

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the study**

Tests are always crucial and important in education realm, especially in the classroom decisions. There are formative and summative tests, diagnostic and prognostic tests, entrance test, teacher-made test and standardized test, etc. The teachers tend to use formative and summative test in the classroom. Both tests can be the teacher-made-test or taken from standardized test. In fact, the classroom test is closely related to the students' learning and the teachers' teaching process.

In general, the conducted-test which is applied in those various school conditions and backgrounds is acquainted with a kind of criterion-referenced (CRT). It significantly measures the students' strengths and weaknesses (Djuric, 2008). This specific test requires the goals and objectives of national curriculum and it is the same as the purpose of CRT. The teachers would deliver the tests based on what the students learn from what is taught by the teacher following the objectives of the curriculum. Therefore, the classroom test is a kind of CRT which shows the students' authentic learning progress and the teachers' teaching objectives as followed in the educational system.

The tests are needed to obtain measureable outcomes from the students and of the teachers' teaching input in the classroom. Therefore, it is obvious that the tests have influence on learning and teaching. In the classroom the teaching process based on the objectives and goals of the curriculum, the

teachers deliver the subject core for the students to obtain cognitive skills. Then, the students acquire them in their study and learning. For example, they study grammar and learn how to use it in speaking and writing. Next, based on the syllabus and lesson plan program, the teachers will conduct the classroom test to measure the students' achievement. Whether the test is to measure the learning or to achieve the specific standard score of the students, both the teachers and the students will attain utmost effort on this process.

In fact, the tests in the classroom practice could represent a multifaceted-condition of the teaching and learning aspect. The test could create various necessary and unnecessary responses of teaching and learning. The necessary responses are connected with the demanded-process based on the curriculum, syllabus and lesson plan of the subject core. Thus, the teachers need to follow them when they deliver the lesson. They also apply teaching techniques to help the students acquiring the objectives and goals of the subject. The students also follow the process in order to study the subject core and learn the cognitive aspect of it. They are motivated to achieve them not only in class, but also in their daily study habit. As a result, when the test is delivered, as Roediger III (2014, p. 1) wrote, it will "...encourage students to practice the valuable skill of retrieving and using knowledge." On the other hand, the teachers and the students can also acquire unnecessary responses. When the teachers only focus on the score results and not with the proper process, they are meant as obtaining unnecessary decisions. The improper process is about narrowing the curriculum, syllabus and lesson plan as Salehi,

Karimvand and Naeeni (2011, p. 5) quoted Noble and Smith, 1994 p.6, said that “teaching test-taking-skills and drilling on multiple-choice worksheets is likely to boost the scores but unlikely to increase general understanding.” The teachers do not pay attention to the objectives and goals of subject core. The students also tend to follow the improper process in order to be good test takers merely. Therefore, those kinds of response or influence are called washback effect of the tests (Alderson & Wall, 1992).

The washback itself has been defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1992; Cheng, 1999; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Mardiani, 2012; Salehi, Yunus, & Salehi, 2011). As Cheng and Curtis cite from Popham, 1987, the concept of washback is rooted in the notion that tests would drive teaching and hence learning, and also refers to a measureable-driven instruction (2004, p. 4). In fact, the influence of the test sufficiently could expose the students’ motivation and achievement gap, and also the teachers’ effort in classroom work (Harlen & Crick, 2002).

Most of the previous studies have attempted the investigation of the washback on the high-stakes examinations, such as: state examination, national examination, university preparation test, and TOEFL or IELTS. They investigated and observed what has happened in the classroom practice because of all those high-stakes examinations. Some of them also did the survey on the teachers and the stakeholders of the school to obtain their perceptions, behaviors, and motivation when the high-stakes examinations are delivered to their students. For example, changing test development and

design to obtain positive washback in Canada (Saif, 2006). Another study is also for national examinations in Colombia (Manjarres, 2005). As a case study she described the aspect of a test to teaching and learning to perceive a complex phenomenon of washback. In more recent study, Behrenwald (2010) tried to obtain preventive washback in the classroom practice because of External Independent Testing (EIT) in Ukrainian EFL. The last is Andrews (2004) who adjusted the curriculum because of the results of the washback investigation among the EFL teachers. Thus, all researchers recognize and experience the testing consequences among the teachers and the students. Most of the research and study, the washback has been acquired for macro context evaluation and improvement. Yet, in Indonesia education context, the study about washback effect still apprehend about national examination (UNAS).

