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WASHBACK ON LEARNING: THE EXPERIENCE OF OUTCOME-BASED ASSESSMENT IN A HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia has in recent years announced its decision to implement Outcome-based Education (OBE) at all Higher Learning Institutions in the country with the focus on developing world-class human capital. This paper presents the findings of a preliminary qualitative study that investigates how diploma students in a Higher Learning Institution in Malaysia experience the washback from the assessment practices as outlined in the standards of OBE. Three students who undertook an english for communication course were recruited as the informants and a semi-structured interview was subsequently administered by the researchers. The resulting themes were subjected to two inter-raters and the reliability value of which was at 90.5%. The findings revealed that technology had become one of the factors that promote the students' learning as it played an almost significant role in the students' selection of both in-class and out-of-class learning practices.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment reform has enveloped the globe through the implementation of new paradigm in educational institutions with the objective of meeting national economics imperatives. Hence, learners' achievement and progress are reported by means of systems that are using 'standards', 'benchmark', 'competencies' and so on. Malaysia is no exempt from this reform as in 2007, its government has announced the implementation of OBE at all Higher Learning Institutions throughout the country. It has been more than 10 years of its implementation and thus, it is timely to look into how its assessment system, i.e. Outcome-based Assessment (OBA) influences teaching and

learning. Against this background, the present study looks into the washback effect of an OBA at a Higher Learning Institution in Malaysia. A case study was carried out to understand how students experience OBA and how the assessment system has affected their in-class and out-of-class learning.

Background of the study

The phenomenon of how tests influence teaching and learning is known as washback or backwash: a phenomenon in the area of the language assessment domain that has not been looked into rigorously. Washback studies became prominent as the magnitude of the question posted by Alderson & Wall (1993) in their seminal paper "Does washback exist?", which has been answered by numerous empirical studies. Currently, studies on washback seek to answer questions such as 'what does washback look like? What brings washback about? Why does washback exist?' (Alderson, 2004: ix). These questions have sparked the researchers' interest to do a washback study and upon reviewing the literature and reflecting on our experiences as language teachers, we narrowed down the focus to investigating the washback effects on learning. Washback on learning is of utmost importance to be investigated, as this will enhance our understanding on washback to the learners. In doing so, this study will investigate how diploma students experience washback from an OBA, i.e. ELC231 test battery. In short, the present study investigates how the OBA has affected the English language learning of diploma students in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) with two research questions:

1.   How does ELC231 influence students' in-class learning?
2.   How does ELC231 influence students' out-of-class learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Outcome-Based Assessment

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is an education system that focuses on how students are able to demonstrate the learning outcomes (LOs). Crespo et.al (2010, p.1) defined LO as "statements of what learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process". It is noteworthy that suitable tools, i.e. assessments have to be developed in order to observe and measure the extent to which the learners achieve the LOs. Hence, in OBE, the tool used to observe and measure the extent to which the learners achieve the LOs is OBA.

OBA is student-centred as it focuses on students and ultimately learning, i.e. to promote better learning experience. According to Gerald Graff (2008), the students' learning "is deeper and more lasting" by means of OBA due to its "integrated, collaborative learning experience" (Suskie, 2009, p.4), which enable students to see the connection between courses they have to take and every experience in college is integrated and connected. There are three features of OBA, namely, authentic, formative and summative, and continuous assessment. Authentic assessments are the ones which require students to be able to perform meaningful tasks in a real-world situation. Commonly,

summative assessment is understood as the one which is carried out at the end of a course of instruction. In terms of formative assessment, it is seen as the assessment which is carried out during a course of instruction. Besides, the continuous assessment is a combination of summative and formative assessment.

With regard the OBE system, an assessment takes place at a few levels, namely, course, program, education and institutional level. This is due to the fact that student learning occurs in many venues and that the learning assessment at every level has to be shared among the stakeholders in the institution to provide better learning experience and ultimately better assessment system (Suskie, 2009).

