



**THE WASHBACK EFFECT OF A THAI NATIONAL  
ENGLISH TEST ON LEARNING AND TEACHING AND  
TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE TEST**

**BY**

**MISS KAVISARA POLPO**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY**

**ACADEMIC YEAR 2021**

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MISS KAVISARA POLPO


ENTITLED

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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

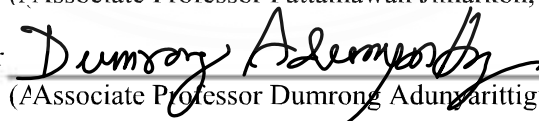
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Thesis Title	THE WASHBACK EFFECT OF A THAI NATIONAL ENGLISH TEST ON LEARNING AND TEACHING AND TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE TEST
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Academic Year	2021

### **Abstract**

Realizing the importance of assessment as a tool for the improvement of education, The National Institute of Educational Testing Service sought to assess Thai students' knowledge by using the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) so that the quality of Thai educational system can be evaluated. However, previous studies pointed that the O-NET had strong negative washback effects or impact on the curriculum. Therefore, this study investigated the core beliefs of English language teachers about the O-NET and how the English O-NET at Grade 12 affects teachers' beliefs in pedagogical practices. In this study, English teachers in 119 public secondary schools under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 1 and 2, Bangkok area were chosen for the mixed-method analysis using questionnaire, classroom observation, and the interview. The results show that teachers believed that the test aligned with the English learning strands prescribed on Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551, and there were direct and indirect effects on stakeholders, the test, and beliefs of teachers in different ways.

**Keywords:** Washback, language testing, assessment, Thai education, teachers' beliefs

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the people who were involved in helping me successfully complete my thesis study.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dumrong Adunyarittigun for the continuous support of my M.A. program, for his guidance, dedication, and immense knowledge throughout my English language studies journey until it has been successfully done. His assistance and critical feedback were valuable throughout the research and writing of this thesis.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank my research committee: Assist. Prof. Dr. Jirada Wudthayagorn and Asst. Prof. Dr. Pattamawan Jimarkorn for their kindness, encouragement, and insightful comments, which incited me to widen my research from various perspectives.

Moreover, I would like to offer my appreciation to my beloved friends, Miss Silada Khamhung and Mister Chaktip Paiboon for their long-lasting support and encouragement. My heartfelt gratitude goes to all faculty and staff members for their expertise and encouragement during my master's degree life. Thank you to my ELS friends at Thammasat University for the priceless moments, consistent encouragement, and faith in my abilities to work on the thesis. I am grateful to the lecturers and graduate and doctoral students who took part in this research. This study would not have been possible without their patience, collaboration, and eagerness to learn new things.

Finally, I wish to thank the support for this study. This research and innovation activity is funded by National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT).

Kavisara Polpo

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale and Background

In light of the importance of language education, one cannot deny that tests are a crucial form of assessment. Tests, particularly high-stakes tests, can exert a substantial impact called “washback.” The term washback is used to broadly define the influence of testing, which impacts teaching and learning in classrooms (Alderson & Wall, 1993).

For measurement-driven instruction, high-stakes tests are used to drive the curriculum in many countries. The test's purpose is to evaluate the test-taker's performance and elevate the quality of education. Additionally, it is used to compare students, schools, and educational systems. The test assesses the students when they finish their elementary or secondary education level (Popham, 1987; Chapman & Snyder, 2000). In Thailand, the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) is considered one of the most important high-stakes tests for both learners and teachers. The objective of the O-NET test is to measure the quality of the Thai educational system and assess the knowledge and thinking ability of Grade 6, Grade 9, and Grade 12 students complying with the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2013).

According to the current educational situation of Thai upper secondary students, O-NET test results are required as one of the criteria for university admission. Furthermore, test results can reflect the quality of teaching and learning and subsequently help teachers plan lessons to serve their students' needs. The scores also help teachers to indicate the learning areas in which the students need to be improved. Furthermore, the students, particularly in Grade 12, aim to reach high scores on the O-NET as the results obtained from the test are used as a criterion for university admission. Hence, this influences a number of schools to conduct intense pedagogical practices so as to assist students in preparing for the standard national test and

accommodate the admission system. Therefore, the O-NET test is essential for learning and teaching.

English is one of the eight learning areas in which students are evaluated through O-Net tests. According to the Thai Ministry of Education (2009), four learning Strands of Foreign Language Areas based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum (BE. 2551) are prescribed for all compulsory academic levels as follows: (1) Language for Communication, (2) Language and Culture, (3) Language and Relationship with Other Learning Areas, and (4) Language and Relationship with Community and the World. Thereby, the English subject is prescribed in a core subject of all levels starting from primary to higher education. However, Thai students have been studying English since they were young, yet their English average scores are lower than expected and designated in the national standards. In the latest report on English learning outcome data (Chaiyong, 2019), Thailand ranked 74th out of 100 countries and scored 47.62, defined as extremely low. When it comes to the comparison of English proficiency of those in the Southeast Asian countries, Thailand is behind the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. However, it is ahead of Myanmar and Cambodia. According to the National Institution of Educational Testing Service, the average Grade 12 students of English O-NET test scores from Academic Years 2014-2017 (mean = 28.31) is below 50%.

Regarding the English O-NET mean scores of the upper secondary school students, it points out that they have low English proficiency. One of the crucial causes of the students' low English proficiency is the teachers' pedagogical practices (Pan, 2009). As previously mentioned, the rationale of high-stakes tests is to evaluate learners' performance and the quality of education (Popham, 1987). Hence, teachers attempt to teach more effectively to enhance the students' academic achievement. It seems to be good that teachers motivate their students to learn and achieve the objectives collaboratively. Unfortunately, there are test impacts known as "washback", which leads to harmful instructional practices. As far as the impact of the test is concerned, washback is a general word in the field of language testing that refers to the test impact. It is also essential to explain what washback entails. When the standardized test was created to evaluate learners, the washback occurred as an effect of the test

(Cheng, 2000). Washback is the influence of testing based on how tests drive teaching and learning. The washback study gained recognition when several standardized tests were developed and reformed. The main scope of the study related to the washback usually focuses on how a language test or score affects teaching and learning in the classrooms. Washback can be analyzed in two directions: positive and negative (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1996; Hughes, 2003). Positive washback is the beneficial impact of a test that appears on both teachers and learners. For teachers, washback will be positive when they improve pedagogical practices that cover all the contents prescribed in the curriculum and pay more attention to low proficiency students. Positive washback encourages learners to study harder to achieve their learning goals (Pan, 2009). It is also possible to achieve beneficial washback if teachers and students are familiar with the test, its goal, and its structure. Understanding the goals of the test helps students and teachers plan for them more organised and directedly (Hughes, 1989).

Conversely, negative washback happens when it induces teachers to narrow the curriculum, reduces instructional time and teaching content, and leads learners to learn only the tested contents (Lunrasri, 2014). However, Hughes (1989) further emphasizes the importance of supportive teachers when they train their students for tests. He insisted that if the test is designed to generate positive washback in teaching, some teachers may struggle to adapt their pedagogical practices to meet the demands of the test. These teachers must be encouraged to create positive washback effects in such circumstances. They should know assessment literacy to evaluate what their students know and can do, interpret the test outcomes, and use them to enhance students' performance (Webb, 2002). This will directly affect students' performance and learning outcomes. Concerning the washback effects, teachers are one of the most significant factors mentioned in washback works of literature (Spratt, 2005). Several teacher factors are proposed to involve in producing washback effects. One of the most critical factors is teachers' beliefs. They encompass a variety of concepts functioning as a tool for understanding and conducting their educational practices and roles in the classrooms (Pajares, 1992; Zheng, 2009). Teachers' beliefs are formed by attitudes, values, preconceptions, images, and knowledge derived from teachers' experiences as

learners, formal education, teaching experiences, and teachers' personality (Kindsvatter, Willen, Ishler, 1988; Pajares, 1992; Grave, 2002). Li (2012) claimed that teachers' beliefs have more significant effects than teachers' knowledge of how they prepare lessons, make decisions, and teach the students in the classrooms. Moreover, such beliefs are central to determining their actual pedagogical practices. As a result, teachers will improve their teaching behaviours appropriately to serve students' needs and interests. Phipps and Borg (2009) exerted that teachers' beliefs are categorized as the system into two types: core and peripheral beliefs. Core beliefs are a stable set of beliefs that have potent impacts on teachers' practices, while peripheral beliefs are less stable and have less impact.

Some studies have argued that such teachers' beliefs influence decision-making and pedagogical practices in the classroom, yet they can also mediate and produce washback effects as well (Mizutani, 2009; Cheng, 1997, 1998; Noble & Smith, 1994; Turner, 2009; Wang, 2010). Pan (2009) reported that teachers' beliefs significantly shaped different directions of washback. Chapman and Snyder (2000) also expressed that teachers' beliefs are essential in determining the types of washback. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about the test strongly affected the changes in their pedagogical practices. Although the term "washback" is logically regarded as neutral, the O-NET test holds tremendous adverse washback effects, particularly on teaching (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 121; Imsa-ard, 2020). The majority of teachers believe that the test enforces them to teach what meets the needs of the test or "teaching-to-the-test" instead of "teaching-to-the-goal" (Pan, 2009). Narrowing curriculum is a problem for numerous schools due to high-stakes tests (Donnelly & Sadler, 2009). Subjects or activities which are irrelevant to achieving the examinations are ignored. A significant number of teachers also reported that they felt it was significant to narrow the curriculum and reduce the contents of teaching, which were not tested—narrowing the curriculum results in high pressure to achieve the desired test scores. Hence, "teaching-to-the-test" becomes a critical practice to eliminate all non-tested materials from classrooms (Clarke et al., 2003; Ryan & Brown, 2005; Shaver et al., 2007). Even if it promotes test scores, it tends to promote students' rote-memorization instead of their thinking skills. In the worst case, narrowing content in the curriculum can cause

inconsistency between the test and course objectives (Cheng, 2005). For these reasons, ignoring the cause of negative washback effects of teachers' beliefs will lead to unsolvable educational damage for generations to come.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

As previously mentioned, the increasing significance of the Ordinary National Educational test scores has highly affected Grade 12 students. This issue raises questions about whether the English O-NET test influences teachers' teaching pedagogical practices in the classrooms. In terms of high-stakes tests, it has more washback or impacts occurring with the content of teaching and the material used in teachers' practices (Hawkey, 2006). However, unlike the positive aspect of washback, the negative aspect is usually neglected. As a result, stakeholders can be unaware of possible harmful effects. Moreover, few research studies only pointed out negative washback affecting learners as follows:

Lunrasri and Gaiaseni (2014) investigated the washback effects of the standard national educational test on English language learning perceived by grade nine students. Researchers administered questionnaires and structured interviews to 400 ninth-grade students to investigate different areas of learning and found the usage of rote-memorization and the practice of communicative skills. Furthermore, the students were unsure whether the contents of the test were related to the textbooks used.

Sundayana, Meekaeo, Purnawarman, and Sukyadi (2018) also used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect data from 200 Thai and Indonesian ninth-grade students to study the washback effects of O-NET and Ujian Nasional (UN) test. The results indicated that students focused on subjects expected to be in the exams studied English to perform well in the exams rather than improve their skills and had anxiety during the test preparations.

As stated above, O-NET has certainly affected students' lives. However, even if several studies are exploring washback effects on learners, there have been few

empirical investigations into the washback effects of a Thai National English Test on learning and teaching and teachers' beliefs about the test.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to investigate how the English O-NET test at the upper secondary level (Grade 12) affects teachers' beliefs in pedagogical practices. The research study aims to answer the following questions:

**(A) What core beliefs do English language teachers possess about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12?**

**(B) What are the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices?**

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The term “washback” has frequently co-occurred in the significant area of high-stakes tests like the English O-NET tests for the upper secondary level (Grade 12). According to Cheng et al. (2014), high-stakes tests have powerful washback effects on teaching and learning in various educational settings. Teachers with high pressure to increase students' test scores tend to abandon teaching contents and materials unrelated to the tests. This induces teachers to get pessimistic feelings toward standardized tests and makes them narrow the curriculum. Furthermore, the washback effects of the test are always associated with the content of teaching and materials used in the classrooms (Alderson, 2004).

Therefore, there is a need to conduct a study to fulfill the gap regarding the washback of the English O-NET tests on the upper secondary level teachers. The study will provide evidence demonstrating teachers' core beliefs in the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 influencing pedagogical practices. The results from this study will shed light on washback effects, which will presumably cause negative results in the Thai context and raise the awareness of the positive washback for English language teachers and stakeholders in Thailand to improve education.



## 1.5 Definition of Terms

This section is provided to define and show operational definitions which are the explanation of technical terms in this study. The terms are defined as follows:

**1.4.1 *Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551*** refers to the curriculum implemented by the Ministry of Education to provide learning standards and goals for education in Thailand.

**1.4.2 *Belief*** refers to mental representation of an individual which could affect teachers teaching behaviors.

**1.4.3 *Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET)*** refers to the high-stake standardized test used to measure the quality of the Thai educational system at the national level and assess the knowledge and thinking ability of students in Grade 6, Grade 9, and Grade 12. To that end, these purposes aligned well with the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551, aiming to improve the quality of the Thai educational system and its courses and syllabuses.

**1.4.4 A *Washback*** refers to the impact of the test, which provoked teachers to alter their teaching manners.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.1 What is Washback and Impact?

The term “Washback” has been used in general and language education. It also refers to a set of beliefs regarding the relationship between testing, teaching, and learning. (Hamp-Lyons, 1997). According to Cheng, Watanabe, and Curtis (2004), washback is a common term used in the educational field of applied linguistics. Besides, it is a significant issue in the field of language testing. Oller (1979) pointed out that the characteristic of a good test comprises validity, reliability, practicality, and washback. Washback is also applied as a term of “test impact”, which is one of the most substantial terms in language testing as well as authenticity, validity, and practicality (Bachman & Palmer, 1996.) There are several definitions of washback defined by various experts.

