

WASHBACK IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN HONG KONG: HONG KONG ENGLISH OR BRITISH ENGLISH?

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Abstract

The present study investigates how the teachers of English in Hong Kong react to Hong Kong English and how the preferences on accents of the HKTEs have potentially been a part of Washback in English pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong. By analyzing two rounds of data collected in 2016 and 2018 that consist of 180 questionnaires and 800 minutes of interviews from language teachers and students, the Washback of pronunciation teaching was revealed. The result suggested that both teachers and students are under the effect of Washback in pronunciation teaching. While both teachers and students acknowledged the common use of Hong Kong English, they both expressed that there is a standard accent, British English, for the examination, which is not explicitly stated in both the examination syllabus and any related materials. At the end, a Washback model for pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong is shown.

Keywords: Washback, Hong Kong English, Pronunciation Teaching

1 Introduction

Washback has been a well-observed phenomenon in the education field among scholars and academics (Pan, 2009). It is described as an effect of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Even though teaching and learning are the key factors for evaluating the performance of certain teaching methodologies or tests, Washback has never been under the spot light in the academia, especially in Hong Kong. There are only several pieces of journals which examine the Washback of the old centralized exam which was replaced by another examination in 2011 (e.g. Cheng, 1997). Also, most of the previous research studies focused on general Washback, which do not include how Washback affects specific language skills and language attitudes, such as pronunciation teaching and Hong Kong English. With regard to the important role of Washback in language teaching, this present study is therefore conducted to fill in the two research gaps mentioned above. The present mixed method study uses qualitative and quantitative data collected in 2016 and 2018 to investigate whether Washback exists in pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong and examine how Washback works in this area. Parts of the data collected in 2016 were already reported in another language attitude study (please refer to Chan, 2016/ 2017), this current study offers an update of the previous paper as well as a new angle on researching language attitude and language education.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Washback & Washback in Hong Kong

Washback and Backwash are two commonly used terms for scholars to refer to how teaching practices are affected by the testing methods (Wang & Bao, 2013). These two terms are somewhat interchangeable in meaning; however, Washback is used in this paper with reference to several previous related studies done in Hong Kong, which all used the term Washback. (e.g. Cheng, 1997, 2004). Scholars started studying Washback on how testing affect teaching and learning since the 90s (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1996; Wang & Bao, 2013). Washback is described as an effect showing noticeable influences from examination excreted on how the concerned subject is taught (Chan, 2016). In other words, according to McEwen (1995), the assessment (or examination) itself becomes the values that teachers hold in their teaching. In general, Washback is said to be an influential factor which affects the education on both macro- and micro-level (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). On a macro-level, Washback influences the entire education system (e.g. on an institutional level or even a national level) whereas on a micro-level, Washback affects the teaching and learning process of teachers and learners. Washback can also be divided into Positive Washback and Negative Washback based on whether the outcome (the effect) is beneficial to or harmful for the education process (Pan, 2009). Positive Washback could be beneficial to the education process if it motivates teachers and learners (Allen, 2016), whereas Negative Washback refers to a narrowing of teaching which changes the education purposes (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004).

Previous studies show that Washback may bring effects in different forms. In Hughes's (1993) research on Turkey English tests, he discovered that teachers experience anxiety in their teaching because they are under pressure to help their students to get high scores, and so they have to adjust their teaching to certain extent. Similarly, in Mahmoudi's (2013) research, she investigated how an English examination poses effect on the teaching in Iran and she concluded that the influence of Washback could be found in multiple dimensions of education, including teachers, learners, schools and even policy makers. These dimensions were mentioned in Hughes (1993) and Bailey (1996)'s Trichotomy Backwash Model which indicates how Washback works. There are three major parts in the model, namely participants (e.g. teachers, students), processes (e.g. teaching, learning) and products (e.g. exam results) (Table 1). While the model explains how Washback works in a general education setting, it does not specifically tell how Washback works in pronunciation teaching. Therefore, in the present study, a modified model is generated at the end to demonstrate how Washback works in a specific language teaching area, like pronunciation teaching.

