
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Shadow of EFL High-stakes Exams on Learning: A Learner Side of the Story

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ABSTRACT

The reciprocal relationship between assessment and learning implies that while assessment measures students' learning, it also shapes how they learn—particularly in the context of high-stakes exams. This paper investigates the washback effects of a high-stakes exam, the Jordanian General Secondary School Certificate English Exam (JGSSCEE), on EFL learning from a student perspective. It also explores whether current twelfth graders' views vary according to specific demographic variables (gender, school type, and academic stream). To this end, a 44-item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire covering three aspects of the learning process (planning, implementation, and assessment) was administered face-to-face to 500 twelfth-grade students. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS. Results showed that the JGSSCEE had a significant impact on students' learning across all three dimensions. No significant differences were found based on gender; however, differences were observed based on school type, favoring public schools in the assessment and implementation dimensions. Additionally, differences based on academic stream were in favor of literary-stream students in the implementation dimension.

KEYWORDS

Ariel, Disney princess, feminism, gender, *The Little Mermaid*, political correctness, racial diversity

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INTRODUCTION

Assessments are unavoidable in educational systems, and the value of any assessment is proportional to the level of impact results have on stakeholders. International standardized tests (e.g., TOEFL and IELTS) are especially important for EFL learners because they can make or break an examinee's academic future. National exams have a comparable weight, particularly when used as the sole basis for determining students' university admission.

The intent, formats, resources, and decisions made in response to assessment results vary depending on the context and instance. The educational system in Jordan, as an example and context of interest for this study, is divided into three stages: preschool, basic school, and secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2014). Secondary school has two major tracks: academic and vocational. The academic stream consists of both a literary and a scientific stream. It is widely acknowledged that Jordan's educational system is heavily test-driven, with exams, particularly public ones, carrying a disproportionate amount of weight (Haddadin, 2006). In compliance with the country's centralized university admission policy, all Jordanian students must take a national unified exit exam by the time they end of secondary school. The most important criterion for university admission for students is their mean score on Jordan General Secondary School Certificate Exam (JGSSCE). This explains why the JGSCEE is regarded as a high-stakes exam and why students, teachers, and parents place such a high value on its results. The time and money spent by parents, schools, and the Jordanian Ministry of Education to help students perform well on the test indicate clearly that the test has a significant impact on society and educational institutions (Shatnawi, 2005). Because the JGSCEE is the means by which students may achieve their future goals, teachers concentrate their efforts on presenting the prescribed curriculum while using commercial books that contain several previous years' tests to provide practice to their students (Ghadi & Al-Jamal, 2008). This comes at the expense of adopting

humanistic and communicative approaches that are dismissed as an unnecessary luxury, trapping teachers in an endless cycle of exam-preparation orientation (Prodromou, 2006). According to this scenario, EFL teachers in Jordan, particularly at the secondary level, are unofficially required to teach to the test (Haddadin, 2006; Homran & Asassfeh, 2023). Thus, it is critical to uncover how JGSCEE contributes to shaping EFL students' learning at an era of globalization marked by excessive competitiveness, while also taking some categorizing variables (students' gender, academic stream, and school type) into account.

Study Background and Literature Review

In applied linguistics research, there are numerous definitions for washback. For example, it refers to the extent to which a test influences teachers and students to behave in certain ways (Alderson & Wall, 1993). It may also be viewed as a process that has an impact on many aspects of teaching and learning (Ozmen, 2011; Wang, 2010). In a broader sense, Messick (1996) defines the washback effect as the extent to which the use of tests influences teaching and learning by forcing learners to do things they would not normally do to inhabit or encourage language learning. This influence extends beyond teaching and learning to include attitudes and behaviors of teachers and students in response to external testing (Cheng, 2005; Schohamy, 2020). The test washback effect is not an unusual idea in testing; it describes the impact of foreign language exams on teaching and learning. This term has become popular among test researchers in the early 1990s. Prior to that, researchers used a variety of terms. For instance, test impact (Bachman & Palmer, 2000; Baker, 1994) is used to refer to the effect of a test on teaching and learning.

