

**T.C. KOCAELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ BÖLÜMÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI**

**THE WASHBACK EFFECTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE  
EXAMINATION (LGS) ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING  
PROCESSES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN A  
PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL IN TURKEY**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**EDA DEMİR**

**KOCAELİ 2019**

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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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## ABSTRACT

Washback or backwash is defined as the impact of the tests on teaching and learning processes. Tests may have a positive or negative effect on the language teaching and learning periods. As English is the most widely-spoken language, there are various kinds of tests held in the English language all over the world. The effects of these tests depend on the types of them. Many studies investigating the washback effects of different kinds of English language tests in Turkey have been carried out so far. These studies mostly focused on the influence of the tests either on language teaching or learning process. The purpose of this study is to examine the washback effects of the English section of High School Transition (LGS) exam on both language learning and teaching processes.

The study was conducted in a state middle school in Turkey. To collect the data for the present study, a combination of the research methods was used. A questionnaire was applied to 117 eighth grade students of the school. Besides, four of the students participated in the interviews. An interview was also held with the English teachers teaching eighth grades. In addition to the questionnaire and interviews a class hour was observed by the researcher. The quantitative data of this study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences Program SPSS 15.0 for Windows SPSS while the transcripts of students' interviews were transcribed and translated into English in order to analyse the qualitative data for the study.

The results of the study reveal that the effect of the English section of LGS exam on both teachers and learners is more positive than negative. Even though the content of the exam is poor, the students feel the need to study for the English language as it is tested in the exam. Similarly, the teachers can easily motivate their students to study English as it is a part of an important exam which determines the high school the students will study at.

**Key words:** EFL teachers, High Stakes Tests, LGS, Washback, 8<sup>th</sup> grade EFL learners,

## ÖZET

Sınavların öğrenme ve öğretme süreçlerine olan etkisi “washback” – geri etki olarak tanımlanır. Sınavların dil öğrenme ve öğretme dönemlerine hem olumlu hem olumsuz etkileri olabilir. İngilizce en çok konuşulan dil olduğu için, tüm dünyada bu dilde yapılan pek çok sınav bulunmaktadır. Bu sınavların etkisi türlerine göre değişiklik göstermektedir. Şu ana kadar Türkiye’deki farklı İngilizce sınavlarının etkilerini araştıran birçok çalışma yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmalar genellikle sınavların ya yalnızca öğrenme süreçlerine ya da yalnızca öğretme süreçlerine olan etkisini ele almıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ise Liseye Geçiş Sınavında yer alan (LGS) İngilizce bölümünün dili hem öğrenme hem de öğretme süreçlerine olan etkisini araştırmaktır.

Bu çalışma Türkiye’deki bir ortaokulda yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmaya veri toplamak için, tüm araştırma metotları bir arada kullanılmıştır. 117 sekizinci sınıf öğrencisine anket uygulanmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, öğrencilerden dördü mülakatta yer almıştır. Sekizinci sınıflarda derse giren İngilizce öğretmenleriyle de mülakat yapılmıştır. Anket ve mülakatlara ek olarak, araştırmacı tarafından bir ders saati gözlenmiştir. Araştırmanın nitel verilerini analiz etmek için mülakatlar yazıya dökülerek İngilizceye çevrilirken nicel verileri Statistical Sosyal Bilimler İçin İstatistik Programı olan Windows için SPSS 15.0 kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları LGS sınavının İngilizce bölümünün hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler üzerinde olumsuzdan ziyade olumlu etkileri olduğunu göstermektedir. Sınavın içeriği yetersiz olsa da öğrenciler sınavda çıkacağı için kendilerini İngilizceye çalışmak zorunda hissetmektedirler. Aynı şekilde, İngilizce, öğrencilerin lisede okuyacakları okulu belirleyen önemli bir sınavın parçası olduğu için öğretmenler de öğrencileri bu derse çalışmalarını için kolayca motive edebilmektedirler.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Geri etki, LGS, önemli sınavlar, 8. sınıf İngilizce öğrencileri ve İngilizce öğretmenleri

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## INTRODUCTION

Whether the goals and objectives of the lessons are achieved or not is determined by using the tests. In order to observe the performance of learners in education, testing is used. Thus, tests are of great importance in all contexts of education as they may affect the learning and teaching processes both in a positive or in a negative way.

The impact of tests on language teaching and learning periods are defined as “washback”. All around the world, different types of tests are held in English language. The effect of these tests on both learners and teachers depends on the type of the exams. Numerous studies have investigated the washback effects of certain English language tests for a long time. Concerning the studies carried out in Turkey, it is observed that they generally focus on the influence of the English tests either on the language teachers or language learners. In this particular study, the researcher aims to examine the washback effects of the English section of High School Transition (LGS) exam on both language learning and teaching processes.

In order to find answers to the research questions, data triangulation was used. The researcher held interviews with both students and teachers, applied a questionnaire to the students and observed a class hour in a public middle school in Turkey. The findings of the study present that the effect of the English section of LGS exam on both teachers and learners is more positive than negative. The content of the exam is poor, nevertheless; it has been found out that the students tend to study for the English language as it is a part of the LGS exam. As for the teachers, they have been observed to easily motivate their students to study English for it is included in an important exam which determines the high school the students will study at.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH**

#### **1.1. PRESENTATION**

This chapter provides the background information about washback research, includes statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, definitions of the terms and abbreviations are presented at the end of this chapter.

#### **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Testing plays an important part in education. "Testing is never a neutral process and always has consequences" (Stobart, 2003: 140). Regarding second language teaching, it can be said that testing is of fundamental importance. Learners are generally obliged to be tested in all education contexts to judge their language learning processes. Getting a satisfactory score from these tests can sometimes be life changing. Despite the fact that researchers studied testing extensively, they did not examine "the influences of tests on teaching and learning" (Bailey, 1996: 259) known as washback, which can be strong or weak, positive or negative. This concept is based on the idea that teaching and learning can be influenced by tests or examinations. The preparation process for the tests has a critical role. Buck (1988: 15) emphasizes that both teachers and students adjust classroom activities according to the demands of a test. As Frederiksen (1984: 193) indicates, the approach of teachers and students is affected by the tests if they are informed about them beforehand. If the students are told about the content of the test, they focus on that content more while preparing for the exam and they do not study for the content which is excluded from the exam.

When the education system in Turkey is considered, it can definitively be claimed that teaching and learning English is of particular importance. English

Language Teaching starts from the primary school, continues in middle school and proceeds to high school. Additionally, some departments of universities provide their courses in English which means that students are required to know the language in order to study in those departments. The use of examinations to select for education and employment has also existed for a long time; such as selecting candidates for institutions of higher education (Bray and Steward, 1998; Eckstein and Noah, 1992). Turkey has an examination-oriented education system. Considering English Language Education, the students are required to test their English language level in all educational contexts except primary school. After middle school, they need to take LGS which includes a part testing English language knowledge. If they study at English Language department in high school, the final year students are obliged to take YDT (Foreign Language Examination of the Transition to Higher Education Institution) and get a satisfactory score from that test in order to deserve to study in English Language departments of the universities. Moreover, the students have to sit for a test in the target language to pass the preparation class or graduate from the university they have studied. In addition to these, if the candidates take and succeed in the exam YDS (Foreign Language Examination), they deserve to get a promotion or proceed to do their master or doctorate degree at the university.

The purpose of this study is to examine the washback effects of the English language part of LGS on both teachers and students in a middle school in Turkey.

### **1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

English is a global language. There are more than 350 million people around the world speaking English as a first language and more than 430 million speaking it as a second language. As English is so widely spoken throughout the world, it is seen necessary to learn it by most people in our country as well. From primary school to university, English is an obligatory lesson in Turkey. In order to evaluate the learning processes of the students, there are certain tests they need to pass. These tests play such a crucial part in the students' lives.



When people learn a language with the intention of succeeding in an exam at the end of their learning processes, they focus on the topics which will be tested in that exam. That is to say, if listening or speaking skills are involved in the test, the candidates tend to study to improve those skills while preparing for that exam whereas they tend to ignore the other skills or components of the language they are learning. Similarly, teachers tend to engage in the activities based on the topics to be tested in the examination. The studies carried out on washback investigate the positive or negative effects of examinations on teaching and learning activities in the classrooms.

In Turkey, there have been many national examinations under different names which the students have been required to take at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade in order to study in a secondary school based on the scores they get. These tests had parts assessing Turkish, Maths, Science and Social Studies. The first time English was included in the content of such tests was when the examination SBS was administered (Doğan and Sevindik, 2011: 309; Üztoşun, 2013: 20). The English curriculum was based on the philosophy of the Communicative Language Teaching which is based on teaching four language skills as a base; however, in SBS examination, only reading skills, lexical and grammar knowledge were tested through multiple choice questions. Although SBS was applied to all levels – 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in 2008 when it was introduced for the first time, from 2009 to 2013, it was administered to only 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Owing to the complaints regarding SBS exam, the testing system underwent change and in 2013, a new test - the Transition Test from Basic to Secondary Level Education (TEOG) was introduced comprising in-class achievement as well as placement exam. TEOG covered only the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum testing Turkish, Maths, Religion, Social Sciences, Science and Foreign Languages (English, French, German, etc.). Considering the content of the Foreign Languages part, 20 multiple-choice questions were asked testing mostly lexical knowledge and grammar knowledge. Thus, listening, speaking and writing skills were still ignored although teaching them was involved in the curriculum. The content of the curriculum could still not be matched with the content of the exam. Only the format of the questions was changed. The questions were visualised and they were mainly dialogue-based. The testing system was one more time altered in

2018. The Ministry of Education declared that they needed to establish a more successful transition process from lower secondary schools to high schools with a new testing system. The current testing system named as High School Entrance Examination (LGS) has been applied all through Turkey since June, 2018. English is still included in the content of the exam. Regarding the Foreign Languages part, there are 10 multiple choice questions as it was in TEOG which means that the type of the questions is still the same- there is a difference only in the number of the questions. This language test is still administered in a traditional way in which the students choose only one option out of four to get the correct answer. As Wiggins (1990: 1) states, the students do not need to use their higher order thinking skills in order to give the correct answer. It is stated in both the curriculum objectives and content and in the course book content and the list of objectives assigned by the Board of Education and Discipline LGS exam should measure receptive and productive language skills. On the other hand, only lexical knowledge and basic reading skills are assessed involving dialogue completion, sentence completion, choosing the correct visual related to the statement, paragraph reading and answering related questions which indicates that assessing listening, speaking and writing skills are neglected in this exam.

In Turkey, there are not many studies carried out on the washback effects of the English section of the exams (SBS, TEOG or LGS) which have been obliged to be taken by the students in the transition process from lower secondary schools to high schools. A study was conducted by Kılıçkaya (2016) which investigated the impact of TEOG on language teacher practices in the classroom. Çelik (2017) analysed the effects of the English section of TEOG on the perceptions of the teachers' about their instructional planning and practising. Each study focused on the washback effects of the exam on only the teachers. In this study, it is aimed to examine the effects of the English section of LGS on both teaching and learning processes of the language.

#### **1.4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Many studies have investigated the washback effects of the examinations on teaching and learning a language (Cheng, 1997: 38; Shohamy, 1993: 101; Watanabe, 1996: 318). As it is indicated by Andrews (2002: 207), when the studies conducted on washback are examined, it is seen that high-stakes exam play an important role. LGS as a high stakes exam is of high importance in improving our students' level of English; therefore, we need to understand the washback effects of this exam on language learning and teaching at middle school level. This study aims to investigate the washback effects of the English section of LGS on teaching and learning processes considering a middle school context in Turkey. In order to investigate the washback effects of LGS on English language education, first of all, a questionnaire will be handed out to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of the middle school where the study is carried out. Next, both the English teachers teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grades and students will be interviewed. Finally, an English lesson will be observed for forty minutes.

This study will investigate the following research questions:

1. Which language skills do the learners need to study for preparing the English section of LGS?
2. Which test-taking strategies do the learners need to improve in order to be successful in the English section of LGS?
3. How does studying for the English section of LGS affect the attitudes of the students towards learning English?
4. What are the positive and negative washback effects of the English section of LGS on the language development of the learners?
5. What is the influence of the English section of LGS on learning English?
6. How do the English teachers prepare their students for the exam? What are the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam on their methods, materials, activities and the content of their lesson?

7. How do the teachers feel about preparing their students for the English section of LGS?

8. How does the English section of LGS affect the assessment practises of the teachers?

### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

There is limited research using data triangulation (interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations) on the effects of standardized tests on both teaching and learning in Turkey. A few number of studies conducted in this field focus on the washback effects of language tests or the tests including a language part focus on either the teaching process or the learning process. They do not handle the learning and teaching processes together. In this study, it is aimed to examine the effects of the English section of LGS on both the teaching and the learning processes of the language. This study is significant for it investigates the washback effects of the English section of LGS which is a prominent high-stakes examination in Turkey. With this study, the role of examinations in developing the role of teaching and learning English in Turkey could draw more attention in middle school context.

### **1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are many limitations of the present study. First of all, the context is limited to only one middle school in Turkey. Another limitation of the study is the restricted number of the participants. Only 117 students studying at 8<sup>th</sup> grade responded the questionnaire which was handed out. The study is also limited to two teachers and four students for the interview section. The number of student participants was low in the interview section because the students were told that the interviews were going to be audio-recorded; thus most of them were not volunteered to be interviewed. Moreover, only two English Language teachers took part in the interview part to investigate the washback effects of the English section of LGS on English teaching processes as they were the only English teachers teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The researcher was allowed to observe only one hour of an English class which was not enough to collect sufficient data for classroom observation.

## 1.7. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**High- stakes test:** A high-stakes test is any test used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability—i.e., the attempt by federal, state, or local government agencies and school administrators to ensure that students are enrolled in effective schools and being taught by effective teachers. In general, “high stakes” means that test scores are used to determine punishments (such as sanctions, penalties, funding reductions, negative publicity), accolades (awards, public celebration, positive publicity), advancement (grade promotion or graduation for students), or compensation (salary increases or bonuses for administrators and teachers). (<https://www.edglossary.org>)

**Standardized test:** A standardized test is any form of test that (1) requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from common bank of questions, in the same way, and that (2) is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. While different types of tests and assessments may be “standardized” in this way, the term is primarily associated with large-scale tests administered to large populations of students, such as a multiple-choice test given to all the eighth-grade public-school students in a particular state, for example. Target Language: It is the language that non-native speakers try to learn. (<https://www.edglossary.org>)

**Target Language:** The target language is the language learners are studying, and also the individual items of language that they want to learn, or the teacher wants them to learn. (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/target-language>)

**ASL:** Arabic as a Second Language Test

**CEFR:** Common European Framework of References for Languages

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**ESUEE:** English Section of University Entrance Exam

**FLTs:** Foreign Language Tests

**IELTS:** International English Language Testing System

**KPDS:** Foreign Language Proficiency Examination for State Employees

**LGS:** High School Entrance Exam

**MONE:** Ministry of National Education

**NMET:** National Matriculation English Test

**OAS:** Oral Assessment System

**OKS:** Placement Test for Entrance to High Schools

**O-NET:** Ordinary National Educational Test

**SBS:** Placement Test for High School Admission

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences

**TEOG:** Transition from Primary to Secondary Education

**TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language

**ÜDS:** Inter-University Foreign Language Examination

**UEE:** University Entrance Examination in Iran

**UN:** Ujian Nasional (English Language Learning Test)

**YDS:** The Foreign Language Exam

This chapter included the introductory remarks in addition to the statement of the problem and the purpose and significance of this study. The following chapter, Literature Review presents relevant studies and the testing system of the transition from lower secondary school to high school in Turkey in detail.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. PRESENTATION**

In this chapter, the literature about testing, assessment and evaluation is explained briefly. As one of the testing principles, washback is analysed. The studies conducted regarding washback effects in English Language Teaching both all over the world and in Turkey are presented. Then, a short history of English Language Teaching and the high school transition exams in Turkey are mentioned. Finally, the new testing system of transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education is introduced.

#### **2.2. TESTING, ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

Tests are designed to determine whether the goals and objectives of the lessons have been achieved or not. Testing is a method of making measurements in education in order to observe the performance of the learners. Although they are defined as similar terms in some educational settings, testing, assessment and evaluation are distinctive parts of education.

According to Baehr (2005: 231), the procedure of assessment and evaluation are similar in that they both set some criteria to determine how well the performance or outcome is. Both of them collect data regarding the performance or the outcome of the product. In order to assess and evaluate, it is required to involve a performer and a person gathering the necessary information about the performer and creating a report based on the findings. However, they are different in the report prepared. The report of assessment consists of suggestions on improvements in future performances of the performers while the evaluative report gives information about the quality of the performance, in other words, a grade, score or an evaluative comment is included in the evaluative report. Thus, in the process of assessment, data are collected and

reviewed to improve the performance of the learners; on the other hand, judgement is made based on the set of standards in the process of evaluation.

It can be claimed that exams comprise a necessary part of the education process. According to Cheng and Curtis (2004: 4), “Examinations are subject to much criticism. However, in spite of all the criticism levelled at them, examinations continue to occupy a leading place in the educational arrangement of most countries these days.” .

