

Planning for teaching and learning in EFL

Effects of standardisation and standardised testing on the learning and teaching of EFL at lower secondary level

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Abstract

This paper describes the washback of competence orientation and competence oriented testing on planning teaching and learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) at Austrian lower secondary schools. It analyses the perceived needs of teachers working in EFL classrooms in general secondary, new middle schools and academic secondary schools based on a mixed methods study. The study relies on data from on-line surveys, interviews, non-participant observation and document research and this paper puts a focus on planning teaching and learning. Findings point towards the need to encourage long-term planning on the basis of a set of descriptors for each of the four years of lower secondary foreign language education. The descriptors presented in this paper are intended to build a basis for assessing and testing communicative competence at beginner and lower intermediate level. Moreover, they can be used to provide formative feedback that can inform the planning of teaching and learning in EFL classrooms.

Das Planen von Lehren und Lernen im Unterrichtsfach Englisch als Fremdsprache

Auswirkungen der Standardisierung und standardisierter Überprüfungen auf das Lehren und Lernen in der Sekundarstufe I

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel beschreibt den Washback, also die Auswirkungen der Kompetenzorientierung und der standardisierten Überprüfungen auf das Planen von Lehren und Lernen im Englischunterricht der Sekundarstufe 1. Die akuten Bedürfnisse der Lehrkräfte, die das Fach Englisch in Hauptschulen, Neuen Mittelschulen und in Allgemein bildenden höheren Schulen unterrichten, wurden in einer Mixed-Methods-Studie unter Heranziehung von Daten aus einer On-line Befragung, Interviews, nicht-teilnehmenden Beobachtungen und Dokumentenanalysen erhoben und beschrieben. Dieser Artikel fokussiert den Teilbereich des Planens von Lehren und Lernen im Englischunterricht. Die Ergebnisse zeigten den dringenden Bedarf der Unterstützung der Lehrkräfte bei der längerfristigen Planung von Unterricht durch die Entwicklung einer Sammlung von Deskriptoren für jeden Jahrgang. Die Deskriptoren sollen eine Basis für das Überprüfen und Beurteilen von kommunikativer Kompetenz von Anfängern und leicht fortgeschrittenen Lernern und Lernerinnen darstellen. Außerdem können sie bei der Formulierung von formativem Feedback, welches beim Planen von Lehren und Lernen zum Einsatz kommt, dienlich sein.

Keywords:

Backward Design
Communicative competence
Formative assessment
Standardisation and standardised testing
Washback

Schlüsselwörter:

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Kommunikative Kompetenz
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1 Introduction

As early as 1993, Alderson and Wall described the effects of testing on teaching and learning in fifteen hypotheses. With their claim that “tests can be powerful determiners, both positively and negatively, of what happens in classrooms” (1993, p. 117), washback became a widely discussed issue in addition to the previously quoted opinion that “teachers will teach to a test (...) if they know the content of a test and/or the format of a test...” (Swain, 1985). Shohamy conceptualises washback in its wider context and argues that measurement-driven instruction “drive[s] learning; *curriculum alignment* focuses on the connection between testing and the teaching syllabus; and *systemic validity* implies the integration of tests into the educational system and the need to demonstrate that the introduction of a new test can improve learning” (1993, p. 7; emphasis in the original). However, she adds that despite the obvious connection between testing and learning, little is known about its effects.

When educational standards were enacted in Austria in 2009, they had already been trialled in a five-year pilot at lower secondary schools with the goal to be used in standardised testing. Shortly before their legal enactment, the content goals in the form of a list of functions and notions were replaced by such that rely on descriptors from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001) at levels A1 to B1. The general goals and the methodological guidelines have stayed the same. The so-called “Übergreifenden Dynamischen Fertigkeiten” (BIFIE&ÖSZ, 2011, pp. 14-15), henceforth called “Dynamic Competences”, which were part of the standards set up by the group of developers (Gassner, et al., 2005), were neither considered for implementation into to the decree, nor did they find their way into the curriculum.

In April 2013, when the first standardised test (E8 test) was implemented, 76,728 pupils in 1,410 schools sat this test in listening, reading and writing, while only 2,744 pupils took its speaking component (BIFIE, 2014, pp. 13, 68). The goal of standardised testing in Austria is system monitoring and the results of E8 testing are intended to be used to inform quality assurance and school development. Thus, the E8 test is considered a low-stakes test in terms of its impact on the pupils’ learning because it does not have any bearing on their grades and its results are published when most of them have already left their schools.

The focus of this paper is on the washback of standardisation and standardised testing on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) at classroom level in Shohamy’s terms (1993). It explores whether standardisation and standardised tests have driven learning and if curriculum alignment has brought about a sufficiently effective connection between testing and teaching. Moreover, it seeks to find out if standards and standardised tests have been successfully integrated into the educational system and if their introduction has improved learning.

2 Theoretical considerations

The notion of competence oriented education was discussed intensively by general educationalists such as Klafki, Habermas, or Roth, as well as linguists in the early 1970s. In language education, competence orientation coincided with the development of the communicative approach and its focus on communicative competence which is commonly described as the knowledge and skill to use a language effectively for communication (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Swain, 2000). Competence oriented approaches or competency-based language teaching (CBLT), used interchangeably in this paper, additionally emphasise functional, interactional and social aspects of language and its role as a medium of interaction between people who want to achieve specific goals and purposes in real life (Richards & Rogers, 2014).

CBLT establishes a direct link to criterion-based assessment where performance criteria are the basis for the assessment of language competencies defined in essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours required for the effective performance of a real-world task (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Linn & Gronlund, 2000; Richards & Rogers, 2014; Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2006). According to Auerbach (1986, pp. 414-415), CBLT programmes are characterised by the following components: a focus on real life, task or performance-centred orientation, modularised instruction, outcomes that are made explicit in advance, continuous assessment, demonstrated mastery of performance objectives, and individualised, learner-centred instruction.

In the last fifteen years, competence orientation has been directly associated with the CEFR and criteria are

phrased as can-do statements. The CEFR plays a prominent role in Europe and beyond and has contributed valuably to the paradigm shift from a deficit oriented to a performance oriented approach that puts the learners at the centre of the learning process. It provides them with the opportunity to relate to competencies that are specific and practical and which can be judged to be relevant and useful or not. Can-do statements are specific and public. They help learners to understand what needs to be learned, what remains to be learned or what could be learned next (Richards & Rogers, 2014, p. 153). Success criteria provide learners not only with the opportunity to identify the goals and to select ways to get there, they also help them self-assess their learning and to understand its main purpose (Black & William, 1998).

The Austrian educational standards for foreign languages for EFL (E8 standards) encompass descriptors for receptive and productive language skills from A1 to B1 level as well as such for the “Dynamic Competences”, which comprise descriptors for communication strategies, social competence, intercultural competence, and language learning competence. The language performance descriptors are meant to describe the expected linguistic learning outcomes after eight years of foreign language education.

When teachers make use of can-do descriptors to plan teaching and learning, they create road maps their learners can follow to take them to a particular destination. Thus, these plans also map what the pupils are expected to learn - the goal - and how learning will be stimulated effectively during the lesson - the route to get there (Mewald 2014b).

According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), the learning objectives of any lesson should reflect the “bigger goals”. In EFL education, this is the communicative competence that the learners are expected to develop. Communicative competence shows in the ability to use the language effectively in authentic situations. This ultimate goal is described comprehensively in the CEFR and the “bigger goals” to guide teaching and learning in Austrian FL classrooms are the goals described in the Austrian National Curriculum (BMBF, 2016) and in the E8 Standards descriptors (BMUKK, 2009). They constitute the foundation for any planning. The curricular goals break down the “bigger goals” into learning objectives for each year. These are the “stepping stones to reach the bigger goals as well as the ultimate goal of communicative competence” (Mewald, 2014b, p. 2).

In “Backward Design” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and in competence oriented FL education, goal setting happens before choosing content or activities to teach. This ensures that the content taught and the activities chosen remain focused and are organised towards the “bigger goals” to be reached. As soon as the “stepping stones”, the learning objectives, are identified, the target performance needs to be described and an appropriate assessment has to be found before teaching and learning can be planned. Conceptualising the target performance and its assessment before deciding on activities or materials is important to make sure that the assessment, be it formative or summative, reflects the goals. When the assessment is aligned with the learning goals, the end becomes the beginning and the paths for teaching and learning become distinct.

