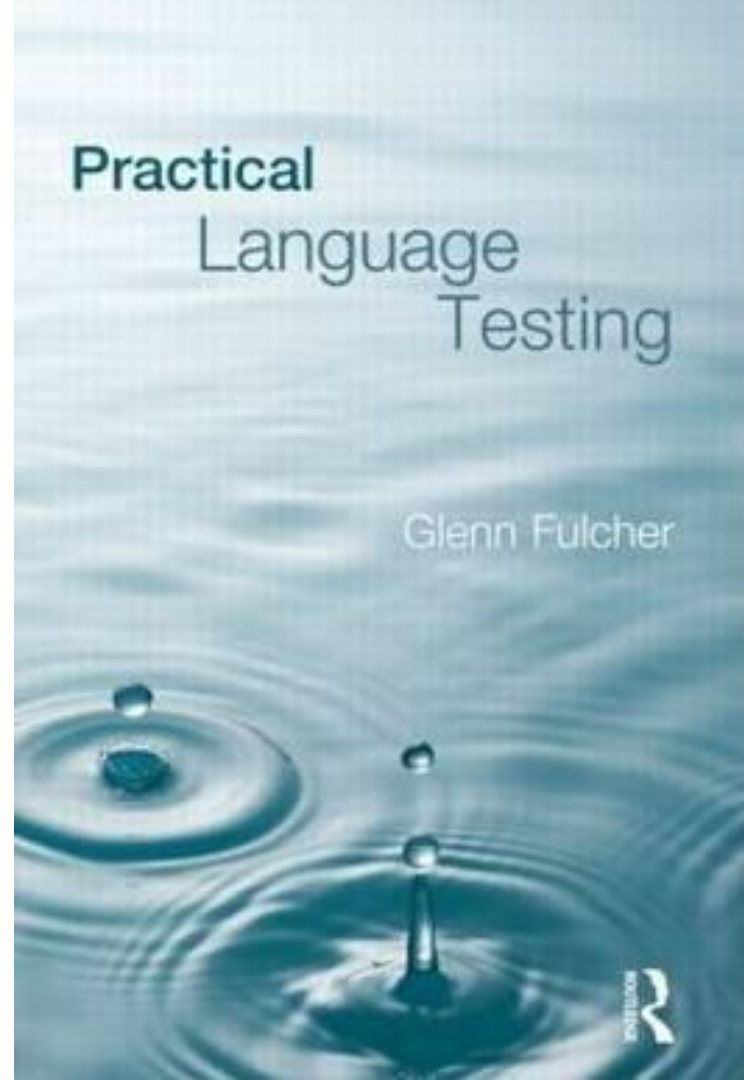


Teaching to the test: Can Washback be Positive?

Dr Johanna Motteram
Assessment Development Projects Manager
British Council Global Assessments

Washback Metaphors



How Does a Lever Work?



Is Washback really that simple?



How shall we approach this question then?



How shall we approach this question then?

- Does Washback exist?
- If it does exist, what is it?
- How do we know if Washback is positive or negative?
- How do we work for positive Washback?

Does Washback Exist?

- Alderson and Wall 1993
 - 15 possible Washback Hypotheses
 - Not much evidence out there for any of them
 - A call to action

Does Washback exist?

- Tsang 2017 “Examining Washback on Learning from a Sociocultural Perspective: The Case of a Graded Approach to English Language Testing in Hong Kong”

https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/chi_lai_tsang_ucl_dissertation.pdf

If it does exist, what is it?

“the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to do things *they would not otherwise necessarily do*”

Messick 1996 p.241

If it does exist, what is it?

“the effects of tests on micro-levels of language teaching and learning inside the classroom As well as on macro-levels of education and society”

Tsang 2017

An aside, regarding Messick 1989...

Figure 2 – *Facets of validity* (Messick 1989, 20)

	TEST INTERPRETATION	TEST USE
EVIDENTIAL BASIS	Construct validity	Construct validity + Relevance / utility
CONSEQUENTIAL BASIS	Value implications	Social consequences

An aside, regarding Messick 1989...

	WHAT TEST SCORES ARE ASSUMED TO MEAN	WHEN TESTS ARE ACTUALLY USED
USING EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF CLAIMS: TEST FAIRNESS	What reasoning and empirical evidence support the claims we wish to make about candidates based on their test performance?	Are these interpretations meaningful, useful and fair in particular settings in which the test is to be used?
THE OVERT SOCIAL CONTEXT OF TESTING	What social and cultural values and assumptions underlie test constructs and hence the sense we make of scores?	What happens in our education systems and the larger social setting when we use tests?

