Influence of SSC Examination on Learning and Teaching of English at Secondary Level in Bangladesh

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BA in ELT and Applied Linguistics

Department of English and Humanities

Brac University

October 2023

Dedication

To My Father, A. K. M. Zafar Ullah Chowdhury.

Declaration

I, AmreenChowdhury, declare this thesis titled "Influence of SSC Examination on Learning and Teaching of English at Secondary Level in Bangladesh" is my original work. I have properly cited and acknowledged all the sources of the research. Therefore, this research does not belong to anyone else.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

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Approval

The thesis titled "Influence of SSC Examination on Learning and Teaching of English at Secondary Level in Bangladesh" submitted by Amreen Chowdhury (16203015) in Fall 2016 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BA in ELT and Applied Linguistics

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Acknowledgment

Firstly, I am thankful to the Almighty Allah for the blessings and support. Secondly, I am grateful to my parents and my husband, Ashik for their unconditional support and love.

Also, I am very grateful and express my gratitude to my teacher and supervisor Dr. Asifa Sultana. Without her support, it was impossible for me to complete this research.

I am truly thankful to all the lovable and respective teachers in the ENH department who played a big part in my journey at BRAC University.

Last but not least, I am thankful to my friends, Anamika, Farah, Rafsana, Nusrat, Tanmoy, and Samid for always supporting and being there for me.

Abstract

Language skills play a very important role to learn and teach English language. From different researches, researchers found that other than writing and reading skill, students lack to develop the speaking and listening skills in the SSC level. This research aims to figure out the influences of SSC examination on learning and teaching of English at secondary level in Bangladesh. The researcher focused to three central questions which are how do English tests affect test preparation and the everyday practice of teachers and learners, how do English tests have an impact on motivation, perceptions, and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning within secondary school education and does washback affect the teaching and learning scenario? By observing the literature review, very few researches are done focusing on the influences of learning and teaching in SSC level in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, the research gaps are filled through this convergent parallel mixed method reseach. As students mainly focus on written examinations, it gets tough for them to connect with the real world. Additionally, students and teachers are always preparing for the SSC level, focusing on similar question patterns and teaching strategies.

Keywords: SSC examination, washback, language skills, teaching stragtegies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Language testing has garnered plentiful attention from researchers over the years as one of the most important areas of language teaching. It has become a field of study within English language teaching worldwide, and, locally, researchers are trying to advance the testing scenario of their countries by working in this field. The main purpose of language testing is that it provides goals for learning and teaching a language and in a way, it also monitors the success that teachers and students are trying to achieve. On one hand, achievement in language tests is often a factor that motivates learners to give more effort to language education. Hence, it can be said that test influence is an underlying feature of language testing that can impact learner motivation. On the other hand, washback in language testing is understood as the effect of testing procedures on the overall teaching and learning scenario (Cheng et al., 2004). Thus, test influence is a type of washback as it impacts how learners prepare for a language test.

In the overall scenario of Bangladesh, English is used as the second language in academic institutions and it is also used as the official language in many workplaces today. This is due to what is stated in the National Curriculum (2012) and the National Education Policy (2010) to emphasize the teaching and learning of English. Although Bangla is the primary language of instruction at the secondary level, the essentiality of English remains due to these aspects of the language. Based on that, it can also be noted that in the National Curriculum (2012, p. 73), the purpose of learning English and achieving proficiency in it will allow learners to contribute to developing the country in various sectors including science, technology, higher education, etc.

Therefore, in the scenario of secondary education in Bangladesh, the status and role of English are prominent. It must also be noted that the country has a culture of being 'test-oriented' and 'test-driven' (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018) therefore; the outcome of English language tests at this level has a significant impact on teaching and learning. Unfortunately, very little research is available on high-stakes testing of English at different educational levels in Bangladesh. Some of these include Islam's (2017) study on the decentralization of PECE examination at the primary level, Ali and Hamid's (2020) study to find out the factors of negative washback effect on English language teaching in secondary education in Bangladesh, and Rahman et al. (2017) study on the impact of higher secondary level English language testing in Bangladesh.

1.2 Purpose of the study

From these research works; it was found that language teachers at different levels of education face certain limitations when teaching English. Additionally, students are under pressure from their parents to do good results and achieve high scores on high-stakes English tests. These social perceptions of success and failure based on test grades are some of the main barriers that both teachers and students face. Also, students' parents are influenced by this as well and they send their children to coaching centers with the hope that they will do better in the exams. Hence, considering all of this, there exists a need to study the test influence on learners' and teachers' preparation for English language tests at the secondary level. This is because other assessments are in practice in addition to the high-stakes language tests. These assessments include class tests, mock examinations, and monthly tests. Hence, in this study, I will look at how the test influence of the high-stake secondary level English language test is affecting teachers' and students' everyday learning scenario and their preparation for other lower stake tests as well.

1.3 Central research question

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do English tests affect test preparation and the everyday practice of teachers and learners?

2. How do English tests have an impact on motivation, perceptions, and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning within secondary school education?

3. Does washback affect the teaching and learning scenario?

1.4 Limitations

The main purpose of language testing is that it provides goals for learning and teaching a language and in a way, it also monitors the success that teachers and students are trying to achieve. On one hand, achievement in language tests is often a factor that motivates learners to give more effort to language education. Hence, it can be said that test influence is an underlying feature of language testing that can impact learner motivation. On the other hand, washback in language testing is understood as the effect of testing procedures on the overall teaching and learning scenario (Cheng et al., 2004). Thus, test influence is a type of washback as it impacts how learners prepare for a language test.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 High Stake Testing and Its Effect in Bangladesh

Teaching the English language in Bangladesh is greatly influenced by high-stakes testing. High-stakes testing is understood as "standardized examinations" whose "results produce significant consequences for schools and/or students" (Smyth et al., 2011, p.5). There are multiple high-stakes tests that students need to take before enrolling in a university. In fact, notable educational choices regarding school, students, and teachers are made using high-stakes tests (Heubert, 2000). According to Bangladesh's context, the success and popularity of schools depend on how its students do in high-stakes tests such as SSC and for colleges, HSC. Likewise, a teacher's popularity also depends on it as many teachers run after-school coaching centers so that students can do better in those high-stakes tests.

