

Univerzita Karlova

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav anglického jazyka a didaktiky

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE



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The Washback Effect of the Czech ‘Maturita’ Exam: the Students’ Perspective
,Washback‘ efekt maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka: perspektiva studentů

Praha, 2022

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V Praze dne 6.1.2022

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Ráda bych poděkovala vedoucímu své práce, PhDr. Tomáši Gráfovi, Ph.D. za trpělivost, ochotu, a za to, že mi šel jako učitel příkladem v rámci celého mého studia.

Chci také poděkovat za podporu svým nejbližším, díky kterým jsem měla sílu studium dokončit.

A v neposlední řadě děkuji všem, kteří mi věnovali svůj čas účastí ve výzkumu.

Abstrakt

Cílem této diplomové práce je pomocí dotazníkového šetření mezi studenty posledních ročníků českých gymnázií zjistit, zda a v jaké podobě dochází na těchto školách v hodinách anglického jazyka k takzvanému washback efektu v souvislosti s maturitní zkouškou a pokusit se stanovit, jakým způsobem je možné případný negativní dopad minimalizovat.

Anglický termín ‚washback effect‘ označuje fenomén, ke kterému dochází, když jsou kurzy zakončeny zkouškou, a který popisuje, jakým způsobem ovlivňuje závěrečné testování studentů samotnou formu výuky a všechny její účastníky. Aplikovaná lingvistika tento jev popisuje a zkoumá již dlouho a ve světě vzniklo množství empirických studií zaměřených na konkrétní projevy washback efektu u jazykových zkoušek. Tato práce si klade za cíl navázat na zjištění již publikovaných prací a aplikovat je do českého prostředí na současnou podobu maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka.

Práce byla prvotně inspirována situacemi pozorovanými při násleších v hodinách angličtiny na jednom pražském gymnáziu, které se uskutečnily v rámci přípravy studentů Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy na pedagogickou praxi. Pro ujasnění zaměření práce byl následně formou polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se čtyřmi studenty posledních ročníků pražských gymnázií proveden předvýzkum. Zatímco v prvotní fázi výzkumu bylo možné studentskou perspektivu jen odhadovat, ve druhé fázi byly zkoumány skutečné postoje studentů, které zformovaly zaměření této práce. Diplomová práce bude ve výzkumu perspektivy studentů pokračovat dotazníkovým šetřením, které by mělo poskytnout jasnější obraz o tom, zda a na základě jakých faktorů washback efekt vzniká. Zatímco velká část empirických studií na toto téma je zpracovávána z pohledu učitelů a s ohledem na to, jak jejich metody přispívají ke vzniku pozitivního, či negativního washback efektu ve výuce, pouze menší část studií zkoumá, jak konkrétní metody působí na studenty samotné a jak je ovlivňují.

Cílem práce je pokusit se zahrnout do zkoumání washback efektu perspektivu těch, které zavedení nové centralizované podoby maturity a tím pádem i přizpůsobování směru, kterým se výuka angličtiny ubírá, ovlivnilo nejvíce. Na základě prvotního šetření se zdá, že pozitivní/příznivé formy washback efektu lze docílit takovým stylem výuky, který dává studentům více prostoru k procvičování jazyka tím, že jim umožňuje ve větší míře hodiny aktivně spoluvytvářet (tzv. ‚learner-centred approach‘). K negativnímu washback efektu naopak může vést taková forma výuky, která je vytvářena pouze na základě učitelova plánu hodiny (tzv. ‚teacher-centred approach‘) a při níž učitel lpí na výuce směřované jen ke zkoušce samotné (tzv. ‚teaching to the test‘). Díky pohledu většího vzorku studentů by mohlo být lépe identifikovatelné, zda je možné cíleně směřovat k příznivé formě washback efektu a jak konkrétně pozitivní či negativní washback efekt v hodinách vzniká.

Práce bude vypracována v anglickém jazyce.

Klíčová slova: washback efekt, maturita, maturitní zkouška, dotazník, gymnázium, testování, hodnocení, cermat

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to ascertain whether and to what extent English language lessons at Czech secondary schools are affected by the so-called washback effect related to the final leaving examination (“maturita”), and to attempt to define how this potential negative impact may be minimized.

The washback effect phenomenon occurs when a (language) course is concluded by a final examination, and describes how such an examination influences the actual curriculum, the instruction as such, and all the participants. Applied linguistics offers a number of both theoretical and empirical studies conducted worldwide which focus on the particular aspects of the washback effect occurring during language examinations. This thesis strives to follow up on the findings of these empirical studies and apply them to the current centralised Czech form of the English “maturita” examination.

The thesis was initially inspired by students’ observations during English lessons at a Czech grammar school, which were a part of pedagogical education at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University. After establishing the focus of the paper, preliminary research in the form of semi-structured interviews with four students in the final grades at Prague grammar schools was conducted. While this pre-research study allowed only for an estimation of the students’ perspective, the second stage examined the students’ actual opinions, which formed the focal point of this paper. The thesis expands on the students’ perspective via questionnaires, which are to provide a clearer picture on the potential emergence of the washback effect, and the aspects of its occurrence. Whereas a major part of the empirical research on this topic is conducted from the teachers’ point of view and with regards to their methods contributing to either positive or negative washback effect in education, only a minority of washback research examines how the specific methods affect the students themselves and how they influence the learning process.

The aim of the thesis is to attempt to incorporate the washback effect analysis also from the point of view of those who are most affected by the implementation of the new, centralized form of the final examination (“maturita”), and therefore by the adjustments in English language lessons as such. Based on the preliminary research, it seems that positive/beneficial forms of washback effect may be achieved by such style of instruction that provides the students with more space to practice the language by allowing them to actively participate in the lessons’ structure and content (so-called “learner-centred approach”). Negative washback effect, on the other hand, may stem from education based solely on the teacher’s lesson plan (so-called “teacher-centred approach”), where the teacher narrows the curriculum to focus only on test-based tasks (so-called “teaching to the test”). A larger sample may provide a better identification of the aspects which consciously aim for a beneficial form of the washback effect, and of the specific factors in the occurrence of positive or negative washback effect in lessons.

Keywords: washback effect, maturita examination, questionnaire, grammar school, testing, assessment, cermat

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List of abbreviations

CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
Cermat	Centrum pro zjišťování výsledků vzdělávání
CLT	Critical language testing
ČSÚ	Český statistický úřad / Czech Statistical Office
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
NATO STANAG	NATO Standardization Agreement
NKÚ	Nejvyšší kontrolní úřad / Supreme Audit Office
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
RVP	Rámcový vzdělávací program / Framework Education Programme
RVP: G	Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia / Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education (Grammar Schools)
SCC	Secondary School Certificate (Bangladesh)
TTT	Teacher talking time

1 Introduction

Testing and assessment are part of one's journey through the educational system, wherever the learner is born. However, it was not until 1993 when Alderson and Wall laid the groundwork by publishing their Washback Hypothesis (Alderson and Wall, 1993) that the focus of research gradually shifted from the merely theoretical approach to empirical studies focusing on various stakeholders in high-stakes testing. Moreover, with the rising tendency of using centralised EFL (English as a foreign language) tests being introduced as gateways to gaining more opportunities all around the world, which usually cause changes in some areas and produce some unintended consequences along the way (Cheng et al., 2015), it becomes essential to expand our understanding on how these reforms impact not only the micro-level of the classroom, but also the macro-level of entire societies and their futures.

This thesis aims to conduct an empirical study on the washback effect of the EFL school-leaving examination in the Czech Republic, the so-called matura examination, by distributing a questionnaire among students in their final two years of grammar school. The goal is to ascertain, whether the learners experience washback, consequentially if the effect is beneficial, or harmful, and ultimately attempt to determine what specifically minimises the potential negative washback effect in language learning classrooms. The study focuses on washback to learning, and follows findings from my preliminary research study conducted in Spring 2018, which suggested that learner-centred approach to teaching and striving towards internal motivation in students could potentially lead to positive washback. Even though the present empirical study was somewhat impacted by the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, as the way learners participate in their lessons went through a significant change due to limited personal contacts and mandated remote teaching in the Czech Republic, the focus of the study remained, as washback impacts the entire course of one's grammar school experience in EFL classes, rather than merely its conclusion.