Tests have a big impact on both teaching and learning processes. As Taylor (2005: 154) emphasises, students study to succeed in tests for the reason that it is the only way they can show how much they have learned. Similarly, tests affect the way teachers teach and plan the content of their lessons. As well as assessing and evaluating the students, tests also demonstrate how much the learners know about the content. Thus, teachers are able to decide whether the teaching process has been effective or it needs to be reviewed. Despite the fact that tests affect teaching and learning processes in such positive ways, there may sometimes be negative consequences of them. Shohamy (2005: 103) describes tests as “devices of power and control”. That is to say, tests have an important role in shaping the future of the learners; in this way they are often anxious about tests. Furthermore, the content of tests influences what and how teachers teach. They depend on these tools to design their lessons.

The studies conducted in language testing introduced a new concept which is called as “washback” or “backwash”. Wall (1997: 291) indicates that “washback (also known as backwash) is sometimes used as a synonym of impact, but it is more frequently used to refer to the effects of tests on teaching and learning” .

## **2.3. WASHBACK**

### **2.3.1. Definitions of Washback**

The term washback occupies an important place in language testing. Washback has been defined in various ways by many researchers. Spratt (2005: 7) indicates that there are varieties in the contexts washback is used in literature.

In some definitions, it is emphasised that washback is the effect of testing on teaching and learning in language testing: Buck (1988: 17) defines the term washback as “the influence of the test on the classroom...this washback effect can be



either beneficial or harmful” . Similarly, Bailey (1996: 259) defines the term as “the influence of testing on teaching and learning”. The term washback is viewed by Messick (1996: 243) as “the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not necessarily otherwise do”.

El- Ebyary (2009) views the term washback as an “interactive multi-directional process” which means that as well as the direct participants of the teaching and learning process such as teachers and students, indirect participants such as parents have a positive or negative impact on washback. Furthermore, Green (2013) explains that the interaction between tests, teaching and learning creates washback; however not only the teachers and students but also educational administration, teacher training, textbooks and test development affect this interaction. Luxia (2005: 142) views washback from another perspective by stating that washback is the result of high stakes tests the results of which are the basis to make important decisions about the students.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) stress that there are two levels of washback effect which are called as micro level and macro level. Micro level impacts refer to the impact of testing on direct participants- students and teachers while macro level impacts refer to the impact of tests on society and educational system. The micro view of teaching and learning is also analysed by Pearson (1988) who indicates that examinations have a great influence on the motivation of teachers and students. Pierce (1992) points out that washback on the macro level affects principals of education, curriculum design and the interaction between teachers, students and learning environment. Cohen (1994: 41) focuses on the macro level of washback, as well. He refers to washback as “how assessment instruments affect educational practices and beliefs”.

According to Cheng and Curtis (2004: 3), there may be many indicators that can affect the language test scores. They state in their review study about the impact of testing on teaching and learning that “Language test scores cannot be interpreted simplistically as an indicator of the particular language ability we want to measure. They are also affected by the characteristics and content of the test tasks, the characteristics of the test taker, the strategies the test taker employs in attempting to complete the test task, and the inferences we wish to draw from them”.

Some researchers have used the term “backwash” instead of “washback” in their studies; however, Alderson and Wall (1993: 8) state that there is no semantic difference between these terms. In their study, they postulated 15 possible washback hypotheses concerning the effect of washback on teaching and learning which has a great influence on the current study:

1. A test will influence teaching
2. A test will influence learning
3. A test will influence what teachers teach
4. A test will influence how teachers teach
5. A test will influence what learners learn
6. A test will influence how learners learn
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning
11. A test will influence attitudes to content, method, etc. of teaching/learning
12. Tests that have important consequences will have washback
13. Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback
14. Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers
15. Tests will have washback effects for some teachers and some learners, but not for others .

### **2.3.2. Types of Washback**

Hughes (2003) indicates that there are two major types of washback: positive washback and negative washback based on its beneficial or harmful effects on teaching and learning processes.

#### **2.3.2.1. Positive Washback**

Positive washback is commonly described as the effect of washback in a positive way that can produce good results in making some changes regarding examinations in language teaching and learning.

Swain (1985) claims that test designers contribute to washback. The view of Alderson and Hamp - Lyons (1996) about washback is in line with Swain who states that innovations in language testing produce curriculum innovations. According to Pearson (1988: 107), “Good tests can be utilised and designed as beneficial teaching learning activities so as to encourage a positive teaching-learning process.”. Similarly, Alderson and Wall (1993) indicate that good learning and teaching tasks can be applicable for good tests. Thus, positive washback helps teachers reconsider their teaching methods and plans. As Messick stresses (1996: 241), “for optimal positive washback there should be little, if any, difference between activities involved in learning the language and activities involved in preparing for the test” .

Instead of focusing on the possible situations that produce positive or negative washback, Hughes (1989: 44) suggests seven ways to achieve positive washback.

1. Test the abilities whose development you want to encourage.
2. Sample widely and unpredictably.
3. Use direct testing.
4. Make testing criterion-referenced.
5. Base achievement tests on objectives.
6. Ensure [that the] test is known and understood by students and teachers.
7. Where necessary provide assistance to teachers.

### **2.3.2.2. Negative Washback**

While tests can influence the teaching and learning process in a positive way, they can also have unexpected, harmful consequences. This usually happens when the instruction focuses heavily on test preparation. These kinds of situations are the negative washback of tests.

Vernon’s (1956: 166) statement “teachers tend to ignore subjects and activities which are not directly related to passing the exam so that examinations distort the curriculum.” is cited in the study of Alderson and Wall (1993: 115) in order to describe negative washback. Wall (2000) explains negative washback by stating that the results of high stakes tests affect the education so much that sometimes the curriculum depends on it and teachers need to adapt their teaching to

the exam question forms; in other words, test results become in charge of the curriculum. Noble and Smith (1994) also express that teachers can be affected by high stakes tests and depend on multiple choice worksheets to improve the scores of the students in such exams neglecting the general understanding. In his study, Smith (1991: 8) states that “testing programs substantially reduce the time available for instruction, narrow curricular offerings and modes of instruction, and potentially reduce the capacities of teacher to teach content and to use methods and materials that are incompatible with standardised testing formats”.

### **2.3.3. Studies Investigating Washback Effect in Language Education**

Many studies investigating washback effects on teaching and learning processes have been carried out all over the world. However, it is seen that the studies concerning washback effects are limited examining the effects of the exams on both teaching and learning in Turkey. In this part, the studies based on washback and their results are presented.

#### **2.3.3.1. Washback Studies in the World**

Wall and Alderson (1993: 41) built a basis for the studies in language testing field with their study investigating the positive and negative relationship between teaching, learning and testing in which they introduced 15 hypotheses concerning the effects of language testing on teaching and learning processes. In their study, Wall and Alderson (1993) examined the washback effects of a new national examination in Sri Lanka by observing lessons and interviewing teachers and students. The findings showed that as speaking skills was not involved in the exam, teachers paid more attention to developing writing skills than oral skills. At later stages, they preferred to use exam preparation products and previous exam papers instead of focusing on the textbooks including communicative tasks. According to Wall and Alderson (1993), this showed that tests may have a big influence on education.

Another interesting study carried out on the effects of washback is about the influence of TOEFL on classroom teaching. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996: 282) focused on “how everything was going on in TOEFL preparation classrooms”. In their study, they made a comparison of teachers’ behaviours between TOEFL preparation classes and non- TOEFL preparation classes by using student and teacher

interviews and classroom observations. The results of the study indicated that how and what teachers teach is affected by the TOEFL test; however, the extent of this effect depends on the teacher. In conclusion, the washback of TOEFL relies on variables such as materials writers, administrators and teachers rather than the test itself.

In Israel, Shohamy *et al.* (1996) conducted a study on the effects of two new language tests- an oral English Foreign Language Test and Arabic as a Second Language Test on classroom activities, the amount of time given to the activities, teaching materials, learning and stakeholders such as language inspectors, teachers and students. In order to collect data, they asked the students to fill in the questionnaires about the awareness of the test and practising for the test, they had structured interviews with the teachers and inspectors about the influence of the test on teaching and learning processes and they used an analysis of inspectorate bulletins. The results of their study showed that ASL which was a low-stakes test did not affect the teaching and learning process in a positive way as textbooks were replaced with worksheets including exercises similar to the past years' tests to practise for the test. Teachers did not use any new materials or activities apart from the materials that prepared for the test. Nevertheless, it was seen that the effects of high stakes EFL test were quite positive in that teachers used various activities such as brain-storming, pair-group work, jigsaw activities, debates to develop the exam skills of the students which contributed to the improvement of students' language skills, as well.

In her study about the possible washback effect of the revised Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam in English on English language teaching in Hong Kong Secondary schools, Cheng (1997) involved both teacher and student opinions. Questionnaires for both teachers and students and classroom observations were the instruments that she used to collect data for her research. She reported that the exam affected the contents of teaching considerably which resulted in changing teaching materials. Despite the change in the activities used in the lesson, the teaching methods of the teachers remained the same. Cheng (1998) carried out a follow-up study regarding the influence of the revised Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam on secondary school teaching. She found out that teaching and learning activities were mostly based on the examination activities which showed that the attitudes of students and teachers towards the examination were unchanged.

Watanabe (1996) examined the classroom practice of two different English exam preparation classes by two different teachers. In one of the classes, the teacher used grammar-translation method most of the time whereas the other class was not a grammar-translation oriented one. The classroom observations revealed that the two teachers were not affected by the translation oriented university entrance examination in the same way; that is, it had a washback effect only on one teacher. On the other hand, Watanabe (1996: 318) states that some factors related to teachers such as their educational background, beliefs, teaching experience might lead to washback or not. He makes a conclusion by asserting that such factors may have a greater influence on the teachers than the entrance examinations.

In Canada, a study investigating the exams in English as a Second Language was carried out by Turner (2001: 138) who designed his research to seek the development of rating scales and the influence of it on teachers. His data were based on feedback from teachers involved in developing rating scales. Turner (2001) notes that the teachers have a positive attitude towards the exams, which helps to increase positive washback when they take active part in the process of the test design.

Andrews *et al.* (2002) examined the washback effects of the revised English exam in Hong Kong secondary schools by using teacher and student questionnaires and classroom observations to collect the data. In the end, they found out that the effect of the exam depended on the learner. For some learners, the exam had a positive washback effect as they improved their speaking skills while for the others, it did not for they only studied in accordance with the exam format to do well in the test.

Hayes and Read (2003: 153) investigated the impact of International Language Testing System (IELTS) on the preparation of the students for this exam in New Zealand. They collected their data through interviews with teachers, questionnaires for both students and teachers, observation of classes and pre-and post-tests for the students. They involved two schools in their research: School A in which the training course was based on preparing for the IELTS exam and School B which ran other English classes. They found out that the washback effects of school A were negative for the reason that both the students and teachers devoted themselves to practise only for the exam and the students neglected to develop their academic language proficiency. On the contrary, the course at school B seemed to

contribute to the students' language development as it was not mainly based on preparing for the IELTS.

In Israel, the washback effects of National EFL Oral Matriculation test was examined by Ferman (2004) who aimed to find out whether this test had an influence on the participants (teachers, students and parents), language education and teaching and learning products. Ferman (2004: 191) used structured interviews with three regional inspectors, open interviews with the teachers, questionnaires for the students and document analyses as instruments to collect the data of his research. Totally 142 subjects took part in the study consisting of 18 EFL teachers, 120 students and 4 EFL inspectors. The results of the study revealed that the EFL National Oral Matriculation Test had a strong washback effect on language education, teachers and students as well as their parents. The test had a positive effect on learning oral skills while it restricted the teaching and learning processes in that the participants stated that they felt under pressure to prepare for the content of the exam.

Luxia (2005) looked at the washback effect of a national test called as the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) which was designed to improve English education in China. By creating this test, it was aimed to use English for communicative purposes rather than focusing on formal linguistic knowledge. In her study, Luxia (2005) involved 1388 participants consisting of teachers, students and inspectors. She used structured and semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to collect the data. Her findings revealed that NMET did not have positive washback in the English Language Teaching curriculum. The reasons for the test to promote negative washback were various such as the test format (including mostly multiple choice questions), using the test scores to give awards or penalties to schools and teachers, teachers' beliefs about the importance of teaching grammar instead of focusing on communication and the use of the test in two different contexts (selecting students for higher education and trying to focus on teaching and learning the language in order to communicate).

Caine (2005) conducted a research on the disparities between the curriculum planning followed by the Japanese Ministry of Education and implementation of it in the classrooms. The data of his research were collected through classroom observations and questionnaires for teachers and students. Seven English teachers from Japanese high schools and 46 students divided in two groups took part in the

study. Caine (2005) found out that despite the changes in the English Language Teaching syllabus made by the Japanese Ministry of Education which focused on communication-based approach, it was seen that grammar-based methodology was still applied in the classes.

A research analysing the washback effect of the English Language Test of the State Examination in teaching English at a Colombian public school was carried out by Manjarres (2005). Based on his research, it was concluded that the teachers usually focused on the activities related to lexical and grammar knowledge. It was also found out that speaking activities were mostly ignored during the classes.

Another study carried out by Amengual-Pizarro (2010) focuses on the washback effects of English Test (ET) in Spanish University Entrance Examination on different aspects of the curriculum, methods and materials, feelings and attitudes. The findings of the study showed that speaking and listening skills were ignored as they were not a part of the exam while writing, reading skills and grammar knowledge were given high importance in the classes.

Muñoz and Álvarez (2010) sought to explore the washback effect of an oral assessment system (OAS) on some areas of EFL teaching and learning. The results revealed that OAS had a positive washback effect on the teachers' teaching and assessment practices and on students' oral production.

Wang and Bao (2013) focused on the washback effects of the college English entrance exam on students in China. They used 55 students as subjects of their study. They concluded that as listening, writing and reading skills were included in this exam, both teachers and students tried to improve these skills and neglect speaking skills. In other words, the exam had a positive washback effect on developing writing, reading and listening skills whereas it restricted improving the speaking skills of the students.

In Iran, a study on the washback effects of the university exam on EFL teachers' assessment practices was carried out by Ramezany (2014). He found out that the classroom assessment tests and quizzes prepared by the teachers were similar to the exam content so as to get the students to be familiar with the exam format and succeed in the exam.



Taqizadeh and Birjandi (2015) carried out a study in Iran which investigated the washback effects of the university entrance examination (UEE) a high stakes test in Iran on the educational processes of high schools especially the practice of English as a Foreign Language. The data for this research were gathered through observations of 10 English classrooms and interviews with 13 English language teachers. As a result of the study, it was found out that in the classrooms, the methodology was based on grammar translation method as the teachers were able to prepare the students for the exam using this method. Therefore, it was clear that UEE had a powerful function in language teaching. However, it was not the only factor for the teachers to use only one method in their classes. The results also revealed that teachers of English were not knowledgeable about new methods and approaches.

In Indonesia and Thailand, Sundayana *et al.* (2018) undertook a multi-case study to analyse and measure the washback effects of the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) and Ujian Nasional (UN) on English language learning of Thai and Indonesian ninth-grade students. 200 students from each case were asked to fill in a questionnaire and 6 students from each case were interviewed to collect the data for the study. The findings of the research stated that students tended to study for the content and skills which were included in the exam in order to perform well. Thus, they did not aim to improve their English language skills. The participants were deeply distressed by not being able to get high scores from these exams, as well.

#### **2.3.3.2. Washback Studies in Turkey**

Sevimli (2007) conducted a study about washback effects of foreign language component of the university entrance examination on the teaching and learning context of language groups in secondary education. The findings of this study revealed that while preparing for this exam, students were not able to develop communicative skills, which should be one of the major goals of any language learning. Like Sevimli (2007), Karabulut (2007) studied on the same topic – the washback effect of the university entrance test measuring the language proficiency. Based on the results, she recommended a change in the curriculum and the test format as it lacked measuring productive skills.

In his study, Yıldırım (2010: 92) aimed to explore the teaching and learning practices for English Section of University Entrance Exam (ESUEE). The subjects of

the study were 70 EFL students having studied the prep class and 6 EFL instructors at a state university in Turkey. His instruments to gather the data were semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. At the end of the study it was found out that students preparing for this exam focused on improving only grammar, vocabulary and reading skills as they were the only components of language assessed in the exam. Thus, they were lacking in skills such as listening, writing and speaking. During their first year at the university, it was difficult for them to succeed in speaking, writing and listening classes.

A similar study was carried out by Hatipoğlu (2016) on the washback effects of English Section of University Entrance Exam (ESUEE). The study included 50 pre-service English language teachers from Middle East Technical University (METU) and evaluated the effect of the exam regarding teaching and learning foreign languages in Turkey. A survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview were the tools used to gather the data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that the learning and teaching process of English was controlled by the exam which resulted in negative washback. Furthermore, it was found out that rather than teaching the language, the high school teachers preferred to train the students in accordance with the exam format aiming to get them to answer the questions in the exam correctly.

Özmen (2011: 25) conducted a research on washback effects of inter-university foreign language examination (UDS) which used to be a high stakes language exam in Turkey on the language learning processes of candidate academics and graduate students. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data of this study. 8 candidate academics and 4 graduate students all of whom were preparing for UDS at a private course in Ankara, Turkey were the subjects of the study. He concluded that the washback effects of this exam on the participants were negative due to the content and style of the test itself which is a multiple-choice test claiming to assess grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and reading-skills in the target language.

