An Investigation on the Attitudes of IELTS and TOEFL iBT Teachers: A Quantitative and Qualitative Washback Study

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Author’s contribution

The corresponding author designed the study, organized the Literature and interpreted the analyses of the study. She wrote the first draft and approved the final manuscript.

ABSTRACT

This quantitative and qualitative study, probably the first of its kind in Iran, compared the attitudes of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers towards the tests. It aimed to see whether the tests promoted positive washback on the attitudes of the teachers, since the tests are intended to measure the broader construct of communicative competence. The study compared instances of positive and negative attitudes of the teachers towards these two competitive tests. Understanding teachers’ attitudes help to predict their teaching behaviors. To do so, a questionnaire was administered to randomly selected 40 teachers actively involved in preparing the students to take IELTS and TOEFL iBT, and ten of them were interviewed. While chi-squared was used to analyze the data gathered from questionnaires, the interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The results indicated that both IELTS and TOEFL iBT had strong influence on the attitudes of the teachers. However, the IELTS teachers’ attitudes were more affected by the test. Although there was some positive washback of the tests, the study found instances of negative attitudes of both IELTS and iBT teachers towards the tests. This suggests that the test washback on the attitudes of the teachers may not always correspond to the effects intended by the test designers. The article also suggests pedagogical implications for test administrators, curriculum developers...
1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of washback refers to the influence of testing on teaching. This influence is often seen as negative. [1] restricted the use of the term ‘washback’ to classroom behaviors of teachers and learners. The emphasis on promoting positive washback is one main difference between traditional language tests, and communicative language tests. [2] defined high-stakes tests as those which have important consequences and in which decisions about admission, promotion, placement, or graduation are directly dependent on test scores. For [1], tests that have important consequences will have washback. The stakeholders who are directly influenced by the high-stakes tests’ washback are language learners, teachers, test developers, materials developers, and publishers. For [3], the most significant participants in program washback are language teachers and that is why they are the most frequently studied of all the participants in the washback process. [4] believed that high-stakes tests influence the attitudes, behavior, and motivation of teachers. [5] stated that “high-stakes testing could affect teachers directly and negatively” (p. 3).

Attitudes strongly connected to feelings, rooted in cognitive and social psychology. [6] defined attitudes that are “reinforced by beliefs (the cognitive component) and often attract strong feelings (the emotional component) which may lead to particular behavioral intents (the action tendency component)” (p. 75). The nature of a test may first affect the attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practicing the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of that work [7]. [8] asserted that washback is largely indirect and unpredictable: indirect, because it depends on the mediation of teachers, publishers and materials developers, and unpredictable, because of individual differences among teachers and students.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally speaking, washback studies revealed rather negative attitudes and feelings generated by the teachers. [2] found negative attitudes towards the test, an atmosphere of high anxiety and fear of test results among teachers and students. They reported that “what the teachers feel is that the success or failure of their students reflects on them and they speak of pressure to cover the materials for the exam” (pp. 309-10). [9] also spoke of the pressure felt by the teachers while teaching to the test.

The negative attitude of teachers towards the exam also reported by [10] in the TOEFL study that they resented the time pressure they felt when teaching towards the exam. However, two teachers had positive attitude and they enjoyed the teaching and felt they could help students cope with something important. They also reported “teachers’ feelings of guilt and frustration at being unable to make the content interesting or to ensure improved scores for their students” (p. 292). [11] introduced a slightly brighter note. He reported that the atmosphere was not necessarily tense depending on the teacher’s attitude towards exam coaching. However, [12] reported generally positive feelings about IELTS amongst teachers and strong motivation amongst learners.
The importance of teachers in washback processes is also emphasized by Alderson and Wall in their washback hypotheses. One of the key characteristics of the Sri Lankan impact study [13] was the careful observation of teachers’ behavior. A longitudinal study, examining how washback of public exams impacted English teaching in Sri Lanka, provided insights into the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of teaching contents and public exams [14].