According to Bresciani (2011), OBA is used by its practitioner to enhance student learning and development. This can be realised via different ways to be meaningfully engaged to OBA. Many instructors, administrators, and scholars are still reluctant to implement the process though they are aware of the promising value of engaging to OBA to student learning and development. Hence, the practice of OBA is not pervasive even in the institution whose leadership emphasizes the importance of such a process to improve student development and learning. There are three common institutional barriers of OBA, namely, time, resource and understanding of assessment (Upcraft & Schuh, 199; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Banta, 2002; Bresciani et al., 2004; Suskie, 2004; Bresciani, 2006; as cited in Bresciani, 2011).

In any profession, managing time is very important as it is assumed that the same amount of time is given to every individual. In implementing OBA, Bresciani (2011) argued that some teachers found that time is a barrier for them to implement OBA as their admin work collides with their teaching process and hence, there is insufficient time to effectively implement OBA. Resource is another problem in OBA in that its implementation is costly. It is costly because of three reasons (Bresciani, 2011 p.6): (1) cost of providing professional development to faculty and administration (2) cost of the time re-allocated from actually teaching to evaluation of teaching and (3) cost of providing retreats so that faculty and administrators can actually reflect on what the OBA data are telling them about their program or curriculum. Finally, OBA is frequently regarded as a shift or a new method that would make administrator and teachers wary of the effect which becomes a threat of unfunded mandate. Many administrators and faculty simply do not believe that OBA is designed to be a systematic process to improve student learning and development, rather than a process to sustain itself (Bresciani et al., 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996 as cited in Bresciani, 2011).

Outcome-based Assessment of the present study

UiTM emphasises that assessment is the key component of OBE. OBA in UiTM deals with aligning the assessments methods to the course outcomes. Apart from that, UiTM stresses on Constructive Alignment (CA), i.e. aligning course outcomes (COs) to the Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs), and

the Assessment Tasks (ATs) in order to ensure that all LOs are achieved. The assessment methods include assignment, test, quiz, final exam and project. Moreover, ATs must be manageable, some TLAs as part of assessment task, design rubrics, ask student to reflect, requires you to keep a portfolio and set tasks that are practical to be carried out by the students. It is noteworthy that UiTM emphasises on continuous assessment, i.e. using formative and summative assessments, as well as employing authentic assessment. Hence, teachers are to align their assessment methods with the outcome statements. Moreover, it is important for learners to know their strengths and weaknesses, as well as further development needs.

The LOs generated in UiTM are aligned with the Ministry of Higher Education's (MOHE) LOs, namely knowledge (learning outcome 1; LO1), psychomotor/practical /technical skills (learning outcome 2; LO2), critical thinking and scientific approach (learning outcome 3; LO3), communication skills (learning outcome 4; LO4), social skills and responsibility (learning outcome 5; LO5), life-long learning and information management (learning outcome 6; LO6), professionalism, values, attitudes, ethics (learning outcome 7; LO7), managerial and entrepreneurial skills (learning outcome 8; LO8) and leadership skill (learning outcome 9; LO9). As regards the present study, ELC231 focuses on LO4, i.e. communication skills.

For graduation purpose, students at diploma level in UiTM have to go through three levels of proficiency courses. Thus, these proficiency courses are high-stakes for diploma level students in UiTM. The final or third level of the proficiency course is the concern of this study. Previously, this course is known as English for Academic Purposes or BEL311. With the implementation of OBE/OBA in UiTM, this course has been improved by means of the Closing the Loop (CDL) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). CDL is a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of OBE curriculum of all courses under a program and CQI is a report accompanies the CDL to address possible issues and suggestions which lead to improving the quality of a program. In 2014, the revised version of proficiency courses in UiTM are known as ELC. In the case of BEL311, it is revised as ELC230 (Integrated Language Skills: Writing). With different course codes and names, the COs and syllabus changed. In 2016, another revision is done and the course changed to ELC231 (Integrated Language Skills III).

The present study deals with the latest version of ELC231, i.e. September 2017 onwards. It is a core course with three credit units and four contact hours. Therefore, students will have two face to face sessions per week (two hours per session). This course is undertaken by third semester students and the pre-requisite is ELC151, the course undertaken by students during their second semester. The main objective of this course is to equip students with necessary writing skills, in which reading and writing skills are integrated with the emphasis is on writing skills. Table 1 shows the assessment components of this course.