Appropriate assessment, as described above, provides feedback which is based on defined goals and learning outcomes that are fleshed out in performance descriptors. Descriptors define the expected performance and criteria of success provide information about its varying levels and qualities. They tell teachers and learners about the target performance, its expected level and the quality (not deficits) of the performance below or beyond the target. Thus learners will know how far on the way to success they have already travelled when they are given feedback. It is obvious that some learners will reach the goal earlier than others. Some may reach the target goal really quickly, others may require more time, choose different paths to get there or aim at different end results. Assessment that provides feedback on where the learners are on their way to the goal and what steps are still to be taken to reach it is therefore assessment for learning. To be able to provide feedback that gives direction, descriptors need to be broken down into manageable steps. Moreover, they need to be precise and graded to show the learner’s progress on the way to success.

3 Methods

This paper is based on a longitudinal study which addresses the washback of competence orientation and competence oriented testing on teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. A mixed methods design was applied in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, analysed separately, and then merged through triangulation. In this study, quantitative data were used as a springboard to examine the fifteen Washback Hypotheses by Alderson & Wall (1993) which predict that testing would influence the teaching and learning of a foreign language. To do so, a quantitative on-line survey explored the status quo of teaching and learning of foreign languages at lower secondary level in Austria before the enactment of standards. A subsequent longitudinal qualitative study explored the washback effect of standardisation and standardised

testing on the teaching and learning of EFL in general secondary schools with streaming as well as in academic secondary schools and new middle schools (NMS), i.e. in potentially more heterogeneous settings. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to explore the washback from an overall as well as an individual perspective taking on a phenomenographic approach in order to be able to describe how the relevant stakeholders experience the washback. To capture the views of all relevant agents, the research design considered the following groups of stakeholders:

Level 1: Organising institutions and change agents (ministry, school authorities etc.)

Level 2: Executing institutions and change agents (universities, university colleges of education, course book writers, publishers etc.)

Level 3: Implementing institutions and change agents (head teachers, teachers, pupils, parents)

The design then created varying focus areas in the exploration of the washback at the three levels. While educational change, the perceived needs of teachers and teacher education and development were considered most interesting at the organising level, supporting measures were most important in the exploration with change agents at the executing level. Finally, the impact of testing on teaching was in the centre of interest in the research of implementing institutions.

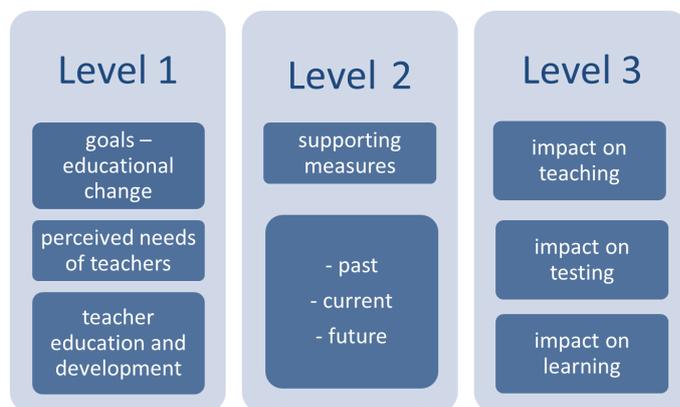


Fig. 1: Research design: Varying goals at four levels

Thus, the study explored “the descriptions and explanations provided by others [the stakeholders] to identify critical variations in the collective experience” (Feig & Alison, 2011, p. 26) and triangulated data from varying reports with the initial quantitative survey.

Washback studies by Cheng (2005) , Cheng, Watanabe & Curtis (2004), Green (2007) , Wall (2005) and most importantly the classical washback hypotheses by Alderson & Wall (1993) were used as an analytical framework in the design of this study.

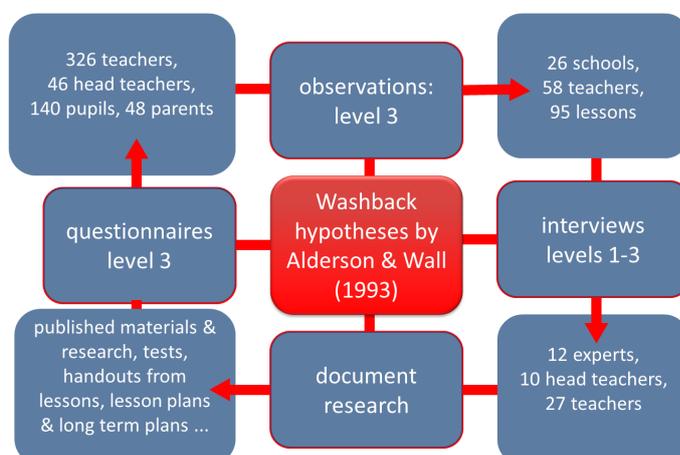


Fig. 2: Mixed methods design

Data from questionnaires were interpreted using descriptive statistics to develop observation and interview schedules and surveys for head teachers, parents and pupils. Sequential triangulation made use of the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) within an analytic framework that mapped Watanbe's five dimensions of washback (1997) onto Shohamy's criteria (1993) to describe the connection between testing and learning.

4 Findings

The results of the first standardised test in English were published in January 2014, almost half a year after pupils had sat it. Most of them had left their schools and reports were presented to parents whose children had not been tested and would not be tested. Thus, the E8 test has to be considered a low stakes test with regard to its impact on the test takers' learning.

The effects of E8 testing on teaching and learning in Austrian EFL classrooms have to be evaluated in the light of this fact. Nevertheless, the washback is expected to be specific because the schools and teachers receive monitored feedback based on their pupils' test results (BIFIE, 2014). Its intensity, on the other hand, is expected to be weak while its impact is likely to be long-lasting due to its legal enactment.

The initial on-line survey carried out in 2009 provided information about the teachers' habits in planning teaching and learning in terms of the selection of goals, content, activities and materials. It suggests that teachers mostly made use of the course book in their planning. The mean results for all four skills in the category "course books" make up 79,68% of all the answers. Conversely, course book units did not seem to be a driving force for planning. 88,9% of all answers suggest that teachers used course book units as the basis for their planning in less than half of their lessons to none of them. With 73,1% and 75% E8 standards and materials were similarly infrequently used for planning. Topics that are interesting for learners seem to be as unpopular as E 8 standards or E8 materials for planning. 75,9% of the teachers said that they would plan according to learner interest in less than half the lessons to none.

In planning lessons I make use of.... (answers in %)	never	in a few lessons	in less than half the lessons	in about half the lessons	in more than half of the lessons	in most lessons	in nearly every lesson
Teacher's handbook	1,10	20,50	13,60	34,10	2,30	15,90	12,50
Course book units	26,50	31,60	30,80	6,80	1,70	2,70	0,00
E8 standards	26,30	31,50	15,30	23,10	3,80	0,00	0,00
E8 materials	25,90	33,00	16,10	7,10	9,80	5,40	2,70
Activities	16,70	26,30	21,90	21,10	7,00	4,40	2,60
Topics interesting for learners	19,00	32,80	24,10	17,20	5,20	0,90	0,90
Lexical fields	8,00	15,00	25,70	25,70	12,40	7,10	6,20
Grammar items	7,00	23,50	27,80	20,90	8,70	7,00	5,20
Course book - listening	0,00	2,50	3,10	3,70	11,10	41,40	38,30
Course book - reading	0,60	2,30	2,30	9,40	19,90	30,40	35,10
Course book - speaking	0,70	7,70	7,70	13,30	24,50	21,70	24,50
Course book - writing	0,00	3,80	9,00	15,40	17,90	26,30	27,60
Published materials - listening	10,50	24,80	18,30	15,00	11,80	17,00	2,60
Published materials - reading	0,60	12,90	17,60	24,10	20,00	18,80	5,90
Published materials - speaking	3,60	15,80	17,30	20,90	16,50	20,10	5,80
Published materials - writing	1,90	14,10	14,10	23,10	19,20	20,50	7,10
Own material - listening	40,30	28,60	9,70	4,50	7,10	5,80	3,90
Own material - reading	7,00	20,30	18,00	16,90	15,70	15,70	6,40
Own material - speaking	6,30	16,90	12,00	17,60	14,10	23,90	9,20
Own material - writing	7,20	14,40	12,40	18,30	17,00	16,30	14,40
Authentic material - listening	18,20	29,90	13,00	15,60	9,10	9,70	4,50
Authentic material - reading	3,60	22,50	20,70	16,60	20,10	10,70	5,90
Authentic material - speaking	9,10	17,40	18,20	14,40	17,40	16,70	6,80

