Doctor of Education Dissertation

Title:

AN EXPLORATION INTO WHAT PROMOTES OR HINDERS BENEFICIAL ENGLISH TEST WASHBACK ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

Ethical English language testing requires an ongoing effort to improve the quality of English test item design. It also requires the identification of what factors might encourage or obstruct positive washback and impact. The advantages and disadvantages of summative high-stakes English tests compared to feasible alternative forms of assessment should also be considered. For instance, an evaluative review of this research suggests the greater appropriateness of multiple medium-stakes formative English assessments over high-stakes summative English tests for students at the case study school. This case study explores the washback phenomenon and related impact phenomenon at one CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school in Hong Kong in order to find out what promotes or hinders beneficial English test washback and impact on teaching and learning at this school and includes a comparison between a new and a long established high-stakes English test. Another focus of this research is the lower academic performance and lower English language proficiency levels of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. A total of 256 student participants completed questionnaires; 147 student participants took part in group interviews; and 7 teacher participants took part in individual interviews. A total of 23 lesson observations occurred as well as one English SBA (School-based Assessment) assessing session and one group tutorial. Key findings include a crucial need for English teachers who prepare students for high-stakes English tests to be aware of what pedagogical practices will maximise their students' chances of success in what can be a very stressful and even traumatic experience. Some examples of detrimental washback and impact were identified including some instances of narrowing of the curriculum and some instances of an increased focus on lower order cognitive skills such as rote learning and memorisation. Examples of beneficial washback and impact were identified including some instances of a wide variety of English learning experiences being encouraged and much enhanced both by English teachers who knew how to scaffold their students' use of lower and higher order cognitive skills in ways that encouraged a creative use of English and English SBA (School-based Assessment). Finally, English SBA (School-based Assessment) was found to be a much sharper tool and to have a more immediate ability to enhance the quality of English teaching and the learning experiences of students by more actively engaging students in the learning process than high-stakes English tests.

Keywords: CMI; EFL; high-stakes tests; impact; measurement-driven instruction; washback

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CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the work contained in this dissertation is entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Signature of Candidate   Date

ENDORSEMENT

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Signature of Supervisor/s   Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Acronyms

AS-level   Hong Kong Advanced Supplementary Level Examination

CE   Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination

CLT   Communicative Language Teaching

CMI   Chinese Medium of Instruction

EDB   Hong Kong Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ELT   English Language Teaching

EMI   English Medium of Instruction

EQ   Emotional Intelligence

ETS   Educational Testing Service

HKALE   Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (AS-level) Advanced Supplementary Level Use of English Examination

HKCEE   Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination English Language Examination

HKDSE   Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education English Language Examination

HKEAA   Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

HREC   Human Research Ethics Committee

IELTS   International English Language Testing System

LET   Local English Teacher (Usually a Hong Kong Chinese English Teacher who is a native Cantonese-speaking teacher of English)

MOI   Medium of Instruction

NET   Native-speaking English Teacher (employed by the school through EDB NET Scheme)

NMET   National Matriculation English Test (China)

NVivo 9   Software that helps researchers manage, analyze and report on unstructured data like interviews, websites, images, videos and social media posts

P1/2/3/4/5/6   Primary 1/2/3/4/5/6

PASW Statistics SPSS   PASW Statistics 18 (formerly SPSS Statistics) is an advanced statistical analysis software

S1/2/3/4/5/6/7   Secondary 1/2/3/4/5/6/7

SBA   (School-based Assessment) (included in HKDSE examination results after HKEAA moderation)

TOEFL   Test of English as an International Language (a trademark of ETS)

USQ   University of Southern Queensland (Australia)

Synonyms

The words *examination; exam* and *test* are used interchangeably and are intended to convey exactly the same meaning as each other.

The terms *positive washback* and *beneficial washback* are used interchangeably and are intended to convey exactly the same meaning as each other.

The terms *negative washback* and *detrimental washback* are used interchangeable and are intended to convey exactly the same meaning as each other.

The HKALE is sometimes also referred to as the *old* examination, exam or test.

The HKCEE is sometimes also referred to as the *old certificate* examination, exam or test

The HKDSE is sometimes also referred to as the *new* examination, exam or test.

1. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter introduces and outlines the focus of this case study. The case study school context

is outlined from page two to five. Research questions are given on page six and the objectives of this

research are given on page eight. Ethical and political considerations are included on page nine and

the likely outcomes of this research are given on page ten. The significance of the study is outlined

from page ten onwards. This chapter concludes on page fourteen.

This was an exploratory, descriptive, illustrative and analytical English test washback and impact

case study that consisted of multiple cases at one secondary school. This case study focused on how

Hong Kong CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school English teachers and students

were influenced by high-stakes, end of senior secondary school English language tests, which are

often referred to as public English exams in Hong Kong, and the identification and description of any

other predominant factors that may have been interplaying with washback and impact from preparing

for these English language tests. One case study focused on washback and impact from the new end

of Secondary 6 senior secondary English examination, the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English examination on Secondary 5 students. This was the new high-stakes,

end of secondary school English test from 2012 onwards in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Examinations

and Assessment Authority, 2012a). A parallel case study focused on washback and impact from the

old end of Secondary 7 HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English

examination, on Secondary 6 students. This Hong Kong end of senior secondary school English test

was phased out in 2012 (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2012b).

High-stakes tests of English are common place in East Asia, including locally developed and international English tests for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in Hong Kong (Qian, 2008); the College English Test (Band 4) in mainland China (Ren, 2011; Xie & Andrews, 2013); English proficiency test exit requirements at some Taiwanese universities (Pan & Newfields, 2011; Pan & Newfields, 2012); English tests used for college entrance, college graduation and employment in South Korea (Choi, 2008); and a university entrance English examination in Japan (Sasaki, 2008) to list just a few. While some are used to help decide who gets one of the limited but much coveted places in prestigious university courses in a prospective university student's own city, region or country, others are used to help decide who meets the minimum English requirements to graduate or for academic studies overseas in an English-speaking country. The stakes are high as these test results often play a significant role in determining both who gets a university place or graduates and also the quality, type and number of career opportunities that will be accessible to them in the future (see also, Bailey, 1999, p. 14).

The case study secondary school context

Case study secondary school teachers made a special effort to become familiar with their students' family backgrounds, particularly living environments, through home visitations. All classes at the case study secondary school usually had at least two homeroom teachers and at least one of these homeroom teachers would usually make a pastoral visit to the home of each of their homeroom students at least once a year. Informal discussions with English teachers about these home visits suggested that most students' homes were very small and often only had one television and one Internet connected computer, if any. Although Hong Kong does indeed have free-to-air English television, during home visits, when the TV was turned on, other family members were invariably

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watching one of the Chinese television channels. It was the view of teachers who made home visits that it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for students to be able to successfully negotiate with other family members to view English television for any extended length of time or on a regular basis. Much the same could be said about Internet connected computer access when there was any.
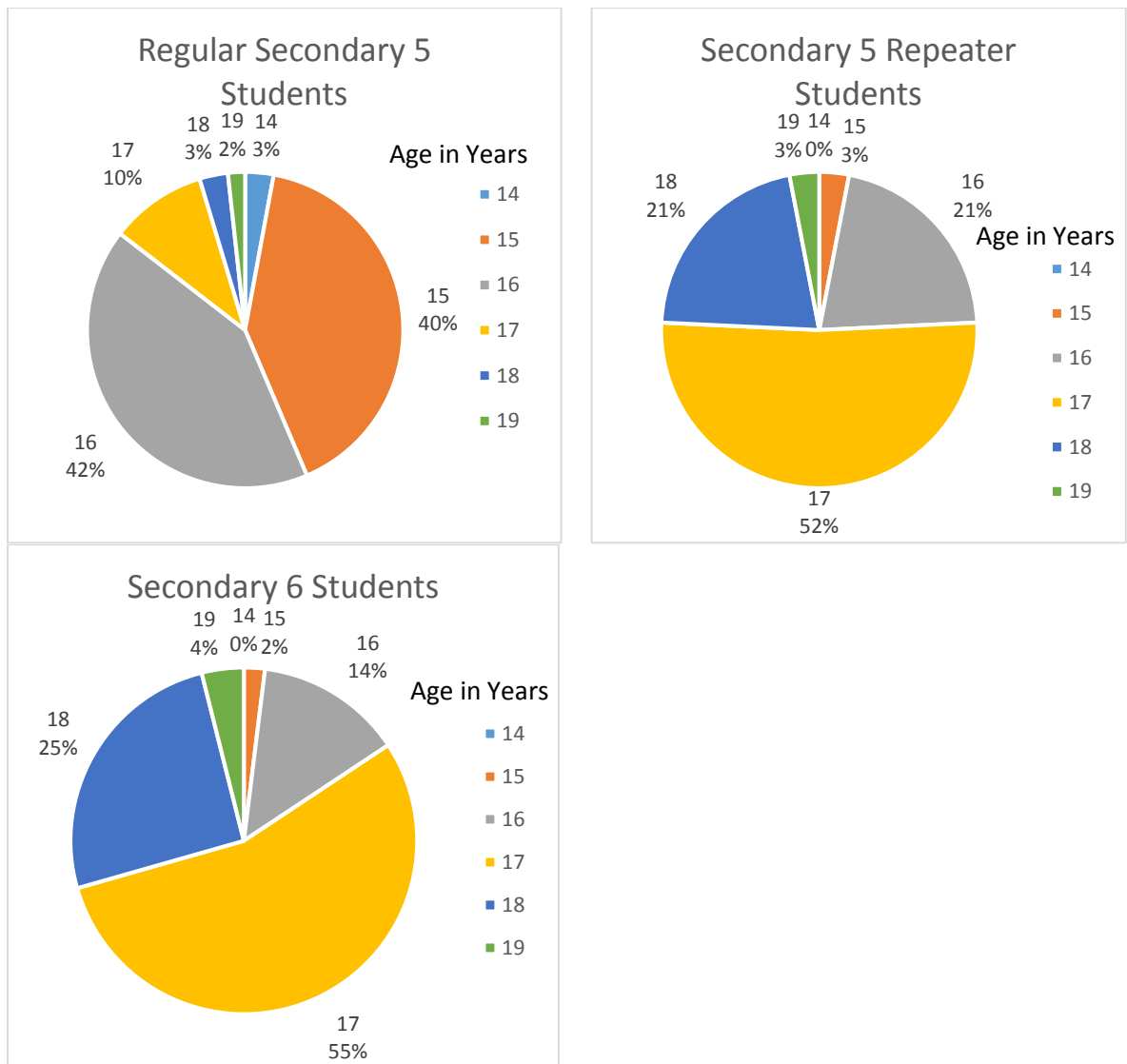
Figure 1.1 **Age.** Student responses to **"**How old were you at your last birthday?**"** (questionnaire item 3).

As shown in Figure 1.1 above, regular Secondary 5 students tended to be 15 or 16 years old while

Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students tended to be 16, 17 or 18 years old. This

meant that regular Secondary 5 students were usually about one year younger than the Secondary 5

repeater and Secondary 6 students. The case study school had a student population that was

predominately made up of students assigned a band three allocation, that is, the lower third of

students in Hong Kong according to academic performance. Recently, (in the 2011/2013 cycle)

academic performance banding was based on standardised results from academic achievement in

three internal assessment results: the first at the end of Primary 5, the second at mid-year Primary 6,

and the third at the end of Primary 6 and partially based on the average of two Pre-Secondary 1 Hong

Kong Attainment Tests (Hong Kong Education Bureau, n.d.).

According to the Hong Kong Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 105/2010 (Hong Kong

Education Bureau, 2010):

> Upon the implementation of the school-based MOI [Medium of Instruction] arrangements in the
> 2010/11 school year, schools will no longer be classified into schools using Chinese as the MOI
> [Medium of Instruction] ("CMI schools") and schools using English as the MOI [Medium of
> Instruction] ("EMI schools").

However, at the time data for this research was collected, during the first few months of the 2010/11

academic year, the terms CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) and EMI (English Medium of

Instruction) remained an apt way of classifying the medium of instruction that students in Hong Kong

would have experienced during their schooling lives. Therefore, it is appropriate to briefly explain

these classifications, in so far as they relate to the case study secondary school, here. The case study

secondary school taught most of its lessons in Chinese. In practice, this meant that in most lessons

traditional Chinese characters were used for reading and writing (except for any Mandarin Chinese

listening and speaking classes, if any) and the Cantonese dialect was used for listening and speaking.

In theory, although not always in practice, English was taught through English.

Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students had seven, 40 minute English lessons per week. This was fewer than it was a few years earlier (eight, 40 minute lessons per week), due to the school's management deciding to allocate less time for English and more time to another subject area in the new curriculum.

The problem that this research aims to address is the lower academic performance and lower English language proficiency levels of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds as implied by lower English test results compared to their peers across Hong Kong. This problem is addressed by investigating why these students are underperforming in English language learning and how their English language learning performance might be improved through the prism of beneficial washback and impact from having to take summative English language tests and beneficial impact from having to take part in formative English language SBA (School-based Assessment). Therefore, this research aims to find out how to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experienced by academically lower performing senior secondary students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Hong Kong by finding out how to enhance beneficial washback and impact from preparing for final end of senior secondary English examinations. Some consideration of the impact effect of English language SBA (School-based Assessment) is also included in this case study.

Washback and impact are experienced not only by students but also by anyone involved in preparing students for a test. This research focused on washback and impact as experienced and perceived by teachers and students. It should also be noted that washback and impact are multifaceted. Therefore, any salient washback or impact that was experienced or perceived by participants and identify by the researcher fell within the scope of this study. For example, for

teacher participants washback and impact affected their teaching, pedagogical choices and motivation while for student participants washback and impact affected their choice of learning styles and motivation.

1.1 *Research questions*

The main purpose of this research is to find answers to the following key research questions:

1) How are CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school English teachers influenced by high-stakes English testing? Some consideration of how CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school English teachers are influenced by English SBA (School-based Assessment) is included within the scope of this question.

2) How are CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school students of English influenced by high-stakes English testing? Some consideration of how CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school English students are influenced by English SBA (School-based Assessment) is included within the scope of this question.

3) What key factors intervene to promote beneficial influence from the English test prepared for?

4) What factors predominantly intervene to hinder beneficial influence from the English test prepared for?

5) Do some types of English testing items tend to have a beneficial effect on teaching and learning?

6) Do some types of English testing items tend to have a detrimental effect on teaching and learning?

7) To what extent are washback and impact influenced by other identifiable factors?

It should be noted that while the main focus of these research questions is a search for washback some consideration of impact also falls within the scope of this research.

In this case study beneficial washback and impact was collectively conceptualised and defined, not only in terms of how it should lead to good, quality learning outcomes (the aspired to product), but also in terms of how it was associated with contemporary language testing or assessment and teaching methods, i.e. authentic language testing or assessment items and communicative language teaching methods (Bachman, 2000; Bachman, 1991; Bachman and Palmer, 1996) and a clear alignment between testing or assessment, teaching methods and teaching materials (which collectively constitute the aspired to process, that is, the preferred pathway towards the aspired to product: good, quality learning outcomes). Detrimental washback and impact was collectively conceptualised and defined as being associated with outdated language testing or assessment and teaching methods, i.e. the testing of decontextualised grammar rules and learning by rote, for example "language learning … driven by examinations which discourages communicative approach but encourages rote memorization of grammatical and lexical concepts" (Ren, 2011, p. 257) and a lack of alignment between testing or assessment, and teaching methods and teaching materials.

The researcher does not consider or intend for the predominant origin or more prevalent usage locale of teaching methods and pedagogical practices (whether or not these be perceived as being Western or East Asian by individual readers of this dissertation) to imply, convey or make any cultural value judgments suggesting the superiority or inferiority of any culture compared to another. In any case, a comparative cultural study of Western and East Asian preferred or most prevalent teaching methods and pedagogical practices falls outside the scope of this research. In short, the

yardstick used to determine whether washback and impact was beneficial or detrimental was a measure of the extent to which washback and impact either promoted or hindered good, quality teaching and learning at the case study secondary school. In a word, good, quality teaching and learning *engaged* students in a richly rewarding learning process that was valuable and worthwhile not because it helped prepare students for a test but because the learning was valuable and worthwhile in and of itself.

Evidence of washback and impact was identified from data collected through classroom observations, teaching material analysis, interviews with teachers and students and a student questionnaire. Any washback or impact identified was classified as being either beneficial or detrimental according to the definitions above. Also, for the purposes of this study, the area of washback and impact considered focuses on the influence high-stakes English tests have on the quality of students' English learning experiences, particularly on *what* content and skills are taught and *how* they are taught. Furthermore, the study focuses on how student motivation to learn was influenced either positively or negatively by such examinations.

1.2 *Research objectives*

An objective of this research was to *explore the interplay* between the washback and impact of external high-stakes English tests on teaching, learning materials and pedagogical practices. In order to do this it was necessary to identify what specific combinations of identifiable factors either promote or hinder beneficial change in these areas. Beneficial change, within the context of this research, was defined as change that leads to more opportunities for students to use English creatively through better teaching, learning, learning materials and pedagogical practices. Beneficial change

could also come through the application of contemporary communicative language teaching practices;

learning that engaged a broad range of lower order to higher order cognitive skills (rather than

primarily focusing on lower order cognitive skills such as rote learning and memorisation); and

the use of authentic learning materials.

Another objective of this research was to make a contribution to our understanding of how

washback and impact and other identifiable factors interplay to become a powerful force for

promoting beneficial (or detrimental) teaching and learning. This contributed to a better

understanding of *what* combinations of identifiable factors encourage beneficial (or detrimental)

washback as well as *how* and possibly also *why* this occurred. O'Neill (2009) recommends further

research in East Asian contexts such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan or China suggesting that:

> it would be pertinent to investigate students' awareness of language learning strategies in more
> depth according to their proficiency levels and their teachers' pedagogy and assessment in these
> countries too. It would also be valuable to consider whether teachers' English proficiency levels
> impacted upon their choice of learning experiences for students, and whether employment of
> native speakers has a significant impact on pedagogy and assessment in these EFL contexts.
> (p.68)

This research included a focus on the language learning strategies of EFL learners, particularly

those with lower proficiency levels, and teachers' pedagogical and assessment practices. It also

considered the impact of a teacher's own English proficiency level (both local non-native English

teachers and a native-speaking English teacher) on their actual and preferred way of teaching.

Ethics and politics

One of the reasons why this case study was considered ethical was since its research findings have

the potential to benefit both the participants and the wider community through suggesting ways to

improve English language teaching, learning, testing and assessment. Furthermore, the research was

conducted under the guidelines of Australian national ethical standards (Australian Government, 2007). This included ethics approval (number is H10REA230) by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Every effort was made to ensure no harm came to participants as a result of taking part in this research chiefly through the strict maintenance of participant anonymity, confidentiality and also through conducting the research as unobtrusively as possible in order to minimise any discomfort or inconvenience to participants. The researcher took care to maintain a politically neutral research role. This research has no foreseeable political implications.

1.3 *Outcomes*

An outcome of this research study was a better understanding of how washback and impact from preparing for an English language test interplays with other identifiable factors to either promote beneficial washback and impact or cause undesirable consequences. Establishing the degree to which high-stakes test items encourage better teaching and learning was another outcome of this research.

1.4 *Significance of the study*

This study has particular significance due to its singular contextual focus on the senior secondary forms of a government aided school with academically lower performing students who mainly come from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Hong Kong. The broader demographic focus of previous English language test washback studies conducted in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2005; Cheng, 1998) could not specifically address washback effects that are unique to this environment. Also, a study that

focused more narrowly on the micro effect of washback without including a complementary focus on the macro effect of impact could not fully answer the research questions posed in this case study.

There is potential for this case study to make a significant contribution to theoretical knowledge in the area of English language test washback and impact. In particular, this research has potential to make a significant contribution to theoretical knowledge about how washback and impact interact with other factors in mainly lower socio-economic contexts that are comparable to those of the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students of the case study school. However, it should be noted that the case study school students had academic achievement and English language levels that clustered mainly in the lower third of their peers in Hong Kong.

Also, although it is now common for students of English to formally evaluate their learning experiences at least once every academic year by completing some kind of questionnaire, such data does not usually provide many (if any) clues to what kind of washback or impact, for instance, high-stakes English achievement and proficiency tests might have on students' motivation and learning. For this reason there is a need for focused research into this area of high-stakes English test washback and impact so that relevant data may be collected for analysis in order to make a contribution to the growing body of academic literature on washback and impact from high-stakes English examinations.

Since the time of the seminal Alderson and Wall (1993) washback study, language, education, testing and assessment paradigms have undergone considerable change as have the theories that underpin how languages are taught, tested or otherwise assessed. To take just two examples, firstly, since 1994 the traditional view of intelligence as a unitary and more or less unchangeable personal characteristic has been challenged by Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, Perkins's

Learnable Intelligence Theory, and an emerging understanding of the importance of EQ (Emotional

Intelligence) (Owens and Valesky, 2007, pp. 53-66). Secondly, the absolute monopoly that

summative high-stakes English language tests often once enjoyed has been challenged by the

introduction of a variety of increasingly credible alternative forms of assessment such as formative

English SBA (School-based Assessment). These, among other changes are particularly salient, from

a Hong Kong senior secondary educational context, as a new English curriculum requiring new

teaching materials and possibly even new teaching methods is introduced. Furthermore, any

washback and impact from the new end of senior secondary school high-stakes English test, the

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination, that is weighted at

85% of the final English grade including any impact effect from English language SBA (School-

based Assessment) that is weighted at 15% of the final English grade (Hong Kong Examinations and

Assessment Authority, n. d.) are phenomena worthy of empirical investigation.

Key studies and papers on washback and impact from public English examinations on Hong

Kong secondary school students, teachers (and sometimes also on other participants) for example

include but are not limited to Cheng (1995) on how washback influenced teaching; Cheng (2005) on

how washback from language testing changed language teaching; Cheng (1999) on the effect of

washback on teacher perceptions and actions; and. Cheng (1998) on the impact of examination

change on students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning. Key studies and papers written after

school-based assessment was planned to be introduced to Hong Kong secondary schools and

weighted at 15% of a combined final public English examination and assessment grade for example

include but are not limited to Carless (2005) on the implementation of assessment for learning;

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Davison (2007) on English language school-based assessment; Carless (2007) on the suitability of task-based approaches; Davison (2004) on the culture of teacher-based assessment; Brown, Kennedy, Fok, Chan, & Yu (2009) on understanding teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment (at primary school and secondary school); and Davison & Leung (2009) on English language teacher-based assessment (current issues internationally and in Hong Kong at the primary, secondary and tertiary education level).

This research is significant as it poses research questions that have the potential of extending what is already known from the findings of previous English language test washback and impact studies. For instance, this research includes within its research focus an attempt to identify what other factors interplay with English language test washback and impact. Qi (2005) foresees the need for future English language test washback studies to shift their focus away from a singular consideration of the washback phenomenon towards a broader exploration of the complex interactions between English language test washback and other related variables. However, as yet, there is only a small but growing body of empirical research, that considers English language test washback and impact from this broader perspective (Booth, 2012; Qi, 2007; Xie & Andrews, 2013).

For these reasons alone, a broadly focused study of what influence high-stakes English examinations have on not only *what* is taught and *how* it is taught but also on *what other key factors* may be identified as interplaying with English language test washback and impact is as significant a research problem today as a singularly focused English language test washback study was twenty years ago. For instance, if high-stakes English examinations *do* create washback and impact or influence through an interplay with other identifiable factors it may be possible to design these

English tests in a way that maximises any positive washback, impact or influence while eliminating or at least minimising any negative washback, impact or influence. Moreover, if some kind of washback effect, impact effect or influence effect from carefully designed, intentionally communicative and performance orientated summative high-stakes English examinations or formative English language SBA (School-based Assessment) can be found to help motivate students to learn to communicate better in English such tests could not only play a role in measuring students English language learning achievements but also help students reach for their learning goal of improved English language proficiency.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced and outlined the focus of this case study. The case study school context was outlined from page two to five. Research questions were given on page six. The objectives of this research were given on page eight. Ethical and political considerations were included on page nine. The likely outcomes of this research were given on page ten. The significance of the study was outlined from page ten onwards. The next chapter reviews research literature pertinent to this case study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The conceptual framework of this research is in broad terms theoretically underpinned by:

contemporary language testing (Bachman, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 1996) and communicative task-

based learning (Nunan, 1989; Nunan, 2004) since an ultimate aim of both is to promote or facilitate

authentic communicative language teaching and learning; and sociocultural theories of second

language learning (Halliday & Webster, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Motivational theory, particularly the

'L2 Motivational Self System' of Dörnyei (2009) underpin the *explicitly motivationally focused*

findings of this washback study. The specific focus is the language testing theory concept of

washback (Alderson &Wall, 1993) and its influence on pedagogical practices and student learning in

the classroom.
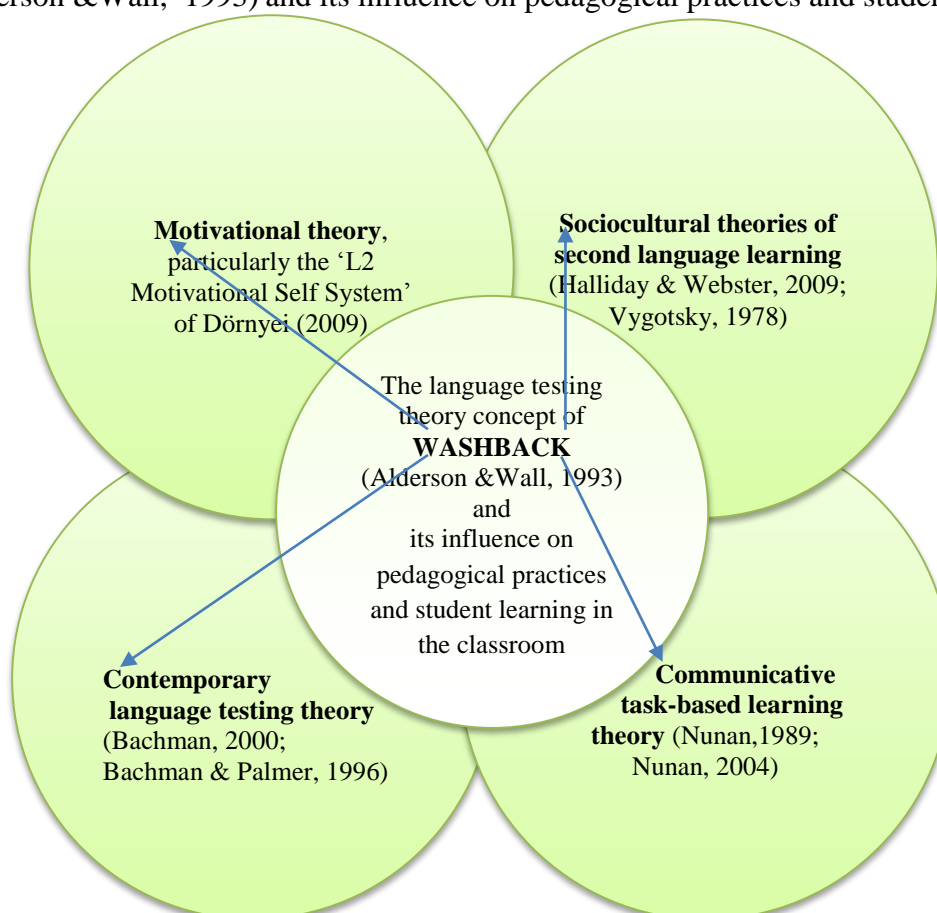
Figure 2.1 An overview of the multi-lensed theoretical framework that underpins this research

2.1 Washback: the concept and context

The Ninth edition of the Little Oxford English Dictionary (Hawker, 2006) defines backwash as "waves flowing outwards behind a ship" (p. 44). This word is also used as a metaphor for how examinations influence teachers and students with the ship representing the examination and the waves representing the influence on teachers and students. In the field of applied linguistics washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993) or backwash (Biggs, 1995, 1996) is defined as the influence of language testing on teaching and learning (Cheng, Watanabe, and Curtis 2004, p. 4). A more detailed definition is given by Messick (1996) who says that "Washback refers to the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning" (p. 241). This broader definition makes it clear that washback may have positive and negative results.

McNamara (2000) defines washback as "The effect of tests on teaching and learning" (p. 73). He then goes on to say that "Ethical language testing practice, it is felt, should work to ensure positive washback from tests (McNamara)" (p. 73). Meanwhile, Davies et al. (1999) in the Dictionary of Language Testing defines washback as:

> The effect of testing on instruction. Language test washback is said to be either positive or negative. Negative washback is said to occur when test items are based on an outdated view of language which bears little relationship to the teaching curriculum….. Positive washback is said to result when a testing procedure which encourages 'good' teaching practice is introduced. (p. 225)

This definition emphasises the beneficial role that teaching can play in facilitating positive washback and notes the role that outdated views of language that have little relationship to the teaching curriculum can play in manifestations of negative washback.

These definitions seem to suggest that the role washback plays in *directly* influencing *student learning* might be somewhat overlooked or underestimated in current research due to the way the concept is being defined with the emphasis being placed more on its influence on teachers rather than on students.

It should be noted that washback is not a concept of esoteric research interest but rather a concept of keen interest across a broad spectrum of stakeholders that include researchers, teachers, test designers, test takers and anyone who relies on test results for any of a multiplicity of intended and unintended possible purposes for several reasons. Washback is a concept of central interest to this research case study primarily because of the complex ways in which it may influence and interact with pedagogical practices and student learning in the classroom. For this reason washback is chiefly explored from within the context of the classroom from two points of view: that of the teacher and that of the learner.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the appropriateness of using high-stakes tests to do any number of things such as drive curriculum change; elicit positive washback on teaching and learning; or as the sole means of inferring whether a student's English level is suitable for tertiary study are becoming increasingly controversial issues. Also, while there may or may not be a general consensus within the education community that *a little stress* from high-stakes tests is probably a better learning environment than a *stress-less* laissez-faire let us do as we like test-less teaching and learning utopia, it should not be forgotten that for all too many, high-stakes tests do not only cause *extreme stress* but also negative washback on teaching and learning. Therefore, there may be a strong ethical argument for the need to replace high-stakes tests with other equally robust but less stressful forms of

assessment, particularly if high-stakes tests do more to entrench disadvantage amongst lower socio-economic, lower academically performing, linguistically disadvantaged groups than ameliorate it.

2.2   Motivation: the concept and context

External motivation is referred to as extrinsic motivation and internal motivation is referred to as intrinsic motivation in relevant research literature. For instance, Ryan & Deci (2000) note that:

> … the freedom to be intrinsically motivated becomes increasingly curtailed by social demands and roles that require individuals to assume responsibility for nonintrinsically interesting tasks. In schools, for example, it appears that intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each advancing grade. Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value. (p. 60)

An external motivation to learn English for a public English examination could be a desire to gain a satisfactory grade. Additional external motivation for learning English for a public English examination could also come from a desire to gain university entry and/or a desire to gain a prestigious, well paid, quality job, for example. It is also interesting that the above quote from Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 60) notes that "In schools, for example, it appears that intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each advancing grade." This seems to imply either that schooling gradually extinguishes students' natural interest in and curiosity for learning or that intrinsic motivation simply decreases with age as students progress through each school grade level. Maybe it is intended to imply both. Either way, it highlights a perception that by the time students reach senior secondary school intrinsic motivation for learning can be quite low. Perhaps it also hints at a need to design and implement senior secondary school curriculum in a way that nurtures and enhances intrinsic motivation to learn through, for example, giving students genuine choices about what English they learn and how they go about learning it.

An intrinsic motivation for a senior secondary school student to learn English could be simply for

the pleasure of listening to and/or watching (or looking at) and being able to understanding: English

pop music; English movies; and/or English books to list just a few possibilities. Ryan & Deci (2000)

note that:

> Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than
> for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun
> or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. (p. 56)

The important role that intrinsic motivation could play in enhancing senior secondary school students'

English learning experiences and outcomes is even more evident after reading a little bit more of

Ryan & Deci (2000) which goes on to note that:

> In humans, intrinsic motivation is not the only form of motivation, or even of volitional activity,
> but it is a pervasive and important one. From birth onward, humans, in their healthiest states, are
> active, inquisitive, curious, and playful creatures, displaying a ubiquitous readiness to learn and
> explore, and they do not require extraneous incentives to do so. (p. 56)

Therefore, designing and implementing English curriculum in a way that encourages active and

playful English learning would seem likely to not only enhance senior secondary students' English

learning experiences but also their English learning outcomes.   Moreover, designing and

implementing English curriculum in a way that could tap into senior secondary English students'

inquisitiveness and curiosity would also seem likely to be worthwhile.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of this research study's exploration into what

promotes or hinders beneficial washback on teaching and learning at the case study school (with the

key research questions in summative form). Figure 8.1, in chapter 8, should also be noted here, for

cross reference purposes, since it illustrates the culmination of this research study's exploration (with

the key answers to research questions in the form of summative findings).
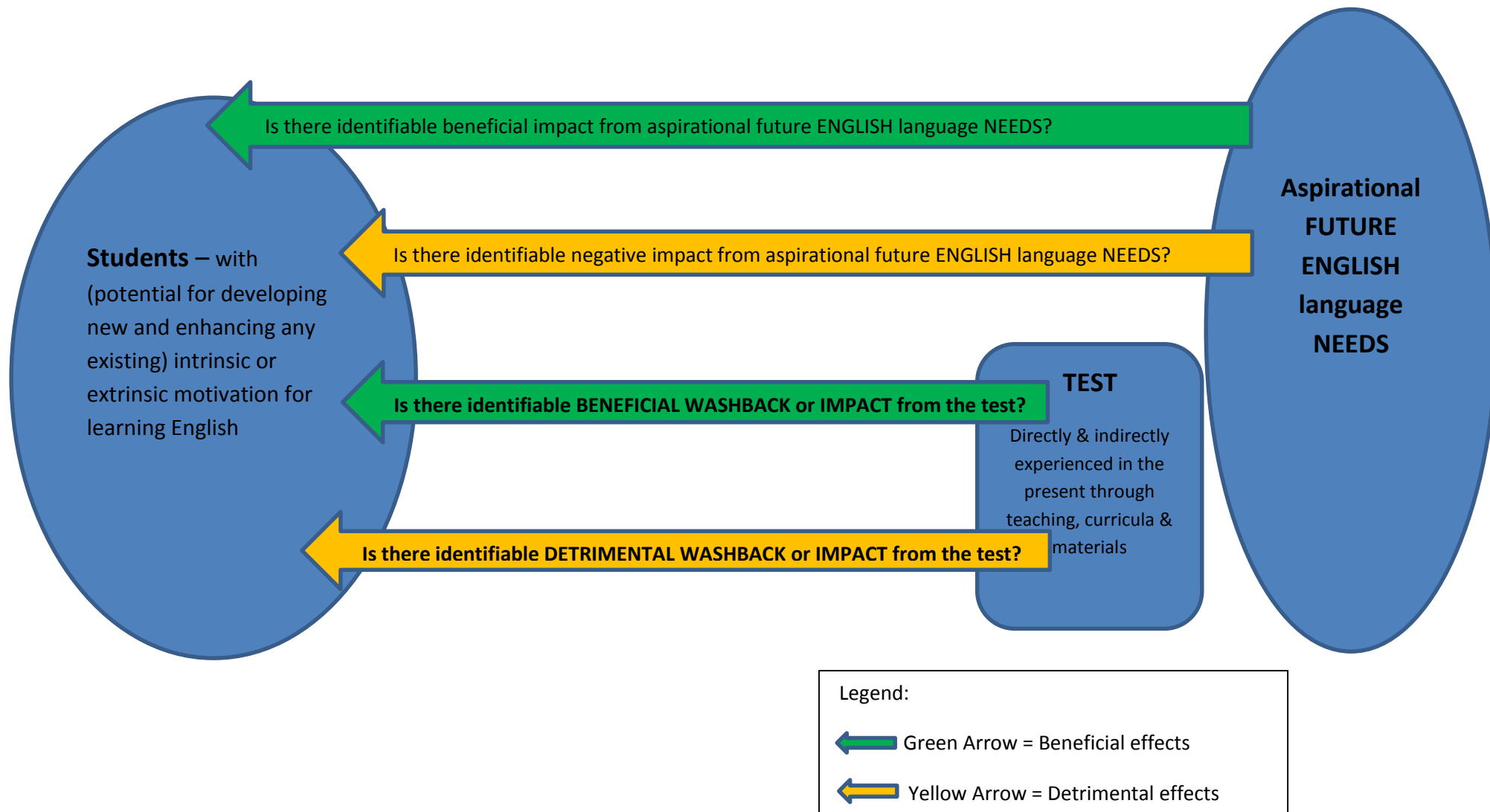
Figure 2.2   Conceptual framework of the exploration into what promotes or hinders beneficial washback & impact on teaching and learning

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.2 includes a search for beneficial or detrimental washback and impact coming either directly or indirectly from the English test prepared for. Another part of the conceptual framework in Figure 2.2 is 'aspirational future English language needs' which refers to students' perceptions about whether or not, where, for what purpose, and how much they would expect to need to use English in their future lives after graduating from senior secondary school. An exploration of students' aspirational future English language needs could lead to the identification of whether this had a beneficial or negative impact on English learning. Furthermore, students' potential for developing new and enhancing any existing intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for learning English was also included within the scope of the conceptual framework of this research.

2.3 *The working definitions of washback and impact used in this study*

In this study, unlike Alderson and Wall (1993), the scope of the term washback is not only defined as an English examination's influence over *teaching*, *teachers*, *learning*, *curriculum* and *materials* but slightly expanded to also directly include *students* whereas the term impact is used to refer to the wider influences of an English test.

Hawkey, (2006) defines the term washback and then the term impact according to the following usage:

- to use 'washback' to cover influences of language tests or programmes on language learners and teachers, language learning and teaching processes (including materials) and outcomes

- to use 'impact' to cover influences of language tests or programmes on stakeholders beyond language learners, teachers, except when it is the influences of a test or programme on learners and teachers *outside* their learning or teaching roles, for example on their attitudes to matters beyond language learning; in this case the book will tend to refer to impact …. (p. 8)

This case study tends to apply the above distinction between these terms except for the exception

given by Hawkey (2006) above in the second bullet point since it was considered too messy,

unnecessary and counterproductive to try to determine when a teacher or student was operating

outside their teaching or learning roles, for example, when talking about how their attitudes and

motivation were influenced by a language test or programme. Therefore, this case study will tend to

refer to washback rather than impact in instances such as those given in the sentence above.

Meanwhile, the term impact will tend to be reserved for the wider macro influences of language tests

on stakeholders other than teachers and students; the influence of teaching materials on teachers,

teaching, learners and learning; and the influence of SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks on

teachers, teaching, learners and learning.

Identifying several related terms in the literature Shohamy (1996) says:

> 'washback' refers to the impact tests have on teaching and learning; 'measurement-driven instruction' refers to the notion that tests drive learning; 'curriculum alignment' implies that the curriculum is modified according to test results; and 'systemic validity' implies the introduction of tests into the educational system along with a whole set of additional variables that are part of the learning and instructional system: the test thus becomes a part of a dynamic process in which changes in the educational system take place. (p. 298)

Bailey (1996) notes that "although there is general agreement in the field as to the basic

definition of washback, there is also considerable variety in opinions as to how it functions" (p. 257).

For this reason alone, while initially defining the phenomenon of English language test influence in

terms of washback and impact a more precise definition and understanding of this phenomenon at the

case study school comes from an analysis of the research data. The scope of this study's exploration

into what promotes or hinders beneficial English test washback and impact on teachers, teaching,

learners and learning is indicated in Table 2.1 on the page after the next page.

2.4 Test items and tasks defined

English language test items are used to make inferences about a test candidate's wider knowledge of English language form and/or practical ability to use the English language in real life situations. In this dissertation the terms test item and examination question are considered to be synonymous except that, unlike an examination question, a test item does not necessarily need to take the form of a question. Depending on the specific design and content of the test items that collectively constituted any actual English language test, such tests could primarily test English language proficiency; specific content or a combination of both. All of the Hong Kong public English tests considered in this case study were comprehensive tests of a Hong Kong secondary student's knowledge about English language form and practical ability to use the English language in real life situations. Each of these Hong Kong public English tests was also as much a test of the specific English language content that was outlined in the relevant mandated English language curriculum as it was a test of English language proficiency.

Ellis (2003) defines tasks as "activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use (p. 3)" and in this way distinguishes tasks from primarily form focused exercises while acknowledging that both share the same purpose of language learning. Bachman, (2001) refers to "various types of items, or tasks, that are commonly found in language tests (p. 112)" seeming to imply either an overlap or interchangeability between the terms test item and test task. Cheng and Curtis (2010) also seem to imply an overlap or interchangeability between the terms test item and task by referring to each collectively as "test items/tasks (p. 163)" and this same overlapping ambiguity of meaning is evident in how research participants, particularly English teachers used these terms. The researcher's use of

the term task is underpinned by Ellis's definition above. However, it was not always appropriate or

possible to make a clear distinction between the terms item and task

Table 2.1 The main scope of this study's washback and impact explorations

PARTICIPANTS	PROCESSES	PERCEPTIONS
English teachers at the case study school who engaged in School-based, curriculum & materials tailoring	English teachers **implementing** new & tenacious remnants of old **English curricula & materials:** the best teachers tailoring these to each student's individual needs and interests	English teacher & student perceptions about their **experiences of the English curricula & materials used**
English teachers at the case study school	English teaching through innovative and/or new & old and/or traditional **pedagogical practices**	English teacher & student perceptions about their **experiences of English teaching**
Students of Secondary 5 & Secondary 6 at the case study school	**Learning English** and/or not learning English but disengaged from the English learning process	Student perceptions about their **English learning experiences**
		Teacher and student perceptions about **the English test and** their experiences of **preparing for it**
		Student perceptions about their **experiences of English test tutoring**

2.5 High-stakes tests and washback

Since the time of the earliest known examinations, which are now generally believed to be the

Chinese imperial examinations (科舉, *"ke-ju"*), high-stakes examination candidates have been

influenced in one way or another by their examinations. While the origins of examinations in China

according to Feng (1995, p. 30) can be traced back as far as Emperor Wen Di (541 – 604) of the Sui

Dynasty to the year 587 C.E., according to Suen and Yu (2006, p. 48) the commonly accepted starting

date for the Chinese imperial examinations is 606 C.E. with their ending date being 1905 C.E., a

period of 1,299 years. Suen and Yu (2006) note several forms of negative washback resulting from

these long lasting tests such as memorising by rote of model performances; focusing on test-taking

skills and surface features; cheating; and psychopathological effects on the examinee.

In the West, in the nineteenth century, a time when high-stakes examinations were being

introduced to Oxford and Cambridge universities, negative effects from these examinations were soon

to be noticed with these new examinations being blamed for a narrowing of the focus of students to

preparing only for what was to be tested (Latham, 1877). Latham, (1877) also points out that these

examinations did not, nor did anyone expect them to test moral or social behaviour even though it

was generally agreed at the time that education in these two qualities was among the main roles of a

university (see also Newman, 1852) and he worried that these qualities could end up being neglected

as a result.

Today's high-stakes English proficiency tests are also often criticised for resulting in negative

washback. For example, Hamp-Lyons (1996) found that as TOEFL was not designed to reflect how a

language is actually used it results in negative washback. For instance, teachers end up trying to

teach discrete chunks of language rules and vocabulary items out of context based on what was required in previous tests. She considers it an ethical responsibility for language tests to be designed in a way that promotes positive washback.

In the early 1990s Alderson (1991) noted that research into the impact of tests "is largely anecdotal, and not the result of systematic empirical research" (p. 16). A few years later, Alderson and Wall (1993, p. 116) consider that even the existence of washback from examinations is yet to be established but that if it exists it is likely to be a complex phenomenon. By the middle of the 1990s Alderson (1996) still laments the limited empirical evidence for either positive or negative washback from examinations while conceding that negative influences may not only be caused by an examination itself but also by administrators who set large class sizes, material writers who provide no guidance to teachers on how to teach and teachers who do not think about the best way to teach. It is not until the near end of the 1990s that Alderson (1998) considers that there is at last some empirical evidence of tests influencing *what* teachers teach although washback on *how* they teach is considered a much more complex phenomenon.

A review of previous studies by Cheng (1999) found that high-stakes tests do influence teaching and learning in a variety of ways with the main finding being that teachers focus on teaching test content. However, a teacher's pedagogical practices are not only potentially influenced by the high-stakes test prepared for (if at all). Each teacher's beliefs about teaching are also deeply influential. For instance, Matoush and Fu (2012) compare the pedagogical practices of two teachers preparing the same 12 students for the oral response parts of the TOEFL test. While one teacher focused on lower order cognitive skills such as memorising which the researchers referred to as ''cheated practice''

(p. 118), the other teacher focused on higher order cognitive skills such as analysing, evaluating and creating through questioning, discussions, problem solving and presentations which the researchers referred to as "authentic language usage" (p.118). These two different approaches to preparing the same students for the same test point towards the influential role that teacher beliefs may play in determining pedagogical practices over and above any washback from the high-stakes test itself.

2.6 Washback from English Examinations in Chinese-speaking Asia

In some predominately Chinese Asian cities, regions or countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China and Singapore, which have deeply entrenched examination cultures that may trace their roots back to the imperial Chinese examination system, examinations have been noted to impede the implementation of any pedagogical or curricular innovations that do not directly help students prepare for their examinations (Cheah, 1998) while at the same time focusing teaching on the test (Fullilove, 1992). In such examination centred educational cultures, it is imperative that English exams are designed to elicit positive washback. However, even when English examinations are especially designed to bring about positive washback this change may be largely limited to the *what* of teaching through the quick introduction of new textbooks while leaving the *how* of teaching largely unchanged and in this way representing only superficial change. Designing English examinations to induce positive washback on *how* teachers teach has been found to only result in a slow and reluctant change in the way teachers teach at best (Cheng, 1995; Cheng, 1998).

This has especially been the case in Taiwan, where a developing theme in the growing literature on the washback from high-stakes English tests is that the *content* of teaching tends to be influenced far more than *teaching method* (Chen, 2002a; Chen, 2002b; Huang 2003).

In fact, Chen (2002a; 2002b) found washback influence on English teachers' teaching attitudes to be quite superficial with washback being limited to decisions about what to teach and not extending to decisions about how to teach.

Potential conflicts between the intended beneficial washback that a test is designed to elicit and any other intended (and unintended) functions or uses that a test will be (or is likely to be) put to must also be taken into account when planning for beneficial washback. The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in China, for example, failed to elicit its intended beneficial washback on English teaching according to Qi (2005) because this aim was in direct conflict with the main function of the test which was to select candidates for institutions of higher education. Other, initially unintended uses of the NMET test, such as for comparing each school's performance, for the evaluation of teachers and for promotions further explain why the washback function of the test was a complete failure. All of these other functions or uses of the test acted as a powerful force on teachers to focus solely on teaching the test. Hamp-Lyons (2007) also notes that tests are "dynamic social forces that cannot be easily controlled, and their impact cannot be limited only to their intended positive effects" (p. 493).

There is a great variety of washback studies with, for example, some focusing more on *how teaching* is influenced by an English examination (Cheng, L., 2005; Wall, D. 2005) and others focusing more broadly on *how teachers and students* are influenced by English examinations (Green, A. 2007; Hawkey, R. 2006). This study will of necessity start with a broad investigation into washback and then gradually narrow its focus to areas that prove to be of particular interest in developing a deeper understanding of washback and the factors that interplay with it and in this way

make a significant contribution to the research literature.

A recent washback study in Taiwan (Pan, Y. and Newfields, T. 2012) compared 737 students

from universities/colleges that had English proficiency exam graduation requirements with 678

students from universities/colleges that did not have such requirements.   Only slight washback could

be attributed to the English proficiency exam graduation requirements such as an increased

motivation for English study; more time allocated to English study; more variation in the methods

adopted to study English; and more test-related practice. Moreover, Pan and Newfields (2012) found

that "simply relying on external tests alone to enhance motivation appears to be ineffective" (p. 119).

2.7 *Washback and Impact from High-stakes Secondary School English Examinations in Hong Kong and Mainland China*

Examination changes that include SBA (School-based Assessment) are expected to influence the

success or failure of the current English curriculum reforms in Hong Kong secondary schools

(Carless, 2005; Carless, 2007a; Carless, 2007b; Davison, 2007 and Qian 2008). Cheng (2008) cites

Andrews, 1995; Andrews, Fullilove and Wong, 2002 and Cheng 2005 (p. 352) as major contributions

to research on language testing in Hong Kong. Perhaps the most significant of these is the

longitudinal study by Cheng (2005) on the washback effect of the 1996 HKCEE (Hong Kong

Certificate of Education Examination) on the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong

secondary schools which found, among other things, that teachers used more authentic materials from

real-life sources and that lessons became more student centred with more time for role play and group

discussion. These changes aligned closely with changes to the content and format of the examination

so washback from the new senior secondary English test, the 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English examination within the Hong Kong secondary school socio-cultural

context is expected to be significant.

Recent research on the washback and impact effects of high-stakes English tests and assessments in the greater China area calibrate closely with current developments in English testing and assessing in their unique and specific national or regional contexts. In mainland China, current pertinent research findings highlight the inadequacies of relying on high-stakes English tests alone for high-stakes English testing and assessing purposes (See Table 2.1). In Hong Kong, current pertinent research explores the impact of fairly recent curriculum reforms such as the introduction of English SBA (School-based Assessment) into the high-stakes testing and assessment mix at a weighting of 15% of the final mark (See Table 2.2). However, there is no recent relevant or comparable research case study on washback from high-stakes English tests including some consideration of impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) conducted from within a 'band 3' CMI (Chinese medium of Instruction) secondary school in Hong Kong. Therefore, this research is well placed to extend existing knowledge on washback and impact while also making its own unique contribution to the field through an in-depth, one site, case study of all the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students and their English teachers at a 'band 3' CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school in Hong Kong.

Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 on the following two pages give an overview of pertinent research findings about the mainly negative high-stakes English test washback experienced at senior secondary level in China and both positive and negative findings about the impact of English SBA (School-based Assessment) at senior secondary level in Hong Kong.

Table 2.2 *An Overview of the Mainly Negative High-stakes English Test Washback Experienced at Senior Secondary School Level from Two Washback Related Studies Conducted in China*

Pertinent Findings	Data Collection Methods
(Yan, 2012*), 'We can only change in a small way': A study of secondary English teachers' implementation of curriculum reform in China.* • Examination culture permeated education system and society (e.g. non-communicative textbook based college entry examination to prepare for) • Lack of support from school administrators (e.g. use of monthly English test results to evaluate English teachers) • Student resistance to change • Teachers' psychological challenges to change (e.g. teachers ranked according to their students' monthly English test results and student resistance to change) • Teachers' inadequate professional expertise (e.g. lack of pedagogical competence and English proficiency)	1st Phase: <u>Duration</u>: Seven weeks at one municipal key secondary school in central China <u>Participants</u>: Student teachers doing teaching practicum (N = 10) and senior high school English teachers (N = 3) Data collection methods included: 1. Ten classroom observations 2. Observations of weekly staff meeting on lesson planning 3. Informal conversations 4. Individual semi-structured interviews 2nd Phase: <u>Duration</u>: no clear timeframe given <u>Participants</u>: senior high school English teachers (N = the number of participants is not indicated) <u>Data collection methods included</u>: 1. Informal conversations 2. Focus groups
(Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011), *The negative influences of exam-oriented education on Chinese high school students: Backwash from classroom to child.* • Assessing performance through a single English exam is an imperfect evaluation method that is insufficient to completely test a student's genuine English abilities • Students may experience symptoms of excessive psychological stress such as anxiety from preparing for a high-stakes English exam (42% of surveyed students were anti-exam and 58% were pro-exam) • When English exam organisation is not a rigorous process the authenticity of the results are reduced (cheating was acknowledged by 60% of the students surveyed, although it is unclear from this paper whether students were admitting to cheating themselves or simply indicating an awareness that cheating occurred)	<u>Participants</u>: Grade 11 Chinese senior high school students (N = 43) from a school in Yunnan Province, southwestern China <u>Data collection methods included</u>: 1. Survey (N = 43) 2. Interviews and focus groups (N = the number of participants is not clearly indicated)

Table 2.3 *An Overview of the Impact of SBA (School-based Assessment) at Senior Secondary School Level from Two Studies Conducted in Hong Kong*

Pertinent Findings	Data Collection Methods
(Leung & Andrews, 2012), *The mediating role of textbooks in high-stakes assessment reform.* • Some textbooks focus more on SBA preparation 'tips' such as scaffolding templates that seem to encourage script memorisation rather than authentic English communication that could actually help students improve their oral English proficiency • According to questionnaire responses 88.8% of teachers did not rely on SBA textbooks/SBA materials too much, therefore SBA's engaging of teachers in the assessment process may also be empowering them to tailor teaching materials that suit their own students' needs rather than overly relying on commercially available SBA preparation materials.	Participants: Secondary English teachers of SBA from across Hong Kong Data collection methods included: 1. Questionnaire responses from Secondary English teachers in Hong Kong (N = 93) 2. Analyses of four SBA textbook sets including audio or audio/visual video CD
(Cheng, Andrews & Yu, 2011), Impact and consequences of school-based assessment (SBA): Students' and parents' views of SBA in Hong Kong. • "different students – those with self-reported high and low English competence – perceived SBA differently." (p. 238) • "The students with higher perceived competence, compared to students with lower competence, held stronger views about SBA; did more English activities inside and outside class; felt more strongly about external examinations and SBA, but felt less concerned about perceived challenges of SBA." (p. 238) • "students with high perceived language competence responded more positively to the items relating to the external examinations while students with low perceived language competence responded more positively to the items relating to SBA." (p. 238) • "parents' education (ß = .27) and the time they spend with their children (ß = .20) play a role in the amount of support they provide for their children in SBA – explaining 11.6% of the variance." (p.239) • "parents' knowledge about the SBA has the strongest association with their support for their children." (p.239) in SBA • "parents' perceptions about the SBA are directly and significantly related to their children's perceptions about SBA." (p.239)	Participants: Secondary 4 students of English SBA and their parents Data collection methods included: 1. Questionnaire responses from Secondary 4 students from two Hong Kong Secondary schools (N = 389) 2. Questionnaire responses from Secondary 4 students' parents (N = 315) * (Note: the quotes on the left hand side of this page are selected from the discussion section of their paper and are not exhaustive – for a complete list of their findings and statistical and practical significance levels refer to their paper)

2.8 Interplay with other factors

While conceding that only a limited number of washback studies document "the factors that interact with tests to shape teaching and learning" Qi (2005) goes on to glean from the literature the following factors:

> political turmoil in the country concerned, lack of material resources, school management practices, and teacher factors such as beliefs, educational background, teaching style, and inadequate understanding of the philosophy of the test (Wall, 1996; Wall and Alderson, 1993; Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Watanabe, 1996). Other important reasons such as the relationship between the different uses of tests have largely escaped researchers' attention. In other words, no question has been raised as to whether the use of a test for other purposes, such as selection, will impede or facilitate the function of the same test as an agent for change. (p. 144)

Some of these factors, particularly teacher beliefs, preferred teaching style, school management practices and educational background are among the factors identified as interplaying with washback in this case study.

According to De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2005):

> a person's knowledge of a language (first, second, third and so on) is never stable and keeps developing when used. When not used, there is stagnation and ultimately a loss of skills. This continuous growth and loss is influenced by a whole range of factors: not only the type and amount of contact with a language, but also individual factors such as age, attitude, motivation, intelligence, and earlier learning experiences are important. (p. 3)

To varying extents, age, attitude, motivation, intelligence and earlier learning experiences are also variables that may play roles in this washback study and foremost amongst these variables is motivation.

The role motivation plays in learning
As noted earlier in this chapter, student motivation is a key factor in this case study. Keller (2008) has identified five principles that motivate students to learn from a comprehensive review and synthesis of the motivational literature. These can be summarised as (i) arousing a learner's curiosity,

(ii) relevance to learner's goals, (iii) confidence to achieve, (iv) gaining satisfaction from participation

in learning, (v) volitional (self-regulatory or willful) strategies to protect their intentions to learn.

Huang (2012) cites Chen, Warden and Chang, (2005) and Warden and Lin, (2000) who find a

tendency for students from Chinese socio-cultural contexts to be strongly motivated by requirement

motivation (i.e. motivated to learn by being required to prepare for a high-stakes English test).

However, Huang (2012) notes that a tendency to be strongly motivated by requirement motivation is

not a tendency confined to Chinese society and also warns that "the possible negative consequences

of utilising extrinsic motivation" (p. 63) are well known even from research on Chinese students.

Dörnyei (2009) summarises his 'L2 Motivational Self System' into three components:

(1) *Ideal L2 Self*, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the *'ideal L2 self'* is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalised instrumental motives would typically belong to this component.
(2) *Ought-to L2 Self*, which concerns the attributes that one believes one *ought* to possess to meet expectations and to *avoid* possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgins's ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalised) types of instrumental motives.
(3) *L2 Learning Experience*, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualised at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self aspects of this bottom-up process. (p. 29)

He considers his 'L2 Motivational Self System' theory to be compatible with the second language

integrative motivation theoretical concept as expressed in Gardner (2001) so therefore it may be

considered as complementing and extending the theoretical framework of Gardner on integrative

motivation. This case study's exploration into what *promotes* or hinders beneficial English test

washback on teaching and learning also sets out to extend these existing theoretical

conceptualisations about the inner workings and outer manifestations of motivation in second

language learning from the context of one Hong Kong secondary school through the prism of

washback and impact from high-stakes English test preparation.

Learning as a social activity

Vogotsky (1978) is often cited to provide a theoretical basis for the use of collaborative learning

activities such as group work (Crossman & Kite, 2007; Havnes, 2004). Group work involving some

degree of problem solving and higher order thinking gives students the opportunity to play an active

role in the learning process itself. It is sometimes even claimed (Brown, H. D., 2007) that post-

structuralist theoretical positions are "now almost orthodoxy" (p. 12). In fact, one of the findings of

this research identified from classroom observations, interviews and questionnaire response data is

that English language learning activities that require some problem solving, higher order thinking and

group work have a beneficial influence on students' motivation to learn English. This would seem to

suggest that appropriately designed English SBA (School-based Assessment) task chains could have

a beneficial influence on students' motivation to learn English.

Fairness

The empirical way fairness is conceptualised in the context of high-stakes English tests in Hong

Kong is an identifiable factor that interplays with the effectiveness of tests. For example, one way the

fairness of high-stakes English tests is established is by requiring all test candidates to attempt the

same test items. Alternatively, when all candidates do not attempt the same English test item content,

for example, as in the speaking test, fairness is established by requiring test candidates to attempt

different test item content at random. In the writing test fairness is established by giving candidates a

choice between two or more test items with the test items being designed to be of an equivalent level

of difficulty and constructed according to a standardised format.