Table 1: The assessment components of ELC231

	On-going Assessments	**Marks**
ELC231 (September 2017 onwards)	Essay Writing	20%
	Evaluative Commentary	30%
	Mid-Semester Test (Reading Test)	25%
	Oral Commentary	25%
Total Marks		100%

WASHBACK

It is very common to see the term washback in the field of language testing and applied linguistics, but it is not found in any dictionaries. Backwash, however, can be found in some dictionaries and is defined with negative connotations. New Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary defined it as "the unwelcome repercussions of some social action", Collins Cobuild Dictionary defined it as "unpleasant after-effects of an event or situation" (Cheng and Curtis, 2004) and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defined it as "the bad situation that remains after something bad has happened". The negative connotations conveyed here is interesting as backwash has mostly been associated with the negative relationship between teaching and testing. Scholars in the 1980s mostly from general education circles defined washback as the phenomenon of tests influencing teaching and learning.

Studies of washback in language testing contexts became prominent in the early 1990s. There have been two types of washback studies cited in the literature to date; investigating the on-going effects of established testing programmes and those looking into how changes in systems of assessment affect educational practice. While the former category has always been associated with the negative washback, the latter category in contrast has produced from positive to negative to no washback (Cheng & Curtis, 2004, Cheng, 2008; Green, 2013). It is gleaned from the literature that scholars other than Alderson & Wall (1993) abovementioned, tended to link washback with the validity of tests. Vernon, (1956) and Morrow (1986) and Messick (1989; 1996) are some of the scholars who belong in this category. Morrow (1986) stated that 'the validity of a test should be measured by the degree to which it has a beneficial effect on the teaching and learning practices' and many other similar claims were made by other scholars. By implication, these scholars mean that if a test does not measure what it intends to measure, teachers and students who are directly affected by the test will be lost in their focus and therefore the teaching and learning may suffer, hence the test results may not be a true representation of the learning outcomes.

Though admitting that validity as a property of tests, Alderson and Wall (1993) claimed that tests by themselves may not necessarily influence teaching and learning. They justified their claims by stating that any test regardless of 'good' or 'bad' may influence both teaching and learning either positively and negatively and the effect of teaching and learning may not necessarily be due to the test itself, but the personal factors associated with the teachers and

students. Therefore, they are sceptical about the 'naïve' deterministic nature of the phenomenon as widely asserted in the literature which claimed that 'where there is a test, there is a direct effect on teaching and learning' and 'the fact of a test having a set of qualities is sufficient in itself, by virtue of the importance of tests in most societies, to bring about change'. Rather, they suggested that researchers should turn their attention to forces which exist within classrooms, schools, education system and society. Given such a backdrop, the present study looks into what and how learning materialises inside and outside of the classroom, particularly the students' learning practices.

Hypothesis and Models of Washback

The washback hypothesis and two relevant washback models are discussed in this study, which capture the potential washback effect of the tests on the respondent identified for this study i.e. students.

Alderson & Wall's Washback Hypothesis (1993, pp. 8-9)
1) A test will influence teaching.
This is the WH at its most general. However, by implication:
2) A test will influence learning
Since it is possible to separate the content of teaching from the methodology:
3) A test will influence how teachers teach; and
4) A test will influence what teachers teach and therefore by extension from 2) above:
5) A test will influence what learners learn; and
6) A test will influence how learners learn
However, perhaps we need to be somewhat more precise about teaching and learning, whence:
7) A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning; and
8) A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching and the associated:
9) A test will influence the degree and depth of learning; and
10) A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching
If washback relates to attitudes as well as to behaviours, then:
11) A test will influence attitudes to the content, method etc of learning/ teaching.
In the above, no consideration has been given to the nature of the test, or the uses to which scores will be put. It seems not unreasonable to hypothesise:
12) Tests that have important consequences will have washback and conversely
13) Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.
It may be the case that:
14) Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.
However, given what we know about differences among people, it is surely likely that:
15) Tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others.

Based on the hypotheses provided by Alderson & Wall (1993), it is clear that the scope of their definitions is teachers and students and by extension teaching and learning. Their hypotheses is aligned with their belief of

disentangling the validity of tests and the associated teaching and learning. It is, however, worth noting that the first washback hypothesis: 'A test will influence teaching' indicates that they accept the relationship between tests' validity and the associated teaching but they clearly highlighted in their discussion that it may not be the main cause for washback being generated in any setting. They also highlighted the aspects of teaching and learning which may be affected by the tests: what teachers teach, followed by what learners learn, how learners learn and more precisely the rate, sequence, degree and depth of teaching and learning.