The changes in teachers’ perceptions in relation to washback on selected aspects of teaching were also investigated. [15] looked closely at the influence of a new examination in Hong Kong on teachers’ perceptions. The results of the study indicated that teachers reacted positively to the examination change. Cheng found a match between the teachers’ perceptions and those of the new exam policymakers. She concluded that the teachers’ perceptions of what was expected of their teaching changed towards the requirements of the new exam. [16] investigated how the teachers’ awareness of and attitudes towards the new TOEFL iBT would develop as the time of the launch drew nearer.

There have been empirical washback studies of high-stakes tests from the point of view of teachers, whose main concern is generally that of the progress in learning of the group of individuals in their class or classes and their ability as teachers to facilitate that progress. [17] reported the crucial role of the teacher in determining types and intensity of washback and that teachers can become agents for promoting positive washback. These concerns differ from those of the tester, researcher or educational innovator, whose interests in washback receive attention elsewhere, for example, in [3] and [18]. [17] also believed that factors beyond the exam itself come into play in determining the amount and kind of washback, such as teachers’ attitudes and the stakes of the exam. She also reported that studies do not explore whether these negative attitudes and feelings generate more or less effective teaching or learning, or whether they have impact on them and, if so, in which way. In the TOEFL study, the quality of teaching seems to be negatively impacted by teacher’s attitudes towards the exam, but whether this is the case elsewhere is not clear. She stated that “test anxiety and its facilitating or debilitating effects on both teachers and learners during the teaching and learning process merit further research as part of studies of washback” (p. 18).

In washback studies four main teacher-related factors are cited; their beliefs, their attitudes, their educational level and experience, and their personalities. In relation to teacher’s beliefs Spratt reported some factors as influencing washback such as the teacher’s beliefs about the reliability and fairness of the exam [19], about what constitute effective teaching methods [20] , about how much the exam contravenes their current teaching practices [10], and about the stakes and usefulness of the exam [2]. Other factors constitute teachers teaching philosophy [21], their belief about the relationship between the exam and the textbook [13] and their beliefs about their students’ beliefs [10].

Another teacher related factor refers to how teachers’ attitudes towards the exam affect how they prepare their classroom materials and their lessons. [22] reported teachers’ attitudes towards an exam became more positive or promoted more positive washback when the teachers were involved in aspects of the test design process.

Other factors relate to teachers’ education and training. This includes factors such as the teacher’s own education and educational experience [11], the amount of general methodological training teachers have received [23], their training in teaching towards specific exams and in how to use exam related textbooks [13], their access to and familiarity
with exam support materials such as exam specifications, and their understanding of the exam’s rationale or philosophy [24,13].

1.1.1 IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is conducted jointly by the British Council, the Cambridge ESOL Examinations, and IELTS Australia the leading educational organization of the country of Australia. The rigorous processes used to produce the test materials ensure that every version of the test is of a comparable level of difficulty, so that the results are consistent wherever and whenever the test is taken. All candidates of IELTS test need to complete four modules of Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing to obtain an IELTS Test Report.

IELTS serves as an effective tool to evaluate test takers’ overall English language proficiency. Gradually it has been recognized by an increasing number of educational and professional organizations, immigration offices or other government agencies in many countries [25].

The [26] reports that the IELTS impact study deals with the effect of the test on students, candidates, teachers, and receiving institutions and that “the study is a part of the continuous validation and revision processes. The more consultation data gathered on the impact of the test, the stronger the assurance of its validity, reliability, positive impact and practicality” (p.14).

1.1.2 TOEFL iBT

[27] announced TOEFL as the most widely-used and internationally recognized test to evaluate non-native English speakers’ language proficiency. However, the content and format of the previous TOEFL tests have long been criticised by language educators who seriously questioned whether the scores on the TOEFL actually reflected the test-takers language proficiency due to the lack of oral proficiency assessment. To address this and other problems, the [27] introduced the Next Generation TOEFL, also known as the TOEFL Internet-based test or iBT. This new version includes a brand new speaking assessment and different integrated tasks by combining reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. One important issue dealing with language assessment is validity, which refers to how closely a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Therefore, if the test as a whole is attempting to measure the ability of the test takers to succeed in the academic environment of a university in which English is the language of instruction, the new TOEFL iBT seems valid because students must, in most academic situations, use more than one language skill.

