EFL TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF THEIR TESTING READING COMPREHENSION AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF ITS WASHBACK EFFECTS[i]

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Abstract:
This study aims to investigate two issues. Firstly, it explores English as a foreign language (EFL) high school teachers' practices of testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension. Secondly, their perceptions of its washback effects are scrutinized. Content analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. Sixty teachers at some high schools in Can Tho City, Vietnam were contacted to answer the questionnaire. In the end, five of them were selected to take part in the interviews. The findings indicated that designing tests has a beneficial impact on reading for EFL learners in the areas of students' passion for reading, decreasing reading boredom, students' interest in reading text content, and students' development of thinking skills. It has an impact on the teachers' time allotment, teaching strategies, and instructional materials.

Keywords: washback effects, teaching reading comprehension, EFL teachers, teachers' perceptions, teachers' practices

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

In Decision 1400 from the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), titled "Teaching and Studying Foreign Languages in the National Educational System, Period 2008-2020," the National Foreign Language Project was inaugurated on September 30, 2008. In order to adapt to studying and working requirements, the newly updated project asks for all academic levels of education and training to continue with the new foreign language curriculum and develop the English competence of students in order to achieve foreign language universalization. The National Foreign Language Project outlined the renovation of foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system in order to improve human resource foreign language proficiency, particularly in a few prioritized areas, in order to aid the country's industrialization and modernization efforts.

Formal testing has an indirect impact on language teaching, but the classroom-based assessment has a direct impact, and knowledge of testing is typically required to comprehend and investigate language education. Researchers in the field of language testing has typically focused on challenges and problems inherent in tests in order to improve their reliability and validity. Nonetheless, the washback effect includes aspects such as curriculum, teacher and student actions both within and outside the classroom, their opinions of the test, and how test scores are used, in addition to the test itself. As a result, the subject of how to establish an effective learning environment for pupils when teaching foreign languages in general or English in particular has been a difficult one.

Reading is an important component of learning English, yet many students struggle with it. In many domains of study; however, it is vital to improve learning outcomes. Reading for meaning, according to Hamra (2010), is fundamentally an attempt to grasp texts. It entails a number of metacognitive comprehension monitoring actions. Clarifying the purpose of reading, identifying the important aspects of a message, focusing attention on the major content, monitoring ongoing activities to determine whether comprehension is occurring, engaging in self-questioning to determine whether goals are being achieved, and taking corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected are some metacognitive activities of reading comprehension (Brown, 1980 as cited in Hamra, 2010). Brown (2004) also discovered that precise evaluation of language abilities, particularly reading comprehension, is a compelling requirement that may be met in a variety of ways, including multiple choice items, short answer items, true/false, and cloze tests, among others. Reading comprehension, in particular, is significant in measuring language abilities in general and reading skills in particular.

Washback, in general, refers to the impact of testing on education (Cheng, 2005; Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). In this study, the terms "test" and "assessment" are interchangeable when their meanings are similar. It is important to estimate and confirm that the exam had the intended impact on teaching and learning in the classroom or within the educational system. When the test has the potential to determine what will

happen and take place in the classroom, its impact is established as a component of classroom practice. It consists of the instructional components, such as the delivery method, instructional materials, instructional methodologies, activity or time schedule, and methods of evaluation (Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2011).

In spite of their importance and impact on the teaching and learning process, testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension have received little attention in the Vietnamese classroom. Furthermore, little is known about how teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching reading comprehension can aid them in improving students' reading skills in the context of Vietnamese language teaching and learning. As a result, this study intends to fill a gap in which few studies on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching reading comprehension have been conducted in Can Tho City.

1.2. Research aims

The purposes of this study are two-fold. Firstly, it is aimed at studying EFL high school teachers' practices in their testing reading comprehension. Secondly, it investigates EFL high school teachers' perceptions of its washback effects on testing reading comprehension.

1.3. Research questions

The current research sought answers to the following two questions:
- To what extent do EFL high school teachers practice their testing reading comprehension?
- What are EFL high school teachers' perceptions of its washback effects on testing reading comprehension?

1.4. Significance of the study

This study supplies insights into the nature of testing and washback by investigating EFL teachers' perceptions as well as their practices in the high school context. It gives teachers golden opportunities of reviewing what they think about their teaching, and its impact on English language teaching; therefore, they may make changes in their behaviours timely and properly. Lastly, it is hoped that this study will be one of the useful references for other researchers in the same field to explore in more detail about testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension.

2. Literature

2.1.1. Perceptions

Perceptions have been defined in various ways. Perception, according to Aque (2007), is the body's ability to perceive information from the outside world. When a teacher detects a teaching approach in English, for example, he or she is aware of that method.

However, according to William (2014), perception is the act of recognizing and interpreting sensory information. It also consists of how the data is processed. It can also

be thought of as a process in which sensory information from our surroundings is absorbed and used to interact with our surroundings. It enabled us to interpret sensory data and turn it into something meaningful. When a teacher recognizes a teaching approach in English, for example, he or she makes an effort to apply that method to his or her own teaching.

Perception, according to Williams (2014), Sian and Ugwugbu's study (1980), can be defined as "*the method for extracting useful information from physical stimulation It's how we interpret our feelings*" (p. 90). Three important aspects of perception were identified in their research. The first is that perception is influenced by both the stimuli and the individual's past experiences, intentions, and social needs. The second is that the perceiver may actively perceive reality, pick facts, and develop hypotheses to determine what is going on. The last is that perception is the process of rational thought that allows an individual to improve his expected outcome and find appropriate remedies. If no additional information is acquired from physical past experiences and memories, merely physical stimulation from sensory receptors of an individual provides limited information. When physical inputs are appropriately interpreted, they become an individual's perceptions.

In this study, perception refers to EFL teachers' understanding of a teaching method, particularly testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension.

2.1.2. Practice

A lot of studies have attempted to define what constitutes practice. Twichell (2013) defines a practice as "*whatever a person does on a regular basis that nurtures him or her*." Writing, painting, and photographing are examples of creative activities. The word "practice" means "to do over and over again," implying that a person can have multiple opportunities to receive the practice he or she desires.

Teaching practice, according to Marais and Meier (2004, p. 221), is "*the spectrum of experiences to which student-teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms and schools.*" It is an important part of teacher education, and it refers to students being placed in schools to practice lesson planning, classroom management, and, most importantly, classroom teaching.

Brophy and Good (1986) and Wang, Haetel, and Walberg (1993) both believe that the teaching method has a significant impact on effective classroom learning and student results. What teachers do in the classroom is heavily impacted by their beliefs about the teaching process. To put it another way, instructors' actions reflect their beliefs and perceptions about their teaching experience.

In the current research, practice refers to how EFL teachers perceive a teaching method and apply it in teaching English, especially testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension

2.1.3. Definition of washback

Washback is defined as "*the impact of testing on teaching and learning*" (Gates, 1995, p. 101) or "*how [tests] influence the classroom teaching that precedes them*" (Thornbury, 2006, p. 228). "*There is a common understanding that language testing can exert an impact or influence on all test stakeholders,*" writes Zhang (2016). (p. 779). This influence can be both positive and detrimental. Washback's harmful impact on teaching and learning has been well documented. For example, Prodromou (1995) describes how teachers may become "*stuck in the examination preparation cycle*" (p. 14), sacrificing communicative or humanistic techniques in favor of thorough syllabus coverage. Furthermore, Pan (2009) emphasizes how teachers may discard activities that are not directly related to passing an exam, and instead concentrate on the teaching of test-taking skills rather than language learning activities. Barnes (2016), for example, discusses the impact of high-stakes exams on teaching and learning, which is bolstered by the usage of test preparation tools. The scenarios outlined above clearly have a detrimental impact on the teaching and learning process, as teaching to the test can lead to a lack of follow-up or lead-in activities in relation to tests (Prodromou, 1995).

