EXAMINATION WASHBACK ON TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: TESTING VERSUS THE FOUR SKILLS IN COMMON ENGLISH COURSES AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in ENGLISH

by

ABDUL LATHEEF VENNAKKADAN

Under the supervision of

Dr. V. P. ANVAR SADHATH
Associate Professor
Postgraduate & Research Department of English
The New College (autonomous)
Chennai, India. 600 014

Department of English
School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology
Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

Declaration

I do hereby declare that the thesis entitled, "**Examination Washback on Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: Testing Versus the Four Skills in Common English Courses at Undergraduate Level",** is the original research work carried out by me and submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language to the School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology, Moulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. No part of this Thesis was published or submitted to any other University /Institution for the award of any Degree/Diploma.

<div align="right">

Abdul Latheef Vennakkadan
Research Scholar (Enrl. No. 1001040108)
Department of English
School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology,
Moulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

</div>

Place: Hyderabad

Date:

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to the School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology, Moulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad for having given me an opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies on "Examination Washback on Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: Testing Versus the Four Skills in Common English Courses at Undergraduate Level". The pursuit of the topic has been demanding, enriching and often mixed with morale boosting/dampening encounters. The faculty members of the department along with the non-teaching staff have extended immense help and guidance throughout my tenure as a research scholar.

My sense of gratitude fails to find words to thank my research guide, Dr. V. P. Anvar Sadhath, Associate Professor, Postgraduate & Research Department of English, The New College, Chennai, for his perceptive guidance, timely support, corrective and constructive interventions from start to finish of the research. His research aptitude and eagerness to promote academic pursuits deserve a special note.

I am much pleased to thank Dr. Sayed Mohammed Haseebudhin Quadiri, Dean, School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology, whose inspiring directions, visionary attitudes and enlightening perspectives have left many lasting imprints on me. I thank the Almighty God for having given a chance to interact with you sir.

My thanks to Dr. Shugufta Shaheen, Head of the English Department, MANUU can't be contained in words because her wholehearted support, motivating guidance, pleasant approach and insightful directions are much beyond the bounds of clichéd words. I like to note, "my gratitude to you is as boundless as your said traits".

CONTENTS

Chapter-3: The Language Testing Literature on Washback

Chapter -4: The Data Collection Tools and Methodology

Chapter-7: Prospects of Alternative Blend-Model Exams for Common English Courses

Figures and Tables

ABSTRACT

The history of testing dates back to the origin of teaching and learning. Many countries in the world adopt different types of evaluation strategies in their educational system with the intention of motivating changes in teaching and learning. The introduction of assessments for such aims has been described using terms like washback, backwash, test impact, curriculum alignment by different authors. All these terms refer to diverse traits of washback, that is, effects of testing on divergent facets of teaching and learning. The majority of washback-intended studies have concentrated on the positive or negative effects of high-stakes examinations on areas such as course contents, instructional methodology, teacher's and student's attitudes, and learning habits.

It is a common belief that testing affects teaching and learning, as stated by Alderson and Wall (1993) that "tests are held to be powerful determiners of what happens in classrooms" (p.1). A number of definitions have been proposed for the term washback throughout the published research and literature on language testing. "The effect of testing on teaching and learning" is known as washback (Hughes, 1989, p.1). Washback can be analyzed according to two major types: positive and negative, depending on whether it has a beneficial or harmful impact on educational practices.

It is often argued that English examinations in Kerala, which tend to be heavily content-based, aim at testing rote memorization of textual components rather than actual language abilities of learners and they often have a negative washback on teaching and learning (Nayar, 2008). Even in the crucial school/college leaving examinations, the skills of Listening and Speaking are not at all assessed and the weight given to reading comprehension is minimal or nil. The exams, though detrimental for promotion or award of degrees, are not constructed in such a way that they really assess the skills/learning outcomes envisaged by the course or targeted by the curriculum.

This study, thus, examines the effects of semester end university examinations for Common English Courses (CEC) at undergraduate level in Calicut University on the English Language Education (ELE) practices at tertiary level. The study further intends to uncover the nature of the test impact viz. negative or positive, on the two important stakeholders of teaching and learning processes, namely teachers and students and how far they are being influenced. The study explores three research issues that contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the role of examinations in the acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL) and deciding its pedagogy at undergraduate level. The first research issue concerns itself with teachers'/learners' attitude to exams and impact of this attitude on language teaching/learning practices in the classroom. The second research issue centres around the influences of current exams on acquiring practical proficiency

over the four macro skills in English and how far the current test mechanism conforms to international benchmarks in language testing. The third point of focus is an investigation to the question whether the two important stakeholders (teachers and students) think teaching and learning can be improved by adopting direct testing techniques and skill oriented exams.

The study is built on the hypotheses that current exams do have remarkable washback effects which are accountable for the disparity between communicative performance and the communicative competence of the Undergraduate English Learners (UEL). Thus, the study delves to problematic aspects of the existing testing mechanism and offers an alternative blend model test design which is expected to ignite greater positive washback on the learners' acquisition of all the four skills leading to better communicative mastery and realistic linguistic proficiency in the Target Language (TL).

One common assumption is that teachers/students are influenced by the knowledge, contents and structure of the exams and will adapt their teaching methodology/learning habits to reflect and cater to the demands of the test design. Thus, the study will make a critical review of the current examination system for CEC at UG level in the University of Calicut, Kerala in the light of Hughes (1993) 'trichotomy model' for washback, considering participants, process and products as components. The present study focuses on the micro level of test impact as it is circumscribed to variables related to immediate teaching/learning environment and

stresses the impact of English tests for Common English Courses (CEC) at UG level on participants (learners and teachers) process (actions by participants towards learning/teaching) and products (what is learned and the quality of learning).

Since assessment system has greater bearing on the pedagogy and the learners in the ELT scenario under study, a review of the washback of current testing system in relation to the acquisition of skills in English would open up possibilities for future researches in the same line and resultant quality improvement of the English Language Education (ELE) in the State. The fact that the issues the study takes up have not been explored in the past adds to the relevance of the topic and possibilities for new researches in the area. It is hoped that problematizing testing at UG level will lead to critical inquiry into the whole process of English language test construction in the State. It will further unfold serious research studies to gauge the validity and reliability of ESL testing practiced in the State at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and to how far they are on a par with language testing practices at the global level. The findings of the study can leave enormous impacts on the curriculum review for CEC at UG level, not only at the university under study but universities in the State also. Furthermore, the study is expected to trigger in-depth academic investigations to commonly believed and generally reflected phenomenon that English learners in the state are suffering from a Skill

Competence Disparity (SCD), namely better Writing Skills versus Poor Speaking Skills.

The research methods for collecting the required data for analysis include both quantitative and qualitative tools. The study makes use of a multi-model design of data collection to ensure maximum degree of authenticity and reliability as it deals with complicated variables in language testing. The data is collected by means of separate, well-designed and authenticated questionnaires for both teachers and students, direct class observations, document analysis of the previous UG question papers, current syllabus and structured interviews with a few teachers. To maximize the degree of authenticity and reliability of the data, the statements in the questionnaires were mostly reworded in the interviews.

The analysis of the data and their interpretations underscore the fact that the test impact on current CEC examinations is overtly negative and the two stakeholders of ELE show a high degree of dissatisfaction with the existing test content, task types and constructs. Since the high stakes examinations are seen to be exerting great influences on learning and teaching, the constructive way to reduce the negative washback and trigger positive washback is to revamp the whole assessment system in a comprehensive way. The language testing literature advocates inclusion of a variety of assessment tools instead of a single summative examination because the practice of evaluating learners' communicative competence in traditional pen paper tests lacks validity as test performances rely

upon a variety of learners' emotional, social, psychological and cognitive factors. Drawing conclusions from the data analysis, the researcher has put forward a few suggestions pertaining to the curriculum, pedagogic transactions and testing of CEC.

Major Findings

The key findings of the research in which data were collected through a multi-model design of questionnaires, classroom observations, document analysis and structured interviews, can be summed up as follows:

I. A vast majority of the teachers are of the view that their students' learning habits, learning techniques and priorities are influenced by the design and content of high stakes semester end university exams.

II. The English teachers are significantly discontent with the structure and pattern of examinations for Common English Course at UG level.

III. The teachers are positively in favour of redesigning the current high stakes semester end examinations in such a way that they dampen the content oriented memorization and promote performance oriented skill production.

IV. The teachers strongly believe that there is no reliable and direct correlation between the ESL learners' scores in English exams at UG level and their performative competence in English.

V. The existing high stakes university examinations for Common English Courses don't meet nor conform to the compulsory attributes of an ideal

language test as stipulated in literature on language testing at the global level.

VI. The teachers are of the view that the most important factor responsible for the mismatch between scores in exam and skill competence in English is the examination system, although aspects like method of teaching, contents and learning habits play a subsidiary part.

VII. The teachers hold the view that the present memorization and reproduction oriented testing makes them approach English as a content subject rather than a skill subject in classroom practices.

VIII. Most of the students do believe that the current design of the English examinations at UG level leaves destructive or narrowing impacts on their skill acquisition in English.

IX. The majority of undergraduate learners of English think that their learning habits, time spent for study, lessons and skills emphasized are significantly influenced by the content and constructs tested in the high stakes semester end exams.

X. Most of the learners believe that the existing task types and design of examinations for Common English Courses practically give little scope for constructive and creative application of acquired language skills.

XI. The learners believe that their communicative competence and skills to use the language in real life will be improved if a formal and standardized speaking test is introduced.

XII.   Majority of the learners think that they are prompted to give more importance to score marks in English than master skills due to the constructs tested in exams.

XIII.   More than 90% of the total weight in every question paper was given to Writing Skill.

XIV.   There was poor or unhealthy correlation between the learning objectives and the test tasks provided.

XV.   The language skills tested exclusively belonged to the lower order skills as stipulated in Blooms' Taxonomy of Education namely, knowledge and comprehension.

Chapter-wise Sketch

The **first chapter** deals with the social, linguistic, political and professional roles of English in India and the evolutionary phases of formal English Language Education (ELE) in the country. It also speaks about the history of English education in Kerala with a comprehensive and penetrating inquiry into the scenario of English language teaching and learning practices at tertiary level. In addition, the chapter attempts a thorough reflection on the three components of ELE in the State, namely method, material and assessment in the light of previous academic investigations, to explicate their conformity with recent international perceptions on Language Teaching and Learning (LTL).

The **second chapter** largely preoccupies with the terminologies and shifting paradigms in English language testing, different types of tests in practice and their respective purposes. It also takes to discussion the evolutionary stages of testing and the recent deliberations on assessment strategies in languages. The emerging trends like Computer Assisted Language Testing (CALT), M-testing along with attributes of an ideal language test are also discussed in detail.

The **third chapter** presents the theoretical framework of examination washback, its diverse dimensions, types, and how the term has been defined in the literatures on language testing. Furthermore, it explicates factors affecting test impacts and different research investigations conducted to assess effects of tests on teaching and learning. The notion of 'Washback Hypothesis' put forward by Alderson and Wall, Hughes' 'Trichotomy Model' for washback are also explained. The pedagogic implications of washback and how the stakeholders are being influenced by negative or positive washback are also dealt with. The question whether positive washback can be nurtured to effect constructive changes in the curricula, instructional practices, and leaner habits are also analyzed in greater depth.

The **fourth chapter** gives a detailed account of the different kinds of research tools used to gather the relevant data for analyzing test impacts on the context under study. The relative advantages of each instrument, the type of variables

targeted, justification for their use in the study are also explained. It further explicates the target population, settings, hypotheses, research issues/questions and how far the reliability of the data has been ensured through a multi-model research methodology.

The **fifth chapter** deals with the analysis of test impact/washback of Common English Courses at UG level in the light of the responses of teachers and students in a systematic and graphic way to explain how far the research hypotheses can be validated or invalidated. It also attempts comprehensive interpretations of the responses to the teacher questionnaire, leaner questionnaire, along with the findings of document analysis, class observations and interviews. Answers to each of the questions are illustrated graphically for better and easy comprehension. The last part of the chapter attempts a critical appraisal of the exams administered at UG level vis-a-vis the attributes of an ideal/standard test for languages.

The **sixth chapter** reports the significant research findings derived from the multi-model research tools used for the study. In addition, it examines the pedagogic and educational implications of these findings in relation to TESL scenario at undergraduate level along with a set of suggestions for ensuring effectiveness and better learning outcomes in English language education. The possibilities for future research in the same line are also discussed.

The **seventh chapter** proposes a blend-model exam design for common English courses at UG level and the rationale for replacing the currently administered content-oriented examinations. It also details the structure of the proposed alternative exam, the proportionate weight given to the four macro-skills, need for inclusion of alternative assessment tools and distribution of their marks. The purpose and specification of each test item has been explained elaborately. Model question paper based on the blend-model design, rubrics for speaking exam and a sample of proposed listening test are also furnished.

Postscript

It is positively hoped that the findings, suggestions and the proposed blend model test design will help enhance the quality of ELE system, employability of the ESL learners, and will contribute insights while revisiting the policy and system of English education in the State. The suggested prospects for future research to analytically examine the current test mechanism in English at higher education level and generically to review or revise and adapt or adopt research proven international practices to the whole gamut of English Language Education in the State, it is believed, will trigger further in-depth academic investigations.

<center>**Chapter-1**</center>

Introduction: Vivisecting the Scenario of English Language Education

1.1. Chapter Sketch

This chapter deals with the social, linguistic, political and professional roles of English in India and the evolutionary phases of formal English Language Education (ELE) in the country. It also speaks about the history of English education in Kerala with a comprehensive and penetrating inquiry into the scenario of English language teaching and learning practices at tertiary level. In addition, the chapter undertakes a thorough reflection on the three components of ELE in the State, namely method, material and assessment in the light of previous academic investigations, to explicate their conformity with recent international perceptions on Language Teaching and Learning (LTL).

1.2. The Socio-linguistic Role of English in India

English is widely used as a language for communication across geographical boarders to carry out variegated transactions in day-to-day life. It is largely referred to as a global language, a link language and a library language as it plays many vital roles in connecting people who have different social, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Since the body of knowledge written in English is so vast and huge, the name a library language is aptly justifiable. It is inevitably offered as a Second Language (SL) or a Foreign Language (FL) at school/university levels all over the world because its educational, literal,

informational and professional potentials are so enormous and well recognized. While speaking about the variegated roles of English, David (2010) observed:

> English plays a vital role in increasing opportunity around the world. It provides access to the information with which individuals can learn and develop and it provides access to the networks, which are vital in building and maintaining economic links. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a common language to share knowledge and ideas, and to create the kind of relationships, which go beyond a simple deal or contract. It enables people to explore cultural differences and to create the kind of trust and understanding which is vital in negotiating and agreeing our common future (p.35).

Historically speaking, the English language came to India with the arrival of Britishers in the early 18th century and it gradually and steadily spread all over the country in the course of time. In a country like India where linguistic, religious and cultural diversities are significantly remarkable, English plays the role of a true *lingua franca* setting a common platform for people to interact, converse and transact without the linguistic barriers of the vernacular. Moreover, English is unique for its rich repertoire of vocabulary, the vast chunk of literature and an amazing degree of flexibility or dynamism. The pervasiveness of its use has become so much that many words in English are used by speakers of other languages without consciously being aware that they are English words. In India, apart from being a medium of instruction at

tertiary level both for non-technical and technical education, it is looked upon as a language of social reputation and a necessity for better career prospects and employment. In short, in a country with hundreds of mother tongues, it is, as Dasgupta (1993, p.12) calls it 'the auntie tongue' of all, and warmly welcomed everywhere, though really possessed by none. Chaudary (2005) sums up the role of English in India in these words:

> On the whole, it may not be out of place to say that English is no longer just our window on the world, or the link language, or any other tool of restricted use as it was in the past. It has now become the language of our daily life, and there is hardly a domain where English is not used (p.52).

1.3. English Language Education in India

The history of formal ELE in India can be traced back to the first half of the 19th century in which the purpose of teaching English was to mould a group of Indians who could be a great administrative support for the British Empire and a powerful tool to bridge the communication gap between India and the Western world. With the advent of Macaulay's Minutes in 1835, the English language education gathered momentum and much debates and hot discussions have taken place on the position to be given to English in the curriculum at school/college level in India since then and it is still igniting sparks in academic circles with relentless vigour. Though the paradigm shifts in ELT practices across the globe have had their own consequent repercussions in

Indian ELE environment, the scenario of English education in the country is plagued with numerous deep-rooted issues.

The central issue of ELE in India stems from the notion of looking at English as a content subject rather a skill subject in policymaking, curriculum design and language educational practices including teaching, learning and testing. The overemphasis assigned to literature even in courses purely intended /designed for skills in the practical use of English leaves destructive impact on the learner's acquisition of communicative competence in the Target Language because teaching of high level literature makes the whole instruction teacher centric lecturing in which the roles of learners are relegated to mere passive listeners, silenced note-takers and unmotivated participants. The overcrowded classrooms, insufficiency of competent teachers, a mode of instruction which fails to accommodate the real needs of learners, poorly designed or thoughtlessly adopted study materials, lack of better infrastructure to ensure greater exposure to English and authentic learning experiences/materials, illogical policies and unscientific language teaching and learning principles followed are a few among the long list of concerns. In this context, it is noteworthy that the assessment strategies often remain reluctant to change or receive least attention even when there are considerable periodic revamp taking place in ELE curriculum at local or national level. Commenting on the testing mechanism of ELE in India, Gupta (2014) said:

The examination system is more achievement oriented rather than performance oriented, leading to an emphasis on grades and positions rather than issues of fluency or proficiency. Indirectly, the teacher remains in many classrooms even today, the facilitator of examinations rather than of linguistic or communicative proficiency. This sensitivity to learner needs is what has been lacking in the academic aspect of ELE in India. The whole academic process is so unwieldy that it fails to respond to learner needs; learner response is too often ignored (p.84)

1.4. Higher Education in Kerala

Kerala has a rich and glorious past in culture, education, social uplift and social integration across the different ethnic communities in the state. Traditional education was individualistic and was imparted at the teacher's home or in small academies. The State has always been able to maintain the lead it had established long back in the field of education until today. Formal and institutionalized education at all levels had its beginnings in Kerala much earlier than in the rest of India and its diversified reflections are tellingly visible in all walks of social, cultural and political lives. Education in early days was religious in its nature.

The antiquity of education in Kerala and the importance the state continues to give it are underscored by the state's ranking as among the most literate in the country with an average of 90.86 %, which is much higher than the national average of 64.84 as per the 2001 census. Commenting briefly on Kerala's

development experiences, Drez and Sen (1996) say that the early promotion of literacy, equal access to education irrespective of caste and gender, the educational activities initiated by the Christian Missionaries and other social organizations have contributed substantially to educational development in the State even before Independence.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) educational commission of 2009-10 summarizes the educational history of the state as follows:

> The two princely states–Travancore and Cochin – had a brilliant track record of educational achievements which goes back to the last few several centuries. Both the princely States have introduced Western education in their domains long before the country's independence. This policy has been continued by different rulers and the able administrators who helped them in evolving progressive social policies from time to time. As a result, Kerala had already laid the foundation for building a progressive system of education much before the time of independence (p.8).

The history of formal school education dates back to 1817 in which Rev. Mead arrived in Nagercoil and started a school under the London Mission Society. It attracted the attention of the then ruler of Travancore, Shri. Swathi Thirunal. He invited Rev. Mead to start an English School in Trivandrum which was named as Maharaja's Free School. It was later developed into the present University College, Trivandrum, and which in the course of time became the

premier institution of higher education in Kerala – The University Travancore in 1936 which was later renamed the University of Kerala in 1957. The third major landmark is the attempt by the Travancore Government to introduce 'compulsory free primary education' in the State in 1946. The scheme was intended to bring primary education wholly under the exclusive and direct control of the Government and provide free minimum education (primary education) to all children of the relevant age group. It is great to note that the State of Kerala introduced a revolutionary educational reform like the recent legislation by the Indian Parliament (Right to Education Act, 2009) making primary education a citizen's basic right nearly 64 years ago.

1.5. Evolution of English Language Education in the State

The roots of Modern English language education in Kerala can be traced back to the Proclamation of 1844 by the Maharaja of Travancore that those educated in English school would be given preference in Public Service. The first school to impart English education in the state was the Raja's Free School established at Thiruvananthapuram in 1834. Schools and colleges are at present largely run by either the government or private trusts, or individuals. English is the language of instruction in most private schools, while government run schools offer a choice of English or Malayalam as the medium of instruction.

Though English is introduced as an additional skill subject giving emphasis to oral and communicative proficiency in Class II in the state school curriculum at

present, it is taught as an academic subject from class III onwards. After having successfully completed 10 years of secondary schooling, students can opt from one of the three broad streams -Liberal Arts/ Commerce / Science at Higher Secondary level. A successful completion of the required coursework entitles each student to go for degree programmes of their choices in which English is a must study for two years. Thus, all learners will get exposed to English at least as an academic subject for 8 years when they finish grade 10, and for 10 years when they reach universities for graduation.

The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), established in 1994, is an autonomous body accountable for planning, implementing and assessing all academic programmes from Pre-school to Higher Secondary levels. The curriculum revision committee of SCERT points to the predicament of ELE in the state saying that the current school system largely brings forth people who are good at reading and writing English. The school setting does not demand either the teachers or learners to interact in English which leads to unhealthy communicative skill in the Target Language (TL).

The impact of technological explosions, globalization and economic liberalization has changed the role of English in India and particularly in Kerala. English is now looked up on as a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education, dignity in society and a necessity for professional compatibility. It has now become a key factor for mobility, career advancements, opportunities and social and economic interactions at diverse

levels. Due to the socialization of internet and information explosion, it has become an indispensable medium of communication both at national and international levels. Thus, English in the state has undergone evolutionary stages first from a library language to a link language then from a window to the world to a language of opportunities and employability for a population, which is considerably inclined to migration and has strong chunks of Diaspora across the globe.

The overwhelming presence and entrenchment of English in Kerala's public life is evident to visitors. Even in rural areas, hoardings, signboards and the name of shops are all primarily in English. English has started freely infiltrating to public life, and its use symbolically endorses the credibility and authenticity of any product or establishment. Most of the educated Keralites will have enough prowess to communicate in English, though more in writing than in fluent speaking. An inevitable presence of ample English vocabulary even in informal interactions in Malayalam is a quite common sociolinguistic phenomenon and the use of L1 alone will appear non-spontaneous if not inadequate, and the use of English alone will of course be construed as showy and pompous (Nayar, 2005; Scotton, 1993). Adding further on the wide spread use of English in Kerala, Nayar (2005) observed:

> The teaching of English in Kerala shares some of the features at national level, at least in the formal, institutional sector of English education. First, English is still treated and taught as a "subject" in the school curriculum

rather than as a serious communicative tool. Second, the educational system is somewhat rigidly bureaucratic, and all matters of policy and implementation, including teaching material are "prescribed" from above. The teaching/learning context is not friendly to the teacher's inventiveness or pedagogic initiatives. Third, arising from the above two factors is the fact that at least at the scholastic level, the de facto objective of teaching/learning is not to develop any kind of ability or competence in the language but merely to fulfill the academic requirement of enabling the students to obtain passing grades in the centrally set examinations. Fourth, most institutions have such a high teacher-student ratio that teachers often have to talk at the students rather than to or with them. Finally most of the teachers are what they are, not necessarily by free career choice, but mainly because it is a job they were lucky enough to secure, which is not to say that they are inadequately trained or prepared (pp.2-3).

The key limitations of ELE in the state can be summarized as overcrowded and under-equipped classrooms, conventionally trained/driven and unmotivated teachers, exam-oriented learners/learning, and indifferent bureaucratic rigidity, inflexible curriculum well rooted in tradition rather than modern approaches, and an assessment strategy that tests rote memorization skill of text material rather than ability to use the language in real contexts. Manjooran (1997) described the scenario of ELE in the State in the following words:

The situation is pathetic. The plight of an English teacher trying to teach a difficult textbook to a crowded classroom of mixed ability students can be miserable if his sincere intention is to teach them the language and not the text book, for the examination at the end of the year hangs like the sword of Damocles, ready to shatter his good intentions, with its time bound threat. Sadly, the situation does not warrant any sweeping reformatory changes in the immediate future. The teacher is stuck with text book teaching, so to say, and the learners of L2 miss the most important point of the whole process of learning a second language, that is the absorption of, and awareness of the target language as a whole (p.3).

There seems to be winds of change blowing and moves are being initiated to make the ELT system more pragmatic and greatly sensitive to redefine parameters of English education. In 1997, a thorough revision of English curriculum was initiated from pre-school to higher secondary levels on a phased manner and it was aimed at a dynamic model of English teaching suitable to a multi-cultural and multi-lingual context and an indigenous approach based on the needs and requirements of the time. In its Website (www.scert.kerala.gov.in), the SCERT claims that the new testing system introduced four years ago has great positive washback in terms of ELT methods, attitude of students and classroom practices.

A critical appraisal of statewide school/college leaving exams, their structure, approach and orientation reveal that they are largely based on knowledge of the

content of the prescribed texts. It shows need for revamping English Language testing in a way sensitive to real-life communicative needs. There are some efforts to test general language and communicative skills but in a limited degree and only at school level. It is not yet time to say that the revised curriculum has succeeded in realizing the targeted learning outcomes in the real sense of the word because the evaluation strategies and classroom practices of ELT need be further reviewed, renewed and the exams don't often test what is to be tested/ought to be tested.

The medium of instruction at higher education level in the State is English. University campuses function as the centre of curriculum planning, exam administration and high level post-graduate research. All undergraduate and post-graduate teaching takes place in the various affiliated colleges often run by private bodies /organizations. In colleges, the nature and quantity of exposure to English instruction varies, depending upon the field of study. Generally, undergraduates have English lessons for two of the three years of study and arts students have more hours and more material to go through than other stream students.

Strictly speaking, the English education at university level has never been a point of serious concern in the State because there was no move on the part of the Government or the Universities to initiate time demanded reviews / alterations in its curriculum and assessment mechanisms. Commenting on the predicament, Nayar (2008) remarked, "at a glance, the whole system seems to

be ambivalent and confused in its logic, its legitimacy, and its motivation" (p. 3). English curriculum in the colleges in Kerala, by and large, appears to be too scared or too unmotivated to break away from the set traditions of the literary text-based mould of the pre-independence days. As Sheorey (2002) points out "most students have difficulty understanding the substance of the 'prescribed' literary selections. The typical method of teaching consists of explicatory reading of the text ... and occasional discussion of grammar points" (p.18).

The introduction of choice based credit semester system and massive curriculum revamp for the UG programmes in 2009-10 academic year opened up winds of hope and constructive changes in the near future. The UG Board of Studies of the Calicut University speaks about the anticipated learning outcomes of the courses as:

> The new language courses are intended to train the students in various kinds of reading using appropriate literary strategies and the teaching of English at this level is not limited to teaching of literature or teaching of language through literature alone. The main objective of the new common courses on language is mastering communication skills in English with fluency and accuracy. (Restructured Curriculum, 2009, p.2).

The formation of Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) in 2007 was another remarkable move to constantly review and revise the higher education sector in the state and its responsibilities include:

1. suggesting improvements in curriculum and syllabi in accordance with the changing societal and academic requirements and facilitate the development and publication of appropriate teaching material, including textbooks, educational softwares and e-learning facilities in order to improve the quality of education.

2. provide academic input to the Government and to the Universities, research institutions and other centers of higher education in the State for the formulation and implementation of the policies on higher education and evolve a perspective plan for the development of higher education, *suomoto* or on the suggestion from Government or requests from Universities or other institutions; hold discussions, conduct workshops and seminars with the objective of facilitating the widest possible consultations with experts and stakeholders including organizations of students and teachers for formulating the policies on higher education and facilitating their proper implementation.

It is rather unwelcome to note that no realistic change has been proposed in the current testing system though the universities, revamping the curriculum, have introduced semester system at UG level. The high stakes university exams aim at, as they have been for quite a long time, testing Writing Skills only. The minor studies (Manjooran, 2008) about exam washback on ELT practices at undergraduate level show that it has a strong negative impact on teaching and learning methods. The total curriculum restructuring is likely to fail to have the

desired outcomes achieved, if a new approach to testing in language courses is not adopted. It is also worth noting that Degrees offered in English language and literature is 95% literature oriented and the inclusion of practical language contents or ELE courses has not given due weight even in the new curriculum. Though the global scenario of Teaching English as a Second Language/Foreign Language (TESL/TEFL) has developed so much to evolve itself as a separate branch of knowledge independent from literature, it is neither assigned weight nor offered as a major /course in the curriculum of higher education in the state. The curriculum of Bachelors /Masters Degree in English ought to give 50% weight to English language components because the government stipulated eligibility for English teachers/Assistant Professors in the State are these qualifications.

The approach to ELE in Kerala is quite dissimilar to that of the global approach because teaching of English here is still equated with teaching of literatures in English often raging from the Old to the Modern English periods. The qualification prescribed for being teachers at school/college level is not a graduation/post graduation in ELE but in English literature in which the weight given to ELE is always less than 10 % .It is high time the universities in the state should think of either separating ELE and English literature majors or give 50 % weight to ELE components in any degree offered in English language and literature   because at global scenario those who have majored in English literature are sidelined for TEFL/TESL positions. It is relevant to note

that the UDF Educational Commission (2010) recommended the following reforms and perceptional changes in English language education in the State:

> Teaching of English is to be done with specific focus on developing functional competence in using the language viz. Listening, Reading, Speaking and Written communication. Teaching tactics and methods used for Communicative English should be what is internationally accepted for the purpose. Methodologies are to be selected in such a manner that the intended language competencies are developed within the time slot assigned to the teaching of this language. IT supports, audio-lingual records and CDs, specially developed textbooks, supplementary readers, student handbooks etc, should be used to augment the quality of teaching with special emphasis on the development of speaking skills, written communication and creative expression (p.14).

A critical vivisection of the English education scenario at tertiary level could better be done if it is analyzed under three heads- methods, materials and mode of assessment, which have been in practice for ages.

1.5.1. Method of Instruction

The method of teaching a language plays a key role in ensuring the learner's communicative skills in that language. Freeman (1992) speaks about the functions of methods in these words. "They serve as a foil for reflection that can aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness of the thinking that

underlines their actions. Knowledge of methods is part of the knowledge base of teaching. With it, teachers join a community of practitioners"(p.68).

The ELT method largely followed for ages and still preferred by teachers in colleges and schools is the traditional grammar translation/lecture method in which the students are relegated to passive listeners and trained to copy whatever is being dictated /spoken. The students are fed with a lot of information about the language, the dos and don'ts of uses and usages, the grammatical structures and idiomatic headaches but given little chances of familiarizing with the actual use of the language. Thus, the over consciousness of grammaticality and accuracy cripples and smothers the students initiatives to articulate their personal feelings in the target language (TL). Consequently, their skills of Writing and Reading prosper at the cost of Listening and Speaking- a reversal of the natural way of language acquisition.

In fact, Kerala English education system appears to be suffering from an out-of-date pedagogy and teacher dominated mode of presentation. In a chalk- and-talk exam-oriented system of instruction, as Paulo Freire (1970), powerfully put, the teacher acts as a narrator who infuses knowledge into 'receptacles' (students) through a parrot-like imitative process. This process in language classes, which are mostly run through a hybrid of grammar-translation and text paraphrasing method, entails explaining, memorizing, drilling, reciting, dictating and note taking.

The student's main task in ELE classrooms is to jot down as the teacher dictates or copy answers from the blackboard in order to prepare themselves for the year-end exam nights. Their focus is on cramming the contents of the prescribed books or disgorging them in their exam papers, which usually test nothing but their short-term memory power and their knack of working rapidly under extreme pressure. To put it another way, the manifestation of competitive ethics in education system has, in effect, made teaching subordinated to testing. This washback effect, in turn, has had pernicious impacts on learning process and consequently students' abilities for language use. The other destructive impact of the traditional teacher-centred approaches is that they continue to keep students passive. Under such circumstances, there is very little scope for genuine and meaningful interaction and effective language learning. In effect, the magnificent role of mutual interaction as the most influential and critical factor, specifically in L2 acquisition, is greatly ignored (Hosseini, 2007, p.18).

The talk and chalk instructional mode lowers the opportunities for transference of academic strategies and social skills, and most notably, contributes to the elimination of creativity and critical thinking, which according to scholars like Birjandi and Naeini (2007) play a significant role in effective language learning. It also affects students' retention of information and eventually their attitudes towards the curriculum in negative ways. Prashar's (2002) idea that, as a result of traditional methods of teaching, Indian undergraduate learners have an aversion to English may well justify this last claim for the language learning contexts in India and in Kerala too.

This is how the present traditional education system wreaks havoc on the process and accordingly effectiveness of learning. Consequently, students are the losers. What Freire (1970) has observed critiquing the 'banking' concept of such traditional systems of education is relevant to this context. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits, which the students patiently receive, memorize, and parrot back. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, and have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the final analysis, it is men themselves who are filled away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human.

There is a variety of reasons for why teachers prefer this mode to the rest. Hesitation about the feasibility of application or level of effectiveness of innovations may be among these reasons. Most of them believe that in addition to the energy, some kind of innovations they demand, and are not practical in real classroom settings. Reality, however, seems to be the fact that they lack the knack to open up their minds for the new emerging trends in the field. A considerable number of teachers lack the methodological savvy because most

of them hold a degree in Literature in lieu of Teaching. There are also teachers who lack the panache for applying innovative approaches in their classes by virtue of the fact that they are not gifted for their profession.

Students also like this product-oriented approach in as much as it dispenses the information they need for securing their marks in minimum time and, of course, with no demands. When mastering some survival skills suffices them to make their dreams come true, why bother wasting time on the so-called real learning, they may reason. Another reason for students' tendency towards the spoon-fed methods of teaching may be the fact that they have been kept away from experiencing the taste of learning in classes that are taught through task-based interactive approaches. They may not be cognizant of the different results they are likely to reap out of such innovative approaches in the course of time.

As a result of this traditional mode of instruction the whole teaching learning process fails to achieve the intended outcome and the product and the process fall much short of the expectations or requirements of the real language learning objectives. It is unfortunate but the truth that ELE in most of the academic situations in the State seems to be ineffective and impractical in the strict sense of the word. English language proficiency and communicative competencies of a majority of students are open to question. At the collegiate level, most of the students who have passed university exams by their cramming skills and survival stratagems, are not able to communicate either

orally or in written form even their basic intentions effectively. This is the reality in spite of the fact that they have had more than 1000 hours of formal language instruction in their language classes before their entry into the collegiate level during nearly 10 years of schooling. Most of the university students do not have competence in language use and in its components as they are expected to. Strictly speaking, no genuine learning occurs in the present language classes if students' ability after a long interval to apply the language to new tasks and situations is considered as the criterion for real learning.

1.5.2. Materials for Instruction

A glance at the so far used material for ELE shows that there is a genuine ambivalence between the teaching of language and literature to the detriment of both. While genuine competence in modern English is desired and required to enable appropriate participation in academic pursuit, career, and public life both intra- and internationally, what is actually offered is familiarity with random works of literatures in English, mostly up to the Georgian Age (Nayar, 2008). It is evident from the students attitude to the prescribed pieces for study that most of them had little focused sense of why they were learning or what they were taught or what purpose it served or what use it would be for them.

Except for some changes with the introduction of new curriculum in 2009-10, the college undergraduates, with little/poor spoken and poor/shaky written English have to cope with (along with some grammar work), a whole set of literary works including a selection of pieces of prose (mostly British writers),

a novel by Thomas Hardy, a play by Ibsen, a collection of poems, and The Merchant of Venice (original Shakespeare's version).

Speaking of the scenario, Nayar (2008) observed:

> when very large class sizes of over a hundred are added to a quite inappropriate curriculum, the actual language teaching or learning becomes a hard nut defying to be cracked. Being products of the system, many lecturers also find that their own meta-linguistic knowledge of English is uncomfortably inadequate to be deviantly innovative. Besides which, there is little point in being innovative as the system is far more conducive to compliance than resistance (p.5).

Manjooran (1997) sums up the ELE scenario in these words. "The L2 learners at the college level are supposed to have learned the basics of the English language from school. It is a misconception that ten years of text book teaching with an examination- oriented approach will yield any solid language learning" (p.4).

In the three years at college, the students are not given not much of a chance to redeem themselves, either. What worsens the situation is that language is taught through literature rather than everyday discourse. Consequently, teachers are not table to sustain students' attention and interest throughout the time in such classes. Shortly after the commencement of the class, students' attention starts to waft, and by the end of the class, boredom is generally

rampant. As Gupta (2005) has asserted, one main problem is that learners' needs are constantly being ignored. The fact that students are coming from different rural and urban areas complicates the situation because their socio-cultural backgrounds create huge gaps in their communicative competencies.

The revised curriculum prepared by SCERT from pre-primary to the higher secondary level asserts that there is a total departure from the content orientation of the earlier textbooks. The textbook is visualized as a link between a variety of activities within and outside the classroom that would lead to specific cognitive outcomes. The lessons are planned in such a way as to instill the curiosity of the students about central themes and ideas in the curriculum. The skills and knowledge targeted through various activities that take place in the classroom are linked together through the textual materials. The lessons serve to introduce an area or the main theme of a particular curricular area and stimulate student interest and curiosity. The shift of emphasis in the new approach is from teaching to learning with focus on equipping the learners with essential language skills and building confidence in them to use language as a functional tool. The main thrust of teaching / learning here is the empowerment of learners as an efficient user of the language, given the constraints of the vocabulary and sentence structures at his\her disposal. Therefore, the emphasis is mostly laid on developing communication skills in the learners (SCERT, 2008).

Speaking about the main problems of ELE in Kerala, Nayar (2008) asks a series

of questions:

> With such an entrenched, pervasive presence of English in the public life and media, and with so many hours of classroom engagement, what is the state of the average school leavers' English language competence? Does it really meet the expectations? What indeed are the target expectations from school leavers? Does their competence really get any better after a few years in college? Is the fact that most manage to pass the examinations good enough reason for complacency? These are indeed difficult questions to answer. I am not sure there have been any serious efforts to answer them" (p. 4).

