

**HIGH-STAKES TESTING WASHBACK: KOREAN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE NATIONAL ENGLISH ABILITY TEST**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate Korean in-service high-school English teachers' (KIHSETs) perspectives on the possible washback of the introduction of a new high-stakes university entrance exam, the National English Ability Test (NEAT). This study sought to investigate teachers' overall support for the test and examine their rationales for and against its implementation in order to elicit and address avoidable issues prior to its implementation. Data was collected through an online survey and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the constant comparative method as outlined by Charmaz (2006). Participants included twenty KIHSETs for the online survey and four KIHSETs for semi-structured interviews. The overall data indicates that KIHSETs feel that, in its current state, the Korean English education system is not prepared for the implementation of the NEAT and therefore any attempt at implementation will be met with a high level of umbrage and resistance. However, the results also suggest that this umbrage and resistance could easily be mitigated or eliminated by following a simple set of procedures aimed at changing attitudes and preparing the overall system for change. This study outlines these possible changes and suggests a course for their implementation in order to ensure an orderly transition from the status quo to the NEAT.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mentor, colleague and good friend,  
Mr. Ted Price,  
who inspired me to pursue an MA and beyond, and also left me a lot of books.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CSAT	College Scholastic Ability Test
KIHSET	Korean In-service High-school English Teacher
NEAT	National English Ability Test

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background and Origins of Research

Tests are referred to as ‘high-stakes’ when their results are used to make important decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools and districts (Madaus, 1998). Receiving a poor score on these tests may lead to serious consequences for the individual taking the test, for example, the failure to qualify for university entrance. High-stakes tests of English have become increasingly widespread around the world and their influence on their education context has become a topic of increasing focus in the field of applied linguistics (Pan, 2009; Cheng, 2005; Spratt, 2005; Wall, 2005; Alderson & Wall, 1993). This phenomenon has become known as ‘washback’ or ‘backwash’ and refers to the overall influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993).

As noted by Apichatrojanakuli, “In recent decades, the significance of washback effects in the world of teaching English seems to have increased, as evidenced by the availability of many English proficiency preparation courses and books...” (2011: 63). There is general agreement across the field that high-stakes tests can strongly influence teaching and learning however, some go even further, stating that these tests actually control how teachers teach and how students learn (Spolsky, 1997; Shohamy, 1993). What happens in the classroom follows what is on the test, because what is assessed becomes what is valued, and what is valued is what is taught (McEwen 1995).

According to the Korean National Board of Educational Evaluation (1986), high-stakes testing of English was first introduced in South Korea in 1945 as a component of University entrance examinations. Since then, South Korea has experienced four testing periods, each having a significant influence on EFL education in the country (Choi, 2008). Although the changes in testing have been documented (Korean National Board of Educational Evaluation, 1986; Cha & Park, 2001; Kwon, 2003) very little research has investigated teachers’ views prior to implementation.

Korea has plans to supersede the current English portion of the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) with the National English Ability Test (NEAT). This new test will be the first of its kind in many ways, for example, moving from paper-based testing to internet based testing and introducing speaking and writing assessment tasks. Korean in-service high school teachers are bound to be affected by these changes as they are in the final push to prepare their students for the test. However, Kwon (2011) notes that there is not much research yet investigating teachers' concerns about the Korean National English Ability Test (NEAT).

### **1.1 Research Aims and Objectives**

Based on the huge impact that testing has had, and continues to have on Korean English language teaching, it is reasonable to conclude that the future implementation of the NEAT will also yield a lot of washback. In the past, Korean in-service high school English teachers (KIHSET) have been the most significantly affected by test washback due to their sense of responsibility to ensure their students perform well on their college entrance exam (Kwon, 2003).

This study aims to preemptively investigate KIHSETs' perspectives on washback from the NEAT and provide possible solutions to avoidable issues prior to its implementation.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

In order to reach the aims of this study, it is essential to first examine whether KIHSETs are in support of, or not in support of the implementation of the NEAT and investigate the rationale behind their responses. Furthermore, KIHSETs concerns must also closely inspected in an attempt to resolve potential difficulties prior to implementation. For these reasons, the following questions were the basis for this study.

1. Are KIHSETs in support of the NEAT replacing the CSAT?
2. Why or Why not?
3. What are KIHSETs' biggest concerns about the NEAT?
4. What is needed to resolve these concerns?

### **1.3 Dissertation Outline**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the context of the study and outlines the origins of research, its aims, objectives and research questions and concludes with the structure of the dissertation. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical background of the study and examines the definition of washback and the nature of washback. This is followed by an exploration of research on washback in South Korea. In addition, background information on the past, present and possible future high-stakes testing periods in South Korea will be presented with a discussion of how positive, neutral and negative washback has influenced and continues to influence South Korea's English language education. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodological background of the study including an explanation of the study's participants as well as how data was collected. The data analysis procedures and results of the study are presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the key findings of the study and possible ways to address and resolve teachers' concerns. Chapter 6 begins with a summary of the findings and concludes with research limitations and suggestions for future study.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical overview of the present study. As this study aims to investigate KIHSETS opinions and concerns in relationship to the future implementation of the NEAT, this chapter will consider washback and the effects of previous high-stakes tests on English Education in South Korea in order to understand their historical context.

### 2.1 Washback Definition

Although the term ‘washback’ has been defined slightly differently amongst researchers, in a broad form it has come to refer to the effects that tests have on teaching and learning (Buck, 1988; Bailey, 1996; Messick, 1996; Wall, 1997; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Spratt, 2005).

Washback effects, as categorized by Bachman & Palmer (1996), can be either ‘micro’ or ‘macro’ depending on the target of impact. They define micro-level effects as those that generally impact teachers and individual students in classroom settings, whereas macro-level effects are much broader and refer to the educational system and society as a whole.

The micro and macro split is not definitively clear, as researchers have adopted different definitions to suit their specific purposes. For example, Hughes (1989) and Bailey (1996) outline washback on the micro-level with focus on the influence of testing on teaching and learning whereas, Pierce (1992) and Cohen (1994) define washback on a more macro-level focusing on the impact of tests on classroom pedagogy, curriculum development, and educational practices and beliefs.

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘washback’ does not differentiate between levels but rather combines both micro and macro level effects in order to explore the holistic impacts of high-stakes testing in South Korea. By treating washback as a single entity, this study is able to

focus on the teachers' specific opinions and concerns with the NEAT in relation to the nature of the washback described in the following section.

### **2.1.1 The Nature of Washback**

While the term 'washback' itself is a neutral term (Ahmad & Rao, 2012, Hawkey, 2006; Shohamy, 2001), researchers have generally classified effects as either positive or negative depending on how educational practices are affected (Hughes, 1989; Pan, 2009; Prodromou, 1995).

Washback is seen as positive if it has overall beneficial effects on educational practices. For example, a test stimulating the implementation of a new national curriculum to promote higher overall communicative competency in learners would be categorized as positive washback, where increased communicative competency is seen as a positive goal (Morris, 1972). Additionally, positive washback effects may include motivating teachers to utilize new teaching-learning activities to promote a more positive teaching-learning process (Pearson, 1988). Pan (2009: 259-260) further summarizes positive washback as:

- a. Tests induce teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly, making them complete their syllabi within the prescribed time limits.
- b. Tests motivate students to work harder to have a sense of accomplishment and thus enhance learning.
- c. Good tests can be utilized and designed as beneficial teaching-learning activities so as to encourage positive teaching-learning processes.

Negative washback effects occur when a test has a harmful impact on educational practices. Examples of this could be a test causing an increased reliance upon privatized education and paid coaching (Wiseman, 1961) or teachers ignoring subjects and activities which are not directly related to passing the exam (Vernon, 1956). Pan (2009: 260-261) further summarizes negative washback as:



- a. Tests encourage teachers to narrow the curriculum and lose instructional time, leading to “teaching to the test.”
- b. Tests bring anxiety both to teachers and students and distort their performance.
- c. Students may not be able to learn real-life knowledge, but instead learn discrete points of knowledge that are tested.
- d. Cramming will lead students to have a negative positive toward tests and accordingly alter their learning motivation.

Though a great deal of attention has been paid to positive and negative washback effects there has been a dearth of focus on the grey area between positive and negative. As stated previously, washback itself is a neutral term. However, the nature of neutral washback has not been defined or discussed in great detail. Although there have been some studies that have mentioned the idea neutral washback (Bachman and Palmer 1996; Messick 1996; Özmen 2010), they seem to lack a coherent definition, leaving the neutral zone a grey, undefined area.

Thus it is important to specify what exactly neutral washback is. In this study, neutral washback shall be defined as effects inside or outside the classroom that cannot be conclusively categorized as either positive or negative. One example of neutral washback in the real world would be the introduction of books focusing on new testing objectives. New testing constructs and objectives cause publishers to create and release test preparation books and materials. While the usage of these books, the manner of their introduction and the policies they may affect can have positive or negative consequences, the fact that the books were created as a result of the new test being introduced is nearly impossible to immediately categorize as positive or negative. In reality it is simply an observed phenomenon. In retrospect it may be possible to categorize these effects further however at the moment of their appearance the phenomenon cannot be definitively placed until further information has been garnered. In particular, when looking at projected washback effects this definition will be extremely important. Since projected washback is a prognostication, it would be unwise to label all likely phenomena as simply positive or negative. In this study, this notion will be explored in detail when looking at the washback effects of past testing periods as well as the perceived washback of the NEAT test.