Alderson and Wall (1993) narrowly defined the definition of *washback* as the impact of testing on teaching and learning in a classroom environment. In other words, washback is also a powerful indicator of what happens in the classrooms. Alderson and Wall (1993) also described it as “a complex phenomenon”, and in their washback hypotheses, they assumed that teachers and learners “do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test”. Likewise, Messick (1996, p. 241) mentioned that washback refers to “the use of the test influencing language teachers and learners to do things that they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning”. Biggs (1995, p. 12) asserted that washback refers to testing driving the curriculum, instructional practices, and students’ learning strategies. In some research studies, washback appears on two different levels: micro and macro levels. At the micro-level, washback affects only particular stakeholders: teachers and students. At the macro-level, it affects the educational system and society (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 30). Andrews (2004, p. 37) described washback as “the effects of the test on teaching and learning, the educational system, and the various stakeholders in the educational process.” Washback does not appear systematically. Sometimes, it has

impacts on students more than on others, and sometimes it can have effects on teachers more than others as well (Tsagari 2009).

In terms of impact, it refers to the consequences of the test on individuals, policies, or practices in the classroom, school, educational system, or society as a whole. Many scholars have considered *washback* a dimension of impact (Alderson & Wall, 1996; Bailey, 1996; Brown, 1996). Test validity (consequential validity) has typically been associated with the impacts of testing on teaching and learning, with washback being just one testing consequence that must be weighed in assessing validity (Tsagari & Cheng 2007). In recent years, language testing researchers have extensively examined consequential validity (together with related concerns of fairness and ethics) (Kunnan 2000). Most recognize that washback and impact are significantly complex phenomena.

### **2.1.1 Dimensions of Washback**

Watanabe (1997, cited in Cheng & Watanabe, 2004) conceptualized washback in several dimensions as follow.

**2.1.1.1 Specificity:** washback can be general or specific. It depends on how broad or limited the scope of the test is. General washback is a type of effect produced by any examination. It affects only one aspect and a particular test purpose for a specific washback. For instance, test designers introduce a new component into a test, expecting that teachers and learners can emphasize the specific element in teaching and learning.

**2.1.1.2 Intensity:** washback can be either strong or weak. If the examination has serious consequences, it evaluates everything happening in the classroom and induces teachers to teach toward the test.

**2.1.1.3 Length:** the impact of the test depends on the duration of time: short-term or long-term washback. For instance, if the impact of the admission test exists only while the students prepare for the examination and disappear after joining the university, it is called “a short-term washback.” Nevertheless, if the influence of the test lasts longer than that, this is “a long-term washback.”

**2.1.1.4 Intentionality:** there are intended and unintended washback. The intended washback is the impact of the test that the test designer expects to happen. It usually aims to improve education. *Unintended washback* is a test impact that the test designer does not expect but happens. Besides, it also refers to the change which does not aim to develop education (Lunrasri, 2014).

**2.1.1.5 Value:** the value of washback can be distinguished into two classes: positive and negative washback. There are no specific criteria for determining whether the washback of the test is positive or negative since the evaluation depends on who investigates in a particular educational context (Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Positive washback works well when the test corresponds with course objectives. A practical example of positive washback is that if the course aims to enhance students' communicative performance, the test should also be created to support communicative performance objectives. On the other hand, adverse washback effects will appear on the curriculum if the test does not correspond with the course objectives. When the test and the curriculum do not correspond well, teachers tend to teach to the test instead of teaching the contents stated in the curriculum (Bailey, 1996).

To sum up, the term washback is widely known in language testing as test impact. It exists on two levels which are micro and macro. Washback at the micro-level impacts teachers and students, while washback at the macro-level affects education and society. There are five dimensions of washback conceptualized above: specificity, intensity, length, intentionality, and value. This research study aims to focus on washback at the micro-level to see the impact of the test on teachers' beliefs about teaching pedagogical practices in classrooms. The study also explores the value of washback, which contributes to the negative effects on classroom practices.

### **2.1.2 Washback: Positive or Negative?**

As previously stated, the effect of language testing on language teaching and learning is known as washback. About its impact, washback can be categorized into two major types: positive and negative. It can be beneficial or harmful depending on educational practices. (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Messick, 1996; Hughes, 2003)

### **(1) Positive Washback**

Several research studies have discussed the beneficial impact of language tests on teaching and learning. As a positive washback is produced, its practical outcome directly affects the educational system. To clarify, positive washback is related when the test encourages using both beneficial teaching-learning activities to enhance the teaching-learning process (Pan, 2009). Positive washback refers to “measurement-driven instruction” (Alderson & Wall, 1993). It means that a good test reflects knowledge and competencies taught in the classrooms, induces teachers to complete the syllabus towards the objectives of the test thoroughly, and motivates students to study harder to improve their learning accomplishments (Wiseman, 1961). Therefore, to enhance beneficial washback, good tests should be facilitated and designed as positive teaching-learning activities (Pearson, 1988, p. 107). Besides, it is suggested that there are powerful ways to encourage positive washback on teachers and learners: teachers and learners do understand the objectives of the test and work towards it, (2) the authentic assignment and authentic text are applied to teach in the classrooms and, (3) teachers use alternative assessment tool such as self-assessment (Bailey, 1996).

### **(2) Negative Washback**

On the other hand, some research studies admitted that, in general, tests or language tests are frequently criticized for the negative impacts of educational practices. It is called negative washback, which has been identified as a significant issue for a long time. Alderson and Wall (1993, p. 5) defined *negative washback* as the unpleasant impact on the teaching and learning specific tests. Negative washback also comes in the form of a “poor” test. In Alderson and Wall’s study, poor test means teachers and learners do something they do not necessarily do because of the test. To elaborate, Vernon (1996) said that teachers tend to eliminate subjects and activities that do not appear in the examinations. This means examinations distort the curriculum. The test may not reflect the learning standards, or the course goals intended to apply.

On the other hand, teachers and students may teach and learn toward the test. Even if teaching test-taking strategies to students promote test scores, this can

produce negative washback effects such as the imbalance of emphasis or focus on skills, relying on memorization, and making students perceive themselves as knowledge seekers rather than understanding seekers (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Scully, 2017). Alderson and Hamps-Lyon (1996) identified negative washback effects influencing the curriculum as follows: (1) narrowing the curriculum, (2) losing teaching and learning time, (3) reducing critical and problem-solving skills, and (4) promoting test scores without general standing. Pan (2009) also added that negative washback effects are associated with both teachers and learners: (1) teachers reduce the curriculum and tend to teach for the test, (2) teachers and students gain the high-pressure from the test, and (3) students pay attention to what is tested only.

### **2.1.3 Washback Hypothesis**

As can be seen, it is difficult to identify whether the tests will call out positive or negative washback effects. Hence, the researchers proposed the washback hypotheses to describe how washback works (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Morrow, 1986; Hughes, 1988; Pearson, 1988). The hypothesis of washback effects is analyzed into five groups as follows (Lunrasri, 2014):

2.1.3.1 *Hypothesis about washback effects on teaching*: A test will influence teachers' content, method, and the depth and phase of teaching.

2.1.3.2 *Hypothesis about washback effects on learning*: A test will influence the content, method, depth and phase of teaching that students learn.

2.1.3.3 *Hypothesis about washback effects on teaching and learning attitudes*: A test will influence attitudes toward the content or method of teaching and learning.

2.1.3.4 *Hypothesis about washback effects on stake of the test*: More important tests have greater washback.

2.1.3.5 *Hypothesis about washback effects on teachers and students*: A test has a washback on all learners and teachers. Therefore, tests will have washback effects for some learners and teachers but not others.

## **2.1.4 Factors Affecting Washback**

Based on previous studies, there are influential factors affecting washback. They are categorized into four main groups: teachers, resources, schools, and examinations (Spratt, 2005).

### ***2.1.4.1 Teachers***

Although testing affects pedagogical practices directly, teacher factors outweigh the influences of testing. It is mentioned that teachers have played one of the most pivotal roles in determining the degree and the direction of washback. Teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experience mediate the washback effects.

#### ***(1) Teachers' Beliefs***

Firstly, teachers' beliefs refer to a subset of mental representations that influence their teaching behaviours in the classrooms (Richardson, 1996). Richardson (1996) and Wang (2010) also proposed similar terms used in the context of teachers' beliefs: attitudes, conceptions, perspectives, perceptions, orientations, theories, and stances. It is widely recognized that beliefs of language learning and teaching held by teachers affect their pedagogical practices transmitted directly to students, and their practices also influence their beliefs simultaneously. The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices directly impacts the way of preparing and implementing learning lessons, selecting learning activities, and evaluating students in classroom practices (Louw, Watson Todd, & Jimarkon Zilli, 2014; Imsa-ard, 2020). Huang (2009) added that washback effects do not always occur directly from the influence of a test. It can happen indirectly by exerting a powerful impact on teachers' psychological processes (beliefs and attitudes), teachers' perceptions of social pressures, and teachers' perceptions of their capacity to exhibit ideal teaching behaviours. Although testing is observed to affect pedagogical practices directly, teacher factors overweight the influences of testing. It is then mentioned that teachers have played one of the most pivotal roles in determining the degree and the

direction of washback. Teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experience mediate the washback effects.

## ***(2) Teachers' Knowledge***

Another factor that indicates teachers' practices in the classroom is knowledge. To manage teaching pedagogical practices effectively, teachers should have expertise in a particular subject. Teachers who have sufficient knowledge can improve their instructional practices efficiently. On the other hand, teachers with insufficient knowledge in assessment literacy, linguistic knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge tend to encounter problems in decision-making as well as adjusting their classroom practices.

Regarding washback literature, teacher knowledge (of a teacher) is being mentioned to encourage potential intended washback effects despite using tests to improve teaching practices, teacher knowledge such as assessment literacy, linguistic knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and many others which plays a significant role in promoting or preventing potential intended washback effects. According to Webb (2002), *assessment literacy* can be defined as teachers' essential knowledge and skills since they allow teachers to assess their students' comprehension and ability. Teachers may interpret the assessment results and employ the assessment in their classrooms to enhance students' learning. Kiomrs's study (2011) explored the interaction between test washback and teacher assessment literacy. The results revealed that teachers who lacked the knowledge base in assessment would be ignorant of the importance of assessment. As a result, teachers would follow traditional assessment forms, which could deteriorate teachers' competence in language assessment in the long term. Hence, the potential intended washback is unlikely to happen if teachers have insufficient teaching knowledge. Chen (2002) also found that teachers could not change their pedagogical practices since they did not know how to change them. Moreover, teacher knowledge has both direct and intended consequences on how teachers teach in the classrooms (Wang, 2010).



### ***(3) Teachers' Experiences***

The last factor mentioned in washback literature is teachers' experience since the instructional practices are based on their various experiences. Several washback researchers identify the emergence of washback effects caused by the following experience: teachers' experiences in the past, teachers' educational experiences, teachers' experiences in training, and teaching experiences (Watanabe, 2000, 2004; Hamp-Lyons, 1998; Shohamy et al., 1996). For instance, teachers with more experience in test preparation classes teach differently from teachers with little experience in teaching test preparation classes (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996).

#### ***2.1.4.2 Resources***

According to the studies, resources can affect washback. Some of the factors mentioned include the availability of the materials and the types of textbooks. Cheng (1997) and Hamp-Lyons (1998) said that in English language learning, the positive washback would happen when the textbooks can assist teachers as a source of knowledge, enhancing the ability to use the English language.

#### ***2.1.4.3 Schools***

Factors causing the washback in the school are the environment of the schools, the management of each educational institution, time allotment, and the size of the classroom that students are allocated to take examinations (Alderson & Hamp Lyons, 1996; Watanabe, 2000; Read & Hayes, 2003). In addition, some teachers have high pressure from the school administrators as they are forced to improve students' test results (Smith, 1991).

#### ***2.1.4.4 Examinations***

The examination itself can influence the washback effect. Regarding high-stakes tests, the results have strongly affected upper secondary students' grade promotion, high school graduation, and university admission. Besides, the test results are used to increase teachers' salaries and promote academic standings. In the worst case, teachers are threatened by being fired if they cannot help their students to reach

high scores. Hence, some teachers will use materials relevant to the tests and teach students about the test.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, these can cause strong washback effects on teaching and learning behaviours (Shohamy et al., 1996; Spratt, 2005). Furthermore, the format of the test can also have a washback effect. Most high-stakes tests are multiple-choice questions. Students are believed to use rote-memorization and test-taking strategies in this specific test format (Prapphal, 2008).

## **2.2 Teachers' Beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs affect individual thoughts on what is right or wrong. Therefore, beliefs have played one of the most fundamental roles in enhancing people's comprehension, judging the information, and improving one's understanding of events. Zheng (2009) indicated that teachers' beliefs are the most significant subject in teacher education since it contributes to the development of thoughts. Teachers' beliefs can be divided into core and peripheral (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Core beliefs are more stable, influential, and less likely to change, while peripheral beliefs might change when reflected upon other beliefs. Panjares (1992) defined teachers' beliefs as attitudes, values, preconceptions, images, and knowledge derived from teachers' intense experiences. Clark and Peterson (1986) claimed that most teachers' beliefs are formed by the previous experience of their schooling as students. Likewise, Kalaja, Paula & Barcelos, Ana (2012) mentioned that the prior learning and teaching experiences construct teachers' beliefs, which depend on one another. Furthermore, the significant beliefs held by language teachers are also related to (1) teachers' reflection on their teaching pedagogical practices, (2) the actions that teachers take and the decision that teachers make in everyday practice, (3) teachers' reactions to changes or innovations, (4) teachers' learning process to teach, and (5) the potential resistance of student on new methods or activities in the language classroom. For unskilled teachers, experience in everyday classroom practices and interaction with colleagues' impact specific relationships among beliefs and principles (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

However, there are some inconsistencies in teachers' beliefs and teaching pedagogical practice among teachers since they believe in teaching toward an examination (Smith, 1991). Pajares (1992) also stated that teachers' beliefs are not always a reliable guide to reality as most beliefs are based on teachers' experiences. There are two types of experiences: formal and informal. Formal experience refers to the experience teachers have obtained through their formal education. Conversely, informal experience refers to teachers' experiences in daily life that can adjust, support, or change their beliefs (Mansour, 2008). Thus, some teachers' beliefs may be against other factors such as student factors, school policy factors, or even teachers' responsibilities to support students' performance. For instance, some teachers belong to subordinate positions. Hence, they believe in their thoughts as a teaching paradigm rather than believing in their actual practices in the classroom (Woods, 1996; Buehl & Beck, 2015).