Authentic material - writing	6,00	24,80	18,10	17,40	14,80	13,40	5,40
Modern Media - listening	9,40	24,50	13,80	13,80	18,20	13,20	6,90
Modern Media - reading	5,80	27,90	16,30	15,10	16,90	14,00	4,10
Modern Media - speaking	11,90	27,60	14,90	16,40	11,90	11,90	5,20
Modern Media - writing	13,90	25,80	16,60	18,50	7,90	9,30	7,90

Table 1: What teachers make use of when planning their lessons (answers in %)

In addition to course books, published materials were quite frequently used for planning reading, speaking and writing by the responding teachers in 2009. Planning for listening was hardly ever guided by material other than course books. What seems also striking is the infrequent use of Modern Media for planning teaching. About half of the answers suggest a minor role of Modern Media in the planning EFL lessons.

Observation drew a completely different picture ten years later. Of the 95 observed lessons, 28 made use of published E8 teaching materials or published E 8 testing materials. Another 5 teachers used published material focussing on the task types used in E8 testing in their lessons. In the interviews, nearly all teachers said they would plan their lessons with standard descriptors in mind and they would regularly use materials published on the BIFIE webpage in order to prepare their pupils for the tests. In the same vein they complained about the lack of focus on can-descriptors, strategies and formative feedback in course books, especially in the receptive skills.

The analysis of teaching time according to the four skills, based on two surveys and on classroom observation, suggests that the teachers have reduced the teaching time for writing drastically from 18% in 2009 to 10% between 2012 and 2014. The teaching time for speaking increased from about 25% to 30% in the same period. Observations and post-observation interviews showed a lack in the assessment of speaking. Only one school had initiated the systematic assessment of speaking with the help of a native speaker assistant who would take pairs of pupils out of the classrooms on a regular basis to assess their spoken interaction.

The teaching time for reading and listening also increased between 2009 and 2014, while the time used for the teaching of grammar nearly stayed the same. Most of the observed lessons delivered a balanced picture of teaching time, i.e. teachers follow curricular guidelines and put equal emphasis on all four skills. If teaching grammar, however, is added to writing, there is a clear surplus for this skill which is also reflected in the contribution of writing to the final grade (see Figures 3 and 4).

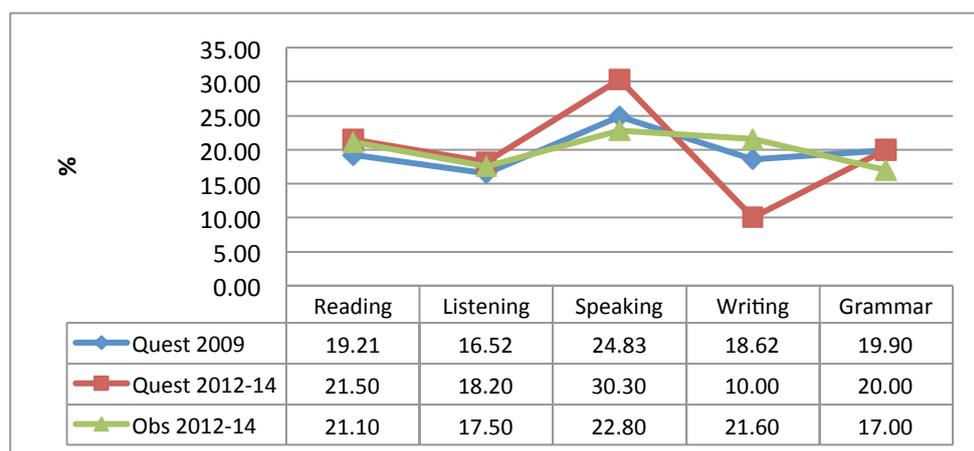


Fig. 3: Teaching time in %

Although the surveys carried out between 2012 and 2014 suggested that E8 testing of speaking and standardisation had created positive washback on classroom assessment, post-observation interviews and document research contradicted this information. Teachers talked a lot about the difficulties in the assessment of speaking and how cumbersome it was. Hardly any teachers reported about testing speaking or its contribution to the pupils' final grades. Nevertheless, compared to the 2009 survey, where writing and grammar made up 93% of the final grade and where listening or reading only received minimal attention, positive washback towards a more homogeneous contribution of all four skills to the final grade could be observed in 2014 (see Figure 4).

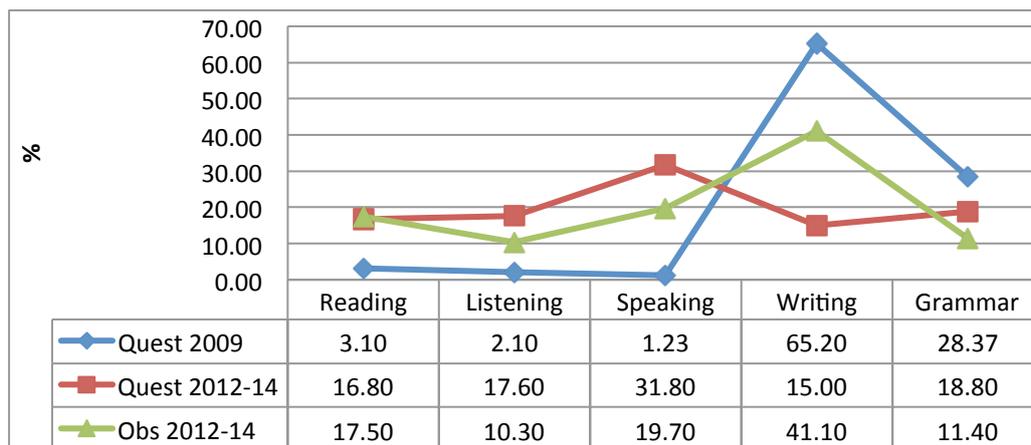


Fig. 4: Contribution of the 4 skills to the final grade in %

In the analysis of teaching and learning, data from the 2009 questionnaires suggests that teachers had not yet changed their teaching in reaction to standardisation or standardised testing. In the later surveys in 2012 and 2014 as well as in post-observation interviews only 25% said that they had changed “what they teach”, i.e. the content. 20% of the teachers reported that they had not changed their methods or strategies and an even bigger number, namely 70% of the teachers, said that they had not changed their testing in response to standardised testing, either. Thus, the washback hypotheses 3 and 4, namely that “[a] test will influence what teachers teach [and] how teachers teach” (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 117) had to be rejected for the present sample. Since only 16,7% of the pupils had crossed that they had changed their learning because of E8 testing, and none had said that they would feel motivated to learn by E8 Standards or testing, hypotheses 2, 6 and 11 were also deemed untrue for the questioned sample.

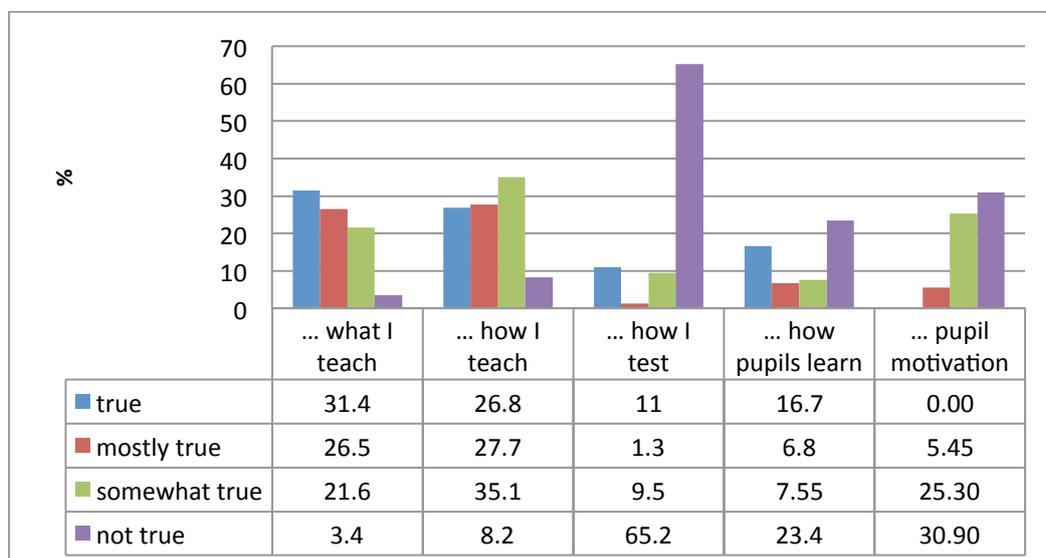


Fig. 5: The impact of E8 tests on what and how teachers teach, how they test, how pupils learn and pupil motivation.