Similarly, Yavuzer and Göver (2012: 136) examined the attitudes of academics in Nevşehir University towards the high stakes tests applied in Turkey which were called as State Employees Language Exam (KPDS) and inter-university foreign language examination (UDS). Yavuzer and Göver (2012) aimed to find out whether these language tests had an effect on the language learning practices of the academics

working in Nevşehir University. The data collection tool of the study was a survey questionnaire which was applied to 121 academics. The results showed that the purpose of the academics was to pass these exams to get promoted rather than doing scientific research. Preparing for the exam did not contribute to their language development as only grammar, vocabulary and reading skills were assessed in these exams. Listening, writing and speaking skills were totally ignored. In conclusion, their study revealed that KPDS and ÜDS had a negative washback effect on academics.

The study of Akpınar and Çakıldere (2013: 12) is in line with the study of Yavuzer and Göver (2012) analysing the washback effects of two high-stakes language tests KPDS and ÜDS in Turkey. 103 academics at Nevşehir University who did not succeed in those exams participated in the study. The participants were given a questionnaire and the answers of them were analysed. They found out that these tests had a positive effect on developing the reading skills while they had a negative effect on developing productive skills and listening skills of the participants.

Duran (2011) investigated teachers' and students' perceptions about classroom-based speaking tests and their washback effect. At the end of the study she found out that both the teachers and the students had positive attitudes towards teaching and testing speaking.

Kılıçkaya (2016) aimed to seek the washback effect of the foreign language section of Transition Examination from Primary to Secondary Education (TEOG). In the study, Kılıçkaya focused on how the teaching practices of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were affected by TEOG. 30 ELT teachers teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade students took part in the research. The participants of the study were 30 teachers. The data collection instruments included semi-structured interviews and analyses of the exam papers prepared by the participants. To sum up, it was found out that language section format of TEOG had a big influence on the English language teaching practices in middle schools. As it was not included in the exam, language skills were ignored in the classes and the products of the lessons (books, materials and so forth) were selected to prepare for the content of the exam which had a negative washback effect on all the participants of the teaching process.

Sayın and Aslan (2016) conducted another research on the washback effects of the language section of English Section of University Entrance Exam (ESUEE) on the undergraduate students studying at ELT department. The researchers aimed to find out whether the exam included all the skills which are necessary to be improved in the process of language learning. The perspectives of the participants on the exam were obtained using a questionnaire. The subjects of the study included 74 freshmen ELT students studying at ELT departments of two different universities. The analysis of the study stated that listening and speaking skills were neglected both in-class practice of ESUEE exam and the preparation process of the students for the reason that the exam included only grammar and vocabulary parts. The ELT students who were able to pass the exam and attend the university based on the score they got did not feel competent enough in speaking and listening classes.

Yesilyurt (2016: 263) examined the perceptions and experiences of the academicians' considering the national high-stakes Foreign Language Tests (FLT) such as YDS. The researcher used metaphor elicitation to describe the perception of FLT in Turkey. A questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study. 110 academicians from Ataturk University participated in the study creating a metaphor for FLT in Turkey. The researcher concluded that test takers had a great difficulty to pass the FLT. They focused their attention on passing the exam so much that they did not have enough time to concentrate on their future scientific studies. In addition to that, these types of exams were lacking in a good structure, scope, quality and utility; that is, these exams had a negative washback effect on the participants.

In her thesis study, Çelik (2017) analysed the washback effects of TEOG exam on the teaching content, methods and classroom assessment of the Turkish EFL teachers. The results of her study revealed that the teachers neglected practising listening, speaking and writing skills; thus, they would not test these skills in the exams they prepared. Instead, they put a heavy emphasis on the activities that the students would possibly face in English section of LGS. Moreover, it was found out that the classroom practice was quite different from the theory stated in the national ELT curriculum.

Finally, Sağlam (2018: 155) investigated the washback effect of a locally produced, high stakes English language proficiency test on tertiary education in

Turkey. In this research, classroom observations and focus group interviews were used to collect data. Her findings indicated that this test had both positive and negative effect on teaching. The positive effect of the test was on materials used while the negative washback effect was that it narrowed the curriculum. The findings also indicated that the washback effect of the test was dependent on the teachers.

## **2.4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN TURKEY**

Turkey is of great geopolitical importance in the international arena. Thus, learning English in this country is quite important for Turkish citizens as it is the language of science, computers, tourism which makes it the most commonly spoken language in the world.

The official language in Turkey is Turkish. It is also the most spoken language in the country. English is the only foreign language which is required to be taught in all levels of Turkish education system. Besides English, German and French are offered as selective subjects. There have been many changes in the English Language Teaching policies in Turkey since English was introduced as a subject at school.

Doğançay and Aktuna (1998: 24) stated that the importance of teaching English at school emerged in the 1950s with the opening of the first Anatolian High School. In Anatolian High Schools, students were more exposed to English than the other state high schools. In the 1980s, English became even more widespread as the impact of globalisation in Turkey made it necessary to learn English to have a successful career as expressed by Ahmad (1993: 181). Özsevik (2010) emphasises that the Education Reform realised in 1997 influenced the English Language Education in Turkey considerably. With this reform, English was required to be a compulsory subject set to teach two hours a week in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades and four hours a week in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Academicians from all parts of Turkey developed a new curriculum which aimed to motivate students to learn the language through games and activities based on using communicative skills (Kırkgöz, 2007a). Although the curriculum focused on the principles of communicative language teaching, classroom practise still reflected the traditional ways of teaching. Yanık

(2008: 123) examined the beliefs and opinions of Turkish EFL teachers about the curriculum of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels and its practice in the classroom during the academic year of 2004-2005. He used questionnaires for the teachers to collect his data. The results of his study showed that the curriculum was loaded too much and teachers were not content with the course books. They claimed that they had to focus on grammar and vocabulary teaching more instead of improving the four language skills of the students because of the curriculum and course books.

In the 2005-2006 academic year, the curriculum was restructured as the problems concerning the language teaching in the traditional ways were still dominant in English Language Teaching system in Turkey. The new curriculum was mostly based on communicative language teaching and constructivist approach. Student-centred learning was encouraged which allowed students to share in decisions and believe in their capacity to lead. The assessment was based on the performance of students including both portfolios and pen and paper tests with examples (Kırkgöz, 2007a). A research was carried out by Dönmez (2010) to investigate the perceptions of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Teachers and students of the implementation of the new curriculum. Interviews were held with both the students and the teachers. The findings of the study showed that teachers were unable to implement the new curriculum in their classrooms due to the lack of time and materials, their inadequate knowledge about the alternative assessment methods and the units being unrelated with each other. Coşkun (2011) conducted a similar study to analyse the attitudes of the English Language Teachers about the curriculum and how they implement it in their classrooms. It was reported that the teachers had quite positive attitudes towards CLT; however they were unable to implement it in their classrooms due to lack of time, materials and the large class size. Besides that, the exam system was still based on grammar which was one of the biggest barriers to using CLT in their classes.

Turkish Ministry of Education conducted another innovation in the education system in 2013. Following this innovation, 12 years of education was declared to be compulsory consisting of four years in the primary school, four years in the middle school and four years in the high school level (Demirpolat, 2015). There was a change in the English Language Education system as well. With the aim of exposing students to the foreign language at a younger age, English course became

compulsory for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It was stated in the new curriculum that English Language teaching was based on Communicative Language Teaching including a national-functional syllabus. The roles of teachers and learners, further activities, materials and methods to be used in the classroom and the objectives of the curriculum were described in detail (English Language Teaching Curriculum, 2013). The new English language teaching program was established on the principles and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : “.....as the CEFR considers language learning to be a lifelong undertaking, developing a positive attitude toward English from the earliest stages is essential; therefore, the new curriculum strives to foster an enjoyable and motivating learning environment where young learners/users of English feel comfortable and supported throughout the learning process. Authentic materials, drama and role play, and hands-on activities are implemented to stress the communicative nature of English. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade levels, speaking and listening are emphasized; while reading and writing are incorporated in higher grades as students become more advanced. Throughout each stage, developmentally appropriate learning tasks provide a continued focus on building the learner autonomy and problem-solving skills that are the basis for communicative competence” (English Language Teaching Curriculum, 2013: 3). Considering the CEFR, it was suggested to include self-assessment as well as pen and paper test, quizzes and homework. At the end of each unit of the course books, there was a part where students could assess what they learned. Besides that, using portfolio assessment was proposed by the curriculum designers as suggested by Laborda *et al.* (2010: 3586) that it is the best way to observe students’ active participation in the learning process and developing communicative skills. Some units of the Teacher’s Book of the 8<sup>th</sup> grades included sample checklists for projects, self-assessment and portfolio. Nevertheless, the results of a study conducted by the British Council and TEPAV (2013) revealed in the class, grammar-based exams not including the assessment of four skills were still being used instead of the alternative assessment types suggested.

In 2017, the education programs of all subjects at all levels were revised regarding the views of teachers, parents and academicians. The revision in English language teaching system was not a drastic one as stated in the new curriculum: “.... basically, the program was reviewed and revised in line with the pedagogic

philosophy of both basic skills and values education, which has been a minor revision in that the English language education program focuses on developing the language skills and proficiency without any concrete course content.” (English Language Teaching Curriculum, 2017: 3).

## **2.5. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HIGH-STAKES TESTS APPLIED IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION FROM BASIC TO SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Since 1997, there have been many types of high-stakes tests applied to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to determine their process of transition to high schools. These exams have been critical for students as their future academic life is shaped by the scores they get from these exams. The students who are able to get high scores can attend to Science High Schools or proper Anatolian High Schools which enable them to study in a university in the future.

LGS (High School Entrance Examination) was conducted at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade level between the years of 1997 and 2005. Later, in 2006 there was a change in the examination system and OKS (The Placement Test for High School Entrance) was introduced which was considered to be more efficient. The implementation of OKS lasted for two years. In 2008, a change in the examination system was needed owing to the failure of OKS to assess the students’ knowledge and experiences in a fair way as it was the single exam to be taken only at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Therefore, another examination SBS (Level Identification Exam) was launched which was quite different from the last two placement examination types. At all levels of middle school, this exam was applied; in other words, at the end of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, students were required to take this exam. The assessment of both LGS and OKS examinations were based on Turkish, Maths, Science and History lessons With SBS; however, for the first time English was included in the content of the exam as well as the other foreign languages such as French, German and Italian (Doğan and Sevindik, 2011: 309). There have not been many studies carried out about the influence of SBS on the classroom practice of teaching English. The results of the few studies in this field demonstrated that there was a negative effect of SBS on teaching English as it lacked improving communicative competence. Akıncı



(2010) analysed the influence of SBS on the classroom practice and testing in some public schools in Denizli. Her findings revealed that the lessons were based on grammar and vocabulary activities. Moreover, the tests prepared by the teachers included only grammar and vocabulary-based matching and multiple choice questions. Özsevik (2010) also carried out a research about the problems Turkish EFL teachers face while implementing CLT in their classrooms. In order to collect his data, he used an online questionnaire and interviewed with the teachers. As a result of his study, he reported that teachers regarded SBS as an obstacle to implement CLT in their classes. They claimed that it was more important for the students, parents and administrators to have high scores from the exam than focusing on communicative activities. Moreover, the teachers declared that the curriculum supporting teaching four language skills by using CLT was unrelated to SBS as it only assessed grammar and vocabulary knowledge and basic reading skills using multiple choice questions. In addition to SBS, the teachers faced other difficulties such as heavy workload, inadequate time and large class size. Similarly, Üztosun (2013) conducted a study about the perspectives of English Language Teachers on the effective ways of teaching English. It was reported that teachers had to focus on grammar and vocabulary knowledge in their lessons rather than communicative activities in order to prepare their students for the exams. Viewing SBS and its effect from a different standpoint, Baş (2013) investigated the relevance between the students' achievement in the written exams and the scores they got from the English part of SBS. He found out that the written achievement exams and SBS scores of the students were quite relevant.

In 2013, TEOG was introduced by Turkish Ministry of Education which was designed to apply to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at the end of the school year as a placement test to place the students to different types of high schools based on their results. With the aim of avoiding test-based classroom practice, the performance-based assessment also consisted of determining the final score of the students. In order to calculate the students' total score, 30% of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade end-of the year scores and 70 % of TEOG score were added together and divided in half. The English part of the TEOG was a pen-and-paper language test consisting of 20 multiple choice questions assessing reading skills and vocabulary knowledge; however, the exam lacked having questions assessing writing, listening and speaking

skills. The multiple choice questions consisted of finding suitable expressions, ordering the sentences, question and answer, sentence completion, dialogue completion, matching words, paragraph reading and answering related questions. There have only been two studies available on the washback effects of TEOG on English language teaching and learning. One of the studies of carried out by Kılıçkaya (2016) who investigated the influence of Foreign Language section of TEOG on the classroom practise. Another study was conducted by Çelik (2017) aiming to find out the perspectives of Turkish EFL teachers about the washback effects of English Language section on their planning, their classroom practices, activities they use and their classroom assessment. She collected her data through interviews held with the teachers, classroom observations and a questionnaire for the teachers. She found out that the English section of TEOG had a negative washback effect on classroom practices of the teachers as well as their planning, classroom assessment and activities. The findings of her study also revealed that the national ELT curriculum demand was unrelated to TEOG. In 2018, a new examination system was presented by the Ministry of Education as a high-stakes test to determine the transition process of the students from lower secondary to upper secondary schools.

## **2.6. HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION (LGS)**

In 2018, The Ministry of Education declared that there was a need to change the testing system to establish a more successful transition process from lower secondary schools to high schools. The current testing system named as High School Entrance Examination (LGS) has been administrated all over Turkey since June, 2018. The old testing system TEOG has been altered in many ways. With this new testing system, the number of high schools in which the students can study is limited and students are placed to these schools based on their scores. If the students cannot get the score required to enter Science High Schools or proper Anatolian High Schools, they are set to study in a high school closest to their residence. The test is applied to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at the end of the school year in two sessions on a single day. The test takes place in a different place which is not the school where the students study. The new testing system consists of two sections –

Logical/Mathematical Section and Linguistic/Verbal Section. Totally 90 questions are included in the test; that is; 20 questions each for Turkish, Mathematics and Science lessons and 10 questions each for History, Religion and Foreign Language lessons. In calculating the test score of LGS, the end-year scores are not counted as it was in TEOG system. Only the scores the students get from the exam is regarded to determine the final score of the students. The perfect score is set to be 500 points. After the students are informed about the results of their test scores in July, they make application online to the high schools they wish to study. In August, the students are placed to a high school (MONE, 2018). As Gronlund (1998) suggests, the main aim of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning in the future. However, the Foreign Language part of LGS consists of multiple choice questions as it was in TEOG which means that the type of the questions is still the same; nevertheless, there is a difference only in the number of the questions. In TEOG, students were supposed to answer 20 items in the English section whereas this number is limited to ten items in the English section of LGS. This pen and paper language test is a traditional way of assessing in which students choose only one option out of four to get the correct answer. In other words, higher order thinking skills is not required to give the correct answer (Wiggins, 1990: 1). Regarding the curriculum objectives and content, the course book content and the list of objectives assigned by the Board of Education and Discipline, both receptive and productive language skills should be measured in LGS exam. However, it is seen that only lexical and grammar knowledge and basic reading skills are assessed involving dialogue completion, sentence completion, choosing the correct visual related to the statement, paragraph reading and answering related questions. Thus, assessing reading, listening, speaking and writing skills are neglected in this exam.

In order to do well in the English section of the exam, students are required to interpret the questions well and find the correct answer. For this, they need to study for the vocabulary and grammar structures. Each year the Turkish Ministry of Education declares the content of the topics that is likely to be included in the exam:

- Friendship
- Teen Life
- In the Kitchen
- On the phone

- The Internet
- Adventures
- Tourism
- Chores
- Science
- Natural Forces

According to the report declared by the Turkish Ministry of Education (2018), about the performance of the students of the LGS exam which took place in 2018, with a rate of 9,50%, the students tended to leave the questions of the English section blank more than the other sections (such as Religion and History) that included 10 questions which indicates that they had difficulty in answering the questions. On the other hand, regarding distribution of the raw scores, it is examined that 41,11% of the students who deserved to study in a proper school answered all questions in the English section correctly. As stated in the chart below, when the success rates of private school students and state school students in the English section of the exam are compared, it is seen that the students studying at the private schools are more successful in the English section than the students studying in the state schools. The chart below reveals the mean value of the students' scores studying in both private and state schools based on the report released by the Turkish Ministry of Education in 2018.

**Table 1: The Mean Value of the Students' score in the English section of LGS**

Type of the school	Foreign Language Section
State school	7,26
Private school	9,11

In this chapter relevant studies and the testing system of the transition from lower secondary school to high school in Turkey are presented in detail. The following chapter includes the methodological details of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. PRESENTATION**

In this chapter, the methodological details of the study are given. The chapter starts with the research design. Then, the information about setting and participants are provided. In the upcoming sections, data collection methods are presented. The final section of the chapter focuses on data analysis.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study which aims to seek the effects of High School Entrance Examination on teaching and learning processes of English Language Education in a middle school is a descriptive study. As Travers (1978: 20) indicates a descriptive study mainly focuses on the reasons of a particular situation and represents the nature of this situation as it is during the time when the study is conducted. Thus, the design of this particular study is descriptive as the interviews held with the teachers and students reveal their opinions about the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam on their teaching and learning the language. Besides that, the questionnaires applied to the students also focus on their attitudes towards the English section of the exam.