In the Czech Republic specifically, the implementation of the standardised school-leaving examination in 2011 triggered a significant shift in curricula at the secondary school level, but its influence has not always been perceived as beneficial. The long-term goal of the state school-leaving examination upon its introduction was to improve teaching, but there is a lack of empirical evidence focusing on how this examination influences the actual teaching and all its participants, the so-called stakeholders, be it teachers, learners, parents or the society.

Washback effect occurs when a course is concluded by a test, and washback research examines how testing influences the actual teaching, curriculum design and all the participants of the course (McKinley, Thompson 2018: 1). Washback itself is divided into two forms, the positive (beneficial) washback effect, which is considered to be a goal in language testing, and the negative (harmful) washback effect. The majority of research covers washback to teaching, as teachers are considered to “play a vital role in bringing about washback effects” (Štěpáník 2018: 437; Cheng et al. 2015: 464), however, the learners and washback to learning are often under-represented (Shih, 2007: 137; Cheng, et. al, 2015: 462), even though it is the learners who face the largest impact on their lives through high-stakes testing. Although most empirical research suggests that including multiple perspectives on washback while striving to always include teachers leads to the most balanced results (Green 2006; Bailey 1999), this thesis aims to limit its scope only to students and specifically to grammar school students, so that it provides greater insight for future and current grammar school English teachers. As this is the first empirical study focusing on the EFL maturita examination in the Czech Republic, it was decided to strive for a limited scope in order to achieve clear conclusions, and possibly to provide the foundation for further research of washback in this context.

The primary incentive to focus on the grammar school students’ perspective on the EFL maturita examination arose in Winter 2017 during an MA seminar, Observations in ELT, in which university TEFL students observed three real grammar school teachers in their own

English lessons and then analysed the teaching situations. The analysis included subsequent group discussions in which students confronted their subjective views both with the perspective of their lecturer and the specific teacher observed. One of the most prominent discussion topics was how the maturita examination was incorporated in the lessons. The three teachers' methods differed, but the possible approaches proved to be a divisive topic considering most of the discussing parties were teachers with highly subjective ideas about what the central focus of maturita courses should be. Some of the methods implemented by the observed teachers resembled 'teaching to the test' (Alderson, Wall 1993: 118, 125), which implies narrowing the curriculum in order to focus on solely test-based tasks, and also that examinations can have significant impact on the content of English lessons, but that the teachers do not tend to alter the actual teaching methodology used once a new exam has been implemented (Wall, 1996: 348; Cheng, 1997: 49 in Bailey, 1999: 19). Specifically, the observed teachers sometimes seemed to resort to teacher-centred methods, and to drilling facts instead of focusing on the communicative aspect of the maturita examination. Even though the attempted analysis was intriguing, the actual grammar school students' perspective was always missing, and only speculated about, which inspired an approach that would include their perspective.

The subsequent qualitative pre-research study was conducted in Spring 2018 using the semi-structured individual interview method with 4 final years grammar school students in order to finalise, whether washback effect of the EFL maturita examination should be pursued further and to see what the actual learners perceived to be the most challenging aspects of studying for the exam in order to establish the focus of the present study. Half of the participants seemed to have been experiencing positive washback, and the other half negative washback. The research further suggested that when a student is motivated and pushed, washback appears to be overtly positive, and that when teachers resort to narrowing their curriculum by teaching to the test and making their lessons teacher-centred it appears to result in negative washback. The interview

results confirmed the intended focus of this thesis and suggested that expanding the sample while primarily focusing on grammar students' perspective could lead to greater understanding of how washback influences the grammar school students' experience in the Czech Republic and possibly to practical implications for grammar-school teachers.

This thesis aims to conduct a study focusing on how learners experience washback in the EFL courses at grammar schools as influenced by the school-leaving matura examination using a questionnaire. The goal of the study is to examine, what type of washback arises in EFL courses at Czech grammar schools and to analyse how specific lesson components influenced by the introduction of a high-stakes centralised state examination influence the learners' motivation, experience of washback and acquisition of English. As I have experienced the state matura examination in English both as a student, and subsequently as a teacher, I hope to be able to implement the findings of this thesis in my own teaching practice. In the Czech Republic, the media tend to depict the matura examination using controversial negative headlines, emphasising the percentage of unsuccessful students and by focusing on individual ill-worded questions in the written part of the exam. Furthermore, some teachers and parents tend to use the examination as a negative external motivator to push students to greater achievements, yet research suggests that using external motivation almost always negatively impacts the learner (Shih 2007: 143).

The design of the Czech state matura school-leaving examination has caused controversy ever since its implementation both among the participants and the general public, and, moreover, the representation in mass media is rather negative. The plethora of non-academic articles focusing on the impact of matura contrasts to the lack of academic and empirical research into the examination itself (Štěpáník, 438). What largely contributes to the issue is the fact that the actual results of the matura examinations and their analyses that could lead to feedback-based improvement to teaching are not made public (Straková, Simonová 479; Štěpáník 439). It

seems that the students themselves are the group that is the most influenced by the introduction of a centralised school-leaving exam, and yet a group that is given the least space to comment on it, both in the Czech Republic and in empirical studies on washback.

The thesis consists of two parts theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part focuses on the theoretical background of washback, considers previous empirical research, delves into the specifics of the Czech final-leaving examination, and delineates the research gap this thesis aims to fill. The empirical section then includes the summary of the preliminary research study from 2018, the methodology of the present study then stems from both the conclusions of the preliminary study and previous research. The methodology section describes the design of the learner questionnaire used to gather participant data. The empirical section then analyses the results of the questionnaire both qualitatively, and quantitatively. The thesis is concluded by a discussion section implicating practical application of the present research in teaching practice.

2 Theoretical background

This chapter summarises the research background on testing and washback until 2020 ranging from theoretical concepts to empirical studies. The first sub-chapter focuses on testing and assessment in order to contextualise the concept of washback and high-stakes testing. The second sub-chapter examines the concept of washback, its main terminology and some of its theoretical background. The third sub-chapter summarises empirical studies on washback focusing primarily on their methodology and findings. The fourth sub-chapter delves into the EFL Maturita Examination in the Czech Republic, namely in terms of its development, aims, its current form, and reception, and also covers previous research in this context. The historical development of the examination is limited only to the changes to the examination that could have impacted the participants of this study, who were to graduate either in Spring 2021 or Spring 2022. The fifth and final sub-chapter describes the specific research gap this thesis aims to fill based on the theoretical groundwork in this chapter, and lays the foundation for the subsequent chapter on methodology.

2.1 Testing and assessment

In order to contextualise washback, we first need to consider the context of assessment and testing in language teaching practice. There are two types of assessment: formative and summative (Hughes 2002: 5). Summative assessment is used as a measure of the students' achievement or success after a certain amount of time, such as, for instance, the end of a semester. (Hughes 2002: 5; Fulcher, & Davidson 2007: 376). Summative assessment can be also used as a motivator for the students' improvement or provide the opportunity for comparison between individual students, schools, etc. (Starý 2006). Formative assessment focuses on the process of learning and is meant to encourage further improvement of one's skills, and the learners are also encouraged to observe their own progress using self-assessment

(Hughes 2002: 5; Fulcher, & Davidson 2007: 372).

“Large-scale high-stakes examinations have long been used for selection purposes in education and employment [...], and have been valued as ways to encourage the development of talent and to upgrade performance of schools and colleges” (Cheng et al. 2015: 439). Tests are often used as measurement tools that should demonstrate the quality of certain schools, curricula, or even of an entire country’s level of education (i.e., an international educational ranking system based on standardised test results) (Shohamy 2017).

The majority of research covers washback to teaching (see, for instance, Shohamy 1992, Hughes 1988, Cheng 1997), as teachers are considered to “play a vital role in bringing about washback effects” (Štěpáník 2018: 437; Cheng et al. 2015: 464). However, the learners and washback to learning are often under-represented (Shih 2007: 137; Cheng et. al. 2015: 462), even though it is the learners who face the largest impact on their lives through high-stakes testing.