Also touching on the issue of fairness, Dimova (2009, p. 14) points out one of the most obvious, but often overlooked, disadvantages of many high-stakes English tests. This is how the cost of test preparation courses and test fees limit test preparation and accessibility to the more economically and socially privileged leading to unequal opportunities. Ethical English test design requires a consideration of how to ensure an English test provides for equal opportunities regardless of which economic or social group a test candidate belongs to. Finally, as the school where this research takes place has a student body that is mainly drawn from lower socio-economic areas of Hong Kong, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the degree to which high-stakes English tests either contribute to maintaining socio-economic inequalities or to deconstructing them.

2.9 Conclusion

There is a need for further research into how students are influenced by high-stakes English testing. There is also a need to establish the degree to which high-stakes English testing can help motivate (or de-motivate) students' English learning. Messick (1996) notes from the literature the notion that some types of tests such as performance assessments (unlike multiple-choice tests which are sometimes claimed to have a negative effect) result in a positive influence on teaching and learning. By comparing the influence of different types of high-stakes English testing or assessment items it is possible to empirically establish the hypothesis that one type of English test item construct has a better (or worse) influence than another. Ultimately, such research should contribute to improving the English learning experiences of students by improving the quality of English teaching and how English learning is tested or assessed.

3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research is an exploratory search for and analysis of high-stakes English language test

washback and impact on Secondary 5 students, Secondary 6 students and their English teachers at one

case study school. Mackey and Gass (2009) defines how case studies differ from ethnographies in

second language research contexts:

> case studies generally aim to provide a holistic description of language learning or use within a
> specific population and setting. However, whereas ethnographies focus on cultural patterns
> within groups, case studies tend to provide detailed descriptions of specific learners (or
> sometimes classes) within their learning setting. (6.2.2. Case Studies, loc. 4992 of 12537)

This case study includes elements from the qualitative research paradigm such as data collected

through semi-structured interviews that was analysed thematically. This case study also includes

elements from the quantitative research paradigm such as data collected through a questionnaire that

was analysed statistically. Nunan (1992) defines qualitative and quantitative research in language

learning contexts in the following way:

> Those who draw a distinction suggest that quantitative research is obtrusive and controlled,
> objective, generalisable, outcome oriented, and assumes the existence of 'facts' which are somehow
> external to and independent of the observer or researcher. Qualitative research, on the other hand,
> assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and
> research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies are justifiable…. (p. 3)

Qualitative and quantitative views of research and their data collection and analysis methods were

considered to be richly diverse rather than superior or inferior to each other. Taking into account

the complexity of the interplay between the washback and impact with the other factors that either

promote or hinder it and the impracticality of pursuing a fully-fledged ethnographic research study,

given the limited available timeframe, mixed methods were considered the most appropriate

methodological choice.

A weakness noted by Wall (1997, p. 296; 2000, p. 501) in washback studies, with the exception

of the Wall and Alderson (1993) study was that most of these studies (Wall 2000 cites Wesdorp,

1983; Hughes, 1988; Khaniya, 1990; Li, 1990 as examples) relied on the analysis of test results and

teachers' and students' accounts of what took place in the classroom rather than on direct researcher

observation. In order to address this weakness, direct observation of teachers and students by the

researcher was an important data gathering technique used in this study.

Green (2006, p. 339) points out the need for test washback studies to include comparisons

between test and non-test preparation courses, as otherwise it would be difficult to separate test

influence from teacher variables. For this reason, some non-test preparation classes were observed,

for the purpose of separating test influence from other variables. At this point, it should be noted that

a limitation of this study was that the qualitative data about perceptions of washback by students,

teachers and from the researcher's own observations were statistically unmeasurable. These

perceptions of washback were in essence identified and interpreted through the prism of the

researcher's own perceptions of any washback both in terms of its strength (weak, moderate or

strong) and direction (positive or negative). It was necessary for the researcher to have some non-

examination benchmark against which to measure his perceptions of washback against. It was

difficult to identify a non-examination orientated senior English lesson at the case study secondary

school in Hong Kong. Some informal observations of English extra-curricular activities, which were

non-examination focused such as the English choir, did take place in order for the researcher to

calibrate a contextually accurate perception of no washback from a public examination on case study

school students and teachers. Secondary 5 students preparing for English SBA (School-based Assessments) were observed. One Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) session was also observed. Observing for any perceived impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) compared to any perceived washback from the public English examinations also helped calibrate the researcher's perceptions of washback.

The duration of this case study was 10 weeks for the collection of data and two and a half years for further analysing and interpreting the data, summarising results, drawing conclusions, implications and writing a dissertation. The focus of this research was two qualitative case studies, one case study focused on Secondary 5 English students and a parallel case study focused on Secondary 6 English students. Both case studies also took into consideration the English teachers and were located at one CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary school in Hong Kong.

While the possibility of widening the study to include a comparison with an EMI (English Medium of Instruction) secondary school in Hong Kong was considered it was eventually decided against for several reasons. Firstly, after informal discussions with a staff member of a 'famous' EMI (English Medium of Instruction) school in Hong Kong it was decided that it could prove difficult to negotiate access to such a school for a full comparative study. Secondly, a full comparative study would significantly add to the cost of the research which of necessity needed to be conducted on a 'shoe string' budget. Thirdly, a full comparative study would halve the time that could be spent researching the intended focus of this case study: a CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) school.

Research questions were developed and refined through an initial review of the research

literature and the researcher also critically reflected on his own five and a half years of experience

teaching English in Hong Kong secondary schools. This was followed by compiling an inventory list,

derived from the initial literature review (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, 2005; De Bot, Lowie &

Verspoor, 2005; Qi, 2005) and critical reflections, from which appropriate research instruments for

finding answers to the research questions were constructed. Most data was collected through

qualitative methods such as field note observations, semi-structured individual and group interviews

and from descriptions and an analysis of test items.

3.1 Data Collection Instruments

Table 3.1 details the data collection and analysis processes. Classroom observations, student

interviews, teacher interviews, and a student questionnaire were the data collection instruments used.

Qualitative data analysis was assisted by NVivo 9 while quantitative data analysis was assisted by

PASW Statistics SPSS.

Table 3.1 *An Overview of Data Collection Instruments*

Research Questions	Data collection instruments and sample size			
	Classroom Observations	**Interviews of Students**	**Interviews of Teachers**	**Questionnaire**
Research questions were answered by analysing the data collected from each of the data collection instruments	18 S5 lesson observations 1 S5 SBA (School-based Assessment) assessing session 5 S6 lesson observations 1 S6 small group tutorial session (the classes of 6 teachers) **4** S5 teachers and their classes and/or tutorial groups **2** S6 teachers and their classes and/or tutorial groups Each participating English teacher was observed teaching for at least two and up to nine lessons and/or tutorials. *One English teacher chose not to participate in this part of the study.	24 S5 group interviews 15 S6 group interviews (147 students) **96** S5 students **51** S6 students Approximately 10 to 30 minutes per interview	7 individual interviews (7 teachers) **5** S5 teachers **2** S6 teachers Approximately 10 to 30 minutes per interview	(256 students) **172** regular Secondary 5 students **33** Secondary 5 repeaters **51** Secondary 6 students Approximately 15 to 20 minutes
Data analysis	Qualitative data from classroom observations were analysed through a comparative analysis with the test in order to infer how much teaching style/method, teaching content and learning were influenced by the test.	Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analysed inductively. Initially field notes and transcripts were summarised then coded according to categories or themes. NVivo 9 was used to assist with transcription and coding.		Quantitative data was initially organised for visual analysis (e.g. responses were collated into bar charts) then descriptive and correlational statistics were used. PASW Statistics SPSS was used to assist with the statistical analysis.

Sampling included the random selection of one English lesson observation from each of the participating English teacher's English lesson observations for transcription and more detailed analysis. All Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 teachers took part in a semi-structured interview. The Secondary 5 students who took part in a semi-structured interview were a stratified random sample of the targeted Secondary 5 student population at the case study school which was stratified according to class grouping and gender. The Secondary 6 semi-structured interviews were a complete 100% census of the Secondary 6 students. All Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students completed a student questionnaire.

3.2 Data from English Lesson Observations

Already existing classes were observed. Observation notes were taken on nine of LET1's English lessons and one English SBA (School-based Assessment) assessing session. Observation notes were also taken on four of LET2's English lessons; three of LET3's English lessons; and two of LET4's English lessons. No formal lesson observation notes were taken on LET5's English lessons because she did not wish to take part in this part of the research. Observation notes were taken on three of NET1's English lessons and one after-school English tutorial. Observation notes were also taken on two of LET6's English lessons. All English lesson observations occurred between October and December, 2010. The length of each observation lasted for between 30 and 72 minutes. Six observations, one for each participating teacher, were transcribed. Transcriptions included a transcription of the English and a translated transcription of any Cantonese spoken during the lesson. A word count of each of these transcriptions after any Cantonese had been translated into English was used to calculate what percentage of each lesson was in English and what percentage of each lesson was in Cantonese. All other percentages were based on the actual time of each lesson segment.

Nearly all of the 256 students, except for one class, and 6 of the 7 Secondary 5 and Secondary 6

English teachers who were the focus of this case study were observed at one time or another in as

near to the natural setting as possible. The reliability and dependability of these observations

improved over time as participants became increasingly acclimatised to the researcher's observations.

Field notes were taken in as unobtrusive a way as possible at either an appropriate time during the

actual observations or as soon afterwards as possible. Some English lesson observations and school

English tutorial observations were consensually audio recorded for later interpretation or translation

so that any Cantonese used in the classroom by either teachers or students could also be included in

the analysis. The researcher assumed the role of an outside observer.

Medium of instruction was included as a factor that may intervene to promote or hinder washback

and impact after critically reflecting on the context of the case study school: a process that included

reading relevant and related Hong Kong based research literature, particularly research on the

learning and motivation of Chinese students of various ability levels in EMI (English Medium of

Instruction) and CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) schools in Hong Kong (for example, see Salili

and Lai, 2003). Classroom atmosphere was included as a factor that may intervene to promote or

hinder washback since if the classroom atmosphere was good, students were more likely to be

engaged in the learning process while if the classroom atmosphere was bad students were more likely

to be disengaged from the learning process (Cheung, 2001). The nature of interactions was included

as a possible relevant factor since on the one hand, the actual use of English for communicative

purposes in the English language classroom of a CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) secondary

school in Hong Kong provided these students with what may have been a fairly rare but potentially

invaluable opportunity to actually gain confidence, competency and fluency in actually

communicating in English, while on the other hand, the use of English as a display language robbed

students of this learning opportunity (Littlewood, 2007). Table 3.2 on the following page details what

the researcher was looking for and which research questions were being addressed.

Table 3.2 *English Lesson Observations Data Collection Summary*

Washback or impact	Research question addressed	Factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback or impact	Research question addressed
Teaching methods Evidence linking any of the following points to some characteristic of the test? - Is the teacher explicitly teaching to the test? i.e. is test like item/question <u>format</u> identifiable? Is test like <u>content</u> identifiable? Are <u>test taking skills/techniques</u> identifiable?	Q.1, 5 & 6	**Medium of instruction** - How is English being used? i.e. for <u>display</u> purposes only or for <u>real communication</u>? - How is Cantonese being used? i.e. *only occasionally* in order to explain complex concepts or *very often* for any kind of communicating? - What <u>percentage</u> of each lesson is conducted in Cantonese instead of English?	Q.3, 4 & 7
- What percentage of each lesson is <u>teacher centred</u>?	Q.1, 5 & 6		
- What percentage of each lesson is <u>student centred</u>?	Q2, 5 & 6	**Classroom atmosphere** - How much <u>laughter</u> occurs in the lesson?	Q.3, 4 & 7
- What percentage of each lesson is <u>textbook centred</u>?	Q.5 & 6	- What evidence of <u>rapport</u> between students and teacher can be identified from the lesson observations?	
- What percentage of each lesson is <u>exam question/item</u> centred?	Q.5 & 6	- What is the <u>mood</u> of students and teacher?	
- What percentage of time is taken up with communicative teaching activities? i.e. Is any time allocated for information gap pair work; group problem solving or role-plays?	Q.1,2,5&6	**Interactions** - <u>Length</u> of teacher and student turns.	Q.3, 4 & 7

- Did teaching methods provided opportunities for creative use of English?.
 	
Formula:
 	
Researcher's perception of centred-ness type x <u>100</u> = percentage.
     Actual length of lesson   1
 	
Note: The units of measurement used in the formula above and the formula on the right were minutes and seconds.
		- <u>Number</u> of teacher and student turns.
		
		<u>Type</u> of teacher and student turns. e.g. Is the teacher asking a 'display question' which he/she already knows the answer to? Is the teacher asking an authentically communicative 'referential question' (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992) which he/she does not already know the answer to? In this way interactions were analysed from a communicative perspective.
		
		Formula: Researcher's perception of turn type x <u>100</u> = percentage.
		     Actual length of lesson 1	

45

3.3 Data from Semi-structured Teacher Interviews

As there were only seven Secondary 5 or Secondary 6 English teachers working at the school

every effort was made to individually interview as many of these teachers as were willing to take part.

However, due to the small number of teacher participants, no sampling technique was used. Unique

features of either the student or teacher samples were taken into account when interpreting data

collected and details about sample bias were recorded in the research report.

Most individual interviews took place either before school, during recess, lunch or after school at

a mutually convenient time for both participant and researcher. These individual interviews took

place over the whole course of the data collection phase and each one lasted for about 10 to 30

minutes. Table 3.3 indicates the four prompts used for the semi-structured teacher interviews and

which research questions were being addressed. In order to elicit teacher perceptions of washback

and impact, prompts enquired about washback from examinations and any related impact on teaching

and actual teaching methods. In order to gauge any other factors that may have intervened to promote

or hinder washback and any related impact each teacher's preferred teaching method and any other

related issues a teacher raised were also elicited by prompts.

Table 3.3 *Semi-structured Teacher Interviews Data Collection Summary*

Washback or impact	Research question addressed	Factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback or impact	Research question addressed
Prompt 1: Washback from examinations on Teaching	Q.1, 5&6	Prompt 3: Preferred teaching methods	Q.3, 4 & 7
Prompt 2: Actual teaching methods		Prompt 4: Any other related issues raised by participant(s)	

3.4 Data from Semi-structured Student Interviews

Semi-structured group interviews of between approximately 3 to 12 members were only

organised for student participants. Stratified random samples were taken from each class. For each

class this was done by putting each student's student number on a small piece of folded paper in a hat

and then drawing a pre-determined number of them from the hat at random. Many such student

groups were interviewed and in this way a broad and representative spectrum of student views

were sampled. However, any identified bias in the sample was noted and taken into account.   Each

group interview lasted for approximately 10 to 30 minutes and as in the case of an individual

interview took place either before school, during recess, lunch or after school over the course of the

data collection phase of the research project at mutually convenient times.

With an alumnus from the case study school interpreting whenever a student participant chose to

speak Cantonese, it was possible to conduct student interviews in either English, Mandarin,

Cantonese or any combination of these while all interviews with teachers were conducted in English.

All interviews were unobtrusively but consensually recorded for later transcription (and when

necessary translation) and notes were taken during and immediately after the interviews. Table 3.4

indicates the six prompts used for the semi-structured student interviews and which research

questions were being addressed. In order to elicit student perceptions of washback and any related

impact, prompts focused on learning and exam focus. In order to gauge any other factors that may

intervene to promote or hinder washback and any related impact, each student's motivation, attitude,

beliefs and preferred learning styles were enquired about were also elicited by prompts.

Table 3.4 *Semi-structured Student Interviews Data Collection Summary*

Washback or impact	Research question addressed	Factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback or impact	Research question addressed
Prompt 1: Washback from exams on learning Prompt 2: Exam Focus	Research Questions 2, 5 & 6	Prompt 3: Motivation Prompt 4: Attitude Prompt 5: Student beliefs Prompt 6: Preferred learning styles	Research Questions 3, 4 & 7

3.5 Data from Student Questionnaire

Additional data was collected through a questionnaire. After some reflection, the most practical and beneficial sample to use when administrating the questionnaire for this case study was to give it to all students in each class observed. All students gave their own and parental written consent to take part in this part of the case study.   A census of students who were preparing for the new senior secondary English examinations at the case study school was conducted with a high potential for resulting in research findings that could be credibly generalised to the case study secondary school.

Generalisability was not an aim of this case study and should be strictly limited to student and teacher populations in contexts that are known to be very similar in every way to that of the case study school. However, given the highly streamed nature of the Hong Kong secondary education system the research findings should to some extent be able to be generalised to students of schools where the predominant medium of instruction is Cantonese and that have a student population that is predominately made up of students assigned a band three allocation, that is, the lower third of students in Hong Kong according to academic performance.

Most recently, (in the 2011/2013 cycle) academic performance banding was based on standardised results from academic achievement in three internal assessment results: the first at the end of Primary

5, the second at mid-year Primary 6, and the third at the end of Primary 6 and partially based on the average of two Pre-Secondary 1 Hong Kong Attainment Tests (Hong Kong Education Bureau, n.d.).

The language used in one version of the questionnaire that was given out to students was Chinese written in traditional Chinese characters. Some students with the highest levels of English language proficiency at the case study school were given the option of completing the English version of the questionnaire. The Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire were piloted on two tri-lingual speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese and English. The Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire were also piloted on two native-speakers of Mandarin and two native-speakers of Cantonese, all of whom could also speak English in order to ensure that the Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire were intelligible to native-speakers of both Chinese dialects. Students were all, to varying extents, bi-lingual speakers of both Mandarin and Cantonese. All students, to varying extents could also speak English. Regular Secondary 5 students all completed the questionnaire in Chinese.

Table 3.5 summarises and categorises questionnaire items into two groups: those that look for student perceptions of washback and those that address other factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback. Table 3.5 also notes which research question or questions each questionnaire item addressed.

Table 3.5 *Student Questionnaire Data Collection Summary*

Washback or impact	Research question addressed	Factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback or impact	Research question addressed
Question 4 & 12: Washback from exam format Question 13: Washback from exam content Question 14 & 15: Washback from exam on study Question 16: Washback from exam resulting in a perceived improved level of English language proficiency Question 17: Impact from SBA (School-based Assessment) resulting in a perceived improved level of English language proficiency Question 18: Washback from the exam resulting in a focused motivation to learn what will be tested Question 23: Impact from an important English exam and SBA (School-based Assessment) * Q.5 & 6 will be addressed by comparing a range of testing items and assessments	Q.2	Question 1: Gender Question 2: Years of English instruction Question 3: Age Questions 5, 6 & 7: Use of English for communicative purposes Questions 8, 9 & 10: An anticipated future need to communicate in English Question 11: Attitude towards learning English Questions 19, 20, 21 & 22: A relationship between perceived English language proficiency and level and type of washback Question 23: Perceived importance of a range of factors that may promote (or hinder) English learning as well as washback from an important English exam and impact from SBA (School-based Assessment)	Q.3, 4 & 7

3.6 Research Reliability and Validity

Triangulation of data took place mainly for the cross-validation of qualitative data with quantitative data and vice versa. The use of some mixed research methods was considered appropriate as in this way qualitative and some quantitative angles could provide a multidimensional view of the washback and impact phenomena. It should also be noted at this point that there were several possible ways of performing triangulation. For example, data triangulation; investigator or researcher triangulation; theory triangulation; and methodological or technique triangulation which were four types of triangulation identified by Bailey (1999, p. 38). These four types of triangulation were included within this case study's research methodology design. A summary of these four types of triangulation is listed next.

1) *data triangulation* – the use of data from more than one source. In this case study, both

qualitative (e.g. classroom observations, semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (e.g. questionnaire) data were collected richly enhancing the accuracy and the nuances of the data collection and analysis.

2) *investigator or researcher triangulation* – the use of more than one person to collect or analyse data. In this case study this was done through the process and as a result of literature reviewing the cumulative findings of a wide range of previously published studies on the same, similar or related topics. This served as a useful introduction to the field of investigation and helped guide the researcher around previously experienced pitfalls that were encountered at various steps along the research process.

3) *theory triangulation* – the use of more than one theory to generate research questions and/or interpret findings. In this case study, on the one hand, theory came forth from the more ethnographic research processes out of an increasingly detailed description and analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. The statistical analysis techniques commonly used in quantitative research also led to the production of complementary theories.

4) *methodological or technique triangulation* – the use of more than one method to collect data. As already stated above, this case study included qualitative and quantitative methods in order to produce a more multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon that was the focus of this research.

It should be noted that in this case study both complementarity in data collection (as in mixed methods) and triangulation were used. Complementary data was collected in order to look at various aspects of the washback and impact phenomena while also collecting data about the same aspects of

washback and impact from different sources (triangulation/cross-validation) facilitating a rich

descriptive analysis of the phenomena.

Table 3.6 on the following page shows how the issues of reliability and validity were addressed

during the research process.

Table 3.6 *Enhancing the Reliability and Validity of the Research*

Factor	Potential problem	Validity enhancement/measure
Language background	Some participants, particularly migrants from the mainland of China might have started learning English at a much later age.	This factor is monitored for during interviews.
Language learning experiences	The previous English learning experiences of participants could have a significant influence on research results.	This factor is mainly measured in questionnaire items 8 and 20 and through classroom observations.
Proficiency level	Participants with lower levels of English may be less likely to take part in this research study.	Ensure that the sampling technique provided a balanced sample. For instance, Secondary 5 student interviews consisted of a stratified random sample N = 96. This was 46.83% of the Secondary 5 student population at the case study school. All 51 Secondary 6 students were interviewed. Also, an interpreter was available to ensure that students with limited English speaking and listening ability could still take an active part in their interview. In these ways care was taken to ensure that the sample was balanced particularly in terms of the student English language proficiency levels sampled.
Drop out rate	Participants may drop out of the research study before the end of the data collection phase.	Ensuring that the data collection phase is not overly arduous by: (i) limiting the length of the questionnaire. (ii) limiting the duration of interviews. (iii) limiting repeat interviews of same participants to a maximum of two times.
Inattention (or heightened attention) & attitude	Some participants may lack interest (or have a heightened interest) in classroom observations, interviews or may not complete the questionnaire honestly.	Watch out for Hawthorne and halo effects.
Data collection	The selection of a teacher's aide for interpreting purposes will require considerable care to enhance the likelihood of honest and open communication.	Be aware that the location and who assists in interpreting during the data collection process may affect results.
Instruments	Avoid giving the exact goal of the research study away through the instruments used.	Be aware that participant behaviour (in classroom observations) and responses (in interviews and in questionnaires) may not reflect natural behaviour or honest responses if the exact goal of the research study becomes known.

* Mackey and Gass (2009) define the *Hawthorne effect* as "the positive impact that may occur simply because participants know that they are part of an experiment" (locations 3295-3302).
* Mackey and Gass (2009) define the *halo effect* as participants providing "information that they believe a researcher wants or expects" (locations 9583-94).

According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005) "*Internal validity* [italics added] relies on the logical analysis of the results, as the researcher develops the description of the phenomenon under study …. Verifying results and conclusions from two or more sources or perspectives enhances internal validity" (p. 215). For this reason, the internal validity of this research was enhanced through the use of logical analysis procedures and the verification of results from multiple sources or perspectives.

According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005) "a well-organized, complete persuasive presentation of procedures and results enhances *external reliability* [italics added] … so that a judgment can be made about its replicability within the limits of the natural context" (p. 215). For these reasons, the external reliability of this research was enhanced by a detailed presentation of what procedures were used and how results were derived. Care was taken to enhance external reliability so it would be possible to generalise the findings of this research to Hong Kong schools with similar student and teacher demographics.

Mackey and Gass (2009) outlined several additional types of validity. These included content, face, construct, criterion-related, and predictive validity (locations 3107-16). They also discussed several other factors that they also considered to be potential threats to research study validity. The validity of this research is enhanced by a detailed presentation of what instruments were used to collect the data. There is a detailed presentation summarising the prevalence of each theme identified in the qualitative data. There is a visual and descriptive summary of quantitative data including a numeric and descriptive summary of correlations. Limitations are also noted in the conclusions.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design of this case study. Firstly, the data collection instruments were outlined. Data was collected from English lesson observations, semi-structured teacher and student and teacher interviews and a student questionnaire. The issues of research reliability and validity were also outlined. The next four chapters present the results and discussion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: English Lesson Observations

Introduction

Pseudonyms were used for student class names in order to protect the anonymity of teachers and

students and are indicted with * an asterisk symbol. Teachers are referred to by the pseudonyms LET1;

LET2; LET3; LET4; LET5; LET6 and NET1 without any * asterisk symbol. Quotes from teacher and

student research participants are included in order to gain a deeper insight into how both teachers and

students perceived and experienced the English language teaching and learning process from within the

context of high-stakes public English examination preparation at the case study school. The

grammatical accuracy of oral English responses from participants have been gently edited to enhance

the anonymity of participants and remove unintended ambiguity whenever it could be done without

affecting the intended meaning of the responses. Therefore, corresponding limits should be placed on

the scope of inferences drawn from this data including a caution that these quotes, in their published

form, are unsuitable for a linguistic analysis beyond, for example, a preliminary survey of when, by

whom, and why English and/or Cantonese was used for communication and whether an interpreter was

required. Detailed linguistic analysis falls outside the scope of this research.

Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English lesson and tutorial observations

The main purpose of all the English lesson and tutorial observations was to look for evidence linking

any of the following points to some characteristic of the public English examination that was being

prepared for:

Teaching methods

- Is the teacher explicitly teaching to the test? i.e. is test like item/question format identifiable?
- Is test like content identifiable? Are test taking skills/techniques identifiable?
- What percentage of each lesson is teacher centred?

- What percentage of each lesson is student centred?

- What percentage of each lesson is textbook centred?

- What percentage of each lesson is exam question/item centred?

- What percentage of time is taken up with communicative teaching activities? i.e. Is any time allocated for information gap pairwork; group problem solving or role-plays?

- Did teaching methods provided opportunities for creative use of English?.

Medium of instruction

- How is English being used? i.e. for display purposes only or for real communication?

- How is Cantonese being used? i.e. *only occasionally* in order to explain complex concepts or *very often* for any kind of communicating?

- What percentage of each lesson is conducted in Cantonese instead of English?

Classroom atmosphere

- How much laughter occurs in the lesson?

- What evidence of rapport between students and teacher can be identified from the lesson observations?

- What is the mood of students and teacher?

Interactions

- Length of teacher and student turns.

- Number of teacher and student turns.

- Type of teacher and student turns.

In this way interactions were analysed from a communicative perspective. Official sample papers and other details about the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English language examination that Secondary 5 students were preparing for are available online and are listed on the last page of this dissertation's appendices at 10.7 for the convenience of the reader.

The following pages present and discuss data from Secondary 5 English lesson observations.

4.1 *Washback on Secondary 5 Classroom Pedagogical Practices*

Four Secondary 5 English teachers' classes or tutorials were observed and one English teacher chose

not to participate in this part of the study. Each participating English teacher was observed teaching

for at least two and up to nine lessons and/or tutorials. In total, 18 Secondary 5 English lessons were

observed. In addition, one Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) assessing session

was observed. Qualitative data from classroom observations were analysed through a comparative

analysis with the test in order to infer how much teaching style/method, teaching content and learning

were influenced by the test.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher One (LET1) and 5 Elm*/5 Maple* Classes

Observation notes were taken on nine of LET1's English lessons that occurred between

Monday 8 November, 2010 and Friday 12 November, 2010. Around the same time, an English SBA

(School-based Assessment) assessing session was informally observed. One of these lessons that

occurred on Tuesday 9 November, 2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order to facilitate

a more detailed analysis. The transcribed lesson included a transcription of the English and a translated

transcription of the Cantonese spoken during the lesson. The analysis below focuses on the 36 minute

lesson that was transcribed.

Examination Washback and SBA (School-based Assessment) Impact on English Teaching Methods:

English Test and English SBA (School-based Assessment) Task Preparation

No explicit washback from the new English examination was observed during this lesson, however, impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) task preparation was explicitly influencing what lesson content was taught. The first part of this English lesson consisted of LET1 reading aloud words or short chunks from 13 sentences and students then repeating each of them together in chorus in a way that was reminiscent of an audio-lingual approach to teaching that included lots of oral repetition in the target language. These sentences were prepared suggested comments about the short English film that this English SBA (School-based Assessment) task was based on. The students had copied these sentences down into their workbooks during a previous lesson. This was followed by a variant form of the grammar-translation approach with LET1 orally interpreting the meaning of virtually all English used and sometimes also identifying a few English grammatical forms for students.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

This lesson was just under two thirds (63.89%) or for 23 minutes teacher centred and just over one third (36.11%) or for 13 minutes student centred. The first phase of the lesson lasted for 3 minutes and was a teacher centred lecture. The second phase of the lesson lasted for 5 minutes and was teacher centred with students all repeating phrasal chunks from the 13 sentences after their English teacher. The third phase of the lesson lasted for 4 minutes and was teacher centred questioning. The fourth phase of the lesson lasted for 3 and a half minutes and was student centred with students being given this time to read through this English SBA (School-based Assessment) task's requirements and instructions. The fifth phase of the lesson lasted for 11 minutes and was teacher centred with LET1

questioning individual students about this English SBA (School-based Assessment) task's requirements

and instructions as well as sharing some of her own ideas and opinions on the English film that this

English SBA (School-based Assessment) task was based on. The sixth and final phase of the lesson

lasted for 9 and a half minutes and was student centred with students being given this time to start

writing up their English SBA (School-based Assessment) task scripts.

Materials, English Test and English SBA (School-based Assessment) Task Centred Instruction

This lesson was 100% focused on preparing students for an English SBA (School-based

Assessment). The materials used were tailor-made worksheets including 13 sentences of suggested

comments on the English film which students viewed prior to this lesson as part of this English SBA's

(School-based Assessment's) preparative task chain and the English SBA (School-based Assessment)

task rubric which were provided as input to guide and support each student's individual English SBA

(School-based Assessment) oral script writing preparation.

Communicative Teaching Activities

No communicative English teaching activities were observed during this lesson. However, it should

be noted that LET1 was preparing her students for a communicative English SBA (School-based

Assessment) task.

Medium of instruction:

A word count of the lesson transcript after any Cantonese used had been translated and transcribed

into English indicated that just under three quarters (72.55%) of the English lesson's oral instruction

was English and that just over a quarter (27.45%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was

Cantonese.   It should be emphasised that these percentages only refer to the medium of instruction

that LET1 used for whole class instruction. Instructional Cantonese was only used once during the

first 3 minute phase of the lesson which included some authentic communicative use of English for

about 2 and a half minutes.

> [*An excerpt 1 minute and 15 seconds into the lesson*]
> LET1 in English: Ok. Now, there are two Fridays this week. Remember tomorrow [Wednesday 10 November, 2010] is a Friday and our dictation will be held on the second Friday, the twelfth of November [2010] and for 5 Maple* I don't give them any dictation this week because they will be doing their [English] SBA [School-based Assessment] which is a very very important assessment so they will not have any dictation with me but you have no [English] SBA [School-based Assessment], your [English] SBA [School-based Assessment] is on Monday. Remember? Now, if you are not free on that day you must tell me earlier to make arrangements. Ok? Because this is an important assessment. Now, the marks from the [English] SBA [School-based Assessment] will go to the HKDSE [Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education] [English] exam marks. LET1 switches to Cantonese: The [English] SBA [School-based Assessment] marks will count towards the public exam.
> [*Excerpt ends 2 minutes and 45 seconds into the lesson*]

The next five minutes of the lesson was really just practising the pronunciation of these 12

sentences with LET1 first reading aloud an English word or short phrasal chunk with the

students repeating each of them after the teacher all together in chorus.

> [*An excerpt 6 minutes and 30 seconds into the lesson*]
> LET1 in English: Ok. Number 5, actually number 6 is a journey to the centre of hell.
> Students all together in chorus: Journey to the centre of hell.
> LET1 in English: Now, watching the film is just like making a journey to the centre of hell.
> LET1 switches to Cantonese: Watching this film is just like going to hell.
> [*Excerpt ends 7 minutes into the lesson*]

After LET1 and students had finished reading aloud all of the 12 sentences in the way

described above, the teacher moved on to a kind of discussion and question phase. LET1 tended to say

a sentence or question in English and follow it with the same sentence or question in Cantonese. From

this point, English was primarily used for display purposes and Cantonese was the medium of

instruction for the rest of the 35 minute lesson.

The amount of Cantonese that LET1 used increased as the lesson went on moving from very short interpretations of single English words or short chunks to longer explanations in Cantonese. LET1 provided a Cantonese interpretation after nearly every individual English word or at the end of nearly every English sentence from six and a half minutes into the lesson to the lesson's end.

This use of Cantonese as the medium of instruction relegated English to a display language role. There was no need for students to attempt to understand the English for communicative purposes, except for the first two minutes of the lesson, as there would nearly always be a Cantonese interpretation to follow.

Classroom atmosphere:

There were a few recorded instances of student laughter in LET1's lessons. LET1 was observed to be the strictest and most teacher centred of all the LETs at the case study school. While LET1's strictness and more traditional teaching style was not always appreciated by all of her students, this being an issue raised by some students in interviews, the classroom atmosphere in the lessons formally observed was nevertheless cordial and all students were engaged in the lesson - at least so far as was observable - by following their English teacher's every instruction. However, it should be emphasised again that while LET1's strictness certainly provided an extrinsic motivation to visibly comply to her every command, some student interviews suggested that this had a debilitating effect on some students' intrinsic motivation for learning English.

Interactions:

As noted above, the lessons observed were very teacher centred with the exception of the formal English SBA (School-based Assessment) task presentations which were held after regular school hours.

Students had few chances to interact with each other or the teacher. The exception was the English SBA

(School-based Assessment) task which although formal, videoed and assessed was student centred and

held entirely in English. However, it should be noted that some fairly rehearsed English code teacher-

student interactions were observed. For example, the following excerpt was taken from the SBA

(School-based Assessment) preparative task chain phase of the transcribed English lesson. It is

included to illustrate how highly teacher-centred and teacher-initiated teacher-student interactions were.

[*An excerpt 10 minutes into the lesson*]
LET1 in English: Ok. Thank you for your opinion. Ok. [LET1 says student's English name]
What do you have down as your opinion?
Female student in English: Entertaining adventure.
LET1 in English: Pardon?
Female student in English: Entertaining adventure.
LET1 in English: Entertaining adventure. Ok. So you found this entertaining. Entertaining is
LET1 switches mid-sentence to Cantonese: Entertaining.
LET1 in English: Ok. How about [LET1 says student's English name]?
Male student in English: 3D was the only good part.
LET1 in English: Pardon?
Male student in English: 3D was the only good part.
LET1 in English: 3D was the only good part. Ok. Thank you. How about [LET1 says student's
English name]?
Male student II in English: I find the movie is for kids only.
LET1 in English: Ah. I find the movie is for kids only. Ah. Do you consider yourself a kid?
LET1 switches to Cantonese: Do you consider yourself to still be a kid?
Male student II: [No oral English or Cantonese answer is audible].
[*Excerpt ends 11 minutes and 30 seconds into the lesson*]

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:
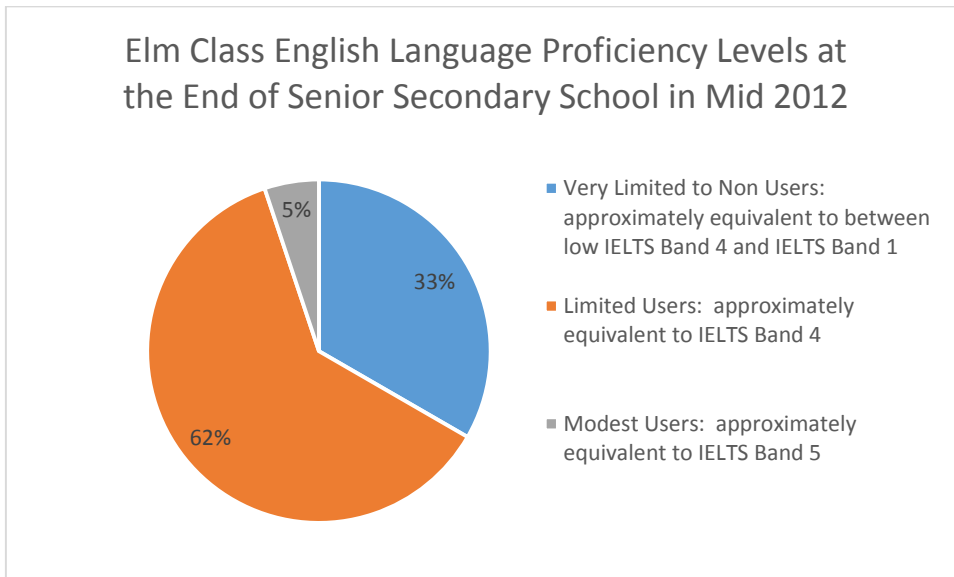
Figure 4.1 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Elm Class

According to Figure 4.1 above, Elm Class students graduated from senior high school having achieved

English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: an overall IELTS Band 4

(62%); and an overall IELTS Band 5 (5%). This means that only 5% of Elm Class students achieved

the minimum English language proficiency level required for admission to local Hong Kong

universities and 95% did not.

Maple Class English Language Proficiency Levels at the End of Senior Secondary School in Mid 2012

■ Very Limited to Non Users: approximately equivalent to between low IELTS Band 4 and IELTS Band 1

100%
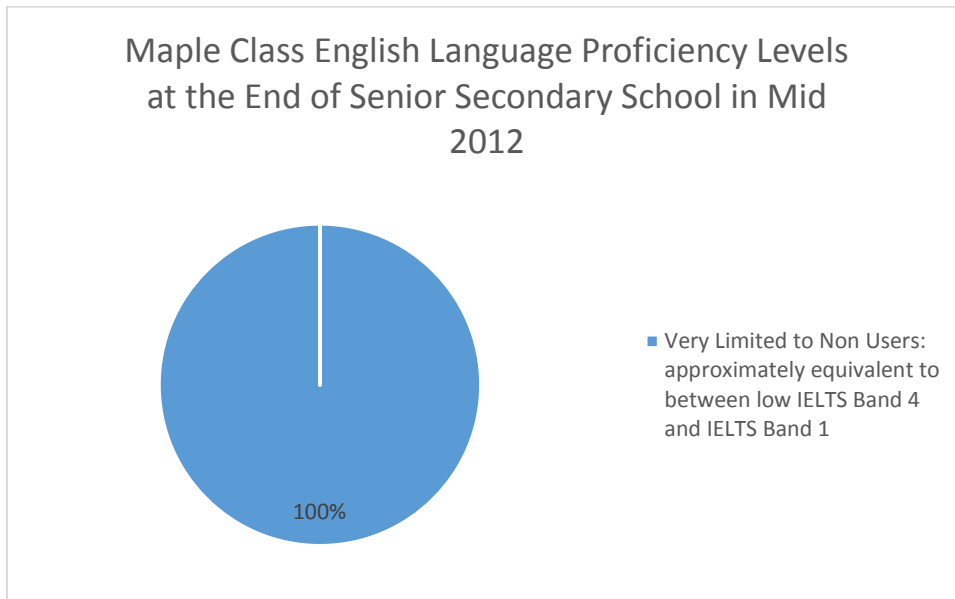
Figure 4.2 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Maple Class

According to Figure 4.2 above, no Maple Class students achieved the minimum English language proficiency level required for admission to local Hong Kong universities.

Summary

Strong impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) was explicitly influencing what was taught in lessons during the two weeks leading up to the actual assessment. As English SBA (School-based Assessment) was held after regular school hours, it also increased the amount of time students were engaged in learning English, at least during the week of the actual assessment. LET1's English teaching and her students' English learning was intensified by focusing on English SBA (School-based Assessment) task preparation during the two weeks prior to the actual assessment since the English SBA (School-based Assessment) was consider to be very important by both LET1 and her students alike as these marks would be counted towards each of her student's HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English language examination results.

Also, the fact that each actual assessment was videoed reinforced the formality and importance of

the assessment further helping to motivate LET1 and her students to prepare well. Furthermore, the

videoing seemed to induce a kind of Hawthorne effect on LET1 and her students from the possibility

that what some teachers' referred to as a big potato, that is, a high ranking official, perhaps from the

HKEAA (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, an independent, self-financing

statutory body) or the EDB (Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special

Administrative Region) might even view selected video samples at some time in the future. The

videoing requirement also added an additional layer of accountability which seemed to ensure the

exclusive use of English during the actual SBA (School-based Assessment) task. In short, since

preparing for and doing the English SBA (School-based Assessment) intensified, focused and

enhanced teacher and student efforts during the two weeks leading up to and including the assessment

and gave each individual student additional opportunities to use English while preparing for and doing

the English SBA (School-based Assessment) task, the impact was strongly beneficial.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Two (LET2) and 5 Palm* Class

Observation notes were taken on four of LET2's English lessons that occurred between

Monday 15 November, 2010 and Thursday 18 November, 2010. One of these lessons that occurred on

Thursday 18 November, 2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order to facilitate a more

detailed analysis. The transcribed lesson included a transcription of the English and a translated

transcription of the Cantonese spoken during the lesson. The analysis below focuses on the 34 minute

lesson that was transcribed.

Examination Washback on English Teaching Methods:

English Test Preparation

LET2 was explicitly teaching towards the English examination through the English textbook for

the core compulsory parts, such as for the Listening skills. However, LET2 was using tailor-made

worksheets for the *Learning English through Short Stories* elective. Washback does not come directly

from the one set of official specimen test papers but indirectly through impact from a commercially

produced textbook for the core compulsory part of the English examination. The *Learning English*

through Short Stories elective has had a washback effect through impact from the materials used for

instruction resulting in LET2 together with her colleagues tailoring materials for use when teaching this

elective at this school.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

LET2's English lesson was teacher centred for about one half (48.53%) of the lesson time or 16

minutes and 30 seconds, an integrated mix of teacher centred and student centred modes for about one

fifth (22.06%) of the lesson time or 7 minutes and 30 seconds and student centred for between a

quarter and a third (29.41%) of the time or 10 minutes.

The first preparatory pre-teaching phase of this lesson was teacher centred and lasted for 9 minutes.

It took up about one quarter (26.47%) of the available lesson time and mainly consisted of classroom

management instructions and classroom management related teacher questioning. This first

preparatory pre-teaching phase of the lesson took a long time not only because this was the first lesson

after lunch but also because many students, particularly some of the boys, seemed to lack motivation

to prepare for this type of English listening task necessitating a considerable amount of gentle verbal

persuasion by LET2 before all the students who had not lost or left their English Listening textbooks at

home retrieve them from their lockers.

The second pre-listening task phase of this lesson was teacher centred and lasted for 3 minutes and

30 seconds. It took up about one tenth (10.29%) of the lesson time and mainly consisted of LET2

writing 8 words from a pre-taught vocabulary list that were also answers for the Listening task on the

board and 5 Palm* Class students then all repeating these words after LET2.

The third Listening task phase of this lesson was an integrated mixture of teacher and student centred

learning and lasted for 7 minutes and 30 seconds. It took up about one fifth (22.06%) of the lesson

time and consisted of LET2 playing short segments of the recording then pausing the recording just

after each answer is heard on the recording in order to ask students if they can tell her the answer.

In the fourth phase of this lesson the teacher introduced a new topic: Good Luck Bad Luck. This

phase of the lesson was teacher centred and lasted for 4 minutes. It took up about one tenth of the

lesson (11.76%) and consisted of LET2 introducing this new topic by providing several examples

and after each example asking students whether it constituted good or bad luck.

The fifth and final phase of this lesson was primarily student centred with some teacher centred

interjections and questions to check how students were progressing through the task and lasts for 10

minutes. Several individual students ask for LET2's assistance or ask her a worksheet completion

related question during this phase of the lesson. It takes up between a quarter and a third

(29.41%) of the lesson time and consists of students completing the Good Luck Bad Luck worksheet.

Materials, English Test Centred Instruction

LET2's English lesson was textbook centred and English Listening test focused for the Listening

task phase of the lesson which took up about one fifth (22.06%) of the lesson time or 7 minutes and

30 seconds and case study school English department tailor-made or edited materials centred and

Learning English through Short Stories elective focused for about half (51.46%) of the lesson time or

17 minutes and 30 seconds. The first pre-teaching phase of the lesson was primarily focused on

classroom management for about one quarter (26.47%) of the lesson time or 9 minutes.

Teaching methods were more influenced by LET2's preferred strategy for bridging the gap between

the students relatively low level of English and the comparatively high level of English required to

understand the textbook and teaching materials. She bridged this gap not by adapting or simplifying

the English used in the textbook or worksheets but by providing Cantonese interpretations throughout

the lesson.

Communicative Teaching Activities

No communicative English teaching activities were observed during this lesson.

Medium of instruction:

A word count of the lesson transcript after any Cantonese used had been translated and transcribed

into English indicated just under two thirds (62.5%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was

English and that just over one third (37.5%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was Cantonese. It

should be emphasised however that these percentages only refer to the medium of instruction that LET2

used for whole class instruction.

[*An excerpt 11 minutes into the lesson*]
LET2 in English: If you have lost the 'vocab' paper please look at the blackboard for the 'vocab'
you are going to listen to. Ok?
LET2 switches to Cantonese: You will hear the following vocabulary.
[*Excerpt ends 11 minutes and 30 seconds into the lesson*]

In the example above, display English was followed by a short communicative Cantonese interpretation. Cantonese rather than English tended to be used by LET2 as the communicative medium of instruction and English tended to be used by LET2 more as a display language than for genuine communication.

Classroom atmosphere:

The classroom atmosphere was good since observations of these students tended to suggest that they were engaging in the English learning process at least to the extent that their English teacher's pedagogical practices enabled such learning opportunities to occur.

Interactions:

In the following example the interaction began with LET2 asking a question in English but receiving no response from the students. Then LET2 repeated a similar question in Cantonese and received a student response.

> [*An excerpt 23 minutes into the lesson*]
> LET2 in English: Ok. So did your mum tell you about what will make you get bad luck?
> LET2 switches to Cantonese: Did your mum tell you what things would make you get bad luck?
> Students in Cantonese: Patting people's shoulders.
> [*Excerpt ends 23 minutes and 30 seconds into the lesson*]

In the example above, English functioned only as a display language while Cantonese functioned as a genuine means of communication. During the lesson, LET2 did quite often ask 5 Palm* Class students questions in English. However, these were usually repeated soon after in Cantonese since only a few of the better students seemed able to understand and respond in English. The students that did answer in English usually only gave short answers. Sometimes other students do give somewhat longer answers in Cantonese.

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:
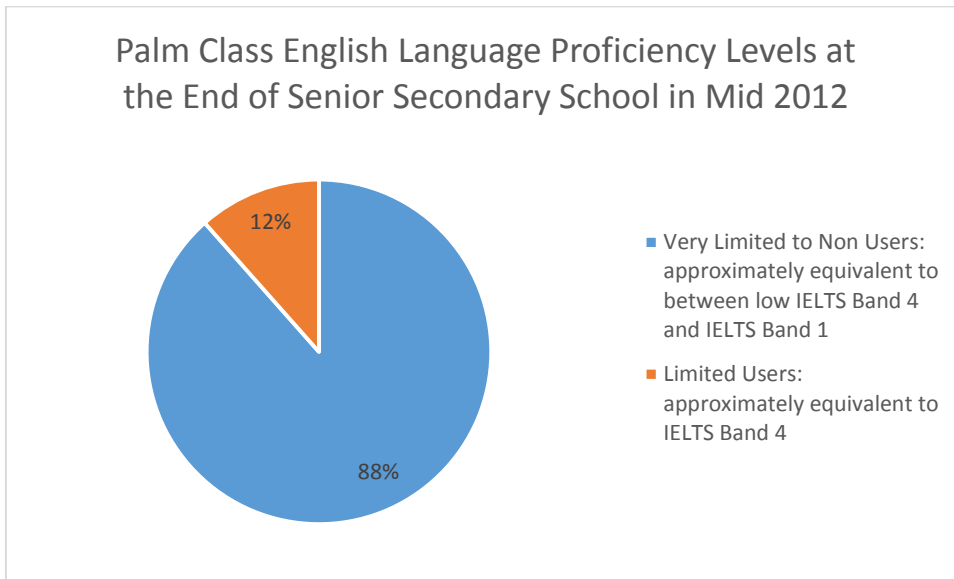
Figure 4.3 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Palm Class

According to Figure 4.3 above, Palm Class students graduated from senior high school having

achieved English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: an overall IELTS Band 4

(12%). This means that no Palm Class students achieved the minimum English language proficiency

level required for admission to local Hong Kong universities.

Summary

The *Learning English through Short Stories* elective was having explicit and some beneficial

washback through impact from the materials used in the classroom. In teacher interviews LET2 and

the other Secondary 5 English teachers at the case study school said that they collaborated with each

other together to tailor worksheets for use when teaching *Learning English through Short Stories* and

other electives. The core compulsory parts of the examination, particularly those for testing listening

skills were having the least beneficial washback. Although the commercially produced textbook

included listening tasks that closely resembled test items expected in the Listening examination these

tasks were considerably above the English language proficiency level of most of her students.

Furthermore, some students, particularly many of the boys, did not find doing Listening test item like

tasks in class motivating so appeared to be disengaging from the learning process during this lesson.

In short, the Listening part of the examination was having more of a negative than beneficial washback

on how Listening was taught to students of lower levels of academic ability and English language

proficiency. Negative impact was also coming indirectly from the test prepared for through the

commercially produced textbook with listening recording that was used in all Secondary 5 English

classes at the case study school.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Three (LET3) and 5 Cedar* Class

Observation notes were taken on three of LET3's English lessons that occurred on Monday

15 November, 2010, Wednesday 17 November, 2010 and Thursday 18 November, 2010. One of these

lessons, that occurred on Monday 15 November, 2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order

to facilitate a more detailed analysis. The transcribed lesson included a transcription of the English and

a translated transcription of the Cantonese spoken during the lesson. The analysis below focuses on

the 34 minute lesson that was transcribed.

Examination Washback and SBA (School-based Assessment) Impact on English Teaching Methods:

English Test and English SBA (School-based Assessment) Preparation

No explicit washback from the new English examination was observed during this lesson. However,

English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation was explicitly influencing the lesson content and teaching methods experienced by those students who were still preparing for an English SBA (School-based Assessment) that would occur later that week.

Students who completed their English SBA (School-based Assessment) the previous week were completing an English proofreading worksheet for at least between 6 to 12 minutes (17.65% to 35.29%) of the English lesson then English dictation corrections for up to 16 and a half minutes (48.53%) of the English lesson. LET3 was explicitly teaching students in English and Cantonese how to identify and analyse the contextual correctness or incorrectness and appropriacy or inappropriacy of parts of speech and tense in order to successfully complete the proofreading worksheet which were skills and techniques required for completing a proofreading item that regularly occurred in the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English examination before 2006 and to a lesser extent in 2008 and 2009. This kind of proofreading item is not in the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination. However, it is an example of washback from the previous English testing regime continuing over to preparation for the current English test.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

The first part of the lesson which lasted for 11 and a half minutes (33.82% of the lesson time) was primarily teacher and worksheet centred for those students who were completing the proofreading worksheet but student and task centred for those students who were writing their English SBA (School-based Assessment) task scripts. The second part of the lesson which lasted for 22 and a half minutes (66.18% of the lesson time) was primarily student centred for both groups of students. When LET3 returned to the classroom with the marked dictation books (after a 6 minute absence) she focused on

answering the individual questions of students who were writing up their English SBA (School-based Assessment) task scripts.

Materials, English Test and English SBA (School-based Assessment) Task Centred Instruction

For those students who completed their English SBA during the previous week, at least 6 to 12 minutes (17.65% to 35.29%) of the lesson was focused on an English proofreading worksheet based on the old English test and up to 16 and a half minutes (48.53%) of the lesson was focused on dictation test corrections. Since knowledge of a wide range of English vocabulary was required to do well in the new English test this could have been at least implicitly linked to the new English test. For those students who were still preparing for their English SBA (School-based Assessment) this lesson was 100% focused on English SBA (School-based Assessment) task script writing. In short, none of the lesson was explicitly focused on the new English test for those students who had already completed their English SBA (School-based Assessment) while the whole lesson is English SBA (School-based Assessment) focused for those students who had to do their English SBA (School-based Assessment) task later in the week.

Communicative Teaching Activities

No communicative English teaching activities were observed during this lesson. However, it should be noted that those students who were preparing for their English SBA (School-based Assessment) were in fact preparing for a communicative assessment task.

Medium of instruction:

A word count of the lesson transcript after any Cantonese used had been translated and transcribed into English indicated that just over two thirds (68%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was

English and that just under one third (32%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was Cantonese. It should be emphasised, however, that these percentages only refer to the medium of instruction that LET3 used for whole class instruction.

It was not possible to accurately calculate percentages for what medium of instruction LET3 used for answering individual student questions as these were often so softly spoken that they were inaudible. It was also not possible to accurately calculate percentages for what code students used when chatting to each other or when asking their English teacher questions for the same reason. During the first teacher centred phase of the English lesson field notes indicated that students only answered a few of their teacher's questions primarily with very short English responses. During the final student centred phase of the lesson students chatted with each other and individual students asked their English teacher questions primarily in Cantonese.

LET3 tended to use English as a display language rather than as a genuine medium of communication since a lot of potentially communicative English usage was made communicatively redundant through pre or post communication of much the same information in Cantonese. English code tends to be followed by either a short Cantonese interpretation, a paraphrase of the English in Cantonese, an interpretation of the English in Cantonese or an extended Cantonese interpretation and explanation.

[*An excerpt 30 seconds into the lesson*]
LET3 in English: Ok. Since some of the students will have SBA [School-based Assessment] today, it is fair to let them have some time to write their script because on Thursday you did have some time to write your script.
LET3 switches to Cantonese: Because last Thursday you had time to write your 'script' [Switches to English code for 'script' twice in this excerpt] this time is exactly the same. We have to make it fair so they can have time to ask me some words and write their 'script'.
[*Excerpt ends one minute and one second into the lesson*]

LET3 tended to read a sentence then repeat a key word while also identifying the part of speech in

English as being for example either a gerund, verb, noun, adjective or adverb then usually switched

to Cantonese and repeated the key word and the name of the part of speech in order to help students

complete the proofreading worksheet.

[*An excerpt 7 minutes into the lesson*]
LET3 in English: And then look at number 2. Let's look at number 2. The island of Samoa, it's
peaceful. Peaceful is an adjective. Peaceful. Peaceful.
LET3 switches to Cantonese: Peaceful is an adjective. 'Okay'? ['Okay' is in English code] [No
Verbal response from students.]
[*Excerpt ends 7 minutes and 13 seconds into the lesson*]

Classroom atmosphere:

The classroom atmosphere is relaxed.

Interactions:

LET3 provided few opportunities for students to speak English with her during the primarily

teacher centred first 11 and a half minutes (33.82%) of the English lesson. However, when she

returned to the classroom with the marked dictation books (6 minutes later) the remaining 16 and a half

minutes (48.53%) of the English lesson was primarily student centred. When individual students sought

after their English teacher's assistance they tended to speak to her in mixed Cantonese-English code or

entirely in Cantonese but rarely entirely in English. LET3 tended to use mixed English-Cantonese code

when interacting with students.

A few teacher-student English medium interactions, such as in the excerpt below, suggested that it

may have been feasible for LET3 to have used more English for communicative purposes had she

chosen to do so since students not only demonstrated comprehension of her English but also a capacity

for giving brief English responses.

[*An excerpt 3 minutes and 3 seconds into the lesson*]

LET3 in English: I have to remind you, on Wednesday, we still have dictation.

Boy in English: Oh yeah.

LET3 switches to Cantonese: This coming Wednesday, we will also have dictation and this time we will have fewer words because we do not have enough time. Yes. Only ten words.

[*Excerpt ends 3 minutes and 18 seconds into the lesson*]

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:
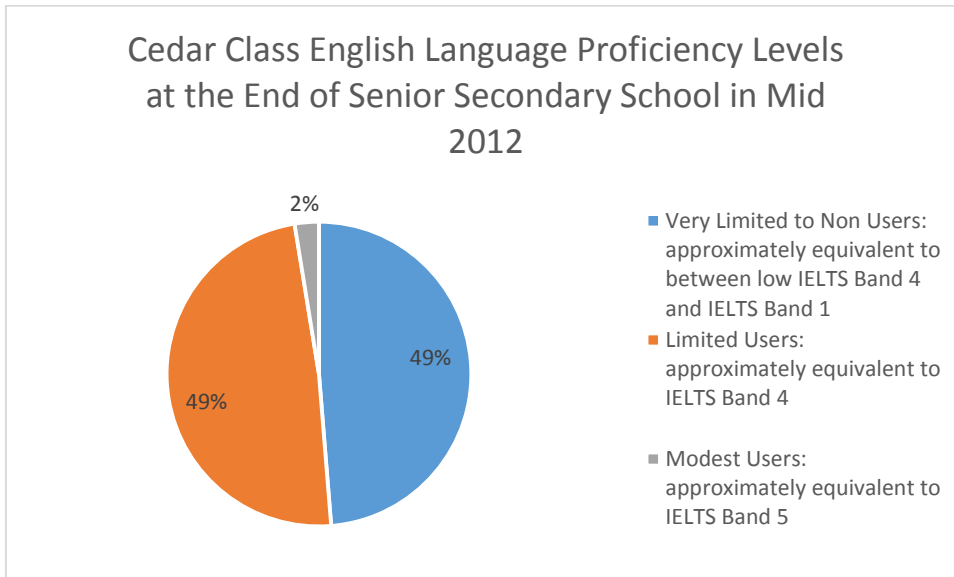
Figure 4.4 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Cedar Class

According to Figure 4.4 above, Cedar Class students graduated from senior high school having

achieved English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: an overall IELTS Band 4

(49%); and an overall IELTS Band 5 (2%). This means that only 2% of Cedar Class students achieved

the minimum English language proficiency level required for admission to local Hong Kong

universities.

Summary

The continued use of teaching materials similar to testing items from the old English test alongside

new teaching materials similar to testing items expected in the new English test or required for

English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation exemplified how the impact of the new English testing regime increased and the impact of the old English testing regime decreased as students moved closer to the new English examination's first testing date or English SBA (School-based Assessment) dates.

English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation caused the suspension of 'normal' English lessons for the two weeks leading up to each student's actual assessment. LET3 explicitly supported English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation by giving students who would have their English SBA (School-based Assessment) later in the week this lesson to write up their English SBA (School-based Assessment) scripts. These students asked their English teacher for English vocabulary suggestions and received individual feedback on their scripts during the last 16 and a half minutes (48.53%) of the lesson.