### **2.1.2 Hangover Effects**

Researchers have noted the continuation of trends in methods and mindsets long after new curriculum and/or high-stakes tests have been implemented (Cho, 2010; Woo, 2001). Sometimes these lasting trends limit the ability to move forward under new curriculum and/or testing objectives and counteract possible positive washback. An example of this is found in the Korean context with the ongoing dominance of rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules despite the national curriculum objectives promoting fluency based teaching (Cho, 2010). Although this type of phenomenon has been recognized, there has been a failure to define it in relation to washback. This may be because most of the literature to date has focused on the present washback of an implemented test rather than the projected washback of a future test.

As lingering trends continue to carry over in the Korean English education system despite changes in circumstance, a ‘hangover-like’ situation has been created. Currently, English education is still under the influence of past precedents which are inhibiting a movement forward; this study will use the term *hangover effect* to refer to trends rooted in previous testing washback obstructing change in English language education. Due to this obstructive nature, hangover effects are categorized as negative. Several examples of hangover effects that exist in current Korean English language education will be discussed in subsequent sections.

## **2.2 Research on Washback in South Korea**

There have only been a small number of studies that have investigated the washback of high-stakes tests in South Korea, and most of these have been done in retrospect focusing on the washback effects of the English portion of the CSAT (see for example Cho, 2010, Hwang, 2003; Kim & O, 2002).

Choi (2008) provided one of the first comprehensive overviews of the impact of standardized tests in EFL education in South Korea. In his study, he describes how washback affects English education as early as elementary school and carries on throughout higher education.

Furthermore, testing washback has caused a narrowing focus on reading, listening and test-taking strategies in the classroom and the avoidance of productive skill practice. Choi (2008) goes on

further to state that this narrow classroom focus has resulted in very few English learners acquiring genuine communicative competence.

Kim (2009) conducted a preliminary survey about the NEAT test with 57 English teachers and 1990 students. She found that 31.6% of teachers and 35.9% of students had negative feelings towards the introduction to the NEAT, however, all of those surveyed expected the NEAT to have a direct influence on changes to English language learning and teaching methods.

In a similar study, Kwon (2011) investigated secondary school English teachers' concerns and psychological burdens regarding the new speaking and writing tests in the NEAT. He surveyed 169 Korean in-service secondary school teachers and found that 57.4% were in favor of the introduction of NEAT while 22% were not. Individuals in favor gave the following reasons for their stance:

1. Assures validity through the assessment of various skills
2. Assesses the actual English abilities
3. Speaking and writing are the ultimate goal of language learning
4. Overcomes the limitation of reading-centered English education; helps develop practical English
5. Communication is the most important part of language learning
6. Provides multiple opportunities to take tests

(Kwon, 2011: 15)

Individuals not in favor provided the following rationale:

1. The problem of objective scoring, practicality
2. Impacts on private institutes' education
3. Schools are not prepared yet; difficult to teach these skills
4. Teaching for the test will be increased
5. The good intention of the test may be tarnished and changed into one just for score hunting
6. The test frame is vague
7. High cost; lack of expertise of the testers

(Kwon, 2011: 16)

The above studies provide a starting point in understanding in-service teachers' perspectives in regards to NEAT washback. However, further detail is required in order to pose solutions to avoidable issues. This study aims to dig further into the thoughts of KIHSETs in hopes of furthering awareness on the matter while suggesting ways to avoid pitfalls prior to implementation.

### **2.3 High-Stakes Testing in South Korea**

Since the introduction of high-stakes English testing in 1945, Korea has progressed through three different periods of testing, currently residing in its fourth (Cha and Park, 2001). Although to different extents, throughout these four periods these tests have had very high-stakes for students as universities have consistently used English scores to filter applicants. In order to understand the extent to which South Korean English language education has been affected by such testing, it is important to first consider the test constructs and objectives during the different periods. The following sections provide a brief description of the past three periods, a detailed look at the current high-stakes University entrance exam and a description of the future NEAT test and its unique characteristics.

### **2.3.1 Past Periods**

The Korean National Board of Educational Evaluation (1986) and Kwon (2003) outline the first three testing periods as follows:

The first period of high-stakes college entrance testing was the College-level Exams Period which lasted from 1945-1968. During this period, individual colleges and universities conducted their own entrance examinations with English being a required subject in all examinations.

The National Preliminary Exams period followed which lasted from 1969-1981. It consisted of a preliminary government-developed test used to filter down applicants to twice as many students as admitted by universities, followed by a second exam that was administered by individual colleges and universities.

The Academic Competence Test period began in 1982 and lasted until 1993. During this time, students took a government administered test which moved away from screening applicants and functioned as one criterion for selecting prospective students along with their own entrance exams and high school transcripts.

Although these periods go by different names, a great deal of similarity can be found in the construct and objectives of the exams that were administered. Overall, these first three testing periods focused primarily on assessing reading, vocabulary and grammar through multiple-choice questioning and placed an emphasis of accuracy over fluency (*ibid.*). A general breakdown of the questions types from 1981 to 1991 is shown below and is representative of the general item distribution of the first three periods.

Table 2.1 College entrance exam item distribution.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	Average
<b>Reading</b>	54	62	54	60	51	35	34	42	54	66	60	53.0
<b>Vocabulary</b>	14	18	10	10	10	21	22	8	8	10	14	13.2
<b>Grammar</b>	18	10	16	14	14	21	18	34	20	12	8	16.8
<b>Spelling/ Punctuation</b>	4	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	4	2	2	1.8
<b>Translation</b>	0	2	2	6	4	10	8	4	6	4	4	4.5
<b>Pronunciation</b>	4	6	6	6	4	8	10	4	4	2	6	5.5
<b>Dialogue</b>	6	2	12	2	4	5	8	4	4	4	6	5.2
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(Source: Kwon, 2006)

The nearly fifty years of high-stakes testing, concentrating primarily on reading, vocabulary and grammar, has had long lasting effects on teachers and classroom practices. These effects are discussed in detail in section 2.4.

### 2.3.2 Present Period: The College Scholastic Ability Test

College entrance testing in South Korea took a major turn in 1992 when the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE), along with the help of a group of professors holding doctorate degrees in ESL/EFL, began work on a new test (Kwon, 2003). The test was set to be very different from previous college entrance exams in that it was the first to have listening items, and the first to emphasize overall communicative ability by placing fluency over accuracy. The current College Scholastic Ability test (CSAT) period has been ongoing since 1994. Initially, test scores were used as the sole criterion for college entrance admission, however, at present, the score obtained is used alongside school academic transcripts and extracurricular records to decipher eligible

applicants (ibid.). With the CSAT continuing to act as a main gatekeeper to University entrance, it remains the single most importance test for high school graduates.

### **2.3.2.1 Comparison with Previous Tests**

Upon detailed investigation and comparison of the English portion of the CSAT with tests from earlier periods, Cha and Park (2001) reported the CSAT, with its new focus on communicative competence, differed from previous tests in five main ways:

1. The CSAT has very limited items focusing on words, idioms and other morphological items, and increased items of integrative understanding.
2. Nearly all of the CSAT items deal with dialogue and discourse whereas previous tests had little to no items focused on dialogue or discourse
3. All of the items on the CSAT are context-embedded where earlier tests were dominated by context-free items.
4. The CSAT has listening comprehension items in place of pronunciation and intonation items.
5. The CSAT tries to incorporate accuracy, fluency and sociolinguistic appropriateness in its items where previous tests sacrificed fluency for accuracy.

The following table from Cha and Park (2001: 251) outlines how the contents and construct of the CSAT differs from that of previous tests.

Table 2.2 Contents and construct of college entrance exams in South Korea

	<b>National Preliminary Exam (1975)</b>	<b>Academic Competence Test (1982)</b>	<b>College Scholastic Ability Test (1994)</b>	<b>College Scholastic Ability Test (2001)</b>
<b>Contents/Types:</b>				
Dialogues	0%	2%	22%	28%
Discourse	10%	18%	74%	72%
<b>Context:</b>				
Context-free	72%	22%	0%	0%
Context-embedded	28%	78%	100%	100%

(Source: Cha & Park 2001: 251)

Although the CSAT was a step forward in the testing of communicative competence, it has faced great criticism for not living up to its objectives. The main problems lie in the CSAT's distribution of questions and the items type used to assess speaking and writing skills. The following table summarizes how CSAT testing items have been distributed over the years.

Table 2.3 CSAT item distribution

<b>Year</b>	<b>Spoken Language</b>		<b>Written Language</b>		<b>Total (%)</b>
	Listening (%)	Speaking (%)	Reading (%)	Writing (%)	
1993	8 (16)	4 (8)	32 (64)	6 (12)	50 (100)
1996	12 (22)	5 (9)	32 (58)	6 (11)	55 (100)
1999	13 (24)	4 (7)	33 (60)	5 (9)	55 (100)
2000	13 (26)	4 (8)	28 (56)	5 (10)	50 (100)

(Source: Kwon, 2003:10)

With the majority of CSAT question items focusing on the assessment of listening and speaking, an imbalance exists between the assessments of the four skills. The CSAT is predominantly



focused on receptive skill assessment, which has resulted in strong accusations of the exam not actually measuring test-takers' overall communicative competence (Kim & O, 2002).

Although the assessment of speaking through listening was a step forward in productive assessment, there has continued to be strong backlash due to its indirect approach. The continuation of paper-based multiple choice questions faces the same criticisms of previous tests that have tried to include productive skill assessment; the argument being that multiple choice questions are neither a valid nor reliable method of assessing learners speaking and/ or writing ability.

