

# Washback of a high-stakes English exam on teachers' perceptions and practices

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**Abstract:** The First Certificate in English (Cambridge ESOL) is a well-known language exam in Greece intended to have positive influence on teaching and learning. However, local practitioners believe that the FCE has negative consequences on the curriculum, teaching and learning.

This paper explores the relationship between the intended influence of the FCE exam, teachers' perceptions towards the exam and their classroom practices. The paper also identifies the existence of factors that seem to influence teaching and learning beyond the exam itself. It concludes by making recommendations for future research and for teachers and teacher educators on avoiding negative effects from high-stakes exams.

**Keywords:** high-stakes exams, test washback, test impact, teachers' perceptions and practices, interviews

## 1. Introduction

Writers in the field of language testing see that high-stakes language examinations have important consequences on teaching and learning, a phenomenon known in the literature as 'test washback' (Alderson and Wall 1993). Test washback is one dimension of test 'impact' (Wall 1997). Writers in the field view test washback as positive, negative or neutral (Bachman and Palmer 1996; Messick 1996) with intended and unintended consequences (Andrews 2004; Qi 2005) while others see that it can be a potential instrument for educational reform (Pearson 1988; Shohamy 1992).

Until the early 1990s, washback was believed to relate to the quality of the design of examinations, e.g. 'If it is a good examination, it will have a useful effect on teaching; if bad, then it will have a damaging effect on teaching' (Heaton 1990:16). However, recent developments in the field have shown that there is not always a linear relationship between the design of a test and the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom as seen also in the three models of test washback proposed in the literature in the 1990s. For example, the model proposed by Alderson and Wall (1993) offered fifteen washback hypotheses relating to various teaching and learning behaviours and attitudes yielded by high-stakes tests and discussed the existence of other factors beyond test design that affect teaching and learning. In their model, the writers stressed the need to take into account research related in fields outside language testing in order to better understand and research washback. In his model, Hughes (1994) specified and defined the constituents of educational systems that are influenced by exams and discussed in detail the conditions that need to be met before washback can occur. In a similar vein, in her model Bailey (1996) specified the participants and the types of products that are influenced by high-stakes exams and discussed the ways and difficulties of investigating washback.

These three models re-conceptualised the notion of washback and offered frameworks for research agendas that informed various studies. These are presented in the next section.

## 2. Research studies

The following table provides an overview of the research studies conducted in the field of test washback.

**Table 1. Washback research studies**

<b>Educational Context</b>	<b>Researchers</b>
Canada	Saif (2006)
Central/Eastern Europe	Gosa (2004); Glover (2006); Wall & Horak (2006; 2008)
China	Chen & He (2003); Jin (2000); Qi (2005)
Brazil	Scaramucci (2002)
Germany	Perrin (2000)
Greece	Tsagari (2009)
Hong Kong	Andrews et al. (2002); Cheng (2005); Stoneman (2005)
Iran	Nemati (2003); Nazari (2005)
Israel	Shohamy et al. (1996); Ferman (2004)
Italy	Hawkey (2006)
Japan	Watanabe (1997); Robb & Ercanbrack (1999)
New Zealand	Read & Hayes (2003); Hayes & Read (2004)
Sri Lanka	Wall & Alderson (1993); Wall (2005)
Taiwan	Chen (2002); Shih (2006)
UK	Saville & Hawkey (2004); Scott (2005); Green (2003)
USA	Alderson & Hamp-Lyons (1996); Stecher et al. (2004)
Vietnam	Nguyen (1997)

The studies included in Table 1 have investigated the washback effects of local, national and international standardized language tests in various educational contexts focusing on a variety of participants and products (e.g. teachers/teaching, learners/learning, textbooks, attitudes toward testing, test preparation practices, etc). As a result, we can now see more clearly that washback is not a direct and automatic effect but actually a broad, multi-faceted, complex and elusive phenomenon that varies in 'form' and 'intensity' (Cheng 2005) and, very often, brought about through the agency of many independent and intervening variables beside the exam itself, e.g. teachers and students, textbook writers and publishers, resources and classroom conditions, management of practices in the schools, communication between test providers and test users, the socio-political context in which the test is used, etc.