1.5.3. Assessment Mechanism

Numerous studies have demonstrated that test method has a sizable influence on performance on language tests and language acquisition.(Shohamy 1983 and Wall, 1993).The testing system followed from school to higher education levels does test only one of the four skills of the learners in English, namely writing. The weight given to reading is nominal whereas crucial oral skills like Speaking and Listening are completely ignored even in detrimental school /college examinations. As a result, they are underweighted in teaching and learning.

The primary classroom observations and formal discussions with teachers and students underpin the fact that the recent sweeping changes in the curriculum have not triggered positive /intended shifts in method of teaching /learning

English as SL at post secondary level .The reasons, all of them accord with, are that the assessment framework continues to be the same followed for ages in which the shortest /best way to fetch marks is to swallow some descriptive answers based on the content of the prescribed books and reproduce them as such on the examination answer sheets. Most of the language tests currently available/practiced are inappropriate because they are based on a model of language ability that does not include the full range of abilities required for communicative language use and they incorporate norm-referenced principles of test development and interpretation. A revolutionary revamp in testing system, in which all the four skills are adequately given weight and mastery of these skills is a must for learners to answer questions, appears a felt need of the time.

The two major uses of language tests are as sources of information for making decisions within the context of educational programs and as indicators of abilities of attributes that are of interest in research on language, language acquisition and language teaching. A review of the question patterns and tasks (Appendix c) discloses the fact that exams aim at testing skills of students in vomiting on answer sheets what they have memorised /could be memorised before exams with the help of certain bazaar notes because what they have to write is some short answers, paragraph questions of (100 words), and generally essays of (250 words).The approach of English exams at UG level, thus, underpins the curriculum/general approach to English as a content subject.

Though the only tested skill is Writing, it too does not require the learners to produce constructive sentences of their own but rote memorization of certain constructions of guide writers to fetch minimum pass grade.

The present testing system with its defective overweight on Writing Skills and total lack of components from other skills seem to have certain ruinous impacts on the students as well as teachers for both of them give over importance to exam preparation thereby reducing the whole curriculum to coaching for grades. "The examination expects them to be familiar with the literary texts and make critical evaluations on many issues based on the texts. Most surprisingly, they manage to do this! One wonders what applied linguists and second language learning pundits will make of that" (Nayar, 2008, p.5).

Analyzing the present system of examination administered in the state, the UDF Education Commission (2009-10) puts forward the following measures to modernize the examination system:

> The common examinations should be designed using accepted new practices followed by the advanced educational systems. The quality and level of the test should be redefined and made comparable to the best in the world. The tests should not be used to perpetuate the conventional memory oriented examinations, but should be redesigned to test higher abilities like problem-solving ability, creative and critical thinking etc. The popularity of examination coaching (coaching for memorization) in

the country is due to the over use of memory centred examinations where certain questions are repeated over the years. It should be possible to evolve new question models which cannot be answered through memorization. New evaluation instruments which measure higher order behaviours like, critical thinking and deep-level problem-solving, etc. should be profusely used for assessing educational outcomes (p.34).

1.6. ELE Concerns to be Addressed at University Level

English being the medium of higher education at the state, proficiency in English is of paramount importance for the students' academic achievement, efficient mastery of the contents in the chosen field and lucrative and prosperous career prospects. In addition to this, under graduation period is the last chance for students of all disciplines, save those who major in English to acquire the required skills in all facets of proficiency in English. So, addressing concerns of all stakeholders involved, regularly critiquing the suitability of learning materials used, and critically examining and remedying pedagogic issues of dare academic consequences are of great significance and consequence. The major concerns, exclusively predominant and specific to English Language Education (ELE) scenario at tertiary level, can be listed as follows:

    I.   Rarely revised system of testing which is neither constructed in close alignment with the emergent needs of the learners nor valid enough to authenticate their skill in the TL.

II. Overemphasis on literature, often belonging to Old, Middle English period, even in Common English Courses, in which the practical and performative skills and linguistic competence of the learners are focused.

III. Irrespective of the background of students and the discipline they are majoring in, the same course books are prescribed for all. This leads to lack in interest and participation on the part of students in language classrooms. It's high time, the authorities should think of designing tailor cut courses at least for Common English Courses (CEC) to cater to students' needs for effective instructional practices.

IV. Due to the content based testing in English, both teachers and students tend to be largely and negatively influenced by high stakes semester end exams. As a result, language instructions and skill acquisition get relegated into vocabulary teaching, thematic explanation, exam training and teacher centredness.

V. The exasperating number of students in Common English Classes, as many batches of different disciplines are clubbed, defeats the purpose of the course because interactivity, learner participation and class management get remarkably disrupted.

VI. The lack of regular up-skilling on the part of teachers, reluctance to keep abreast of the recent research findings and emerging concepts in language teaching, learning and testing, keep the stone rolling in the

traditional mode with minimal learning outcomes and poor skill acquisition.

VII.   The highly utilitarian attitude of the learners, their exam-orientedness and marks hunting also creates demotivation and promotes teacher centered lecturing instead of learner participatory English classrooms.

VIII.   Lack of regular and comprehensive review on the efficacy of the materials, methods, approaches and assessment strategies employed with the full involvement of teachers who actually encounter practical issues in classrooms.

1.7. Scope and Significance of the Study

The system of teaching and learning, whether formally or informally done, encompassed and continues to include, some kind of testing and evaluation to serve diverse purposes. It is a common belief that testing affects teaching and learning, as stated by Alderson and Wall (1993) that "tests are held to be powerful determiners of what happens in classrooms"(p.1). In recent literatures on language testing, a number of definitions have been proposed for the term "washback". In simple terms, "The effect of testing on teaching and learning" is known as washback. (Hughes, 1989, p.1). In a broader sense, the term refers to the totality of effects the testing strategies leave on the processes, the products and the materials used in a teaching and learning system. The concept of washback can be analyzed according to two major types: positive and negative, depending on whether it has a beneficial or harmful impact on educational practices (Hughes, 1989).

The system of education in India followed at the national and state levels, assigns heavy weight and crucial importance to formal written summative /formative exams. Marks in the formal exams are still looked upon detrimental factors in deciding the promotion, grade, academic achievement and professional destiny of the students. This being a known fact, both students and teachers tend to be over conscious and concerned about scores in exams right from the beginning of a course. The case is not different even in Kerala where skill in English language is treated as a barometer of education. Gupta, (2013) made the following observation while criticizing the Indian ELE practices:

> The examination system, in ELE scenario across States, is more achievement oriented rather than performance oriented, leading to an emphasis on grades and positions rather than issues of fluency or proficiency. Indirectly, the teacher remains in many classrooms even today, the facilitator of examinations rather than of linguistic or communicative proficiency (p.8).

It is often argued that English examinations in Kerala, irrespective of the - primary, secondary and tertiary levels- tend to be heavily grammar-orientated, content based, textual, and aim at testing rote memory of prescribed materials rather than actual target language ability. Studies so far done (Nayar, 2008 and Manjooran, 1997) to uncover test impacts on the stakeholders involved in English language education in the State, though very sparse and less focused,

indicate that current ESL exam practices have a negative washback effect on teaching and learning. Even in crucial school/college leaving exams, the skills of Listening and Speaking are not at all assessed and the weight given to reading comprehension is minimal.

While examining the history of educational research, especially in the field of English Language Education in the state, it is evident that there were a very few attempts made to investigate vital pedagogic issues encountered by teachers and learners of English. A great chunk of doctoral or pre-doctoral studies carried out in English at Calicut University are/were dealing with areas related to English Literature rather than ELE or Applied Linguistics. The issues related to English Language Education, either at the state level or at the university level, have rarely been investigated from various perspectives to critically review its efficacy, to effect radical changes to meet emerging needs of the employers and to address real language needs of learners.

Though a curriculum revamp for undergraduate programs (UG) was introduced in 2009 admission onwards, the test contents and design were never revised and were not in line with the latest trends and developments in language testing. The exams, though detrimental for promotion or award of degrees, are not often designed in such a way that they really assess the skills envisaged by the course or targeted the syllabus. So an academic enquiry to critically assess the testing system and its impacts on the stakeholders, to reveal perceptions of teachers and students about the test items, patterns, and test strategies seems to

be highly desirable. Moreover, such an investigation will be conducive to gauge how far the present mechanism is catering to the needs/perspectives of the people involved in the system and also to ascertain how far it is in compliance with the language testing practices at the global level/in high quality education system.

1.8. Research Design, and Hypotheses

The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial questions as unambiguously as possible. Obtaining relevant evidence entails specifying the type of evidence needed to answer the research question, to test a theory, to evaluate a programme or to accurately describe some phenomenon.

This study examines the effects of existing end semester university examinations for Common English Course (CEC) at undergraduate level in Calicut University on the English Language Education (ELE) scenario /practices. The study further intends to uncover the nature of the test impact, negative or positive, on the two important stakeholders of teaching and learning processes, namely teachers and students and how far they are being influenced.

The study explores three research issues that contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the role of examinations in the acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL) and its pedagogy at undergraduate level. The first research issue concerns itself with teacher/learners' attitude to exams and

impact of this attitude on the language teaching/learning practices in the classroom. The second research issue centres around the backwash of current tests /exams in ensuring the competency over the four skills in English and the third point of focus is an investigation to the question 'do the two important stakeholders think teaching and learning can be improved by adopting direct testing techniques and skill oriented exams, thus eliminating the potential mismatch between the development of the four skills or the targeted objectives and the attained outcome.

The study is to test the following hypotheses formulated in relation to the current examination practices in Common English Courses at UG Level:

1. The present assessment strategy followed for UG Common courses in English has test impact/washback on teaching and learning English.

2. The two important stakeholders (learners and teachers) of the English language education are not happy with design and structure of the existing high stakes semester end exams.

3. The existing system of testing does not comply with the standard practices/design of an ideal language test in English.

Thus, the study delves to the problematic aspects of the existing testing aspects and offers an alternative test design which is expected to have greater positive washback on the learners' acquisition of all the four skills leading to better communicative mastery in the English language.

One common assumption is that teachers will be influenced by the knowledge that their students are planning to take a certain test and will adapt their teaching methodology and lesson content to reflect the test's demands. Negative washback is said to occur when a test's content or format is based on a narrow definition of language ability, and so constrains the teaching/learning context. Positive washback is said to result when a testing procedure encourages 'good' teaching practice. Alderson and Wall (1993) explicitly stated 15 washback hypotheses through reading the literature and their experience. The factors that are influenced are: teaching, learning, content, rate, sequence, degree, depth, attitudes and the number of teachers or learners affected by a test. Hughes (1993) suggested a trichotomy model for washback, considering participants, process, and products as components of washback. In Hughes framework, 'participants' include language learners and teachers, administrators, materials developers, and publishers, "all of whose perceptions and attitudes toward their work may be affected by a test". The term 'process' covers 'any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning'. Thus, the study will make a critical review of the current examination system in the light of Hughes trichotomy model for washback, considering participants, process, and products as components.

Since assessment system has greater bearing on the pedagogy and the learners in the ELT scenario under study, a review of the washback of current testing system in relation to the acquisition of skills in the English would open up

possibilities for future researches in the same line thereby resulting the quality improvement of the entire ELE in the state. The fact that the issues the study takes up have not been explored in the past adds to the relevance of the topic and scope and possibilities for new researches in the area. It is hoped that problematizing testing at UG level will lead into critical inquiry into the whole process of EL test construction in the state and it will unfold serious research studies to gauge the validity and reliability of ESL testing practiced in the state and how far they are on a par with language testing practices at the global level.

In short, the research is an attempt to answer the following questions, which have been haunting the stakeholders involved in ESL education in the state, with the help of empirical data collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, document analysis and interviews:

1. What is the teacher's and student's attitude towards the existing examinations and impact of this attitude on the pedagogy and acquisition of English at UG level?

2. Are the teachers and students content about the current test system for Common English Courses?

3. Do they believe the current test structure needs a revamp?

4. Do they feel the currently practiced testing strategy has negative impact on ELE at UG level?

5. Do they think the existing tests fail to measure all the major objectives/learning outcomes envisaged by the syllabus?

6. Does the present system of testing make teachers treat English more as a subject than a language?

7. Do they think introducing a skill-oriented exam at UG level will be more effective than the present test mechanism?

8. Do the currently administered tests make learners and teachers be highly text oriented than skill oriented in teaching and learning English?

9. Do they think that it is imperative to give due weight to all the four macro skills in a standard/detrimental language test?

10. What are the factors responsible for effecting washback at UG level Common English Courses?

11. Do the currently administered tests for Common English Courses have components of a standard test in English?

12. Was the test structure revised along with the recent revamp in the curriculum?

1.9. Methodology

Social research is markedly different from scientific research because the former undertakes as Yin remarks "an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of data" (Yin, 1994). The washback researchers emphasize on a qualitative inquiry or mixed methodology to investigate the examination washback effect because it encompasses numerous variables; only a quantitative research may

not fully depict a complete picture (Cheng, L., 2004). The study plans to employ a mutli-model design of data collection to ensure maximum degree of authenticity and reliability.

The present study, being an investigation to the perceptions of teachers and learners about existing test system and future test pattern, has made use of both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection, viz. questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and classroom observations to ensure degree of reliability in generalization, conclusion and judgment. To have more reliable data, some teachers were randomly selected to be interviewed mostly rewording the statements of the questionnaire to crosscheck the data collected.

1.10. Conclusion

The standard failure in India is a failure that Kerala does not have, namely the access of every one to school education. But when it comes to developing higher educational potentials in tune with the opportunities offered by its wider network of school education, Kerala fails. It fails also when compared to other states, in making the content of education suit the demands of the contemporary age, including in providing a focus on the technical facilities related to the rapidly expanding information economy in the world (Drez and Sen, 1996).

In brief, the present ESL instructional system which implies the idea of burn the midnight oil, memorize the contents and pass the course, appears to be no more helpful in real world situations and in acquiring communicative

competence . The need of the hour is a thorough scrutiny of the ELE system, including, method, material and testing framework and periodic review/revamp of the curriculum. It has to be done in such a manner that the system pressurizes the teachers and students to ensure maximum proficiency for communication, basic skill mastery, creative expression, and employability in an increasingly competitive world. Though there are some feeble blows of revolutionary winds in ELE contents, and approach at tertiary level, the testing mechanism in practice, being discordant with latest advances in language testing research, nullifies the productive shifts with its negative content and method washback. The ELE scenario in the state is plagued with many pedagogic issues and testing /examination construction is one of such areas. Therefore, the research attempts a comprehensive scrutiny of the whole test construction process currently practiced. Moreover, it tries to find answer to the question how far the high stakes ESL exams at undergraduate level are influencing the stakeholders like learners and teachers at various levels of teaching learning processes.

Chapter-2

Perceptions of English Language Testing and Assessment

2.1. Chapter Sketch

The chapter largely preoccupies with the terminologies and shifting paradigms in English Language Testing, different types of tests in practice and their respective purposes. It also takes to discussion the evolutionary stages of testing and the recent deliberations on assessment mechanism in language. The emerging trends like Computer Assisted Language Testing (CALT), M-testing along with attributes of an ideal language test are also discussed in detail.

2.2. Testing, Measurement and Evaluation

The history of language testing and assessment can be traced back to the origin of teaching and learning. Testing, Measurement, Evaluation and Assessment are oft-encountered terms in the literatures on language testing. Though mutually inclusive and interrelated, a small distinction can be observed between/among these terms when a close and subtle analysis is attempted.

On the one hand, an examination is quite formal and has an element of finality in it. On the other hand, a test is informal and is an on-going activity along with classroom instruction, and is of lesser duration. Tests are tools used to measure abilities or performance of learners. Caroll (1968) describes a test as "a psychological or educational procedure designed to elicit certain behaviour from which one can make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual" (p. 46).

Evaluation, as the term indicates, is boarder in scope and encompasses the entire process of gathering information and making conclusive inferences after a judicious analysis of the obtained details. Measurement is said to be the activity of assigning numerical values to the obtained data in a meaningful, consistent and scientific manner. The process of estimating abilities of learners in the language using the marks, scores or grades secured in different tools of testing is termed as assessment. For the sake of consistency and uniformity, the term testing has been used in the study as an umbrella term to mean all the related terms of language assessment.

The interrelationship between testing, teaching and learning, methods and materials is inseparably interwoven. The objectives of teaching determine the type of material and methods to be adopted and all these factors in conjunction decide the assessment techniques to be employed. The diagram below throws clearer light on this interrelationship. The arrows point in both directions to underscore the fact that their interlink is not one sided but a two way relationship.

Figure 2.1. Interlink between evaluation, instruction and objectives
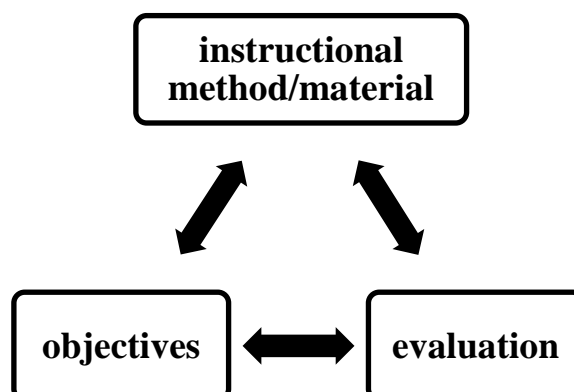
The role of tests or instruments of assessment in language education is to capture the kind of behaviour or performance of learners which can act as reliable evidence for their skills in the Target Language (TL) in real life contexts. The tools used for evaluation have to be reliable, accurate and must be sensitive enough to indicate differences in the abilities of learners.

The two major uses of language tests are as sources of information for making decisions within the context of educational programs and as indicators of abilities of attributes that are of interest in research on language, language acquisition and language teaching (Heaton, 1975, p.36). The researches on impact studies (Bachman and Palmer, 1996) underpin the fact that both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other. Tests serve different purposes like reinforcing learning, motivating students, a means of assessing the students' performance in the language. A good classroom test helps locate the precise areas of difficulty encountered by the class or by the individual student and their areas of strength as well. Thus, test is used as a valuable teaching as well as assessment device.

When speaking about the relationship between testing and teaching, Hubbard et al. (1983, p. 255) mentioned ten aims that testing fulfils.

1. Identification of problem areas for remedial attention.
2. Giving each student a course grade.
3. Assessment of your own effectiveness as a teacher.

4. Checking on general progress and obtaining feedback.

5. Course or syllabus evaluation.

6. Preparation for public examinations.

7. Institutional requirement for student promotion.

8. Measuring what a student knows.

9. Identification of levels for later group-work.

10. Reinforcement of learning and student motivation.

2.3. Types of Assessment

Based on the focus and purpose of the assessment, it is broadly divided into two, namely formative and summative. Though they are dissimilar in intension and function, at times, the same type can meet purposes of both kinds. To ensure comprehensive and reliable evaluation of the abilities of students, it is better to use both types in assessment practices.

2.3.1. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment primarily aims at monitoring students' learning and providing on-going feedback for teachers to review or revise their teaching and for students to improve their learning. It is conducted during a course or programme and is otherwise known as internal tests, seasonal tests or progress tests. These types of tests are often teacher made, teacher evaluated and are effective means to understand whether the set objectives are being realized or the mode of instruction and teachings materials need a review.

More specifically, formative assessments help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need improve further. It helps the teachers recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately .Formative assessments are generally low stakes and help in giving the teacher a record of learner's performance and progress in each stage of learning or skill acquisition. Examples of formative assessments include asking students to draw a concept map in class to represent their understanding of a topic, asking students to answer a few questions of objective type at the end of a class or instructing students to write a summary of the topics they learned in the previous class.

2.3.2. Summative Assessment

This type of assessment is held at the end of a course of study or a programme to evaluate student learning by comparing it against some standards or benchmarks. This kind of test is high stakes because they have high value and is used for selection or certification. They are more formal than formative tests, generally based on a syllabus and are conducted by an external authority or a Board of Examination. The main purposes of summative assessment are to provide feedback about the learner's performance, level of achievement at a particular point of time or completing some specific units in a course of study. This being a sort of achievement test, the learners' scores are taken as indicators of their mastery of skills in language or attainment of the targeted learning outcome of the course. Examples of summative assessments include midterm exams, and term-end exams. Information from summative

assessments can be used formatively when students or faculty use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses.

2.4. Types of Tests

Tests are means of obtaining systematic evidence on which instructional decisions can be based. Educators see tests as motivators that stimulate individuals to do their best. If they are well designed and properly used, tests can effectively enhance the educational process (Richards, 1990). Educational testing is in fact a world endeavor. In everyday life too, the act of testing is going on, knowingly or unknowingly to select an object, to assess a person so on. Therefore, tests are inevitable tools in educational practices to provide information about the achievement of the testees, without which inferences can't be drawn nor decision can be taken. Depending upon the purpose for which a test is designed, they can be compartmentalized into different kinds.

2.4.1. Progress Tests (PT)

It is widely used kind of a test which is often constructed by the teachers and designed to measure the extent to which students have mastered the material taught in classrooms. It is formative in nature because the main intention is to assess teachers' work and students' learning. It is a teaching device to reflect feedbacks on the efficacy of instructional mode, materials and student achievement. Moreover, it encourages students to study more and gives a picture of the areas where they are weak or need give more emphasis. The

major aims of a PT are to stimulate learning and reinforce what has been taught.

2.4.2. Achievement Tests (AT)

An achievement test, as the name reveals, is meant to measure how far the learners have achieved what is taught to them. It is similar to PT in purpose but is far more formal and is intended to measure achievements on a larger scale. ATs are often written based on what a student is presumed to have learnt, not necessarily on what they have actually learnt or been taught. Several achievement tests are standardized as they are pre-tested and each item is analyzed and revised where necessary. Its value and importance is much more than PT as scores in AT are significant for certification or promotion.

2.4.3. Proficiency Tests (PT)

Achievement Tests look back on what is taught/learnt but Proficiency Tests look forward to what the students will be required to perform at a particular level of education. PTs are no way related to any syllabus or teaching program because they look into level of skills expected at certain stages. It is concerned with measuring students' control of the language in the light of what he will be expected to do with it in his future performance of a particular task. It is meant to measure not general attainment but specific skills that the students may require in his future career/study. An example of this type of test is exams given by an employer to the prospective candidates to test their general ability in language before a selection process.

2.4.4. Diagnostic Tests (DT)

These kinds of tests are always administered to determine/locate the areas of difficulty of learners and to devise appropriate remedial measures. It is held during the course of study so that both teachers and learners get a good picture of those areas where they need to focus and improve further. They are formative in nature and are low stake tests. They can include Progress, Achievement and Proficiency Tests. Diagnostic Tests are primarily designed to assess students' knowledge and skills in particular areas before a course of study is begun. The major test types and the purposes they are serving or expected to meet can graphically be illustrated using the diagram below:

Figure 2.2: Test Types and Purposes

test types		
	progress tests	to assess mastery of the units taught
	achievement tests	level of achievement on a larger scale
	proficiency tests	specific skills expected from learners
	diagnostic tests	locate areas of difficulty
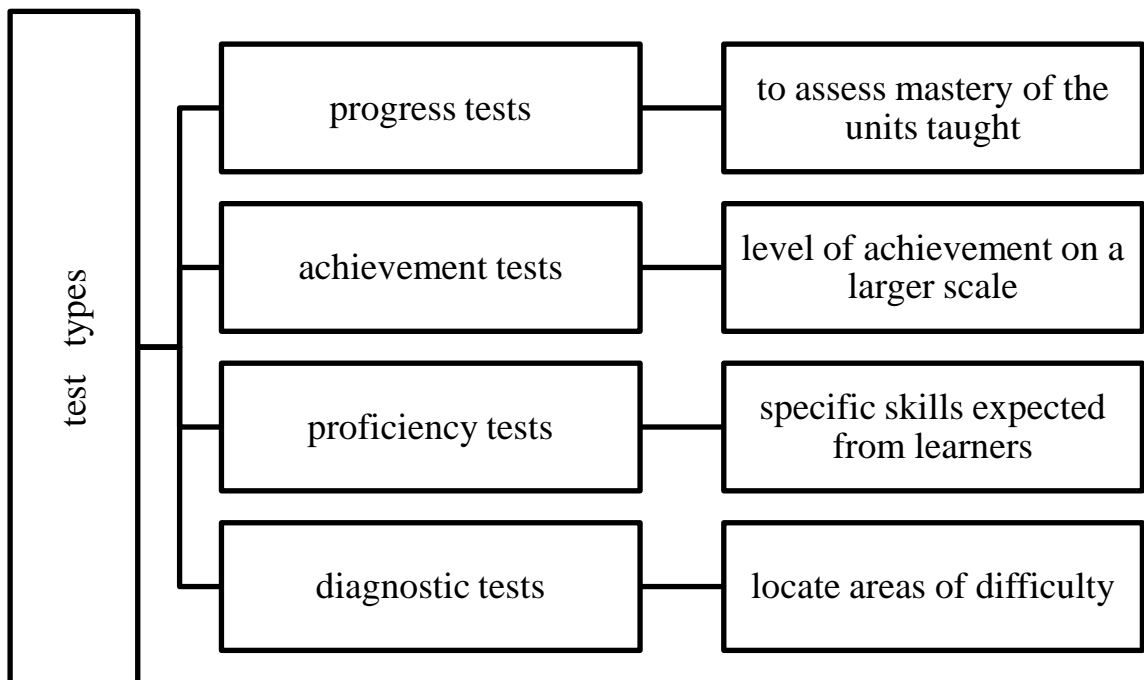
2.4.5. Norm-referenced and Criterion–referenced Tests

A test which relates the performance of one candidate to that of other candidates is said to be norm-referenced. It places the candidates in a rank of performance. Criterion referenced tests, on the other hand, are designed to assess whether a particular candidate's performance demonstrates a particular level of language ability or not. The learners' performance is juxtaposed with the set standard to know how far it is higher or lower. It tests externally defined objectives and is objective in nature. Alen Davies (1990) is of the view that both types are not mutually exclusive and a norm referenced test, at some point, uses criterion referencing in order to determine a cut off, a level that needs to be reached for some purpose. Similarly, criterion referencing requires norm referencing to establish what levels are suitable.

2.5. Attributes of an Ideal Test

The credibility and effectiveness of assessment depend on the validity of the instruments or tools used to measure what is to be measured. Bachman and Palmer (1999), while commenting on designing and developing useful language tests, observe that tests differ from other components of instructional programme like teaching material, learning activities for their primary purpose of measurement. Of all the qualities of an ideal language test - reliability, validity, authenticity, discrimination, positive washback and practicality- the first two are critical for tests because they are the qualities that provide the

major justification for using test scores –numbers as a basis for making inferences or decisions. These essential requisites can be elaborated as follows.

2.5.1. Reliability

In simple terms, it is defined as consistency of measurement which helps yield consistent test scores across different characteristics of testing situations. The notion of reliability implies that if the same tests were to be administered to the same test takers on two different occasions, in two different settings, the test scores in both the occasions have to be justifiably similar. In other words, students who obtain high scores on one set of items also obtain high scores on other sets of equivalent items, and those who have a low score on one set of items also have a low score on other sets of items (Scannel and Tracy, 1975). Thus, reliability is the degree of stability and trustworthiness of the instrument which has been used to gather data. In Spearman's (2009) view, reliability refers to a particular kind of consistency of results obtained over a period of time, over different groups but using similar tests (equivalence) and over different parts of a test (p.16).

2.5.2. Validity

This refers to how far a test includes indicators of constructs (abilities) of the test takers' language competence that a test is expected to measure. The term, thus, is used to mean the extent to which scores on a given test can be interpreted as evidences of the abilities we intend to measure. Validity is established not by declaration but by evidence. To phrase it another way,

validity in testing refers to whether the test measures what it claims to measure, and whether it measures what was taught. For example, a test which is designed to determine the extent to which a particular group of students have mastered specific algebraic concepts will not be valid when administered to a different group of students with the intent to determine their performance in Elizabethan literature. Similarly, a test of English as a Second Language (ESL) is not valid for students learning translation theory (Heaton, 1995). Messick's (1995) unified view of validity predicated that validity is a multifaceted concept, which can only be established by integrating considerations of content, criteria, and consequences into a comprehensive framework for empirically testing rational hypotheses about score meaning and utility. This concept has sub divisions like face validity, content validity, construct validity and criterion related validity.

2.5.2.1. Face Validity is said to exist if a test item looks suitable and apt in superficial inspection. For example, a test of spoken English skills should appear to be testing the communicative competence of the candidate. It is the first impression that the test creates in an observer.

2.5.2.2. Content Validity implies constructing the test in such a way that it contains representative samples of the course and it reveals the apparent relationship between the test items and the course objectives. When content validity lacks in a test, the testees may complain that the test doesn't cover areas in the syllabus that ought to have been tested.

2.5.2.3. Construct Validity means whether a test is capable of measuring certain specific characteristics of language ability as postulated in a theory of language behavior and acquisition. It is related to theoretical ideas about various abstract notions. Thus, the construct validity will help the assessor to infer the degree to which the testee possesses the hypothetical quality (construct) presumed to be reflected in his /her performance.

2.5.2.4. Criterion Related Validity is a type of validity where the newly developed test is measured against an existing test whose validity has been established. The degree of correlation with the existing test helps ensure validity of the newly developed instruments.

In short, questions pertaining to the validity of a test include what the test measures; does it measure what it wants to measure, and whether it measures what was taught? Henning (1987) claims that a good language test should consider how relevant is language behavior being tested in meeting the communicative needs and whether or not the users of the test will accept its content and format. A test should comply with at least one of the four types of validity discussed above. The closer a test is proved to be to its purpose, the more valid it is.

2.5.3. Practicality or **Usability** is the third important attribute of a good test. It involves the economical use of time and expenses in test construction, test administration, and test scoring. A test may be highly reliable and valid and yet not be practical for use in a given testing context.

2.5.4. Authenticity

It is another equally important feature of a good test. In communicative testing, authenticity is a key element in the designing of materials and test items. It means assessing language behaviour by observing it in real, or at least realistic, language-use situations which should be as authentic as possible (Gronlund, 1985).

2.5.5. Discrimination

This feature an ideal test implies the capacity of a test to differentiate among the different candidates and to reflect the differences in performances of the individuals in the group. For example, a test in which all the testees score more than 70% clearly fail to discriminate the more talented and the less talented among the candidates. It is dependent on the degree of difficulty of the test items.

2.5.6. Positive Washback

Washback is defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning process. If a test is said to be harmfully influencing the scope and objectives of a course, limiting teaching to training for tests, it is said to be negative washback. Positive washback is said to exist, if the testing strategies promote and enhance the course objectives in a beneficial manner. An ideal test should have a positive washback on teaching, learning and language acquisition. Graphically, these attributes can be better illustrated as follows:

Figure 2.3. Attributes of in Ideal Test

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                    │           authenticity            │
                    ├──────────────────────────────────┤
                    │           practicality            │
  ┌──────────┐      ├──────────────────────────────────┤
  │ language │      │          discrimination           │
  │   test   │──────┤                                   │
  │attributes│      │             validity              │
  └──────────┘      ├──────────────────────────────────┤
                    │            reliability             │
                    ├──────────────────────────────────┤
                    │         positive washback          │
                    └──────────────────────────────────┘
```
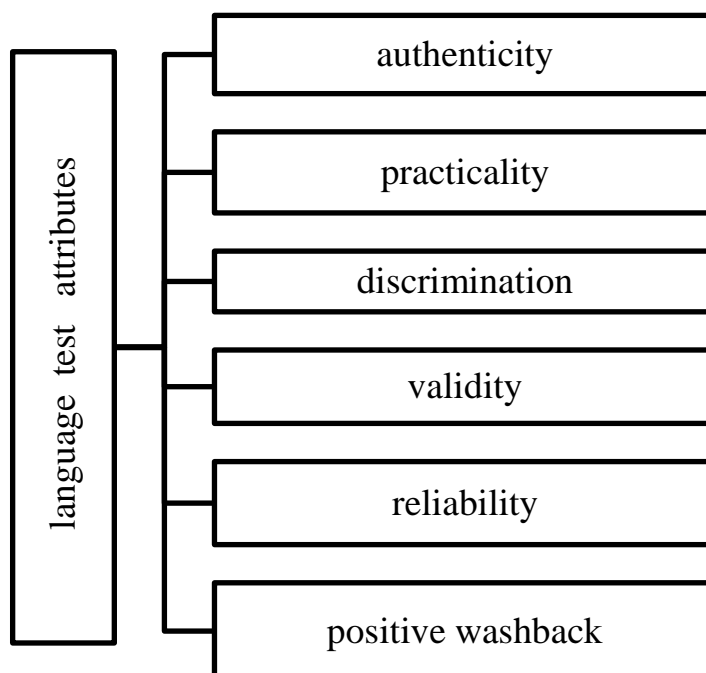
2.6. Approaches to Language Testing

Madsen (1983) compartmentalizes the evolution of language testing into three stages- the intuitive, the scientific, the communicative. The criterion for his divisions is the perceptional changes of educators to teaching and learning language over the years. Some other researchers on language testing (Morrow, 1979 and Heaton, 1995) prefer to term these periods in the history of language testing as pre-scientific, sychometric-structuralist and psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic. A recent approach added to this division is communicative approach to language teaching and its counterpart in language testing is assessing communicative competence.

2.6.1. The Pre-scientific Period

In this period, often estimated as 1950s, there was virtually no language testing research. Teachers constructed their own tests, basically following the general principles of humanities and social sciences. The popularly used test items in this period were grammar-translation or reading-oriented activities, such as translation, essay-writing, testing knowledge of grammar, often with incomplete sentences to be completed. This is the reason why Heaton (1982) calls it 'the essay-translation approach'. It has also been termed 'traditional' and had a highly subjective character and no attention was paid to reliability, objectivity or statistics. Madsen (1983) calls this first period 'intuitive' because of its subjective character and its dependence on the personal impressions of teachers. In fact, one of the main problems of this approach, apart from those mentioned, is the one derived from subjective marking.

2.6.2. The Psychometric-Structuralist Period

The psychometric-structuralist stage refers to the period in which the Discrete Point (DP) approach dominated with the assumption that language can be broken down into isolated segments for testing purposes (Lado, 1961,p.18).The exponents of this approach, being influenced by structuralist linguists, equated knowledge of language with the mastery of the features of the language as a system. ELT testing, during this period, focused on the learners' knowledge of the grammatical system, of vocabulary, and of aspects of pronunciation in a de-

contextualised manner. Thus, the point of grammar chosen for assessment would be tested one at a time and tests of grammar would be separate from tests of vocabulary. This practice of testing separate and individual points of knowledge, divorced from its social or communicative context, was backed by the then emerging science of the measurement of cognitive abilities called psychometrics. This is why the period is termed the psychometric-structuralist .The overemphasis of this approach on reliability and validity made multiple choice questions as the most suitable item format for test construction.

Testing, during the period, focussed on specific language elements (discrete points, each item tests an element), especially centred on the contrasts between the mother tongue and the target language. This period is also called 'modern' and 'scientific' because with the help of measurement experts and statistical procedures it was demonstrated that testing can be objective, precise, reliable and scientific. In this time, multiple-choice questions centred on structures or vocabulary items together with tests were devised to measure performance or recognition of separate sounds. The main criticism based on the fact that it was based on an atomistic view of language (isolated segments) and on the idea that knowledge of the elements of a language is equivalent to knowledge of the language.

2.6.3. The Psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic Period

The psycho-linguistic-sociolinguistic stage refers to the period just before the advent of communicative language testing at the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. This approach considers language interactive, functional, purposive,

authentic, and contextually bound and attempts to assess language proficiency in a holistic way (Morrow, 1979).The growing dissatisfaction with structuralism and behaviourism led test writers and teachers to consider the need to test the whole aspects of the communicative skills. In this way, integrative tests, such as Cloze, dictation, composition, oral interviews and translation came to be used. Tests in this period were also called pragmatic tests because they require from the students the use of more than one skill and one or more linguistic components.

2.6.4. The Communicative Period

Within a decade after the DP approach gathered momentum, the language educators/testers felt the need of assessing the practical skills of learners and this move was intensified by the beginning of communicative wave in ELT. These two factors resulted in the development of integrative and pragmatic tests .They, unlike the DP tests, integrated knowledge of all the relevant systematic features of language (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) with an understanding of the context. The test items during this time consisted of oral interviews, composing of whole written texts, and tests involving comprehension of extended spoken and written discourses (Mc Namara, 2000).

Moller (1981) provides the following definition for communicative language tests:

> An assessment of the ability to use one or more of the phonological, syntactic and semantic systems of the language 1) so as to

communicate ideas and information to another speaker/reader in such a way that the intended meaning of the message communicated is received and understood and 2) so as to receive and understand the meaning of a message communicated by another speaker/ writer that the speaker /writer intended to convey (p.39).

The wide range of impacts that the Communicative Approach (CA) to ELT made all over the world during the early 1970s left its consequential influences on language testing as well. The CA is based on the premise that language is primarily a tool for communication. The exponents of CA argue that knowing a language is more than knowing its rules of grammar. The learner's mastery of a language depends on their ability to use it in real life contexts and to communicate inner ideas and thoughts in day-to-day social environment/life contexts.

Because of the changed perspectives on language education, the language testers of communicative approach developed a theoretical framework for communicative testing in English and it stressed the external and social functions of language for purposive communication in situations closely similar to those in actual life. These tests were designed to assess students' proficiency and were tailored to include items which possibly measure the students' communicative ability in all levels of language.

Brown (1987) elaborates the characteristics of a communicative language test. Tests of performance like interviews, pair talks and role-plays were introduced

to assessment mechanism in which the performative competence of learners in the macro skills of English was rated. According to Brown (1987), a communicative language test has to meet the following criteria:

> It has to meet some rather stringent criteria. It has to test for grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and illocutionary competence as well as strategic competence. It has to be pragmatic in that it requires the learner to use language naturally for genuine communication and to relate to thoughts and feelings, in short, to put authentic language to use within a context. It should be direct (as opposed to indirect tests which may lose validity as they lose content validity). In addition, it should test the learner in a variety of language functions (p. 230).

Canale and Swan (1980) specified the components of communicative competence as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. They can be elaborated as follows:

Grammatical Competence is concerned with components of the language code at the sentence level, e.g. vocabulary and word formation.

Sociolinguistic Competence is concerned with contextual components such as topic, status of interlocutors, purposes of communication, and appropriateness of meaning and form.

Discourse Competence is concerned with: (i) a knowledge of text forms, semantic relations and an organized knowledge of the world; (ii) cohesion −

structural links to create meaning, and (iii) coherence – links between different meanings in a text; literal and social meanings, and communicative functions.

Strategic Competence, which is concerned with (i) improving the effectiveness of communication, and (ii) compensating for breakdowns in communication.

Bachman (1990) defines communicative language ability as both knowledge of language and the capacity for implementing that knowledge in communicative language use and realistic situations (p.107). Brown (1987) mentions some primary criteria for the construction of communicative tests: concentration on content, providing something motivating, interesting and substantive and at the same time integrated and interactive, and grading the difficulty of the items (p.230). Bestard Monroig and Perez Martin (1992) emphasize the importance of providing students with a physical context like the house, the bus etc, a clear communicative activity and the socio-cultural context. They also insist on the relationship between the participants (p.201). As regards the difficulty of offering a completely real context, they suggest the use of an imaginary context in the classroom by means of drama, simulation, problem-solving activities and role-play and they insist on the need for a global, qualitative and comprehensive assessment.

Brown (2003) specifies four salient principles for communicative language testing (p. 34) :

- Tasks in the test should resemble as far as possible to the ones as would be found in real life in terms of communicative use of language
- There is a call for test items contextualization.
- There is a need to make test items that address a definite audience for a purposeful communicative intent (goal) to be envisioned (might happen).
- Test instructions and scoring plans should touch on effective, communication of meaning rather than on grammatical accuracy

According to Farhady (1983) both DP and Integrative Tests (IT) have theoretical and statistical deficiencies. DP tests have problems with their content validity because the language segments, sampled for test items, are neither adequate nor authentic. ITs, on the other hand, have problems with their reliability because they seem to violate the assumption of item independency. Since the reliability and validity of a test are closely related, previous interpretations of the reliability and validity of IT and DP tests are at best questionable. It should be mentioned that ITs such as oral interview, examinations and compositions are not subject to these inadequacies. The problem with these ITs, however, is that they are not practical for large populations because of the amount of time, expense and energy involved in administering and scoring them.

An ideal solution to strike a balance between the DP tests and ITs will be to devise tests that include the positive characteristics while minimizing problematic aspects. In this regard, Farhady (1983) observes "such tests would

have independent items with predetermined purposes which would preserve the context of language use based on meaningful communication" (p.39). The EFL/ESL testing, in the years to come, is likely to follow this direction.

The close relationship between teaching and testing in educational settings (Gronlund, 1976) suggests that testing methods in ESL should be directed towards teaching approaches. Unfortunately, however, developments in testing have not been fast enough to cope with instructional advancements. Especially in the context of ESP, testing has received the least attention and almost no practical attempt has been made to develop tests which fulfil the needs of the field.

2.7. Recent Trends

The history of language testing is seen to have undergone different evolutionary changes from the high degree of subjective, discrete and unscientific methods of testing into scientific, integrated, communicative and integrative testing strategies using both formal and informal or alternative methods of assessment. The recent trend in language testing is towards giving greater weight to continuous or alternative assessment in which learners linguistic and performative abilities in the target language are assessed throughout the course. A variety of formal or informal strategies like seminars, projects, portfolios, blogs, presentations and assignments rather than high stake formal tests in which the scorability depends a lot on extraneous factors and the

authenticity of reliable evidence from such tests about student's skills to use the target language has been questioned.

2.7.1. Continuous Assessment

The recent deliberations in language testing literature advocate more weight to formative assessment than to the summative assessment because the practice of evaluating learners' communicative competence in traditional pen paper tests lacks credibility and validity as test performances rely upon a variety of learners' emotional, social, psychological and cognitive factors. In this respect, Le Roux (2011) observes "varied continuous assessment mechanisms offer a broad spectrum of ways in which students can account for their day-to-day learning, drawing on varied skills sets in authentic settings without the pressure traditionally associated with written tests" (p. 84). It gives chances for students to get incessant updates on the strength and weaknesses of their skills in the language in an authentic setting. These feedbacks, in turn, take the shape of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the processes of language acquisition.

The Continuous Assessment (CA) has been advised as an integral part of assessment in language testing because the recent literatures on language testing pose doubts on the authenticity and naturalness of assessing EFL learner's communicative competence in formal tests of two/three hours in which the act of communication, in the real sense of the word, doesn't happen. Spolsky (1981) concludes that long term, patient and sympathetic observation of authentic language behavior is the only full solution to the problem of

conducting natural language assessment. The major strategies and techniques used in CA are portfolios, projects, presentation, seminar, classroom participation, regular observation and periodic tests held in an informal setting.

2.7.2. Performance Testing Approach

Any assessment can be considered a type of performance when a student is placed in some context and asked to show what they know or can do in that context. Performance-based assessment believes that the students will learn best when they are given a chance to perform and show what they know according to their own plan, collect data, infer pattern, draw conclusion, take a stand or deliver presentation. According to Brown (1996, p. 34), in developing performance-based assessment, teacher should consider the following principles:

• State the overall goal of the performance.

• Specify the objectives (criteria) of the performance in details.

• Prepare students for performance in stepwise progressions.

• Use a reliable evaluation form, checklist or rating sheet.

• Treat performances as opportunities for giving feedback and provide that feedback systematically.

2.7.3. M-Testing/E-testing

The wide spread use of ICT and the internet in educational practices has redefined the whole perspective of teaching, learning, assessment and the traditional roles of the stakeholders in a drastic way. Though the potential of e-content, digital materials and e-resources are plentifully exploited in

instructional practices, the viability and prospective advantages of incorporating e-testing into formal and informal assessment is underexplored. There are numerous web tools and online testing applications, which can be freely utilized to ensure regular and continuous assessment of learners throughout the course. In testing mechanism for languages like English, inclusion of a variety of alternative testing tools and continuous assessment of learner's achievement of the skills in TL are a necessity to maximize learning outcome. Therefore, integration of these digital testing tools to formal and informal English language testing will be of exponential benefit with little additional workload on the teachers.

The handheld or hybrid devices like *phablets* /smart phones have paved the way for round-the-clock access to the internet with ease and speed and it seems to have reduced the world into a palmtop globe. The fact that most of the learners possess a smart phone and are well exposed into its educational utilities/applications makes it easy to use it as a great pedagogic tool to extend learning beyond the formal framework. The integration of mobile technology and educational apps into teaching, learning and testing English has numerous advantages. It transforms learning from a teacher dominant process to learner-based interactive process and leaves ample space for individual pace. It can effectively cater to learner levels and differences as these apps offer a variety of options for customization or personalization.

The key plus of e-testing/m-testing is the feasibility of immediate feedback as correction is done automatically. The teachers are relieved of the laborious task of grading and tabulating learner's scripts meticulously. Since digital testing takes care of marking and tabulating tasks, the assessment strategies can include a series of continuous tests to measure learners' achievements in language skills on a regular basis. Moreover, providing learners with feedback on a regular basis motivates them well and helps them know of their strengths and weaknesses in the target language. In addition, both teachers and students get considerable chances to revise/review their teaching/learning tactics to maximize learning outcome and better level of skill acquisition.

The favorable opportunity of ubiquitous use of cell phones and the advanced level of our learners' digital literacy and booming emergence of apps for educational purposes have to be utilized to revamp learning experiences in a way the digitally native generation looks for. Integration of e/m-testing tools into the traditional framework of paper and pen can tremendously enrich and enhance the validity, efficacy, comprehensiveness and authenticity of language assessment. A few free softwares /web tools/ m-testing applications that can effectively be used for teaching and regular in-class tests on reading skills, vocabulary and grammar are the following .They offer a simple user interface, easy account creation steps and reasonably good customization options absolutely at free of cost.

2.7.3.1. Socrative Student/Teacher

Socrative (http://www.socrative.com) is a free e-learning platform that works both on computers and mobile phones and has an amazingly simple user interface. Only the teacher needs to create an account in Socrative and it takes seconds because the only detail needed is an active email. Once a teacher account is created, a room number is generated which the students have to type in to log on to the room. The teacher himself/herself can test all options of the app if (s)he has two devices , one for student log in and the other for teacher log in. It helps engage the entire classroom with educational exercises and games while capturing student results in real-time. Moreover, the quizzes created by a teacher can easily be imported/shared by others using a code generated for each quiz. In addition to grading the results of tests/quizzes automatically, Socrative has also effective options like real time group games, exit ticket and short quizzes.

2.7.3.2. Infuse Learning Application

Infuse Learning (http://www.infuselearning.com) is a free student response system that works with any Internet-connected device like computer/tablet/mobile phones on Android/iOS platforms. Infuse Learning allows teachers to push questions, prompts, and quizzes out to students' devices in private virtual classrooms. It has a highly user friendly interface and students can log in using the room number given by the teacher. This e-learning platform helps teachers and learners interesting/assessment as it accommodates a wide variety of formats like standard multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions. Infuse Learning also offers an option for students to

reply by creating drawings or diagrams on their iPads, Android tablets, or on their laptops.

2.8. Need for Skill-based Exams/Testing Strategies

Tests have to measure accurately whatever they are intended to measure. Many teachers feel that students actual abilities in the target language are not reflected in the test scores they often obtain. According to Hughes (1989), there are two main sources for this mismatch, namely test content and test techniques. Test content refers to the language items and specific language behaviour or skill that are tested in a test whereas testing strategies imply the means of obtaining indicators of these skills or types of tasks used.

The main purpose of teaching English as a Second Language, especially Common English Courses offered at undergraduate level, is the development of the ability to interact successfully in that language and this involves comprehension and production. So, any test which meets the absolute characteristics like validity, reliability, authenticity, positive washback and practicability should have tasks that form a representative samples of all the skills that the course expects the learner to achieve. Since the traditional paper /formal tests gave little or no weight to skills like Listening and Speaking, and are largely testing learners' ability to reproduce certain contents in the prescribed books in writing, the recent studies on testing advocate for skill-based exams in which both formal and informal techniques of testing like presentation, interview, projects, portfolios and continuous observations are used to reduce the mismatch between the test scores and testees's actual ability

to use the language. In any internationally recognized tests of English (IELTS/TOEFL), learners ability to use the language in near- life contexts is tested without any attempt to check their ability to reproduce the content of a specific book as is/was the practice in a traditional content-based exam.

2.9. Conclusion

Though the areas of language testing has been stagnant and reluctant to change, recent surge of interest and research studies have foregrounded testing as a sacrosanct area in language education. A good volume of research has identified testing, assessment strategies and test construction as having influential impacts and positive or negative repercussions on the stakeholders like students, teachers, administrators, policy makers and curriculum designers. Keeping updated of the current research findings, changed perceptions of language teaching and testing, incorporating such developments and techniques to classroom teaching and testing practices are a necessity to ensure effectiveness in instruction and quality in education. Since assessment is central to understanding the achievement of learning outcomes and overall objectives of the programme, special attention and meticulous execution are a must throughout the process of assessment to ensure the success of the programme. The laxity in assessment framework can create loopholes for subjectivity, inflating, and personal grudges creeping into final grades of learners and it will, in turn, evolve themselves into many serious pitfalls in the system.

Chapter-3

The Language Testing Literature on Washback

3.1. Chapter Sketch

The chapter deals with the theoretical framework of examination washback, its diverse dimensions and types and how the term has been defined in the literature on language testing. Furthermore, it explicates factors affecting test impacts and different research investigations conducted to assess effects of tests on teaching and learning. The pedagogic implications of washback and how the stakeholders are being influenced by negative and positive washback are also discussed.

3.2. Defining Washback

The language testing literatures make ample references to the influence of exams on the instructional activities, students' attitude to learning and methodology adopted by teachers and effective implementation of curriculum. Tests are said to be powerful determiners of what happens in classrooms and it is commonly claimed that tests affect teaching and learning activities both directly and indirectly. It is a common popular presumption that teachers, being influenced by the design of the tests their students are to take in a course, will adapt their instructional methodology and lesson contents to cater to the needs of the test. Although the term 'backwash' was first used to imply the influence of testing on teaching materials and classroom practices (Hughes, 1989, p.1), the term 'washback' has

gained popularity nowadays within the applied linguistics and language testing community and is more widely used (Alderson, 2004, p.12).

Depending upon the type of influence that tests exert on the pedagogy, learners and the contents of instruction, washback is categorised as either negative or positive. The negative washback is said to work when the test constructs or test design are based on a narrow definition of language ability, and consequently constrains the teaching/learning context to those items. If a testing procedure, on the other hand, encourages 'good' teaching activities/learning habits among teachers/learners and better attention to mastery of language skills, it is termed positive washback. Despite the relatively large number of studies on language testing, the phenomenon of washback is yet to be adequately and consistently defined. Assertions about the nature, extent, and direction (positive/negative) of impact in language testing have often been based on assumptions rather than on empirical evidence. Alderson and Wall (1993) argued the need for empirical investigation and were among the first to develop appropriate research hypotheses.

The past ten years have seen a growing awareness that testing can have consequences beyond the bounds of classrooms. Tests and test results have a significant impact on the career or life chances of individual test takers .They also impact on educational systems, and on society more widely as test results are used to make critical decisions concerning the life of test takers, educational policy, and curriculum revamp. The term

'impact' is generally used to describe these wider consequences of tests (Bachman and Palmer 1996, p.11).

3.3. Theoretical Framework

The body of research and literature on language testing fails to assign a single definition to the concept of 'washback' and this diversity in definitions underpins the complexity and relativity that this term encompasses at its practical level. In simple terms, it is defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993, p. 10; Cheng and Curtis, 2004, p.14). Similarly, Shohamy et al (1996, p.298) defines washback as 'the connections between testing and learning' and Saville (2000, p.4) and Hughes (1989, p.1) as "the effect of testing on teaching and learning". Messick (1996), noting that washback can have either harmful or positive effects, describes it as 'the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning''(p.241). Andrews (2004), in an article that explores the relationship between washback and curricular innovation, gives a wider dimension to the term and defines it as "the effects of tests on teaching and learning, the educational system, and the various stakeholders in the education processes" (p.37).

Some language testers consider washback as one dimension of impact which implies effects on the educational context (Hamp-Lyons, 1997,

p.17) others see washback and impact as separate concepts relating respectively to 'micro' and 'macro' effects within society. Alderson and Wall (1993) restricted the use of the term 'washback' to "classroom behaviours of teachers and learners rather than the nature of printed and other pedagogic material" (p.118). Most testers locate both concepts within the theoretical notion of 'consequential validity' in which the social consequences of testing are part of a broader, unified concept of test validity (Messick, 1996). Consequential validity (along with related themes of fairness and ethics) has been extensively discussed among language testers in recent years (Kunnan, 2000).

Biggs (1995) used the term backwash to refer to the fact that testing drives not only the curriculum but teaching methods and students' approach to learning. Alderson and Wall (1993, pp.120-1) put forward 15 hypotheses listed below, highlighting more specifically some of the ways in which a test might affect teaching and learning. Which hypotheses will be put forward depends on the nature of the test, the educational context, and the nature of the decisions resulting from test outcomes. In fact, there seem to be a number of variables in society, education, and schools that determine how washback will appear. Bailey (1996, pp. 265-266) noted that five of the hypotheses relate to 'washback to the learners' and six relate to 'washback to the programme'.

1. A test will influence teaching.
2. A test will influence learning.

3. A test will influence what teachers teach ; and

4. A test will influence how teachers teach ; and therefore by extension from (2)above:

5. A test will influence what learners learn ; and

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.

14. Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.

15. Tests will have washback effects for some learner s and some teachers, but not for others.

Noting the uncertain nature of the phenomenon, however, Alderson and Wall (1993) observed that:

> The Washback Hypothesis seems to assume that teachers and learners do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test. They also make the point that even a 'poor' test could have a positive washback effect if it encouraged motivation on the part of learners or

teachers. For example, a test might encourage learners to 'do their homework, take the subject being tested more seriously, and so on', whereas teachers might 'prepare lessons more thoroughly (p. 117).

Hughes (1993) also attempts to operationalize the different workings of the washback effect. In his trichotomy model, he distinguishes between participants, processes and products. Participants in his model include students, teachers, administrators, materials designers and publishers. Processes are the actions undertaken by the participants and that may affect learning. Products refer to "what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning (fluency, etc)" (Hughes, 1993, p. 2).

One more recent attempt at disentangling the complexity of washback was done by Watanabe (2004, pp.55-56), who conceptualizes it in terms of dimension, aspects of learning and teaching that may be influenced by the examination, and the factors mediating the process of washback being generated. Watanabe's dimensions are specificity (to what extent is the specific type of exam or a specific component/aspect of the test that brings about changes in the teaching and learning), intensity (strong or weak washback depending on how much of what happens in the class or how many students or teachers are affected by the exam), length (the period of time an exam is said to influence the teaching and learning), intentionality (whether the social consequences of test interpretation and use were intended or unintended), and value (the value judgment -positive or negative washback- associated with a

test by a certain audience). Finally, Watanabe (2004) provides a number of factors mediating washback: test factors (such as purpose, content, method of the test, importance of the test) personal factors (beliefs, training of participants), and contextual factors (school, town, society where the test is used).

The present study focuses on the micro level test impact as it is circumscribed to variables related to immediate teaching/learning environment and investigates the impact of English tests for General English Courses (GEC) at UG level on participants (learners and teachers) process (actions by participants towards learning) and products (what is learned and the quality of learning) as suggested in Hughes' tri-chotomy model above.

3.4. Washback and Related Concepts

The wider level of empirical studies done in the last decade on the macro/micro level   impact of tests have clearly defined the theoretical framework for impact studies. There are many key terms used in the language testing literature and the major concepts related to washback can be explained as follows.

3.4.1. Test Impact

Although the terms washback and impact are sometimes used synonymously, test impact more accurately refers to the wider implications and effects of a given test. Reflecting awareness of the potential for effects that go beyond the   classroom, a distinction is commonly made between

'washback', the effects on teacher and learner behaviour in the classroom, and 'impact', the wider effects of testing, e.g., on teaching materials, educational systems and wider society (Wall, 1997; Taylor, 2005). Indeed, washback can be considered to be one aspect of impact (Taylor, 2005), the former being micro-level and the latter macro-level effects (Weir and Milanovic, 2003). Whilst the term 'washback' is commonly used in language testing and applied linguistics, in educational research, it is more usual to refer to the same phenomenon as the 'effects' or 'consequences' of testing, incorporating notions of both 'washback' and 'impact'.

Some researchers have argued that tests can have more far-reaching effects in the educational world than just in the language classroom. Bachman and Palmer (1996, p.12) used the term "test impact" to refer to the effects that tests have on individuals (teachers and students) or educational systems and on the society at large. Wall (1997) held a similar view by stating that "test impact refers to any of the effects that a test may have on individuals, policies or practices within the classroom, the school, the educational system, and society as a whole" (p.11). Andrews (2004) used "test impact" to describe, "the effects of tests on teaching and learning, the educational system, and the various stakeholders in the education process" (p. 9).

While acknowledging that washback can be seen as the influence and effect of tests on teaching and learning, McNamara (2000) noted, "Tests can also have

effects beyond the classroom. The wider effect of tests on the community as a whole, including the school, is referred to as test impact" (p.74). Wall (1997) makes a similar distinction between test washback and test impact, agreeing that the term 'impact' more accurately refers to "…..any of the effects that a test may have on individuals, policies or practices, within the class room, the school, the educational system or society as a whole" (p.291). Taylor (2000), building upon a model proposed by Rea-Dickins (1997), who identified at least 5 stakeholder categories: learners, teachers, parents, government and official bodies, and the marketplace (p.45), offers a more detailed conceptualization in order to illustrate the wider societal effects of a test (i.e. test impact).