Washback, on the other hand, may have a good impact on teaching and learning. According to Brown (2002), positive washback can be facilitated by changing test design factors, changing test contents factors, adjusting test logistics elements, and modifying test interpretation factors. Another type of positive washback, according to Brown (2004), is "*knowledge that 'washes back' to students in the form of valuable diagnoses of strengths and deficiencies*" (p. 29). In this view, successful examinations will have a positive impact on the teaching-learning process, motivating both teachers and students and encouraging the concept of lifelong learning (Pan, 2009).

2.1.4. Definition of reading

Reading, according to Anderson et al. (1985), is the process of extracting meaning from written materials. It necessitates the coordination of numerous connected sources of data. Reading, according to Wixson, Peters, Weber, and Roeber (1987), is a process of making sense that includes (a) the reader's prior knowledge, (b) the text information, and (c) the reading environment. Reading, according to Grabe (1991, cited in Alyousef 2005), is an interactive process between readers and texts that leads to fluency in reading. Readers engage with texts to extract meaning, and there are two types of knowledge: linguistic or systems knowledge (bottom-up processing) and schematic knowledge (top-down processing) (top-down processing). The basic purpose of reading, according to Pourhosein Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), is to extract the correct message from a text that the writer intended for the reader to receive.

2.1.5. Definition of Reading comprehension

Reading is traditionally thought to be a linear process in which a reader decodes a text into its smallest elements (words). Reading began to be considered as an activity in which the reader responds to stimuli in printed texts in the 1950s, influenced by behaviorism

theory, with no adequate explanation of how this process occurs (Samuels & Kamil, 1988). This viewpoint has been chastised because it places too much emphasis on memorizing the formal arrangement of sentences in a text. Researchers began to focus more on the reader's function and fluency in the late 1960s and 1970s, leading to the creation of cognitive models of reading that emphasized the reader's active cognitive process of activating preexisting knowledge (Goodman, 1967).

Readers are active participants who sample the text, form hypotheses, and then confirm or reject those hypotheses (Goodman, 1967). Goodman's psycholinguistic reading theory has recently been broadened to include meta-cognition, or thinking about what one is doing strategically while reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Metacognition, according to Carnine et al. (1990), is concerned with learners' knowledge of and use of their cognitive resources, as well as prediction, summarizing, clarifying meaning, and recounting. Thus, the metacognitive theory is concerned with behaviors that learners must engage in before, during, and after reading in order to correctly comprehend a piece.

Diverse definitions of reading from various schools of thought provide different perspectives on what reading comprehension is. Reading comprehension, according to Grabe and Stoller (2011), is a complex combination of abilities that includes quick, efficient, interactive, strategic, flexible, assessing, intentional, comprehending, learning, and linguistic processes. These skills work together to help readers attain the ultimate aim of reading, which is a complete knowledge of a text. Furthermore, reading comprehension is a collaborative effort between the reader and the text (Javed et al., 2015; Nuttall, 2005). Understanding the primary idea of a text, recognizing the type of writing, ordering the sequence of the text, predicting what a text is about, and guessing the author are all important parts of reading comprehension. Students who master these elements have a greater understanding of the material. Making predictions based on prior knowledge of the structural organization and text elements might also help pupils better understand the material they're reading (Palincsar, 2003). Furthermore, the number of vocabulary influences reading comprehension, with increased vocabulary leading to better reading comprehension (Renandya, 2004).

In another study, both Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) and Kintsch (1998) define reading comprehension as the process of deriving meaning from text. Rather than trying to infer meaning from specific words or sentences, the objective is to understand the text as a whole. The mental representation of a text's meaning combined with the readers' past knowledge is referred to as reading comprehension. This is referred to as a mental model (Johnson-Laird, 1983) or a scenario model (Kintsch, 1998). This paradigm establishes the meaning of what was taught (RAND Reading and Study Group, 2002). According to Keenan, Betjemann, and Olson (2008), reading comprehension requires the right development and ordination of a variety of lower- and higher-level processes and skills. As a result, there are many different, distinct origins for possible understanding breaks.

In conclusion, the structural, cognitive, and metacognitive theories of reading help us understand how reading is perceived. These ideas will be used to examine EFL reading instruction in the Vietnamese context. According to the discussion above, teaching EFL reading should focus on strengthening students' ability to comprehend written texts through the development of several sub-skills. The teacher's job, then, should be that of a facilitator, guiding pupils through tasks that will help them comprehend the material. The creation of models for teaching reading in EFL contexts will be discussed in the following section.

2.2. Models of pedagogy to teach EFL reading

Three reading models are extensively used in EFL reading instruction: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive (Aebersold & Field, 2011; Clark & Silberstein, 1987; Zhang, 2016).

The bottom-up reading paradigm encourages reading teaching that builds learners' decoding abilities from the ground up, starting with the smallest units, single letters, and letter blends, and progressing to words and phrases. The top-down model arose as this concept began to become obsolete.

Reading is viewed as a process of reconstructing meaning under the top-down paradigm, which emphasizes comprehension of units of meaning larger than words and sentences. Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith are proponents of this paradigm (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). This theory's applicability in the EFL environment can be seen in the implementation of instructional practices that highlight learners' active role as readers. Guessing the meaning of words based on context, previewing an article before reading it to get a general idea of the content, and actively participating in predicting what the author will say next are examples of these behaviors. The reader applies his or her vocabulary, sentence structure, discourse, and world knowledge in this process.

The third model, the alternative model, combines the two previous reading modes, bottom-up and top-down. Reading, according to this paradigm, is a combination of all meaning-gathering tasks. This interactive theory recognizes the value of prior knowledge and prediction while also emphasizing the importance of speedy and precise processing of the text's actual words (Harmer, 2001). "...*sometimes the individual details assist us to understand the whole; sometimes our overview allows us to process the details*," he explained (Harmer, 2001, p. 201). This model aims to improve pupils' reading metacognitive skills. According to Harmer (2001), reading instruction can be facilitated in a variety of ways, including providing an advance organizer (i.e., to activate the students' background knowledge) before reading, providing examples and more practice while reading, and providing feedback to students for pre-reading and reading activities.

2.3. Bailey's Washback Model (1996)

Bailey's (1996) model gives a straightforward and thorough overview of the various challenges involved in the washback process when compared to other washback models. This model includes the washback participants, processes, and results and tries to outline

how a test might be connected to various stakeholders and how these stakeholders can influence one another.

Hughes (1993) made a separation between participants, processes, and products, which sheds light on the potential mechanisms by which washback might function, and this distinction served as the foundation for Bailey's (1996) washback model (Figure 1). In other words, he classified the numerous kinds of consequences that could happen to the three parts of an educational system—participants, processes, and products. Teachers, students, educational administrators, content creators, and publishers all fall under the category of "participants" in the classroom. "Processes" are the actions taken by participants that can lead to the learning process, such as creating learning materials, designing a syllabus, coming up with innovative teaching methods, putting test-taking tactics into practice, and so on. The learning goals and the level of learning are the final two "products" that are mentioned (Hughes, 1993).