The students’ experience of the lessons differs from that of the teachers (Green 2006; Bailey 1999), and teachers sometimes make claims of their methodology that do not always translate to their actual teaching in classrooms (Cheng 1997: 49 in Bailey 1999: 19), which means that the way learners perceive the lessons’ components is not comparable to the teacher’s perspective and might not reflect the teacher’s original intention. That is why empirical studies into washback to learning are a vital in attempting to seek practical application of washback findings in teaching.

2.1.1 Reliability

Language tests are reliable if they measure consistently, where a test-taker would achieve a somewhat comparable result if the test were taken on a different day, and, in turn, tests are

unreliable if one's score is considerably different depending on the day's circumstances (Hughes 2002: 3). In order to promote reliability in tests, test-makers should eliminate “unclear instructions, ambiguous questions, or items that result in guessing on the part of the test-takers” (Hughes 2002:3).

2.1.2 Validity

A test is valid when it measures, what it is designed to measure (Chromý 2014: 17). Validity is also related to how test scores are interpreted (Messick 1996: 246). There are several types of validity: for instance, consequential validity is related to ethical concerns (Cheng 2014), systemic validity, which focuses on the effect a test has on classroom practice (Berry 1994 in Bailey 1999: 4), construct validity (Alderson, & Wall 1993: 7), and others.

Messick (1996) asserts that even a validated test can be subverted by excessive coaching or examination strategies being emphasised in the preparation for a test, which could “increase test scores without correspondingly improving the skills measured by the test,” and the validity of the interpretation of thusly achieved test scores could be impeded. Messick contrasts subverting test validity with test validity being improved if teaching practices emphasize test familiarization and lead to reducing anxiety (Messick 1996: 246).

2.1.3 Critical language testing (CLT)

Recent research has focused on Critical language testing (CLT) (see, for instance, Shohamy 2001, 2008, 2017), which examines “the hidden agendas of the testing industry regarding high-stakes testing” (Shohamy 2001 in Cheng 2015: 437). Language testing includes certificate examinations, school leaving examinations, entrance examinations, but there are also international tests such as, for instance, PISA (Shohamy 2017: 441). Previous CLT research has focused on how testing can be misused and on what unintended consequences it can have, such as, for instance, “discrimination against immigrants and minority groups” (Shohamy 2017:

441). Some have termed tests to be “gatekeeping mechanisms” (McNamara 2000: 10), others have argued for the terms “political use and abuse of language tests” (Shohamy 2001).

The consequences of tests need to be a part of the discussion focusing on high-stakes testing. A learners’ results are not only used to reflect on that individual’s performance, but they can be also used in assessing the quality of schools and misused if governing bodies “take punitive measures” (Ali et al 2020: 10). Shohamy poses several questions concerning the consequences of tests, and emphasises the need to incorporate test consequences in language testing: “Are [the tests] meant to evaluate the level of language proficiency or as sanctions for discipline and control?” (Shohamy 2017: 446) In short, high-stakes tests should be examined in their specific context, so that their unintended consequences on the stakeholders can be prevented (Bachman, & Palmer 1996 in Bailey 1999: 5).

2.2 The washback effect

Due to the sheer number of published research on washback, there are also incredibly many definitions of washback, some being straight-forward (Bailey 1999: 3), and others, somewhat, complex (Spratt 2005: 21, Chan 2019, Wei 2017). In short, research on washback examines how testing impacts, for instance, teaching and learning (Hughes 2002: 1).

The concept of the washback effect was originally introduced by Alderson and Wall in 1993. Until then, research used to focus on the *impact* of tests, an umbrella term under which the term *washback* was sometimes subsumed (Cheng 2015: 438), and the assertions about the impact of language testing “used to be based on assumption rather than empirical evidence” (Taylor 2005: 155). Impact was a term that was in use for the macro-level impact of testing, while washback was used on the micro-level of classroom impact (Cheng 2015: 438). Sometimes, the term “backwash” is used instead of *washback*; while “backwash” seems to occur in general education literature, language education literature prefers “washback” (Andrews 1994 in Bailey

1999: 8); however, the terms can be also used interchangeably (Cheng, & Watanabe 2004: xi).

Washback impacts not only the learners, but also the teachers, the administrators, the material developers, the curriculum, the parents, the employers and others (Hughes 1993 in Bailey 1996: 262; McKinley, & Thompson 2018: 1; Saville et al. 2004 in Cheng, & Watanabe). Usually, research terms the parties impacted by the implementation of an examination the stakeholders, and it is established that in order for washback to be beneficial, the stakeholders should be included in the design of the high-stakes testing (Shohamy 1992: 514) and collaborate with each other (Cheng 2015).

2.2.1 Harmful (negative) versus beneficial (positive) washback

Washback is divided into two forms, the positive (beneficial) washback effect, which is considered a goal of language testing, and the negative (harmful) washback effect. When a test causes positive washback, it is argued that it causes innovation to the language teaching curriculum (Alderson, Wall 1993: 222 in Fulcher, & Davidson 2007), includes authentic language tasks (Messick 1996: 6 in Bailey 1999), tests the abilities that need improving using appropriate tasks, and its implementation necessitates for the primary participants, learners and teachers, to understand its demands (Hughes 2002: 55). In order for tests and assessment to have beneficial washback, testing should test while using authentic language samples in listening, speaking, reading (Messick 1996, 241).

A test leads to negative washback when ‘teaching to the test’ occurs (Bailey 1996) and when a test is implemented as a prescriptive tool without including the participants in the design (Shohamy 1992: 514). However, most research also warns against assuming simple causality in the relationship between test and washback (Alderson, Wall 1993: 225 in Fulcher, & Davidson 2007), as there are far more factors that come into play (Messick 1996: 17 in Bailey 1999). For instance, washback cannot always be easily differentiated from the good/bad educational practices (Messick 1996: 242) and should be evaluated in the given context of the

educational system, the society in which it is implemented, and in terms of the tests' potential outcomes (Bachman, & Palmer 1996 in Bailey 1999: 5).

2.2.2 Washback to teaching

The implementation of tests inevitably influences the way the subject is taught and sometimes also the motivation of the stakeholder. In the majority of empirical studies focusing on high-stakes examinations, it is shown that washback is more likely to be negative, even more so when such an examination becomes “not the final stage of a process of learning, but become[s] the beginning, middle, and end” (Prodromu 1995: 13). Lumley and Stonemen observed disunity in the learners' perception of test preparation courses in that they did not actually perceive those as “opportunity for language learning” (2000: 75 in Spratt 2005: 12), which then Spratt related to teachers heavily focusing on exam-oriented materials in order to satisfy their students (2005: 12). There are multiple factors that contribute to such a perspective, namely, a possible miscommunication between teachers and their students, a difference in teacher beliefs and learner beliefs, or simply the pressure of having one's students' school-leaving examination results reflecting on their professional standing. However, Spratt (2005: 24) showed there was no evidence that proved test coaching to lead to better test results.

Another term for test coaching is ‘teaching to the test’ which is what occurs when teachers resort to overly emphasise test-based task in their course design and narrow the curriculum to do this (Alderson & Wall 1993 in Douglas: 224). Furaidah et al. (2015: 49) even use the term ‘drilling’ in order to differentiate between more communicative tasks and test-preparation tasks, which they observe to cause less language production and language learning opportunities by the learners and more teacher-centred lessons. Some researchers even link washback to teaching with teachers' motivation, in that an implementation of a test could lead to teachers being demotivated in their job, when their reputation depends on the success/fail rates of their students

(see, for instance, Thuy Nhan 2013 in Thu & Dinh 2020: 163). Prodrumu links testing to imposed extrinsic motivation, which, while imposing discipline, would lead to teacher-centred lessons, and, inevitably, negative washback to the learner (Prodromu 1995: 14)

The degree of washback to teaching tends to also be related to the teachers' perception of their students' competence: if the teachers believe the learner to be competent, washback appears to be less intensive (Furaidah, et. al, 2015: 56). Furthermore, research shows that students' experience of the lessons differs from that of the teachers (Green 2006, Bailey 1999), and teachers sometimes hold beliefs and make claims about their methodology that do not always translate to their actual teaching in classrooms (Cheng 1997: 49 in Bailey 1999: 19; Ménéová 2015: 36).