The research conducted in test washback so far has undoubtedly made possible the discovery of new and important issues. However, more research is needed that can shed

more light on this complex phenomenon and confirm how generalizable the results of these studies are to other populations and situations, and to follow up on the issues they raise (Spratt 2005:27).

The next section presents an empirical study into exam washback by investigating the washback effects of a high-stakes language exam, namely the First Certificate in English (FCE), in the context of Greek private language schools, known as 'language frontistiria'.

### **3. The FCE examination**

The FCE exam is administered by Cambridge ESOL. It is designed to represent a general standard of competence in English as a foreign language at intermediate level, e.g. ALTE Level Three (UCLES 1994:8), commonly known nowadays as B2 level on the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) (for an overview of the exam constructs, design, and format see Appendix 1).

The FCE certificate is officially recognized by the Greek State as a language qualification for the hiring and promotion of employees in the public and private sectors (Government Gazette, 1/772/2005) as well as in a wide range of educational fields.

### **4. The intended impact of the FCE exam**

One of the issues that has been of concern to FCE designers was the positive impact their examinations can exercise on teaching and learning. In its revision in 1996, FCE was brought in line with recent developments in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics aimed at providing 'positive educational impact' (UCLES 1995:6).

However, articles published by local EFL practitioners and textbook writers (e.g. Gabrielatos 1993; Prodromou 1993; Kenny 1995) have pointed, directly or indirectly, to the negative washback of the exam. For instance, there were complaints that the exam enforced traditional ways of teaching such as emphasis on grammar teaching and mother tongue use, teacher-centred lessons, focus on exam skills and test-taking techniques, etc. The exam was also said to lead to the development of large publishing industries that designed a welter of teaching materials which resembled the format of the exam and made students become anxious and experience an educational vacuum.

Only two things were said in favour of the exam, e.g. that the FCE encouraged the teaching of the four skills and that students were motivated and encouraged to work harder during the exam preparation period.

### **5. Aims of the study**

Given the disagreement between the test designers' claims and the local writers' beliefs with regard to the nature of the washback of the exam and the lack of research in the field, the present study set out to explore and identify the nature of the washback of the FCE exam on the teaching and learning that takes place in Greek language frontistiria.

### **6. Research design**

Fifteen native and non-native FCE teachers preparing students for the exam were interviewed for 30-40 minutes each. The teachers had a wide range of teaching qualifications and experience working in various areas of Athens (city centre, southern and northern suburbs) and represented various socio-economic backgrounds (see Appendix 2).

The interviews conducted were based on an interview guide (Oppenheim 1992:67) which listed the topics that were covered followed by questions (see Appendix 3)<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of the interview transcripts (38,579 words, 134 pages in total) was done manually (Seidman 1998; Mason 2002).

The next section presents the results of the study quoting extracts from the interviews conducted<sup>2</sup>.

## 7. Results of the study

### 7.1 Teachers

#### *Teachers' attitudes towards the exam*

Teachers, overall, were strongly in favour of the exam and considered it 'a necessity' in the local context because of its recognition by the state as an official language qualification.

#### *Teachers' role*

Half of the teachers said that their students became extremely dependent on them during the FCE year in that students looked at them as 'God or Goddess', a 'moving dictionary', a 'walking grammar', 'the expert', 'an authority' or 'a know-all person'. Teachers felt that their students expected them not only to teach the language but prepare them successfully for the exam.

They expect everything from me. They feel I am the guru and they come to me for psychological help, for practical help for whatever you can imagine. But I think that it's a common attitude and I am not an exception to the rule. They expect everything from me. I don't like this. I try to cultivate a feeling of independence because that's what you are supposed to do and it's right. I don't think people should be dependent on someone else. I don't think this is a right attitude in general (T1)

#### *Teachers' feelings*

Students' dependency on teachers as well as accountability towards parents and employers made teachers feel stressed and anxious as success in the exam was the yardstick their professional status was judged by.