The number of washback studies on IELTS has been much higher than on iBT in the literature. There is convincing evidence to suggest that TOEFL and IELTS, as high-stakes tests, have powerful washback effects and that these effects occur to a different extent in relation to different individuals within a specific educational context. In Iran IELTS and TOEFL iBT are administered to measure the EFL proficiency required to attend a university or to facilitate immigration to an English speaking country [28]. Given that the most significant participants in program washback are language teachers, in order to get better insight of the teachers’ behaviors in the classroom this study reports on teachers’ attitudes to address the following research questions.
1.2 Research Questions

1. Is there any significant difference between the attitudes of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT teachers towards the test?
2. What are the attitudes of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT teachers towards the tests?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The participants included a random sample of twenty IELTS and twenty TOEFL iBT teachers who participated in teachers’ questionnaire and five IETS and five TOEFL iBT teachers who participated in interviews.

2.2 Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study included the teachers’ questionnaire, and the teachers’ interview. The teachers’ questionnaire included the closed-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement.

2.3 Design

In the present study, teachers’ questionnaires and also teachers’ interviews were conducted through a triangulation research design. Triangulation was used to reduce the chance of systematic bias through obtaining the same result using a different data collection or analysis method. Triangulation is a must as a methodological research in any serious investigation of washback. The choice of type of research methodology normally involves a consideration of the advantages and feasibility of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The value of using both types of data (a form of methodological triangulation) is explained by [29]. In this study the teachers’ responses to interview questions (qualitative data) and their responses to a Likert scale (quantitative data) to investigate their attitudes towards the tests were used. While open-ended qualitative data allow the teachers’ depth of attitudes to be expressed, the quantitative data create the opportunity to see how representative they are and whether they are distributed randomly through the sample.

The area of participants’ attitudes has long been a cornerstone of washback studies, with an emphasis on survey [30,31,32] and interview [33] methods. Quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interview data might each contribute to an understanding of the effect of the test on the attitudes of the teachers. It is rather uncommon to encounter washback or impact studies that do not combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches, what [34] qualified as reconciliation between scientific and humanistic research.

2.4 Procedure

At the outset of the study, qualitative input ensured the content validity. Through conducting a pilot study with a sample of 10 questionnaires completed by IELTS and iBT teachers, factor analysis was employed to ensure the construct validity which resulted in elimination of some items and Cronbach’s alpha was computed to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Then, questionnaires were completed by the participants of the study. The reverse scoring was used for items shown negative attitudes. The selected response options
were numerically coded and entered into a computer data base for descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis through SPSS version 18. In the next step, a sample of five IELTS teachers and five iBT teachers were interviewed to investigate their attitudes towards the tests. Before recording the interview a friendly rapport was established in order to put the teachers at ease and motivate them to be interviewed. After that, the teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study (though they were already familiar with it through the completion of the questionnaires). They were asked to answer the questions with care and patience. The teachers were all cooperative and showed interest. All interviews were conducted in English and audio recorded. During the interview the researcher tried to avoid imposing her personal views on the teachers or directing them towards a specific answer. The teachers’ interviews were immediately transcribed after the interview sessions by listening carefully to the voice recordings. At the end, the answers of both IELTS and iBT teachers to each question were analyzed qualitatively.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 The result of the quantitative analysis of teachers’ questionnaires

At first, the reliability of IELTS and iBT teachers’ questionnaires were estimated (Table 1). Then, chi-square analysis was performed based on the teachers’ responses to the questionnaire items to look into any significant difference between the attitudes of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers towards the tests. As Table 2 reveals the chi-square observed value (22) was higher than the critical value of 9.49 at 4 degrees of freedom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL iBT</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The Chi-square analysis of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers’ responses regarding their attitudes towards the Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the observed value of chi-square was higher than its critical value, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers preparing candidates to take the tests. As shown in Table 3, while the attitudes of 65.2 percent (always for nonparametric data, a combination of agree and strongly agree shown bold in table) of the IELTS teachers were influenced by the test, the attitudes of 57.2 percent (always for nonparametric data, a combination of agree and strongly agree shown bold in table) of iBT teachers were influenced by the test. In other words, the attitudes of a significantly higher percentage of IELTS teachers were influenced by the test than those of the iBT teachers.
Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of IELTS and TOEFL iBT Teachers’ Responses regarding Their Attitudes towards the Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>IELTS Count</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within test</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IBT Count</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within test</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Test</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To discuss the obtained results, Table 4 is a comparison of percentages of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT teachers’ responses to questionnaire items regarding their attitudes towards the tests.