Figure-3.1 : Stakeholders in the Testing Community

Learners Teachers	**Test construct** →		Learners Parents / Carers
School owners			Teachers
Test writers Consultants	**Test format** →		Receiving institutions Govt agencies
Examiners Raters	**Test conditions**		
Test centre administrators		**Test scores** →	Professional bodies
Materials writers	**Test assessment criteria** →		Employers
Publishers	→		Academic researchers
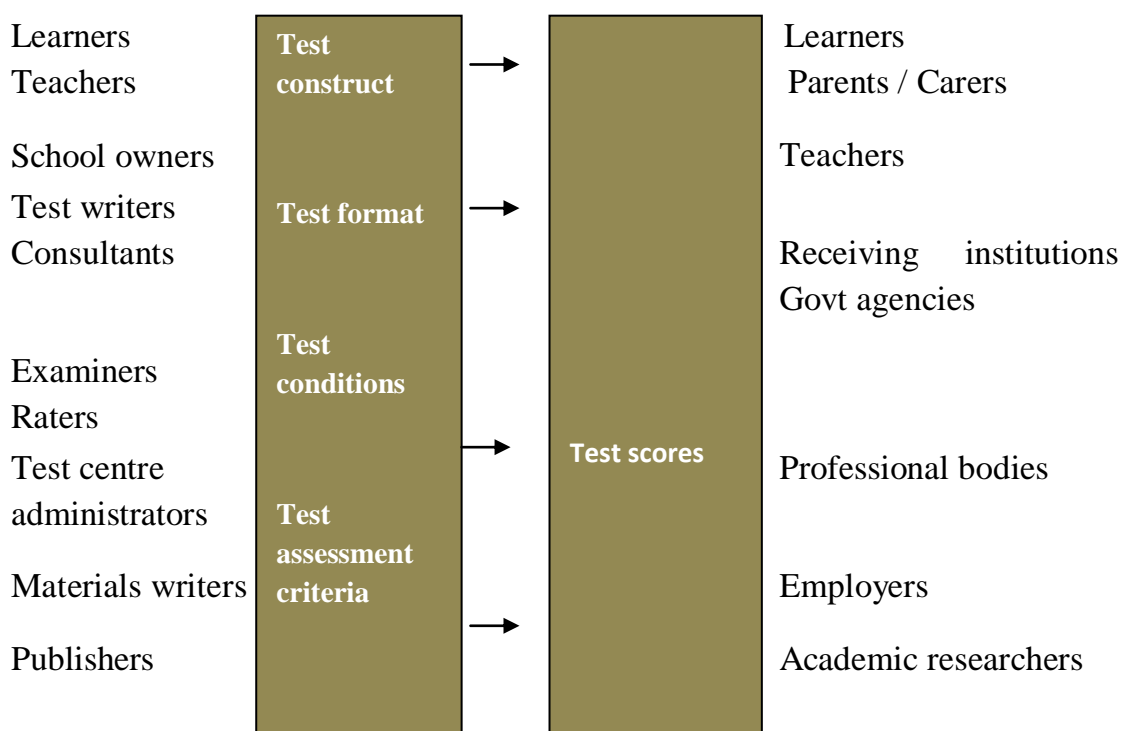
Source: (UCLES, 2000) University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

It is clear that the term 'washback' is open to a variety of interpretations and that there are a number of important variables to consider when conducting research into the issue. For example, how the term washback is defined, whether the micro level/macro level of effects of a test on teaching and learning are focused , or both the distant and immediate stakeholders in the education process (as illustrated in figure 2.1) are taken into account are some of the issues to be dealt with. Other issues also arise concerning the kind of influence that a test might have. In addition, if – as suggested by Messick (1996, p. 241) – the effects of a test can be harmful or beneficial, is it possible to foster positive washback and how it can be achieved are some other concerns.

Therefore, the term impact now appears to be used to describe studies that investigate the influence of language programs and /or tests on stakeholders beyond the immediate learning program context. The substantial volume of research in language testing in the recent decades has resulted in the emergence of various terms and definitions closely or distantly pertaining to different aspects of washback. They can be summarised as follows.

3.4.2. Systemic Validity (Fredericksen and Collins, 1989) refers to the effects of instructional changes brought about by the introduction of a test into an educational system, as stated, tests induce "in the education system curricular and instructional changes that foster cognitive skills that the test is designed to

measure'' (p.13).

3.4.3. Consequential Validity refers to the societal implications of testing that are only one facet of a broader, unified concept of test validity. Messick, (1996) defines it as "encompassing concepts ranging from the uses of tests, the impacts of testing on test takers and teachers, the examination of results by decision makers, and the potential misuse, abuse, and unintended usage of tests" (p.14). In other words, consequential validity implies that tests have various influences both within and beyond the classroom. Shohamy calls it measurement-driver instruction (1992) and contended that "the use of external tests as a device for creating impact on the educational process is often referred to as the washback effect or measurement-driven instruction" (p.15).

3.4.4. Curriculum Alignment: Shohamy (1996) defined curriculum alignment as the phenomenon of "modifying the curriculum according to test results or narrowing of the curricula to fit closely and exclusively with the demands of a test" (p.6).

3.4.5. Washback Validity: In Morrow's view (1986) "examining washback validity, in essence, would take testing researchers into the classroom in order to observe the effect of their tests in action"(p.16). In other words, washback validity deals directly with the extent to which the test meets the needs of students, educators, researchers, administrators of tests, and anyone who uses the test results in the future. In addition, washback validity refers to the value of the relationship between the test and any associated teaching.

3.5. Types of Washback

The large-scale studies held on language testing and washback in recent years have resulted in redefining the concept of washback overtime. Tests affect teachers and learners and they make impacts on the method/attitude to teaching/ learning in and out the classrooms. These effects might be either beneficial or harmful depending on various not-yet defined factors. Several forms of washback have been identified, including method, content and pressure. For each of these, positive and negative washback can be identified. Washback can be seen to have operation on teaching content, preparation for tests like training in test taking strategies, doing exercises of past papers, teaching methods, assessing students, and changing curriculum and materials used.

Generally, washback can be analyzed according to two major types: positive and negative, depending on whether it has a beneficial or harmful impact on educational practices (Hughes, 1989). Pearson (1988), elaborating on the phenomenon, observed: "It is generally accepted that public examinations influence the attitudes, behaviour, and motivation of teachers, learners, and parents" (p.98). This influence is often seen as negative: Vernon (1956, p.166) claimed that examinations 'distort the curriculum'. He felt that teachers tended to ignore subjects and activities which did not contribute directly to passing the exam, and lamented what he considered to be excessive coaching for exams. Morris (1972, p.75) considers examinations necessary to ensure that the

curriculum is put into effect. Swain (1985, pp.42-4) recommends that test developers 'bias for best' and' work for washback', while Alderson (1986, p.104) argues for innovations in the language curriculum through innovations in language testing. Green and Hawkey (2004, p.66) illustrate a historical expectation of negative washback from modern language tests, the kind of harmful influences that poorly designed tests are said to exert on the classroom and it is implied into the Target Language Domain (TLU) as a set of specific language use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside the test itself.

3.5.1. Intentional Washback.

This type of washback is said to operate when a test is deliberately planned in such a way that it exerts influences leading to positive outcomes and processes in learning and teaching. Such tests might be attempting to encourage language learning and teaching where the communicative activities of the target language domain and language teaching, learning and use on the course are similar or overlap significantly.

3.5.2. Content and Method Washback

If the contents and format of a test influence the materials to be taught in a course, it is termed as content washback. In the early 1960s, tests were beginning to be seen as having an effect on teaching apart from the better known roles of measuring student's achievement, placement, diagnostics or selection.

A test is considered to have beneficial washback, when preparation for it does not dominate teaching and learning activities. When a test reflects the aims and the syllabus of the course, it is likely to have beneficial washback, but when the test is at variance with the aims and the syllabus, it is likely to have harmful washback (Hughes, 1989).

Method washback, on the other hand refers to how a test influences the methodology of instruction adopted by teachers or the method of learning followed by students in a programme. Tests could have a washback on teaching and learning if it made teachers and learners do good or bad things they would not otherwise do. These might lead to teachers preparing lessons more thoroughly, learners working harder, or "taking the subject being tested more seriously". Alternatives, teachers may teach to the test "with an undesirable narrowing of the curriculum" in order to help their students achieve high scores (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p.35).

3.5.3. Pressure Washback

It implies any type of mental pressure that exams/results of exams create in the teachers or the testees or other stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in educational practices. The pressure washback also has two dimensions: productive and counterproductive. The former pressure helps motivate teachers and learners to teach/learn better. This might explain why some teachers teach to the test and why students might work harder when exams are approaching (Alderson and Wall, 1993).

The counterproductive pressure washback is said to work when tests cause anxiety, restlessness and extraordinary tensions among teachers and learners. Learners may perform abnormally because of the pressure of the test (Pearson, 1988, p. 60). Smith (1991) reported that data from teacher interviews showed that publication of test results caused feelings of fear, guilt, shame, embarrassment and anger as teachers believed test scores were used against them. The school administrators were believed to use test scores as a means of judging and controlling what teachers did. As a consequence of this, teachers determined to do whatever was necessary to raise scores despite the invalidity of the tests.

However, there were two different reactions possible to this narrowing of the curriculum: one was that teachers taught to the tests with the aim of raising test scores and keeping them high; the other was that if a teacher was resistant, it was because his pupils needed to "keep up with current events and trace the history behind what' s happening now" (Smith 1991, p.10). This suggests that washback effect might occur to some people but not to others and personal factors, rather than contextual issues, may determine the nature effect of pressure washback (Alderson and Wall, 1993).

In short, the phenomenon of washback is diverse in its nature and implications. It depends on many factors directly and indirectly related to teaching and learning. The various kinds of washback in force can be illustrated as follows

Figure: 3.2. Kinds of Washback
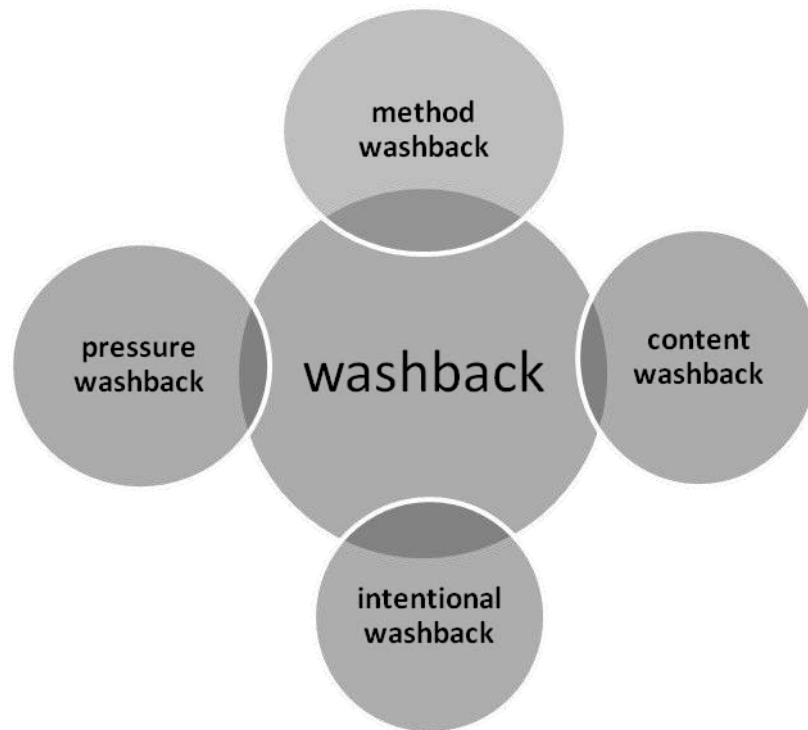
3.6. Pedagogical Implications

Studies (Andrews, 2004; Wall,1997) on washback stress the fact that it has far reaching pedagogical implications and consequences than generally perceived at peripheral level. In terms of the classroom setting at a micro level, the positive washback integrates meaningful and innovative learning activities in teachers' educational methodologies, and thus educators will devote more attention to students' intentions, interests, and choices. Students at the same time will be encouraged and motivated to work harder. On the other hand, the negative washback is that teachers will usually teach to the test, narrow the curriculum and only focus on what will be tested. Moreover, cramming will be

the washback brought by measurement-driven tests, even though there is an ongoing debate as to whether cramming is positive or negative washback. In terms of educational setting, the positive washback is that the authority can use the test to attain its goal of teaching and learning. However, the negative washback is that the authority uses that goal to control and obtain the power of the academic system that will usually place undue pressure and anxiety on school staffs, teachers and even students. In other words, the washback on the side of the educational setting is one coin with two sides, depending on the stakeholder's point of view.

By analyzing the possible positive and negative washback that tests might bring about at micro and macro levels, it seems that teachers play an important role in fostering different types of washback. In other words, the beliefs of the teachers are a critical factor in determining the washback effect. For example, a test, on the one hand, will encourage some teachers to think it is important to plan their curricula carefully to meet the needs of the test, but on the other hand, teachers may think that tests force them to teach what they don't find suitable or appropriate for students. Spratt (2005) has stated that the teacher plays a significant role in determining the types and intensity of washback, and thus, teachers have become the sources of promoting positive washback. Chapman and Snyder J. (2000) have expressed a similar view by stating that "it is not the examination itself that influences teachers' behavior, but teachers' beliefs about those changes" (p.462). As Watanbee (2005) suggested, teachers should be provided with in-service training and be familiar with a wide range

of teaching methods. Tests sometimes are used by schools or school administrations as a "lever" to introduce the innovation of new curricula, but it may change the format of what teachers instruct, not foster an in-depth change of teaching methodologies as a whole. As Wall (2005) stated, "examinations cannot influence teachers to change their practices if they are not committed to the new ideas and if they do not have the skills that will enable them to experiment with, evaluate and make appropriate adjustments to new methods"(p. 283). In other words, teachers themselves must conduct the changes and teachers need to have the necessary skills to adapt the changes. Again, teachers play a very crucial role in promoting positive washback or hindering negative washback.

There are two major perspectives that teachers should bear in mind. If they are test writers, they should try to make a match between what is tested and what is taught by using more direct testing, making sure the test is known by students. Tests are one factor that will lead the teacher to "teach to the test", and what students learn might be discrete points of language, not the communicative part of language they need in real life. To remedy this, it is desirable to use authentic and direct tests (Bailey, 1996). If we are responsible for helping students pass the test, we should try our best to learn more teaching methodologies by taking more training courses, engaging in peer observations and utilizing the tests to enhance students' learning while at the same time not inhibiting students' motivation by cramming too much. As teachers, Bailey (2005) remarked "we may have limited power to influence

highs takes national and international examinations, but we do have tremendous power to lead students to learn, to teach them language and how to work with tests and test results" (p.120). All in all, it's the teacher who has the most power to turn it into positive or negative washback.

Cheng (1997) observed "washback effects work quickly and efficiently in bringing about changes in teaching materials and slowly and reluctantly and with difficulties in the methodology teachers employ" (p.1).Cheng also reports that tests can be introduced to improve teaching and learning especially in countries where tests are treated as high stake and detrimental for future course of action. Messick (1996) claims that if a test is deficient because it has construct underrepresentation, then good teaching cannot be considered an effect of the test, and conversely, if a test is construct-validated, poor teaching cannot be associated with the test. Only valid tests (which minimize construct underrepresentation and construct irrelevancies) can increase the likelihood of positive washback.

All the several forms of washback identified so far are having double-edged impacts-namely, positive and negative. Washback can be seen to have operation on teaching, content, preparation for tests like training in test taking strategies, doing exercises of past papers, teaching methods, assessing students, and changing curriculum and materials used. Whether impact is intended or unintended, it would seem to be a legitimate and crucial focus of research, both micro and macro, to review and change tests and programs in

the light of findings on, among other aspects of programs or tests, how the stakeholders use the exams and what they think about them (Saville 2003, p. 60).

3.7. Conclusion

Washback is a complex notion. It not only refers to the effects of an exam on the classroom, but also on the school, on the educational system and on the society. This effect does not take place directly but it is mediated by a number of factors like the teachers' perception of the test, the status of the test, as well that of the subject matter tested, the macro context where the exam is used and the purpose of learning the language in the context. The concept of washback, being dependent on various complex variables, needs wider level of investigation and profound enquiry to gauge its full measure of influences within and beyond the classroom practices.

The present study, realising this fact, is circumscribed to the micro level of washback effects as it focuses on the three important variables– learners, teachers and curriculum. Drawing on Hughes' trichotomy model of impact studies, the investigation primarily hinges around the attitude of teachers/learners to current ELT testing pattern, washback effects of existing test framework on the pedagogy, instructional contents and whether the recent curriculum revamp has failed to hit the target due to keeping the old testing system intact. It also delves, in a considerable measure, to the overt divide between the performative competence and

linguistic competence manifested by a vast majority of ESL students at UG level and examines how far washback engenders/widens this linguistic/skill discrepancy.

Chapter-4

The Data Collection Tools and Methodology

4.1. Chapter Sketch

This chapter gives a detailed account of the different kinds of research tools used to gather the relevant data for analyzing test impacts on the ESL context under study. The relative advantages of each instrument, the type of variables targeted together with justification for their use in the study are also explained. It further showcases the research design, target population, hypotheses, research issues /questions and how far the reliability of the data has been ensured through a multi-model research methodology.

4.2. Instruments of Data Collection in Social Research

Social research is markedly different from scientific research because the former undertakes, as Yin (1994) remarks "an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of data" (p.60). Weiss (1998) also provides a useful definition when she describes social research like case studies as "a research strategy that investigates a phenomenon in its natural setting using multiple sources of evidence (p. 328). She also distinguishes the two general approaches as follows: quantitative research "examines phenomena that can be expressed numerically and analyzed statistically", whereas qualitative research "examines phenomena primarily through words, and tends to focus on dynamics, meaning and context" and in so

doing "usually uses observation, interviewing and document reviews to collect data" (Weiss, 1998, p. 335). Weiss (1998) further summarizes the distinction in the following way: "Quantitative evaluators tend to focus on whether and to what extent change in x causes change in y. Qualitative evaluators tend to be concerned with the process that connects x and y" (p. 284)

Robson (2002) suggests that researchers undertaking investigation of social phenomena need to develop specific skills including: question asking; good listening; adaptiveness and flexibility; grasp of the issues; and lack of bias. This is consistent with establishing "trustworthiness" in flexible designs which rely heavily on the behaviour of participants in the research context rather than the use of "instruments" to collect data. However, these designs are not without their difficulties, especially threats to the reliability and validity of the research which occur if procedural aspects are not dealt with effectively (e.g. researcher bias, respondent bias, reactivity, etc.). Triangulation is a procedural strategy which can help mitigate such risks and enhance the rigour of the research, and four types are typically found in the literature (Denzin, 1988,p.23).

- data triangulation (more that one method of data collection)
- observer triangulation (more than one observer)
- methodological triangulation (combining qualitative and quantitative methods)
- Theory triangulation (using multiple theories or perspectives).

The major instruments of data collection used in social research, like surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observational methods are all relevant to impact research and were employed in the present study. The relative merits and demerits of these tools used in gathering, analyzing and interpreting data can be described as follows.

4.2.1. Surveys and Questionnaires

Survey methods are typically associated with large-scale data collection exercises requiring large samples and statistical procedures in the analysis. These methods can be useful in impact research to establish current practices before a test or revised assessment practice is introduced, or else they may be part of the regular monitoring of how a test is used and how stakeholders feel about it. Construction of the instruments, sampling and analysis are important considerations especially when a wide-scale survey with statistical reliability and validity is required. It needs to be recognised, however, that real world research brings its own challenges in this respect and difficulties in obtaining representative samples or adequate response rates are likely to be faced by researchers. While care should be taken to address these issues it may be possible to deal with the data in other ways, as Robson(2002) pointed out "even if statistical generalization is not legitimate, it may be feasible to use the kind of theoretical generalization discussed in the context of flexible design research" (p. 267).

Small-scale surveys and questionnaires can also be used in case studies and in other kinds of narrowly focused research. However, care is to be given to the construction of such instruments, even in the cases where statistical analysis are inappropriate. Potential problems which can occur with survey research include: a lack of clear aims, implicit rather than explicit theoretical input, un-established causal relationships, inadequate sampling, instruments containing invalid items, lack of triangulation through other data collection methods, and interviewer or researcher effects. In summary, questionnaires can provide insights into the formulation of impact hypotheses and can serve to bring into focus issues which need to be investigated in more depth using other techniques such as interviews or direct observations.

4.2.2. Interviews

Survey techniques can be used in oral rather than written formats, e.g. for interviews conducted over the phone. Oral approaches involving interview formats are, however, more commonly used in face-to-face contexts, with an interviewer (researcher) asking questions and receiving answers from an individual or a group of respondents. The extent to which this questioning is structured is a key point, ranging from scripted, fully-structured interviews to unstructured, open-ended ones. The former tend to be used in fixed design research and the latter (semi-structured or unstructured) tend to be considered "qualitative research interviews" as used in flexible designs (King, 1994). An alternative way of thinking about this

is to make a distinction between respondent and informant interviews (Powney and Watts, 1987). In all types of interview, however, the role and behaviour of the interviewer is a crucial aspect of the method.

The relationship between the participants is also a consideration and this will vary depending on whether the interviewer is an "insider" or "outsider" to the context, and on whether the interview takes place in a one-to-one or group format. The dynamics of the event depending on these factors can determine the amount and quality of data obtained. Tellis (1997) suggests in relation to case study research that researchers need to "consider not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them"(p.125).

4.2.3. Observational Methods

Real world research generally involves observation in different modes. The observation carried out can be, either by being physically present at the time or through the use of recording techniques which produce a permanent record of the event which is to be observed (audio or video). In the case of the first, the observation could be conducted in an unobtrusive way (fly on the wall) or else the observer could become an active participant in the event (either in a flexible or in a structured way).

Participant observation is now widely used in flexible research designs which follow ethnographic principles. A key feature of this approach is that the observer seeks to become a member of the observed group, making this method particularly

appropriate for certain kinds of research study. Structured observation usually makes use of some kind of observation schedule and a coding system for capturing aspects of the event which are predetermined to be of interest to the researcher. Because subjectivity and inconsistency can be a problem with observations, it is quite common now to record what happens so that the coding and the analysis can take place later, possible with several observers so that inter-observer agreement can be addressed. When recordings are made as permanent records, these can be subjected to a variety of analytical studies.

4.2.4. Mixed Method Designs

Mixed method designs have become increasingly common in social research. Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007) defined mixed methods research "as an approach to research design which guides the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data in many phases in the research process" (p. 67).

The washback researchers emphasize on qualitative inquiry or mixed methodology to investigate about the examination washback effect because it encompasses numerous variables; only a quantitative research may not fully depict a complete picture (Cheng, L., 2004). So the present study, being an investigation to the perceptions of teachers and learners about existing test system and future test pattern, has made use of both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection- questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and classroom observations to ensure degree of reliability in generalization and judgment.

4.3. Need and Scope of the Study

While examining the history of educational research, especially in the field of English language education in the State, it is evident that there were a very few attempts made to investigate vital pedagogic issues encountered either by teachers or learners of English or both of them. A great chunk of doctoral or pre-doctoral studies carried out in English at Calicut University are/were dealing with areas related to English literature rather than ELE or applied linguistics. The issues related to English Language Education (ELE), either at the State level or at the university level, have rarely been investigated from various perspectives to critically review its efficacy, to effect required changes to meet emerging needs of the employers and to address real language needs of learners. Though a curriculum revamp for undergraduate (UG) programs was introduced in 2009 admissions onwards in Calicut University, the test contents and design were never revised and were not in line with the latest trends and developments in language testing. The exams, though detrimental for promotion or award of degrees, are not designed in such a way that they really assess the skills envisaged by the course or targeted by the syllabus. Therefore, an academic enquiry to critically assess the testing system and its impacts on the stakeholders, to reveal perceptions of teachers and students about the test items, patterns, and test strategies seems to be highly desirable. Moreover, such an investigation will be conducive to gauge how far the present mechanism is catering to the needs/perspectives of the people involved in the

system and to ascertain how far it is in compliance with the language testing practices at the global level.

4.4. Aims

The study is predominantly aimed at vivisecting the current system of tests given for the Common English Courses (CEC) for all undergraduate students of Calicut University in the light of international perceptions and benchmarks of language tests to see how far it has impacts on learning and teaching English as a language. To be very precise, the chief micro and macro aims of the study can be listed as follows:

1. To find out whether the present testing mechanism has any kind of influence on learning and teaching English

2. To understand what kind of a test impact is there, positive or negative due to the current test strategies

3. To investigate the perceptions of teachers towards the current exam pattern

4. To understand how students perceive the current system of testing for the UG common courses

5. To uncover how far the current test procedure complies with the internationals test practices in English

6. To examine whether the current tests are valid enough to measure the learning outcomes targeted by the course

7. To affirm if the existing test structure encompasses the basic principles/components of a standard test in language

8. To gauge how much weight is given to each skill of English in the current test design

9. To propose an alternate skill weighted test design in which learners ability to use English in contexts highly similar to their life and academic needs is tested

10. To explore the potential of integrating e-testing and m-testing possibilities for continuous assessment in a second language learning and teaching context.

4.5. Hypotheses

The present study is built on a set of assumptions that the researcher could draw/formulate because of his first-hand experience of being an English Lecturer at UG level for years and also from the discussions with a few of his experienced colleagues in the field on many vital issues related to the TESL scenario at UG level in Calicut University. They can be summed up as follows:

1. The present assessment strategy followed for UG Common English Courses has test impact/washback on teaching and learning English.

2. The two important stakeholders of the English language education viz. teachers and students are not happy with design and structure of the existing high stakes end semester exams.

3. The existing system of testing does not comply with the standard practices/design of an ideal language test in English.

4. Constructive changes in test structure can bring about better instructional practices in EL classrooms.

4.6. Subjects and Settings

The cohort of 120 students majoring in different disciplines like Mathematics, Physics, English and Arabic, who were pursuing their undergraduate degree in six Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to the University of Calicut were respondents to the student questionnaire. The researcher has taken care to administer the questionnaire to students who have sat for the high stakes semester end university examinations for the Common English Courses to ensure validity, reliability and authenticity of the responses. The selection of respondents from various disciplines was intentional because it is expected to add comprehensiveness, perceptional diversity/richness to the data collected. The respondents were briefed on the objectives and intention of the research and were encouraged to ask for clarification, if they found any questions obstructing their comprehension, during the time of answering the questions to maximize dependability, quality and authenticity of data.

All the participants have had studied English as a compulsory subject for more than 10 years before their university education and at least one year at undergraduate level in which they have taken two semester end exams in their common English courses. So, it is assumed that the respondents were well aware of the design, structure, test items of Common English Course exams, instructional

practices in classrooms at UG level and outlined objectives of the courses. To add further clarity and intention of the study, and to maximize authenticity of the responses, the researcher had given/shown a detailed briefing on the pattern, test items and question types used in the Common English Courses. The course objectives of CEC were also recapped.

The teacher questionnaire was given to 40 teachers who had extensive experience in teaching English at undergraduate level and were employed in six different Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to the University of Calicut. Out of the forty, only 30 teachers responded on time. To investigate diversity and richness in perception, care was taken to get responses from teachers who have taught English Common Courses at undergraduate level before and after the massive curriculum redesign in 2009. The respondents of the teacher questionnaire were also briefed on the intention, purpose and future scope of the research and were highly qualified, experienced and knowledgeable about the trends and developments in ELE at local and global levels to critically reflect and respond to the questions related to the efficacy, impact, reliability and validity of the current test system followed at the UG level in the university.

The number of participants in this study was determined on the basis of the suggestions by research methodologists. Cohen (1977) recommends that the number of participants per variable needs to be fourteen. Hair et al (1998) says that fifteen to twenty participants per independent variable are appropriate to

generalize research results. Therefore, the researcher chose a sample 20 students from five separate undergraduate majors in six affiliated colleges (6x20=120) and 30 teachers, approximately 6 each from a college.

4.7. Methods of Data Collection Used

Weiss (1998) noted that, when investigating human behavior and attitudes, it is most fruitful to use a multi-method approach in which a variety of data collection tools like observations, interviews, questionnaires and documental analysis are used so that the study can be more reliable on the strength of each type of data collection and minimize the weaknesses of any single approach. The present study has made use of a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods of obtaining data to ensure maximum credibility of the responses and dependability of the results.

The perceptions of teachers about the current tests, degree of impact on teaching, the validity, reliability and authenticity of the currently administered tests were obtained through a researcher developed and further validated questionnaire for teachers. The students perceptions on the current tests designed for the UG Common English Courses, their views on how it has bearing on their habit of learning or teacher's method of instruction, whether they are content or discontent with the test tasks etc were gathered through the questionnaire for learners. The other research tools used are document analysis, classroom observation and interview with the teachers. The two significant documents analysed in the study were previous question papers of end semester university examination for

Common English Courses and the syllabus for all the six compulsory courses offered at UG level in Calicut university. The primary purposes of these tools were to ensure and confirm the authenticity of responses, reliability of the results and how far the testing system reflect the learning outcomes and instructional objectives. Thus, the study basically intends to answer 12 important questions (Chapter-1, p. 46-47) related to teaching and testing of Common English Courses meant for all the undergraduate students at Calicut University using the data collection tools described below.

4.7.1. Questionnaire for Students

In the trichotomy model of washback propounded by Hughes (1989), the learners are said to be one of the key stakeholders. So the learner factors and responses are considered highly significant in understanding different variables of examination washback. The learner questionnaire is divided into three parts and the first part gives instructions to fill in, the second part includes validated questions and the third part is meant for furnishing participant's personal details which are thought to be relevant for the study. It consisted of 15 questions which intended to measure learners' perceptions on testing for UG Common English Courses and its influences on their learning habits or skill acquisition in the target language. Of the fifteen questions, three questions were of multiple-choice type and one to rate the weight given to the four macro skills in the current semester end exams. The rest of the questions (11) were close ended yes or no questions deftly designed to