Bailey's model, which is based on Hughes' (1993) model, discusses the immediate effects of a test on a number of participants who are all involved in processes that result in products unique to the participant. In Figure 1, the dotted lines show potential test-related effects from different participants. The direct impact that exposure to knowledge derived from tests has on test-takers is demonstrated by Bailey's (1996) model, which refers to this as washback to the learners. Based on Alderson and Wall's (1993) theories, she also refers to the results of test-derived information delivered to teachers, administrators, curriculum designers, and therapists as washback to the program.
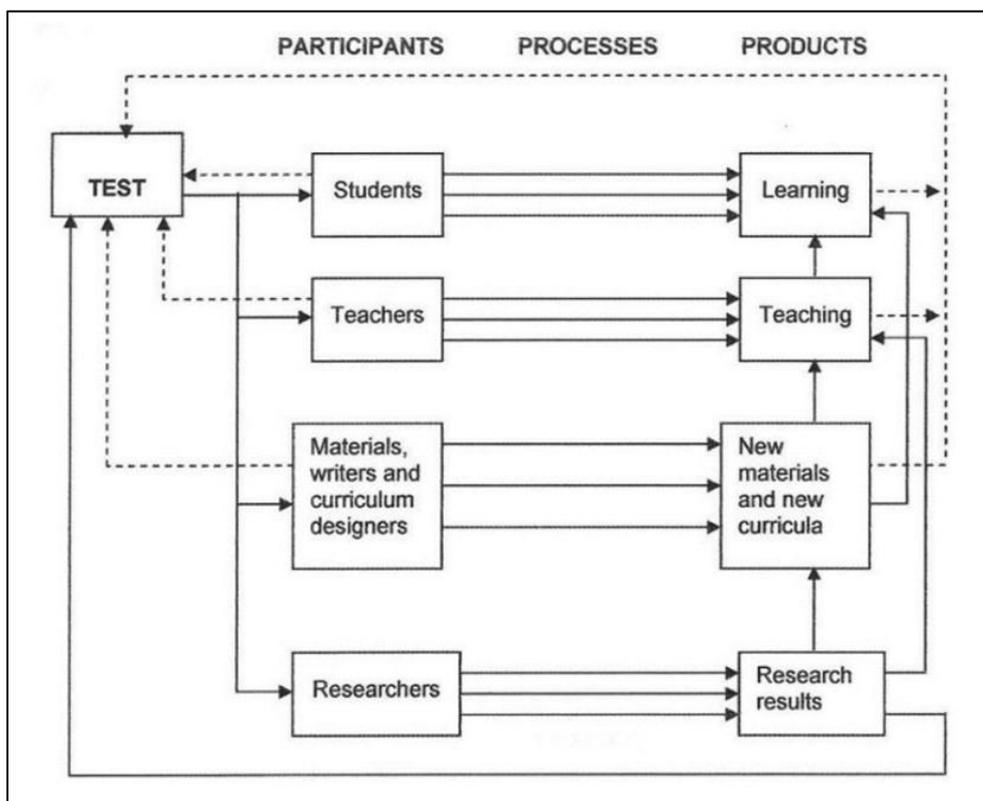

Figure 1: Washback Model (Bailey, 1996)

2.4. Related studies

2.4.1. Foreign studies

In the process of teaching and learning, testing and washback are crucial, but occasionally, not many teachers take this issue into account. In reality, they don't think about whether or not the tests they design for students and washback affect their learning results or are appropriate for their levels. Some assessments are created based on the experiences of the teachers, and washback is occasionally disregarded. As a result, they might violate the test reliability and validity requirements as well as the washback effects. Testing, however, can be either good or negative depending on how we test the test and washback.

According to Wiyaka (2020), Scholars have long acknowledged the impact of examinations on teaching and learning, also referred to as washback. High-stakes testing, however, typically addresses studies on washback. This study explores the washback effect of performance-based tests, which are low-stakes assessments used to gauge reading proficiency. Because there are no significant consequences for the students, such an exam has low stakes. The study's participants included 50 junior high school students and 10 English teachers from Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. For both teachers and students, data were gathered through a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. According to the findings, performance-based testing has a favorable impact on EFL learners' reading skills in the following areas: students' excitement for reading, decrease in reading ennui, students' interest in reading text content, and students' development of higher-order thinking skills. It has an impact on the teachers' time allotment, teaching strategies, and instructional materials. For practical reasons, traditional evaluation is still used, particularly in multiple-choice test formats. For instance, a study on the English national test carried out by Sabrina (2016) showed that the examination questions were all in multiple choice style, which demonstrated that they were entirely practical. Multiple choice tests, according to Sumardi (2017), are useful as a more approachable assessment strategy for English language teachers because they are simple to correct and conduct in a big class.

The impact of the English Test component of the Spanish University Entrance Examination was examined by Amengual-Pizarro in 2009. The findings showed that the teachers give equal attention to the skills and resources that fulfill the English Test's objectives. In other words, the English Test has the effect of limiting the curriculum to the tested skills and topics since teachers teach to the test and overlook the practice of skills like speaking.

Many researches have looked into how exams impact and washback affect student and teacher practices. Sukyadi and Mardiani (2011) conducted a study to examine the effects of the English National Examination, a school-leaving exam, on language classroom practices, taking into account both teachers and students. The findings imply that while students work on vocabulary, listening, and reading, teachers primarily educate for the test and concentrate on test-taking tactics.

According to Zmen (2011), the goal of the ÜDS (Inter-university Foreign Language Examination) was to ascertain the test-takers' washback impact. The study's findings showed that the content of the ÜDS, which primarily aimed to measure test-takers' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in addition to their reading ability, had a detrimental impact on the participants. They claimed that because these abilities weren't assessed, they couldn't learn or develop other ones, including speaking.

Green (2013) has highlighted the changes in language evaluation over the past few decades in another study, which has sparked an increase in interest in washback. First, there has been a shift in test design toward performance testing, which involves efforts to develop assessment tasks that more closely mirror real-world applications of language-related knowledge, skills, and abilities. This movement is reflected in Hughes' (1989). The use of tests as instruments for social policy has also changed people's perspectives on test validity.

Similar research was conducted by Akpnar and Akldere (2013), who examined the washback effects of the KPDS (State Personnel Language Examination) and ÜDS tests, two high-stakes exams in Turkey (Inter-university Foreign Language Examination). To examine how these two exams affected Turkish academicians' receptive and productive skills, researchers used a survey research methodology. They discovered that while listening, speaking, and writing are not examined in the exams, KPDS and ÜDS have substantial negative washback effects on reading skills but strong positive washback impacts on those skills.

Entürk (2013) examined how the KET (Key English Test) affected behavior in a private college's classroom. The outcomes show that the teacher adapts her classroom English instruction to incorporate the KET language abilities. Since KET is focused on English communication skills, it has been noticed that teachers incorporate receptive and productive skills into classroom activities, which is thought to be a beneficial washback effect.

English is instructed as a foreign language in Chile (EFL). EFL occurs in societies where "*English is not the usual language for communication,*" according to Thornbury (2006). (p. 74). The students taking part in this action research all have English as a subject in school and are fluent in Chilean Spanish. Due to this circumstance, testing is now commonplace in their connection with English. Learners' exposure to the target language is primarily restricted to the classroom, as opposed to settings where English is taught as a Second Language (ESL). This is why the teacher's role is so important in making up for the aforementioned drawbacks. One of the numerous ways a teacher might improve the EFL setting, according to Brown (2000), is to "*play down the role of testing and highlight more intrinsic elements,*" which can be seen as raising positive washback.

Within the context of tertiary education in Mainland China, Zhan and Andrews (2014) looked at the washback effects of CET-4 on Chinese non-English major students. The study concentrated on how CET-4 affected students' outside-of-class learning habits. The findings imply that because listening and reading comprehension are examined in exams, learners gave practicing these abilities a higher priority. Exams from the past as

well as other simulated exams are reviewed as part of the learning process. The study's most surprising finding is that learners appear to have changed what they learn rather than how they learn, suggesting that their outside-of-class learning techniques are more focused on memorizing than communication.

According to Klçkaya (2016), Turkey's 12-year compulsory education program consists of 4 years of primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. To apply for entrance to upper secondary education, pupils must pass the Transition Examination from Primary to Secondary Education (TEOG) at the conclusion of eighth grade (high schools). The Ministry of National Education created the high-stakes test known as TEOG (henceforth MoNE). High test scores will help students be admitted to "highly successful" upper secondary schools where admission to tertiary education is almost guaranteed. The results are used to select students at around the age of 14 into upper secondary schools, which is generally regarded as crucial by both students and parents. It covers a variety of subjects from the lower secondary school curriculum, one of which is a foreign language. Students can choose from German, French, English, or Italian, depending on their preferences. Twenty multiple-choice questions in the English component of the TEOG test students' comprehension of grammar, vocabulary, and reading while completely ignoring their listening, writing, and speaking abilities (MoNE 2015). The people who design the tests do not disclose any information on the test standards, despite the fact that test-takers should be aware of why they will be evaluated, what will be examined on the exam, and what the results signify.