As presented in Table 4, the IELTS teachers’ answers to the most items related to their attitudes towards the test showed higher percentages than those of the iBT teachers, although the iBT teachers responded with higher percentages to some items. A closer look at the percentages reveals a range of differences depending on each item. The considerably higher percentages of the IELTS and the iBT teachers felt guilty if they did not familiarize the students with the test format, they believed they had to teach what was supposed to be tested, and they thought it was their responsibility to help the students to raise their test scores.

Considerably higher percentages of the IELTS teachers than the iBT teachers believed that the test improved the test taking strategies of their students rather than their language proficiency, and that the test brought about the fear of test results for them.

However, a lower percentage of both the IELTS and the iBT teachers perceived the test as fair for the Iranian candidates in the Iranian context, so that if the test score were not a requirement, they would still prepare their students for their study aboard in the same way, and they felt unable to present the materials in a simulating way that could create learning opportunities.

Table 4. A comparison between the percentage of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers’ responses regarding their attitudes towards the tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ attitudes items</th>
<th>IELTS teacher</th>
<th>iBT teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The test provides positive motivation for my students to learn.</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The test provides positive motivation for me to teach.</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The test motivates me through its international credibility.</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The test causes unhelpful stress for my students.</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The test brings about fear of test results for me.</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel guilty if I do not familiarize my students with the test format.</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel my students need to develop skills to enable them to get by on their own.</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel my students need to develop a higher level of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Attitudes towards the Tests</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>IBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY MUCH</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUITE A LOT</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT REALLY</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 1. Percentage of IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers’ responses regarding their attitudes towards the tests**

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3.1.2 The Results of qualitative analysis of the teachers’ interviews

The transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed to investigate the similarities and differences of the IELTS and the iBT teachers’ responses to each question as discussed below:

**Question one:** Regarding the receiving of any training in teaching IELTS/iBT preparation, none of the five IELTS teachers had received any training. They stated that they had learned to teach through the observation of class sessions, reading IELTS books, and briefed by the course organizers. In the case of the iBT teachers, three out of five had previous training but not an official one, and the two others had learned to teach through observation.

**Question two:** Considering their attitudes towards the test format, generally both the IELTS and the iBT teachers’ perceived iBT more valid through its tasks of integrated skills, while they believed separated skills in IELTS affected the authenticity of the test. Generally both groups assessed speaking to a computer screen as unreal, unauthentic and totally annoying and they found the IELTS speaking section more humanistic and authentic.

**Question three:** Regarding their idea about the strengths and weaknesses (or easiness and difficulty) of the IELTS/TOEFL iBT test, all IELTS teachers believed that the reading part was difficult which could not be answered without resorting to the test taking strategies. They perceived the speaking part easy and that the students got the highest score on this part. They also believed that IELTS test format was easy to learn but producing acceptable answers to fit that format appeared to be difficult. However, they believed that IELTS motivated the students to learn English. They regarded the British or the Australian accent used in IELTS as a weak point. The time pressure imposed by the IELTS test caused the students stress. The iBT teachers mostly believed that the easiest thing about the iBT was the possibility to get the required score through using test taking strategies. Obvious format, predictable content, preferred American accent, and the opportunity for note-taking throughout the test were considered as easy things about the iBT. They regarded overexposing of the students to a large number of vocabulary items and getting high score in spite of their unreadiness for academic or genuine settings, as weak points of the iBT test.