2.2.3 Washback to learning

The empirical studies on washback predominantly focus on washback to teaching rather than washback to learning (Bailey 1996: 265), however, the empirical studies that specifically focus on washback to learning have also found evidence for why learner perspective should be given greater emphasis. In their Sri Lankan study on washback, Alderson and Wall (Bailey 1999: 37) emphasise the need of triangulation when conducting an empirical study. Bailey further argues that washback studies should include at least the teachers' and learners' perceptions in order to analyse both 'washback to the programme' and 'washback to the learner' (Bailey 1996: 273). Green's empirical study of IELTS courses shows that teachers and learners typically experience the content of lessons differently, as both perceive the frequency of individual activities in conflicting ways, which led Green to question, if one can even assume for the washback effect to teachers and learners to be comparable (Green 2006: 115).

There is also a clear relation between extrinsic motivation and test implementation, where the implementation is meant to achieve greater and/or more comparable, or objective test results by introducing the actual test as the ultimate goal of a particular process of learning. However,

this can demotivate the learner in the long run by their intrinsic motivation not being engaged enough (Prodromu 1995: 14) due to the course being skewed towards test-based tasks, as opposed to real-life application of their skills.

2.3.4 Washback studies in the Czech Republic

There were only two empirical studies that focused on washback in the Czech context, one focused on the NATO STANAG, a standardised EFL examination, and the other on the maturita examination, both of them specifically examining washback to teaching.

In 2010, Svoboda conducted an empirical study at the University of Defence (Univerzita obrany) in Brno using a questionnaire. He based the study on the Washback hypothesis (Alderson, & Wall 1993:120-121), and aimed to ascertain the direction of washback to teaching (Svoboda 2010: 88). The study indicated that there is beneficial washback due to the teachers (8 participants) being detrimental to the direction of it, stemming from the fact they were both the teachers and the examiners in this particular case (Svoboda 2010: 90).

The second empirical study was conducted in 2018 (Štěpáník) and specifically focused on the Czech maturita examination and its washback to teaching, utilising the Washback hypothesis as well (Alderson, & Wall 1993:120-121). There were 16 participants that took part in semi-structured interviews. The study indicated a negative impact to the formative assessment of the learners, as the implementation of the examination caused some strategy coaching and eliminated the creative aspect of language production (writing) due to the requirements of the examination (Štěpáník 2018: 463). Overall, the study highlighted the need for the common examination data to be made public, and demonstrated the need for extensive academic research into the maturita examination and washback (Štěpáník 2018: 466).

2.4 The Czech maturita examination system

In the Czech Republic, four-year secondary education concludes with the maturita school-

leaving examination, which corresponds to the ISCED 3A level (Šťastný 2016: 2). Passing the matura examination is necessary for continuing into tertiary education. The current form of the Czech matura examination works in two parallel examination systems: the standardised state matura system which is termed ‘společná část,’ identical for all types of secondary level schools, and the second ‘profilová část’ administered by the individual schools. The test-takers usually register for their state examination in early December¹ by submitting an official application in which they select examinations from both systems according to the instructions by Cermat (the common examination) and their school’s headmaster (the profile examination), and subsequently take the examination in Spring. If the test-takers fail the Spring date examination, they are allowed 2 resit attempts starting a year² after their original examination date.³

2.4.1 The development of the matura examination format

The development of the centralised matura examination began in the 1990s, and was first legislated in 2004 (Andrýsková 2017: 20), however, the examination itself was first implemented in Spring 2011 after a postponement from 2010. Initially, the design distinguished two levels of difficulty, intending for the higher level to become a substitution for entrance examination to universities. The state administered two-level common part of the matura examination consisted of two compulsory examinations: Czech language examination, and either foreign language or mathematics examination, and an optional subject⁴ examination

¹Maturitní zpravodaj 2019/č.52. Accessed 15 January 2021. https://maturita.cermat.cz/files/files/zpravodaj/Cermat_MZ_52_19.pdf

² The same one-year rule restriction for re-taking centralised examinations also occurs in Bangladesh with the SCC examination (Sultana, 2018:2).

³Portál jednotlivé zkoušky. Užitečné informace. Accessed 14 December 2020. <https://pjz.cermat.cz/Info/UzitecneInfo.aspx>

⁴ The optional subjects were mathematics, social sciences, biology, geography, etc., but in the initial two-level model, the students were also able to choose the higher level of difficulty of Czech language and foreign language examinations as their supplemental optional examinations, which, if the student failed, would not result in failing the entire examination. Whereas if the student failed in one of the two compulsory subjects he chose, the failed

(Andrýsková 2017: 28). In 2013, the design of the examination changed to the current one-level difficulty model.

Since 2013 until the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the following model was in place: the state matura examination consisted of two compulsory examinations (Czech language and foreign language or mathematics), and the maximum of two optional examinations. The Czech language examination in the common examination consisted of a centrally distributed didactic test, a centrally distributed writing examination, and an oral examination administered by the individual schools based on the common examination rules. The assessment of the written examinations was centralised, the students' answer sheets were computer processed and their writing examinations were corrected by designated official assessors, and thus were not processed by the students' schools themselves to ensure an objective assessment. The second examination system, working in parallel with the 'common' state matura examination, is the school 'profile' examination, which includes two to three compulsory examinations, and the maximum of two optional examinations.⁵ In September 2015 there was a significant innovation to the school administered 'profile' foreign language examination, through which it was legislated for headmasters to choose whether their students would be allowed to substitute their profile foreign language examination using a certificate above B1 level of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).⁶

In March 2020, a regulation to the state matura examination was legislated⁷ due to prolonged

attempt would result in failing the entire examination, and in having to re-take the failed subject in its entirety at a later date.

⁵ This information was originally accessed at the official website of the matura examination at <https://novamaturita.cz>, which is no longer valid. The same information is listed on the newer and currently active website <https://maturita.ceremat.cz/menu/maturitni-zkouska> as of November 2021.

⁶ *iHned*. Místo maturity z cizího jazyka nově stačí jazykový certifikát. Ale jen na vybraných školách. Accessed 12 October 2020. <https://domaci.hn.cz/c1-64652960-misto-maturity-z-ciziho-jazyka-nove-staci-jazykovy-certifikat-ale-jen-na-vybranych-skolach>

⁷ Zákon č. 135/2020 Sb. Accessed 15 April 2020. <https://maturita.ceremat.cz/files/files/zakon-vyhlaska/zakon135-2020.pdf>

remote learning caused by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, and the final year students not being allowed to participate in inclass learning. The change enacted by the regulation removed the writing examination from the state examination system for the Spring 2020 examination date, and allowed for alternative assessment using all students' previous term's results, if the test-takers had not been allowed to return to their schools by 1 June 2020. Ultimately, the final year students were permitted to return to schools by 11 May 2020, and sat their examinations which commenced on 1 June 2020 with the 'didactic' tests. In comparison to the preceding year, the examination dates were delayed by about a month.⁸

The Spring 2021 school year's matura examination plan was announced by the end of January 2021. However, the plan kept changing until March 2021. At first, the common ('společná část') examination was supposed to consist of a centrally distributed 'didactic' test, and the school coordinated profile ('profilová část') examination to subsequently consist of both a writing examination, to be newly designed and assessed by the schools, and an oral examination which should then focus on only one umbrella topic for the entire examination time, as opposed to focusing on several topics throughout various prescribed tasks, as it previously did. The profile examination was to remain as determined by the individual schools. To put it briefly, it seemed as if the two previously largely separate systems were to be merged for that particular school year in an attempt to expedite the examination process. In March 2021 it was announced that both the oral examination and the writing examination were optional.⁹

In summary, the matura examination system has not remained constant ever since its inception. Even though the current worldwide pandemic has impacted some aspects of it, such

⁸ The original dates were: state writing examinations (8-30 April 2020), state didactic tests (4-6 May 2020), oral examinations, both state and profile examinations, (16 May 2020 - 10 June 2020). (Maturitní zpravodaj 2019/č.52)

⁹ *Novinky.cz*. PŘEHLEDNĚ: Kdy a jak proběhnou maturity a přijímačky na SŠ. Accessed 13 March 2021. <https://www.novinky.cz/veda-skoly/clanek/prehledne-kdy-a-jak-probehnou-maturity-a-prijimacky-na-ss-40353578>

as delaying the test dates, it did not directly cause harm to the examination system itself. Rather, it appears as if the pandemic merely exposed the underlying issues of the system.¹⁰ (“Pandemie v přímém přenosu obnažila problémy českého školství. Co je potřeba změnit?,” Deník N, 2021).