They have also touched on the personal factors of these stakeholders such as their attitudes and behaviour to content and method of teaching and learning. Next on their list was the 'stakes' attached to a test which they described it as the consequences of the tests on these stakeholders' lives. In the last two hypotheses, they have elaborated the 'stakes' attached to a test by stating that tests may have washback on all teachers and learners or it may have washback on some but not all. Here, they reiterate the personal characteristics of the stakeholders and not the test.
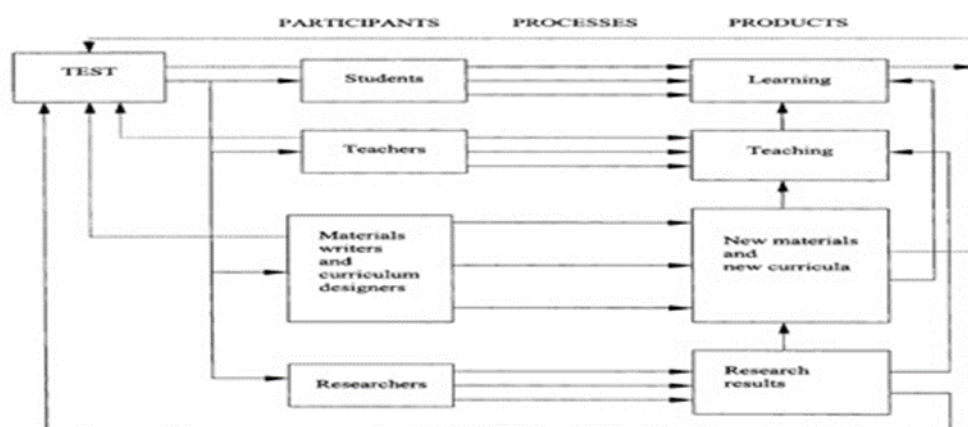
Bailey's Washback Model (1996)

Figure 1: A basic model of washback (Bailey, 1996, p. 264)

Following Alderson and Wall's washback hypotheses (1993), Hughes (1993 as cited in Bailey, 1996) provided another dimension of test effect but not just confining his focus on teachers and learners but an all-encompassing one. He stated that "in order to clarify our thinking about backwash, it is helpful, I believe, to distinguish between participants, process and product in teaching and learning, recognizing that all three may be affected by the nature of a test" (p. 2). Since this model deals with the participants, processes, Saville (2009) renamed this model as the 3Ps model. He described the 3Ps as the three dimensions of the model namely participants, process and products affected by tests. In Hughes' (1993) proposed framework, participants include language learners and teachers, administrators, materials developers, and publishers, "all of whose perceptions and attitudes toward their work may be affected by a test".

The term process covers "any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning". According to Hughes, such processes include materials development, syllabus design, changes in teaching methods or content, learning and/or test-taking strategies, etc. Finally, product refers to "what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of learning (fluency, etc.)". He also claimed that the trichotomy into participants, process and product allows us to construct a basic model of backwash. He suggested that the nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practicing the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of that work. Here Hughes stresses the participants' perceptions and attitudes and how these factors affect what they do.

Bailey (1996, p. 264) combined Alderson & Wall's (1993) washback hypothesis and Hughes' (1989) framework of washback and she visualized in a diagrammatic form as shown in the figure above. The dotted lines in the figure represent possible influences from the participants on the test which has been described by van Lier (1989 as cited in Bailey, 1996) as 'washforward'. Bailey (1996) refers to the effects of test-derived information to the test-takers and having a direct impact on them as washback to the learners and those test-derived information provided to teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, counsellors, etc as washback to the programme.