The analyses of post-observation interviews generated various categories and trends which suggest a “positive attitude towards E8 shown by trained writing raters or speaking interlocutors and assessors”. Trained writing raters use the rating scales in classroom testing and some of them presented the kind of diagnostic feedback they give to any written text or assignment. Trained teachers also teach and test speaking using the standardised test format more frequently than their untrained colleagues. However, teachers reported about the lack of materials for speaking because the course books did not offer any suitable ones. The most pressing need phrased by the interviewed teachers, however, stems from the fact that the curriculum is general in its descriptions of goals and that teachers lack detailed lists of descriptors for years 5-8. Doing this on their own was considered an overwhelming task although especially NMS teachers felt that they had to do so in order to

be able to provide sufficient information about goals to pupils and parents.

Teachers who had not attended any E8 training or taken part in the piloting of E8 standards reported they would only use published test folders for test design. They said that they would hardly ever add their own ideas to available classroom test materials. Neither teachers nor head teachers believed that pupils would be aware of E8 standards. Thus, they were doubtful about a deliberate change in pupils' attitude though standardisation or E8 testing. This opinion phrased in interviews by teachers was confirmed in the questionnaires answered by parents and pupils.

The least impact was described to have happened in the teaching of reading and listening. Although the teaching time had increased in both skills, teachers did not sufficiently focus their learners on reading or listening as skills or on strategies that might improve their performance. Only teachers in ASS, who were also familiar with the test formats of the new Matura exam, made efforts to teach reading or listening in a strategic way and to create awareness for their effects in their pupils.

5 Conclusion

Concluding it can be said that standardised testing and a newly adapted curriculum have caused washback in Austrian EFL classrooms. Using Watanabe's five dimensions to describe this washback it can be said that the washback is specific, strong and positive in the current practice of teaching of speaking. Teachers have not only increased the teaching time for speaking, they have also adopted the format of the speaking test and thus created more opportunities for their pupils to communicate with each other. As far as the other three skills are concerned, the washback is also specific but weak at the same time. Several course books are already making use of the standardised prompt formats effectively but they do not support teaching or learning strategies that would encourage peer-writing or peer-assessment or decrease the number of gap-filling exercises to increase writing at text level.

Teachers who do not teach in upper secondary classes fail to explicitly teach reading or listening strategies. Their practice of treating reading and listening tasks as mere input which does not require any structured output or strategy use cannot be considered positive washback from E8 testing or standardisation. However, it must be said that the so-called "Dynamic Competences", which are aiming at strategy use and the development of metacognitive skills, are not sufficiently known or implemented.

Thus, the intended washback of E8 testing on classroom practice has not been fully achieved. Assessment literacy has only increased with trained raters, where the washback can be considered strong, but has not reached the majority of teachers without rater training.

The motivation of pupils through standardised testing has been positive with those pupils who were tested in speaking but nearly all the other pupils said that they had rather disliked the test and the long and stressful morning. Finally, the washback on the pupils' attitude towards learning has to be considered the weakest.

The following concluding statements verbalise the analysis in Table 2:

- Standards and standardised testing have increased the amount and quality of teaching speaking; yet speaking is not seriously tested or part of the final grade.
- Teachers who do not teach upper level classes are not aware of reading or listening strategies – they do not teach them and pupils have problems with tasks that require strategy use, especially with inferencing.
- Most teachers are not aware of text types or how to teach skills necessary to produce them effectively.
- Course books and test folders do not support explicit instruction of strategies or linguistic means to go about tasks strategically.
- Pupils and parents feel frustrated by the slow feedback – more immediate feedback should be considered. Otherwise they will not see any reason to change learning because of standards or standardised testing in the future.
- Testing in schools has not changed; it still overemphasises writing, especially through gap-filling tasks; text writing is often based on prompts that resemble the test format but that do not require higher level thinking.
- Changes in attitude towards teaching and learning of EFL seldom became visible in observed lessons.
- The potential competence orientation that could be achieved through standards and standardised testing might be wasted if it is not made more explicit and conscious in the future. This can be achieved through more explicit and strategic input and more immediate feedback before the pupils leave schools or go into summer holidays. (Mewald, 2015, pp. 40-41)

Watanabe's five dimensions (1997) Shohamy's criteria (1993)	Specificity. <i>general vs. specific</i>	Intensity. <i>strong vs. weak</i>	Length. <i>short vs. long</i>	Intentionality <i>unintended vs. intended</i>	Value <i>positive vs. negative</i>
washback effect	general: course and test materials are not specific enough to create specific washback	weak: test is low-stakes; pupils are not aware of standards, they do not benefit directly from the feedback of E8 testing and they lose interest in its results	long: standards have been legally enacted	intended: legal enactment	positive where training has reached teachers; no negative effects reported; neutral where it has not
measurement-driven instruction	specific: E8 testing is based on test constructs that define competences and uses clear assessment criteria	weak: classroom testing has not changed; it does not drive learning effectively but still remains alienated from learning	long: classroom testing may improve from repeated E8 tests	intended: testing materials are available and used by teachers	positive: assessment literacy will eventually improve classroom testing
curriculum alignment	specific: curriculum has changed to use can-do descriptors and CEFR levels	weak: curriculum change has not yet reached school books – not completely aligned with standards & CEFR descriptors in goal setting; teachers lack orientation	long: curriculum will stay the same and so will standards descriptors	intended: curriculum, standards and test constructs are aligned	positive: alignment has taken place simultaneously
systemic validity	general: need to demonstrate that the introduction of E8 testing can improve learning	weak: teachers' assessment literacy requires support	long: teachers' assessment literacy will develop	intended: teacher education has discovered assessment literacy as a goal	positive: growing assessment literacy will improve classroom testing and assessment

Table 2: Washback in five dimensions based on three criteria

6 Limitations, ethical considerations and outlook

Although the results presented in this paper rely on a relatively large sample and ample observation in classrooms, there are limitations to its generalisability. Any data presented in this study stems from teachers who have contributed voluntarily to the surveys, interviews and observations.

Teachers had opened their classrooms to the research upon invitation and they were committed and positive towards competency based education. None of the schools or teachers had negative feelings or attitudes towards standards or E8 testing. Thus, it has to be acknowledged that the study had aimed at finding washback. Still, it was not determined only to see the positive washback but also to be critical if needed.

All participants had been informed about their right to withdraw from the research at any time. None of the teachers did. On the contrary, some offered repeated visits; this was especially important when new changes through the implementation of the NMS became one of the research interests. Coming back to schools and engaging in a professional exchange brought about giving the documents in the appendix in exchange to the taking away of information, impressions and valuable new ideas for teacher education. Thus, the lists of descriptors for years 5 to 8, based on the CEFR and the Austrian portfolios, are the product of an ongoing debate with teachers about the need to make planning more targeted and able to inform pupils about goals and achievements. Moreover, the list of text types was intended to provide stimuli for varied text production which is still rather limited in scope in most course books. Finally, the rating scales were developed to help teachers without long and professional training to implement criterion oriented assessment in their classrooms and to encourage self- and peer-assessment with their learners. It is hoped that with this contribution research and classroom practice have created what was intended to be positive washback on each other's practice.

