

December 2007      *Test Washback: How Far Have We Come? What More Needs to Be Done?*  
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**Test washback: How far have we come? What more needs to be done?**

It has long been noted that high-stakes language exams exert a powerful influence on language learners and teachers, a phenomenon known within the language testing literature as the 'washback effect' (Alderson and Wall, 1993). However, despite the plethora of assertions that the introduction of high-stakes language examinations into the Greek educational system created a shift towards exam-oriented syllabuses and methodologies, little empirical research has been carried out in the present context that can show what is actually happening under their influence.

The study that I am going to present, based on doctoral research, aimed at investigating the washback effect of a high-stakes language test on the teaching and learning that takes place in Greek private language schools.

During the presentation I will report the results of the data collected for the purposes of the study based on teachers' interviews, detailed analysis of exam-oriented textbooks and students' diaries and demonstrate how the mechanism of washback of high-stakes language tests operates in the present context. The paper will also discuss how the results advance our knowledge of the complexity of washback, and to what extent they confirm or disconfirm what we already know about washback and what questions remain to be explored. The discussion will round off with recommendations on how to promote positive washback and suggestions for future researchers in the area.

**Thematic area:** Language Teaching and Learning (& Language Testing and Assessment)

**Key words:** language testing, test washback, test preparation, students' diaries and textbook analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods, Greek students