When these students were in Secondary 4, English lesson materials were reported by LET3 as being about 50% from the old English test and 50% from the new English test, and now that her students are in Secondary 5, more English teaching materials were based on the new English test and fewer teaching materials were based on the old English test. Also, the first English SBA (School-based Assessment) dates were having a strong and beneficial impact on English teaching for the two weeks leading up to them.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Four (LET4) and 5 Pine* Class

Observation notes were taken on two of LET4's English lessons that occurred on Wednesday 1

December, 2010 and Thursday 2 December, 2010. The lesson that occurred on Wednesday 1 December,

2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order to facilitate a more detailed analysis. The

transcribed lesson included a transcription of the English and a translated transcription of the Cantonese

spoken during the lesson. The analysis below focuses on the 32 minute lesson that was transcribed.

Examination Washback on English Teaching methods:

English Test Preparation

The materials used for the oral English lessons were explicitly based on the requirements of the new

English examination and have been tailor made at the school and shared between all English teachers.

This was the only Secondary 5 class observed to include any extended use of communicative teaching

activities during a lesson.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

The lesson moved between teacher centred and student centred modes depending on the purpose of

each phase of the lesson. The lesson was teacher centred for between a third and half (40.63%) or 13

minutes of the lesson, student centred for about one third (32.81%) or 10 minutes and 30 seconds of

the lesson and an integrated mix of teacher and student centred modes for just over a quarter (26.56%)

or 8 minutes and 30 seconds of the lesson.

Phase one consisted of a teacher centred lesson introduction and lasted for one minute. Phase two

consisted of a student centred reading and note taking and lasted for 5 minutes. Phase three consisted

of teacher centred reading, questioning, pronunciation modelling and pronunciation elicitation and

lasted for 5 minutes. Phase four consisted of student centred group discussion and lasted for 5 minutes and 30 seconds. Phase five consisted of a teacher centred introduction to the next part of the lesson and lasted for one minute. Phase six consisted of a mix of teacher centred talk, questioning and elicitation and student centred responses and presentations and lasted for 8 minutes and 30 seconds. Phase seven consisted of teacher centred talk and lasted for 6 minutes.

Materials, English Test Centred Instruction

This lesson was explicitly, wholly focused on materials that were also explicitly, wholly focused on the Oral English examination.

Communicative Teaching Activities

Communicative English teaching activities were observed during some parts of this lesson. The use of some communicative English teaching activities were explicit examples of washback from the final Oral English examination since the format of the teaching materials very closely resembled the official specimen Oral English paper and the content was a reasonable prediction of what might be expected to appear in this test.

Medium of instruction:

A word count of the lesson transcript after any Cantonese used had been translated and transcribed into English indicated that most (96.5%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was English and that only a very small percentage (3.5%) of the English lesson's oral instruction was Cantonese. It should be emphasised, however, that these percentages only refer to the medium of instruction that LET4 used for whole class instruction. While the medium of instruction was generally English it was occasionally supplemented with a Cantonese interpretation of a few of the more difficult vocabulary items.

[*An excerpt 28 minutes and 23 seconds into the lesson*]
LET4 in English: First aid provides rapid
LET4 switches to Cantonese: Rapid
LET4 switches back to English: Rapid [pause] and effective response, effective [pause] in the event of an accident...
[*Excerpt ends 28 minutes and 42 seconds into the lesson*]

More English was used for communicative purposes in LET4's 5 Pine* Class lessons than observed in most of the other Secondary 5 classes. The higher academic ability level and the better English level of students in this class largely accounted for this difference.

Classroom atmosphere:

The classroom atmosphere was beneficial for learning as the students appeared to be engaged in learning and there was also some student laughter during the lessons observed. This laughter indicated that students were enjoying this English lesson which was another indicator of a classroom atmosphere that was beneficial for learning..

Interactions:

Teacher turns were longer than student turns during questioning and answering phases of lessons.

[*An excerpt 8 minutes and 8 seconds into the lesson*]
LET4 in English: How do you say this word?
Boys in English: Association
LET4 in English: A-sso-ci-a-tion [LET4 slows down and breaks the word up into its syllables]
Right. Ok, association of Hong Kong life? [LET 4 emphasises last word with a raised voice pitch and pauses].
Boys in English: Savers.
LET4 in English: Savers. Life saver's certificate.
[*Excerpt ends 8 minutes and 22 seconds into the lesson*]

Students were observed to have longer turns at speaking English during the group work phases of the lesson than during the teacher centred questioning and answering phases of the lesson.

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:
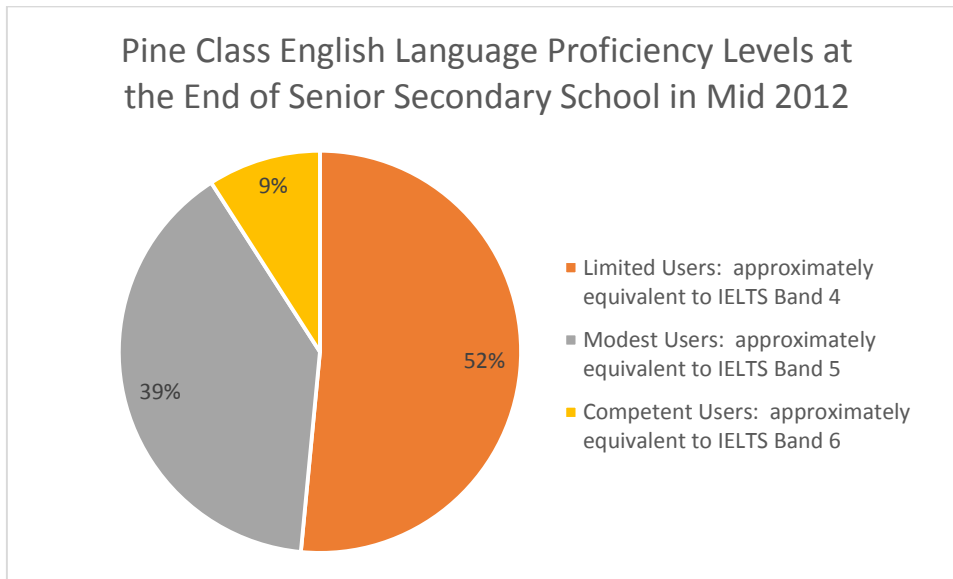
Figure 4.5 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Pine Class

According to Figure 4.5 above, Pine Class students graduated from senior high school having

achieved English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: an overall IELTS Band 4

(52%); an overall IELTS Band 5 (39%); and an overall IELTS Band 6 (9%). This means that 48% of

Pine Class students achieved the minimum English language proficiency level required for admission

to local Hong Kong universities and 52% did not.

It should also be noted that even when these students were in Secondary 5, one academic year before

graduating from senior high school, compared to most of the students in other Secondary 5 classes at

the case study school these students were observed to have and were also reported to have a higher

level of English language proficiency coupled with a higher academic ability making it far easier for

LET4 to incorporate extended use of communicative teaching activities into her lessons.

Summary

No impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) was observed during this lesson. The Oral English part of the examination was having explicit and some beneficial washback on the materials and teaching methods used since LET4 together with her colleagues in this school's English department collaborated to tailor a booklet of Oral English task examination like samples with pre-task preparatory worksheets for use when teaching Oral English classes and students were observed taking part in some communicative English teaching activities during the lesson. In short, the Oral English part of the examination was having more of a beneficial, positive than detrimental, negative washback on how Oral English was taught to LET4's Secondary 5 students who tended to have higher levels of academic ability and English language proficiency than other Secondary 5 students at this case study school.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Five (LET5) and 5 Oak* Class

No formal lesson observation occurred because LET5 did not wish to take part in this part of the research.

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:
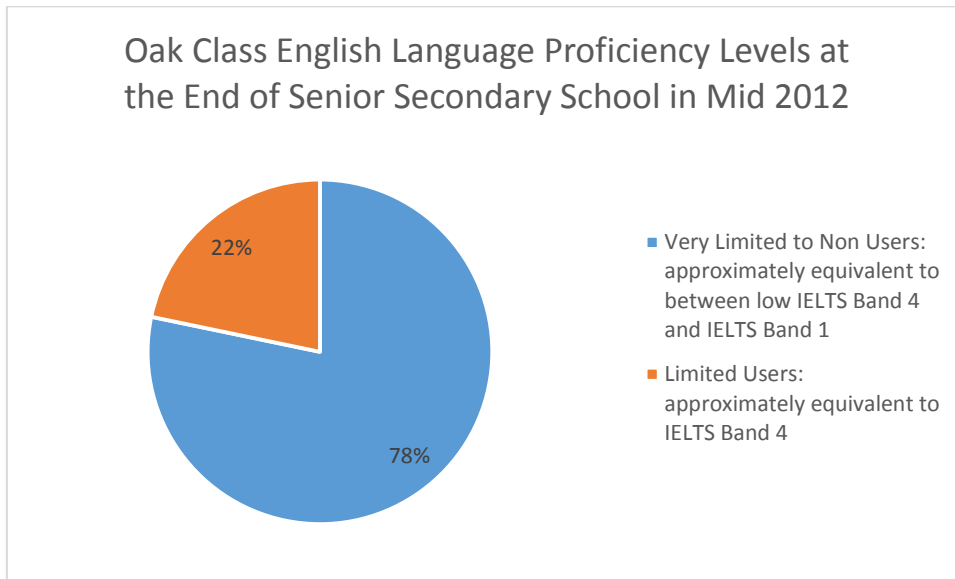
Figure 4.6 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Oak Class

According to Figure 4.6 above, Oak Class students graduated from senior high school having

achieved English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: an overall IELTS Band 4

(22%). This means that no Oak Class students achieved the minimum English language proficiency

level required for admission to local Hong Kong universities.

Overall Summary of Secondary 5 Class Observation Analysis

Strong and immediate impact effects were observed in the form of two weeks' explicit in-class

preparation for English SBA (School-based Assessment) immediately preceding an English SBA

(School-based Assessment) assessment period. The strength and immediacy of this impact was

evidently related to the shorter time span before this assessment would occur compared to the longer

time span before the English examination would occur. As for the elective part of the English

examination, washback was stronger than for the core, compulsory part of the English examination and

has led to the English teachers in this school either writing their own teaching materials or tailoring

materials from a variety of commercially available textbooks and other commercially available teaching

materials. These materials were then pooled and shared by all case study school Secondary 5 English

teachers. Overall, lessons were extremely focused on preparing students for one or another part of the

English examination or English SBA (School-based Assessment) so washback from the English

examination was strongly influencing the format and content of what was taught and impact from

English SBA (School-based Assessment) was strongly influencing pedagogical practices during the

one or two weeks leading up to an English SBA (School-based Assessment).

A comparison between classes observed with students of very different levels of academic ability

and English proficiency levels strongly suggested that teachers adjusted the amount of English and

Cantonese medium of instruction used in their lessons according to their students' level of English.

However, teachers were in each class observed to use the same materials regardless of their students'

English levels. Teachers were also observed bridging the gap between their students' ability and

English level and the textbook or other teaching materials through the use of the Cantonese medium

rather than through adjusting their textbook or other teaching materials to suit the needs of their students.

On the one hand, LET4 whose students tended to have a higher ability and English level than the

students in the other Secondary 5 classes was observed using both a greater range of teaching strategies

and more contemporary communicative language teaching strategies than other Secondary 5 English

teachers. On the other hand, English teachers with students of a lower ability and English level were

more likely to use non-communicative, form and vocabulary focused teaching strategies such as listen

and repeat together in chorus and usually used Cantonese to provide students with more explicit

explanations of grammatical points than their colleagues.

4.2 *Washback on Secondary 6 Classroom Pedagogical Practices*

The two Secondary 6 English teachers' classes and/or tutorials were observed. Both of the Secondary

6 English teachers were observed teaching for at least two lessons and/or tutorials. In total, 5

Secondary 6 English lessons were observed. In addition, one Secondary 6 small group tutorial

session was observed. Qualitative data from classroom observations were analysed through a

comparative analysis with the test in order to infer how much teaching style/method, teaching content

and learning were influenced by the test. Information about the official sample papers of the HKALE

(Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) AS-level (Advanced Supplementary Level) Use of

English examination that Secondary 6 students were preparing for is listed on the last page of this

dissertation's appendices at 10.7 for the convenience of readers. The following pages present and

discuss data from Secondary 6 English lesson observations.

Secondary 6 Native-speaking English Teacher One (NET1) and Poplar*/Willow* Classes

Observation notes were taken on three of NET1's English lessons and one after-school English

tutorial that occurred between Monday 18 October, 2010 and Tuesday 26 October, 2010. One of these

lessons that occurred on Monday 18 October, 2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order to

facilitate a more detailed analysis. The analysis below focuses on the 72 minutes and 30 seconds of

lesson time that was transcribed.

Examination Washback Effect Influence on English Teaching methods:

English Test Preparation

NET1 was always implicitly and sometimes explicitly preparing students for the Oral English paper D, Writing paper B and Reading Skills part of paper C. Preparation for the examination was made quite explicit through the use of past papers, particularly for Oral English practices, and through the use of a textbook that very closely followed the format of the examination. Other teaching activities such as spelling dictation tests were implicitly linked to the examination by the need for students to be able to: correctly spell a wide range of vocabulary for the Writing paper; understand and use a wide range of vocabulary in the Oral English paper; and also recognise a wide range of vocabulary for the Reading Skills part of paper C.

The arrangement of teaching modules according to local themes of interest in the explicitly examination focused textbook was further enhanced by NET1 including additional but related current affairs materials in his lessons. Since current affairs materials from local English newspapers and magazines were often the source of materials used in the actual examination this choice of materials may also be seen as being influenced by the examination's past papers' use of such materials. The use of a task chain on one theme that moves, for example, from discussion to reading, reading to discussion and then on to writing also helps students improve their communicative command of vocabulary. This focus on vocabulary development was NET1's way of addressing students' weaknesses in this area which he identified as one of the main reasons some students performed badly in the final English examination.

In summary, NET1 was both explicitly and implicitly teaching towards the test. This was most identifiable through the teaching of the examination format. It was also identifiable in the choice of content.   Overall, modules of lessons included a mix of teacher, student, textbook and examination centred activities. The most communicative focused lessons were those that prepared students for the Oral English paper. The most form focused lessons were those that focused on writing corrections.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

The lesson included a communicative mix of teacher and student centred interactions for just over one tenth (13.79%) of the lesson or 10 minutes, a primarily teacher centred mode for between a third and half (40.68%) of the lesson or 29 minutes and 30 seconds and a primarily student centred mode for just under half (45.52%) of the lesson or 33 minutes.

Phase one consisted of a mix of teacher centred talk and questioning to elicit who had not done their homework and student centred responses from some students who successfully managed to negotiate an extension of their homework's due date in English and lasted for 10 minutes. Phase two consisted of a primarily teacher centred dictation test and lasted for 11 minutes and 30 seconds. Phase three consisted of a primarily teacher centred introduction to an Oral English examination like practice activity and lasted for 18 minutes. The fourth phase of this lesson was student centred preparation time which consisted of silent reading and note taking and lasted for 10 minutes. The fifth and final phase of this lesson primarily consisted of student centred individual presentations and small group discussions and lasted for 23 minutes.

Materials and English Test Centred Instruction

Phases one and two of the lesson were implicitly focused on improving each student's level of

English language proficiency for the English examination without any explicit focus on any of the

five English examination papers. The first phase was a talk and interaction phase that does not require

any teaching materials as such although NET1 did use the classroom computer screen to project images

of charts onto the board's white screen and some other visual stimuli such as his mobile phone during

this communicative Listening and Oral English introductory phase of the lesson. The second phase was

a dictation test requiring no materials on the part of the students other than a blank piece of paper.

Phases 3, 4 and 5 of this lesson were explicitly focused on Oral English examination preparation and

the materials used came from a commercially produced textbook that very closely resembled the format

and expected content of the Oral English examination.

Communicative Teaching Activities

This lesson included communicative teaching activities for about one third (31.72%) or 23 minutes

of the lesson time in the form of individual Oral English presentations and small group discussions.

For the rest of the time which was about two thirds (68.28%) or 49 minutes and 30 seconds of the lesson

students were being prepared for the final communicative activities phase of the lesson. During

virtually all of the lesson, English was being used communicatively by either NET1 and/or his students

except for a prerequisite 10 minutes of silent preparation.

Medium of instruction:

The medium of instruction was English only. This was necessitated by the fact that NET1 did not

speak Cantonese, which was most students' first Chinese dialect. In this case it was quite natural for

all communication between teacher and students to occur in English as it was the only shared medium

of communication. In short, English was being used for real communication.

Classroom atmosphere:

Quite a lot of laughter occurs. The rapport between NET1 and his students was clearly beneficial

for their English learning. The mood of both NET1 and his students was cheerful.

Interactions:

It is quite interesting to note how NET1 incorporates authentic communication into spelling

tests.

[*10 minutes and 33 seconds into lesson*]
NET1: Number 2. Obsession. I had an obsession with my weight. I checked my weight on my
bathroom scales. I stand on my scales and I put it down into my mobile phone and I get a graph.
[NET1 shows graph on his i-phone] so you can see that my weight is always going down, down,
down, down. [Students laughter] My obsession, obsession.
[*11 minutes and 13 seconds into lesson*]

After first saying the spelling list word 'obsession' NET1 then contextualised 'obsession' by

including it in a sentence. This sentence was an authentically communicative sentence as NET1 was

in fact sharing some of his own daily life experiences with the students through this sentence by acting

out, standing on the bathroom weighing scales and also showing the students the graph on his i-phone

where he recorded his weight each morning. The students' attention was engaged by NET1's light

hearted sharing of a real-life experience. Students responded positively to this authentically

communicative sentence by laughing when shown the i-phone graph of their teacher's weight going

down.

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:

Poplar & Willow Class English Language Proficiency Levels at the End of Senior Secondary School in Mid 2012

Legend:
- Modest to Non Users: approximately equivalent to between low IELTS Band 5 and IELTS Band 1
- Modest to Competent Users: approximately equivalent to between mid IELTS Band 5 and low IELTS Band 6
- Competent Users: approximately equivalent to between low and mid-level IELTS Band 6
- Very Competent Users: approximately equivalent to between a mid-level and a high IELTS Band 6

Figure 4.7 The English Language Proficiency Levels Achieved by Poplar & Willow Class

According to Figure 4.7 above, Poplar and Willow Class students graduated from senior high school having achieved English language proficiency levels approximately equivalent to: a mid-level to high IELTS Band 6 (2%); a low to mid-level IELTS Band 6 (12%); and between a mid-level IELTS Band 5 to a low IELTS Band 6 (42%). This means that 56% of Poplar and Willow Class students achieved the minimum English language proficiency level required for admission to local Hong Kong universities and that 44% of these students did not.

Summary

 Between two thirds and three quarters (70.34%) of this lesson or 51 minutes was explicitly focused

on preparing students for the Oral English examination. Washback from the Oral English examination

was beneficial as it led to NET1 setting aside time for communicative English teaching activities

in the form of Oral English examination like practices. Beneficial washback effects from the whole

English examination were enhanced by NET1's native-speaking English ability coupled with his highly

developed professional competency in communicatively teaching English language which was

demonstrated during lesson observations.

Secondary 6 Local English Teacher Six (LET6) and Poplar*/Willow* Classes

 Observation notes were taken on two of LET6's English lessons that occurred on Thursday 21

October, 2010 and Friday 22 October, 2010. One of these lessons that occurred on Tuesday 9 October,

2010, was randomly selected for transcription in order to facilitate a more detailed analysis. The

analysis below focuses on the 35 minute lesson that was transcribed.

Examination Washback Effect Influence on English Teaching methods:

English Test Preparation

 LET6 was observed to be implicitly and often explicitly preparing students for the English

examination papers that she had been assigned to prepare her students for. These are the Listening

paper A, the Language Systems part of paper C and Practical Skills for Work and Study paper E. In a

similar way to NET1, LET6 explicitly focused on preparing students for the examination through the

occasional use of past papers and through the regular and frequent use of a textbook that very closely

followed the format of the examination. One of the lessons observed explicitly focused on the Language Systems part of paper C.

Both an explicit and implicit test focus was observed. Once again, as was the case with NET1, the most explicit examination washback was evident in the choice of teaching materials that were identical in format to past papers. The content was also influenced by the test but indirectly through the use of a textbook, past papers or commercially produced mock papers that closely resembled past papers. However, as LET6 mainly relied only on these ready-made materials this represented an example of negative washback since the content of the actual test that students were preparing for would more likely be taken from recent editions of newspapers, magazines, local English TV and radio than resemble the content from ready-made materials being used in class. Also, the wide gap between the past examination papers and most students' current levels of English language proficiency resulted in negative washback due to the unsuitable difficulty level of these materials.

Overall, LET6 used a mix of teacher, student and textbook focused teaching modes while remaining examination focused throughout. The most beneficial washback came from lessons that prepared students for the Practical Skills for Work and Study paper E largely due to the fact that these test like materials also doubled as effective teaching materials. It should also be noted that the materials themselves were authentic in the sense that they simulated the kind of English language reading and writing tasks that would be required when a Hong Kong business needed to communicate in English. These materials also required creative use of the English language thereby providing an opportunity for language learning to occur while completing the tasks. The most detrimental washback came from the Language Systems part of paper C. This was because the kind of materials used in the examination

were designed to explicitly test a student's knowledge of language form. This did not provide any

opportunities for the creative use of the English language so learning from these materials was

somewhat limited to becoming familiar with this test item type and learning grammar rules. However,

a more communicative approach to the teaching of language form, such as the teaching of language

forms in a communicative context as the need arises was not observed during this lesson.

Teacher and Student Centred Instruction

The first phase of this lesson was primarily an integrated mix of teacher and student centred

instruction and lasted for more than half (57.14%) of the lesson or 20 minutes.   It mainly consisted of

LET6 asking students to share their answers to an already completed matching exercise that was

identical in form to matching items found in Language Systems past papers. LET6 discussed each

question while the students checked that they understood the meaning of key vocabulary through

teacher led discussion and questioning. The more difficult questions that required a short answer were

answered by one or two of the better students while easier questions that only required a very short one,

two or three word answer or that could be answered with a simple yes or no response were answered

by almost any student in the class. LET6 also encouraged students to complete her own oral English

sentences with the correct answer through the use of a raised pitch and pause technique which resulted

in some of the better students correctly completing her sentences. In short, LET6 tried to draw students'

attention to the key words that linked sentences on one half of the matching exercise to the other.

The second and last phase of this lesson was primarily student centred and lasted for less than half

(42.86%) of the lesson or 15 minutes. It mainly consisted of students doing corrections to a previously

completed and marked practical skills paper. This part of the lesson focused more closely on

language form than examination format. Students also had the opportunity to receive individualised

feedback on their marked grammatical errors if they were unsure about why a correction was required.

Materials and English Test Centred Instruction

 LET6's instruction was all explicitly focused on preparing students for their English examination

papers. The materials used were all from a commercially produced textbook that very closely followed

the format and anticipated content of the examination.

Communicative Teaching Activities

Few communicative English teaching activities were observed during this lesson. However, there

were a few instances of authentic English communication noted such as between LET6 and the class

as a whole; between LET6 and individual students; and between students.

Medium of instruction:

The lesson was conducted entirely in English. However some students indicated in student

interviews that this teacher did sometimes use Cantonese in their English lessons. The complete

absence of Cantonese in the lessons observed may therefore be partly a result of the presence of the

researcher at the back of the classroom.

Classroom atmosphere:

LET 6 and her students are cheerful. However, even LET6 admits that the first part of the lesson

that focused on the Language Systems part of paper C was boring, as she says to the class:

LET6: … I won't check another [language systems] task, so boring, right?"

However, despite LET6's self-awareness of the inadequacies of this teaching method, the need to

familiarise and prepare her students for the final English examination makes her feel the need to

continue teaching in this way. Therefore, the need to prepare students for the types of questions

expected in the Language Systems part of paper C was, in this case, resulting in a negative washback

on the way language form was taught.

Interactions:

LET6 did incorporate some authentic English communication into her lessons. This was

mainly during the more informal discussions that occurred during lessons, for example, when her

students were doing their corrections and individual students had the opportunity to interact with LET6

in English if they did not understand how to correct a particular marked error.

Washback on English Language Proficiency Levels:

Please refer back to Figure 4.7 on page 89 and the text immediately below it for information about this.

Summary

The examination was observed to be having an explicit washback effect on the content taught in this

lesson indirectly through impact from a commercially produced textbook that very closely resembled

the examination. However, washback from the examination has not had a beneficial effect on the

teaching methods observed since LET6's teaching focused on error correction and did not include any

communicative language teaching activities. While student academic ability levels and English

language proficiency levels were observed to scuttle attempts at employing communicative language

teaching methods in all but one of the Secondary 5 classes observed these factors did not account for

LET6's non-use of communicative language teaching methods in this lesson. The limited class time

available to prepare students for the examination and the high-stakes of the examination coupled

together with a student and teacher preference for teaching methods that focused explicitly on

examination practice over teaching methods that focused explicitly on providing students with

opportunities to improve their communicative language competencies were factors that accounted for

the lack of a beneficial washback effect on teaching methods in this case.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from and included discussion of data collected from English

lesson observations. Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English lessons were observed. The following

chapter presents the results from and includes discussion of data collected from English teacher

interviews. It begins with the results from and discussion of Secondary 5 English teacher interviews

and ends with the results from and discussion of Secondary 6 English teacher interviews.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: Interviews with English Teachers

Introduction

This chapter presents results from and includes discussion of data collected from interviews with

English teachers. It begins with Secondary 5 English teacher interviews and ends with Secondary 6

English teacher interviews. In all, seven English teachers were interviewed.

5.1 *Washback on Secondary 5 English Teachers*

Five Secondary 5 English teachers took part in an individual interview. Each interview was of

approximately 10 to 30 minutes duration. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were

analysed inductively. In this section the results of these inductive analyses are reported individually

one after the other.

The topics, main questions and purpose of each semi-structured teacher interview prompt are

outlined in Table 5.1 on the following page.

Table 5.1 *Semi-structured teacher interview guide's purpose*

PROMPTS	PURPOSE To elicit teacher perceptions about:
1. **Washback from examinations on teaching** How much do the final English exams influence your English teaching?	- how much their English teaching was influenced by the final English exams
2. **Actual teaching methods** How do you *actually* teach your English classes? Why do you teach in this way?	- how they actually taught English - why they taught English in the way that they did
3. **Preferred teaching methods** If you had a free choice, how would you *prefer* to teach your English classes?	- how they would prefer to teach English if given a free choice
4. **Any other issues raised by participant(s)** Do you have anything else you would like to say about your English teaching experiences?	- any other issues that teachers raised

Semi-structured teacher interview prompts

The semi-structured English teacher individual interviews focused on and around 4 prompts. Most prompts consisted of only one question. However, prompt 2 consisted of two questions.

S5 Local English Teacher One (LET1) of 5 Elm* and 5 Maple* Classes

During the first year of preparation for the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination, when her students were in Secondary 4, LET1 made very few changes to her teaching.

This finding is inferred from strong circumstantial evidence that included comments made by a few other teachers during interviews, and comments made by this teacher when interviewed. A few classroom observations of other English teachers also confirmed that teaching materials designed for the old discontinued HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination were still being used at the time data was being collected. When interviewed, LET1 suggested that one of the main reasons why she did not initially make many changes to what or how she taught English was due to her view that the core, compulsory part of the new English examination was much the same as in the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination. The following quote illustrates this view.

> LET1: I would say that it is very similar. It is not much different, only that we have
> one more year and the requirements are quite similar.

It should also be further noted that when LET1's students were in Secondary 4, she used many of the same teaching materials for the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination as she had previously used for the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination. During this whole year of English study there was little, if any, negative washback from the new English test. For example, there was no teaching-to-the-test type of negative washback from the new English test during this first ever year of preparing students for it. However, there was little, if any, positive washback from the new English test at this time either. This was because explicit preparation for the public English exam had not yet started since the focus at this time was mainly on improving the students' English proficiency levels only.

Despite the apparent lack of washback from the new English test at this early pre-test stage, it should be noted that from within the context of this Hong Kong case study secondary school it would seem to be undesirable for English teaching at the Secondary 4 form level to become overly focused on teaching-to-the-test. For example, from within the context of Taiwanese elementary school education, Wu (2012, p. 18) notes that negative effects may result from a focus that is more test-centred than learning-centred by warning against providing students with "test preparation programs rather than the English courses …" and Wu (2012, p 18) goes on to say that " … a great number of conscientious EFL educators expressed serious concern over test misuse and negative consequences."

LET1 perceived herself to be conscientious, despite her decision not to begin teaching-to-the-test during the very first year of the new three year English language syllabus. Although it should also be noted that according to the definitions of washback used for this study (**2.1** on page 16) preparing students for one test using materials designed for another risked teaching and testing non-alignment. This was very likely a form of negative washback experienced during the first of the three academic years of preparation for the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English exam.

According to LET1, the main focus of Secondary 4 English teachers at that time was on trying to improve the English language skills and English language proficiency levels of students albeit through the reuse of many existing teaching materials that closely resembled the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English test.

Researcher: So in Secondary 4, you basically just did the same thing as you did in the old
      syllabus?

LET1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

During the second year of preparation for the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English exam, after her students started secondary 5, LET1 mainly used all new teaching materials in order to teach students the new *Learning English through Short Stories* elective that was the first elective prepared for. However, she considered the skills required for the new *Learning English through* electives to be much the same as those required in the core compulsory parts of the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination and the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination.

LET1: I can only say that the content [of the *Learning English through Short Stories* elective] is different but the skills are basically the same.

Preparation for this new elective started when students were beginning the first term of Secondary 5 and constituted the main focus of this term's classes until culminating in the first English SBA (School-based Assessment) task which was based on this elective and held towards the end of the first term of Secondary 5. The most immediate impact came from the English SBA (School-based Assessment) task, especially during, but not limited to, the one or two weeks leading up to the actual assessment. Although preparing for electives was only intended to take up 25% of course time and the compulsory part was intended to take up 75% of course time, in practice whatever was to be assessed in an English SBA (School-based Assessment) task was taking up most of the term in any term with English SBA (School-based Assessment) task.

LET1: The SBA [School-based Assessment] is a very useful tool to make the students work because they have just finished their SBA [School-based Assessment], their first SBA [School-based Assessment]. As they know that this mark is going to be counted in their actual English subject mark then they will work harder and become more serious.

LET1 acknowledged that the English SBA (School-based Assessment) was having a strong

influence not only on teachers' lesson planning and time allocations but also on student motivation to

take English learning seriously. This constituted beneficial impact on teaching and learning from

the English SBA (School-based Assessment) on what content was taught during English lessons.

As for washback from the final English examination, there was very little, if any evidence of

washback from the final examination on LET1's teaching during the first of the three years of

preparation when her students were in secondary 4. Washback or Impact increased in strength the

closer an English SBA (School-based Assessment) or the final English examination was to the time of

teaching. English SBA (School-based Assessment) impact eclipsed washback from the final

examination from the time LET1 started teaching the theme of an English SBA (School-based

Assessment) until the actual assessment. Nevertheless, LET1 felt that the new HKDSE (Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education) and the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education

Examination) English test, for example, had had a strong influence on her teaching.

LET1: It's quite heavy I tell you. It is very much now especially the senior forms. We teach, we focus on all the things that we know that the students are going to see in the exam. Now for my teaching, I mainly teach the easiest 3,000 words because I know that they are going to see those in the exam so our teaching is, I have to say, very exam orientated and also we train them, practice them for each of these years on the different papers and do quite a lot of past papers.

The number of English lessons per week (seven, 40 minute lessons per week) was fewer than

it was a few years earlier (eight, 40 minute lessons per week), due to the school's management

deciding to allocate less time for English and more time to another subject area in the new curriculum.

It was perhaps not surprising that within this context of fewer English lessons per week alongside a

perceived need to cover more content than in the past that this situation has had an impact on the

quality of the washback received from the new English exam leading to negative washback. Since

English teachers felt the need to cover more content in less time, teachers perceiving pressure

from tighter time constrains was, at least partially, contributing to the entrenchment of 'traditional'

classroom activities such as 'chalk and talk' and copying down notes from the board. Furthermore,

students were mainly only required to make use of lower order cognitive skills such as memorisation

and rote learning for spelling dictation tests, stifling the implementation of more creative and

contemporary teaching techniques that were better at motivating and engaging English students in the

English learning process. However, unlike the negative washback from the new HKDSE (Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education) English exam on pedagogical practices as described immediately

above in this paragraph, English SBA (School-based Assessment) seemed to be having an inherently

beneficial impact on LET1's pedagogical practices. This is particularly noteworthy considering that in

every other instance LET1 was observed using and also reported preferring to use her own 'traditional'

pedagogical practices for teaching English.

LET1 considered the main change to her teaching as a consequence of the change from the old

HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) to the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma

of Secondary Education) English examination to be on what content she taught.

LET1: I can only say that the content is different but the skills are basically the same.

In summary, LET1 perceived making few pedagogical changes to her teaching as a result of the new

test but she did note that English SBA (School-based Assessment) was "a very useful tool to make the

students work harder and become more serious." It may be inferred from her perceiving in her students

an improved effort and attitude towards learning while preparing for and doing English SBA (School-

based Assessment) that the strongest beneficial impact on LET1's students' learning was coming from

English SBA (School-based Assessment). Observations of English SBA (School-based Assessment)

preparation and English SBA (School-based Assessment), particularly when compared to observations

of other non-English SBA (School-based Assessment) related English lessons also supported this

assertion.

S5 Local English Teacher Two (LET2) of 5 Palm* Class

If LET2 did not have to prepare her students for an English examination she would include English

materials from a far wider variety of sources rather than mainly only including English examination

focused materials.

> LET2: I think I would give more opportunities for my students to explore the
> English from anywhere, not only from the textbook [if there was no English examination to
> prepare for]. Basically we only do what we have to do in the exams so all our lessons are based
> on the exam.

When LET2's students were in Secondary 4, she still used some worksheets and teaching

materials from the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English

examination.

> LET2: We just focus on the past papers or the textbooks [when 5 Palm* students were in
> Secondary 4] from the old syllabus.

By LET2's own admission, about 70% of each of her Secondary 5 English lessons was taught

through Chinese. LET2 claims that she did this mainly because of her students' low level of English

proficiency when compared to the level of English required by the new Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education English examination. LET2 says that she had been explicitly preparing her

Secondary 5 students for the new English examination. Her main English examination model was the

sample paper since there were not yet any past papers to refer to.

While English SBA (School-based Assessment) was also part of the old English examination, LET2

noted that the number of English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks required had increased. In

LET2's view, this increase in the number of English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks had also

increased the amount of impact on teaching and learning traceable back to English SBA (School-based

Assessment). Impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) on LET2's teaching usually only

lasted for a week or two leading up to and including the actual English SBA (School-based Assessment).

Even though LET2's students had been preparing for the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English curriculum since they were in Secondary 4, it was only since they had

started Secondary 5 that she had consciously focused on familiarising her students with the format of

the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination and she was still

a little unsure about some aspects of the format of the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary

Education) English examination.

> LET2: This year, it is apparent that I use more time to tell them [her Secondary 5 students] the
> rules of the new exam, the DSE [Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education English exam], for
> example the listening, they have to choose, they have to choose in a few papers, I forgot.

Like other LETs, LET2 admits that she continued using materials modelled on the old HKCEE

(Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination), even old past English paper questions, when her

students were still in Secondary 4 because she perceived little change in the core compulsory part of

the new English examination. LET2 worries that the new English examination will be too difficult for

her students.

> LET2: Actually, it worries us [English teachers at the case study school] because in this school, the students competency compared to other students in Hong Kong is low. We try to give them some materials that are similar to the public exam but we always have to adjust the difficulty but I think we are not showing them the real reality... I just think even the students or the teachers are not feeling safe toward this exam. Both of us, I mean students and teachers don't know what will happen…

In summary, from the time students started Secondary 5 preparing for the English examination had

caused narrowing of the curriculum to such an extent that usually only question formats or content that

were expected to occur in the final English examination were taught. However, when students were

still in Secondary 4, teaching materials explicitly derived from the old examination were still in use.

LET2, in collaboration with her English teaching colleagues, when faced with the daunting task of

preparing teaching materials within a limited timeframe for the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English examination, prioritised the writing and tailoring of new teaching

materials for those parts of the examination that were completely new and also recycled old teaching

materials wherever possible for use in preparing students for the core, compulsory parts of the new

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination where little, if any,

change was perceived. LET2 thought that the most beneficial impact on her teaching and her students'

learning came from the extended preparation for English SBA (School-based Assessment) and this

impact effect not only influenced the content that she taught but more importantly also influenced the

teaching methods that she used resulting in more communicative and student centred learning activities.

The new electives also had a beneficial influence on teaching as they resulted in teachers writing or

tailoring new teaching materials. Little, if any, beneficial washback came from the core or compulsory

part of the new examination since LET2, like many of her colleagues, perceived little significant change

between the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) and new HKDSE (Hong

Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination. Negative washback on her teaching

took the form of a mismatch between the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education)

English examination prepared for and the current English level of her students. This was evident in

LET2's perceived need to use Chinese for 70% of the time in order to make the requirements and format

of the new English examination comprehensible for her students.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Three (LET3) of 5 Cedar* Class

If LET3 did not have to prepare students for a public English examination she said that she would

also include some phonics games and some kind of vocabulary building exercises in her lessons. LET3

said that she was preparing her Secondary 5 students for all their English examination requirements,

sometimes implicitly, for example:

LET3: I want them to learn more vocabulary words so I will have them, weekly, will have
dictation…

Since there was the English examination to prepare for LET3 spent quite a lot of time doing

examination focused practice.

LET3: Because we have to prepare [for] the exam and they have to do quite a lot
of practice and students may get bored with it…

Sometimes LET3 even explicitly prepared students for the English examination through lengthy

test item like practice tasks which she says students found boring. LET3 noted that student boredom

was a particular problem particularly when doing practice tasks based on test items from the Listening

and Integrated Skills paper.

> LET3: It is according to the exams and then it is based on their exam requirements. You have to do some practice like this. For example, I need to take a double lesson for doing our listening tasks for all tasks including short tasks or integrated task. Sometimes they will be bored, ok, because they do not have such patience to do [what is] such a long task for them.

Even though LET3 was aware that her students sometimes found extended and explicit examination

practice boring she felt that she had little choice but to teach in this way in order to prepare her students

for the exam.

> LET3: They have their exams very soon [referring to the Secondary 5 students] so I have to teach in this way but actually when they were in junior forms I would have more English activities, just like the phonics games or vocabulary learning exercises.

This was a clear example of negative washback from the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English examination on LET3's teaching as her English teaching methods were

more focused on her students' learning needs than on the public English examination when she was

teaching junior students who did not yet have to prepare for an external public English examination. In

other words, LET3's teaching was less focused on her students' learning needs because of the test.

LET3 used Chinese in her English lessons to explain what she was teaching because otherwise

she felt that her students would not understand her lesson leading to disciplinary problems.

Noteworthy was LET3's perception that her teaching was less English examination focused and

therefore less stressful when her students were in Secondary 4.

> LET3: We don't have much stress when they were in form 4.

When LET3's students were in Secondary 4, about 50% of her teaching materials were the same as those that she had used for the old discontinued HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education) examination.

> LET3: Some teachers use their old certificate ones [referring to teaching materials] and if I have enough time I will prepare the materials for the new syllabus. So it depends on the teachers. Sometimes I collect some materials from the others. It may be new or old but I think it is just like, the rating is about 50:50, actually, because we don't have enough time to prepare for the new syllabus sometimes we will use, if we find the materials of the old syllabus is useful…

LET3 felt that the final English examination had a greater influence on her teaching than the English SBA (School-based Assessment) with the exception of the week or two before an English SBA (School-based Assessment) in which she entirely focused on SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation. LET3 felt that it was easier to prepare for the old English examination since she was quite familiar with it.

> LET3: And I don't know actually, sometimes we don't know how to follow, how we can prepare, so I think for teachers it is easier to prepare the old certificate exam because it has lasted for quite a long period.

In summary, the act of preparing for an English examination did influence what LET3 taught. Sometimes this resulted in negative washback. The worst washback reported came from preparing for the Listening and Integrated Skills paper. Even though, this paper does not really double as suitable teaching materials for LET3's students, she still felt that she had to 'do' past paper type exercises with her students, regardless, in order to prepare them for the examination. The best impact reported came from preparing for the English SBA (School-based Assessment) and lasted for the one or two weeks leading up to and including the actual assessment. The impact of English SBA (School-based Assessment) was good because it focused students on preparing for an appropriately

challenging (but not too difficult), meaningful, communicative task for one or two weeks which was a

pedagogically sound length of time (one or two weeks) for her students.

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Four (LET4) of 5 Pine* Class

LET4 considered the overall ability level of 5 Pine* students to be much higher than the overall

ability level of the other Secondary 5 students at the case study school.

> LET4: the 5 Pine* [students' abilities] are much higher than those [of other Secondary 5
> students] in our school….. and also their ability is in a great range. Ok, you can find that some
> students get Level 4 in the public exam last year [the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of
> Education Examination)] and some of them get Level 1, ok, there is a big gap. So that you find
> that when I ask them to do the exercise for themselves, some of the better students, they can
> finish very quickly and the others they try very hard.

Some of the ways in which the case study school's English panel's other Secondary 5 LETs

decided to go about preparing their students for the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary

Education) English test led to a narrowing of the curriculum since only three of the possible 8

elective *Learning English through* elective themes were selected by this form's LETs to be taught

across all of the Secondary 5 classes.

> LET4: In our school we have 'compulsory' electives, that's what I can say. Maybe
> in other schools they can have a choice, actually there are 8 electives in the new curriculum,
> right? Ok? Maybe, in other schools, they can choose the one, maybe, the teachers favourite or
> maybe that kind of things.

It should be noted that 5 Pine* Class was a special class for repeating Secondary 5 students who had

already attempted the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) at the end of

the previous academic year at other secondary schools and were now preparing for the new

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination from the beginning of

the new academic year in September, 2010 onwards as Secondary 5 students. Also, it should be noted

that LET4 only started preparing 5 Pine* Class students for the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English examination from the time this class opened at the beginning of

September, 2010. The decision about which electives would be taught was made by the other

Secondary 5 LETs during the previous academic year when their students were in Secondary 4. This

may partly explain LET4's dissatisfaction with the decision to only prepare students for three of the

eight electives since she was not part of the decision making process.

If there was no English examination to prepare for LET4 says that she would have chosen themes

according to her students interests. LET4 felt that washback from the new HKDSE (Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination came more through the impact of using an

examination focused commercially produced English textbook than the one set of specimen English

examination papers available at the time when research data was collected in November, 2010. The

English textbook used at this school was perceived by her to be much easier than the actual specimen

examination papers and more suitable for use as teaching materials than the specimen examination

papers but nevertheless she still felt that the English textbook was a little too difficult for her students

even though her students were amongst the best Secondary 5 students at the case study school.

It is interesting to note that according to LET4, the electives studied in each English class were

not chosen by her students or by herself but by a several member school panel made up of English

teachers. The three electives chosen by the English panel were then taught across the board to all

Secondary 5 students. LET4 felt that the main difference between the old HKCEE (Hong Kong

Certificate of Education Examination) and new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examinations was the *Learning English Through* electives which was a new feature introduced by the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination. In short, she felt that there were no big differences between the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education) examination and new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination with the one exception being the new electives.

For the last month, LET4's mixed ability class, who mainly came from other schools and tended to have higher ability levels than the other students at this school, had been preparing for an English SBA (School-based Assessment) task.

The task chain started by watching a film together in class followed by students completing worksheets on the film. This was followed by students writing their scripts for the English SBA (School-based Assessment). LET4 noted that in other schools which tended to have students with higher ability levels most English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation would have been done by students themselves in their own time.

> LET4: Actually, some of the students complained in 5 Pine* because they told me that in their old schools teachers won't do so much preparation for them. They have done it by themselves. They have searched the Internet, they ask their friends or they ask the teacher during their free time not in class. Ok. Sometimes it's a waste of the lesson time.

In summary, the uniform 'lock-step' and 'one-size-fits-all' conformity in the way that worksheets were tailored and used across all Secondary 5 classes in the case study school posed some difficulties for LET4 as her students, while of mixed abilities, were generally of a much higher ability level than the other classes since they nearly all came from more academically focused schools. Also, the different school cultures between her students' original schools, and the case study school caused some

dissatisfaction among her students.

> LET4: I always receive complaints or maybe some opinions from students. They said, wow,
> there are too many holidays and activities….. 5 Pine* students say that they find that
> they have little time to focus on their study.   They say that I come here to study not play.

LET4 encouraged students to go to tutorial centres outside of school in order to prepare for any other

Learning English through electives that they might have been interested in that were not taught in the

case study school. Even though her mixed ability class was generally of a much higher ability level

than the other classes, she still felt that the new syllabus was too difficult for the lowest academic band

of students, the band 3 students that constituted the vast majority of students at the case study school.

> LET4: For the new syllabus, actually for our students, there is too much for them actually.
> What I can say is it is too demanding because they have to read a lot and to write, ok, and do
> some reflective things and analytical things. Actually in our school, students are, what can I say,
> they can't do it very well.

There was a wide range of English test items that students needed to become familiar with in order

to prepare well for the 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

examination. The most evident examples of beneficial washback and impact from the new English

examination on to the teaching and learning practices used in her English classroom came from the

English test items; English learning tasks and English learning experiences that emanated from

preparing for either English SBA (School-based Assessment) or *Learning English through* electives.

This was despite LET4's perception that these were somewhat more challenging than those required

by the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English examination,

Secondary 5 Local English Teacher Five (LET5) of 5 Oak* Class

If LET5's students were not preparing for an English examination she says that she would have more

class activities. LET5 also says that she would get her students to speak more English.

> LET5: Not just sit in their seats, they can have more discussion, more presentation that will not
> be counted in the exam marks.

This contrasted with how she taught while preparing her students for a public English examination.

> LET5: Most of the time just chalk and talk.

It is not only the examination preparation that led LET5 to teach in the way that she did but also

her students' low levels of English. She estimated that 60% of her lessons were conducted in Chinese

and 40% in English. When LET5's students were still in Secondary 4, there were few, if any, changes

that could be traced to the new English test because she perceived little, if any, difference between the

core part of the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English examination

and the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination.

> LET5: Last year we used some of the 'used' materials. That was last year, but not this year,
> this year we have a lot of new worksheets.

The introduction of the new *Learning English through* electives in the new HKDSE (Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination had a strong impact on the materials

used for teaching.

> Researcher: Have you made any changes because of the new exam?
> LET5: Yes, especially this year, because there is the elective parts so we don't have
> much experience of, knowledge of it so we need to do lots of preparing things… because we
> don't have any textbook so we need to try to find the material, create, but we just try to copy.
> Copy and make adaption but it takes a long time to do that.

LET5 feels that she has only made some small changes because of the new English examination

LET5: Because we have to prepare the students for the SBA [School-based Assessment]… we just
ask the students to answer some questions and prepare for some presentations for the first time…
we asked the students to do the individual presentation instead of the group interaction…..
For preparation we ask the students to watch a movie.

LET5 also felt that her students were more influenced by English SBA (School-based Assessment) than

the final public English examination.

LET5: I always emphasize that this SBA [School-based Assessment] mark will be counted in the
HKDSE [Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education], yeah, so they will try their best to do it
even though they are not paying attention in class… at least with SBA [School-based Assessment]
the students will try their best to perform well.

When LET5's students were still in Secondary 4 she still used some of the materials that were

specifically prepared for the old English examination.

LET5: [Laughter] That was last year, but not this year, this year we have a lot of
new worksheets.

Once again, as LET5 stated earlier in the interview, she says that the main impetus behind the creation

of new materials was the new *Learning English through* electives, a feature that was absent in the old

HKCEE [Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination] English test. Although LET5 says it was

not recommended by the school authorities, she admits that both she and other English teachers spent

at least a week or more of class time helping students prepare for each English SBA (School-based

Assessment) task.

In summary, the new English examination had a strong influence on LET5's teaching. Strong

beneficial impact was demonstrated by the writing of new teaching materials for the new *Learning*

English through electives. The strongest beneficial impact, however, came from the English SBA

(School-based Assessment) which not only resulted in additional teaching materials being prepared but

also in beneficial pedagogical practices such as the introduction of a new task chain approach to

teaching that includes viewing a film, classroom discussion and note taking, learning new vocabulary in order to be able to perform the task, script writing, script editing, oral presentation practice and oral question answering practice, culminating in a formal oral presentation followed by oral question answering. At least, this appeared to be a new pedagogical experience from the perceptions of case study Secondary 5 students' field notes.

Noteworthy was the little or no influence that the new English examination had on LET5's teaching and learning when her students were in Secondary 4. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, this was the first year LET5 had to prepare students for the new English examination and she felt that she lacked the time to write new materials. Secondly, during this first year she prepared students for the core compulsory part of the new English examination and she perceived little change between the old and new English examination in this part and continued her established practice of focusing on language form in Secondary 4 classes. Negative washback from the new English examination was much the same as from the old English examination in that it continued to focus teaching efforts on familiarising students with the various parts of the English examination mainly through 'chalk and talk' teacher centred lessons to the exclusion of more interesting student centred activities such as oral presentations and group discussions. This was because of a perceived need to familiarise students with the large number of test types and the expected content of the English test prepared for in too short a time.

5.2 *Washback on Secondary 6 English Teachers*

The two Secondary 6 English teachers took part in an individual interview. Each interview was of approximately 10 to 30 minutes duration. Qualitative data from these semi-structured interviews were analysed inductively. In this section the results of these inductive analyses are first reported individually one after the other.

S6 Native-speaking English Teacher One (NET1) of Poplar* and Willow* Classes

NET1 prepared students for two and a half of the five HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) AS Use of English papers. These were Section D – Oral English, Section B – Writing, and the first part of Section C – Reading Skills with LET6 preparing students for the Language Systems part of this paper. If NET1 had a free choice, he said that he would probably also teach English phonics.

> NET1: Phonics is one of the weak points they have when they come across new words, which they do, in the Oral exam.

NET1 did not teach any lessons on phonics because the explicit teaching of English phonics in English lessons was disbanded a few years earlier as a result of a directive from one of the two local English panel chairs, his line managers. Prior to this directive he successfully taught English phonics to Secondary 1 classes for one lesson each week.

NET1 organised his teaching around a thematic task chain and provided students feedback on the communicative content and grammatical form of their oral presentations, writing test item like tasks, and reading comprehension question answers.

NET1: I teach the Writing and the Oral papers with a little bit of Reading so I
give them input on a topic, we discuss it, we brainstorm, we put some notes on what we agree
upon on the board and then eventually they get a writing quiz on the topic after we have
brainstormed and done some preparation and reading on the topic, so it is thematic, and then we
do oral practices after school usually on the same theme.

The most beneficial washback from the English examination on NET1's teaching came from the

Oral English paper. The Oral English past papers doubled as beneficial teaching materials for the

thematic task chain approach utilised by NET1. Regular after-school Oral English practices using past

Oral English papers also helped to familiarise his Secondary 6 students with the format of this paper.

However, there were also limitations on the realisation of all potential beneficial washback on NET1

from the Oral English paper. For example, even though the Oral English paper, amongst other things,

tests for accuracy in pronunciation in Part 1 and intelligibility in Part 2 and NET1 acknowledged a need

for his Secondary 6 students to learn phonics in order to overcome difficulties pronouncing unfamiliar

words in the Oral English paper, timetable schedule limitations restricted the scope of what was taught.

Another reason why the teacher does not teach phonics to these students was historical. As noted above,

a few years earlier the school's middle management requested NET1 to stop teaching English phonics

to Secondary One students so the teaching of English phonics to S6 students could have risked

reigniting this previous controversy (See page 116 on the previous page).

This was an example of potential beneficial washback on a teacher's teaching decisions being muted

by school upper and middle management decisions on how many hours of English were to be timetabled

each week and what and how English was to be taught during those hours.

Some beneficial washback flowed from the Writing paper. The teacher prepared students for writing

by first brainstorming on a theme. Students then took notes and did some further research at home on

the Internet. This was followed by a timed, in class writing quiz based on the same format, word length

and time limits as the actual test. In this case the waskback was limited to practising timed writing in

the same format as the actual test.

> NET1: … the Reading Comprehension Section but I don't really like teaching that because the students lack vocabulary and the multiple-choice questions are very tricky so I do a little bit of it but I don't think that is particularly useful I think they need just more general reading on a topic rather than just past paper practice on that…

The least beneficial washback came from the Reading part of the Reading and Language Systems

paper which was taught by NET1. One reason given for a lack of beneficial washback from this

part of the paper was the use of what he referred to as 'tricky' multiple-choice items and questions.

NET1 saw general reading on a topic more useful than simply going over past Reading papers. In this

case, the Reading part of the test led to some teaching that explicitly focused on familiarising students

with the multiple-choice format of the paper. This time would have otherwise been spent developing

reading skills or learning new vocabulary according to the teacher. This focus on multiple-choice test

taking skills was an example of negative washback from the test. While multiple-choice items may

well be an efficient and accurate testing method they did not double as useful pedagogical materials for

teaching reading.

> NET1: I don't restrict my teaching to what's in the examination but I find an established examination with lots of past papers is a useful, used with discretion, it is very useful and it does provide you, it helps to motivate Hong Kong Chinese students because they are very motivated to get marks in the examination so if you do something that is too far off the exam, you have to link everything to the exam or they will not be interested in studying it and that is what the after-school tutorial schools do, so we have to compete with that, to do that as well, although they are interested in class marks as well. Basically, they are very examination and mark orientated but I have to soften that to make it more educationally sound by using a thematic approach and a task chain that mixes in a little bit of reading and discussion and note taking.

In summary, this last comment highlights how an English teacher's ELT (English Language

Teaching)theoretical knowledge and teaching experience contribute to a teacher's personal beliefs

about what works best in the ELT (English Language Teaching) classroom and enhanced pedagogical

practices and affected the type, amount and extent of washback from each part of the public English

examination.

S6 Local English Teacher Six (LET6) of Poplar* and Willow* Classes

LET6 prepared students for two and a half of the five HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level

Examination) AS Use of English papers. These were Section A – Listening, the second part of Section

C – Language Systems and Section E – Practical Skills. If she had a free choice and no examination to

prepare the students for she claims that she would teach quite differently.

> LET6: I can have more freedom to make good use of my time and space to learn English together
> with my students… I would include materials or resources more from our daily life, that means I
> may not use textbooks or I may not do so many practices in drilling grammar… I will have more
> fun … doing activities … watch movies … take my students out of the campus… so each
> student can experience English in their real life.

The two Secondary 6 English teachers (LET6 and NET1) divided seven 40 minute English lesson

periods between themselves each week. This meant each Secondary 6 English teacher only had 3 or 4

40 minute lessons a week in which to prepare students for two and a half papers. LET6 felt that these

time limits restricted the focus of teaching to examination preparation with all lessons focused on one

or more of the papers. Most of the teaching material used in class came from a textbook. This textbook,

which was the same one as used by NET1 who prepared Secondary 6 students for the other half of the

examination papers, was commercially published but almost identical to past papers with a few

important exceptions. It is arranged so that the difficulty level of the English used gradually increased

and it was also arranged according to themes.

LET6: You know for the textbooks, I guess the author has thought to arrange the practice according to different levels of difficulty as well as according to different themes but for the past papers, you know, the themes are diversified, right?.….the S6 textbook, some of the focus will be on the elaborations of different skills in preparing students to complete the task..… Let's say that I believe that I have my own mission to let my students learn English together and at the same time I have to meet their desire because they have to attempt the examination. In that sense, I think I will make the textbooks just like as a tool… to let my students to learn English faster…

In this case, the examination had a strong effect on *what* was taught in the English lessons, however the washback came indirectly from the examination through the impact of the past papers and the commercially published textbook. Furthermore, the examination had a strong but comparatively somewhat lesser effect on *how* English was taught in the English lessons. This washback came indirectly from the impact of the examination past papers through the commercially published textbook materials. Washback was also filtered through the teacher's beliefs about how best to prepare the students for the examination.

As was the case for NET1, LET6's English language teaching ELT (English Language Teaching) theoretical knowledge and teaching experience contributed to her personal beliefs about what works best in the ELT classroom: enhancing pedagogical practices and affected the type, amount and extent of washback from each part of the English examination. The theoretical underpinnings of some of the papers prepared for, such as the task-based focus of the Section E – Practical Skills also had a washback effect on teaching and learning.

The washback from the Practical Skills paper came through strongly because, like the Oral English paper, the Practical Skills paper format was an appropriate format for use as teaching materials. This was particularly so when ordered according to difficulty and theme as was the case in the commercially produced textbook that was used in most of LET6's English lessons.

LET6 sometimes encouraged students to do group work and group presentations. Since these skills were not tested in any of the papers that she was preparing her students for, this choice probably came more from her own pedagogical beliefs than the test. While it could be argued that these skills were required for the Oral English paper, as this was not one of the papers that LET6 was preparing her students for, it was unlikely to be her main reason for using group work and group presentations.

> LET6: I will instruct the students to study grammar by themselves. They have to do presentations and share their findings with their peers so that is a good way to learn with peers.

The theoretical underpinnings of this pedagogical choice came from developmentalists and social interactionists such as Piaget (2002) and Vygotsky (1978). So once again it can be seen that washback from the examination prepared for was not the only influence on the teacher. A teacher's ELT (English Language Teaching) theoretical knowledge filtered out some of the negative washback and enhanced some of the beneficial washback from the examination prepared for.

In summary, there were limitations on how a teacher filtered out deterimental washback and enhanced beneficial washback. This was particularly the case when the sole use of an examination paper, or even a textbook derived from it, did not by itself constitute beneficial teaching materials. In this case, in order to prepare students for the Language Systems part of paper C, the teacher's comments were reminiscent of the now obsolete audio-lingual method's emphasis on pattern and substitution drills. LET6 said "I drill students on grammar". While preparing for this paper did require a focus on language form, simply completing multiple-choice cloze, proofreading, summary, and matching exercises similar to those in the examination and grammar drills were more of a negative than beneficial washback on teaching and learning. It may be that since CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) generally focused more on meaning than form the intention of including a Language Systems part to

paper C was to ensure that teachers spent some lesson time explicitly focusing on language form. In

summary, the washback from the Language Systems part of paper C had a beneficial washback on ***what***

was taught. It has ensured that teachers spend some time focusing on language form in their lessons,

however, it also resulted in a negative washback on ***how*** language forms were taught.

Conclusion

This chapter presented results from and included discussion of data collected from interviews with

English teachers. It began with Secondary 5 English teacher interviews and ended with Secondary 6

English teacher interviews. In all, seven English teachers were interviewed. The next chapter presents

the results and discussion from interviews with English students.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: Interviews with English Students

Introduction

This chapter presents results from and includes discussion of data collected from interviews with English students. Each subsection begins with results from and includes discussion of Secondary 5 student interviews and ends with Secondary 6 English student interviews and a summary. In all, 123 English students were interviewed.