According to Bangladesh's social context, the SSC examination is a prestigious and important examination because, historically, it was the first terminal school-leaving test and a public examination that students took part in. Hence, a high-stakes assessment such as SSC has historical significance in this way, and presently, as a high-stakes assessment, it is crucial in making notable educational choices regarding school, students, school districts, or teachers (Smyth et al., 2011). Also, SSC as a high-stakes test determines which "college" a student will get admission to. Parents are motivated to send their children to a good college whose quality of education is well-known in the locality, if not the country. Additionally, studying at a good college means that a student will be well prepared to score high marks on the high-stakes test, HSC. The overall outcome of HSC will determine which type of higher education the student will have the eligibility for. Also, it is a government requirement for students to get a GPA of 5 (or the highest

grade) in all their subjects in SSC and HSC to receive the government scholarship for undergraduate. In relation to this, Walker (2014) says that today's teachers are "producing future test takers instead of creative, critical thinkers". This is because of the overall impact that high-stakes tests have. The culture of high-stakes testing and measuring 'intelligence' and 'success' for all stakeholders based on it shows that the focus of education is no longer about students' educational needs, rather, it is about achieving a satisfactory test score.

Subsequently, another crucial social impact of high-stakes standardized testing is that it centrally influences students dropping out of school. Hence, such tests often "represent" at-risk students as "failures", as their scores are compared to nationwide test results (Apple, 2006, p. 29). The at-risk students are those who come from poor households and study at schools that have "poor infrastructure, biased social practice, lack of quality education", these institutions are often in "geographic isolation", and the students have an "unequal access to education" compared to students going to a school in a more prominent location. These are the primary causes of school dropouts in Bangladesh (Sarkar et al., 2019). Hence, if students perform poorly or fail in their SSC examination, they are not encouraged to continue their education because their parents think it is a waste of their finances. These students become demotivated to continue their education, hence, such an outcome has a significant impact on high-stakes tests.

Hence, language education and testing have a crucial role in the overall education of the country, especially in the educational, pedagogic, socio-cultural, and socio-economic contexts. Even though Bangla is the L1 and Bangla medium is the most populous educational curriculum taught in the country, even in that curriculum, the status of English is vital (Rahman et al., 2019) and in Bangladesh, the other most influential language is the English language for job purposes (Roshid, 2014) and education (Sultana, 2018). Therefore, importance is given to learning English

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and students study the language as an academic subject from the beginning of their primary education. The main skills of language that are practiced are reading and writing, with either little or no focus on speaking and listening. As it is a compulsory subject, therefore, students' and teachers' willingness and attention, towards achieving a good score is prominent.

2.2 Validity of English Language Tests

One of the key measures to maintain the quality of a test is validity. Nevertheless, whether a test has been planned by a "professional test developer or a language teacher", it is essential to measure the quality of a language test. (Akbari, 2018, p. 1). In a modern conceptualization, validity is used to denote the "interpretations of test scores and the decisions made based on test and measurement results", hence, addressing the language test's adequacy and justifying the structure appropriateness (Akbari, 2018, p. 4). Hughes writes that if the test content is the "representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned" then it has content validity. Additionally, if the degree to which the test results correlate with the criteria that are not part of the test, that is, if there is a correlation between the "particular test and a criterion" (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007, p. 5) to which the test has been made then it has criterion-related validity (Hughes, 2003, p. 27).

Hence, if this notion of test validity is considered, then we would find that the quality of the SSC English language test is lacking. It is because the National Education Policy (2010) stresses the importance of teaching and testing the four different skills of English (speaking, listening, writing, and reading), however, as a matter of fact, only writing and reading are being tested. In this context, it has been reported that several items of the SSC English language test "demand memorization or knowledge of forms over communicative skills" (Sultana, 2018, p. 4)

which clearly shows that there is a discrepancy between what the curriculum states and what the test assesses. The SSC test does not all the language skills holistically, meaning that it also lacks construct validity. This is illustrated through the fact that students when completing the reading component of the test, are given texts that they have already read in their course book. Additionally, they have to memorize grammatical rules and the grammar component of the test paper that carries (45 out of 100) marks, clearly showing that the test lacks even this component of validity altogether.

Although numerous projects were undertaken to improve the scenario of English language teaching, the actual situation is different. To improve the scenario of CLT, the English in Action (EIA) project ran from 2008-2017 and primarily focused on training teachers. However, a study on teachers who underwent EIA training did not "employ listening activities" in the classroom and Bangla was the medium of instruction as students requested teachers to translate the reading materials (Karim & Mohamed, 2019, p. 458). One of the underlying causes behind this is that high-stakes tests such as SSC both lack "validity and authenticity" as it does not measure what it is intended to measure (Sultana, 2018, p. 4). Due to this, teachers and students are not concerned about practicing what the CLT approach prescribes for everyday classroom practices.

Hence, even though different communicative tasks are available based on language skills, in the English language textbooks of NCTB, students cannot achieve listening and speaking skills because it is not practiced in class. The primary cause is that listening and speaking are not put to a test; hence, no concerned parties are interested in practicing it. Thus, the inconsistency between what the curriculum states and what is prescribed in the textbook is never tested. Due to this, the SSC English language test lacks validity.

2.3 Reliability of English Language Tests

Reliability for language tests speaks about the "stability of test scores" (Harris, 1996, p. 14). Whenever the test is administered, it should produce "essentially the same results consistently" even when "the conditions of the test remain the same" (Madsen, 1983, p. 179). It is understood in this way that if the number of samples, is increased, then the assessment will be more reliable about testing of students' knowledge and ability. Scorer reliability and test reliability are the two different categories of reliability. According to Harris, various factors affect test reliability but the most important one is the "adequacy of sampling tasks" (Harris, 1996, p. 14). Harris also writes, that in a session, it is the primary reason why specialists, generally, tend to "favor objective examinations" which include different test items. They oppose essay examinations with this as tasks given in an essay examination are limited. On the other hand, test reliability can be greatly affected if the conditions in which the tests are taken are altered. This happens if the changes occur from one test administration to the next. It is also noted that poor student motivation can be a factor that may lower test reliability. Students have been less motivated because of any weakness in the test or the testing procedure. This is caused by factors that are beyond the test writer's or examiner's control.

Alternatively, rater or scorer reliability is concerned with the consistency or the stability through which the test performances can be assessed (Harris, 1996, p. 15). This explains why a scorer consistently assigns the same test and should give similar or the same scores. Another reason why the objective test is more popular is because the scorer reliability of such tests is almost perfect. However, for free-response tests such as compositions, individual judgments can play a significant role in the final score that the scorer puts. Hughes (2002, p. 39) mentions the reliability coefficient which can help test designers and test evaluators to collate test reliability. He says that

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"the ideal reliability coefficient of a test should 1." The number '1' indicates that such a test that has this coefficient will give precisely the same results every time the test is administered to the participants.