2.4.2 The EFL matura examination format

As this thesis specifically examines the washback effect on learning in English lessons at Czech grammar schools, the following paragraphs summarise the main alterations to the format of the EFL examination itself in order to outline its aspects that have certainly influenced how teachers have been teaching in the recent years, and consequently might have impacted the learners included in this study. As the two forms of the examination are concerned, the foreign language examinations specifically can be taken both in the common examination and in the profile examination, however, the test-takers are currently¹¹ not allowed to sit both examination forms and can only select one. Furthermore, since 2015 the headmasters of individual secondary level schools can choose to waive their students’ foreign language examination if they provide a language certificate corresponding to language ability above B1 level.¹²

In the years before the common examination was implemented, the EFL examination at grammar schools typically consisted of an oral examination in which the students drew one number from a list of topics of about twenty-five items (ranging from geographical English-speaking countries topics to more specific cultural topics and personal life topics), had fifteen

¹⁰ *DeníkN*. Pandemie v přímém přenosu obnažila problémy českého školství. Co je potřeba změnit? Accessed 29 June 2021. <https://denikn.cz/651517/pandemie-v-primem-prenosu-obnazila-problemy-ceskeho-skolstvi-co-je-potreba-zmenit/>

¹¹ In the past, it was up to the headmasters, whether the test-takers are to be allowed to choose to take the same subject examination both in the common and in the profile examinations. One was then for example allowed to sit for EFL examination both in the common form, consisting of the writing examination (centrally distributed and corrected), the didactic test (centrally distributed and corrected) and the oral examination (administered by the schools but according to the rules of the common examination), and in the profile form, which was to be designed by the test-takers’ individual schools.

¹² *Novinky.cz*. Mezinárodní certifikát místo maturity z jazyka? Vyhláška budí rozporuplné reakce. Accessed 10 April 2021. <https://www.novinky.cz/veda-skoly/clanek/mezinarodni-certifikat-misto-maturity-z-jazyka-vyhlasaka-budi-rozporuplne-reakce-329064>

minutes to prepare and then led a structured oral monologue about a given topic and answering supplemental questions from two examiners (usually a student's English teacher and one of his English teaching colleagues). Many grammar schools still retain this particular form in their profile examination.

Since 2011 until Spring 2020, the common EFL examination specifically consisted of three components: the centralised and so called 'didactic' test (listening comprehension, reading comprehension and use of English), a writing examination, and an oral examination. The oral examination was administrated and designed by the individual grammar schools based on official common examination instructions published by Cermat.¹³ The time allotted to individual final year students' was 20 minutes preparation time and 15 minutes examination time. Analogically to the previous form of the foreign language examination, the examinee drew a number designated to a particular worksheet with several sub-tasks and topics based on a pre-selected topic list by the grammar school English teachers (*novamaturita.cz*). The tasks ranged from interactive conversation tasks to picture description and a shorter one-topic monologue. The examiners' responses however were limited by the examiner's worksheet, which included a list of prompts and questions individualised to each task. Currently, the individual grammar schools design their own profile examination format, this sometimes includes a mere individualised list of topics for the common oral exam, other times, the schools create a more complex profile foreign language examination including essay writing or defending a project, simulating the defence of theses or experiences at university.

Significant changes were introduced both to the profile and the common EFL examination due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In spring 2020, the common EFL examination did not include the

¹³ Referring specifically to the "Katalog požadavků zkoušek společné části maturitní zkoušky," and "Vyhláška č. 177/2009 Sb." (legislated on 15 October 2020).

writing examination and was only based on the didactic test and an oral examination based on the previous common examination model conducted at a later date. The matura examination plan for the 2020/2021 school year was announced at the end of January 2021: the secondary level schools were to design the common oral examination and its criteria anew and individually, and in addition to that, the schools were to set their own writing examination as a part of the common examination. This change seems to have caused controversy as it only added to the workload of the teachers already suffering immense pressure due to constant political decisions about the form of teaching (in class or remote) and the postponed return to in class teaching¹⁴ due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the Czech Republic. In January 2021, it was announced that the writing examination was removed from the Spring 2021 matura examination, just as it was the previous year. However, it is probable that some of the secondary schools had already designed the writing examination and their own assessment criteria well before this announcement was made, and consequently that the schools administrators and teachers had wasted a significant amount of effort in a period when spare time was already lacking.

2.4.3 The objectives of the matura examination

The objectives of the Matura examination are established in the “Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia” (typically referred to as “RVP”, or in English “Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education (Grammar Schools)) published by the Národní ústav pro vzdělávání (the National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers).¹⁵ The Framework Education Programme is

¹⁴ *iHned.cz*. Angličtináři odmítají změnu maturit. Kvůli covidu zkoušku nestihneme kvalitně připravit, varují a žádají odklad. Accessed 20 October 2020. <https://domaci.hn.cz/c1-66828140-anglictinari-odmitaji-zmenu-maturit-kvuli-covidu-zkoušku-nestihneme-kvalitne-pripavit-varuji-a-zadaji-odklad>

¹⁵ *Národní ústav pro vzdělávání*. RVP pro gymnázia. Accessed 5 December 2020. <http://www.nuv.cz/t/rvp-pro-gymnazia>

based on the current educational strategy and serves as a guideline for Grammar Schools in establishing their own “Školní vzdělávací program” (School Education Programme). The individual grammar schools can add to the baseline of the Framework Education Programme in the form of their individualised School Education Programme, in which they can set the demands to be higher according to their own grammar school graduate profile (RVP G¹⁶).

The foreign language matura examination’s primary objective is for the learners’ language ability upon their final-leaving examination to correspond to B1-B2 proficiency according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (RVP G: 13). The examination further specifies the six key competences of a grammar school graduate to be: the learning competence, the problem-solving competence, the communicative competence, social and personal competence, the civic competence and the entrepreneurial competence.

Before the state matura examination was implemented in 2011, the discourse surrounding the educational innovation via the examination often included a prospective plan for the centralised examination results to be used in substitution for university entrance exams (Kabele 2015: 49), and the supposition for the innovation to revive the sense of prestige the final-leaving examination used to be associated with.¹⁷ Furthermore, the political discussion often compared the Czech educational system to other countries that already implemented centralised examinations and aspired for the centralised examination to help Czechs fair better (Kabele 2015: 49) both in real life and in statistical analyses.

2.4.4 The political and social context of the matura examination

The centralised matura examination is coordinated by Cermat (Centrum pro zjišťování

¹⁶ Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia. Accessed 5 December 2020. http://www.nuv.cz/file/159_1_1/ .

¹⁷ *Universitas.cz*. “Maturanty z moci úřední” už české vysoké školy zažily. V poválečných letech. Accessed 5 December 2020. <https://www.universitas.cz/tema/5320-maturanty-z-moci-uredni-uz-ceske-vysoke-skoly-zazily-v-povalecnych-letech>

výsledků vzdělávání), which is an organisation that falls under the direct management of The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. Upon its introduction, there were some features of the centralised examination that became more emphasised than others in the political discourse, and consequently in the media, which tend to refer to the examination using sensational titles,¹⁸ which in turn impact multiple stakeholders, namely the learners, teachers, parents, and, last but certainly not least, the Czech society's perception of the examination. Some washback studies have previously highlighted the need for considering the contextual factors of tests (Cheng, 2015: 437), such as ethics, fairness (Hamp-Lyons, 1997; Shohamy, 2001), political use and abuse of language tests (Shohamy, 2001), the role of test scores in making decisions about the educational system (Douglas, 2011 in Ali, et. al, 2020: 9) and high-stakes tests being used as gate-keeping mechanisms (McNamara, 2010). The Czech final-leaving examination is often commented on by public figures, but it is arguable, whether it is politically used or actually abused.