Mixed method design is used in this study. As specified by Firestone (1987: 19), “each method-type does provide different kinds of information. Their strengths and weaknesses are complementary.”. Therefore, using both qualitative and quantitative methods helps to support the results of each other. This research is quantitative in that a questionnaire was used to get the opinions of the students. It is qualitative in that the questionnaires were supported by the interviews held with the students and the teachers. In addition to these, a classroom observation was used to obtain more information about the situation. According to Wall and Alderson (1993)

and Bailey (1996, 1999) the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods; in other words, using classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews is valuable in the studies conducted in the field of washback for the reason that it is possible to collect evidence on the opinions or attitudes as well as the behaviours of the teachers and the students in the classroom in this way. Thus, combining the research methods by using questionnaires, holding interviews and making a classroom observation promoted the opinions of the teachers and the students about the English section of the LGS exam and how it affects the way they teach and learn English.

### 3.3. SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in a public middle school in Derince, Kocaeli. The school was founded in 1988 and served as a primary school until 2012 for the students whose ages were between 6 and 14. In 2012, when the law concerning 12 year compulsory education (which is known as 4+4+4 education system by the public) was put into practice, the school started to serve as two different schools- a primary school and a middle school. The middle school where this study was carried out has 526 students ranging from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Totally 26 teachers teaching different subjects work there.

In this particular study only the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were going to take the LGS exam at the end of the academic year were included. The number of the students who took part in the survey is 117 consisting of 59 female and 58 male students. Besides applying the questionnaire, four students consisting of one male and three female students were interviewed. The participants taking part in the questionnaire were categorised regarding their gender and age.

**Table 2: Gender and age of the students**

Age levels	Male	Female	Total
13	30	43	73
14	28	16	44
<b>Total</b>	58	59	117

There are 4 female English Language Teachers in the school. However, two of them teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. As the study focuses on the English section of LGS exam and the effects of it on the students and teachers who are dealing with preparing their students for this exam, only these two English Language Teachers were included in the interview part of the study.

**Table 3: Profile of the teachers**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Department of graduation</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Years of teaching experience</b>
Teacher 1	Female	ELT	B.A	14
Teacher 2	Female	ELT	B.A	11

### **3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

As Alderson and Wall (1993) suggest, surveys, interviews or classroom observations or a mixture of all of these methods are used in most of the washback studies. In this particular study, qualitative and quantitative data obtained by questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation were used.

#### **3.4.1. Questionnaire for Students**

The questionnaire for students was adapted from a thesis study conducted by Cakildere in 2013, which examined the washback effects of high stakes exams, KPDS and UDS (YDS) on language learning of academic personnel in Turkey. In the questionnaire, some modifications were applied in accordance with the LGS exam. Three items were omitted. The item stating that going abroad for language education is necessary in order to get a valid point from KPDS and ÜDS was irrelevant for the present study as the participants were eighth grade students. Items stating that studying for the exam increases or decreases the participants' willingness towards learning English were excluded as well for the reason that the last two items of the questionnaire which ask whether the English part of LGS influence their English in a positive or negative way provide answers related to these items. At the

end, twenty three survey items were included in the study. The seventh item of the questionnaire was repeated in the item twenty one in order to prevent response bias of the respondents. It was aimed to check if the respondents answered the questions truthfully or not. The survey items were prepared in English. First, they were translated into Turkish by the researcher. Then, an English Language Teacher was asked to translate the items into Turkish as well. Finally the survey items were checked in terms of the correctness of meaning in Turkish by an expert using an Expert Evaluation Form. In this form, the expert was asked to describe the correctness of the statements' meaning in Turkish and the final form of the questionnaire was developed.

In the first part of the questionnaire, the students were informed about the survey and were asked to fill in the personal information regarding their age and gender. In the second part of the survey they were asked to cross the best item out of 5-point Likert-scale items (1=definitely disagree; 2=disagree; 3=no idea; 4=agree; 5=definitely agree). In the first four items, which skills the students study while preparing for the English section of the LGS exam is examined. The next five items focus on the studying strategies participants use and their motivation and anxiety towards the exam in the process of getting prepared for the English section of LGS. Items from number ten to twenty measure positive and negative washback effects of the English section of LGS on grammar, vocabulary, reading, pronunciation, speaking, listening and writing. Item 21 is a repetition of question item 7. Question repeating (question piping) was used to repeat a previous question in the questionnaire in order to increase the reliability of the respondents so that the inconsistent answers of the students to these questions could be removed in the analysis of the data. Finally, the last two items of the survey examine if the English section of LGS, in general, affects the language learning processes of students in a positive or negative way.

While filling in the questionnaire, none of the participants was asked to give their names. They were guaranteed anonymity.

### **3.4.2. Interview with Students**

Besides giving a questionnaire to the students, semi-structured interviews were carried out to provide much more detailed information for the study. Semi



structured interviews are flexible with a predetermined scheme; thus, the interviewer has a list of questions which serve as a set of guidelines and they can freely arise themes related to these questions during the interview. Gass *et al* (2005) state that compared to structured interview, this technique helps the researcher to collect more information. Also, compared to unstructured interviews, the semi-structured nature of the data collection tool will bring out more uniformed data to facilitate the comparison with the data obtained (Kumar, 2019).

Interview questions were prepared in accordance with the research questions. By holding interviews, it was aimed to support the outcomes of the questionnaire with more detailed information. Seven open-ended questions which aimed to get a detailed personal evaluation were included in the interview held with the students. The number of respondents was limited to four students (three female students and one male student). All the interviews with the students were held face-to-face in a friendly atmosphere in their mother tongue. Each interview lasted between 8-9 minutes. The interviews were tape recorded.

Firstly, the students were asked to introduce themselves briefly.

The second question of the interview which reads “How important is learning English for you and in which circumstances do you use English?” focuses on the importance of learning the foreign language and when the students use the skills especially while studying for the LGS exam.

The third question aims to seek how long the students have been preparing for the English section of the exam.

The fourth, fifth and sixth questions included the students’ opinions about the positive and negative sides of preparing for the English section of the LGS exam and if the students enjoy or feel stressed while studying for the exam by giving reasons for their answers.

The final question seeks answers to the opinion of the students about the effects of the English section of the exam on their language learning- whether it improves their language learning or not.

### **3.4.3 Interview with Teachers**

The aim of the present study is to obtain the views of both the students and the teachers. Besides conducting a questionnaire and holding interviews with the students, the research also included a semi-structured interview with both of the teachers to supplement the data collected. The teachers were asked for permission to record the interviews; nevertheless, they asked the researcher to take notes of the answers they gave instead of recording them. The interviews were carried out in Turkish in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere for the participants. Each interview lasted for 15-20 minutes. After getting some personal information about the teachers, the researchers dealt with the issues such as the opinion of the teachers about preparing their students for the English section of the LGS exam, whether the effects of the section of the exam was positive or negative for their students, whether it improves their students' English level and they feel more responsible for preparing their students for such an exam. Some more questions were asked depending on the answers of the teachers spontaneously to collect more information.

### **3.4.4. Classroom observation**

Observation offers richer and more in-depth information. As indicated by Bailey (1999), classroom observation is needed in the studies concerning washback for the reason that questionnaires and interviews are not enough to understand the effects of language testing. Thus, one classroom was observed for one class hour to examine the actions of the teacher and the students, strategies, content and materials used. Neither the teacher nor the students were disturbed during the observation. The researcher was non-participant; in other words, she did not participate in the classroom activities. Before the observation, the researcher asked for permission to record the lesson; however, it was not approved by the school management and the teacher. Thus, the researcher took field notes during the observation process.

## **3.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

The quantitative data of this study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences Program SPSS 15.0 for Windows SPSS. The analysis included

descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages, frequencies, and the values showing reliability).

In order to analyse the qualitative data for this study, the transcripts of students' interviews were transcribed and translated into English. To analyse the interviews held with the teachers, the field notes taken during the interviews were used and translated into English.

This chapter presented the methodology of this study including the instruments applied and data collected as well as analysis procedures. Next chapter explicates the results of the present study.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4. RESULTS**

#### **4.1 PRESENTATION**

In this chapter, the results of the survey given to the learners and interviews held with both the learners and teachers are introduced. The chapter begins with the analysis of the demographic information of the respondents to the questionnaire. Then, each items of the survey is analysed and demonstrated in tables and graphs. Following the analysis of the survey, the results of the interviews both with the students and the teachers are presented. Finally, the findings of the classroom observation are provided with the information gathered using notes taken by the researcher.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNERS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

In the survey, the Likert Scale is used to allow the respondents to express how much they agree or disagree with the statements. They were offered a choice of five pre-coded responses as below:

Definitely disagree = 1

Disagree= 2

No idea= 3

Agree= 4

Definitely agree= 5

The mean value of the items show to what extent the survey takers agree or disagree to the items. If most of the respondents answered an item as “agree”, it means that the mean value of that item is more than three while if most of them

answered an item as “disagree”, it means that the mean value of that item is less than three.

#### 4.2.1 Age and gender of the students

Totally, 117 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the questionnaire. As it is seen in the table below, the number of the female and male students taken part in this survey is almost equal. The table shows that the ages of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade female and male students are close to each other, as well. Based on the table, it can be concluded that totally 73 thirteen year old students and 44 fourteen year old students answered the survey of the present study.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of the 1<sup>st</sup> Research Question:

The first research question of this study, “Which skills do the learners need to study for preparing the English section of LGS?” is examined through the results of the first four items of the questionnaire in this part.

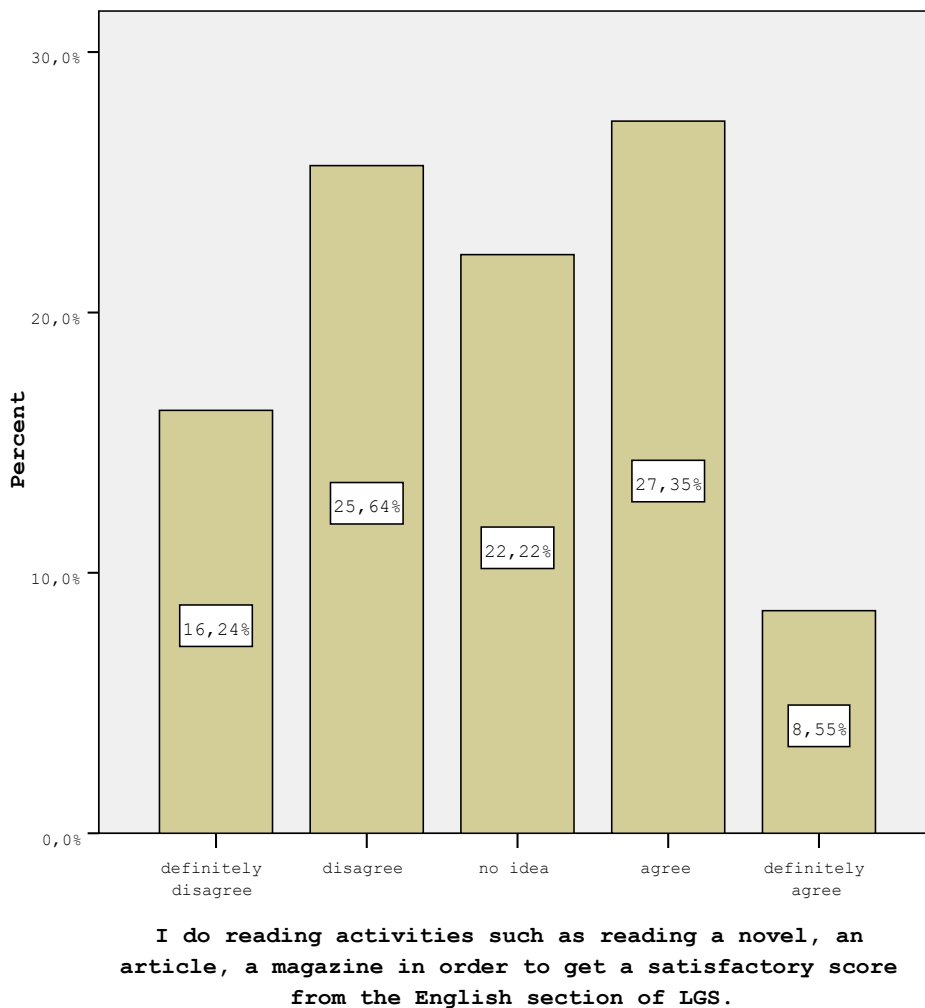
The first four items of the questionnaire ask if the students do any kind of reading, listening, speaking and writing activities in order to prepare for the English section of LGS exam. The table below shows a graph of their answers about the first item focusing on the extent of the reading activities they do while preparing for the exam.

It can be seen on the table that the mean value of this item is below three which means that most of the respondents answered to this item as “disagree”. When the percentages of the answers are considered, it is seen that 41, 88 % disagreed with the idea whereas 35, 99 % agreed with it. In other words, most of the learners stated that they did not do reading activities while preparing for this exam.

**Table 4: Mean value for the first item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I do reading activities such as reading a novel, an article, a magazine in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	2,86	1,23

**Figure 1: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the first item**



Based on the second item of the questionnaire, the table below demonstrates whether the students do listening activities in the preparation process of the exam:

**Table 5: Mean value for the second item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I do listening activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	3,19	1,15

The mean value of the second item is “3, 1966” which indicates the number of the learners who ticked agree part is more than the number of the students who ticked the other part.

The answers given to the third item which asks if the students do speaking activities to get a valid score from the exam are illustrated in the table below:

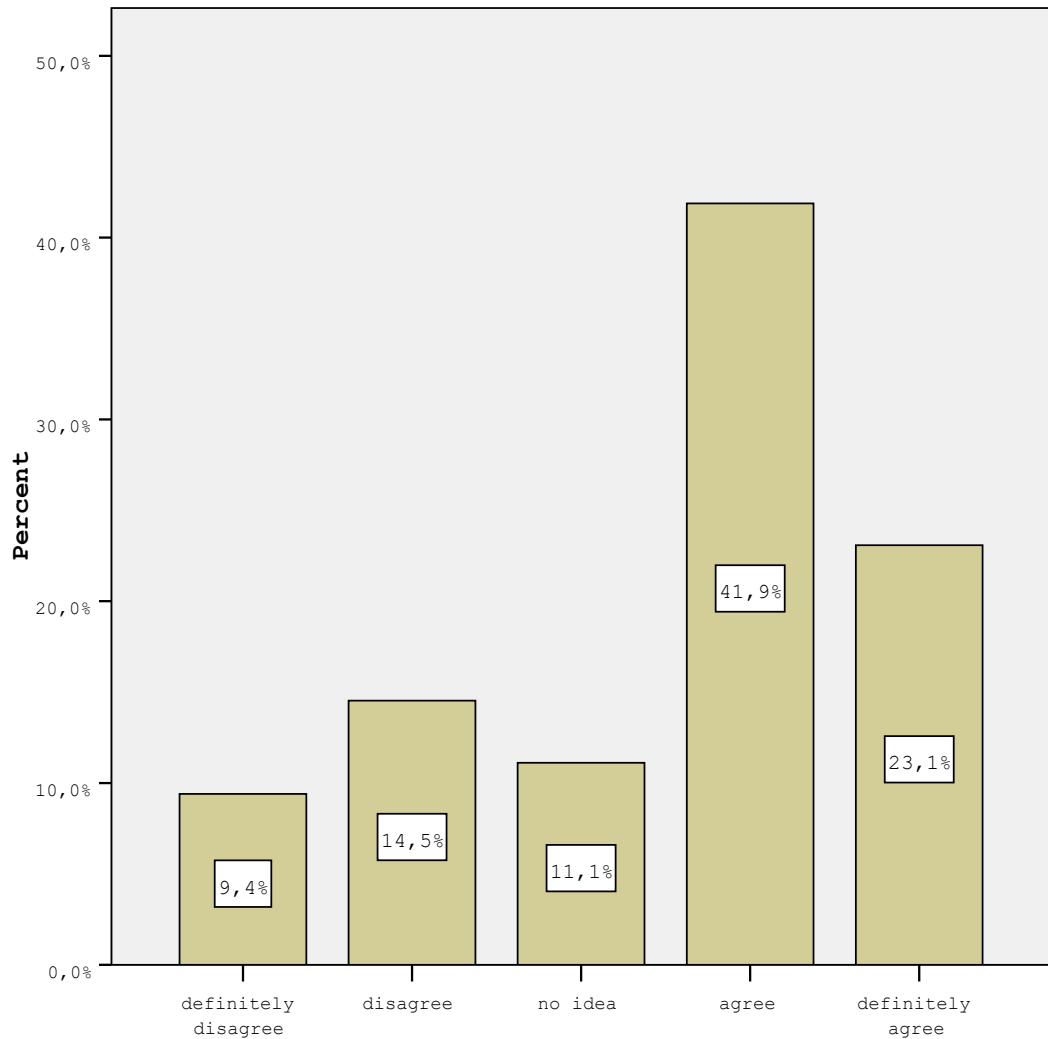
**Table 6: Mean value for the third item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I do speaking activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	3,26	1,24

As in the second item, the mean value of the third item is a little higher than 3 which means that the number of the learners who agree with this item is more than the students who disagree with this item.

Students are asked if they do any kind of writing activities to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS. The following bar chart gives the percentages of the students’ answers. It is clearly seen in the bar chart that most of the participants checked agree (41, 9%) or definitely agree (23, 1%) option which means that most of them do writing activities while preparing for the English section of the exam.

**Figure 2: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the fourth item**



**I do writing activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.**

#### **4.2.3 Analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Question:**

The second research question of this study, “Which strategies do the learners think they need to improve in order to be successful in the English section of LGS?” examines items 5, 6 and 7 of the questionnaire.