As a teacher you are accountable to your employers ... the frontistirio... the parents, to your students and to yourself. Maybe you shouldn't but that's how you assess your ability as a teacher, how successful you will be, so, there is .. this becomes ... your objective but it creates tension, stress and all this (T13)

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<sup>1</sup> In the guide, a distinction is made between '*ordinary teaching*' (when teaching aimed at developing general language skills based on a published textbook series) and '*intense exam preparation*' (when teaching was devoted exclusively to the preparation of students for the FCE exam, based on development of exam techniques and skills using practice test materials) reflecting the teaching that takes place in frontistiria.

<sup>2</sup> Several of the extracts were translated from Greek to English, because 60% of the respondents chose to use their mother tongue during the interviews (see Appendix 2). Teachers were given code names such as T1, T2, T3, etc. for reasons of anonymity. During the course of the interviews some teachers referred to the FCE exam as '*Lower*' and to the speaking paper as '*Interview*' even though these had changed their names in 1984.

*Teachers' attitudes towards teaching*

Teachers stressed that their methodology was affected by the exam which made them do things they would not otherwise do. They explained that what they do is:

We teach them rules, rules, rules .... not the real learning of the language and communication (T7)

In absence of the exam, teachers said they would employ a communicatively-oriented methodology, focus on individual students' needs, and use more authentic materials.

*7.2 Ordinary teaching**Impact on content of teaching*

Teachers said that the exam influenced the textbooks they used and that they placed a great deal of emphasis on grammar and vocabulary because they considered them a key to success for Papers 1, 2 and 3 of the exam.

Because grammar, that is Use of English, is the A and Z in FCE .... If you know Grammar well, you will definitely succeed. There is no way you will fail. You might not be able to speak well, but if you write a perfect grammar paper something will happen. They will pass you... It also gets most of the marks (T11)

The exam had a strong influence on the amount of attention teachers devoted to reading and the types of tasks they used in the classroom and influenced the teaching of writing. A great deal of attention was paid in the classroom to the writing tasks that were tested in the exam. The weighting of listening in the exam (only 20 marks were allocated for listening while the rest of the papers received 40 marks each) had a strong influence on the teaching of the skill, causing teachers to omit or to spend less time on listening than on the other skills. Speaking received little attention mainly due to the nature and marking of the skill in the exam and the coaching of students prior to exam administration. Pronunciation was also neglected because teachers believed that it did not directly contribute to the requirements of the exam. The most obvious influence of the exam based on what teachers said, was on the task types teachers used for reading and writing.

*Impact on methods of teaching*

Teachers used traditional methods for the teaching of grammar and vocabulary while the majority did not employ communicative methodologies because they thought that these were not compatible with the principles underlying the exam.

*Classroom assessment*

There was washback on the way teachers designed their classroom tests. This was experienced on the types of tasks employed as well as on the skills tested.

I give tests following the types found in the exam. For example, when I do Use of English, I give them a short text to insert words, fill in the gaps, or transformations that are adjusted to the demands of the exam (T10)

Teachers relied on the textbook materials for their classroom tests which mediated the washback of the exam and stressed that the examination influenced the way they designed classroom tests in previous years as well.

### *7.3 Intense exam preparation*

#### *Impact on contents of teaching*

The majority of the teachers started exam preparation in the third term while several teachers did so at earlier points even the beginning of the school year. Intense exam preparation took place outside regular hours but some teachers did so during ordinary teaching.

The examination influenced the types of materials used during the exam preparation period. Teachers used actual past papers and other commercial publications containing model exam questions or supplementary materials focusing on developing language skills needed in the exam. Teachers also used their own materials based on past papers and practice tests.

#### *Impact on methods of teaching*

Other than the materials used, the exam had a strong washback on the methods of teaching. The methodology teachers used in exam preparation focussed exclusively on preparing students for the requirements of the exam. For example, teachers used a variety of exam-preparation techniques so that students could acquire the necessary test-taking skills needed by the exam ranging from general test-wiseness techniques to more specific teaching to the test strategies (Smith 1990; Gipps 1994), e.g.