In a different study, the IELTS Test generated favorable washback on productive skills in the Japanese tertiary context, according to Alan (2016)'s findings. Test takers' language skills have improved as a result, notably their speaking abilities. Additionally, a variety of mediating factors that influenced washback to the learner in this situation were found. The IELTS Test or any other four-skills test can be used to generate positive washback for learners, but the results are based on a number of variables that are inextricably linked to the sociocultural and educational context. Therefore, while intending to introduce tests that are meant to encourage positive washback to the learner, test designers and test users must take these elements into consideration.

Last but not least, according to Schissel (2018), a study on how testing affects instruction and learning has been referred to as backwash, washback, impact, and repercussions. In the literature, the words "impact" and "washback" are frequently used. Positive and negative, intentional and unforeseen effects of test use are included in test impact and washback. Studies on the subject have oversimplified the causal relationship between testing and teaching. It is difficult to pinpoint and prove a causal link between testing on the one hand, and instruction and learning on the other because this process frequently involves other elements like institutional support, teacher judgment, or family engagement.

2.4.2. Vietnamese studies

In the context of Vietnam, some studies about English as a foreign language teachers' perceptions and practices regarding assessment have been conducted. Ha, X., Tran, N., & Tran, N. (2021) conducted an investigation into "High school English as a foreign language teachers' beliefs and practices regarding assessment in a curriculum innovation context in Vietnam". The author concentrated on the analysis of the data including test results as well as in-depth interviews with six teachers. The results showed that the high-stakes tests had a significant impact on instructors' testing beliefs because they made explicit linguistic items a focus of the tested material and assessment methods. Their testing procedures correctly mirrored these thoughts. However, the teachers' actions and ideas ran counter to both the intended curriculum's goals and the fundamentals of good teaching. These results imply that in order for innovations like Task-based language teaching to truly impact the classroom, in-service teacher professional development programs are required.

In a study, Nguyen and Kim (2021) conducted a study: "Difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, Cantho, Vietnam". 90 sophomores with English majors from Tay Do University's Bachelor of English 10 program (2015-2019) are the study's participants. All of them continue to experience certain challenges with regard to psychological factors like attitude and motivation as well as linguistic factors like vocabulary, grammar structures, previous knowledge, and some tactics like inferring meaning from context, skimming, and scanning. There were two stages to the research. Participants were receiving questionnaires from the former. Students were then chosen to complete an interview paper. Additionally, the report identifies various challenges that can be overcome by pupils.

However, in spite of its roles and impact on the process of teaching and learning, testing and washback in teaching reading comprehension have not been paid much attention in a Vietnamese teaching context. Moreover, little is learnt about how teachers' perceptions in teaching reading comprehension may help them to improve students' reading skill within the context of language teaching and learning in Vietnam. Hence, this research aims to fill the gap in which few studies are carried out in that area in Vietnam regarding EFL teachers' perceptions.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research questions

In order to investigate EFL teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension and their perceptions of its washback effects, the researcher attempted to find the answers to the following two questions:
1) To what extent do EFL high school teachers practice their testing reading comprehension?
2) What are EFL high school teachers' perceptions of its washback effects on testing reading comprehension?

3.2. Research design

The research employed a descriptive, mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012), in which both parts were equally conducted because of their suitability to the focus of the study. The questionnaire and interview data were integrated with quantitative and qualitative data for the current investigation. The results from the interview were interpreted qualitatively while the data from the questionnaires were quantitatively examined. Descriptive statistics were specifically used to assess the questionnaire data, which was then presented in tables with numbers and percentages and discussed EFL high school teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension. The thematic analysis had been used to code the transcripts of the teachers' interviews (Dorneyi, 2007).

The data were collected from a survey via a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. First, the questionnaire was employed to investigate EFL high school teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension, and explore their perceptions of its washback effects on testing reading comprehension. Then, the qualitative research conducted via using semi-structured interviews was implemented to triangulate and strengthen the validity and reliability of the data gathered from the questionnaire as well as clarify some aspects that were not discovered yet in the questionnaire.

3.3. Participants

Based on the purpose of the study, the participants of this study are 60 FL high school English teachers who take part in teaching reading at different high schools in Can Tho City, Vietnam based on convenience sampling (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). They consisted of both male and female teachers of different ages. Most of them have experience in teaching reading in Can Tho City, Vietnam. Data collection was done after they had completed the questionnaire. Jr (2009) claimed that one technique to ensure the dependability of the data is to increase the sample size for a study. However, it might be challenging to estimate the size of the sample size for a given study. Jr. (2009) also indicated that response rate, question design, or the caliber of data collection are additional variables that affect data reliability.

Table 3.1: Summary of the participants' personal information

Personal information	Content	Number (N=60)
Gender	Male	14
	Female	46
Years of teaching	Less 5 years	6
	From 5 years to 10 years	10
	More than 10 years	44
Place of work	In a public high school	60

As shown in Table 3.1, in terms of gender, the number of female participants was 14 (23.3%). Their years of teaching were ranging from less 5 years to more than 10 years, into three smaller groups, with group (1) at less 5 years: 6 (10%), group (2) at from 5 years to

10 years: 10 (16,7%), and the biggest one, group (3): 44 (73.3%). It is noteworthy that the group with years of teaching of more than 10 years is the largest group because this is the group with the longest years of teaching. It is noticeable that all of them are from public high schools.

In addition, 15 teachers who were not among the actual participant of the study but had a similar context to 60 EFL teachers at public high schools were invited to pilot the questionnaire before the main study was conducted. Two different participants who were not among 15 piloting participants were invited to attend the pilot interview.

3.4. Instruments

Two instruments were employed to collect the data in this study, including a questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview.

3.4.1. The questionnaire

According to Gay et al. (2012), "*a questionnaire is efficient; it requires little time and expense and permits collection of data from a large sample*" (p.196). In this research, the questionnaire included about 34 structured or closed-ended questions to collect quantitative data. Using the term "*washback to the learners,*" the washback model (Bailey, 1996) demonstrates the clear impact that exposure to material derived from tests has on test-takers. This 34-item questionnaire is designed to highlight people who practice teaching reading comprehension. By enabling them to make wiser judgments about the creation, administration, and use of assessment tasks, experts feel that assessment literacy and assessment knowledge can empower various stakeholders, particularly teachers (Grabowski & Dakin, 2014; Popham, 2009). Alderson (2000) divides reading assessment into new and old trends, but she explicitly makes the case that more thought must be given to how informal assessment can take the place of more formal testing so that informal assessment procedures can properly take the place of more traditional assessment practices.

In this study, the questionnaire was adapted from Wiyaka's (2020) questionnaire and it contained two clusters. It included a considerable modification of the washback of test of reading for EFL learners to suit the purposes of the study of the EFL high school teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension. The items in the questionnaire were designed based on the findings of related studies listed in the literature review. The first cluster consisted of 19 items. They were about teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The second clusters were designed with 15 items trying to figure out teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. This part was designed by the researcher based on the research question.

The questionnaire is employed in this study as it supplies a cheap, quick and efficient way of gaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people.

The questionnaire in this study includes 2 sections. The first section contains questions about participants' personal information to gain information about the teachers' gender, age, teaching experience, and schools where they work.

The second section is used to investigate teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. This section includes 19 items in 1 cluster. The participants will be asked to give their opinions on the statements based on the format of a five-point Likert-scale of the level of frequency ranging from Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Usually and Always (5). This section has an open-ended question which enables participants to respond openly to this question.

The third section with 15 items, which explores EFL teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension, will be designed based on the format of the five-level Likert item ranging from Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly agree (5). This section also has an open-ended question which enables participants to respond openly to this question.