### **2.3.3 Possible Future Period: The National English Ability Test**

The ongoing lack of need to develop productive skills has had long, detrimental effects on the overall communicative competence of Korean EFL learners (Choi, 2008). It has now reached a point where educators contend that it is imperative for high-stakes tests to include genuine productive skill assessment in order to promote and foster real-life communication skills (Lee, 2001; Choi, 2008). In response to the growing concerns, in 2006, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) announced their plans to develop a new English ability test, known as the National English Ability Test (NEAT). The implementation plan for the NEAT and its objectives are outlined below, followed by a description of its differences in relation to the CSAT.

#### ***Implementation Plan for the NEAT***

According to the original plans, the long term schedule for the implementation of the test will occur in the following three stages, as outlined by Kwon (2010:5).

Stage 1: The current CSAT will be maintained during NEAT development.

Stage 2: The newly developed NEAT will be used as supplementary criteria for college/ university admission.

Stage 3: Based on the reliability, validity and public opinion a decision regarding the NEAT replacing the English portion of the CSAT will be made in 2012.

A detailed outline of the implementation plan can be found in appendix 1.

### ***NEAT Objectives***

According to the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE, 2011), which is working on developing a bank of questions for the new test, the purpose and objectives of the NEAT development are as follows:

1. To improve students' English ability in speaking and writing for an enhancement of practical English education.
2. To improve students' English communicative competence.
3. To align the contents of the NEAT with the National curriculum to reform school education.
4. To use the test to screen college entrance applicants.
5. To lower dependency on foreign tests (ie. TOEIC, TOEFL)

(Jin, 2008: 6)

With these new objectives, the NEAT is set to be quite different from previous high-stakes tests. As outlined in the NEAT brochure released by KICE (2011:8), the following five characteristics are what make the NEAT unique:

1. The NEAT directly measures all four English skills.
2. Test takers receive two test opportunities.
3. Two levels are available: Levels 2 and 3
4. The NEAT is administered using the Internet.
5. The NEAT is a criterion-referenced test.

### **2.3.3.1 Differences between the NEAT and CSAT**

The new directions of the NEAT have hope and intention of generating positive washback on English education in South Korea. The major differences between the NEAT and the current CSAT are outlined in detail in the sections below, followed by a discussion of its possible washback effects.

#### ***The NEAT directly measures all four English skills***

Possibly the most notable difference between the NEAT and the CSAT, is the introduction of speaking and writing assessment through performance tasks. In addition to paper-based items focusing on listening and reading, the NEAT will be the first test in the history of Korean college entrance examinations to assess productive skills through performance tasks. This new direction of assessing productive skills through tasks aims to be more valid and reliable than the indirect paper-based multiple-choice questions of the past. The task item types and examples for speaking and writing are outlined in the following sections respectively.

#### ***Speaking***

As outlined by KICE representatives Jin & Kim (2011), assessment tasks for speaking are to include situational inter-related questions, picture description, presentation and problem solving tasks. Situational inter-relation question items place test-takers in a communicative situation and require them to answer/ respond to questions accordingly. Picture description items require test-takers to review a set of pictures for one minute and then tell a short story based on the pictures. Presentation tasks require test takers to summarize given data. Test takers are allowed one minute to review a graph with a general contextual description after which time they must make their presentation. Finally, in problem solving tasks, test-takers are required to give advice on how to solve a given problem. Samples for all of these question types can be found in appendix 2.

#### ***Writing***

Assessment tasks for writing are to include descriptive writing on given conditions, short essay writing, selective picture description with given words, one picture description, two picture description and inference and letter writing. Descriptive writing tasks require test-takers to write

60 to 80 words on a given topic. Short essay tasks require test-takers to write 80 to 120 words on a given topic following the specific outline provided. In selective picture description tasks with given words, test-takers are given a situation, and based on the situation, test-takers must choose one of the given pictures and write a short memo (20 words or less) while incorporating the given language. One-picture description tasks require test-takers to describe a picture following given prompts in 20 to 30 words. In letter writing tasks test takers must write a 40-50 word letter based on given information. Finally, two-picture description and inference tasks require test-takers to examine three pictures and, in 30 to 50 words, describe the first two and then write their own possible conclusion. Examples of NEAT writing questions can be also be found in appendix 3.

The introduction of productive skill assessment through the tasks mentioned above separates the NEAT from all prior high-stakes tests. It also represents a critical departure from past test constructs and a segue into a new English testing era in South Korea.

### ***Test takers receive two test opportunities***

Another change to be implemented with the NEAT is the increase in annual testing opportunities. When the CSAT was first introduced in 1993 two different exams were offered, and students could choose their testing date (August 9<sup>th</sup> or November 16<sup>th</sup>). However, in 1995, the CSAT was reduced to a single annual opportunity. The NEAT will once again offer students two opportunities per year to take the test.

### ***Two levels are available: Levels 2 and 3***

The NEAT will also offer three versions of the test as opposed to the single version of the CSAT. The NEAT options will now allow test takers to choose which test to take based on their situation, aptitude and future goals. Kwon (2010) outlines the objectives of the different levels as follows:

Level 1 is a proficiency test for university students and is to be used in civilian and government sectors for selection, placement and promotion.

Level 2 is to be used for admission to university departments that require advanced English.

Level 3 is to be used for admission into university departments that require basic, practical English.

As Level 1 is outside the scope of this study, only levels 2 and 3 will be discussed further. The details of the differing characteristics of levels 2 and 3 can be found in appendix 4.

Since the objectives of the two versions are different, the distribution and types of questions will also slightly differ. Below is the proposed framework of item distribution for levels 2 and 3 as released by MEST on September 8, 2010. However, future changes are possible as work is still ongoing.

Table 2.4 NEAT item distribution

Skills	Number of items		Time (mins)
	Level 2	Level 3	
Listening	35	35	35
Reading	35	35	60
Speaking	4	4	15
Writing	2	4	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>145</b>

(Source: Kwon, 2010:9)

### *The NEAT is administered using the Internet*

Another reason that the NEAT is unique is, while previous high-stakes tests have been paper-based, the NEAT will be the first of its kind to be internet-based. The test will be administered at a number of test centers around the country with a total of 50,000 test takers at the same time. It will be the first test to use a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) that can be optimized for each site's configuration maximizing efficiency during administration. All recorded answers will be immediately consolidated and sent to the scoring center for further processing.

### ***The NEAT is a criterion-referenced test***

As a result of the introduction of productive assessment tasks, scoring is set to differ from the previous CSAT scoring system. The CSAT has followed a norm-referenced scoring system where test takers are compared with their peers in order to identify whether the test taker performed better or worse than others. The NEAT will be the first test to introduce a criterion-referenced system in which scores will indicate how well test takers performed on a given task without further comparison.

Furthermore, the CSAT reported scores based on a 1-9 stanine score, whereas the NEAT will report scores based on the following achievement standards: Excellent, Average, Basic and Below Basic.

### **2.3.3.2 The Implications of NEAT**

With new directions and objectives, the NEAT aims to have positive washback effects on Korean English education by re-establishing harmony between testing objectives, curricula type and classroom methods, and promoting practical and communicative English education. However, due to the differences between the NEAT and the current CSAT it is certain to have a heavy impact on English education in South Korea.

Up until now, the overall construction and objectives of high-stakes tests have had an enormous impact on the teaching and learning of English in South Korea. In order to understand the KIHSETs perspectives on the NEAT, it is important to first discuss the washback effects of high-stakes tests to date.

## **2.4 The Washback of High-stakes Testing of English in South Korea**

As previously discussed, from the introduction of high-stakes English entrance examinations in 1945, the scores that students receive have directly affected their choice and opportunity for higher education. With the vast competition to enter high-ranking universities in South Korea, these scores have been used as a filter in order to screen students for entry. The notion amongst

most Koreans is that university entrance exam results initiate a chain reaction, whereby those who enter and graduate from the highest-ranking universities are the ones that usually land the best jobs and are more likely to attain wealth and success. The truth of the matter is the result of a single English test score has the possibility of greatly influencing the overall quality of one's adult life.

With so much riding on a single English test score, the impacts of high-stakes inside and outside of classrooms in South Korea have been extensive. The following sections detail specific washback effects in regards to their nature: positive, neutral and negative.

#### **2.4.1 Positive Washback Effects**

##### ***Spread of English***

The undeniable impact of high-stakes tests on English learners' lives has driven the spread of English language learning in South Korea (Kwon, 2013). Learners have no choice but to study English if they want to succeed in entering the highest ranking universities. This has resulted in the spread of English throughout the country, increasing Korea's ability to communicate internationally and contributing positively to Korea's quick economic growth and success.

*“Education has contributed greatly to South-Korea’s rise to economic success over the past 40 years, during which time the nation has increasingly become an assessment culture, with the compulsory College Scholastic Ability Test gaining overwhelming importance in secondary school education.” (Finch, 2010: 11-12)*

##### ***Educated Changes***

High-stakes tests have provided quantifiable data in English language education through which, stakeholders have been able to track learners' performance. This has exposed some of the overall weaknesses in language learners' abilities, as reported by Kang (2009), “speaking proficiency remains nearly at the bottom. Korean TOEFL test takers ranked 136th out of 161 nations in speaking skills”. With access to test results like TOEFL and IELTS scores (see for example: ETS, 2003; IELTS, 2009), stakeholders have been able to adjust and follow the progress of multiple

aspects of English language learning and teaching including language learning objectives, testing objectives, curriculum objectives, classroom approaches and learning styles. The results of such changes are clearly noted when examining Koreans' rapid increase in average score on the TOEFL from 2006-2011. As shown in the annual data collected by Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2006; ETS, 2007, ETS, 2008, ETS, 2009, ETS, 2010, ETS, 2011), South Korea has had the world's biggest rise in average TOEFL, score moving from 72 out of a possible 120 in 2006, to 82 in 2011.