Positive and Negative Washback?

- Working for “Positive Washback” assumes something needs improving.
- “Good test” = Positive Washback?
- Definition of a “Good test” is contextual.

Test uses and Washback

- Implied need for improvement, implies a better way to teach/learn
- This means we need to think about the purpose of the teaching/learning
- What is the purpose of the test?

Some assumptions...

- The purpose of the test is to measure language proficiency
- The candidates will need to **use** the language in a given context (or contexts) in the future
- There is something about the teaching and learning in a given context that needs improving.

So, when can Washback be positive?



Bailey 1996

- Stakeholders understand the construct, and uses of the results.
- Results are quick, clear and useful.
- Results are fair and believable.
- Assessment // Curriculum alignment

Bailey 1996 cont.

- Test has sound foundations.
- Test texts and tasks are authentic.
- Stakeholders are invested and involved in the assessment process.

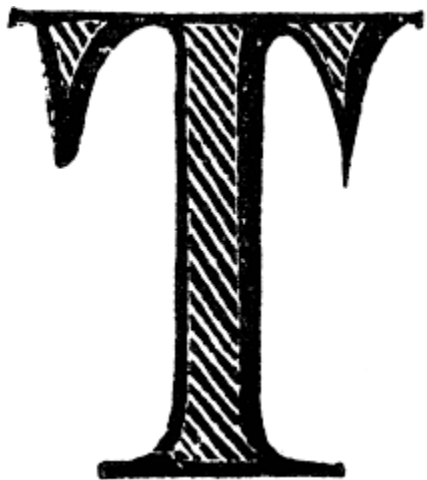
Wall 2000: Test dev'mt for +'ve Washback

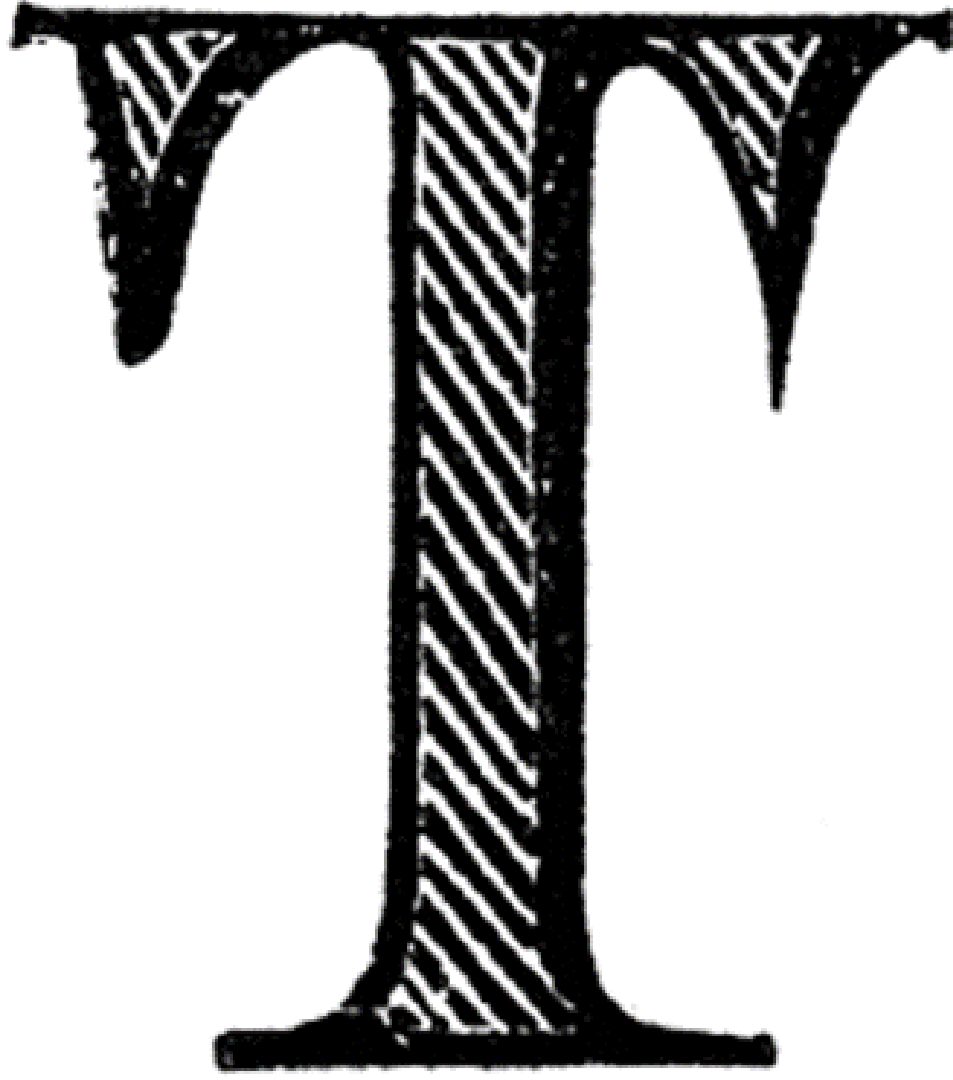
- Investigate antecedent situation
- Stakeholder engagement in planning and development
- Publicise test specs early, pilot thoroughly
- Manage expectations – when and how change can be expected