The questionnaire was based on the literature review and categorized into two clusters, as follows:

- Cluster 1 consisting of nineteen items (Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19) was adapted from Wiyaka (2020), to explore teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.
- Cluster 2 contains fifteen items (Items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34). Items 29 and 34 were adapted from Marín, J. H. M. (2009) and the rests were designed by the researcher based on the research question to figure out teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

Table 3.2: Summary of the clusters and items

Clusters	Researchers	Items
Teachers' practices	Wiyaka (2020)	Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19
Teachers' perceptions	Marín (2009)	Items 29, 34 Items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33

3.4.2. The semi-structured interview

Since in the questionnaire, the participants were restricted to express their ideas by merely selecting given answers, interviews were used to "*obtain information that can later be compared and contrasted*" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 451). Semi-structured interviews were exploited to gain deep insights into the two purposive groups, namely "washback effects in learning" and "washback effects in teaching". Desired information gained from individual respondents was non-numeric data, supplementing the numeric data from the quantitative research. The semi-structured questions were extracted from the questionnaire together with sub-questions and prompt to understand more about participants' perceptions. The interview protocol helped interviewees feel free to express themselves. Specifically, the first question investigated teachers' opinions about testing

reading comprehension and its washback effects. The second question asked for some advantages and disadvantages of designing reading tests while teaching reading comprehension. The third question explored the benefits of applying "washbacks" in teaching reading comprehension. The last question asked teachers to offer suggestions for high school teachers of English to apply the tests and its washbacks in teaching reading comprehension. Besides, the researcher also asked subsequent questions to make sure or clarify the interviewees' ideas. All of the questions were transcribed into Vietnamese to help the interviewees understand easily.

To guarantee the reliability and the comprehensibility of questions, and make interviewees self-confident in providing as much information as possible, interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. The five EFL teachers all opted to answer in Vietnamese. Each interview was conducted within twenty to forty minutes and recorded by the researcher with the participants' permission. The interviews were then carefully transcribed verbatim. The contents of the interviews' Vietnamese transcriptions were then analyzed for themes related to the research goals then the researcher translated them from Vietnamese into English.

3.5. Procedures

The two instruments were used to collect data with numeric and non-numeric data for this study. The procedures for data collection include piloting and administering the instruments. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire via Google Form. The interviews were conducted after the questionnaires. The questionnaires were delivered to 60 EFL teachers to identify teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and their perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The researcher contacts the participants to present the objectives of the study. The researcher presented the data collection questionnaire as well as the interview questions to the participants to preview. After they agreed, the researcher met the participants to collect data with their permission.

3.5.1. Piloting and administering the questionnaire

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire items, the total questionnaire (containing 34 questions) was piloted with 15 participants in a similar context to those participating in the actual study before being administered. A supervisor, two experienced educators, and three master's students in the Principles and Methods in EFL Teaching Program had reviewed the questionnaire before it was piloted. The instruments' problems were identified and significantly improved thanks to their thoughtful and cautious comments. Next, the data from the piloted questionnaire was encoded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The results showed that the piloted questionnaire was reliable (α=.867 >.70), which indicated that the questionnaire could be applied to gather the data for the actual study.

The hardcopies of the official questionnaire were then sent directly to 60 EFL high school teachers in Can Tho City, Vietnam. The researcher had explained the research

topic and purpose of the study to the participants before they answered the questionnaire.

3.5.2. Piloting and administering the semi-structured interview

Two EFL high school teachers (out of 15 teachers participating in the pilot questionnaire) were invited to participate in pilot interviews before actual interviews were conducted. Their responses helped the researcher adjust the questions and the language used so that the questions could be proper and easy for the participants to understand.

The time, place and mode were pre-arranged most conveniently for the respondents. To guarantee the reliability and the comprehensibility of questions, and make interviewees self-confident in providing as much information as possible, interviews were offered in either Vietnamese or English. The five EFL teachers all opted to answer in Vietnamese. Each interview was conducted within 20 to 40 minutes and carefully recorded by the researcher with the participants' permission. The Vietnamese verbatim of the interviews was then carefully transcribed. Then, the contents of the Vietnamese transcriptions of the interviewees were analyzed into topics and themes relevant to the research aims. After that, the purposeful excerpts from the original versions were translated into English by the researcher.

After collecting the questionnaire, the researcher invited randomly five EFL high school teachers coming from several public high schools to take part in the actual interview. To guarantee the reliability and the intelligibility of questions, and make interviewees self-confident in providing as much information as possible, interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. Interviews were planned as friendly chats and conducted face-to-face in a quiet place. Each interview lasted 20 to 40 minutes and was carefully recorded by the researcher.

3.6. Data analysis
3.6.1 Analysis of the questionnaire

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics 20. First, 60 EFL high school teachers' responses were encoded on IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Next, a scale test was run to check the reliability of the questionnaire, followed by several calculations in IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

Second, a *Descriptive Statistics Test* was calculated to find out the total mean scores of the level of teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension: the mean score of each cluster; the mean score and the percentage of agreement and disagreement of each item included in the questionnaire. Items in each cluster were analyzed in accordance with the percentage of agreement and disagreement. Then, a *Descriptive Statistics Test* was further conducted to examine the mean scores of two clusters of the questionnaire.

Next, *One-Sample t-Test* was run to check whether a mean score is statistically different from a certain test value as presented in Table 3.4 (*This framework was used because of its reputation and its relevance to the five-point Likert scale in the current study*).

Crosstabs were conducted to check methods and perceptions of teaching depending on teaching experience.

This comprehensive comparison was aimed at making a solid platform for further purposive target samples in interviews in qualitative research.

Table 3.3: Interpretations of test values

Test value	Interpretations
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree (equivalent to a very low level of agreement)
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (equivalent to a low level of agreement)
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral (equivalent to an average level of agreement)
3.41 – 4.20	Agree (equivalent to a high level of agreement)
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly agree (equivalent to a very high level of agreement)

(Likert, 1932)

3.6.2. Analysis of the interview

For the data from semi-structured interviews, EFL high school teachers' responses were transcribed and translated into English. Next, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Thematic analysis is a method of assessing qualitative data, according to Jack Caulfield's 2019 study. The use of thematic analysis is common in the field of psychology and other disciplines that employ qualitative research techniques. In their 2006 publication Using thematic analysis in psychology, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke describe their thematic analysis methodology. Usually, it refers to a collection of texts, such an interview or a transcript. To find common themes—topics, concepts, and patterns of meaning that recur—the researcher carefully analyses the data. There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common form follows a six-step process: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

Step 1: Familiarization

The first step is to get to know our data. It's important to get a thorough overview of all the data, the researcher collected before we start analyzing individual items. This might involve transcribing audio, reading through the text and taking initial notes, and generally looking through the data to get familiar with it.

Step 2: Coding

Next up, the researcher needs to code the data. Coding means highlighting sections of our text – usually phrases or sentences – and coming up with shorthand labels or "codes" to describe their content. In this extract, the researcher has highlighted various phrases in different colors corresponding to different codes. Each code describes the idea or feeling expressed in that part of the text.

At this stage, the researcher wants to be thorough: we go through the transcript of every interview and highlight everything that jumps out as relevant or potentially

interesting. As well as highlighting all the phrases and sentences that match these codes, the researcher can keep adding new codes as we go through the text.

After, the researcher has been through the text and collated together all the data into groups identified by code. These codes allow us to gain a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recur throughout the data.

Step 3: Generating themes

Next, the researcher looks over the codes we've created, identifies patterns among them, and starts coming up with themes. Themes are generally broader than codes. Most of the time, the researcher will combine several codes into a single theme.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

Now, the researcher has to make sure that our themes are useful and accurate representations of the data. Here, the researcher returns to the data set and compares our themes against it.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

Now that, the researcher has a final list of themes, it's time to name and define each of them. Defining themes involves formulating exactly what we mean by each theme and figuring out how it helps us understand the data. Naming themes involves coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

Step 6: Writing up

Finally, the researcher will write up our analysis of the data. Like all academic texts, writing up a thematic analysis requires an <u>introduction</u> to establish our research question, aims and approach.