### ***CSAT Impact***

. The introduction of listening comprehension items in the CSAT have contributed to increased attention to listening in high school classrooms and a small shift away from linguistic forms and traditional grammar translation methods (Kwon, 2000). Moreover, since all items on the CSAT are context imbedded, teachers have begun to emphasize the importance of reading for the main idea and making inferences from English contexts (Kwon, 2003). This has produced the positive result of language learners having a more balanced English skill set.

## **2.4.2 Neutral Washback Effects**

### ***Objective Alignment***

High-stakes tests have had a major impact on curricula types and dominant classroom methods implemented in South Korean public secondary English classroom as illustrated in the following table.



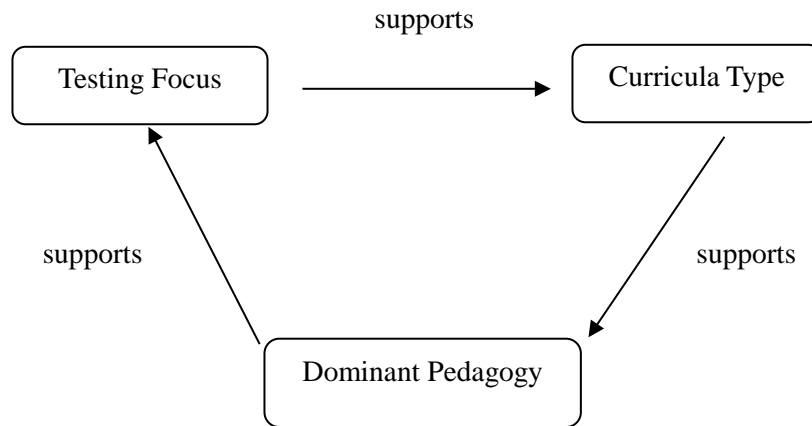
Table 2.5 Objective alignment overview

<b>Test Period</b>	<b>Testing Focus</b>	<b>School Years</b>	<b>Curricula Type</b>	<b>Dominant Classroom Methods</b>
The College-level Exams Period	Reading Vocabulary Grammar	1945-1968	Grammatical	Grammar Translation
The National Preliminary Exams Period	Reading Vocabulary Grammar	1969-1981	Grammatical	Grammar Translation
The Academic Competence Test Period	Reading Vocabulary Grammar	1982-1993	Grammatical	Grammar Translation
The College Scholastic Ability Test Period	Reading Listening	1994-Present	Communicative/ Functional	Grammar Translation, Audio-lingual

(Adapted from: Kwon, 2003)

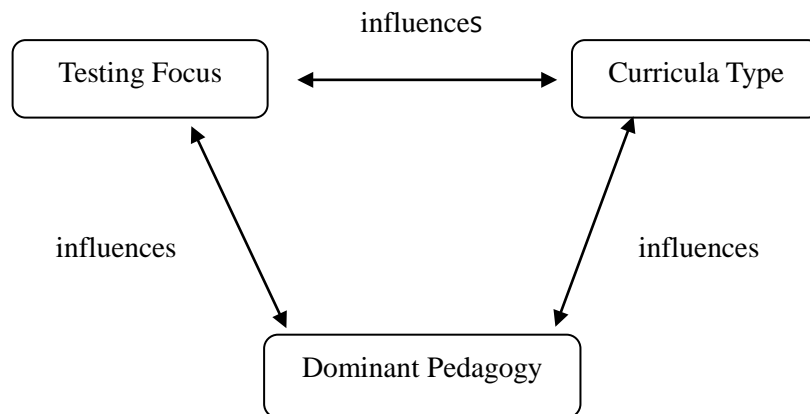
From 1945-1993, curricula types and dominant classroom methods fell in line with the primary testing focus of the times: reading, vocabulary and grammar. The grammatical curricula and Grammar Translation Method (GTM) that dominated classrooms supplied learners with what they needed for the test. As outlined by Richards and Rogers, the purpose of GTM in foreign language study is “to learn language in order to read its literature... little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening...accuracy is emphasized... grammar is taught deductively... the student’s native language is the medium of instruction...” (2001: 5). As seen in the diagram below, during this period, testing focus, curricula type and dominant classroom pedagogy were in synergy as they worked together and supported each other.

Diagram 2.1. Synergy between curricula, pedagogy and testing



However, from the current viewpoint, it is not possible to decipher the exact direction of influence or ‘washback’. More specifically, it is hard to identify whether testing focus affected the curricula and teaching methods or whether the teaching methods and curricula affected the testing focus as illustrated below.

Diagram 2.2. Direction of washback



When the three aspects are supporting each other as noted in the first three testing periods, the alignment between them cannot be classified as positive or negative. It is simply a noted phenomenon, and is therefore a 'neutral' washback effect.

It was not until the fourth testing period beginning in 1994, that testing focus, curriculum type and dominant classroom pedagogy experienced a major mismatch which has resulted in the negative washback described in the following section.

### **2.4.3 Negative Washback**

#### ***Holding Teachers Back***

New directions in English language learning outlined in the 6<sup>th</sup> National curriculum promoted a communicative focus on English language learning and teaching and clearly stated that Communicative language teaching, also known in short as CLT, should replace other traditional methods in English classrooms. Furthermore, the development committee stated that the goal of English teaching is "to develop the learners' communicative competence in English through meaningful drills and communicative activities." (Development Committee, 1992: 180). Although this new curriculum urged teachers to change their classroom practices, these changes are yet to be seen. The main reason for the lack of curriculum objective implementation in secondary classrooms can be directly attributed to the lack of communicative assessment in the CSAT.

As Li (1998) found in her survey of 18 Korean secondary school EFL teachers all reported that they still use a combination of Audio-Lingual and Grammar-Translation methods in their classroom. The nature and washback of grammar-based examinations was unanimously reported as one of the main factors in the failure to move towards more communicative approaches. As stated by McClintock, "The Korean government may have written CLT into the national curriculum, but this does not mean that is the actual utilized pedagogy in the classroom. It may not be feasible for teachers to implement the CLT approach due to the fact that they have to focus on the content of the standardized exams in order for students to obtain better scores." (2011: 154)

Since the CSAT testing focus and objectives are holding back the teachers' ability to implement the communicative focus outlined in the National curriculum, this effect is categorized as negative washback. However, the CSAT may not be the only factor contributing to the lack of communicative implementation. This could also be due to the 'hangover effects' of past periods discussed below.

### *Hangover Effects*

The testing, curriculum and pedagogical focus on reading, vocabulary, and grammar in the first three testing periods has left a considerable mark on language learners and teachers in South Korea resulting in a number of hangover effects.

As previously mentioned, one of the most notable hangover effects is the dominance of rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules in present day Korean high school classrooms (Cho, 2010). Dating back to the College-Level exams period, these practices have been helpful to prepare students for the grammatical accuracy based testing for the past 50 years. The extended period of time that these practices worked in support of high-stakes testing has resulted in these practices becoming both habitual and comfortable for teachers and learners.

In addition to the above, in preparing for high-stakes tests, Korean English teachers and learners have developed a faith in focusing on test-taking strategies, rather than focusing on overall English language development. Throughout the history of high-stakes testing, test taking strategies and repetitive mock testing have supported good test scores. For this reason, test-taking strategies have become the main focus of secondary classrooms (Woo, 2001) following the hangover belief that this will cultivate higher scores than focusing on learners' English language development. This has left language learners with their relatively low speaking and writing skill in comparison to their reading, listening and grammar abilities.

Overall, Korean English education has had little need to focus on developing proficient users of English primarily due to the focus on high-stakes testing. This has resulted in the fossilization of habits which will continue to dominate Korean English education until new norms are set. Since

the norms in Korea are dictated by the objectives of high-stakes tests, hangover effects, like those mentioned above, will continue to prevail unless test objectives are changed.

### ***An Increased Reliance on Private Education***

Negative washback of high-stakes testing is also found in the increased pressure for parents to enroll their children in private English institutes, also known as English hagwons. The European Commission of Education and Training reports that, “in countries where there are competitive entrance examinations to enter the next level of education, there is a strong demand for private tutoring. This in turn leads to high private household expenditure on education. This is true in ... South Korea” (European Commission, 2005:213). This mindset of Korean parents is exemplified in interviews conducted by Cynthia Kim (2013), in which a mother states “All mothers want to beat each other in finding better opportunities for their kids...I don’t want my daughters to get anything less than my neighbors.”

The hard facts of the issue were exposed in a poll conducted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in August 2012 (Statistics Korea, 2012). The numbers showed that South Korea’s spending on private education per student averaged 236,000 Korean won per month, with parents in the country spending 19 trillion Korean won in total.

The exorbitant expenditure on English hagwons has placed undue pressure and stress on parents and is therefore considered as a negative washback effect of the high-stakes testing system.

## **2.5 The Implications of Previous Washback**

With high-stakes testing historically having such a strong impact on English education in Korea, there is little doubt that the NEAT will bring with it, its own washback. Arguably, those who will be most affected by the changes will be KIHSETs as they are in the final push to prepare their students for the exam. This study will examine KIHSETs perspectives on the NEAT in hopes of preemptively resolving issues prior to implementation.

