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# The Negative Washback Effect of Baccalaureate Examination on English Teaching Methodology and Learner Motivation

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## Abstract

Language assessment and evaluation are crucial elements in the language teaching and learning process in particular and Education in general and are considered to be their pedagogical GPS. Yet, their outcome is not always advantageous. The aim of this research is to investigate the negative impact Moroccan Baccalaureate examination has on grammar teaching methodology, learning attitudes, and learning outcomes. The theoretical framework the study starts from is Messick's (1989) new interactive validity model and Alderson and Wall's (1993) washback hypothesis. To test its hypothesis, this study employs a mixed-research methodology (MMR), relying both on quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis instruments, namely, questionnaires comprising yes/no checklists, rating items, Likert scales, and eventually interviews. The results show that (i) most teachers in this study believe that the Baccalaureate examination negatively affects their grammar planning discretion and makes it un-communicative and deductive, (ii) that most students form negative attitudes towards grammar due to the final summative examination, and that (iii) university professors believe that learners come to university linguistically and cognitively unprepared for their academic tasks because of the Baccalaureate negative washback. The research suggests some recommendations to deal with the negative washback impact, namely on the curricular, methodology, and assessment philosophy levels.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Statement of the Problem

English Baccalaureate Examination (EBC) is a high-stake, summative, non-holistic and de-communicative test which has negative unintended consequences on its stakeholders, namely, Moroccan teachers and learners. Despite this, there is little research about the causative relation of EBC on English language teaching, in particular, teaching grammar and structures. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the washback effect of EBC on the teaching of grammar and learner motivation in the Moroccan educational scape.

## 1.2. Significance of the study

The study has a two-fold rationale:

- *On the applied level*: uncovering how EBC leads to negative washback effect on teaching methodology and learning motivation may lead to raising assessment literacy levels, encouraging CLT in teaching methodology and reduce exam-oriented learning and its anxiety.

- *On the theoretical level*: In Morocco, the research conducted on Assessment Theory and Practice (ATP) in general, and consequential validity issues in particular, is scarce. Therefore, this research aims at contributing more knowledge about this issue in the Moroccan research community.

## 1.3. Background Literature

Considered to be the pedagogical GPS guiding the processes of language teaching and learning, Assessment is a *sine qua non* element in any sound educational program or syllabus. Defined as a set of scientific measures aiming at gauging a complex attribute of an individual or a group of individuals (Brown, 2004), assessment serves two main pedagogical functions, namely, accountability and language development (Weir & Roberts, 1994).

The paradigmatic shift from modern traditional assessment to post-modern communicative and performance-based assessment came as a critical theoretical shift in the way tests are evaluated. Traditionally, the standard criteria for judging the validity of a test initiated from the statement that 'a test is valid when it measures what it supposes to measure'. This is Cronbach & Meehl's (1955) worn out view, limiting test quality in a Holy trinity of 'construct, criterion and content' aspects. (Messick, 1996) held a different view, one which will sparkle the 'post modernization' of test evaluation. For Messick (1989), validity is not a property of the test, but an ongoing process of adequate and appropriate interpretation and use of test scores. As Messick proposes

his "consequential validity" concept, which emphasizes the fact that tests have social and value implications, (Alderson & Wall, 1993) give it a more pedagogical dimension and propose their washback hypothesis in their seminal work "*Does Washback Exist?*". For Alderson and Wall, washback simply means test influences on teaching and learning, although it has more definitions (Shohamy, 1992; Gates, 1995; Baker E. L., 1991; Messick, 1989; Frederickson & Collins, 1989). Since then, abundant research has been conducted about test consequences on different aspects of teaching and learning.

## 1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study frames its objectives, questions and hypothesis basing on multiple theoretical paradigms. To start with, on the level of language teaching and learning, the study highlights the Communicative Language Teaching approach in teaching all language aspects, especially grammar, as it is student-centered and situation-based (Dos Santos, 2019) and also facilitates student-student classroom interaction (Savignon, 2002). Moreover, on the level of language assessment, the study relies on two theoretical sources. On the one hand, it believes in the interactive nature of test validity as explained by Messick (1989). The study advocates paying attention to the consequential validity of BAC examination, in addition to other validity facets. On the other hand, it draws on the work of Alderson and Wall (1993), especially their *washback hypothesis*. The study believes that the form-based, summative and decontextualized nature of BAC examination yields negative washback effect on English grammar teaching, learner motivation and students' outcome.

## 1.5. Research questions and hypothesis

The study has three main objectives:

1. To what extent do Moroccan teachers consider washback as a major factor influencing their grammar teaching?
2. How does BAC examination affect Moroccan students' attitude towards grammar, especially in Second Year Bac level?
3. What are university professors' attitudes towards their S1 students' grammar usage?

The hypothesis of the research is:

The English BAC Examination negatively affects grammar teaching methodology and language learning motivation.

## 1.6.  Purpose of the study

The study attempts at uncovering the complex, and under-researched, relation between the national English language assessment philosophy and practice on the hand, and English language teaching and practice on the other hand. To be more specific, the study aims at exploring how BAC examinations leads to negative washback consequences on grammar teaching and learner motivation. It has three main objectives:

1.  To measure the extent to which Moroccan teachers consider washback as a major factor influencing their grammar teaching.
2.  To measure Moroccan students' attitude to grammar in Second Year Bac level.
3.  To gauge University professors' attitudes towards their S1 grammar usage.

## 2.  Review of Literature

### 2.1.  Establishing Conceptual framework

The term 'washback' is so complex (Bailey, 1996; Watanabe, 1996) to the extent that there is no consensus on how to articulate or define it. For the domain of Applied Linguistics, 'washback' and 'backwash' are both used interchangeably and mean the same (Hughes, 2003). In the search dictionary, the term 'backwash' appears more than 'washback', referring to a bad situation that remains after something dissatisfactory happened (Longman, 1995). In the field of Applied Linguistics, the term 'washback' is more frequent than 'backwash', and gaining currency with time (Cheng et al, 2004). However, if one dares to postulate, the reason might be the fact that 'backwash' is associated only with negative ramifications, rendering it academically unsuitable, as it is not neutral.