As stated previously, significant evidence indicates that teachers are motivated by beliefs. Teachers' beliefs towards the test have highly influenced the changes in pedagogical practices such as teaching to the test, transmitting test-taking skills, or narrowing the curriculum. Although such beliefs on instructional practices increase test scores, it can be one of the powerful components that mediate washback effects. Referring to washback studies, Shohamy et al. (1996) explored the impact of two national tests in Israel: Arabic as a second language (ASL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). The findings from the interview process revealed that teachers paid attention to the oral or EFL examination. Therefore, they provided a wide range of oral activities in the classrooms that were identical to the test in order to generate the students' oral proficiency and test scores.

Furthermore, class textbooks were replaced by past examination papers. Teachers also stopped teaching irrelevant materials or new lessons that might not appear in tests. They turned to review test papers instead. According to this study, teachers' beliefs on the oral test produced an intended washback on classroom teaching. However, Huang (2009) investigated China's washback effect of the English oral test. The study aimed to explore how the test influenced teachers' behaviours. The results showed that the teachers' beliefs played a virtual role in forming washback effects.

Interestingly, they insisted that the text does not directly make the changes in instructional practices. However, the test could impact teachers' beliefs, attitudes, perception of social pressures, and teachers' perception of their performance in conducting pedagogical practices. In a similar study, Yamashita (2011) explored the impact of high-stakes tests on teachers' pedagogical practices in private school systems in the District of Columbia. The research findings revealed that teachers changed their pedagogical practices at the content level, but the tests alone were not enough to change how teachers teach their students.

In short, beliefs are part of a better understanding of how teachers behave in the classrooms. Besides, teachers' beliefs are a significant factor in determining the different directions of washback since their beliefs towards the test change teaching pedagogical practices. Hence, investigating teachers' beliefs can also explain why washback effects associate with teachers.

### **2.3 Language Assessment Literacy**

Interestingly, the term assessment literacy is not well-known in language education. This is unfortunate since teachers' knowledge and comprehension of assessment can hugely affect how they teach and their students learn in classrooms. Assessment literacy is "the knowledge about assessing what students know and can do, interpret the assessment results, and apply the results to improve student learning and teaching effectively" (Webb, 2002). Moreover, AL is also significant for conducting effective teaching. It is argued that without good assessment, it is impossible to have good teaching (Eckhout, Davis, Mickelson, & Goodburn, 2005). Despite its virtual role in forming the quality of teaching, it is reported that teachers all over the world suffer from their poor level of assessment literacy (Volante & Fazio 2007). Several studies suggested causes responsible for preventing teachers from an optimal level of AL. One widely believed that if a teacher knows how to teach language efficiently, he or she will know how to evaluate the product and method of language learning as well (Spolsky, 1978, cited in Jafarpour, 2003). This mistaken belief blocks teachers' knowledge base in language assessment literacy. To demonstrate the importance of assessment literacy,

Havnes (2004) noted that enhancing students' learning needs a corresponding development in the assessment system. The assessment also guides students' learning, as the assessment system defines what is worth learning.

### ***2.3.1 Instrument for Literacy Assessment***

One of the teachers' most essential responsibilities is assessing students' performance. However, most teachers reported not being qualified to perform this task properly. Teachers also believe they require remediation or guidance in implementing assessment principles and strategies with assessment-related decisions (Mertler & Campbell, 2005). The research study showed that teachers lack fundamental assessment skills while administrators have low levels of assessment literacy. If teachers do not have adequate knowledge of assessment literacy, it will give false results to students that prevent them from achieving their full potential (Stiggins, 2001). Teachers often employ assessment for three purposes: diagnostic, formative, and summative.

(1) *Diagnostic, or Diagnostic or pre-assessment* typically comes before practice. Teachers use it in order to check their students' background knowledge. This instrument of literacy assessment assists teachers in preparing the course in advance. For the diagnostic aspect, no grades are given.

(2) *Summative assessment* summarizes what students learned at the end of a semester. Final examinations and essays are clear examples of summative assessments. Teachers will give scores or grades to the students. Unfortunately, summative assessments or learning assessments are common and still being used in secondary and higher educational institutions. Studies showed that this kind of assessment is insufficient to improve learning for students when used alone. This is basically because waiting until the completion of a course to determine how well students have learned is too late to help them improve their learning style (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005).

(3) *Formative assessment is one of the instruments for assessing students in shaping their competencies and skills to assist them in continuing the development process. This assessment is often used to give teachers and learners appropriate feedback on their performance. As a result, teachers can enhance their pedagogical practices, and students can improve their learning based on their achievements. Formative assessments also help students to detect their learning strengths and weaknesses in particular fields (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).*

Black and William (1998) concluded that several factors must consider improving students' learning through assessment. The first is providing effective feedback to the students. Feedback from teachers to students seems to perform social and administrative roles, often at the expense of the learning function. Generally, formative assessment can assist all students. It gains exceptionally positive outcomes with low-performance students by focusing on their work issues and allowing them to clearly understand what is wrong and how they can be improved. Feedback to any student should focus on the specific qualities of his or her performance and avoid comparisons with other students. The second is identifying a significant impact on the motivation and self-esteem of students. The students' information from formative assessment also has negative results, such as an obsessive emphasis on competitiveness and the attendant fear of unavoidable disappointment. What is needed is a thriving culture based on the expectation that all students will succeed. Last is letting the students assess themselves. Students are usually truthful and accurate in judging themselves and others. However, students can only judge themselves when they have a good vision of the goals that their learning is supposed to achieve. However, many students do not possess such a vision and seem to grow accustomed to receiving classroom instruction as an arbitrary sequence of activities with no overarching justification. Overcoming passive learning requires intense and long-term effort. When students gain this understanding, they become more dedicated and successful learners. Furthermore, their assessments become a topic of conversation with their teachers and one another, and this discussion encourages the critical focus on one's thoughts that is required for successful learning.

Referring to Washback literature, the significance of teachers' knowledge regarding assessment literacy is highlighted. It is one of the crucial factors leading to intended washback on teaching. Cheng et al. (2008) explored six aspects of ESL/EFL classroom assessment practices. These aspects are teachers' assessment preparation, the relative weight of scores given for assignments and tests, the types of assessment (selection vs. supply methods) that teachers employed, the purpose of using each type of assessment, the source of each method used, and when teachers used each method. The results showed that the assessment objectives dictated the choice of assessment approaches and when each should be used in their classrooms. Kiomrs et al. (2011) also investigated the interaction of test washback and teacher assessment literacy in the Iranian EFL context. The study also suggested that teachers' knowledge about assessment literacy induces either washback or non-washback effects on teaching.

As shown by assessment literacy studies, assessments have direct washback impacts learning. Therefore, if the assessments encourage memorization, students will be more vulnerable to rote learning and memorizing facts. Likewise, if assessments are based on students' understanding of learning principles, a more profound learning process can be initiated. Therefore, it can be concluded that the assessment practice affects students' learning patterns more than teachers' pedagogical practices and curricula (White, 2009).

## **2.4 Assessment Policy in Thailand**

Across the world, the crucial key component of learning and motivation is an assessment. Given the significance of assessment, Thailand adopts assessment in order to inform the policy and practice systematically. Regarding the policy level, the results can also be used to hold the schools' accountability system. Hence, assessment becomes one of the most powerful diagnostic tools, which helps teachers identify hidden obstacles and construct learning goals in accordance with the student's test results. In addition, the assessment information assists teachers in improving their teaching practices, for instance, by emphasizing the needs of the students at different learning levels.

Moreover, learning assessment is also a method of enhancing students' performance by using the test results as evidence to demonstrate their progress and achievement. Therefore, the test results will help students improve their abilities (Making a case for a Learning Assessment). In the Thai context, the National Educational Act of B.E. 2542 (1999) is used to govern the Thai educational system. Therefore, referring to Section 26 of the Act mentions assessment explicitly.

Educational institutions shall evaluate learners' performance through observation of their development, personal manners, learning behaviour, participation in activities, and results of the examinations accompanying the teaching-learning process proportionate to the various levels and types of education (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999).

According to ONEC, learning assessment can be analyzed into four levels: (Basic Education Core Curriculum, 2008).

#### ***2.4.1 Classroom level***

As determined above, measurement and assessment are fundamental parts of the learning process. In order to evaluate students' performance in teaching-learning practices, teachers often assess students' performance in teaching and learning activities, e.g., asking questions, observing, assigning homework, evaluating tasks/projects, and writing tasks. Traditionally, teachers always conduct assessments or provide students with opportunities for self-assessment, peer assessment, and parents' assessment. The students who fail to follow the standards will require remedial learning.

The purpose of classroom assessment is to reveal students' competence that they have accomplished in the learning process through teaching-learning activities. The results will become a practical lens to decide what must be improved and which areas must be enhanced. The outcomes also contribute to teachers' instruction, which must align with standard learning goals.\



### ***2.4.2 School level***

To assess students' achievement, the educational institution will evaluate on an annual /semester basis. The evaluation is based on reading, critical thinking and writing, desired characteristics, and student improvement activities. The purpose of school assessment is to ensure whether the education offered by the educational institutions allows learners to achieve their learning objectives and what fields they need to learn more about. Besides, the evaluation results can be compared with the national assessment and used for feedback policy, curriculum, and teaching-learning activities. The outcomes are also helpful for preparing the quality development plan defined in the educational quality assurance guidelines and for reporting the achievement of each educational institution to its school board, the office of the educational service area, Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), parents and the community.

### ***2.4.3 Local Level***

Local-level assessment is used to evaluate students' quality at the educational service area level, based on the standards of learning prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum. Accordingly, the students are evaluated by standard examination papers prepared and administered by the educational service area or incorporated with the parent agencies. The findings of assessments are also derived from the verification and the analysis of the data gathered from the examination at the educational institution in the educational service area.

### ***2.4.4 National Level***

Concerning standard learning goals prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum, the assessment is conducted to assess students nationally. The schools must prepare to examine all students in grades 6, 9, and 12. The outcomes will provide associated data for comparing educational quality at various levels. Furthermore, the assessment information also relates to decision-making at the policy level.

The data obtained from the students at different levels helps the institution monitor, review, and improve the student's performance. Educational institutions are responsible for setting up the system for offering the necessary care and assistance, remedial steps, and motivation and support to assist students in developing their highest potential. The improvement will be based on individuals' differences, including unique problems and desires.

## **2.5 National Level Assessment in Thailand**

According to the Basic Educational Core Curriculum 2008, there are four levels of assessment in Thailand: classroom level, school level, local level, and national level. It is essential to concern national-level assessments in Thailand, such as the O-NET, since it is considered a high-stakes test that influences teachers' and learners' behaviours to do the things they would not otherwise do because of the emergence of the test (Brown, 2005). Thus, such influences are called washback effects.

The Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) is a national assessment considered a high-stakes test in the Thai educational system. It has played a substantial role in teachers' and students' learning performance. In 2006, O-NET was first executed under the National Institute Education Testing Service (NIETS) following the 2001 curriculum. It aimed to push the knowledge and thinking ability of Grade 6th, Grade 9th, and Grade 12th students in eight subjects: Thai language, mathematics, science, social studies, religion and culture, and foreign languages. Any student enrolled in a government-funded school in Thailand takes the O-NET three times during school. As the examination is held annually, all students with the mentioned grade levels are subjected to the test for the content learned in classes on the same day in February at the end of each academic year (NIETS, 2010).

The Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) is also used to hold accountability to the Thai educational system and serves as a gatekeeper.

First, the O-NET is a state-mandated test used as a necessary tool to hold accountability in Thailand. The test itself is not only applied to assess only learners'

intellectual and academic capacity but also to verify other stakeholders' accountabilities, including teachers, schools, and policymakers as well. For learners, the O-NET test keeps them accountable by comparing them with the national standards. Next, teachers are kept accountable for the accomplishment of their learners' performance by preparing teaching content that matches the national curriculum. Additionally, schools are held responsible since students' performance will be compared to other schools. Finally, policymakers are responsible when the average test scores touch the standards (Nipakornkitti & Adunyarittigun, 2018).

Second, O-NET functions as a gatekeeper for higher secondary level (Grade 12 students). The high scores on the O-NET test are a powerful determiner of their future. Applying to university is the most necessary qualification for individual students (Goodman, 2013; Imsa-ard, 2020). Furthermore, the accountability system in Thailand can be reflected by the O-NET scores as well.

To explain, the increasing significance of the O-NET test severely impacts students since the test aims to evaluate students' academic proficiency according to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E 2551 ([www.niets.or.th](http://www.niets.or.th)). The O-NET test scores of Grade 12 students also influence their university admission. However, unavoidable impacts also highly affect teachers. As mentioned earlier, the O-NET holds teachers accountable for teaching the national curriculum. Students' poor scores may be caused by the teachers who do not teach by the Basic Educational Core Curriculum, or their pedagogy is ineffective. Teachers pay attention to the test results as it promotes the academic standings of their careers. Besides, the students with low test scores also affect the school's ranking compared to other schools in local areas or national levels and the school's accountability. Consequently, it can cause parents to have untrustworthy attitudes toward the schools since parents desire their children to study in schools with a good reputation on the standardized test (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Pitisutti & Wongwanich, 2016; Nipakornkitti & Adunyarittigun, 2018).