In the case of Bangladesh, multiple issues and incidents prove that high-stake English language tests of JSC, SSC, and HSC lack reliability. For example, in 2016, the pass rate of SSC exams was 88.29% (Mamun, Malik, and Nur Alam, 2016) which reduced to 80.35% (Tribune Desk, 2017) in 2017. Next, in 2018, the rate decreased further to 77.77% (Mamun, 2018), and in 2019 it was 82.20% (Al Amin & Anik, 2019). Consequently, the SSC examination in 2020 was taken before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Although there is overall uncertainty about the education scenario of the country, the pass rate for 2020 is 82.87% (Abdullah, 2020) which is the highest in four years. Although it is understandable that there are different batches of students who take part in the SSC examination every year. However, the syllabus, materials, teaching, and mock tests that are administered to them do not change much. Billah (2018) has asserted this in their research about the fluctuation of test results every year. Kamruzzaman (2018) notes that there is an inconsistency in the way exam scripts are checked and this is a significant problem in our education system. One of the main reasons behind this is an examiner has to check almost four hundred scripts within two weeks. In most cases, the examiner fails to do this as he or she has other obligations, e.g. teaching in a private tuition or coaching center. The role of secondary or head examiners is most times assigned to the principal of the institution and this is problematic as well. It is because they also have other responsibilities and obligations, due to which it gets quite tough to recheck the results given by the initial examiners. This shows the lack of scorer reliability in a test. Moreover, among students, challenging the SSC examination results is a practice because they often receive fewer marks than they expected. Habib (2018) noted that the inconsistency in
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the SSC examination pass rate every year affects all subjects considerably. For example, the fluctuation in English examination results shows that the quality control measures for checking students' scripts are doubtful (Sultana, 2018). Therefore, this adds to the doubt regarding the reliability of the SSC English test administered across the country.

2.4 Washback of English Language Tests

Washback, sometimes called, backwash is a common term in applied linguistics and ELT, which is defined as the "influence of testing on instruction" (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Similarly, washback denotes the overall effect that language tests have on language learning and teaching (Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p. 3). Washback can either be positive or negative, meaning, its overall impact can vary on language learning and teaching. Cheng and Curtis write, primarily, there are two different washback studies, firstly, it relates to traditional objective-based testing, e.g. multiple-choice tests. Secondly, the other area looks at specific tests and whether these have been modified or improved so that they can exert a positive influence on learning and teaching. Popham notes that tests should drive learning and teaching, which he calls 'measurement-driven instruction' (Popham, 1987 as cited in Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p. 4). This means that the content and format of the test and the curriculum's format and content should be compatible, which Shepard remarks as 'curriculum alignment' (1990 as cited in Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p. 4). Even though the SSC English examination in Bangladesh as a test demands curriculum alignment, however, the reality is that the SSC test does not measure communicative competence which the curriculum demands (Khan, 2010, p. 132). Therefore, there is a discrepancy between what is stated in the curriculum and what is tested. Due to this, learners after finishing SSC still fail to use English for communication. The sad reality is that high-stakes examinations decide learners' fate and

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advance the future of their educational and professional opportunities (Hoque, 2011, p. 9). In SSC, the four English language proficiency tests are the most obvious example of flouting curriculum alignment. However, writing and reading skills are being tested.

Due to this, speaking and listening skills are not given preference in schools. Therefore, a washback effect of the SSC English language test on teaching is that as testing is done on two skills, so, students are only motivated to learn what is tested. Another washback effect of the SSC English test is students undergo constant exam pressure. They become dependent on coaching classes or private tuition. They memorize guidebooks and, this practice of rote learning does not contribute to their competency in English. Therefore, Sultana writes that "explicit teaching towards the test and test preparation culture are noticed, which is not the original purpose of the examination" (2018, p. 5). The nature of washback is bidirectional (Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p. 8), i.e. positive or negative, but in the case of the SSC English test, it is negative.

2.5 Research Contribution to Bangladesh's Current Research Body

Owing to a global trend in language testing research, English language testing is gathering plentiful attention from Bangladeshi researchers. The English language is used as a second language in academic institutions and it is the official language of many workplaces. Although the National Curriculum (2012) and the National Education Policy (2010) emphasize building the functional capability of using English communicatively, however, that dream is still unfulfilled. In the scenario of secondary education in Bangladesh, the status and role of English are prominent. However, the culture of 'test-oriented' and 'test-driven' (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018) practices in education has led the outcome of English language tests to impact learning and teaching greatly.

Existing studies on testing and teaching languages in the country report that language teacher at different levels of education faces certain limitations when teaching English. Additionally, students are under pressure from their parents to achieve good results and achieve high scores on high-stake English tests. On test-grade, these perceptions of failure and success are some of the main barriers that both teachers and students face. Additionally, students' parents are influenced by this as they send their children to coaching centers with the hope that they will do better in the exams (Islam, 2017; Rahman et al., 2017; Ali & Hamid, 2020). In light of this, the current study will look at the test's influence on learners' and teachers' overall preparation for the SSC English test. Within preparation for the test, other assessments are in practice such as class tests, mock examinations, and monthly tests, will be considered, and how students' and teachers' preparation for these tests contribute to the overall preparation for the high-stake test. Hence, in this study, I will look at how the test influence of the high-stakes secondary-level English language test is affecting teachers' and students' everyday learning scenario and their preparation for other lower-stakes tests as well.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the different aspects and methods that were used to organize this research paper. At first, the researcher explained the research design, which was mixed method research.

After that, the researcher discusses the setting, the study's participants, and the researcher's role. In addition, the author next explains data collecting, which involves surveying and conducting interviews. Finally, the data collection procedure and the data analysis procedure have been discussed.

3.1 Research design

The mixed method approach, in specific, the convergent parallel mixed method helped the researcher to collect data in this study.

According to Creswell, "a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data analyzes them separately, and then compares the result to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other." The researcher plans a survey for teachers.