6.1 *Washback on English Students (from Qualitative Data)*

The senior secondary student participants at the case study school were, compared to their Hong Kong peers, academically lower performing and mainly from lower socio-economic backgrounds. QSR's NVIVO 9 software was used to assist with organising and coding the data from the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 focus group interviews in preparation for analysis. Washback from preparing for the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination first test of Spring 2012, here after also referred to as the new English exam, was the main focus of the study. A parallel case study of washback from preparing for the long-established HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination final test of Spring 2012, here after also referred to as the old English exam was also conducted. It should be noted that a special small scale additional testing session of the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination is also scheduled, but for private candidates only, in Spring 2013. Washback from preparing for the Spring 2013 special additional testing session falls outside the scope of this research project.

Secondary 5 Students

   The Secondary 5 semi-structured interviews were a 46.83% (96 of 205) stratified random sample

of the targeted Secondary 5 student population at the case study secondary school. This sample was

stratified according to class grouping and gender. Female students made up 37.50% (36 of

96) of the sample while male students made up 62.50% (60 of 96) of the sample. This was

almost the same gender balance as recorded for the total Secondary 5 student population at the case

study secondary school which consisted of 35.12% (72 of 205) female students and 64.88% (133 of

205) male students. A total of 24 Secondary 5 student focus group interviews were

conducted of which 8 were mixed gender focus group interviews and 16 were single gender focus

group interviews. For the purposes of analysis, data from mixed gender focus group interviews was

subdivided according to gender resulting in 32 source files, 14 with female students and 18

with male students.

Secondary 6 Students

   The Secondary 6 semi-structured interviews were a complete 100% census (51 of 51) of the

Secondary 6 students. The gender balance consisted of 52.94% female students (27 of 51) and 47.06%

Male students (24 of 51). A total of 15 Secondary 6 student focus group interviews were conducted of

which 3 were mixed gender focus group interviews and 12 were single gender focus group interviews.

For the purposes of analysis, data from mixed gender focus group interviews was subdivided according

to gender resulting in 18 source files, 10 with female students and 8 with male students.

Results from and discussion of the semi-structured student interviews are arranged in the same order as the prompts in Table 6.1. Secondary 5 themes are presented first, followed by a presentation of Secondary 6 themes. This is then followed by a figure summarising and comparing the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 themes that came from the data collected under each prompt. Each of these sub-sections then ends with a summary. The topics, questions and purpose of each semi-structured student interview prompt are outlined in Table 6.1 on the next page.

Table 6.1 *Semi-structured student interview guide's purpose*

PROMPTS	PURPOSE To elicit student perceptions about:
1. <u>Washback from examinations on learning</u> *How do you actually study English?* *Why do you learn English in this way?*	- how they actually studied English - why they learnt English in the way that they did

2. <u>Exam Focus</u>
How do you feel about your final exams?
What do you know about your final exams?
  - *Could you tell me about the format of your final English exams?*
  - *Could you tell me about the content of your final English exams?*
  - *Could you tell me about the skills that are important to do well in your final English exams?*
  - *Are these final exams important or unimportant for you? Why?*
	- how exam focused they were

3. <u>Motivation</u> *Why are you learning English?*	- what motivated them to learn English
4. <u>Attitude</u> *How do you feel about your English learning experiences?*	- how they felt about their English learning experiences
5. <u>Student beliefs</u> *What do you think is the best way to learn English?*	- what they thought were the best ways of learning English
6. <u>Preferred learning styles</u> *What is your favourite way of learning English?*	- what their favourite way of learning English was

Semi-structured student interview prompts

The semi-structured English student group interviews focused on and around 6 prompts. Most prompts consisted of only one question. However, prompt 1 consisted of two questions and prompt 2 consisted of six to seven questions. Themes were organised according to prompt number and then from the most common to the least common themes that were identified from two or more of the source files. Closely interrelated themes were grouped together as they were conceptualised as one theme consisting of multiple subthemes.

6.2 *Washback on English Students (Themes from Qualitative Data)*

How we actually study English and why we study it in this way

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about the actual way they studied English and why they learnt English in the way that they did. A comparison between responses to prompt 1 from Secondary 5 English students preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old English exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Question 2

Secondary 5 English Students

<u>1-1a</u>: *Study English in the English lesson at school* (a theme found in approximately 53% or 17 of 32 source files).

The most exam focused response was from a girl in the class for Secondary 5 repeaters.

5 Pine* Class Girl: Actually, I just study English in the English lesson. The English teacher teaches me the grammar and sometimes we'll have the speaking lesson. There is less time and less chance for me to learn English in other ways.
Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
5 Pine* Class Girl: Because in the English lesson we just need to learn how to do and what to do

in the examination. For example, the reading, the writing, listening, always we just do one in the English lesson.

Other reasons given for mainly relying on English lessons at school to study English included a belief that this was the only place where they could learn English. Since Secondary 5 English students at the case study school mainly came from lower socio-economic family backgrounds cost sensitiveness may at least partially explain why so few of these Secondary 5 students attended a commercial tutorial school for public English exam preparation. English lessons at the case study school were one of the only ways, and sometimes the only way, that Secondary 5 students studied English.

    5 Cedar* Class Boy through Interpreter: This is the only way.

    5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: This is the only way to learn English, she thinks.

Further reasons given for a sole reliance on English lessons at school for the study of English included the fact that English lessons are compulsory in secondary schools in Hong Kong.

    5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: We have to attend the lessons. Yes.

    5 Elm* Class Girl: Because I have an English lesson every day.

Some other students chose only to study English in English lessons at school either because it was the easiest option available or laziness ruled out seeking to find any additional options such as a commercial tutorial class to attend after school hours.

    5 Palm* Class Boy: Easier.

    5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: She is lazy because she didn't find any tutorial classes to enhance her English skills.

Other students valued their English lessons at school as a place to study English, particularly

English vocabulary and grammar.

5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Can learn vocabulary and different grammar patterns.

1-1b: *My friends or classmates help me learn English* (a theme found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: Seek help from his classmates.
Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: He trusts that they can help him.

5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: He seeks help from his friends.
Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: It is a good way.

The identification of this theme, particularly here amongst lower performing students who required an interpreter in order to communicate their ideas did suggest that some low performing students' motivation for learning English could have been enhanced through the use of pedagogical practices that tapped into their intrinsic motivation to socialise, particularly with their classmates and friends. At the case study school and in the surrounding community Cantonese Chinese was the main dialect used for verbal communication, particularly when socialising, and Classical Chinese was the main written language script used. Field notes suggested that at least some students were aware that an ability to communicate in English would open up the possibility of socialising with Hong Kong's English-speaking international community when such opportunities arose. This was a motivation that could be a utilitarian and an extrinsic motivator for learning English. For instance, on the one hand, students could have been extrinsically motivated to learn English in order to gain employment with an employer and in a job that required employees to speak English in Hong Kong. While, on the other hand, students could have been intrinsically motivated to learn English in order to socialise with non-Chinese-speakers

of English in Hong Kong or abroad; or for watching English language movies simply for pleasure. In

short, pedagogical practices that included creative use of the English language that were also

intrinsically interesting promoted and encouraged students to develop additional motivation,

particularly intrinsic motivation, for learning English and were strongly beneficial. These types of

pedagogical practices could have potentially enhanced all students' English learning experiences and

also helped to improve student English learning outcomes. However, only relying on the extrinsic

motivation of preparing for the new English examination to promote or encourage students to learn

English was in comparison far less beneficial.

1-2: *Study English through reading* (a theme found in approximately 41% or 13 of 32 source files).

    Some students thought that studying English through reading books or newspapers, sometimes with

the help of a paper or online dictionary, was a good way to learn new English vocabulary.

    5 Elm* Class Girl: We can learn more English words from the books.

    5 Oak* Class Boy through Interpreter: He can learn more vocabulary from reading an English
newspaper.

    English newspapers were the most preferred reading text type with English newspaper cuttings

regularly being given out to students by their English teachers for students to read and complete cloze

or some other kind of vocabulary, grammar or comprehension exercise on in class or for homework.

    5 Pine* Class Girl: Actually I learn, I study English in my English lesson and my teacher will
give me some newspaper cutting homework…

    Washback from the new public English examination, in this case, would largely seem to have had

an indirect effect on students via their English teacher's teaching and through impact from the teaching

materials used by the English teacher such as the English newspaper cuttings referred to by this student.

<u>1-3</u>: *Study English through watching English movies, films or TV* (a theme found in approximately 28% or 9 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Through worksheets containing contents from an English movie and watching a movie, the teacher teaches them English.

Students preferred to learn English through English movies, films or TV because they thought these were easy or enjoyable ways of learning English, particularly for learning new vocabulary. Some students mentioned that English film viewing accompanied by completing a worksheet that focused on the content of the English film viewed was an activity that they had experienced in their English lessons. Since the English SBA (School-based Assessment) was weighted at 15% of the final HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination grade and some English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks required the viewing of an English film, it is possible that this preference for learning through English movies, films or TV was at least partially the result of positive impact from the new curriculum's English SBA (School-based Assessment) component. However, it is more likely that the alignment of the first English SBA (School-based Assessment) task with many Secondary 5 English students' preference for learning English through films had the effect of enhancing the beneficial impact of preparing for and doing this English SBA (School-based Assessment) task.

<u>1-4</u>: *Study English by learning new English vocabulary* (a theme found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files).

Students thought it was important to memorise new English vocabulary in order to improve their English. Some students disliked memorising and rote learning and suggested contemporary alternatives.

5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: The teaching method is primitive in Hong Kong… and he said that the education system does not change. Yes.
Researcher: Why doesn't it change?
5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: The teachers will not help them to memorise the words by telling them a story. They [the teacher] will just copy it onto the blackboard and let them [the students] copy it down.

Comments like these highlight the difficulty of effecting beneficial change on pedagogical practices only through the implementation of a new English examination. Even when new English examinations were carefully designed and implemented in order to elicit beneficial washback on teaching and learning, as has historically been the case in Hong Kong, the continued use of pedagogical practices that encourage obsolete learning techniques, such as an overreliance on memorising and rote learning, sometimes obstructed or blocked the intended beneficial washback from reaching the learning experiences of English students.

This student's comments and field notes from both Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students also suggested that while, on the one hand, rote learning that consisted of memorising through repetitive copying tended to be disliked by students and therefore potentially risked demotivating student English learning, on the other hand, mnemonic memorisation techniques that consisted of memorising through stories or rhymes, for example, tended to be not only preferred but also liked by students and therefore potentially held promise for enhancing student motivation to learn English.

1-5a: *Study English by completing English worksheets* (a theme found in approximately 22% or 7 of 32 source files).

1-5b: *Study English through English exercises* (a theme found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

Worksheets, usually closely modelled on expected testing items, grammar or cloze exercises, were

given out by English teachers and either completed in class or taken home as homework. Some

students thought that worksheets made it easier to learn English. Other students noted that it was

compulsory to complete English worksheets thereby emphasising the influential role played by

English teachers who determined what would be taught in English lessons or set for homework. The

content of these worksheets might, for example, be taken from an English film that was viewed in class

or could focus on listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary or a combination of

these skills. At least one English film was viewed as part of the *English through Short Stories*

elective and this viewing was also the initial stage of preparing for the first Secondary 5 English SBA

(School-based Assessment) task at the case study school. One student noted that the English

worksheets they were given by their English teacher usually required students to fill in the blanks.

<u>1-6</u>: *Study English on the Internet* (a theme found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files).

Some online learning was set by the English teacher for homework.

    5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Online.
    Researcher: Ok, why do you learn English in this way?
    5 Palm* Class Boy: Because…
    5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Compulsory.

However, some of the online English learning that occurred at home was student-initiated social

communication through English.

    5 Elm* Class Boy: I actually study English with my internet friends.

The continued use of the Internet for English learning, even though preparing for the new HKDSE

(Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English language examination does not directly

require it, was at least evidence against any narrowing of the curriculum to exclude online learning

homework that was not directly related to the new English examination. It should be noted that

motivating factors for students to learn English online were not limited to the social aspects

of this medium but also included an appreciation of the vast array of English reading materials that

were available via this medium. For example, some students surfed the web to find English websites

with reading materials that they could read in order to learn new English vocabulary.

1-7: *Study English by preparing for English dictation tests* (a theme found in approximately 16% or 5

of 32 source files).

Dictation tests on a regular basis, usually weekly, were a common feature of Secondary 5 English

lessons at the case study school. Some students found these English dictation tests useful.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: In the English lesson my English teacher has dictations, in one week one
> piece. I think that is so helpful…

> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Dictation.
> Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Can help him to memorise the words and can spell the
> words.
> Researcher: Learn how to spell the words this way. Ok good and how do you actually study
> English? Can you tell me again?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy: Practice.
> Researcher: Practice, why do you learn English in this way?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: I can put it into practice in the examination.

In order to do well in the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

examination, (as in other previous and current public English examinations in Hong Kong) an ability

to correctly spell a wide range of common and less common English words was an important skill. The

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination continued to heighten

the motivation of some English students to improve their English spelling accuracy through preparing

for weekly in-class dictation tests. These same English students may not have had as much

motivation to prepare well for weekly in-class dictation tests without the need to prepare for the

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination.   This effect, (i.e. an

increased motivation to learn how to accurately spell new English vocabulary), could be seen as an

example of some beneficial washback from the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary

Education) English examination. However, there was also some negative washback evident from the

continued focus on memorising and rote learning by students, under the guidance and direction of

their English teachers, in order to remember or at least recognise or recall new English vocabulary

and improve spelling accuracy. This may have been an indirect indication that the HKDSE (Hong

Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English examination was having negative washback on

English teachers' pedagogical practices leading to an excessive focus on the lower order thinking skills

of remembering and understanding new knowledge, for example, students regularly learning lists of

new English words for dictation tests. Furthermore, this may have been indicative of an inadequate

focus on the higher order thinking skills of applying, analysing, evaluating and creating new knowledge

(Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) when preparing for the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary

Education) English examination. A notable exception was when students were learning English

through communicative English language based tasks (Nunan, 1989; Nunan, 2004) such as those

observed in the English SBA (School-based Assessment) task preparation and performance stages at

the case study school since the best of these tasks required students to engage in a variety of lower

and higher order thinking skills throughout the learning process as students moved through the task

chain.

1-8: *Study English through listening to or singing English songs* (a theme found in approximately 16%

or 5 of 32 source files).

The main reason given for learning English through music was that it was a good way to come across and learn new English vocabulary. One of the electives in the new curriculum was *Learning English through Poems and Songs*. Even though this was not one of the electives that English teachers at the case study school were preparing their Secondary 5 students for, these students were told by their English teachers that they could prepare for additional electives either by themselves or at a commercial tutorial school. This teacher directive would have at least provided some encouragement to the more motivated and linguistically gifted students to do some extension self-study by also preparing for some of the other electives not studied in their English class at the case study school. However, it should be noted that few, if any, students had chosen to do so at a commercial tutorial school by the time data was being collected about one and a half academic year's before the actual English examination. Nevertheless, the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination provided opportunities for the more motivated and linguistically gifted students to extend their learning beyond what was taught in the English classroom and this should be considered to be an example of beneficial washback from the new English examination but it was a kind of beneficial washback that was fairly rarely detectable at the case study school mainly due to the predominately lower socio-economic family backgrounds of most students in combination with lower levels of academic performance and English language proficiency.

1-9: *Study English by using a dictionary* (a theme found in approximately 13% or 4 of 32 source files).

This shows that at least some of the Secondary 5 English students at the case study school had the self-motivation to take some responsibility for their own learning in contrast to the vast majority who

displayed a near complete reliance on their school English teacher to prepare them for the HKDSE

(Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination through what was

taught in English lessons and set for homework.

1-10: *Take notes in English* (a theme found in approximately 13% or 4 sources of 32 source files).

   Note taking in English usually occurred in English lessons at the request of English teachers. Some

students found this a helpful but boring way to learn new vocabulary. One girl suggested allocating

more English lesson time for English group discussions as she thought that this would be a more

interesting way to learn new English vocabulary compared to just copying down notes from the board

for much of the English lesson. There was little (if any) evidence that preparing for the new English

examination had done anything to lessen the predominance of teacher 'chalk and talk' and increase the

opportunities for students to actually practice communicating in English in lessons except for during

some of the preparation for and actual performance of the English SBA (School-based Assessment)

task.

Other ways students learned English

1-11: *Talk to my mother in English* (a theme found in approximately 6 % or 2 of 32 source files).

   5 Elm* Class Girl: Speaking, always we can, I can. Speaking English with my mother.

   5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: His mother teaches him.
   Researcher: How does she teach him?
   5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Communication. Speaking.

   The identification of this theme highlights the significant role that family background played in

each student's English learning and public English examination preparation. However, it should be

noted that while the girl demonstrated some competence, confidence and fluency in speaking English,

the boy communicated through an interpreter. Although an empirical study comparing the actual

English language proficiency level of each student's parents with their child's English language

proficiency level fell outside the scope of this case study, given demographics such as the generally

lower socio-economic and non-English-speaking linguistic backgrounds of most of the parents of

students at the case study school along with field notes suggested that few parents could speak

fluently in English. Certainly, students with parents who could speak English fluently themselves, or

who employed an English-speaking domestic helper at home were likely to enjoy far more

opportunities to gain competence, confidence and fluency in speaking English than students without

this enhanced English-speaking linguistic environment at home. However, for most students at the

case study school watching free-to-air local English TV was the only possible way of enhancing their

home English linguistic environment and it would require not only a student's but also their families'

consent to change the TV channel to English, something that rarely occurred.

1-12: *Listen to English* (a theme found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

A few students relied on their classmates, friends or a family member who could speak some

English to help them learn English. A few others also went to commercial English tutorial schools.

The fact that these students actively sought out opportunities outside of regular case study school

English lessons to improve their English in order to prepare well for the new English examination

may partially be an example of beneficial washback.

1-13: *Study English through English games* (a theme found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source

files).

Only a few students reported learning English through language games such as scrabble which was

surprising considering how focused most students were on learning new English vocabulary. Again, it

should be noted that a general overreliance on memorising and rote learning new English vocabulary

rather than the utilisation of more contemporary, creative CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)

for learning was at least partly due to the time constraints faced by English teachers and their students

when preparing for this new high-stakes English test. For instance, English teachers reported that time

constraints and the importance of preparing well for the new English examination left little time for

pedagogical creativity. Moreover, preparing for the new English exam tended to tilt teacher and

student focus more towards the *ends* (i.e. the final grade) than the *means* (i.e. pedagogical practices

and learning strategies) In this way, the new English exam was acting as a kind of counterweight, in

effect, contributing to the intransigence of existing 'traditional' English examination preparation

methods, such as those heavily reliant on memorising and rote learning, while at the same time

helping to deter the introduction of more contemporary pedagogical practices, such as those

associated with communicative language teaching. This is an example of negative washback from the

new English examination.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

1-1: *Study English through reading* (a theme found in approximately 61% or 11 of 18 source files).

   Some students read an English newspaper in order to learn new English vocabulary and grammar

through reading.

   6 Poplar* Class Boy: I read the *South China Morning Post* every day so that I can learn more
   about the new vocabulary and sentence structure.
   6 Willow* Class Girl: . . . the newspaper. . . can learn a lot of vocabulary . . .

   On the one hand, it was interesting to note that no students said that they were reading an English

newspaper for pleasure. It was nearly always invariably for the utilitarian purpose of improving their

English language reading proficiency level. On the other hand, it was interesting to note that some

students perceived the reading of English books to be interesting.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I will read English books.
> Researcher: Ok, why do you learn English in this way?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think it is interesting for me to read books to learn English. For example it can improve my vocabulary, sentence structure or anything else.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: . . . reading books because this is my interest so I think it is not boring . . .

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Because reading English books I don't need other people to help me and I can choose different levels of English books for myself.

It is noteworthy that the reading of English books was perceived by at least one student as not boring.

Some students were reading English books for the explicitly utilitarian purpose of learning new English

vocabulary and grammar and the implicit purpose of improving their English reading proficiency level.

Furthermore, when students were reading English books for pleasure, there was the added flexibility of

being able to choose a book that was both of interest and comprehensible. This contrasted with the

type of reading sometimes experienced when reading English textbooks in an English lesson. Reading

their English textbook was an activity observed during English lessons. However, it should be noted

that the content of the textbook was not necessarily comprehensible or of intrinsic interest or pleasurable

for every individual student to read because each student not only had different levels of English

language proficiency but also their own unique preferences about what they liked to read for pleasure

and or for learning English. This finding is inferred from the rich variety of student responses in

interviews, classroom observations, teacher interviews and an analysis of the comparatively limited

proficiency levels and text types contained in the set English textbook compared to the wide variety of

proficiency levels and text types available in the local public library if students were given guidance on how to and encouragement to actually go and access these freely available English reading materials.

Also, English books could be read independently and compared to the limited number of texts contained in their English textbooks, there was a wide range of English books to choose from at the school library or in the nearby local public library. Therefore, there would seem to be much potential for enhancing student reading ability through English teachers guiding students in how to select from a library English books that individual students personally found interesting enough to read for pleasure and encouraging students to read English books for pleasure by regularly allocating some English lesson time for students to read individually chosen, comprehensible English books that they were personally interested in. However, field notes suggested that Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English teachers tended to perceive that preparing for the public English examination left them with little (or no time) for non-examination focused, innovative or creative teaching strategies like this. This is an example of negative washback from both the new and the old public English examinations on English teachers' pedagogical practices.

1-2a: *Do English grammar and vocabulary exercises* (a theme found in 50% or 9 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Just do more exercises . . .
Researcher: Ok, what kind of exercises?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Grammar and also the vocabulary exercises.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: I will do more exercise and talk more with my friends.
Researcher: And why do you learn English in this way?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because it is effective and for efficiency.

6 Willow* Class Boy: I would do the exercise that is given by the teacher.

Doing grammar and vocabulary exercises, particularly those given out by English teachers were

considered to be an effective and efficient way of learning English.

1-2b: *Learn English grammar* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Grammar revision is really important . . .
> Researcher: Why is learning grammar important?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: It can be used to communicate with the others correctly.

Although no explicitly equivalent theme was identified amongst the Secondary 5 students when asked how they actually studied English and why they studied English in this way, the themes completing English worksheets and exercises, for example, implicitly imply that there were not only Secondary 6 students but also Secondary 5 students who placed importance on the learning of English grammar. It was noteworthy that the reason given for learning grammar was in order to communicate correctly in English. It would seem that for this student, the learning of English was intrinsically motivating since he wanted to be able to communicate in English. This suggested that pedagogical practices that included opportunities for students to interact in the English medium and socialise would have had the potential of enhancing students motivation for learning English.

1-2c: *Study English by learning new English vocabulary* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: . . . [knowing] more English vocabulary . . . helps me to write good examples in the examinations and also when I am doing . . . the Use of English [part of the public English examination] I can more effectively do that.

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: . . . learning vocabulary.
> Researcher: So learning vocabulary, right? And why do you learn English this way?
> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: Just for the examination.

This student's motivation for learning new English vocabulary seemed to be entirely public examination focused, and this was typical of all the student comments collected under this theme. It

was noteworthy that although none of these students required an interpreter to convey their

comments, their unedited comments lacked grammatical and English usage accuracy.

Furthermore, the student comments at the beginning of this section (1-2c) suggested that there

was potential for English teachers to enhance their students' English learning experiences and

learning outcomes through encouraging a broader spectrum of motivations for learning English other

than just the public English examination.

The importance placed on focusing primarily or solely on the public English examination

preparation by these and many other students so as to gain a high enough public English examination

result to satisfy the entry requirements of each student's best-case-scenario future career aspirations

had a negative washback in the form of lessening or even preventing a broader spectrum of

motivational reasons for learning English. Moreover, field notes suggested that the pedagogical

practices of English teachers were also fairly narrowly focused on public English examination

preparation both in terms of the content taught and how it was taught with the public English

examination being the focus of every Secondary 6 lesson that was observed. Therefore, narrowing of

the curriculum caused by the public English examination also had a flow on effect on some students

in so far as it either contributed to their singular public examination based extrinsic motivation for

learning English and lessened opportunities for the encouragement and development of a broader

range of motivations for learning English.

1-2d: *Keep a notebook for self-study* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Boy: By reading the notebooks.

Although very few students reported keeping a notebook for revision purposes, classroom

observations confirmed that all students were required to take down notes during their English lessons.

These notes could consist of sentences, phrases, vocabulary, grammatical or learning content

summary notes.

1-3a: *Study English through watching English TV* (a theme found in approximately 28% or 5 of 18

source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because this is my interest, I like to watch the TV and I think the normal
> way to learn English is a bit dull, just like at school we just continue to copy and copy. This is
> difficult. This is not just like some things put in your mind continuously but you cannot think
> about it so it may not be efficient.
> Researcher: Ok, why do you learn English the way you do?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Yes. I use this way because it is not as boring as the lesson in the school.

This student's comments were quite perceptive in that he valued watching English TV not only

because he found it interesting but also because he could take time to reflect on the contents of the

English TV he watched. His comments also suggested that English lessons could be enhanced by

giving students more time to reflect and discuss the content of their English lessons during class time

since this would make English lessons more interesting and educational by increasing teacher-student

and student-teacher verbal interactions, particularly if these verbal interactions occurred through the

medium of English.

1-3b: *Study English through watching English movies* (a theme found in approximately 22% or 4 of

18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: As I have mentioned before, I prefer to watch some English programs
> including movies and documentaries instead of learning English from regular lessons because I
> find watching movies is more interesting and I can have fun when I watch movies.

Students understandably preferred enjoyable English learning experiences such as watching English

movies over textbook based and examination focused English lessons. It was also interesting to note

that some students seemed to perceive a link between enjoyable learning experiences and the quality

and/or the quantity of learning that actually occurred. The following student comments tend to

exemplify this type of student perception.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I watch the English film.
> Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because watching the movie is very funny and so that I can learn more
> about English words.

1-4: *Learn English at a tutorial school* (a theme found in approximately 33% or 6 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: It [tutorial school] is very useful to help me . . . [prepare for and do well in]
> the examination.
> Researcher: So it has helped you to become familiar with the examination.
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Yes.

Tutorial classes were perceived to be beneficial not only for becoming familiar with the public

English examination itself but also in order to do well in the examination. It was noteworthy that there

was no explicit mention of actually needing to improve one's level of English language proficiency.

1-5: *Learn English from my English teacher* (a theme found in approximately 28% or 5 of 18 source

files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Although I think watching movies is really good, but, I have no time to do
> that so actually I learn from my English teacher, especially in the class, they teach lots of
> vocabulary and when I listen to their speaking or what they teach us, so, I think it is actually then
> that I study English.

This student's comments were interesting because although she valued watching English movies,

she did not value this method enough to actually set aside time for it, perhaps because it was quite a

time consuming activity and she had many other demands on her 'free' time such as homework and study directed at preparing for her public examinations, not only for English but also for her other public examination subjects. She seemed to value learning English from her English teacher, particularly because of the new vocabulary that her teacher taught her in class and also because of the opportunities English lessons provided for her to listen to her English teachers speaking English.

1-6: *Learn English for the English exam* (a theme found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: The exam also is very important. They will look at your exam results then they will or will not employ you.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Also I want to study English in order to prepare for the examination because I want to study in university in the future, therefore I think I should study English well.

The importance of the public English examination depended on what the examination results would be used for. Students perceived that their examination results would determine their employment and university entry opportunities.

1-7: *Study English by using a dictionary* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: If I see a word that I can't understand I will look it up in the dictionary

At least the identification of this theme suggested that some students were capable of and also had sufficient motivation to learn English independently.

1-8: *Talk to my friends in English* (a theme found in approximately 11% 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I will do more exercises and talk more with my friends.
> Researcher: Why do you learn English in this way?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because it is effective and efficiency.

The identification of this theme suggested that some Secondary 6 students found the social aspect

of learning intrinsically motivating. Therefore, there was certainly potential to enhance students'

intrinsic motivation for learning English by tapping into this preferred learning style through

pedagogical practices that included social interaction thereby not only enriching the English learning

experiences of students but also most probably improving their learning outcomes since student

perceptions tended to suggest that the presence of intrinsic motivations for learning English (in

combination with or without extrinsic motivations for learning English) were more beneficial than

extrinsic motivations for learning English (with very little or without any intrinsic motivations for

learning English) at least amongst senior secondary students at the case study school.

1-9: *Study English through listening to or singing English songs* (a theme found in approximately 11%

or 2 of 18 source files).

Reasons given for preferring this style of learning included that it was not only more effective but

also more relaxing and less stressful than the *status quo* examination focused preparation.

Secondary 5 Themes The actual ways Secondary 5 students studied English included :-	Secondary 6 Themes The actual ways Secondary 6 students studied English included:-
1-1a: **Study English in the English lesson at school** (a theme found in 17 of 32 source files [53%]).	**1-1**: **Study English through reading** (a theme found in 11 of 18 source files [61%]).
1-1b: **My friends or classmates help me learn English** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	**1-2a**: **Do English grammar and vocabulary exercises** (a theme found in 9 of 18 source files [50%]).
1-2: **Study English through reading** (a theme found in 13 of 32 source files [41%]).	**1-2b**: **Learn English grammar** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-3: **Study English through watching English movies, films or TV** (a theme found in 9 of 32 source files [28%]).	**1-2c**: **Study English by learning new English vocabulary** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-4: **Study English by learning new English vocabulary** (a theme found in 8 of 32 source files [25%]).	**1-2d**: **Keep a notebook for self-study** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-5a: **Study English by completing English worksheets** (a theme found in 7 of 32 source files [22%]).	**1-3a**: **Study English through watching English TV** (a theme found in 5 of 18 source files [28%]).
1-5b: **Study English through English exercises** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	**1-3b**: **Study English through watching English movies** (a theme found in 4 of 18 source files [22%]).
1-6: **Study English on the Internet** (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	**1-4**: **Learn English at a tutorial school** (a theme found in 6 of 18 source files [33%]).
1-7: **Study English by preparing for English dictation tests** (a theme found in 5 of 32 source files [16%]).	**1-5**: **Learn English from my English teacher** (a theme also found in 5 of 18 source files [28%]).
1-8: **Study English through listening to or singing English songs** (a theme found in 5 of 32 source files [16%]).	**1-6**: **Learn English for the English exam** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
1-9: **Study English by using a dictionary** (a theme found in 4 of 32 source files [13%]).	**1-7**: **Study English by using a dictionary** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-10: **Take notes or write** (a theme found in 4 of 32 source files {13%]).	**1-8**: **Talk to my friends in English** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-11: **Study English through Talk to my mother in English** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	**1-9**: **Study English through listening to or singing English songs** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
1-12: **Listen to English** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	
1-13: **Study English through English games** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	

KEY: **Underlined purple print** = Prompt 1 themes unique to one group. **Underlined red print** = Prompt 1 themes that occur in both groups.

This arrow indicates a near match between themes.   **This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.**

Figure 6.1   Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6
            English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 1

Prompt 1 Theme Comparison and Summary

The most notable difference between the themes from amongst Secondary 5 and Secondary 6

students in response to prompt 1, was the theme *Learn English at a tutorial school* amongst Secondary

6 students. It should be noted that whereas comparatively few Secondary 5 students were attending a

tutorial school for public English examination preparation at the time this data was collected about 18

months before each group's final public English examination, many Secondary 6 students were

attending a tutorial school as part of their preparation for their final public English examination. The

view that English exam washback increased over the several year duration of an English testing

regime's life was consistent with this finding, as was the view that English test washback increased the

closer the actual testing date was, particularly given that the Secondary 6 students would sit their final

English exam a few months earlier than their Secondary 5 peers. However, an overall tendency for

Secondary 5 students to come from even lower socio-economic family backgrounds than the Secondary

6 students, might have suggested that the cost of commercial tutorial schools, despite their ubiquitous

presence across Hong Kong, may have deterred far more Secondary 5 than Secondary 6 students from

attending one.

Whatever the individual reasons behind the overall tendency for students from lower socio-

economic backgrounds being far less likely to attend a commercial tutorial school, it was evidence that

a high-stakes examination driven education system was far more motivating for students from higher

socio-economic backgrounds than for students from the case study school who mainly came from lower

socio-economic backgrounds. From an ethical point of view, this finding was quite troubling since it

suggested that the high-stakes examinations considered in this case study actually made a contribution

to creating what could be called an 'unequal playing field effect' rather than a 'fair, equal playing field

effect'. Of course, these two high-stakes English examinations were not the only contributors to this

'unequal playing field effect'. The academic 'banding' of students and the medium of instruction used

during each student's schooling history (i.e. whether primarily English, Chinese or a combination of

both) also contributed to this 'unequal playing field effect' to name just two other key contributors to

this effect. An exception to this finding was the English SBA (School-based Assessment) which

seemed to motivate all students regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds and also had the added

advantage of enhancing the appropriateness of the pedagogical practices experienced by students. The

short term, more often (perceived by case study students as) achievable goals that English SBA

(School-based Assessment) set compared to the long term, less often (perceived by case study students

as) achievable goals that each high-stakes English examination set also partially explained this

difference in effect.

The greater prevalence and reported utilisation of independent learning strategies amongst

Secondary 6 students suggested by an overall analysis of responses to all prompts, notwithstanding

the comparatively lower levels of English language proficiency and poorer academic performance

amongst the Secondary 5 group of students compared to their Secondary 6 peers, also required

consideration and explanation. Secondary 5 English lesson observations suggested implementation of

the new Secondary 5 English curriculum had so far, achieved few, if any, tangible improvements or

enhancements over and above the preexisting pedagogical practices of the LETs (Local English

Teachers) who were teaching Secondary 5 English students at the case study school. Again, as

already noted above, English SBA (School-based Assessment) was a stark exception since fulfilment

of an English SBA (School-based Assessment) task required students to engage in some communicative

use of English at least during the task presentation stage. Moreover, observations of the English SBA

(School-based Assessment) task preparation stage suggested that these preparations were also

enhancing pedagogical practices to some extent, for example through teachers allocating more lesson time for student centred learning.

Although the theme *Study English on the Internet* (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]) was only identified from amongst some Secondary 5 student responses to prompt 1, it should be noted that this theme was also identified from amongst some Secondary 6 student responses to prompt 6 *Learn English via the Internet such as through watching YouTube or reading English online* (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]). In a similar way, the theme *Study English through English games* (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]) was also identified amongst some Secondary 6 students under prompt 5 *Learn English through playing English games* (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]). The explicit identification of the theme *Listen to English* (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]) only amongst some Secondary 5 and no Secondary 6 students also needed to be analysed with caution. For instance, it should be noted that communicative English was observed between Secondary 6 English teachers and their students and between Secondary 6 students themselves. However, in stark contrast, scant use of communicative English was observed during Secondary 5 lessons. The only notable exceptions were some Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparations and all Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) presentations where English was observed being used for communication.

To conclude, initially, during the first 12 months of preparation for the new English examination when the students were in Secondary 4 and the first half of Secondary 5, there was very little, if any, washback from the new English examination. In fact, it was reported by some Secondary 5 students and teachers that up until a few months into Secondary 5 they were still mainly doing past papers and

worksheets that were derived from the now redundant HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education

Examination) English exam and it was observed that some worksheets designed for this old certificate

examination were still at least occasionally being used in Secondary 5 classes. This was an example of

a type of negative washback effect on some English teachers' English lessons during the introductory

phase of this new test at the case study school. The fact that only one set of official sample papers

published in 2009 was available in the September to December school term in 2010 may have been

able to explain this situation except for the fact that there were several unofficial sample papers and

preparatory textbooks on the commercial market. It was noteworthy that at least one English teacher,

off the cuff, hinted that the reason for the delay in implementing teaching and learning materials that

were designed specifically for the new curriculum in order to prepare students for the new English

examination was to wait for more commercially produced materials to come on the market before

tailoring any for the students so they would have a broader range to choose from. If this was indeed

the case, it was a shrewd tactic that could economise the limited time Secondary 5 English teachers had

for tailoring materials by delaying such tailoring until a larger pool of appropriate commercially

produced materials was available on the market to select from for tailoring to the special needs and

interests of the predominately lower 'band' students at the case study school. Therefore reports of an

initial absence of washback on some English teachers' English lessons during the introductory phase

of this new English test was more likely a demonstration that the washback effect from a new test was

not always immediate and in many cases only builds up after most, or all, of the usual commercial

publishing houses produce the customary textbooks and supplementary teaching and learning materials

for preparing students for the new test. It was also a likely demonstration of how washback from a

high-stakes test, particularly a new one, built up and changed as the time of the test administration approached.

How we feel about and what we know about our final exams

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about how exam focused they were. A comparison between responses to prompt 2 from Secondary 5 English students preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old English exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Question 2.

Secondary 5 English Students

2-1: The vast majority of Secondary 5 English student semi-structured group interview participants said that they *do not go to a tutorial school for public English exam preparation* (a theme found in approximately 94% or 30 of 32 source files).

By far the most common reason given for not attending was cost (a theme found in approximately 28% or 9 of 32 source files).

Other reasons given for not attending included a belief that these tutorials were useless, not very useful, not helpful at all, or not really good. Another reason given for not attending included a belief that these tutorials were boring. A few students admitted that their main reason for not attending was laziness. Interview transcript examples are included below. Two girls from different classes and interview groups thought these tutorials were useless.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: No, useless.
> Researcher: Why is it useless?
> 5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: Cannot take care of one individual because in the tutorial classes there are so many students that the teacher cannot take care of one individual.

> 5 Maple* Class Girl: No.

Researcher: Why not?
5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: She thinks that tutorial classes are useless and unnecessary and also she can study English by herself so she doesn't need any tutorial classes.

One boy from another class and interview group thought these tutorials were not very useful.

5 Pine* Class Boy: Because the tutorial school just teach you some skill for the exam but sometimes the skill is not very useful for me.

Another girl from another 5 Elm* Class interview group thought these tutorials were not helpful.

5 Elm* Class Girl: I think it is not…
5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: It is not helpful at all.

One girl from 5 Pine* Class thought these tutorials were not really good.

5 Pine* Class Girl: Last year I have [English tutorial class], but this year I don't have [English tutorial class] because the tutorial class is not really good because they just give me some vocabulary or they ask me to do more, a lot of practice and I think they didn't teach me a lot of English skills.

Two 5 Elm* Class girls from one interview group did not attend commercial public exam preparation tutorial school for English because they thought it would be boring and one 5 Maple* Class girl from another interview group thought it would be very boring. A 5 Elm* Class boy and a 5 Maple* Class girl said that they did not go because they were "lum" which is Cantonese for lazy. While only a few Secondary 5 English students attended commercial public exam preparation tutorial school for English, reasons *for* attending included: "Just…to learn more English…not only the exam, to learn vocabulary that is not taught in the school and grammar, because the tutor teach me the skills I never learn in school, So so … but has helped me learn reading and writing." Interview transcript examples are included below.

5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Just because he wants to learn more English.

Researcher: So it's just mainly because he wants to learn more English. It is not because of the exam?
5 Elm* Class Boy: Not only the exam.

5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: He learns vocabulary that is not taught in the school.
Researcher: Is that all or does he learn some other things?
5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: Skills for writing.
Researcher: What kind of writing skills?
[5 Maple* Class Boys laugh]
5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: Grammar.

Researcher: Do you find it useful?
5 Pine* Class Boy: Yes, useful.
Researcher: Why is it useful?
5 Pine* Class Boy: Because the tutor teach me the skills I never learn in school.

One 5 Elm* Class girl said that she attended tutorials twice a week and another 5 Elm* Class girl

from the same focus group said that she only attended tutorials in the summer holiday. One 5 Palm*

Class girl said that she attended tutorials once a week.

Researcher: Why do you go?
5 Palm* Class Girl through Interpreter: To deal with the public examinations.
Researcher: Ok and have you found it helpful?
5 Palm* Class Girl through Interpreter: So so.
Researcher: How has it helped you?
5 Palm* Class Girl through Interpreter: Reading and writing.

2-2: *Know a few things about the public English exam* (a theme found in approximately 88% or 28 of

32 source files) was a surprising theme to identify given this public English exam's high-stakes. Most

Secondary 5 English students had little more than a superficial knowledge of the *format* or the *type of*

questions or test items to expect in the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education)

English Language examination. There was even less certainty about what *content* to expect with the

identification of the theme *expect the public English exam to have topics drawn from **daily life** in Hong*

Kong (a theme found in approximately 72% or 23 of 32 source files). Many possible public English

exam topics were suggested including a belief that topics would be drawn from the daily life

experiences of teenagers in Hong Kong or from current affairs' "hot topics" particularly as reported in

local English language newspapers or on local English TV news reports. These expectations may

partly be derived from what content or topics their English teachers teach in their English lessons.

For example, some students reported that their English teacher would give them worksheets that

included a newspaper cutting for use in at least one English lesson per week.

While most Secondary 5 English students knew how many English examination papers there were

and what each paper tested and some could provide a basic outline of what kind of questions to

expect in each paper very few students could provide any detailed information about the kinds of

questions to expect in any of the papers. An exception was the speaking paper, with students being

far more familiar with the format of the speaking paper than any other paper. The relatively simple

format and short length of the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

Language Paper 4 (Speaking) - the student copy is only one page long - is a likely reason for the

greater familiarity with the speaking paper.

2-3a: *Public English exam is difficult* (a theme found in approximately 84% or 27 of 32 source files).

2-3b: *Afraid, worried, nervous, scared or stressed by public English exam* (a theme found in

approximately 22% or 7 of 32 source files).

Many Secondary 5 students expected the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education)

English exam to be difficult. It should be noted that there were only four students (3 girls and 1 boy)

who thought that the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English exam was

difficult because it was a new test. Far more Secondary 5 students (about 25 students: 7 girls and 18

boys) thought that this new English exam would be difficult mainly because of their low level of

English language proficiency. Many students felt stress from preparing for the HKDSE (Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education) English exam. The most stressed students, perhaps not surprisingly,

tended to be those with the lowest levels of English language proficiency coupled with a desire to do

well in the public English exam however stress was not reported as being directly associated with the

newness of or unfamiliarity with the new English exam.

2-4a: *A good result in the public English exam is important to get a job* (a theme found in

approximately 78% or 25 of 32 source files).

2-4b: *A good result in the public English exam is important to get into a university* (a theme found in

approximately 53% or 17 of 32 source files).

2-4c: *A good result in the public English exam is important for my future communication needs* (a

theme found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files, 3 for girls and 5 for boys).

2-4d: *English for communicating with non-Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong*, particularly

international communication with 'foreigners' was another closely related theme (found in

approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files, 2 for girls and 4 for boys). Finally, it should be noted that

themes 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d were closely related to each other and there was quite a bit of overlap

between them.

2-5: *Prepare for the public English exam by either learning English grammar, listening, reading,*

writing, and/or speaking skills and/or strategies that are required to do well in the public English

exam. A variety of strategies were used when preparing for the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English Language examination. There were a variety of suggestions on how

best to prepare for this English examination. Some suggestions could be considered to be evidence of

beneficial washback from the new English examination. For example, reading an English newspaper

or reading a book were foremost amongst the strategies used to prepare well for the HKDSE (Hong

Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination (a theme found in 25% or 8

of 32 source files, 4 for girls and 4 for boys) which could be considered as evidence of beneficial

washback from the exam. There were also a few references to watching English films, DVDs, or TV

news (themes found in approximately 9% or 3 of 32 source files, 2 for girls and 1 for boys) and there

were also a few references to listening to or singing English songs (a theme found in approximately 6%

or 2 of 32 source files, 1 for girls and 1 for boys) which could also be considered as evidence of

beneficial washback from the exam.

   Furthermore, an increased tendency to: (i) read authentic texts like books or newspaper articles, (ii)

view English films, DVDs or TV news, or (iii) listen to, and/or read the lyrics of, and/or sing English

songs in order to prepare well for the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

Language examination could be considered to constitute examples of beneficial washback from the

new exam. However, it should be noted here that these examples of positive washback from the new

exam may also be partly derived from the impact of English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks

that were assigned and assessed by each student's classroom English teacher, particularly as viewing

a film or reading a short story were observed as being included in these tasks at the case study school.

Also, these examples of positive washback from the new exam may be partly derived from how and

what a classroom English teacher taught or may have even been a direct or indirect result of the

inclusion in the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma Secondary Education) of the new

Learning English through electives (particularly from those in bold and italics below) which

include *Learning English through Sports Communication*, *Learning English through Drama,*

*Learning English through Poems and **Songs***, *Learning English through Debating*, *Learning English*

*through **Short Stories***, *Learning English through **Popular Culture***, *Learning English through*

*Workplace Communication and Learning English through **Social Issues***.

Detrimental washback from the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education)

English exam may have included the continued overuse of teacher centred teaching methods. For

example:

> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Interaction. He wants more interaction.
> Researcher: More interaction in class?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy: Because in my class English lesson is always do the exercise.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

Secondary 6 responses indicated that these students tended to be quite noticeably more fluent at

communicating in English. In fact English teachers reported that this group was the 'cream of the

crop' as Secondary 6 students were mainly drawn from the top academically performing 15% to 20%

of the previous academic year's Secondary 5 student population and that accepting new students from

other 'better' schools, a custom that was referred to by at least one English teacher as 'reblooding',

accounted for about half of the Secondary 6 students.

Demographic differences, particularly between the Secondary 6 and the regular Secondary 5

students became increasingly evident during the course of data collection, particularly from student

interviews. Classroom observations and teacher interviews also tended to confirm this perception. Due

to the evident demographic differences between Secondary 6 and Secondary 5 students, that is, the

Secondary 6 students tended to be academically higher performing, have higher levels of English language proficiency and be more motivated to learn English, only a few responses unique to Secondary 6 students could reliably be attributed to the different tests prepared for. Furthermore, another explanation for many of the differences between the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 student responses stemmed from the differing socio-economic status of students in each group.

2-1: *Expect the public English exam topics to be mainly drawn from <u>daily life</u> in Hong Kong* (a theme found in approximately 94% or 17 of 18 source files). This theme was also identified from many student responses in and across the Secondary 5 group. A contrast between Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student semi-structured group interview participant responses was the degree of familiarity each of these groups of students had with the public English examination prepared for. Unlike the majority of Secondary 5 students, the majority of Secondary 6 students were quite familiar with the format of each of the five public English examination papers prepared for. An overall comparative review of relevant segments of the interview transcripts from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students suggested that while both groups of students were capable of speculating about what kind of content to expect in their respective English examinations, the Secondary 6 student responses demonstrated a greater familiarity with and certainty about what kind of content to expect.

2-2: In stark contrast to the vast majority of Secondary 5 English student semi-structured group interview participants, the majority of Secondary 6 English student semi-structured group interview participants thought that *attending tutorial class is important if you want to do well in the public English exam* (a theme found in approximately 78% or 14 of 18 source files). One reason given for attending tutorial school was it was a trend.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think it is a trend.
Researcher: So you just go because everyone else goes?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think that is part of the reason why we all go to tutorial school.
Researcher: So you just go because it is fashionable?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think so. [laughter] It is a trend.

Other reasons given for attending included to get a higher mark in the exam since tutorial school

focused on the skills required to gain a higher mark in the public English examination.

Researcher: How do you feel about your tutorial class?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: More efficient.
Researcher: In what way is it more efficient?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Make very good use of time. They don't waste any minutes.
6 Poplar* Class Boy through Interpreter: They focus on the examination so it is more efficient.
Researcher: So it is more focused. What do they actually do?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Teaching the skills of the exam.
Researcher: What kind of skills have you learnt so far?
6 Poplar* Class Boy through Interpreter: The vocab and synonyms.

Researcher: Why do you think that it is useful to go to tutorial school outside of school?
6 Willow* Class Girl: It teach us some skills for the examination but not useful for our daily life.
Researcher: …Can you give me some examples of the skills you have learnt from tutorial schools?
6 Willow* Class Girl: Maybe how to jot down listening and how to quickly jot down some notes
for the listening task, yes.

Researcher: Do you mainly go [to tutorial school] to improve your English or do you mainly go
to learn how to get a higher mark in the exam?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Higher mark in the exam.
Researcher: Ok, and how do the tutorial schools teach you to get a higher mark? What do they
teach you to help you get a higher mark?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: They will focus on the skills.

Many Secondary 6 students tended to be primarily focused on improving their English

examination taking skills in order to gain a high enough mark to gain entry to a local Hong Kong

university (a theme found in 9 of 18 source files). This tended to result in some students seeking

shortcuts for gaining a higher public English examination mark that did not necessarily require an actual

improvement in their level of English language proficiency through learning, for example, some

multiple-choice guessing skills at tutorial school.

> Researcher: Can you tell me about the skills that are important to do well in your final exams?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Tutorial class.
> Researcher: What kind of skills does tutorial class teach you?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: They just help you to do the multiple-choice questions.
> Researcher: How do they help? What skills do you need to do multiple-choice?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: They can teach you how to select the answer even if you don't know the answer.
> Researcher: Ok, so if you don't really know the answer they can tell you how to guess. Is that what you mean?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: How to guess and have a higher percentage chance to get it correct.

In so far as this Secondary 6 student's response was indicative of the kind of study focus promoted by commercial tutorial classes it was deeply concerning. On the one hand, if it was truly possible to coach students to improve their correct response rate in multiple-choice items beyond their ability level, this undermined the validity of the test. On the other hand, if it was not truly possible to coach students to improve their correct response rate beyond their ability level this student was wasting time on learning ineffectual 'test taking skills'. Assuming that the English test that he was preparing for was in fact a credible and reliable gauge of his actual level of English language proficiency his time would have been better spent actually focusing on improving his level of English language proficiency. Therefore, his perception of commercial tutorial classes as offering 'test taking skills or tips' that he could use as a shortcut to a higher mark without actually improving his English was an example of negative impact from commercial tutorial school advertising, which was ubiquitous in Hong Kong.

2-3a: *Public English exam is difficult* (a theme found in approximately 56% or 10 of 18 source files).

2-3b: *Nervous, stressed, afraid, frightened, scared or feel pressure from public English exam* (a theme found in 50% or 9 of 18 source files).

This theme was also identified from many student responses in and across the Secondary 5 group.

Many Secondary 6 students expected their public English examination to be difficult (a theme found in approximately 56% or 10 of 18 source files). Some of these students attributed a perception that the public English examination would be difficult to their low level of English language proficiency. It should be noted that while this theme was found in more than half of Secondary 6 source files, it was found in nearly all of the Secondary 5 source files.

2-4: *A good result in the public English exam is important to get into a university* (a theme found in 50% or 9 of 18 source files).

    More Secondary 6 students were focused on gaining a good result in their public English examinations for local university entry than for getting a good job in the future (a theme only found in approximately 6% or 1 of 18 source files). This contrasted with the Secondary 5 cohort of students since more of these students were focused on gaining good public English examination results for getting a job than for local university entry.

2-5: *It is unnecessary to go to a tutorial school to prepare for the public English exam* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

    Finally, it should be noted that as with the Secondary 5 cohort of students, Secondary 6 students offered a variety of suggestions on how to best prepare for their public English examination.

Secondary 5 Themes	Secondary 6 Themes
A summary of the main themes from prompt 2 indicating how English exam focused Secondary 5 English students were.	A summary of the main themes from prompt 2 indicating how English exam focused Secondary 6 English students were.

2-1: Do not go to a tutorial school for public English exam preparation (a theme found in 30 of 32 source files [94%]).

2-2a: Know few things about the public English exam (a theme found in 28 of 32 source files [88%]).

2-2b: Do not know about or are puzzled by the public English exam (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).

2-2c: Expect the public English exam to have topics drawn from daily life in Hong Kong (a theme found in 23 of 32 source files [72%]).

2-3a: Public English exam is difficult (a theme found in 27 of 32 source files [84%]).

2-3b: Afraid, worried, nervous, scared or stressed by public English exam (a theme found in 7 of 32 source files [22%]).

2-4a: A good result in the public English exam is important to get a job (a theme found in 25 of 32 source files [78%]).

2-4b: A good result in the public English exam is important to get into a university (a theme found in 17 of 32 source files [53%]).

2-4c: A good result in the public English exam is important for my future communication needs (a theme found in 14 of 32 source files [44%]).

2-4d: English for communicating with non-Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).

2-5: Prepare for the public English exam by either learning English grammar, practicing Listening, Reading, Writing, and/or Speaking skills and/or strategies that are required to do well in the public English exam (a theme found in 25 of 32 source files [78%]).

2-1: Expect the public English exam topics to be mainly drawn from daily life in Hong Kong (a theme found in 17 of 18 source files [94%]).

2-2: Tutorial class is important if you want to do well in the public English exam (a theme found in 14 of 18 source files [78%]).

2-3a: Public English exam is difficult (a theme found in 10 of 18 source files [56%]).

2-3b: Nervous, stressed, afraid, frightened, scared or feel pressure from public English exam (a theme found in 9 of 18 source files [50%]).

2-4: A good result in the public English exam is important to get into a university (a theme found in 9 of 18 source files [50%]).

2-5: It is unnecessary to go to a tutorial school to prepare for the public English exam (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).

KEY: Underlined purple print = Prompt 2 themes unique to one group. **Underlined red print** = Prompt 2 themes that occur in both groups.

This arrow indicates a near match between themes.   **This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.**

Figure 6.2   Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 2

Prompt 2 Theme Comparison and Summary

Given the high prevalence of (2-2a) *Know few things about the public English exam* (a theme found in approximately 88% or 28 of 32 source files) and (2-2b) *Do not know about or are puzzled by the public English exam* (a theme found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files), in and across Secondary 5 students, it seemed to suggest that a new English testing regime could be slow at

producing any discernible washback effects on students because it took some time before students became familiar with a new test which was an obvious prerequisite for any kind of washback effect. Furthermore, the high importance given to attending a tutorial school if you wanted to do well in the public English exam across many Secondary 6 students compared to very few Secondary 5 students at the case study school suggested that the new Secondary 6 English testing regime was initially having a far weaker washback effect on students than the long established Secondary 7 English testing regime. There was nervousness and fear for some students in and across both student groups.

Since far fewer Secondary 5 students at the case study school intended to go on to university it was not surprising that many Secondary 5 students explicitly linked doing well in their public English exam with getting a job. The same could be said about the many Secondary 5 students who held a perception that *a good result in the public English exam is important for my future communication needs* (a theme found in approximately 44% or 14 of 32 source files).

In short, the most striking thing to be identified from the analysis of Secondary 6 semi-structured interview responses was that a long running test produced far stronger washback on *what* was taught than a newly implemented test due to teacher and student familiarity with the format and content from an extensive body of past papers and textbooks and other materials including teacher tailored materials.

6.3 *Impact of Other Identifiable Factors (Themes from Qualitative Data)*

Why we are learning English

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about what motivated students to learn English. A comparison between responses to prompt 3 from Secondary 5 English students

preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old English

exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 7.

Secondary 5 English Students

3-1: The most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 English students was

to *learn English for work* (a theme found in approximately 59% or 19 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: Because I think if I learn English I can get a good job.

Virtually all students who were learning English for work perceived a strong link between having

good English and being able to find a good job. This perception provided these students with an

explicit and extrinsic motivation for learning English. Many of these students also perceived a need

to use English for communicative purposes at work.

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: Firstly, I think Hong Kong is an international city so that is why I need to
> Learn English since English is a common language of many people from many different
> countries so if I need to work in Hong Kong I will need to use English.

3-2: The second most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 English

students was to *learn English for socialising and communication* (a theme found in approximately 53%

or 17 of 32 source files).

> 5 Cedar* Class Boy: Can make friends from other countries...

> 5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: She says that we have to communicate with foreigners in
> English so it is important for us to have good English.

> 5 Cedar* Class Boy: Because English is an international language. When I visit another country
> we should speak English with others.

While the need to use English at work was a specific reason given by a few students for learning

English, for many other students the reasons given for needing to learn English broadly centred

around socialising and communicating with non-Chinese speakers of English in Hong Kong and

while travelling abroad.

3-3: The third most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 students was to

learn English because it is an important or useful language (a theme found in approximately 41% or

13 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: Because English is an international language and it is
> very important.

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: I also think English is an international language so many people use English
> and it is very useful so I learn English.

The most common specific reason given for English's importance or usefulness was that it was an

international language and as such it was perceived by students to be a convenient, or even a

necessary *lingua franca* for communicating with non-Chinese speakers.

3-4: The fourth most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 students was to

learn English for knowledge or interest (a theme found in approximately 34% or 11 of 32 source

files).

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: … learning English is very interesting.

> 5 Maple* Class Boy: Because I can read more … English books.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: To broaden her horizons.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: To learn more things.

Many of these students' responses suggested an intrinsically motivating interest in learning English.

While some of these students' responses suggested broad intrinsic motivations for learning English,

others suggested very specific intrinsic motivations for learning English, such as reading English books.

3-5: The fifth most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 students was to

learn English because it is compulsory (a theme found in approximately 31% or 10 of 32 source files).

    5 Elm* Girl through Interpreter: It is compulsory for her to study English.

    5 Pine* Class Boy: … English is our main subject. We need to learn it and this is a world
    language: we should learn it.

    5 Elm* Class Boy: Because the system requires me to learn English.

    5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: It is compulsory to learn English.

   While these students all correctly perceived English to be a compulsory subject of study for Hong

Kong secondary students, a few students specifically conveyed their acquiescence to English's

compulsory status in their education system and for these students, despite the compulsory nature of

English study, they still had compelling intrinsic motivation for learning English to augment any

extrinsic motivation garnered from the compulsory core subject status of English in the curriculum.

However, for those students who only, or mainly only studied English due to the extrinsic motivation

of its compulsory status, this kind of motivation only seemed to be a weak to moderate, and on its own

not a particularly compelling, motivator for English learning.

3-6: The sixth most common motivation for learning English amongst Secondary 5 students was to

learn English for the English exam (a theme found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files with

only 8 references to it).

    5 Elm* Class Girl: For test.

    5 Cedar* Class Girl through Interpreter: She does not want to get a fail in her English
    examination.

    5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: In order to get a good grade in the examinations.

The final English examination was a key extrinsic motivator for some Secondary 5 students,

whether it was expressed negatively in terms of not wanting to fail; positively in terms of wanting to

get a good grade; or quite simply in terms of learning English for the test. It is noteworthy that very

few students reported being motivated to learn English because of the final English examination they

were preparing for. Furthermore, of the eight Secondary 5 students who volunteered responses that

suggested that they were in one way or another motivated to learn English by their final English

examination, five required an interpreter to express this motivation and only three could express

themselves in English without resorting to the interpreter for assistance. Although there was no

quantifiable statistical evidence found to directly supported this view, a review of all relevant

qualitative data tended to suggest that the final English examination was surprisingly and counter-

intuitively only perceived by students as having what the researcher could only describe as being, at

worst, a weak positive washback or, at best, a moderate positive washback so far as providing an

extrinsic motivation for learning English was concerned.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

3-1: The most common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of Secondary

6 English students was to *learn English for communication and socialising* (a theme found in

approximately 72% or 13 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because English is an international language so that I can use English to communicate with people from other cultures and therefore I can know more and meet more friends.