However, the O-NET tests own washback severe effects. Concerning the English test, firstly, the format comes with 80 multiple-choice questions with 100 points (Imsa-ard, 2020). It is claimed that multiple-choice test usually allows

students to answer test items correctly without understanding the contents that will be tested. The use of the test focus on receptive skills and minimal focus on critical-thinking skills (Brown, 1997, 2005). Moreover, it is believed that the test's structure also logs and relies on rote-memorization (Watson Todd & Shih, 2014). Hence, the O-NET has been critiqued in that the test itself is not consistent with the goal of the national curriculum—constructing communicative competence to build “the ability to use foreign languages for communicating in various situations” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 252). Secondly, the influence of the test affects teachers on pedagogical practices. The tests have highly affected teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly, making them complete their syllabi within the prescribed time limits. This strongly leads them to “teach-to-the-test” in order to touch the expected learning goals (Au, 2007; Pan, 2009). The English O-NET test has become a severe problem for teachers when they must devote class time in the final year of secondary school for O-NET preparation. Thirdly, teachers appear to use material, i.e., old test papers of the O-NET from the previous academic year, to familiarise students with the test (Lunrasri, 2014). Vernon (1996) also stressed that irrelevant subjects, contents, and activities that do not contribute to achieving the test, are also ignored by the teachers. This produces a negative washback since teachers do not cover all the contents prescribed in the curriculum. Additionally, when teachers are stressed and concerned with increasing students' test scores to meet expectations, their creativity to conduct effective pedagogical practices is blocked (Marchant, 2004). As a result, students will lack innovative classroom learning experiences and interactive classroom activities.

With regard to educational goals in many countries, high-stakes tests are used as impartial and equitable methods to assess learning (Kennedy, 2016; Vaardingerbroek & Taylor, 2009; Tikoduadua, 2014). The tests have high stakes since the findings are exposed to the public and used to make significant decisions that affect schools, teachers, and students. Besides, it influences students' high-school graduation and university admission. In some cases, the test outcomes affect teachers' salaries and promote academic standings (Madaus, 1988; Au, 2007; Pitisutti & Wongwanich, 2016). Since the justification of high-stakes tests has proposed attractive rewards, it helps teachers perform more efficiently and make students more motivated. However, Pan

(2009) reported that several teachers believe that tests force them to teach what to meet the needs of the test. Hence, it influences teachers to believe that teaching students about the test is the most successful way to help them obtain higher exam scores (Bailey, 1996, p. 259). Teaching toward high-stakes tests leads teachers to focus on more exam tasks and bring out activities directly targeted at improving test-taking skills or strategies (Alderson & Hamp Lyons, 1996). Moreover, narrowing and changing the curriculum are consequences for teachers who want to ensure optimal results in the examined content. They may adjust pedagogical practices by teaching tested subjects and abandoning content or activities that do not enhance to pass the examinations (Au, 2007; David, 2011).

## **2.6 Related Washback Research Studies**

A broad spectrum of research studies has explored the washback effects of high-stakes tests. In addition, some research studies investigated and indicated the washback effects of language tests. The following findings which are relevant to this study have illustrated as follows:

Wall and Alderson (1993) conducted a study of washback effects on the new “O-Level” English examination in language teaching discovered from examining 14 schools in Sri Lanka. The study employed direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires as the research instrument. The participants were seven teachers from different schools in Sri Lanka. The researchers focused on the characteristics of positive and negative washback effects in the content of teaching, pedagogical practices, and assessment. Based on the results of their work (1993), it is revealed that there was no evidence to support washback effects on instructional content and teaching methodology. However, there were effects both positive and negative washback in the assessment. Besides, they also claimed that positive washback did not appear in the content of teaching and teaching practices because teachers lacked an understanding of the purpose of the new examination and insufficient training.

Sommit (2009) examined the effects of the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) on upper secondary school teachers’ pedagogical practices in the

Bangkok area by using questionnaires and interviews with teachers. The interview process was conducted with 15 teachers, and questionnaires were gathered from 550 teachers. The teachers taught five subjects: science, mathematics, Thai, social studies, religion and culture, and English. Moreover, she also compared teachers in various subjects, educational sectors, and teachers' behaviours before and after the O-NET was tested. As a result, it clearly showed and highlighted the negative washback of the O-NET on teaching pedagogical practices. Moreover, science and mathematics were two subjects teachers taught to the test. For this reason, it is due to the test blueprints of each subject may or may not specify the content of the test.

Pitisutti and Wongwanich (2016) also investigated the washback effects of the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) test on Thai teachers in different school settings. The research instrument was questionnaires. 485 primary, secondary, and upper secondary teachers participated in this study. The results showed positive and negative washback effects on teachers' instructional practices. However, teachers also reported that students' test scores affected their salaries and academic standings. Hence, teachers enhanced the teaching pedagogy to optimize the washback. Additionally, the differences in school settings and reputation did not reflect any washback effects on teaching practices.

Gashaye (2012) explored the washback of the English exam of the university entrance examinations on teaching and learning by using classroom observations and questionnaires. The respondents in the study were 62 eleventh-grade students and 12 teachers. The findings found that teachers changed teaching methods or teaching-to-the-test to accommodate students for the University Entrance English Exam (UEEE). Likewise, Kilickaya (2016) also discovered a similar phenomenon in his study investigating the washback effects of Transition Examination from Primary to Secondary Education, a high-stake test in Turkey. He collected the data through semi-structured interviews with 30 lower secondary school teachers. The results showed that teachers changed their pedagogical practices by abandoning the skills that were not tested, such as listening, speaking, and writing, in the classrooms.

El-Murabet Onaiba (2014) conducted a study to investigate the washback effect of revised EFL public examination on teachers' pedagogical practices, materials, and curriculum in Libyan schools. The researchers collected data through questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation with 140 ninth-grade teachers and 14 inspectors of the English target population. The findings indicated that teachers had negative attitudes towards the examinations. Moreover, the test exerted harmful washback effects on instructional practices since teachers relied on hidden syllabus and narrowed the curriculum to meet the content of the examination. The differences between experienced and novice teachers and the level of education were also the factors influencing their response to the test.

Due to the complex phenomenon of washback, it needs to investigate through various research methods. Referring to washback literature, the well-known researchers in the field adopted a mixed method approach in their studies (Watanabe, 2004; Green, 2007; Turner, 2006). Besides, it is claimed that mixed-methods research is increasingly widespread in language testing and assessment (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Turner (2006) also mentioned that mixed - methods assist in addressing specific research questions, particularly for researchers who conduct the study in the classroom context. Given the strengths of the mixed-methods approach, such an approach is considered the most suitable methodology for this study.

In previous washback studies, the following research instruments used to investigate were questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. However, only questionnaires, interviews, and observation will be reviewed in this section since they are the most used instruments for investigating the washback effect (i.e., Wall & Alderson, 1993; Sommit, 2009; Gashaye, 2012; El-Murabet Onaiba, 2014; Pitisutti and Wongwanich, 2016). Most researchers used five-point-Likert-type scale questionnaires in their studies to elicit teachers' opinions towards the examinations, teachers' instructional practices, and washback effects on teaching. Questionnaires are commonly used to generalise the population or findings and draw inferences about respondents' characteristics, perceptions, and behaviours (Punch, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2009). Besides, questionnaires require respondents to "reveal information about feelings, to express values, to compare with

alternative methods in a way that calls for a judgment about things rather than the mere reporting of facts" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 146). According to Pitisutti and Wongwanich (2016), the pitfall of the study is that it relies exclusively on a questionnaire. The results may be insufficient to provide insights into teachers' fundamental pedagogical practices, which reflect washback in the classrooms (Borg, 2006; Dörnyei, 2003). Another downside of using questionnaires is that it gives the researchers little chance to check the truthfulness of the answers since the participants may rush to complete the questionnaires without paying attention to the items (Denscombe, 2003; Pitisutti & Wongwanich, 2016).

In terms of interviews, several research studies used the interview process after using questionnaires, i.e. (Wall & Alderson, 1993; Sommit, 2009; Gashaye, 2012; El-Murabet Onaiba, 2014). The advantage of employing interviews is their flexibility, which helps researchers explore new sources of opinion in a way that questionnaires cannot. Moreover, it may persuade the interviewees to be more willing to reveal tentative or exploratory opinions and thoughts unavailable on the questionnaires (Brown, 2001). The data derived from the interview part will complement the part of the questionnaires (Denscombe, 2003). The last powerful instrument many scholars have utilised in washback studies is classroom observation (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, 2005; Watanabe, 2004). It is conducted to see teachers' actual instructional practices toward students

In conclusion, the research studies cited above have explored the washback effects of different test types and contexts on teaching and learning. The results found positive and negative washback effects on teachers' instructional practices. Some studies have found only harmful impacts in classroom practices. Therefore, washback can have either positive or adverse effects. Besides, it can also have beneficial and harmful impacts depending on the test and contextual factors.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

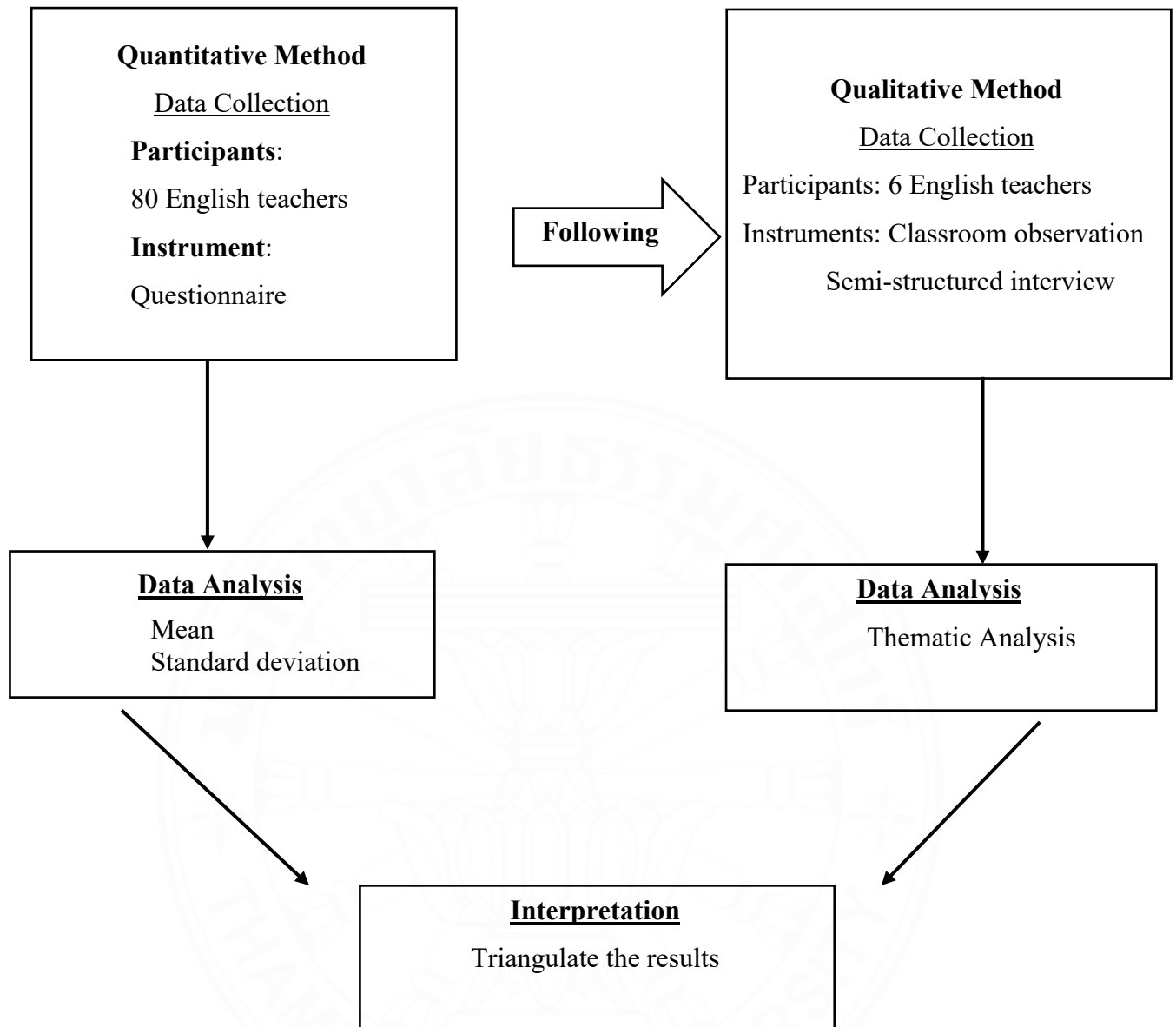
#### **3.1 Introduction**

This study was driven by research questions relating to a). English language teachers' core beliefs about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 and b). the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices. As factors mediating washback effects in classroom practices were also addressed, this chapter describes the methodology and procedures used in this study.

First, the research design is introduced to evaluate the comparison and contrast between the two approaches and investigate the test washback effects on teachers' pedagogical practices. Then the study of participants and their validity and reliability will be discussed in this chapter. Lastly, data collection and data analysis will be later discussed in sequence.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research study employed a mixed-methods approach. First, the researcher used the contemporary design to compare and contrast the results between the two methods to reveal the evidence (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). In such an approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were used concomitantly. Second, this methodology was employed to explore the washback effects of the test on teachers' pedagogical practices. (Dörnyei, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Third, the research study used a questionnaire to elicit the 12th-grade teachers' beliefs and responses about their pedagogical practices. Fourth, classroom observation and interviews were used to examine the teachers' pedagogical practices and beliefs. In the last sequence, the researcher has integrated all data into the overall interpretation. The research design of this analysis is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Research Design**

### 3.3 Participants of the Study

#### 3.3.1 Samples

The population of analysis was English teachers in public secondary schools under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 1 and 2, Bangkok area, in the academic year 2021. There were one hundred nineteen public schools in the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 1 and 2, Bangkok area. The researcher

obtained a random sample since it ensured that every member of the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected (Fraenkel, Hyun, Wallen, 2019).