Therefore, this present study aims to generate the washback effect of EFL the classroom tests which directly concerns with the classroom practice. The EFL classroom test is more closely related to the students' performance and the teachers' decisions in the classroom. For the teachers, the EFL the classroom tests would focus on obtaining information about the students' development which is also related to the teachers' particular instruction and decision in the classroom (Brookhart & Nitko, 2007). In that state, washback mechanism is necessary to do in the classroom test in order to obtain the real value of the test preparation for the students. The washback effect could reflect the teachers' decisions and strategies to prepare their students

encountering the test. Therefore, Brown (1996) said that they could help to improve classroom achievement and provide the needs of the students

### **The Research Question**

In this study, the washback phenomenon was obtained on the particular context of the classroom practice. The particular context of classroom practice promoted and exposed several kinds of actions because of the EFL classroom tests. This study tried to discover the effect of EFL classroom tests to the teachers' teaching and the students' learning. In fact, each response reflected the effect of the tests on teaching and learning. Everything that was done by the teachers and the students would represent the effect of EFL classroom tests. Based on those facts, this present study attempted to generate the main research questions based on Brown's "Strategies for Taking Tests" (2002). This empirical study sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the effects of the classroom tests on the teaching process?
  - a. What teaching materials are delivered before the test?
  - b. What teaching strategies are employed to prepare the classroom test?
  - c. What does the teachers' plan for test-design?
2. What are the effects of the EFL classroom tests on the learning process?
  - a. What materials are learned to prepare the classroom test?
  - b. What the students' strategies are used employed for test-taking?
  - c. What the students' activities before the classroom test?

Therefore, the value of washback effect is able to be revealed in order to expose and evaluate the whole teaching, learning and testing process in the classroom practice.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This present study is going to investigate, observe and survey the changes of teaching and learning because of the tests in the classroom practice in Grade 7-8 of junior high school in Surabaya. The washback effect of EFL the classroom tests toward teaching and learning would be exposed and based on what occur in the classroom. Firstly, the researcher expected to obtain the teachers' decisions for the students before the EFL the classroom tests. Secondly, the researcher expected also to acquire the way of how the students prepare the EFL classroom test. Thus, the extents of the teachers' and the students' responses toward the classroom test are expected to show the washback effect phenomenon in the classroom practice.

The first is to discover the influence of EFL classroom tests toward the teaching process which consist of:

- To examine the teachers' teaching content before the tests
- To examine the teachers' teaching strategies to prepare their students before the classroom tests
- To examine the teachers' plan for classroom test design

The next is to discover the influence of EFL classroom tests toward the students' learning strategies which consist of:

- To examine the students' learning content before the EFL classroom tests
- To examine the students' strategies in preparing the EFL classroom tests.
- To examine the students' activities before the test

Then, all the results of the tests influences are expected to generate washback effect of the tests in the classroom practice.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The washback effect is the influence of the test toward teaching and learning. It means that the tests influence everything which is connected with teaching and learning, such as the strategies and activities (Messick, 1996). Hughes (1993), as cited by Cheng and Curtis (2004), mentioned that the washback investigation would involve briefly the whole aspects in the classroom practice. Therefore, the teachers and the students are the most important areas to generate the washback effect of the tests.

Based on the complexity of the washback phenomenon approach, Watanabe (2004) has divided it into three outlines that could expose and verify everything occurring in the classroom. All decisions and practices in the classroom between the teachers and the students would be determined and identified as the washback phenomenon.

It is necessary to recognize the washback phenomenon and its approach in the classroom tests. The tests influence in the classroom could be anything that happens between the teachers and the students. The classroom

tests will trigger several decisions from the teachers while the students decide several actions and attitudes to prepare for test-taking before the tests. The teachers might determine themselves to do necessary or unnecessary decisions on teaching because of the tests (Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Alderson & Wall, 1992). The same decisions could also occur among the students.