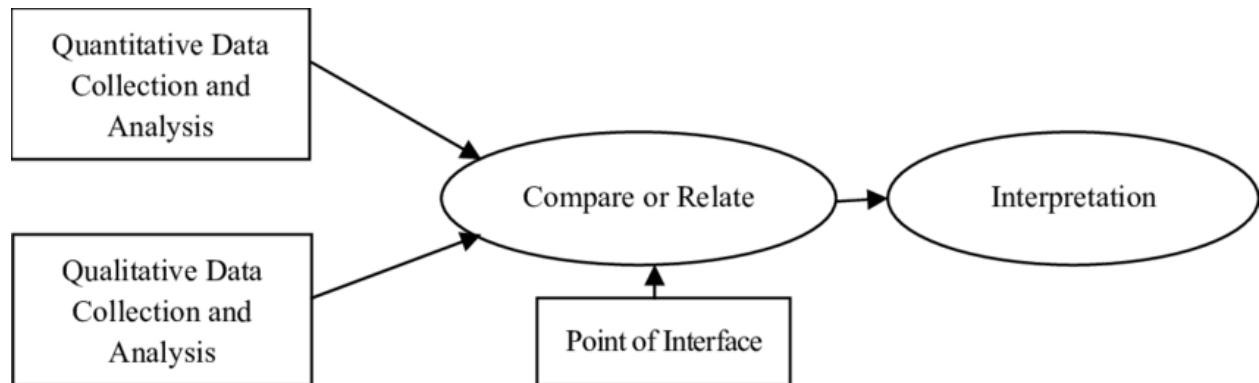The following diagram explains the convergent parallel mixed method:

Table: Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

3.2 The setting of the research

Choosing an appropriate setting is very important in research. As there are a vast number of Bangla medium schools, it is quite difficult to select a specific school for the research. However, this study is solely based on Bangla medium students and teachers from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

3.3 Participants of the study

In this research, the participants were secondary school teachers and students. Hence, for data collection, the teachers were interviewed and students did the survey. According to Huberman and Miles (1994), in qualitative research, participants are equally important. So, for the qualitative process, the researcher took participants who were related to the research topic. The researcher interviewed around 10 teachers from various Bangla medium schools. These participants have been associated with the Bangla medium schools for a few years. On the other hand, there are around 40 participants in the survey, who are aged between 14-15. They have recently passed the SSC examination. To get the results as close as possible, the researcher tried to use online platforms (e.g. Google form).

3.4 Researcher's Role

The researcher had experiences which are similar to the students of this study. Therefore, being the primary examiner, the researcher played a very important role in designing, conceptualizing, and managing the research solely on the findings of validity, reliability, and washback effects. In the following sections, the contributions and responsibilities are discussed further.

3.5 Research Instruments

This part of the chapter discusses the research instruments used in the research. The main research instruments of this research are surveys and interviews. As mentioned, the researcher followed a

convergent parallel mixed method to collect data. Therefore, these research instruments will help the researcher to compare and relate to provide a proper interpretation.

3.6 Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure of this research is conducted the Google Forms, on-call, and Zoom meetings. The researcher took the help of the Google form to collect the quantitative data. However, as the timings of the researcher and teachers were clashing, the Google form was also used for 2 of the interviews. As the research was a convergent mixed method research, there were open-ended as well as closed-ended questions. Due to the participants' privacy, the researcher did not include their personal information e.g. name, school, or age in the research. However, the research was completely based on Bangla medium students and teachers.

3.6.1 Interview

To conduct this study, 10 teachers were interviewed. Most of the teachers were face to face interviewed. Some of them were on-call or video-call interviews as they were not comfortable with being physical. Additionally, the researcher also conducted written interviews through social media platforms for two of the participants. Moreover, the questions were open-ended, so the teachers replied accordingly. There are 9 questions in total which includes the thematic analyses. According to Clarke and Braun, "thematic analyses is a method for 15 systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight patterns of meaning (themes) across the data set" (2012, p 57). Therefore, the researcher used "coding" to read and analyze the data. Eventually, a code was given to understand better.

3.6.2 Survey

As it is a mixed-method study, the researcher also conducted quantitative research on students. In the survey questionnaire, there are 15 close-ended questions (Appendix A). However, the survey was conducted through social platforms. On the other hand, the teachers were interviewed through a questionnaire that included some personal questions, e.g. name, age, and teaching experience along with some questions related to this study (Appendix B). Additionally, some teachers objected to an on-call or on-video interview. As there were some restrictions in some schools for the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants were not as expected.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Findings and Analysis

This chapter includes the quantitative findings of the research. Moreover, the researcher analyzed the findings.

4.1 Bangla Medium Background: Yes or No?

The results of this research show that all the students were from Bangla medium schools. The researcher wanted to get the results as precise as possible; therefore, this question was set. As this research is solely based on Bangla medium education, this data helps to analyze the students' perspective at the secondary level.
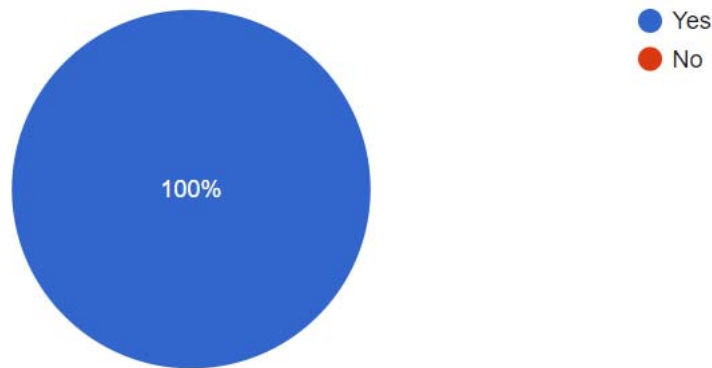

Figure 1: Bangla Medium Background: Yes or No?

4.2 SSC Examination Participation

Following the previous question, the participants were asked to answer whether they sat for the SSC examination. As the students are from different schools, the researcher intends to know that they are familiar with the SSC English examination. The results show that 100% of students sat for their SSC examination.
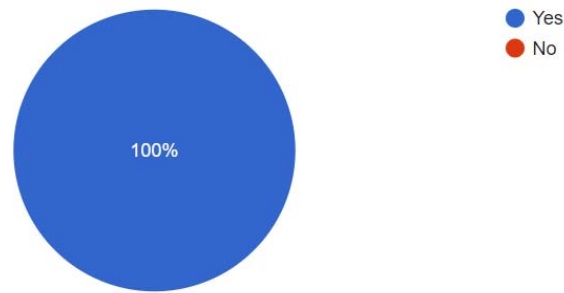
Figure 2: SSC Examination Participation

4.3 Effects of SSC Examination Pressure on Performance

These participants were asked whether the pressure of the SSC examination in English affected their performance. According to the results, 42.1% said "positively" which means they were highly affected and 5.3% said "negatively" which means they were slightly affected. On the other hand, 34.2% of participants said they did not get affected at all and around 18.4% of participants were not sure about the answer.
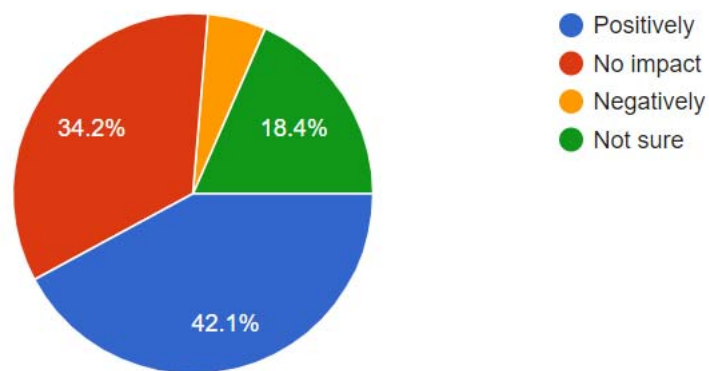