In reference to the model of Hughes (1993) visualized by Bailey (1996, p. 264), the ultimate product of beneficial washback is the improved learning of the construct being measured (language proficiency in the present study). But not all of the participants' processes lead directly to learning. As Hughes (1993) claimed, the other participants' processes yield additional products that will contribute to and promote students' learning - products such as new materials and curricula, improved teaching, valuable research findings, etc.
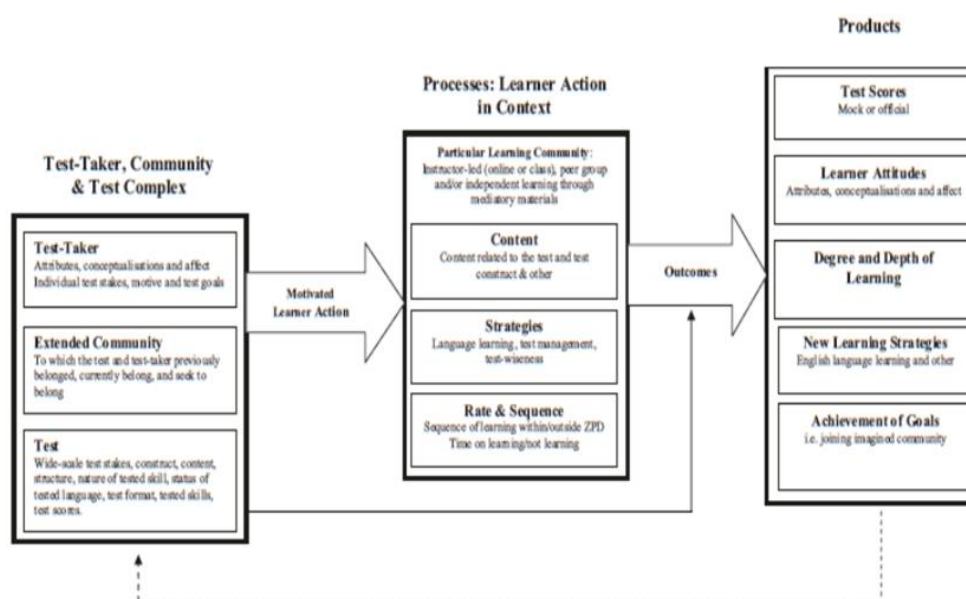
Booth's sociocultural washback model

Figure 2: Washback on the processes and products of learner test activity.

Extending Bailey's (1996) basic model of washback, Green's (2007) model and Shih's (2007) model of student learning, Booth (2018) devised a sociocultural conceptualisation of washback model. It was highlighted that Bailey's (1996) model does not detail the type of learning processes student might engage in and how these stakeholders might influence each other. Furthermore, Green's (2007) model fail to include how test preparation may influence learning outcome and Shih's (2007) model does not account for the incremental nature of learning mediated by learner choices in relation to particular learning communities. Putting together the drawbacks of these models, Booth (2018) developed a washback model on the processes and products of learner test activity.

Booth's (2018) model was developed to mitigate some missing components in previous washback studies. First the influence of the wider community and test takers themselves on the wide scale impact and stakes of a test. Hence, it is deemed important to consider the people and systems who contribute to the construction and use of the test and how they might interrelate. Only then, the understanding of how a test influence learning might be better. Second, the role of situated learner action is missing in previous washback studies since many washback studies focused on teaching. Therefore, learners past histories, experiences, cultural associations, attributes, conceptualisations and agency (in context) play an important role in washback effect of a test. Third, the choices learners make outside of the classroom context (Gosa, 2014; Cho 2010) is also another important factor that a washback model needs to accommodate. The present study adapts both Bailey's and Booth's washback model as they offer meticulous explanations with regards to the participant, processes and

products. This is of utmost importance as the present study focuses on how the learning process i.e. in-class and out-of-class learning is affected by OBA.

METHODOLOGY

A "case" can be considered as an individual, an event, a program, the implementation process, organizationnal change, a group of individuals, an agency, or a school (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). It has to be noted that analysing the unit for any study may depend on the way the researchers define their initial research questions (Yin, 2003, p. 23). Thus, in the case of the present study, i.e. to explore the washback effects of an outcomes-based assessment on learning, the unit of analysis is defined as the individuals, i.e. the students.

According to Dornyei (2007:155), the case study approach has several advantages: the case study is an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. It offers rich an in-depth insight that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us. Thus, this method is highly recommended for exploring uncharted territories or making sense of a particularly problematic research area, and it can provide an unparalleled understanding of longitudinal processes. Blumberg et.al. (2014) highlighted that multiple case study is able to provide a robust result.