## **.CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological background of the present study. It begins with an overview of the methodology and research design, followed by a description of the participants and data collection procedures. The chapter concludes with a description of how the data was analyzed.

### **3.1 Overview of Methodology and Design**

This study utilized mixed methods, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis of the data was conducted in a qualitative manner in line with the constant comparative analysis procedures outlined by Tracy (2013) and Charmaz (2006). The overall nature of the study lent itself best to a qualitative rather than quantitative paradigm as the data was primarily open-ended and non-numerical and was analyzed using non-statistical methods (see Dornyei, 2007:24). Quantitative data was only collected in a single initial question to elicit KIHSETs overall support for the NEAT and provide a basis for qualitative data analysis.

The data for this study was collected through an online survey and semi-structured interviews spanning over a period of three months from March to June 2013. The primary data was gathered through an online survey which elicited general answers to the research questions, however specific information was still lacking. In order to fill-in as well as clarify and expand on the information collected from the online survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews were arranged with KIHSET volunteers and data was collected until answers from the interviews and survey data became repetitive to the point of reaching saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and research questions could be fully answered. The overlap in questioning and responses from the survey and semi-structured interviews naturally complemented one another and provided an additional self-auditing function that facilitated reaching the saturation point.

## 3.2 Participants

### *Survey*

The survey participants included 20 volunteers from a group of 86 Gyeonggi province KIHSETs attending a two-month teacher-training course, from March 1<sup>st</sup> to April 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, at Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Education (GIFLE). Sixteen (80%) of the participants were female teachers and four (20%) were male. All teachers have been teaching English for a minimum of three years, with 55% having greater than 10 years of experience. The following table outlines these details.

Table 3.1 Survey Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>	
		4 (20%)		16 (80%)
<b>Years Teaching English</b>	<b>&lt;3 years</b>	<b>3-7 years</b>	<b>7-10 years</b>	<b>10&gt;</b>
	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	11 (55%)

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

The semi-structured interviews included four volunteers from a group of 82 Gyeonggi-do KIHSETs attending an intensive one-month training course, from June 1<sup>st</sup> to June 31<sup>st</sup>, at GIFLE. Two of the participants were male and two were female. All participants have been teaching English for more than three years with a majority having over seven years of experience. The following table outlines their details.

Table 3.2 Interview Participants

Gender	Male		Female	
		2 (50%)		2 (50%)
Years Teaching English	<3 years	3-7 years	7-10 years	10>
	0 (0%)	1 (16.67%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (50%)

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### *Online Survey*

The online survey (appendix 6) that was used to collect initial data was created during the month of March 2013 and contains a mixture of fixed alternative and open-ended questions, which were strategically allocated to allow participants to provide details and rationale behind their close-ended responses. Lime survey software, hosted on the Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Education homepage ([www.gifleonline.com](http://www.gifleonline.com)), was used to create and administer the survey and its construction follows the model of McDonough & McDonough (1997) who affirm that “The designer has to choose a mix of question types that will maximize the range and detail of the information elicited.” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997:177).

The survey was first piloted on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 with a small sample of five respondents. This initial pilot survey was carried out to check on its suitability and efficiency. For suitability, I wanted to ensure that the survey was eliciting useful data relevant to this study’s research questions. For efficiency, I wanted to check on the completeness of answers and length of time required for respondents to complete it. The pilot study fulfilled both suitability and efficiency requirements and was re-administered to the study’s sample group the following week.

The official online survey was conducted in a computer lab at Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Education (GIFLE) on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2013. To ensure survey takers fully understood what



they were participating in prior to taking the survey, they were briefed on the details of the study; I also went over each question with them and provided clarification when needed. Prior to starting the survey, participants were required to read over the informed consent page (appendix 5) and if at any time they wished to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Following the online survey, I conducted a single-session, in-depth, semi-structured interview with four participants in order to further explore trends found in the initial data. These were set up between June 17 and June 21, 2013. In line with Berg (2001:70), a semi-structured interview set-up was specifically chosen to allow myself to go beyond the answers to prepared questions when necessary. The questions below initiated the interview and were used for the following purposes. 1. To elicit data that could be cross-referenced with the survey results; 2. To expand on trends found in the initial data.

### ***Interview Questions***

1. What are your biggest concerns in regards to the future implementation of the NEAT?
2. What can be done to ease or remove these concerns?

A time was pre-arranged to meet with each participant and interviews lasted between 15 to 20 minutes each. Prior to starting the interview, participants were briefed on the study in progress and the purposes of the interview. They were given the opportunity to clarify anything that they were unsure of. All interviews were conducted solely in English and with permission from the participants, all interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed for further analysis.

## **3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

### ***Data Immersion***

Data analysis began with data immersion (Tracy, 2013: 188), where the entire breadth of the data was explored through a detailed reading, analysis, re-reading, re-analysis process. The data gleaned from the online survey was automatically consolidated and summarized by the Lime Survey software used to administer it. The data log produced by the Lime Survey software was

downloaded for further analysis in the following formats: .pdf, .doc and .xml. The .pdf version summarized according to question and contained corresponding graphs when appropriate, the .doc version summarized the responses according to each individual participant, and the .xml version provided all data in spreadsheet form where respondents were indicated in rows and responses to questions were divided by columns. Each of these formats provided a different perspective on the data and facilitated the process of noticing trends. The quantitative data gathered from closed-ended questions was entered into Microsoft excel for comparative purposes and the qualitative data collected from open-ended responses was extracted for further analysis.

In order to analyze interviews, each interview was transcribed. At first, the traditional listen-pause-transcribe method was used by slowing down the speaking speed by using VLC media player. However, upon discovering a more efficient method a transition was made to computer assisted transcription using Nuance Dragon Naturally Speaking 12 speech to text software. This involved calibrating the software to my personal speech patterns, listening to the interviews via headphones and simply dictating what was recorded during the interview. The software automatically converted my dictation into text, providing me with the initial transcription.

Once initial transcription was completed, each interview was reviewed two more times in order to check for accuracy and make corrections when necessary. To ensure accuracy, the last stage of my transcription involved a final check by my colleague who reviewed the audio and transcripts. At this point the transcriptions were deemed to have reached an adequate level of detail and accuracy. At times, the transcription may appear grammatically and lexically inaccurate however, this reflects the context and participants actual English usage in the interview. Interviewees' responses have been transcribed verbatim in order to avoid the risk of imposing my personal interpretations. All transcripts are available upon request.

### ***Coding***

Following data immersion, data from the surveys and interviews were coded using Nvivo 10 software. The coding procedure involved primary and secondary cycle coding following the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). Codes and data were under constant review allowing me to make slight modifications and create new nodes during the coding process.

The primary-cycle coding, outlined by Tracy (2013: 89), followed standard procedures where qualitative responses were first closely examined and compared for similarities and differences. I then lumped together the data for each open-ended question into primary codes based on shared characteristics in Nvivo 10. The initial codes were as follows:

1. Reasons in Support
2. Reasons not in Support
3. Concerns
4. Suggestions for Resolution

In line with Tracy (2013), secondary-cycle coding involved the critical examination of the initial codes while organizing, categorizing and synthesizing them into interpretive concepts. During this process, codes that were originally separated by question were reorganized into second level codes that served to explain, theorize and synthesize (ibid.) emergent trends. The secondary cycle coding produced the following codes.

1. Rationale for Supporting NEAT
  - a. Positive Washback
2. Rationale for not Supporting NEAT
  - a. Neutral Washback Concerns
  - b. Negative Washback Concerns
3. Suggestions for Resolution

## **CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

In the following sections, the findings of this study are presented under subheadings that bring forth the themes found in the collected data. The themes presented are the outcomes of the formal data analysis previously described which resulted in data being reshuffled and reorganized multiple times. Excerpts from survey and interview respondents will be provided to support each theme. However, to maintain anonymity, each survey respondent has been labeled with an Alias from 1 to 20 and each interviewee has been given a number from 1 to 4. Please note that the resolutions to the problems that were voiced during interviews were redistributed into the subheading below during coding since they highlighted, strengthened and expanded upon KIHSETs overall concerns.

### **4.1 Findings**

#### **4.1.1 Support for the Implementation of NEAT**

The results from the online survey showed an even split between respondents supportive and not supportive of the NEAT replacing the English portion of the CSAT. Of the 20 teachers surveyed, nine were supportive, nine were not supportive and two responded that they didn't know. These results indicate a strong division in opinions with regards to the NEAT implementation.. In order to understand the respondents' rationale, in an open-ended follow-up question, they were asked to provide further details behind what motivated their responses.

##### **4.1.1.1 Rationale for Supporting the Implementation of NEAT**

Based on my coding, the data displayed that all of those in support of the NEAT felt that it would produce positive washback in the form of promoting productive skill development in Korean English language teaching and learning. More specifically, respondents felt that new directions and objectives of the NEAT would allow them to focus more on communicative ability in class, and help Korean students develop a more balanced language skill set.

“Learning Language is not just for the purpose of reading and listening. Students who are learning language have to communicate with others who speak that language. If the recent test system is changed into NEAT, which focused on speaking and writing as much as reading and writing, the class will also be changed and students can have more chances to speak and write in English during the class.” (*Survey response Alias 1*)

“One good thing is there is already a consensus that it is necessary to change. For example, even though students can get high score in TOEFL or toeic. Not TOEFL in case of TOEFL they have to speak something and write something so they cannot do that. But still in case of TOEIC many people can get high score in TOEIC but still many of them cannot communicate efficiently. And all of the Korean teachers understand that so they basically they think that it is necessary to change it.” (*Interviewee 1*)

Furthermore, those in support felt that the NEAT would put pressure on learners and teachers to develop writing and speaking skills, promote a more balanced approach in English language learning, increase teachers’ English usage, promote more communicative activities in class and demand an increased focus on fluency and the ability to communicate.