Item five tries to find out whether the students believe they need extra help such as attending an English course or having private lessons in order to prepare for the English section of LGS. The mean value of the item (3, 80) implies that the students think they need extra help to succeed in the English section of the exam.



**Table 7: Mean value for the fifth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Extra help such as attending an English course or having private English lessons are needed in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	3,80	1,22

For the sixth item, the students are asked if they need to know test strategies and tactics in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.

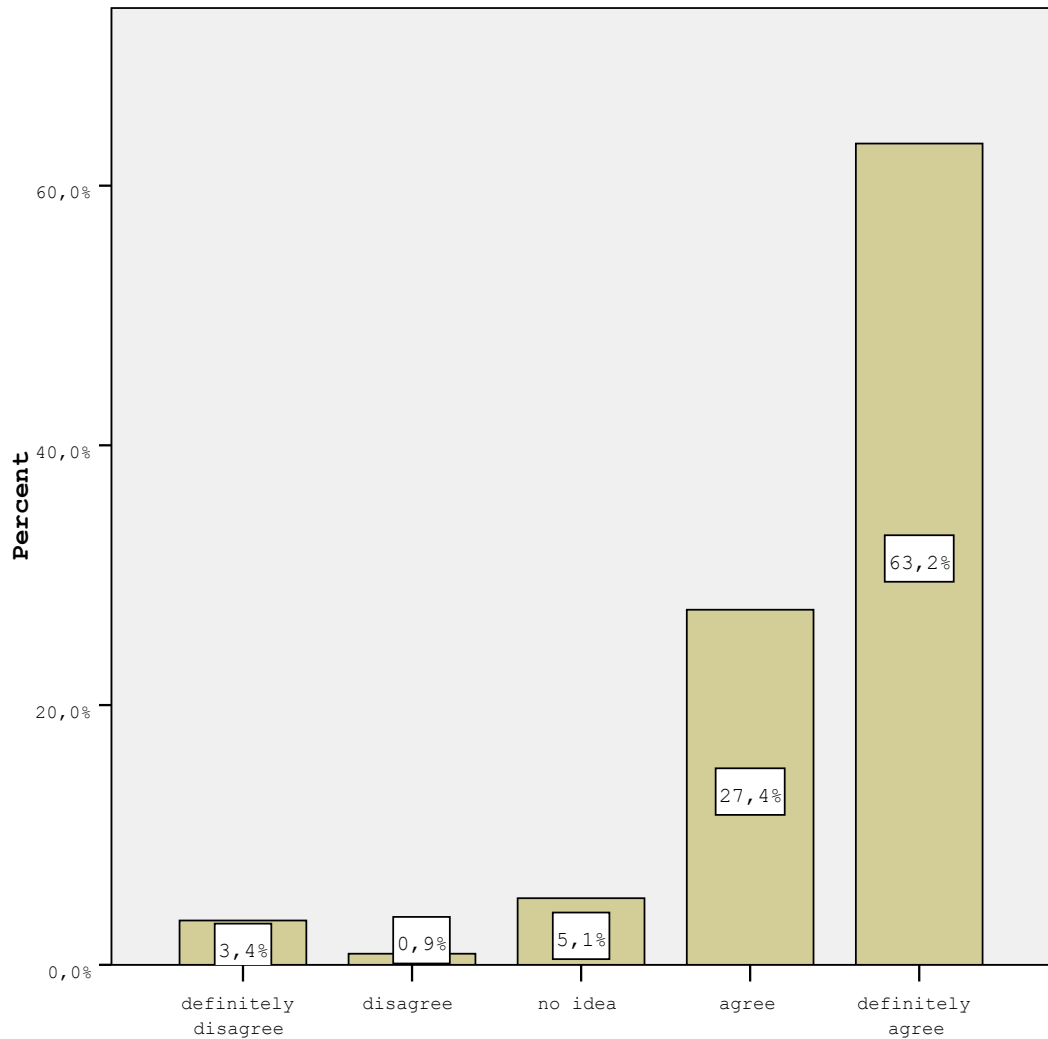
**Table 8: Mean value for the sixth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Test strategies and tactics need to be learned in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	4,11	1,02

As clearly seen in the table, the mean value of the sixth item which is 4, 11 demonstrates that a high majority of the respondents agree that they need to know some strategies and tactics to be successful in the exam.

The seventh item is repeated in the twenty first one. Both items ask if the students need to practise sample test questions in order to get a satisfactory score from the exam. In the bar chart below, the percentage distribution of the students' answers for both items are shown:

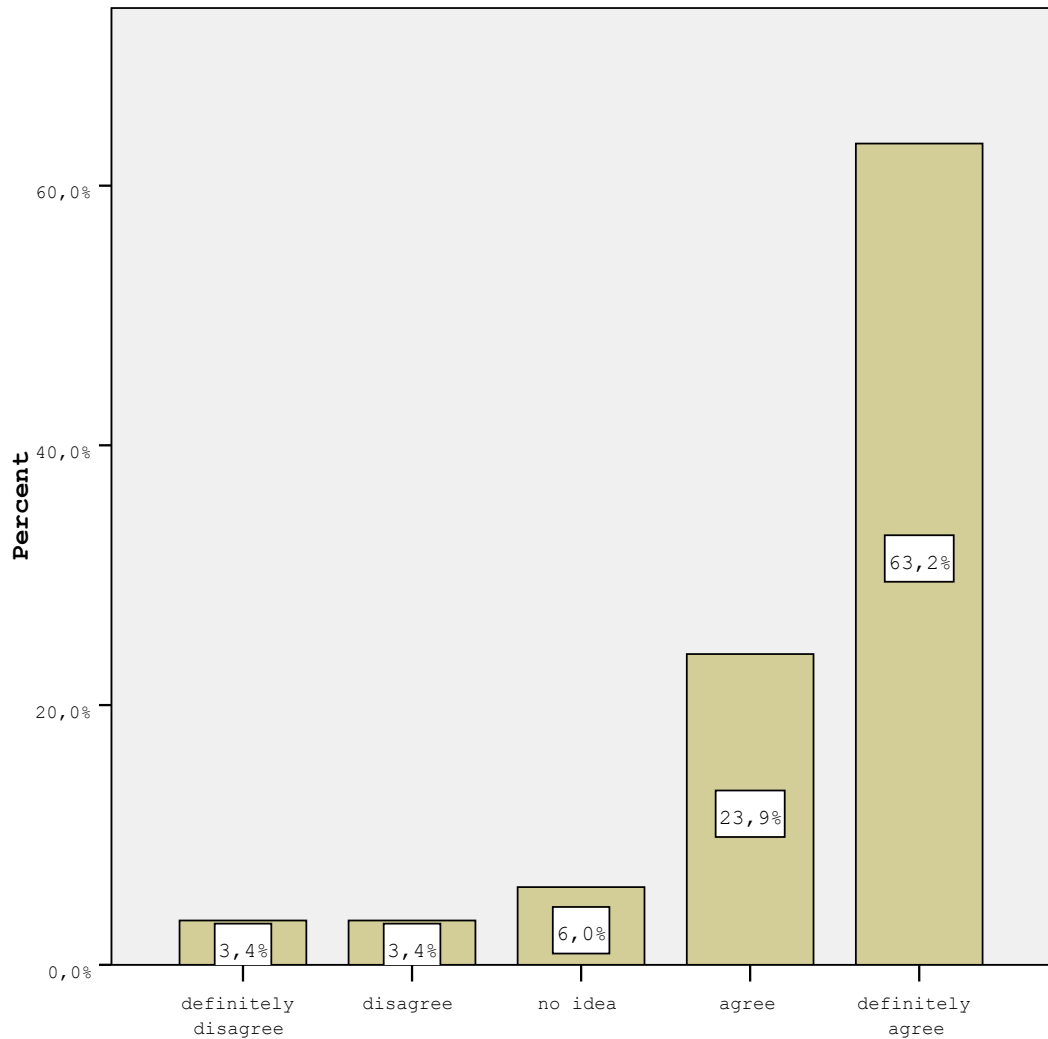
**Figure 3: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the seventh item**



**Too many preparation tests should be solved in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.**

As seen in the bar chart, the percentages of definitely agree (63,2%) and agree (27,4%) answers for this item mean that the vast majority of the participants think they need to solve tests to do well in the exam. When the analysis of the twenty first item is regarded, it is seen that the results are similar to the percentages of the answers for the seventh item. It is observed that totally 86,1% of the participants agreed that it was necessary to solve tests while preparing for the English section of the exam.

**Figure 4: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the twenty first item**



**Too many preparation tests should be solved in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.**

#### **4.2.4 Analysis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Research question:**

This study focuses on the opinion of the students by analysing the third research question which is “How does studying for the English section of LGS affect the attitudes of the students towards learning English?”.

In the eighth item of the questionnaire, the students are requested to answer whether studying for the English section of LGS makes them feel willing to learn the language.

**Table 9: Mean value for the eighth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Studying for the English section of LGS increases my willingness of learning English.	117	1,00	5,00	3,70	1,12

Mean value for the item number eight which is 3,70 indicates that preparing for the exam makes most of the students willing to study English.

Through the ninth item, the students are asked if they feel not being able to get a satisfactory score from the English part of the exam has a negative impact on their feelings towards learning English.

**Table 10: Mean value for the ninth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Feeling that I will not be able to get a valid score from the English section of LGS negatively affects my studies and my attitude towards English.	117	1,00	5,00	2,88	1,49

When the mean value of the ninth item (2,88) is checked, it is seen that the students who disagree with this item are more than the students who agree with this item.

#### **4.2.5 Analysis of the 4<sup>th</sup> Research question:**

Items from number ten to number twenty one of the questionnaire aim to seek the answers for the research question, “What are the positive and negative washback effects of the English section of LGS on the language development of the learners?”.

Item number ten focuses on if LGS exam has a positive effect on the development of students’ grammar knowledge.

**Table 11: Mean value for the tenth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I study to improve my grammar knowledge since it is tested in the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	3,58	1,15

The mean value which is 3, 58, clearly shows that most of the respondents study to improve their grammar knowledge as it is included in the English section of the exam which also means that the exam has a positive washback impact on the participants' language development.

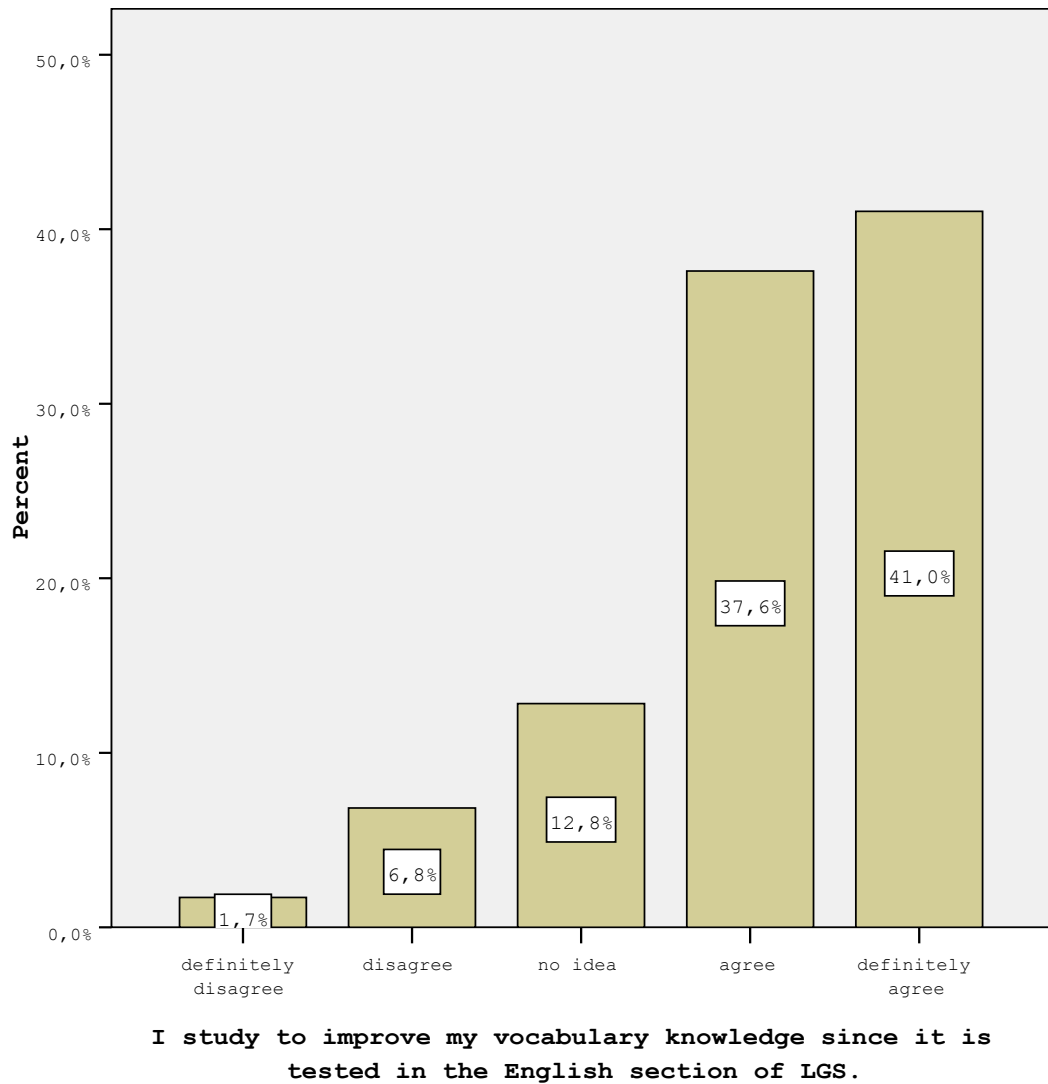
Practising vocabulary has a crucial role in learning a language. The English section of LGS consists of questions related to vocabulary knowledge. For item number 11, the students are asked if they study vocabulary to get a satisfactory score from the exam. The results of the analysis for the eleventh item of the questionnaire are presented both in the table and in the graph below:

**Table 12: Mean value for the eleventh item**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid definitely disagree	2	1,7	1,7	1,7
disagree	8	6,8	6,8	8,5
no idea	15	12,8	12,8	21,4
agree	44	37,6	37,6	59
definitely agree	48	41,0	41,0	100
Total	117	100	100	

As seen in the bar chart below, totally 78, 6% of the respondents agree that they study vocabulary to succeed in the exam while 8, 5% of them disagree that they study to improve their vocabulary knowledge for the exam.

**Figure 5: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the eleventh item**



The item number twelve which is ‘I study to improve my reading comprehension since it is tested in the English section of LGS’ examines whether LGS has a positive or negative washback effect on reading.

The mean value (3, 73) for the item number twelve clearly indicates that a majority of the students study to improve their reading skill as it is tested in the exam.

**Table 13: Mean value for the twelfth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I study to improve my reading comprehension since it is tested in the English section of LGS	117	1,00	5,00	3,73	1,17

The English section of LGS does not contain a part testing pronunciation knowledge. Whether the students need to improve their pronunciation or not is asked in the item number thirteen.

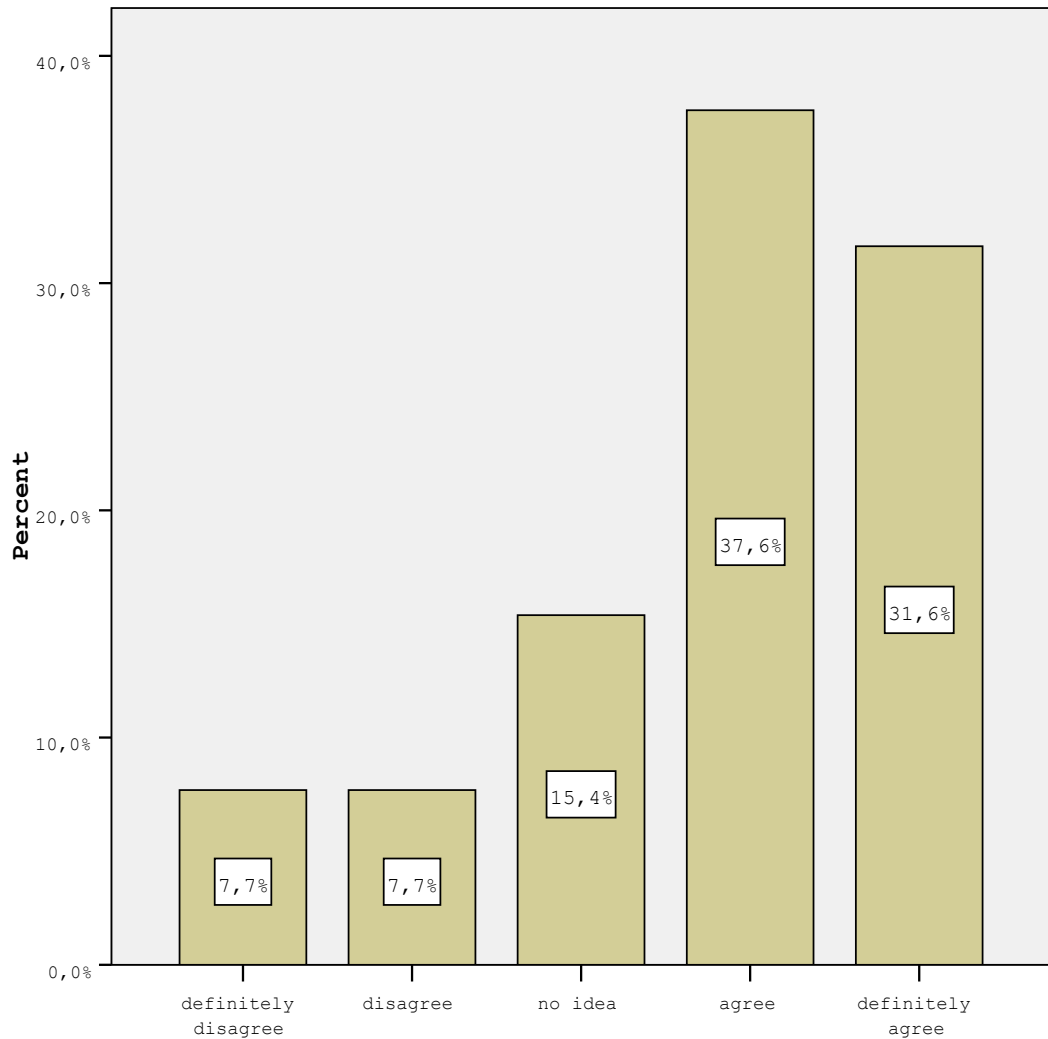
**Table 14: Mean value for the thirteenth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I do not study to improve my pronunciation since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	2,44	1,28

Considering the mean value of this item which is 2, 44, it can be concluded that most of the respondents think they need to improve their pronunciation to prepare for the exam.