measure impact of ESL tests at UG level on three components (Hughes, 1989) process ,product and participants.

Figure 4.1: Trichotomy Model of Washback
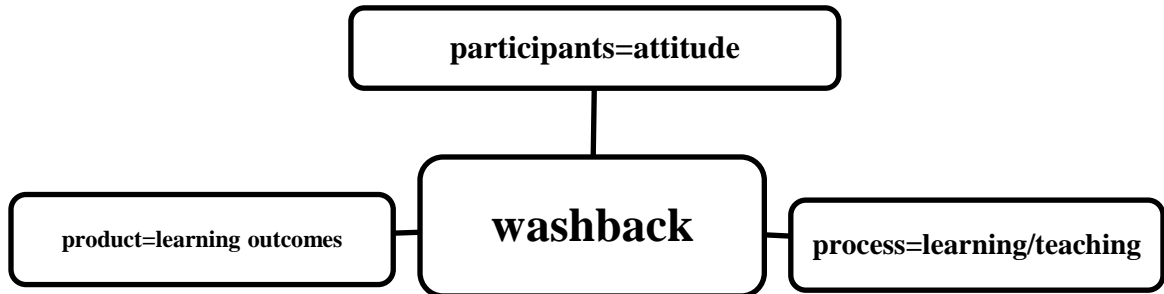
Questionnaire: Learner #1.

Examination washback on teaching and learning English as a second language.

- Please answer all questions truthfully. They are related to **Common English Courses at UG level.**
- If you feel like furnishing any additional details of importance, use the space provided at the end.
- Kindly **circle/check** each of your answers

1. What is the **main** purpose of your studying English? Check **only one**

   column

	Yes	No
To use English in real life		

Only to pass exams		
For both of the above		
None of the above		

2. Do you think the exams influence your habits of learning English?

    1. Yes

    2. No

3. Do you give less importance to those parts of text books that are not important for tests/exams?

    1. Yes
    2. No

4. Do you think the present exam structure of Common English at UG level is to be changed?

    1. Yes

    2. No

5. Do you think you can pass the Common English Courses if you by heart some expected answers before a few weeks of the test?

    1. Yes

    2. No

6. Does the current exam pattern of Common English Courses test all your skills in English?

    1. Yes

    2. No

7. Which of your skills are tested in the current test pattern? Rate them accordingly

(1=never ; 2=sometimes; 3=often; 4=always)

Listening	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4
Reading	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4

8. Do you think your communicative skill in English will be better if a speaking test is introduced to the existing assessment strategy?

    1. Yes

    2. No

9. Does your teacher stress the importance of exams in the class?

    1. Yes

    2. No

10. Do you think your teachers' teaching method in Common English Courses is exam oriented or skill oriented? Check **only one** column.

	Yes	No
Skill oriented		
Exam oriented		
Both		

11. Do you think the classroom learning/teaching activities are largely

influenced by final exams?

    1. Yes

    2. No

12. Do you think getting good marks in exams is evidence to your

communicative skill in English?

    1. Yes

    2. No

13. Do you like to have the present system of testing in Common English

Courses changed into skill based exams?

    1. Yes

    2. No

14. Do you give more importance to score marks in exams than acquire ability

to use English in real life?

    1. Yes

    2. No

15. If your answer to the question above (#14) is yes, what do you think is the reason for that? Check suitable column(s).

	Yes	No
Exam system		
Teachers' method of teaching		
Text books for the course		
Parents' pressure to get good marks		

Comments (if any):

Name:………
………………(optional).
Major………………………………………………………………
Class/Level/Year:………………………………………………………………..
Institution:………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……

4.7.2. Objectives

The student questionnaire targeted at understanding their attitude towards the current test system for UG Common English Courses and their perceptions of how the test should be. Moreover, it intended to investigate if the students think the present test strategies influence the content of instruction, nature of learning

English, acquisition of skills in the language and achievement of course objectives. In addition, there were a few questions from the teacher questionnaire, slightly reworded to confirm if both of them view a single variable in the same way and also to add authenticity and reliability to responses.

4.7.2. Questionnaire for Teachers

The teacher is instrumental in making examination washback effect positive or negative. Alderson and Wall (1993, p.127) negated any washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology whereas, Andrews et al (2002) pointed out a high influence of examination washback effect on teaching. Cheng, L. (1997, p.52) observed no change in teaching methodology with the revised examination, though class room activities might change. Shohamy (1993) reported changed methodology with high stakes EFL examinations, simulations of exam, tasks or creating new activities which directly aimed to improve exam skills. Hence, the teacher factor is considered to be one of the most influential factors in shaping washback effect. It was covered mainly through the questionnaire.

The questionnaire meant for the teachers, like the learner questionnaire, comprised of three parts, namely instructions to the respondents, researcher validated questions and the part for furnishing professional details which the researcher deems to have reasonable bearing on the study undertaken. Of the eighteen questions addressed to the teachers, three questions were of multiple choice nature ,two questions to rate test impact/weight given to macro skills in the current test

system and the remainder to measure teachers perceptions of how examination washback works on the process, product and participants of teaching CEC at UG level. The thrust areas of the questionnaire were whether the teachers are content with the test constructs, task types, skill weighting and validity of the current examinations. The space provided at the end of the questions in both questionnaires was to encourage the respondents to add, comment on any variables related to test impact which they think is worth mentioning.

Questionnaire: Teachers #1

Examination washback on teaching and learning English as a second language.

- Please answer all questions truthfully. They are related to **Common English Courses at UG level.**
- If you feel like adding any comments of importance, please use the space provided at the end.
- Kindly **circle/check** each of your answers.

---

1. Are your students learning habits influenced by the final exams?

    3. Yes

    4. No

2. Are you happy with the current test structure of Common English Courses at UG level?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Do you think the test pattern of Common English Courses has to be skill based rather than content based?

   1. Yes

   2. No

4. Do the final exams influence your classroom teaching? (1=never; 2=sometimes; 3=often; 4=always) .Rate **both** items.

   | Method | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
   | Contents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

5. Do you give greater focus to those areas that are thought to be important for exams?

   1. Yes

   2. No

6. Does the current test structure of Common English Courses help your students be better users of English?

   1. Yes

   2. No

7. Do you think your students' high scores in English certify to their communicative proficiency in the language?

   1. Yes

   2. No

8. If your answer to the above question (**#7)** is **negative** , what do you think is

responsible for the mismatch? Please check suitable column(s).

	Yes	No
Exam system		
Teachers' instructional mode		
Teaching materials		
Learners' learning habits		
None of the above		

9. Do you think effecting relevant changes in the present test structure can

change the teacher oriented method of instruction?

    1. Yes

    2. No

10. Do you think introducing speaking test/viva voce at UG level will have

positive effects on leaner's communicative competence?

    1. Yes

    2. No

11. Do you think your learners are more concerned about passing exams than

acquiring skills in English?

    1. Yes

    2. No

12. Do you think the present test pattern makes you recourse to lecture method

as contents are more tested than skills?

1. Yes

2. No

13. Does the exam system make you approach English at Under Graduate level as a content subject rather than a skill subject (language)?

    1. Yes

    2. No

14. Do you think introducing skill weighted exams for Common English Courses will be better/more useful?

    1. Yes

    2. No

15. How do you rate the weight given to the four skills in English in the current assessment system?

    (1=least; 2=little; 3=much; 4=most)

Listening	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4
Reading	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4

16. Do you think the recent curriculum change should have included changes in test structure also?

    1. Yes

    2. No

17. How does the revamped curriculum approach English? As a skill subject

(language) or content subject?

	Yes	**No**
Language		
Subject		

18. What do you think is an effective way to ensure communicative skills of

your students in English?

	Yes	No
Introduce skill based exams		
Give in service programmes to teachers		
Change the prescribed teaching materials		
All the above		
Other (specify)		

Comments (if any):

Name:………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………….(optional)

Designation
:……………………………………………………………………………………………….

Experience at UGlevel:………………(years).

Institution:………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

4.7.2.1. Objectives

The major objectives of the teacher questionnaire were to explore teachers' attitude towards the current system of tests administered to measure learner's achievement level in Common English Courses for undergraduate students and to measure their perspective about testing of English as a Second Language. Another aims was to assess how far, they think, the current assessment mechanism influences the teaching contents, instructional method, skill acquisition, students' learning habit in the ELE scenario at undergraduate level. Moreover, there were questions intended to measure their degree of acceptance of the weights given to the macro skills in English exams and the factors responsible for positive/negative washback effects.

4.7.3. Classroom Observations

Collecting information through classroom observation provides direct experience (Nunan, 1992). Schmuck (1997) asserted that "Observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways. They provide researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent

on various activities"(p.145). For class observation, the months prior to examination were selected. The purpose was to evaluate, in detail, the classroom practices before examinations. Notes were taken during the classroom observation.

4.7.4. Structured interviews

The washback study, being the understanding of phenomena, the researcher adopted multiple sources of data collection in the study to increase the reliability of the data, observations/judgments. By employing different methods of data collection in a single project, the investigators will be, to some extent, able to compensate for the limitations of each (Denzin, 1988). It appears likely that more reliable information can be obtained by doing a follow-up study in which interviews or direct/indirect observations are used.

The researcher conducted structured interviews with the teachers who responded to the questionnaires to further validate their responses and to have wider glances to their perceptions, observations, attitude and remarks about the test impact and ELE practices at the UG level. Most of the questions were reworded versions of those included in the questionnaire but suffixed with a why or what to get additional details and exploratory insights to their perspectives and the research issues in focus. The purpose of interview was to fill in the gaps in information already provided by the respondents in questionnaire. As the same teachers were selected for interview whose classes already had been observed, any clarification could be sought regarding class observation. The average length of interview was

10 minutes. The questions for the structured interview with the teachers were as follows.

1. Do you think your students' habits of learning English at UG level are influenced by the type of tests they take at the semester end? If yes why? If not why not?

2. Do you agree with the existing structure and test items of the exams for Common English courses at UG level? If yes to what extent and why? If not how to restructure it?

3. Do you think the present testing strategies at UG level affect the mode/contents of instruction in any way? How do you justify your stand?

4. Do you consider the current tests for UG Common English Courses as valid and reliable to measure learners' achievement of skills in English or the course objectives? If yes why? If not, why not?

4.7.4.1. Objectives

The major objectives of the interview and the classroom observation were to include a multi-model design of data collection in the study to avert some potential pitfalls while employing only one mode of research instrument in understanding the complex phenomenon of test impact. In addition, it could help add to the degree of reliability to the responses in the questionnaire along with giving a wider scope for teachers to express their perceptions on the test system currently in practice. Furthermore, these two tools also helped in giving chances for the

researcher to personally interact with teachers and discuss issues critical to English language testing and teaching at UG level.

4.7.5. Document Analysis

The documents taken for analysis as a research tool were the semester end question paper of Common English Courses at UG level; one paper each for all the six courses offered over four semesters. The chief intentions were to understand the nature of skills tested in the examinations, how much weight has been assigned to each macro skill, and to evaluate which language components are provided to assess the learner's skill in the TL. The document analysis was also meant to ascertain the degree of close alignment between instructional/course objective and the achievement of learning outcomes. Besides, how far the examinations fulfil attributes of an ideal test in English language were also analysed through this tool. It also helped in showing the disparity between the global practices in language tests and how far the current exams for CEC differed from them in test structure and constructs.

4.8. Problems Faced at Data Collection Stage

The notable problems faced by the researcher during the data collection were getting time slots in different colleges to administer questionnaires to students in their classrooms and the lack of interest on the part of some students to respond to the questions in a truthful and realistic ways. Another problem was to get answer to the interview questions sent to a few teachers on time. The location and radius

of distances between the colleges chosen for the study also posed some practical difficulties. Since care was taken to get the questionnaires completed in person on the same day, both from teachers and students, the whole activity was highly time consuming.

4.9. Conclusion

The study makes use of a mutli-model design of data collection to ensure maximum degree of authenticity and reliability as it is dealing with complicated variables in language testing and wasshback. The data is collected by means of separate, well designed and authenticated questionnaires for both teachers and students, direct class observations, document analysis of the previous UG question papers, current syllabus and structured interviews with a few teachers. To maximize the degree of authenticity and reliability of data, the statements in the questionnaires were mostly reworded in the interview and the informants were briefed on the purposes of the study and the ways of answering the questions. The spaces provided at the end of the questionnaire for any additional comments of the respondents were productively used by a few informants to add their views and comments in detail. Many of the comments added show that the respondents were really concerned about the issues raised in the questions and they have their own perceptions about the test design.

Chapter-5

Analysis of Test Impact on Common English Courses

5.1. Chapter Sketch

This chapter gives a detailed sketch of major research tools used for the study, a comprehensive analysis of the responses to the teacher questionnaire, leaner questionnaire, along with the findings of other research instruments like document analysis, class observation and interviews with the teachers that the researcher made use of to add credibility and validity to the data collected. Answers to each of the questions are illustrated graphically for better and easy comprehension.

5.3. Analysis of Learner Questionnaire

The learner questionnaire was divided into three parts and the first part gave instructions to fill in, the second part included validated questions and the third part ws meant for furnishing participant's personal details thought to be relevant for the study. It consisted of 15 questions, which intended to measure learners' perceptions of testing in UG Common English Courses and its influences on their learning habits or skill acquisition in the Target Language. Of the fifteen questions, three questions were of multiple-choice types and one to rate the weight given to the four macro skills in the current semester end exams. The rest of the questions (11) were close ended yes or no questions deftly designed to measure impact of ESL tests at UG level on three components (Hughes, 1993) process, product and participants. Many of the

questions were partly or greatly similar to those in teachers' questionnaire because the researcher wanted to investigate the variables of washback from two different stakeholders' perspectives to compare and confirm how far they yield the same/different responses.

Question No.1 was intended to understand which factor significantly motivates the students to learn English and also to uncover whether examination plays any considerable role in it.

Figure :5.1. Learner Question 1

Q.1 What is the main purpose of your studying English? Check only one column
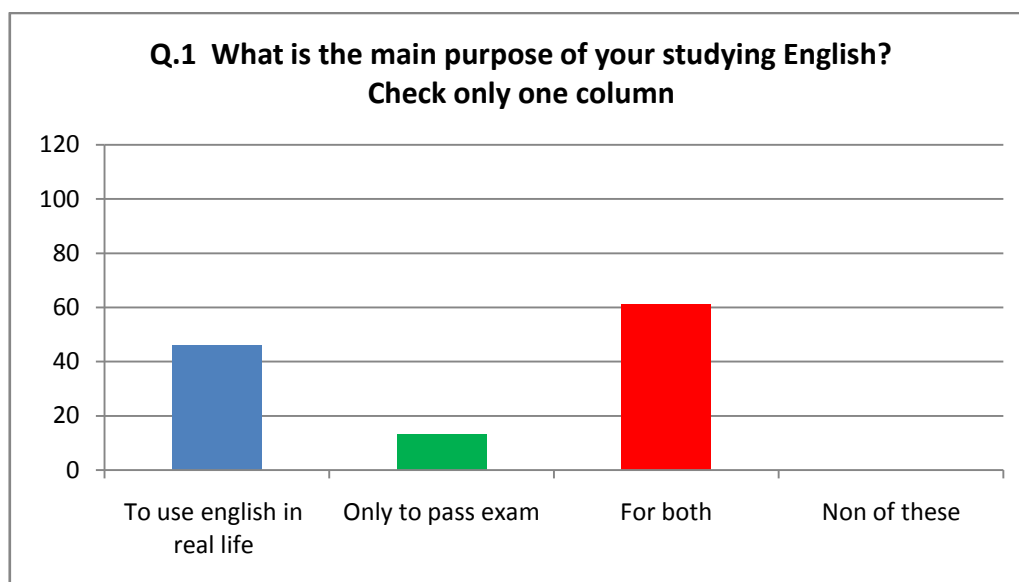
Among the respondents, 42% said that their purpose of learning English was to use the language in real life needs whereas only 11% believed that the most important factor for their learning English was exams and achieving good scores in exams. The students who considered both exams and real use in life as the main reason for learning English were 61%. The data throw light on the fact that many students are really interested to aquire practical skills in the use of English for their personal and professional advancement and they don't

consider attaining only good marks in English will help them much in the future life. It further stresses the need of designing exams in which the real skills in the use of English are tested and properly assessed. Furthermore, the responses indicate the necessity of considering stakeholders' interest in drafting and deciding course objectives to ensure there is no marked mismatch between the two.

Question No.2, was meant to throw light on whether learners think their learning habits in English are guided or influenced by exams for common English courses.

Figure :5.2. Learner Question 2
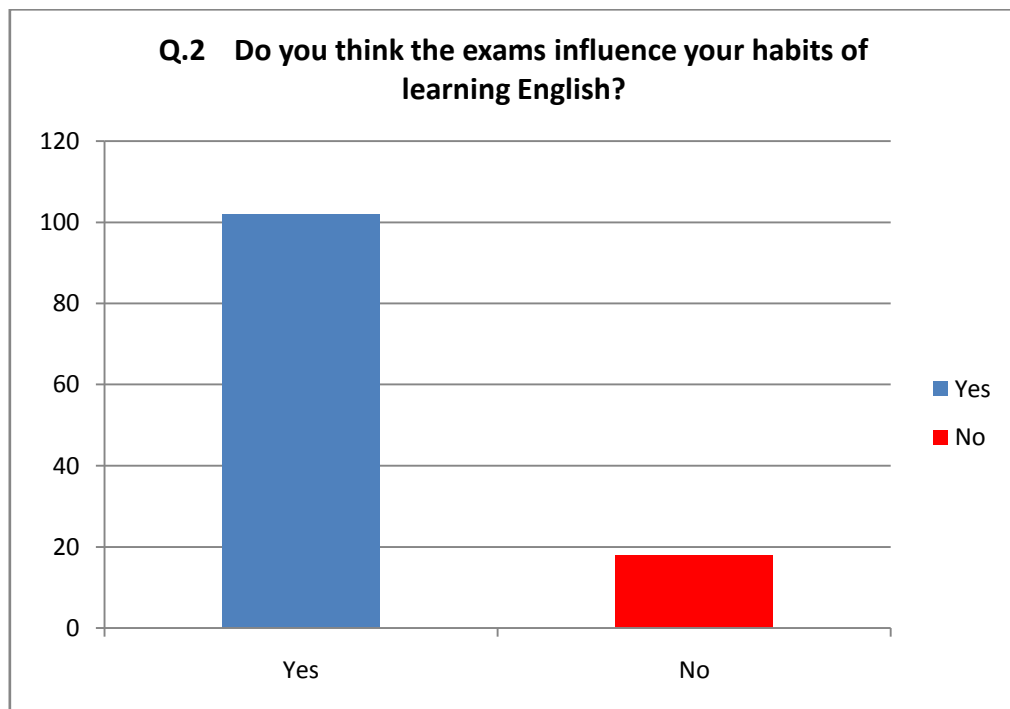
As the chart above shows, the perceptange of students who think that exams do influence their learning habits in English is remarkably big (85%) whereas those who hold a reverse view is just 15%. It is fascinating to note that when

the same question was put to teachers (TQ.No 1,p.148), a great number of them (93%) agreed with the opinion. Therefore, both students and teachers firmly underline the assumption that there is the phenomenon of test impacts or washback. The data, both from the learner and teacher questionnaires, underscore their firm belief that the current examination system and test design have overt washback on learning habits and teaching modality.

Question No.3 addresses one of the most important research questions of the study viz. what the two significant stakeholders of testing viz. teachers and students, think about the nature of washback effect of the current exams for CEC at UG level.

Figure :5.3. Learner Question 3
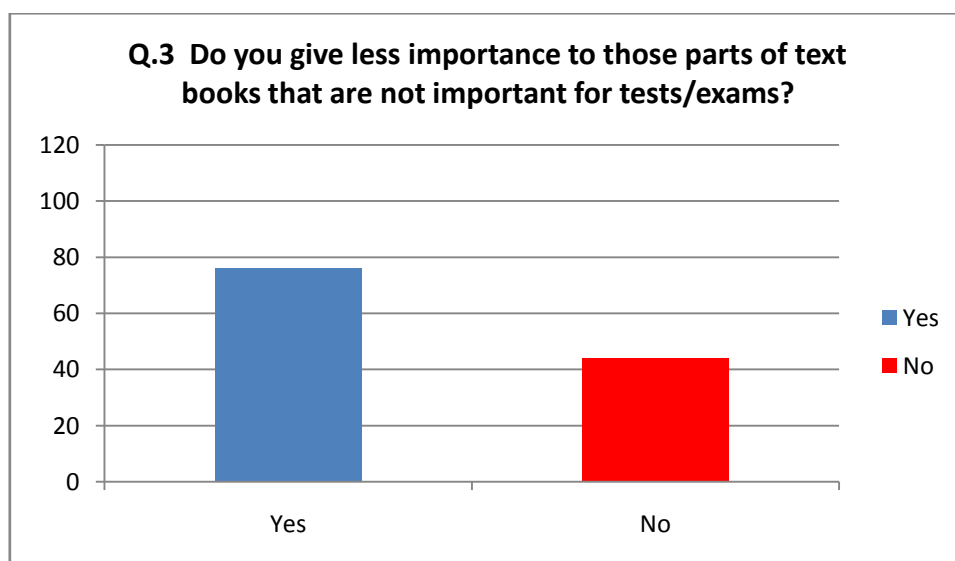
As the bar chart explicates, a good percentage of students (76%) believes that they don't pay serious attention to parts or units in the prescribed texts which are said or thought to be less important for exams.On the other hand, only (44%) gives equitable imporatnce to all units of the books irrespective of their

relative significance and weight for the semester –end university exams. It is really interesting to note that the teachers also responded in the same manner (TQ. No. 5) when the same question was put to them with little rephrasing. The datas in both the questionnnaires do asnwer the research question about the nature of test impact as being largely and evidently negative.So , the data implies that making positive changes in test pattern and design can bring about similar and productive changes in educational practices and stakeholders' perceptions to learning/teaching.

Question No 4 was intended to reveal if the learners desired for a change in the present exam design for Common English Courses and the question types.

Figure :5.4. Learner Question 4
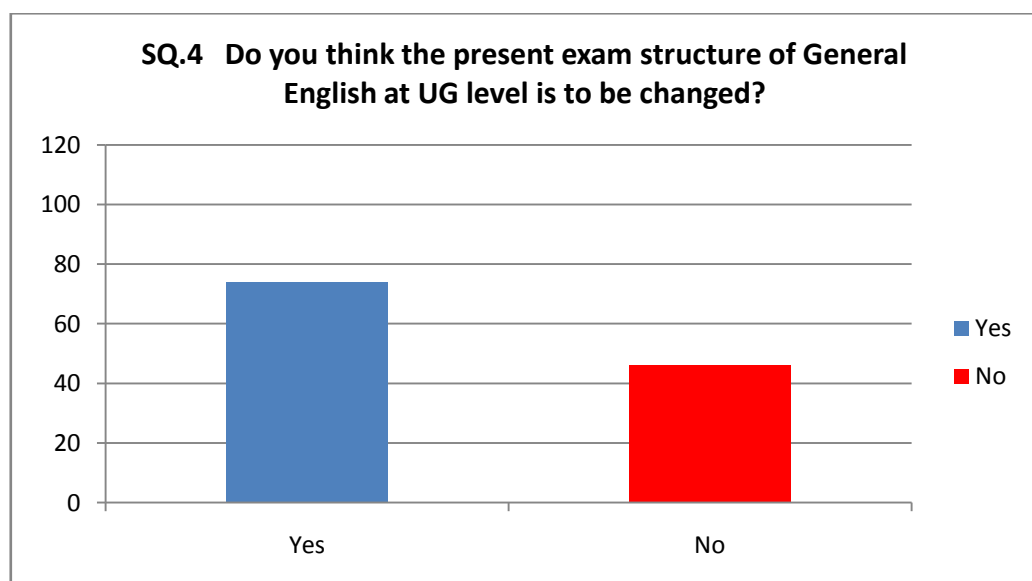
The responses to SQ. No.4, as shown in the bar chart above, indicate that the students are not happy with the spresently followed structure and task types of the semester end high stakes exams and they think that it has to be changed according to the course objectives and professional and personal language skill

requirements. Of the 120 leaners who answered the question, (74%) wanted a positive change in the existing test pattern whereas only 46% thinks there is no need for a change. Since the same question was there in teachers questionnaire (TQ. No. 3) also, it appears relevant to underscore that both the teachers and students strongly believe a change is badly needed as they think the current test system doesn't produce reliable results and fails to meet standars of validity in language testing. Moreover, the content and constructs targeted in the current mechanism don't motivate learners to develop or improve all skills in English.

The fifth question was intended to measure what the learners think about the nature and task types figuring in the current exam and if they think questions are frequently repeated over the years.

Figure :5.5. Learner Question 5
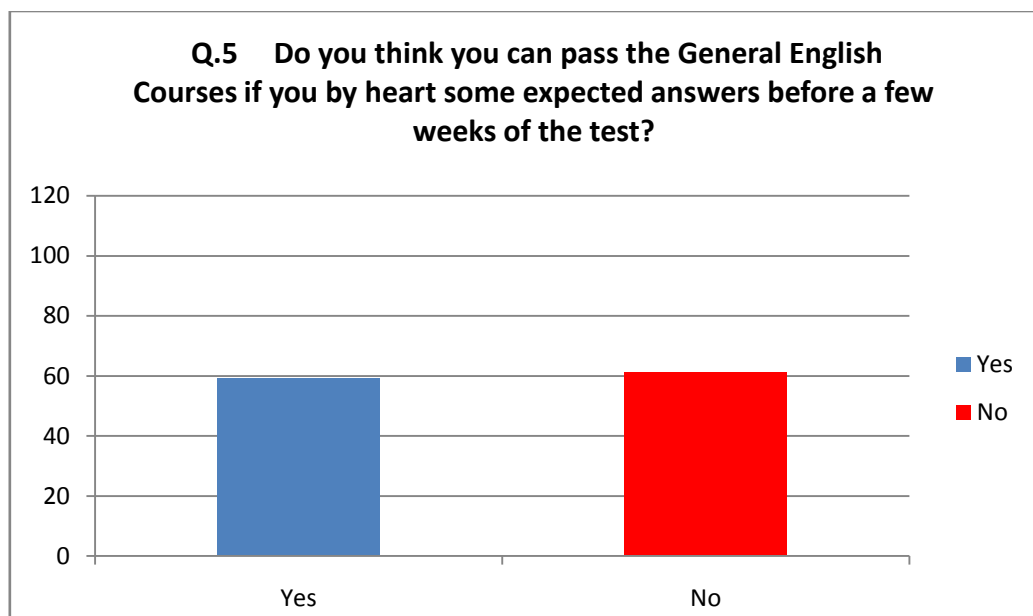
As shown in the bar chart (SQ.No.5), the leaners who differ and agree whether they can get a pass mark in UG CEC if they only focus on some expected,

usually asked kind of questions just a few days before the exams, are almost the same. On the one hand, 59% of students thinks they can pass. On the other hand, 61% opines that they can't get a pass mark.The narrow difference between the agreeing and disagreeing group indicates the fact that the current exams follow a set, predictable, and steriotyped test items and are largely relied on their ability to regurgitate. Furthermore, it lends firmness to the assumption that exams at UG level have a negative washback and they focus on the content testing is illogical and objectional in the TESL test mechanism. Analysing the responses to questions (No.3,5&2), it can be construed that the negative impacts of the current exams on the learners' attitude to English and focusing on skill acquisition in TL are significatly reflective.

Figure :5.6. Learner Question 6
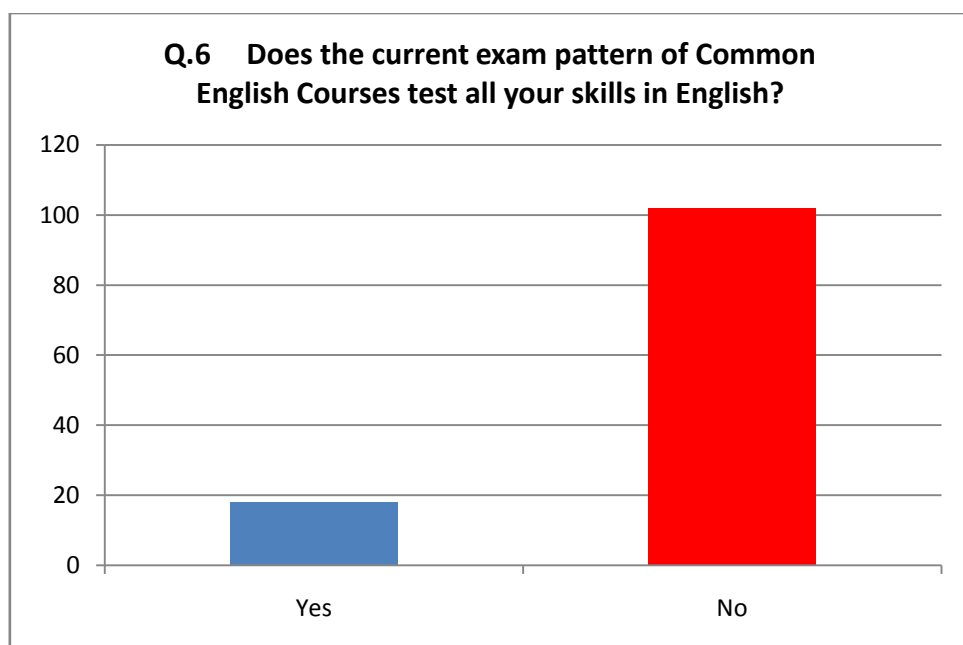
The answers to the question No 6. reveal that a remarkable number of students (85%) believe that the current exams for Common English Courses at UG

level focus mainly on one or two skills and other macro skills are wholly ignored.The number of learners who have an opposite view is (15%) only. The question No.15 in the teacher's questionnaire was a reworded idea of the above question and a good majority of teachers (TQ. No.15,p.164) have also agreed with the view that all skills are neither proprtionately given weight nor duly represented in the current question papers. In all the four sections of the end Semester English exams (Appendix. C), the only skill tested is writing ability based on the content. There is no specific weighting given to either Listening, Speaking or Reading in the formal test pattern. This is one of the strong reasons why the students and teachers are explicitly discontent with the system and why the system exerts a negative impact on the three significant compenents viz. students, teachers and the process of teaching and learning. In the light of the responses, it can be said that the study validates the hypothesis No.3 (Chapter .1,1.8).

Question No 7, put as a sequel to add credibility and clarity to the previous question (No.6), throws a clear picture about the extent of weight given to the four major language skills in the current exams and how two important aural /oral skills like Listening and Speaking are tested in the least degree. The informants were asked to rate their reponses on a four point scale

Q. No. 7 Which of your skills are tested in the current test pattern? Rate them accordingly
(1= never 2=sometimes; 3=often; 4=always)

Figure :5.7. Learner Question 7
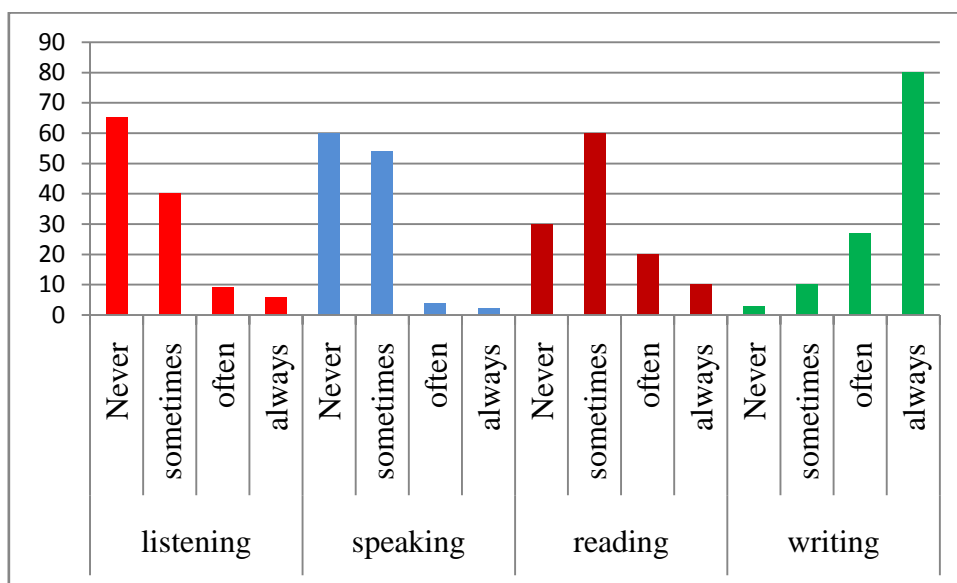
The comparative bars indicate that the most and always tested skill is Writing and the second comes reading skills. In scrutinising the question papers (Appendix. C), it can be found that there is no formal attempt or test tasks meant to assess reading and comprehension ability as such. It's again significant to note that the responses of teachers to the same question show a sharply similar result. The data further indicates that the research hypothesis (Chapter-4, 4.5) that there is a dichotomy between spoken and written English skills of the graduates in the university has its share of responsibility/impact in the exam pattern. The analysis of previous questions (SQ.No.5,11,TQ No.1) has already indicated the influence of current testing on English language educational practices. So, non-assessed skills have all probability to be sidelined both in teaching and learning because high stakes exams are looked upon with seriousness in the context under study.

Figure :5.8. Learner Question 8

Question No. 8 aimed at measuring what the learners think about having a new kind of exam design for Common English Courses.
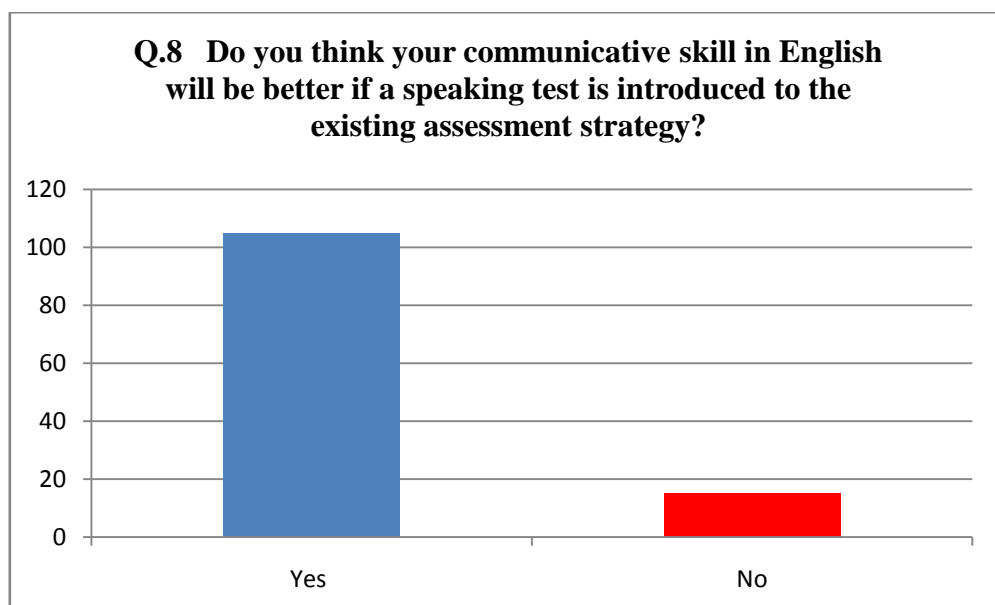
The learners responses to the question No. 8 show that a large number of them (87%) strongly feel that introducing a speaking test, though formal or informal, with due weight of marks will help improve the communicative skills of learners.The results also imply the fact that both the teachers and students tend to give less significance or no significance when a particular language skill is not assessed in a formal way or carries no weight in grading.The results of Q No.10 in teacher's questionnnaire really confirm the students views. Since the high stake examinations are looked at with much importance and detrimental value by all the stakeholders in the current educational scenario of the state, it goes without specifically stating that introducing a speaking test with clear-cut

task items,guidelines and rating scale to the assessment framework will surely help improve learner's communicative/performative competence.

Figure :5.9. Learner Question 9
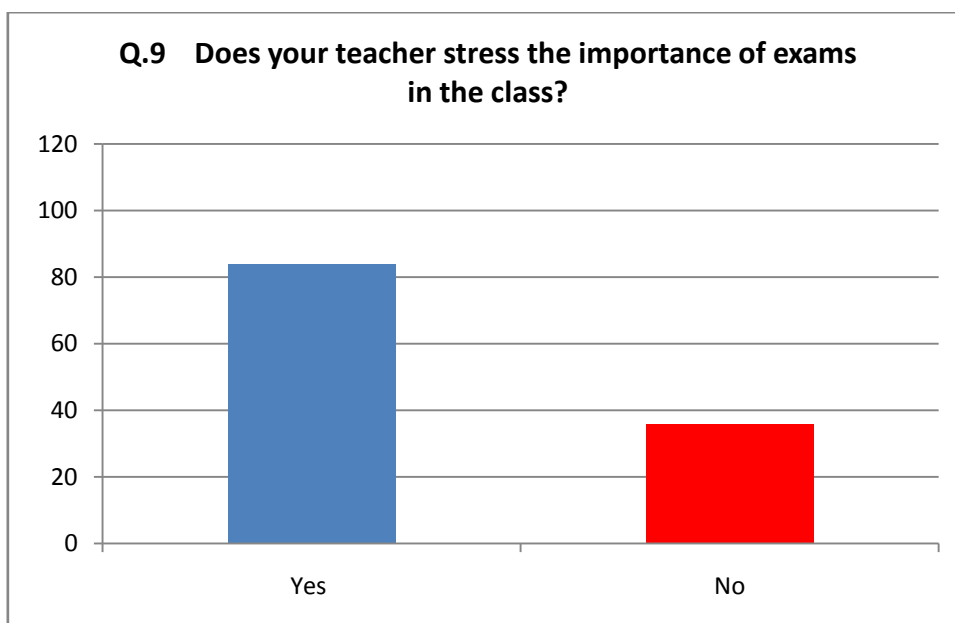
The learners responses to the question No .9 show that their teachers do stress the importance of exams in classes. Not less than70% thinks that the importance of exams, the units with potential coverage in exams and the ways of learning to get good grades in exam are emphsised in teaching. The teachers reason for emphasising exams can be due to the realisation that students consider exams as detrimental and references to exams will add to their extrinsic motivation, focused attention to lessons and clasroom activities. In contrast, 30% learners believes that the teachers don't stress importnace of exams and the impact of scores in them. The response of learner to this question has to be analysed along with TQ No.5& 4 in which the content and classroom activites are said being influenced by exams.So, the general

coclusion that can be drawn from the vailable data is that the teachers directly and indirectly stress and get incluences by test tasks and test contents.

Figure :510. Learner Question 10
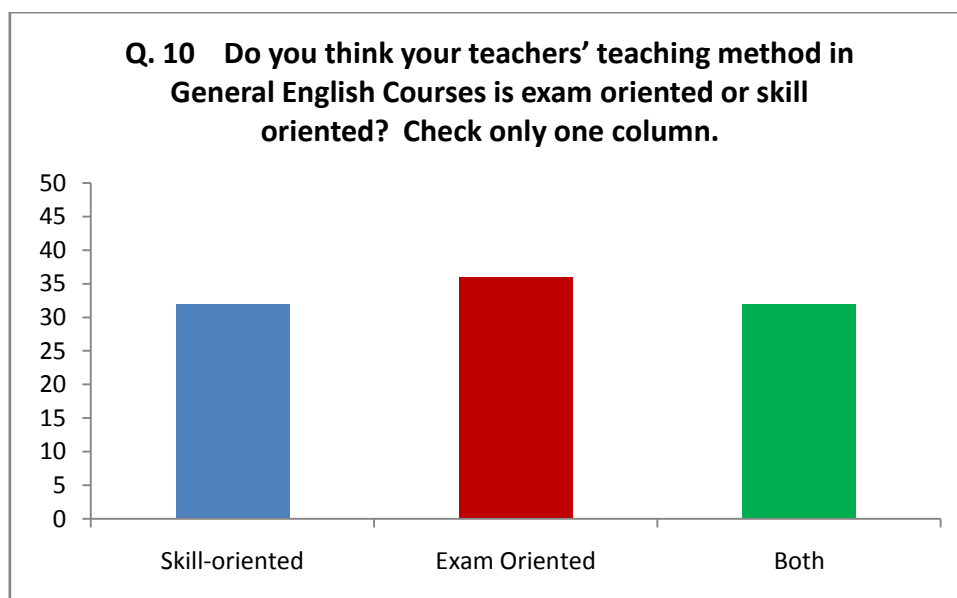
The bar chart (Q No.10) makes it clear that the students who believe the method of instruction in ELT classrooms is exam-oriented is (36%). On the contrary, there are 32 % learners who think the method of teaching English is skill –oriented. An equally big number of informants (36%) opine that the mode of teaching is a mixture of both.When this result is examined in relation to the responses of Q.No. 10 , it is to be concluded that the semester –end UG examinations not only influence the content but also the method of instruction. The data imply that the more the components of learning and teaching are influenced by tetsing the stronger the washback effects will be on pedagogic practices. The responses to the teacher questionnaire (TQ. No 1,4&8) very strongly support the same view that the existing exams have impacts on

forming learners' attitude to learning and teachers approch to teaching English are explicitly measurable.

Figure :5.11. Learner Question 11
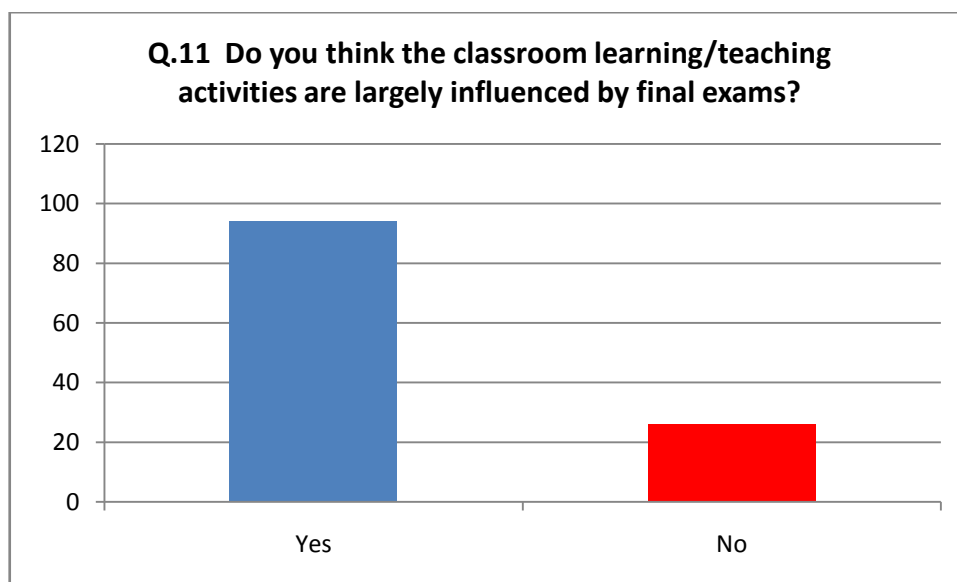
The results of the Q.No 11 show that 78% of the learners believe that there is some kind of washback taking place in learning and teaching practices in EL classrooms at UG level. The content and method of teaching, learner's habits of learning are seen to be influenced by semester end exams. The test impact, considering the results of the Q. Nos. 3,6,and 7, is negative in nature as it encourages the learners to focus on certain areas and skills at the cost of other important skills. The severe consequence of this negative impact of neglecting unassessed skills leads to wide discrepancy in scores and skills in English and also to competence level of the acquired skills. The present employment market demands greater level of communicative skills in English than correspondence skills. Therefore, the negative impact emerging from the test mechanism leaves

far reaching destructive repercussions on their career prospects and future academic pursuits.

Figure :5.12. Learner Question 12
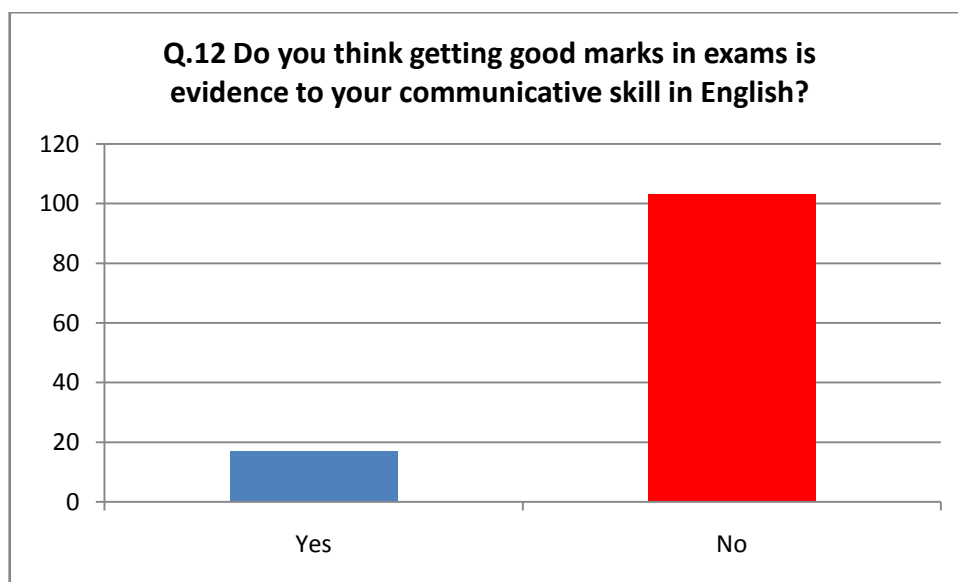
The responses to the Q.No 12 underline a disturbing fact, which the teachers also accorded with in their answer to the TQ.No 7, that the learners don't consider their marks in Engish as an indicator of their skills to use the language.The percentage of respondents who think there is no correlation between the scores in hightakes exams at UG level and their skills in English is really high(86%). On the other hand ,the learners who agree with the view is just 14%. It is further needs to mention that the same question was asked to the teachers and 90% of them believe that the scores are not reliable indicators of their proficiency in English.

The results ,in another sense, underline the teachers' as well as the learners' belief that the currently adminstered exams' validity to assess learners'

language skills is seriously doubtful. It, further, implies that there should be immediate moves to reconsider test construction/test writing for UG English exams and it should be in line with recent perceptions and pratices of language testing at the global level.

Figure :5.13. Learner Question 13
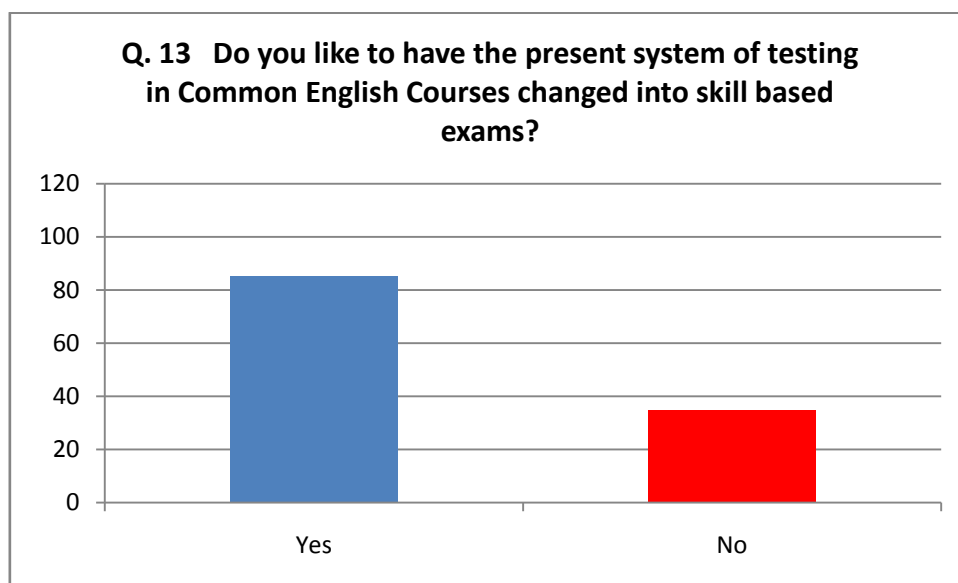
The results of the Question No. 13 suggest that a good number of the leaners (71%) are not happy with the current content-based tests in English which are argely dependent on students' ability to reproduce the prescribed materials with a little or no room to measure their skills in the Target Language. Though 29% deosn't want switching into skill-based exams,the overall results, justaposed with the teacher's positive responses (90%) for skill-based tests (TQ.No.3) indicate the fact that the test patterns and test items for Common English Courses are highly traditional and needs a thorough revision to bring about positive washback in learning and teaching. The dissatisfaction stems from the realisation that the exams neither redefine attitude to language nor positively

help improve all the macro skills.The drastic deviation of the exisitng testing mechanism from research proven and globally accepted practices can be another factor.

Figure :5.4. Learner Question 14
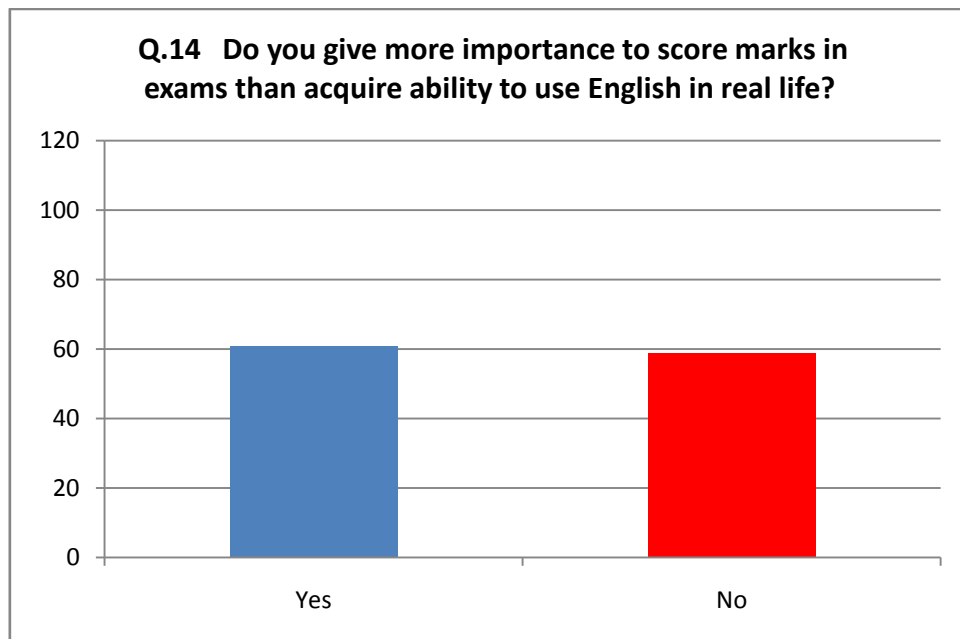
The results of the question, as indicated in the chart, show that the learners are equally divided on their opinion about whether they give more importance to acquire marks in exams or acquire skills in English. When 51% of learners believe that they prefer marks to skills in the Target Language, 49% of them thinks the other way. The results underscores the assumption that the university semester end exams/ scores are looked upon with importance and effecting constructive revisions in exam pattern can bring about productive changes. Since the current exam design has negative washback, there should be some immediate measures to objectively analyse the whole test construction process and its efficacy in terms of English skill acquisition and proficiency.

Figure :5.15. Learner Question 15
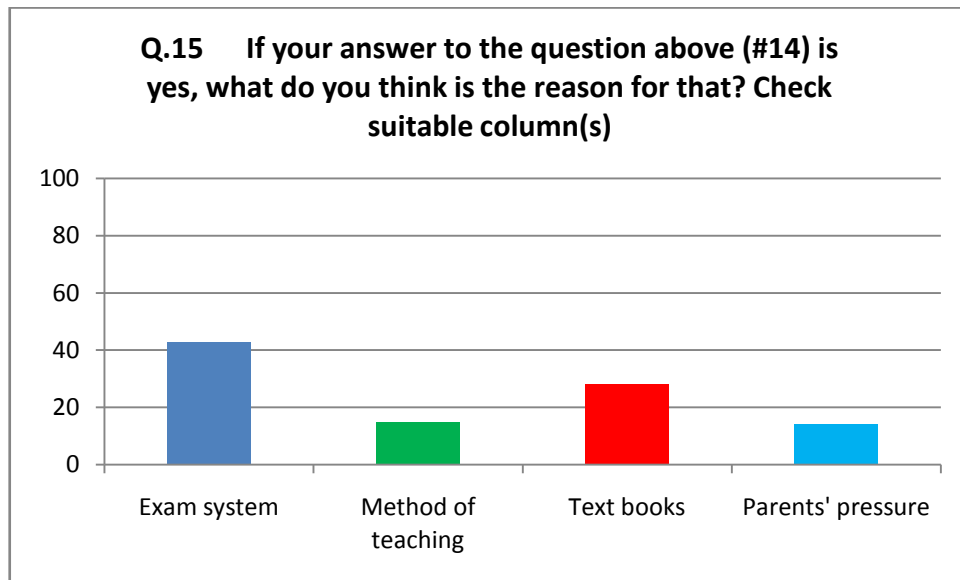
Of the four choices given as potential factors responsible, 43% of learners consider exam system as the most important reason to prefer skills to marks. The learners consider textbooks as the second important factor (28%). The rest of the two choices were indicated viz. method of teaching (15%) and parents' pressure (14%) respectively. It is pertinent to underline that the exam system has been identified as the most influential factor in framing learner's attitude and habit of learning English. The responses add greater credibility and authenticity to the learners' previous responses regarding the negative influences of current semester end exams on various facets of English language education in the state.

5.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire

The questionnaire meant for the teachers, like the learner questionnaire, comprised of three parts, namely instructions to the respondents, researcher

validated questions and the part for furnishing professional details which the researcher deems to have reasonable bearing on the study undertaken. Of the eighteen questions addressed to the teachers, three questions were of multiple choice nature ,two questions to rate test impact/weight given to macro skills in the current test system and the remainder to measure teachers' perceptions of how examination washback works on the process, product and participants of teaching CEC at UG level. The space provided at the end of the questions in both questionnaires was to encourage the informants to add, comment on any variables related to test impact, which they think, is worth mentioning.

The first question in the teacher questionnaire (TQ No.1) was intended to reveal whether the teachers believe their students consider exams as critical and important to decide their mode and manner of learning.

Figure: 5.2.1. Teacher Question 1

Q.1 Are your students learning habits influenced by the final exams?

- yes
- No

7%

93%
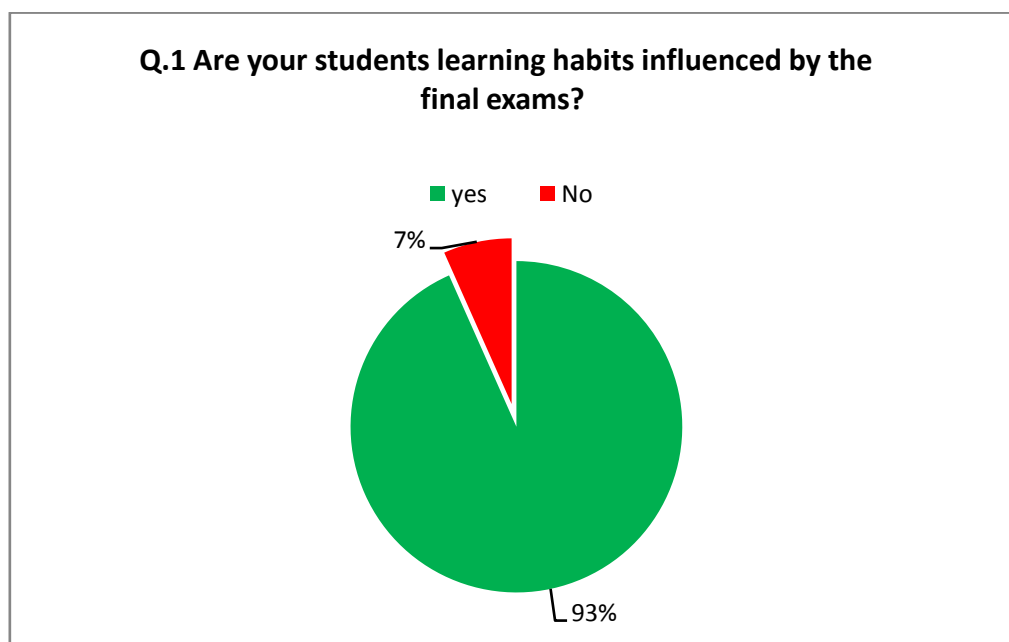
Of the thirty teachers who responded to the question, almost all (93.3%) are of the view that exams influence their students' habit of learning. The percentage of teachers who have a different view is too less (7%).So, it seems to undescore the fact that teachers believe high stakes exams have a calculable impact on teaching and learning practices. The responses further pinpoint that this attitude to examinations on the part of students will consequently affect teacher's mode of instruction in classrooms. The question answers one of the key research questions of the study, namely 'Does the current exam system for Common English Courses at UG level exert any effect on teaching/learning? If yes what is its nature and magnitude?' The huge number of responses supporting the question underlines how the acdemic excellence and skill development, often targetted in language subjects, are hijacked by the illogical importance given to formal testing, both by teachers and learners, even at a time in which employability of the educated is a debated question and a grave concern at higher education level.