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Appendix

The following descriptors have been adapted from CEFR descriptors following the suggested practice of the framework. The CEFR intends to “be open and flexible, so that it can be applied, with such adaptations as prove necessary, to particular situations” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 7). Moreover, descriptors in European Language Portfolios, such as the ESP Mittelstufe (<http://www.oesz.at/sprachenportfolio/schueler.php?page=S1000>) were considered in the development of the following collection of descriptors for EFL in years 5-8.

DESCRIPTORS FOR LISTENING

Year 5 (input texts will mostly be at A1 – A2 level)

Can understand familiar words, phrases and simple sentences concerning themselves and their surroundings, especially if there is visual support (e.g. mime, gesture).
 Can understand simple instructions articulated carefully and slowly, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand main ideas and overt information/details in conversations which are carefully articulated, with pauses to assimilate meaning, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand words and numbers that are spelt to them.
 Can understand the main ideas, overt information/details and overt speaker attitude in very simple texts (e.g. stories, reports, songs...) that are suitable for their age, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand the social or situational context in simple conversations, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand main ideas, simple directions and how to get from X to Y, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand the gist of TV programmes or films that are easy to understand and that are suitable for their age.
 Can infer basic underlying information from simple conversations (e.g. simple indirect requests: It’s hot in here! - request to open the window)
 Can understand main information and specific details in personal conversations, phone calls, instructions, routine commands, time-table announcements, songs, poems, stories, and short classroom presentations/conversations.

Year 6 (input texts can be at A1 – A2 level; very short B1 input texts can be used if the task is very simple)

Can catch the main points of every day conversations, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand simple directions and how to get from X to Y.
 Can understand simple messages and announcements if they are audible and clear and distinguish them from supporting detail.
 Can identify the topic and the gist of simple fact-based information (news) or discussions (e.g. on the radio or TV).
 Can understand specific information/details in simple fictional and non-fictional texts that are suitable for their age, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand the main idea and most overt simple information/details in stories, sketches, dialogues, even though they do not know all of the words, especially if there is visual support.
 Can identify the situational context in conversations, even though they do not know all of the words.
 Can understand overt speaker attitude in stories, sketches, dialogues, even though they do not know all of the words, especially if there is visual support (e.g. mime and gesture, body language).
 Can understand simple lyrics even though they do not know all of the words when they have the opportunity to listen more than once and are given visual support.
 Can understand main information and specific details in interviews, anecdotes, travel accounts, exercise instructions, simple technical descriptions, recipes, sports commentaries, news, and longer classroom presentations/conversations.

Year 7 (input texts at A1 - B1 level and suitable authentic sources can be used)

Can understand the main ideas and specific details in uncomplicated texts that are suitable for their age and distinguish important information from supporting details.

Can understand the main idea and specific details/information in conversations about topics of immediate need (for example family, friends, hobbies etc.).
Can understand the main points/information in speech that is clearly articulated about familiar topics and distinguish important information from supporting details.
Can identify speaker attitude and situational context in conversations, even though they do not know all of the words.
Can understand overt information about familiar topics and infer consequential underlying meaning/information, especially if there is visual support.
Can follow audio- or video recorded input/film and identify speaker attitude if given visual support.
Can follow instructions for everyday equipment or activities, especially if there is visual support.
Can understand lyrics even though they do not know all of the words when they have the opportunity to listen to them more than once.
Can understand main information and specific details and identify attitudinal and contextual clues in urban legends, simplified readers, documentaries, simple talks, book reports or sketches appropriate for their age and level.

Year 8 (input texts at A1 - B1 level and suitable authentic sources can be used)

Can understand gist/main ideas and important detail/information in texts that are suitable for their age.
Can follow discussions about familiar topics is able to understand the main points, arguments and speaker attitude when standard language is used.
Can understand personal conversations on familiar topics, identify speaker attitude, situational context and underlying messages if they are clearly linked to explicitly stated ideas/details.
Can understand simple technical information, especially if there is visual support.
Can follow detailed descriptions of the way or everyday technical equipment in their fields of interest.
Can follow audio- or video recorded input/film and identify speaker attitude.
Can follow audio- or video recorded input/film and understand straightforward, concrete information and situational context.
Can understand factual information about familiar topics even in more complex input texts, especially if given visual support.
Can understand main information and specific details and identify attitudinal and contextual clues in short stories, young adult literature, jokes, simple lectures, movies or theatre plays appropriate for their age and level.

DESCRIPTORS FOR READING

Year 5 (input texts will mostly be at A1 – A2 level)

Can understand familiar words and very simple sentences (for example in notices, posters, catalogues etc.), especially if there is visual support.
Can understand simple instructions and rules (e.g. classrooms rules, instructions for tasks), especially if there is visual support.
Can understand the gist/main message of simple stories and fact based texts about familiar topics, especially if there is visual support.
Can understand concrete information in simple stories and fact based texts about familiar topics, especially if there is visual support.
Can understand concrete information in letters, e-mails, postcards, magazine articles, web-pages and short sketches if simple language is supported by visuals.
Can understand simple instructions and notices (e.g. public places, streets, shops...), especially if there is visual support.
Can follow short, simple written directions, for example understand descriptions of the way from X to Y, especially if there is visual support.
Can understand the setting and the function of simple texts.
Can use content pages to find text effectively.
Can use word lists or picture dictionaries to find the meaning of unknown words.
Can use glossaries to understand the meaning of unknown words.

Can understand the logical organization of a text: headline, beginning, middle, end if clearly marked.
 Can understand references in a text (e.g. through pronouns: this, that, these, those, he, she, it, they, we ...).
 Can identify paragraphs based on idea units.
 Can identify simple and familiar text types: e.g. letters, e-mails, stories, poems, fables, newspaper reports (weather), signs/notices, instructions...
 Can enjoy very simple graded readers at A1 level.

Year 6 (input texts can be at A1 – A2 level; very short B1 input texts can be used if the task is very simple)

Can understand concrete information in short, simple texts and specific, predictable information in simple everyday material (for example advertisements, prospectuses, menus, timetables etc.) and distinguish it from supporting detail.
 Can read for gist to identify the main idea of a text and apply skimming and scanning strategies to find overt pre-specified information quickly.
 Can understand concrete information in personal letters, e-mails, short messages, diary entries, sketches and (role-) plays if they contain the highest frequency vocabulary.
 Can understand everyday signs, instructions and notices (for example in public places, such as streets, restaurants, schools, shopping malls, railway stations, on public telephones and screens etc.).
 Can understand concrete information in stories and fact based texts about familiar topics at A2 level.
 Can use indexes to find information effectively.
 Can use bilingual dictionaries to find the meaning of uncomplicated unknown words.
 Can understand the logical organization of a text, i.e. can identify headings, sub-headings.
 Can identify key sentences in paragraphs, especially in non-fictional texts.
 Can enjoy simple graded readers (A1-A2).
 Can identify less familiar text types: e.g. notes, fairy tales, diary entries, magazine articles, signs, timetables, food/medicine labels, instructions, reports, menus, recipes ...

Year 7 (input texts at A1 - B1 level and age appropriate authentic texts can be used)

Can understand concrete information which depends on high frequency everyday language in short, simple texts on familiar matters and distinguish it from supporting detail.
 Can understand concrete information in standard routine letters, e-mails or faxes: enquiries, orders and letters of confirmation on familiar topics.
 Can find and understand relevant information and distinguish main points from supporting detail in simple everyday material, on familiar subjects (for example letters, brochures, prospectuses, advertisements, short official documents etc.).
 Can understand regulations, for example concerning safety in public places or on planes, trains or the subway, when expressed in everyday (non-technical) language.
 Can understand concrete information and infer simple underlying messages in fictional and fact based texts about familiar topics at A2 – B1 level.
 Can find pre-specified information quickly and effectively from a range of different texts.
 Can use monolingual dictionaries to find the meaning of unknown words, especially if there is visual support.
 Can understand the logical organization of a text: headings, sub-headings, forward and backward referencing.
 Can identify topic sentences in paragraphs, especially in non-fictional texts.
 Can identify most text types: personal, public and professional (=school) domain.
 Can enjoy extensive reading of longer non-fictional texts, graded readers (B1) and authentic young adult literature when given guidance.
 Can identify less familiar text types: e.g. simplified readers/young adult literature: crime, science fiction, love and romance, travel reports, urban legends, newspaper articles, book/film reviews, factual reports, guides, reference books (science, nature, arts & crafts, house & home, health...), biographies, interviews...

