The Washback Effect of Iranian English University Entrance Exam (IEUEE) on Students' Language Learning Beliefs

In washback literature, there is a widely held belief that a test will influence attitudes to the content, method etc. of learning/teaching [1]. That is, tests might impact the attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders. However, only few studies have addressed the effect of tests on beliefs. This study intended to probe the washback effect of Iranian English university entrance exam (IEUEE) on fourth-grade highschool students' language learning beliefs. The study focused on a small number of students (N=۱۰) in an EFL context. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the data were subjected to qualitative content analysis. Analysis of data indicated that the IEUEE negatively motivated students to focus on language components tested and ignore higher order skills such as writing, speaking and -listening. Moreover, the IEUEE negatively encouraged the students to hold non communicative beliefs. The immediate implication of this study concerns the need to design a new test which is performance -based and communicative. In addition, it emphasizes the necessity of conducting more studies to investigated different contextual factors that interact with tests to shape and reshape beliefs.