More than this, there are conflicting views even in the conceptualization of the term 'backwash' effect. For instance, while it is moderately connected to the concept of consequential validity, they are at variance. In fact, there are two contending standpoints. Whereas Frederickson and Collins (1989), Morrow (1986), Messick (1996), and Weir C. J. (1990) propose washback as part of validity, Ferman (2004), and Alderson and Wall (1993) beg to differ. For Ferman (2004), validity is not a property of the test, but only a meaning of its scores; consequently, it cannot be mistaken for washback. For Alderson & Wall (1993), the conceptual complexity of washback renders it absurd to limit it to validity. In the same vein, (Davies, 1997) argues that the concept of consequential validity is too 'open-ended' for a test-designer to control. That is, one cannot control all the social consequences of a test, rendering it un-empirical, dissimilar to the washback hypothesis proposed by Alderson & Wall.

Other concepts that researchers might use loosely in interchangeability with washback is "systemic validity". For Frederickson & Collins (1989), systemic validity designates the degree to which the test induces positive change in the educational system and curriculum. However, it must not be mistaken for washback, as the former is a one-sided concept, not accounting for the negative repercussions a test might bring on that educational system and curriculum.

Technically, washback designates the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Bailey, 1996), which can be negative or positive. As might be inferred, it is moderately connected to the concept of consequential validity of Messick (1989; 1996). As Messick (1996) puts it, "Washback refers to the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning." (p.241).

Through framing a washback hypothesis, Alderson and Wall (1993) allowed the washback concept to be investigated empirically, the thing that paved the way to rendering it a rich conceptual source of theory and research. In their well-established article '*Does Washback Exist?*' Alderson and Wall posit that *"If the test is 'poor', then the washback may be felt to be negative. But if the Washback Hypothesis holds, then good tests should have good effects (as yet undefined) rather than negative effects"* (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 117). The hypothesis suggests that a test might bring positive or negative effect on the educational stakeholders. To illustrate, Vernon (1956) and Dawadi (2018) argue that examinations distort the curriculum. Teachers tend to ignore critical subject matter, as it is not covered by the summative examination. Pearson (1980) and Pan and Newfields (2013) propose that public examinations influence attitudes, behaviours and motivation of teachers and students. On the other hand, Morris (1972) admits that examination insures putting into effect the content of the curriculum. However, there are few studies conducted as to this aspect. Eventually, the effect could be positive or negative.

## 2.2. Washback from different theoretical frameworks

### 2.2.1. Alderson and Wall (1993) model

J.C. Alderson and D. Wall are the originators of empirical studies on 'washback'. In 1993, they published the academically well-acclaimed article '*Does Washback Exist?*' in the Applied Linguistics Journal, in which they provided a meticulous framework for washback analysis, referring to it as 'The Washback Hypothesis'. Alderson and Wall (1993) stipulated that washback influences learning and teaching in at least thirteen ways:

1. A test will influence teaching.
2. A test will influence learning.
3. A test will influence what teachers teach.
4. A test will influence how teachers teach; and therefore, by extension from 2 above.
5. A test will influence what learners learn.
6. A test will influence how learners learn.
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching; and
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching; and
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.
11. A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning.
12. Tests that have important consequences will have washback; and conversely.
13. Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.

Actually, the virtue of this framework is that it demarcates the influences of testing into those that are teacher-related {1, 3,4,7,9 and 11}, learner-related {2, 5, 6, 8 and 10}, content-related {3 and 5}, method-related {4 and 6}, practice-related {from 3 to 10} and attitude related {11}, according to  Xu and Liu (2018). Alderson & Wall (1993) commented that the Washback Hypothesis, in all its statements, is flexible and context sensitive. After three years, Alderson added that the hypothesis is mediated by factors like status of the test, quality of teaching materials, the extent to which stakeholders invent novel ways to reduce washback and the intensity of washback  (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996).

### *2.2.2.  Hughes' (1993) Washback Trichotomy Model*

In 1993, Alderson & Wall laid out the territory. In the same year, Hughes built upon their hypothesis, and complemented it with a three-fold mechanism. In his own words, "In order to clarify our thinking on backwash, it is helpful, I believe, to distinguish between participants, process and product in teaching and learning, recognizing that all three may be affected by the nature of a test" (Hughes, 1993, p. 2). Both frameworks provide a good model to washback impact. Whereas Alderson & Wall's model focuses on micro-aspects of teaching and learning, Hughes' model is a trichotomy-mechanism  (Cheng & Watanabe, 2008), seen as more practical. In *Washback and TOEFL 2000,* Hughes' academically well-known washback reference, he explains that (i) participants are all stakeholders whose work may be affected by the test, (ii)

processes are stakeholders' actions which may or may not contribute to teaching and learning, while (iii) products are what is eventually learned. To illustrate, participants may be teachers, students, administrators, and curriculum designers. Processes may be material design or learning strategies. Products could be facts, skills, competences…etc. This framework was later abbreviated in the expression PPP, coined by Saville (2008)

### 2.2.3. Bailey's Basic Model

It took Bailey only three years to observe that Alderson & Wall's (1993) model and Hughes's (1993) framework were one-directional frames of washback. In 1996, she published her acclaimed article "*Working for Washback*" in the Language Testing Journal, in which she combined the first two frameworks and improved upon them. Bailey (1996) proposed the concept of 'direct of influence', which designates that the influence of testing can be a washback or a 'washforward'. To explain, the participants, processes and products are not only affected by the test, but also affect the test, thus the term 'washforward'. In addition to this, Bailey hypothesizes that in the same way that there is 'washback to the learner', there is also 'washback to the program'. In '*Working for Washback*', she maintains that washback to the learners designates the effect of tests on students, while washback to the program refers to test impact on teachers, administrators, curriculum developers…etc. That is, washback has a micro and macro effect. This is compatible with the claim that washback controls not only teaching and learning, but also the curriculum, proposed by Biggs (1998). For this reason, the literature differentiates between test impact which is more macro-level, and washback which is more micro-level (Shohamy, 2001; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hamp-Lyons, 1998)

### 2.2.4. Green's Washback Model

In 2007, Green conducted a study on the IELTS test washback on teaching and learning. He deduced a model for washback incorporating two basic dimensions: direction and intensity. The direction of washback is determined by the degree of 'test quality', i.e. "the more closely the characteristics of the test reflect the focal construct as understood by course providers and learners" (Green, 2007, p. 14). In addition to this, test stakes and test difficulty, as perceived by stakeholders determine washback intensity. Furthermore, the two constructs of washback direction and intensity are mediated by context-sensitive factors, such as teacher-training, material quality, teacher beliefs and acceptance of test demands (Xu & Liu, 2018).