Year 8 (input texts at A1 - B1 level and age appropriate authentic texts can be used)

Can understand concrete information and infer underlying messages in texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job/school- related language on subjects related to the learners' fields of interest.

Can understand the description of events, feelings, and wishes in personal conversations well enough to react appropriately to speaker attitude or behaviour.
 Can understand the main idea, specific details and situational contexts in simple literary texts.
 Can understand the most overt feelings and attitudes of speakers in simple literary texts.
 Can use skimming and scanning strategies in order to locate desired information and gather information from different parts of a text in order to fulfil a specific task (e.g. select passages for careful reading quickly).
 Can recognise the line of argument in a short text, though not necessarily in detail.
 Can understand clearly written, straightforward instructions for a piece of equipment or activities (e.g. electronic devices, gymnastic exercises...).

Can understand stories and fact based texts about familiar topics at B1 level, especially if there is visual support.
 Can use monolingual dictionaries to find the meaning of most unknown words at B1 level.
 Can identify concluding sentences (justifications) in paragraphing, especially in non-fictional texts.
 Can enjoy longer authentic texts for young adults when given guidance in the selection of texts or choosing carefully based on interest and readiness.
 Can identify less familiar text types and differentiate between fiction and non-fiction: e.g. simplified readers/young adult literature, reference books, travel reports, historical novels – historical accounts, safety regulations, advertisements, forms, simple business letters (letter of complaint, applications for holiday jobs/schools) ...

DESCRIPTORS FOR SPEAKING

Year 5

Descriptors for oral production	Text types	Communicative functions
Can describe himself/herself, familiar places, people, animals and objects (e.g. home, classroom, family and friends, food, clothes, pets etc.).	descriptions	to describe (to compare) people, places, objects
Can describe events and activities (e.g. daily routine, birthday parties, hobbies, sports activities, weather, seasons etc.).	descriptions	to describe events or activities
Can tell/retell short, simple narratives or stories on familiar topics, guided with pictures, keywords, or phrases.	stories	to tell and retell present events
Descriptors for spoken interaction		
Can ask for or pass on simple personal information (e.g. family and friends, hobbies, pets ...).	functional discourse/ informal conversation	to ask for and give information
Can ask about things and make simple transactions (shopping, asking for the time/well-being etc.).	functional discourse	to greet and depart, to ask for things, to thank, to ask for/offer help/attention
Can make simple arrangements (e.g. where and when to meet, what to do etc.).	functional discourse/ informal conversation	to invite/request to join
Can express likes and dislikes	informal conversation	to express opinions
Linguistic competence		
Can link words, groups of words or simple sentences with very basic linear connectors like 'and', 'but' or 'because' ('then') as a simple list of points.		
Can use very simple sentence starters like first, then or at last (after a while, later, finally) to structure a text and give it a sense of beginning, middle, and end.		
Can use a very simple learnt repertoire of words, phrases, and structures with enough control so that the message is usually clear.		
Starts using very simple turntaking phrases (e.g. And you? What about you?)		

Year 6

Descriptors for oral production	Text types	Communicative functions *
Can describe and compare places, people, animals and objects.	descriptions	to describe and to compare people, places, objects
Can describe past events and activities (e.g. birthday parties, festivals, holidays etc.) and give simple instructions.	descriptions	to describe past events or activities, to give instructions
Can tell/retell short, simple narratives or stories, guided with pictures, keywords, or phrases in present and past tense.	stories	to tell and retell present and past events
Descriptors for spoken interaction		
Can ask for or pass on personal information of some detail (e.g. about family, friends, home etc.)	functional discourse/ informal conversation	to ask for and give information
Can get simple information about travel, use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask and give directions, and buy tickets.	functional discourse	to ask for/offer help, to ask for/give information
Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.	informal conversation	to express feelings, attitudes, opinions
Can make and respond to invitations and apologies.	informal conversation	to invite, to apologise
Linguistic competence		
Can use a simple learnt repertoire of words, phrases and structures with enough control so that the message is usually clear. Starts using lexical and grammatical elements independently and creatively (with less control).		
Can create simple sentence level cohesion through conjunctions like 'or', 'if', 'when' or 'where' (for, since, if, while, before...), reference (pronouns, demonstratives, comparatives), or substitution (one/ones).		
Can use simple phrases for basic turntaking (e.g. What do you think? I think so too. I agree.).		

(*) year 5 functions supplemented by ...

Year 7

Descriptors for oral production	Text types	Communicative functions *
Can ask for or pass on detailed personal information.	functional discourse/ informal conversation	to ask for and give information
Can give simple accounts of experiences and events.	personal report	to report about events/personal experiences
Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans, and actions.	personal statement	to give reasons, explanations
Can give a short, rehearsed presentation on familiar topics. Can respond to straightforward follow-up questions.	expository discourse	to report about a topic
Can tell/retell narratives or stories, true or invented.	stories	to tell and retell a story
Descriptors for spoken interaction		
Can communicate in simple routine situations in everyday life.	functional discourse/ informal conversation	to initiate, maintain, and close a conversation; to request action; to express preference
Can discuss what to do and make plans.	argumentative discourse	to agree/accept/disagree
Can initiate, maintain or close simple, face-to-face conversations on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.	informal conversation	to initiate, maintain and close conversations

Linguistic competence
Can use linking words like 'firstly', 'lastly' or 'finally' ('in addition', 'after all') to sequence information.
Can use a sufficient** repertoire of words, phrases and structures independently but with enough control so that the message is mostly clear.
Can use a repertoire of turntaking phrases (e.g. What do you think? Do you agree? What's your opinion? I think so, too. I cannot agree completely...)

(*) year 5 and 6 functions supplemented by ...

(**) sufficient refers to the texts types and functions listed above and in years 5 - 6

Year 8

Descriptors for oral production	Text types	Communicative functions *
Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions.	descriptions	to describe dreams, hopes, plans, ambitions
Can present a topic and respond to follow-up questions.	expository discourse	to report about a topic
Can give reasons for opinions and plans.	personal statement	to give reasons and explanations
Descriptors for spoken interaction		
Can exchange relevant information and give his/her opinion on familiar topics.	argumentative discourse	to ask for/give information; to ask for/express preference
Can respond to suggestions and agree and disagree with others.	argumentative discourse	to agree/accept/disagree
Can give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest; can briefly give reasons and explanations.	informal discussion	to agree/disagree; to ask for/express preference
Can initiate, maintain and close simple, face-to-face conversations.	informal conversation	to initiate, maintain and close conversations

Linguistic competence
Can use cohesive devices to sequence information, give reasons, exemplify, or conclude, e.g. 'therefore', 'for example' or 'although' ('so that', 'consequently', 'as a result')
Can use a sufficient repertoire of words, phrases and structures with enough control so that the message is clear.
Can use a wider repertoire of turntaking phrases (e.g. Would you like to comment on this? What are your ideas? I don't trust your arguments. I could not agree more.)

(*) year 5-7 functions supplemented by ...