Students have to memorise hundreds of prepositions, hundreds of idiomatic expressions, hundreds of .... (T1)

### *7.4. Learning*

Teachers believed that the exam influenced learning leading to memorization of repeated items, standardization of knowledge and unproductive learning.

... we train them within the framework of the exam .. students become... how can I put it? ... a very well-programmed computer which functions without allowing its brain to look for different things, to function independently, to look at language differently. The student faces what will appear in the exam, the standardisation of the topics (T8)

The exam was also believed to create lack of student autonomy and ability to communicate despite their good grammar skills. Students preparing for the exam were believed to be unable to use the language communicatively.

### *7.5. Students*

#### *Students' attitudes towards teaching*

Teachers said that the exam influenced students' attitudes towards teaching, that they were negative towards communicative activities and materials or activities that did not relate to the exam because students believed that such activities did not relate to the requirements of the exam. Students expressed strong desire for predictability according to their teachers. They wanted their teachers to provide them with 'repeated items' and they would get upset if their teachers were not able to prepare them adequately for what was to come in the exam.

*Students' attitudes towards the exam*

Teachers said that the exam was highly valued by students because it was associated with opportunities for professional and educational advancement. Therefore, it became a strong motivation for students to learn the language.

*Students' attitudes towards learning English*

Half of the teachers believed that that the exam made students become interested in learning the language and study harder. The rest believed that students did not enjoy learning the language and used it as a means of passing the exam.

They want to get the Lower. They are not interested in really learning the language .... They learn the language as if it is a paper that will help them find a better job (T10)

*Students' feelings*

Teachers stressed that the examination induced feelings of stress and anxiety in students not only prior to the exam administration but throughout the academic year.

They get stressed.... at the beginning there is fear .... but as the dates of the exam are drawing nearer and with continuous revisions that we do on certain things, they become more confident and feel safer (T12)

These were also increased by teachers' pressure due to frontistiria or parents' expectations.

Parents put a lot of pressure on their children to take up English when they are very young ... as a consequence, if there is some sort of inclination, then the child learns ... if not then this becomes extremely stressful for the child (T14)

Teachers believed that students became bored and demotivated in the classroom because of the nature of the exam, the exam-oriented methodology and the material used.

**8. Summary and discussion of the results**

The analysis of the teachers' interviews showed there was a close relationship between the content of the exam and the teaching and learning that went on in the classroom. Overall, teachers claimed that what was taught and learned in the exam preparatory classes was dominated by the extensive use of exam preparatory materials and teaching to the test practices in order to meet the exam requirements.

Most teachers stressed that the constraining impact of the examination was transferred in ordinary classes, too, where the exam encouraged teachers and students to place more value on the skills and activities that were assessed on the exam and less value on those that were not tested. In short, the syllabus of ordinary classes was also determined by the exam content and adjusted to the exam demands.

Teachers perceived the exam as something making very special and highly specific demands for which the students needed special preparation. The exam was also said to have detrimental effects on students' attitudes towards learning the language, creating feelings of anxiety and making them feel bored and demotivated.

The exam appeared to have negative effects on teachers, too. Due to its high stakes, success on the exam was a way to judge teachers' professional value. This made them feel accountable to a number of stakeholders and in turn led to anxiety and stress.

The results of the study bring the validity of the claim made by UCLES that the FCE exam has a 'positive impact' on teaching and learning into question and are in agreement with the negative views expressed in the local publications (see Section 4) according to which the FCE exam has a constraining influence on teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, teachers' perceptions of the negative influence of the exam, however important they are, are not sufficient evidence for various reasons. First of all, even though teachers pointed to the influence of the exam in intense exam preparation classes, it was not always clear that the exam had actually caused certain practices to occur in ordinary classes. For instance, even though teachers' interviews indicated that the examination influenced the content of their ordinary teaching and classroom assessment (e.g. made them pay more attention to grammar and vocabulary and the written skills rather than to the aural/oral skills), this cannot be attributed to a direct influence of the exam because the exam placed equal emphasis on all four language skills. If the exam were to have an influence on the content of their teaching and classroom assessment as teachers said it did, it would have encouraged them to focus on all skills tested in the exam.