Furthermore, Alderson and Wall (1992) described that the teachers' perception about the classroom tests was connected with the test results. Smith, 1991, as cited in Alderson and Wall (1992) has reported that the test result provoked "feeling of fear, guilt, shame, embarrassment and anger in teachers." Therefore, they would do any necessary action to stay away from those feelings. On the other hand, unnecessary decisions mean to enhance activities without motivation or under pressure. Those condition happened in the teachers' and the students' experience before, during and after the tests. Their anxiety would bring about the score-minded behaviors and lead to "teaching to the test" and "learning to the test". As a result, the process of teaching and learning tended to reduce the meaning of curriculum. Behrenwald (2010) also revealed the same thing about unnecessary decisions which restricted the skill achievement into so called relevant skills on test-taking from certain contents.

Based on that evidence, this study generated the following facts that:

a. The classroom tests exposed washback phenomenon. It means that the tests have influenced the classroom practice

- b. The influence of the tests attained the teachers' whole thought, activities and decisions.
- c. The influence of the tests attained the students' whole thought, activities and decisions.
- d. The washback effect of the classroom test brought about the evaluation and feedback for the process of teaching, learning and testing.

Finally, when the washback effect was being generated through the tests, its dimension and complexity would expose the meaning and role of threefold process: teaching, learning and testing in education.

This project is based on four theoretical areas. The first theoretical area, as mentioned by Brown (2000; 2002; 2003), would pervade the washback existence in general. The second is obtained from Hughes (2003) who divided the washback outcome into three affected-groups: participants, processes, and products. Then, the third theoretical area is the complexity of the washback phenomenon which would scrutinize it through scientific approach in the classroom practice (Watanabe, 2004). Then, the last theoretical area is the connection between the washback effect and test validity which bring the implication of conducted-test to particular attitude in the classroom practice (Messick, 1996).

Although the washback effect issue is unfamiliar topic, Brown (2003), and Alderson and Walls (1992) have studied its existence and the importance of washback.. Brown emphasized that it would always occur in the circle of teaching, learning and assessment. The conducted-test in the classroom would

obtain important consequences for teaching and learning. Therefore, it cannot be denied because the test will always affect the classroom practice since the test was used to verify teaching and learning.

Next, the washback model which is concerned with the classroom aspects, practice and activities in general. Hughes, as cited by Cheng and Curtis (2004), declared that the tests would influence three groups. The first group which consisted of the students, the classroom teachers, the administration, material developers and publishers is called the participants. The second group is about the action of the previous group which usually occurred because of the test. The third is learned-results and its quality that are called the products. Hughes confirmed that the tests bring such complex influences not only the people but also their efforts in educational system.

The second theory is about the complexity of the washback phenomenon. Watanabe (2004) tried to notice the washback investigation through a scientific approach. Therefore, he divided it into three areas of investigation: dimensions, the affected-aspects of learning and teaching, and the involving factors in the process of washback. This view could direct and bring the washback investigation into wider implication. The washback effect of a certain test is not only about negative or positive, but also about several factors of people and materials within. For example, Djuric (2008) and Sprat (2005) did the dimensions of washback on its value; Sukyadi and Mardiani did washback dimension on value and also investigated the affected-aspects of learning and teaching; then, Pizarro (2010) investigated the washback

dimensions on intensity. Thus, the washback study could perceive different views in the circle of teaching, learning and testing.

Finally, the last theory is about washback validity. Alderson and Wall (1992) have mentioned that the test factor is related with the well test design. They quoted Keith Morrow, 1986, who connected the tests with the quality of teaching (p. 4). It means that good teaching would produce well-prepared test-takers (the students). Well-prepared students would do the tests well, too. Thus, it could expose good washback effect of the test. This relevance concept is called “washback validity”. Through this theory, the investigation would also emphasize and expose more the impact of the test in the action of the teachers, as the test designer, and the students, as the test-takers. The teachers’ good teaching would reflect to both the readiness of their students and their test design.

Those theories would be expected to maintain the investigation, especially in gathering the data from the survey. They would not only prove the existence of the washback effect, but also purchase the process of it.