The findings of item fourteen which is ‘I would study to improve my pronunciation if it was tested in the English section of LGS’ is demonstrated in the bar chart below. Based on the results of the bar chart, it can be concluded that a high number of participants agree that they would study to improve their pronunciation to succeed in the exam which implies that the English section of LGS has a negative impact on the language learning process of the students.

**Figure 6: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the fourteenth item**



**I would study to improve my pronunciation if it was tested in the English section of LGS.**

The English section of LGS does not contain any items related to speaking skills. Item number 15 in the questionnaire seeks to find out whether the students study to improve their speaking skills while preparing for the exam. The results of the analysis of the present item are shown in the table below. The analysis of the percentage who answered “disagree” for this item is 59,8%. In other words, many students try to improve their speaking skills even though it is not tested in the exam.



**Table 15: Mean value for the fifteenth item**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid definitely disagree	33	28,2	28,2	28,2
disagree	37	31,6	31,6	59,8
no idea	21	17,9	17,9	77,8
agree	19	16,2	16,2	94
definitely agree	7	6	6	100
Total	117	100,0	100,0	

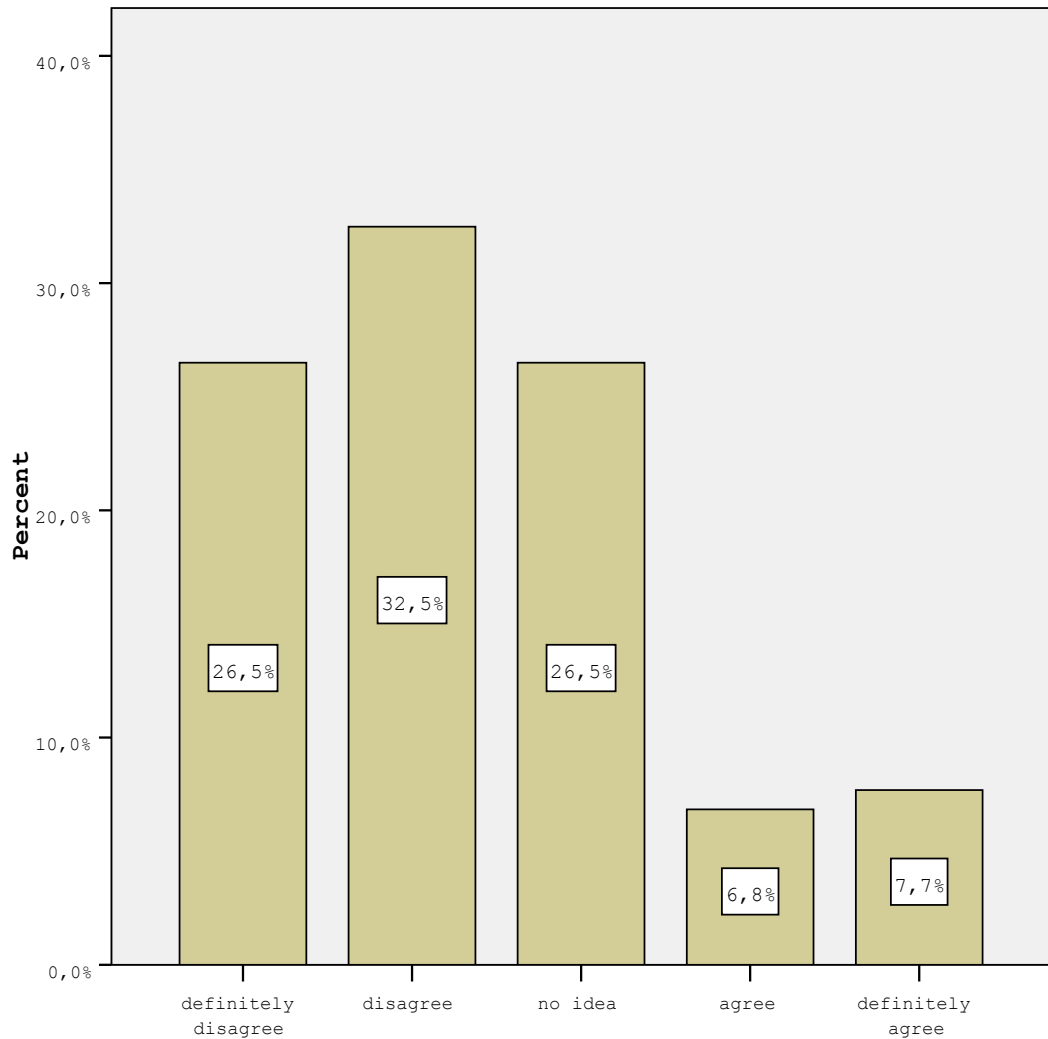
On the other hand, the findings of item number 16 which asks students whether they would study to improve their speaking skills if it was included in the exam reveal that most of the students (70, 1%) agree that they would study more to improve their speaking skills if it was tested in the exam.

**Table 16: Mean value for the sixteenth item**

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid definitely disagree	5	4,3	4,3	4,3
disagree	10	8,5	8,5	12,8
no idea	20	17,1	17,1	29,9
agree	50	42,7	42,7	72,6
definitely agree	32	27,4	27,4	100
Total	117	100	100	

The English section of LGS does not contain a part testing listening skills as well. Item 17 asks students if they study to improve their listening skills for the exam. The graph below shows the analysis of the results of this item.

**Figure 7: Percentages of the answers of the respondents for the seventeenth item**



**I do not study to improve my listening skills since it is not tested in the English section of IGS.**

Despite not being required to improve their listening skills for the exam, the answers of the students indicate that they prefer to study to improve their listening skills for almost 60% of them disagreed with this item. Regarding the analysis of the eighteenth item, it is seen in the figure below that 70,1% of the respondents agreed that they would improve their listening skills more if it was included in the exam.

**Table 17: Mean value for the eighteenth item**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	definitely disagree	8	6,8	6,8	6,8
	disagree	6	5,1	5,1	12,0
	no idea	23	19,7	19,7	31,6
	agree	50	42,7	42,7	74,4
	definitely agree	30	25,6	25,6	100
	Total	117	100	100	

Item 19 asks whether the students study to improve their writing skills or not for the exam. When we look at the table below, we see that most of the students study to improve this skill even though it is not tested in the exam.

**Table 18: Mean value for the nineteenth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I do not study to improve my writing skills since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	2,22	1,19

Similar to item 19, item 20 asks the students whether they would study to improve their writing skills if it was included in the exam. It is clearly seen that a high percentage of them stated they would study to improve this skill if it was a part of the exam.

**Table 19: Mean value for the twentieth item**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I would study to improve my writing skills if it was tested in the English section of LGS.	117	1,00	5,00	3,8	1,16

#### 4.2.6 Analysis of the 5<sup>th</sup> Research question:

Through items 22 and 23, the influence of the English section of LGS on learning English is analysed.

For item 22, the students are asked whether studying for the English section of LGS has a positive effect on their English while they are asked whether studying for the exam has a negative effect on their English for the item 23. The tables below show that most of the students think that studying for the English section of LGS affects their English in a positive way.

**Table 20: Mean values for the twenty second and twenty third items**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Studying for the English section of LGS influences my English in a positive way.	117	1,00	5,00	4,23	1,08
Studying for the English section of LGS influences my English in a negative way	117	1,00	5,00	1,85	1,26

### 4.3. ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH THE LEARNERS

One male and three female students chosen randomly from different classrooms took part in the interview part of the study. First of all, the students were asked to introduce themselves briefly.

The second interview question asked how important English is for the students and in which cases they use the language. All of the students acknowledged that knowing English is quite important for them as they will need the language in every step of their lives and it is the most widely-spoken language in the modern world. Some of the students stated that they sometimes practise the language by speaking in English with their friends while some of them declared that they use the language only in English classes.

Student 1: *“In my opinion, we have to learn English as English is the most commonly spoken language in the world. I do not use English outside of school.”*

Student 2: *“I think it is necessary to learn English because we will need it when we try to find a job in the future. I mostly use English in English classes; however when I am together with my friends, we sometimes try to talk in English.”*

For the third question, the students were asked how long they had been studying for the English section of LGS. Two participants stated that they started to study for the English section of the exam in September when the schools opened. However, the other two students stated that they started to prepare for the English section of LGS during their previous summer holiday.

Student 1: *“I started to prepare for the English section of LGS on my last summer holiday. I do not study for English every day; however, I study Science, Maths and Turkish as the coefficient of the questions in these parts is higher than the ones in the English part. So, I study English only three days in a week.”*

For the fourth question, the students were asked their perceptions about the positive and negative aspects of LGS with regard to learning English. Each single participant declared that preparing for the exam has a positive impact on English lesson. On the other hand, Student 4 expressed that one negative aspect of preparing for the exam may be focusing on only multiple choice questions. In her opinion, doing such exercises is easy; however, students have difficulty in expressing themselves in English. On the other hand, the other students claimed that they study for English more as it is included in the exam. Otherwise, they would not study for it.

Student 3: *“I think without the English section of the exam, we would not regard studying English as important. As it is a part of the exam, we study for it and we learn new words and grammar which is good for us.”*

Student 4: *“Well... I enjoy preparing for the English section of the exam. Learning new words and grammar of English language... Compared to the other sections of the exam, I think English section is easier and seeing that I can do it makes me feel relaxed. However, we only focus on grammar and vocabulary of English and in the test I just need to find the correct option because there are multiple-choice questions. When speaking English is considered, it is difficult for us to express ourselves.”*

The fifth interview question asked the participants whether they have fun while studying for the exam or not. Each single participant claimed that they have quite a lot of fun while studying English for the exam. Two participants expressed that it is especially fun when they do vocabulary exercises. One of the participants even stated that she liked reading story books in English aloud as she thinks it is a good way to learn the words and how to pronounce them.

*Student 2: "I really enjoy practising vocabulary and memorising new words. I also enjoy reading the dialogs and texts in our textbooks. Also, if I have time before I go to bed, I read my English story book."*

*Student 3: "Practising vocabulary is great fun for me. Besides doing vocabulary exercises, I read English story books aloud before I go to bed. I learn new words when I read. If there is a word I cannot pronounce, I check the pronunciation of it on You Tube."*

For the sixth interview question, the participants were asked whether the exam they have at school put pressure on them in general. They were also asked whether studying for the English section of the exam causes anxiety or worry. All of the participants responded that having exams generally make them feel stressed. Nevertheless, compared to the other lessons like Maths or Science, English is easier for them. As they do better in English, English exams or studying for the English section of LGS do not cause as much stress as the other sections of the exam.

*Student 1: "Well, I can say that I do not worry so much when I study for the English exams. It is easier and less demanding compared to Maths which I am really afraid of."*

*Student 3: "The English section of LGS does not cause so much stress on me for I am interested in the language and I think I am quite competent."*

For the seventh interview question, the participants were asked whether the exam improves the English level of the students or not. All of the students believed that studying for the English section of LGS helps them improve their language level. They claimed that while studying for this exam they especially improve their grammar and vocabulary knowledge in English. They asserted that they cannot do many activities regarding reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in the class;

however, two of the students stated that they try to spare some time to do online listening activities at home. One of them also maintained that she listens to songs in English and tries to speak in English with some of her friends and her sister from time to time. Moreover, all of the students except one expressed that they read English story books in order to practise vocabulary and improve their reading skills as they are interested in improving their English level.

*Student 2: “As well as doing multiple choice exercises to practise for the exam, I sometimes do online listening activities in order to improve my English. Concerning writing activities, we sometimes write dialogues in English classes at school.”*

*Student 4: “In order to study for the exam, I only do multiple choice exercises and practice mock tests along with practising vocabulary. I enjoy listening to English songs. I am interested in improving my pronunciation. If I see a word which I do not know how to pronounce, I check the meaning and pronunciation of it online. I want to practise my speaking skills and for this, I sometimes talk with my friends and my sister in English.”*

#### **4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH THE TEACHERS**

Besides applying questionnaires to the students and holding interviews with them, the data of this study include the interviews held with the teachers as well. Two English Language Teachers teaching the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in this part of the study. Their answers to the questions during the interview helped to get the answers for the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> research questions of the study.

The first two questions of the interview involved some basic information about the interviewees such as their teaching experience both as a teacher and working in the same school as well as their previous experience in preparing students for such exams as LGS.

*1. How long have you been working as an English language teacher? Can you talk about your educational background? How long have you been working in the same school?*

The first question of the interview aimed to find out the years of teaching experience of the English language teachers taking part in the study as well as their educational background and the period they had been working in the same school. It is clearly seen in the chart below that both teachers have almost the same amount of experience in teaching which is 10 years for teacher A and 11 years for teacher B. Moreover, they have both been working in middle schools and teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade students since they started their teaching experience. Both teachers have bachelor's degree. While Teacher A has been working in the same school for 6 years, Teacher B has been working there for 8 years.

*2. Have you prepared your students for an exam like LGS before? If your answer is "yes", how long have you been preparing students for these kinds of exams?*

For the second interview question, participants were asked whether they had the experience in preparing students such exams as LGS before. Both of the teachers agreed that they had been preparing students for such kind of high stakes exams since they started teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grades. They both stated that they prepared students for SBS and TEOG which were the high stakes exams administered by the MONE before LGS.

#### **4.4.1 Analysis of the 6<sup>th</sup> Research question:**

The answers of the participants for the third interview question form the basis for the answer of the 6<sup>th</sup> research question which asks how the English teachers prepare their students for the exam and what the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam are on their methods, materials, activities and the content of their lesson are.

*3. How many students have you been preparing for the English section of LGS during this academic year? How is your process of preparing the students for the exam?*

For the third interview question which asked the teachers about their process of exam preparation with the students, they had similar answers. Teacher A stated that she totally has 57 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from two out of the four 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Teacher A also expressed that when compared with each other, the students in one of the classrooms are much better than the students in the other



classroom. She claimed that most of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not aware of the importance of the exam and do not know how to study for the English part of the exam. In order to prepare the students for the exam, she practises especially vocabulary and focuses on grammatical structure of the language, hands out worksheets and applies mock exam papers. She also stated that she mostly uses activities from the course books prepared and sent by MONE and test books prepared for the sake of practising for the exam. She indicated that she mostly uses Grammar Translation method via lecturing, including questions and answers during the lesson (the teacher asking the questions and the students answering them), focusing on grammar exercises, getting the students to memorize target words.

Teacher A: " ....*In order to practise for LGS, the students need to answer multiple choice questions testing grammar and vocabulary knowledge so I try to give them mock tests every week to make them familiar with what they are going to face in the exam.*"

Teacher B believed that some students are more competent in learning a language compared to the others. Besides being more talented in languages, they are more eager to know about the language and they study more. Furthermore, she declared that some of the students are unwilling to learn the language and cannot focus on the lesson. Thus, they do not know how to study effectively for the exam. About the activities she conducts in the class, she stated that for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, she focuses on the activities which help her prepare the students for the exam which means that she cannot spare enough time for activities including reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Thus, her choice of methods and techniques is not based on Communicative Language Teaching but rather on Grammar Translation Method. She claimed that she still does her best to focus on the language skills in one out of the four classes of English in a week. In order to teach vocabulary, she prefers to use flashcards which, she thinks, is one of the most effective ways to focus on the lexical knowledge. In addition to that, she indicated that flashcards easily catch the attention of the students and make the lesson more engaging and fun.

Teacher B: *“...Well, I think teaching vocabulary with flashcards has a profound effect on the students as the cards easily attracts them and when used in a proper way, the cards can get the students both learn and enjoy the process.”*

#### **4.4.2 Analysis of the 7<sup>th</sup> research question**

It is aimed to seek the answers for the 7<sup>th</sup> research question which asks “How do the teachers feel about preparing their students for LGS?” through the answers of the interviewees for the fourth and fifth questions of the interview.

#### *4. What do you think about preparing your students for such an important exam?*

Both teachers expressed that in the process of preparing their students for the exam, they feel more responsible as the results they get from LGS exam is of high importance for the students.