Several studies addressed washback with focus on EFL contexts. For example, Tsagari (2007) investigated the washback effects of the First Certificate in English (FCE) on the learning and teaching process in Greece. The FCE is an exam designed to provide a baseline for intermediate-level EFL proficiency. 15 native and non-native EFL teachers were interviewed, 39 students' diaries were analyzed, and textbook content was thoroughly examined. While teachers' approaches were unaffected by the findings, the material they used was. According to Tsagari's research, the exam had a negative impact on students' attitudes, sentiments, and motivation to study a language.

Caine (2005) investigated the washback effects of EFL examinations on the teaching and learning process (e.g., junior college exams, university admission exams) in Japan. The researcher's main goal was to determine whether there is a negative washback in Japanese EFL exams. A questionnaire was given to 55 teachers and students from six different schools across the country, and four teachers were observed. The study findings indicated negative washback because teachers emphasized grammar, required extra time to teach students how to write and read, used Japanese in their classes, and that worksheets and reading aloud are excellent language teaching strategies. On the other hand, the collected data from the students' questionnaire revealed both negative and positive washback. For 46% of students, the most important aspects of language acquisition were English grammar, speaking, and listening comprehension. Students' data revealed that multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary questions are preferred as a method of exam preparation.

Another group of researchers (Aftab et al., 2014) conducted a study in Pakistan to investigate the nature of the washback effects of the intermediate English examination, which determines students' admission to university. The researchers interviewed six teachers and students in order to collect data and learn about their perspectives. The findings revealed negative washback because students treated English as a subject to pass rather than a language to practice, and teachers relied on test-taking strategies rather than engaging students in learning activities.

In Japan as well, Watanabe (2013) investigated the washback effects of the national center test for university admissions, an exam that evaluates students' high school performance and determines admission to public and private universities. The researcher gathered information by analyzing the results of 200 students. The findings revealed that students met the required standards, and the test scores predicted candidate performance at university. The findings revealed that the test had an effect on how well the institutes' test preparation materials performed. According to the researcher, the test had a positive washback effect on teaching and learning.

Haddadin (2006) investigated secondary school students and teachers' perceptions of the washback effect of public exams on English language skills instruction using a questionnaire for data collection from 250 students in the first and second secondary grades, as well as 45 English teachers from Amman Second Educational Directorate schools. The findings indicated that the public examination influenced teachers' perceptions of instruction, and teachers and their students focused primarily on the test tasks and language skills addressed in the test.

Tayeb et al. (2014) investigated the General Secondary English Examination (GSEE) washback effects on teaching and learning in Yemen. The study concentrated on eight dimensions, four of which were associated with teachers (teaching methods, teaching experiences, content assessment, and beliefs) and four with students (learning styles, learning activities, attitudes, and motivation) based on a semi-structured interview with three English teachers with a combined teaching experience of more than ten years. Thirty Yemini English teachers of the 12th grade responded to a questionnaire the researchers constructed based on the interview

results. The findings indicated that the test had a significant impact on teaching methods and learning styles and presents evident washback effects of the exam on the elements of Yemen's language teaching and learning processes, as well as on what and how teachers teach and how students learn. The findings also indicated that teachers adopt GSCEE items in their classroom tests.

To sum up, washback effects research from students' perspective has targeted the effects on students': language proficiency (e.g., Hughes, 1998; Khaniya, 1990), learning strategies and learning content (Mahmoudi, 2015), attitudes and motivation to study language (e.g., Tsgari, 2007), learning styles and activities (e.g., Caine, 2005). Research studies (e.g., Aftab, 2014; Caine, 2005; Haddadin, 2006; Mniruzzman & Hoque, 2010; Shohamy et al., 1996; Wall & Alderson) are interested in test taking strategies rather than learning activities (e.g., Aftab, 2014; Caine, 2005; Haddadin, 2006; Shohamy et al., 1996) confirm that students place more attention to the skills subject to testing in public exams compared to those that are not.