The <u>results</u> or findings section usually addresses each theme in turn. We describe how often the themes come up and what they mean, including examples from the data as evidence. Finally, our <u>conclusion</u> explains the main takeaways and shows how the analysis has answered our research question.

To sum up, the researcher made a protocol to familiarize and coded the data into specific themes. Similarities and differences among EFL high school teachers' responses were recognized. Evidence for each theme was provided by using direct citation of students' answers in which each student was addressed under a pseudonym to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure the reliability, English versions of EFL high school teachers' responses were checked by a supervisor and an experienced teacher.

3.7. Ethical research

In the research design, there are a number of ethical concerns that the researcher should always be aware of. These concerns may overlap. If the researcher intends to get data from participants, she or he would often describe how to address each problem in the research proposal:

- All research participants must voluntarily participate in order to avoid any sort of coercion or pressure. Every participant is free to stop participating in the study at any time without feeling obligated to do so. There is no requirement that participants give a justification for abandoning the research.

- It is crucial to make it clear to participants that declining to take part has no negative effects or penalties. Since individuals took the time to assist the researcher in the study process, the researcher should respect their choices and refrain from attempting to persuade them otherwise.

- Anonymity means that the researcher doesn't know who the participants are and can't link any individual participant to their data. The researcher can only guarantee anonymity by not collecting any personally identifying information—for example, names, phone numbers, email addresses, IP addresses, physical characteristics, photos, and videos. Data pseudonymization is an alternative method where the researcher replaces identifying information about participants with pseudonymous, or fake, identifiers.

- In order to maintain confidentiality, you must keep all participant information private in your report while letting the researcher know who they are. Since everyone who participates has a right to privacy, the researcher must safeguard their personal information when maintaining or using it. All consent forms that have been signed are kept by the researcher in a closed file drawer, and all survey data files are password-protected.

- There may be ethical concerns with the researcher's methods of communicating the research findings. Honest, dependable, and credible communication in science is essential. The outcomes should ideally be as transparent as possible.

- Study misconduct includes fabrication of data, falsification of data analysis, and inaccurate reporting of findings in research papers. It resembles academic fraud.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

Table 4.1: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics of teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension		
Cronbach's Alpha	**Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items**	**N of Items**
.835	.859	19

The data gathered from the questionnaire were submitted to SPSS for Windows version 20.0 for the quantitative analysis. After analysis, it is shown that the reliability of the questionnaire was reliable enough for the research as in Table 4.1.

In order to investigate teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension, a nineteen-item closed-ended

questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted. To the teachers, it has influences on the areas of strategies, teaching materials, and time allotment. The data collected from the interviews were classified into themes which corresponded to the clusters of the questionnaire in order to gain deeper insights into teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

Through data analysis, the results on teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension were grouped into three themes including strategies, teaching materials, and time allotment. Teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension were described by using the frequency tables.

4.1.1. EFL high school teachers' implementation of strategies for testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

A construct consisting of ten items was used to investigate the participants' implementation of strategies for testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The frequency tables were also carried out to describe data. The result was displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Frequency table of EFL high school teachers' implementation of strategies of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

Strategies	Frequency				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. I implement activities that may promote the students' test taking skills.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	12 (20%)	42 (70%)	5 (8,3%)
2. I make sure that the language used in the text is suitably pitched to our students' proficiency.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	11 (18,3%)	40 (66,7%)	8 (13,3%)
3. I teach test-taking strategies such as skimming, scanning, main idea, … in the classroom meeting.	2 (3,3%)	0 (0%)	11 (18,3%)	26 43,3%)	21 (35%)
4. I select some teaching methods in a way that tends to help the students succeed on assessment.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (16,7%)	42 (70%)	8 (13,3%)
5. I select some teaching methods that tend to help develop students' skills which are more likely to be tested on assessment.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	10 (16,7%)	42 (70%)	7 (11,7%)

The frequency of teachers' agreements about the implementation of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension is analyzed according to the arrangement from high percentage to a low percentage.

As can be seen in the result, 83,3% of the participants confirmed that they select some teaching methods in a way that tends to help the students succeed on assessment. This may be one of the most impactful ways to progress the learning of each and every student. 81,7% of the participants select some teaching methods that tend to help develop students' skills which are more likely to be tested on assessment, which helps teachers

learn how they can simply and effectively help their students on the road to success through practice in the classroom. 80% of participants make sure that the language used in the text is suitably pitched to our students' proficiency. This might be one of the ways of helping students overcome difficulties in learning English to focus on specific areas such as pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary usage. 78,3% of the participants stated that they implement activities that may promote the students' test-taking skills and teach test-taking strategies such as skimming, scanning, and main idea, … in the classroom meeting. it is crucial for teachers to implement different strategies that address each child's readiness and interest in taking tests.

From the frequency tables, it is concluded that these five factors have a direct influence on participants' practices of strategies of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

4.1.2. EFL high school teachers' using teaching materials of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

A construct consisting of six items was used to investigate the participants' practices of employing teaching materials of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The frequency tables were also carried out to describe data. The result was displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Frequency table of EFL high school teachers' using teaching materials of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

Teaching materials	Frequency				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. I ask students to discuss all the materials in the textbook.	3 (5%)	16 (26,7%)	27 (45%)	14 (23,3%)	0 (0%)
2. I skip over certain sections in the textbook because they are less likely to be tested on assessment.	3 (5%)	9 (15%)	28 (46,7%)	18 (30%)	2 (3,3%)

The frequency of teachers' agreements about using teaching materials for testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension is analyzed according to the arrangement from high percentage to a low percentage.

As shown in the research result, 33,3% of the participants agreed that they skip over certain sections in the textbook because they are less likely to be tested on assessment. This may mean that those sections are not important and some teachers tend to teach something for assessment. 23,3% of the participants supported the view that they ask students to discuss all the materials in the textbook. This might be due to the fact that teachers do not have enough time to do everything at school and they leave something for students to do or prepare at home.

From the frequency tables, it is clear that the two factors mentioned above are rarely done by teachers in the aspect of using materials for testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

4.1.3. EFL high school teachers' implementation of time allotment of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

A construct consisting of three items was used to investigate the participants' implementation of time allotment in testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The frequency tables were also carried out to describe data. The result was displayed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Frequency table of EFL high school teachers' implementation of time allotment of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

Time allotment	Frequency				
	Never	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Usually**	**Always**
1. I do not have enough time to prepare authentic performance-based assessment.	7 (11,7%)	21 (35%)	26 (43,3%)	5 (8,3%)	1 (1,7%)
2. I spend more time to prepare reading assessment.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	20 (33,3%)	29 (48,3%)	10 (16,7%)
3. I do not have enough time to carry out reading assessment.	9 (15%)	23 (38,3%)	19 (31,7%)	8 (13,3%)	1 (1,7%)

As shown only 15% of the participants agreed that do not have enough time to carry out a reading assessment. This may mean that the majority of teachers have enough time to carry out reading assessments due to the reason that they have prepared the formative and summative tests well and chosen suitable materials for the tests. only 10% of the participants do not have enough time to prepare an authentic performance-based assessment, which may mean that an authentic performance-based assessment takes time and effort.

From the frequency tables, it is obvious that the majority of the participants do not have difficulty in implementing time allotment of testing reading comprehension and washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. These two factors contribute to effective reading assessment.

4.2. Teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension

The second purpose of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The responses to the statements (from Item 20 to Item 34) provide data on their perceptions. The result reports the descriptive statistics of the results on the perceptions of EFL teachers about the washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

As shown, the mean score of EFL teachers' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. (N = 60, M1 = 3.63) is higher than the third scale (3.0) among five-point scales. The results supported the conclusion that the EFL teachers had quite good washback effects in teaching reading comprehension.