### **3.3.2 Participants**

In quantitative data, eighty teachers teaching at the upper secondary school level (Grade 12) from public schools in the year 2021 participated in the study. The entire school was selected randomly from twenty schools under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 1 and 2 in the Bangkok area. There were seven large schools (with a size of more than 1,500 students), ten medium schools (with a size of 501-1,500 students), and three minor schools (with a size of fewer than 500 students). In qualitative data, six teachers were selected purposively from the ones who had previously responded to the questionnaires and were willing to participate in classroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

### **3.3.3 Ethical issue**

The participants were informed before conducting the research study and asked to fill out the consent forms. Their identity and privacy were protected confidentially. The information about English language teachers teaching in Grade 12 was not revealed.

## **3.4 Research Instruments**

According to the research study approach, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis were gathered using various instruments. This way, questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, while classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data.

### ***3.4.1 Teacher Questionnaire***

The questionnaire was designed to reveal teachers' reported core beliefs about the English Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET), which influenced their classroom pedagogical practices. The questionnaire had three major parts with a total of 45 statements. All of them were close-ended questions. The

statements in the questionnaire were translated from English into Thai to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity.

**(1) Part One (General Information):** The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 5 questions (statements 1-5). It was conducted to elicit general information about participants' covering demographic details such as teachers' gender, age, educational background, teaching experiences, and weekly teaching load.

**(2) Part Two (Teachers' Core Beliefs about the English O-NET test):** This part of the questionnaire consisted of 23 questions measuring six areas of teachers' core beliefs (statements 6-28). The six areas were teachers' beliefs about the purpose of the O-NET, the validity of the O-NET Test, its impact on pedagogical practices, test format assessed on the O-NET, pressure caused by the O-NET test, and teaching to improve O-NET scores. A five-point Likert scale was used to estimate the degree of agreement in the second part of the questionnaire: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

**(3) Part Three (The Effects of the English O-NET test on pedagogical practices):** The last part of the questionnaire consisted of 16 questions measuring four areas of teachers' pedagogical practices (statements 29-45). They were content of teaching, pedagogical practices, the types and sources and information developed for teachers' assignments, and teachers' assessment practices. A five-point Likert scale is also used to measure the degree of agreement in the second part of the questionnaire: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

In terms of questionnaire statements, they were developed from factors Spratt (2005) has identified. The factors affecting washback effects are teachers, resources, schools, and examinations. To construct the questionnaire effectively, the researcher studied several articles and documents about washback effects and teachers' pedagogical practices toward the O-NET test. Furthermore, the statements were adopted and developed from some washback, teachers' beliefs, and the O-NET studies (Sommit, 2009; Gashaye, 2012; Lunrasri, 2014; Imsa-ard, 2020). Finally, some statements were developed by reviewing literature from some scholars

(Alderson & Hamp-Lyon, 1996; Spratt, 2005; Pan, 2009; Nipakornkitti & Adunyarittigun, 2018)

### ***Content Validation***

After the questionnaire was developed, the researcher asked three experts in the fields of language assessment to validate the questionnaire statements. First, referring to the content validity, the experts were asked to check the questionnaire using the IOC index (Item-Objective Congruency Index) developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). IOC index is the procedure used in test development to assess content validity at the item development stage. Then, the three experts were provided with the validating sheet, and they had to rate the questionnaire statements by putting a checkmark on the IOC, ranging from 1 (clearly measuring), 0 (unclear measuring), and -1 (clearly not measuring). The statements with scores lower than 0.5 will be improved or revised for the study.

On the other hand, the statements that have scored higher than 0.5 will be reserved. The findings from the experts' validation of the teacher questionnaire were acceptable at the IOC index level of 0.99. Besides, some English and Thai words in the statement should be changed to make it more comprehensible for participants.

### ***3.4.2 Classroom Observation and Field Notes***

Classroom observation is one of the most crucial tools which aims to examine what classroom teaching and learning look like under the influence of washback effects of the English O-NET test. It could have been impossible to investigate the test's impact on teaching and learning dimensions without using classroom observation. In this process, the researcher aimed to see only the teachers' instructional practices in actual teaching scenarios under the influence of the test. Additionally, observation is essential for understanding the washback phenomenon (Bailey, 1999). Each participant was observed in the classroom for five classes. Field notes were employed to record the content of the lesson, pedagogical practices, teaching

materials used in the classroom, and assessment. The sections of the field notes enabled the researcher to record teachers' behaviour in the classrooms.

### ***3.4.3 Teacher Interview***

A semi-structured interview was chosen as it allowed the researcher more room for follow-up questions and a more in-depth study. It is suggested that “a semi-structured interview is a commonly used type with enough flexibility to probe some aspects in depth” (Heigham, 2011). In this study, the objective of semi-structured interviews was to investigate the influence of the English O-NET test on teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to ask English teachers about four main topics: teaching goals, perceptions towards the O-NET, the impacts of the O-NET, and pedagogical practices in classrooms. The interview questions were conducted in Thai to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted 30 minutes. However, the interview duration was handled and solely relied on each interviewee's convenience to relax their tension. The interview questions related to teachers' beliefs on the O-NET test were adopted and developed from that of Imsa-ard (2020). In addition, the questions related to teachers' instructional practices were adopted from previous studies (Sommit,2009; El-Murabet Onaiba,2014; Lunrasri, 2014).

### ***Content Validation***

Then, the researcher asked three experts to validate the interview questions in English and Thai using Objective Congruence (IOC). The results of the IOC index of the semi-structured interviews were 0.78. For interview questions, the experts suggested that there should be more questions on teachers' beliefs on the impacts of the O-NET and teachers' perception of the O-NET. The experts also suggested changes in language use and the order of the questions presented. Additionally, the question should be added in order to make them more comprehensible for participants as follows:

**(1) Do you think the English O-NET test affects your teaching? If so, what and how?**

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data was collected in twenty public upper secondary schools in Bangkok, Thailand, during the first semester of the academic year 2021 and was gathered between June and August 2021. According to this process, the researcher contacted relevant schools, and the cooperation was managed afterward.

Eighty participants were asked to complete the consent forms before the data collection. The process was comprised of three main steps. First, teachers' questionnaires were distributed and gathered. Second, classroom observation was conducted. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The above stages were illustrated as follows:

**3.4.1 Quantitative data:** the researcher administered the questionnaire to 80 English language teachers in Grade 12. The participants were required to fill out the Thai edition of the questionnaire. The duration of the questionnaire process took about 20-30 minutes. Besides, the questionnaire was sent to the participants' manual format/email or online platforms form. It depended on the participants' convenience. It took a few weeks to gather the questionnaire data.

**3.4.2 Qualitative data:** the researchers began the process of classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with six teachers who had previously responded to the questionnaire and were willing to participate in classroom observations and interviews. Five teachers were observed in the classroom for five classes for the observational process. Each class took 50 minutes. Depending on the participants' convenience, the interview process was conducted only once, either in-person or online. Each interview lasted 30 minutes.

The researcher launched the classroom observation at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2021. The teachers and students were teaching and learning at the average pace to cover the contents of the textbooks prescribed in the

Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. Furthermore, it was also the time that teachers and students prepared themselves for the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET). The classroom observations were conducted in Grade 12. At the beginning of classroom observation, the researcher introduced herself to teachers and students in each class. She informed them that she would sit at the back of the classrooms in order to observe teachers' pedagogical practices. During the observation, the researcher was supposed to be silent and shows no interactions. The researcher merely completed the field notes. In this detail, there were five teachers for the observational stage. Each participant was observed at least five times during the data collection. After completing classroom observations, the semi-structured interviews were personally conducted according to the teachers' convenient date and suitable time. Every interview was audio-recorded, and each interview lasted 30 minutes. However, the interview duration was managed and depended on each interviewee's convenience so that they felt free for the information exploration.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

After gathering the data from different sources, the researcher analyzed quantitative data by employing mean and standard deviation. The researcher also implemented thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data.

#### **3.6.1 Quantitative analysis**

In order to analyze the questionnaire data, the percentages of the responses to 45 five-point Likert scale questions were calculated to reveal general information and teachers' core beliefs about the English O-NET test and their beliefs influencing pedagogical practices.

#### **3.6.2 Qualitative analysis**

For qualitative analysis, the thematic analysis (TA) was implemented (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic research often entails (usually inductive) the coding of qualitative data into clusters of related entities or semantic



categories and the discovery of coherent patterns and relationships between themes to provide a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under study. The thematic analysis procedure was applied to extract themes from the data gathered from teachers' classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. To that end, observational field notes were explicitly made to capture more details. Then, they were analyzed by mean and percentage. Mean and percentage indicated the degree of focus or content of teaching, teachers' practices in classrooms, and the time allotted to test-related tasks.

Moreover, Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested a “six steps approach to thematic analysis (TA), which are familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.”

In this study, the researcher transcribed the data by reading them thoroughly to investigate patterns and commonalities while leaving space for emerging themes. Next, coded generating was performed by preparing the data into groups. The criteria of this study were words that were connective data for teachers' beliefs and the washback effects on the test selected into categorization for thematic identification. Themes addressing the research questions were then identified through preparing codes, which were classified and combined into topics.

In conclusion, the findings from both quantitative and qualitative were triangulated to check whether the gathered data from English language teachers in Grade 12 through multiple methods had the same information to confirm the findings.

### **3.7 The Pilot Study**

The purpose of conducting a pilot study was to examine research procedures, research instruments, sample recruitment strategies, and other research methodology in preparation for the main study. According to Mackey and Gass (2015), all research designs need to be piloted, pretested, and revised in order to find the potential problem areas in the research instrument before the implementation in the

primary research study. Hence, the validity and reliability of the research instruments discussed above had undergone trials before collecting the data. In addition, the reliability of questionnaires, classroom observations, and interview questions was reviewed through the pilot study.

### **3.7.1 Participants**

After reviewing the questionnaires, observational checklist, and interview questions, the researcher started the pilot study with three Grade 12 English teachers who had the same characteristics as the primary study participants from three upper secondary schools. The researcher also used convenient sampling to select the participants. The pilot study was carried out in March 2021.

### **3.7.2 Instruments and Procedures**

The pilot study of quantitative and qualitative data was shown and clarified as follows:

#### ***(1) Quantitative data:***

First, the primary tool of quantitative data is teachers' questionnaires. The 12th Grade English teachers were asked to complete the pilot stage. Three English language teachers were selected by purposive and convenience sampling due to the characteristics of the target participants. In this focus, the questionnaire was constructed in bilingual, Thai, and English to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity. The questionnaire was piloted to identify potential issues, such as possible misinterpretation of thoughts by participants and difficulties in interpreting some technical terms in the questionnaire (Brannen 1992, Bryman 1992).

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was used in the study. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha is one of the most significant measures of the reliability of research instruments. Referring to George and Mallery (2010), the acceptable value of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha should be 0.7. The result revealed that the reliability of the teachers' questionnaires was 0.73. (See Appendix E). Therefore, the questionnaire was highly acceptable.

## ***(2) Qualitative data:***

The descriptive data was investigated through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. In terms of classroom observation, it was conducted in three classes of Grade 12th teachers at three upper secondary schools. First, the classroom observations were made with observational field notes, especially for English teaching. Then, the researcher tried semi-structured interviews with two English language teachers who taught the same level of students in the upper secondary schools. The interview duration was 30 minutes each, and the stage was proposed for the more delicate information apart from the questionnaire. As a result, all of them are done to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity. The data were audio-recorded and then transcribed.

### **3.7.3 Considerations from the Pilot Study**

Initially, the questionnaire was divided into three parts: Part 1 (General Information), Part 2 (Teachers' Core Beliefs about the English O-NET test), and Part 3 (The Effects of the English O-NET test on pedagogical practices). However, during the questionnaire process, participants suggested that more space should be provided at the bottom of the questionnaire for the participants who want to fill in a more specific response.

In the case of classroom observation of the pilot study, the field notes were appropriate to capture the events observed. They were used to record the content of the lesson, pedagogical practices, teaching materials used in the classroom, and assessment effectively. While observing, it was also noted that this stage's time limitation is significantly noted. Even though each class gained a similar teaching period of about 50 minutes to an hour, some teachers required longer times than expected. As a result, the observation ran longer than the researcher had expected.

Concerning semi-structured interviews, the results from the pilot study revealed that one general question enquiring about the positions of teachers' variables (teaching experience) that lead to the test influencing their practice was

overlooked. The researcher also noticed that the teacher who gained more teaching experience expressed more details and reflections on the O-NET test than the one with less experience. The question about why teachers devoted more time to reviewing the English O-NET test contents was not included. Hence, these questions were used in the main study.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of this study in the following sequence according to the research questions:

- (1) Research Question 1: What core beliefs do English language teachers have embedded about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12?
- (2) Research Question 2: What are the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices?

#### 4.1 Research Question 1: What core beliefs do English language teachers hold about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12?

To answer the first research question, an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is illustrated to answer the research question. The results are shown into six parts: teachers' beliefs toward the purpose of the O-NET, the validity of the O-NET Test, its impact on pedagogical practices, test format assessed on the O-NET, pressure caused by the O-NET test, and teaching to improve O-NET scores.

##### 4.1.1 Teachers' beliefs towards the purpose of the O-NET

Table 4.1 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers' Beliefs regarding the Purpose of the O-NET is shown as follows.

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. The major purpose of the O-NET test and scores is to prepare	12.5%	33.75%	33.75%	10%	10%

learners for higher education.					
7. The major purpose of the O-NET test and scores is set as a criterion for high-school graduation.	11.25%	22.5%	27.5%	26.25%	12.5%
8. The major purpose of the O-NET test and scores is used for admission to universities.	28.75%	33.75%	16.25%	15%	6.25%
9. The O-NET test is an appropriate indicator of learners' English proficiency.	10%	26.25%	23.75%	21.25%	18.75%
10. The O-NET test is appropriate to assess learners' English proficiency, but it needs to include other aspects such as listening, speaking, and writing.	38.75%	27.5%	23.75%	6.25%	3.75%

Table 4.1 shows that 33.75% of the teachers agreed, and 12.5% strongly agreed that the O-NET test was mainly used to prepare learners for higher education. 33.75% agreed, and 28.75% strongly agreed that the O-NET test was used for university admission. While 26.25% agreed and 10% strongly agreed that the O-NET test was appropriate to indicate learners' English proficiency. However, it should be noted that 27.5% of the teachers agreed, and 38.75% strongly agreed that the other aspects such as listening, speaking, and writing should all be included to make the O-NET more appropriate for assessing learners' English proficiency.