## 2.3. Washback: pedagogical implications on methodology and learner motivation

Alderson and Wall (1993) proposed that washback is the cause of test influence on teaching and learning. To give more details, when the test content/format aligns with curricular aims,

washback effect is positive. Conversely, the less a test is aligned with curricular objectives, the more it hinders learning (Brown, 2004), thus results in negative washback. Research proved that test consequences affect language teaching and learning in different ways. First, among the consequences of negative washback effect, we find wastage of instructional time (Smith et al, 1989; Pan and Newfields, 2013). This refers to the time wasted in *training* learners for exams, via exam strategies and test coaching. This is also known as measurement driven instruction (Popham, 2004). Second, there is curriculum (Maudus, 1989, (Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010). It refers to the fact that teachers teach only what is covered in the exam. For instance, if the final test does not measure aural-oral skills, then speaking and listening will be disregarded in planning lessons. Third, research proves washback leads to under-teaching complex skills (Frederikson, 1984), especially when high-stake tests rely on discrete items excessively.

Moreover, washback leads to what is known as score contamination (Haladyna, 1991; Kim E. J., 2017). For instance, educational stakeholders may mistake 'score' with 'educational achievement'. On the classroom discourse level, washback results in impact on interactional choices (Walsh, 2006), distortion of L1/L2 use (Shohamy, 2001), influence over talking time (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004), influence on mode of interaction  (Furaidah et al , 2015), impact on language instructions (Maruoka & Matsui, 2020). As a consequence, the classroom discourse also gets contaminated, and stops students from interacting with 'comprehensible input' and 'comprehensible output'.

The Washback Hypothesis did not fail to include also conative-related test influences, namely, a test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993). What Alderson & Wall referred to, in this section of their work, is the concept of *learner motivation*. Such a concept has always had a rather elusive definition in the language teaching literature, and consequently used loosely and interchangeably with similar but not identical concepts. Perhaps, the most exact and academically well-acclaimed definition of *learner motivation* is that of Dörnyei (2001), who claims that it designates (i) the choice of a particular action, (ii) the effort invested in it and (iii) the persistence expanded on it (Dörnyei, 2001). It is needless to dive into all the details of motivation theory, as it is not the entire focus of the study.

There have been many studies gauging the influence of tests on students' motivation, among which are Cheng L. (1998), Lumley and Stoneman (2000), and Pan (2014). First, Cheng (1998) conducted a comparative washback study on the impact of the public examination (HKCEE) in

Hong Kong on students' motivation. He concluded that students experience 'significant change in their motivation to learn English'. In the same vein, Lumley & Stoneman (2000) initiated a study on the impact of the newly introduced public examination (GSLPA) if Hong Kong on students' motivation. They deduced that students displayed only extrinsic motivation towards learning, as a ramification of the '*narrow focus on test-taking procedures*' (Lumley & Stoneman, 2000). Conversely, there are situations where tests have positive washback effect on students' motivation. Pan (2014) notes that the English certification exit requirements test in Taiwan actually pushes low proficiency students to invest in the school resources (library, teachers, other high proficient learners) to develop the necessary target skills. Eventually, English language learners in Hong Kong in the two studies, as many learners around the world, were de-motivated to learn the language, due to the form-based nature of their high-stake public examinations. However, one should not forget that the intensity of the washback effect on students' motivation and attitudes, as already established in previous sections, is mediated by factors like learning/teaching material, teaching beliefs, learner idiosyncrasies and test status…etc.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research design

#### 3.1.1. Research aims and objectives

Table 1 below demonstrates the research aims and questions of the study.

*Table 1. Research aims and questions*

| Research Aims | Research Questions |
|---|---|
| To measure the extent to which Moroccan teachers consider washback as a major factor influencing their grammar teaching. | Do Moroccan teachers consider washback effect a major factor affecting how they teach grammar? |
| To measure Moroccan students' attitude to grammar in Second Year Bac level. | Do Moroccan students have a bad attitude towards grammar because of washback effect? |
| To gauge University professors' attitudes towards their S1 grammar usage. | Are Moroccan university Professors of S1 satisfied by their learners' mastery and use of grammar? Does the washback effect of second year Baccalaureate teaching of grammar extend also to university level? |

#### 3.1.2. Research Philosophy

The research is embedded in a '***positivist***' and '**interpretivist**' research philosophy. To start with, the research transitions from a pre-defined assumption and hypothesis, namely the fact that there is negative washback effect affecting grammar learning and teaching, to a conclusion intuitively known by the researcher, namely that there is indeed a negative washback impact for teacher and learners. However, perceptions and attitudes are variables usually measured

using an 'interpretivist' research philosophy, as they may be subjective and requiring inferential discussion. Such complex dual-philosophical approach is sufficient to account for the complex nature of washback effect. As Xu and Liu (2018) observe since washback is a complex phenomenon, it is essential to obtain both quantitative to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

### 3.1.3. Data collection method

The data collected is primarily word-based, as it was collected via yes/no close-ended checklists, raking scale and Likert scale. However, the researcher converted the categorical nominal and ordinal variables into frequencies and numbers, relying on Google processing software.

The Likert scale was electronically disseminated via learning management systems to students, while the yes/no close-ended checklist and ten-items rating scale were shared via e-mail to teachers. To give more details, measures of frequency-distribution method were used to account for count, percent, and frequency of how often an educational stakeholder (teacher, student, professor) reacted to a given item in the research tools. The semi-structured interview with the university professors was descriptively coded and thematically analyzed, then attached to the research.

### 3.1.4. Research participants

The researcher targeted participants who are educational stakeholders of the language teaching and learning context, namely, teachers, students, and professors. Bailey (1996) explains that washback studies have to consider participants (teachers and students), processes and products in their research scope. This was backed up by Saville (2004), abbreviating such framework into the '3Ps' expression. Due to logistic and budgetary constraints, surveying the whole population was a daunting task. The researcher, however, relied on sample surveying, selecting only representatives of the target population.

The sample representative was selected in a non-random fashion, relying on non-probability sampling. The researcher targeted only teachers who teach the Second Year Baccalaureate level in public schools of El Jadida, in Casablanca-Settat Regional Academy in Morocco, and students who study at the Second Year Baccalaureate level in the same geographic region mentioned before. As for the university professors interviewed, only those who teach grammar at the first semester were represented. Based on these decisions, the researcher generalizes inferences on the whole population.

## 3.2. Presenting results

### 3.2.1. Presenting results of questionnaire for teachers: yes/no checklists

In this descriptive non-experimental survey, the researcher used a quantitative research instrument (online questionnaire) to answer the first confirmatory research question: *"Do Moroccan teachers consider washback effect a major factor affecting how they teach grammar?"*. The questionnaire aimed at measuring the relation between two variables, namely, washback effect on grammar and Moroccan teachers' attitudes. The questionnaire contained two sorts of data gathering tools, namely, close-ended questions and ranking items.