> 6 Willow* Class Boy: It is so obvious that Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city. Foreigners from

all over the world, they come to Hong Kong and we communicate with them in English so it is so crucial for us to learn English.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: For the exam, the other reason is English is an international language. We can use it to communicate with other people in other countries.

6 Willow* Class Girl: I can communicate with foreigners.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Just because English is an international language. I need to learn it to communicate with others, other than Chinese.

For most students the reasons given for needing to learn English broadly centred around communicating with non-Chinese speakers of English in Hong Kong. Only one student explicitly mentioned making more friends, therefore it would seem that these students viewed English more in terms of its utility for facilitating communication with non-Chinese speakers of English than in social terms. Some students explicitly perceived that they were learning English for more than one reason, for example, there were five references from individual students who perceived learning English for the final English examination and communication; one reference from one student to learning English to help non-Chinese speakers of English; and one reference to learning English for communication and making friends.

3-2: The second most common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English because it is an important international language* (a theme found in approximately 61% or 11 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Girl: My parents and teacher told me that English is very important and it is an international language.

There was considerable overlap between students perceiving that they were learning English for

communication and students perceiving English to be an important international language. While

all of these students were aware that Hong Kong had an international population of non-Chinese

English speakers, a perception that was enhanced by the presence of a NET (Native-speaking

English Teacher) at the case study school who was one of the two Secondary 6 classes' two English

teachers, it was also noteworthy that a few students explicitly mentioned not only teachers but also

parents as persons who emphasised to them the importance of English as an international language in

Hong Kong.

3-3a: The third most common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of

Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English for workplace communication* (a theme found in

approximately 44% or 8 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: We need to use English when we work.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think that English language is useful. It is useful for me to work in the future. Nowadays many works need workers to speak English well. Therefore, I think I should learn good English.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because same as him. Because nowadays in the 21 century most of the businesses use English to communicate with the foreigner so we need to have this technique.

Since a far greater proportion of Secondary 6 students planned to attend university than Secondary

5 students it was not surprising that the prevalence of an explicitly perceived need to learn English for

work was only found in approximately 44% of Secondary 6 source files compared to approximately

59% of Secondary 5 source files. However, while for many Secondary 6 students the more

immediate need to master academic English for their English examination in preparation for

university may have temporarily overshadowed the need to master English for work, the perception of

an eventual need to be able to communicate in English at work was still explicitly evident across

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almost half of the Secondary 6 source files.

3-3b: A closely related theme was to *learn English to help find a job* (a theme found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: I think learning English helps you in finding a job.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think it is because the government needs us to learn English for us to find jobs.

These students perceived that their employment opportunities were enhanced by being able to communicate in English. It is noteworthy that one student also perceived that the Hong Kong government wanted students to learn to communicate well in English in order to help improve their employment prospects.

3-4: The fourth most common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English for the English exam* (a theme found in approximately 33% or 6 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I learn English in order to get a good result in the public English examination and that is the main thing, the main reason I learn English.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Because we need to take part in the public English examination…

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: For the exams and if I learn English I can find a good job.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: For the public English exam.

The final English examination was a key extrinsic motivator for some Secondary 6 students. A few of these students explicitly perceived that they were learning English primarily in order to get a good result in their final English examination. Several others simply perceived that they were learning English for their final English examination. The phrase 'need to' came up twice, once referring to the

need to do the English examination and once referring to the need to gain a pass in the English

examination, highlighting not only the compulsory nature of the test and its importance but also the

interrelated dual extrinsic motivations of English test preparation with what the English test results

would be used for.

3-5: Another common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of Secondary 6

English students was to *learn English as part of education and knowledge* (a theme also found in

approximately 33% or 6 of 18 source files).

   6 Willow* Class Girl: Yes I think it's good to learn English. We can learn a lot of knowledge.

   6 Poplar* Class Girl: My mum told me that English is important.

   These students explicitly perceived the value of learning English. For some students learning

English was an intrinsically motivating experience while for others it was an extrinsically motivating

experience imposed on them by the compulsory nature of the English language subject in the school's

curriculum, the final English examination and even a parent's wishes for them to learn English.

3-6: The sixth most common motivation for learning English amongst the comparison group of

Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English because it is compulsory* (a theme found in

approximately 22% or 4 of 18 source files).

   6 Willow* Class Girl: The school asks us to learn English.

   A review of all relevant qualitative data from student interviews, classroom observations and teacher

interviews led the researcher to the view that the compulsory nature of learning English, was an

extrinsic motivator for learning English. In the researcher's view this helped extrinsically motivate

students who failed to sufficiently develop their own intrinsic motivations for learning English.

However, an imposed extrinsic motivation, such as this, tended to only have a weak to moderate effect on their English learning efforts.

Secondary 5 Themes	Secondary 6 Themes
A summary of the main themes from prompt 3 indicating what motivated Secondary 5 students to learn English.	A summary of the main themes from prompt 3 indicating what motivated Secondary 6 students to learn English.
3-1: Learn English for work (a theme found in 19 of 32 source files [59%]).	**3-1: Learn English for communication and socialising** (a theme found in 13 of 18 source files [72%]).
3-2: Learn English for socialising and communication (a theme found in 17 of 32 source files [53%]).	**3-2: Learn English because it is an important international language** (a theme found in 11 of 18 source files [61%]).
3-3: Learn English because it is an important or useful language (a theme found in 13 of 32 source files [41%]).	**3-3a: Learn English for workplace communication** (a theme found in 8 of 18 source files [44%]).
3-4: Learn English for knowledge or interest (a theme found in 11 of 32 source files [34%]).	**3-3b: Learn English to help find a job** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
3-5: Learn English because it is compulsory (a theme found in 10 of 32 source files [31%]).	**3-4: Learn English for the English exam** (a theme found in 6 of 18 source files [33%]).
3-6: Learn English for the English exam (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	**3-5: Learn English as part of education and knowledge** (a theme found in 4 of 18 source files [22%]).

KEY: **Underlined purple print** = **Prompt 3 themes unique to one group.** **Underlined red print** = **Prompt 3 themes that occur in both groups**

This arrow indicates a near match between themes.   **This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.**

Figure 6.3 Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 3

Prompt 3 Theme Comparison and Summary

A comparison of each group's themes strongly suggested that the similarities between the three most common motivations for learning English tended to be far more striking than any differences. There were only slight differences between each group's three most common themes and only a few small differences in the degree of theme prevalence between each group.

Much the same could be said for the next three most common themes with one notable exception. Learning English for the English exam had greater prevalence as an explicit extrinsic motivator amongst Secondary 6 students compared to Secondary 5 students. This suggested that an increased motivation to learn the English that was expected to be tested by the English exam being

prepared for was having a discernibly stronger washback effect on the Secondary 6 students preparing

for the old Secondary 7 English exam than on the Secondary 5 students preparing for the new

Secondary 6 English exam. Students preparing for the new Secondary 6 English exam only had

access to one set of official specimen English exam papers, there being no actual past English exam

papers at the time data was collected in the latter part of 2010 and the researcher formed an overall

impression from Secondary 5 student responses that these students lacked familiarity with and were

uncertain about what to expect in their final English exam. In contrast, students preparing for the old

Secondary 7 English exam had many years of past English exam papers to refer to and the researcher

formed an overall impression from Secondary 6 student responses that these students were

comparatively quite familiar and certain about what to expect in their final English exam.

A greater familiarity with and certainty about what to expect in the English test prepared for would

seem to be interdependent with and interrelated to a prevalence of an explicit extrinsic motivation to

learn English for an English exam. For this reason English exams that had been around for several

or more years may not only have stronger potentially beneficial washback effects, such as eliciting an

explicit extrinsic motivation to learn English, but may also be potentially more prone to narrowing of

the curriculum type of detrimental washback effects than newly implemented English exams due to a

greater awareness amongst students about what was likely and what was unlikely to be tested. In short,

the manifestation of either positive or negative washback effects from an English exam not only

increased as English student extrinsic motivation to learn English for the English test increased but

also intensified over the several or more year lifespan of an English testing regime in complex

ways that can be difficult for the developers of new English testing regimes to anticipate or predict.

In addition, the researcher formed an overall impression from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students that those students who intended to go on to university not only tended to be the most English exam focused but also the most motivated to at least attempt to learn English up to a level approaching that required in an academic context, such as first year university in Hong Kong. In contrast, those students who intended to either work or do some kind of applied training course in order to prepare for work after graduating from senior secondary school tended to usually be lowly to moderately and only occasionally highly motivated to learn English for general English communication rather than for academic purposes.

In short, it is the considered overall view of the researcher, particularly after critically reflecting on all of the relevant qualitative data available to him from student interviews, classroom observations and teacher interviews that on the one hand, students who intended to work immediately after secondary school may have tended to be less motivated to learn English and may have tended to be only aiming to learn English to a basic communicative level compared to their peers who intended to go to university immediately after secondary school. On the other hand, students who intended to go to university immediately after secondary school may have tended to be more motivated to learn English and may have tended to be aiming to learn English to an academic level compared to their peers who intended to work immediately after secondary school. Moreover, future aspirations of individual students seemed to be realistically based. The school's higher performing students tended to be aiming for university and the school's lower performing students tended to be aiming for work or vocational training. However, previous university entry rates for the case study school suggested that students tended to be overly optimistic on their chances of gaining a place in a local Hong Kong university to

study for an undergraduate degree.

Finally, it should be noted that the six themes were fairly equally divided between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning English. However, there tended to be a greater prevalence of intrinsic than extrinsic motivations for learning English in and across both groups. An exception was learning English for work which had the greatest prevalence amongst Secondary 5 students.

How we feel about our English learning experiences

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about how they felt about their English learning experiences. A comparison between responses to prompt 4 from Secondary 5 English students preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old English exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 7

Secondary 5 English Students

4-1a: The most common attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English learning experiences was *a feeling that learning English is difficult* (a theme found in 63% or 20 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Boy: I think English is very useful but I don't like it too because the English lesson is very boring and I can't get the main point … so I think to learn English is very difficult.

English vocabulary was perceived to be *difficult to learn* for several reasons including perceptions that there was such a wide variety of it to learn; memorising it was too difficult; and it was also very difficult to pronounce. All these reasons for perceiving the learning of English vocabulary as difficult tended to suggest an overreliance on 'traditional' pedagogical practices for enhancing student English vocabulary such as the rote learning and memorisation of new English vocabulary; and students possessing an insufficient knowledge of English phonetics.

Furthermore, this situation was made all the worse by the often large gap between the case study student participants' level of English language proficiency and the level of English language proficiency required to gain an English grade in the final English examination high enough to meet the English language requirements of their future work or further study related aspirations. . Another reason given for perceiving English as difficult to learn was incomprehensible English teaching. This suggested that the pedagogical practices that these students experienced could have been enhanced by the inclusion of more opportunities for student-teacher and teacher-student questioning to discern whether students were comprehending the English lesson or not. English grammar was also perceived as a reason why learning English was difficult.

4-1b: Another attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English learning experiences (that was very closely related to 4-1a) was *a feeling that learning English is boring* (a theme found in 22% or 7 of 32 source files). See the example given above at 4-1a that demonstrates how these themes often overlapped.

As noted above, closely interrelated to perceiving English as difficult to learn was a perception that the way that English was taught was boring, dull or demotivating suggesting the possibility that students' enjoyment of their English learning experiences could be enhanced by pedagogical practices that focused less on grammatical constructs and more on pedagogical practices that students tended to find intrinsically motivating.

4-2: The second most common attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English learning experiences was *a feeling that learning English is fun or interesting* (a theme found in approximately 44% or 14 of 32 source files).

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The most prevalent reason given for finding English lessons fun or interesting was watching

English movies in class.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: I think English is interesting because in some English lessons we can watch a movie to learn English.

Other reasons given for having a positive perception of English lessons included being taught by a

good English teacher.

> 5 Maple* Class Boy: It's very good. [laughter]
> Researcher: Ok. Why? What makes it good?
> 5 Maple* Class Boy: It is because the teacher teaches well.

A few other students reported liking or being interested in the social or communicative aspect of

English learning either in the classroom or in their future lives.

> 5 Oak* Class Boy through Interpreter: Very interesting.
> Researcher: Very interesting. Why? In what way?
> 5 Oak* Class Boy through Interpreter: Can learn English with his classmates.

> Researcher: You said you like English, right? Why?
> 5 Maple* Class Girl: Because people around the world. They speak in English.

One student thought that it was quite fun to learn English through music and another student

thought that some English games were quite fun ways of learning English. All in all, this theme

suggested that some English teachers were finding time to use more innovative and intrinsically

motivating pedagogical practices that their students enjoyed at least some of the time regardless of

any teach-to-the-test pressure and related negative washback that they may have felt or experienced.

4-3: The third most common attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English

learning experiences was *a feeling that there should be more chances to communicate in class and at*

school in English (a theme found in approximately 28% or 9 of 32 source files).

The 'chalk and talk' style of teaching English was perceived to be boring.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: Their English teacher just writes something on the blackboard and she thinks it's boring.

Some students clearly felt that their English learning experiences could have been enhanced through more opportunities to communicate in English, not only during their English lessons, but also within the wider school environment. Student comments suggested that their English lessons tended to be teacher centred and that the use of CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) during their English lessons was quite common.

> 5 Elm* Class Boy: I think if we want to learn English we must have more talk and more listening.

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: Because in one week we only have a few English lessons and I didn't have a lot of opportunity or chance to speak English so I think my English learning experience is not really good.

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: I think my English learning experience is not good because I think in school we do not always speak English usually.

In short, these students thought that their English lessons and the predominance of Chinese in their CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) school environment provided them with far too few chances to actually practice communicating in English at school.

4-4: The fourth most common attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English learning experiences was a feeling that *previous English examination results affected how much they liked or disliked learning English* (a theme found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files).

> 5 Cedar* Class Boy: I feel my English learning experience is not bad because my English, in my English exam, I can get a quite good mark.

Students' perceptions about the English examination they were preparing for depended on their

previous English examination results. Those students who had good English examination results in the

past tended to like learning English while those students who had experienced failure or poor English

examination results in the past tended to dislike learning English and English examinations.

> 5 Pine* Class Boy: My English learning experience is bad.
> Researcher: Why?
> 5 Pine* Class Boy: Because I did not do well in English in the HKCEE [Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination].

<u>4-5</u>: Another common attitude amongst Secondary 5 English students about their English learning

experiences was *a feeling that their early English foundation at primary school was poor* (a theme

also found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: When I am a primary school student in the English lesson I do not pay very much attention.

   Not paying attention during primary school English lessons was the main reason given for having a

poor English foundation.

> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Because he didn't pay attention during lessons and he knows nothing now.
> Researcher: Oh, ok so why doesn't he pay attention?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Because when he was small, he does not know why he doesn't pay attention.
>
> 5 Maple* Class Boy through Interpreter: He did not pay attention when learning English in primary school.

   Another reason given for poor English was a dearth of English immersion opportunities.

> 5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: Do not have a good English foundation.
> Researcher: Ok and why is that?
> 5 Palm* Class Boy through Interpreter: He does not have many chances to be exposed to English.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

<u>4-1a</u>: The most common attitude amongst Secondary 6 English students about their English learning experiences was *a feeling that learning English is difficult* (a theme found in approximately 83% or 15 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think … it is a difficult thing to learn English better. For it is because maybe we use English less to communicate with our family and with our friends we prefer to use Chinese to communicate with each other.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think learning English is very difficult because in the past my English Exam results are very poor and when I read the newspaper, the *South China Morning Post* newspaper, I find out I have a lot of words … that I cannot understand. I can't understand the essay, especially about the, what the essay want to mention about so I think that learning English is very difficult.
> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: I find it difficult
> Researcher: Difficult?
> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: Difficult. I learn English because when I watch some TV programs in English I sometimes find myself, I don't understand some words so I have to check the dictionary immediately.

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: Sometimes the grammar is very difficult to use, I think, and it is difficult to memorise too many vocabulary.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Because English … has a lot of language. Its grammar and in English there is a lot of vocabulary. It is very dangerous for me. I want to jump from the building. [laughter].

There were several reasons why students perceived English to be *difficult to learn.* Not being able to understand enough English vocabulary was the most commonly perceived difficulty. There was also a perception that English grammar was difficult to use. For at least one student, the learning of English grammar and vocabulary was not only perceived to be a difficult experience but also a stressful one. Noteworthy was a student's perception of English as a medium of communication and his attribution of his own difficulty in learning English to an insufficient use of the English medium of

communication with family and friends since they prefer to use Chinese as their medium of

communication.

4-1b: A closely related theme was *a feeling that learning English is boring* (a theme

found in approximately 44% or 8 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Boring in the school, is stubborn, I think the system is stubborn.
> Researcher: Is what?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Stubborn.
> Researcher: Why?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because it's like a mechanical learning system. You need to have many, many things to remember but not useful for daily communication.

One student attributed a perception that his English lessons were dull to the examination driven

system that he considered to be the root cause of a *stubbornly* change resistant style of learning that

tended to focus on the learning of the English grammatical and lexical knowledge required to do well

in the public English examination rather than the English used for daily communication. This

perception of the *system* being *stubbornly* resistant to change was particularly noteworthy. From this

perspective, English teachers were as much victims of the "system" as their students. There was even

a hint of a perception that it would be futile to attempt to enhance the pedagogical practices that

students experienced without first making beneficial changes to the examination focused system that

was driving their English teachers' current pedagogical practices. It was noteworthy that from these

students' perspective, preparing for a public English examination tended to be leading to a focus on

skills that were of utility for doing well in the examination rather than a focus on communication and

the intrinsic value of learning English for pleasure. Students tended to perceive the skills, grammatical,

lexical, rote learning and memorisation focused English learning style as boring while a communicative

focused English learning style tended to be perceived by students as more useful and appropriate for

their needs. Of particular concern was the possibility suggested by some student comments that student

interest in learning English was being diminished by public English examination focused instruction.

In short, the public English examination prepared for was having a negative washback on the

pedagogical practices experienced by these students as was further evident from the student responses

below.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Yes. I also think learning English at school is boring since the teachers do not teach very well…
Researcher: Why is it boring? Is it boring because of teachers?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: One of the reasons is the teacher.
Researcher: What about the teacher? What makes the teachers boring? Can you give me some details?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Just the methods.
Researcher: Their teaching method is boring? Can you describe what makes it boring?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: A lot of exercises without explanation.
Researcher: So they do lots of exercises but do not explain?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Yeah.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Although I think English is interesting, the lesson is quite dull because I think the teachers only tell us the skill without any funny things so we find it very difficult to concentrate in the lesson.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Actually, I am not interested in English.
Researcher: You are not interested? Why are you not interested?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Because it is so boring.
Researcher: Why is it boring?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: The vocabulary, phrases and the grammar.
Researcher: Sorry. The vocabulary is difficult?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: Yeah.
Researcher: And what?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think it is too difficult to remember.

6 Poplar* Class Boy: Also is so boring.
Researcher: Why is that?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: If I want to, if you want to learn a language, you must let me make [develop or nurture] an interest in the language, but I can't find that in English.

4-1c: A closely related theme was *a feeling that learning English is a torture* (a theme

found in approximately 6% or 1 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: It's a torture.
> Researcher: Ok. Why is it a torture?
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: My English level is not good. When a primary student or secondary student, my English level was not as great as the others. It is difficult to learn. I have learned it about 15 years but I can't … [achieve] a good result….

In so far as a public English examination driven system led to instructional materials, such as

textbooks, that were too difficult for some students to comprehend without translation, trying to bridge,

what over time became an increasingly unbridgeable gap between the level of English required for

comprehensible English input led to psychological distress, which one student even went so far as

to describe as "torture". There was little doubt that this was an examination driven form of negative

washback specifically and more generally a negative impact of a public English examination driven

system on lower performing students.

The student comment "… I can't … [achieve] a good result …" encapsulated how counterproductive

repeated failure or poor performance in language testing was, particularly for those students' self-

confidence. Finally, one student's comments suggested a deeply insightful perception that English

teachers needed to focus on developing and encouraging whatever kernel of intrinsic interest their

students had left for learning English: something that the public examination driven system in Hong

Kong tended to destroy in all too many students at the case study school.

4-2: The second most common attitude amongst Secondary 6 English students about their English

learning experiences was *a feeling that learning English is fun or interesting* (a theme found in

approximately 39% or 7 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think English is fun and we can use English to communicate with others easily.

Researcher: Ok. What makes it fun?

6 Poplar* Class Boy: You can communicate with people from other countries and also we can use English to go to lots of countries and we can travel.

Students who perceived English learning to be fun also tended to enjoy communicating with non-Chinese speakers in English or found learning English to be useful for watching English movies or TV and reading English newspapers. While no students mentioned finding preparing for an English examination to be fun, one student who had quite fluent English compared to other Secondary 6 students at the case study school thought that learning English was easier and less stressful than preparing for her other examination subjects. Obviously, it was less stressful for students to prepare for an examination in a subject they are good at compared to one they are not good at. Furthermore, it would be expected that students would enjoy subjects that they excelled at. Unfortunately, for all too many of the students who took part in this case study, the English required to do well in the public English examination that they were preparing for was way beyond their reach and many of them knew this. The many students who found themselves in this situation tended to not enjoy learning English for their English examination but found it either too stressful, or boring, or even both stressful and boring.

However, an analysis of the responses of students who did find learning English to be fun or interesting did suggest possible ways of encouraging other students' enjoyment of, and interest in, their English learning experiences. For example, student English examination preparation stress could be reduced by reducing the stakes of the high-stakes public English examination such as through an expanded rollout of English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks. Since the flexibility of these

type of tasks and their short term learning goals provided otherwise poorly performing students of

English with opportunities to learn at an appropriate level and experience success. Therefore,

reducing the stakes of the public English examination by introducing more lower-stakes, achievable,

short-term learning goals such as through an expanded rollout of English SBA (School-based

Assessment) would seem to have had a high potential for improving the English language learning

experiences and enhancing the assessable English language performance results of students who

performed badly within an high-stakes English examination based system. It should be noted that any

additional English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks would need to focus on encouraging more

communicative use and development of English with a higher level of practical English language

proficiency being the ultimate aim.   Furthermore, in-house designed school-based assessment tasks

and curriculum that could be directly tailored to the needs and interests of an individual school's

students would seem to be a more appropriate way of achieving improved English language proficiency

levels than an externally imposed assessment and curriculum system that could easily miss the mark in

terms of appropriate difficulty level, appropriate proficiency level, and appropriately motivating topics.

The case study school's NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) did provide an authentic reason

for students to communicate with a non-Chinese speaker in English. This experience of an authentic

need for communicating in English could be expanded if the education system were flexible enough

to not only allow but also to encourage several non-Chinese speaking students from Hong Kong's

English-speaking expatriate community to enrol at the case study school.

Other beneficial changes could include more opportunities to learn English through watching

English movies and more opportunities to learn English through reading books. The new senior

secondary curriculum allowed for this, however, it could be expanded to play a far greater role in the

curriculum experienced by students, like many of those from the case study school, who needed to be

engaged or re-engaged in the process of learning English in a way that they could enjoy, find interesting

and experience success. The valuable contribution that enjoyable learning experiences played in

intrinsically motivating students to learn English was evident from the student comments below.

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: I think learning English is very funny and sometimes it is difficult to learn but I think learning English is fun.
> Researcher: Ok. So why is it fun?
> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: Because we can learn a different language and communicate with others, yes.
> 6 Willow* Class Boy: The experience is quite interesting and sometimes I found that English is useful so I think that learning English should be a lifelong accomplishment. Yes.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Happy and relaxed.
> Researcher: Why is that?
> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think that it is easy.
> Researcher: You don't feel any pressure?
> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Not as difficult as other things.
> Researcher: What is it not as difficult as?
> 6 Willow* Class Girl: Not as difficult as other things.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: It is quite good because I think English is very useful for me to communicate.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think it is quite happy because we can learn English in different ways. For example, we can watch the movie or newspaper.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think English is interesting because I like to watch the American TV programs.

4-3: The third most common attitude amongst Secondary 6 English students about their English

learning experiences was *a feeling of disappointment since despite learning English since starting*

primary school they could not speak English well or could not speak English well enough to get good

results in the English test (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Boy: I feel disappointed in my English learning.
Researcher: Why is that?
6 Poplar* Class Boy: I learnt English for many years. Since I studied at kindergarten I have learnt English but for now I am not good at speaking English so I feel disappointed. I can't get a good English result in CE [Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination] so I feel disappointed.

6 Willow* Class Boy: Unhappy.
Researcher: Unhappy. Why unhappy?
6 Willow* Class Boy: Because I learn English for so very much time, but my result is not good.

The disappointment expressed about the less than desired progress in learning English from Kindergarten up to the last years of Secondary expressed here, taking into account how examination driven learning appeared to operate at the case study school, could be analysed in the following way. As soon as an incomprehensible input gap occurred because the level of English expected of students of a particular grade level and their actual level of English no longer calibrated, not only did English acquisition and learning stop or slow from this point onwards, the learning of English also becames an increasingly difficult and stressful activity as this gap widened. Furthermore, student self-confidence in their own ability to learn English also suffered from this experience.

Secondary 5 Themes	Secondary 6 Themes
A summary of the main themes from prompt 4 eliciting how Secondary 5 students felt about their English learning experiences.	A summary of the main themes from prompt 4 eliciting how Secondary 6 students felt about their English learning experiences.
4-1a: Learning English is difficult (a theme found in 20 of 32 source files [63%]).	**4-1a: Learning English is difficult** (a theme found in 15 of 18 source files [83%]).
4-1b: Learning English is boring (a theme found in 7 of 32 source files [22%]).	**4-1b: Learning English is boring** (a theme found in 8 of 18 source files [44%]).
4-2: Learning English is fun or interesting (a theme found in 14 of 32 source files [44%]).	**4-1c: Learning English is a torture** (a theme found in 1 of 18 source files [6%]).
4-3: There should be more chances to communicate in class and at school in English (a theme found in 9 of 32 source files [28%]).	**4-2: Learning English is fun or interesting** (a theme found in 7 of 18 source files [39%]).
4-4: Previous English examination results affected how much they liked or disliked learning English (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	**4-3: A feeling of disappointment since despite learning English since starting primary school they could not speak English well or could not speak English well enough to get good results in the English test** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
4-5: Early English foundation at primary school was poor (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	

KEY: **Underlined purple print** = Prompt 4 themes unique to one group. **Underlined red print** = Prompt 4 themes that occur in both groups

This arrow indicates a near match between themes.   **This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.**

Figure 6.4   Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 4

Prompt 4 Theme Comparison and Summary

A comparison of each group's themes showed that the most prevalent theme amongst both groups of students was **Learning English is difficult**. This theme was more prevalent amongst Secondary 6 students (83%) than Secondary 5 students (63%). The theme that was the second most prevalent theme amongst both groups of students was **Learning English is boring.** This theme was more prevalent amongst Secondary 6 students (44%) than Secondary 5 students (22%). This suggested a greater prevalence of a perception that the learning English was difficult and boring amongst Secondary 6 students than amongst Secondary 5 students. An opposing theme was **Learning English is fun or interesting.** This theme was slightly more prevalent amongst Secondary 5 students (44%) than Secondary 6 students (39%).

There were two additional themes that were only identified in some Secondary 5 semi-structured student interviews. One of these themes suggested that Secondary 5 students would like *more chances to communicate in class and at school in English.* The fact that this theme was prevalent in approximately 28% of Secondary 5 semi-structured student interviews was noteworthy. Another of these themes suggested that Secondary 5 students' *previous English examination results affected how much they liked or disliked learning English* and the fact that this theme was prevalent in approximately 19% of Secondary 5 semi-structured student interviews was also noteworthy.

Secondary 5 classroom observations suggested that Secondary 5 lessons offered few, if any, opportunities for students to really communicate with either each other or their English teacher through the English medium. By way of contrast, Secondary 6 classroom observations suggested that Secondary 6 lessons offered the opportunity for students to be really taught through the English medium. This was especially the case in the Secondary 6 lessons taught by NET1 and also usually the case in the Secondary 6 lessons taught by LET6. The tendency for Secondary 6 students to have a higher level of English proficiency than their Secondary 5 peers at least partially (but not completely) explained this difference between the pedagogical practices reported by Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students.

Notwithstanding the different English exam prepared for or the comparatively lower levels of English language proficiency and poorer academic performance amongst the Secondary 5 cohort of students compared to their Secondary 6 peers, overall the various sources of data available suggested that when a LET (Local English Teacher) was a highly proficient, native-speaker like user of English they tended to provide their students with far more chances to communicate in class and at school in

English than their less highly proficient user of English colleagues. Furthermore, the researcher formed

the view, from an overall analysis of relevant data from teacher interviews, classroom observations and

student interviews, that English teacher's knowledge of and degree of appreciation for CLT

(Communicative Language Teaching) also tended to influence how many opportunities they provided

for their students to really communicate in class and at school in English.

We think these are the best ways for us to learn English

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about what they thought were the best

ways of learning English. A comparison between responses to prompt 5 from Secondary 5 English

students preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old

English exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 7.

Secondary 5 English Students

5-1: The most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was

the best way to learn English was to learn English through reading (a theme found in approximately

53% or 17 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: … read more English books.
> Researcher: Ok. Does he do that?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: No. [laughter]
> Researcher: Why not?
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: … he doesn't understand the words in the English books.
>
> 5 Elm* Class Girl: I think reading books is the best way to learn English.
> Researcher: Why?
> 5 Elm* Class Girl: Because English books have many difficult words.

It is interesting to note the tension between students perceiving reading English to be the best way

of learning English and the difficulty they perceived in implementing this belief in actual practice due

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to a perception that they understood too few English words or that English books had too many difficult words. These perceptions suggested a need to ensure that students had ample access to books that provided them with the opportunity to experience comprehensible input while reading English books. These perceptions also suggested that continued exposure to English books (including the English textbooks used during English lessons) that were incomprehensible when students attempted to read them did more harm than good in terms of meaningful learning or in terms of encouraging an interest in and self-confidence about learning English through reading.

5-2: The second most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through speaking English* (a theme found in 50% or 16 of 32 source files).

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: I think speaking is a better way to learn English because I think through speaking English we can learn listening and English speaking so I think this is the best way to learn English.

> 5 Cedar* Class Boy: I think the best way to learn English is usually to talk to friends and the teacher because talking with my English teacher … can tell me where I am wrong, so I think this is the best way to learn English.

> 5 Maple* Class Boy: Meet the English native-speakers.

These students perceived that speaking English was the best way of learning it. Some student responses suggested that this was not the usual way of learning English during Secondary 5 English lessons at the case study school. Other student responses suggested an awareness that communicating in English with friends and their English teacher; or even making an extra effort to speak English with English native-speakers were the best ways of learning English.

5-3: The third most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought

was *the best way to learn English was to watch English movies, films or TV* (a theme found in

approximately 47% or 15 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Girl: Watching English films.
> Researcher: Why?
> 5 Maple* Class Girl: Because…
> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Can listen to the conversations between the actors and
> learn the correct pronunciation of each of the words.

> 5 Cedar* Class Girl: Watch movie.
> Researcher: Why?
> 5 Cedar* Class Girl: Because I think it is interesting.

> 5 Elm* Class Boy: … see more English films.

Viewing English films or movies was also perceived by many students as the best way of learning

English. Reasons given for this perception include finding this way of learning English interesting.

Considering the high prevalence of Secondary 5 students finding their school English lessons

difficult, boring or uninteresting [across approximately 75% of source files] it would seem imperative

to make the most of pedagogical practices that incorporated learning English through ways that

students found interesting such as through the viewing and listening audio-visual medium.

5-4: The fourth most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought

was *the best way to learn English was listening to, speak to and question the English teacher* (a

theme found in approximately 28% or 9 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: Pay attention to the teachers.

> 5 Elm* Class Boy: Pay attention in class.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: With the NET teacher.
> Researcher: Why? Why do you think this is a good way?

5 Elm* Class Girl: Because the NET teacher uses English.

5 Pine* Class Girl: I think talk more to English teacher

5 Pine* Class Boy: For me, I think the best way of learning English is maybe we can chat with my English teacher …

These students perceived their English teachers as playing a central role in their English learning experiences. The recurrence of student responses that indicated students perceiving a need to pay attention in class suggested or hinted at the high prevalence of teacher centred learning that was observed during most Secondary 5 English lesson observations. It also hinted at the difficulty many students found in remaining focused and paying attention during lessons that were either too difficult, uninteresting or too boring. It was reassuring to note that students perceived opportunities to chat or talk with their English teacher to be a most beneficial way of learning English. However, the comment "Because the NET teacher uses English" implied that their local English teacher tended to not use English during English lessons for actual communication, a phenomenon that was observed during many Secondary 5 English lesson observations.

5-5: The fifth most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through vocabulary exercises and spelling tests* (a theme found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files).

5 Elm* Class Girl: Learn more vocabulary and more about the grammar.

5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: To copy the vocabs. Many times so that he will familiarise himself with the words.
Researcher: Ok, so why is that the best way? Why is dictation the best way to learn English?
5 Elm* Class Boy: Because it can make me remember how to use the word.

5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: She also thinks that the basics is the most important, so

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she said that doing more exercise is efficient.

Researcher: Ok, you said doing exercises is the best way to learn English, can you tell me what kind of exercises?

5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: She said that they're the supplementary, like reading, writing.

Some student responses suggested a belief in learning new English words through decontextualised repetition while some other student responses suggested a belief in a far broader and more meaningful context. Overall, these students' focus on vocabulary (which in some cases also included a focus on grammar), when all relevant qualitative data from student interviews, classroom observations and teacher interviews were reviewed and taken into consideration, tended to suggest that these students' preferred learning styles were strongly influenced by the pedagogical practices that they had experienced in their English lessons.

5-6: Another common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through English songs* (a theme also found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files).

5 Elm* Class Girl: I think my English teacher can teach me some English songs because … the melody is good. English songs can make me learn some different English and English songs are very funny.

5 Maple Class Boy: Listen to English music.
Researcher: Ok, why do you think that listening to music is the best way?
5 Maple Class Boy through Interpreter: Since it is easier to remember the lyrics, the English words, vocabularies, so he will know [learn or acquire] more English.

There was a pressing need to find ways of encouraging genuine interest in English learning amongst the many students who after taking into consideration all the relevant qualitative data available from student interviews, classroom observations and teacher interviews, were perceived by

this researcher to be only weakly to moderately motivated by extrinsic motivators such as the public

English examination that they were preparing for. Since these students also often lacked intrinsic

motivations for learning English, tapping into students' interest in learning English through songs

would certainly have been a potentially promising way of encouraging an intrinsic motivation for

learning English. In particular, it could have been possible to rekindle an intrinsic motivation for

learning English amongst students whose last flame of intrinsic interest in learning English had long

since been snuffed out. For example, if pedagogical practices that many students found uninspiring,

such as learning English through rote learning and memorisation of English from textbooks could

have been replaced by more interesting and more comprehensible pedagogical practices, it is probable

that more English would have been learned.

5-7: The seventh most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they

thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English with a dictionary* (a theme found in

approximately 16% or 5 of 32 source files).

> 5 Cedar* Class Girl through Interpreter: Check the dictionary.
> Researcher: Oh, ok, why?
> 5 Cedar* Class Girl through Interpreter: Convenient.
>
> 5 Elm* Class Boy through Interpreter: When he come across a new vocabulary he can look it up in the dictionary for the Chinese meaning of the vocabulary.
>
> 5 Elm* Girl: Read dictionary.

This method may well have been perceived as convenient but it would seem to be one of the far less

successful 'best' methods since an interpreter was required to communicate all but one of these

student responses from a total of five references from five source files.

5-8: The eighth most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought

was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through playing English games* (a theme

found in approximately 9% or 3 of 32 source files).

    5 Elm* Class Boy: I think it is best to learn English … by playing some - about English - games

    5 Elm* Class Girl: Scrabble …. Barrier games.

   These students' comments certainly suggested that there could be a high potential for

communicative English games to enhance student enjoyment and active participation during English

lessons. Furthermore, the use of English language games during English lessons would go some way

towards addressing the kind of student disengagement often associated with overly teacher centred

pedagogical practices.

5-9: Another belief amongst Secondary 5 English students was that *the best way to learn English was*

to go to tutorial class outside of school (a theme also found in approximately 9% or 3 of 32 source

files).

    5 Maple* Girl through Interpreter: Learn the basic knowledge of English.
    Researcher: And how?
    5 Maple* Girl through Interpreter: Asking teachers and join the tutorial classes and also by
    themselves they should work hard.

   While the prevalence of perceiving English tutorial classes outside of school as being the best way

of learning English was low, it was interesting to note that one student perceived that hard work or

personal effort was also needed in order to benefit from what could be gained from attending English

tutorial classes.

5-10: The tenth most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought

was *the best way to learn English was to write more English* (a theme found in approximately 6% or

2 of 32 source files).

   5 Elm* Class Boy: I think speak more and write more is the best way.

   5 Maple* Class Boy: 5C GI: Read more and write more.

   Despite the low prevalence of writing English being perceived as the best way of learning English,

it was interesting to note that in the two comments included here that it was integrated with the use of

other English skills such as speaking or reading. This suggested that communicative based English

teaching that integrated the use of more than one skill in a natural kind of a way, simulating how

English was used in real life situations, would have a high potential for re-igniting or re-kindling

student interest in learning English during Secondary 5 English lessons.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

5-1: The most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was

the best way to learn English was to watch English movies, films or TV (a theme found in

approximately 67% or 12 of 18 source files).

   6 Polar* Class Boy: I think watching TV is the best way to learn English because we can listen
   to the English word … its exciting and more interesting than the other ways. So I think this is
   less tough.

   6 Polar* Class Girl: I think the best way to learn English is watching more English TV
   programmes because it is … more interesting for us to watch and we can at
   the same time learn more English and it is relaxing.

   A few students thought that watching TV was the best way to learn English because they perceived

it to be not only more exciting or interesting but also more relaxing or at least less tough than the

other alternatives. A few students also noted how watching English movies helped improve their

English pronunciation and listening skills. One girl thought that watching the TV news first in Chinese and then in English with the assistance of English subtitles was a good way to improve her English listening comprehension.

5-2: The second most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through reading* (a theme found in 50% or 9 of 18 source files).

    6 Poplar* Class Boy: Reading is important because you can learn so many things by reading, through reading, just like vocabulary, tenses or some phrasal verbs.

    6 Willow* Class Girl: I also think that we should read more [English] newspapers because we can learn different vocabulary and different ideas.

There were two main reasons why students thought that reading was the best way to learn English.

Firstly, it was perceived to be a way of learning English vocabulary and grammar in context.

Secondly, it was perceived to be a way of gaining new ideas. Both of these reasons were utilitarian.

It is interesting to note the lack of any non-utilitarian reasons for reading in English such as for enjoyment. This tended to suggest that English teachers could enhance their students intrinsic motivation to learn English by including in their English lessons carefully selected reading materials that were not only comprehensible but also of interest to their students in order to help encourage an interest in reading in English so that students could enjoy their English reading experiences.

5-3: The third most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through English songs* (a theme found in approximately 22% or 4 of 18 source files).

    6 Willow* Class Girl: English songs because they are more interesting.

6 Willow* Class Girl: I like to listen to music because I can put the music in the MP3. Whenever I can listen it can help me to improve my listening skill or speaking skill.

There were both utilitarian and non-utilitarian reasons given for perceiving English songs as the best way of learning English. While learning English through English songs was perceived to be more interesting than the alternatives, it was also perceived to be helpful for improving English listening and speaking skills. Since students already considered learning English through songs to be interesting, this way of learning English would seem to be a promising way of tapping into the intrinsic motivation of students for listening to or singing music in order to enhance their English learning experiences.

5-4: The fourth most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to go to, tour or live in an English speaking country* (a theme found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think the best way to learn English is to have a tour to the other countries. For example, it is because you cannot speak Chinese to communicate … so you can only speak English to communicate.

A few students perceived travelling to an English speaking country to be the best way of learning English. Reasons given for favouring this way of learning English included the genuine need for actually communicating in English while in an English-speaking country.

5-4b: Another belief amongst Secondary 6 students was that *the best way to learn English was to learn English through speaking English to English speakers* (a theme also found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

6 Willow* Class Girl: I think to have a talk with someone who speaks English every day. Actually, I envy some families who have a Philippine maid. Their children speak English to their

maid every day so that can improve their English.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I think the best way is to talk to the foreigners because they can correct our mistakes.

Native-speakers of English were valued for providing opportunities for students to experience communicating in English. They were also valued because they could help students correct the kind of English usage errors common amongst Cantonese Chinese learners of English. The fact that the case study school had a NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) teaching half of the English lesson allocation for the two Secondary 6 classes may have enhanced these students' appreciation of the value of learning English in this way. In any case, there was potential to further enhance students' intrinsic motivation to learn English by providing additional opportunities for them to communicate in English, particularly through the use of Internet based communication technologies such as Skype that could be used as a medium for facilitating English communication between students at the case study school and students in English-speaking countries.

5-5: Another common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was *the best way to learn English was to communicate in English* (a theme also found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Speaking to the English speaker and I think we can just improve more.

> 6 Poplar* Class Girl: I think the best way of learning English is to communicate with the English-speakers….. communicate because I think if you always talk with English-speakers … you will improve your English.

In 17% of source files at least one or more students thought that communicating in English was the best way of learning English. Although the prevalence of this perception was only found in

approximately 17% of source files, it suggested that there were students who valued this way of learning

English and classroom observations of Secondary 6 English lessons suggested that Secondary 6

students were experiencing communicative English learning through the pedagogical practices of their

two English teachers, particularly in the lessons taught by the NET (Native English-speaking Teacher).

Given the explicitly expressed preference for learning English through communicating in English

across approximately 17% of Secondary 6 source files there was clearly potential for tapping into these

students' intrinsic motivation for learning in this way and of encouraging other students' to develop

this same intrinsic motivation for learning English by maximising the opportunities for students to

communicate in English both inside and outside of their English lessons.

5-6: The sixth most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought

was *the best way to learn English was to learn English through playing English games* (a theme also

found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I think the best way to learn English is playing games in English … we
> can play a lot of … English games to learn more about the vocabulary and you must try to let
> them become interested in English [through interesting content]. I think this is the best way.
> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Through the games or through some funny learning material.

Students preferred learning English through English games because they could see the value of

pedagogical practices that encouraged and engaged their interest in learning English. There was clearly

a considerable amount of untapped potential for enhancing English learning in this way and student

and teacher interviews as well as classroom observations suggested that preparing for a high-stakes

English examination tended to discourage teachers from allocating English lesson time for learning

English through games.

Secondary 5 Themes	Secondary 6 Themes
A summary of the main themes from prompt 5 that gauged Secondary 5 student beliefs by eliciting what they thought was the best way to learn English.	A summary of the main themes from prompt 5 that gauged Secondary 5 student beliefs by eliciting what they thought was the best way to learn English.
5-1: **Learn English through reading** (a theme found in 17 of 32 source files [53%]).	**5-1:** **Watch English movies, films or TV** (a theme found in 12 of 18 source files [67%]).
5-2: **Learn English through speaking English** (a theme found in 16 of 32 source files [50%]).	**5-2:** **Learn English through reading** (a theme found in 9 of 18 source files [50%]).
5-3: **Watch English movies, films or TV** (a theme found in 15 of 32 source files [47%]).	**5-3:** **Learn English through English songs** (a theme found in 4 of 18 source files [22%]).
5-4: **Listen to, speak to and question the English teacher** (a theme found in 9 of 32 source files [28%]).	**5-4:** **Go to, tour or live in an English speaking country** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
5-5: **Learn English through vocabulary exercises and spelling tests** (a theme found in 8 of 32 source files [25%]).	**5-4b:** **Learn English through speaking English to English speakers** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
5-6: **Learn English through English songs** (a theme found in 8 of 32 source files [25%]).	**5-5:** **Communicate in English** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
5-7: **Learn English with a dictionary** (a theme found in 5 of 32 source files [16%]).	**5-6:** **Learn English through playing English games** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
5-8: **Learn English through playing English games** (a theme found in 3 of 32 source files [9%]).	
5-9: **Go to tutorial class outside of school** (a theme found in 3 of 32 source files [9%]).	
5-10: **Write more English** (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	

KEY: **Underlined purple print** = Prompt 5 themes unique to one group. **Underlined red print** = Prompt 5 themes that occur in both groups

This arrow indicates a near match between themes. → **This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.** →

Figure 6.5 Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 5

Prompt 5 Theme Comparison and Summary

A comparison of each group's themes suggested that many themes were either the same or very similar only differing in their degree of prevalence in and across each group. However, there were two themes that were only identified from the Secondary 6 English student group responses and five themes that were only identified from the Secondary 5 English student group responses.

The fourth most common belief amongst Secondary 6 English students about what they thought was the best way to learn English was to go to, tour or live in an English speaking country. The fact

that the Secondary 6 students, unlike their Secondary 5 peers were taught half of their weekly English

lessons by a NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) may have heightened these students awareness

of the value and benefits of communicating in English with native-speakers of English in order to

improve their English.

The fourth most common belief amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was

the best way to learn English was listening to, speaking to and questioning the English teacher. It

should be noted that these students were all taught by a LET (Local English Teacher). This experience

may have heightened some Secondary 5 students' awareness of the benefits of listening to, speaking to

and questioning their LET (Local English Teacher) in order to improve their English. However most

noteworthy was several other additional themes that were identified from the Secondary 5 student group.

Other beliefs amongst Secondary 5 English students about what they thought was the best

way to learn English were to learn English through vocabulary exercises and spelling tests; learn

English with a dictionary and go to tutorial class outside of school. It would seem likely, after taking

into account relevant data from student interviews, lesson observations and teacher interviews that some

Secondary 5 students' belief in the value of English vocabulary exercises and spelling tests may have

reflected how they were taught in some of their English lessons. The value given to learning English

with a dictionary suggested that some Secondary 5 students were taking some responsibility for their

own English learning and developing some independent learning skills. However, a belief in the value

of going to an English tutorial class outside of school held by a few Secondary 5 students pointed

towards a perceived need to prepare more explicitly for the English exam and the influence of

commercial English test preparation tutorial school advertising. It should also be noted that there was

a long established culture in Hong Kong of valuing commercial tutorial schools for 'hot tips' on English

test preparation.

Our favourite ways of learning English

The purpose of this prompt was to elicit student perceptions about what their favourite way of

learning English was. A comparison between responses to prompt 6 from Secondary 5 English students

preparing for the new English exam and Secondary 6 English students preparing for the old English

exam was conducted in order to partially answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 7.

Secondary 5 English Students

6-1: The most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn*

English through watching movies, films or TV (a theme found in approximately 59% or 19 of 32

source files).

> 5 Pine* Class Girl: I think maybe watching movies because I can see the words on the screen and
> I can listen for the right pronunciation so I think it is an interesting way for me to learn English.

The most common reasons why students preferred learning English in this way included because

with the help of subtitles, it helped them to learn new English words and their pronunciation. It was

quite evident from the following student responses that this learning style was also perceived to be very

interesting; fun; relaxing; and/or enjoyable.

> 5 Cedar* Class Boy through Interpreter: My favourite way of learning English is to see an English
> movie because in the movie [with English subtitles] I can see many English words. So I love this
> way of learning English.

> 5 Elm* Class Girl: Watch English films.
> Researcher: Ok. Why?
> 5 Elm* Class Girl: Because it's very interesting.

5 Elm* Class Girl: Watch the film.
Researcher: Why?
5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: It is more funny than reading books.

5 Elm* Class Girl: Also watching films. English films.
Researcher: Why?
5 Elm* Class Girl: Can relax.

5 Pine* Class Girl: My favourite way of learning English is watching movies, watching English movies. It is because I can enjoy learning English through watching movies.

6-2: The second most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to

learn English through English songs (a theme found in approximately 44% or 14 of 32 source files).

5 Elm* Class Girl: My favourite way is listening to the English song.
Researcher: Ok. Why is that?
5 Elm* Class Girl: Because music can make me relax and songs have different kinds of words.

5 Elm* Class Girl: Also listening to English songs and watching films.
Researcher: Why?
5 Elm* Class Girl: Because, also, we can relax and feel funny.

5 Pine* Class Girl: My favourite way of learning English is listening to music because I think if, when, you listen to music, you will enjoy a song and you will join in the song and after you listen to the song you can check the Chinese meaning.

The most common reasons why students preferred learning English in this way included that it was

relaxing; fun; and or enjoyable. Utilitarian reasons for preferring to learn English through songs

included that it was a way of learning new English words and that you could check the meaning of

these new words. In this way, English songs provided an intrinsic motivation for learning new

English words.

6-3: Another common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn*

English through reading (a theme found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files).

5 Cedar* Class Girl: Watch [look at] book.
Researcher: Reading books. [Girls' laugher] Why?
5 Cedar* Class Girl: Because I think interesting.

5 Pine* Class Boy: I like to read the English newspaper and cut out some of the vocabulary in the newspaper.

Learning English through reading was a preferred learning style amongst some students. Reasons for preferring to learn English in this way included because it was interesting and a good way of learning new English vocabulary.

6-4: Another common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English through English games* (a theme also found in 25% or 8 of 32 source files).

5 Cedar* Class Boy: Play games. [laughing]
Researcher: What kind of games?
5 Cedar* Class Boy through Interpreter: Vocabulary games just like scrabble.

5 Elm* Class Girl: Scrabble. Barrier games.

English language games, like scrabble, were a preferred way of learning new English vocabulary. However, student and teacher interviews as well as classroom observations suggested that this method was rarely utilised during English lessons. Therefore, there was potential for enhancing student intrinsic motivation to learn new English vocabulary through the application of this way of learning English.

6-5: Another common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English through memorising English vocabulary or grammar* (a theme found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files).

5 Cedar* Class Girl through Interpreter: Just memorise some things.
Researcher: Ok. Memorise what?
5 Cedar* Class Girl through Interpreter: The vocabulary and grammar.

5 Maple* Class Girl: Read, memorise two vocabulary per day, each day.

The identification of this theme came somewhat as a surprise. However, considering that this is likely to be a highly prevalent way of learning English in Hong Kong generally and at the case study school specifically according to qualitative data from student interviews, classroom observations and teacher interviews, it does suggest that a significant minority of students still preferred to learn English in this way (approximately 19% prevalence across source files). This level of prevalence suggested that some memorising of new English vocabulary and grammar could be retained as one of several possible ways of learning English. However, an overreliance on this way of learning English would seem to be ill advised due to the far more common perception amongst students that this was an unpleasant and unenjoyable way of learning English. For example, see Secondary 5 theme <u>4-1</u>:

Learning English is <u>difficult</u>, <u>boring</u> or uninteresting (a theme found in 24 of 32 source files [75%]).

<u>6-6</u>: Another common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English through drama* (a theme also found in approximately 19% or 6 of 32 source files).

5 Elm* Class Girl: Drama.
5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: Through drama.

The glibness of this response was noteworthy and representative of student responses that mention learning English through drama. Although students gave no explicit reasons for preferring to learn English through drama, the most likely implicit reason for preferring to learn English in this way was for enjoyment. It was noteworthy that this way of learning English seemed to be particularly popular with students who had particularly low levels of English. For this reason, learning English through drama would seem to have potential for providing these students with a much needed intrinsic motivation for learning English.

6-7: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English*

through dictation or spelling (a theme also found in approximately 9% or 3 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Just spell the words.

> Researcher: Why do you like dictation so much?
> 5 Oak* Class Girl through Interpreter: Easier

> Researcher: I am surprised three people from your group think dictation is their favourite way
> of learning English. Why do you like dictation so much?
> 5 Oak* Class Boy: It is a convenient way for them to memorise the vocabulary.
> Another 5 Oak* Class Boy: Can know [recognise, spell or understand] more vocabulary.

It was surprising to find students who preferred to learn English through dictation or spelling tests.

Reasons given for this preference included that it was an easier or a convenient way of memorising

new English vocabulary. It was noteworthy that the few students who preferred to learn English in this

way had quite low levels of English, even for the case study school. These students certainly had

ample opportunities to learn English in their preferred way at the case study school since dictation

spelling tests were regularly held in all Secondary 5 English classes of the case study school.

6-8: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English with*

the help of English teachers (a theme also found in approximately 9% or 3 of 32 source files).

> 5 Palm* Class Girl through Interpreter: To seek help from English teachers.

> 5 Pine* Class Boy: My favourite way of learning English is that if I don't know the English
> meaning I will ask the English teachers

The most surprising thing about the identification of this theme was that it was only prevalent across

9% of source files, particularly considering that for the vast majority of Secondary 5 students at the

case study school, English lessons were the main place for not only learning English but also for

experiencing English usage. The only barrier to these students experiencing their preferred method of

learning were class sizes and teaching methods that did not provide students with many opportunities

to ask questions. English teachers could encourage this preferred way of learning English by structuring

their lessons to include ample opportunities for students to ask questions.

6-9: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English*

through talking with foreigners (a theme found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

> 5 Elm* Class Boy: My favourite way of learning English is to talk about things with a
> foreigner then we can listen more and talk more …

> 5 Elm* Class Girl through Interpreter: It is a valuable opportunity to talk with foreigners.

There was considerable overlap between what students perceived to be the best ways of learning

English and their preferred learning styles. Communicating in English generally and more

specifically talking to native-speakers of English would for these and potentially many other students

have helped enhance and encourage an intrinsic motivation for learning English. For this reason alone

it would have been worthwhile for English teachers to try to increase the amount of English lesson time

spent communicating in English and to have more fully utilised the NET (Native-speaking English

Teacher). Several years previously, Hong Kong government aided schools, such as the case study

school, were permitted to employ up to two NETs. Government policy had since limited funding for

NETs to one per school. A policy of not only permitting but encouraging schools to employ two or

more NETs would help enhance the English language environment of the school and also have offered

great potential for encouraging in students an intrinsic motivation, indeed, even a real need for

communicating and learning in English.

<u>6-10</u>: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English through learning English pronunciation* (a theme also found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Pronunciation.
> Researcher: Learning pronunciation?
> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: Yes.

This may at first seem like a strange response to the researcher's question "What is your favourite way of learning English?" if it were not for the underlying inference that she favoured learning English through taking part in English language conversations or watching English films or TV for example. The identification of this theme points towards an intrinsic motivation for learning English for actual communication. Therefore, students who favoured this way of learning English preferred learning English for communication so watching English through films or chatting to native-speakers of English should have had high potential for more fully engaging students in the English language learning process in and outside of the English language classroom and were likely to be successful ways of encouraging English learning.

<u>6-11</u>: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to *learn English through activities conducted in English* (a theme also found in approximately 6% or 2 of 32 source files).

> 5 Maple* Class Girl through Interpreter: To join activities which are related to English.

This theme, although only prevalent in two source files was noteworthy because it highlighted some students' preference for learning English through activities. Except for English SBA (School-based Assessment) few English language based activities for Secondary 5 students were observed at the

case study school in or outside of English lessons. Therefore, there was much untapped potential for

improving students' intrinsic motivation to learn English through including more English language

activities in English lessons specifically and in the school more generally in the form of extra-

curricular activities.

Comparison Group of Secondary 6 English Students

<u>6-1a</u>: The most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to *learn*

English through watching movies, TV dramas or other TV programmes (a theme found in

approximately 83% or 15 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: My favourite way of learning English is to watch movies because I think it
> is more attractive and interesting.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I also think seeing a movie is my favourite way to learn English because
> the English teacher will teach the vocabulary in the movie.

This was also the most prevalent way of learning English amongst the Secondary 5 students.

Reasons given for favouring this way of learning English included that it was more interesting than

the *status quo* English grammar and vocabulary focused English lessons that these students were

more accustomed to.

<u>6-1b</u>: A closely related theme was to *learn English through watching the TV news* (a theme found

in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I will watch TV news to learn English because I can listen to more English
> and learn more words.

The identification of this theme suggested that it had potential for encouraging student intrinsic

motivation and interest in English learning through teaching English through interesting mediums such

as watching TV that also broaden students' local and international current affairs and cultural

knowledge base. Therefore, including this way of learning English in some English lessons could have

contributed to making English lessons more interesting for students.

6-2: The second most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to

learn English through English songs (a theme found in approximately 67% or 12 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: My favourite way of learning English is learning English with entertainment.
> For example, listening to some music.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: I like to listen to English music because I like the music because music
> can make me relaxed then I can turn my hobby into a learning way.

Learning English through songs was favoured because it was entertaining; a hobby; relaxing; and

interesting. Utilitarian reasons for preferring to learn English in this way included that it was a

good way of learning new English words and that it could also improve English listening and

speaking skills.

6-3: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English*

through speaking English (a theme found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: My favourite way to learn English is when I can talk … if I can speak
> English well it can improve my confidence.

Learning English through speaking English was favoured by one girl because it could help her

improve her confidence in speaking English. The underlying inference being that these students

would prefer more opportunities in their English lessons to practise communicating through English,

particularly through English conversations.

6-4: Another preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English*

through reading books (a theme found in approximately 17% or 3 of 18 source files).

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: … read the storybook for the children.

> 6 Willow* Class Girl: My favourite way to learn English is to read different kinds of English

books because I can learn some useful vocabulary from the books.

Reading English books was preferred by one student for the utilitarian reason that it was a good way of learning new English words. Reading a children's storybook was another student's favourite way of learning English Therefore, encouraging an interest in reading English books for pleasure could have had high potential for enhancing existing intrinsic motivation for learning English through reading.

6-5: The fifth most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to *learn English via the Internet such as through watching YouTube or reading English online* (a theme found in approximately 11% or 2 of 18 source files).

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: Watching the YouTube in the internet and I like sports and also I always go on the internet to watch the highlight of the games. I will try to understand what the men say. It's my favourite way.

> 6 Poplar* Class Boy: I surf on the internet so I can learn many English words … as well as the English.

Some students favoured learning English via the Internet because it offered the opportunity for students to learn English through watching or reading content in English that they were interested in. For this reason alone, this medium obviously offered enormous potential for enhancing student interest in learning English. Tapping into this interest in surfing the Net by learning English through online content more frequently in English lessons and for homework, as was already occasionally done by some teachers at the case study school, could have had a high potential for encouraging the development of an intrinsic motivation for learning English.