So, back to the Singapore project...

steps we are taking to work for positive
Washback through the transition...







Test:
Construct and
curriculum goals
are aligned.





Learners and
Teachers
understand the
test construct.

Click on the individual link below to access a familiarisation test:


[Literacy Familiarisation - Speaking](#) 

[Literacy Familiarisation - Listening](#) 

[Literacy Familiarisation - Writing](#) 

[Literacy Familiarisation - Reading](#) 

[Literacy Familiarisation - Grammar & Vocabulary](#) 

[Numeracy Familiarisation](#) 

Workplace Literacy and
Numeracy (WPLN) Assessment

WPLN Candidate
guide

Explicit description of items
Preparation hints
Scoring criteria



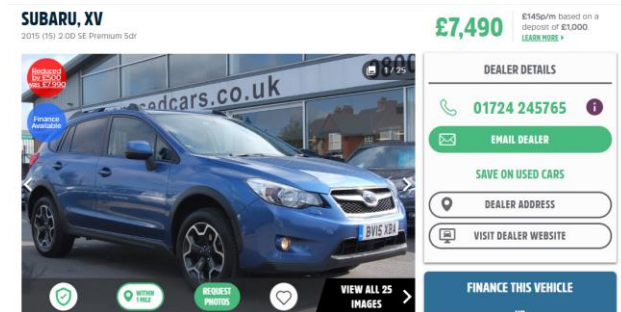
Context:

Test is
appropriate for
Context –
Localisation.

Global Assessments

£7,490 = \$12,648
SGD

\$61,800 SGD



SUBARU, XV
2015 (15) 2.0D SE Premium Sdr

£7,490 £1450/m based on a deposit of £2,000 LEARN MORE

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EMAIL DEALER

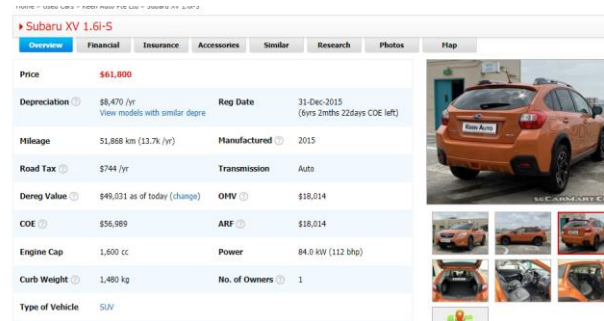
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Subaru XV 1.6i-S

Overview Financial Insurance Accessories Similar Research Photos Map

Price **\$61,800**

Depreciation $\$8,470$ /yr View models with similar depre Reg Date 31-Dec-2015 (9yr 2mth 22days COE left)

Mileage 51,866 km (13.7k /yr) Manufactured 2015

Road Tax $\$744$ /yr Transmission Auto

Dereg Value $\$49,031$ as of today (change) OHW $\$18,014$

COE $\$36,989$ ARF $\$18,014$

Engine Cap 1,600 cc Power 84.0 kW (112 bhp)

Curb Weight 1,480 kg No. of Owners 1

Type of Vehicle SUV

https://www.sgcarmart.com/us_ed_cars/info.php?ID=859023&DL=2659

- Does Washback exist?
- If it does exist, what is it?
- How do we know if Washback is positive or negative?
- How do we work for positive Washback?

References

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