Table 2 displays the demographics of the 50 questionnaire respondents who undertook the research. All the participants of the research were teachers **in service**. All of them have undergone basic state-funded training in CRMEF Casablanca, Derb Ghalef. All of the research participants have worked in the public sector (at the time when this research is written) and have worked within the Casablanca-Settat academic region of Morocco, specifically in Al Jadida.

In this research, 61.1% of the participants had less than 5 years of seniority (table 3). About 25% of them practice seniority ranging between 6 and 10 years. Eventually, 13.9% of the research participants had more than 10 years of seniority (figure 1).

*Table 1.* demographics 1

| Participants | |
|---|---|
| Profession | Teachers (100%) |
| Region | AREF Casablanca-Settat, El Jadida (100%) |
| Sector | Public sector (100%) |

*Table 3.* seniority

| Years of seniority | |
|---|---|
| Less than 5 years | 61.1% |
| Between 6 and 10 years | 25% |
| More than 10 years | 13.9% |
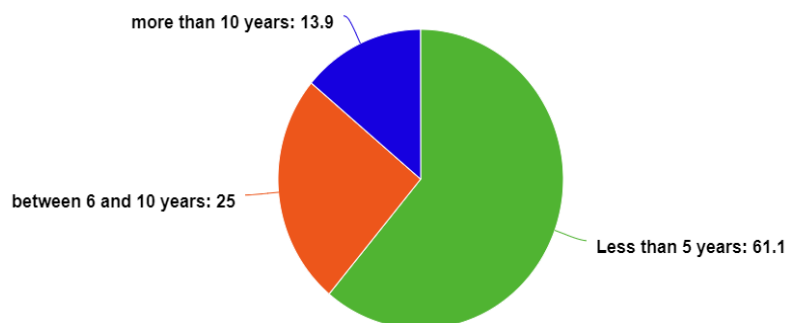


*Figure 1.* demographics

*Table 4. presenting results*

| Questions | Participants who answered | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| I usually present structures in comprehensible context (text, song, audio, video…etc.) | **45%** | **55%** |
| I usually present structures in decontextualized sentence carriers on the whiteboard. | **58.8%** | **47.2%** |
| I usually follow an inductive method in the presentation stage and make learners deduce the rules by themselves | **38%** | **62%** |
| I usually have learners practice structures in meaning-based tasks, involving meaning negotiation (role-plays, simulations, debates, interviews…etc.) | **38%** | **62%** |
| Usually, the time I spend in the practice stage is more than that I spend in the production (experimenting) stage | **91.7%** | **8.3%** |
| the procedures of the practice stage usually mimic real-life usage of language. | **39.5%** | **60.5%** |
| The procedures of the practice stage usually mimic Baccalaureate examination test items | **86%** | **14%** |
| Usually, I do not give much attention to the production stage, as practice is more important | **58.1%** | **41.9%** |
| In the production stage, I have learners use language experimentally in meaning-negotiation tasks (role-plays, paragraph writing, dialogues, debates…etc.) | **27.9%** | **72.1%** |
| In the production stage, I have learners produce decontextualized sentences containing the target structure | **60%** | **40%** |

### 3.2.2. Presenting results of questionnaire for teachers: ranking items

In this section, 50 teachers were asked to rank the six factors that influence their grammar planning practice (practices described above), according to their perception (figure 2). Table 5 best displays the results:

*Table 5. Presenting results*

| Factors | First | Second | Third | Fourth | Fifth | Sixth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom management | 8/50 | 6/50 | 10/50 | 11/50 | 8/50 | 7/50 |
| BAC examination and accountability | 31/50 | 9/50 | 4/50 | 3/50 | 1/50 | 2/50 |
| Cognitive load of syllabus | 3/50 | 16/50 | 8/50 | 6/50 | 7/50 | 9/50 |
| Quality of teaching material | 3/50 | 12/50 | 16/50 | 6/50 | 9/50 | 3/50 |
| Teacher training and experience | 2/50 | 4/50 | 6/50 | 19/50 | 15/50 | 3/50 |
| Teaching beliefs | 3/50 | 3/50 | 5/50 | 4/50 | 9/50 | 25/50 |

### 3.2.3. Presenting results of questionnaire for students: Likert scale

In this descriptive non-experimental survey, the researcher used a quantitative research instrument (online questionnaire) to answer the second confirmatory research question: *"Do Moroccan students have a bad attitude towards grammar because of washback effect?"*. The questionnaire aimed at measuring the relation between two variables, namely, washback effect on grammar and Moroccan students' attitudes towards learning it. The questionnaire contained two sorts of data gathering tools, namely, five-item Likert scales and close-ended questions.
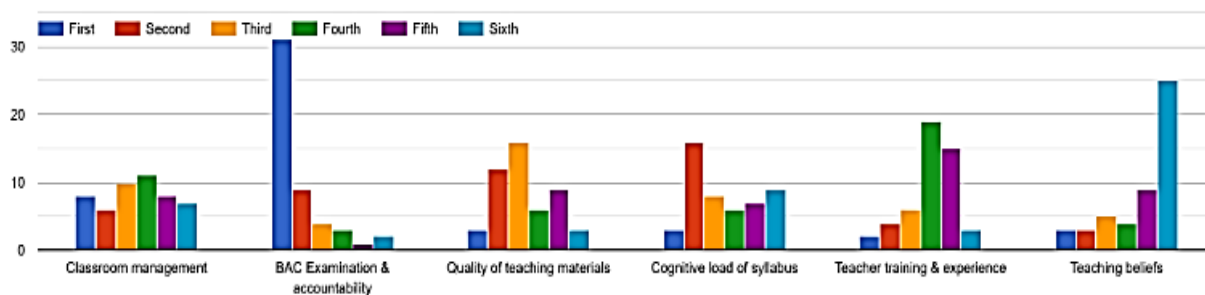


**Figure 2.** *results from questionnaire*

**Table 6.** *demographics 2*

|  | **Participants** |
|---|---|
| Level | Second Year Baccalaureate students (100%) |
| Region | AREF Casablanca-Settat, El Jadida (100%) |
| Sector | Public sector (100%) |

**Table 7.** *presenting findings*

|  | Number of ss who selected | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Questions** | S. D | D | N | A | S. A |
| I am satisfied with the way grammar lessons (reported speech, passive voice…etc.) are taught in Moroccan public high schools | 20 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Grammar is my favorite language aspect in the unit | 18 | 12 | 6 | 10 | 4 |
| The Baccalaureate exam influences how I feel towards grammar lessons | 8 | 9 | 0 | 14 | 19 |
| I prefer learning grammar using fun activities like role-plays, games, interviews, and simulations | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 24 |

### 3.2.4. Presenting results of semi-tectured interviews with professors

The aim of this qualitative research procedure is to answer the third and fourth questions of the research 'are Moroccan university Professors of S1 satisfied by their learners' mastery and use

of grammar? And Does the washback effect of second year Baccalaureate teaching of grammar extend also to university level?'