Secondary 5 Themes	Secondary 6 Themes
A summary of the main themes from prompt 6 eliciting Secondary 5 students' preferred learning styles by asking what was their favourite way of learning English.	A summary of the main themes from prompt 6 eliciting Secondary 6 students' preferred learning styles by asking what was their favourite way of learning English.
6-1: Learn English through watching movies, films or TV (a theme found in 19 of 32 source files [59%]).	**6-1a: Learn English through watching movies, TV dramas or other TV programmes** (a theme found in 15 of 18 source files [83%]).
6-2: Learn English through English songs (a theme found in 14 of 32 source files [44%]).	**6-1b: Learn English through watching the TV news** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [28%]).
6-3: Learn English through reading (a theme found in 8 of 32 source files [25%]).	**6-2: Learn English through English songs** (a theme found in 12 of 18 source files [67%]).
6-4: Learn English through English games (a theme found in 8 of 32 source files [25%]).	**6-3: Learning through speaking English** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
6-5: Learn English through memorising English vocabulary and grammar (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	**6-4: Learning English through reading books** (a theme found in 3 of 18 source files [17%]).
6-6: Learn English through drama (a theme found in 6 of 32 source files [19%]).	**6-5: Learn English via the Internet such as through watching You tube or reading English online** (a theme found in 2 of 18 source files [11%]).
6-7: Learn English through dictation or spelling (a theme found in 3 of 32 source files [9%]).	
6-8: Learn English with the help of English teachers (a theme found in 3 of 32 source files [9%]).	
6-9: Learn English through talking with foreigners (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	
6-10: Learning English through learning English pronunciation (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	
6-11: Learn English through activities conducted in English (a theme found in 2 of 32 source files [6%]).	

KEY: Underlined purple print = Prompt 6 themes unique to one group. **Underlined red print** = Prompt 6 themes that occur in both groups

This arrow indicates a near match between themes.   This arrow indicates an exact match between themes.

Figure 6.6   Comparative summary of the themes from Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English student responses to semi-structured group interview prompt 6

Prompt 6 Theme Comparison and Summary

A comparison of each group's themes suggested that many themes were either the same or very similar only differing in their degree of prevalence in and across each group.   However, there was one noteworthy theme that was only identified from the Secondary 6 English student group and several more noteworthy themes that were only identified from the Secondary 5 English student group.

The fifth most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 6 English students was to learn

English via the Internet such as through watching YouTube or reading English online. It should also

be noted that these students were also required to do some self-access online English learning. This

experience may have heightened some Secondary 6 students' awareness of the benefits of learning

English online.

The fourth most common preferred learning style amongst Secondary 5 English students was to

learn English through English games. It should be noted that the most commonly mentioned game was

scrabble and that this game was available in a multifunction room which also doubled as the school's

English Corner. Other preferred learning styles amongst Secondary 5 English students included to

learn or memorise English vocabulary or grammar; learn English through dictation or spelling; learn

English with the help of English teachers and learn English through learning English pronunciation. It

would seem very likely, given what was observed during Secondary 5 English lessons, that some

Secondary 5 students' preference for these learning styles reflected how they were taught in some of

their English lessons. Two other preferred learning styles amongst some Secondary 5 English students

were to learn English through drama and learn English through activities conducted in English. There

was little, if any, evidence from either Secondary 5 English lesson observations or teacher or student

interviews that suggested that these were regular English lesson activities. However, it was clear that

at least some Secondary 5 students at the case study school preferred to learn English in these ways.

In short, the preferred learning styles that were only identified amongst the Secondary 5 students,

that is, learn English through: games; memorising; vocabulary and grammar; drama; dictation or

spelling with the help of English teachers; and pronunciation, seemed to reflect and be highly

influenced by Secondary 5 students' previous English learning experiences at the case study school.

Hence, these themes did not seem to be instances of positive or negative washback from the new

English examination. However, an awareness of the possibility of being able to learn English through

drama or other English language activities may have been enhanced through preparation for the new

English exam given that the new English exam explicitly included English through drama as an elective

and English SBA (School-based Assessment) also explicitly required English language activities.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from and included discussion of data collected from interviews

with English students. Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English students were interviewed. The

following chapter presents the results from and includes discussion of data collected from a

questionnaire that was given to all Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English students at the case study

school.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: Survey of English Students

Introduction

This chapter presents results from and includes discussion of data collected from a questionnaire

that was given to all Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students at the case study school. Three sets of data

are presented alongside each other. The first data set comes from regular Secondary 5 students. The

second data set comes from Secondary 5 repeater students. The third data set comes from Secondary

6 students. Every Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 student completed a questionnaire.

7.1 *Washback on English Students (from Quantitative Data)*

A questionnaire was used to conduct a complete census of the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6

student population who regularly attended classes at the case study secondary school. The data set

consisted of 256 student cases that may be divided into three main groups: 172 regular Secondary 5

students; 33 Secondary 5 repeaters; and 51 Secondary 6 students.

It should be noted that the scope of the statistical analysis of each group of English students'

questionnaire responses does not include any comparative statistical analysis since it would be

impossible to control for any known (or unknown) extraneous confounding variables. For example,

from within the context of the case study school, on the one hand, the Secondary 5 students except for

the Secondary 5 repeaters' class were a fairly comprehensive group, both in terms of their academic

performances and levels of English language proficiency; on the other hand, the Secondary 6 students

were an elite group, both in terms of their academic performances and levels of English language

proficiency since approximately half of the Secondary 6 students were drawn from the best

academically performing 20% of the previous academic year's Secondary 5 students at the case study

school which was a Chinese medium of instruction (CMI) school and approximately half drawn from

Secondary 5 graduate students from other, usually higher academically performing, neighbouring

secondary schools. Pie charts: in Figure 4.l on page 63; Figure 4.2 on page 64; Figure 4.3 on page 70;

Figure 4.4 on page 76; Figure 4.5 on page 81; Figure 4.6 on page 83; and Figure 4.7 on page 90 detail

the English language proficiency levels achieved by each class of students.

The research design was as outlined below.

- Non-experimental: Each group of student participants were samples of convenience, albeit a

  complete census of Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students, from one case study school.

  Furthermore, known differences between the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 student groups,

  particularly the differing levels of academic performance and English proficiency and the

  likelihood of other unknown lurking extraneous confounding variables completely ruled out

  any possibility of treating the Secondary 6 students as a control group that could be

  statistically compared to either of the Secondary 5 groups of students.

- Dual: Two parallel case studies were conducted, at the same case study school, in order to

  explore the washback effects of a new English examination on Secondary 5 students (Case

  Study A); and the washback effects of an old English examination on Secondary 6 Students

  (Case Study B).

- Case study: The case study was an in-depth exploration of washback phenomena from a new

  (Case Study A) and an old (Case Study B) English examination.

A visual and descriptive comparison of questionnaire response data from each of the three groups of student participants was cross-checked with qualitative data. Meanwhile, the scope of the statistical analysis was limited to and focused on parallel statistical explorations of relationships between variables of interest within each unique group of student participants in order to assist answering key research questions. PASW Statistics SPSS version 18 was used to assist with this analysis.

7.2 *Washback on English Students (Inferences from Quantitative Data)*

There were seven questionnaire items (12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 23-9) that surveyed for washback from the high-stakes English examination that each group of students was preparing for. A further two questionnaire items (17 and 23-10) surveyed for impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment).
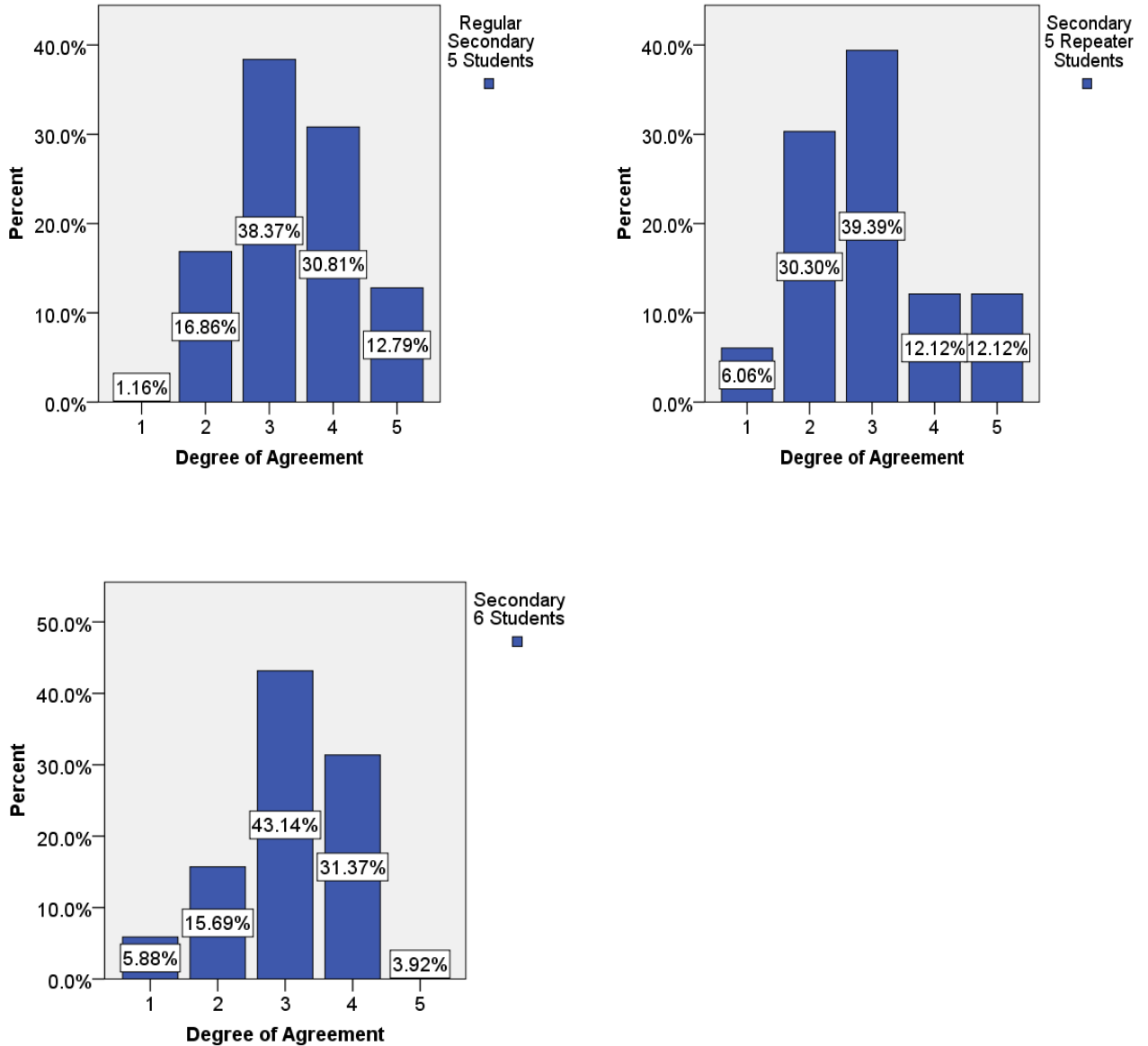
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.1 **Familiarity with <u>format</u> of English examination.** Student responses to "You are familiar with the <u>format</u> of your final end of school English examination" (questionnaire item 12).

As shown in Figure 7.1, a high percentage of students from each of the groups rated their

familiarity with the *format* of their final end of school English examination "Neutral". This tendency

when cross-checked with qualitative data from student and teacher interviews and classroom

observations suggested not only a high degree of uncertainty about the *format* of the new 2012

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HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination that

Secondary 5 students were preparing for, but also, and perhaps more surprisingly, considering the

long running duration of this testing regime over many years, a high degree of uncertainty about the

format of the old 2012 HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English

examination that Secondary 6 students were preparing for in November, 2010 when this research data

was collected.

Qualitative data from all English teachers who taught Secondary 5 students from when these

students were in Secondary 4 onwards suggested that Secondary 5 English teachers had only really

started teaching materials that specifically focused on their students' public English examination, the

new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination,

when their students commenced Secondary 5, from September, 2010 onwards, by which time one

academic year of the three academic year course had already been completed. For example, the

Secondary 5 teacher of Secondary 5 Cedar* Class reluctantly admitted that "…some teachers

[including herself] use their old certificate ones…" referring to the teaching materials that some

Secondary 5 English teachers used when their students were still in Secondary 4 (See page 109). The

teacher of Secondary 5 Palm* Class also somewhat reluctantly admitted that "We just focus on the

past papers or the textbooks . . . from the old syllabus" when her students were is Secondary 4 (See

page 104). Another Secondary 5 teacher, the teacher of Oak* Class quite candidly stated that "Last

year [when her students were in Secondary 4] we used some of the 'used' materials." referring to

teaching materials originally designed to prepare students for the old HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate

of Education Examination) English Language examination (See page 114). The Secondary 5 teacher

of Elm* Class and Maple* Class also quite candidly acknowledged that when her students were in

Secondary 4 she basically just did the same thing as she did for the old syllabus (See pages 99 &

101).

All Secondary 5 English teachers had continued to use some of their old HKCEE

(Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination based worksheets

and other related teaching materials when their students were in Secondary 4, from September, 2009

to July, 2010, rather than immediately starting to use worksheets and other related teaching materials

specifically based on the new HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

examination. Therefore, the high percentage of uncertainty amongst Secondary 5 students about the

format of their final end of school English examination, in November, 2010, when the questionnaire

data was collected, was not all that surprising.

Furthermore, Qualitative data from Secondary 5 students also suggested that these students tended

to know just a few things about the *format* of the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of

Secondary Education) English Language examination (See **2-2**, page 156).

It should be emphasised that the group with the highest percentage of students familiar with the

format of their English examination were the Secondary 5 repeaters' class. Qualitative data

suggested at least four reasons for this. Firstly, there were more students who were highly motivated

to learn English in this group since they had gone to the trouble of finding a new school that offered a

Secondary 5 repeaters' class. Secondly, these students tended to have a higher level of English than

the other Secondary 5 students particularly if they had come from an EMI (English Medium of

Instruction) school. Thirdly, these students tended to have higher academic ability than the other

Secondary 5 students having mostly come from other schools where student academic performance

was higher than at the case study school.   Fourthly, these students were about one year older than the

other Secondary 5 students due to the fact that they were now studying at this year level for a second

time.

As for the Secondary 6 students, qualitative data suggested that Secondary 6 English teachers

started explicitly teaching towards their students' public English examination, the 2012 HKALE Use

of English examination, at the commencement of Secondary 6, from September, 2010 onwards,

which was at the beginning of the two academic year course. Secondary 6 English teachers had only

taught about two months of English lessons to their new Secondary 6 students by the time students

completed the questionnaire and took part in interviews so had not as yet had much time to explicitly

familiarise their students with each question type in each of the five Use of English papers that they

needed to prepare students for.
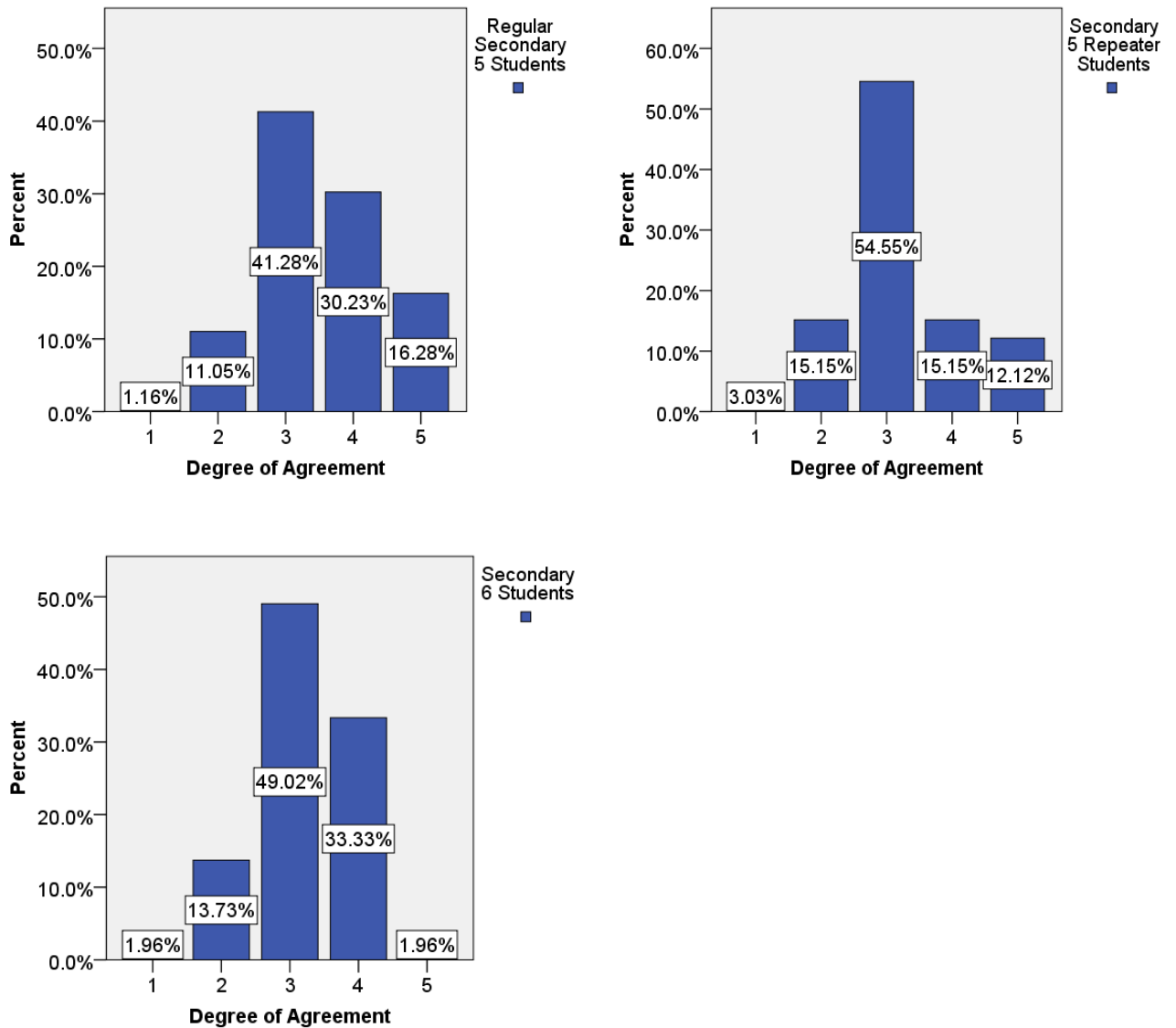
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.2 **Familiarity with <u>content</u> of English examination.** Student responses to "You are familiar with the <u>content</u> of your final end of school English examination" (questionnaire item 13).

As shown in Figure 7.2, the responses for questionnaire item 13 surveyed student familiarity with

the *content* of the English examination prepared for and responses indicated that students were at least

as unfamiliar about what *content* to expect in their respective final English examinations as they were

about the *format* of each examination. Student responses to questionnaire item 13 suggested that

227

Secondary 5 students tended to be uncertain about what kind of *content* to expect in the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination. Perhaps

more surprisingly, Secondary 6 students were also uncertain about what kind of *content* to expect in

the old 2012 HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination.

Comparatively slightly lower percentages of regular Secondary 5 students were familiar with the

content than the *format* of the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

Language examination. Qualitative data from Secondary 5 students supported this tendency.

(See **2-2,** page 156).   Likewise, lower percentages of Secondary 5 repeater students were familiar

with the *content* than the *format* of the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education)

English Language examination. Furthermore, slightly lower percentages of Secondary 6 students

were familiar with the *content* than the *format* of the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level

Examination) Use of English examination.

Qualitative data suggested that while students could easily become familiar with the *format* of

either English examination it was not so easy to become familiar with the *content* of either English

examination. Students could familiarise themselves with the *format* of the English examination

prepared for, when or if they wanted to, through the study of textbooks that were based around each

English examination or through studying the one set of specimen papers for the new 2012 HKDSE

English Language examination or through studying the many sets of past papers for the old HKALE

(Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination that all closely resembled

the *format* of each English examination and these resources were readily available to students at the

case study school by the time the research data was being collected in November, 2010. It was not so

easy for students to become familiar with the *content* of the English examination prepared for because

the *content* of each examination would be unique and unknown to students and all others (except of

course for the English test item writers themselves who nevertheless must maintain strict

confidentiality) prior to the actual English examination.

Qualitative data suggested that the *content* of either English examination was correctly perceived

by students as being broadly selected from local Hong Kong current affairs as reported daily in the

local Hong Kong English language media (For Secondary 5 see **2-2** page 156 and for Secondary 6

see **2-1** page 161).

Students, or at least their English teachers, would need to monitor the various local media daily in

order to be certain of successfully familiarising themselves with all possible sources of English

examination *content*. Therefore it was not surprising that student responses indicated lower

percentages of students being familiar with the *content* compared to the *format* of the final English

examination prepared for.
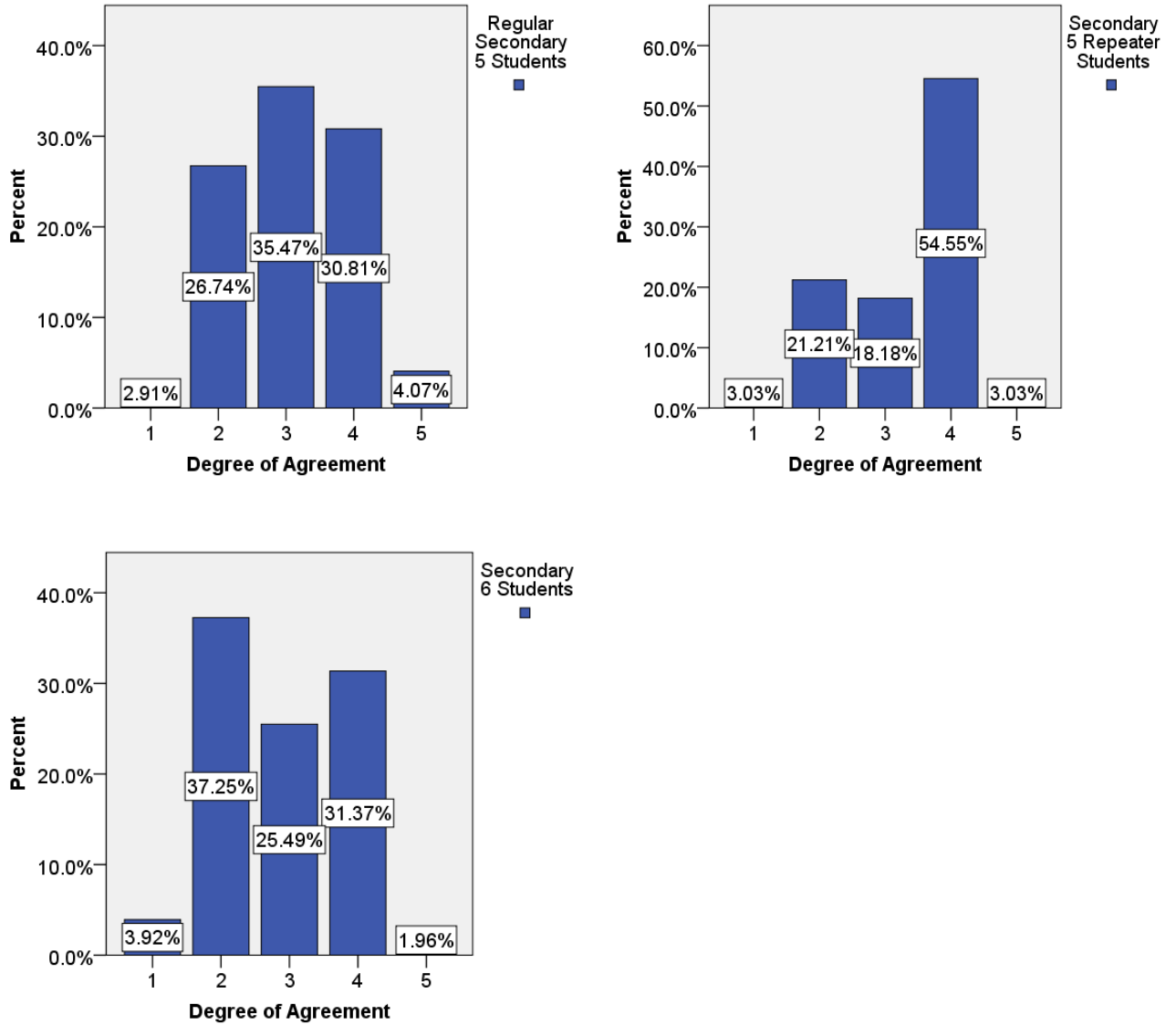
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.3 **Narrowing of curriculum content caused by preparing for the English examination.** Student responses to **"**You only study what content you think will be tested in your final end of school English examination" (questionnaire item 14).

As shown in Figure 7.3, questionnaire item 14 surveyed for any narrowing of the curriculum

caused by preparing only for the *content* expected to be tested in each English examination.

Responses suggested that there was more narrowing of the curriculum caused by the old 2012

HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination than the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination. Qualitative

data suggested that the large body of past papers available for the old HKALE ((Hong Kong

Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination compared to only one set of specimen

papers available for the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English

Language examination at the case study school at the time the research data was being collected in

November, 2010, made it more difficult for students preparing for the new 2012 HKDSE

(Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination to predict what

content to expect (For Secondary 5 see **2-2** page 156 and for Secondary 6 see **2-1** page 161).

Secondary 5 repeater responses to questionnaire item 14 suggested that many of these students

were aware of the dangers of preparing too narrowly for a high-stakes English examination and of the

need to prepare thoroughly. For example, many Secondary 5 repeaters perceived that they were not

limiting themselves to studying only what *content* they thought might be tested in the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination.   This may

be attributed to their unsuccessful attempt at a recent high-stakes English test. During the previous

academic year, these students prepared for and attempted the now discontinued old end of Secondary

5, 2010 HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination) English Language examination.
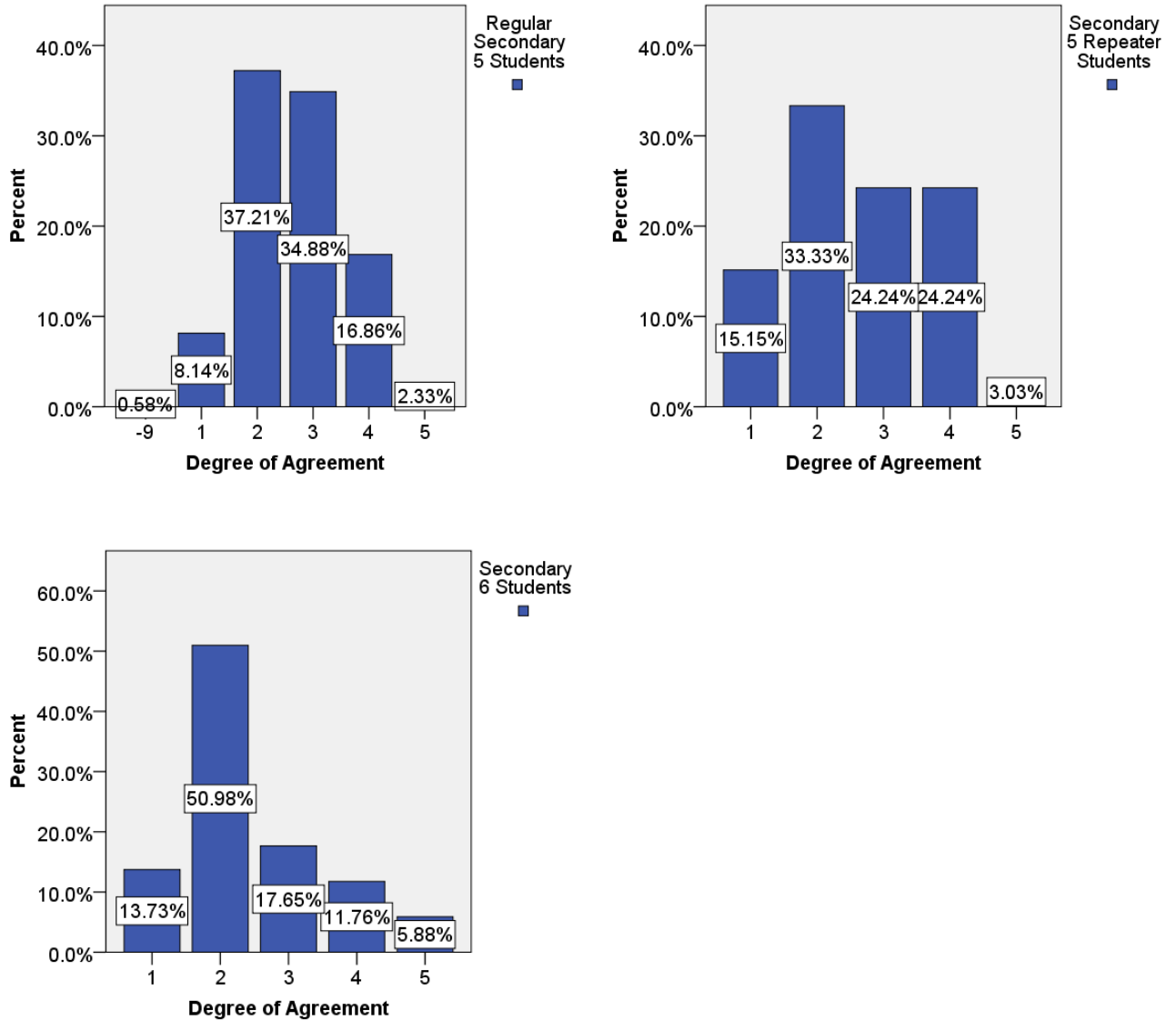
Legend:

(-9) Missing Value; (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.4 **English examination's effect on how English is studied.** Student responses to "How you study English has been affected by your final end of school English examination" (questionnaire item 15).

As shown in Figure 7.4, questionnaire item 15 surveyed for English examination washback on

how students studied. A considerably higher percentage of Secondary 5 students agreed that how

they studied English was affected by the English examination prepared for than disagreed. This was

particularly evident after combining the "Strongly Agree" with the "Agree" category and combining

the "Disagree" with the "Strongly Disagree" category. A combined total of 45.35% of regular

Secondary 5 students either agreed or strongly agreed compared to 19.19% who either disagreed or

strongly disagreed. Also, a combined total of 48.48% of Secondary 5 repeater students either agreed

or strongly agreed compared to 27.27% who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Secondary 6

student responses suggested that English examination washback on study was strongest for this group

of students who were preparing for the old HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination)

Use of English examination since a combined total of 64.71% either agreed or strongly agreed

compared to 17.64% who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, there was also a high

degree of uncertainty given that the second highest rating response of the five possible responses was

"Neutral" in all three groups.

Qualitative data suggested that washback was strongest for examination items that students were

most familiar with (For Secondary 5 see **2-2** page 156 and for Secondary 6 see **2-1** page 161).

Once again, the substantial body of past papers available for the old HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced

Level Examination) Use of English examination compared to the one set of specimen papers

available – at the time research data was being collected in November, 2010 for the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination coupled with

the fact that the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination

was a long running examination while the 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary

Education) English Language examination was a new - and at the time research data was being

collected in November, 2010 - yet to be administered examination suggested that the overall

washback effect gradually increased over the life of an English examination as teachers and students

became more familiar with the specifications of the English examination prepared for. However, it

should be noted that qualitative data suggested a more rapid and stronger washback effect from some

kinds of testing items than others. For example, preparing for the new 'Learning English through…'

electives which were the only testing items in the new testing regime to be perceived by English

teachers at the case study school as being uniquely new elicited strong beneficial washback. It should

be noted here that preparing for and doing English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks also had a

strong beneficial impact. However, even beneficial washback from the new electives took one year,

or about one third of the way through the available preparation time, to occur. This may be explained

by the fact that the teachers had previously only experienced giving students two years of preparation

towards a high-stakes English test or that in this case study school English test washback only

gradually increased to an explicitly detectable level from two year's out from the actual test prepared

for. Qualitative data also suggested that English examination washback gradually increased the

closer you got to the actual testing date.
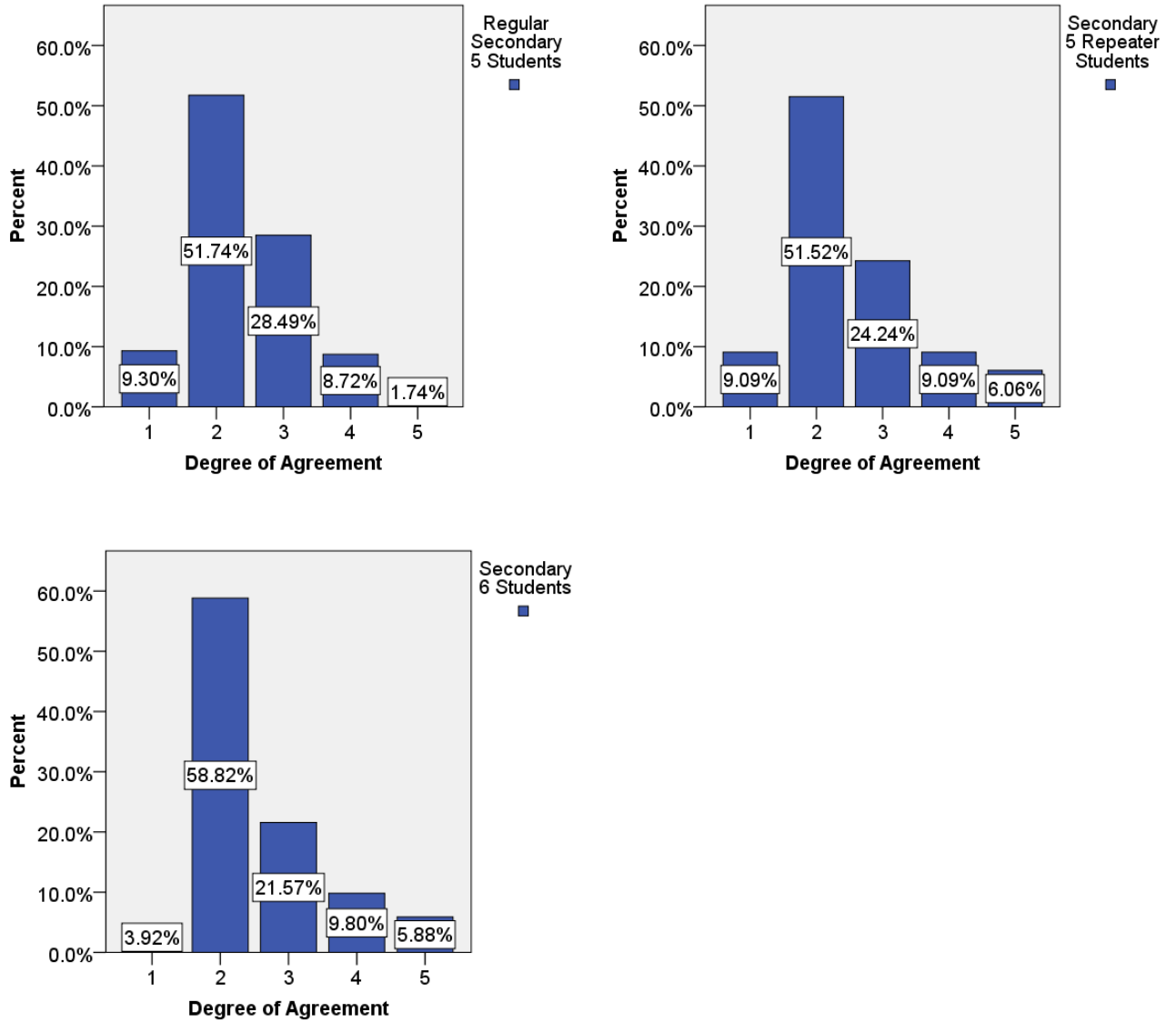
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.5 **English language proficiency improved while preparing for English examination.**

Student responses to **"**Preparing for your final end of school English examinations has helped you to improve your level of English language proficiency" (questionnaire item 16).

As shown in Figure 7.5, questionnaire item 16 surveyed for beneficial washback on the level of English language proficiency achieved. Responses suggested a tendency towards beneficial washback from each English examination prepared for that improved the level of English language

proficiency for all groups. For a small percentage of students in each group this beneficial tendency

was felt quite strongly. About one tenth of regular Secondary 5 students (9.30%) and Secondary 5

repeater students (9.09%) responded "Strongly Agree" to this questionnaire item compared to only

3.92% of Secondary 6 students. However, combining the "Strongly Agree" with the "Agree"

category revealed that overall there was little difference between groups with 61.04%, 60.61% and

62.74% of regular Secondary 5 students, Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students,

respectively, either agreeing or strongly agreeing that preparing for their final end of school English

examinations had helped them to improve their level of English language proficiency. Therefore,

preparing for both English examinations was perceived by just under two thirds of the students in

each student group as tending to help them improve their level of English proficiency.

It should be noted that around one quarter of regular Secondary 5 students (28.49%) and

Secondary 5 repeater students (24.24%) were uncertain about what role, if any, the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination played in

improving their English language proficiency. Likewise, around one fifth of Secondary 6 students

(21.57%) were uncertain about what role, if any, the old 2012 HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced

Level Examination) Use of English examination played in improving their English language

proficiency.

Furthermore, a comparatively low percentage of students 10.46%, 15.15% and 15.68 of regular

Secondary 5 students, Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students, respectively, felt that

their English language proficiency did not improve while preparing for their final English

examination. Although these percentages are low it was nevertheless noteworthy that a minority of

students in each student group felt that preparing for a high-stakes English language examination did

not improve their English language proficiency. In short, it showed that high-stakes English language

examination preparation was not universally perceived by students at the case study secondary school

as being beneficial for improving English language proficiency.
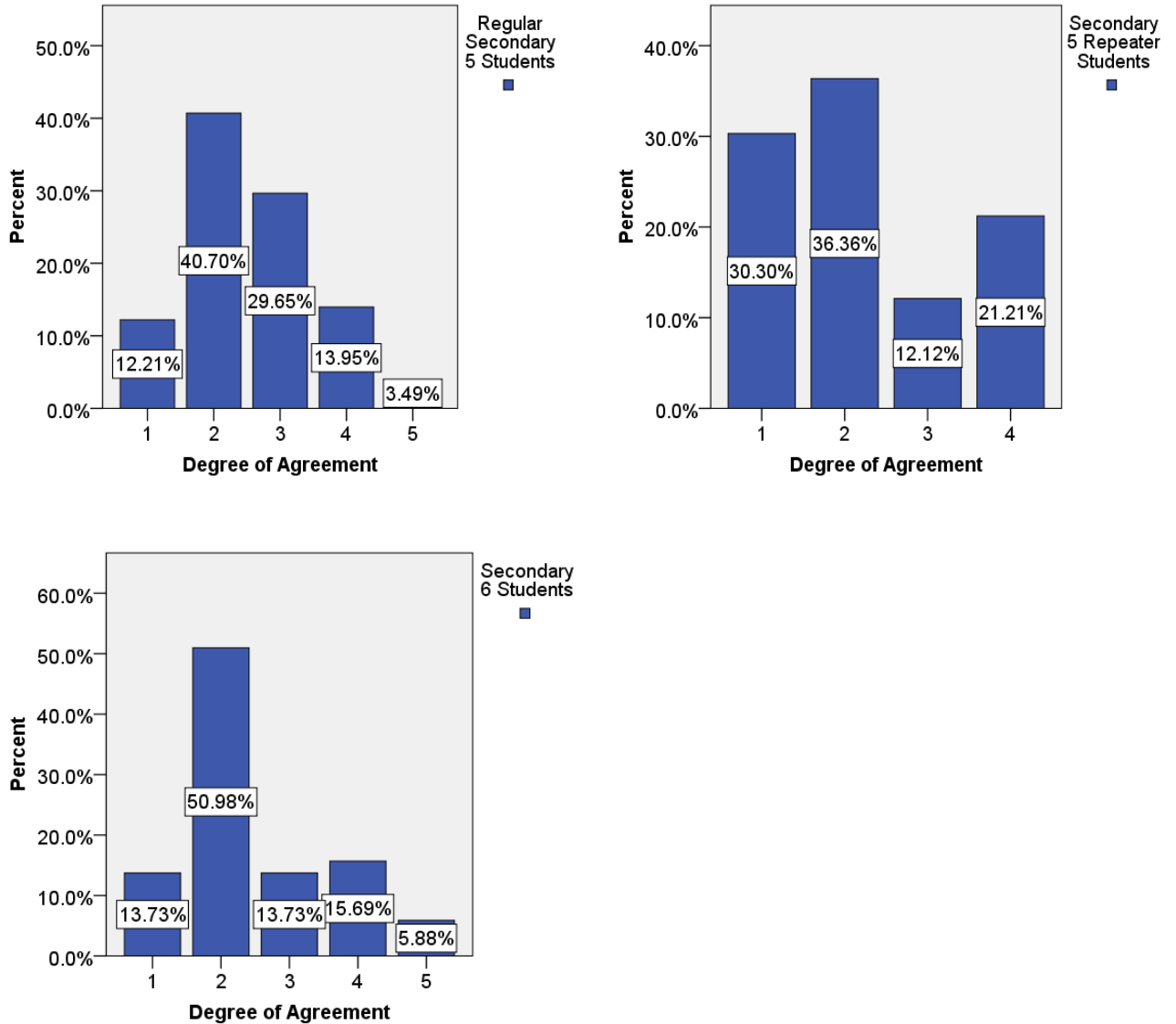
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.6 **English examination preparation is main motivation for learning English.** Student responses to "Now, you are mainly learning English in order to prepare for your final end of school English examinations" (questionnaire item 18).

As shown in Figure 7.6, questionnaire item 18 surveyed for beneficial washback on each student's

motivation to learn English. This kind of washback was most prevalent amongst Secondary 5

repeater students and the Secondary 6 students. This kind of washback was also prevalent amongst

regular Secondary 5 students but to a lesser degree.

Qualitative data strongly suggested that Secondary 5 students were not only learning English for their final end of school English examination, the new 2012 HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination but also for their future working life, socialising and communication, because English was an important or useful language, for knowledge or interest, or because it was compulsory. In fact, learning English for the final end of school English examination was the least prevalent reason for learning English across all Secondary 5 students (For Secondary 5 see **3-1** to **3-6** on pages 167 - 169).

Furthermore, qualitative data suggested that Secondary 6 students were not only learning English for their final end of school English examination, the old 2012 HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination but also for socialising and communication, because it was an important international language, for workplace communication, to help find a job and as part of education and knowledge. However, it should be noted that learning English for the English exam was a theme prevalent across one third (33.33%) of Secondary 6 interview source files compared to roughly about half that prevalence across all of Secondary 5 source files (18.75%) (For Secondary 5 see **3-6** on page 169 and for Secondary 6 see **3-4** on page 173).

A tendency for Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students to be the most motivated to try to gain a place in a university by gaining a high mark in their final English examination should also be noted. Differing degrees of motivation to learn English and different motivating reasons for learning English accounted for the variations in responses between and within groups for this questionnaire item.
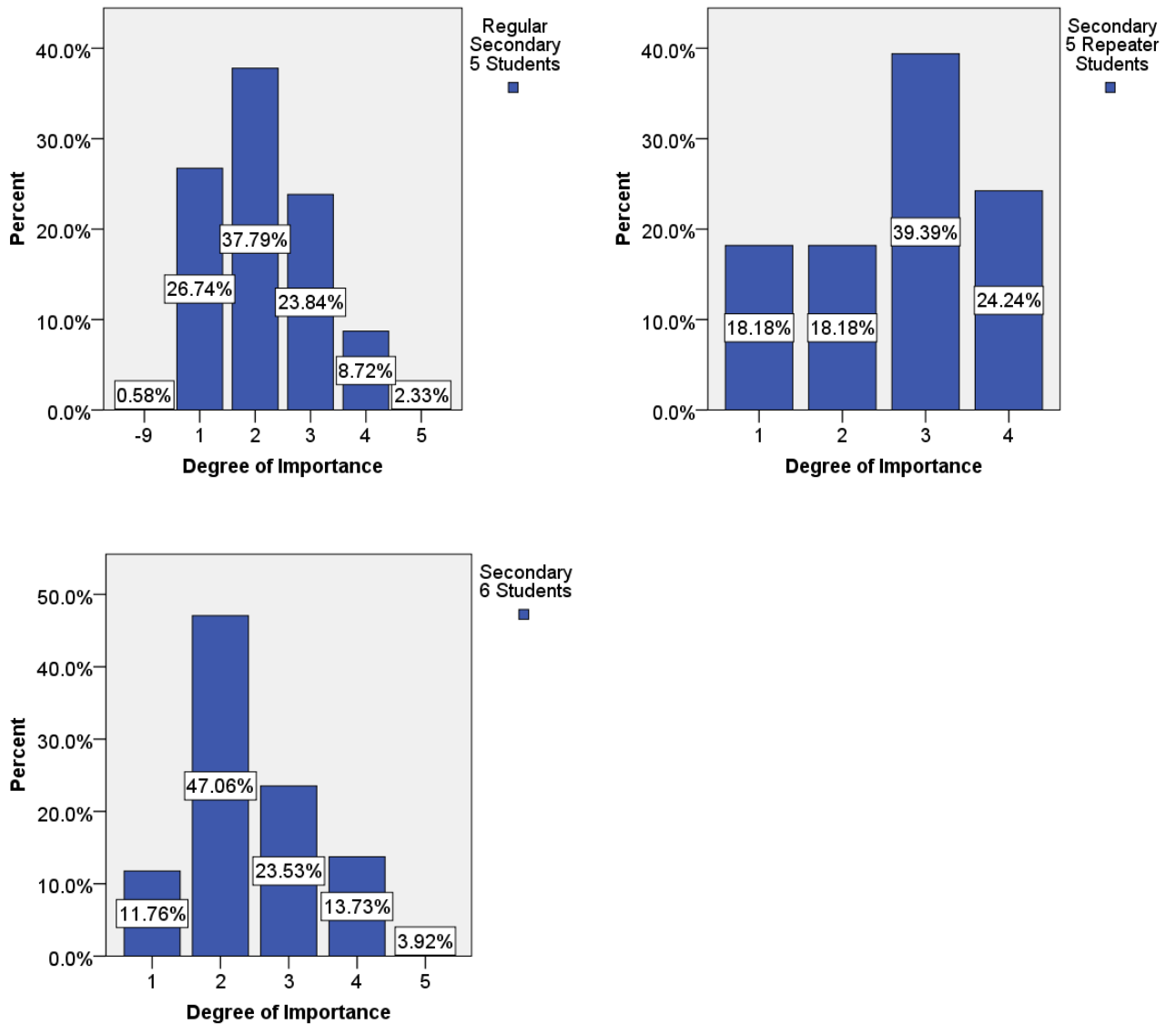
Legend:
(-9) Missing Value; (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.7 **English examination preparation is an important motivator for learning English.**
Student responses to "In regards to your own English learning experiences, how important do you think the following are for you to be a successful English learner?
☐   An important English examination to prepare for" (questionnaire item 23-9).

As shown in Figure 7.7, questionnaire item 23-9 surveyed how important each student thought

preparing for an important English examination was to be a successful English learner from their own

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experiences. Regular Secondary 5 students were the most likely to be motivated to learn English by

preparing for an important English examination since just under two thirds of these students (64.53%)

either strongly agreed (26.74%) or agreed (37.79%) with this questionnaire item's question and

statement. The next most likely students to be motivated to learn English by preparing for an

important English examination were the Secondary 6 students since well over half (58.82%) either

strongly agreed (11.76%) or agreed (47.06%) with this questionnaire item's question and statement.

However, the Secondary 5 repeaters' responses greatest tendency was towards indecision since well

over one third (39.39%) rated this questionnaire item "Neutral". Qualitative data suggested that

Secondary 5 repeater students' previous experience of preparation for and attempting of a high-

stakes English examination, the old 2010 HKCEE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education

Examination) English Language examination and subsequent second attempt of a high-stakes English

examination through enrolling in the case study secondary school to prepare for the new 2012

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination accounted

for much of the higher percentage of indecision amongst Secondary 5 repeater students compared to

either the regular Secondary 5 students or the Secondary 6 students.
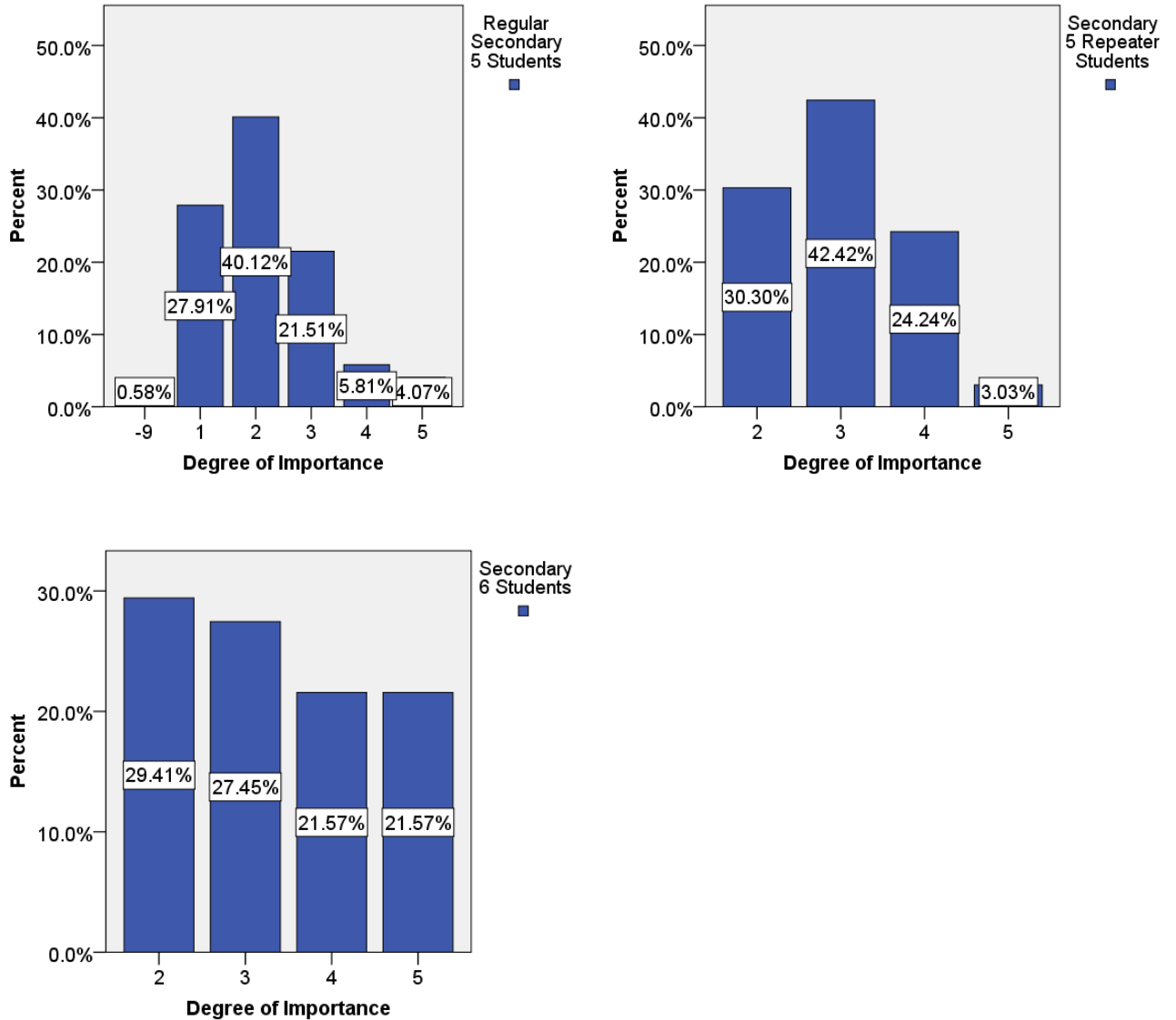
(-9) Missing Value; (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.8 **English SBA (School-based Assessment) is an important motivator for learning English.** Student responses to "In regards to your own English learning experiences, how important do you think the following are for you to be a successful English learner? ☐ School-based English assessments" (questionnaire item 23-10).

As shown in Figure 7.8, questionnaire item 23-10 surveyed how important each student

thought preparing for school-based English assessments was to be a successful English learner from

their own experiences. Results were quite mixed between each of the three groups. Just over

two thirds (68.03%) of regular Secondary 5 students either strongly agreed (27.91%) or agreed

(40.12%) that preparing for and doing English SBA (School-based Assessment) helped improve their

English compared to just under one tenth of regular Secondary 5 students (9.88%) who either

disagreed (5.81%) or strongly disagreed (4.07%). Furthermore, a slight tendency for Regular

Secondary 5 students to perceive more beneficial washback from English SBA (School-based

Assessment) on their level of English language proficiency (68.03%) than from regular examination

preparation classes (64.53%) according to a comparison of responses to questionnaire item 23-10 and

23-9 was noteworthy. Moreover, a comparison of responses to questionnaire items 17 and 23-9

which were displayed in Figure 4.15 and Figure 4.13 also confirmed a slight tendency for Regular

Secondary 5 students to perceive more beneficial washback from English SBA (School-based

Assessment) on their level of English language proficiency (66.86%) than from regular English

examination preparation classes (64.53%).

Qualitative data suggested that regular Secondary 5 students' overall lower level of English

compared to the Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students contributed to these

questionnaire response results. Since regular Secondary 5 students tended to have a lower level of

English language proficiency than the other two groups their English teachers also allocated more

class time for English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation. The time allocated was always

at least two weeks and could be up to four weeks leading up to the actual assessment. The Secondary

5 repeater students' class were allocated less class time to prepare for English SBA (School-based

Assessment) than the other Secondary 5 students since their higher level of English language

proficiency and higher academic ability level allowed them to prepare for English SBA (School-based Assessment) with less teacher-directed class time.

Secondary 6 students would have perceived this questionnaire item quite differently to the Secondary 5 students since there was no English SBA (School-based Assessment) marks that would count towards their final examination mark. For this reason it was not possible to make a meaningful comparison between Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 student responses to this questionnaire item. Nevertheless, Secondary 6 students had a tendency to perceive that preparing for the final English examination did more to help improve their level of English language proficiency than school-based English assessments. Qualitative data suggested that this was due to the high-stakes of the English examination prepared for compared to the low-stakes of the school-based assessment of English that took place during Secondary 6 and 7.
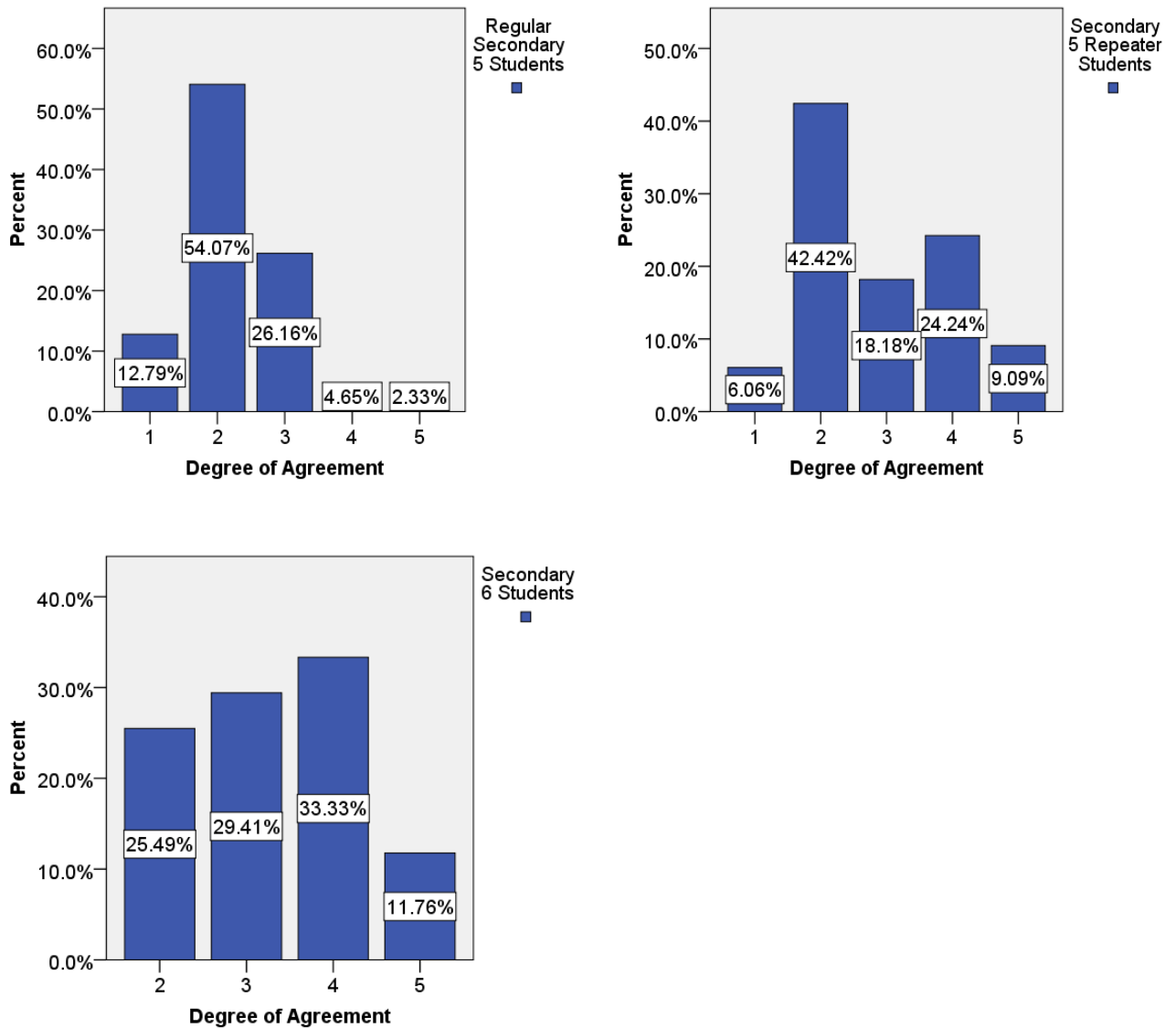
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.9 **English SBA (School-based Assessment) helps improve English.** Student responses to "In your opinion, preparing for and doing English school-based assessments helps you improve your English" (questionnaire item 17).

As shown in Figure 7.9, questionnaire item 17 surveyed for the extent to which students either

agreed or disagreed with the proposition that preparing for English SBA (School-based Assessment)

helped to improve their English in a way similar to but differently posed and nuanced than

questionnaire item 23-10 in Figure 7.8. As would be expected questionnaire item 17 elicited

comparably similar responses to those for questionnaire item 23-10. For reasons similar to those

discussed under questionnaire item 23-10, responses to questionnaire item 17 indicated that

regular Secondary 5 students have a slight tendency to consider English SBA (School-based

Assessment) as more beneficial in helping them become successful English learners than did the

Secondary 5 repeater students. Qualitative data suggested that this was because the regular

Secondary 5 English teachers not only allocated more English class time for English SBA (School-

based Assessment) than the Secondary 5 repeaters' English teacher did but also provided more

scaffolding throughout the preparatory stages of the task chain prior to the actual formal English SBA

(School-based Assessment) task performance.

Furthermore, as noted under discussions for questionnaire item 23-10, differences in the way

in which Secondary 6 students would have perceived English school-based assessment, given the

different context of school-based assessment for English in Secondary 6 and 7 where the marks were

not counted towards the final examination mark, no meaningful comparison between Secondary 5 and

Secondary 6 responses to this question were possible. Nevertheless, as also noted under discussions

for questionnaire item 23-10, Secondary 6 students had a stronger tendency to perceive that preparing

for the final English examination did more to help improve their level of English language

proficiency than school-based English assessments. Qualitative data suggested that this was due to

the high-stakes of the English test prepared for compared to the low-stakes of Secondary 6 and 7

school-based assessments of English.