Figure 3: Effects of SSC Examination Pressure on Performance

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4.4 Effects of SSC English Exams Fear of Learning a Language

The next question is about whether the fear of sitting for SSC English exams had any effect on learning a language. Here 65.8% of participants said "yes" and 34.2% said "no."
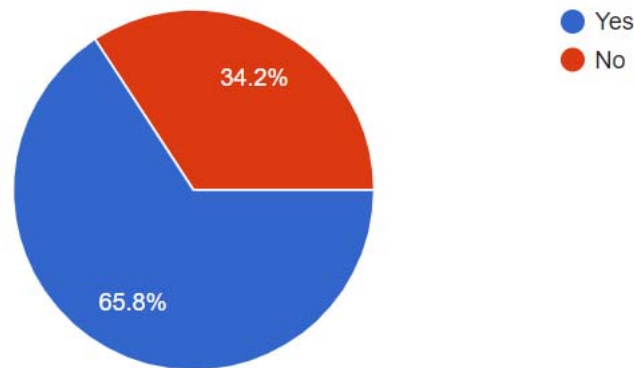

Figure 4: Effects of SSC English exams Fear of Learning a Language

4.4.1 Exploring the Impacts of Learning a Language in Fear

Here, the participants who said "yes" were questioned further to understand to what extent it influenced them. Therefore, 33.3% were strongly affected, 36.1% were moderately affected, 16.7% were slightly affected and 13.9% were not sure about their answer.
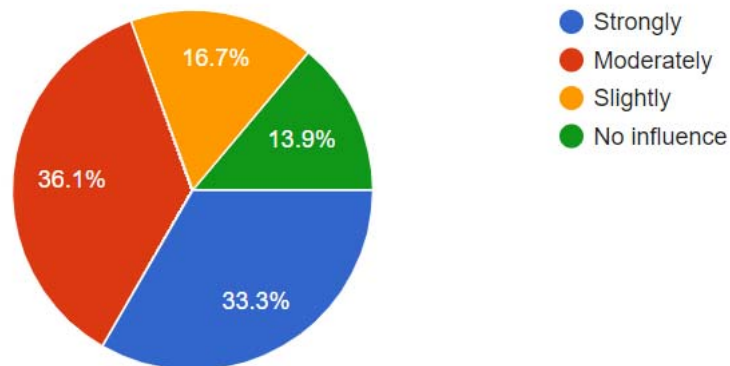
Figure 5: Exploring the Impacts of Learning a Language in Fear

4.5 Effects of the Different Types of Tests on Preparation Strategies

On asked about how the different type of test affects their preparation strategies, 56% of participants said they "focus on written examination", 6% said they "focus on the speaking test," 37% said they "focus on both written and speaking test" and 2% participants were "not sure" about the answer.
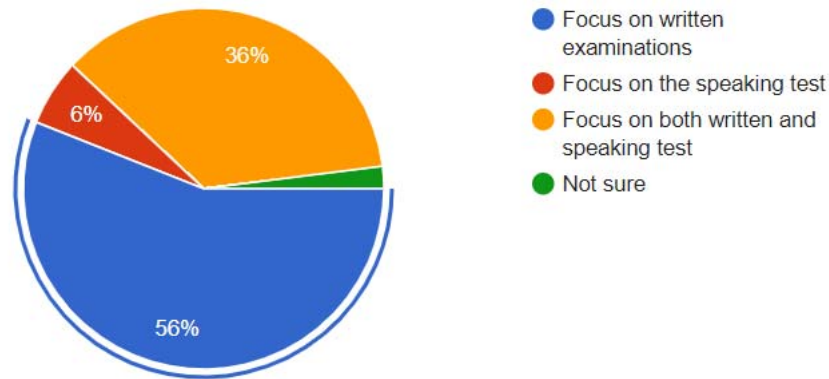
Figure 6: Effects of the Different Types of Tests on Preparation Strategies

4.6 Assessing the English Examination Results with the Real World

Participants were asked whether their results in the English examination matched their proficiency in the real world. So, 34.2% of participants said it is "strongly connected," 44.7% of participants said it is "moderately connected," 18.4% said it is "slightly connected" and 2.6% said the examination had "no connection" with the real world.
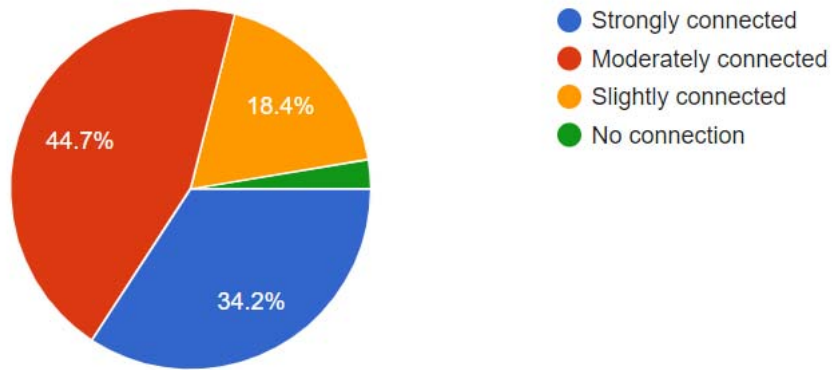
Figure 7: Assessing the English Examination Results with the Real-World

4.7 Similarities of Questions Practiced at the Secondary Level

In this question, participants where the test questions of the English examination remain common with the ones that you practiced at the secondary level. 15.8% said "strongly," 55.3% said "moderately," 23.7% said "slightly" and 5.3% said "not at all."
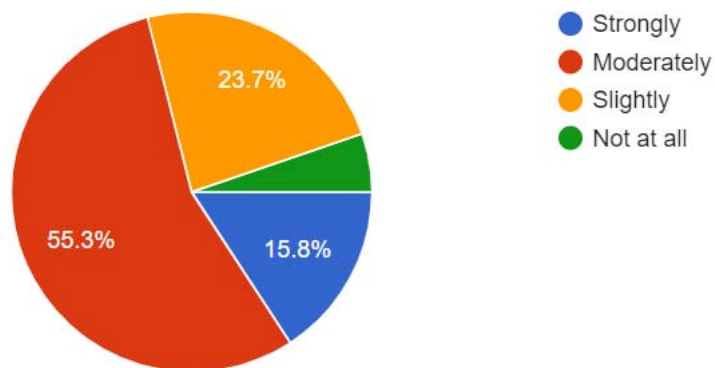
Figure 8: Similarities of Questions Practiced at the Secondary Level