Similarly, teachers' views about the negative influence of the exam on the use of communicative methodology in ordinary classes cannot be substantiated either because they are in contrast with the underlying philosophy of the exam which does not preclude communicative teaching. On the contrary, according to its designers (UCLES, 1994), the exam was in line with pedagogic developments in communicative teaching and learning. If the exam had influenced their teaching as teachers say it did, it would have encouraged them to use communicative activities in the classroom rather than traditional methods.

But if the exam was not to blame for the way things happened in class why was it then that teachers concentrated so much on grammar and paid less attention to the rest of the skills? Why did they not employ communicative activities in class? Why did they not test all skills? It seems that other factors, beyond the exam, contributed to what was happening in the classroom.

For example, teachers' negative attitudes towards the exam seem to have influenced the type of teaching taking place in FCE classes. In addition, there were certain misconceptions on the part of the teachers with regard to the requirements of the exam. For instance, while teachers were familiar with the contents and format of the exam, they did not seem to be aware of the underlying ideas of the exam. Had teachers been more knowledgeable about the underlying principles of the exams, they would have used communicative methodologies and would have developed their students' pronunciation skills.

Views like these point to lack of training also evidenced in the scarcity of work on pronunciation and in the limited work on listening and speaking rather than the influence of the exam.

This amount of controversy among teachers and the lack of understanding of the underlying principles of the exam make it difficult to draw a definite conclusion about the nature of the influence of the exam.

A factor that might have equally contributed to the way teachers did things in class could be attributed to the nature of commercial publications used to prepare students for the exam. Also other external factors operating within the local environment could be responsible for this state of affairs. For instance, certain practices, such as the teaching



of grammar, vocabulary and dictation, could also be the result of the teaching practices in the mainstream Greek schools rather than a direct influence of the exam. Parental intervention with regard to methods used in exam preparation, their views about their children's success as well as about the value of the exam and learning English seem to be having an important influence on what was happening in FCE classes. Finally, equally important was the role of frontistiria and the pressure they imposed on students and teachers in order to achieve exam success within a limited period of time and meet parental expectations.

However, despite the contradictions and shortcomings discussed above, teachers' interviews were important. The data collected were of value because, first of all, they revealed many areas of the influence of the exam and thus helped in mapping the scope of FCE washback. Other than this, they pointed to the existence of other important factors relating to features of the local environment that seem to have an influence on what takes place in the FCE classroom.

### **9. Further Research**

The results of the present study showed that high-stakes tests, powerful as they are, might not be the unique agents for profound changes in an educational context. While the study reiterates the complexity of investigating washback noted by previous studies (Alderson and Wall 1993; Wall 1999; Andrews 2004), it also provides an indication as to the sources of this complexity that can be traced both inside and outside the classroom context.

The picture that emerged from the study is that that factors such as teachers, textbooks, parents and educational institutions seem to be playing an equally important role in the presence of washback in the present context. However, further research is needed to explore the claims teachers made about the negative influence of the exam on aspects of teaching and learning identified, resolve the contradictions and ambiguities discussed earlier, clarify the ways in which these factors interact with each other and identify more clearly the extent of the influence on what is happening in the FCE classroom. It is hoped that further research will provide more insights into the nature of FCE washback in the present context of inquiry and establish a clearer 'evidential link ... between the teaching or learning outcomes and the test properties thought to influence them' (Messick 1996:247). Data collected for the purposes of future research are expected not only to clarify teachers' views but bring into light new aspects of examination impact that are worth investigating further.