The supporting reasons elicited from participants align with the overall objectives of the NEAT and the administrative rationale for its creation and implementation

#### **4.1.1.2 Rationale for Not Supporting the NEAT**

The data for not being in support of the NEAT elicited a wide variety of responses in both the online surveys and semi-structured interviews. In initial coding, the data combined produced a total of five subcomponents ranked in order of prominence as follows:

1. There will be a higher dependency on private English education.
2. Schools are not ready for the NEAT.
3. Teachers are not ready for the NEAT.
4. Students are not ready for the NEAT.
5. Administrative policies do not support NEAT objectives.

Further analysis of the elicited responses made it apparent that the majority of the rationale against the NEAT is the result of teachers feeling that many aspects of Korean English language learning and teaching are not ready for the change. In order to offer a deeper discussion of the issues, the above reasons were re-coded according to emergent themes and then categorized in regards to neutral and negative washback. This resulted in the following re-ordering of prominent themes:

1. Neutral washback: lack of readiness for required changes
2. Negative washback: concerns of a higher dependency on private English education

### ***Neutral Washback Concerns***

“Sure I agree with that the NEAT can have very positive washback effect for that but basically it may be too difficult to change it at the same time because all of Korean people share the same kind of problem that's why in my point of view it still needs some time.” (*Interviewee 3*)

The implications of the NEAT will affect all areas of English language education in South Korea. With its considerable differences to the current CSAT, many carefully planned changes will be required if there is to be a smooth and successful transition. These changes are neither positive nor negative but simply mandatory based on the nature of the new test and therefore are categorized as neutral washback effects. It is the lack of progress in the implementation of these necessary changes that has many teachers feeling that Korea is not ready for the NEAT.

### ***Lack of Readiness in School Facilities***

The NEAT, being the first computer based test of its kind in South Korea, has some teachers worried that their schools are not adequately equipped to meet its demands. Three teachers reported that their school's equipment and facilities do not sufficiently support what is needed to prepare students for the NEAT and that their schools need to be fitted with computers and technology to allow their students to practice for the new style of test. This anxiety is exemplified in the following data excerpt:

“...for the test actually we need computer a lot in the classrooms so students can practice by themselves ... but actually students schools don't have.”

*(Interviewee 3)*

### ***Lack of Readiness in Materials***

Three teachers also reported feeling that the necessary changes have not been made to current language learning textbooks and classroom materials and that it would not be possible to meet the demands of the NEAT as they currently are.

“English textbook should be changed.” *(Survey Alias 14)*

“I have no idea what kind of materials I should use in class.” *(Survey Alias 7)*

“Materials development that is somewhat of a problem to keep up with the changes to the NEAT. The materials need to be changed in order to support communicative competency.” *(Interviewee 4)*

In addition to feeling that materials needed communicative revisions, two interview respondents took this further stating that they have tried to make the current textbooks communicative by adding their own supplementary materials, however, the time consumption, energy and support required to do so is not practical for the general majority of English teachers.

“In the actual situation in school ... people say like 70% of their work is not about teaching but about administrative jobs or for the homeroom teacher. I think the job for the homeroom teacher is quite important in the Korean situation only 30% of their work can be related to teaching itself like preparing materials. In some cases even I saw or experience that kind of situation in high school the teacher prepares some teaching material for their class while some other teacher or other head of the department even though he's a teacher is working next to the teacher who's preparing material and one time I saw the kind of case like ‘Hey, What are you doing it looks like you don't have anything else to do.. then take this.. it is my document.. finish this!’” (*Interviewee 2*)

Due to issues described in the interview excerpt above, teachers are extremely concerned about the time and energy required to create supplementary materials to compensate for the lack of communicative aspects of current textbooks. The mismatch between current textbooks and the communicative focus of the NEAT will place a direct burden on teachers to make up for its weaknesses.

### ***Lack of Readiness in Teachers***

Many teachers responded that they do not feel ready to cope with the neutral washback of the NEAT and the changes it will bring to their classroom practices, specifically in the shift to productive communicative focus. Seven respondents felt that their own productive skills were not sufficient as illustrated in the following data excerpts:

“I have to teach writing skills to my students, but it is the most difficult part for myself. I am not that confident in my writing. I know I will work on it more to be a more helpful teacher, however, still I am worried.” (*Survey Alias 15*)



“Even I, an English teacher, sometimes feel less confident when I have to teach speaking and writing to the students. Unfortunately when I was a student, those productive skills were less focused than now and there were not enough opportunity for me to be exposed by English. But If I realize the reality, I have to focus more speaking and writing in teaching.” (*Survey Alias 13*)

Another major theme was the reported feeling of being pedagogically unprepared to teach productive skills. A total of ten teachers voiced concern over this issue.

“still many Korean teachers don’t have the real tools practical tools to teach writing and speaking the productive tools because they haven't done that before.” (*Interviewee 1*)

“It needs the changes of the way of teaching and tests, but I don't know how to change and even what to change.” (*Survey Alias 5*)

“Many teachers have taken online courses on the NEAT, but we still don't get enough hints of how to teach students for improving their communicative ability.” (*Survey Alias 7*)

Four teachers also reported difficulty and uncertainty in evaluating learners’ speaking and writing skills as demonstrated in the following:

“It's too DIFFICULT to evaluate Students' speaking and writing skills... I'm not sure to make the right rubric.” (*Survey Alias 19*)

A final reported difficulty related to teachers’ readiness is linked to testing overlap. Three teachers reported that if the NEAT were implemented today there would be great confusion over which test to teach towards, the CSAT or the NEAT. The differences between the two tests pose problems in regards to classroom pedagogy as stated by the following interviewee:

“If NEAT takes over for CSAT now, we have to teach for two tests... Some students will take the CSAT and some take NEAT... I don’t know how to do both at same time... it is too confusing. We need some plan to change slowly so it can be smooth.” (*Interviewee 2*)

Due to the concerns mentioned above, teachers feel unprepared for the neutral washback of the NEAT exam and its implications.

### ***Lack of Readiness in Students***

Three participants also voiced concern over students’ lack of readiness for productive assessment because of the historical lack of need for productive skill development.

“In real class Ss never have a chance to speak and write in English, but NEAT has questions about all four skills.” (*Survey Alias 17*)

“It will give more pressure students because they are likely to think NEAT is to add speaking and writing test to the CSAT, so they need much more time to prepare for them.” (*Interviewee 4*)

If the NEAT were implemented today, teachers are worried that students have not had enough time to transition to the new testing focus due to the constraints of the current CSAT combined with the issue of textbooks and materials previously discussed.

### ***Lack of Readiness in Policy Support***

Participants also reported a lack of support from administrators and policies in relation to the communicative objectives of the NEAT. Five participants felt that administrators are against or ignorant to what is needed to support communicative development in the classrooms.

“Some of them I know some school principals who have very innovative ideas act very positively and as some of the really want to listen to others teachers opinion but basically in Korean society it will be very difficult for the school principal to listen to some idea from his subordinates Basically the school principals are not ready to listen.” (*Interviewee 3*)

These participants all reported the need for strong and detailed educational policies which can override the ignorance and stubbornness of some of their superiors and empower them to conduct classes in line with productive objectives.

“We need some policy that helps us ... like in some cases school principals or vice principals they just want to stop us because some of them think it is dangerous that is why we need kind of help from policy. If the government helps us have some power to change it if we can really recompose our own materials and curriculum we can do whatever we want but still even though we agreed all the teachers agreed with it, as long as the school principal don't want that it cannot change.” (*Interviewee 1*)

### ***Negative Washback Concerns***

“...if Neat is replaced for the CSAT, students who grow up surrounding by all the private study will have much benefits than those who don't have that kind of support.” (*Survey Alias 4*)

In addition to the lack of readiness, another substantial reason opposed to the implementation of NEAT that teachers reported, was a fear of an increased dependency on private English education due to the introduction of productive skill assessment. This concern surfaced in five survey responses as well as in all four interviews and stems from large class sizes and inability to provide students with the same amount of practice and feedback as private institutes. Teachers feel that parents will do anything to try to gain an advantage for their children and the large class sizes and limited contact do not work in favor of the public classrooms. The only way to gain the

advantage is to turn to private education. The following survey and interview excerpts illustrate the strength of this concern.

“We have too many students in one class, so hard to teach speaking or writing and give them feedbacks. Students and parents are worried about how they can make it on the NEAT, which can drive them rush into the English private institutes. Because they don't think that English classes in school can satisfy their desire of getting high scores on the NEAT.” (*Survey Alias 7*)

“It might evoke private education because writing teachers actually cannot edit the students' mistake one by one but in private institutes case they can do it as long as they pay much money.” (*Interviewee 2*)

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.0 Introduction

Although many teachers understand the objectives and positive benefits of the implementation of the NEAT, the findings of my study have uncovered major neutral and negative concerns of KIHSETs. In order to increase KIHSET support and facilitate the transition to the NEAT, their concerns must be addressed and solutions must be provided. The following sections discuss each reported issue in detail and provide possible ways to resolve them.