**Question four:** About their perceptions of type of knowledge, skill or ability students needed to reach a good score level, the IELTS teachers mentioned: general knowledge, topic familiarity, cultural familiarity, knowledge of test format, ability to manage time, and training. The iBT teachers emphasized general knowledge, topic familiarity, knowledge of test-taking strategies, ability to manage time, ability to take notes, knowledge of technical terminology, test format, ability to get main ideas, and preparation for the test.

**Question five:** As to the frequency of teaching an item they felt as important but it did not appear in the test, most of the IELTS and the iBT teachers responded that they avoided teaching it.

**Question six:** When the teachers were asked to add any comments concerning their attitudes towards the impact of the tests, the IELTS teachers said that their test benefited from an international credibility. It was much more popular than TOEFL both for immigration or educational purposes. IELTS was motivating and made people pay more attention to English. They believed that Internet testing was not realistic. Looking at a screen and speaking to computers were not real. The only advantage of iBT over IELTS was the iBT
integrated skills. However, most of them believed that if candidates got good scores in IELTS it didn’t mean that their English was good. The iBT teachers believed that TOEFL iBT was a better test than the IELTS. However, they noted that getting a high score on the iBT was not an indication of language proficiency. To these teachers iBT required a lot of preparation and it was good for academic contexts while IELTS was a better indicator of the communicative skills and that culture bound questions made iBT biased. They convinced that the iBT was practical, and it expanded their knowledge of vocabulary [28].

3.2 Discussion

As stated in the literature review, the amount of general methodological training teachers have received [23], and their training in teaching towards the tests [13] play crucial roles in the washback effect. As revealed by the teachers’ interviews, most of the teachers of either IELTS or TOEFL iBT did not receive any formal training in teaching towards the test. This finding was also evident in the above studies as a determining factor in the occurrence of negative washback.

Based on the analysis of teachers’ interviews, high percentages of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT teachers of this study believed that test-taking strategies rather than language proficiency was what the students needed to get the required score on the tests. This finding contrasts with the result of study of [11] in which the teachers claimed that they intentionally avoided teaching test-taking techniques since they believed that actual English skills would help students to pass the test. This result was supported by a higher percentage of IELTS teachers in questionnaire survey.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that both IELTS and iBT affected the teachers’ attitudes in a more negative way towards the preparation courses which can be supported by the findings of [35] regarding the negative washback of the high-stakes tests on teachers’ attitudes in preparing for the test.

The teachers’ understanding of the test’s rationale and philosophy [24] also plays pivotal role in the kind of washback. As proposed by the teachers’ interviews, they were not aware that the communicative competence is the focal construct of IELTS and iBT tests. They all believed it was the flaw of the test which demanded a series of test-taking strategies to pass the test. It was considered by the teachers that neither the IELTS nor the TOEFL iBT was a good indicator of language ability of the test takers. Although there was a contradiction between this finding and the analysis of questionnaire responses in the sense that a high percentage of both the IELTS and the iBT teachers believed that the students need to develop a higher level of cognitive ability to pass the test.

Both IELTS and iBT teachers believed that they only needed to focus extensively on test format, test-taking strategies, test content, getting high scores on the test, and time management. These activities are characterized as negative washback as concluded by the study of [36] on teacher factors mediating washback.

Teachers’ interviews and questionnaires revealed that the iBT teachers were more under the pressure of time to cover the materials. This result is in line with the finding of [37]. The finding can be also supported by the [2] who found the teachers’ feeling of pressure to cover the materials for the exam as a negative one towards the test.
Almost half of the IELTS and the iBT teachers of the study felt guilty of and frustrated at being unable to make the content interesting to ensure improved scores for their students. Similar feelings were also reported by [10] that most of the teachers had a negative attitude towards the TOEFL regarding teaching the test.

Based on the participants’ survey, there have been indications of negative attitude among the teachers that both IELTS and iBT tests indeed caused anxiety. It appeared that the test results caused fear for the IELTS teachers more than the iBT teachers. This finding supports the results of study by [38] that the IELTS causes anxiety among teachers.