4.8 Language Learning Skills and Motivation

The next question was whether the English examination motivated them to improve their language-learning skills. Here, 44.7% were "highly motivated," 34.2% were "slightly motivated," 15.8% had "no impact," 2.6% were "slightly demotivated" and 2.6% were "highly demotivated."
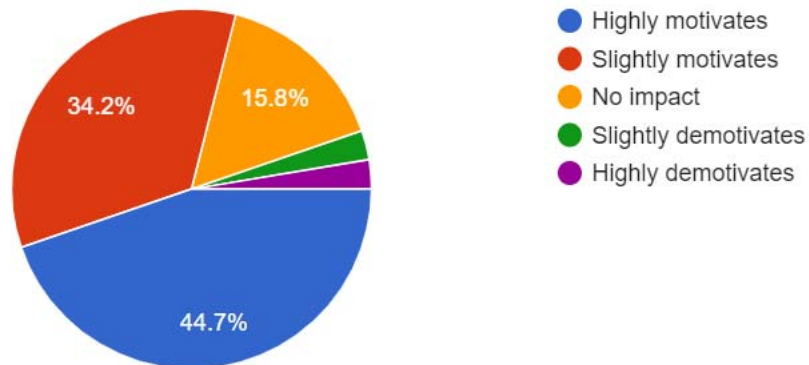
Figure 9: Language Learning Skills and Motivation

4.9 Consistency of Marks in the Same English Examination

When asked about whether they get a consistent mark when taking the same English examination over an academic year, 23.7% of participants said yes, 55.3% said sometimes, 13.2% said "slightly" and 7.9% said "not at all."
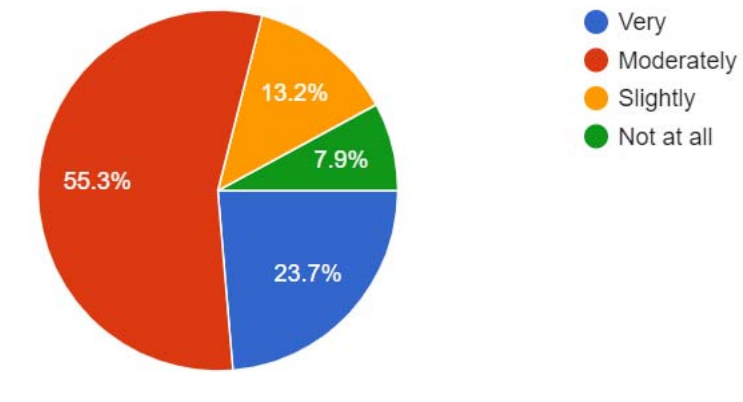
Figure 10: Consistency of Marks in the Same English Examination

4.10 Examining Examiner's Consistency in Marking

The next question was whether their scores remained consistent when different examiners checked their papers. According to the participants, 42.1% said "yes," 28.9% said "no" and 28.9% said they were "not sure."
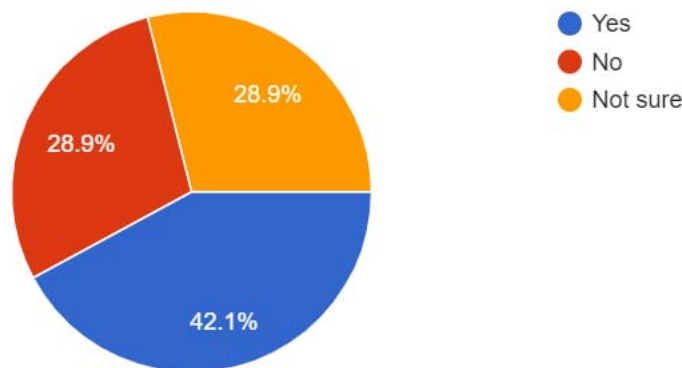
Figure 11: Examining Examiner's Consistency in Marking

4.11 Impacts of Diverse Teaching Methods on Performance

Among the participants, when asked about whether their teachers apply different teaching methods for the English examination to improve their performance, 34.2% think "strongly," 34.2% think "moderately," 18.4% think "slightly" and 13.2% think "not at all."
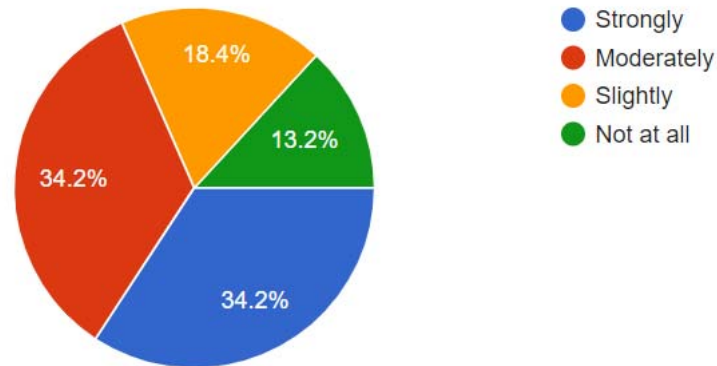
Figure 12: Impacts of Diverse Teaching Methods on Performance

4.12 Motivation Beyond the Real Life

Participants were asked how the English exam motivates them to learn the language in real life. 28.9% said they were highly motivated, 36.8% said they were moderately motivated, 26.3% said they were slightly motivated and 7.9% said they were not motivated at all.
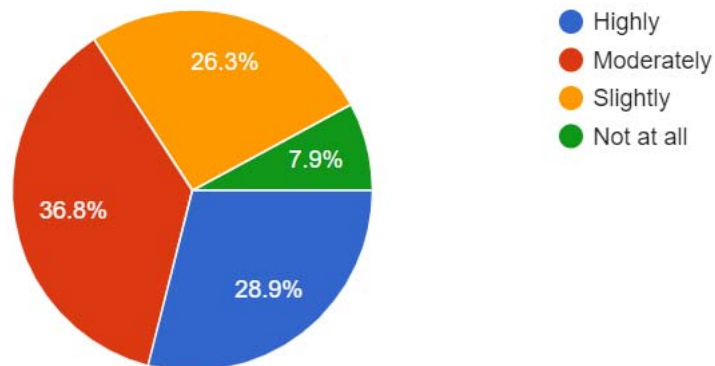
Figure 13: Motivation Beyond the Real Life