The second question, aimed at gauging how the teachers feel about the current test structure used for assessing language abilities of students at undrgraduate level, shows that the teachers are alarmingly discontent with the test design and tasktypes used in the semester end exams of Common English Courses.

The question No.2 meant for teachers aimed at understanding their attitude to current tests and if they like its pattern and task types. Almost all of the

respondents (97%) support the opinion that the pattern, constructs, task items and design of the tests in CEC need a comprehensive revamp.

Figure: 5.2.2. Teacher Question 2
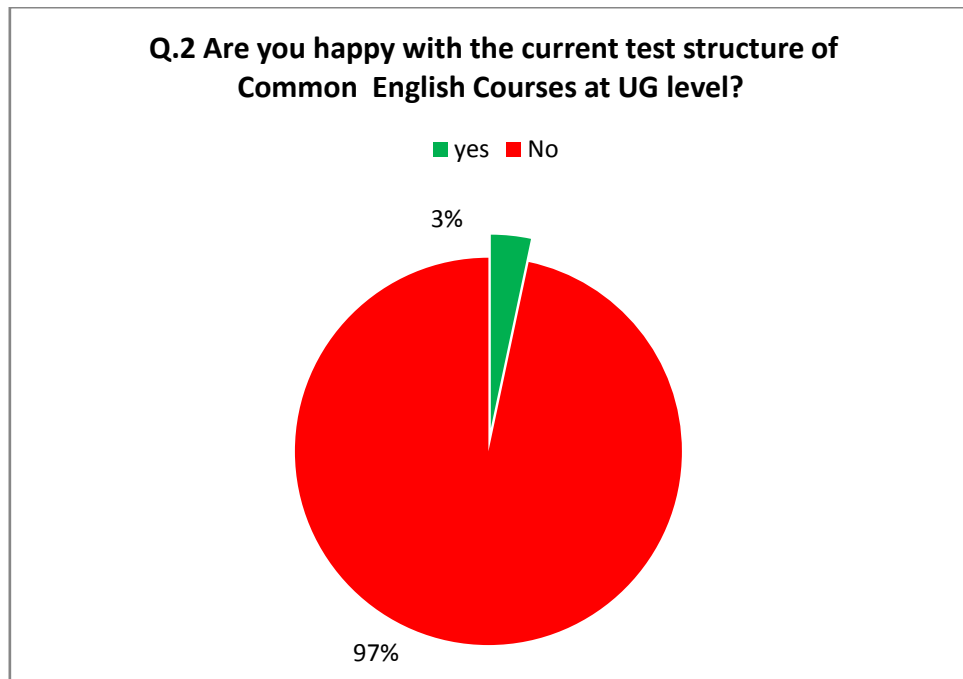
The results affirmatively emphasis the teacher's massive dissatisfaction with the way the examinations are constructed and how the existing tests fail to be realistic indicators of the learner's skills and abilities to perform in the Target Language. The widely held belief that there is marked disparity among the ESL leaner's skills- especially written and spoken skills- has to be traced to this faulty struture of testing. One of the main reasons why the teachers are highly discontent with the exams appears to be the lack of questions to check the higher order skills of learners in English. A passing glance at the nature and type of questions asked in all the six CEC question papers also add credibility to the teacher's emphatic view because they are too realistically predictabe,

surprisingly textual, astoudingly factual to be called examinations meant for assessing language skills in English.

The third question (TQ No.3) was meant for tracing the reason for the teachers' satisfaction/ dissatisfaction with the current test and whether they prefer skill oriented tests to content-based tests in English.

Figure: 5.2.3. Teacher Question 3
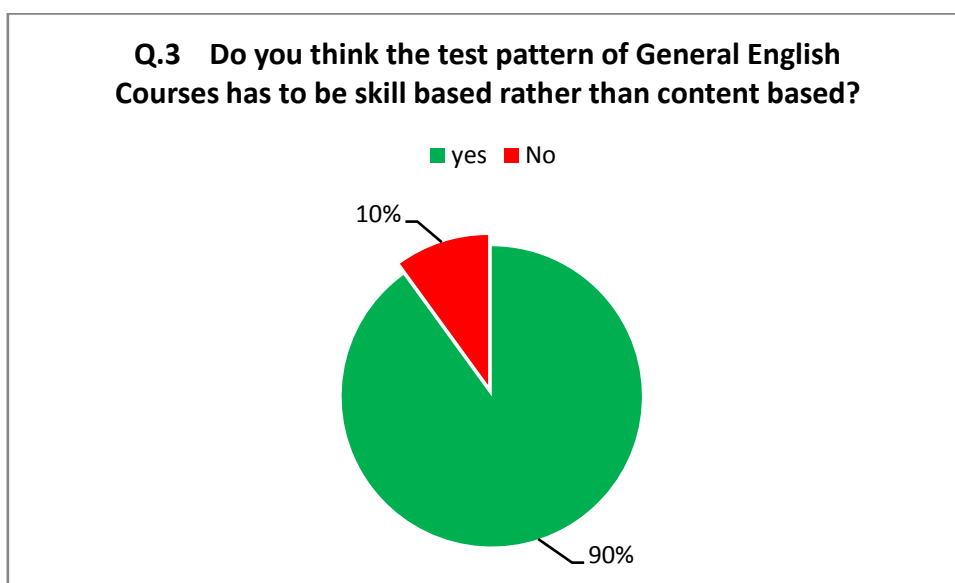
When 90% of the teachers expressed their positive nod for skill based test structure in Common English Courses, only 10% of the informants supported content-based test design. The graph underlines that the currently adapted content based testing strategy for common English courses is disliked by a good majority of the teachers as it fails to target and measure real language abilities of ESL learners at UG level. The singular weight and importance given to writing skills, that too heavily dependent on the retention ability of learners to reproduce what they have learned, can be another reason why teacher's argue for a change. It is evident from the data the compulsory courses

predominantly meant for communicative competence, linguistic mastery and proficiency improvement in the TL, testing learners' ability to reproduce contents parrot fashion has lost its educational usefulness and content validity. In addition, the responses also stress that teachers are aware of the paradigm shifts taking place in language assessment at the global level because all international testing mechanisms to assess proficiency in languages are purely skill based.

The fourth question (TQ.No.4), expected to throw light on the nature of washback in ELT practices under study, shows how far the two important components of instruction viz. the method and contents are influenced by semester end exams which are high –stakes in nature.

Figure: 5.2.4. Teacher Question 4
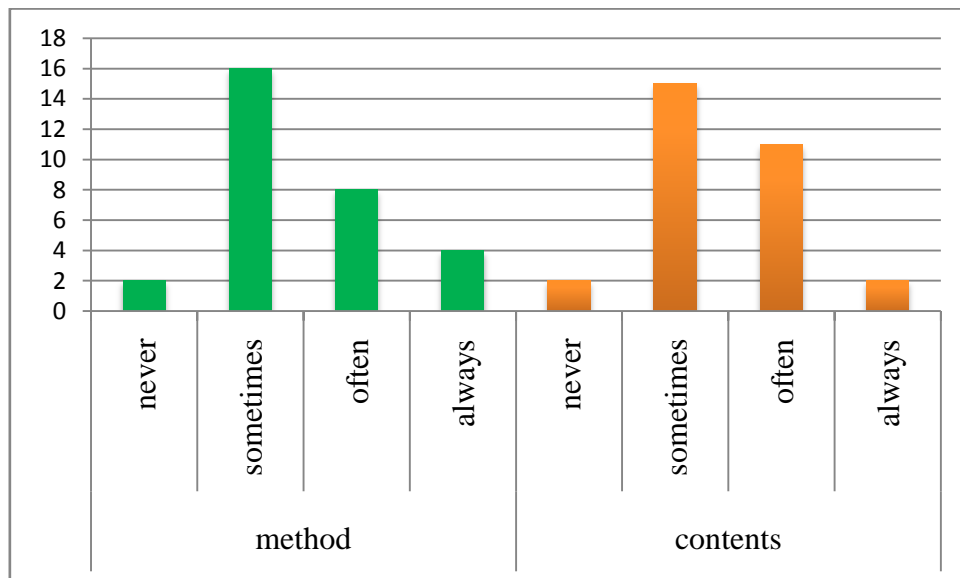
Q.4 .Do the final exams influence your classroom teaching?

.Rate **both** items.

(1=never; 2=sometimes; 3=often; 4=always)

Method	1	2	3	4
Contents	1	2	3	4

More than 60% of the respondents believe that the exams do influence the content as well as the method of teaching English at UG level some way or other, though there is lack of unity regarding the frequency and extent of the influence. Teachers who opined the exams never have impact on teaching are very few and amounts to mere 4%. It can be concluded from the data that, the degree of test impacts on the contents of teaching are more than that on the method of teaching.

The negative impact of testing on contents, given the present pattern of questions for CEC, can manifest itself in the form of partially teaching or skipping the areas, which are thought to be unimportant for examination, or spending more time on units that are supposedly significant for examination. A negative washback on method takes the form of teacher oriented instruction in which contents are explained with little emphasis on learner participation or classroom interaction. Juxtaposing the teachers' responses to Q. No 2 & 4, it is evident that the present English examinations have mostly a negative impact on language acquisition. One of the hypotheses was that the current testing has impact on the major components of teaching and learning English and the responses prove the hypothesis right because both teachers and students rate method and contents as two important components influenced by teaching. In short, the data lend credibility to the results of the previous questions.

Figure: 5.2.5. Teacher Question 5

Q.5 Do you give greater focus to those areas that are thought to be important for exams?

No 33%

yes 67%
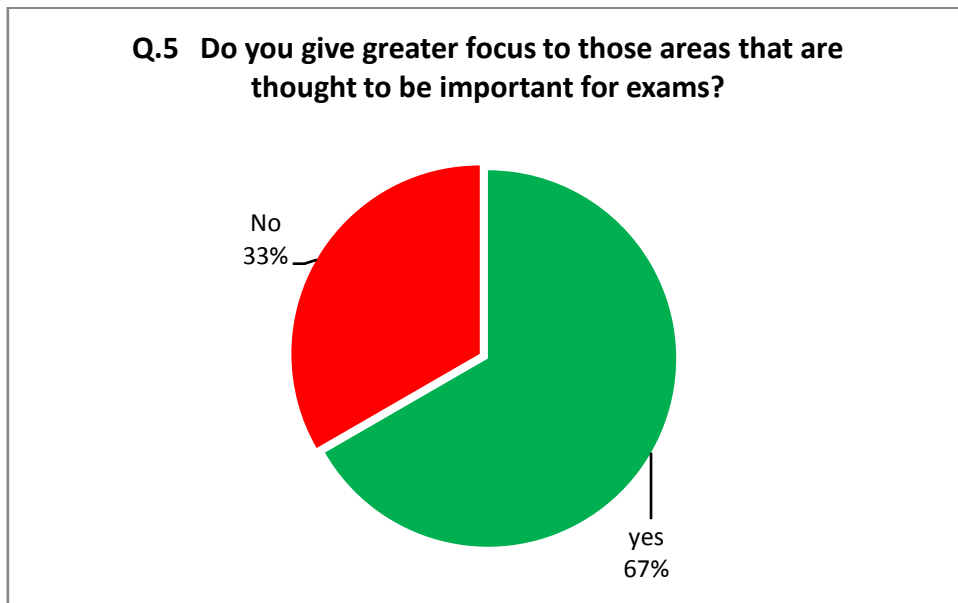
The responses to the fifth question (TQ. No.5), a sub-question to further measure teachers' views on the impacts of testing on teaching practices in the classroom, shows that 67 % of them tend to give greater stress to those areas of the text books which they think are important for exams or from where more questions are likely to appear in the question paper. The teachers who said their teaching is least influenced by the type of questions appearing for exams are 33%. The data adds value and authenticity to the TQ No. 1 & 4 because a good majority of teachers emphasis contents which help learners' achieve higher marks in examinations without assessing their real value in terms of course objectives and learning outcomes. Giving focus to those contents which are likely to figure in question papers can be in the form of repetitive exercises, providing more support materials or having special informal tests on those areas.All these can result in creating unwanted exam consciousness and

learning-for-exam attitude among language learners.The result further emphasises the assumption that the contents of teaching are by and large influenced by test practices and test design.

Figure: 5.2.6. Teacher Question 6
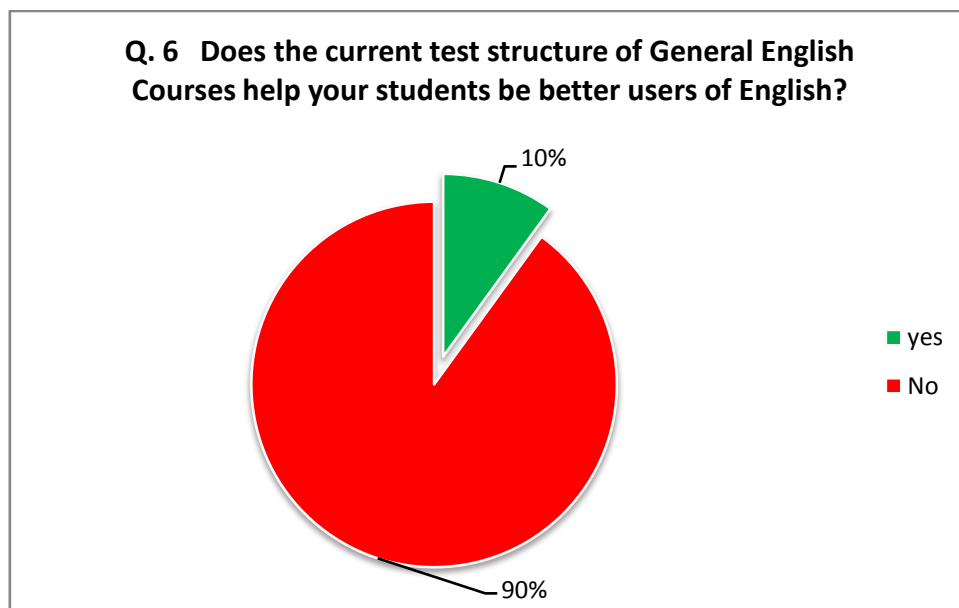
It's remarkable to note that 90% of the teachers strongly disagreed with the opinion that the existing test structure helps students develop their communicative skill in English. It shows teachers'marked disatifaction with how exam questions are being designed and how they think the whole structure has some kind of negative effect in relation to the skill acquisition in English and how task types are distantly related to valid skill indication.Only a small percentage (10%) subscribes to the view that the existing pattern is useful for skill achievement and mastery. The result further reveals the teachers' view that the currently adopted method of test construction doesn't fit to the real needs and standards of an ideal language test.The data also underscores the

generally held view among the ESL professionals and academicians in the state that the testing mechanism and test patterns of English have destructive impact on performance and communactive skills of ESL learners. Moreover, the result supports the view thatskills like vocabulary, functional use of grammar, reading comprehension and speaking are rarely focused in the current system.

Figure: 5.2.7. Teacher Question 7

Q. 7. Do you think your students' high scores in English certify to their communicative proficiency in the language?

yes 3%

No 97%
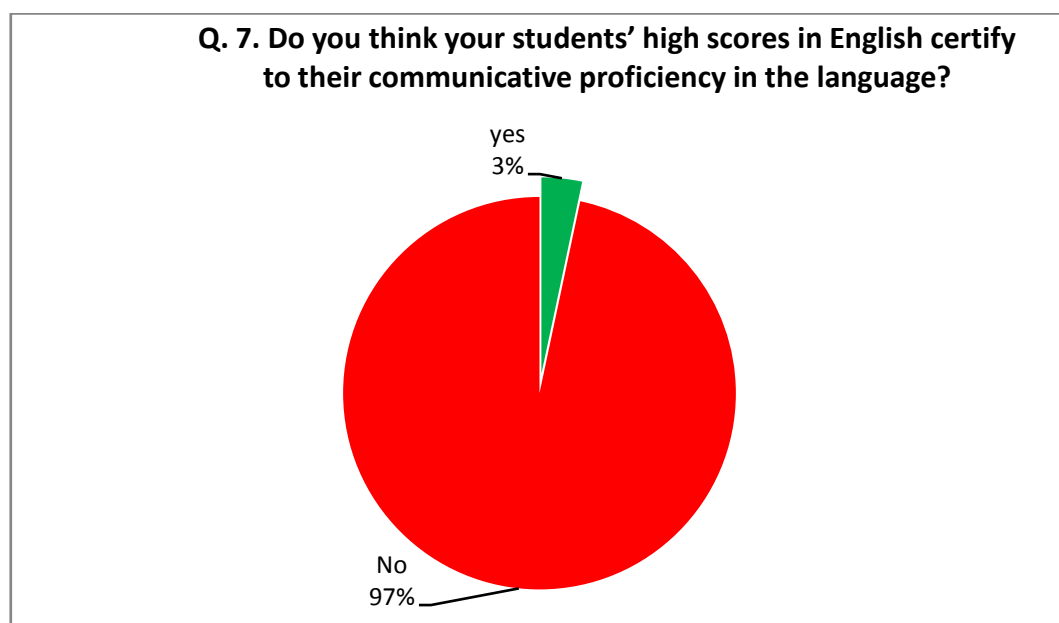
Another pertinent question (TQ.No.7) addressed to understand teachers' perception about the washback effect of the current test system was if they consider their student's scores as a reliabe evidence to certify to their communicative skill in English. It is striking to note that only 3% of the teachers consider there is a correlation between scores in exam and the actual ability of students to use the language. A vast majority (97%) of the respondents are of the opinion that the scores in exams are not indicative of the learners' skills to use English in real life contexts. The result, in another sense,

underlines the teachers' belief that the currently adminstered exams' validity to assess learners' language skills is in question and the whole test design has to be repatterned in such a way that test scores yield authentic and reliable data about the test taker's performative abilities in the TL.

Figure: 5.2.8. Teacher Question 8
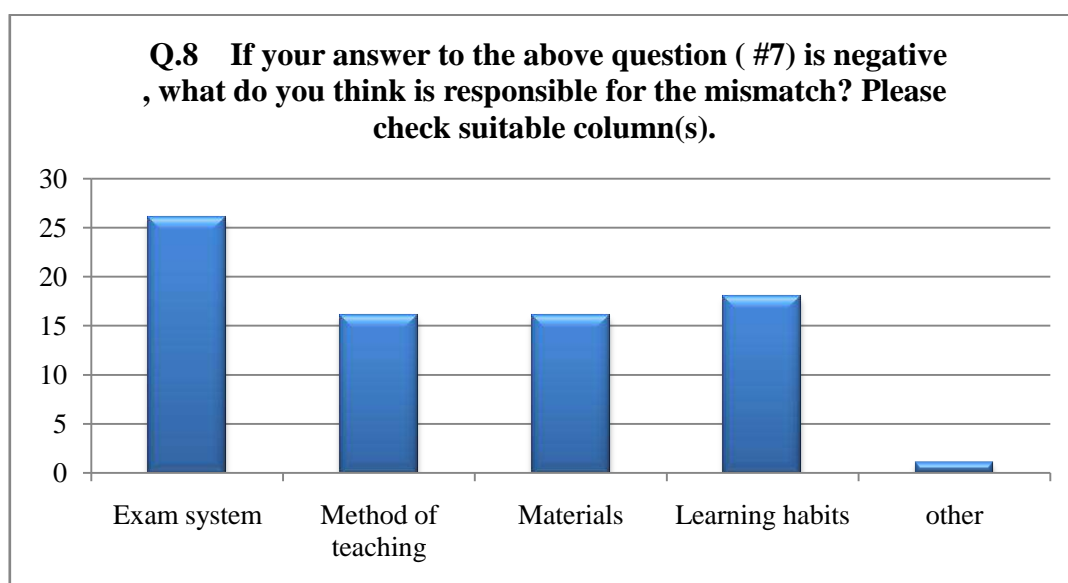
This question (TQ. No.8), a sequel to further measure and underline teachers' belief about the washback effect, examines the root factors that play a vital role for the mismatch between scores in exam and the abilities of learners to use English in actual situations.It is relevant to note that a great majority of the teachers (87%) believe that examination system, currently adminstered to the UG students for their Common English Courses, plays the most important role in engendering a mismatch between the marks students obatain in exams and their ability in the language. The response indicates the fact that the current design of the test fails tovalidate its purpose and it also lacks reliabilty as the quantitative data given in the form of marks to students don't reflect nor

indicate their performance skills. Due to the negative washback of the exams, the other components of learning and teaching process like material(53%) , method(53%) and learning habit(60%) also are shown to have their own share of unhealthy influences in this mismatch.The data further unveils the close link between test system, teaching contents, learning habits and the materials used in ELE.

Figure: 5.2.9. Teacher Question 9

Q. 9 Do you think effecting relevant changes in the present test structure can change the teacher oriented method of instruction?

No 20%

yes 80%
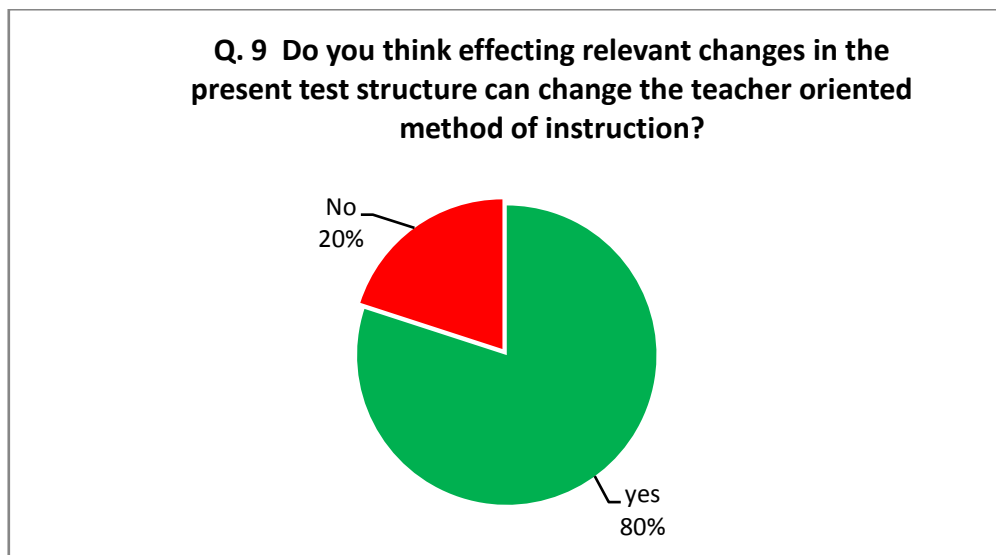
Question No. 9 was addressed to the teachers with the intention of understanding their belief about bringing about changes in the present test pattern and whether they think it can bring about positive effect on teaching and learning process. The response was expected to reveal and illustrate two perceptions of the respondents, viz. whether they subscribe to the concept that washback can be effected by positive changes and positive changes in testing can trigger positive washback. As many as 80% of teachers do think that changes in examination and test strategies will cause proprtionate impacts on

instructional mode and other aspects of educational transactions like learning, teaching and attitudes. On the other hand, 20% disagrees with the view that altering test construction and assessment framework makes any consequent change on pedagogic practices.The result has to be interpreted along with responses to TQ No.5, 6 & 8 that in the presnt ELT scenario, constructive changes in test mechansim will create similar and resultant repercussions in all related areas of instruction.

Figure: 5.2.10. Teacher Question 10
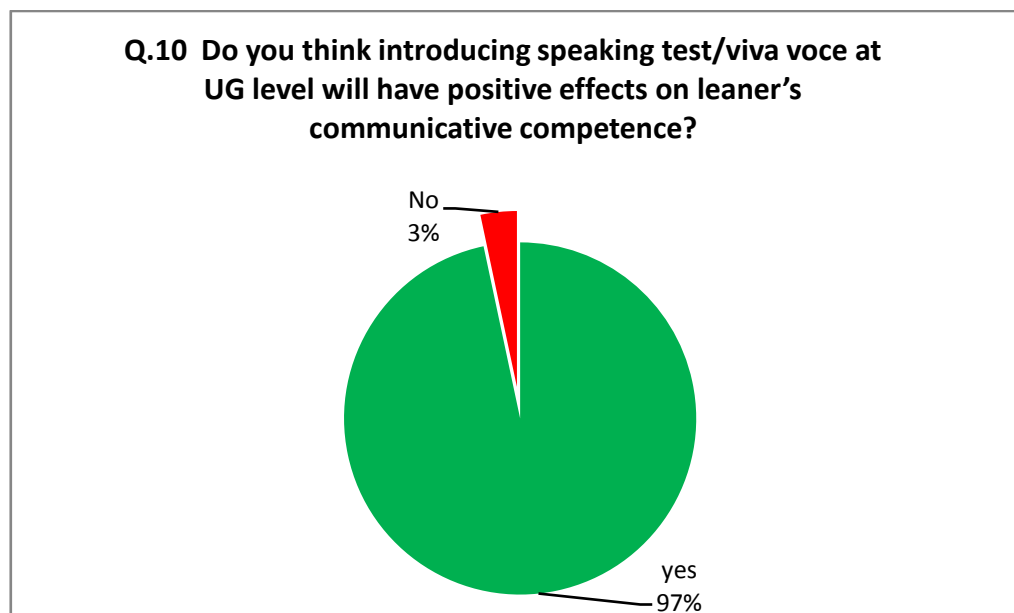
The teachers' response to Q.No. 10 shows there is a felt need to include speaking skills in the formal testing mechnism as summative assessment exerts considerable washback effects. As many as 97% of teachers strogly believe that introducing viva voce or giving weight to other neglected oral skills in semester-end exams will significantly add to the communicative comptence of learners as the education system is shown to have washback effects. The result

also lends believability to the discrepancy referred to in a few previous studies held on the ELT scenario in the state between two skills, perceivably ability to speak and write.The formal examination system in English,high stakes in nature, markedly formal and detrimental in deciding pass or fail, does not give any weight to speaking. The written exams currently adminstered measure the learner's ability to write in English. Consequently, other oral/aural skills are sidelined as they are not tested.

Figure: 5.2.11. Teacher Question 11
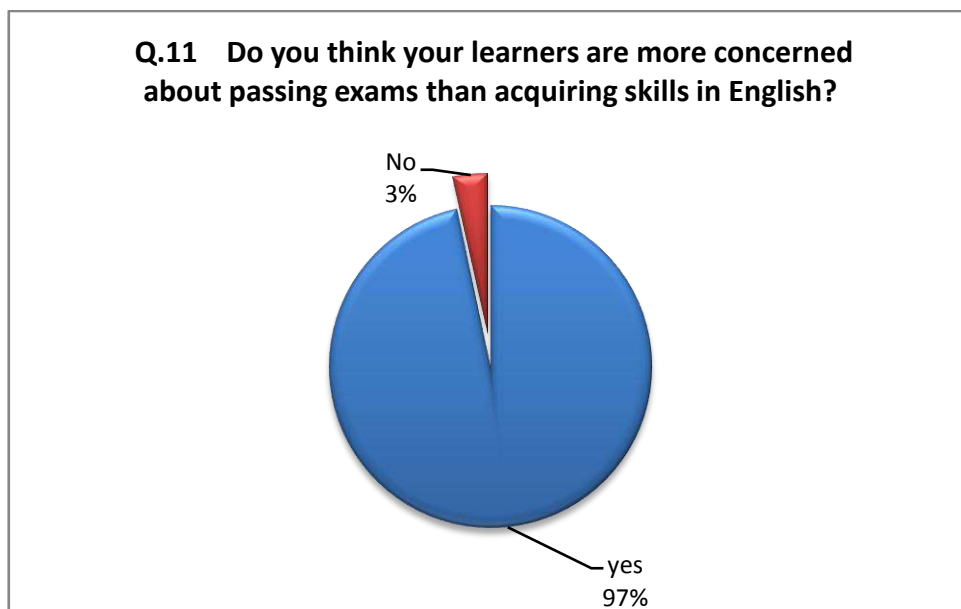
It is a general notion in kerala educational setting that the young generation is highly mark conscious and exam focused in their habit and attitude to knowledge and learning. The puopose of the question was to reveal the teacher's stand on this in a measurable way and it's surprising that 97% of the teachers subcribes to the generalnotion. It, in other words, throws light on the whole testing system which also plays an unignoarble role in creating

unwelcome exam-orientedness in students. When analysed along with teachers' responses Q.Nos 8 & 9, it is evident that overemphasis in language testing on formal exams leaves destructive impacts on skill acquisition and exam-centred learning on the part of students. It, in turn, influences class room teaching and interaction.Consequestly, it may create a negative washback of relegating teaching into exam training and score fetching techniques.The terribly low percentage of teachers (3%) who diagreed with the question discloses the graveness of the tendency and their need to take immediate measures to disorient the learners from attaching undue importance to tests in English.

Figure: 5.2.12. Teacher Question 12
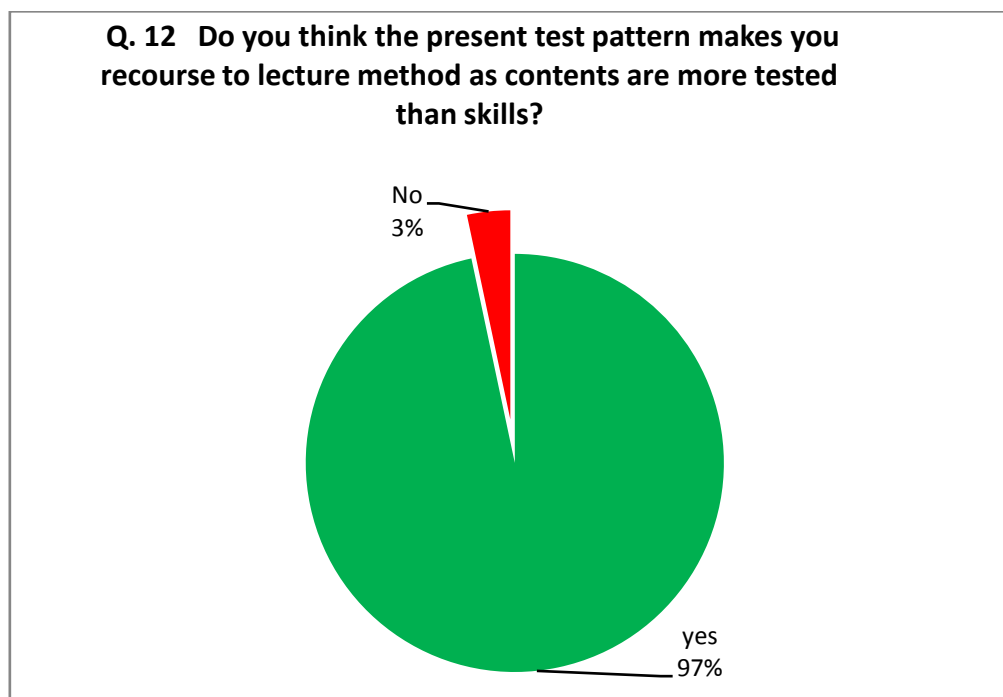
It is very clear from a casual glance at the question papers of current examinations for common English courses at UG level that they are valid for mesuring learner's ability to reproduce the contents, not to reflect reliably on

their performative abilities. The responses of the teachers (97%) underline that fact that the wrong design and unsuitable test item often compel them to resort to lecture method, teacher centric way of instruction and low degree of student/teacher or student/student interaction in English classrooms.The response further lends stregth to the belief that there is a negative kind of test impacts in force at UG level English teaching and learning. Moreover, the responses accentate the teachers's disagreement with the test design because what is in practice is at wars with what should be practised. Therefore, the answer to Q.12 can be looked up on as another strong indicator to prove the hypothesis that there is the current semester end examinations influence teaching and learning and the nature of this impact is often negative due to many factors like, test contents ,high career impact and general attitude to exams.

Figure: 5.2.13. Teacher Question 13

Q.13   Does the exam system make you approach Common English courses at Undergraduate level as a subject rather than a language

No 10%
yes 90%
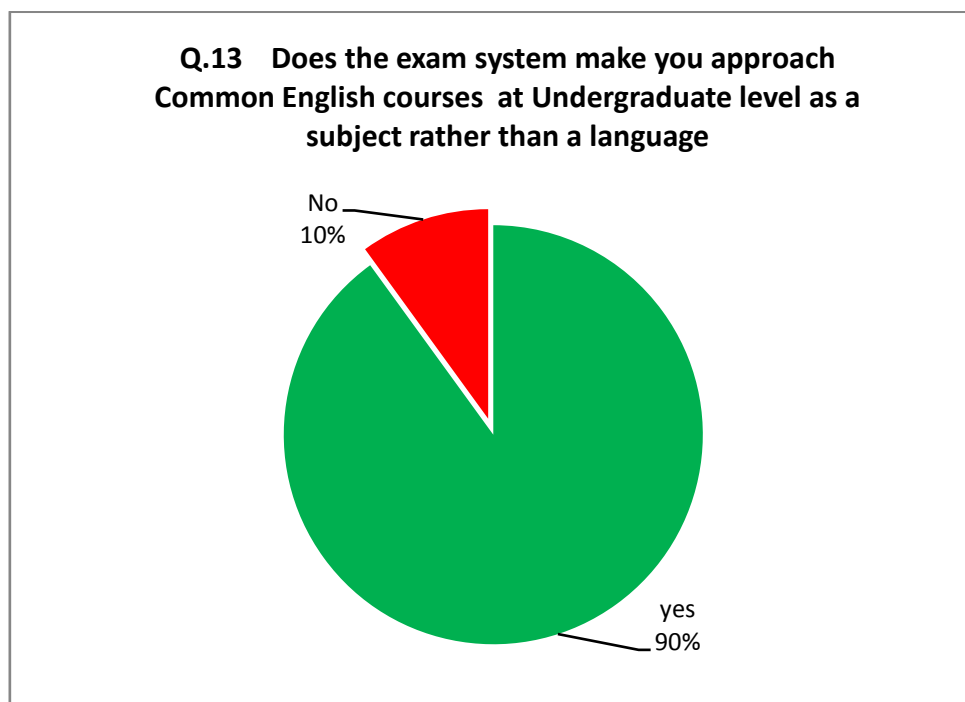
To further underline and add comfirmation to the impact of exams on attitude to teaching and the mode of instruction adopted, question No. 12 was repeated with reasonable rephrasing. The respondents (90%) held the view that they are forced to look at English as asubject, rather than a language, in teaching and informal testing due to the treatment of English in the UG curriculum as a content subject and the ways in which high stakes university exams in English are designed. Teachers' answer to Both Q.No 12 and 13, emphatically state that the washback effect of the presently adminstered tests is clearly negative because it brings about unhealthy impacts on langauge acquistion and classroom practices. It is also of interest that in both the questions (Q.No 12&13) the percentage of teachers who responded affirmatively is 90 or more than that. So, the responses indirectly reveal the profundity of the test impact to dimensions like attitude to teaching and learning, methodology of instruction and content focus.

Figure: 5.2.14. Teacher Question 14

Q.14 Do you think introducing skill weighted exams for Common English Courses will be better/more useful?
No 3%
yes 97%

As much as 97% of the teachers very strongly believe introducing skill wieghted examinations at UG level for Common English Courses will trigger productive changes in many aspects of teaching and learning. The data covertly pinpoint that the current exam pattern has destructive influences on language acquisition and learning/teaching practices in and outside the English language classroom.Except 3% of teachers, all are of the firm stand that switching from content-based exam meant for assessing subject knowledge of the learners to such test contructs and design in which actual skills of learners are targeted and assessed can cause benefitial changes both for teachers and students in attaining   better learning outcome and greater level of communicative proficiency.The teachers' responses, when examined side by side with the learners' answer to the question (LQ.No 13) emphatically state how dissatisfied the two stakeholders are with the current formal exams and how they feel productive changes are a must.

The question No 15 was meant to quantify teachers' opinion about weight distribution to different skills in the current assessment mechanism in practice. They were asked to rate their reactions on a four point scale

Q. No. 15 How do you rate the weight given to the four skills in English in the current assessment system?

(1=least; 2=little; 3=much; 4=most)

Listening	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4
Reading	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4

Figure: 5.2.15. Teacher Question 15
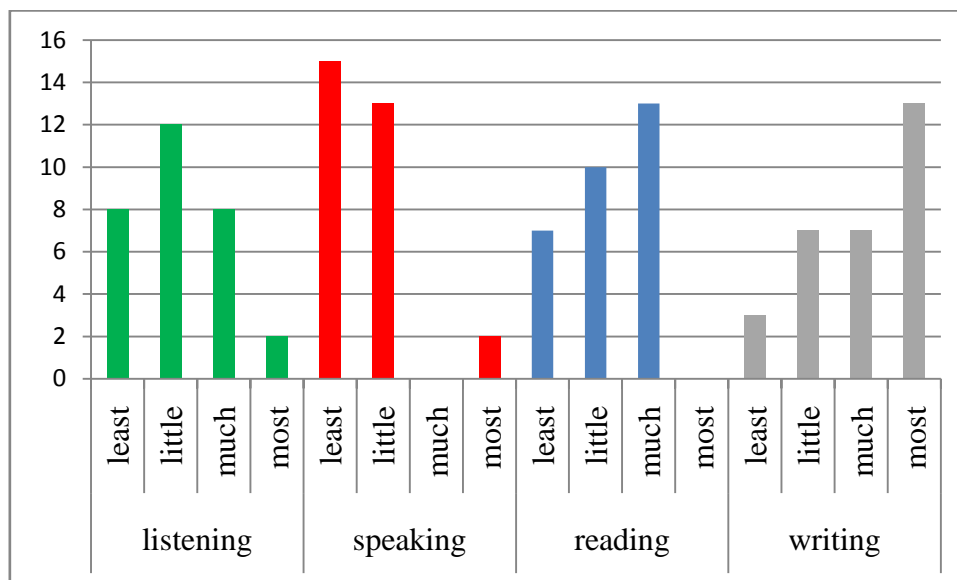
The responses to TQ. No 15 unveil how teachers rate the weight given to the four-macro skills in the current CEC exams. It is not only drastically disproportionate but some skills are completely neglected. Since the previous responses have reiterated that both teachers and students are being influenced by the nature and structure of test strategies in English at UG level, neglect of some of the macro skills in a test of high significance like semester end exams will consequently make both teachers and learners pay little attention to them. It, in turn, will result in wide discrepancy among the acquired skills in English at the end of the course. The result indicates that Listening and Speaking are always little or least tested whereas writing grabs the most weight. The answer to the dichotomy between speaking and writing skills in English among ESL undergraduates can partly be traced in these responses. The document review of the previous years' question papers for CEC along with the syllabus for UG

CEC add strength to the data obtained through this question because the only skill targeted in formal examinations was writing.

Figure: 5.2.16. Teacher Question 16
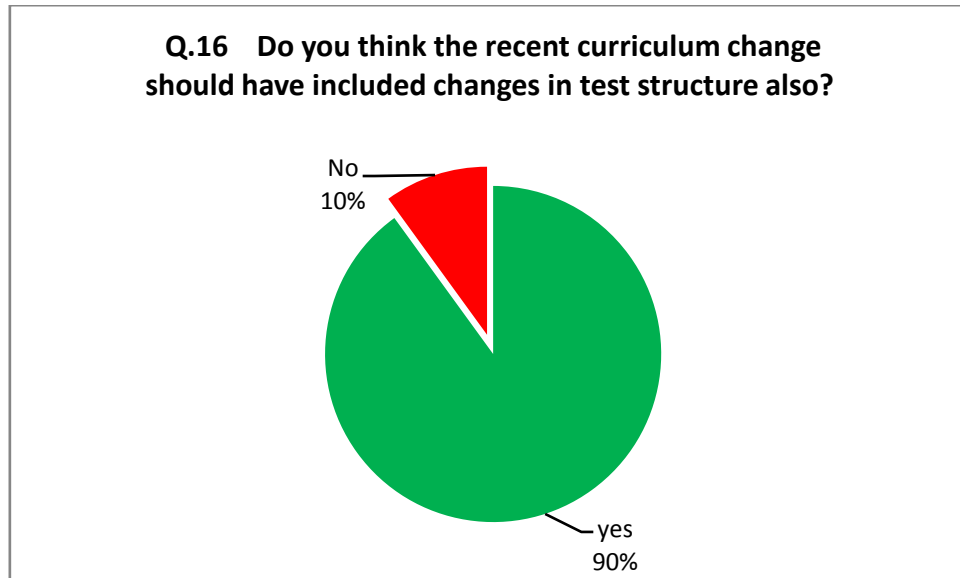
There was a massive curriculum revamp effected at UG level as Calicut University introduced Credit Based Semester System (CBSS)in 2009. In spite of changes in the curriculum, the formal exams held for CEC at the end of the semester, their design, distrbution of weight to the four skills, test items and constructs underwent no change. The question was to register the teachers' reaction to the traditional written exams in which the only tested skill was learne's ability not to construct original sentences and ideas of their own but to reproduce the content of prescribed texts. A very good percentage of the teachers (90%) believed that test structure and test items for Common Eglish have not been revised in accordance with the changed curriculum. It has serious implications that the a test meant for measuring redproduction of contents taught in English can't yield reliable data nor can authentically

measure acquisition of the targeted skills in the course. In addition, the data underlines the common notion about the state higher education system that, test strategies often remain untouched and are highly traditional, in spite of occasional revisions in the curriculum.

It is a much discussed but generally agreed fact that English has been treated and looked upon as a content subject down the years at different levels of English language education in Kerala and the country. This perception was expected to be altered and redefined in the revamped curriculum as the global approach to English language has undergone much paradigm shifts in the recent years.

Figure: 5.2.17. Teacher Question 17

Q.17   How does the revamped curriculum approach English? As a language or subject?

language 17%
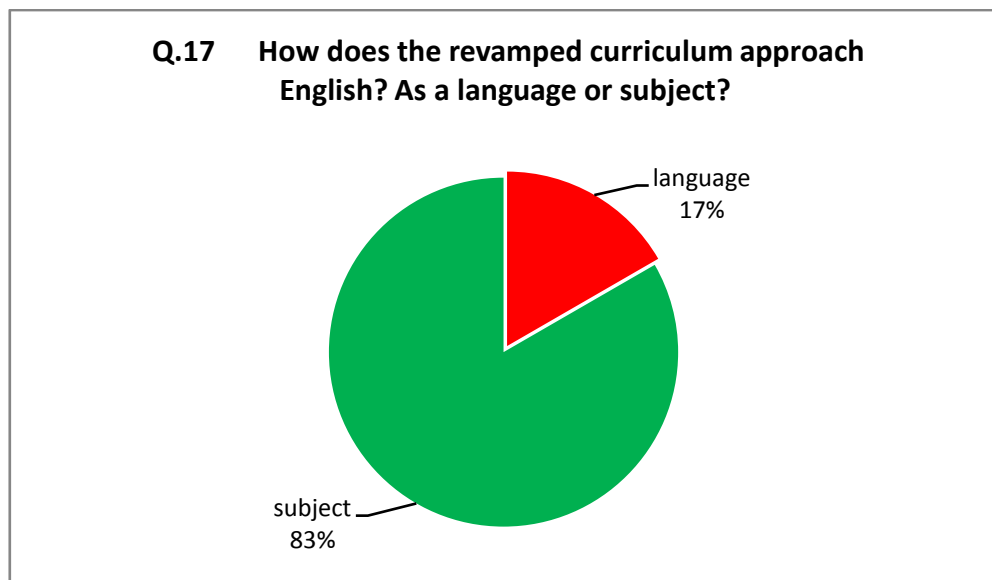
subject 83%

The responses of the teachers (83%) stress that the new curriculum also holds the traditional perception to English and testing is designed accordingly.The consequence of considering English as a content subject is enormous as it will

have adverse effects on methodology, testing, skill development and classroom interaction. To add to this disadvantage, all the pertinent stakeholders will look at English language education just like teaching and testing any other content-subject. These deformed views will defeat the very purpose and objectives of offering Common English Courses at UG level.

In the changed perception to ESL at a global level, it is relevant how teachers perceive the remedial measures to be adopted to ensure learners communicative mastery in English at UG level.The Question No. 18 was meant to understand what the teachers think as crucial factors for enhancing communicative competence of the learners.

Figure: 5.2.18. Teacher Question 18

Q.18   What do you think is an effective way to ensure communicative skills of your students in English?

- Introduce skill based exam 25%
- Give inservice training to teachers 14%
- change current texts 10%
- all the above 42%
- Non of the above 9%
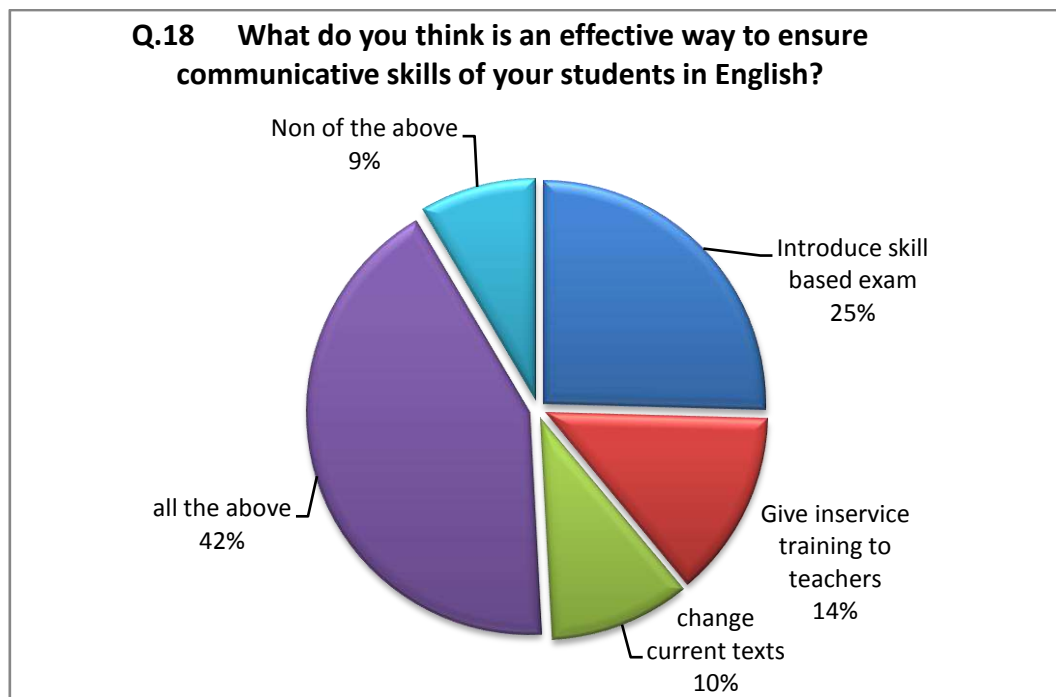
The foremost important factor which 25% teachers think as impeding skill achievement and to be restructured is the exam system because it fails to test

skills and produce positive washback that are the two unique prerequisite for any valid language tests. Among the teachers, 15% believes that giving in service training program to teachers to keep them abreast of the recent trends, research and developments in the field will also help significantly. Another 14% subscribes to the view that introducing skill focused learning material and textbooks can be of use. The responses again reiterate the fact that teachers consider the present exams as a crucial factor responsible for poor acquisition and mastery of skills in English at UG level. They also express concerns that, in an educational scenario where exams are high stakes and looked upon very pertinent by teachers and students, defectively constructed and disproportionately skill-weighted exams often fail to ensure realisation of instructional objectives and effective achievement of learning outcomes.

5.4. Analysis of Class Observations and Interviews

Since the researchers on washback (chapter 4,4.2) emphasize qualitative inquiry or mixed methodology to investigate the examination washback effect as it encompasses numerous variables, classroom observation and structured interviews were also research methods in the study. The purpose was to employ a mutli-model design of data collection to ensure maximum degree of authenticity and reliability of the collected data.

The classroom observations and interviews were to further authenticate the responses furnished in the questionnaires, how far the classroom practices of teaching and learning reflect and inform about their answers and how far they

can be taken as authentic data reflecting their views and attitude. The structured interviews (Appendix.E) conducted with a few teachers who responded to the questionnaire were to give them chances to add more details and elaborate on any points that they thought important in the ESL context under study. Almost all questions were rephrased versions of the questions in the questionnaire to teachers but with 'wh' affixed at the end (chapter-4, 4.7.4). The nature of the instructional activities in ESL classrooms, the degree of leaner participation and focus of the contents were underlining the responses given in the questionnaire. All the teachers being interviewed reiterated the perceptions, attitudes, and remarks they expressed in their respective questionnaires with explanation and one or examples from their professional life. In brief, the variety of tools employed for data collection positively enhanced the reliability and authenticity of the responses.

5.5. Analysis of Current Exams for Common English Courses

A close and cross analysis of the current test design and test items for the Common English Courses at the UG level (Appendix-C) throws light on the fact that almost all term-end tests tend to be largely discrete-point in nature, reflecting an orientation toward the behaviouristic language learning theories and testing learner's ability for rote memorization. This conservative stance in classroom testing has resulted in an ever-widening gap between the description of the course goals and their testing procedures. The analysis intends to answer the following questions:

1. How far reliable, authentic and valid are the testing procedures currently in practice?

2. Does the presently followed test pattern for Common English Courses conform to the latest trends in language testing?

3. What approach to testing is followed and how far the tests measure the course objectives and achievement of learning outcomes?

A language test should be dynamic, reflecting students' communicative abilities rather than being a body of passive items. Such a mismatch should be eradicated to allow reliability, validity, and authenticity to take place in the process of assessment. In a course where the learners actual skill to use language is targeted, the focus of the test and test items should measure how well students are able to engage in meaningful, purposeful, and authentic tasks which could reflect their performative competence in the Target Language. Students must have they must have a good command of the components involved in communication. The best exams in this communicative era, Madson (1983, p. 78) comments, are those that combine the various sub-skills necessary for the exchange of oral and written ideas. He asserts that communicative tests need to measure more than isolated language skills, to comprehensively indicate how well a person can function in another language.

An ideal language test should consist of attributes like reliability, validity, practicality, and authenticity and positive washback. They fall under the heading of desirable test characteristics. Marshall and Hales (1972) point out that any test that is to be used effectively as a measuring instrument should be

reliable, valid, authentic, and practical. They warn that a drawback in any of these test attributes can render a test futile. Since teaching a language aims at learners mastery over all the four macro-skills, tests should therefore assess the learner's communicative behavior and not be based on linguistic items alone. In taking tests, especially in Common English Courses, student's performance should be measured not only in terms of formal correctness, but also primarily in terms of interaction, for the concern should not be how much the students know, but how well they can perform.

The currently used tests for common English courses consist of four parts (Appendix. C). In part one, there are three bunches of four questions each in which the students are asked to choose the correct options from the four alternatives given. Each question carries a single point (12x1=12). It is astonishing to note that all questions are categorically textual and factual and those students who have regurgitated the textual contents can achieve a commendable score. The nature of the questions underlines the fact that it looks at English as a content subject rather than a skill subject. The test design is strongly inclined to have a negative washback on the teachers as well as students because it never aims at assessing the communicative competence or the actual use of the skills in English in life like situations. Instead, all the learners are required to do is to mug up the text as such and vomit them on the answer sheets to fetch marks. The teachers on the other hand are encouraged to steadily prepare the students to reproduce the content verbatim.

The second part comprises nine questions and the students are instructed to answer all of them in a sentence or two. They are mostly 'wh' questions based on the units or chapters in the text in which again the textual memory of the students like names of characters in the story, definition of some terms used and meanings of some special references made are asked. It is alarming that there is no question to check or examine different skills targeted by the course. From the very face validity of the question papers, it is clear that the test writer looks at English just like any other science subject in which knowledge of the content is assessed without trying to gauge the real skills and abilities to apply them in the context.

The third part consists of seven questions in which the learners should answer at least five questions in paragraph. Often questions are based on the imagery used in a prescribed poem, critical estimation of the title, the use of symbols to stress the theme of the writing etc. Without any grain of doubt, those questions also target at assessing learner understands of the contents and their prowess to regurgitate what has been taught in classes preferably reproducing the bazaar notes, dictated ones in the classrooms. The questions give no room for motivating learners and teachers to improve skills in the target language or nor do they compel them to pay attention to skill mastery in teaching and learning.

The final part, that's section four, includes three questions in which the students have to answer any two in about 200 words. The questions in this section are often focused on the themes of a poem in the prescribed book or to

critically analyse the appropriateness of the title of a drama meant for study or to attempt an analysis of the structure and characters.

In short, the design of the exams and test items included are quite far away from the objectives of the course. The literatures on language testing list reliability, validity, authenticity, positive washback and practicality as the necessary attributes for a standard test in English. Since the existing exams measure only the ability to reproduce the memorised contents in writing and includes literally no component to measure other macro skills of the students in English, the validity, reliability of the scores achieved in such exams fail to reflect leaner's competence in the target language. Consequently, the current exams substantially fail in helping the stakeholders locate the precise areas of difficulty encountered by the class or by the individual student and their areas of strength as well. Mere and complete focus on regenerating the mugged up content at the cost of other skills brings about mismatch/discrepancy in the mastery of skills and unhealthy skills in the TL.

5.7. Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of the data collected through diverse research tools emphatically state the fact that the current examination, with its irrational test constructs, task types, stereotyped pattern and pre-occupation with writing skills exert a negative washback on the ELT practices at UG level in Calicut University. The responses largely pinpoint and enormously affirm the popularly held view among the academicians and ESL teachers that the marked

disparity between speaking skill and writing skill acquisition among the ESL learners has to be traced back to the singular weight given to writing skills in the semester end university examinations. Furthermore, a good chunk of the informants agree with the perception that the existing test design is unfit and unscientific to measure the learning outcomes outlined in the syllabus and are far away from meeting the global benchmarks in English language testing. Thus, the results prove the three main hypotheses (chapter-4, 4.5) of the study true.

Chapter-6

Findings, Implications, Suggestions and Conclusions

6.1. Chapter Sketch

This chapter reports the significant findings derived from a multi-model research method viz. the teachers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, structured interview with teachers, class observations and document analysis of the semester end question papers used for Common English Courses at undergraduate level in Calicut University. Furthermore, it examines the pedagogic and educational implications of these findings in relation to TESL scenario at undergraduate level. Besides, the chapter also proposes a set of suggestions for ensuring effectiveness and better learning outcomes in English Language Education.

6.2. Findings of the Teacher's Questionnaire

To get an overall and quick idea about the responses to the teachers' questionnaire (Chapter-5) the major findings can graphically be summarized in the following manner. Though the teacher questionnaire consists of 18 questions of different types, only 14 questions of greater significance have been chosen in the summary graph. A detailed list of the major findings concluded from the responses of the teachers is furnished below the graph.

Figure-6.1. A graphical summary of the results of Teacher's questionnaire
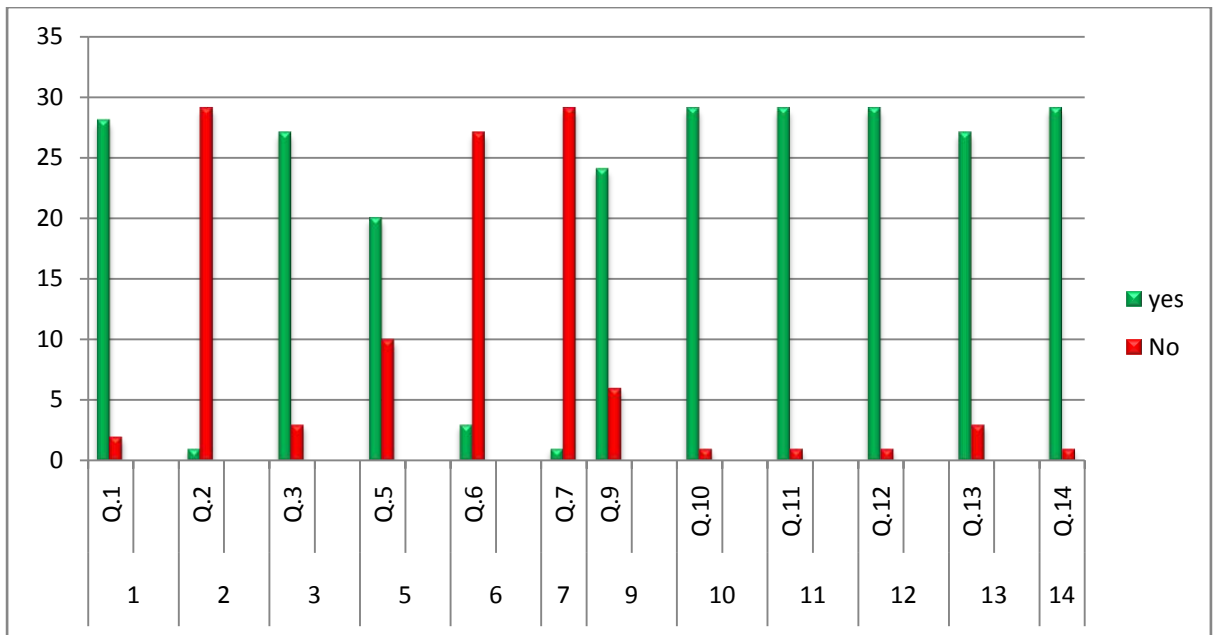
I. A vast majority of the teachers are of the view that their students' learning habits, learning techniques and priorities are influenced by the design and content of high stakes semester end university exams for Common English Courses at UG level.

II. The English teachers are significantly discontent with the structure and pattern of examinations for Common English Course at UG level. So, the hypothesis (Chapter-1, 1.8 ,2) is proven.

III. The teachers are positively in favour of redesigning the current high stakes Semester End Examinations in such a way that they dampen the content oriented memorization and promote performance oriented skill production.

IV. The content of teaching is more influenced by the nature and constructs of tests than the method of teaching.

V. The English teachers do emphasize the importance of exams and give more stress to the units which are thought to have more weight in exams.

VI. The teachers think that the existing structure, task types and patterns of the examinations don't help students improve their proficiency to use English in real life contexts.

VII. The teachers strongly believe that there is no reliable and direct correlation between the ESL learners' scores in English exams at UG level and their performance competence in English.

VIII. The existing high stakes university examinations in English do not meet nor conform to the compulsory attributes of an ideal language test as stipulated in literature on language testing at the global level.

IX. The teachers are of the view that the most important factor responsible for the mismatch between scores in exam and competence in English is the examination system, although aspects like method of teaching, contents and learning habits play a part.

X. The teachers believe that positive washback can be effected if the tests are restructured in such a way that they aim at promoting skill acquisition and authentic assessment of those skills.

XI. The teachers strongly hold the belief that introducing alternative assessment tools like viva voce, journal writing, presentation will productively help reduce adverse test impact on English language classroom practices.

XII. A vast majority of the teachers think that the ESL learners are more concerned about attaining high marks in English examinations than mastering or acquiring the skills to use the language in real life contexts.

XIII. The teachers hold the view that the present memorization and reproduction oriented testing makes them approach English as a content subject rather than a skill subject in classroom practices.

XIV. The teachers believe that resorting to lecture oriented method of teaching English at UG level is largely due to the negative washback of tests.