In addition, almost high percentages of the IELTS and iBT teachers believed that the success or failure of their students reflected on them, and that it was their responsibility to raise the students’ scores on the test. These findings as indications of negative attitudes support the findings of [2].

Another negative case of washback of teachers’ attitudes, evident in the teachers’ interviews, was the little attention paid to the materials not included in the tests. This evidence is also considered as negative washback in the Sri Lankan washback study by [13].

Instances of positive effect of tests on teachers’ attitudes can be found in motivating role of both IELTS and iBT in learning and teaching and their international credibility. This finding supports the report of [12] regarding positive feelings about IELTS amongst teachers for teaching and strong motivation amongst learners. However, [32] predicted a negative effect of testing if it is used as the primary motivating power of educational process. It seemed that this strong motivation among the teachers made them feel able to create learning opportunities through presenting the preparation materials in a simulating way which is in contrary with the findings of the study of [39].

The questionnaire revealed that lower percentages of IELTS and iBT teachers perceived the test as fair for Iranian candidates in the Iranian context. In their interviews the teachers pinpointed cultural familiarity and accent as instances of test bias necessary for passing the test. These attitudes were found to be negative based on the reviews of 11 washback studies by [17].

Analysis of interviews revealed that both IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers had positive attitudes towards the TOEFL iBT through its integrated tasks and found it valid in this sense. This result is in line with the purpose of TOEFL iBT policymakers. [27] reported integrated tasks in the Speaking and Writing sections make iBT more communicative. The teachers of both groups also found IELTS less authentic for the isolated skills. [38] believed that integrated format is closer to the target language use construct, while discrete item test format is more reliably scored.

4. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to compare the washback of IELTS and TOEFL iBT on the attitudes of teachers preparing candidates for the test. It results showed that the attitudes of IELTS teacher were more affected by the test. The study also found instances of rather negative influences of both IELTS and TOEFL iBT on the teachers’ attitudes. This suggests that the test washback on the attitudes of the teachers may not always correspond to the effects intended by the test designers. As a means for implications, washback may have some
predictable effects. However, it may also have less predictable effects as stated by [40]. Thus to ensure the desired effect, teachers need to consider a variety of factors that may have a positive washback effect on their attitudes and performance.

A number of implications emerged from this study at the pedagogical level. It is the responsibility of test administrators, curriculum coordinators and language institutions to provide teachers with the guidance necessary to focus not only the test format but also on the constructs underlying the test design [28].

The study concluded that both the IELTS and the iBT teachers seemed willing to go along only with the demands of the test which is also in accord with the conclusion drawn by [13] in their washback study. The implication is that teachers should be provided with the knowledge and attitudes to teach communicatively to promote positive washback as the test developers and policymakers have intended. It is the responsibility of both the IELTS and the iBT administrators to develop highly formal professional training courses to qualify the teachers and to encourage them with the required positive attitudes.

Since most of the findings of this study were in accordance with the other studies in other contexts, as appeared in the discussion, another implication of the study addresses test developers and suggests that they should consult teachers internationally and consider their attitudes towards the test. As [41] asserted “when writing of tests does not involve those who are expected to carry out the change- the teachers…… it is difficult to expect that tests will lead to meaningful improvement in learning” (p. 514).

If IELTS and TOEFL iBT teachers feel they are under pressure to cover the materials and to teach only to the test; if they feel guilty for being unable to ensure improved scores and believe that the success or failure of the students reflects on them, the burden of responsibility seems to be on the English institutions that should prepare a sound curriculum for preparation classes to reduce these types of negative attitudes.

As another pedagogical implication, teachers should avoid to constrain creativity and spontaneity at the cost of teaching only those skills amenable in test.

Although teaching test format and test taking strategies would be beneficial the teachers should know that focusing on developing English skills would, to a much greater extend, help the student to pass the exam.

Given that the teachers decide, to a greater or lesser extent, to allow washback to operate, their classes should be characterized by knowledge creation and critical thinking as well rather than score-oriented and rote learning. They also need to focus their attention on the test’s content domain as opposed to test techniques and testwiseness to promote positive washback both on their attitudes and eventually on their teaching behavior.

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

**REFERENCES**


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