4.13 Confidence in Language Skills Assessments

Next, they were asked whether they were confident to sit for different languages based on their classroom learning experience. 37.8% said they were "very confident," 54.1% were "slightly confident" and 8.1% said they were "not confident."
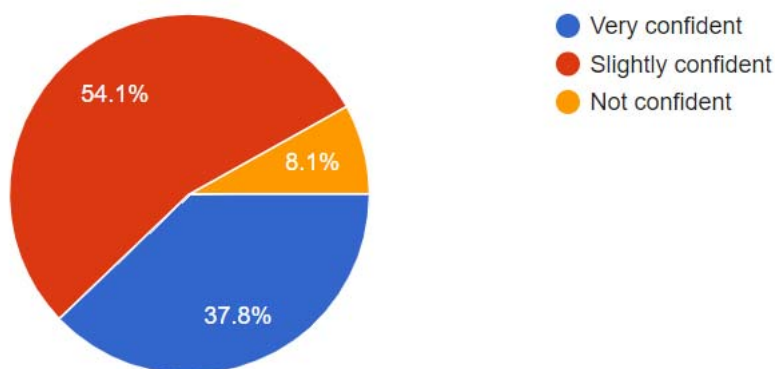
Figure 14: Confidence in Language Skills Assessments

4.14 Fair Assessments on English Language Examination

Finally, the participants were asked whether they think the English language examination assesses their language proficiency fairly. So, according to the results, 27% said "strongly," 40.5% said "moderately," 24.3% said "slightly" and 8.1% said "not at all."
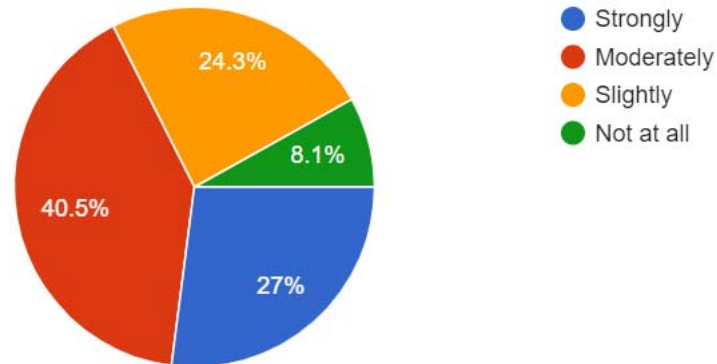
Figure 15: Fair Assessments on English Language Examination

Chapter 5: Qualitative Findings and Analysis

This chapter discusses the qualitative findings of the research. Moreover, all the data are thematically analyzed and integrated to understand better.

5.1 Teaching Experience in Bangla Medium Schools

This research is solely based on Bangla Medium teachers and students. The researcher wanted teachers with experience in Bangla medium schools as participants. Therefore, this question was set. The table below shows the name initials of the participants and their teaching experience in Bangla medium schools:

Name	Teaching Experience
AAM	2 years
SAR	3 years
CR	3 years
PP	1 year
MC	5 years
BP	1 year
WP	10 years
SS	8 years
APH	7 years

FE	9 years

Table 2: Teaching Experience in Bangla Medium Schools

5.2 Perceptions of the Examination System's Assessment of Language Skills

The next question was about how well they perceive that the examination system assesses the students' language skills. So, according to the teachers, the current education system at the SSC level cannot access a student's different levels of knowledge since they are mostly in written forms. Therefore, when a student is getting good grades in written exams, it is difficult to say that they are equally good in speaking, reading, and listening skills. Additionally, 3 of the participants added that listening and speaking skills should be added to the assessments.

5.3 Effects on Teaching Methods and Classroom Contents

When asked about the effects of their teaching methods and topics in the class, 7 of them said it greatly affects the teaching methods and topics in the class. Since most of the students are exam-focused, they had to focus more on the academic curriculum and syllabus completion rather than preparing themselves for competitive English knowledge. Additionally, there is a tight schedule for the teachers to complete the syllabus, so chances are low that they can teach something out of the textbooks. On the other hand, 3 of the participants said it did not affect the teaching methods. This is because they prepared the lessons in such a manner that students could prepare themselves for the contents out of the syllabus.

5.4 Adapting Different Teaching Strategies for Examination Preparation

Here the participants were asked how they adapted the teaching strategies to prepare the students for the contents of the English examination. All of them mentioned that the overall teaching

strategies consist of several class lectures, homework, class tests, and quizzes. Additionally, 8 of them said that they consistently provide written feedback to help the students learn better.

5.5 Effects on Students-Teachers Interaction

Then, they were asked whether the pressure of getting good results affected their interaction and teaching the students. All of them said it does affect in most of the time. As mentioned earlier, the pressure of getting good results affects them to a great extent in the long run. Therefore, students are confining themselves to selective topics and textbooks. The students are also very reluctant to study non-academic books as they are not in the syllabus. Eventually, their creativity level gets hampered.

5.6 Enhancing English Learning and Teaching

The next question asked them to share their opinion on the examination system modification to enhance the learning and teaching of English at the SSC level. All 10 participants said modification is required in the language examination system. They believe that more speaking and listening tests should be done for the betterment of the students. Besides, testing the 4 language skills will be helpful for the students in the long run. On the other hand, when there are different language skills, teachers can also modify their teaching techniques and strategies for the students.

5.7 The Exam-Focused Environment

Here the participants were asked about the effects on the students as they are mostly exam-focused. They mentioned that students have positive as well as negative impacts on them. Even though they are exam-focused, they get very good grades. However, their creativity and thinking out of the box get hampered. At times, when they fail to get the targeted scores, they tend to suffer from anxiety and depression. Excessive pressure from the teachers and parents also leads to a bad impact on the

student. So, when the students fail to get the desired grades, they start to stress out, and lead to academic failure.

5.8 The Examination System and Rote Memorization

The last question was based on rote memorization focusing on the examination system. They mentioned that almost 80% of students try to memorize first. According to the SSC examination question pattern, memorizing the essays, paragraphs, or composition on selective areas is quite visible. Also, when they speak, it is seen that they always translate a question into Bangka and then, into English which is also based on their memorized vocabularies. On the other hand, 20% of students write by themselves rather than memorizing. Additionally, they read newspapers, story books, and novels or watch English movies to develop their English language skills.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter compares the quantitative and qualitative data along with their interpretation. In chapters 4 and 5, the data was analyzed separately. Additionally, the researcher will be addressing the three central questions of the research.