For the interview results, the teachers perceived the O-NET test as a standardized test for admission to higher education. Furthermore, the teachers believed that the O-NET test could be used for evaluating students' English proficiency if the

test included direct tests of listening, speaking, and writing skills, as seen in Excerpts 1-3.

**EXCERPT 1:**

“O-NET has always been used *as a standardized test to measure students’ English proficiency*. As I can see, the O-NET measures almost every skill except listening”.

(English teacher D, September 3, 2021)

**EXCERPT 2:**

“O-NET is *a proficiency test, a standardized test, and a test used for university admission*, but I think the test needs to be *improved by including other aspects such as listening, speaking, and writing* so that it could benefit students in addition to university admission.”

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 3:**

“The purpose of teaching for O-NET is to *prepare the students to study in the higher education* such as Grade 12 students who want to study at university.”

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

One of the teachers compared the O-NET test with other tests such as TOEFL or IELTS. These tests include listening, reading, speaking, and writing sections which can assess students’ proficiency by having test takers perform tasks in each language skill. For example, in the listening section of the IELTS test, test takers will listen to the recording only once and give their answers to the questions on the test

papers. For speaking section, it evaluates test takers' use of spoken language. In addition, the test takers discuss a wide range of topics with an IELTS examiner.

On the other hand, the O-NET test appears to include the indirect test of listening and speaking skills in the test paper. The indirect tests of listening and speaking skills in the O-NET test are dialogue completion and situational dialogue. First, students must read dialogues which some are being blanked out. Then, students need to figure out appropriate responses to fill in the blanks without actually listening and speaking, as seen in Excerpt 4.

#### EXCERPT 4:

“Unlike other tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS that include a listening section. For the O-NET, *the test does not cover all four skills*. However, the test has been perceived as a test for every student nationwide, so, understandably, it cannot cover some English skills. I think it would be better if the test were improved by including other aspects assessing students' English proficiency.”

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

#### 4.1.2 Teachers' beliefs towards the validity of the O-NET Test

Table 4.2 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers' Beliefs regarding the Validity of the O-NET Test is shown as follows.

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. The contents of the O-NET are aligned with English learning strands prescribed in Basic Educational	8.75%	47.5%	30%	10%	3.75%



Core Curriculum B.E. 2551, i.e., communication, culture, connection, and communities.						
12. The content of the O-NET is consistent with that in the English textbooks.	3.75%	28.75%	35%	21.25%	11.25%	
13. The content tested in the O-NET is appropriate for assessing learners' English proficiency.	11.25%	35%	32.5%	13.75%	7.5%	
14. The O-NET test is used to reflect the quality of teaching and learning.	15%	23.75%	18.75%	22.5%	20%	

Table 4.2 shows the teachers' beliefs toward the validity of the O-NET. As can be seen, a majority of the teachers agreed (47.5%) and strongly agreed (8.75%) that the contents of the O-NET were aligned with the specified Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. Furthermore, 35% of the teachers agreed, and 11.25% strongly agreed that the content tested in the O-NET was appropriate for assessing the proficiency of the learners, which can be related to Statement 9 since both statements agreed that O-NET was appropriate for assessing proficiency. Interestingly, there was evidence showing that 22.5% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed that the O-NET could be used as an accountability measure to reflect the quality of teaching and learning.

The interview results showed that teachers explained that the test content is consistent with the Basic Educational Core Curriculum. However, they disagreed that the test should be the only tool used to reflect the quality of teaching and learning.

**EXCERPT 5:**

“I think the test's content *is appropriate as topics can be found in the textbooks* I used. Something like grammar rules or usages are always taught, and the questions are not that different from the book.”

**EXCERPT 6:**

“I do not think that the test alone can judge teachers or students and situations of learning in Thailand. Sure, you can see the overall picture that it is good or bad, but each case, school, and student have unique situations. So, I do not think it would be fair to teachers if only this test were used to reflect everything.”

#### 4.1.3 Teachers' beliefs toward the impact of the O-NET on pedagogical practices

Table 4.3 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers' Beliefs regarding the impact of the O-NET on pedagogical practices is shown as follows.

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. The O-NET test affects my pedagogical practices, especially in applying new teaching approaches to help students achieve their learning goals.	20%	37.5%	21.25%	15%	6.25%
16. The O-NET test affects my English pedagogical practices in classrooms.	17.5%	36.25%	25%	12.5%	8.75%

17. I include the content expected to appear on the O-NET test into my lessons.	21.25%	21.25%	30%	16.25%	11.25%
18. I set aside time for preparing my students for the O-NET test.	18.75%	28.75%	27.5%	18.75%	6.25%
19. The O-NET test affects my instructional plan and lessons, which need to cover all contents prescribed in the Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551.	21.25%	37.5%	35%	5%	1.25%

Table 4.3 illustrates the teachers' beliefs toward the influence of the O-NET on pedagogical practices. The results reveal that most teachers (37.5%) strongly agreed (21%) that the O-NET test affected their instructional plan and lessons, which must cover all contents prescribed in the Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. Besides, due to the O-NET results, most teachers (37.5%) strongly agreed (20%) that they had to change or adjust their teaching approaches to help their students meet their learning goals. For example, 36.25% of the teachers in the English class agreed, and 17.5% strongly agreed that the O-NET test affected their pedagogical practices. Surprisingly, 21.25% of the teachers strongly agreed, and 21.25% agreed that they included any content which was more likely to appear in the O-NET test in their lessons. The results also found that 28.75% of teachers agreed, and 18.75% strongly agreed that they set aside time to prepare the students for the O-NET test.

The qualitative data analysis shows that the O-NET affects teachers' practices in different ways. Firstly, the teachers taught test-taking strategies to students, as seen in Excerpt 7. Moreover, the O-NET test items were used to teach test-taking techniques, as shown in Excerpt 8. Apart from teaching test-taking strategies, some teachers explained that they would integrate the topics or issues tested in the test into their lessons illustrated in Excerpt 9.

**EXCERPT 7:**

“Mainly, *I would adapt my teaching contents since I cannot teach only the basics anymore*. So, I use the previous O-NET test papers and teach students test-taking strategies for students to practice in the classrooms”.

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 8:**

*“I would focus on teaching techniques for the test and choose items from former tests for the techniques*. For example, I would show them the test, read the test together, and teach them how to take the test. Mostly, I would try to improve students’ English proficiency and teach them techniques since they don’t know how to apply their knowledge to the test.

(English teacher C, August 31, 2021)

**EXCERPT 9:**

“It doesn’t mean that I do not care about the test at all, I do, and I study its patterns, but *I never teach my students about the tests. Instead, I would insert some test items related to my teaching topics in the classrooms*. I would tell my students to be careful while taking multiple-choice tests. They may get the wrong answers instead of the right ones. For instance, I am teaching future tense at the moment. Other tenses have experimented in the O-NET, so I teach them to notice time expression”.

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

Secondly, the data from the interview show that teachers need to dedicate extra time to preparing students for the O-NET test. For example, Teachers A, B, and F, who were in charge of tutoring O-NET tests for students in Excerpts 10-12, explained that teachers helped students develop test-taking strategies for the O-NET

tests when students were free from regular classes. Lastly, the data from the interview show that the school also guest lecturers to give tutoring on the O-NET.

**EXCERPT 10:**

*“There is a class dedicated to Grade 12 O-NET tutoring in which I am responsible for teaching. As a result, I can spend the whole period of classes helping students practice the tests.*

(English teacher A, August 29, 2021)

**EXCERPT 11:**

*“Before the pandemic, **guest lecturers or teachers would be invited for tutoring O-NET** once or twice when students were free from classes. Students were not required to attend such tutoring. Yet, students were expected to attend that”.*

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 12:**

*“In every semester, there is **a day for workshops which intend to prepare students for taking the O-NET tests, and guest lecturers are invited for tutoring.**”*

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

**4.1.4 Teachers’ beliefs towards test format assessed on the O-NET**

Table 4.4 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers’ Beliefs towards Test Format assessed on the O-NET is shown as follows.

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

20. The multiple-choice format of the O-NET test is appropriate for evaluating learners' reading comprehension.	20%	43.75%	26.25%	6.25%	3.75%
21. The multiple-choice format of the O-NET test is appropriate for evaluating learners' critical thinking skills.	7.5%	38.75%	25%	18.75%	10%
22. The multiple-choice format of the O-NET test is appropriate for evaluating learners' productive skills.	10%	21.25%	43.75%	17.5%	7.5%
23. The multiple-choice format of the O-NET test is appropriate for evaluating all skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551.	10%	25%	26.25%	23.75%	15%

Table 4.4 reveals teachers' beliefs toward the test format assessed on the O-NET. From the data, a majority of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that the multiple-choice format of the O-NET test is appropriate for evaluating students' reading comprehension (43.75%, 20%), critical thinking skills (38.75%, 7.5%), and productive skills (21.25%, 10%), respectively. However, it should be noted that 43.75% of the teachers had a neutral response on the appropriateness of the multiple-choice test format used to evaluate students' productive skills. Interestingly, up to 23.75% disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed that the O-NET's multiple-choice format is appropriate for evaluating all skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551.

Further investigation from the interview data confirmed that teachers believed the O-NET test emphasised reading skills because the whole test package was in a multiple-choice format. The test is meant to evaluate four skills. However, its format could lead teachers to emphasise teaching reading skills for the test. Teacher B from Excerpt 13 and Teacher C from Excerpt 14 also pointed out minimal measurement emphasising productive skills since the writing part of the O-NET test relies on sentence completion and error recognition.

**EXCERPT 13:**

“We taught reading and conversation. For conversation, *I focused on dialogue completion rather than focusing on conversation and authentic listening*. I then need to emphasize teaching reading.

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 14:**

“*Emphasized reading since most tests are in reading comprehension form* or essays. There are only 15 questions on grammar, but the important part is the reading.”

(English teacher C, August 31, 2021)

#### 4.1.5 Teachers’ Perception of Pressure caused by the O-NET

Table 4.5 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers’ Perception of Pressure caused by the O-NET is shown as follows

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24. The O-NET test significantly impacts my instruction more	10%	30%	25%	17.5%	17.5%

than the curriculum or textbooks.

25. I have been pressured by school administrators, parents, and my students to increase my O-NET test scores.	31.25%	28.75%	18.75%	11.25%	10%
26. I feel pressured to be responsible for the students' failure from the O-NET test.	31.25%	25%	25%	7.5%	11.25%
27. The O-NET test makes me nervous since the O-NET scores have impact on my promotion or survival in the profession.	21.25%	20%	13.75%	23.75%	21.25%

Table 4.5 summarizes the teachers' perception of the impact and pressure of the O-NET test. The results illustrate that most teachers agreed (30%) and (10%) strongly agreed that the O-NET test has a more significant impact on their instruction than the curriculum or the textbooks they use. On the other hand, an equal number of 17.5% of teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed with such statements. In addition, most teachers (28.75%) and (31.25%) strongly agreed that stakeholders had pressured them to increase their O-NET scores. Teachers also agreed (25%), and (31.25%) strongly agreed that they felt pressured to be responsible for students' failure on the O-NET test. Regarding Statement 27, although 20% of the participants agreed and 21.25% strongly agreed that the O-NET test made them nervous due to the test's impact on their promotion and profession, 23.75% disagreed, and 21.25% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Further analysis of the interview data shows additional information concerning how teachers define pressure and what stakeholders expect. Informants used the word 'expectation' instead of 'pressures.' They admitted that these expectations might indirectly pressure them. For instance, Teacher E from Excerpt 15



referred to parents' expectation for students to have a good test result on the O-NET, and Teacher C from Excerpt 16 referred to an expectation from the administrators who would like to see how students' scores could be improved.

**EXCERPT 15:**

“Parents do not directly pressure us to increase the O-NET test scores, but they, as the parents, could see the students' performance through the score. *Of course, some parents would also expect their children to pass the tests.*”

(English teacher E, September 11, 2021)

**EXCERPT 16:**

“It is not a direct pressure, but it is more like *an expectation from the administrators* who would like to see students' scores improvement.

(English teacher C, August 31, 2021)

**4.1.6 Teachers' beliefs towards teaching to improve O-NET Scores**

Table 4.6 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Teachers' Beliefs towards Teaching to Improve O-NET Scores are shown as follows

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28. One of the teaching goals is to help learners obtain high scores on the O-NET test.	10%	20%	21.25%	20%	28.75%

Table 6 shows teachers' beliefs toward teaching to improve O-NET scores. Again, the result shows that the majority of the participants disagreed (20%) and strongly disagreed (28.75%) that one of the teaching goals was to help their students obtain high scores on the O-NET.

The interview analysis reveals that the teachers revealed various teaching goals, including using English for communication in daily life, such as in Excerpts 17 and 19, or helping students have better attitudes toward English, as shown in Excerpts 18 and 20.

**EXCERPT 17:**

“The main goal of teaching is *to equip students with English language knowledge and develop their four skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as improving students' attitudes toward the English language*. I would prefer to see students enjoy learning and have a clear mindset on the reason for learning English rather than forcing them to study. By having a good attitude and knowing the objective of learning English, they can become interested in learning themselves and develop their skills.”

(English teacher A, August 29, 2021)

**EXCERPT 18:**

“The goal I want to achieve is that *students can apply English*. ... I also want students to enjoy using English in their daily life.”

(English teacher D, September 3, 2021)

**EXCERPT 19:**

“I teach English for communication, and *I want them to be able to use English*, but since I cannot teach them to do so, *my main goal is to help them have a good attitude toward English first so that they can learn themselves and learn English later.*”

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 20:**

“As an individual, *I want my students to be able to use English*. I want them to adequately understand English and apply it in their daily life or communication.”