### **The Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study of the washback effects of the tests could be the inspiration or impulse for the transformation in teaching and learning. Transformation in teaching and learning between the teachers and the students would create a lot of opportunities of communication, input and intake, trust and confidence, and interest and involvement. Therefore, both the teachers and the students would not attain several unnecessary decisions and activities just

because of the conducted-test. The washback mechanism could also bring innovations and propositions for the classroom practice, especially when it is approaching the testing season. Andrews (2004) has mentioned the contribution of the washback study that is related to their way applying the conducted-test in the classroom practice and their concern toward the tests influence to their students:

1. The washback study could trigger and form the teachers' desire for improvement in teaching, especially in preparing their students before tests
2. The washback study could encourage the teachers' teaching techniques and methods innovatively, especially before the tests
3. The washback study could inspire the teachers to maintain their students' learning and skill achievement in spite of the fact that the students are approaching the classroom tests.

Finally, the washback effect of the tests would always look forward to having positive results when it generated necessary thought and strategies.

### **The Assumptions**

This study is based on the assumption that the influence of the classroom tests has exposed both necessary and unnecessary thought, decisions and content. The washback mechanism maintains every process which exposed the influence of the tests toward the strategy of teaching and learning. When the teachers planned to deliver the tests, there were several

responses to encounter them. Both teachers and students tried to prepare themselves before the tests.

When the teachers decided to follow the curriculum, syllabus and lesson plan in preparing their students encountering the tests, this state recognized as necessary decision and strategies. It is determined as positive washback effect because this mechanism followed appropriate process of teaching, learning and testing. On the other hand, when the teachers decided to focus on the tests score and teach to the tests, this state is recognized as unnecessary decision and strategy. It is determined as negative washback effect because this mechanism turned to be a process of test preparation.

Finally, the teachers and the students need to realize and recognize the influence of the test in their classroom practice. For the teachers, washback mechanism is beneficial feedback in teaching strategies. Its roles are not only to establish a sufficient teaching strategy before the tests, but also to maintain the meaning of teaching despite in the tests period. For the students, washback mechanism is beneficial feedback in learning strategies. It establishes precise learning strategy and learning habit in spite of preparing the tests.

### **Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this study is in junior high schools which are using English language as the core subject. The investigation would also cover the EFL teachers from junior secondary schools as the first respondent. The schools context and background would be related to the curriculum and how the stakeholders demand the teachers to construct their EFL curriculum,

syllabus and lesson plan (RPP = Rancangan Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran). The school that applied EFL as medium instruction would be investigated by distributing questionnaire and doing the interview. This study is limited to EFL classroom test.

This thesis is limited on the study of the washback effects of the classroom tests. The classroom tests are tools for examining and portraying students in statistical scale or category system which is obtained in the classroom practice. Moreover, this study of the washback is emphasized and limited on its effects of the tests toward the teaching related areas and learning activities in the classroom. Teaching related areas contain teaching technique, teaching strategies, material selections, and related-documents, such as: EFL curriculum, syllabus and lesson plan, which are conducted and delivered because normally the process will be heading to formative and achievement examination in every semester.

Meanwhile, the students, as the second respondent, are limited only to grade seven and eight students. Grade seven and eight students do not interfere with another tests preparation outside the classroom tests (grade nine students are not included because in this grade, the students more focused on National Examination – UNAS). Therefore the students are limited in grade seven and eight. They would be delivered questionnaires about their learning activities, habit, and content to prepare the tests. Their responses toward the tests are limited to the tests which are obtained only in the classroom.

**Definition of Key Terms**

- a) Washback is the influence of the tests on teaching and learning decisions, strategies and content
- b) Teaching Aspect is related to activity or time management in the classroom, materials, contents, methods, strategies and assessing the students.
- c) Classroom test is given periodically to determine the students' overall achievements in a specific core subject and in a specific time. It is associated with formative and summative test which contain of standardized tests, such as state or district assessment, end-of-unit or chapter tests, and end-of terms or semester exams, and also contain of teacher-made-test.

**Organization of the Thesis**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I presents introduction including background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the study, theoretical perspective, the significance of the study, the assumptions of the study, delimitation and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the review of related literature which consists of the factual process in teaching, learning and tests; then, the impact of the tests which refers to both necessary and unnecessary decisions; next, washback effect and the areas affected by washback; the last is the previous study of the washback effect. Chapter III presents the method of the study, which consists of research design, respondents, instruments, data

collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and methods of verification (triangulation). Chapter IV presents the findings and the discussions. Chapter V presents summary, conclusion and suggestion which are about the results and ideas toward this study.