In the Jordanian context, a limited number of studies (e.g., Ghadi & Al Jamal; 2007; Haddadin, 2006) targeted JGSCEE washback effects. Ghadi and Al Jamal (2007) addressed the teachers' perspective on four domains: activity/time management, instructional methods, classroom materials, and topics teachers would teach. Haddadin (2006) conducted a remedial program to develop English language skills in light of JGSCEE washback effects. Those studies are far from conclusive and comprehensive, which poses a need for further research to which the current study comes as a response. The current study—to the best of the researchers' knowledge—is the first to address JGSCEE washback effects from a student's perspective targeting the three dimensions of the teaching/learning process: planning, implementation and assessment. It also investigates the extent to which students' practices differ according to certain variables: gender, school type (public vs. private), and academic stream (literary vs. scientific).

METHOD

Design

This study is survey-based, descriptive in nature since surveys are one "method of studying phenomena and correctly describing them as they occur in real life and numerically expressing them" (Abbas et al., 2012, p.74).

Participants

The researchers used convenient sampling to recruit 500 (230 male and 270 female) EFL students from public ($n=420$) and private ($n=80$) schools in a major city in Jordan.

Research Instrument

Based on a review of the existing literature (e.g., AL-Lawati, 2002; Brown, 2000; Robb & Ercanbrack, 1999; Wall & Alderson, 1993), a 44-item, five-point Likert scale questionnaire was developed for the current study. The survey was divided into two sections: the first collected background information (students' gender, academic stream, and school type). The second addressed learning practices across three dimensions: planning (13 items), implementation (24 items), and assessment (7 items). Students were asked to rate the items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = usually, and 5 = always). That is, the greater the perceived washback effect, the higher the mean response. A panel of seven EFL instruction experts checked and validated the questionnaire items: one EFL teacher, one EFL supervisor, and five TEFL-specialized faculty members.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

An initial 47-item questionnaire was referred to a panel of seven EFL instruction experts to ensure the comprehensiveness of the domains to the topic addressed, the comprehensiveness of the items to the corresponding domain, item relevance to the corresponding domain, and the linguistic correctness and clarity of each individual item. To ensure reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was used, yielding coefficient values ranging from 0.70 to 0.83 for the dimensions, with a total value of .85 for the overall scale.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were distributed to the participants at their respective schools. The second researcher met individually with each participant, explained the purpose of the study, obtained consent, and distributed and collected questionnaires for analysis. There was a total of 500 surveys subject to analysis. The questionnaire data was analyzed using descriptive (mean and standard deviation values) and inferential statistics (ANOVA and Multiple Analysis of Variance) in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

RESULTS

JGSCEE Washback Effects on Student Practices on the Three Dimensions

Planning

For the first dimension, planning, the results (Table1) indicate that the mean response at the item level ranges between 4.11 and 3.17. The highest mean response ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.21$) was pertinent to assigning the first priority to grammar, followed by students' modification of their learning style to meet JGSCEE needs ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.26$). The next item is related to assigning much time for exercises that mirror JGSCEE questions ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.20$). A close mean response was associated with focusing on grammar and vocabulary that commonly appear on the test ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.21$). On the other hand, the item that received the lowest mean response addressed making equal efforts in dealing with the four skills ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.34$). Similarly, students reported not allocating time for each individual skill ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.32$) and frequently skipping listening and speaking activities ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.48$).

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON *PLANNING*

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
The first dimension: planning, When I plan I :				
- give grammar the first priority in my planning since it occupies the highest share of grades.	4.11	1.21	1	High
- modify my learning style to go on with ultimate goals that meet JGSCEE needs.	4.09	1.26	2	High
- assign much time to exercises that are comparable to JGSCEE items.	4.06	1.20	3	High
- concentrate on exercises that include grammar and vocabulary to be tested.	4.05	1.21	4	High
- make my learning plan associated directly with JGSCEE.	4.02	1.14	5	High
- focus on JGSCEE requirements.	3.93	1.16	6	High
- dedicate much time for covering previous JGSCEE questions.	3.88	1.10	7	High
- practice test- taking strategies.	3.71	1.20	8	High
- assign time for reading and writing skills that will be tested on JGSCEE	3.56	1.30	9	High
- depend on the student's book rather than JGSCEE questions.	3.53	1.32	10	High
- skip the listening and speaking skills since they are not included on JGSCEE.	3.48	1.48	11	High
- allocate time for each skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) according to my background regarding about JGSCEE.	3.45	1.32	12	High
- provide equal efforts for the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) when I prepare for JGSCEE.	3.17	1.34	13	Medium
- Overall	3.77	0.77	-	High