**Table 8.** demographics 3

|  | Highest degree | Experience teaching 2.Y. B | Experience teaching at university |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prof L.F | PhD | 25 years | 18 years |
| Prof R.H | PhD | 21 years | 2 years |
| Prof H.H | PhD | 20 years | 2 years |

### 3.2.4.1.    General theme one: validity problems with the BAC exam score

#### 3.2.4.1.1.        Sub-theme one: Predictive validity issues

One of the main themes observed in the three interviews is issues related to validity, which is briefly defined as the extent to which the test measures what it claims to measure. Among the types of validity, we find **predictive validity** that is the ability of a test to forecast future potential performance of testees.

The three interviewees brought up a shared experience of teaching at the university level, related to the process of students' admission at the beginning of the academic year. They reported that one of the procedures of selection is norm-referencing candidates in accordance with their BAC exam score (at least 14), then having them sit for an oral interview, as a consolidation form of diagnostic assessment. The three interviewees expressed that they observed a significant performance gap between the candidates BAC score and their performance in the oral interview. Furthermore, one interviewee added that some of those who were accepted into the English department did not show a performance compatible with their BAC score. The three interviewees concluded that there is a significant issue regarding the predictive validity level.

### 3.2.4.2.    Sub-theme two: concurrent validity issues

Adding upon the predictive validity issue, another type of validity problem was inferred upon the descriptive coding of the interviews, namely, concurrent validity problems. As was explained in the previous sections, concurrent validity reflects the degree to which a test measures a certain linguistic construct, in this context, 'communicativeness'. Supposedly, the exam score should give a holistic measurement on the test takers' performance regarding all language aspects, but the interviewees showed different views.

The three interviewees had a consensus over the fact that the BAC score accurately reflects some language aspects, and not all. For example, the BAC score may be a good measurement of learners' ability to form grammatical structures and accurately use lexical collocations, but it fails to measure their communicative ability as the exam is intensely form-based, decontextualized and disregards aural-oral assessment items (speaking and listening). The three interviewees agreed to the fact that a test taker having a great BAC score (16-19) does not necessarily mean they can use language for communication and authentic performance. This is misaligned with the pedagogical guidelines' standards of BAC assessment, which claims to measure holistically all learners' linguistic competencies.

### 3.2.5. General theme two: negative washback effect of BAC examination

#### 3.2.5.1. Sub-theme one: negative washback on students' grammar learning

The three interviewees consented to the fact that there is a negative washback effect of the form-based BAC examinations on the way grammar is taught in second year BAC level. As they were high school teachers by themselves, they admitted that BAC examination leads teachers to *teach for the test* and learners to adopt certain *exam-coping strategies*, which minimize the quality of grammar learning.

Among the examples of negative washback effect on Grammar teaching that was discussed significantly is the fact that teachers teach using the examination items found in the BAC test. For instance, when teaching the passive voice/reported speech/conditionals, the teacher seems always to rely on '*rewrite the sentences as suggested*', or when teaching any of the tenses, '*put the verb between brackets in the right form*'. The interviewees admitted that this is because of the high accountability culture of BAC examination, as well as the heavy cognitive load and limited time allocated for covering it.

#### 3.2.5.2. Sub-theme two: negative washback effect on students' academic performance

The researcher inferred the following from the three interviews conducted. First, the fact that grammar is taught for examination and not for language use limits learners' **cognitive abilities.** It was mentioned that the way grammar is taught, and the BAC exam is constructed does not foster higher thinking skills for learners, which are much needed at the academic and university level. Not only this, but also their communicative competence is affected. The three interviewees agreed that there are some modules in English studies at the university which requires a high communicative performance of learners, such as *Spoken English, Public Speaking* and *Business English.* Yet, learners seem linguistically and psychologically

unprepared to undergo tasks that require them to use language in context, even if they can score well in competence-based tests.

### 3.2.5.3. Sub-theme three: negative washback effect on professors' academic performance

It is interesting to observe in the three interviews that the negative washback effect of BAC examination on grammar learning does not only end in Second Year Bac level, but also extends to university level, in many aspects. First, the interviewees noted that the BAC exam score is neither predictive or valid as a measurement of admission to the English department, rendering the diagnostic and placement assessment procedures even more complicated. Second, one of the interviewees added that the *exam-coping strategies* learners used to pass the BAC test stick with them even at university level, to the point that they might use them in some modules that normally require higher order thinking skills like planning, synthesizing and analysing. Third, when teaching modules like *Public Speaking* or *Spoken English¸* professors observe that, albeit their good BAC exam score, students still make performance mistakes in basic grammatical structures when presenting a short speech.  One of the interviewees, who is a university professor with experience not only in teaching, but also supervising, reported that more often than not, university professors find themselves obliged to down-level the difficulty of the content or course, to suit the learning uncommunicative learning profiles of these students.

## 3.2.6. General theme three: opportunities for mediating the washback effect.

### 3.2.6.1. Sub-theme one: Learner autonomy

Among some solutions that interviewees suggested for remedying the negative washback effect on grammar teaching and learning is fostering learner autonomy. One interviewee suggested that in class, the teacher is not supposed to teach everything at once, but only in dozes. Instead, he/she ought to give learners a chance to construct the knowledge and use of the target structure independently at home, through assigning optional but purposeful homework. It was added that this would also be beneficial on their academic performance, as the learning-strategies obtained in second year BAC level would be used when admitted to the English department

### 3.2.6.2. Sub-theme two: blended learning

Another interviewee added that blended learning, which is combining online learning with face-to-face learning, is an efficient alternative for the current pedagogical situation where teachers teach for the test. For instance, a teacher may invest in communicative tasks in the classroom, while he assigns form-based practice and exam-oriented exercises at home to be done.

### 3.2.6.3.    Sub-theme three: reformation of exam

One of the interviewees suggested a paradigmatic reformation of the way the BAC exam is constructed. It was argued that the form-based and decontextualized assessment items inherent in such an exam fail at producing intended positive test impacts on the teaching and learning process of language and grammar. Instead, the exam should contain not only a written part, but also an oral part, where listening and speaking are authentically assessed.