### 5.1 Addressing Concerns of Readiness

#### *School Facilities*

It seems that teachers' perceived lack of readiness in school facilities is a direct result of a hangover mindset from previous periods. This is because with the constructs of the high-stakes tests to date, teaching to test objectives and mock test taking could help students obtain better grades. Due to the long history of practice, teachers continue to believe that in order to prepare students for the NEAT they need to follow same techniques of teaching to the test and drilling test questions. In this case they would need to be provided with computers in order mimic the NEAT.

It is essential to break this hangover effect of habitual test drilling if the NEAT is to have a positive impact on Korean English language learning and teaching. If teachers continue with the test-based mindset, techniques and methods used in of previous periods, the students will not develop their own overall proficiency, thus, undermining the core objectives on the NEAT.

In order to resolve this issue, teachers must be educated in the proper approaches and techniques to develop a balanced set of English skills and understand that just because the test is computer based does not mean that schools need to have more computers. Class time would better be spent on real proficiency development and engaging students in skill building tasks, activities and projects. If stakeholders, such as parents, teachers and learners are interested in mock NEAT

practice, with the ease of computer access in South Korea, this is something that can be done outside of class. With awareness raising through teacher training programs and various forms of media, teachers and all other stakeholders will be equipped with the knowledge and tools required to change, resulting in the disappearance of this hangover mindset.

### ***Materials***

To address the perceived lack of readiness in materials, it is crucial for teachers to be provided with textbooks and materials that are in-line with the objectives of the NEAT. Although there are many books on the market which teachers can purchase to supplement their textbooks, most of these books are also feeding the hangover mindset discussed above, and are simply a compilation of mock test questions. Teachers want their textbooks to be right from the start so they are not burdened with the job of trying to supplement it. This may be a sign for the Korean Ministry of Education to initiate the reconstruction of public English textbooks incorporating more communicative activities.

In order for this re-creation to be successful, textbook creation methods of the past must be pushed aside and a new format should be implemented. It is important to first start with analyzing the thoughts and needs of in-service teachers to distinguish what improvements could be made to current textbooks. This should be followed with the Ministry of Education creating detailed outline of the objectives of the new textbooks as well as a breakdown of the types of activities and tasks that should be included. Experts in communicative textbook development and design should then be contracted to create the new books followed by a trial period in order to give teachers practice with the new style of book, and receive feedback. The textbooks should then go through multiple revisions responding to the concerns and aligning with the core values of the textbook creators. Although this sequence of events may take some time, I believe that the quality of textbooks would be greatly improved in alignment with the proficiency objectives of the NEAT, resolving this current issue.

### ***Teachers***

In order to resolve the issue of teachers not feeling ready in their own proficiency and/or pedagogy, there needs to be more opportunity to partake in high quality training courses catering

to their needs of improving their English language and teaching skills as well as their confidence. As it will be the first time for many teachers, they need to be explicitly trained on how to focus on communicative competence and how to teach and evaluate speaking and writing. As previously mentioned, many teachers are suffering from the hangover effects from previous periods and training courses could also help to refocus and recalibrate their thoughts in line with the new directions required for the NEAT. These training courses could be offered through various methods such as, on-campus, at institutes like Gyeonggi-do Institute for Foreign Language Education, or off-campus via online courses or training CDs. It is important for the Ministry of Education mandate the completion of such training to ensure all teachers have acquired the basic knowledge and skills to facilitate the changes and additions brought on by the NEAT.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education needs to provide teachers with a detailed breakdown of how the CSAT will be phased out and the NEAT phased in to avoid teachers confusion on which teaching objectives to follow. With the sizeable differences between the CSAT and the NEAT, having to teach to both tests would be extremely difficult. One possible solution is to slowly insert one productive task into each test and slowly increase the amount of questions yearly until the NEAT has been fully implemented. This would be a phase out, phase in technique which would reduce teachers' difficulties in making the transition. In order for this to be successful, the Ministry of Education needs to provide stakeholders with a detailed timeframe for this transition indicating exactly what changes will be implemented and when.

### ***Students***

The perceived lack of student readiness is another concern stemming from hangover effects. At present, students only concern is to score well on the CSAT which requires very little speaking and writing proficiency. Due to a historical lack of focus on productive proficiency, if the NEAT was implemented today, because of the hangover of the CSAT objectives on classroom practices and English language learning in general, students would not be prepared to complete the productive tasks in the NEAT.

Many of the solutions to other concerns will directly contribute to the resolution of this issue. The creation of new communicative textbooks combined with communicatively equipped teachers will naturally contribute to the development of learners speaking and writing skills. This combined with the slow introduction of speaking and writing tasks into the current CSAT, while slowly phasing into the NEAT would allow time for students to catch up with the requirements of the new testing system.

### ***Policy Support***

It is not only teachers who are being affected by the hangover effects of past periods. Principals, parents, other subject teachers, learners and various other stakeholders are also suffering from these effects and may not understand what is needed for the new NEAT testing period. These individuals may not realize that current methods may not produce good results under the new testing objectives. These individuals may insist that English classes are conducted in a certain way in line with previous traditions which can result in the obstruction of teachers' ability to meet the productive objectives of the NEAT.

The first step in resolving this issue is to educate all stakeholders in the educational changes required to support the NEAT. Because the concept of a communicative classroom is a very new idea in South Korea and is somewhat contrastive to traditional teaching beliefs, stakeholders must understand what is needed to meet the new testing paradigm.

In addition to raising stakeholders' awareness, it is also important for the Ministry of Education to empower English teachers by implementing strong policies that will support them from the bottom up. This will allow teachers to somewhat avoid the prejudice and obstruction of less competent authorities and conduct classes in line with the new proficiency objectives of the NEAT.

### **5.2 Addressing Concerns of Negative Washback**

The fear of an increased dependency on private education is an issue that is not easily fixable. The only way to battle against this is to adjust public classroom settings. For example, class size



must be reduced. Furthermore, class time or English study opportunity in the public setting should be increased in order for teachers to provide more communicative opportunities as well as in depth feedback. Until the public system is able to offer the same advantages as private education, reliance will continue and/or increase.

Another possibility is for the Ministry of Education to inspect private institutes and its instructors and certify them as NEAT qualified. These certified NEAT institutes could work in cooperation with the public system and act as a support tool in preparing students for the test. Curriculum could be developed together to ensure that the public schools and private institutes are working towards the same objectives and engaging students in material supportive of the NEAT.

In the event that these adjustments cannot be met, this may be something that is unresolvable since the personal choice of stakeholders to enroll in additional English education cannot be stopped.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

This study has been concerned with preemptively examining KIHSETs' perspectives on NEAT washback in order to provide possible solutions to avoidable issues prior to its implementation. As previously mentioned, there is a common agreement amongst educators that it is imperative for high-stakes tests in South Korea to include genuine productive skill assessment in order to foster overall communicative competence in learners. If high-stakes tests continue to exclude genuine productive skill assessment, teachers and learners have little to no need to develop speaking and writing skills, resulting in an ongoing productive deficiency amongst learners and the continuing dominance of GTM and Audiolingualism in classrooms. The implementation of the NEAT would be the first test in the history of high-stakes testing in South Korea, to include the task based assessment of speaking and writing. Although the objectives of the NEAT are good in theory and intend to have positive effects on the education of English in South Korea, teachers' hold negative perspectives due to neutral and negative washback concerns. What the evidence demonstrates is that KIHSETs positive perspectives towards the NEAT is hindered by a perceived lack of readiness in the Education system, making the required changes difficult and unfeasible. Furthermore, the fear of an increased dependency on private education adds to the negativity surrounding the NEAT, resulting in negative concerns far outweighing the possible positive washback support.

The perceived lack of readiness amongst KIHSETs is something that can be easily changed through proper preparation, planning and addressing hangover mindsets through education and communication. If the Ministry of Education and KICE explicitly provide KIHSETs with the NEAT objectives, preparatory procedures and future implementation plans in addition to providing/mandating training courses, teachers will be much more convinced that when the time comes for it to be implemented the education system will be ready.

In regards to the negative washback effects and a fear of an increased dependency on private education, this may be something that cannot be controlled and inevitably unavoidable. As discussed earlier, naturally, countries that have competitive entrance exams have a strong

demand for private tutoring<sup>1</sup>. In order to completely avoid this problem, English needs to be removed from the exam all together. However, this is not in the foreseeable future in South Korea.

The NEAT is an exciting option to push Korean English education forward and resolve issues of the past. However, its implementation must be handled with care to ensure stakeholders are ready and supportive of the changes it will bring both inside and outside the English classroom in South Korea. In order for the NEAT to receive strong support, the positive washback must outweigh the negative however, at present this is not the case. If the concerns of stakeholders are adequately addressed and solutions are provided, increased support should follow but if the reported neutral and negative washback issues are not resolved, the NEAT has little hope of gaining support and will continue to be an issue of debate amongst Korean in-service high school teachers.

This study has attempted address KIHSETs perspectives on the possible implementation of NEAT, however, because of its narrow focus group the findings are limited to only a small sample of the stakeholders who will be affected by the washback. I strongly suggest that further research be done to investigate the perspectives of other additional stakeholders, such as parents and learners, in order to obtain a broader understanding of the issue. If these issues can be addressed, the implementation of the NEAT will gain support, resulting in smoother implementation and greater benefits for the education of English in South Korea. In the future of high-stakes testing in Korea and beyond, I hope that in-depth consideration of the washback effects of high-stakes tests on all stakeholders are considered and addressed prior to implementation in order to maximize support and positive washback.

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<sup>1</sup> ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/household-annex1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/household-annex1_en.pdf)).