Implementation

For the second dimension, implementation, the results (Table 2) indicate that the mean response at the item level ranges between 4.21 and 3.29. The highest mean response ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.13$) concerns allocating a lot of time to grammar and vocabulary questions since they are assigned high weight on the JGSCEE, followed by the item addressing students' emphasis on mastering

the book exercises that appear on the JGSCEE ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.08$). The following item concerns using the worksheets that review the material covered on the JGSCEE ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.11$). The same mean response ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.26$) reflects students' use of commercial books. On the other hand, the item that receives the lowest mean response addresses prioritizing the mastery of the four skills rather than practicing the JGSCEE's skills ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.40$). Similarly, students less frequently give equal attention to the four skills ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.39$) or cover all the skills addressed in the textbook ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.30$).

Table 2

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON IMPLEMENTATION

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
The second dimension: implementation, when I learn I :				
- allocate much time to exam questions grammar, vocabulary and text assigned higher marks on JGSCEE.	4.21	1.13	1	Very high
- concentrate on mastering the textbook's exercises that are frequently repeated on JGSCEE.	4.13	1.08	2	High
- use the worksheets to review expected topics on JGSCEE.	4.03	1.11	3	High
- use additional commercial books because they help me to succeed on JGSCEE.	4.03	1.26	3	High
- adjust my learning activities to meet the questions included on JGSCEE.	4.02	1.12	5	High
- concentrate on frequently repeated vocabulary that appear on JGSCEE.	4.00	1.17	5	High
- apply activities which promote my test- taking skills.	3.99	2.47	7	High
- assign much time to learn grammar compared to other contents (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).	3.95	1.21	8	High
- use test – taking strategies for JGSCEE purposes.	3.91	1.21	9	High
- use previous JGSCEE papers during my learning activities.	3.87	1.10	10	High
- feel I am obliged to use Arabic in understanding English grammar for JGSCEE purposes.	3.87	1.15	10	High
- follow my teacher's instruction in learning the lessons whether these lessons are tested on JGSCEE or not.	3.81	1.32	12	High
- learn what I think is important whether it is included on JGSCEE or not.	3.67	1.29	13	High
- assign my learning activities based on their weight toward JGSCEE.	3.66	1.18	14	High
- study every section in the textbook whether it is to be tested on JGSCEE or not.	3.64	1.31	15	High
- use specific learning activities to develop my language skills.	3.55	1.28	16	High
- skip over listening and speaking skills in the textbook because they are not tested on JGSCEE.	3.53	1.40	16	High
- neglect listening and speaking since they are not tested on JGSCEE.	3.48	1.45	18	High
- use software programs to help me in preparing for JGSCEE's skills.	3.38	1.39	19	Med
- pay more attention to previous JGSCEE papers and stop using the textbook When JGSCEE dates are close.	3.37	1.38	20	Med.
- during my learning, I cover all skills in the textbook (listening, speaking, reading and writing).	3.33	1.30	21	Med.
- give equal attention to the four skills regardless of their weight on JGSCEE.	3.32	1.39	22	Med.

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
- prioritize the mastery of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to - practice the language rather than practicing JGSCEE's skills .	3.29	1.40	23	Med.
Overall	3.74	0.68	-	High

Assessment

For the third dimension, assessment, the results (Table3) indicate that the mean response at the item level ranged between 4.02 and 3.18. The highest mean response ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.018$) is associated with teachers' adoption of JGSCEE questions in classroom assessment, followed by the adoption of JGSCEE grading guidelines ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.21$). On the other hand, the item that receives the lowest mean response ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.46$) addresses the inclusion of listening quizzes in classroom tests, followed by assessment attention to reading and writing ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.35$).