Teacher A stated that the English section of LGS does not affect the total score as much as the other sections such as Turkish or Maths which has a demotivating effect on students. Besides that, she expresses another problem they face which is about the content of the exam. As the English section of LGS is a written exam which tests only grammar and vocabulary knowledge of the languages, the students do not improve their language skills much while preparing for the exam. Like Teacher A, Teacher B also indicated that the English section of the exam does not include speaking, listening, writing and reading parts which are the main components of learning a language. As they have only four hours of English in a week, they mostly focus on activities which are possible to be included in the exam. As a result of this, she gives the activities related to listening, reading, writing and listening skills as homework. The students who are interested in improving their language level do their homework whereas the ones who do not care about learning the language do not study for English at home. Additionally, she points out that the exam causes a lot of stress and anxiety on both students and teachers.

Teacher B: *“In our country, teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grades means preparing the students for the high school entrance examination; in other words, teaching is exam preparation. Among the parents and school management there is a belief that the success of the students depends on the teacher. This belief puts too much pressure and weight on us. I do whatever I can to prepare them well for the exam.”*

5. *Do you think LGS improves your students' English level? What are the negative and positive aspects of preparing your students for the English section of LGS?*

Both teachers had similar ideas about the positive and negative sides of the exam preparation process of the exam. They both emphasized that if there was not an exam including the English section, some students would regard learning the language as unnecessary and they would not study for it. For the sake of the exam, the students feel they need to study at least grammar and vocabulary as it is included in the exam.

When the negative side of the exam preparation process is considered, they stated that the lack of doing speaking, writing, listening and reading exercises causes the students to fail in practising the language. As the students do not use the language, they are afraid of making mistakes especially when speaking. In order to prevent this, the teachers try to spare some time for the activities based on developing language skills for one-or two lessons every two weeks. However, most of the students are reluctant to do pronunciation, speaking or listening exercises as they are not included in the exam. Their parents put too much pressure on the students; that's why, they think they need to focus on only practising tests that consist of grammar and vocabulary questions and questions that assess reading comprehension to be successful in the exam.

Teacher A: *"...Well, there are both good sides and bad sides of the exam. The good side is that students have to study for English, mostly reading, grammar and vocabulary, as it is a part of the exam. So they have to care about English lesson. When it comes to the bad side of the exam, I can say that the content which is based on testing only reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary knowledge causes the students to fail in developing the four language skills."*

#### **4.4.3 Analysis of the 8<sup>th</sup> Research question:**

Interview question six aims to find answers for the eighth research question of this study which asks how the English section of LGS affects the assessment practises of the teachers.

6. *Do you think LGS has an impact on the assessment types you apply? If so, in what ways does the exam affect your assessment practices?*

Both teachers indicated that LGS has a profound effect on the ways they assess their students. They both prefer to hold written exams which assess grammar and vocabulary knowledge consisting of multiple choice questions, true-false questions and dialogue completion. In addition to the written exams, they regularly give quizzes which are shorter than the written exams but include similar parts. Neither the written exams nor the quizzes they prepare contain parts assessing speaking, reading, writing or listening skills as these are not included in LGS.

Teacher B: *“LGS does not assess the four language skills like TOEFL or IELTS. That’s why we cannot have enough time to focus on the language skills in our lessons and assess them in the exams or quizzes although I would prefer to include them in my assessment practises. The questions we prepare for the written exams or quizzes are related to LGS like multiple choice questions, gap filling questions or true-false questions assessing the grammar and vocabulary knowledge of our students.”*

#### **4.5. ANALYSIS OF THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

One of the two teachers was observed for forty minutes (one lesson hour) on December, 2018. 27 students participated in the lesson during the observation. The researcher did not take part in the classroom activities- she was just a non-participant observer. The researcher took some field notes during the observation process. During the observation, the researcher took teaching materials, methods and techniques, teaching content (including reading, speaking, listening, writing, grammar and vocabulary focus) and classroom assessment practices into consideration. The data collected by means of classroom observation helped to find answers for the sixth research question of this study supporting the data gathered from the interviews held with the teachers.

The teaching materials the teacher and the students used, methods and techniques carried out by the teacher and organisational patterns were noted to collect the data for the sixth research question which asked about the effects of the exam on the teaching materials, techniques and methods. It was observed that they mostly used the textbook provided by MONE. Besides the textbook, they also did

exercises on a worksheet handed out by the teacher. Although there was a projector in the class, it was not used during the observed lesson. The activities including neither the visual materials such as video presentations or posters nor the audial materials like songs were applied during the lesson. It was observed that the teacher usually translated the exercises in the mother tongue or she got the students to translate the exercises. In other words, the lesson was usually based on grammar translation method. Filling in the blanks exercises, use of words in sentences, question-answer exercises, choosing the right option exercises were carried out during the lesson. The teacher asked the questions and the students answered the questions individually. Neither pair work nor group work had a place in the lesson. The content of the lesson was mostly based on grammar activities such as multiple choice questions, completion, matching, drilling and making sentences as well as vocabulary activities such as word completion, use of dictionary, memorizing meaning and completion. It was observed that there was no place for activities or exercises regarding listening, writing, reading and speaking skills. The teacher did not use any kind of assessment types during the one lesson hour observed.

The results of the study were expounded in this chapter. The following chapter consists of the discussion of the results, implications and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. PRESENTATION

The present study aims to investigate the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam on both teaching and learning English in a middle school in Turkey by way of exploring answers for eight research questions based on the data gathered from both students and teachers. In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed along with the suggestions given for further research.

#### 5.2. DISCUSSION

##### **5.2.1. Research Question 1: Which language skills do the learners need to study for preparing the English section of LGS?**

In the fifteen hypotheses they postulated about washback effects of the exams on language teaching and learning, Wall and Alderson (1993: 41) stated that the learning processes of the students would be affected by a test. Besides, the findings of Sundayana *et al* (2018) reveal that in order to perform well in the exam, students tend to study for the content and skills which are included in the exam format. On the other hand, when the answers for the first research question that asks which skills the learners study to prepare for the English section of LGS are examined, it is seen that despite not being a part of the exam, listening, speaking and writing activities are still practised by the students as a preparation for the exam; however, they neglect doing reading activities such as reading a book, newspaper or magazine in the target language.

The first four survey items of the questionnaire are based on the skills the students need to practise while preparing for the exam. The mean value of the item 1 is below three (2,86) which shows that most of the students do not prefer to do reading activities such as reading a novel, an article, a magazine in order to prepare

for the exam. The English section of the LGS exam tests only basic reading skills by including a short text or a chart and getting the participants to interpret. In the interviews held with them, the students stated that they do not read books in English; however, they do reading exercises such as answering questions related to a short text or chart in order to prepare for the exam.

When it comes to practising listening activities, the students were asked if they did any kind of listening activities in order to do well in the exam. Surprisingly, 47, 9 % of the students agreed that they would practise their listening skills although it is not tested in the English section of LGS. Based on the interviews held with the students, it is observed that some students do listening or speaking activities outside the classroom as they are interested in improving their English. Thus, it can be concluded that the main aim of these students may not be getting a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS exam. Instead, they do listening activities in order to improve their language proficiency as they are interested in learning English.

Concerning speaking skills, the third survey item asked the students if they did any kind of speaking activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS. Similar to the findings of the second survey item, it is seen that nearly half (47, 9 %) of the participants agreed that they did speaking activities in order to prepare for the exam although it is not included in the exam content. As in listening, the reason why the students do speaking activities is they want to improve their level of English. In the interviews held with the students, some of them claimed that they try to practise their English outside the classroom by talking with their friends or siblings in English. 31, 6 % of the students disagreed with the statement that they do speaking activities in order to study for the exam. The rest 20,5 % of the students stated that they had no idea about this. Thus, it can be concluded that for some students studying for the English section of LGS has a negative washback effect while it has a positive impact on others.

As for practising writing skills, the participants were asked if they did any kind of writing exercises while preparing for the English section of LGS. 65% of the students stated that they did writing activities as a preparation for the exam while almost 25% stated they did not and 10% had no idea about that. Testing writing skills is not involved in the exam which makes the result quite surprising. Concerning the

interviews with the students, it is observed that some students regard writing dialogues in the class as writing exercises. Hence, for them, it is a kind of exam preparation. They think the activities and the exercises they do in the class prepare them for the exam. These findings may reveal that the effects of the English section of the exam depend on the learner.

To conclude, for some learners the exam has a positive effect on improving their language skills while for the others it does not. The findings of the present study are in line with Andrews *et al.*'s (2002) who carried out a case study about the effects of high stakes exams on the performance of the students who take them. They suggest that the washback effects of the UE oral exam were not the same for each learner. For some students, it helped them improve their speaking skills while for the others, the exam meant to confront the requirements of the exam format. As opposed to the findings of Yıldırım (2010) in his study which examined the teaching and learning practices of Foreign Language University Entrance Exam and revealed that the students studied for the exam format to succeed in the exam neglecting to improve their writing, listening and speaking skills as they were not tested in the exam, the test does not always affect what the learners study.

#### **5.2.2. Research Question 2: Which test-taking strategies do the learners need to improve in order to be successful in the English section of LGS?**

For the second research question, the participants were asked whether they needed to get extra help such as attending an English course or having private lessons in order to prepare for the exam. The mean value of their answers is 3, 80; in other words, 66% of the students agreed on the answer. As Madaus' (1988) expressed one of the influences of the tests on the curriculum and participants is that a commercial industry was developed in order to prepare the students for the tests. When the answers of the students are examined, it is observed that some of them think they need to go to an English course which is provided by a language school or their school in the afternoon during the week days or at the weekend while the rest found it necessary to have a tutor to take private lessons which costs much more than attending a course. The students who claimed that they do not need any extra help while studying for the English section of the exam think that the other sections such as Turkish, Maths and Science sections of the exam are much more important than



the English section as they include more questions and the coefficient of the question items are higher in these sections than the English ones. In order to get a better score than the other participants, they need to do well especially in these sections of the exams. As English does not influence their final score as much as Turkish, Maths or Science do, they focus on studying for these lessons more; in other words, they prefer to take private lessons or courses in Turkish, Maths or Science lessons.

Another item of the questionnaire asked if the students need to know some strategies and tactics in order to succeed in the English section of the exam. The mean value of the answers is 4, 11; that is, a high percentage of the students think that they need to know some tactics. Similarly, Bailey (1996) found out in his study that learners apply test-taking strategies while answering the question items in the tests. The content of LGS exam includes multiple choice questions testing mostly lexical and grammar knowledge and reading comprehension. In order to do well in answering multiple choice questions, test-takers need to know the strategies as well as English grammar and vocabulary. Considering the questions of the English section, it is seen that it is not enough to know grammar and vocabulary well. Besides, the participants need to interpret the questions well. An example would be as below: (LGS 2019)

The table below shows the results of a study on daily internet activities of 100 teens in Japan.

**Table 21: A question item from the English section of LGS**

<b>Internet activities</b>	<b>Number of teens</b>
reading news	5
shopping online	5
checking e-mails	10
doing homework	15
watching movies	20
playing games	45

According to the results, which of the following is CORRECT?

- A) Shopping online is very popular among teens in Japan.
- B) Most of the students use the internet to do their homework
- C) Nearly half of the students spend their time checking their e-mails and reading the news
- D) Many of the teens spend their time playing games and watching movies.

When we go through the options, we see that only 5 students agreed they use the internet to shop online which means answer choice A is wrong. In choice B, it is claimed that most of the students do their homework on the internet; however, in the chart we see 15 out of 100 students agreed that they use the internet to do homework which makes B wrong as well. According to the chart, the number of students who read e mails or read the news on the internet is totally 20 which makes less than a quarter of the participants; thus choice C is a wrong answer as well. By eliminating the wrong answers, the students can get to the right answer which is choice D.

For the seventh and twenty first items of the questionnaire, the students were asked if they needed to practise sample test questions in order to get a satisfactory score from the exam which is related to finding the answers for the second research question of this study. The seventh item was repeated in the twenty first item of the questionnaire to check if the students gave reasonable answers to the questions; thus, it was aimed to check the validity of the students' answers to the questions and prevent response bias- the tendencies of the respondents to respond falsely or inaccurately to the questions. It was observed that for the seventh item, 90, 6% of the participants agreed that it was necessary to practise sample test questions and similarly, for the twenty first item, 86, 1% of the respondents agreed that too many exam preparation tests should be solved in order to prepare for the exam. The percentages of the students who agreed with the item are quite close to each other. Therefore, it may be concluded that the students answered the items of the questionnaire accurately. Regarding the answers of the students, it is seen that the vast majority of the participants (almost 91%) agreed that it is necessary to solve tests to do well in the English section of the exam. Thus, while preparing for the exam, they mostly do exercises similar to past years' tests. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students feel the need to prepare for the content of the

exam to get a good score as found out by Sayın and Aslan (2016: 30) in their study about the washback effects of the language section of LYS exam. The 74 freshmen ELT students who participated in the study stated that in their preparation process for the exam, they mostly practised multiple choice questions including reading comprehension and grammar and vocabulary knowledge; as a result of this, they felt incompetent in speaking and listening classes.

### **5.2.3. Research Question 3: How does studying for the English section of LGS affect the attitudes of the students towards learning English?**

The learners' motivation and anxiety towards the test can have an influence on their performance considerably. With regard to this view, the participants were asked if studying for the English section of LGS increases their level of willingness towards learning English in order to obtain answers for the third research question which states how the attitudes of the students towards learning English are affected by studying for the English section of the exam. The mean value of the item is 3,70 which means that almost 64% of the students feel that they are more willing to learn the language thanks to the exam.

The students were also asked if their studies and attitudes towards English are negatively affected due to feeling that they will not get a good score from the English section of LGS. The mean value of the participants is 2, 88 which is quite low. In other words, more than 50 % of the students do not feel stressed because of the exam. Unlike the results of Sundayana *et al's* (2015) multi-case study which stated that the students felt worried about not being able to get a good score from O-NET and UN exams in Indonesia and Thailand, in this study, it was found out that more than half of the students are not stressed by not being able to get high scores from the exam. Based on the interviews held with the participants, it can be concluded that the students do not feel as worried or anxious to study for the English section of the exam as they do towards Maths, Turkish or Sciences. The students claim that the coefficient of the English items is much lower compared to the items of the other sections such as Turkish, Maths or Science which makes English less important for them. Besides, the questions of the English section are quite easier for them compared to the questions of the other sections in the exam.

#### **5.2.4. Research Question 4: What are the positive and negative washback effects of the English section of LGS on the language development of the learners?**

In the questionnaire applied to the students, from item number ten to item number twenty one, the answers for the fourth research question are sought. The students were asked if they practise grammar in order to study for the exam. The mean value of the answers for this question is 3,58 which reveals that the participants need to improve their grammar knowledge. This result is not surprising as the students have to know the grammar well in order to understand and answer the questions of the English section correctly. Thus, it can be concluded that concerning grammar knowledge, the English section of LGS exam has a positive effect on the language development of the students.

Item eleven of the questionnaire aimed to find answers if the students are required to study vocabulary to get a satisfactory result from the English section of the exam. Seeing that the English section includes questions most of which test the lexical knowledge of the students, it is observed that learners with a rate of almost 79% stating that they study vocabulary in order or succeed in the English section of the exam.

About improving the pronunciation, the learners were asked if they did not study for pronunciation as it was not tested in the exam. Almost 55 % of the students stated that they disagreed with this idea; in other words, they claimed that they studied to improve their pronunciation. Testing pronunciation is not included in the exam; nevertheless, in the interviews held with them, some students stated that if they encountered a word the pronunciation of which they did not know, they check it on the internet. The students regard every activity they do in English is a kind of preparation for the exam despite not being included in the test. The next survey item asked the students if they would study to improve their pronunciation in English. A high percentage (70%) of the students agreed that they would study for it if it was included in the exam. Regarding the findings of this item, it can be concluded that more students would be willing to improve their pronunciation of English if it was included in the exam format.

The students were also asked if they needed to improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills while preparing for the exam. When the results of the items are analysed, it is seen that students study to improve their reading comprehension as basic reading skills is tested in the exam. Based on the findings of the first item of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that they do not read a magazine, book or newspaper in order to study for the English section of the exam. Instead, they practise answering the reading comprehension questions related to a short text in the books or worksheets they use to prepare for the exam as they stated in the interviews held with them. About improving speaking and writing skills, it is observed that more than fifty per cent of the students disagreed with the items which state they do not study to improve their writing, listening and speaking skills. Besides, in the interviews held with them, they stated that they try to improve these skills even if they are not tested in the exam. They usually do the activities related to improving these skills outside the classroom themselves; in other words, they do it for their own language development as they are interested in learning the language. However, they think that all these activities could also help them do better in the exam. Unlike the findings of the studies carried out by Yavuzer and Gover (2012) who found out that preparing for the KPDS and UDS exams did not contribute to the participants' language development as only grammar, vocabulary and reading skills were tested in the exam, the present study reveals that the English part of the exam had a positive washback effect on some students' English learning process due to the fact that they cared about learning English and improving their language more as it was included in the exam. The reason for the difference of the results may be the different age range. Yavuzer and Gover's (2012) participants were academicians working at a university while the participants of this study consisted of eighth grade students. Therefore, the aims, attitudes and perspectives of the participants of these learners are quite different from each other. The academicians aimed to pass KPDS and UDS exams to get promoted whereas the purpose of the eighth grade students was to get a good score from the exam as well as improving their English level. Additionally, more than 65 % of the participants agreed that they would study to improve their listening, speaking and writing skills more if they were tested in the exam.