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

**4.2 Research Question 2: What are the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices?**

To answer the second research question, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed to indicate the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices. The quantitative data were collected from a questionnaire. The qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

**Table 4.7 The Percentage indicating Level of Agreement towards Statements about the English O-NET Test on Content of Teaching**

The quantitative data were first used to determine what teachers used as a source for designing the teaching content. The data were then shown in Table 4.7 as follows:

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
29. My English lesson follows contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 to help learners achieve the standards learning goals.	31.25%	55%	13.75%	0%	0%
30. My English lesson follows contents and skills tested in the O-NET test to help learners increase their scores.	17.5%	41.25%	32.5%	8.75%	0%

Table 4.7 shows the data concerning the effects of the English O-NET test on teaching content. Up to 55% of the teachers agreed, and 31.25% strongly agreed that their lesson followed contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 to help learners achieve the standards learning goals. Furthermore, 41.25% agreed, and 17.5% strongly agreed with the statement that their English lesson followed contents and skills tested in the O-NET test to help learners increase their scores. The data from the questionnaire show that most of the participants follow both the Basic Educational Core Curriculum and the O-NET.

The qualitative findings from teachers' interviews show that the English Ordinary National Educational Test for grade 12 affects the content of teaching and that

teachers know Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. Therefore, it possibly comes to play as a mediator of the test and content of teaching.

Analysis pointed out that the knowledge about the core curriculum contributes to teachers' focus on content and skills to teach students efficiently, as shown in Excerpts 21-22.

**EXCERPT 21:**

*“I teach English according to the strands prescribed in the Basic Educational Core Curriculum since they focus on skills rather than contents. For example, if the curriculum has text reading linked to the scientific and cultural reading in the test, I will emphasize these reading skills rather than other skills.”*

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 22:**

*“I need to follow contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum since they will appear in the O-NET test. If I complete the complete syllabus towards the contents in the core curriculum, the students will be able to pass or achieve the O-NET.”*

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

**Table 4.8 The Percentage indicating Level of Agreement towards Statements about the Effects of English O-NET Test on Pedagogical Practices**

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
31. When I prepare my lessons, I pay attention to the objectives of the syllabus.	38.75%	47.5%	10%	2.5%	1.25%

32. When I prepare my lessons, I pay attention to previous O-NET test papers.	6.25%	47.5%	25%	15%	6.25%
33. I adapt or change my pedagogical practices in my English class to help learners succeed in the English O-NET test.	13.75%	50%	22.5%	10%	3.75%
34. In my English classes, I use English textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education to cover all the contents prescribed in the Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551	23.75%	43.75%	18.75%	7.5%	6.25%
35. In my English classes, I use previous O-NET test papers to help learners perform well and get familiar with the test.	20%	45%	17.5%	13.75%	3.75%
36. In my English classes, I focus on contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 and syllabus.	25%	48.75%	22.5%	3.75%	0%
37. In my English classes, I focus on contents and skills tested in the O-NET test, i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension.	23.75%	43.75%	21.25%	7.5%	3.75%

<p><b>38.</b> In my English classes, I spend time on classroom activities that help learners improve their English proficiency such as listening and speaking activities.</p>	31.25%	36.25%	22.5%	8.75%	1.25%
<p><b>39.</b> In my English classes, I spend time reviewing the contents and skills which are more likely to appear on the O-NET test.</p>	20%	36.25%	17.5%	13.75%	12.5%
<p><b>40.</b> In my English classes, I would not adapt or change my pedagogical practices if my students were not required to take the English O-NET test.</p>	15%	21.25%	28.75%	13.75%	21.25%

Table 4.8 shows the data related to the effects of the English O-NET test on pedagogical practices. As can be seen, up to 47.5% agreed and 38.75% strongly agreed that teachers paid attention to the syllabus' objectives; 47.5% agreed, and 6.25% strongly agreed that they paid attention to the previous O-NET test papers. In addition, most teachers agreed and strongly agreed that in their English classes as they adapted or changed their pedagogical practices (50%, 13.75%) and used English textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education (43.75%, 23.75%), used previous O-NET test papers (45%, 20%), focused on contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 and syllabus (48.75%, 25%), and focused on contents and skills tested in the O-NET test (43.75%, 23.75%). Furthermore, the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that they spent time on classroom activities in order to help students improve their English proficiency (36.25%, 31.25%) and also spent time reviewing the contents and skills which are more likely to appear on the O-NET test. Regarding statement 40, whereas 21.25% of participants agreed and 15% strongly agreed that

teachers would not change their practices if their students were not required to take the O-NET, 13.75% of participants disagreed, and 21.25% strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, the data from the questionnaire show that teachers follow both O-NET and Basic Educational Curriculum Core to prepare lessons and activities. The qualitative findings from interviews revealed the effects of the English O-NET test on teachers' pedagogical practices. The impacts of the test affected teachers' pedagogical practices since teachers focused on grammatical structures, vocabulary, and reading comprehension rather than other contents and skills such as other English skills, including activities for developing writing and speaking that were otherwise not measured in the test. Furthermore, teachers familiarized their students with the previous O-NET test papers, as seen in Excerpts 23-24.

**EXCERPT 23:**

*“I used the previous tests as a part of my practices to familiarize students with the test, and they would not be alerted during the test. Therefore, I would look at the previous O-NET tests and use them as examples for each topic or unit.”*

(English teacher A, August 29, 2021)

**EXCERPT 24:**

*“I mixed the items of the previous tests from different years and provided them to students without telling students that these are from the real test. After that, I taught them test-taking strategies such as how to do each item, identify items, and how remove the irrelevant choices so as to help you do the best you can do.”*

(English teacher C, August 31, 2021)

Additionally, classroom observations and interviews confirmed that the teachers taught students to understand the test questions using grammar-translation. Besides, the teachers applied the previous O-NET test papers to help the students



perform well and get familiar with the test. The teachers also taught students to use test-taking strategies in taking the O-NET test, as shown in Excerpts 25-26.

**EXERPT 25:**

“When the O-NET test comes out in the form of a text conversation, you should read the direction of the test. Since each sentence required two answers, *you had to use grammar-translation by translating every single word. Then, you could apply test-taking strategies by cutting choices to achieve the test easily.* Moreover, you could complete the test within the time limit.

(English teacher E, Classroom observation on September 11, 2021)

**EXCERPT 26:**

“*You can understand some parts of the O-NET, such as the future tense or grammatical structure, by reviewing previous O-NET papers since you can become familiar with the test.* Apart from that, you should *use a grammar-translation approach* for each item, recall how to use tenses and conduct sentence patterns, and then use test-taking strategies to rule out distractors.”

(English teacher F, Classroom observation on September 17, 2021)

Conversely, some teachers pointed out that if students learned content and skills based on the core curriculum, they would achieve the O-NET test.

**EXCERPT 27:**

“We know that the O-NET’s content is from the Basic Educational Curriculum Core, therefore, *the pedagogical practices would also base on the curriculum core.*”

(English teacher F, October 16, 2021)

**Table 4.9 The Percentage indicating Level of Agreement towards Statements about the Effects of the English O-NET Test on Resources for Classroom Practices**

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
41. I assign tasks based on textbook exercises that help them increase the knowledge and enhance English language proficiency.	42.5%	47.5%	10%	0%	0%
42. I assign tasks similar to the English O-NET test, such as practicing the previous O-NET test papers to help them perform well on the test.	25%	42.5%	15%	11.25%	0%

Table 4.9 illustrates findings concerning the English O-NET test's effect on classroom material choices. The data analysis showed that most teachers agreed (47.5%) and strongly agreed (42.5%) that they assigned tasks based on textbook exercises. It should be noted that 42.5% of the teachers agreed, and 25% strongly agreed that they assigned tasks similar to the English O-NET test, such as practising the previous O-NET test papers to help them perform well on the test.

Further investigation from the interview revealed more effects of the English O-NET test on resources for classroom practices. For instance, Teacher B from the Excerpt 28 admitted that the O-NET test papers were given to students as assignments. In addition, students had to practice doing the test in classrooms. Teachers may send O-NET test papers in LINE groups for students to practice outside the classroom. Teacher F, in Excerpt 29, gave students O-NET papers to practice themselves since she did not have enough time to have students practice in class.

**EXCERPT 28:**

“Instead of including some items from the O-NET into the practice exercise, *I provided my students with the O-NET test papers to practice in class.*”

(English teacher B, August 30, 2021)

**EXCERPT 29:**

*“I gave students previous O-NET papers in LINE group. The O-NET papers included every topic integrated. Since there was not enough time to teach every topic of the test in a semester, I needed to give them the test papers and let them ask questions on the topic they did not understand.”*

(English teacher F, 16 October, 20)

**Table 4.10 The Percentage indicating the Level of Agreement towards Statements about Assessment Practices is shown as follows.**

Statements	Percentage of Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
43. I assess learners' English proficiency based on the objectives of the syllabus.	38.75	52.5%	7.5%	1.25%	0%

44. I use performance-based assessment to evaluate learners' English language learning, such as writing assignments, role-plays, pair-works, and group discussions etc.	47.5%	33.75%	13.75%	5%	0%
45. I adapt my assessment to match the format of the English O-NET test, such as a multiple-choice test to evaluate learners' English language learning.	22.5%	36.25%	25%	12.5%	3.75%

Table 10 shows the findings related to their assessment practices. As can be seen, 52.5% agreed, and 38.75% strongly agreed that they assessed students' English proficiency based on the syllabus' objectives; 33.75% agreed, and 47.5% strongly agreed that they used performance-based assessment. It should be noted that 36.25% of the teachers agreed, and 22.5% strongly agreed that they also adapted their assessment to match the format of English O-NET tests, such as a multiple-choice test to evaluate learners' English language learning.

The findings from interviews and in-class observations were consistent with that of the questionnaire as it indicated that the assessment format was adapted to match the format of the O-NET. Besides, the qualitative findings pointed out that teachers' knowledge about the English O-NET test possibly comes to play as a mediator of the teachers' assessment practices that have direct washback impacts on learning, as can be seen in Excerpts 31-35.

#### EXCERPT 30:

"I would look at the previous O-NET tests and use them as examples for each topic or unit. *I also used the previous tests as a part of my assessment to check students' understanding.* This can

help them familiarize themselves with the test, and they would not be nervous during the test.”

(English teacher A, August 29, 2021)

**EXCERPT 31:**

*“I used to photocopy the whole test paper for students as assignments, show them the answers for 2-3 items, and give them the answers before finishing the class. I also must show them different parts during the class, such as telling them to look at the conversation. I think it's a good idea to evaluate students' understanding”.*

(English teacher D, September 3, 2021)

**EXCERPT 32:**

*“I mixed the items of the tests from previous years and assessed students without telling students that these were from the real test. After telling the correct answers, I taught them test-taking strategies such as how to figure out the answer for each item and how to remove the irrelevant choices.”*

(English teacher C, August 31, 2021)

**EXCERPT 33:**

“As you (students) can see from the screen, these test items are taken from the old tests in 2017 and 2018. I will give you 20 minutes to complete this test. Don't forget to translate every question and use the test-taking strategies I have taught. When you finish, I will give you the answers and explanation. *The test results will show how well you understand the lessons.*”

(English teacher E, Classroom observation on September 11, 2021)

**EXCERPT 34:**

“Since there is not enough time, I *will send the old version of the O-NET for students as an assessment and let them ask if they have any questions so that I can check their comprehension.*

In the next class, I will show the correct answer and explain important questions.”

(English teacher A, Classroom observation, September 22, 2021)

In Excerpt 30, it was shown that the teacher adapted their assessment by including the previous tests in their assessment. The same practices could also be observed in the Excerpt 32 and 33. Furthermore, in the Excerpt 31 and 34, the whole version of the previous O-NET papers was used as a tool for assessment. However, the interview and observation failed to indicate performance-based assessments.

**Summary**

The findings from Chapter 4 depict the crucial information as follows. Concerning English language teachers’ core beliefs about the English O-NET test, most teachers believed that the O-NET had different purposes, such as preparing students for higher education, being a criterion for graduation, and being used for university admission. Most of them also agreed that the contents of the O-NET test were aligned with the English learning strands prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. The test would be appropriate for assessing students’ English proficiency if it included a direct assessment of productive skills. The findings also show that the test pressured teachers in which stakeholders, including the school administrators and parents, expected students to achieve a good score. They show that the English O-NET test has a different washback on teaching:

**1. There was a washback on teachers' practices which could be seen in how teachers needed to spend extra time preparing students for the test.**

**2. There was a washback on classroom resources and their content in which the O-NET papers were adopted for the classroom practices, and the contents of the O-NET were included in the lesson.**

**3. The test also affected teachers' classroom assessment practices, which could be seen in how assignments or tests were given in a multiple-choice format used for the O-NET, or students might be given an assignment with the topics related to the test.**

Concerning the effects of the English O-NET test on pedagogical practices, while the test itself did not have a direct washback effect on the test, findings have shown that teachers' factors, such as teachers' knowledge and teachers' beliefs, come into play as mediators between the test and pedagogical practices. Hence, it is possibly implied that the indirect washback effects could be derived from teachers' beliefs about practical pedagogical practices and test preparation in order to make teachers demonstrate effective instructional practices. Additionally, teachers used their knowledge about the English O-NET test and language assessment literacy to associate with their competence so as to create or choose high-quality classroom evaluations and use them effectively to facilitate students' learning.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSIONS**

This chapter is divided into five parts. (1) the research questions of this study, (2) The summary of the findings, (3) The discussion of the findings, (4) its implication, as well as (5) the recommendations for further studies are explained as follows.

#### **5.1 Review of Research Questions**

The study's objective was to investigate how the English O-NET test at the upper secondary level (Grade 12) affects teachers' beliefs in pedagogical practices. The research questions are as follow:

- (1) What core beliefs do English language teachers have embedded about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12?
- (2) What are the effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices?

#### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

The current analysis aims to study how the English O-NET test at the upper secondary level (Grade 12) affects teachers' beliefs in pedagogical practices. The findings were divided into two parts based on the research questions of this study. The findings could be summarized as follows:

##### ***5.2.1 Teachers' Core Beliefs about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12***

From the findings, several essential pieces of information could be seen. Firstly, many teachers believed that the O-NET serves different purposes, from preparing students for higher education to being used for university admission. Most of



them also agreed that the test aligned with the English learning strands prescribed in the Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 and was appropriate for assessing high school students' English proficiency. However, the test needs to be improved to assess productive skills more than it currently does. In addition, there were washback effects of the O-NET test on teachers' pedagogical practices since the test caused them to spend extra time or effort preparing students for the test. Besides, most teachers agreed that the test affected their pedagogical plans as they needed to cover all contents prescribed in the Core Curriculum. For instance, the pedagogical plans were affected by the test as teachers adopted the test or adapted the content into their lessons. The test results also put high pressure on teachers, including the school administrators and parents, who expected them to help students achieve satisfying scores on the test. Lastly, the test also has effects on teachers' assessment practices. For example, teachers were reported to give assignments or tests in a similar format to the test, which is the multiple-choice test, or use the topics of the assignments related to the test.

### ***5.2.2 The Effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on Pedagogical Practices***

Regarding the effects of the English O-NET test on pedagogical practices, most teachers agreed that their English lesson followed both contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 and the contents of the O-NET. This result was explained in the interview in which teachers believed that the skills prescribed in the core curriculum would also appear in the O-NET. The results of the questionnaire also displayed several effects of the O-NET on the pedagogical practices, including how teachers also paid attention to the previous O-NET papers, a change in pedagogical practices, how teachers focused on reviewing for the test, and how they assigned tasks resembling the O-NET. Lastly, the O-NET also affected how teachers assessed students as the assessment's format was adapted to match the O-NET's format.

Further investigation of the effects of the qualitative analysis showed different knowledge responsible for mediating the test and the teaching content. Firstly, there was the knowledge about Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 in which

teachers understood the learning standards and could design learning content according to their understanding. Since teachers with excellent knowledge-driven skills could focus on content and skills to efficiently teach students, another knowledge is about the English O-NET, which helped teachers plan their instruction, practices, and goals according to the test. In this study, teachers' knowledge about the O-NET was found to be responsible for assisting teachers in gaining insights about content and strategies for students. This shows how knowledge about the core curriculum and the test affects teachers' practices, and the better they know, the better teachers may teach students.

### **5.3 Discussion of the Findings**

The findings are discussed in 2 aspects, including:

- 1.) English language teachers' core beliefs about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 and
- 2.) The effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices.

#### ***5.3.1 English language teachers' core beliefs about the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12***

When the test objectives are considered, some teachers believed the O-NET test and scores were primarily used as a criterion for high school graduation. This could be the teachers' misunderstanding about the test purposes. It is meant to assess students' academic knowledge, critical thinking abilities, and the quality of education nationwide (NIETS, 2012; Nipakornkitti & Adunyarittigun, 2018; Sundayana, Meekaeo, Purnawarman, & Sukyadi, 2018). The finding of this study is in line with that of Lunrasri's study (2014). She found that teachers agreed it was a good idea to use the O-NET test scores as a criterion for high school graduation.

Such misunderstanding of the test objectives could lead to a negative washback on teaching. When teachers fail to understand the goals of the test, they will not be able to use the test results to improve the quality of their teaching and effectively serve the students' needs (Hughes, 1989; Alderson & Wall, 1993; Stiggins, 1999).

Furthermore, of course, they will not appreciate the value of the test (Hughes, 1989; Alderson & Wall, 1993; Stiggins, 1999). This also indicated how teachers lacked the knowledge of assessment literacy important for assessing, interpreting the assessment result, and understanding how to improve the classroom. The study showed that this could be harmful.

However, the finding also indicates the teachers' beliefs about the validity of the test. More than half of the teachers agreed that the O-NET test and its content were consistent with the Basic Educational Core Curriculum and the use of O-NET to assess students' English proficiency. It means that the O-NET tests what is meant to test. This could support by Nipakornkitti's and Adunyarittigun's studies (2008). They matched the test items with the Basic Education Core Curriculum. The evidence pointed out that the O-NET test matched with learning strands of foreign language areas based on the curriculum. The results are also in line with Lunrasri (2014). Most teachers agreed that the contents of the O-NET test and the core curriculum are consistent. Besides, the O-NET test acts as the evaluation to assess the quality of students' learning at the national level, using the learning criteria stipulated in the Basic Education Core Curriculum. (Ministry of Education, 2001; Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2008). However, most teachers believed that the test would have more validity if it could include direct tests of listening, speaking, and writing.

It is unsurprising that most teachers believed that the test affected their instructional plan and lessons in the classrooms, especially including content expected to exist on the test, introducing test-taking strategies, and setting aside time for preparing students for the O-NET test. Interestingly, the teachers in the study believed that they did not intend to teach the test to the students but that it helped them gear towards effective teaching, which responded to the national core curriculum. Therefore, they needed to adjust their lessons and teaching to motivate their students to learn and achieve the expected learning goals. The results are bound up with Yamashita and Li's study (2012). It is evident that high-stakes tests, along with the teachers' beliefs, influence their pedagogical practices. If the teachers struggle to adapt their teaching to cover all contents prescribed in the curriculum and to meet the test demands,

they can create positive washback in the classroom setting (Hughes, 1989; Pajares, 1992; Zheng, 2009). These will positively impact students' performance and learning outcomes (Webb, 2002).

Surprisingly, the findings pointed out that teachers believed that the multiple-choice format of the O-NET test was appropriate for evaluating students' critical thinking skills, productive skills, and learning strands prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551. It could be inferred that the teachers might not have understood the nature of objective tests and their measurability for critical thinking and productive skills. Since the O-NET test was objective, its nature is limited to evaluating students' rote-learning and decontextualized short memory for facts. Therefore, it lacks authenticity as students cannot engage in real-world activities, and the types of sources of texts do not represent authentic activities (Burke, 1999; Forsyth et al., 1999; Watson Todd, 2007; Prapphal, 2008). This finding is in line with Brown et al.'s study (1997) since multiple-choice tests in English are limited to sensory abilities (which, for practical reasons, generally means simply reading); thus, writing and speaking receive minimal emphasis.

Due to the significance of the O-NET test, it cannot be denied that teachers were likely to get pressure from school administrators, parents, and students to help students get a good score. They also had pressure to be in charge of the students' failure on the test. Also, the study by Imsa-ard (2020) showed that school principals likely pressured teachers to help students achieve the expected high scores. Referring to the washback effects can also occur indirectly by exerting a powerful impact on teachers' perceptions of social pressures. Moreover, school authorities' pressure certain teachers to raise their students' test scores (Smith, 1991; Huang, 2009; Pan, 2009). However, the teachers did realize that their main goal was to help students learn and develop their English proficiency according to the national core curriculum, not to obtain a high-test score on the O-NET. Some teachers asserted that English teaching aimed to enhance students' understanding of the language and apply it in their daily life or communication.

### **5.3.2 The effects of the English Ordinary National Educational Test for Grade 12 on pedagogical practices**

The English O-NET test had positive washback effects on teaching content. The results pointed out that most teachers taught contents and skills prescribed in Basic Educational Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 to help students achieve their learning goals. The present results shed light on beneficial washback effects since teachers had good knowledge about the Basic Educational Core Curriculum, teaching content, and skills that guided their instructional practices. It is claimed that teachers with adequate knowledge about a particular subject or the test content can encourage potential intentional washback effects by enhancing their instructional practices (Chen, 2002; Webb, 2002; Kiomrs, 2011; Wang, 2010). For English language, it is a compulsory subject in a foreign language area. Therefore, English teachers need to understand the details in the indicators prescribed under the four learning strands and eight learning standards. To ensure success in implementing this standards-based small case, teachers need to comprehend the purpose, goals, and technical requirements of the Basic Educational Core Curriculum as well as their local context (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2009). In light of the significance of the O-NET, its results are a powerful determiner of students' future. The teachers knew that the contents of the test aligned with the learning strands prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum. Hence, they appeared to follow the national curriculum, adapted or changed their pedagogical practices, and spent time reviewing the contents and skills in regular English classes, which were more likely to appear on the O-NET test. Some teachers also employed the old version of test papers to teach in the classrooms from the beginning of the second semester.

Additionally, the teachers believed that the O-NET test has validity to a certain degree even though its multiple-choice format fails to evaluate productive skills and critical thinking. The test seemed to drive teachers to teach what needs to be tested on the national curriculum. Teachers appeared to focus on teaching communicative skills but did not emphasize productive skills. Because of these, teachers utilize performance-based assessments rather than multiple-choice tests in their classrooms. Even though teachers integrate the O-NET test, adapt test items, and

use previous test editions to teach in class, the teachers do not ignore what needs to be taught as prescribed in the national curriculum. Concerning beneficial impacts, the performance-based assessment allows students to employ real-world activities, implies the integration of language skills, and makes it motivating for both instructors and students (Brown, 2004, p.255). Lately, there has been a tendency toward using assessments that reflect real-world language usage, in which students practise the language in realistic, direct, and communicative circumstances (Shohamy, 1995, p. 188).

#### **5.4 The Implication of the Findings**

The findings' implications could be essential and valuable for stakeholders. Firstly, there is an implication for the English language teachers as the results and discussions from this study pointed out that teachers lacked knowledge and comprehension of language assessment. Due to the teachers' misunderstanding about the O-NET test's purpose, training in language assessment literacy is needed for high school teachers. The knowledge about assessment literacy contributes to teachers comprehending a variety of expectations regarding different test types, comprehending assessment practices (e.g., diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, and self-assessment), defining learning purposes, and providing potential feedback to the students. It is plausible that if teachers clearly understand how to assess students' learning and how to use the assessment outcomes for learning, this will help improve teachers' teaching and students' learning (Webb, 2002).

Another important implication of this study is how this study shed light on how the influence of the O-NET was responsible for preventing teachers from teaching efficiently. In this study, it was shown that teachers believed that the O-NET also follows the prescription of the national curriculum as the test aimed to evaluate students' competence and schools' curriculum so that the quality of the education could be improved. In addition, the core curriculum goal, knowledge, and skill could also be achieved. Teachers then based their pedagogies on the prescription of the national curriculum. However, they also had to change their pedagogies and dedicate time to

preparing students for the test. As a result, the test was perceived responsible for distracting teachers from following the national curriculum.

Lastly, there is an implication for the improvement of the O-NET. Despite being an attempt to evaluate the English language skills of Thai students and their education, teachers believed that the test could not correctly measure listening, speaking, or writing skills as the format of the test emphasized reading. The suggestion is that the test could include different formats such as essays, interviews, or audio for listening skill tests. However, the test designers should also consider the practicality of the test as the improvements would be costly or difficult to manage or evaluate. The concerned stakeholders then should study different standardized proficiency tests which employ several test formats, such as IELTS, to learn methods to improve the O-NET's validity.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

In this study, some limitations could affect the findings and the interpretation. Therefore, different limitations are provided so that further studies may avoid them. Firstly, while the O-NET was used as a national or large-scale test, this study was conducted in the Bangkok area of Secondary Educational Service Area Offices 1 and 2. This could make the result unable to generalize to teachers in other areas of Bangkok or Thailand. Further studies then could investigate on larger scopes so that the whole picture of the findings could be understood better. Moreover, due to the pandemic, classroom observations in this study were forced to be conducted in the online classroom, which could be different from the on-site classroom., Further studies should consider observing on-site classrooms as it could be more convenient, clearer to observe, and help researchers understand findings that could not be observed in the online classroom.

## **5.6 Conclusion of the study**

There was a relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices which needs to be addressed as follows:

Since teachers had misunderstandings of test purposes, they must be provided with training on language assessment literacy and knowledge of a specific test to enhance their understanding of the test's purpose and the characteristics of each test format so that teachers would understand the test's values. Additionally, despite its shortcomings which decreased the validity of the test, teachers still believed that the O-NET test was suitable for evaluating students' critical thinking and productive skills. Moreover, they also believed the test holds a significant foundation for paving the way for students' future career paths. To that end, teachers had to adjust or adapt their teaching methods to prepare students for the test. For example, the multiple-choice format might evaluate critical thinking skills through critical reading of the reading comprehension items. However, this format prevented the evaluation of productive skills as it did not allow test takers to perform their listening, speaking, and writing abilities.

Besides, the researcher of this study found that practicing the previous versions of the O-NET test papers can help increase examination efficiency as some teachers integrated O-NET items into lessons to boost their learning and increase grammatical familiarity. However, on the other hand, this practice could also foster conditional learning patterns with negative reinforcement by encouraging students and test-takers to overprioritize their time on the previous test papers than other equally necessary skills such as productive or performance-based skills. In terms of the assessment, while the performance-based assessments could not be directly observed for qualitative data, it is not indicated that such assessments do not exist. However, the researcher encountered the constraint of online teaching and a small number of class observations which could restrict the possibility of observing the actual use of the performance-based assessment. Therefore, this study suggests that this topic needs to be covered in-depth with an extended period of observation and on-site observation.

Once again, although the O-NET had no longer been in use, there were crucial lessons from the specific test in this study which can allow test developers or policymakers involved in high-stakes test business to develop more improved, valid, and reliable high-stakes tests, which will help drive positive washback effects. For instance, those involved in designing the tests might consider improving the validity of



the test by including the writing, speaking, and listening parts. Likewise, those involved in the design and development of the test should also consider the usefulness of the test as the cost of essay-writing and speaking sessions proves to be more expensive, time-consuming, as well as too much of a challenge to exam-takers in order to achieve the expected mark. Finally, as clearly stated, they should also conduct examinations of the internationally widely accepted standardized tests such as TOEIC or IELTS to understand the procedure and requirements for the examiners and to provide solid guidelines for instructors and exam-takers.



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