XV. The existing semester end exams give alarmingly disproportionate weight to Writing skills and other macro-skills like Listening, Speaking and Reading are either nil-represented or insignificantly assessed.

XVI. The teachers are of the belief that the massive curriculum revamp in 2009 at UG level in the university was limited to the contents and structure of courses to be taught but the assessment mechanism and formal test patterns were not redefined in line with global perceptions on English language testing.

XVII. The teachers believe that even the revamped curriculum for UG, introduced in 2009 with massive changes in many aspects, failed to approach English as a skill subject.

XVIII. The teachers believe that introducing skill based exams, instead of content testing exams, plays a greater role in ensuring the skill

acquisition of learners than factors like in service training for teachers and change of prescribed textbooks.

XIX.   The teachers largely believe that the important areas, that the existing high stakes examinations negatively affect, are content, method of instruction and skill acquisition.

6.3. Findings of Students' Questionnaire

The below given graph illustrates a general summary of the responses to the students' questionnaire which has been duly analyzed, interpreted in chapter 4. The significant findings of the questionnaire are listed in depth below the bar chart.

Figure-6.2. A graphical summary of the results of learners' questionnaire
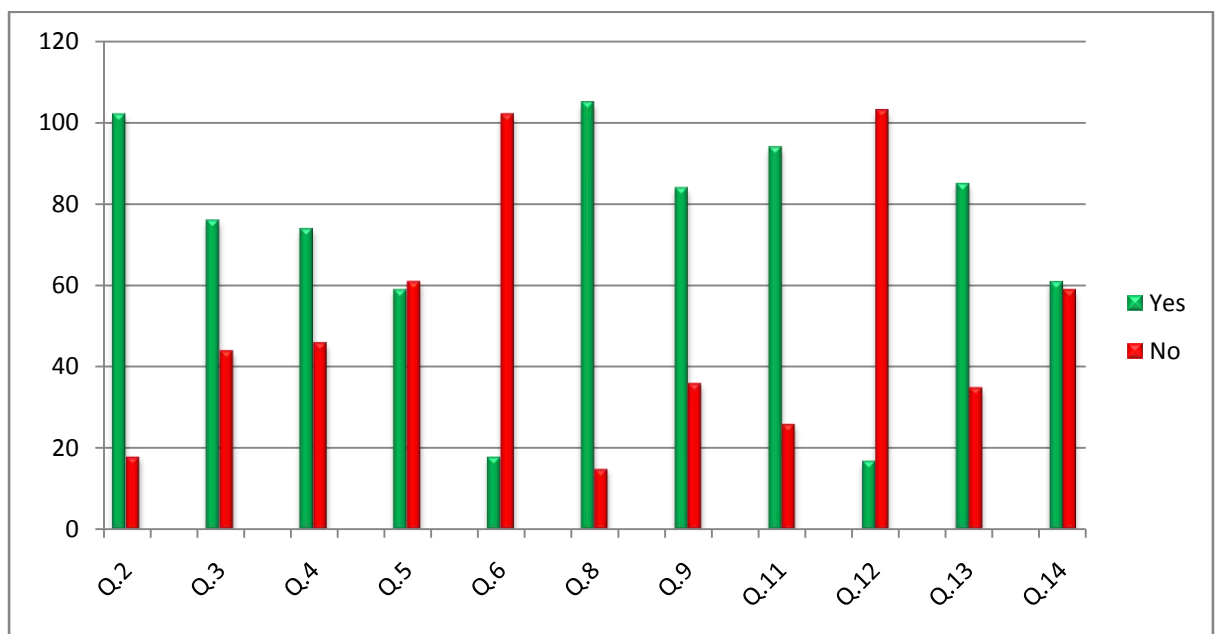
I.   The ESL learners who responded to the questionnaires were majoring in different branches of Science and Humanities.

II.   The learners are highly discontent with the pattern, task types and design of the current question papers for the Common English Courses at UG level.

III.   Most of the students do believe that the current design of the English exams at UG level leaves a destructive or narrowing impact on their skill acquisition in English.

IV.   The main purpose of students' learning English at UG level is not to attain marks in the exams but acquire skills to use English in real life contexts or both.

V.   The majority of undergraduate learners of English think that their learning habits, time spent for study, lessons and skills emphasized are significantly influenced by the content and constructs tested in the high stakes Semester End Exams.

VI.   The learners prioritize their skill achievement and skill development in English according to the weight given in exams.Consequently, the skills not tested in exams get little attention and focus.

VII.   The current exams for Common English Courses exert a negative washback both on learning and teaching activities in and out of the classrooms because they are highly textual requiring the test takers to regurgitate subject knowledge .

VIII.   Most of the learners believe that the existing design and task types of Examination for Common English Courses practically give little scope for constructive and creative application of acquired skills.

IX. Many learners strongly believe that introducing performance tests like viva voce, presentation, projects, though not strictly formal and high stakes, will help improve the communicative skills.

X. The Majority of students don't believe that they can pass examinations in Common English Courses if they by-heart some expected answers just a few weeks before the examination, but there are a very good number of students who believe the other way round.

XI. The current exams in Common English Courses don't test all the major skills in the English language.

XII. The learners believe that writing skill is the most and always tested skill in UG English examinations.

XIII. The learners believe that their communicative competence and skill to use the language in real life will be improved if a formal and standardized speaking test is introduced.

XIV. A good majority of the learners believe that their teachers stress the importance of semester end examinations in English classrooms.

XV. The learners believe that the method of instruction followed in Common English classes at UG level is largely examination oriented.

XVI. Majority of the learners believe that the current testing is confined to assessment of writing skills only and other macro skills like Listening, Speaking and Reading are drastically under-represented or nil-represented in test construction, consequently under-emphasized in teaching and learning.

XVII.   The learners believe that the marks they get in English examinations do not certify to their skills to use the language in their personal or professional life.

XVIII.   Most of the learners believe that changing content-based tests to skill-based examination will bring about productive learning outcomes.

XIX.   Majority of the learners think that they are prompted to give more importance to score marks in English than master skills due to the constructs tested in exams.

XX.   The learners strongly believe that the current English examinations at UG level exert content washback and method washback on teaching and learning English.

6.4 .Findings of Document Analysis

The two components taken into consideration under document analysis were the previous years' semester end university question papers (Appendix. C) for three courses of Common English and the contents of the prescribed syllabus/books (Appendix. D&F). The relevant findings that a critical scrutiny of the selected documents yielded were as follows:

I.   All the question papers, irrespective of the differences in the contents of the prescribed materials, have almost a similar pattern.

II.   More than 98% of the questions were targeting learners' comprehension of the contents taught.

III. More than 80% of the weight in all the question papers was given to Writing skills.

IV.   There was no specific question to check learners' vocabulary, macro and micro Reading Skills, Speaking and Listening Skills.

V.   There was poor or unhealthy correlation between the learning objectives and the test tasks provided.

VI.   The question papers rarely reflected or contained test constructs which could be taken as reliable indicators of learner's ability to use the Target Language in realistic contexts.

VII.   There was a strong mismatch between the question patterns, test items and the overall design of the examination and the attributes of an ideal test in English language. Thus, the hypothesis (chapter 1, 1.8) is proven.

VIII.   The context of the questions were purely related to the literary works prescribed for study and they did not have any direct relation with the kind of context that the test takers are likely to encounter in the target language.

IX.   The language skills tested exclusively belonged to the lower order skills as stipulated in Blooms' Taxonomy of education namely, knowledge and comprehension.

X.   A great chunk of the syllabus constitutes English literary pieces ranging from Old, Middle to Modern periods and the major genres comprise poetry, prose, short story and plays.

XI.   One of the many books prescribed was *Four Skills for Communication* but the question paper was not designed to test skills but knowledge and comprehension levels.

XII.   Though students' chosen majors are different and their linguistic needs in English are not identical in their academic environment, they all had to study the same course material and take the same test tasks.

XIII.   The current assessment procedure and test items are not aligned with the learning outcomes and instructional objectives.

6.5. Findings of the Classroom Observations/Interviews

The purpose of classroom observations and structured interviews with a few of the teachers who had already registered their responses to the teacher questionnaire was to authenticate the credibility of the answers in both the questionnaires. The researcher observed a few common English classes right from the beginning almost to the end to have a broad understanding of the classroom practices, instructional and interactive modalities, learners' attitude to English and how far examination washback is visible in teaching learning process. The classes were largely lecture-oriented, considerably crowded and learners, most of the time were silent listeners. There were more than two references to examinations in many classes, as teachers seemed to use references to importance of examination to arouse or retain learners' motivational level. The observation, by and large, added credibility and authenticity to the responses in the questionnaires because the classroom environment reflected many of the responses in practice.

The structured interviews were held with ten teachers with the purpose of confirming the data in teachers questionnaires and also to record elaborate

comments of teachers, if any, on any aspect of ESL teaching or testing. In the interview, the teachers affirmed their own opinions in the questionnaires and a few added further remarks on testing and teaching at UG level. They were mainly as follows:

I. There was a mismatch between the volume of the course material and the duration of the semester and teachers were under pressure to complete the contents which are only tested in examinations.

II. There is no well-drafted policy for question paper design and structure at UG level, voices of teachers about test construction or test design are not heard and nomination to the Board of Studies is often highly politicized.

III. Many teachers remarked that the extent of washback of the current examination is so much that it defeats the very purpose of language instruction and course objectives.

IV. Most of the teachers agreed with the view that the test design influences both content and method because students have a utilitarian attitude to learning and they are very much interested in securing scores in exam. Consequently, English teaching is tailored to meet their examination needs.

V. Majority of the teachers supported the view that the CEC has to be restructured to meet specific needs of each branch of undergraduate studies, viz. the idea of introducing English for Specific Purpose (ESP) should be explored and seriously considered.

6.6. Educational Implications and suggestions

A language test should be dynamic, reflecting students' communicative needs rather than being a body of passive tasks intended to measure knowledge and comprehension levels of the test takers. Any mismatch between the instructional objectives and learning outcomes attained should be eradicated to safeguard reliability, validity, and authenticity in the process of assessment. In a course where the learners actual skills to use language are targeted, the focus of the test and test items should be to measure how well students are able to engage in meaningful, purposeful, and authentic tasks which could reflect their performative competence in the Target Language. Students must have good performance ability, linguistically and communicatively. That is, they must have a good command of the components involved in communication.

Tests and techniques of testing have positive or negative impacts on teaching, learning and achievement of objectives. Irrespective of the high stakes/low stakes nature, any language tests have to be well-planned and judiciously written to ensure its suitability and validity in assessing learners. The influences of testing on the contents, method and mode of instruction were clearly reflected in the responses of two important stakeholders viz. learners and teachers. It strongly indicates that the ill-constructed and unsystematically defined test specifications will have destructive effects on learning habits and skill acquisition in a second language context.

A test is an instrument or a tool. It follows a systematic procedure for measuring a sample of behavior by posing a set of questions in a uniform manner. It is an attempt to measure what a person knows or can do at a particular point in time. Furthermore, a test answers the question 'how well' an   individual performs either in comparison with others or in comparison with a domain of performance tasks. Therefore, the tests/examinations have multiple dimensions of impact and relevance on the future of all the stakeholders involved. A defectively constructed or an unsystematically designed test, when it has high stakes nature, will not only demotivate all aspects of language learning and teaching but also trigger a kind of negative attitude among the stakeholders to the system. Since practical and communicative skills in English have an enormous share in deciding the career graph and prospects of a person in the current job market, the system of ELE should be continuously reviewed to ensure maximum degree of compatibility and avoid any pitfalls of great social/economic impacts.

After a profound analysis of the data collected through multiple research tools , critical interpretation of the responses of the teachers and learners and valid conclusions made on their bases, the researcher felt that there are many areas of ELE at undergraduate level which need re-examination and remedial measures for maximizing learning outcome and learner competence in TL. The major suggestions pertaining to the key areas of English language teaching and learning can be summed up under the following heads.

6.6.1. Redefining Test Constructs/Design

I. There should be periodic review of the effectiveness of the test construction, task types and test mechanism in relation to course objectives, learning outcomes and the real life/career needs of the learners .Accordingly changes should be made on a continuous basis.

II. Remedial steps to reduce/minimize discrepancy in the acquisition and mastery of oral and written skills must be taken by thoroughly revamping the existing test patterns as they are shown to be one of the core factors responsible for this.

III. Since exams and scores obtained in them have marked significance and decisive influences on the future of learners in the current educational scenario in the state, constructive restructuring of the examinations, inclusive of the constructs to be tested and design to test them, should be done to maximize validity and reliability of the scores attained.

IV. The current tests in English should be benchmarked against international language test practices and necessary changes should be adopted.

V. The test writers should be trained and up-skilled with the latest development and research findings in language testing practice.

VI. The rigorous procedure followed in English language test construction, viz. test blue print, test specification, construct validation must be followed in each stage of writing tests for CEC at UG level.

VII. A body of teachers well acquainted with language testing should be formulated to critically evaluate the reliability, authenticity and validity

of the semester end examination and how far they conform to standard practices in language testing.

VIII. Instead of set task types targeting verbatim reproduction of contents delivered and recalled, a variety of test items to assess reliable language behavior of learners should be incorporated to English tests at UG level.

IX. The curriculum contents and prescribed texts should be re-examined to ascertain their suitability to promote acquisition and mastery of all the four macro skills in English

X. Measures to introduce formal speaking test, with due weight in assessment, should be taken to avert and minimize the negative washback of the current exams.

XI. Over emphasis on English Language Literature to teach language skills must be relooked and steps to revamp the English curriculum to included language specific literature should be adopted.

XII. The possibilities of incorporating computer assisted testing and m-testing strategies at UG level should be explored and implemented to reduce the weight given to formal semester end exams.

XIII. The language assessment system should be restructured and weight be redistributed giving due importance to alternative assessment tools like , e-portfolios, projects, journal writing, presentation, group discussions and seminars.

XIV. Measures should be taken to give proportionate weight to all the macro skills in the assessment mechanism to avoid sidelining of any

unassessed skills and consequent neglect of their improvement/ acquisition.

XV. There should be clearly defined exam specifications and detailed description of task types, and skills each item is targeting for test writers.

XVI. For speaking examination, well-defined rubrics adept at discriminating and rating different level of learners' communicative proficiency, must be drafted/developed and provided to all affiliated colleges.

6.6.2. Revamping Syllabus for CEC

I. To reduce too much content orientation and resultant content washback on learning and teaching, the material for CEC should be revised.

II. There should be two text books for study. A literature-based text book which consists of pieces of different genres (Chapter-7, 7.5.1.) and another skill-based text book either compiled in-house or published by well-known publishers with communicative and academic skills in focus. *Weaving it together*, *Academic Writing Skills*, *Headway Plus*, *Interchange* are a few skill based EL books.

III. The learning outcomes and course objectives of CEC should be redefined so systematically as to help in test design and construction

IV. The possibility of introducing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should be explored and executed to address diversity of learner needs/ background, motivation and career/academic advancement.

V. While prescribing the language-based textbooks, care must be taken to choose those books, which are well graded, and efficiently meeting the course objectives and learner needs.

6.6.3. Up-skilling for ESL Teachers

I. To maximize the efficacy of revamp in testing and blend-model syllabus, the teachers must be provided with in-service training and related up-skilling in areas of test instruction and assessment.

II. There should be regular interaction between members of the Board of Studies for UG and representatives of teachers to address/redress pedagogic issues of significance/consequence in ELE at university level.

III. Comprehensive practical sessions on the efficient use/integration of ICT to teaching/testing English should be organized.

IV. A separate body of teachers who are well versed with systematic procedure of test writing for language courses must be set up and properly trained.

6.6.4. Tapping Potential of E-Testing/M-Testing

In testing mechanism for languages like English, inclusion of a variety of alternative testing tools and continuous assessment of learner's achievement of the skills in TL are a necessity to maximize learning outcomes and provide regular feedback. Therefore, integration of digital testing tools/M-testing applications to formal and informal English language testing will be of exponential benefit with little additional workload on the teachers. So, there

should be seminars/practical sessions on exploring the possibility of introducing mobile-based continuous assessment.

6.7. Future Research Prospects

The present research is ignited by the largely perceived notion that there is an explicit disparity in acquisition and competence level between spoken and written skills of ESL learners in the State and by the general belief that ESL learners scores mismatch with their performance ability in English. While investigating the causes and factors triggering the skill-rift, the investigator has encountered a lot of other variable, not only academically relevant but deserving critical investigation for comprehensive quality development and professional competence. The potential areas for future research, specifically related to the testing mechanism or generically connected to the broad spectrum of English Language Education in the State, can be listed as follows:

I. A massive and penetrative study on the assessment mechanism of English language education and its impact on the four important components, namely students, teachers, process and learning outcomes.

II. A comparative study and analysis of testing practices skill-based/common English courses in select premier universities in the world and strategies currently in practice in the State.

III. An analytical vivisection of the current summative examinations in English, their test constructs, targeted skills order/level and test construction and how far they comply with/conform to international benchmarks.

IV. An investigation to the compatibility of currently used study material, course objectives, pedagogic approaches to ELE in the State and the ever-competitive needs of the corporate/real-world needs can be undertaken.

 V. A pre-test post-test study of introducing skill-based interactive testing system at UG level and its potential washback on various facets of English language education.

VI. An error analysis of ESL learners' common types of structural, grammatical, and spelling mistakes in written English at any particular level of English Language Education.

6.8. Conclusion

The analysis of the data and their interpretations underscore the fact that the test impacts of current CEC examinations are overtly negative and the two stakeholders of ELE, teachers and students, show a high degree of dissatisfaction with the existing test content, task types and constructs. Since the high stakes examinations are seen to be exerting great influence on learning and teaching, the constructive way to reduce the negative washback and trigger positive washback is to redesign the whole system in a comprehensive way. The language testing literature advocates inclusion of a variety of assessment tools instead of a single summative examination because the practices of evaluating learners' communicative competence in traditional pen paper tests lacks credibility and validity as test performances rely upon a variety of learners' emotional, social, psychological and cognitive factors. Therefore, the

researcher has put forward a few suggestions pertaining to the material, teachers and testing strategies (Chapter-7, 7.3.1-7.3.5).

Apart from informing about the efficacy of a system/programme, tests/examinations play detrimental roles in reviewing/ restructuring various aspects of pedagogic transactions, assessing the achievement and competency level of learners and motivating all the stakeholders of learning teaching activities. Therefore, combating the issue of negative test impact is a must and one way of doing it, the researcher believes, is introducing a blend-model test design which not only recognizes the significance of skill development and assessment in language tests but also accommodates the principle 'language through literature'. It is hoped that the proposed alternative test design will trigger better communicative proficiency, positive washback and effective achievement of learning outcomes leading into high level of employability, learner motivation and student/teacher interaction in English classrooms.

Two model question papers based on the proposed blend-model test design, one for Reading, Writing and Vocabulary, another for Listening Skills have also been furnished to give a clear idea of how the test looks like. To reap the best out of the mooted design, there must be regular review of the test components to decide how far the test constructs are reliable and authentic to reduce the mismatch between test scores and ability to use the language in real life and professional situations.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Chapter-7</h1>

Prospects of Alternative Blend-Model Exams for Common English Courses

7.1. Chapter Sketch

This chapter gives the rationale for replacing the currently administered content-oriented tests with skill-oriented examinations in English. It also details the pattern and design of the proposed alternative exam, the proportionate weight given to each macro skill, the kind of alternative assessment tools that can be integrated and distribution of their marks. The purpose and specification of each test item has been explained elaborately along with a few model question paper for different semesters at UG level.

7.2. Rationale

Testing is an integral part of the educational practices because tests are used both as power teaching tools and reliable means for evaluation. Apart from informing about the efficacy of a system/programme/course, tests and examinations play detrimental roles in reviewing and restructuring various aspects of pedagogic transactions and in motivating all the stakeholders of learning and teaching activities.

Since testing occupies such sacrosanct relevance and value in educational system, any high stakes formal examination has to be meticulously planned, well grounded in up-to-date theoretical perceptions and research findings and dexterously

constructed to really assess and yield reliable data to judge the achievement level of learners as well as the course objectives in an authentic way.

The test pattern, task types, the order of cognitive skills targeted in current high stake semester end examinations at UG in Calicut University fall much below the global standards, practices and perspectives on English language testing. Consequently, they exert destructive impacts on contents, learning, pedagogic practices and attitude of learners and teachers towards English. Moreover, both teachers and learners are seen to be enormously discontent with the structure and constructs of the CEC exam because they emphatically believe that the exams, instead of accelerating skills to use English in real life contexts, overtly create extreme exam consciousness leading into mere content delivery, examination training and content memorization even in courses meant for English proficiency (chapter-6, 6.2 & 6.3) . So, an alternative test design which falls in line with international benchmarks in language testing, closely aligned to instructional objectives and learning outcomes, promoting a massive positive washback in terms of teaching, learning, contents, mode of instruction and simultaneously adaptable and practicable in the present ESL scenario seems a felt need and necessity of the hour.

A close examinations of the international practices and testing mechanism followed in IELTS and TOEFL specifically highlight the fact that tests in language are solely validated on the basis of how far the learners macro skills in the TL are

measured, assessed using realistic tasks. There is no attempt either directly or indirectly to focus on regurgitation ability of learners to reproduce specific contents. Apart from that, all the major skills are given equal weight and proportionate importance to get maximum authentic and reliable data about the learner's proficiency level. A close glance at the design used for international language tests like IELTS/TOEFL shows that all macro skills are equally weighted and assessed in language tests and there is no room for assessing mere content reproduction ability. The tree diagram below illustrates the maximum weighting /band given to each macro skill in English and all of them are equally assessed and minimum individual score/band is necessary in each skill.

Figure :7.1. Weight Distribution in IELTS/TOEFL

IELTS	TOEFL
Listening 40 Marks/9B	Listening 30 Marks/
Speaking 40 Marks/9B	Speaking 30 Marks/9B
Reading 40 Marks/9B	Reading 30 Marks/9B
Writing 40 Marks/9B	Writing 30 Marks/9B
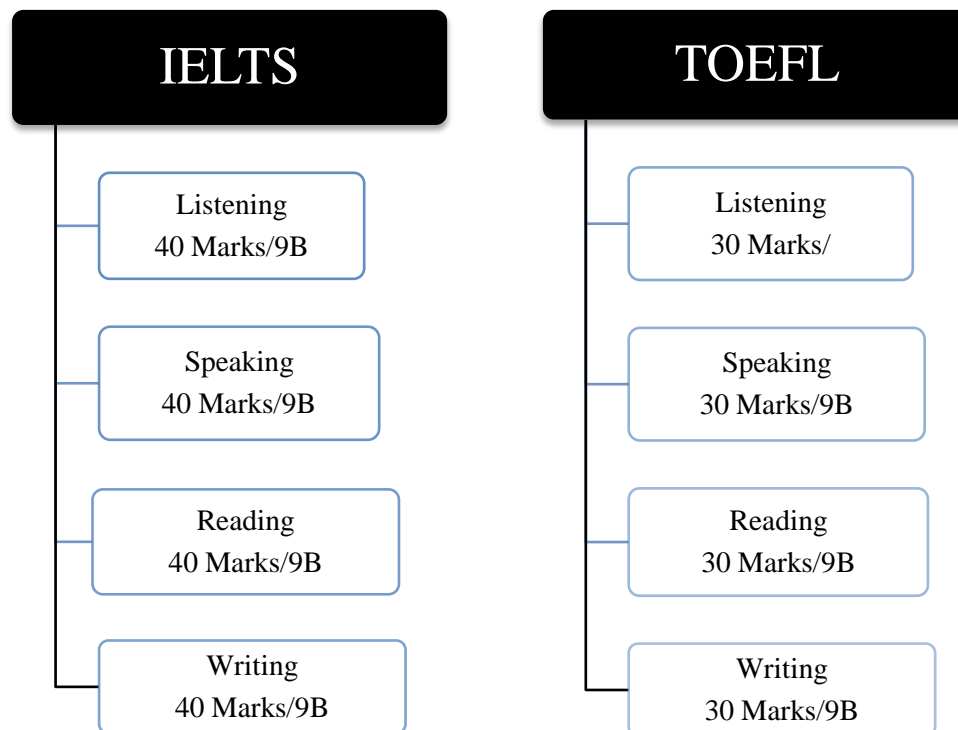
7.3. Blend-Model Exam Design

The need for an alternative blend-model test design for Common English Courses at UG level arises from the realization that the two pertinent stakeholders of ELE strongly believe that the current test design, constructs, task types and targeted skills are quite ill-suited to assess the course objectives and instructional outcomes (Chapter-6, 6.2&3). Moreover, the learners who come for higher studies at university level are trained in an ELE system which is rooted in 'language through literature approach'. So, the alternative exam for CEC at UG level is mooted in such a way that it creatively blends both assessment of the textual content and skill achievement in line with the global practices in language testing. It attempts at promoting learners real life needs through focus on communicative abilities and linguistic skills and exposing them to the richness of English language and humanitarian values through different genres of literary texts.

The proposed blend model advocates use of both summative and alternative assessment with a proportion of 80% and 20% respectively. The table below gives a detailed representation of how the 80% has been apportioned to various skills in English. The Skills of Listening and Speaking are given 10 marks each whereas Reading and Writing Skills are assigned 20 marks respectively. Realizing the significance of literature in learning English in the ELE context under study, the textual contents, especially select works of different genres from English literature, have been given 20 marks weight.

7.3.1. Weight Distribution in the Proposed Semester End Exam for UG

Summative Assessment (SA)		
Skills/components in focus	Percentage (%)	Marks/80
Listening	12.5	10
Speaking	12.5	10
Reading and vocabulary	15+10=25	20
Grammar & writing	10+15=25	20
Textual contents	25	20
Total	100	80
Alternative Assessment (AS)		
Assignments/project/journal	30	3+3=6
Test papers	30	3+3=6
Classroom participation	20	4
Attendance	20	4
Total	100	20
Grand total (SA&AA)	**100%**	**100**

The table below (7.3.2) gives a very detailed picture of the kind of test items that can be used to assess learners' mastery of all the macro and micro skills in English over the four semesters in which common English courses are compulsory. While designing the alternative test, attention has been paid to include a variety of task types so that the learners' level/order of skills in English, from comprehension to

analysis and application, can be effectively and realistically evaluated. In addition, there are more than one question formats under a single task type and it is to leave a choice to the question setters to opt formats in accordance with demands of the course objectives/semester requirements or level of the learners. Keeping the expected level of language skills at each semester of undergraduate study, the difficulty level and cognitive demand of the task types have been graded simple to complex from one semester to the other.

7.3.2. Test Items/Task Types for First Semester

Components/skills	Task types	No. Qs	Marks	Total
Listening (two audio clips by Native speakers)	MC*	5x.5	2.5	10
	Matching	5x.5	2.5	
	Fill in (one word/number)*	5x1	5	
Speaking	Phase-1 Introducing oneself	8 sentences	4	10
	Phase -2 Teacher student talk	10 exchanges	6	
SECTION -ONE **Reading & Voc.**	Comprehension-MC	4x1	4	20
	Answer questions	3x2	6	
	Voc. MC	5x1	5	
	Matching columns	5x1	5	
SECTION-TWO **Grammar& Writing**	Grammar –MC*	4x.5	2	20
	Choose and complete	4x.5	2	
	Jumbled Sentence *	3x1	3	
	Join sentences	3x1	3	
	Essay :Narrative	1x10	10	

	MC	10x.5	5	
SECTION-THREE	SA	5x1	5	20
Literature -Textual	Essay	2x5	10	
Total				**80**
Listening & Speaking				**20**
Grand Total				**100**

* Choice should be provided for descriptive questions: SECT-2, Essay. SECT-3, SA, Essay.

7.3.3. Test Items/Task Types for Second Semester

Components/skills	Task types	No. Qs	Marks	Total
Listening	MC	5x.5	2.5	
(two audio clips by	T/F	5x.5	2.5	10
Native speakers)	Fill in (one word/number)	5x1	5	
Speaking	Phase-1 Student/ Student dialogue	8 exchanges	4	10
	Phase -2 Picture/image/scene description	10 sentences	6	
SECTION -ONE **Reading & Voc.**	Comprehension- T or F	4x1	4	20
	Answer questions	3x2	6	
	Complete	5x1	5	
	Make sentence	5x1	5	
SECTION-TWO **Grammar& Writing**	Grammar –MC	4x.5	2	20
	Complete	4x.5	2	
	Jumbled Sentence	3x1	3	
	Complete	3x1	3	
	Essay :Opinion	1x10	10	
SECTION-THREE **Literature -Textual**	MC	10x.5	5	20
	SA	5x1	5	
	Essay	2x5	10	

Total	80
Listening & Speaking	**20**
Grand Total	**100**

* Choice should be provided for descriptive questions: SECT-2, Essay. SECT-3, SA, Essay.

7.3.4. Test Items/Task Types for Third Semester

Components/skills	Task types	No. Qs	Marks	Total
Listening (two audio clips by Native speakers)	MC	5x.5	2.5	10
	T/F	5x.5	2.5	
	Answer questions (one word/number)	5x1	5	
Speaking	Phase-1 Role play in pairs/groups	10 exchanges	4	10
	Phase -2 Teacher/student interview	8 exchanges	6	
SECTION -ONE Reading & Voc.	Comprehension- T or F	4x1	4	20
	Answer questions	3x2	6	
	Voc. Match (antonyms/synonyms)	5x1	5	
	Make sentence using idioms	5x1	5	
SECTION-TWO Grammar& Writing	Grammar –MC	4x.5	2	20
	Cloze test	4x.5	2	
	Jumbled Sentence	3x1	3	
	Rewrite	3x1	3	
	Essay :Compare & Contrast	1x10	10	
SECTION-THREE Literature - Textual	MC	10x.5	5	20
	SA	5x1	5	
	Essay (critical appreciation) 1. from prescribed text	2x5	10	

	2. Unseen text				
Total					**80**
Listening & Speaking					**20**
Grand Total					**100**

* Choice should be provided for descriptive questions: SECT-2, Essay. SECT-3, SA, Essay.

7.3.5. Test Items/Task Types for Fourth Semester

Components/skills	Task types	No. Qs	Marks	Total
Listening (two audio clips by Native speakers)	MC	5x.5	2.5	10
	T/F	5x.5	2.5	
	Answer questions (two words/numbers)	5x1	5	
Speaking	Phase-1 Multiple Role play	8 exchanges	4	10
	Phase -2 Extempore on given topics	10 sentences	6	
SECTION -ONE **Reading & Voc.**	Comprehension- T or F	4x1	4	20
	Answer questions	3x2	6	
	Complete (antonyms/synonyms)	5x1	5	
	Make sentence (idioms/phrases)	5x1	5	
SECTION-TWO **Grammar& Writing**	Grammar –MC	4x.5	2	20
	Complete	4x.5	2	
	Jumbled Sentence	3x1	3	
	Rewrite using given words	3x1	3	
	Essay :Cause and effect/ agree or disagree	1x10	10	
SECTION-THREE **Literature -Textual**	MC	10x.5	5	20
	SA	5x1	5	
	Essay (critical appreciation)	2x5	10	

	1. From prescribed text			
	2. Unseen text			
Total				**80**
Listening & Speaking				**20**
Grand Total				**100**

* Choice should be provided for descriptive questions: SECT-2, Essay. SECT-3, SA, Essay.

7.4. Duration and Targeted Skills

In the proposed alternative semester end examination design, the total time assigned to various sections is two hours and thirty minutes (2.30) which excludes Listening and Speaking Skills exams. The total duration of the exam is equitably divided among the three sections of the questions paper viz. Vocabulary and Reading Skills (50 minutes) Grammar and Writing (50 minutes) and English Literature (50 minutes). The Listening and Speaking examinations have to be conducted at colleges in stipulated time frame announced by the university and standardized audio clips for listening and rubrics/rating scale to assess speaking skills should also be provided to ensure, credibility, uniformity and identical difficulty level across institutions.

Given the findings that the ESL test design has a reflective negative washback on the stakeholders (students and teachers) at UG level in Calicut university, the newly mooted test pattern gives considerably due weight to all the macro and related micro skills of English to maximize positive washback. The table (7.4.1) illustrates the standard duration that learners are supposed to take for completing each task type. The time is calculated based on the thinking and reading time that

each item requires from an average student. The listening exam can be conducted either at the beginning or end of the written exam whereas speaking test can be scheduled according to the convenience of colleges but within a timeframe announced by the University.

7.4.1. Time Allocation for Individual Test Tasks

Components/skills	Task types	No. Qs	Minutes	Total
Listening (two audio clips by Native speakers)	MC*	5x.5	8	30
	T/F*	5x.5	8	
	Fill in (one word/number)*	5x1	14	
Speaking	Phase-1 TS /SS dialogue/interview		3	8
	Phase -2 Short talk/description		5	
SECTION -ONE Reading & Voc.	Comprehension-MC/T or F*	4x1	15	45
	Answer questions	3x2	15	
	Voc. MC/complete*	5x1	5	
	Make sentence /match *	5x1	10	
SECTION-TWO Grammar& Writing	Grammar –MC*	4x.5	8	55
	Cloze Test/Fill in/complete *	4x.5	12	
	Jumbled Sentence *	3x1	9	
	Complete/join sentences	3x1	6	
	Essay : Opinion/ Compare&	1x10	20	

	Contrast /Agree or Disagree/ Cause and Effect/Narrative			
SECTION-THREE **Literature -Textual**	MC*	5x1	5	50
	SA	2x5	10	
	Essay	2x5	35	
Total (section 1, 2& 3)				**150** **(2.5 hrs)**
Listening				30
Grand Total (in hours)				**3:00**

7.4.2. Rubrics for Assessing the Proposed Speaking Test