7.3 *Impact of Other Identifiable Factors (Inferences from Quantitative Data)*
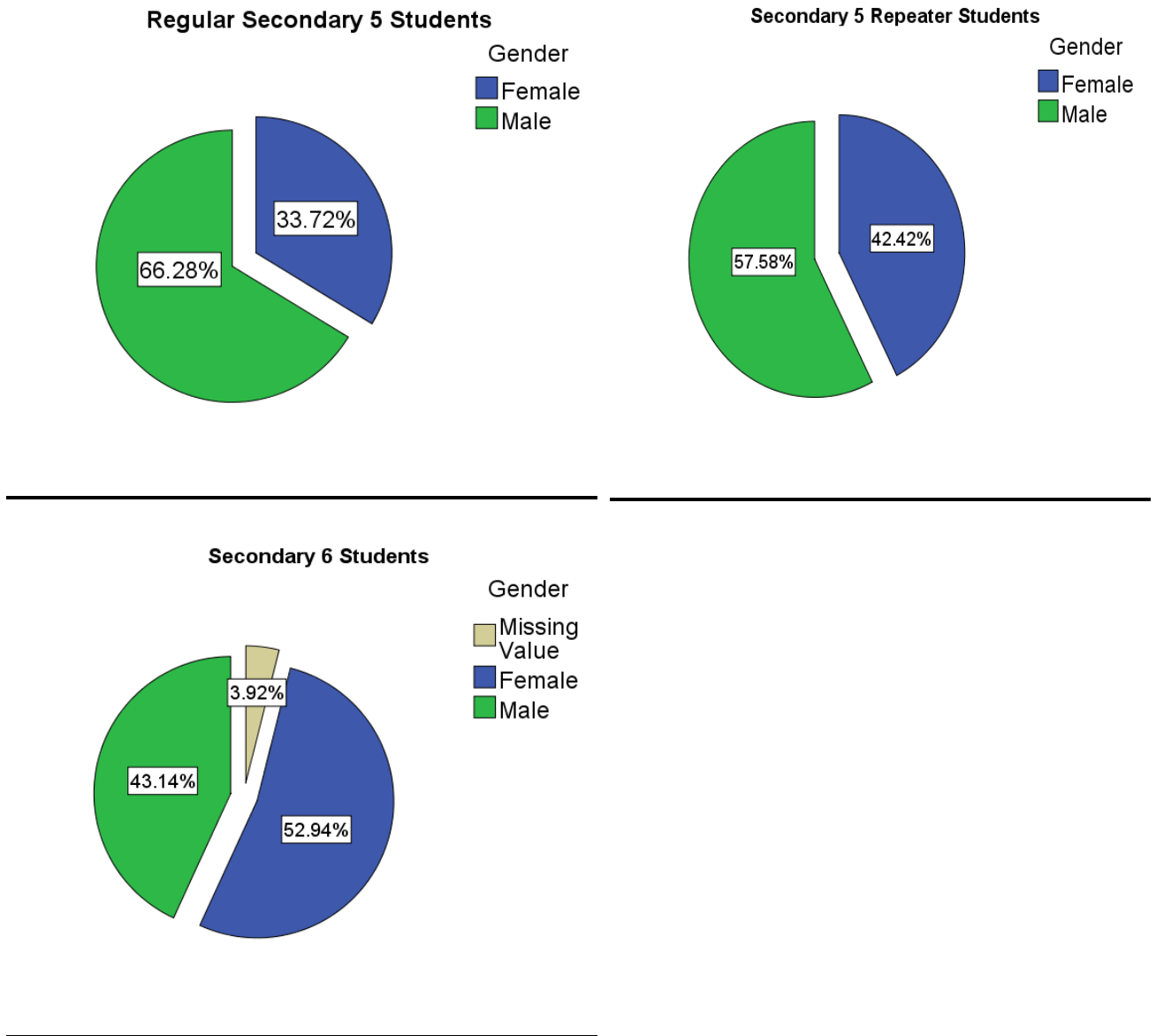
Figure 7.10 **Gender.** Student responses to "What is your gender?" (questionnaire item 1).

As shown in Figure 7.10, questionnaire item 1 surveyed student gender. On the one hand, Figure

4.16 shows that about two thirds of regular Secondary 5 students were male and about one third were

female and that there were also more males than females in the Secondary 5 repeater students' class.

On the other hand, Figure 7.10 shows that there were more females than males among Secondary 6

students. It was worth noting that the group of students with the best overall academic performance

and highest overall level of English language proficiency, that was the Secondary 6 Students, also had

the highest percentage of female students.
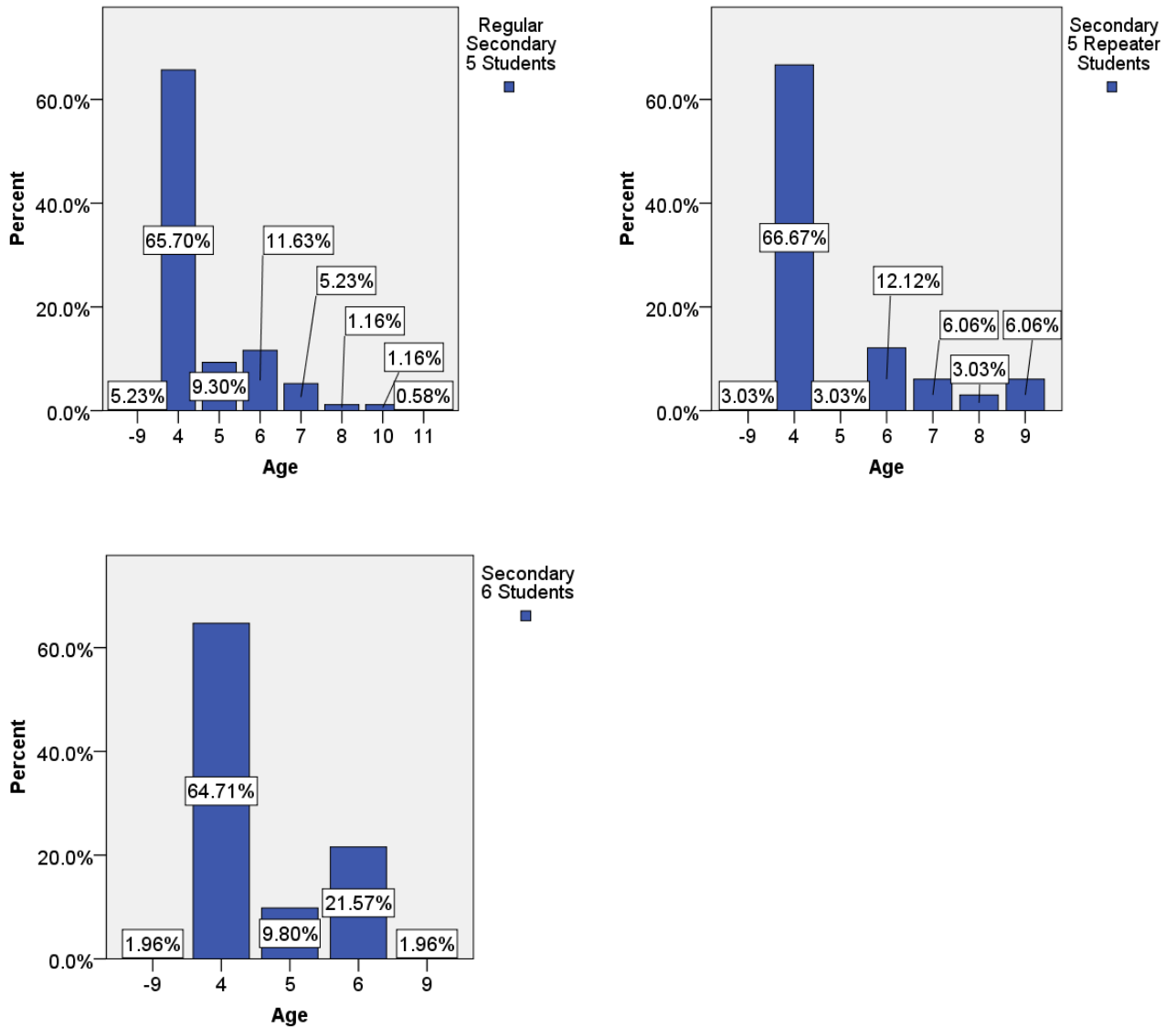
Legend: (– 9) Missing value. All other numbers indicate age in years.

Figure 7.11 **Age when regular English lessons commenced.** "Student responses to "How old were
you when you first began regular English lessons in a school?" questionnaire item 2.

As shown in Figure 7.11, about two thirds of all students recalled beginning their first regular

English lessons when they were four years old. It should be noted that some students migrated with

their families from Mainland China to Hong Kong at various ages possibly explaining why some

students did not recall beginning their first regular English lessons until they were older. It should

also be noted that some students, particularly some of the Secondary 6 students, may have interpreted

the questionnaire item's inclusion of the word 'school' in a way that excluded any consideration of

regular English lessons at pre-school. Finally, it should be noted that very few Secondary 6

students recalled starting regular English lessons any later than when they were 6 years old. Taking

into consideration the fact that the Secondary 6 students were about half drawn from approximately

the top academically performing 20% of the previous year's Secondary 5 students or about half drawn

from other neighbouring but higher academically performing schools it was not surprising that very

few Secondary 6 students commenced regular English study later than 6 years of age. However, the

data collected under questionnaire item two did seem to suggest the existence of an underclass of

students who commenced regular English studies later than their peers who also very rarely

progressed onto Secondary 6 study under the old examination system at the case study school.
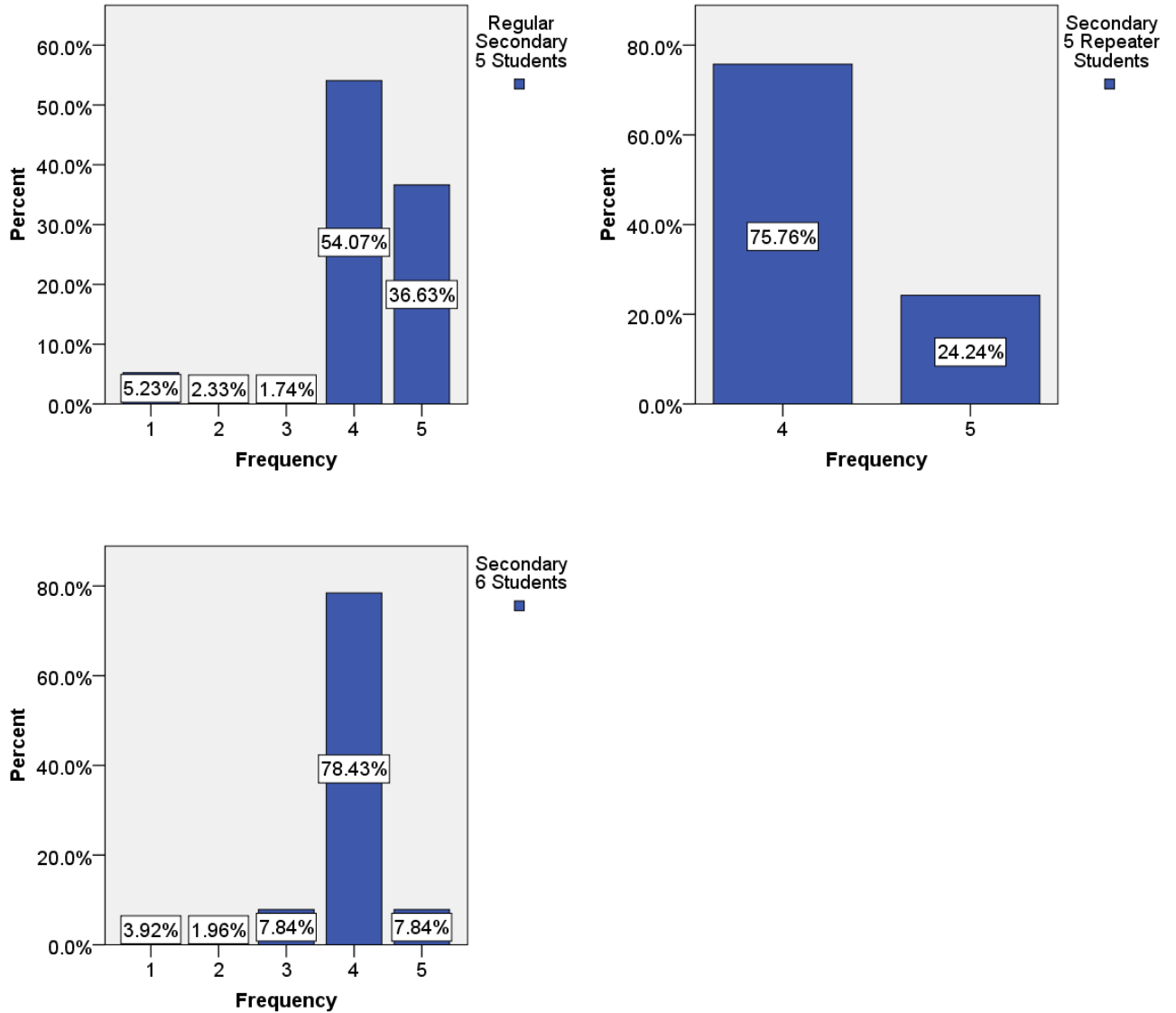
Legend: (1) All of the time; (2) Often; (3) About half of the time; (4) Sometimes; (5) None of the time

Figure 7.12 Linguistic environment: **Use of English between students and teachers.** Student responses to "You speak English with teachers outside of class at school" (questionnaire item 5).

As shown in Figure 7.12, Secondary 6 students were far more likely to sometimes use English

with teachers outside of class than regular Secondary 5 students. There were a few likely reasons for

this. Firstly, Secondary 6 students were taught half of their English lessons by a NET (Native-

speaking English Teacher). Secondly, the LET (Local English Teacher) who taught the other half of

their English lessons was observed using English to communicate with students not only inside the classroom during her formal English lessons but also outside the classroom after lesson time. Thirdly, Secondary 6 students tended to have a higher level of English language proficiency than Secondary 5 students.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that although Secondary 5 repeater students and Secondary 6 students had similar percentages of students who sometimes spoke English with teachers outside of class, there were far more Secondary 5 repeater students who never spoke English with teachers outside of class. This was most likely because the Secondary 5 repeater students did not have as many opportunities to interact with the NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) as the Secondary 6 students, during the first term of the school's 2010-2011 academic year, in Autumn, 2010, when the research data was collected.
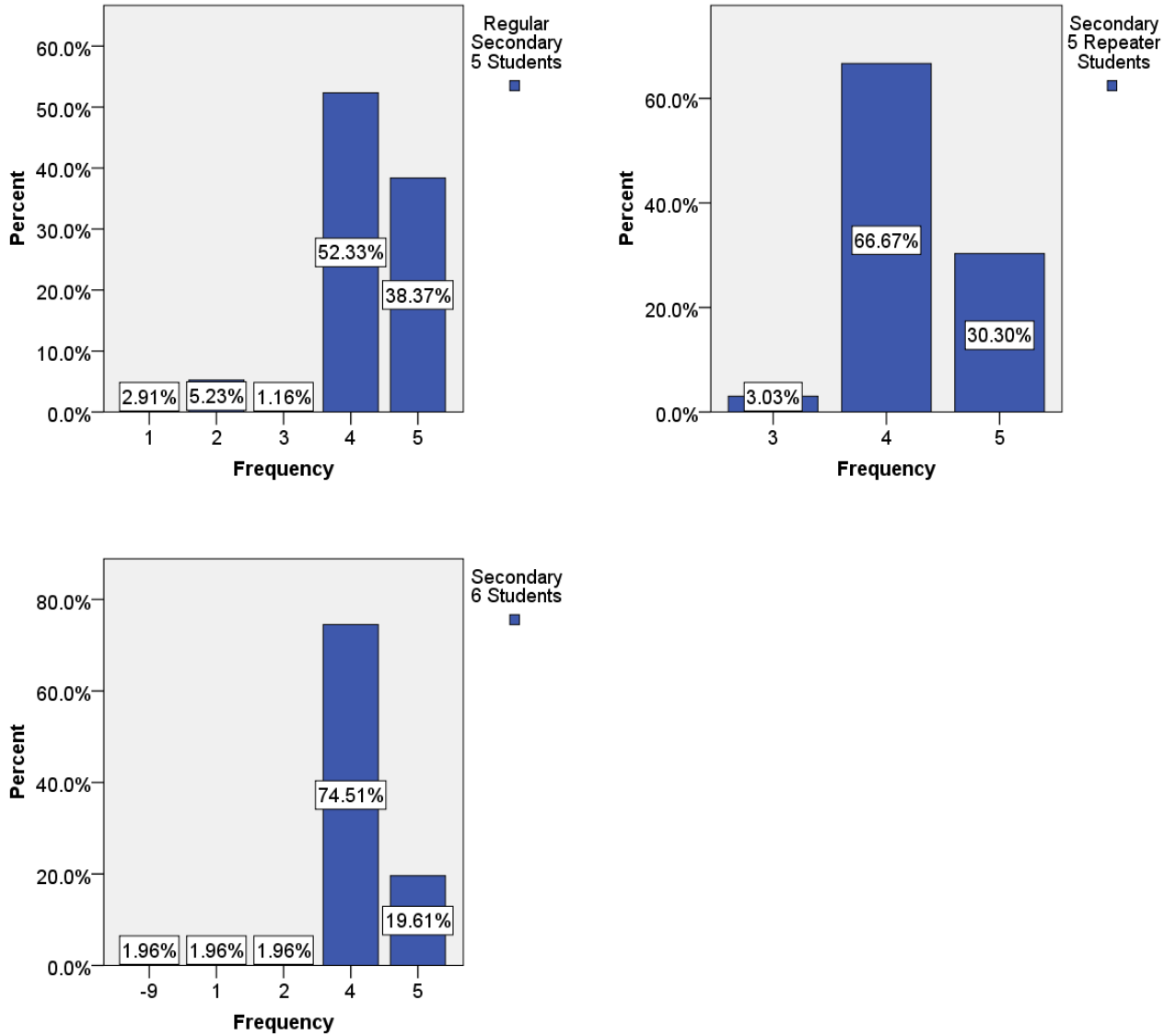
Legend: (1) All of the time; (2) Often; (3) About half of the time; (4) Sometimes; (5) None of the time

Figure 7.13   <u>Linguistic environment</u>: **Use of English between students.** Student responses to "You speak English with other students outside of class at school" (questionnaire item 6).

As shown in Figure 7.13, about three-quarters of Secondary 6 students, two-thirds of Secondary 5

repeater students and slightly over half of regular Secondary 5 students claimed to sometimes speak

English with other students outside of class at school. There were at least a few likely reasons why

Secondary 6 students reported a higher use of English with other students outside of class at school

than either of the other two student groups. Firstly, Secondary 6 students had regular after-school

English language tutorials with the case study secondary school's NET (Native-speaking English

Teacher) in the school's English Corner that focused on the Oral English examination paper. During

this English tutorial time students took part in group discussions in English with other students

outside of regular class at school. Secondly, the Secondary 6 students tended to have a higher level of

English language proficiency than either of the other two student groups which made speaking

English with other students outside of class at school a lot easier.

Regular Secondary 5 Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening		3.49	22.67	15.7	52.33	5.81
Speaking	1.16	3.49	9.3	4.07	67.44	14.53
Reading	1.16	5.23	9.3	12.21	54.65	17.44
Writing	1.16	1.74	15.7	11.63	55.23	14.53

Secondary 5 Repeater Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening		3.03	18.18	21.21	54.55	3.03
Speaking			3.03	3.03	81.82	12.12
Reading		3.03	12.12	12.12	60.61	12.12
Writing		3.03		6.06	72.73	18.18

Secondary 6 Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening		1.96	31.37	23.53	41.18	1.96
Speaking			3.92	7.84	78.43	9.8
Reading			11.76	27.45	58.82	1.96
Writing		3.92	7.84	27.45	49.02	11.76

Figure 7.14 Linguistic environment: **Use of English by students in daily life outside of school hours.** Student responses to "You currently use English in your daily life outside of school hours" (questionnaire item 7).

Figure 7.14, visualised an overall tendency for students in each student group to only use English

in their daily lives outside of school hours "Sometimes". In contrast, the percentages of students who

claimed to use English "All of the time" or even "Often" or "About half of the time" in their daily

lives outside of school hours were comparatively low, as were the percentages of students who

claimed to use English "None of the time" in their daily lives outside of school hours. Taking into

considering the school's geographic location nearby some of Hong Kong's lowest socio-economic

neighbourhoods it was a little surprising, although by no means improbable, that such a high

percentage of students claimed to use English "Sometimes" in their daily lives outside of school

hours. It was interesting to compare how frequently students claimed to speak English in their daily

lives outside of school hours (Figure 7.14) with how frequently students claimed to speak English

with either teachers or students outside of class at school (See Figure 7.12 and Figure 7.13). A

comparison suggested that regular Secondary 5 students, except for the 5.23% who claimed to speak

English

"All of the time" with teachers outside of class at school, actually had a strong tendency to speak

English less frequently with teachers outside of class at school or with other students outside of class

at school than in their daily lives outside of school hours. The same was the case for Secondary 5

repeater students with no exceptions and for Secondary 6 students, except for the 3.92% who

claimed to speak English "All of the time" and the 7.84% who claimed to speak English "None of the

time" with teachers outside of class at school and the 1.96% who claimed to speak English "All of

the time" with other students outside of class at school. In short, except for a handful of the very best

regular Secondary 5 students and Secondary 6 students, there was an overwhelming tendency for the

linguistic environment, whether between students and teachers or between students and students,

outside of class at the case study school to be less conducive to speaking English than the linguistic

environment in students daily lives outside of school hours. At best, the results of this comparison

suggested that the outside of class linguistic environment at the case study school did enhance the

overall English-speaking environment for the very best regular Secondary 5 and Secondary 6

students of English compared to what these students experienced in their daily lives outside of school

hours. At worst, the results of this comparison suggested that the outside of class linguistic

environment at the case study school was a deficient English language environment compared to what

many students experience in their daily lives outside school.

Regular Secondary 5 Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening	0.58	14.53	36.05	26.74	20.93	1.16
Speaking	1.74	13.37	37.21	26.74	17.44	3.49
Reading	1.74	11.63	38.37	20.93	23.84	3.49
Writing	1.74	12.79	33.72	24.42	25.58	1.74

Secondary 5 Repeater Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening		36.36	33.33	24.24	6.06	
Speaking		33.33	33.33	27.27	6.06	
Reading		24.24	36.36	27.27	12.12	
Writing		24.24	36.36	30.3	9.09	

Secondary 6 Students

	Missing Value	All of the time	Often	About half of the time	Sometimes	None of the time
Listening		15.69	56.86	21.57	5.88	
Speaking		15.69	62.75	13.73	7.84	
Reading		15.69	56.86	11.76	15.69	
Writing		15.69	56.86	19.61	7.84	

Figure 7.15 Extrinsic motivation to learn English: **Expect to use English in future work life.**
Student responses to "In your opinion, you will need to use English in the future in your work life after school" (questionnaire item 8).

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Figure 7.15 showed that the student group with the most wide-ranging spectrum of expectations about how often they would use English in their future working lives after school were the Regular Secondary 5 students. This diversity of expectations broadly reflected their diverse future career plans. The wide range of regular Secondary 5 student responses may also at least partly have reflected a high degree of uncertainty amongst this group of students about whether to plan future university study or not since 51.16% were not sure if they planned to go to university or not (See Figure 7.17 on page 262).

Secondary 5 repeater students also had a wide range of student responses although not as wide-ranging as the regular Secondary 5 students since there were no responses for "None of the time" and very few responses for "Sometimes". The highest percentage for "All of the time" may reflect the fairly high percentage of students in this student group who planned to go to university in the future (See Figure 7.17 on page 262).

Secondary 6 students had no responses for "None of the time", and very few responses for "Sometimes". However, this group of students had the highest percentage for "Often". This may reflect the higher number of students from within this particular student group who plan to go to university and then enter into a professional career (See Figure 7.17 on page 262).

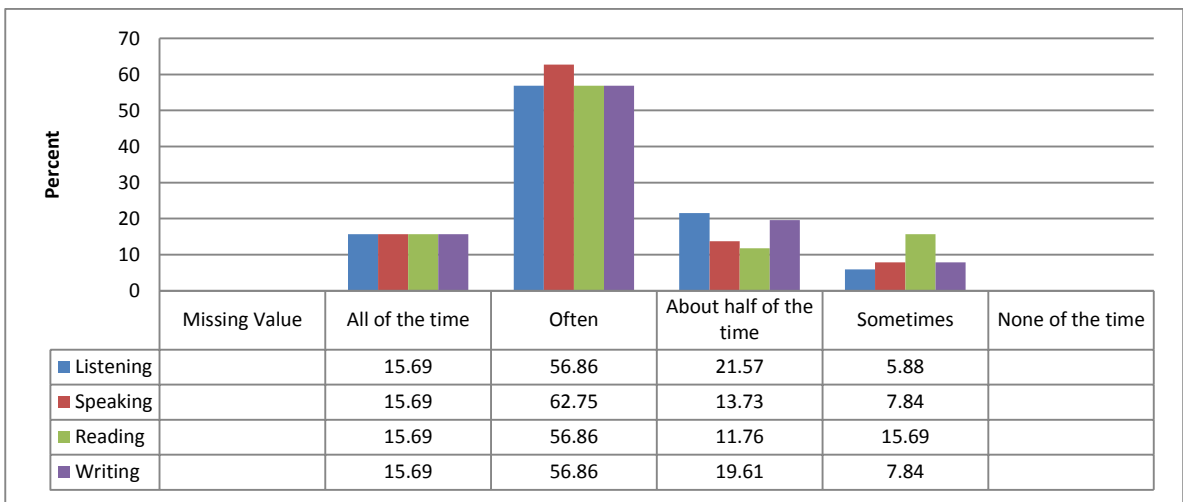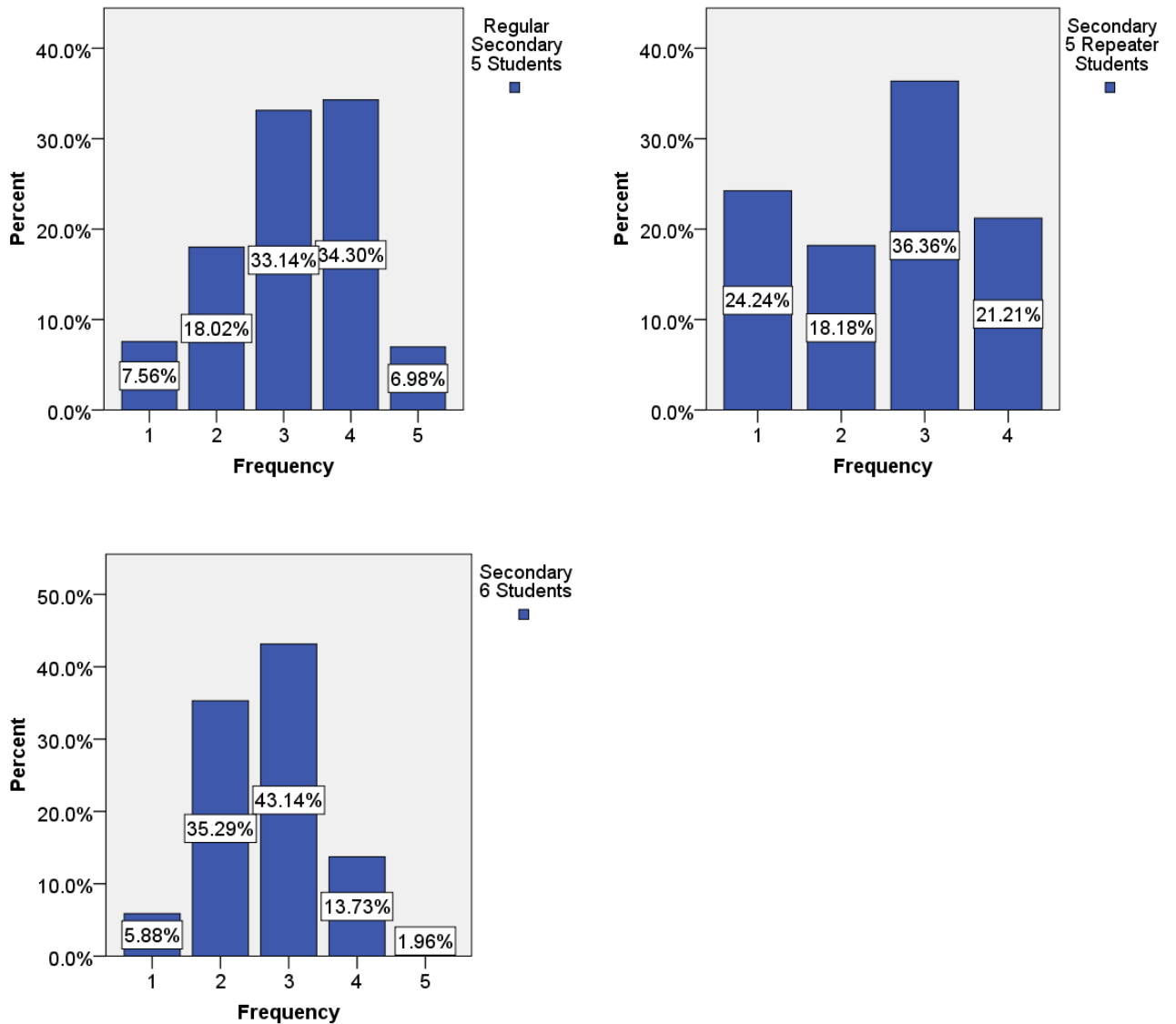**Legend: (1) All of the time; (2) Often; (3) About half of the time; (4) Sometimes; (5) None of the time**

Figure 7.16 Extrinsic motivation to learn English: **Expect to use English in daily life after graduating from high school.** Student responses to "You expect to use English in your daily life after graduating from high school" (questionnaire item 9).

The different responses to questionnaire items 8 and 9 as shown in Figure 7.16 above and Figure

7.15 may be accounted for by the scope of each question asked. While the scope of questionnaire

item 8 (See Figure 7.15) was limited to a student's expected use of English in their future work life

the scope of questionnaire item 9 (See Figure 7.16) was effectively unlimited encompassing a

student's expected use of English in any part of their future daily life. Amongst regular Secondary 5

students there was a tendency to expect to use English more in their future work life than in their

future daily life. This tendency was evident when comparing the percentages of these students who

expected to use English "All of the time" in their future work life (13.37%) with the percentages of

these students who expected to use English "All of the time" in their future daily life (7.56%) and was

also evident when comparing the percentages of these students who expected to use English "Often"

in their future work life (37.21%) with the percentages of these students who expected to use English

"Often" in their future daily life (18.02%) since expected English use in future work life was roughly

twice that of expected English use in future daily life. Similarly, the percentage of these students who

expected to use no English in their future work life (3.49%) was roughly half the percentage who

expected to use no English in their future daily life (6.98%).

There was a similar tendency amongst Secondary 5 repeater students although the tendency was

not as strong. A comparison of the percentages of these students who expected to use English "All of

the time" in their future work life (33.33%) with the percentage of these students who expected to use

English "All of the time" in their future daily life (24.24%) and a comparison of the percentages of

these students who expected to use English "Often" in their future work life (33.33%) with the

percentage of these students who expected to use English "Often" in their future daily life (18.18%)

revealed a weaker tendency of expecting to use English more in future work life than in future daily

life. A likely explanation for why this tendency was weaker amongst Secondary 5 repeater students

than regular Secondary 5 students was that Secondary 5 repeater students tended to come from

higher socio-economic background families who were more likely to speak English at home at least

some of the time compared to regular Secondary 5 students who tended to predominately come from

lower socio-economic background families who were less likely to speak English at home.

Amongst Secondary 6 students since the percentages of these students who expected to use

English "All of the time" in their future work life (15.69%) compared to the percentage of these

students who expected to use English "All of the time" in their future daily life (5.88%) was much

higher. Also, the percentages of these students who expected to use English "Often" in their future

work life (62.75%) compared to the percentage of these students who expected to use English

"Often" in their future daily life (35.29%) was also much higher.
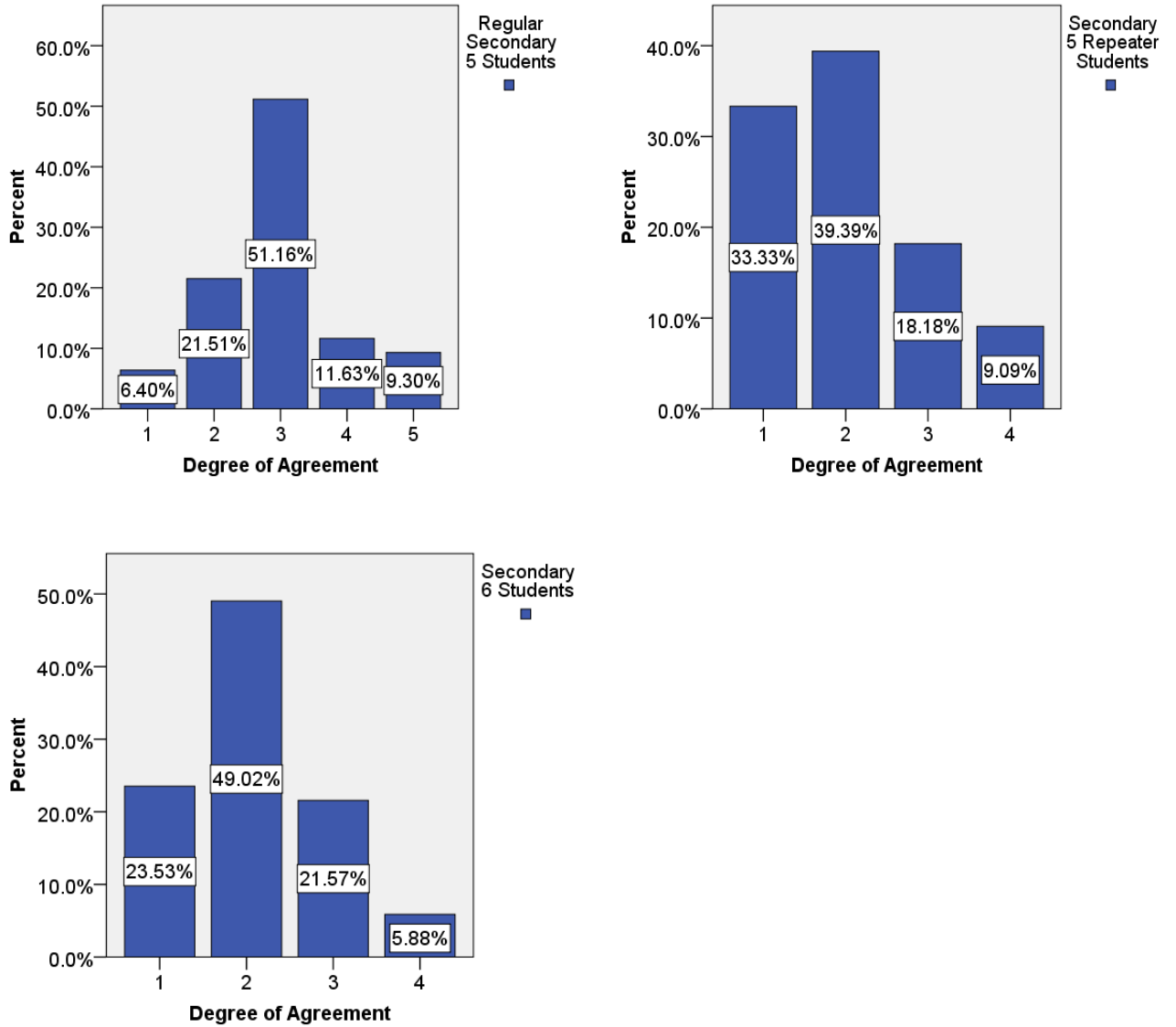
Legend: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree

Figure 7.17 Extrinsic motivation to learn English: **Plan to study at an English medium university or college in the future.** Student responses to "You plan to study at an English medium university or college in the future" (questionnaire item 10).

As shown in Figure 7.17, over half of regular Secondary 5 students (51.16%) were uncertain

whether or not they were planning to study at an English medium university or college in the future.

This group also had the lowest percentages of students planning to study at an English medium

university or college in the future (between 6.40% and 27.91%).

Secondary 5 repeater students were far more certain about their future plans. Between 33.33%

and 72.72% indicated that they planned to study an an English medium university or college in the

future. Very few (only 9.09%) did not plan to do so. Secondary 6 students had the highest

percentage of students who were planning to study at an English medium university or college in the

future with between 23.53% and 72.55% indicating that they planned to do so. Very few (only

5.88%) did not plan to do so.
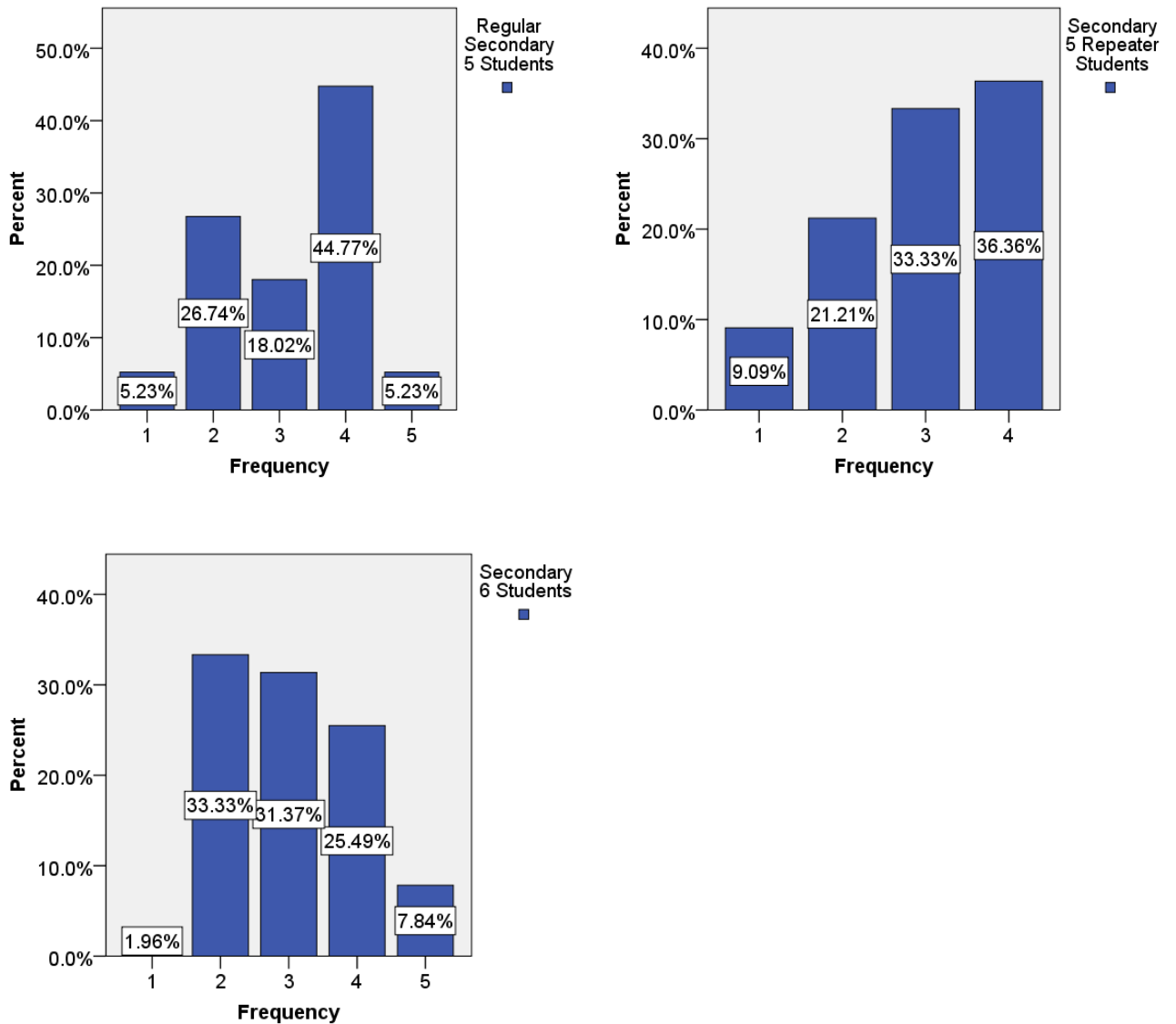
Legend: (1) All of the time; (2) Often; (3) About half of the time; (4) Sometimes; (5) None of the time

Figure 7.18 <u>Motivation to learn English</u>: **Enjoy learning English at school.** Student responses to "You enjoy learning English at school" (questionnaire item 11).

According to Figure 7.18 the student group with the lowest percentage of students who enjoyed learning English was the regular Secondary 5 students. While Secondary 5 repeater students tended to enjoy learning English more than the regular Secondary 5 students, overall, it was the Secondary 6 students who tended to enjoy learning English at school the most.

An extrinsic motivational factor that may have influenced the degree of enjoyment felt by English students at the case study school may have been regular English lessons with the NET (Native English-speaking Teacher) since the Secondary 6 students were taught half of their English lessons by the NET (Native-speaking English Teacher). By providing a real communicative need to use English the NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) also enhanced the quality of the English learning environment thereby increasing the likelihood that the Secondary 6 students would be both motivated to learn English and also enjoy their in-school English learning experiences.

Another possible extrinsic motivational factor may have been the different English examinations prepared for. The Secondary 6 teachers and students had an advantage over all the Secondary 5 teachers and students in that the Secondary 6 students were preparing for a long established English examination. This in itself provided a high degree of certainty about *how* Secondary 6 students were to be examined. Secondary 6 English teachers were therefore able to provide their students with clear guidance on how to best prepare for their English examination.

	Missing Value	No English	Basic English level	Intermediate English level	Advanced English level	Like native-speaker of English
■ Listening		13.37	43.02	37.21	5.81	0.58
■ Speaking		12.79	41.28	38.95	5.81	1.16
■ Reading		11.05	39.53	42.44	5.81	1.16
■ Writing		8.72	38.37	38.37	13.95	0.58

	Missing Value	No English	Basic English level	Intermediate English level	Advanced English level	Like native-speaker of English
■ Listening		3.03	27.27	60.61	6.06	3.03
■ Speaking		3.03	36.36	54.55	6.06	
■ Reading			30.3	42.42	27.27	
■ Writing			45.45	30.3	24.24	

	Missing Value	No English	Basic English level	Intermediate English level	Advanced English level	Like native-speaker of English
■ Listening		3.92	27.45	52.94	15.69	
■ Speaking		1.96	21.57	74.51	1.96	
■ Reading			21.57	45.1	31.37	1.96
■ Writing			23.53	47.06	29.41	

Figure 7.19 English proficiency: **Self-assessment of English ability.** Student responses to questionnaire items 19, 20, 21 and 22.

As shown in Figure 7.19, there was a tendency for Secondary 6 students to rate their level of

English language proficiency higher than either the regular Secondary 5 or Secondary 5 repeater

students. There was also an overall tendency for the Secondary 5 repeater students to rate their level

of English language proficiency higher than the regular Secondary 5 students. Classroom

observations and student interviews also provided substantial indications of a tendency for Secondary

6 students to have higher level of English language proficiency.

Regular Secondary 5 Students

Secondary 5 Repeater Students

Secondary 6 Students

1	Intelligence	5	A genuine interest in learning English	9	An important English examination to prepare for	13	Explicit knowledge of grammar rules
2	Hard work	6	English textbooks	10	School-based English assessments	14	Someone at home who can help me learn
3	Enjoyable English learning experiences	7	English films	11	English homework	15	Spending time living in an English speaking country
4	A good teacher	8	Tutorials outside of school	12	Rote learning and memorisation		

Figure 7.20 <u>English learning experiences</u>: **Importance of several factors for successful English learning.** Student responses to "In regards to your own English learning experiences, how important do you think the following [factors listed below] are for you to be a successful English learner?" (questionnaire items 23).

As shown in Figure 7.20, several factors were rated by students as being either very important, important, undecided, unimportant or very unimportant for successful English learning. These factors are listed below in descending order according to the percentage of student ratings for each category down to a rating of 33% or above for each student group respectively:

Regular Secondary 5 student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed *very important* for successful English learning were **hard work** (66.86%), **a good teacher** (54.07%), and **a genuine interest in learning English** (50.58%) **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (48.28%), **enjoyable English learning experiences** (48.26%), and **English films** (34.3%). Some rated **intelligence** (43.02%), **school-based English assessments** (40.12%), **English homework** (38.95%), **an important English examination to prepare for** (37.79%), **English films** (37.21%), **a good teacher** (34.3%), and **enjoyable English learning experiences** (33.72%) as *important* factors for successful English learning. About a third of regular Secondary 5 students were undecided about the role played by **rote learning and memorisation** in successful English learning with 33.72% rating this factor *undecided*. No factors were considered by 33% or more of regular Secondary 5 students as being either *very unimportant* or *unimportant* for successful English learning.

Secondary 5 repeater student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed *very important* for successful English learning were **hard work** (78.79%), **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (69.7%), **a good teacher** (51.52%), and **a genuine interest in learning English** (51.52%), and **enjoyable English learning experiences** (48.48%). Some rated **enjoyable English learning experiences** (45.45%), **a genuine interest in learning English** (39.39%), **English**

homework (39.39%), **intelligence** (36.36%), **English films** (36.36%), **a good teacher** (33.33%), and

English textbooks (33.33%) as *important* factors for successful English learning. About a third or

more of Secondary 5 repeater students were undecided about the role played by one or more factors

in successful English learning. Some rated **tutorials outside of school** (42.42%), **school-based**

English assessments (42.42%), **English films** (39.39%), **an important English examination to**

prepare for (39.39%), **intelligence** (33.33%), **spending time living in an English speaking country**

(33.33%) as factors that played an *undecided* role in successful English learning.

Secondary 6 student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed very

important for successful English learning were **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (60.78%),

hard work (58.82%), and **a good teacher** (54.9%), **a genuine interest in learning English**

(47.06%), and **spending time living in an English speaking country** (36.28%). Some rated **English**

films (50.98%), **enjoyable English learning experiences** (49.02%), **tutorials outside of school**

(49.02%), **a genuine interest in learning English** (47.06%), **an important English examination to**

prepare for (47.06%), **English homework** (47.06%), **someone at home who can help me learn**

(41.18%), **intelligence** (37.25%), **a good teacher** (33.33%), **spending time living in an English**

speaking country (33.33%), **school-based English assessments** (29.41%) as *important* factors for

successful English learning. They rated **rote learning and memorisation** (35.29%) as an

unimportant factor for successful English learning. There were no ratings of 33% or above on the

very unimportant factors for successful English learning.

More than a third of Secondary 5 repeater students were *undecided* about the role one to six

factors played in successful English learning. Firstly, it was noteworthy that **tutorials outside of**

school (42.42%), **school-based English assessments** (42.42%), and **an important English**

examination to prepare for (39.39%) were among the six factors that these students felt undecided

about because if a student was undecided about how beneficial taking part in or preparing for each of

these were for successful English learning, despite **hard work** (78.79%) receiving the highest

percentage of *very important* ratings, such a student was unlikely to focus much effort on such

activities. Secondly, it was also noteworthy that **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (69.7%)

gained the second highest percentage of *very important* ratings. Classroom observations suggested

that student belief in the high importance of an explicit knowledge of grammar rules would have been

enhanced by a focus on grammar during English lessons. However, the third highest percentage of

very important ratings was **a good teacher** (51.52%) and if their English teacher (past or present) was

unable to explicitly explain grammar rules or if a student was unable to understand such explanations,

neither an explicit knowledge of grammar rules nor the anticipated flow on of successful English

learning would be expected by such students to be achievable in such an instance. Thirdly, **a genuine**

interest in learning English (51.52%) and **enjoyable English learning experiences** (48.48%) also

received quite high percentages of *very important* ratings. However, classroom observations

suggested, that more often than not, creating enjoyable English learning experiences was a far lesser

priority than getting students to complete textbook exercises or worksheets which tended to focus on

the anticipated grammatical and lexical requirements of the public English examination. In short,

Secondary 5 repeater student ratings for factors that were *very important, important, undecided,*

unimportant or very unimportant for successful English learning could hold the key for understanding

why these students did not do so successfully in the old public English examination and thus decided

to repeat their studies by preparing for the new public English examination.

About a third of regular Secondary 5 students were only uncertain about the role that one

factor, **rote learning and memorisation** (33.72%), played in successful English learning. It was also

interesting to note that slightly more than a third of Secondary 6 students considered this same factor,

rote learning and memorisation (35.29%), to be *unimportant* for successful English learning.

Regular Secondary 5 Students

Secondary 5 Repeater Students

Secondary 6 Students

1	Intelligence	5	A genuine interest in learning English	9	An important English examination to prepare for	13	Explicit knowledge of grammar rules
2	Hard work	6	English textbooks	10	School-based English assessments	14	Someone at home who can help me learn
3	Enjoyable English learning experiences	7	English films	11	English homework	15	Spending time living in an English speaking country
4	A good teacher	8	Tutorials outside of school	12	Rote learning and memorisation		

Figure 7.21 English learning experiences: **Importance of several factors for successful English learning.** Student responses to "In regards to your own English learning experiences, how important do you think the following [factors listed below] are for you to be a successful English learner?" (questionnaire items 23).

In figure 7.21, on the previous page, in order to enhance the extent of the analysis, the rating data from questionnaire item 23 was also re-organised by combining the *very important* rating category responses with the *important* rating category responses and combining the *very unimportant* rating category responses with the *unimportant* rating category responses while maintaining the *undecided* rating category unchanged as shown in Figure 7.21. These factors are listed below in descending order according to the percentage of student ratings for each category down to a rating of 33% or above for each student group respectively:

Regular Secondary 5 student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed as being either *very important or important* for successful English learning were **hard work** (91.28%), **a good teacher** (88.37%), **enjoyable English learning experiences** (81.98%), **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (80.84%), **a genuine interest in learning English** (78.49%), **English films** (71.51%) **intelligence** (68.6%), **school-based English assessments** (68.03%), **an important English examination to prepare for** (64.53%), **English homework** (58.72%) and **someone at home who can help me learn** (52.91%), **English textbooks** (47.67%), **spending time living in an English speaking country** (44.77%), **tutorials outside of school** (38.96%). About a third of Regular Secondary 5 students were undecided about the role played by **rote learning and memorisation** in successful English learning with 33.72% rating this factor *undecided*. Over two-fifths of Regular Secondary 5 students thought **rote learning and memorisation** was either very unimportant or unimportant for successful learning with 43.6% rating this factor either *very unimportant or unimportant* for successful English learning.

Secondary 5 repeater student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed as being either *very important or important* for successful English learning were **hard work** (96.97%), **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (93.94%), **enjoyable English learning experiences** (93.93%), **a genuine interest in learning English** (90.91%), **a good teacher** (84.85%), **intelligence** (57.57%), **someone at home who can help me learn** (57.57%), and **spending time living in an English speaking country** (51.51%), **English films** (48.48%), **English textbooks** (36.36%), **an important English examination to prepare for** (36.36%). About a third or more of Secondary 5 repeater students were undecided about the role played by one or more factors in successful English learning. Some rated **tutorials outside of school** (42.42%), **school-based English assessments** (42.42%), **English films** (39.39%), **an important English examination to prepare for** (39.39%), **intelligence** (33.33%), **spending time living in an English speaking country** (33.33%) as factors that played an *undecided* role in successful English learning. Some rated **rote learning and memorisation** (51.51%), **tutorials outside of school** (36.36%), and **English textbooks** (33.33%) as being either very unimportant or unimportant for successful English learning.

Secondary 6 student ratings for factors that 33% or more of these students deemed as being either *very important or important* for successful English learning were **a genuine interest in learning English** (94.12%), **hard work** (90.19%), **a good English teacher** (88.23%), **explicit knowledge of grammar rules** (88.23%), **enjoyable English learning experiences** (78.43%), **someone at home who can help me learn** (70.59%), **spending time living in an English speaking country** (69.62%), **intelligence** (66.66%), **tutorials outside of school** (64.71%), **English films**

(62.74%), **an important English examination to prepare for** (58.82%), **English homework**

(54.9%) and **English textbooks** (43.13%). Some rated **rote learning and memorisation** (52.94%),

school-based English assessments (43.13%), as being either *very unimportant or unimportant* for

successful English learning.

7.4 Correlations

The following guidelines were used for determining the strength of the relationship between two variables from the value of the correlation coefficient in this study. Taken from Pallant (2010 p. 134) who cites Cohen (1988, pp. 79 – 81) the values from 0.10 to 0.29 (i.e. 1% to 8.41% of shared variance) were interpreted as small; values from 0.30 to 0.49 (i.e. 9% to 24.01% of shared variance) were interpreted as medium and values from 0.50 to 1.0 (i.e. 25% to 100% of shared variance) were interpreted as large. Elliott (2007 p. 193) suggested that "When data are observed in ordered values such as tiny, small, medium, large, very large….. then Pearson's correlation is not appropriate, whereas Spearman's rho can still be correctly used." In this study Spearman's rho was used to calculate correlations. Statistical significance reported is $p < .01$ wherever possible in order to minimise the possibility of type 1 errors (i.e. false correlations). It should also be noted that usually only statistically significant correlations of either $p < .01$ or $p < .05$ have been included since the practical significance of most statistically non-significant correlations were quite low given that they mostly reported very low levels of correlation.

Correlations between a familiarity with the English examination prepared for and a few of the more probable motivations for learning English were investigated. The relationship between a familiarity with the *format* and *content* of the final end of school English examination prepared for (as measured by questionnaire items 12 and 13) and each of the following three variables were explored for statistically significant correlations using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. The first variable of interest was an expectation to use English in daily life after graduating from high

school (as measured by questionnaire item 9). The second variable of interest was a plan to study

at an English medium university or college in the future (as measured by questionnaire item 10).

The third variable of interest was the frequency of enjoying English learning at school (as measured

by questionnaire item 11).

Regular Secondary 5 students:

There was a small, positive correlation between an expected use of English in daily life after

graduating from high school and a familiarity with the *format* of the final end of school English

examination prepared for, *rho* = .249, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 6.2% of shared variance). There was a

medium, positive correlation between an expected use of English in daily life after graduating from

high school and a familiarity with the *content* of the final end of school English examination prepared

for, *rho* = .340, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 11.56% of shared variance). This suggested a tendency

amongst the regular Secondary 5 students for students who expected to use English in their daily

lives after graduating from high school to more highly value learning the *content* than the *format* of

their English test. A greater focus on learning English test *content* than *format* in itself suggested a

broader and deeper motivation for learning English than would the comparatively narrow and

superficial focus of learning *content*.

Moreover, there was a medium, positive correlation between a plan to study at an English medium

university or college in the future and a familiarity with the *format* of the final end of school English

examination prepared for, *rho* = .370, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 13.69% of shared variance). There was

also a medium, positive correlation between a plan to study at an English medium university or

college in the future and a familiarity with the *content* of the final end of school English examination

prepared for, *rho* = .334, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 11.16% of shared variance). This suggested a

tendency amongst the regular Secondary 5 students for students who planned to study at an English

medium university or college in the future to more or less equally value learning English test *content*

and *format*. However, these correlations also suggested more of a narrow and superficial focus on

learning English test *format* than a broader, deeper and more beneficial focus on learning English test

content.

Furthermore, there was a medium, positive correlation between the frequency of enjoying English

learning at school and a familiarity with the *format* of the final end of school English examination

prepared for, *rho* = .356, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 12.67% of shared variance). There was also a

medium, positive correlation between the frequency of enjoying English learning at school and a

familiarity with the *content* of the final end of school English examination prepared for, *rho* =

.390, *n* = 172, *p* < .01, (i.e. 15.21% of shared variance). This suggested that regular Secondary 5

students who enjoyed their English learning experiences at school valued learning English test

content slightly more than learning English test *format*. This also pointed towards students who

enjoyed learning English at school being slightly more likely to experience beneficial washback from

a slightly greater focus on English test *content* that was more likely to lead to a comparatively broader

and deeper English learning than a greater focus on English test *format* which was more likely to lead

to comparatively narrow and superficial English learning.

Secondary 5 Repeater students:

There was a medium, positive correlation between an expected use of English in daily life after graduating from high school and a familiarity with the *format* of the final end of school English examination prepared for, *rho* = .435, *n* = 33, *p* < .05, (i.e. 18.92% of shared variance). There was also a medium, positive correlation between an expected use of English in daily life after graduating from high school and a familiarity with the *content* of the final end of school English examination prepared for, *rho* = .366, *n* = 33, *p* < .05, (i.e. 13.4% of shared variance).

This suggested a tendency amongst the Secondary 5 repeater students, for students who expected to use English in their daily lives after graduating from high school, to highly value learning both the *content* and the *format* of their English test. However, an examination of the correlations in Table 4.1 suggested a greater focus on learning English test *format* while learning to read English which in itself suggested a comparatively narrow and superficial focus particularly when learning the reading macro skill of English.

The correlations shown in Table 4.7, were also noteworthy given the similarities between questionnaire items 8 and 9. With one exception Table 4.7 shows medium to large, positive correlations between a need to use English in a student's future work life and a familiarity with the *format* and *content* of the final end of school English examination prepared for.

Moreover, there was a medium, positive correlation between the frequency of enjoying English learning at school and a familiarity with the *format* of the final end of school English examination prepared for, *rho* = .356, *n* = 33, *p* < .05, (i.e. 12.67% of shared variance).

Table 7.1   Correlations between Secondary 5 repeater students perceiving a need to use English in their future work life (questionnaire item 8), and perceiving familiarity with the <u>format</u> of their final end of school English examination (questionnaire item 12), or perceiving familiarity with the <u>content</u> of their final end of school English examination" (questionnaire item 13).

Students perceiving a need to use English in their future work life	Test format	Test content
Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient	Questionnaire Item 12	Questionnaire Item 13
Questionnaire Item 8 (Speaking) Correlation Coefficient	25.7% of shared variance .507**	22% of shared variance .469**
Questionnaire Item 8 (Listening) Correlation Coefficient	23.91% of shared variance .489**	17.89% of shared variance .423*
Questionnaire Item 8 (Reading) Correlation Coefficient	38.07% of shared variance .617**	22.47% of shared variance .474**
Questionnaire Item 8 (Writing) Correlation Coefficient	12.18% of shared variance .349*	5.81% of shared variance .241

Secondary 5 Repeater Students For all above N = 33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Secondary 6 students:

There were few practically significant and no statistically significant correlations using

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient at either the 0.01 level (2 tailed) or the 0.05 level (2 tailed) for

the 51 Secondary 6 students.