## 3.3.  Discussing Results

### 3.3.1.  Discussing washback effect on grammar planning and teaching

#### 3.3.1.1.    Analyzing results

The Baccalaureate examination, as has already been established, is a summative end of term evaluation procedure, originally meant to measure Moroccan students' intake and performance of to what extent they mastered the lessons and units covered by the target syllabus. However, the research argues and the findings present a different story. The way the Baccalaureate examination is constructed negatively impacts the way teachers teach some language aspects, namely, grammar. The Baccalaureate examination, as has been explained, is an evaluation (not an assessment) characterized by being form-based, de-contextualized, invalid, and non-authentic with an intense negative washback effect. The way its test items are constructed, especially those claiming to measure testees' grammatical competence, is in question. These test items often do not present meaningful context, and only tests learners' grammatical competence and not performance.

The negative washback influence of BAC examination on grammar teaching/planning touches upon the three stages of presentation, practice, and production, although their nomenclature may change from planning framework to another. It pushes teachers to teach in a fashion misaligned with the general standards approved in the official pedagogical guidelines and the curriculum.  Initially, teachers most often prefer presenting target structures in decontextualized sentences, rather than in meaningful and comprehensible input. Moreover, they report that they prefer using a deductive and top-down approach of grammar teaching. When asked about whether they invest more time in practice stage or production stage, most teachers reported that they prefer spending more time in the practice stage. In the same vein, the procedures selected in the practice stage and the production stage, the teachers reported, are form-based and test-oriented, never mimicking meaning-negotiation or real-life usage of language. When asked about the major influence of their grammar teaching/planning decisions, the teachers reported

that the high-stake nature of the summative BAC examination impacts to a great extent their grammar planning.

Considering the form-based nature of the BAC examination, the fact that it excludes aspects of speaking and listening, aims at evaluating more than assessing and relies on discrete decontextualized testing items in measuring grammar performance, it comes to no surprise that the way teachers teach is going to be immensely impacted by a negative washback effect of the test. Teachers ranked '*heavy cognitive load*' as the second most influencing factor affecting their grammar planning/teaching, after '*Examination accountability*'. These two factors, it seems, limit the grammar planning creativity of teachers, and force them to rely on Audio-lingual practices of grammar teaching, even if their curriculum is communicative.

### 3.3.1.2.    Contrasting results with existing literature

The finding showing that Moroccan teachers adapt the way they teach to the form-based nature of the summative BAC examination is compatible with data in the existing literature. Initially, Maudus (1988) and Pan (2014) argues that teachers adjust teaching methods, planning decisions and material selection to the content/format of the test. In *'Does Washback Exist'*, the ground-breaking article by Alderson and Wall (1993), it is stated among the maxims supporting the washback hypothesis that *a test will influence the how and what of a teaching course*. In the same vein, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) studied washback effect on TOEFL while Watanabe (1996) investigated entrance exams' impact on grammar teaching, and both concluded that teachers use specific exam-preparation methods for high-stake exams. More recent research conducted on washback effect leading to teaching via exam strategies (Green, 2006; Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010; Xie & Andrews, 2013) led to similar results.

Moroccan teachers teach deductively in an uncommunicative manner, or in the words of Popham (1987), follow a '*measurement-driven instruction*', due to the high stake and form-based nature of the BAC examination. Had this examination included authentic assessment, covered all language aspects (including oral-aural skills), and employed context-based test items, teachers would not have faced a top-down pressure to limit their creativity in grammar teaching and planning. This is why Smith (1991) proposes the necessity of having a pedagogical harmony between test format, curriculum standards and course methodology and content.

### 3.3.1.3.    Significance of findings

Educational stakeholders should not underestimate the gravity of such findings. The way the BAC examination is constructed, with its form-based decontextualized nature, pushes teachers

to adopt a deductive un-communicative measurement-driven approach oriented to preparing learners for the test. This causes teachers to teach against how it is dictated in the pedagogical guidelines, and consequently negatively impacts their teaching methodology. Nowadays, Moroccan teachers of Second Year BAC level feel oppressed by the summative examination, as they cannot apply state of the arts teaching approaches and procedures. In teaching grammar, instead of harbouring communicative competence and performance in learners, they only target training learners to take the test, failing their ultimate duty as their aim is linguistic developing, and not merely exam-training.

With time, these teachers start adopting BAC test items as grammar teaching procedures. Moreover, as explained by Vernon (1956) and proved by Al Amine and Greenwood (2018) they tend to ignore language aspects not covered by the examination. It is interesting to note down that Moroccan teachers, as the data suggests in previous sections, do not include speaking and listening in teaching grammar, because the BAC examination does not measure aural-oral skills. Their grammar teaching methodology is erroneous, because the high-stake exam is not well-constructed, and this is not easily adjusted.

### 3.3.2. Discussing washback effect on grammar learning

#### 3.3.2.1. Analyzing results

Any form of examination has not only an impact on the 'what and how' of teaching, but also that of learning. Unfortunately, learners are not exempt from the negative washback effect of examination. The Baccalaureate summative examination, being form-based, heavily decontextualized and intensely high stake, has a significant toll on learners' motivation and attitudes towards the target subject, in this case, English grammar and structures.

The results of this study indicate the following facts:

- Most learners are dissatisfied by the way they learn grammar in Second Year Bac level.
- Most learners find grammar as their least favorite language aspect.
- Most learners report that the Baccalaureate examination negatively impacts the way they perceive grammar.
- Most learners express that they would better learn grammar in a communicative game-based approach.

The Baccalaureate summative examination affects Moroccan learners' attitudes towards grammar for the following reasons. First, it pushes them to employ demotivating exam-preparation strategies for revising their grammar lessons, which causes learners to adopt

memorization-driven and root learning. Second, it keeps Moroccan learners anxious and on-edge vis-à-vis their revision for the BAC exam. This affects the way they regard grammar as an important core component of language development. Moreover, what accentuates this distress is learners' awareness that there is an alternative method for learning (communicative and engaging), but which cannot be opted for due to the high-stake nature of the Baccalaureate examinations.