Table 1. The Trichotomy Backwash Model (adapted from Bailey, 1996)

<i>Different Parts in Backwash</i>	<i>Example</i>
1. Participants	People like students, teachers, material designers and policy- makers whose attitudes might potentially be influenced by the examinations.
2. Processes	The actions taken by the participants during the learning and teaching process concerning the examinations.
3. Products	The actual output of teaching or the results of the examinations.

Even though the number of research on Washback in language-learning context is not abundant, there were two insightful studies which provide valuable data on how Washback works in Hong

Kong, Cheng (1997) studied how the leading public examination in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination – HKCEE, which was replaced in 2011) affects the English teaching in Hong Kong by analyzing questionnaires (48 from teachers and 42 from students) and classroom observations. It shows that Washback works extremely fast in Hong Kong especially on the textbook selection and teachers’ attitudes. Later, Tsang (2017) researched on the effects of the new public examination in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education - HKDSE) on English learners in Hong Kong. In her multi-phased study, in which data from 15 interviews and 150 questionnaires were analyzed through statistical analysis, a number of effects from Washback were listed, for example, the focus on reading that may fit particular type of exam questions, the special emphasis on examination forms, the skill drillings for examination format and the overwhelming tutorial classes on examinations. Her research shows that in Hong Kong, students’ learning process is affected by the HKDSE in various ways, mostly on how students learn English (Tsang, 2017). However, these studies only focused on how Washback works on a general level of English education, they did not put the emphasis on how pronunciation teaching of English in Hong Kong is potentially affected. Pronunciation teaching and preferences in accents are interlinked, it is therefore important to know whether the examination has posed any effect on the development of any variety of English, and in this case, it is Hong Kong English. Hence, to fill this research gap, the present study investigates whether there is Washback in Hong Kong in pronunciation; and if so, how the Washback from examination works and potentially affects Hong Kong English.

2.2 English Education in Hong Kong

English plays an important role in the education in Hong Kong and this can be seen from how English emerges into different levels of education in Hong Kong. According to the Curriculum Development Council (2017), English Language is the compulsory subject for both primary schools and secondary schools; also, English is listed as one of the eight main learning foci of Hong Kong students. Even though some secondary schools in Hong Kong adopt Chinese as their medium of instructions (CMI Schools), around 75% of the secondary schools use English as the teaching medium for all subjects (EMI Schools) (Lo & Lo, 2014). Furthermore, English is taught as a mandatory subject in both EMI and CMI schools. At the end of the twelve years of free education (six for primary school and six for secondary school), students are required to attend HKDSE, which is a centralized, high-stake and globally recognized examination. In the HKDSE, English is one of the core subjects that they must take. Students who want to pursue a further study in a local university in Hong Kong must get a Level 3 or above¹. More importantly, English is the medium of instruction of all the universities in Hong Kong (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Therefore, no matter how, students in Hong Kong need to study English throughout their earlier life.

2.3 Hong Kong English and the English Examination in Hong Kong

Due to the special historical background as an ex-British colony for over a hundred years, Hong Kong is said to be a bilingual city where English and Cantonese are used as the official languages. Under the World Englishes paradigm, Hong Kong English has been studied as a

¹ In 2017, only 52% of the students can get a Level 3 or above in English Language, there were 52,000 participants that year. (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2017)

variety of English spoken by Hongkongers whose mother tongue is Cantonese. Hong Kong English has been investigated in various aspects, such as phonetics and phonology (e.g. Hansen Edwards, 2015, 2018; Hung, 2000, 2012; Lam, 2017), syntax and morphology (e.g. Setter et al., 2010; Wong, 2017), attitudes (e.g. Chan, 2016; Hansen Edwards, 2015, 2016) and sociolinguistics (e.g. Chan, 2018; Hansen Edwards, 2017). However, while Hong Kong English is widely acknowledged and accepted as a variety spoken in Hong Kong (Chan, 2016, 2016/2017), it is seldom for scholars to examine this in the public examination domain. On a document level, interestingly, while ‘British English (BrE)’ or ‘Received Pronunciation (RP)’ have been referred as the standard by English teachers for many years (Chan, 2016/2017), there is not a ‘preferred accent’ or ‘standard accent’ in the HKDSE syllabus (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2017). Also, previous studies shows that teachers and students do have a preferred accent, which is either BrE or American English (AmE) (e.g. Hansen Edwards, 2016). Since there is a research gap in how Hong Kong English could be fitted into the Hong Kong examination, by employing a mixed method study which consists of two rounds of questionnaires and interviews with both teachers and students, this paper aims at figuring out whether there is a Washback from the examination to the students and teachers in Hong Kong regarding English pronunciation teaching by answering the following research questions:

1. Does Washback exist in the Pronunciation Teaching in Hong Kong?
2. How does this form of Washback work?

3 Methodology

3.1 Settings and Participants

The present study is a mixed method research, using both questionnaires and interviews to elicit data. There were two rounds of data collection – *Round 1* and *Round 2*. For *Round 1*, the data was collected in 2016, which includes 100 questionnaires and 28 interviews; and in *Round 2*, the data was collected in 2018, which includes 80 questionnaires. The participants in the two rounds were of different age and occupations. In *Round 1*, both qualitative data and quantitative data were collected from English teachers in Hong Kong with demographic data displayed below (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographics of Participants in Round 1

	Male: Female	Native: Non-native	Level of Teaching*
Interview (n=28)	46%: 54%	25%: 75%	29%: 29%: 42%
Questionnaire (n=100)	40%: 60%	21% :79%	32%: 39%: 29%

* *Level of Teaching: Primary: Secondary: Tertiary*

In *Round 2*, only quantitative data was collected from university students in Hong Kong with demographic data displayed below (Table 3).

Table 3. Demographics of Participants in Round 2

	Male: Female	First Language*	Degree Pursuing**
Questionnaire (n=80)	52%: 48%	10% :90%	75%:25%

* *First Language: English: Cantonese*

** *Degree Pursuing: Undergraduate: Postgraduate*

3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Questionnaires and interviews were used for data elicitation in the present study. In *Round 1*, 100 questionnaires were collected online through a survey engine. The questionnaires were made up of multiple choices and 6-point Likert Scale questions. Then, 28 interviews were conducted by the researcher based on the same questionnaire; however, follow-up questions were used to elicit more details. The data was triangulated in order to achieve higher validity and was analyzed through descriptive statistic and thematic analysis. In *Round 2*, 80 questionnaires were received through the same survey website. In this questionnaire, a different set of questions was used – although the questions were still in the form of multiple choices and 6-point Likert Scale questions, the questions were set specifically to have a follow-up on the themes generated from *Round 1*. Also, there were question boxes under most of the questions, which provided the researcher with detailed elaboration of the answers from the students which can potentially serve as a form of qualitative data.

4 Finding and Discussion

The two rounds of data collection yielded 180 questionnaires and over 800 minutes of spoken data. In order to achieve a clear presentation of data, only the relevant data is cited here and they are placed under the two research questions in 4.2 and 4.3 below. Before answering the two research questions, several pieces of data are shown in 4.1 to present data that foregrounds this research, such as the participants’ attitudes towards Hong Kong English and their attitudes on Hong Kong English in Hong Kong Examination.

4.1 Attitudes towards Hong Kong English and its Use in Examination

Since parts of the attitudes data in *Round 1* was reported in previous research (Chan, 2016/2017), in this part the data collected in *Round 2* will be presented in parallel with those collected in *Round 1*. There are two reasons why the data collected in the two rounds are compared here. Firstly, the participants in *Round 1* were mainly English teachers, which is different from those in *Round 2* who were mostly undergraduates and postgraduates. The attitudes between teachers and students could potentially be compared. Secondly, since the two rounds were done with a gap of two year, the data elicited in *Round 2* could also be seen as a follow-up survey which proves or disproves the data of *Round 1*. In the following, the data which shows their attitudes towards the existence on Hong Kong English and towards the use of Hong Kong English in examination will be briefly shown.

4.1.1 Existence of Hong Kong English

In both rounds, the participants were asked whether they think Hong Kong English exists. The results were in general very positive with 93% of the participants in *Round 1* (Questionnaire),

89% of those in the interviews and 98% of the students in *Round 2* agreed that Hong Kong English exist (Table 4).

Table 4. Do You Think Hong Kong English Exist?