6.1 Addressing Question No. 1

The first question is how English tests affect test preparation and the everyday practice of teachers and learners. According to Smyth (Smyth et Al., 2011, p.5), high-stakes testing is understood as a "standardized examination," which means that the results they get in the high-stakes examination are consequences for their upcoming schools or colleges. Therefore, students and teachers tend to focus on written examinations more than any other examinations. Doing the thematic analysis, both teachers and students have similar opinions. This means that their preparations get affected as they cannot focus on speaking, listening, and reading skills equally.

Additionally, students and teachers also had similar opinions when they were asked about their everyday practice. Students and the teachers both agreed to the statement that some students' results in the English examination matched their proficiency in the real world. Supporting this, the teachers mentioned this was possible because some of them developed their English language skills by reading newspapers, story books, and watching movies.

However, at one point, the teachers and students had different opinions on the questions practiced at the Secondary level. Here, the teachers mentioned that they always practice similar question patterns which eventually, discourage them from going out of the syllabus. However, most students mentioned that they sometimes practice similar question patterns that they got in the SSC examination.

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On the other hand, the teachers and students had different opinions on diverse teaching methods. The students agree that teachers use different teaching methods to improve students' performance. Though, most teachers disagreed some teachers agreed that their teaching methods were not affected. This is because they think that you can plan your lessons accordingly to use an efficient way to enhance students' performance.

6.2 Addressing Question No. 2

The second question is how English tests have an impact on motivation, perceptions, and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning within secondary school education. Doing the thematic analysis between students and teachers, both agreed that the fear of sitting for the SSC English examination leads to different effects of learning a language. Most students, as well as the teachers, mentioned that they were strongly affected to get better grades. Additionally, the students were motivated to improve their language learning skills.

As most students are exam-focused, some teachers mentioned that students occasionally try to learn the language in real life. However, most students avoided studying or learning something out of the syllabus. This shows that they rarely chose to teach out of the syllabus. Additionally, students mentioned they were motivated to learn the language in real life.

6.3 Addressing question no. 3

The third question is does washback affect the teaching and learning scenario? By now, it is proven that washback affects the teaching and learning scenario positively and negatively. Students mentioned that the pressure of the SSC examination affected their performance, equally, the teachers agreed. As the system is exam-focused, the students get very good grades. However, when the students fail to get the targeted marks, they start to get different health issues.

On the other hand, teachers also get negatively affected while teaching. As students are exam-focused, teachers rarely get a chance to use impromptu topics. Eventually, the students' creativity and thinking out of the box are affected.

This thematic analysis proves that this research convergent parallel mixed method research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

English language is one of the major aspects of education. This research is based on the different effects of the SSC examination on learning and teaching English examination in the SSC level. In recent days, it is very important to know English language as a second language. After the analysis, it is quite clear that students and teachers need to focus on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Alongside this, it is proved through the literature review and the findings. Additionally, validity, reliability, and washback of English language tests are equally important. Therefore, in this research, the researcher focuses on the central questions:

1. How do English tests affect test preparation and the everyday practice of teachers and learners?

2. How do English tests have an impact on motivation, perceptions, and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning within secondary school education?

3. Does washback affect the teaching and learning scenario?

After this convergent parallel mixed method research, it is proved that there are various influences on learning and teaching English Language at the SSC level. As students mainly focus on written examinations, it gets tough for them to connect with the real world. Additionally, students and teachers are always preparing for the SSC level, focusing on similar question patterns and teaching strategies.

Lastly, the exam-focused environment creates a lot of pressure on the students and teachers. As the students do not prefer studying outside of the syllabus, teachers also confine themselves to the examination syllabus. Apart from these, both the teachers and students prefer the different language skills to be integrated with the SSC level for their real-world experience.

7.1 Recommendation

In this research, the researcher found that teachers and students mostly focus on the written examination system. As the English language is very important as a second language, the researcher would suggest implementing the speaking and listening skills along with the writing and reading skills. Even though the syllabus is confined, the teachers should focus on different skills to help the students deal with the real world. Additionally, the students should focus on learning the language rather than getting good grades.

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Appendix A

1. Are you a Bangla medium student?

   a. Yes

   b. No

2. Did you sit for your SSC examination?

   a. Yes

   b. No

3. Does the pressure of the SSC examination in English affect your performance?

   a. Positively

   b. No impact

   c. Negatively

   d. Not sure

4. Do you think the fear of sitting for SSC English exams would have any effect on learning a language?

   a. Yes

   b. No

5. If yes, to what extent does it influence?

   a. Strongly

   b. Moderately

   c. Slightly

   d. No influence

6. How does the different type of test affect your preparation strategies?

   a. Focus on written examinations

b. Focus on the speaking test

c. Focus on both written and speaking test

d. Not sure

7. How does your result in the English examination match your proficiency in the real world?

a. Strongly connected

b. Moderately connected

c. Slightly connected

d. No connection

8. Do the test questions of the English examination remain common with the ones that you practiced at the secondary level?

a. Strongly

b. Moderately

c. Slightly

d. Not at all

9. Do you think English examinations motivate you to improve your language-learning skills?

a. Highly motivates

b. Slightly motivates

c. No impact

d. Slightly demotivates

e. Highly demotivates

10. Do you get a consistent mark when taking the same English examination over an academic year?

   a. Very

   b. Moderately

   c. Slightly

   d. Not at all

11. Do your scores remain consistent when different examiners check your paper?

   a. Yes

   b. Not

   c. Not sure

12. Do your teachers apply different teaching methods for the English examination to improve your performance?

   a. Strongly

   b. Moderately

   c. Slightly

   d. Not at all

13. How does the English exam motivate you to learn the language in real life?

   a. Highly

   b. Moderately

   c. Slightly

   d. Not at all

14. Do you feel confident to sit for different language skills (e.g. listening, reading, speaking, and writing) based on your classroom learning experience?

a. Very confident

b. Slightly confident

c. Not confident

15. Do you think the English language examination assesses your language proficiency

fairly?

a. Strongly

b. Moderately

c. Slightly

d. Not at all

Appendix B

1. How long have you been teaching at Bangla Medium School as an English teacher?

2. How well do you perceive that the examination system assesses a student's language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing)?

3. Does the English examination affect your teaching methods and the topics in class? Explain your reason.

4. How do you adapt the teaching strategies to prepare the students for the contents of the English examination?

5. Has the pressure of getting good results affected your interaction and teaching the students?

6. According to your experience, how do you think the examination system can be modified to enhance the learning and teaching of English at the SSC level?

7. As most students are exam-focused, what effects does it have on the student?

8. Focusing on the examination system, how do students emphasize rote memorization?