### 3.3.2.2.    *Contrasting results with existing literature*

The finding suggesting that Moroccan learners' perception and attitude towards grammar learning is affected by the summative Baccalaureate examination is consistent with existent literature. Tests may have a washback effect on learning in terms of (i) promoting/demoting learning ( (Hughes, 1998)), (ii) learners adopting specific learner strategies ( (Cheng, 1988)) or (iii) learners getting motivated or demotivated ( (Pan, 2004)). Moreover, The Washback Hypothesis did not fail to include also conative-related test influences, namely, *a test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning* (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Moroccan learners may feel demotivated to learn grammar and construct a negative perception of it is due to the top-down negative test impact, emanating from its erroneous form, which is by nature form-based. These learners adopt a '*measurement-driven learning*' because not only of the faulty construction of the test, but also due to societal factors dictating the necessity to pass the high-stake exam.

This is not only in Morocco, but all over the world. Cheng (1998) conducted a comparative washback study on the impact of the public examination (HKCEE) in Hong Kong on students' motivation. He concluded that students experience 'significant change in their motivation to learn English'. In the same vein, Lumley & Stoneman initiated a study on the impact of the newly introduced public examination (GSLPA) if Hong Kong on students' motivation. They deduced that students displayed only extrinsic motivation towards learning, as a ramification of the '*narrow focus on test-taking procedures*' (Lumley & Stoneman, 2000). Nevertheless, it does not mean that the effect is absolute. For instance, there are some rare instances where summative examinations may eventually lead to positive impact on learning. Pan (2014) notes that the English certification exit requirements test in Taiwan actually pushes low proficiency students to invest in the school resources (library, teachers, other high proficient learners) to develop the necessary target skills.

### 3.3.2.3. Significance of findings

Educational stakeholders cannot undermine the significance of such insights. The fact that Moroccan learners negatively perceive grammar (and other language aspects) due to the summative Baccalaureate examination calls for an urgent reformation of the official assessment philosophy of our educational systems. The negative perception to such important language aspect, as grammar, causes students to experience severe emotions of demotivation, learning anxiety, learning frustration, all factors having strong toll on their academic performance during and after Second Year BAC level.

Not only do Moroccan learn grammar the wrong way (uncommunicative and extremely deductive), but also, they have the wrong feelings towards it. Without communicative competence in grammar performance, and the right motivation for it, learners will face linguistic challenges in future academic, vocational, and professional tasks. This raises the important question of **'are we developing linguistic competence, or linguistic frustration in these students?'.** Such question should motivate the so much called for reformation of the current assessment philosophy.

### 3.3.3. Discussing washback effect on grammar and learning outcomes

### 3.3.3.1. Analyzing results

As has already been established, the Baccalaureate summative examination has a negative washback effect not only on the way grammar is taught and learnt, but also its future learning outcomes. By learning outcomes, we refer to *what and how learners will use their competence in grammar after graduation*. The official Moroccan pedagogical guidelines, for instance, suggest learners using their language for vocational and academic purposes after graduation as one of the key learning outcomes.

The Baccalaureate summative examination, considering its form-based nature, which is intensely un-communicative, in-authentic, and de-contextualized, negatively affects the way grammar is taught, to make it also un-communicative and test-oriented, and also affect the way grammar is learnt, pushing learners to form negative learning attitudes towards it. Educational stakeholders should not fail to consider the fact that among this negative effect dimensions, there is the factor of *extent*. Indeed, it seems that the negative washback effect of Baccalaureate examination does not only stop at the Second Year Bac level, but also extends to the post-BAC graduate level, where BAC students who enroll, the English department are supposed to use language for academic purposes.

The interviewees of this research, who happen to be university professors of the English department who have had experience at teaching and supervising at the Second Year Bac level, seem to hold a consensus on the fact there are far-reaching consequences of negative washback effect of BAC examinations. Initially, issues of Baccalaureate examination validity were raised. The interviewees pointed out to the fact that the Baccalaureate score of English subject lacks *predictive* and *concurrent* validity. Therefore, it should not be taken as a norm-reference benchmark for admitting students to the English department as a diagnostic procedure. This is because the Baccalaureate exam does not cover all language skills, does not measure the communicativeness of language, and is highly form-based. In addition to the fact that these professors observe that learners who have scored well in the Baccalaureate exam may not necessarily perform well in the diagnostic interview, or even later in the academic courses upon admission. Conversely, there are candidates who have not scored well in the Baccalaureate examination but show good performance in the diagnostic oral interview and academic modules.

In addition to these issues of washback extent, the interviewees confirmed that the fact that students learned grammar deductively, uncommunicatively, and in-authentically in the Second Year Bac level, which is a methodological consequence of BAC washback influence, negatively affects learners' academic performance in the English department. First, these learners come with no ability to employ higher order thinking skills, because the way they learned grammar and other language aspects was top-down and based on spoon-feeding and exam-coping strategies. As a long-term consequence, these learners transfer this test-wiseness and exam-coping strategies to the university context and fail to reach the critical academic standards. Moreover, the fact that learners learned grammar purely for exam-taking means that they have not well developed their performance competence to use grammar for real-life purposes. When they decide to use language (including grammar) for real-life purposes in the academic context, for example in modules like Spoken English, Public Speaking or Business English, at least according to the university professors, learners commit grave grammatical errors. This is not because they do not know the rule, but due to fact that they have not been accustomed to using language in context before, as in pushed comprehensible output.

### 3.3.3.2.    Contrasting results with existing literature

The negative washback effect of any examination has six dimensions, namely, direction, extent, intensity, intentionality, length, and specificity. Bachman and Palmer (2010), Green (2007), and Watanabe (2004). In this situation, we tackle the dimension of 'extent' in particular. The

research data seems to suggest that the Moroccan Baccalaureate examination has a strong and long durational extent, which lasts even after the cessation of the exam itself. In brief, the way the Baccalaureate exam is constructed affects the way grammar is taught and learnt, and consequently the way it is used in academic contexts upon graduation. This is compatible with (Xu & Liu, 2018) who propose that test not only affects the school context but also the educational system of a state as a whole. It comes to a surprise to read that the Pedagogical Guidelines (2007) clearly state that the teaching/learning/assessment approach should ' ' *hold all concerned parties accountable for the outcomes of learning''* (p. 5). Accountability for learning outcomes never touches the way the Baccalaureate exam is constructed, but only the way grammar is taught (I mean inspecting teachers).

### 3.3.3.3.    Significance of findings

Educational stakeholders must not undermine the pedagogical and andragogical pitfalls of this situation. The way the Baccalaureate exam is constructed, with its form-based in-authentic nature, negatively impacts the methodological work of teaching grammar and psychological mechanisms of learning it. As a consequence of students learning grammar in an intensly deductive, top-down, exam-oriented and un-communicative method, they form negative perceptions towards it. These learners develop neither higher-order thinking skills and autonomy competences, nor communicative competence of language usage. These set of skills are a sine quanon for academic success upon enrollment in the English departement, without which university professors will find hard times doing their jobs.