	<i>Round 1 (Chan, 2016/ 2017)</i>		<i>Round 2</i>
	<i>Questionnaire (n=100)</i>	<i>Interview (n=28)</i>	<i>Questionnaire (n=80)</i>
Yes	93%	89%	98%
No	7%	11%	2%

Generally, the participants in both rounds acknowledged the existence of Hong Kong English. The high level of acknowledgement on Hong Kong English remained in two years time. This is also in line with the result of many of previous research studies. For example, in Hansen Edwards (2016a), over 40% of participants agreed that Hong Kong English is a legit variety of English. Interestingly, when both groups of participants were asked whether Hong Kong English should be allowed, they again showed a similar tendency of rejecting the idea. When teachers were asked what would they do when they encounter Hong Kong English during their teaching or in examination in *Round 1*, over 34% of the teachers said that they would directly correct the students for using Hong Kong English (Chan, 2016/ 2017). Similarly, in *Round 2*, when students answered the question ‘do you think that Hong Kong English should be allowed in examinations?’, 64% of them chose ‘No’ (Table 5).

Table 5. Allowing Hong Kong English in Classes and Examinations

	<i>Round 1</i>	<i>Round 2</i>
	<i>Questionnaire (n=100)</i>	<i>Questionnaire (n=80)</i>
Yes	34% (Directly Correct)	37%
No	66% (No Response)	64%

In general, although the teachers and students acknowledged the existence of Hong Kong English, they have hesitations on using it in classes and examinations. It can be supported by how students comment on whether Hong Kong should be allowed in examinations, for example:

Hong Kong English is clear to me. I think it is just an accent like any others, for example, American or Australian accent. They are allowed in most of the international exams too.
-#60 Postgraduate Student²

[...] as long as the language itself does not impede communication among people from different backgrounds or having another accents/ cultural background, this type of language should be allowed.
-#28 Postgraduate Student

English is taught for communicative purposes in Hong Kong - in other words, we learn English to communicate with others (native or non-native speaker of English); and the examinations should align with that aim. Hence, I argue that exams of English should test students’ ability to communicate with others, no matter the variety of English.
-#25 Postgraduate Student

² Number of questionnaire completion is used here as anonymous purposes

Some students, like the three above, think that Hong Kong English should be allowed in classes and examinations because Hong Kong English is clear and understandable on a global scale. However, there are also students who believe that Hong Kong English should not be allowed because Hong Kong English is informal; also because the teachers at school do not teach Hong Kong English; and mostly, the examinations in Hong Kong require other forms of English but not Hong Kong English. For example:

[It is] because it (Hong Kong English) is not formal and we are learning British English in Hong Kong.

-#66 Undergraduate Student

Because schools usually aim to teach students American or British English so the assessment should require using those types of English as well.

-#50 Undergraduate Student

From the excerpts, it is clear that students' comments on Hong Kong English differ because of their different purposes of using the language. While some think that English is just a tool of communication, and Hong Kong English can fulfill the communication purpose perfectly; the others take English (with an accent other than Hong Kong English) more like an examination tool to get high marks in examinations, and interestingly, students normally take this preferences in accent in English from assessments and teachers. This exam-oriented mindset is exactly how Washback is generated and these will be further discussed in the next two parts, 4.2 and 4.3.

4.2 Does Washback exist in the Pronunciation Teaching in Hong Kong?

The data from both qualitative data and quantitative data provides supporting evidence to directly and indirectly proves that Washback is very likely to exist in the pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong from both students' and teachers' perspectives.

4.2.1 Teachers' Perspectives

From the questionnaires and interviews with teachers, although the word 'Washback' has never been explicitly used or referred, a trace of Washback could be sensed. When the teachers answered the question '*Why do you think Hong Kong English is not suitable in Hong Kong Classrooms?*', 28% of the teachers chose 'Hong Kong English is not acceptable in examinations' and 25% of them chose 'Hong Kong English is not a Standard English', which were the two of the highest options among the five options (Table 6).

Table 6. Why Do You Think Hong Kong English is not Suitable in Hong Kong Classrooms?