In interview data, all of the participants had a positive perception of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. They said that washback effects play a crucial role in English teaching.

"It is clear that in the high school curriculum, when we are a classroom teacher teaching English, we teach them four skills, of which the skill I think is quite important is reading comprehension skill because it is one of the things that is shown in the re-testing of students' knowledge through the midterm, final exam and especially in the high school graduation exam. It shows through two reading comprehension passages, you know I think the reading comprehension test and its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension are quite important." (Teacher 5, line 171 -172)

A male EFL teacher insisted that washback effects play a crucial role in English teaching.

"Yes, the first is that testing students' reading comprehension is a very necessary thing. It will help the designer, or the teacher, to re-evaluate the student's understanding level when exposed to a linguistic corpus and also to provide students with knowledge. lexical knowledge of phrases, characteristics, informational or cultural characteristics through the reading text. Not only will the students take the reading comprehension test, but in the process, they will gain a certain amount of knowledge through the linguistic material, in addition, the skills will be better, more improved in reading skills and especially in reading skills. (Teacher 4, line 137-138)

Similarly, Teacher 3 supported that:

"Well, first of all, I see that reading comprehension testing is very important and necessary for high school students. It's important because I find it prepares students for the 12th grade graduation exam and in the exam the reading comprehension section accounts for more than 25%, there are three reading passages with 17 questions out of a total of 50. Sentences are therefore an important part of teaching reading comprehension skills. The second is necessary if for students after graduating from high school or they have a need to study abroad or something, reading comprehension skills are also a means, or If you have good reading comprehension skills, it's also more convenient for you to get other certificates like TOEIC, IELS or TOEFL or something. Therefore, I think teaching reading comprehension is very important and necessary for high school students. Then I have a reading comprehension test to help the teacher just observe the progress of the student or the ability of the student, which is the exploratory step." (Teacher 5, line 106)

4.2.1. EFL high school teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension affect learners

A construct consisting of eight items was used to investigate the participants' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The frequency tables were also carried out to describe data. The result was displayed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Frequency table of EFL high school teachers'
practices of testing reading comprehension affects learners

Teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension	Frequency				
	Never	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Usually**	**Always**
1. I believe testing reading comprehension helps students review how to read.	0 (0%)	2 (3,3%)	8 (13,3%)	38 (63,3%)	12 (20%)
2. I think testing reading comprehension develops students' reading ability.	0 (0%)	2 (3,3%)	9 (15%)	34 (56,7%)	15 (25%)
3. I am aware that testing reading comprehension helps students have a balance of information, experience, and knowledge from reading.	0 (0%)	4 (6,7%)	10 (16,7%)	40 (66,7%)	6 (10%)
4. I understand that testing reading comprehension helps learners know their own level.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	15 (25%)	35 (58,3%)	9 (15%)
5. I think testing reading comprehension motivates students to prepare for the test.	1 (1,7%)	2 (3,3%)	16 (26,7%)	40 (66,7%)	1 (1,7%)

The frequency of teachers' agreements about the EFL high school teachers' practices of testing reading comprehension affecting learners is analyzed according to the arrangement from high percentage to a low percentage.

As can be seen, 83,3% of the participants believed that testing reading comprehension helps students review how to read. This may help students learn how to improve reading comprehension and recall is key to success in school and in everyday life as well as recall as much information as they can. 81,7% of the participants thought testing reading comprehension develops students' reading ability. This may be because it helps students think about related issues they've studied in the past. Through a variety of text types, students understand, gradually build up their vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, memorization abilities, and ability to create answers and nurture a life-long habit of reading for education and enjoyment. 76,7% of participants are aware that testing reading comprehension helps students have a balance of information, experience, and knowledge from reading. This might help students become familiar with both fiction and non-fiction, broaden their worldview, and discover new interests. 73,3% of the participants understand that testing reading comprehension helps learners know their own level. This may help them determine when they are ready to move to the next level. Finally, 68,4% of the participants think testing reading comprehension motivates students to prepare for the test. This might be because reading through repeating and reciting familiar words helps them to associate spoken words with their written form, and memorise and recognise familiar words to be confident for tests.

4.2.2. Practices of testing reading comprehension affect EFL high school teachers

A construct consisting of seven items was used to investigate the participants' perceptions of its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. The frequency tables were also carried out to describe data. The result was displayed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Frequency table of practices of testing
reading comprehension affects EFL high school teachers

Practices of testing reading comprehension affect EFL high school teachers	Frequency				
	Never	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Usually**	**Always**
1. I believe testing reading comprehension provides teachers with essential information about students' weaknesses, needs, obstacles, and deficits.	0 (0%)	1 (1,7%)	12 (20%)	36 (60%)	11 (18,3%)
2. I think testing reading comprehension helps teachers improve their own knowledge in designing the tests.	0 (0%)	2 (3,3%)	11 (18,3%)	38 (63,3%)	9 (15%)
3. I think diverse practices for assessing English reading may affect the achievement of the program's objectives.	1 (1,7%)	2 (3,3%)	15 (25%)	33 (55%)	9 (15%)
4. I believe it is necessary to promote teachers' reflection on foreign language reading assessment practices.	0 (0%)	2 (3,3%)	17 (28,3%)	33 (55%)	8 (13,3%)
5. I think testing reading comprehension helps improve teachers' sorting skills.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (36,7%)	33 (55%)	5 (8,3%)

The frequency of practices of testing reading comprehension affects EFL high school teachers learners is analyzed according to the arrangement from high percentage to a low percentage.

As indicated, 78,3% of the participants believe testing reading comprehension provides teachers with essential information about students' weaknesses, needs, obstacles, and deficits. This may help teachers know that their students' level of instruction is important for choosing materials and adjusting the reading passage and repeating the procedure until they reach the students' optimal level. Also, 78,3% of the participants thought that testing reading comprehension helps teachers improve their own knowledge in designing the tests. This may help test makers follow the procedure of designing a reading test by using standardized tests such as PBT TOEFL as the template for developing a reliable test, thus reliability test and revision process can both be bypassed. 70% of participants thought that diverse practices for assessing English reading may affect the achievement of the program's objectives. The reason may be that students are not familiar with certain kinds of assessments. 68,3% of the participants believe it is necessary to promote teachers' reflection on foreign language This may help

them provide the solution to all learning problems. Finally, 63,3% of the participants thought testing reading comprehension helps improve teachers' sorting skills. This might be reading Sorting is a fundamental skill that provides the foundation for teaching in many different areas. These results suggest that practices of testing reading comprehension have an effect on EFL high school teachers in terms of designing reading tests, assessing learners and sorting skills.

In conclusion, there is a matching between EFL teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension and their perceptions of its washback effects. It serves as a foundation for instructors to contribute to their own professional growth.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary of major findings

This study set out to determine EFL teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension and their perceptions of its washback effects. This study was conducted with the participation of 60 EFL high school teachers in Can Tho City with two research questions (1) - To what extent do EFL high school teachers practice their testing reading comprehension? and (2) - What are EFL high school teachers' perceptions of its washback effects on testing reading comprehension? Thanks to the quantitative and qualitative data collected from a survey via a questionnaire analyzed by the software SPSS, and a semi-structured interview, the two research questions were fully answered and the following main findings were recorded to reach the aim of the study.

A considerable number of participants indicated that they believed reading comprehension tests administered by teachers were crucial to the teaching profession. Furthermore, they think that there is a relationship between teachers' perceptions and their practices of testing reading comprehension and its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. Most EFL high school teachers recognized that testing reading comprehension influences teaching reading comprehension. The explanation for this is that teachers with methodological experience are willing to invest their time in selecting appropriate teaching strategies and redesigning their instructional materials to make reading lessons and reading tests more engaging and effective and to engage students in reading lessons. As a result, there are more opportunities to allow students to be taught in a way that is more focused on their specific needs, which can accelerate their progress in reading sessions and feel comfortable taking reading assessments.

