

The Washback of Writing Assessment

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Abstract

Writing assessment to monitor students progress in writing skill is often implemented in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The assessment should be adhered with the principles of second language assessment. One of principles is washback. Washback is an effect of assessment. Washback in assessment generally refers to the effect of test in teaching and learning in terms of students preparation. It means that washback can occur before the assessment. This research aims to find out the activities students do in regard with writing assessment and the washback of writing assessment. This research used qualitative research design and interview was used as the data collection method. The researcher interviewed four students batch 2017 at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. The result showed that writing assessment presented positive washback. Students perceived three positive washback of writing assessment that was conducted in ELED. First, the assessment makes students do some preparation. Second, feedback gives benefit for students writing ability. Third, the result of assessment makes students study the material.

Keywords: Washback, writing assessment, types of assessment, the impact of washback.

Background of the study

The challenge for teachers especially in writing assessment is to make an assessment for student which can give a positive washback. According to Brown (2003), washback is one of the principles of second language assessment. Based on the researcher experience ELED lecturer apply assessment in monitoring students skills including writing skill. However the washback research has never been conduct in ELED,so the researcher is interested in doing this research to find out the washback of writing assessment that is conducted in ELED.

Literature Review

Washback is an important principle of an assessment in language testing. According on Bedford(2002), washback has generally been described as the effect of assessment on teaching and learning. Brown (2003) stated that washback also includes the effect of the tests on teaching and learning in terms of students preparation for the test. This effect can be positive or negative. According to Brown (2003), there are two kinds of assessment that present washback: informal and formal performance assessment. Informal assessments are more likely to present washback than formal assessments because the teacher usually provides an interactive feedback in informal performance assessments. The challenge for teacher is to achieve washback on the classroom test. One way to enhance washback is by giving feedback on students test performance.

Method

This research was conducted at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. In this study the researcher involved students of English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta as the participants. This study used interview as the data collection method to collect data. Interview was conducted because the researcher wanted to explore information from participants by doing follow up questions and clarifying the answer.

Finding

There are two main points explained in this chapter based on the research questions. The research questions are regarding with the activities students do in regard with writing assessment and washback of writing assessment applied at the English Language Education Department of a private university in Yogyakarta. The finding in the category of the activities students do in regard with writing assessment answered the first research question while category of washback of writing assessment answered the second research question. There are three findings in each point.

Conclusion

In writing, a teacher usually uses assessment to monitor students' writing ability. The assessment used should adhere the principles of second language assessment. One of them is washback. Washback is the effect of assessment for teaching and learning process in a form of positive or negative. ELED lecturers also used assessment to monitor students' writing skill. On the other hand

washback research has never been conducted in ELED so the researcher was interested in finding out the washback of writing assessment which was used in ELED. To find out the washback of writing assessment, this study used qualitative approach. This study has two objectives; first, to find out the activities students do in regard with writing assessment, and second, to find out the washback of writing assessment used at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. To gather the data, interviews were held to four participants of ELED batch 2017. Based on the answer of those participants, it is revealed that there were two main points that consists of three findings for each main points.

The first main point is with the activities students do in regard with writing assessment. Based on the findings, the participants of this study explain their experience when they were facing the assessment. The students said that they did some preparations, before doing the assesment. The students also received feedback on the assessment. After the assessment had finished the student reviewed the result of assessment and studied the materials by looking at the wrong answer on the answer sheet.

The second main point is the washback of writing assessment. The result showed that all of washback presented by writing assessment was positive. Based on the findings, the participant said that the assessment made students did some preparation which indicated that the assessment made students paid attention to the material thoroughly. The participants said that the feedback given by the lecturer presented positive washback, by receiving feedback, the students knew

which part of the material they did not know well, so they could fix their mistake for the next assessment. The last finding is that the assessment gave a positive washback because the students studied the material from the assessment results.

In short, this study concludes that writing assessment used in ELED presents positive washback. In this study four ELED students batch 2017 were interviewed as the participants who were accessible and easy for the researcher. However, because the participants came from the same class, the result could not be transferable to the whole students of batch 2017. Therefore, when reading the finding of this study, please do take the study limitation into account.

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