A case study is categorized into two types: single case and multiple case (Stake, 2006). The present study belongs to the latter as the focus of this study is on the washback phenomenon, which Stake (2006) named as "quintain" and the individual cases share common characteristic or condition. Furthermore, the cases have something in common; they have undertaken the ELC231.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were employed to gain insights from the students on how they have experienced the ELC231. The insights include the in-class learning and out-of-class learning when undertaking ELC231. The outline of a moderator's guide (Table 4) is pre-developed to provide the direction of the semi-structure interview (Vaughn et.al, 1996).

Table 2: Outline of moderator's guide

Source: Vaughn et.al, 1996: 43

I.	Introduction
A.	Welcome
B.	Statement of the purpose of the interview
C.	Guidelines to follow during the interview
II.	Warm-up
A.	Set the tone
B.	Set the participant at ease
III.	Establish easy and non-threatening questions

IV.	Establish more difficult questions
V.	Wrap up
A.	Identify and organize the major themes from the participant's responses
B.	Ensure that any conversational points not completed are mentioned
VI.	Closing statements
A.	Request anonymity of information
B.	Answer any remaining questions
C.	Express thanks

It is worth noting that McDonough and McDonough (1997) pointed out that it is natural for both researcher and informants to use the language of their mother tongue. Hence, the informants were allowed to use both English and Malay language to ensure that they feel at ease and most importantly, it is easier for them to share their views and perception.

Data collection and Data Analysis

Purposeful sampling was employed, as the informants were students who have taken ELC231 in order to better understand how they experienced learning with the influence of OBA. The participants were chosen on voluntary basis. One lecturer was approached and asked for voluntary participants. Three students volunteered to be interviewed at their free time. As a confidentiality measure, the students will be addressed using pseudonym, F, H and S. The students were contacted via WhatsApp and an appointment was set for the interview, which lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. The students were first explained briefly about the study and some background knowledge so that they will be able to answer the interview questions correctly. The students were then informed about ethical issues and they signed the consent letter. A recorder was used to record the interview for the purpose of transcriptions later for data analysis.

The interviews were, then, transcribed and analysed by means of thematic analysis. The researchers looked for emerging themes in the interviews. This is done twice to ensure that there are no themes being overlooked. After that, the emerging themes from each interview were combined so that the researchers will be able to see the bigger picture. A qualitative phenomenological method was employed as this method was considered to be appropriate because rather than focusing on differences between individuals, building theories or documenting case studies, a phenomenological method provides grounds for investigating a phenomenon as lived and experienced by a number of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, this method allows participants the opportunity to narrate their experiences with as much detail as possible, including their subjective reflections and judgements (Smith et al., 2009).

Credibility and trustworthiness

The themes generated were given to two inter-raters to be rated. One inter-rater is an Associate Professor in the area of Language Testing in IIUM and

another inter-rater is an English teacher in Universiti Sains Malaysia. The inter-rater reliability for the generated themes is 90.5%.

Ethical Issue

There are five sets of ethical principles for conducting research with human participants: consent, confidentiality, protection of participants, honesty and benefit (Robson, 1993). In this study, this set was followed. First, consent from the involved parties, i.e. UiTM (main campus and branch campus) and the informants were gained. Second, the informants will remain anonymous; pseudonyms were used, and their data will be kept confidential. Third, no giving misleading information with regards to the investigation were given to the informants. The informants were briefed about the general purpose of the study. Finally, the informants benefited from this study as they reflected on the in-class and out-of-class practices during the interview session. Based on researchers' observation, students have the tendency to relate and understand ELC231 better when they share their experiences. Moreover, they have the tendency to realize that English is important, and it is part and parcel of their student's life.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the present study are discussed with reference to in-class and out-of-class learning. In-class learning refers to the what (i.e. learning content, materials, tasks, etc) and how (i.e. the rate and sequence of learning) learning is going on inside the ELC231 classroom. By extension, out-of-class learning refers to what (i.e. learning content, materials, tasks, etc) and how (i.e. the rate and sequence) learning is going on outside the ELC231 classroom.