### **5.2.5. Research Question 5: What is the influence of the English section of LGS on learning English?**

Items twenty two and twenty three of the questionnaire sought answers for the research question which asks the influence of the English section of LGS on learning English. Items 22 and 23 asked the students whether studying for the English section of LGS affects them in a positive or negative way. When the answers of the participants are analysed, it is seen that almost 80% of them stated that their language learning is affected by the exam in a positive way while almost 20% of them think that the exam affects them in a negative way. The findings of this research question are in the same line with the findings of the third research question which revealed that the students do not feel worried or stressed about the English section of the exam. Moreover, during the interview held with them, the participants indicated that they study English thanks to the exam. They stated that they would not study for it that much if English was not included in the content of the exam. The exam is quite important for the learners for the scores they get from the exam determine which high school they will study at and also the education they will get at high school will have an impact on the departments and universities they will study at in the future. Even if English does not affect the final score as much as Turkish, Maths or Science, as it is included in the exam the students feel obliged to study for it. Some students even try to improve their level of English since they think that knowing English is a must which will have a positive impact all through their lives (when they get a job or when they travel etc.). The findings of the fifth research question are quite different from the findings of Ferman's (2016) study which investigated the washback effects of EFL Oral Matriculation Test on the language education in Israel. He found out that the students felt under pressure to prepare for the content of the exam which was a negative impact of the test. When it comes to the English section of the LGS exam, the students do not feel as worried as the students who took EFL Oral Matriculation test as English is only one of the sections with ten easy questions that do not affect the final score of them as much as the other sections. On the contrary, they care about learning the language and try to improve their level of English thanks to the exam.

**5.2.6. Research Question 6: How do the English teachers prepare their students for the exam? What are the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam on their methods, materials, activities and the content of their lesson?**

Regarding the interviews held with the teachers, it is observed that both teachers agreed they mostly make their students practise multiple choice questions testing reading comprehension, lexical and grammar knowledge. They hand out mock tests in order to familiarise their students with the question types they are likely to see in the exam. During the four hours of English lesson each week, they claimed they focus on the exercises which help them prepare their students for the exam most of the time. They rarely have enough time to do listening, writing or speaking activities although they would prefer to base their lessons on such activities more. Considering the methodology the teachers used in the classes, it was both observed in the classroom practise and also claimed by the teachers that most of the time they had to base their lessons on Grammar Translation Method rather than Communicative Language Teaching which is required in the curriculum administered by MONE (2017). Similar to this result, Birjandi and Taqizadeh (2015) also concluded in the study they carried out in Iran examining the washback effects of university entrance examination on high school educational processes that one of the reasons for them to base the methodology of their lessons on grammar translation method was the UEE exam. Likewise, Caine (2005) who conducted a study examining the disparities between the curriculum planning followed by the Japanese Ministry of Education and implementation of it in the classrooms found out that although the curriculum involved changes using communication-based approach in the English Language curriculum, grammar-based methodology was still applied in the classes. In both cases, it is seen that there is a gap between the theory and practice of English Language Teaching. The findings of Wall and Alderson's (1993) study which investigated the washback effects of a national examination in Sri Lanka also reveal that teachers used exam preparation products and previous exam papers rather than using the textbooks which include communicative tasks. Besides, Kılıçkaya (2016) sought the washback effects of the foreign language section of the TEOG exam and found out that the teachers usually neglected language skills as they were

not tested in the exam and prepared the content of their lesson according to the exam format.

#### **5.2.7. Research Question 7: How do the teachers feel about preparing their students for LGS?**

Both teachers claimed that they both feel responsible for preparing their students for the exam as the score the students get from the English section has an influence on the total score they get in order to deserve to study in a proper high school. They both expressed that the coefficient of the questions in the English section is not as high as it is in the other sections of the exam; however, as English is in the content of the exam, students feel obliged to study for it. Otherwise, they would not study for it. Thus, it can be a positive side of the exam according to the teachers. When negative sides are considered only lexical knowledge along with some grammar knowledge and reading comprehension are tested in the exam which causes the students to focus on only these components of the language and feel reluctant to focus on developing their writing, listening and speaking skills. In addition to that, another negative side of the exam is the weight and pressure it puts on the students as well as the teachers. The teachers stated that they felt distressed about getting their students to be successful in the English section of LGS exam. The results of the seventh questions are in the same line with one of the findings of Cheng (1997) who sought the washback effects of the revised Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam in English on the English Language Teaching in Hong Kong Secondary Schools. Despite having different contents and format, both exams had a big negative impact on teachers. The participants of both studies claimed that they felt under pressure while preparing their students in accordance with the exam format and content and getting their students to be successful in the exams.

#### **5.2.8. Research Question 8: How does the English section of LGS affect the assessment practises of the teachers?**

Based on the data gathered from the interviews with the teachers, it can be concluded that the assessment practices of the teachers are highly affected by the exam. Both teachers indicated that they use written exams testing grammar and vocabulary knowledge and sometimes reading comprehension of the students including multiple choice questions, true-false questions and dialogue completion as



in the English section of LGS. In addition to the exams, the teachers prepare quizzes which are shorter but similar to the exams they hold. Speaking, listening and writing skills are not included in their exams as they are not a part of the English section of LGS exam. Similar to the findings of the Çelik's (2017) study which focused on how the Turkish EFL teachers perceive the washback effects of the English section of TEOG exam on their methods, planning, teaching content and assessment, the results of the present research reveal that the teachers assess mostly students' lexical and grammar knowledge with written exams and quizzes that include multiple choice, sentence completion or true false questions related to the exam format instead of testing listening, writing or speaking skills of the students.

### **5.3. IMPLICATIONS**

According to Wall and Anderson (1993: 6), "The Washback Hypothesis seems to assume that teachers and learners do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test. Hence the notion of influence. But this also implies that a 'poor' test could conceivably have a 'good' effect if it made teachers and learners do 'good' things they would not otherwise do: for example, prepare lessons more thoroughly, do their homework, take the subject being tested more seriously and so on. And indeed, it is relatively commonplace to note that teachers often use tests to get their students to do things they would not otherwise do: to pay attention to the lesson, to prepare more thoroughly, to learn by heart, and so on. To the extent that these activities are in some sense desirable hard-work is presumably more 'desirable' than no work at all, extrinsic motivation might be better than no motivation at all – then -any test, good or bad, can be said to be having beneficial washback if it increases such activity or motivation." When the results of the present study are considered, it can also be concluded that the washback effects of the English section of the LGS exam are more positive than negative both on the learners and the teachers. The content of the English section of LGS does not contain testing language skills; instead, it only tests lexical and grammar knowledge along with the reading comprehension. However, as it is a part of the exam which determines the high schools the students will study at, the students take studying for the English

lesson seriously. Considering the teachers, it can be claimed that they can easily motivate their students for the lesson for the students feel they need to pay attention to what is being taught. Although they can rarely base their lessons on doing activities related to improving language skills, they can still get their students to learn the grammar and vocabulary of the language which is better than nothing. Thus, the English section of the LGS may have a poor content; nevertheless, it helps the learners pay more attention to learning English as this lesson is included in the exam content. Regarding that Turkey is an exam-driven country and the exams usually have a big influence on the future of the participants of the teaching and learning processes, English, being a part of a crucial exam, is considered of great significance by both the students and the teachers. On the other hand, the results also reveal that if the content of the English section of LGS test language skills as well, the students will even learn it better. In other words, if the test format is modified and testing the language skills is included in the test, the students will be more motivated to study listening, speaking, writing and reading.

In the present format of the test, all items are multiple choice ones. When it comes to assessing the skills with those types of items, it may not have a positive effect on improving the language skills of the students due to the fact that the students would focus on practising similar items while preparing for the exam rather than the skills themselves as suggested by Davies *et al.* (1999: 225), “There is great pressure to practice such items rather than to practice the skill of writing itself”. Furthermore, changing the test format would become inevitable when assessment of all language skills is included in the exam. There may be many handicaps to be faced by the Turkish Ministry of Education if they consider modifying the design of the test. Nonetheless, some suggestions would help them to overcome the complications. First of all, English should be removed from the main exam and tested separately. Secondly, it is required to have experts in the English language in order to deal with the preparation and assessment of the exam. Then, it should also be taken into consideration that the evaluation process of the four language skills of thousands of students may take a long time; thus, the timing of the exam should be arranged accordingly. Finally, all language skills along with grammar and vocabulary should be assessed in the test. The test items should neither be too difficult for the

candidates that would cause them to feel stressed and anxious nor too easy which would make them not study for English enough.

#### **5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The present study examined the washback effects of the English section of LGS exam on both teaching and learning process of language education regarding a middle school. In order to collect the data, both interviews and questionnaires were used along with a lesson hour observed. Similar studies were carried out before regarding the effect of the English section of high school transition exams; however, they focused on the effects of the exams either on teaching or learning processes. This study looked at the effects of the exam taking both processes into consideration. The present study was carried out only in a public middle school in a city in Turkey. Other studies considering the same topic might be conducted in different school contexts and cities to see the similarities and differences.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### ÖĞRENCİ ANKETİ

#### THE WASHBACK EFFECTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION (LGS) ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN A PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL IN TURKEY

“Liseye Geçiş Sınavının (LGS) İngilizce Öğrenme ve Öğretme Sürecine Etkisi” üzerine yapılan bu çalışmada, öğrenciler tarafından doldurulacak bu anket onların LGS’nin İngilizce bölümüne yönelik tepkileri ve öğretime bakış açıları hakkında bilgi sağlayacaktır. Lütfen soruları elinizden geldiğince dikkatli yanıtlayınız. Anlamadığınız sorular varsa lütfen yardım isteyiniz.

#### Kişisel Bilgiler

Cinsiyet:  Bayan  Bay  
Yaş:  13  14  15 +

Anket sorularını yanıtlarken cümleyi okuyup verilen derecelerden birine karar vereceksiniz:

- (1) Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
- (2) Katılmıyorum
- (3) Bilmiyorum
- (4) Katılıyorum
- (5) Kesinlikle katılıyorum

<b>Aşağıda likert tipi anket verilmiştir. Dikkatlice okuyup size en uygun olanı (x) işaretleyiniz.</b>					
	<b>Kesinlikle katılmıyorum</b>	<b>Katılmıyorum</b>	<b>Bilmiyorum</b>	<b>Katılıyorum</b>	<b>Kesinlikle katılıyorum.</b>
1- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için roman, makale, dergi okumak gibi okuma etkinlikleri yaparım.					
2- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için dinleme etkinlikleri yaparım.					
3- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için konuşma etkinlikleri yaparım.					
4- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için yazma etkinlikleri yaparım.					
5- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için kursa gitmek veya özel ders almak gereklidir.					
6- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan almak için test taktikleri ve stratejileri bilinmelidir.					
7- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan alabilmek için sınava hazırlanırken test çözülmelidir.					
8- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne çalışmak İngilizce öğrenme isteğimi arttırmaktadır.					
9- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan alamayacağımı düşünmek İngilizce'ye olan bakış açımı ve çalışmalarımı olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir.					
10- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer aldığı için İngilizce dilbilgisine çalışırım.					
11- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer aldığı için İngilizce kelime bilgimi geliştirmeye çalışırım.					
12- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer aldığı için okuma anlama becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışırım.					
13- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer almadığı için İngilizce telaffuzumu geliştirmeye çalışmam.					
14- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer alsaydı, İngilizce telaffuzumu geliştirmeye çalışırdım.					
15- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer almadığı için konuşma becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışmam.					
16- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer alsaydı konuşma becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışırdım.					
17- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer almadığı için dinleme becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışmam.					
18- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer alsaydı dinleme becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışırdım.					
19- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer almadığı için yazma becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışmam.					

20- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünde yer alsaydı yazma becerilerimi geliştirmeye çalışırdım.					
21- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümünden iyi bir puan alabilmek için sınava hazırlanırken test çözülmelidir.					
22- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne çalışmak İngilizcemi olumlu yönde etkiler.					
23- LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne çalışmak İngilizcemi olumsuz yönde etkiler.					



## Appendix B

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

#### THE WASHBACK EFFECTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION (LGS) ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN A PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL IN TURKEY

In the study which focuses on “The Washback Effects of High School Entrance Examination (LGS) on the Teaching and Learning Processes of English Language Education”, this questionnaire will provide information about the students’ perspectives towards LGS. Please answer the questions as carefully as you can. If there are questions you do not understand, please ask for help.

#### Personal Information

Gender:      Female                    Male  
Age:        13                    14            15 +

**You will read the sentence and decide which option to choose while answering the questions in the questionnaire:**

- (1) Definitely agree
- (2) Disagree
- (3) No idea
- (4) Agree
- (5) Definitely agree

**Please read the following items carefully and cross (x) the one that suits you best.**

	<b>Definitely disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No idea</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Definitely Agree</b>
1- I do reading activities such as reading a novel, an article, a magazine in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
2- I do listening activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
3- I do speaking activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
4- I do writing activities in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
5- Extra help such as attending an English course or having private English lessons are needed in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
6- Test strategies and tactics need to be learned in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
7- Too many preparation tests should be solved in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
8- Studying for the English section of LGS increases my willingness of learning English.					
9- Feeling that I will not be able to get a valid score from the English section of LGS negatively affects my studies and my attitude towards English.					
10- I study to improve my grammar knowledge since it is tested in the English section of LGS.					
11- I study to improve my vocabulary knowledge since it is tested in the English section of LGS.					
12- I study to improve my reading comprehension since it is tested in the English section of LGS.					
13- I do not study to improve my pronunciation since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.					
14- I would study to improve my pronunciation if it was tested in the English section of LGS.					
15- I do not study to improve my speaking skills since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.					
16- I would study to improve my speaking skills if it was tested in the English section of LGS.					
17- I do not study to improve my listening skills since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.					

18- I would study to improve my listening skills if it was tested in the English section of LGS.					
19- I do not study to improve my writing skills since it is not tested in the English section of LGS.					
20- I would study to improve my writing skills if it was tested in the English section of LGS.					
21- Too many preparation tests should be solved in order to get a satisfactory score from the English section of LGS.					
22- Studying for the English section of LGS influences my English in a positive way.					
23- Studying for the English section of LGS influences my English in a negative way.					



## Appendix C

### ÖĞRENCİLER İÇİN MÜLAKAT SORULARI

1. Kendini kısaca tanıtır mısın?
2. İngilizce öğrenmek senin için ne kadar önemli? Hangi durumlarda İngilizceyi kullanıyorsun?
3. LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne ne kadar süredir hazırlanıyorsun?
4. LGS'nin İngilizce dersi açısından olumlu ve olumsuz yönlerinden bahseder misin?
5. LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne çalışmak eğlenceli mi? Neden/Neden değil?
6. Okulundaki sınavlar üzerinde stres yaratıyor mu? LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne hazırlanmak üzerinde stres yaratıyor mu?
7. LGS'nin İngilizce öğrenimine etkileri nelerdir? Bu sınavın İngilizceni geliştirdiğini düşünüyor musun?



## **Appendix D**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

1. Could you introduce yourself briefly?
2. How important is it for you to learn English? In which circumstances do you use English?
3. How long have you been preparing for the English section of LGS?
4. Can you tell me about the positive and negative sides of the LGS exam regarding English lesson?
5. Do you enjoy studying for the English section of LGS? Why? /Why not?
6. Do you feel stressed about the exams at school? Does preparing for the English section of LGS make you feel stressed?
7. What are the effects of LGS on learning English? Do you think this exam improves your level of English?

## Appendix E

### ÖĞRETMENLER İÇİN MÜLAKAT SORULARI

1. Kaç yıldır İngilizce öğretmeni olarak çalışmaktasınız? Eğitim durumunuzun nedir? Aynı okulda kaç yıldır çalışmaktasınız?
2. Daha önce LGS gibi bir sınava öğrenci hazırladınız mı? Eğer cevabınız evetse öğrencilerinizi böyle bir sınava ne kadar süredir hazırlamaktasınız?
4. LGS sınavının İngilizce bölümüne kaç öğrenci hazırlamaktasınız? Bu sınava öğrenci hazırlama süreciniz nasıl geçiyor?
5. Böyle önemli bir sınava öğrencilerinizi hazırlamakla ilgili düşünceleriniz nelerdir?
6. LGS'nin öğrencilerinizin İngilizce seviyesini geliştirdiğini düşünüyor musunuz? LGS'nin İngilizce bölümüne öğrencilerinizi hazırlamanın olumlu ve olumsuz yanları nelerdir?

## **Appendix F**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

1. How long have you been working as an English Language Teacher? Can you talk about your educational background? How long have you been working in the same school?
2. Have you prepared your students for an exam like LGS before? If your answer is “yes”, how long have you been preparing students for these kinds of exams?
3. How many students have you been preparing for the English section of LGS during this academic year? How is your process of preparing the students for the exam?
4. What do you think about preparing your students for such an important exam?
5. Do you think LGS improves your students’ English level? What are the negative and positive aspects of preparing your students for the English section of LGS?
6. Do you think LGS has an impact on the assessment types you apply? If so, in what ways does the exam affect your assessment practices?

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

The researcher was born in Balıkesir in 1985. She graduated from Fatma Emin Kutvar Anatolian High School in Balıkesir in 2003. She studied at the English Language Teaching department of Balıkesir University Necatibey Education Faculty between the years 2003 and 2007. She has been working as an English Language Teacher in different public schools since 2007. Besides being an English Language Teacher, she is also coordinating projects under the framework of European Union. She holds a CELTA certificate as well. She started English Language Teaching MA program at Kocaeli University in 2017. Currently, she is working as an English Teacher at Körfez Science High School.

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