5.2. Discussion

The results of the data gathering and analysis are presented in themes, allowing for the examination of both individual cases and cross-cases (Duff, 2008). The study aims to determine how the teachers' perceptions of the washback effects of evaluating reading comprehension are affected. Overall, testing reading comprehension had a beneficial washback effect on teaching reading for EFL students in regards to topics like students'

passion for reading, decreasing reading boredom, students' interest in reading text content, and students' improvement of reading skills.

The results indicate that the majority of EFL high school teachers find it simple to adapt the reading materials relevant to their students' levels as practical and effective. This is in line with teachers' perceptions and their practices of testing reading comprehension and its washback effects in teaching reading comprehension. According to the interviews, EFL high school teachers encounter several challenges when changing the reading materials. First of all, teachers believe that students need access to a variety of reading resources to prepare for a reading test because there aren't many relevant reading passages that teachers can use. There are few opportunities for students to study reading lessons outside of their textbooks. With a poor choice of reading materials, students still don't get enough practice. Second, it can be challenging to locate reading passages that are closely related to the textbook subjects to create engaging reading examinations. For their instructional materials to be appropriate for the level of their students, teachers must modify them. To increase students' interest in reading, teachers must modify the way they ask for responses by giving them a variety of question types and multiple-choice options. For instance, the textbook's assignments only instruct students to read the paragraph and respond to the questions. They are without a doubt uninteresting. Therefore, teachers no longer use textbooks as their main source of information. Some teachers claim that they prefer using other materials of their choosing when asked if they still utilize textbooks. If they solely depend on the textbook, they would be unable to alter the exercise because every student in a single class would be using the same textbook.

Khanshan (2018) stated that the ability of specific classroom exercises to effectively advance students reading comprehension abilities, such as test-taking techniques, time management, learning grammar and vocabulary, and so forth. This demonstrated that evaluation change could result in intended positive washback, which was also mentioned by researchers like Pearson (1988) and Popham (1987). Accordingly, prior studies have highlighted the necessity of utilizing real-world resources and tasks in the classroom to assist students in developing effective knowledge growth strategies (Bailey, 1996; Khezrlou, 2012a, 2012b; Messick, 1996).

Many of the reading passages in textbooks are only created without updated materials with test-taking strategies like skimming, scanning, main idea, etc. in the classroom meetings to satisfy the requirements of high-stakes English exams. There should, in the opinion of some teachers, be a correlation between the material taught updated information and the material covered on the reading test to help the students succeed on assessment.

All of these indicate that a novel method of assessment resulted in favorable washback from the viewpoint of the pupils. The adoption of this kind of reading test has caused the students' attitudes toward reading classes to change because reading can function as an engaging activity rather than tedious drills. Moreover, this encourages teachers to actively alter reading passages so that they are more pertinent to their

students. Such a design helps students succeed in practicing reading skills as well as doing reading comprehension tests.

5.3. Conclusion

The thesis seeks to understand the practices of EFL teachers as well as how they see reading comprehension assessment and its possible washback effects. This expressed their opinions on the teaching and testing of reading comprehension in the classroom as well as their experienced teaching and testing methods for English as a foreign language. EFL high school teachers in Can Tho City who were at similar educational levels were given an online questionnaire as part of the study. Various inquiries on subjects raised by the research questions were included in the study, including EFL teachers' practices of their testing reading comprehension and their perceptions of its washback effects. The change in assessment methodology has an impact on instructional strategies, material choice, and time management during the teaching and learning process. The study's findings showed that EFL high school teachers thought the textbook reading assignments needed to be modified to match the reading abilities of their pupils. They must, therefore, be revised to include exercises that might improve the pupils' test-taking abilities. Furthermore, due to a variety of matters, including varying student educational levels and linguistic backgrounds, the time allotted for evaluating reading comprehension may change.

5.4. Implications

The current study is an early attempt to look at the connection between reading comprehension assessment and teachers' practices and perceptions of testing reading and teaching reading comprehension. The study's key findings identified a few practical implications for English instruction and learning. This study aids English teachers in their understanding of the value of evaluating reading comprehension, its influence on instruction, and the accomplishments of their students. Based on the study's findings, some recommendations can be made to enhance how instructors' practices and perceptions of reading assessment impact teaching and learning.

First, it is important that everyone understands what is meant by the "washback effect" in the context of teaching English. Because it may affect their decision regarding instructional strategies, the growth of students' capacity for learning, and the preparation for reading comprehension exams, EFL high school teachers are interested in the role of teachers' practices and perceptions of testing reading in the classroom environment.

Second, teachers should increase their self-assurance when implementing teaching strategies and creating instructional materials for textbooks because these decisions can have an impact on students' learning results. Stakeholders (authorities, schools, etc.) should give instructors greater opportunities to advance their teaching methods, particularly in reading abilities, through workshops or training sessions so that they may use the results in a classroom setting.

The administration of schools and the use of instructional materials is another implication. To better prepare their students for assessments, EFL high school teachers should have the freedom to construct reading assignments using real materials that match the textbooks used in the classroom. Textbooks predominate among the legitimate materials they use, which also include language lab, test-oriented, and other authentic materials from magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. Therefore, this scope should be included in the national curriculum. Skimming, scanning, main idea, reference, etc., are techniques that should be discussed in class because they will instantly improve students' test-taking abilities. Since these tactics are not covered in the content of the textbooks, teachers are not motivated to redesign any reading assignments for students to practice in the reading lessons. The teachers' ingrained perceptions and practices around reading evaluation served as obstacles to creative curriculum. The ability of instructors to alter their teaching materials is therefore necessary for innovation to result in a change in the classroom.

Last but not least, ongoing professional development initiatives should be created based on the requirements of EFL high school instructors for teaching reading and English in particular. More efficient school-based training sessions are required for EFL high school teachers. The automatic configuration of the school aids instructors in learning more during such training. It should be possible to immediately observe and navigate a teacher's methods.

5.5. Limitations of this study

Although the two research instruments and the integration of the literature were successfully used to address the two research questions and achieve the research goal, the study still has a number of limitations.

The first restriction highlighted in the study is the one regarding time. The study only allowed 60 EFL high school teachers to participate. In other words, the study's generalizability was limited because the sample size for the questionnaire was not as broad and representative as anticipated.

Second, a study of students' opinions toward teachers' revamping of materials is required in order to determine whether teachers' methods and perceptions of teaching and evaluating reading comprehension are accurate. The information gained from these variables sheds light on the effects of teachers' methods for creating instructional materials. However, few educators were aware of its functions, which limited what EFL high school teachers intended.

Additionally, the data analysis was restricted by the absence of student interviews or questions. The overall outcome of this study would benefit from a more thorough evaluation. The perceptions and responses of the students to the redesigned reading passages might be helpful in understanding the teachers' perceptions more generally.

5.6. Suggestions for further studies

On the basis of the limitations that the present study encountered, two suggestions related to participants are proposed for further study. It is critical to expanding the number of participants from the English learning and teaching communities in order to make the study's generalizability relevant to participants. When assessing the data, specific factors should be taken into account to improve comparisons between groups. Another recommendation is that future research should be focused on both teachers and students as their practices and perceptions of testing reading comprehension and its washback effects in teaching play an important part in the success of their teaching and learning process.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Both authors strongly agreed on the publication of this paper and there was no contention or rivalry during finishing the work. In other words, the authors declare no conflicts of interest in this article. Both authors are fully and equally responsible for the benefits and harms after this article is published. The authors, moreover, declare that the material presented by us in this paper is our original work, and does not contain any materials taken from other copyrighted sources. Wherever such materials have been included, they have been clearly indented or/and identified by quotation marks and due and proper acknowledgements given by citing the source at appropriate places.

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