Furthermore, the fact that the Baccalaureate exam does not cover aural-oral skills and fail to include authentic assessment makes of its score invalid on all levels of predictive, construct and concurrent validities. This does not serve the academic context of university, as university professors need a reliable benchmark upon which to rely on evaluating candidates for admission to the English departement.  These problems should not be taken lightly, as they push all education stakeholders (teachers, students, professors) to go into a vicious circle, the exit from it being an urgent paradigmatic reformation of Baccalaurate exams, and revisiting of the national philosophy of language assessment.

### 3.3.4.  Recommending solutions

### 3.3.4.1.    Test Content and form

The researcher proposes the following recommendations in hope of reforming the nature of the Moroccan Baccalaureate examination.

1. The Moroccan Baccalaureate examination should extent its coverage to measure not only grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and language functions, but also aural-oral skills like listening and speaking.

2. The Moroccan Baccalaureate examination should include less discrete point items which are form-based and decontextualized by nature and integrate more communicative test items that engage the higher-order skills of learners and activate their emotional, cognitive, and personal skills as well.

3. The Moroccan Baccalaureate examination should target to vary its bank of test items not to be predictable by other education stakeholders, as this directly lead to measurement-driven teaching and learning. Instead of relying on the same test items to measure *the passive voice* lesson each year (*re-write sentences as suggested, for e.g.)*, we can include communicative and context-based test items where learners show that they can use the target structure in novel language situations (referring to the *complexity* skill of using language).

### 3.3.4.2. Curriculum design

1. Curriculum designers should aim at creating a strong curricular alignment between the official guidelines of teaching English and the assessment philosophy and practice influencing the construction of the Baccalaureate examination test.

2. Curriculum designers should also target lightening the heavy cognitive load included both in the syllabi and examination standards, as means of encouraging educational stakeholders to shy away from the *'measurement-driven approach'* to teaching and learning, and instead embrace a *'performance-based approach'* that directly prepares learners for real-life usage of grammar, language, and knowledge.

### 3.3.4.3. Teaching methodology

The researcher proposes the following recommendations in hope of reforming the nature of the Moroccan Baccalaureate examination.

1. Supervisors and teacher trainers should aim at targeting the 'assessment literacy' of teachers, to prepare them to mitigate the negative washback effect of Baccalaureate examination via their personal mediating factors.

2. Having the necessary assessment literacy, teachers should strive at teaching language for communicative needs and aims, as dictated in the general pedagogical guidelines,

instead of following a *measurement-driven approach,* that is originally unfit by any official standards.

### 3.3.4.4. *Learners' motivation and attitude*

Educational stakeholders, namely, school counsellors and psycho-pedagogues, should strive to coach learners to having the right perception towards examination, one such which dictates that the aim of learning a language is not taking examination, but rather using it for real-life purposes. The same thing may apply to other school subjects.

## 4. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the negative washback effect of Second Year Level Baccalaureate examination on the way grammar is taught and learnt in Moroccan public high schools. The results indicate that (i) most teachers use a de-contextualized and uncommunicative approach to teach grammar due to the influence of the form-based summative BAC exam, (ii) learners form a negative attitude not to learning grammar and prefer it less than other language aspects, due to the intense negative washback impact of the exam and (iii) and students face cognitive and linguistic difficulties of performance in the academic context after graduation, due to the extremely deductive and decontextualized approach they were taught in previous levels and especially in high school.

Furthermore, the research thesis and questions are considered highly relevant and extremely significant to the advancement of the English language teaching and learning sector in the Moroccan educational scape. On the one hand, it reveals that the way the BAC exam is constructed, being form-based, uncommunicative, inauthentic, and non-holistic, does not do Moroccan educational stakeholders (teachers and students in particular) any good. In fact, it creates methodological issues for teachers and conative problems for students. This sheds light on the urgent need for decision makers to revise the national assessment philosophy of English language in public high schools. On the other hand, the research is significant also in the sense that it highlights the extent of this negative washback impact of BAC exam to the academic level, create issues for other educational stakeholders (university professors), and hindering their andragogical efficacy. The research on washback effect in Morocco is scarce to non-existent, and not so many articles are published about it. Nevertheless, it does not lessen from the significance and pedagogical perils of such a topic. This research strives to contribute to the poor existent literature of BAC exam washback impact, and to be a golden springboard for future researchers sharing the same ambition of investigating this topic.

Moreover, although this research has the virtue of answering all the research questions empirically and of adding much needed pedagogical and andragogical significance, it nevertheless has some *methodological limitations*. As has already been established, among the quantitative research instruments used, namely, online-delivered questionnaire containing yes/no checklists and rating items, there might be a methodological constraint. The questionnaire may lead to two possible biases. It may present an *acquiescence* bias, influencing teacher-respondents to choose 'yes' when the statement is unclear to them, or *prestige* bias, also known as *social desirability bias,* as many Moroccan teachers do not like to appear bad in front of their colleagues. In addition to this, methodological issues may extend also to sampling size. The washback effect is a pedagogical phenomenon, so complex that a cross-sectional survey of a small population sample, such as this one, would not give a clear-cut image into its reality, in the Moroccan context. The researcher hopes that, in the future, stakeholders interested in measuring similar variables would, as much as they can, avoid such methodological constraints.

Eventually, it is worth noting that this research reveals new horizons on closely related topics of interest, as the existent literature on BAC exam washback effect in Moroccan language learning context is scare and poor. Future stakeholders may be interested in answering the following questions:

a) How does the form-based nature of the English BAC exam influence the way teachers design their material?

b) How does the lack of technology-gadget in classrooms aggravates the English BAC negative washback effect?

c) How is teacher assessment literacy in Morocco predictive of the extent and intensity of BAC exam negative washback effect?

The negative washback effect of English BAC exam poses a significant pedagogical hurdle in the English language teaching scape. Striving to resolve this issue is a sine qua non stipulation to the implementation of a post-modern humanistic and communicative curriculum & assessment philosophy, which highlights educational stakeholders' needs and prioritizes standards over top-down objectives. Without such a paradigmatic shift in the national assessment philosophy of English language, particularly that in public sector, we would be using audio-lingual and behavioristic assessment means to claim achieving curricular communicative standards and objective, a thing absurd and impossible. Yet, educational stakeholders as teachers and students of Applied Linguistics in the Moroccan context will

hopefully put efforts and resources to address this issue, in the name of a continuous formative evaluation of our educational policies and in the aim of educational welfare in general.

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