The table below table gives a model rubric for the proposed speaking test because it will help the examiner to assess different aspects/sub-skills of speaking in a systematic and measurable way. Moreover, following the same rubric across all colleges affiliated to a university will help maintain objectivity and identical standard in assessment.

Areas in focus	**Specific indicators**	
Pronunciation articulating the words correctly/clearly	All words are clearly understood	**4**
	Most words are clearly understood	**3**
	Some words are clearly understood	**2**
	Not many words are clearly understood	**1**
Intonation	Excellent use of suprasegmentals	**3**

Voice modulations/suprasegmentals	Limited use of suprasegmentals	2
	Poor use of suprasegmentals	1
Grammar Correct tenses / articles / syntax	Meaning is clear	3
	Most meaning is OK	2
	Confusing to understand	1
Fluency Can keep speaking	Can keep speaking	5
	Stops and starts, with pauses	3
	Only gives 1 – 2 word answers	1
Presentation skills Eye contact / gestures/body language	Appears confident/appropriate gestures	3
	Trying to be confident/limited gestures	2
	Makes listeners uncomfortable	1
Content Depth/appeal/clarity of message	Excellent ideas	7
	Interesting ideas	5
	Ok	3
	Not interesting	1

Total Mark: 25 Weight (10):   25/2.5=10

7.5. Materials to be Used

In the wake of the research findings that one of the greatest kinds of test impacts in force in the current ESL environment at university level is content washback and method washback, the study materials of CEC needs to be revised. The responses of both the stakeholders have explicitly indicated that one of crucial factors responsible for the negative test impact is the material used for instruction. The

document analysis of the study has disclosed that the study materials constitute largely a body of literature of different genres in English ranging from the Old to Modern Periods. They are neither graded nor well chosen to meet specific and prospective needs of the learners whose discipline of specialization drastically differs. Therefore, the study proposed a kind of syllabus which is composite in nature that it pays proportionate attention to language skills and humanitarian values. The new syllabus moots two books for each CEC at UG level, one language specific book and another literature specific book. There should be two text books for study. *Weaving it together*, *Academic Writing Skills*, *Headway Plus*, *Interchange* are a few skill based EL books

Since the primary and rudimentary aims of learning a language is to effectively and proficiently communicate in the TL, the new syllabus design assigns 80% weighting to different macro/micro skill development in English and 20% weight to prescribed literary pieces to expose the learners to the semantic richness of the language and multi-dimensional values enshrined in words. The literary text may consist of all genres, namely essays, short stories, one act play, and poems which have to be judiciously selected keeping leaner's levels, motivational factors, the literary and linguistic values of the text and English language education utilities. The literary text is to be taught in a learner centric way in which teacher/student interaction acts as a tool to explore the semantic nuances, linguistic richness and communicative tools of the text. In addition, the length of the works and

timeframe for one semester, intellectual level and cultural background of the writings should also be decisive factors in selecting texts. The distribution of different genres can be as follows:

7.5.1. Number of Genres in the Proposed Literary Text:

Genres	Numbers
Essay	3
Poem	3
One act play	2
Short story	2
Total	**10**

7.6. A Model of the Proposed Blend-Model Examination

FIRST SEMESTER B.A/B.Sc/B.Com DEGREE EXAMINATION
Common English Course (101, UG-CCSS)

Marks: 60   Time: 2.5 hrs

Section One: Reading & Vocabulary(20 Marks)

Read the text below and do the tasks that follow

A thirteenth- century explorer

1.   Marco Polo was born in Venice in 1254. Niccolo Polo , Marco's father, was one of Venice's many rich merchants. When Marco was only six years old, his father left Venice on a trading journey to China. When Niccolo Polo returned to Venice nine years later, Marco's mother was dead. Niccolo wanted to return to China, but who would look after young Marco? Niccolo decided to take his 17- year-old son with him.

2.   Marco, his father and his father's brother Maffeo left Venice in 1271. They sailed to Turkey and then travelled east along the Silk Route. They travelled in large trading caravans, sometimes with more than 2,000 people and animals. For three years and 6,000 km they walked, crossing the deserts and mountains of Persia and Afghanistan, until they finally reached China.

3.   At the city of Shang-tu, the European travelers met the emperor of China, Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan liked the three strange Europeans. He especially liked young Marco because he quickly learned to speak the emperor's language, Mongol. The next year, the emperor started to send Marco on trading   journeys through China.

4.   For the next 17 years, Marco Polo travelled to China and saw many wonderful things. Marco Polo was amazed to discover that China had many thousands of kilometers of roads. He was also amazed to learn that the emperor of China had a huge postal service connecting all the towns and cities of his empire. More than 200, 000 horses were used to carry letters all over China. In many Chinese cities, Marco was surprised to see policemen and firemen because these did not yet exist in Europe. He was also surprised to find special parks and gardens, full of flowers and animals, where ordinary people could go to relax.

5.   In 1292, Marco, Niccolo and Maffeo finally left China. This time, they travelled on one of the emperor's large ships. The ship stopped at many places along the way, including India, Sri Lanka and Oman before reaching Hormuz in 1295. The three Venetians then travelled overland to Constantinople and from there returned to Venice in the same year. When Marco Polo left Venice, he was only 17. When he returned, he was 42.

6.   Three years later, Marco Polo joined the Venetian navy. At that time, Venice was at war with another Italian city, Genoa. Marco was captured in the battle and put in prison. In prison, Marco met a man called Rustichello. During the next year, Marco dictated many stories about his travels to Rustichello, who wrote them down. Together, the Venetian and the Frenchman wrote a book called A Description of the World, which they finished in 1298. We do not know what Marco Polo did for the rest of his life. We only know that he died in Venice in 1324.

TASK 1 - What is the main idea of the text? Circle the best answer(4x1=4)

  a.   Marco Polo's journey along the Silk Route
  b.   The adventurous journey of Marco Polo
  c.   How Marco Polo wrote his famous book

TASK 2 -   Choose the main idea of paragraph 4 in the text above

  a.   The last years of Marco Polo's life
  b.   Meeting the Chinese Emperor
  c.   The amazing things Marco Polo saw in China

TASK 3 – Scan the text and decide whether these statements are TRUE/ FALSE/NG.

    a. The three Venetians travelled alone to China.   _____

    b. Chinese postmen travelled by horse.   _____

TASK 4 – Answer the following questions in complete sentences   (3x2=6)

1.   Why did Kublai Khan like Marco Polo?

_____

_____

2.   How long was Marco Polo away from Venice?

_____

_____

3.   Where did he write his famous book?

_____

_____

Task.5 Choose the best word to complete the following sentences. Use the words from the box. (5x1=5)

vibration   migrate   vomit   exaggerate   victims physical

1. Many people _____ to other countries in search of jobs or a better career.

2. Fortunately, a lot of   _____ survived death though it was a major accident.

3. The reporter tried to _____ many facts for selfish interests.

4. Emotional injuries last longer than _____ injuries.

5. When I enter any mosque, I put my mobile phone in _____ mode.

TASK 6 Match a word from Column A with its <u>antonym</u> from Column B. (5x1=5)

A WORDS	C ANSWERS	B OPPOSITES
1.scatter	1. … ….	a. increase
2.loose	2. ……	b. gather
3.decrease	3. ……	c. create
4.passive	4. ……	d. tight
5.destroy	5. ……	e. active

Section Two- Writing & Grammar(20 Marks)

TASK 7 Fill in the gaps with a suitable article a, the, or --. (4x.5=2 marks)

She is ………. expert from Germany and reached ……. here yesterday for doing some research on Omani culture. One of ………. areas of her research………critical analysis of the features of Omani culture in 1980s.

TASK 8 Complete the following sentences with conditional clauses .(3x1=3)

1. If you come home very late ………………………..
2. I would not complain against you ……………..
3. All students will be happy……………………………

TASK 9 Use the correct *conjunctions* in the brackets to complete the sentences.(4x.5=2)
            (or   but   and   because   so   though)

1. Muna is not allowed to watch television _____ play outside until her homework is over.

2. The book was 300 pages long, _____ I read it all.

3. We stopped near the bakery _____ bought some bread.

TASK 10. Re-order the jumbled sentences.   (3x1=3)

1. baby/ apple/ gave/ a red/ her /mother/ the.

_____

2. chair /the/ cat/ black/ onto/ jumped/ the.

_____

3. in/ weather/ the /Salalah /good/ is?

_____

TASK 11 Write an essay about 200 words on any ONE of the following topics (1x10=10)

A.   Write a <u>narrative essay</u> about a sad event in your life.

<div align="center">OR</div>

B.   Write a <u>narrative essay</u> about a memorable journey.

Section Three: Literature (Prose and Drama) 20 marks

I. Read the following questions and choose the correct option(5x.5=2.5)

1.   What was the art that almost all the youngsters knew in Tolstoy Farm?
      a. Horse riding   b. carpentry   c. cooking   d. felling trees
2.   Who was the founder of INA?

      a.Subhash Chandra Bose   b.M.K.Gandhi

      c.Mohan Singh   d.RaniofJhansi

3. Who taught the King that human beings had the obligation to respect life?
      a.Gandhib.Achebe

      c. Baldwin   d. Anderson
4. When was the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly held?
      a.9 December 1946   b.9 November 1946
      c. 9 October 1946   d. 9 February 1946
5. Who commented   that a House divided against itself could not stand very long?
      a Gandhi.   b. Nehru
       c. Jefferson   d. Lincoln

II. Fill in the blanks with appropriate   response from the choices given below (5x.5=2.5)

1.   Chinua Achebe was born in

        a. Congo   b.Nigeria   c.South Africa   d.Ghana

2. Junoon is a movie based on Ruskin Bond's   .

        a. The Flight of Pigeons   b.The Kashmiri Storyteller

        c.The Blue Umbrella   d. The Tiger in the Tunnel

3. Fritz Karinthy is a ……………playwright.

a) Hungarian c) American   b) British   d) Indian

4. Mr Sage is selling

     a) furniture   b) radiogram   c) piano d) books

5. The collection   of poetry by Langston   Hughes is…………….   .

    a) The Weary Blues   b) The lyrical   Ballads

     c) Songs of Innocence   d) Summer in

III. Answer any five of the following questions in two or three sentences.   (5x1=5)

1.   Who were Kallenbach and Sjt.Pragji Desai?
2.   Who was particularly   responsible for regenerating Congress in 1921?
3.   What was the vision of King about America?
4.   How did Abraham Lincoln define democracy?
5.   According to the author, how can a wife help the husband in his social life?
6.   What changes does winter bring to the Himalayas?
7.   What are the things in Jill's house that surprise Aunt Jane?

IV. Write two essays of not more than 150 words each (2X5=10 Marks)

1. Make a comparison between the political philosophy of M.K.Gandhi and
Martin Luther King.

2. *The Refund* is a biting satire on the modern system of Education. Discuss.

3. Soul Gone Home is a typical portrayal of African American life. Comment.

7.7. A Model of the Proposed Listening Examination

FIRST SEMESTER BA/BSc/BCom/BTHM
LISTENING EXAM, MARCH ,2015

Marks: 10   **Time: .5 hour**

SECTION ONE: Listen and circle the correct answer   **(5x.5=2.5)**

1. The caller can reserve a car by pressing button number ………

   a) Two   **(b)** One   **(c)** Three

2. The name of the caller is ………………..

   a) Moris   **(b)** Melanie   **(c)** Maxine

3. The booking reference is ……………

    a) ACFY15AG   **(b)** ASFY15AG   **(c)** ACFY50AJ

4. The total extra amount Mr Maxine will have to pay is …………..

    a)   £ 15   **(b)** £ 65   **(c)** £ 165

5. Mr. Maxine rented a car …………

    a) several weeks ago   **(b)** two days ago   **(c)** two years ago

SECTION TWO: Listen and write TRUE or FALSE (5x.5=2.5)

6. The creative photography course is for people who know the subject before._____

7. The course is spread over less than one month._____

8. The course on web designing gives practical lessons on many aspects of designing web pages._____

9. The web designing course requires some previous experience._____

10. The conversation is between a course advisor and a student._____

SECTION THREE: Listen to the lecture and answer in words/numbers (5x1=5)

11. What medal will each Nobel Prize winner receive in addition to cash prize? _____

12. Were any Nobel Prizes given for the years, 1940 to 1942? _____

13. How many people are there in Nobel Peace Prize Committee? _____

14. When was the Nobel Prize in Economics established? _____

15. Which is the last month for receiving names of candidates for the Nobel Prize each year?_____

7.8. Conclusion

The data analysis shows that both learners and teachers affirmatively agree with the statement that the current examination, with their destructive emphasis on content learning and content testing, exerts counterproductive influences on the learners/teachers attitude to learning, testing, teaching and other related educational practices. Moreover, the document analysis shows that the exams for CEC are far away from the necessary attributes of a standard test in English viz. validity, reliability, authenticity, positive washback etc in evaluating the learners' proficiency in English. In the light of these findings, a blend-model of test construction with proportionate weight to all the skills has been proposed for CEC at UG level in Calicut University. It is called a blend-model because in the design and nature of tasks presented in it, both higher and lower order skills of the Educational Taxonomy are duly represented and assessed. Moreover, it is creative mixture of testing practices in English at the global level and the practices which have been in vogue in TESL scenario for years. Besides, it has given due weight to both skill orientation and literature teaching.

References

Alderson, J. C. (2004). Foreword. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis, (Eds.) *Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods*. (pp. ix-xii). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Alderson, J. C., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (1996). TOEFL preparation courses: A study of washback. *Language Testing, 13* (3), 280-297.

Alderson, J. C., & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics, 14* (2), 115-129.

Alderson, J. C., Clapham, C., & Wall, D. (1995). *Language test construction and evaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Andrews, J., Majer, J., Sargeant, D., & West, R. (2000). Reforming language examinations as classroom research: Washback and washforward in a cluster of teacher training colleges in Poland. In M. Beaumont & T. O'Brien (Eds.), *Collaborative research in second language education* (pp. 181-193). Sterling, VA: Trentham Books.

Andrews, S. (1994). The washback effect of examinations: Its impact upon curriculum innovation in English language teaching. *Curriculum Forum, 1*, 44-58.

Andrews, S. (2004). Washback and curriculum innovation. In L. Cheng., Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis (Eds.), Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods (pp.37-50). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bachman, L.F., Palmer, A.S.,(1996). Language Testing in Practice. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bailey K M (1996) 'Working for washback: a review of the washback concept in language testing' Language Testing 13/3: 257 – 279

Bailey, K. M. (1999). *Washback in language testing. TOEFL Monograph Series, Ms. 15*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Berry, V. (1994). Current assessment issues and practices in Hong Kong: A preview. In D. Nunan, R. Berry, & V. Berry (Eds.), *Bringing about change in language education:* Proceedings of the International Language in Education Conference 1994 (pp. 31-34). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.

Biggs, J. B. (1995). *Student approaches to learning, constructivism, and student centred learning.* Paper presented at the Twentieth International Conference on Improving University Teaching. Hong Kong . July 10–13.

Bracey, G. W. (1987). Measurement-driven instruction: Catchy phrase, dangerous practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 683-686.

Brown G & G Yule (1983) .*Teaching the Spoken Language*. Cambridge: CUP

Brown J D (2001). *Using Surveys in Language Programs*. Cambridge: CUP

Brown J D (2002) .Extraneous variables and the washback effect' Shiken: JALT Testing & Evaluation. SIG Newsletter 6/2: 12 – 15 www.jalt.org/test/bro_14.htm . last accessed 04.09.05

Brown, H. D., (1987). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Brumfit C J & K Johnson (1979). *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: OUP

Buck, G. (1988). Testing listening comprehension in Japanese university entrance examinations. *JALT Journal, 10*, 12-42.

Burrows, C. (2004). Washback in classroom-based assessment: A study of the washback effect in the Australian adult migrant English program. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis (Eds.), *Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods* (pp. 113-128). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics, 1(1):1-47.

Chapman, D. W., & Synder, C. W. (2000). Can high-stakes national testing improve instruction: Reexamining conventional wisdom. *International Journal of Educational Development, 20*, 457-474.

Cheng L (1997) How does washback influence teaching? Implications for Hong Kong. Language and Education 11/1: 38 – 54

Cheng L (1999) .Changing assessment: Washback on teacher perspectives and actions. Teaching and Teacher Education 15: 253 – 271

Cheng L, Y Watanabe with A Curtis (Eds.) (2004) Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods New Jersey: LEA

Cheng, L., & Curtis, A. (2004). Washback or backwash: A review of the impact of testing on teaching and learning. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis

(Eds.), Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods (pp. 3-17). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cohen, D. Andrew, (1994). Assessing language ability in the classroom. Heinle & Heinle publishers.

Cohen, J. (1977). Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences. New York: Academic Press.

Collins, S. (1999) Communicative Methodology: A Health Warning? Exploration in Teachers Education. Vol 7, Number 1, p.2-6 http:// www.jalt.org

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Dasgupta, P. (1993). *The otherness of English: India's auntie tongue syndrome*. New Delhi: Sage Publications

Davies A (1968) Language Testing Symposium: A Psycholinguistic Approach London: OUP

Davies A (1978) Language testing .Language Teaching and Linguistics. Abstracts II, 3/4: 145 – 159.

Davies, A. (1990) Principles of language testing. Oxford: Blackwell.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (2000). The handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Denzin, N.K. (1970) Sociological methods: a source book. Chicago, IL:Aline doi:10.1093/eltj/cci030

Farhady, H. (1983). The disjunctive fallacy between discrete-point tests and integrative tests. In J.W. Oller, Jr. (Ed.). Issues in language testing research. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury Publishers.

Fredericksen, J. & Collins, A. (1989). A systems approach to educational testing. Educational. Researcher, 18(9), 27–32.

Fulcher G (2000). The communicative' legacy in language testing. System .28/4: 483 –497

Green, A. (2007). *IELTS washback in context*. Cambridge: CUP.

Gronlund, N. E., (1985). Measurement and Evaluation in Teaching. NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Gupta, D. (2005) ELT in India: A Brief and Historical and Cultural Overview. Asian EFL Journal 7:1

Hair, J.F. Jr. , Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., & Black, W.C. (1998). Multivariate Data Analysis, (5th Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Heaton, J. B., (1995). Writing English Language Tests. London: Longman Group Limited

Hughes A (1989) Testing for Language Teachers .Cambridge: CUP

Hughes A (Ed.) (1988) Testing English for University Study (ELT Document 127) Modern English Publications.

Hughes, A. (1988). Introducing a needs-based test of English language proficiency into an English-medium university in Turkey. In A. Hughes (Ed.), *Testing English for university study. ELT Documents #127* (pp. 134-146) Modern English Publications in association with the British Council.

Hughes, A. (1993). *Backwash and TOEFL 2000*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Reading.

Hymes, D.H. (1972) "On Communicative Competence" In: J.B. Pride and J. Holmes (eds) Sociolinguistics. Selected Readings. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 269-293.(Part 1)

Johnson R K (Ed.) (1989) The Second Language Curriculum Cambridge: CUP

Kellaghan, T., Madaus, G. F, & Airasian, P. W. (1982). The effects of standardized testing. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff Pub.

King, N. (1994). The qualitative research interview. In Qualitative methods in organizational research: A practical guide, edited by C. Cassell and G. Symon, 14–36. London: Sage.

KSHEC, Functions and responsibilities (2013) .last accessed on 4/2/2015 http://www.kshec.kerala.gov.in/

Kunnan, A.J (2000)Fairness and Validation in Language Assessment: Selected Papers from the 19th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Orlando, Florida. Cambridge University Press.

Lado, R. (1961). Language testing: The construction and use of foreign language tests. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Le Roux. C Marie-Therese (2011) Product versus Process? Continuous Assessment in the Oman General Foundation Programs.ELC Journal of Salalah College of Technology, Volume 1,p79-93.

Madsen, H. S. (1983). Techniques in Testing. New York: Oxford University Press.

Manjooran, L. (1997). Redundant factors in second language learning. PhD Thesis, University of Calicut.

Mc Namara, (2000). Language Testing. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Messick, S. (1996) Validity and washback in language testing. Language Testing 13/3:241 – 256

Morrow, K., (1979). Communicative language testing: revolution of evolution? In: Brumfit, C.K., Johnson,K. (Eds.), The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching. Oxford University Press, Oxford,pp. 143-159.

Nayar P.B. (2008) English in Kerala: Plus ça change?.TESL-EJ,12.3,27-38.

Nayar, P.B. (1997). ESL and EFL dichotomy: Language politics or pragmatics? *TESOL Quarterly 31* (1), 9-37

Nayar, P.B. (2005). The pragmatics of code switching. Paper presented at the 9th convention of the International Pragmatics Association, Riva Del Garda, Italy.

Nunan, D. (1992). Language teaching methodology. London: Prentice Hall

Pearson, I. (1988). Tests as levers of change (or 'putting first things first'). In D. Chamberlain & R. Baumgartner (Eds.), *ESP in the classroom: Practice and Evaluation* (pp. 98-107). London: Modem English Publications in association with the British Council.

Powney, J. & M. Watts (1987) Interviewing in Educational Research. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Pride J B & J Holmes (Eds.) (1972) Sociolinguistics. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin

Rea-Dickins P (1997) So, why do we need relationships with stakeholders in language testing? Language Testing, 14(3), 304–314.

Richards J C & T S Rodgers (1986) .Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching Cambridge: CUP

Robson, C. 2002. Real World Research. A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner Researches, 2nd edition. Blackwell: Oxford

Saville N (2000) 'Investigating the impact of international language examinations' University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) Research .Notes 2 [available on-line] http://www.cambridge-efl.org/rs_notes [last accessed 04.09.05]

SCERT Curriculum Restructure(2010). Last accessed on 06/4/2015 http://www.scert.kerala.gov.in/

Schmuck, R. A. (1997). Practical action research for change. Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development.

Shohamy, E. (1992). Beyond proficiency testing: A diagnostic feedback testing model for assessing foreign language learning. *Modern Language Journal, 76* (4), 513-521.

Shohamy, E. (1992). New models of assessment: The connection between testing and learning. In E. Shohamy & R. Walton (Eds.), *Language assessment for feedback: Testing and other strategies.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

Shohamy, E., Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Ferman, I. (1996). Test impact revisited: Washback effect over time. *Language Testing, 13(3)*, 298-317.

Smith, M.L. (1991) Put to the test: The effects of external testing on teachers. *Educational Researchers* 20 (5): 8–11.

Spolsky, B. (1981). Some ethical questions about language testing. In C. Klein-Braley & D. Stevenson (eds.), Practice and problems in language testing (pp.5-21). Frankfert: Peter Lang

Spratt, M. (2005). Washback and the classroom: The implications for teaching and learning of studies of washback from exams. Language Teaching Research, 9, 5-29.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative Competence: Some roles of Comprehensible Input and Comprehensible Output in its Development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), Input in second language acquisition (pp. 235–253), Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Taylor, L (2000) Stakeholders in language testing. Research Notes 2, 2-3.

Taylor, L, (2005) Washback and impact. ELT Journal,59 ,2, pp 154-155

Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to case study . The Qualitative Report. 3(2).

UDF Education Commission (2010). last accessed on 3/4/2015
http://www.highereducation.kerala.gov.in/

Wall, D. (2005). *The impact of high-stakes examinations on classroom teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wallace, M.J. (1998) Action research for language teachers. Cambridge: CUP

Watanabe, Y. (2004). Methodology in washback studies. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis (Eds.), *Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods* (pp. 19-36). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Watanabe, Y. (2004). Teacher factors mediating washback. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe, & A. Curtis (Eds.), *Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods* (pp. 129-146). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Weir, C J (1983) Identifying the Language Problems of Overseas Students in Tertiary Education in the UK. Unpublished PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, London.

Weir, C J (1990) Communicative Language Testing, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.

Weir, C J (1993) Understanding and Developing Language Tests; Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.

Weir, C J (2004) Limitations of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in developing comparable examinations and tests; Internal document. Cambridge ESOL.

Weir, C J (2005) Language Testing and Validation: An Evidence-Based Approach, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Weir, C J and Milanovic, M (2003) (Eds) Continuity and Innovation: Revising the Cambridge Proficiency in English Examination 1913-2002, Studies in Language Testing,15, Cambridge: Cambridge ESOL/Cambridge University Press.

Weir, C J and Roberts, J (1994) Evaluation in ELT, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Weiss, C (1998) Evaluation, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Weiss, C. H. (1998). Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Widdowson H (1979). Explorations in applied linguistics. Oxford: OUP.

Yin, R. K. (1994). Case study research: Design and methods (2nd ed.). Newbury

The coral reefs of Agatti Island

A Agatti is one of the Lakshadweep Islands off the southwest coast of India. These islands are surrounded by lagoons and coral reefs which are in turn surrounded by the open ocean. Coral reefs, which are formed from the skeletons of minute sea creatures, give shelter to a variety of plants and animals, and therefore have the potential to provide a stream of diverse benefits to the inhabitants of Agatti Island.

B In the first place, the reefs provide food and other products for consumption by the islanders themselves. Foods include different types of fish, octopus and molluscs, and in the case of poorer families these constitute as much as 90% of the protein they consume. Reef resources are also used for medicinal purposes. For example, the money cowrie, a shell known locally as Vallakavadi, is commonly made into a paste and used as a home remedy to treat cysts in the eye.

C In addition, the reef contributes to income generation. According to a recent survey, 20% of the households on Agatti report lagoon fishing, or shingle, mollusc, octopus and cowrie collection as their main occupation (Hoon et al, 2002). For poor households, the direct contribution of the reef to their financial resources is significant: 12% of poor households are completely dependent on the reef for their household income, while 59% of poor households rely on the reef for 70% of their household income, and the remaining 29% for 50% of their household income.

D Bartering of reef resources also commonly takes place, both between islanders and between islands. For example, Agatti Island is known for its abundance of octopus, and this is often used to obtain products from nearby Androth Island. Locally, reef products may be given by islanders in return for favours, such as help in constructing a house or net mending, or for other products such as rice, coconuts or fish.

E The investment required to exploit the reefs is minimal. It involves simple, locally available tools and equipment, some of which can be used without a boat, such as the fishing practice known as Kat moodsal. This is carried out in the shallow eastern lagoon of Agatti by children and adults, close to shore at low tide, throughout the year. A small cast net, a leaf bag, and plastic slippers are all that are required, and the activity can yield 10–12 small fish (approximately 1 kg) for household consumption. Cast nets are not expensive, and all the households in Agatti own at least one. Even the boats, which operate in the lagoon and near-shore reef, are constructed locally and have low running costs. They are either small, non-mechanised, traditional wooden rowing boats, known as Thonis, or rafts, known as Tharappam.

F During more than 400 years of occupation and survival, the Agatti islanders have developed an intimate knowledge of the reefs. They have knowledge of numerous different types of fish and where they can be found according to the tide or lunar cycle. They have also developed a local naming system or folk taxonomy, naming fish according to their shape. Sometimes the same species is given different names depending on its size and age. For example, a full grown Emperor fish is called Metti and a juvenile is called Killokam. The abundance of each species at different fishing grounds is also well known. Along with this knowledge of reef resources, the islanders have developed a wide range of skills and techniques for exploiting them. A

multitude of different fishing techniques are still used by the islanders, each targeting different areas of the reef and particular species.

G The reef plays an important role in the social lives of the islanders too, being an integral part of traditions and rituals. Most of the island's folklore revolves around the reef and sea. There is hardly any tale or song which does not mention the traditional sailing crafts, known as Odams, the journeys of enterprising 'heroes', the adventures of sea fishing and encounters with sea creatures. Songs that women sing recollect women looking for returning Odams, and requesting the waves to be gentler and the breeze just right for the sails. There are stories of the benevolent sea ghost baluvam, whose coming to shore is considered a harbinger of prosperity for that year, bringing more coconuts, more fish and general well-being.

H The reef is regarded by the islanders as common property, and all the islanders are entitled to use the lagoon and reef resources. In the past, fishing groups would obtain permission from the Amin (island head person) and go fishing in the grounds allotted by him. On their return, the Amin would be given a share of the catch, normally one of the best or biggest fish. This practice no longer exists, but there is still a code of conduct or etiquette for exploiting the reef, and common respect for this is an effective way of avoiding conflict or disputes.

I Exploitation of such vast and diverse resources as the reefs and lagoon surrounding the island has encouraged collaborative efforts, mainly for purposes of safety, but also as a necessity in the operation of many fishing techniques. For example, an indigenous gear and operation known as Bala fadal involves 25–30 men. Reef gleaning for cowrie collection by groups of 6–10 women is also a common activity, and even today, although its economic significance is marginal, it continues as a recreational activity.

Questions 1-9

Reading Passage 1 has nine paragraphs **A–I**.

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.

List of Phrases

i Island legends

ii Resources for exchange

iii Competition for fishing rights

iv The low cost of equipment

v Agatti's favourable location

vi Rising income levels

vii The social nature of reef occupations

viii Resources for islanders' own use

ix High levels of expertise

x Alternative sources of employment

xi Resources for earning money

xii Social rights and obligations

1) Paragraph A

2) Paragraph B

3) Paragraph C

4) Paragraph D

5) Paragraph E

6) Paragraph F

7) Paragraph G

8) Paragraph H

9) Paragraph I

Questions 10-13

Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C or D**.

10) What proportion of poor households get all their income from reef products?

    A   12%

    B   20%

    C   29%

    D   59%

11) Kat moodsal fishing

    A   is a seasonal activity.

    B   is a commercial activity.
    C   requires little investment.

    D   requires use of a rowing boat.

12) Which characteristic of present-day islanders do the writers describe?

    A   physical strength

    B   fishing expertise

C courage

D imagination

13) What do the writers say about the system for using the reef on Agatti?

A Fish catches are shared equally.

B The reef owner issues permits.

C There are frequent disputes.

D There is open access.

IELTS General Writing Sample Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Task.1   You have seen an advertisement in an English newspaper for a job working in the City Museum shop during the holidays.

You decide to apply for the job. Write a letter to the director of the Museum. In your letter:

•introduce yourself

•explain what experience and special skills you have

•explain why you are interested in the job

General Writing Sample Task 2

Task. 2 You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Is freedom of speech necessary in a free society?

Give reasons for your answer.

Write at least 250 words.

IELTS Speaking : Family Tradition

IELTS speaking Task-2

Take one minute to prepare a talk on the following subject.

Take notes if you like and remember to include reasons and examples.

You should then speak for between one and two minutes.

Describe your favourite family tradition.

- You should say:
- What the tradition is
- When it occurs
- What you do
- And explain why it is your favourite tradition