Answer	Percentage (n=100)
Hong Kong English is not acceptable in examinations	28%
Hong Kong English is not a standard English	25%
Hong Kong English is a kind of errors that students should avoid	19%
Hong Kong English is not as prestigious as other varieties	15%
Others	13%

The figures here suggest two things: first, teachers really concern whether an accent is acceptable in the examination; and second, they consider there is a standard form of English in general or at least in the examination. By choosing ‘Hong Kong English is not acceptable in examination’, the teachers admit that although they acknowledge the existence of Hong Kong English (Chan, 2016/2017), they would still adjust their teaching (in this case, preference in an accent) according to the examination, which is what Washback refers to – an effect excreted from examinations to teaching.

Furthermore, the interviews with the teachers provide extra information which confirms the existence of Washback in pronunciation teaching. In the interviews, teachers of different levels repeatedly expressed that they would base their teaching of accent and pronunciation on how (they think) the examination is marked or how (they think) the examination authority would prefer. The followings are some of the examples from the interviews³:

[...] the examiner from the Education Bureau (EDB) will judge the pronunciation according to the Standard English (in Territory-wide System Assessment – TSA, a public examination for primary school students in Hong Kong). In this kind of situation, the pronunciation is very important, if they (the students) mispronounced the words in Hong Kong accent and I think the mark would be deducted.

- Cathy, Primary School English Teacher

[...] examiners (of public exams) are just we, teachers (in secondary schools) and we understand that the HKEAA, still need British, regard British as the core English accent that we need to teach at school.

- Miranda, Secondary School English Teacher

Teachers in the interviews continue in emphasizing that they understand what the EDB or the HKEAA needs in the examinations and they think the authority would lower their students’ grades if they speak Hong Kong English or not to use the ‘core English’ that they think the authority needs. However, as mentioned earlier, there is not even a single word on the accent requirement in the HKEAA syllabus for HKDSE at all. The data shows that these teachers adjust their teaching on pronunciations according to what is required from the authority. The result here is in coherence with what suggested by Scohamy (1996) that teachers might adjust their teaching to fit into the examination because they might subject to high anxiety because they feel that their performances are measured by students’ result.

4.2.2 Students’ Perspectives

For the students’ data collected from questionnaires in *Round 2*, it provides a students’ point of view on the Washback – as students are the ones who receive the teaching from teachers. Again, even though the word Washback has never been included in the questionnaire, a sense of Washback could be detected from the responses.

In the questionnaire, when the students were asked whether they think there is a ‘Standard Accent’ in the English examination in Hong Kong, 59% of them answered ‘Yes’; they were then asked to name that ‘Standard Accent’, 68% answered ‘British English’ (Table 7).

³ Pseudo-names are used here to protect the teachers’ identity. Some of these interviews excerpts are reported in Chan (2016) and Chan (2016/ 2017) as supporting data for an attitude research.

Table 7. Students' Perspectives on Standard Accent in English Examination in Hong Kong

<i>Do you think there is a 'Standard Accent' in the English Examination in Hong Kong? (n=80)</i>	
Yes	59%
No	41%
<i>Can you name that 'Standard Accent' in the English Examination in Hong Kong? (n=80)</i>	
British English	68%
American English	7%
Hong Kong English	6%
Others	19%

It is clear from the data that students agreed that there is a 'Standard Accent' in the examination and the 'Standard Accent' is likely to be British English. However, if there is no preference in accent in the HKDSE syllabus as suggested previously, how do these students 'know' there is a 'Standard Accent' in the examination? The answers of the last open question in the questionnaire provide some insights for us. At the end of the questionnaire, the students were asked to answer an optional question 'How do you know (or who tell you that) there is a 'Standard Accent' for the exam?'. Among the 54 answers that the students gave to this question, three main sources which tell the students about this 'Standard Accent' could be found. The three categories are teachers (28%), students' feeling from the examination authority (17%) and students' feeling on the historical background of Hong Kong (7%) (Table 8).

Table 8. How Do You Know (or Who Tell You That) There is a 'Standard Accent' for the Exam?

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Percentage (n=54)</i>
Teachers (Primary School/ Secondary School/ Tutorial Centre)	28%
Students' Feeling from the Examination Authority (HKEAA/ EDB)	17%
Students' Feeling on the Historical Background of Hong Kong	7%
Others	48%

From the table, the most prominent source of 'Standard Accent' is their teachers, including teachers from primary schools, secondary schools and even from tutorial centres. The students point out that their teachers would explicitly say that there is a Standard Accent for examinations, for example:

The English test is in British style and in British spellings too. My teachers told us these again and therefore we put it in our hearts. I tend to follow what teachers want, if she wants British ways, then I will try my best for the marks, somehow, Hong Kong is like this, so exam-oriented.