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**APPENDIX 1 NEAT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
◦ Basic schedule	Development and Pre-tests			General implementation			
◦ NEAT Level 2 & Level 3	Pre-tests (3)	Pre-tests (2)	Pre-tests (3)	General Implementation	General Implementation	General Implementation	Implementation (24 times, 120 examinees)
				Policy making on replacing CSAT	<Notice	Period>	Abolition of CSAT ( <u>Upon decision</u> )
(College Scholastic Ability Test)		Notice two versions of the test: A. B type	<Notice	Period>	A. B type, Increase listening items		

(Source: Jin, 2011:8)


## APPENDIX 2 SAMPLE NEAT SPEAKING ITEMS

(Jin & Kim 2011)

### Situational Inter-related Question

Type	Direction	Suppose you've made friends with a foreigner. On the first meeting, this new friend asks you four questions. You should answer with one or two full sentences. After the first beep, record your answer. You will be given 20 seconds to answer each question. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.
Short Conver sation	Q. 1	Who do you like most in your school? 예시 답안: I like Jane most, one of my friend.
	Q. 2	How long have you known her or him? 예시답안: I've known her for three years. We used to be classmates in middle school.
	Q. 3	Why do you like her or him? 예시답안: We have many things in common. For example, we like listening to sound tracks from movies.
	Q. 4	What do you like to do with her or him? 예시답안: I'd like to go to the movies with her because I like her.

### Picture Description

Type	Direction	You will see six pictures and tell a story based on the pictures. You have 1 minute to prepare your answer. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your answer. The story should start with "One day, a man was ..." After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.
Picture Description	 <p>One day, a man was standing on the subway platform. He was drunken and fell onto the rails of the subway platform. The next train was about to arrive. The train was already in the station. A young student jumped onto the rail to save the drunken man's life. The young student pushed the man and saved him. People around them were smiling and applauding. The police rewarded him for his heroic deed.</p>	

## Presentation

Type \ Direction	You will see a table showing Sumi's spending behavior. You will have 1 minute to think about your presentation. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your presentation. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.							
Presentation	The graph shows Sumi's spending behavior. She spends her money eating snacks, buying clothes, and enjoying entertainment. Describe and compare what you see in the graph. Please use the words 'more', 'most', 'less' or 'least' to compare the data.							
	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>Sumi's Spending Behavior</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Money Spent (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Eating snack</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buying clothes</td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Enjoying entertainment</td> <td>25</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>예시답안: This graph shows Sumi's spending behavior. We can see how much money she spends. She spends the most money on <i>Eating snacks</i>. She spends 15 percent more money on <i>Eating snacks</i> than on <i>Buying clothes</i>. She spends 30 percent of her money buying clothes. She spends more money on <i>Buying clothes</i> than on <i>Doing entertainment</i>. Of all the items listed, she spends the least on <i>Doing Entertainment</i>.</p>	Category	Money Spent (%)	Eating snack	45	Buying clothes	30	Enjoying entertainment
Category	Money Spent (%)							
Eating snack	45							
Buying clothes	30							
Enjoying entertainment	25							

## Problem Solving

Type \ Direction	You will hear a story describing a problem. You will have 1 minute to think about your advice on how to solve the problem. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your answer. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.
Problem Solving	One of your best friends likes computer games very much. Whenever he starts a game, he never stops. In the end, he doesn't do his homework or get enough sleep. So he argues with his parents a lot about his game addiction. What would you like to say to him?
	<p>예시답안:</p> <p>Please think about your game addictions. I know you like computer games too much and don't do enough homework and get enough sleep. I also heard your parents don't like your playing computer games. You'd better manage your time. Why don't you reduce the time you spend playing games? Instead, spend more time on studying and do homework first</p>

## APPENDIX 3 SAMPLE NEAT WRITING ITEMS (Jin & Kim 2011)

### Descriptive Writing

#### Descriptive Writing on Given Conditions

- Write about the most memorable place that you have ever visited, including the following information. (60-80 words)

자신이 여행했던 장소 중 가장 기억에 남는 곳에 대해 다음 내용을 포함하여 쓰시오. (60-80 단어)

- the name of the place
- the time of your visit
- the reason for choosing it

### Short Essay Writing

#### Short Essay Writing

- Choose one position on whether you prefer to go to college or not to go to college, and write about your position on with a clear introduction and conclusion and the two reasons provided in the chart and one additional reason, by following the chart below. (80-120 words)

다음의 표는 대학 진학의 장점과 단점에 대한 생각이다. 이를 참고하여 자신의 입장을 선택하여 서론을 쓰고, 한 가지 이유를 추가하여 세 가지 이유를 모두 논한 후, 결론을 쓰시오. (80-120 단어)




Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Introduction</b> ↓ 1. new experience 2. knowledge 3. _____ ↓ <b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Introduction</b> ↓ 1. too much money 2. too much time 3. _____ ↓ <b>Conclusion</b>

## Selective Picture Description with Given Words

### Selective Picture Description with Given Words

- A friend of yours asked for some money and you have to refuse the request. Choose one reason from the pictures given below, and write a memo to your friend in complete 2-3 sentences, using the given words or phrases. (in less than 20 words)

친구가 돈을 빌려달라는 부탁을 했는데, 이를 거절해야 하는 상황이다. 다음 제시된 세가지 상황 중 하나를 선택한 후, 주어진 단어나 어구를 활용하여 상황에 알맞게 거절하는 메시지를 완전한 2-3개의 문장으로 작성하시오. (20단어 이내)

(1)	(2)	(3)
		
- no money - wallet	- lunch - starving	- friend - movie

## One-picture Description

### One-picture Description

- Carefully examine the picture, and complete the sentences which describe the people and animals in a zoo yesterday shown in the picture. (20-30 words)

다음 그림을 보고, 어제 동물원에서 있었던 일을 묘사하는 글을 완성하시오. (20-30단어)



Bill went to the zoo yesterday. He \_\_\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Three monkeys on a tree \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Bill's sister \_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The staff of the zoo \_\_\_\_\_ (4) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Letter Writing

**Letter Writing**

- **Write a reply to your Australian friend's email, suggesting what to bring with him when he visits Korea next week, based on the information given below (40-50 words).**  
 다음 주에 한국을 방문할 호주인 친구가 무엇을 준비해야 할지 묻는 이메일에 대한 답장을 쓰시오. (40-50 단어)

Hello Minsu!

I'm very excited to see you next week in Seoul. But I am worried about something. I heard that winter in Korea is very cold. I'm wondering what kind of clothes I should bring with me.

*Jeff*

---

Hello Jeff!

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_




\_\_\_\_\_

*Minsu*

## Two-picture Description and Inference

**Two-picture Description and Inference**

- **Describe each picture, (1) and (2), and then, write a possible conclusion that could be shown in picture (3). (30-50 words)**  
 다음 그림 1, 2가 나타내는 상황을 각각 묘사하고, 그에 알맞은 그림 3의 내용을 추론하여 쓰시오. (30-50단어)

1	2	3
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: blue; font-weight: bold;">1</p>  </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: blue; font-weight: bold;">2</p>  </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: blue; font-weight: bold;">3</p>  </div>

## APPENDIX 4 NEAT LEVEL 2&3 DETAILED COMPARISONS

Level 2		Level 3
Requires a degree of English proficiency necessary for college or university education	Objective	Focus on basic and practical English ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No grammar items</li> <li>• Focus on communicative skills</li> <li>• Topics on basic academic English</li> </ul>	Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No grammar items</li> <li>• Focus on communicative skills</li> <li>• Topics on practical English: everyday life, work</li> </ul>
3000 words	Vocabulary	2000 words
English I & II, English reading comprehension and writing, advanced English conversation	Alignment with curriculum	General English and practical English conversation

(Source: Jin, 2011:10)

## APPENDIX 5 INFORMED CONSENT

### Purpose of the Study:

This is a study that is being conducted by Mr. George Whitehead, to be used in his final dissertation project for the University of Birmingham.. The purpose of this study is to preemptively investigate Korean in-service high-school English teachers' support and concerns of washback from the possible future implementation of the National English Ability Test. The information gathered will be used to suggest possible solutions to avoidable issues prior to its implementation.

### What will be done:

You will complete a survey, which will take 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your opinions on the possible future implementation of the NEAT. You will also be asked for some demographic information (e.g., sex, your current teaching context and number of years teaching English) so that I can accurately describe the general traits of the group of teachers who participate in the study.

After you complete the survey, you may be contacted for further discussion in the form of an informal interview.

### Benefits of this Study:

You will be contributing to knowledge about in-service teachers opinions and needs for the upcoming changes in English testing objectives. It is an exciting time in South Korea as objectives are shifting from accuracy to fluency but it is important to ensure that teachers are ready for such a drastic change. Your participation in this study will help to raise awareness on teachers' concerns and contribute to finding possible solutions.



**Risks or discomforts:**

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded.

**Confidentiality:**

Your responses in this survey will be kept completely confidential.

**Decision to quit at any time:**

Your participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

**Contact information:**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Mr. George Whitehead at

[george.gifle@gmail.com](mailto:george.gifle@gmail.com).

By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

---

Welcome and thank you for your participation!

---

Next >>

Exit and clear survey

## APPENDIX 6 ONLINE SURVEY

### In-Service Teachers' Opinions

\*

I am..

Female     Male

\*

I currently teach at...

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose... ▼

\*

I have been teaching *English* for...

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose... ▼

\* Are you in support of the NEAT replacing the English portion of the CSAT?

Please select at most one answer

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

Why or Why not?

What are your biggest concerns with the implementation of the NEAT?