### **10. Recommendations**

Several recommendations can be put forth for language teachers preparing students for a high-stakes exam based on the results of the study so as to avoid misunderstanding of the exam requirements that are likely to lead to negative washback on teaching and learning. These apply to school owners and curriculum planners, too. For example, to avoid negative washback from exam preparation, teachers should:

- be aware of the exam requirements. They need to have a sound knowledge of the aims, specifications and administrative procedures of the exam they are preparing for. Putting trust on exam information included in exam textbooks is not enough.
- adapt exam-preparation materials, supplement them with what is missing in the textbooks and/or produce materials to meet the requirements of the exam and the needs of their students.
- familiarise students with the exam and give them a clear picture of the requirements of the exam.

- provide students with informative feedback, that is give students relevant, and meaningful feedback that could help them prepare effectively for the exam as the types of feedback prospective test-takers receive about their ongoing performance are likely to affect them directly.
- cope with the build-up pressure and student anxiety in the weeks leading up to the exam; this may include counselling students who are not doing well, or students who are particularly stressed (e.g. students not sleeping well, getting frequent headaches, feeling that they can not remember things, etc).
- balance teaching and testing in the exam class: be careful with the amount of testing done (e.g. screening, revision, mock exams, etc) since too much focus on testing can highlight students' inadequacies and have a negative impact on self-efficacy.
- establish effective channels of communication, e.g. use student diaries to discover what it is that students do, especially outside class, their difficulties and problems in preparing for the exam, their feelings, test-related anxiety and attempt to allay debilitating anxiety.

Although not involved directly in the present study, there are implications for teacher trainers and educators, too. The following suggestions are aimed at all those who train teachers.

There is a need for teacher educator programmes to include components on how to prepare students for high-stakes exams, for example, train teachers to:

- choose exam-preparation materials: critically educate them as to which exam materials are the most accurate, representative, and appropriate for their own interests, and
- familiarise teachers with the rationale and principles behind various instructional techniques in exam materials and train them how to use them.

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## APPENDIX 1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FCE CONSTRUCTS AND FORMAT

Papers	Test Constructs	Input	Format
<b>Paper 1: Reading Comprehension</b> (1 hour)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding structural and lexical appropriacy.</li> <li>Understanding the gist of a written text and its overall function and message.</li> <li>Following the significant points, even though a few words may be unknown.</li> <li>Selecting specific information from a written text.</li> <li>Recognising opinion and attitude when clearly expressed.</li> <li>Showing detailed comprehension of a text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Section A</u>: discrete sentences</li> <li><u>Section B</u>: three or four written texts, covering a range of text types: narrative, descriptive, expository, discursive, informative, etc.</li> <li>Sources include: literary fiction and non-fiction, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, information leaflets, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Section A</u>: twenty-five discrete four-multiple choice items</li> <li><u>Section B</u>: fifteen four-option multiple choice items spread across three or four texts.</li> </ul>
<b>Paper 2: Composition</b> (1 hour & 30 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using natural and appropriate written language in response to a variety of thematic or situational stimuli</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four short situational prompts or questions on a range of everyday topics</li> <li>One question on each of the three background reading texts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two writing tasks from a choice of five; required length of answer between 120 and 180 words each; the range to include: letters, descriptive, narrative, discursive pieces and written speeches</li> </ul>
<b>Paper 3: Use of English</b> ( 2 hours )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using English at the word or sentence level, including use of correct structural words and forms; correct and appropriate words and sentences; variety of forms in expressing similar meaning; application of word derivation</li> <li>Synthesising information in a piece of correct and appropriate extended writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercises based on short texts and discrete sentences</li> <li>Some visual input (maps, diagrams, etc) in directed writing questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modified cloze</li> <li>Transformation exercise</li> <li>Word formation</li> <li>Sentence building</li> <li>Directed writing task</li> </ul>
<b>Paper 4: Listening</b> (approx. 35 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the gist of spoken text and its overall function and message</li> <li>Following the significant points, even though a few words may be unknown</li> <li>Selecting specific information from a spoken text</li> <li>Recognising tone and attitude when clearly expressed</li> <li>Understanding point of detail in spoken text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three or four authentic and simulated recordings. Sources include: news programmes, news features, conversations, public speeches, announcements, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three or four tasks, with a total of approximately thirty questions</li> <li>Task types may include multiple choice, gap-filling, note-taking, true/false, yes/no, etc</li> </ul>
<b>Paper 5: Speaking</b> (approx. 15 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacting in conversational English in a range of contexts ( everyday to more abstract); demonstrating this through appropriate control of fluency, interactive communication, pronunciation at word and sentence level, accuracy and use of vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt material including photographs, short texts and visual stimuli. The prompt material may be related to optional background reading texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A theme-based conversation between candidate(s) and an examiner: 1. Talking about (a) photograph(s) - 2. Talking about a short text - 3. A communicative activity</li> <li>The interview may be taken singly or in pairs or in a group</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2 – The interview guide