-#51 Postgraduate Student

Since my early schooling days, I have been told again and again that we should learn British English and that they are the safest to use in the exams. [...] Even though I did not know what I heard was British English, I was very smitten by it and I tried to imitate.

-#4 Postgraduate Student

From the two excerpts above, it can be said that some teachers teach with their preferences in accent and pass that directly onto their students through teaching. This finding echoes with what

Hansen Edwards (2016) discovered that students in Hong Kong experienced British-influences through “pedagogical materials and BrE-speaking teachers” (p. 212). It is also in agreement with Zhang’s (2013) result that Hong Kong students mostly favor inner circle Englishes (e.g. BrE). However, there is another tendency that can be found here that students, similar with what their teachers do, tend to guess what the examination authority like or prefer, for example:

HKEAA posts exemplar videos for each level on the web. I don't see traits of Hong Kong English in higher level candidates.

-#24 Postgraduate Student

The excellent grades are delivered mostly to people who speak in the standard accent. People without speaking in that accent generally get a lower grading in the pronunciation part.

-#10 Undergraduate Student

I noticed a tendency of markers favouring students with a more ‘native’ accent than other students who don't seem to have one.

-#8 Undergraduate Student

I think examiners in general are impressed by people who carry a standard accent, just because they sound like native English speakers.

-#2 Undergraduate Student

Students here show that they ‘guess’ the standard from the existing materials (like textbooks and videos) from the authority. Also, they would use the grades in examination as a kind of indicators to determine whether the kind of accent is good for certain examination, which would then affect how the students do in the examination. It is how Washback works on students – they observe and then adjust themselves to fit in the examinations.

Apart from the teachers and students’ own observation, it also seems that the history of Hong Kong has somehow also played a major role in how students’ thought of the ‘Standard’, for example:

I guess Hong Kong was a British (English) area, we still use quite a lot of British. Also, the teachers are sort of using British (English) and they insist on using British, so I think the exam wants British (English)?

-#60 Postgraduate Student

Since Hong Kong was a colony of Britain before, I think the exam would be following British accent.

-#14 Undergraduate Student

Hong Kong was a British colony, we learn the British way. Also, most of the teachers teach with the British spelling and accent and you may find the HKEA (HKEAA) use British spellings in their reports too.

-#1 Postgraduate Student

The excerpts above may imply that students in Hong Kong are also affected by the fact that they are studying in Hong Kong, a place with special historical background linked to the British Emperor and eventually British English.

4.3 How does this form of Washback work?

From the above, it can be seen quite clearly that a Negative Washback exists in the pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong on a micro-level. Here, it can be concluded that the teaching of pronunciation in Hong Kong is highly affected by how the teachers teach. According to the Trichotomy Backwash Model (Hughes, 1993; Baliey, 1996), there are different stick-holders in Washback, including participant, process and product. A modified model of Washback is made specifically for the pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong, or more specifically, for how Washback exerts its effect on students through teachers and examination (Fig. 1).