(**) sufficient refers to the texts types and functions listed above and in years 5 – 7

Text types - oral production	Features	Examples
description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the phenomenon - describes its parts, qualities, and/or characteristics - mostly uses present tense, adverbs and adjectives, or comparisons - past tense is used for descriptions of past events 	descriptions of things, people, places, pets, pictures
expository discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presents a topic in a static way - information is logically organised around a theme - states a problem - presents some arguments - offers a solution (and probably an evaluation of the solution) 	positive and negative sides of life in the country
story/narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses mainly past tense - presents a series of events in a linear sequence - often uses direct speech to make the listeners feel, think, 	true or invented stories, retold stories

	and share experiences through the real dialogues of the participants (often in the present)	
personal report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe the features of events within the experience of the test takers - follow a structure of what, when, where, with whom, why, how - use facts to explain something or give details about a topic - can be descriptive - are mainly delivered in the past - present tense can be used for rituals in the test takers' daily lives 	reports about holidays, weekends, sports weeks, excursions, family meetings, daily routines
personal statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presents a point of view - states reasons - explains plans or facts - mostly features present tense or future tense (possibly the conditional) 	future education / job / life / ideal place to live / ideal partner or family / free time or holiday preferences etc.
Text types - spoken interaction	Features	Examples
argumentative discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - speakers maintain opposing positions or compare similar opinions - arguments are shared in personal, social interaction - discussants come to a conclusion 	choosing places and activities for holidays, sports weeks; teenage problems such as pocket money, going out...
functional discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - features concrete social functions - often starts with and ends with greeting - aims at achieving a certain goal - is mostly informal in nature 	greeting and departing, expressing feelings, making arrangements or transactions, getting information ...
informal conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal information is exchanged - informal language - speakers usually know each other 	private conversation
informal discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presents arguments and information about a familiar topic from different points of view - phrases a recommendation as to how to solve a problem or react to a certain situation - more formal than argumentative discourse 	discussion about familiar topics at school

Speaking rubric years 5 & 6	Innovating /4.0	Applying / 3.0	Developing /2.0	Beginning / 1.0
Task Achievement How effectively is the information conveyed? How effectively is the theme developed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information communicated comprehensibly - main ideas linked in a narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information mostly communicated comprehensibly - main ideas sometimes linked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited information, not always comprehensible - simple list of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very little information - ideas presented randomly
How effective is turntaking?	- basic turntaking using stock phrases	- beginning turntaking using	- simple questions	- beginning use of questions

		stock phrases		
Clarity & Naturalness of Speech How long and connected is the speech? How fluent is the speech and how natural are the pauses? How clear are pronunciation and intonation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connected stretches of speech - some degree of fluency and some pauses for planning - pronunciation clear; very few mispronunciations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beginning stretches of speech - beginning fluency despite several pauses for planning - pronunciation generally intelligible; occasional mispronunciations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short contributions - noticeable pauses or false starts sometimes causing breakdown - pronunciation intelligible; mispronunciations sometimes impair understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very short, isolated utterances - much hesitation frequently causing breakdown - frequent mispronunciations; understood with effort
Linguistic range How varied are lexical elements and grammatical structures? How well do they support the message and contribute to the success of the performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - linguistic range appropriate and purposeful; repetitions are rare - some simple compound or complex sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - linguistic range not completely appropriate; some repetitions - some simple compound sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - linguistic range sometimes limited; frequent repetitions - simple isolated sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited linguistic range - mainly word or word group level sentences
Accuracy How correct is the language? Do mistakes (lexis or grammar) impair understanding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language generally correct - some mistakes may occur; no impact on comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language often correct - mistakes with hardly any impact on comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language sometimes correct - mistakes with some impact on comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language correct enough to be understood by an international audience

Speaking rubric years 7 & 8	Innovating = 4.0	Applying = 3.0	Developing = 2.0	Beginning = 1.0
Task Achievement How effectively is the information conveyed? How effectively is the theme developed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - detailed information communicated reliably - main ideas expanded and linked in a narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concrete information communicated comprehensibly - main ideas mostly linked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited information, not always comprehensible - simple list of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very little information - ideas presented randomly
How effective is turntaking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effective turntaking (initiating, maintaining and/or closing discourse) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic turntaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effective use of questions in information exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beginning use of questions to get information
Clarity & Naturalness of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - longer stretches of speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connected stretches of speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short contributions - noticeable pauses, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very short, isolated utterances

Speech How long and connected is the speech? How fluent is the speech and how natural are the pauses? How clear are pronunciation and intonation?	- fluent and spontaneous with natural pauses - pronunciation and intonation clear and natural	- some degree of fluency and some pauses for planning - pronunciation and intonation intelligible; mispronunciations are rare	hesitations or false starts sometimes causing breakdown - pronunciation intelligible; mispronunciations or accent sometimes impair understanding	- much hesitation, frequently causing breakdown - frequent mispronunciations; only understood with effort
Linguistic range How varied are lexical elements and grammatical structures? How well do they support the message and contribute to the success of the text?	- linguistic range helps to convey message effectively (i.e. choice of words, phrases and structures make the text interesting and engaging) - some variation through compound and complex sentences	- linguistic range is appropriate and purposeful - some compound or complex sentences	- linguistic range sometimes limited - some repetitions - sentence structures show little variation and are repetitive	- limited linguistic range - frequent repetitions - simple sentences
Accuracy Do mistakes (lexis or grammar) impair understanding?	- language generally correct - some mistakes may occur; no impact on comprehension	- language often correct - mistakes with hardly any impact on comprehension	- language sometimes correct - mistakes with some impact on comprehension	- language correct enough to be understood by an international audience

DESCRIPTORS FOR WRITING

Year 5

Descriptors	Text types	Communicative functions
Can write short, simple texts on familiar topics (e.g. home, classroom, shopping, parties, family and friends, seasons and time, food, clothes, hobbies etc.).	informal descriptions or reports	to describe and/or to compare people, places, objects, activities, animals, pets
Can ask for or pass on simple personal details (e.g. family and friends, hobbies, pets ...).	surveys, profiles or postings in social networks	to ask for and give informal information about people, places, objects, activities, pets
Can fill in simple information (e.g. numbers, dates, own name, nationality, address, age, date of birth etc.).	forms	to inform
Can write short simple texts addressed to people they know (e.g. family and friends).	postcards, text messages, letters, e-mails	to report, to say thanks, to invite, to give and ask for information, to keep in touch, to express interest or hope, to ask for something or directions, to announce

Can write short, simple narratives on familiar topics, guided with pictures, keywords, or phrases.	stories	to tell and retell present and past events
Can write about simple plans (e.g. in school magazines, blogs ...).	letters, e-mails, informal reports, articles, postings in social networks	to inform about the near future
Linguistic competence		
Can link words, groups of words or simple sentences with very basic linear connectors like 'and', 'but' or 'because' ('then') as a simple list of points.		
Can use very simple sentence starters like first, then or at last (after a while, later, finally) to structure a text and give it a sense of beginning, middle, and end.		
Can use a very simple learnt repertoire of words, phrases, and structures with enough control so that the message is usually clear.		

Year 6

Descriptors	Text types	Communicative functions*
Can write texts addressed to people they know (e.g. family, friends, teachers, peers)	notes, text messages, letters, e-mails	to apologise, to give reason, to ask for/offer help, to give explanations, to inform
Can write short texts on familiar topics (e.g. articles in youth magazines, school website...).	informal description, report	to report about or describe people, pets, places, objects, events or familiar topics, to inform
Can write simple narratives.	stories, fairy tales, legends	to entertain
Can write simple lyrical texts.	poems	to entertain
Linguistic competence		
Can use a simple learnt repertoire of words, phrases and structures with enough control so that the message is usually clear. Starts using lexical and grammatical elements independently and creatively (with less control).		
Can create simple sentence level cohesion through conjunctions like 'or', 'if', 'when' or 'where' (for, since, if, while, before...), reference (pronouns, demonstratives, comparatives), or substitution (one/ones).		
Can use paragraphs to structure simple texts.		

(*) year 5 functions supplemented by ...

Year 7

Descriptors	Text types	Communicative functions*
Can write detailed texts addressed to people they know or to foreign people but in familiar situations.	personal letters, e-mails	to report about or describe events, experiences and feelings, to ask for/give advice, to sympathize, to suggest, to ask for/give advice, to persuade
Can write texts on familiar topics.	factual reports or descriptions	to report about or describe people, pets, places, events, familiar topics, personal experiences, or feelings, to inform
Can write short, simple texts about interesting or famous personalities, if provided with key facts.	biographies	to inform
Can write endings to narratives on familiar topics.	stories, fables, fairy tales, legends, jokes	to entertain

Can write short texts about books/stories or films.	summaries, reviews	to inform, to express preference/opinion, to describe feelings
Can describe simple everyday objects and processes.	factual description, processes description	to give information/directions/instructions
Linguistic competence		
Can create simple paragraph level cohesion and uses linking words like 'firstly', 'lastly' or 'finally' ('in addition', 'after all') to sequence information.		
Can use a sufficient** repertoire of words, phrases and structures independently but with enough control so that the message is mostly clear.		

(*) year 5 and 6 functions supplemented by ...