As Cermat is an organisation that cannot be divided from the political context, its directors have always been vocal figures commenting on the results and certain aspects of the centralised Maturita examination in the media. Furthermore, some of their tendencies resemble gatekeeping mechanisms. Pavel Zelený, the former director of Cermat, asserted that one of the main aims of the examination is to assess whether a test-taker meets the minimum requirements while emphasising that the examination itself should filter out some test-takers who should not be allowed continue into tertiary education.¹⁹ This assertion was by no means one of its kind.

¹⁸ For instance, “Projekt státních maturit je špatný, zjistil audit” (2009: *Aktuálně.cz*. <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/projekt-statnich-maturit-je-spatny-zjistil-audit/r~i:article:646148/>), “Podvody prodraží maturitu” (2011: *Lidovky.cz*. https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/podvody-prodrazi-maturitu.A110329_000118_In_noviny_sko), or “Babiš si notuje se Zemanem: Každý je vysokoškolák a nikdo neumí manuální práci” (2014: *Novinky.cz*. <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/babis-si-notuje-se-zemanem-kazdy-je-vysokoskolak-a-nikdo-neumi-manualni-praci-261947>).

¹⁹ *Týdeník školství*. KDO MÁ PRAVDU ANEB STÁTNÍ MATURITA Z POHLEDU CERMAT- Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/tydenik-skolstvi-kdo-ma-pravdu-aneb-statni-maturita-z>

Ever since the implementation of the examination, many Czech political representatives keep focusing on the negatives of the test-takers, namely the shaky fail-rate, which at one point became celebrated by Josef Dobeš, the then Minister of Education, for becoming a figurative sieve meant to weed out incapable students.²⁰ Another former Cermat director Jiří Zíka was dismissed due to having made the demands of the Czech language centralised maturita examination more challenging without having been instructed to do so by the coordinating higher entity, The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.²¹

Before the implementation of the maturita examination in 2011, it was widely described as a lacking project²² that had to be introduced by 2010, so that the Czech Republic would not have to return a third of the funds invested into the common final-leaving examination by the European Union.²³ Upon its introduction, there were a number of demonstrations organised by the test-takers between 2009 and 2011 centred mainly around the teachers' and learners' feelings of uncertainty, and the lack of teacher training in preparation for the examination.²⁴ In 2010, Pavel Zelený, the then director of Cermat, stated that even though the teachers had undergone some training based on the 2007 design of the examination, they would have to attend another training due to the changes in the overall design.²⁵ In 2012, a year after the exam's implementation, the Supreme Audit Office (Nejvyšší kontrolní úřad, NKÚ) concluded

²⁰ *MŠMT*. MINISTR DOBEŠ: U STÁTNÍCH MATURIT PROPADLA PĚTINA ŽÁKŮ, A TO JE DOBRĚ. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/novinar/ministr-dobes-u-statnich-maturit-propadla-petina-zaku-a-to>

²¹ *iDnes*. Odvolání Zíky je na místě, souhlasí odborníci. Podle Klause jsou problémy jinde. Accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/odvolani-cermat-jiri-zika-reakce-odbornik-skolstvi.A180529_141255_domaci_nub

²² *Aktuálně.cz*. Projekt státních maturit je špatný, zjistil audit. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/projekt-statnich-maturit-je-spatny-zjistil-audit/r~i:article:646148/>

²³ *MŠMT*. ČT 1: OTÁZKY VÁCLAVA MORAVCE - STÁTNÍ MATURITA. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/ct-1-otazky-vaclava-moravce-statni-maturita?highlightWords=st%C3%A1tn%C3%AD+maturita>

²⁴ *MŠMT*. Státní maturita už tu měla být před lety. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/mf-dnes-statni-maturita-uz-tu-mela-byt-pred-lety>

²⁵ *Týdeník školství*. KDO MÁ PRAVDU ANEB STÁTNÍ MATURITA Z POHLEDU CERMAT. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/tydenik-skolstvi-kdo-ma-pravdu-aneb-statni-maturita-z>

that the common examination did not meet its two primary goals, namely to partly substitute entrance exams to universities, and to compare individual secondary schools' results across the Czech Republic, because The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic did not fully develop the intended goals and deadlines, and as such they could not be seen as conclusively fulfilled.²⁶ And as it was outlined above, the examination format has not remained constant since, and therefore has been continuously featuring in the public discourse and media. As the year 2021 was an election year in the Czech Republic, the possibility of politicians using the often-spotlighted maturita issue as a platform for acquiring voters could not be dismissed. For instance, Robert Plaga, the then Minister of Education, publicly appealed to the current Cermat director for the centralised examination to exclude any topics that would have been covered in the final year of secondary schools, had the pandemic not interrupted the educational process,²⁷ and the current Prime Minister even proposed for the didactic tests to be cancelled altogether.²⁸ Throughout February 2021, many politicians vocalised the need for all schools to reopen as soon as possible, even though the pandemic was not contained; this shift in political discourse contrasted to previous points of time with comparable rising numbers of COVID-19 cases and subsequent restrictions, and as such could not be conclusively dismissed as part of the pre-election campaign, and as such an attempt to gain voters.

It appears that the original aims of the maturita examination, such as improving general education and achieving greater comparability across secondary schools, are no longer the main

²⁶ *iDnes*. Státní maturita byla dražší, než se plánovalo. Základní cíle nesplnila. Accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/statni-maturita-byla-drazsi-nez-se-planovalo-zakladni-cile-nesplnila.A120319_090505_domaci_hv

²⁷ *Seznam zprávy*. Ulehčete maturantům, vyzval Plaga. Nejde to, vzkázal autor testů Cermat. Accessed 30 January 2021. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/ulehcete-maturantum-vyzval-plaga-nejde-to-vzkazal-autor-testu-cermat-139877>

²⁸ *Aktuálně.cz*. Maturity by měly být bez didaktických testů, říká Babiš. Vláda rozhodne tento týden. Accessed 25 January 2021. <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/babis-je-pro-zruseni-didaktickyh-testu-u-maturit-na-zdravot/r~52e7bd6e5e6711eba25cac1f6b220ee8/>

focus of the discourse about the examination, and this divergence could, in turn, be perceived as the examination losing its credibility. Recently, there have been voices suggesting that the current form of the examination hinders the educational system and should be abolished, while an alternative solution should be sought.²⁹

2.5 The research gap

In the Czech Republic there is only one empirical study on washback of the matura examination focusing namely on washback to teaching caused by the implementation of the common Czech language and literature examination (Štěpáník, 2018), and only one other washback-focused empirical study of the NATO STANAG EFL examination at the University of Defence in Brno (Svoboda, 2010). In addition to these, there is one unpublished diploma thesis focusing on the final year grammar school students' perspective on the matura examination in general (Andrýsková, 2017), and then there are a few other sources that merely briefly mention the examination itself in connection to washback. It seems that the international increase in washback research has not yet reached the Czech Republic. In this aspect, it seems that attempting to gain insight into how the implementation of the high-stakes EFL matura examination impacts the educational system and its participants is needed.