Amongst regular Secondary 5 students, there was a large, positive correlation between an

important English examination to prepare for and school-based English assessments $rho = .607$, $n =$

171, $p < .01$, (i.e. 36.84% of shared variance). There was also a medium, positive correlation

between an important English examination to prepare for and English homework $rho = .333$, $n = 171$,

$p < .01$, (i.e. 11.09% of shared variance). Furthermore, there was also a medium, positive

correlation between school-based English assessments and English homework *rho* = .375, *n* = 171, *p*

< .01, (i.e. 14.06% of shared variance).

Table 7.2 Regular Secondary 5 Students Spearman's rho correlation coefficients
            between Questionnaire Items 23-1 to 23-15

QQ23-2 Hard work	Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .261** N = 171 Enjoyable English learning experiences .256** N = 171
QQ23-3 Enjoyable English learning experiences	A good teacher .304** N = 169 English films .284** N = 171 A genuine interest in learning English .278** N = 170 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .271** N = 171 Hard work .256** N = 171
QQ23-4 A good teacher	Enjoyable English learning experiences .304** N = 169 A genuine interest in learning English .228** N = 169 English films .236** N = 169 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .230** N = 169
QQ23-5 A genuine interest in learning English	Enjoyable English learning experiences .278** N = 170 A good teacher .228** N = 169 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .214** N = 170 English textbooks .199** N = 170
QQ23-6 English textbooks	Tutorials outside of school .296** N = 171 English homework .263** N = 171 English films .229** N = 171 School-based English assessments .205** N = 171 A genuine interest in learning English .199** N = 170
QQ23-7 English films	Enjoyable English learning experiences .284** N = 171 A good teacher .236** N = 169 English textbooks .229** N = 171
QQ23-8 Tutorials outside of school	Someone at home who can help me learn English .330** N = 171 Spending time living in an English speaking country .313** N = 171 English textbooks .296** N = 171 An important English examination to prepare for .238** N = 171 English homework .229** N = 171
QQ23-9 An important English examination to prepare for	School-based English assessments .607** N = 171 English homework .333** N = 171 Tutorials outside of school .238** N = 171 Rote learning and memorisation .208** English textbooks .205**
QQ23-10 School-based English assessments	An important English examination to prepare for .607** N = 171 English homework .375** N = 171 English textbooks .205** N = 171
QQ23-11 English homework	School-based English assessments .375** N = 171 An important English examination to prepare for .333** N = 171 Rote learning and memorisation .315** N = 171 English textbooks .263** N = 171 Tutorials outside of school .229** N = 171
QQ23-12 Rote learning and memorisation	English homework .315** N = 171
QQ23-13 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules	Enjoyable English learning experiences .271** N = 171 Hard work .261** N = 171 Someone at home who can help me learn English .242** N = 171 A good teacher .230** N = 169 A genuine interest in learning English .214** N = 170
QQ23-14 Someone at home who can help me learn English	Spending time living in an English speaking country .375** N = 171 Tutorials outside of school .330** N = 171 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .242** N = 171
QQ23-15 Spending time living in an English speaking country	Someone at home who can help me learn English .375** N = 171 Tutorials outside of school .313** N = 171

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Small correlations in **black** ink.

   Medium correlations in **blue** ink.   Large correlations in **green** ink.

Amongst Secondary 5 repeater students, while there were strong, positive correlations between

an important English examination to prepare for and school-based English assessments *rho* = .647, *n*

= 33, *p* < .01, (i.e. 41.86% of shared variance). There were also strong, positive correlations

between enjoyable English learning experiences and a good teacher *rho* = .617, *n* = 33, *p* < .01,

(i.e. 38.07% of shared variance).

Table 7.3   Secondary 5 Repeater Students Spearman's rho correlation coefficients between
             Questionnaire Items 23-1 to 23-15

QQ23-3 Enjoyable English learning experiences	A good teacher .617**
QQ23-4 A good teacher	Enjoyable English learning experiences .617**
QQ23-5 A genuine interest in learning English	School-based assessments -.404* Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .428*
QQ23-6 English textbooks	Tutorials outside of school .350*
QQ23-8 Tutorials outside of school	English textbooks .350*
QQ23-9 An important English examination to prepare for	School-based English assessments .647** Spending time living in an English speaking country -.381*
QQ23-10 School-based English assessments	A genuine interest in learning English -.404* An important English examination to prepare for .647**
QQ23-13 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules	A genuine interest in learning English .428*
QQ23-15 Spending time living in an English speaking country	An important English examination to prepare for -.381*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).   For all above N = 33.   Small correlations in **black** ink. Medium correlations in **blue** ink. Large correlations in **green** ink. Negative correlation in **red** ink.

Amongst Secondary 6 students, the most striking relationship was the medium, negative correlations

between an important English examination to prepare for and a genuine interest in learning English

rho = -.384, *n* = 51, *p* < .01, (i.e. 14.75% of shared variance).

Table 7.4 Secondary 6 students Spearman's rho correlation coefficients between
          Questionnaire Items 23-1 to 23-15

QQ23-1 Intelligence	English textbooks -.277*
QQ23-3 Enjoyable English learning experiences	Someone at home who can help me learn English .479** A good teacher .349*
QQ23-4 A good teacher	English films .390** Enjoyable English learning experiences .349*
QQ23-5 A genuine interest in learning English	An important English examination to prepare for -.384**
QQ23-6 English textbooks	English homework .450** School-based English assessments .426** An important English examination to prepare for .407** Intelligence -.277*
QQ23-7 English films	A good teacher .390**
QQ23-8 Tutorials outside of school	English homework .299*
QQ23-9 An important English examination to prepare for	English textbooks .407** A genuine interest in learning English -.384** School-based English assessments .313*
QQ23-10 School-based English assessments	English textbooks .426** English homework .368** An important English examination to prepare for .313*
QQ23-11 English homework	English textbooks .450** School-based English assessments .368** Tutorials outside of school .299*
QQ23-13 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules	Someone at home who can help me learn English .407**
QQ23-14 Someone at home who can help me learn English	Enjoyable English learning experiences .479** Explicit knowledge of grammar rules .407** Spending time living in an English speaking country .358**
QQ23-15 Spending time living in an English speaking country	Someone at home who can help me learn English .358**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).   For all above N = 51.   Small correlations in **black** ink. Medium correlations in **blue** ink.   Negative correlation in **red** ink.

In concluding this section on corrections it should be noted that even when items were correlated, it was not possible to accurately speculate about what the connection between these items might be without first consulting the qualitative data from lesson observations, teacher interviews and student interviews. Furthermore, it should be explicitly stated that no cause and effect relationships are necessarily implied simply by the existence of a correlation, however large a correlation may be.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from a questionnaire that was given to all Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students at the case study school. In all, 256 Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 English students were interviewed. The following chapter presents the overall conclusions reached from analysing all the data collected for this case study.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the overall conclusions reached from analysing all data collected for this case study. Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007, loc. 4452) warn that "… it is not enough merely to manage and manipulate the data. Data are materials to think with." Guided by this principle, a critically reflective review of the results and discussion chapters through a process that included critical analysis and evaluation, led to the creating of a new theoretical framework of the impact and washback phenomena at the case study secondary school. The higher order cognitive processes outlined in a revised form of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001) also underpinned this critical review process.

Figure 8.1 contextualises the researcher's predominant perception of beneficial washback and impact at the case study school as being one of many motivational reasons why students learn (or do not learn) English well. It should be noted that beneficial washback and detrimental washback are not conceptualised as superordinates of the items under them, nor are the items under them intended to necessarily constitute examples of washback. In a word, the green and yellow arrows in Figure 8.1 constitute *factors* that intertwine in complex ways in a process that in the end produces either positive or negative washback. Washback is both part of this process in the form of intended washback and unintended washback and part of the end product in the form of the beneficial washback and detrimental washback that actually occur.
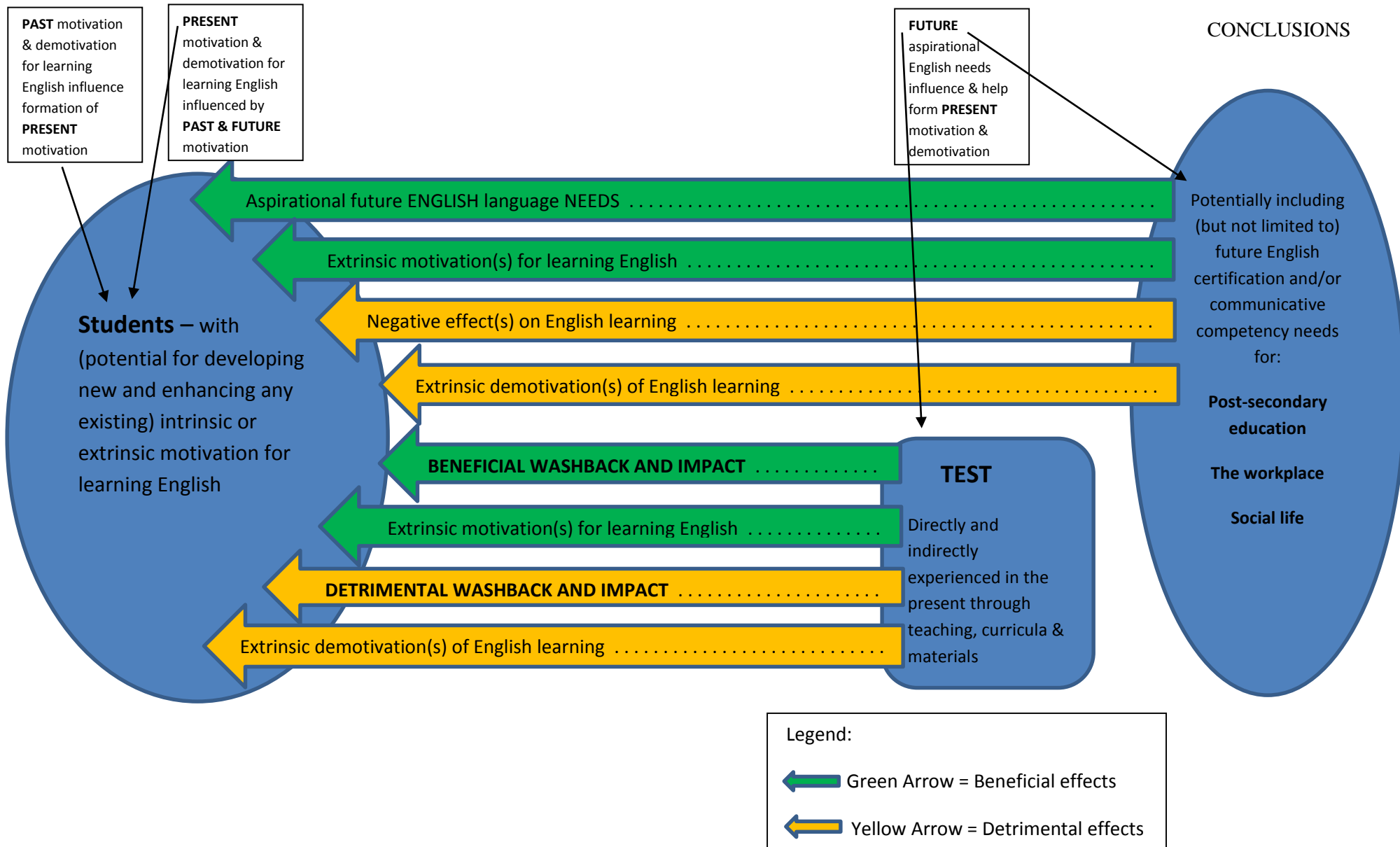
Figure 8.1
Beneficial washback & Impact contextualised as one of many motivational reasons why students learn (or do not learn) English well

A Theory of Washback at the Case Study Secondary School

The following theory came from coding data, grouping codes and formulating categories, reviewing data and critically reflecting.

Beneficial washback was enhanced by Native-speaker English ability when coupled with the professional freedom to apply communicative English teaching pedagogical practices.

English teachers with high levels of English language proficiency and high levels of English language teacher training who were also able to apply their professional knowledge in the classroom promoted the most beneficial washback and minimised negative washback from the English examination prepared for on their teaching and their students' learning. However, these teachers needed to be given a high degree of professional freedom and autonomy and feel self-confident enough to make their own professional decisions about how to best teach their students English.

The students that gained the most beneficial washback from English examinations.

Students with higher levels of English language proficiency, higher levels of academic performance and higher levels of motivation to learn English gained more beneficial washback from English examinations as their English teacher was more likely to use communicative teaching methods.

The students that gained the most negative washback from English examinations.

Students with lower levels of English language proficiency, lower levels of academic performance and lower levels of motivation to learn English are more likely to experience negative washback from an English examination as their English teacher is more likely to only use display English in lessons and teach students about English rather than with English through the Cantonese medium of instruction.

<u>A Summary of Theory on How Washback from a High-stakes English Examination and Impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) Tasks Worked at the Case Study School</u>

Impact from preparing for and doing **<u>English SBA</u>** (School-based Assessment) tasks could eclipse washback from the high-stakes examination prepared for but only for the one or two weeks it took to prepare for an English SBA (School-based Assessment) task.

However, this was only true if the English SBA (School-based Assessment) task was high-stakes. i.e. it worked for Secondary 5 students where English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks were worth 15% of their final examination grade but not as strongly for Secondary 6 students where English school-based assessments did not count towards their final examination grade but only towards their final school report results.

<u>Other factors</u> could enhance or reduce both the degree and quality of washback experienced. For example, as **a student's motivation** to do well in the examination increased so did their susceptibility to any kind of washback from the examination prepared for. Also, as a student's motivation to do well in the examination decreased so too did their susceptibility to any kind of washback from the examination prepared for decrease. Furthermore, if the **type of testing items used** in a test doubled as beneficial teaching materials beneficial washback was more likely but if the type of testing items used in a test did not double as beneficial teaching materials negative washback was more likely.

Teachers beliefs and abilities could either enhance beneficial washback (i.e. if a teacher's beliefs incorporated communicative teaching principles and the teacher was also highly proficient in English) or increase negative washback (i.e. if the teacher's beliefs incorporated a need to nearly always convey meaning via the Cantonese medium and the teacher also lacked the confidence to regularly speak English for communication in the classroom).

Student beliefs and abilities affected how well students prepared for the test. Many student beliefs about how best to prepare for an English test were acculturated from their experiences of learning English at school in the English classroom. Some student interviews with students who had previously studied at other secondary schools suggested that newly enrolled students from other schools often brought with them dissonant beliefs about how a school in general and English teachers in particular should prepare their students for tests.

Whole school and middle management decisions could influence how well teachers prepared students for the English test. Residual effects from the management style of a previous principal could be detected. That is, a belief that new EDB (Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) policies were often changed or withdrawn completely so it was best to first wait and see if a new EDB (Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) policy was permanent before setting out to implement it. The main source of this finding was teacher interviews and informal discussions with teachers. This attitude may explain the delay in any significant washback from preparing for the new HKDSE.

The degree of congruence between the materials used to prepare students for a test and each student's current level of English could either enhance beneficial washback (i.e. if highly congruent) or increase negative washback (i.e. if highly incongruent).

<u>**Time to Examination**</u> Washback was first detected two years prior to the testing date of either examination. Washback tended to increase as the public testing date approached but not necessarily at an even rate. Residual effects from the previous, superseded testing regime could still be detected.

8.1 *How CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) English Teachers were Influenced by High-stakes English Testing and English SBA (School-based Assessment)*

Strongly beneficial impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment)

The English teacher of Secondary 5 Elm* and Maple* classes had a favourable perception of English SBA (School-based Assessment) because in her view students worked harder and more seriously while preparing for and doing English SBA (School-based Assessment). The English teacher of Secondary 5 Palm* Class thought that English SBA (School-based Assessment) had a beneficial influence on both the content taught and the teaching methods used since more communicative and student centred learning activities took place in her classroom during the one or two weeks leading up to the actual English SBA (School-based Assessment). The English teacher of Secondary 5 Oak* Class thought that English SBA (School-based Assessment) had a greater influence on her teaching than the English examination and she also thought that English SBA (School-based Assessment) motivated her students to "try their best to perform well" at least while preparing for and actually doing the English SBA (School-based Asessment).

The preparation of Secondary 5 students for the English SBA (School-based Assessment) was observed and reported to produce the most beneficial influence on the English teaching methods and learning materials used at Secondary 5 level in the case study school. Beneficial impact from English SBA (School-based Assessment) explicitly influenced teachers' lesson planning, for instance, it seemed to have encouraged teachers to work collaboratively at tailoring learning materials for their students and these tailor-made learning materials were observed and reported to be of a far more appropriate level of difficulty than the commercially produced ready-made test focused English

textbooks or learning materials that were otherwise used at the school. Another beneficial impact

from English SBA (School-based Assessment) was its explicit influence on pedagogical practices

with Secondary 5 teachers spending (what was for their students) a pedagogically sound one or two

weeks of English lessons, depending on their students' ability and English levels, explicitly preparing

their students for the actual English SBA (School-based Assessment) administration.

Furthermore, English SBA (School-based Assessment) provided students with short-term achievable

goals; tended to increase the time spent on student centred learning during lessons; tended to increase

the time teachers spent giving individualised oral feedback to students during lessons; tended to

increase opportunities for students to use English in and outside of regular class time; and tended to

increase the use of the English medium of instruction.

Moreover, an analysis of the teaching materials that were being used at the case study school in

Secondary 5 English lessons suggested that English SBA (School-based Assessment) elicited an

increased use of the English medium by teachers and students during English lessons because English

SBA (School-based Assessment) teaching materials were tailored or created 'in-house'. For this

reason, English SBA (School-based Assessment) teaching materials were of a more appropriate level

for students than textbooks and of a level that students could understand without extensive Cantonese

interpretation and explanation. In stark contrast, Cantonese interpretation and explanation was a core

part of most of the other lessons observed particularly when lessons were based on the textbook.

Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation was also observed to more actively

engage students in the English learning process than 'regular' English lessons as the task-chain of

English SBA (School-based Assessment) preparation resulted in English teachers providing their

students with a variety of activities and instruction modes through which students could become increasingly familiar with the language required to prepare for and fulfil the English SBA (School-based Assessment) task.

Mainly beneficial washback from the new 'Learning English through' electives

The new *Learning English through Short Stories* elective had beneficial and explicit washback on the English teachers of 5 Palm* and 5 Oak* classes through their pedagogical practices, particularly the learning materials used in these classes. These learning materials were collaboratively tailored or created 'in-house' by Secondary 5 English teachers. However, since these learning materials were tailored before the opening of 5 Pine* Class, (a special class for new students from other schools that only started at the beginning of Secondary 5, not in Secondary 4 like the others) the English teacher of 5 Pine* Class found that these learning materials were not suitable for some of her students. She says that "Some of the better students, they can finish very quickly…" This highlights how important it is for all English classes' teachers to be involved in the tailoring of any learning materials that they will use in order to ensure that the actual learning needs of each unique class of students is taken into consideration during any collaborative tailoring process. Indeed, for the Secondary 5 Pine* Class students, whose English teacher did not take part in the collaborative tailoring process, the materials were not explicitly tailored (i.e. in this case, in relation to the Secondary 5 Pine* students, the materials could not really be described as or fulfil the function of tailor-made materials) and therefore for this reason to some extent lacked the appropriacy and the subsequent beneficial washback that occurred in the classes for whom these materials were explicitly and collaboratively tailored for. In other words, the scope of beneficial washback in the form of collaboratively tailored

learning materials only fully extended to those students for whom the materials were tailored for (or comparable students). Therefore, English teachers' familiarity with the English language proficiency levels and interests of their students played an important intermediary role in determining whether or not (and to what extent) beneficial washback was realised. In short, an analysis of these new English learning materials suggested that they were of a more appropriate level for the students that they were specifically designed for than the ready-made commercially produced and explicitly examination focused English textbook used at the school.

Washback mediated through the prism of teacher beliefs and priorities

Where little, if any, change between the old and new English examination was perceived by Secondary 5 teachers, little, if any, washback occurred from the new English examination. Learning materials prepared for the old certificate English examination reportedly continued in use when the students were in Secondary 4 since teachers focused on preparing students for the core, compulsory part of the examination at this time, a part of the examination where teachers initially perceived little, if any, change. Some use of these old certificate exam English teaching materials that were designed to prepare students for the old English examination was also observed during lesson observations that occurred during the middle of the first term of Secondary 5. When the students were in Secondary 4 they had a further two academic years ahead of them before the actual new English examination occurred.

English teachers did not seem to perceive any urgent need to explicitly prepare their students for the new English examination when their students were still in Secondary 4. However, by the beginning of Secondary 5, washback from the new English examination's *Learning English through*

Short Stories elective and impact from the subsequent and related English SBA (School-based Assessment) that was derived from it was explicitly and strongly evident. In all, three electives were chosen by the English teachers on behalf of the students. The first English SBA (School-based Assessment) that was prepared for was one which was derived from and was really an extension of the new elective *English through Short Stories* which was taught immediately before this English SBA (School-based Assessment).

Beneficial washback dependent on how appropriate testing items were for learning

Secondary 6 teachers were explicitly English examination focused from the very beginning of the two academic years of preparation for the five HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination papers. All English lessons observed explicitly focused on at least some part of one of the five English examination papers prepared for. English examination papers that best doubled as teaching and learning materials produced the most beneficial washback on regular classroom and school-based tutorial teaching. The Oral English paper gained the most beneficial washback for this reason. Negative washback on teaching was observed to come from the Language Systems part of the Section C paper. The teacher just seemed to 'go through' the already completed examination-like textbook exercises. For example, the teacher asked students for the correct answers to a matching exercise that they had already completed and coached students on how to answer multiple-choice items

8.2 *How CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) English Students were Influenced by High-stakes English Testing and English SBA (School-based Assessment)*

Much washback on students is mediated through a teacher's pedagogical practices

An interesting insight from a Secondary 5 English student was that despite the new English curriculum and the new English examination "the education system does not change…" because his English teacher's pedagogical practices remained unchanged. This situation exemplifies how futile it is to rely on beneficial washback effects alone in order to facilitate beneficial change on *how* students are taught. In many cases, washback effects on students were indirectly received. For example, washback was often mediated through a teacher's pedagogical practices. In this way, positive washback could be changed into negative washback through inappropriate teaching methods. Therefore, English teacher training in appropriate contemporary CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) pedagogical practices is crucial if beneficial washback from English exams is to achieve its full potential for enhancing the quality of the English teaching experienced by English students and have any chance of resulting in better learning outcomes for these students.

Extrinsic motivations for learning English associated with weak to moderate washback and impact

English lessons were by far the most commonly reported locale of actual English learning amongst Secondary 5 students. Extrinsic motivations for learning English in English lessons at school included student perceptions that English lessons were English examination focused. However, these lessons were also compulsory and this compulsoriness left open the possibility that at least some (if not many) students were attending these lessons even though they had very little (or no) intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for learning English. For those Secondary 5 students who felt more compelled to

learn English by extrinsic motivators than through intrinsic motivators any impact of washback on self-directed English learning had at worst a weak to at best a moderate effect. Some students' reports of laziness as a reason for not seeking other ways of learning English outside of regular English lessons also hints at a lack of intrinsic motivation to learn English. Some students' comments even suggest that many of the more 'traditional' (and examination focused) ways of teaching English at the case study school tended to de-motivate students. Furthermore, some teachers reported that they would teach more interesting, appropriate and diversified English lessons if there was no English examination to prepare their students for.   Beneficial impact and positive washback were likely to be experienced either directly or indirectly, particularly through their English teacher's pedagogical practices. Also, the greater the scope of perceived freedom that students (and teachers) experienced while learning (or teaching) English, the more fertile the environment for intrinsic motivators of learning (or teaching) English.

In so far as it was possible for the implementation of the English curriculum to be flexibly and appropriately calibrated to align with each student's needs (e.g. current level of English) and interests both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn English tended to be enhanced. The intensity of this enhancement depended on the extent to which each student's needs and interests were identified as being (or not being) met. In other words, the extent to which the English curriculum was appropriate was identified as an intervening variable affecting the strength and quality (either beneficially or detrimentally) of the washback or impact effects.

Impact of washback on students depended on what they planned to do after graduation

Washback on students depended on how important the English examination was for each of

them personally. This varied for many reasons but particularly depended on what each student intended to do after leaving secondary school. For those students who intended to study at university after graduating from secondary school the English examination was a very high-stakes test. However, for those students who did not intend to go on to university the stakes of the English examination were still high but usually somewhat lower depending, for example, on what English examination mark, if any, was required in order to gain a training place to prepare for a job or gain a job in their preferred profession.

Impact of washback greater for those students who planned to go to university

Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from students suggested that students tended to be less English examination focused than their teachers unless they wanted to continue on to university and students who came from other schools were most prevalent amongst students who wanted to go on to university. Secondary 6 students and Secondary 5 repeaters tended to be more English examination focused than regular Secondary 5 students. The Secondary 6 students and the Secondary 5 repeaters were both higher performing academically, had higher levels of English proficiency and were more motivated to learn English. For these reasons, Secondary 6 students and the Secondary 5 repeaters also had the greatest chance of doing well in their final public English examinations and going on to university. Therefore, the examination had the highest stakes for these students and therefore it also had the strongest examination focusing washback.

Impact of washback greater on students with better English and academic performance

Secondary 6 students were far more familiar with the format and content of English papers prepared for than the Secondary 5 students. This was because their teachers always explicitly taught

them using test like materials. This was also because there were many past papers available. In

addition, a far higher percentage of Secondary 6 students intended to go to university after graduating

from senior secondary school, therefore they were more motivated to do well in the English

examination. Furthermore, far more Secondary 6 students went to commercial after-school English

examination preparation tutorial classes in order to improve their English examination taking skills

and become more familiar with the English examination prepared for than Secondary 5 students.

Moreover, there were also some other factors that accounted for Secondary 6 students' greater

familiarity with the examination prepared for. Firstly, secondary 6 students tended to be more

motivated to learn English given that half were drawn from the top 15% to 20% of this case study

school's previous year's Secondary 5 students and half drawn from other higher academically

performing schools. Secondly, the Secondary 6 students also tended to come from more socio-

economically better off families than most of the regular Secondary 5 students. The above factors

may also explain why Secondary 5 repeaters tended to be more familiar with the new HKDSE (Hong

Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English test than the regular Secondary 5 students. In short,

the longer an English examination has been administered the more familiar English teachers and

students are with its requirements. Students with higher academic ability; higher levels of English

language proficiency; higher levels of motivation to learn; and who were also from a higher socio-

economic background (in any combination) tended to be more familiar with the requirements of the

English examination prepared for, regardless of which English test was prepared for or whether it was

a new or old test.

8.3 *The Factors that Intervene to Promote Beneficial Washback*

By collaborating and tailoring materials English teachers enhanced beneficial washback

Secondary 5 English teachers made strategic use of the limited lesson preparation time available

to them at the case study school. These English teachers collaborated in focusing on and prioritising

the preparation of materials for the electives that were part of the new test. These English teachers

also collaborated in focusing on and prioritising the preparation of new materials for English SBA

(School-based Assessment) tasks and English SBA (School-based Assessment) related teaching

materials. When these shared materials were further tailored to match the actual English level of a

teacher's students they produced the most beneficial washback. In short, newly introduced elective

testing items produced some of the strongest beneficial washback on new teaching material selection

and development. English SBA (School-based Assessment) also had some of the strongest beneficial

washback.

The pedagogical practices of communicative language teaching enhanced beneficial washback

Teachers who expressed more communicative language teaching orientated teacher beliefs

about teaching in interviews and who were observed to apply these beliefs during classroom

observations promoted more beneficial washback than other teachers. This trait was most evident in

teachers with a deep understanding of contemporary communicative English language teaching

methods and the theories that underpin them who were usually also the teachers with the highest

academic level of applied linguistics training and the most fluency in English. The main source of

this finding were teacher interviews and informal discussions where teachers disclosed what their

highest degree was. Two English teachers with master degrees were also observed in lesson

observations to use more communicative English teaching pedagogical practices in their lessons than the other English teachers. Interviews also revealed that they had a deeper interest in using and far greater understanding of contemporary communicative language teaching theories and how to apply pedagogical practices derived from these theories in their lessons. Classroom observations, interviews and informal discussions revealed that these two teachers were also far more fluent in English than the other English teachers at the case study school.

The pedagogical practices of communicative language teaching by an English teacher with a native-speaker level of English language fluency further enhanced washback

Native-speaker or near native-speaker levels of English language proficiency promoted beneficial washback. Teachers with higher levels of English language proficiency also tended to use more English in the classroom as well as more communicative language teaching methods.

8.4 *The Factors that Intervene to Hinder Beneficial Washback*

Teachers continuing to use materials aligned to the immediately superseded testing system

The use of teaching materials based on the discontinued old English certificate test continued during much of the first year of the new three year Senior Secondary English course. Washback from the new test was slow to influence the materials teachers used for teaching the core compulsory part of the English curriculum because teachers did not perceive any significant differences between the core compulsory parts of the old and new English tests.

Too large a gap between English textbooks or materials and most students' current English levels

Despite the large gap between the English in the textbook and students' current English levels, teachers still attempted to use this textbook as teaching materials for the new Senior Secondary English course. Since it was too difficult for most of the students to understand LETs (Local English Teachers) tended to make extensive use of the Cantonese medium of instruction during what was supposedly English lesson time.

Insufficient tailoring of materials leaving too large a gap between materials and students

The use of tailor-made English teaching materials that were shared between Secondary 5 English teachers without further tailoring by individual teachers to match the actual English level, academic ability level and interests of their own unique class of students left a gap between the English level of these materials and students' levels of English language proficiency. Furthermore, when these English teaching materials were not original but based on past examination papers or other commercially available English teaching materials and used as one-size-fits-all English teaching materials they elicited poor teaching practices such as excessive use of Cantonese interpretation in order to bridge the gap between the comparatively high level of English used in the materials and the students' much lower levels of English. These English teaching materials were mandated by the English panel chair for use across the whole cohort of Secondary 5 students despite their significantly different levels of English language proficiency and the varying academic ability levels amongst Secondary 5 students both between and to a lesser extent within each English class. It was usually only when teachers further tailored these materials that negative washback was avoided.

Adding new subjects to the curriculum reducing time for formal English instruction

School management decisions about how to find time to add a new subject to the curriculum resulted in Senior Secondary students being allocated one less English lesson each week. Several years ago the number of formal English lessons per week was reduced from 8x40 minute lessons per week to 7x40 minute lessons per week. It was suggested that this was in order to provide more formal lesson time for a new subject first introduced in the new senior secondary curriculum.

Inappropriate narrowing of the curriculum by middle management

The middle management English panel chair decision to select three 'electives' and make them compulsory for all Secondary 5 students at the case study school posed a particular problem for the Secondary 5 repeaters who tended to have much higher levels of English, more advanced academic abilities, higher motivation levels and different interests to the other regular Secondary 5 students. The main sources for this finding included background information about the Secondary 5 repeater students from a teacher interview with their English teacher, student interviews and classroom observations.

Lack of professional freedom to freely 'tailor' instruction and instructional materials

Individual English teachers were observed in English lesson observations to lack and some English teachers also reported in individual teacher interviews that they did indeed feel that they lacked the professional freedom and autonomy required to be able to truly 'tailor' their instruction and instructional materials to match the needs and interests of their students.

8.5 *The Types of English Testing Items that Tend to Promote Beneficial Washback*

Beneficial washback and impact from testing items and assessment materials that are also appropriate teaching and learning materials

Some types of English testing items and assessment materials do have a better washback influence than others on teaching and learning. Most notable for strong beneficial washback or impact on teaching and learning were those parts of either English tests that doubled as beneficial teaching and learning materials. Examples include the Secondary 6 Oral English test, the Secondary 5 English SBA (School-based Assessment) task preparation and assessment, and the new elective 'Learning English through' part of the Secondary 5 English curriculum and examination.

8.6 *The Types of English Testing Items that Hinder Beneficial Washback by Tending to Promote Detrimental Washback on Teaching and Learning*

Negative washback from testing items that were inappropriate teaching and learning materials

Some types of English testing items did have a worse washback influence than others on teaching and Learning. Most notable for negative washback on teaching and learning were those parts of either English test that did not double as beneficial teaching and learning materials. Examples include the second part of Section C – Language Systems paper for the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) Use of English examination as it tended to lead teachers towards coaching students on examination skills for the testing items used such as matching and multiple-choice rather than leading teachers towards more appropriate, meaningful or interesting English learning activities.

8.7 *The Interplay of Washback on Teaching and Learning from Some Types of English Testing Items with Other Identifiable Factors*

Students often experienced washback indirectly and teachers' beliefs influenced the impact of washback on pedagogical practices and materials selection

Washback often came from the English examination prepared for indirectly through impact from the teaching materials used. A teacher's teaching beliefs also heavily influenced how students were prepared for their English examination during English lessons. An English teacher's own English ability and English language teaching theoretical knowledge along with their teaching ability and level of professional freedom and autonomy to apply these beliefs in practice also influenced the quality of beneficial washback and impact evident in the English classroom.

8.8 *Limitations*

Evaluations of the type and strength of positive or negative washback and impact from qualitative data were not quantifiable so were not statistically measureable. These evaluations were based on the participants' and researcher's own perceptions about the type (positive or negative) and strength (weak, moderate or strong) of the washback and impact.

It was not possible to report what the English language proficiency levels of student participants were at the beginning of their two or three years of English language public examination preparation. However, it was possible to report the approximate English language proficiency levels achieved by student participants. A benchmarking table from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2012c) was referred to when constructing the pie charts that report estimates of the approximate English language proficiency levels achieved by Secondary 5 students. A benchmarking table from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2004) was referred to when constructing the pie charts that report estimates of the approximate English language proficiency

levels achieved by Secondary 6 students. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2013) notes that "… the assessment objectives, curricula, assessment formats and examination design of the HKDSE [Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education] English Language and IELTS [International English Language Testing System] are different even though both are tests of English language proficiency." It should be further noted that there are the same type of differences between the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) AS-level (Advanced Supplementary Level) Use of English examination and the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English Language examination. Therefore, the pie charts that outline the English language proficiency levels achieved by the Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students of the case study school in Figure 4.1 on page 63; Figure 4.2 on page 64; Figure 4.3 on page 70; Figure 4.4 on page 76; Figure 4.5 on page 81; Figure 4.6 on page 83; and Figure 4.7 on page 90 are only approximate estimations of English language proficiency levels and are not actual test scores and it would be statistically inappropriate to use these pie charts to compare the proficiency levels achieved by Secondary 5 students to the proficiency levels achieved by Secondary 6 students.

Finally, it should be noted that the data collected for this research was extensive and richly meaningful. The findings reported and discussed in this dissertation only represent a select few of all the possible findings that could come from this data. Replication studies at a variety of other schools across Hong Kong would be needed in order to fully establish to what extent the findings derived from this case study are either unique to this particularly school's unique context or generalisable to others like it and to the wider education system in Hong Kong and/or elsewhere. However such generalisability fell outside the scope of this research due to its case study research design and focus.

8.9 *Recommendations*

The overriding implication of this research for the case study school is that as a whole English language learning curriculum, pedagogy, testing and assessment should focus less on extrinsic and more on intrinsic motivation for learning. In order to achieve this goal the overall framework of the English language curriculum, pedagogy, testing and assessment require considerable fine-tuning. Three main recommendations for the case study school come from an overall analysis of the main findings.

Firstly, at the school level a greater focus on intrinsic motivation for learning could be implemented through ensuring that senior secondary students had a genuine choice when it came to selecting which *Learning English through* electives to choose. Student choice could be further enhanced through inter-school level co-operation. If neighbouring schools each specialised in a different selection of the *Learning English through* electives student exchange arrangements could be implemented for the teaching of these electives. At the curriculum development and assessment level the school should be granted greater autonomy through the Hong Kong Education Bureau and Hong Kong Education Examinations and Assessment Authority offering a greater number of English curriculum and assessment options for senior secondary English language study and assessment. For example, the number of *Learning English through* electives could be increased and at the examination and assessment level the weighing of these electives could also be increased. As a whole, all these suggested changes would help enhance student choice and therefore be more likely to tap into student intrinsic motivation for learning English through the creative use of English while doing something that they actually enjoyed learning about.

Secondly, another recommendation is for the number of English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks to be increased along with their weighing. At the case study school this type of assessment tended to have a far more immediate and sharper beneficial impact on teachers and students than the high-stakes English test. Preparing for and doing more English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks would provide students with more chances to use English creatively and therefore could play the dual role of assessing and learning.

Thirdly, English teachers with native-speaker levels of English language proficiency and a relevant language teaching related Master's degree should be given greater levels of professional autonomy and academic freedom. One of the findings from this research was that these teachers were unable to reach their full English teaching potential without the professional autonomy and academic freedom to make the most appropriate choices about what to teach and how to teach it. This would not only help improve these teachers' morale but also greatly benefit their students through more appropriate teaching materials and pedagogy.

8.10 *Conclusion*

English examination washback did not work alone. It operated in a dynamic environment and often indirectly through or alongside several other factors such as impact from teaching materials or English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks to produce strong, weak or no washback. Washback could be either beneficial or detrimental to teaching and learning. Factors that interacted with English examination washback included indirect washback through impact from commercially produced textbooks and commercially available after-school English examination preparation

tutorials. Each teacher's own beliefs about how best to prepare their students for the test, middle management decisions by the English panel chair about how to standardise and apply the English teaching curriculum, whole school management decisions on what ratio of time, resources and focus should be allocated to English compared to that given to several other curriculum subjects had the capacity to either magnify, change or eliminate both beneficial and detrimental washback from an English examination.

HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) English SBA (School-based Assessment) tasks demonstrated potential for gaining beneficial washback for whatever time was required to prepare for the task which at the case study school was two to three weeks leading up to the actual assessment date depending on the English proficiency level and academic ability level of each class. Entirely new components of a newly introduced English examination also demonstrated potential for beneficial washback when teachers were required to prepare their own tailor-made teaching materials that were appropriate for the English proficiency level, academic ability level and interests of their students.

Washback from the English examination was only perceptible up to two years prior to the examination prepared for. There was no or very little washback reported from the new English examination during the first year of senior secondary study when the students were in Secondary 4. Washback was perceptible from two years prior to the actual English examination date and reportedly increased as the date of the actual English examination prepared for approached.

Washback from the Secondary 5 English examination could be briefly eclipsed by preparation for and impact from an English SBA (School-based Assessment) task. This was observed during

classroom observations and after-school lessons or tutorial observations at school. Compared to 'regular' English lessons, English SBA (School-based Assessment) was observed to provide Secondary 5 students with a greater variety of English learning opportunities. 'Regular' English lessons tended to be too teacher centred, too textbook centred and too focused on the expected types of test questions. 'Regular' English lessons also tended to include too great a focus on the teaching of language form and excessive use of the Cantonese medium of instruction in lieu of appropriate communicative English teaching strategies and teaching materials.

9. REFERENCES

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A research data inventory was developed and refined through an initial review of the research literature and critically reflecting on five and a half years of experience teaching English in Hong Kong secondary schools.

Inventory items derived from the literature cited below were selected for inclusion in research instruments as they were considered likely to elicit data either on washback or the factors that may intervene to promote or hinder washback.

<u>Semi-structured student and teacher interview guides</u>:

KEY: SP = Student Prompt; TP = Teacher Prompt.

Main Inventory Sources	**Inventory**	**Prompts** for the questions that were constructed by the researcher
15 Possible Washback Hypotheses Alderson, J. C., & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), pp. 120-121.	**Washback from examinations on teaching** **Washback from examinations on learning** **Exam focus**	TP1 Washback from examinations on teaching SP1 Washback from examinations on learning SP2 Exam focus
Cheng, L. (2005). Changing language teaching through language testing A washback study. *Studies in Language Testing,* Vol. 21 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 271 – 274.	**Preferred strategies for learning a language**	SP6 Preferred learning styles
De Bot, K., Lowie, W., & Verspoor, M. (2005). *Second Language Acquisition an advanced resource book.* London: Routledge. p. 3.	**Motivation** **Attitude**	SP3 Motivation SP4 Attitude
Inventory mainly derived from the researcher's own critical reflections on five and a half years teaching experience in Hong Kong secondary schools or of his own composition.	**Student beliefs** **Other related issues**	SP5 Student beliefs TP4 Any other related issues raised by participant(s).
Qi, L. (2005). Stakeholders' conflicting aims undermine the washback function of a high-stakes test. *Language Testing*, 22(2), 144.	**Teaching style**	TP2 Actual teaching methods TP3 Preferred teaching methods

Questionnaire:

KEY: Q.=Question

Main Inventory Sources	Inventory	Questions/items constructed by the researcher
15 Possible Washback Hypotheses Alderson, J. C., & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), pp. 120-121. * As this paper is widely considered to be the genesis of contemporary study into washback it may generally be considered to be the main source of the researcher's questions/items on washback.	Washback	Q.12 You are familiar with the <u>format</u> of your final end of school English examinations Q.13 You are familiar with the <u>content</u> of your final end of school English examinations Q.14 You only study what content you think will be tested in your final end of school English examination Q.15 How your study has been affected by your final end of school English examination Q. 16 Preparing for your final end of school English examinations has helped you to improve your level of English language proficiency Q. 17 In your opinion, preparing for and doing school-based assessments helps you improve your English Q.18 Now, you are mainly learning English in order to prepare for your final end of school English examinations Q.23-9 An important English examination to prepare for
Cheng, L. (2005). Changing language teaching through language testing A washback study. *Studies in Language Testing,* Vol. 21 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 271 – 274.	Gender	Q.1 Gender
De Bot, K., Lowie, W., & Verspoor, M. (2005). *Second Language Acquisition an advanced resource book.* London: Routledge. p. 3. *The citation from this book identifies variables that may influence language acquisition. Some of these variables were considered likely to influence participants so were included in the inventory by the researcher.	Age Intelligence Motivation	Q. 3 Age Q.23-1 Intelligence Q.8 In your opinion, you will need to use English in the future in your work life after school Q.9 You expect to use English in your daily life after graduating from high school Q.10 You plan to study at an English medium university or college in the future Q.11 You enjoy learning English at school Q.23-5 A genuine interest in learning English

	English Contact	Q.2 How old were you when you first began regular English lessons in a school
		Q.5 You speak English with teachers outside of class at school
		Q.6 You speak English with other students outside of class at school
		Q.7 You currently use English in your daily life outside of school hours
The following were mainly derived from the researcher's own critical reflections on five and a half years teaching experience in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Some other washback studies, for example, Cheng, L. (2005), include similar questions/items in their data collection instruments particularly when investigating similar sets of research questions on English language examination washback, however, as stated above, the inventory included in this section mainly comes from the researcher's own critical reflections.	**Perceived importance of English contact** **Perceived level of English language proficiency** **Effort** **Enjoyment** **Teacher quality** **Teaching materials** **Tutorials** **Assessments** **Homework** **Memorisation** **Grammar knowledge**	Q.23-14 Someone at home who can help me learn English Q.23-15 Spending time living in an English speaking country Q.19 Which one of the sentences below best describes your English speaking ability? Q.20 Which one of the sentences below best describes your English listening ability? Q.21 Which one of the sentences below best describes your English reading ability? Q.22 Which one of the sentences below best describes your English writing ability? Q.23-2 Hard work Q.23-3 Enjoyable English learning experiences Q.23-4 A good teacher Q.23-6 English textbooks Q.23-7 English films Q.23-8 Tutorials outside of school Q.23-10 School-based assessments Q.23-11 English homework Q.23-12 Rote learning and memorisation Q.23-13 Explicit knowledge of grammar rules

10. APPENDICES

10.1 *Timelines*
The planned progression of the research project

Semester 1, 2010 (Part-time)		(i) Review literature and refine problem and research questions (ii) Background reading on conceptual framework and methodology (iii) Construct draft research proposal (iv) If draft research proposal is approved this semester, submit ethics form for the research project. (observations and interviews of teachers and students)
Semester 2, 2010 (Full-time)		(v) When point (iv) is approved send consent letters to participants (vi) Start collecting first phase of data from consenting participants (questionnaires, classroom observations and semi-structured individual or group interviews of teachers and students) and start writing descriptions of anticipated test items (vii) Initial phase of washback data analysis and coding and initial analysis of questionnaire data (viii) Initial search of data for any other factors that interplay with washback and an initial analysis of these and coding (ix) Start collecting second phase of data from consenting participants (classroom observations and in-depth individual or group interviews of teachers and students) (x) Second phase of washback data analysis and coding including further analysis of test items (xi) Second phase of search of data for any other factors that interplay with washback and analysis and coding
Semester 1, 2011 (Full-time)		(xii) Analysis and coding (xiii) Drawing conclusions and implications
Semester 2, 2011 (Part-time) **& Semester 1, 2012 (Part-time)**		(xiv) Focus on preparing first draft of thesis
Semester 2, 2012 (Part-time)		(xv) Focus on preparing second draft of thesis
Semester 1, 2013 (Part-time)		(xv) Focus on preparing final copy of thesis for submission

10.2 *Lesson observation guide*

DAY: (Circle) M T W TH F SA SU   **DATE:** __/__/20__   **TIME:__:__**   **CLASS:____**

TEACHER: _____   **LESSON TOPIC:** _____

Time	Teacher & Student Actions	Materials Used by Teacher and Students	Comments

EXAM FOCUS: (Circle)   HIGH   MEDIUM   LOW   NONE

Which exam item/question types, if any, are identifiable? …………………………………………………………………………………………

………..

Which exam papers, if any, are identifiable? …………………………………………………....................……………………………………………

………

Any additional field notes or reflections: …………………………………………………….....…………………………………………………

………

………

10.3 *Semi-structured student interview guide*

* Actual interviews started with prompt 3, followed by prompts 4, 5, 1, 2, and 6 respectively.

 PROMPTS

1. <u>Washback from examinations on learning</u>

How do you actually study English?

Why do you learn English in this way?

2. <u>Exam Focus</u>

How do you feel about your final exams?

What do you know about your final exams?

   - *Could you tell me about the format of your final English exams?*

   - *Could you tell me about the content of your final English exams?*

   - *Could you tell me about the skills that are important to do well in your final English exams?*

   - *Are these final exams important or unimportant for you?*

     Why?

3. <u>Motivation</u>

Why are you learning English?

4. <u>Attitude</u>

How do you feel about your English learning experiences?

5. <u>Student beliefs</u>

What do you think is the best way to learn English?

6. <u>Preferred learning styles</u>

What is your favourite way of learning English?

10.4 *Semi-structured teacher interview guide*

* Actual interviews started with prompt 3, followed by prompts 2, 1, and 4 respectively.

PROMPTS

5. **Washback from examinations on teaching**

    How much do the final English exams influence your English teaching?

6. **Actual teaching methods**

    How do you *actually* teach your English classes?

    Why do you teach in this way?

7. **Preferred teaching methods**

    If you had a free choice, how would you *prefer* to teach your English classes?

8. **Any other issues raised by participant(s)**

    Do you have anything else you would like to say about your English teaching experiences?

10.5 *Questionnaire* (English version)

Dear Students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about your English learning experiences. Please be assured that information you provide will be kept confidential. Furthermore, it will not be possible to identify you in any published research that may consequently result from the answers you give to this questionnaire.

(1) What is your gender?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ Male   ☐ Female

(2) How old were you when you first began regular English lessons in a school?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ 4 years old   ☐ 5 years old   ☐ 6 years old

☐ 7 years old   ☐ 8 years old   ☐ 9 years old

☐ 10 years old   ☐ 11 years old   ☐ 12 years old

☐ 13 years old   ☐ 14 years old   ☐ 15 years old

☐ 16 years old   ☐ 17 years old   ☐ 18 years old

(3) How old were you at your last birthday?
Please answer this question by writing a number between the brackets.

(_____) years old.

(4) What level of secondary school are you studying in now?
Please answer this question by writing a number between the brackets.

☐ Secondary 5   ☐ Secondary 6

(5)   You speak English with teachers outside of class at school.
Please complete this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

      ☐ All of the time
      ☐ Often
      ☐ About half of the time
      ☐ Sometimes
      ☐ None of the time

(6)   You speak English with other students outside of class at school.
Please complete this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

      ☐ All of the time
      ☐ Often
      ☐ About half of the time
      ☐ Sometimes
      ☐ None of the time

(7)   You currently use English in your daily life outside of school hours.
Please complete this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

Speaking	**Listening**	**Reading**	**Writing**
☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time
☐ Often	☐ Often	☐ Often	☐ Often
☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time
☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes
☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time

(8)   In your opinion, you will need to use English in the future in your work life after school.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

Speaking	**Listening**	**Reading**	**Writing**
☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time	☐ All of the time
☐ Often	☐ Often	☐ Often	☐ Often
☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time	☐ About half of the time
☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Sometimes
☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time	☐ None of the time

(9) You expect to use English in your daily life after graduating from high school.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ All of the time
☐ Often
☐ About half of the time
☐ Sometimes
☐ None of the time

(10)   You plan to study at an English medium university or college in the future.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

(11)   You enjoy learning English at school.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ All of the time
☐ Often
☐ About half of the time
☐ Sometimes
☐ None of the time

(12)   You are familiar with the <u>format</u> of your final end of school English examination.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

(13)   You are familiar with the <u>content</u> of your final end of school English examination.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
☐

(14) **You only study what content you think will be tested in your final end of school English examination.**
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

(15) **How you study English has been affected by your final end of school English examination.**
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

(16) **Preparing for your final end of school English examinations has helped you to improve your level of English language proficiency.**
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

(17) **In your opinion, preparing for and doing English school-based assessments helps you improve your English.**
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

(18)   Now, you are mainly learning English in order to prepare for your final end of school English examinations.
Please answer this item by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

(19)   Which one of the sentences below best describes your <u>English speaking</u> ability?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ I can not say anything at all in English.
☐ I can speak a few words and some memorised phrases in English.
☐ I can take part in conversations on many familiar topics in English but may make some mistakes.
☐ I can usually express my own opinions in English, give detailed explanations and talk at length.
☐ I can speak English as well as a native speaker.

(20)   Which one of the sentences below best describes your <u>English listening</u> ability?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ I can not understand anything at all when I hear someone speak English.
☐ I can understand familiar sentences and questions in English.
☐ I can understand conversations on many familiar topics in English but may misunderstand some details.
☐ I can usually understand a conversation between two native speakers.
☐ I can listen to English as well as a native speaker.

(21)   Which one of the sentences below best describes your <u>English reading</u> ability?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

☐ I can not understand anything at all when I read English.
☐ I can read and understand very short, simple texts in English.
☐ I can understand many familiar short stories in English but may not understand some of the words used.
☐ I can usually understand the main gist of at least several articles in an English newspaper.
☐ I can read English as well as a native speaker.

(22) Which one of the sentences below best describes your <u>English writing</u> ability?
Please answer this question by ticking (/) the appropriate box.

- ☐ I can not write anything at all in English.
- ☐ I can write some simple sentences in English but only on very familiar topics.
- ☐ I can write sentences in English on many familiar topics but might make some mistakes.
- ☐ I can write an essay in English but might make a few mistakes.
- ☐ I can write like a well educated native speaker of English.

(23) In regards to your own English learning experiences, how important do you think the following are for you to be a successful English learner?
Please answer this question by rating:-

1. *Very important*
2. *Important*
3. *Undecided*
4. *Unimportant*
5. *Very Unimportant*

- ☐ Intelligence
- ☐ An important English examination to prepare for

- ☐ Hard work
- ☐ School-based English assessments

- ☐ Enjoyable English learning experiences
- ☐ English homework

- ☐ A good teacher
- ☐ Rote learning and memorisation

- ☐ A genuine interest in learning English
- ☐ Explicit knowledge of grammar rules

- ☐ English textbooks
- ☐ Someone at home who can help me learn English

- ☐ English films
- ☐ Spending time living in an English speaking country

- ☐ Tutorials outside of school

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your help.

問卷

親愛的學生

此問卷的目的在於瞭解你學習英文的經驗。此份問卷采不計名的方式，個別資料不會對外公開，請您安心作答。

(1) 性別?
　　填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

　　　□　男性　　　　　　　　　　　□　女性

(2) 請問你幾歲開始接受學校正規的英文課程
　　填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

　　□　4 歲　　　　　　　□　5歲　　　　　　　□　6歲

　　□　7歲　　　　　　　□　8歲　　　　　　　□　9歲

　　□　10歲　　　　　　　□　11歲　　　　　　　□　12歲

　　□　13歲　　　　　　　□　14歲　　　　　　　□　15歲

　　□　16歲　　　　　　　□　　17歲　　　　　　□　18歲

(3) 請問你上一次生日的年齡是?
　　請在括弧內以阿拉伯數字的方式填寫。

　　(＿＿＿＿) 歲。

(4) 你現在讀高中幾年級?
　　填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

　　　□　中五　　　　　　□　中六

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(5) 你在學校的課餘時間用英文與老師交談。

填寫時請以此符號 (/) 填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 從不間斷
- ☐ 時常
- ☐ 大概一半時間
- ☐ 偶爾
- ☐ 從不

(6) 你在學校的課餘時間用英文與其他同學交談。

填寫時請以此符號 (/) 填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 從不間斷
- ☐ 時常
- ☐ 大概一半時間
- ☐ 偶爾
- ☐ 從不

(7) 除了上校時間以外，你在日常生活中會使用英文。

填寫時請以此符號 (/) 填入適當的格子。

說		聽		讀		寫	
☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷
☐	時常	☐	時常	☐	時常	☐	時常
☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間
☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾
☐	從不	☐	從不	☐	從不	☐	從不

(8) 你認為未來畢業後在職場上需要使用英文。
   填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

說		聽		讀		寫	
☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷	☐	從不間斷
☐	時常	☐	時常	☐	時常	☐	時常
☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間	☐	大概一半時間
☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾	☐	偶爾
☐	從不	☐	從不	☐	從不	☐	從不

(9) 高中畢業後，你期望在日常生活中使用英文。
   填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 從不間斷
☐ 時常
☐ 大概一半時間
☐ 偶爾
☐ 從不

(10) 你計畫就讀以英文方式授課的大學。
   填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 非常同意
☐ 同意
☐ 無意見
☐ 不同意
☐ 非常不同意

(11) 你在學校喜歡學英文。
   填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 從不間斷
☐ 時常
☐ 大概一半時間
☐ 偶爾
☐ 從不
☐

(12) 你對學校英文畢業考試的<u>出題方式</u>非常熟悉。

填寫時請以此符號(∕)填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 非常同意
- ☐ 同意
- ☐ 無意見
- ☐ 不同意
- ☐ 非常不同意

(13) 你對學校英文畢業考試的出題<u>內容</u>非常熟悉。

填寫時請以此符號(∕)填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 非常同意
- ☐ 同意
- ☐ 無意見
- ☐ 不同意
- ☐ 非常不同意

(14) 你只是學習你覺得將會在學校英文畢業考試出現的內容。

填寫時請以此符號(∕)填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 非常同意
- ☐ 同意
- ☐ 無意見
- ☐ 不同意
- ☐ 非常不同意

(15) 你學習英文的方向是被學校的英文畢業考試所影響嗎?

填寫時請以此符號(∕)填入適當的格子。

- ☐ 非常同意
- ☐ 同意
- ☐ 無意見
- ☐ 不同意
- ☐ 非常不同意

(16) 準備學校的英文畢業考試對於提升你的英文能力上有所幫助。
填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

- □ 非常同意
- □ 同意
- □ 無意見
- □ 不同意
- □ 非常不同意

(17) 你認為準備及做校本評核 **(SBA)** 能使你的英文能力進步。
填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

- □ 非常同意
- □ 同意
- □ 無意見
- □ 不同意
- □ 非常不同意

(18) 你目前學習英文的主要目的是為了準備學校的英文畢業考試。
填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

- □ 非常同意
- □ 同意
- □ 無意見
- □ 不同意
- □ 非常不同意

(19) 下列那一句話最符合你目前的英文<u>口語</u>能力？
填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

- □ 我完全無法以英文表達。
- □ 我能說出幾個英文單字以及一些背過的片語。
- □ 我能就多項熟悉的主題以英文對話，但有些許錯誤。
- □ 我時常能以英文詳細地表達我的意見。
- □ 我講的英文能像以英文為母語的人士一樣好。

(20) 下列那一句話最符合你目前的英文<u>聆聽</u>能力？

填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 當別人講英文時我完全無法理解。
☐ 我能理解熟悉的句子及問題。
☐ 我能理解許多常見的主題及英文對話，但細節部份可能會有所誤解。
☐ 我能理解以英文為母語人士之間的對話內容。
☐ 我的英文聆聽力能像以英文為母語人士一樣好。

(21) 下列那一句話最符合你目前的英文<u>閱讀</u>能力？

填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 當我閱讀英文時我完全無法理解。
☐ 我能閱讀及理解簡短的英文文字。
☐ 我能理解許多熟悉及簡短的英文故事，但無法理解一些用字。
☐ 我能理解英文報紙中幾篇文章的主旨。
☐ 我的英文閱讀能力能像以英文為母語人士一樣好。

(22) 下列那一句話最符合你目前的英文<u>寫作</u>能力？

填寫時請以此符號(／)填入適當的格子。

☐ 我完全無法以英文書寫。
☐ 我能就熟悉的主題寫出幾句簡單的英文句子。
☐ 我能就熟悉的主題寫出英文句子，但也許會有錯誤。
☐ 我能寫出英文短篇文章，但也許會有錯誤。
☐ 我能寫出像受過高等教育之以英文為母語人士一樣的文章。

(23) 以你個人學習英文的經驗，成為一位成功的英文學習者的條件有什麼?

請以數字代碼填入空格內：

1. *非常重要*
2. *重要*
3. *無意見*
4. *不重要*
5. *非常不重要*

☐　智能

☐　努力

☐　快樂的英語學習經驗

☐　好的老師

☐　對學習英文有濃厚的興趣

☐　英文教科書

☐　英文電影

☐　校外補習

☐　準備重要的英文考試

☐　英文校本評核(SBA)

☐　英文作業

☐　死記硬背的學習方式

☐　清晰的文法觀念

☐　家裏有人能幫助我學習英文

☐　曾在英語國家居住

問卷已結束，感謝您的幫助。

10.7 *Further information about the examinations*

Official information about the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education English language examination is available online from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority homepage in the link below:

(http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/mobile/en/hkdse/assessment/subject_information/category_a_subjects/hkdse_subj.html?A1&1&2)

The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority publishes each year's examination papers soon after the testing session has finished. Books with the examinations that the students in this case study actually did are listed below. The printed copy of each also includes a CD of the listening test.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (2012). *2012 Subject Examination Report and Question Papers English Language (with listening test CD).* Hong Kong: HKEAA.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (2012). *2012 Subject Examination Report and Question Papers Use of English (AS).* Hong Kong: HKEAA.