### SECTION 1: Teachers' Biodata

- How long have you been teaching English?
- What are your teaching qualifications?
- Have you had any kind of training: pre-service or in-service?
- Have you taught FCE classes before?
- Are you teaching them this year?

### SECTION 2: Ordinary teaching

- What kinds of material do you use in your ordinary classes? Why is that? What is the nature of this material?
- What skills do you teach? What kind of activities do you use?
- How do you teach your ordinary classes? Which methods do you use? Can you give me some examples?
- Do you use communicative activities in the classroom (group work, pair work, role plays etc)? What do you do? Can you give me some examples? How did the students react? Positively/negatively?
- How often do you test your students? Do you write these tests yourself? What do you usually test? What is the format of these tests?

### SECTION 3: FCE exam preparation

- When do you start exam preparation for the FCE? How often do you do exam preparation?
- What kinds of material do you use during exam preparation? Why is that? How do you use this material?
- How do you teach your exam preparation classes? Do you use any special techniques? Can you give me a few examples?
- Do you think that the time devoted to exam preparation should be minimized or maximized? Why is that?

### SECTION 4: General views on teaching and the FCE

- What do you think of the FCE exam?
- Do you think that your teaching is affected by the FCE exam? In what ways?
- Do you think that students' learning is affected by the exam? In what ways?
- What changes would you initiate in class if your students didn't take the FCE exam at the end of the year?

### SECTION 5: General views about students

- Why do you think your students learn English?
- What do your students think of the FCE exam? Why do they want to get the FCE certificate?
- Do you think that the FCE exam motivates your students to learn?
- Do you think that the FCE exam affects your students' psychology?
- What do your students think of exam preparation?

**APPENDIX 3 – Teachers' biodata**

Teachers' Identity & Sex	Teaching Experience (Years)	Teaching Qualifications	Other Qualifications & Training	Frontistirio Owner	Native speaker of English	Language of the interviews
T1: F	3	CPE (UCLES)				English
T2: M	5	CPE (UCLES)	BA in Psychology	✓		English
T3: M	12	BA in Education in UK	MEd in UK		✓	English
T4: M	10	BA studies in UK	MA studies in UK			English
T5: F	3	CPE (UCLES) & BA in English Language and Literature				English
T6: F	5	CPE (UCLES)	BA in Psychology	✓		English
T7: F	10	CPE (UCLES) & UCLES/RSA DOTE	Foundation Course in ELT Methodology & Short Literature Course in UK			Greek
T8: F	7	CPE (UCLES) & UCLES/RSA COTE & UCLES/RSA DOTE				Greek
T9: M	8	UCLES/RSA CELTA & UCLES/RSA DELTA	In-service training in UK		✓	Greek
T10: F	5	CPE (UCLES)	BA in Education	✓		Greek
T11: F	10	CPE (UCLES)	BA in Education & MA in Educational Psychology in UK			Greek
T12: F	6	BA in English Language and Literature				Greek
T13: F	8	BA in English Language and Literature & UCLES/RSA DOTE	Introductory Course in ELT Methodology			Greek
T14: F	16	CPE (UCLES) & UCLES/RSA DOTE	Introductory Course in ELT Methodology			Greek
T15: F	18	CPE (UCLES) & BA in English Language and Literature	Various in-service seminars			Greek