In-class learning

Based on the interviews, it was evident that students themselves played a major role in the classroom. H always stayed focused in class and she took note of any important things discussed in the class. For her, the notes were helpful when she did her assignment and subsequently, for assessment purposes. On the contrary, S did not do so. She preferred staying quiet in class and rarely asked questions. This is due to her personality and also the fear to approach the teacher in the classroom. F felt like he only learns English for test and hence, he did not pay much attention in class. For F, this course is not his core-course (related to his program) and he deemed that it is not important. However, he was aware that he has to pass this course in order to graduate. It was evidenced that students have their own conception about the course, and they have their own language learning practices in classroom.

The three informants did mention about the importance of having a good teacher. They believed that it is of utmost importance for teachers to be livelier, fun, interactive and active. F had a strong conviction that a good teacher would spark his interest to learn more. Narrating his experience with a 'bad' (as he termed it) teacher, he felt demotivated to learn and that he just learnt English for the sake of passing the test. For him, the teacher is a bad teacher because the teacher focuses too much on textbook and hence the class

seemed boring to him. F further elaborated that a teacher must know what teenagers nowadays like and that teachers should tap on it. He added that teachers should use educational games and interact with students when in class. Apparently, H and S concurred with F. They explicated that an active teacher would make the students more active and a dull teacher would make the class (students) dull too. Apart from that, the classroom tasks also affect the in-class learning. They prefer communicative activities such as debate, games, quizzes and etc. because they felt that these classroom tasks are essential and help them learn more.

F used a dictionary app on his mobile phone whenever he encountered unfamiliar words while doing any activities in class. Although using mobile phones in class is prohibited, F said that he had to use it as it is convenient for him to find the meaning of any unfamiliar word. He also added that it saved his time and class time as he was independent by not asking the teacher every time, he encountered any unfamiliar words. Apart from that, F liked it when his teacher used Edmodo; an educational website in the classroom. He enjoyed reading his teacher's posts as well as doing assignments given by means of Edmodo. H also highlighted that her teacher used Edmodo in class, and she enjoyed using Edmodo in the classroom. For H, Edmodo is exciting to use, and she was happy every time her teacher uses Edmodo.

S highlighted that she enjoyed doing presentations using PowerPoint, Prezi, etc. For her, presenting in front of the class is fun as she can be actively participating in class. When using PowerPoint or Prezi, S felt that she can showcase her technical skill, along with her speaking skill. Apart from that, S also used Google translate in class, especially when she had writing tasks to be done. For her, Google translate helped her to ease her 'mental block' when she had to write essays in class. Upon discussing further on how they learn in English class, the informants had to say that friends did help while learning in class. They felt more comfortable to ask their friends rather than asking their teacher. Apart from that, they used to communicate in English with friends and they found it really helpful in improving their English proficiency. They also highlighted that they helped each other in class and that friends are of utmost importance in learning.

Since ELC231 covers 3 skills, namely writing, reading and speaking, the informants have different preferences. In the classroom, H and F focused more on speaking, while S fancied reading. Unanimously, they felt that writing was the toughest skill and they felt that writing activities that were done in the classroom were the toughest, as well as the writing assessments. It is obvious that they were aware of their strength and weaknesses with regard to their English proficiency. The three of them talked about how difficult it was to write essays due to their lack of grammar and vocabulary mastery. H and F preferred speaking skill because for them, speaking is spontaneous and stress-free. S preferred reading because for her, reading comprehension involved answering questions that is readily available in the text.

Out-of-class learning

Upon asking whether they learn English outside of the ELC231 class, H and S admitted that though sparingly, they learn English outside of the class, while F conceded that he did not learn English outside of the class. Although F confidently said that he did not learn English outside of the class, when he was prompted with more questions, he had to admit that he did learn English out-of-the class unintentionally. The students reported that they learnt English through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, they learnt English by reviewing people's posts, which are in English. However, F deemed that Facebook is not really helping as he said posts in Facebook are the same every day and thus, he did not learn much from Facebook. The students learnt grammar by means of subscribing to YouTube channels, including teachers who posted useful English lessons on YouTube. Moreover, they found Google to be useful and handy in helping them to find information on the Internet.

The informants did mention that they learnt English, i.e., grammar, pronunciation, expressions, vocabulary, etc. through movies. They further elucidated that the English subtitle alleviated their English proficiency. H highlighted that she watched Korean drama with English subtitle. She learnt a lot of new words and expressions with this method. The informants listened to English songs and they learnt English by means of scrutinising the lyrics. One respondent, H, used an application named Music Match when listening to English songs and convinced that Music Match helped her to go through the lyrics while listening to the songs. This method has proven to be successful on helping her learnt English while listening to English songs.