Even though Cermat offers some data about the exam itself (data.cermat.cz), mostly focusing on the fail rate, it offers no insight into the research that preceded the introduction of the centralised examination in 2011. The previously used address of the official matura examination website novamaturita.cz is no longer valid, but at least until January 2018 it used to include a mention of research on washback as a part of a questionnaire-based inquiry carried

²⁹ *Ucitelskaplatforma.cz*. Učitelé: Ani po deseti letech nedokážeme vytvořit kvalitní státní maturitní zkoušku. Petra Mazancová. Accessed 10 December 2020. <https://www.ucitelskaplatforma.cz/2020/06/05/ucitele-ani-po-deseti-letech-nedokazeme-vytvorit-kvalitni-statni-maturitni-zkousku/>

out prior to 2011.³⁰ However, multiple interviews with politicians, the material developers from Cermat and other sources claim there to have been research whose focus seemed to have included the impact of such an examination one could summarise using the term washback, which, however, seem not to have included the learners' perspective at all.³¹ However no such research led by the The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic was ever made public. It is essential for more research of the examination washback effect to be conducted to reflect on whether its form serves its original purpose and whether it is a tool conducive to learning rather than merely being an unintended consequence of a learning obstruction. According to an accessible summary of a 2015 research, the headmasters of all three types of grammar schools in the Czech Republic seemed to have favoured to be able to determine the pass limit of a centralised examination for their own schools in over 70% of their responses (Dotazníkové šetření Cermat, 2015: 21), which could have alleviated the external factors impacting the schools, their teachers, and learners; however such a change was never implemented.

Most of the international empirical research focuses on washback to teaching and multiple sources assert the lack of research into washback to other stakeholders (Ali, et. al, 2020: 15; Huhta, et. al, 2006: 345; Bailey, 1999: 35; Cheng, et. Al, 2015: 462, 464; Shih 2007, 151), claiming for a needed expansion onto a more macro-level. While this thesis cannot aim to cover all stakeholders in the Czech Republic due to its limited scope, the primary focus is put on the

³⁰ Original source: <https://www.novamaturita.cz/dotaznikove-setreni-1404036603.html>

³¹ Using Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>), a limited access to the novamaturita.cz website was achieved, however the original assertion about the questionnaire inquiry was not recovered. However, there are a few sources that mention such an endeavour: 2009: *MŠMT. Otázky Václava Moravce*. Accessed 1 October 2020. <https://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/ct-1-otazky-vaclava-moravce-statni-maturita?highlightWords=st%C3%A1tn%C3%AD+maturit>; 2015: *Docplayer. KOMENTOVANÉ VÝSLEDKY DOTAZNÍKOVÉHO ŠETŘENÍ MEZI ŘEDITELI A UČITELI STŘEDNÍCH ŠKOL UKONČOVANÝCH MATURITNÍ ZKOUŠKOU*. Accessed 1 October 2020. <http://docplayer.cz/23323290-Komentovane-vysledky-dotaznikoveho-setreni-mezi-rediteli-a-uciteli-strednich-skol-ukoncovanych-maturitni-zkouskou.html>.

learner. As the focus arose during teacher training and as the author's long-term focus is teaching grammar school students, it seemed necessary to incline towards the learner in order to finally perceive an authentic student rather than hypothesising about their needs based on subjective impressions. Furthermore, the educational system in the Czech Republic seems to often be imposing external motivational factors rather than promoting the learners' intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2001: 20) especially where the matura examination is concerned (Štefl, 2014), even though this type of motivation rarely results in a positive impact on the learning process (Shih, 2007: 143).

The EFL grammar school teachers preparing their students for the conclusion of their secondary schooling certainly face a great challenge when/where the matura examination is concerned. As a direct result of the implementation of a centralised matura examination system (common examination) parallel with a school administered examination system (profile examination), a potential English grammar school teacher in the Czech Republic can face four types of students in their classrooms. First, there is a learner taking the partly centrally distributed and partly school administered common matura examination, second a learner about to take the profile examination consisting of whatever form the grammar school teachers chose (ranging from a mere oral examination to a thesis-like defence, etc.), third, a learner who formally registered for the profile examination, but intends to skip it by acquiring a language certificate, and fourth, a learner who decided to register for a different foreign language examination altogether.

All of these four potential students come with greatly varied expectations and needs. As for the common examination, there might be more questions concerning the form of the exam, as it is centrally designed, and the learners might hypothetically demand that the lessons become clearly test-focused in order to alleviate their examination anxiety according to their learner beliefs. Even if the profile examination simply consisted of an altered oral exam, the teacher would still need to multi-task when delivering any instructions. Moreover, some grammar

schools may choose to create a complex profile examination that could correspond to a higher CEFR level, which would consequently demand a curriculum incongruent with teaching according to the aims of one exam, which could result in additional multi-tasking. Washback to teaching and to learning must surely heighten in comparison to a scenario of only one examination system instead, which then suggests the question of whether such a system even meets its intended goals, when there is such an inordinate amount of variation to one subject examination. Does it then follow that a learner can deem the matura examination itself as a clear goal to meet, when its form can still change multiple times in the four to eight years since their entry to grammar school? This sense of uncertainty that most Czech stakeholders face implies a strong probability of harmful washback to learning.

The research gap itself was further ascertained by my 2018 preliminary research case study, in which I interviewed four grammar school students using the semi-structured interview method. Not only did the study reaffirm Green's assertion that teachers play a major role in shaping washback to the learners (Green, 2006: 132), it also seemed to suggest that when the teacher narrows the curriculum by teaching to the test and leaning towards a teacher-centred approach to teaching, the learners experience negative washback. And, in contrast, when the individual students were challenged in the lessons, and experienced internal motivation, which often coincided with learner-centred lessons, the learners seemed to have been experiencing an overall positive washback.

When teaching, one can always strive for meeting the learners' needs, but it is a rare occurrence to get the learners' honest feedback on one's teaching, and their opinions about how the goal of the course influences their experience. There are many learner variables and learner needs to consider while designing any course, yet when a course is concluded by a high-stakes examination that either opens or closes the path to further education, such as the state matura examination, it is vital to consider not only a hypothetical learner, but to include real students

by conducting empirical studies that expand the merely theoretical approach. Due to the various forms of the EFL maturita examination in the Czech Republic, it seems key to seek out the learner's perspective on their learning experience to ascertain how teachers could adapt their methods in order to promote beneficial washback.

Due to all the aforementioned aspects unique to the EFL maturita examination in the Czech Republic, this thesis aims to focus solely on the learners' perspective on the examination, as one of the most impacted stakeholder groups, and their experience of washback in order to finally include them in the discourse concerning their high-stakes examination. Furthermore, due to the unique circumstances of an ever-changing examination, the learners will undoubtedly have a unique perspective on the matter. This thesis aims to explore this perspective in order to move from the theoretical understanding of the learner's point of view to their actual experience of washback through the means of an empirical study, just as Alderson and Wall originally suggested in 1993 (Alderson and Wall, 1993: 128).

2.6 Research questions

Based on the overview of theoretical research, the preliminary research questions are:

- 1) Do EFL learners at Czech grammar schools experience washback that could be perceived as beneficial or harmful?
- 2) Which factors determine whether the washback is experienced as beneficial or harmful?
- 3) Which factors affect the direction of washback to learning?
- 4) To what extent does the preparation for the EFL maturita examination affect the contents of the course, the style of teaching?

3 Method

This study aims to describe if and how EFL learners at grammar schools in the Czech Republic experience washback. The methodology is partly based on my pre-research study conducted in Spring 2018 the implications of which impacted the design of the questionnaire that was distributed for the purposes of this thesis. The main instrument for data collection was an online distributed questionnaire using Microsoft Office Forms.

The online questionnaire was chosen for several reasons. First, as it was distributed during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the originally intended in-person distribution and collection was rejected. Second, the intention was to collect as much data as possible and reach a statistically significant sample of participants.

As there has not been any study focusing on washback in EFL lessons in the Czech Republic, the main goal was to survey EFL learners at Czech grammar schools in order to establish how they are impacted by the concluding maturita examination throughout their studies, and whether they experience washback. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. The collected data was evaluated using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, and the answers to open questions were analysed using thematic analysis.

3.1 Participants

This thesis focuses on washback to learning and limits its scope to grammar-school learners in the Czech Republic. The population intended to be studied is learners about to take their EFL maturita examination in the Czech Republic.³² The chosen sample is limited to grammar-school attendees, with the assumption that if multiple types of secondary schools were included, the

³² It was essential not to include graduates, whose perspectives on the examination itself would have already been biased looking back on the examination and the preparation stage, which is why the survey was distributed in the first half of the school-year.

collected data could skew the focus of this research into the territory of comparing a perceived quality of types of schools, i.e. away from washback. By limiting the sample, I hoped to collect cohesive and comparable data.