(**) sufficient refers to the texts types and functions listed above and in years 5 - 6

Year 8

Descriptors	Text types	Communicative functions*
Can write connected texts on familiar topics.	factual descriptions, reports, explanation, articles in youth magazine	to report about or describe people, pets, places, events, personal experiences, feelings, reactions, wishes, or future plans, to inform, to declare position, to express opinion, to give reasons/explanations
Can write narratives, true or invented.	stories, fables, legends, fairy tales, jokes	to entertain
Can write notes for short, simple presentations on topics of interest.	mind maps, notes	to give information/directions/instructions, to declare position, to express opinions/feelings/attitudes
Can write letters of application including a CV (e.g. to apply for a summer job).	application, CV – long and short version	to inform, to offer help/services
Linguistic competence		
Can create paragraph level cohesion and uses cohesive devices to sequence information, give reasons, exemplify, or conclude, e.g. 'therefore', 'for example' or 'although' ('so that', 'consequently', 'as a result')		
Can use a sufficient repertoire of words, phrases and structures with enough control so that the message is clear.		

(*) year 5-7 functions supplemented by ...

(**) sufficient refers to the texts types and functions listed above and in years 5 - 7

Text types	Features	Examples
application letter including CV	- has a letter head - begins with a salutation - lists reasons for applying and qualifications - ends with a final statement and signature - CV lists information in a structured way (attachment)	application for a summer job
article in youth magazine	- has a headline - describes, reports, tells stories or discusses topics - ends with a concluding statement	adventure, field trip, pets, music...
biography	- has a title	(personal) heroes,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describes characteristic features of a person/group of people, e.g. physical appearance, behaviour, activities, preferences - describes events in the life/lives of the person/people 	sports people, celebrities
card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - begins with a salutation - greets, congratulates, invites someone - ends with an endnote 	birthday, invitation, party, farewell, congratulation
email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a subject line - can begin with a salutation - briefly describes places, people or objects; reports about activities or events; responds to a text (e.g. another email, article etc.) - ends with an end note - can use acronyms and text message shorthand - can be interactive (may contain questions, replies, requests ...) 	s.a.
essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - starts by outlining the topic - describes items related to the topic in their right order - explains how the items relate to each other and to the topic - ends with a concluding statement - can include visual images, e.g. pictures, flowcharts or diagrams to support the text 	topic presentation
factual description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with an introductory statement - systematically describes different aspects of the subject - ends with a concluding statement - is objective (no personal opinion) 	home town
factual report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with a general classification or definition - includes background information about who, when or where - lists a sequence of activities or events - ends with a concluding comment - is objective (no personal opinion) 	school project, historical report
film/book/play summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - describes setting, characters and plot 	film/book/play
film/book/play review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - briefly describes setting, characters and plot - describes how the writer feels about a novel, film, book or play - lists what did and did not appeal to the writer or provides a personal comment on the characters or events 	film/book/play
form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - requires short answers mostly following a given structure - can use acronyms 	membership forms
informal description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with an introductory statement - describes different aspects of the subject or object - may include the writer's opinion - ends with a concluding statement 	people, objects, animals, landscapes
informal report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with an introductory statement - includes background information about who, when or where - describes a sequence of activities or events - may include the writer's opinion - ends with a concluding statement 	activities, events
letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - begins with a salutation - describes places, people or objects; reports about activities or events; responds to a text (e.g. another letter, article etc.) 	pen pals, holiday, complaint, invitation, planning,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ends with an end note - is interactive (may contain questions, replies, requests etc.) 	letter to the editor (youth mag)
note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can begin with a salutation - very briefly delivers a message - can end with an end note - can use telegraphese, acronyms and text message shorthand 	home late, where to find food
poem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - text may rhyme - does not have to follow rules of grammar or punctuation 	
postcard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can begin with a salutation - briefly describes places, people or objects and/or reports about activities or events; - can use telegraphese 	holiday, weekend trip
process description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with a statement of the goal (can be the title) - can list materials/ingredients needed - gives a series of steps (instructions) in chronological order 	pizza recipe
story, legend, fairy tale, fable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - has a beginning, middle, and end - time, place (setting) and characters are introduced - has a storyline/plot - may contain a message/moral - may be real or invented 	picture stories, adventure, fantasy, science fiction, crime and suspense
survey outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with a statement of the goal (can be the title) - lists questions to be asked 	use of mobile phones in class
survey report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a title - begins with a statement of the goal (can be the title) - can list questions that were asked - gives a summary of results (can be done in diagrammatic form) 	use of mobile phones in class
text message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses acronyms and text message shorthand - is interactive (s.a.) 	s.a.

Writing rubric years 5 & 6	Innovating / 4.0	Applying / 3.0	Developing / 2.0	Beginning / 1.0
Task Achievement How well does the writer convey the concrete message? Are there any concrete details? Does the writer stick to the text features?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - message/content meaningful and successful - some details - good layout & format - text features met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - message/content meaningful and mostly successful - few details - layout & format appropriate - text features mostly met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - message/content sometimes unclear - hardly any details - layout & format messy - text features not completely met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - message/content often unclear - no details - layout, format not appropriate - beginning to use text features
Coherence and cohesion How well is the text organised? Are beginning, middle and end clearly and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - text organised with beginning – middle - end - several sentence starters, linking words - ideas clustered in paragraphs; not always marked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - text organised with sense of beginning and end - some sentence starters and linking words - ideas sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some idea of beginning or end - some linking words, e.g. 'and', 'but', 'because' - ideas not linked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - isolated sentences - some sentence co-ordination with 'and' or 'but'

effectively marked? Is the text coherent on sentence level? Are paragraphs visibly marked?		linked		
Linguistic range How varied are lexical elements and grammatical structures? How well do they support the message and contribute to the success of the text?	- linguistic range is completely appropriate and purposeful - simple compound and occasionally some complex sentences	- linguistic range appropriate - some repetitions - sentence structures show some variation but are repetitive	- linguistic range sometimes limited - several repetitions - sentence structures often repetitive	- limited linguistic range - sentence structure highly repetitive
Accuracy How correct is the language? Do mistakes (lexis or grammar) impair understanding?	- language almost always correct and always comprehensible - minor mistakes may occur	- language mostly correct and almost always comprehensible	- language sometimes correct and to be understood most of the time	- language correct enough to be understood by an international audience
Writing rubric years 7 & 8	Innovating / 4.0	Applying / 3.0	Developing / 2.0	Beginning / 1.0
Task Achievement How well does the writer convey the message? Are there any details? Does the writer stick to the text features?	- message/content meaningful and completely successful - several relevant / interesting / creative details - layout & format outstanding - text features met - word limit met or exceeded	- message/content meaningful and mostly successful - some details - layout & format appropriate - text features met - appropriate length	- message/content sometimes unclear - hardly any details - text features met but text shorter than expected	- message/content often unclear - no details - layout, format not appropriate; - text features not completely met; limited length
Coherence and cohesion How well is the text organised? Are beginning, middle and end clearly and effectively marked? Does the text flow, i.e. is it coherent on sentence and paragraph level? Are paragraphs	- text well organised with strong beginning – middle - strong end - sentence starters, linking words used effectively - good sentence level coherence - paragraphs largely coherent	- text organised with sense of beginning – middle - end - sentence starters and linking words used throughout - some sentence level cohesion - paragraphs clearly marked	- text loosely organised - some linking words - very little sentence level cohesion - ideas clustered in paragraphs but not always marked	- isolated sentences - some sentence co-ordination, e.g. with 'and', 'but' or 'because'

coherent and visibly marked?				
Linguistic range How varied are lexical elements and grammatical structures? How well do they support the message and contribute to the success of the text?	- linguistic range helps to convey message effectively (i.e. choice of words/phrases/structures make the text interesting/engaging) - consistent variation (compound and complex sentences)	- linguistic range is appropriate and purposeful - some variation through compound and complex sentences	- linguistic range sometimes limited - some repetitions - sentence structures show little variation and are repetitive	- limited linguistic range - frequent repetitions - sentence structure simple and highly repetitive
Accuracy How correct is the language? Do mistakes (lexis or grammar) impair understanding?	- language almost always correct and always comprehensible - minor mistakes may occur	- language mostly correct and almost always comprehensible	- language sometimes correct and to be understood most of the time	- language correct enough to be understood by an international audience