When doing assignments, the informants reported that they used dictionary to look up for unfamiliar words. S and H used dictionary when doing assignment and also when they found some unfamiliar words. However, it is worth noting that they used dictionary outside of the class because dictionary is heavy to carry to class. Hence, they didn't bring dictionary to class. Other learning occurred by means of reading English novels, family and lecturers from other faculties. S, for instance read English novels and she learnt English from reading English novels. Moreover, she also learnt English from her sister, which she claimed to have a better proficiency in English compared to her. H believed that she has to use English with lecturers from other faculties and this has made her want to be better in using English.

DISCUSSIONS

The OBA i.e., ELC231 has resulted in both positive and negative washback on the participants and processes. The positive washback was: students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, friends, family and teachers as the source of encouragement, interesting classroom tasks and technology has helped them to learn better. On the other hand, the negative washback was: students have the tendency to perceive the assessment as low stakes (not their core-course and the absence of final exam), bad teaching approach and too dependent on technology, in which they can't think on their own.

It is worth highlighting that there are implications on the teaching and learning. One prominent aspect evidenced in the findings of the present study is the use of technology. Students are more inclined to use technology, especially mobile phone in their everyday life, which include learning. Kiernan & Aizawa (2004) recommended a study on how mobile phones can serve as a "learning tool in your pocket" to create a more authentic kind of learning tasks. To reiterate, one of the assessments to be used in OBA is authentic assessment. Hence, teachers may use mobile phone to create authentic tasks in the classroom. Furthermore, the use of Edmodo can be seen as an effort from the teachers to use technology in the classroom. It is worth noting that technology promotes language acquisition by means of allowing students to work independently, flexible, at their own pace and instant access to error feedback (Arvan & Musumeci, 2000; Felix, 2003; Collentine, 2000; Singh, 2003 in Saggara & Zapata, 2008). The use of technology can help teachers in terms of relieving their burden of grading a large number of exercises and consequently allowing them to spend more time on other administrative responsibilities.

With regards to technology used in learning, it has to be noted that technology is man-made and hence, we should not be the slaves to technology. In that sense, we should not be too dependent on the technology. Technology should be used with caution, as there is too much of a good thing in technology. Although technology has now become the new teaching method in most educational institutions, it has to be noted that technology has to be used wisely. It is not wise to fully depend on technology as human beings who need 'human touch'. This can be seen nowadays as technology has brought about bad effects among our kids, especially young children. Hence, teachers can control the use of technology in their teaching.

It is also interesting to note that one of the common institutional barriers of OBA as identified by Bresciani (2011) is understanding of assessment among teachers. When teachers fail to understand the assessment system, this will culminate in distortion and dilution of students' conception towards the assessment system. As reported earlier, the informants' have the conception that ELC231 is not an important assessment for them, though admittedly, it is a high stakes test. Teachers have the power to mould students' perception and conception about tests, and therefore our conviction is that it is the teachers who should understand the assessment first, as their conception will further mould the students' conception. Not just conception, without the understanding of assessment, the teacher will not be able to deliver well in class, hence the 'bad' teacher discussed by the informants. When the teacher understands the demands of the assessment, promoting learning is not a big deal. Furthermore, it is imperative for teachers to know the intended outcomes of an assessment in order to better understand the assessment needs of the students (Belkbir, 2019) Apart from teachers, friends and family may also help in student learning in terms of encouragement and effort.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
One of the initiatives from UiTM to ensure OBE is implemented successfully is by educating and disseminating information with regards to the new

assessment system, i.e., OBA among its teachers. Continuous workshops and seminars, especially hands-on are of utmost importance to ensure teachers are equipped with knowledge and hence are able to deliver their best. As educators, the researchers believe that good teaching leads to good learning and hence, empowered teachers culminate in empowered learners. The study recommends that future studies should look into teacher-student relationship in realizing good learning experience, with regards to the 21st Century learning and Industrial Revolution. Though admitting that teachers are the heart of teaching and learning process, students should be placed as the centre of discussion as it is through learning that we as teachers know whether our teaching is working or not.

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