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON ASSESSMENT

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
When teacher assesses us, s/he ...				
- adopts test items from JGSCEE in classroom quizzes.	4.02	1.08	1	High
- assesses our assignments by using the same guidelines that are used on JGSCEE.	3.87	1.21	2	High
- assesses my assignments by using the same guidelines used by teachers' grading of JGSCEE.	3.74	1.24	3	High
- prepares monthly tests that mirror the content of JGSCEE rather than the content of the textbook.	3.60	1.27	4	High
- does not include speaking tests in classroom quizzes and tests.	3.59	1.37	5	high
- covers all the task types of the textbook are in his tests.	3.59	1.29	6	High
- focus mainly on our written and reading works.	3.53	1.35	7	High
- includes listening tests in classroom quizzes and tests.	3.18	1.46	8	Medium
Overall	3.64	0.81	-	High

Washback effects associated with EFL students' gender, academic stream and school type

Towards an investigation of the impact some categorical variables (gender, academic stream, and school type) have on students' perceptions of JGSCEE washback effect on their learning practices on the survey collectively, 3-Way ANOVA was used. Results (Table 4) indicated a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) associated with school type only.

TABLE 4
3-WAY ANOVA STUDENTS' RESPONSES BY GENDER, ACADEMIC STREAM AND SCHOOL TYPE

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Gender	.462	1	.462	1.043	.308
Academic stream	.905	1	.905	2.043	.154
School type	2.231	1	2.231	5.037	.025*
Error	219.654	496	.443		
Corrected Total	224.564	499			

Whereas the above results relate to the three dimensions of the learning process, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to see whether the classifying variables (gender, academic stream and school type) had significant influence on students'

responses associated with individual dimensions of the learning process. Pertinent to the first variable, gender, the results (Table 5) show that there is no statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) for students' mean responses on all dimensions. Secondly, there are no statistically significant differences associated with academic stream in planning and assessment. However, there are statistically significant differences associated with implementation in favor of literary students ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.718$) compared to scientific ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.631$). For the school type, the results indicate statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) in students mean responses at the level assessment and implementation dimensions in favor of public ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.66$) compared to private schools ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.72$).

TABLE 5
MANOVA RESULTS FOR STUDENTS' RESPONSES BY GENDER, ACADEMIC STREAM, AND SCHOOL TYPE

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Gender Hotelling's Trace=.004 F=0.673 Sig=0.569	Planning	.212	1	.212	.354	.552
	Implementation	.743	1	.743	1.607	.206
	Assessment	.261	1	.261	.398	.529
Academic stream Hotelling's Trace =0.017 F=2.785 Sig=0.040	Planning	.050	1	.050	.083	.773
	Implementation	2.023	1	2.023	4.375	.037*
	Assessment	.615	1	.615	.937	.334
School type Hotelling's Trace=0.012 F=2.036 Sig=.180	Planning	1.775	1	1.775	2.958	.086
	Implementation	2.007	1	2.007	4.341	.038*
	Assessment	3.911	1	3.911	5.956	.015*
Error	Planning	297.657	496	.600		
	Implementation	229.310	496	.462		
	Assessment	325.711	496	.657		
Corrected Total	Planning	300.342	499			
	Implementation	235.896	499			
	Assessment	331.805	499			