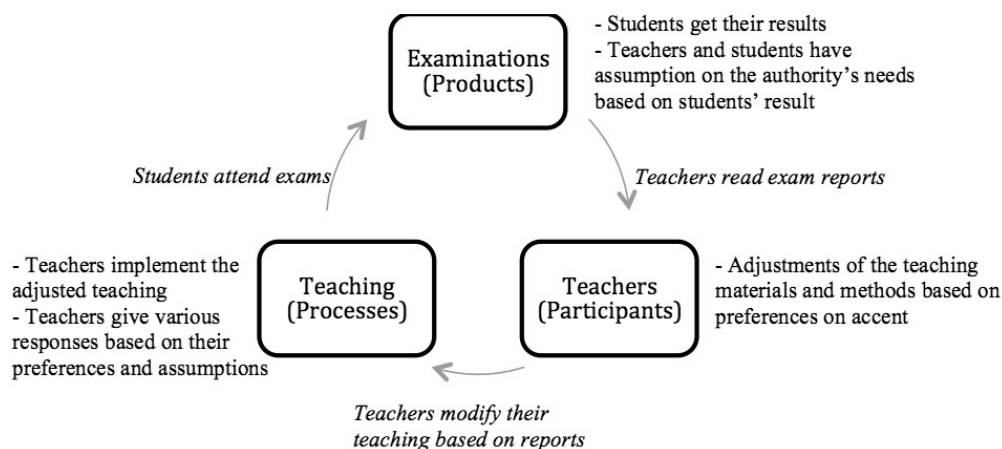


Fig. 1. Modified Trichotomy Washback Model– Washback Cycle for Teachers

In the modified model, the product, which is the examinations, is placed at the top of the figure to show that it is potentially the examination which initiates the Washback cycle. Next, when the results of the examinations release, teachers would study the examination reports and more importantly, how the students with different accents get different grades. Then, the participants, who are the teachers, would begin to modify and adjust their teaching materials and methods to satisfy their assumptions on the effect of accents on examination. After that, the teachers implement their modified plans in classes during their teaching. At the end, students who have attended the modified classes, take the examinations and the new results come out for the teachers to evaluate their teaching methods again and again. There are several features which make this modified model different from the original one. First, the model is set in a cycle form which indicates that Washback seems to be an ever-going process and the teachers would modify their teaching year by year. Second, examination (process) is placed at the top to show that examination plays an important role in Washback as it seems to initiate the whole cycle. It is also worth to note that these Washback is said to be very common among high-stake tests like HKDSE and the English examination in Iran (Mahmoudi, 2013), in which examination reports are produced every year for the teachers as references to modify their teaching according to their students' results.

5 Limitation

It is worth to note that a number of limitations could be found and these should be taken into consideration. First, like most of the previous studies on Washback, the data was driven

indirectly from questionnaires and interviews, which relies hugely on self-report data. Since Washback is an effect driven by teaching and testing, it is difficult to ask about the effect explicitly in the questionnaires or during the interviews because it is very likely that the teachers do that unintentionally and they may have never come up with the term before. However, in the present study, in order to minimize the effect from self-report data, two rounds of quantitative data was collected and triangulated with the qualitative data. The validity of the study is then enhanced to a certain extent. Second, since Washback is a generated theme in the previous report (Chan, 2016/ 2017), the questionnaire that was used at that time was not specially made for investigating Washback. Some of the questions may be indirect and therefore the study was subjected to an interpretation from the researcher. However, a second round of data was collected with different group of participants to validate the data and to lower the effect from interpretation from the researcher. At last, the number of participants of both rounds was considerably small (180 questionnaires and 28 interviews), which causes a generalization problem with such small sample size. However, the number of data collected for the present study already exceeded some of the previous studies, for example, 90 questionnaires in Cheng (1997), 12 interviews and 150 questionnaires (Tsang, 2017), which makes the result of the current study comparable to the previous study.

6 Conclusion

By utilizing a mixed method study consisting of two rounds of data, including questionnaires and interviews, the present study shows that Negative Washback exists in the pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong on a micro-level, which affects both teachers and students. Although teachers and students acknowledged the communicative function of Hong Kong English, they insisted that a standard accent exists in the public examination, which appears to be British English; but interestingly, it is not explicitly reported in any examination reports and syllabuses. Students reported that they were told by the teachers that there is a standard from of accent for examination and teachers said that they understand the examination as they are parts of the system. The tendency of preferring British English may come from the historical background of Hong Kong and the choice of teaching materials. A modified model of Washback was drawn at the end to provide a clear picture on how Washback works in the teaching of a specific language skill, pronunciation teaching, which has rarely been investigated in previous literatures.

It is worth to note that Washback is an important effect in language testing as it alters how the teachers teach and eventually how the students learn. Research of this kind is therefore necessary in providing insights on whether a specific test is serving its aims. The result of the present study can therefore be seen as an initial study of Washback in pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong, which on one hand, links Hong Kong English to education study; and on the other hand, provides insights for language teachers to think of whether a standard accent is needed, especially when students could speak an accent which can already fulfill communicative function in a global context under the World Englishes paradigm.

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