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study reveals how JGSCEE affected students' practices. The majority of the students who responded to the survey indicated that JGSCEE had an effect on their planning, implementation, and assessment. This is no wonder for several possible reasons. First, "utility" is one of the factors that may affect the strength or degree of washback, for the value of a test score depends on how decisive a test score is. The JGSCEE plays a decisive role since the option of enrolling in Jordanian or international institutions or colleges is based on students' scores on this test. Anxiety is a second factor that may affect the strength of washback: if an exam causes too much stress, the washback effect is likely to be more pronounced. There is a consensus among all Jordanians that the JGSCEE touches every single home in Jordan, causing anxiety for not only students but also their families. In brief, then, Gates' (1991) utility and anxiety principles apply to the student sample of the current study. At the level of individual dimensions, to start with planning: students gave grammar special attention as the first priority since it occupies the highest share of grades (almost one-third of the total score). They also modified their learning styles to meet JGSCEE needs. In addition, they concentrated on the exercises which include grammar and vocabulary that are to be tested. One explanation for this might be the over-emphasis on grammar and vocabulary in the JGSCEE questions. This means that students in their planning engaged in test skills rather than

learning activities, a finding that is consistent with other researchers' (e.g., Aftab et al., 2014; Al Lawati, 2002; Khaniya, 1990; Mahmoudi, 2015; Tayeb et al, 2014).

The results on the implementation dimension reveal that students focused on mastering the textbook exercises that are commonly tested on the JGSCEE and spend a lot of time on grammar and vocabulary. They also use commercial books and workbooks to aid in their success on the JGSCEE. This implies that instead of focusing on the learning course objectives, students work towards the exam. These results concur with other researchers' (e.g., Aftab et al, 2014; Caine, 2005; Khaniya, 1990; Mahmoudi, 2015)

JGSCEE has a significant impact on students' practices in assessment as well. The findings of this study indicates that students' perceptions of how they are assessed may be interpreted to prepare for the JGSCEE exam since their teachers use test questions from the JGSCEE in class quizzes and grade their assignments in accordance with these criteria. Additionally, speaking and listening assessments are not included in their teachers' exams. These outcomes are in line with (e.g., Aftab et al, 2014; Caine, 2005; Tayeb et al, 2014). This study shows that there are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in students' responses according to the gender on three dimensions. This finding is consistent with what Al-lawati (2002) found: there was no significant difference between male and female students. This study also shows that there is a statistically significant difference in students' responses associated with the academic stream in the implementation dimension in favor of the literary stream. This finding, consistent with Abd Alrahim's (2002) and Al-lawati's (2002), might be attributed to the relatively greater weight assigned to English in the literary stream, compared to the scientific stream where more focus is put on math, physics, chemistry, and biology. The statistically significant differences in students' responses according to school type in implementation and assessment in favor of public school students might be due to students' attitudes toward using commercial textbooks and teacher-prepared exams in public school. The general impression is that private schools do not favor students' dependence on commercial books. One more reason that is possible is that public school teachers are commonly involved in scoring, grading, and rating students' performance on the JGSCEE guidelines in their assessment, an experience that might have a positive impact on public school students' washback.

Based on the findings of the study, it is clear that the JGSCEE is leading EFL students to follow a test-driven doctrine in their learning practices. This necessitates developing the test format in such a way that takes into account well-balanced emphasis on the four skills and higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities in addition to the communicative aspect of language teaching and learning. This exam will compel both teachers and students to devote more time and attention to language function and motivate students to apply their mental abilities to a range of tasks in compliance with the motto "not tested, not studied." EFL teachers should balance the necessity to get their students ready for the final exam with the need to improve their students' language competence. In addition, EFL teachers should follow the teacher's book guidelines to ensure the development of all language skills. In addition, teachers should focus on enhancing students' speaking and listening skills. Of course, this is hard to accomplish before teachers and test designers realize that English is best taught and assessed communicatively.

Fortunately, during work on this research a new policy has emerged in the Jordanian educational system to ensure covering the four language skills, yet this policy has not yet been implemented with the hope that it will see the light next year (2026). Thus, the researchers invite follow-up research on the washback effects of the JGSCEE after the new-policy implementation in addition to comparing the washback effects with those associated with other school subjects.

Finally, it is worth mention that this study is not devoid of limitations, for the participants comes from only one major city in Jordan, hence generalizations should be made cautiously. Additionally, had the data collection been based on more than one type of research instruments, deeper understanding of the phenomenon could have resulted.

ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

JGSCEE; Jordanian General Secondary School Certificate Exam

JGSCEE; Jordanian General Secondary School Certificate English Exam

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