The sample consists of EFL learners in their two final years of grammar school. The study includes both attendees of the final and penultimate years of grammar-school studies, because the EFL matura examination is the long-term goal of the entirety of grammar-school education that influences the curriculum throughout one's studies,³³ as the teachers design the course with that conclusion in mind. Moreover, washback effects are likely to be the most prominent as the test date approaches (Green 2013: 47), which is why the sample includes only the two concluding years.

There were 194 participants who completed the questionnaire, 127 were women and 67 were men.³⁴ The mean age was 17.9³⁵ with 56.7% of the participants being 18 years old at the time when they took part in this study, the youngest participant was 16 and the oldest was 19. All participants were grammar-school students, 41.2% attended a 4-year grammar school, 17% attended a 6-year grammar school and 41.8% attended an 8-year grammar school. 60.8% of the participants were in the final year of their grammar-school studies, and 39.2% were in the penultimate year of study.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Pre-research study

³³ *maturita.ceremat.cz*. KATALOG POŽADAVKŮ ZKOUŠEK SPOLEČNÉ ČÁSTI MATURITNÍ ZKOUŠKY. (published April 2014) The common EFL examination aims for the language proficiency level of graduates of grammar-schools (based on the "Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia") to be at least B1, which is to be achieved via the centralised examination, which is the conclusion of the grammar-school students' studies, which in turn determines how the examined subjects, such as EFL, are taught.

³⁴ No one specified their gender as "jiné" (other).

³⁵ Calculated using SPSS.

My unpublished pre-research study conducted in Spring 2018 utilised the semi-structured interview method and included four EFL learners attending grammar schools in Prague. The interviews were conducted individually, led in Czech as the native language of the participants, and recorded. The interviewees were informed only about the general focus of the study being the EFL matura examination, as I wanted to avoid influencing their answers. The main aim of the pre-research study was to gain preliminary insight into washback to learning in order to establish the focus of this thesis and what instruments it should employ.

The interviews were led using a structured list of questions and a list of several statements for the participants to react to (see, *8 Appendix: 8.1*). The first section focused on getting to know the participants and to find out more about their motivation for learning English. The second set of questions focused on the participants' experience at their schools; for instance, the examination preparation in their EFL lessons and their perspectives on various teaching methods. Spontaneous and subjective reactions were encouraged in hopes that an open discussion could follow. The third set of questions focused on the EFL examination itself. By design, I asked about their opinions on the examination's difficulty, their expectations, and finally about their concerns, which was one of the central washback questions that was meant to expose a potential harmful washback taking place. The concluding set of questions asked about the future of the examination, specifically what the participants would change about the examination if they could, and what advice they would give future test-takers. Even though the advice question could be more suitable for those already having taken the exam, it was kept in order to allow space to comment on learning strategies and regrets in their own learning in the past months, which could relate to potential harmful washback.

The penultimate section of the interview preparation included a list of statements, where the participants were asked to read them, using a separate sheet of paper, and to express whether they (dis)agree with the individual statements and why. The statements were designed to show

a potential experience of harmful/beneficial washback. The statements included clichés about the examination that are often used in the Czech media discourse concerning the examination;³⁶ namely, the EFL maturita being too easy or difficult, illogical (16.c. translated “The EFL maturita examination’s design makes sense.”), which could hint at harmful washback. The second statement (16.b. “The EFL maturita examination motivates me.”) was designed to show whether the examination is a beneficial factor in (intrinsically) motivating the learners in language learning. The very last statement focused on the extrinsic motivation the learners experience from their teachers, which was the only question meant to ask about the context outside of the language classroom. The learners were asked to say whether their teachers tend to tell horror stories about the examination and thus scare them into productivity, or whether they comment on the usefulness of the examination.

The results of the study seemed to indicate that two of the participants experienced an overall harmful washback and that the two other participants experienced beneficial washback. There appeared to be a link between the participants’ experience of washback, their social/family environment, and their motivation. Specifically, the participants that experienced harmful washback seemed to have been under external pressure to perform well, which impacted their self-assessment and mental state, both of which appeared to have negatively impacted their motivation to learn and participate in their EFL lessons. While some of the findings of the pre-research study indicated that learner-centred approach to teaching could promote beneficial washback, it was not possible to draw any conclusions based on the limited amount of data. There also appeared to be a link between learner autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and beneficial washback, but again, the sample was insufficient for generalisation.

The pre-research study established that there was a need for further research and for expanding

³⁶ Examples of titles in section 2.4.4.

the sample of participants, which led to adopting a questionnaire in the present study. The pre-research study also highlighted the need for gathering more information on the contents of EFL lessons to better comprehend how the learners perceive the teaching methods they experience in preparation for the concluding EFL maturita examination.

3.2.2 Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was developed in several stages. First, the pre-research study conclusions were taken into consideration to establish the themes the questionnaire study needed to cover. For instance, as the most insight into the participants' experience at their schools was gained via spontaneous conversation, the subsequent questionnaire included more open questions. Due to the pre-research study having indicated that EFL learners were impacted by their self-assessment, both their school grades and the learners' opinions on them became a part of the questionnaire in the form of open questions as well. To collect more information on the contents of EFL lessons, the questionnaire came to include detail-oriented statements for the participants to react to, using a Likert-scale, regarding, for instance, the frequency at which individual language skills were practised, the type of interactions between the teacher and the learner, and the learner's opinion on the inclusion of geographical and cultural information being a part of the lessons and assessment.

Secondly, after preliminary questions were formulated, the questionnaire was piloted in two rounds. During the first pilot stage, the questionnaire was distributed in a doc file among my university peers attending English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts, who were asked to read the preliminary list of questions and to comment on any potential phrasing issues. The second pilot stage employed a preliminary online Microsoft Office Forms questionnaire, in which I asked several people³⁷ to complete the questionnaire to establish the average time

³⁷ The group of people that filled in the questionnaire consisted of adults that had taken their EFL maturita

needed and to test, whether questionnaire settings needed adjustments. The second pilot stage resulted in adjusting some phrasing, adding one question, and indicating the average amount of time needed to fill in the questionnaire before the questionnaire was made public and distributed to the participants.

The development of the questionnaire was influenced by secondary sources focusing on empirical studies and questionnaire design (Oppenheim 1992; Andrews, 2003; Punch, 2003; Fraenkel, et. al, 2012, Dörney, et. al, 2009; Chromý, 2014) and the phrasing of the questions was influenced by multiple empirical studies utilising questionnaires and interviews (for instance, Wall, and Alderson, 1993; Green, 2006; Tayeb, 2014; Furaidah, 2015; Ménová, 2015; Šťastný, 2016; Andrýsková, 2017). The Washback Hypothesis as defined by Alderson, and Wall in 1993 was used as the guide for selecting topics related to the hypotheses in terms of both teaching and learning.

The final questionnaire was then launched online using Microsoft Office Forms and reached the intended participants using publicly accessible e-mail addresses of English teachers teaching at grammar schools in the Czech Republic, who were asked to share the link to the questionnaire with their students. The data collection began on 11 November 2020 and the last answer was recorded 24 November 2020. The number of collected questionnaires is 194.

3.2.3 Questionnaire design

The online survey is titled “Maturitní zkouška z anglického jazyka: perspektiva studentů” (in translation, “The EFL Maturita examination: the students’ perspective”), which reflects my intention not to mention the phenomenon of washback directly in order to avoid influencing the

examinations years ago, some of which had experienced the common state examination that started in 2011. In short, the people that participated in the second pilot stage did not meet the requirements for the participants of this study and did not participate in the survey once it was made public.

views expressed by the participants. The same intention is reflected in the instructions of the questionnaire, where the descriptors of washback (the influence of a high-stakes concluding examination on the design of the course and its participants) are used without explicitly using the term washback.

In order the questionnaire answers to be recorded, each of the participants has to click “send” at the end of the survey; Microsoft Office Forms does not record partially completed questionnaires. Neither the survey platform, nor the questionnaire collect any information that could serve to identify the individual participants. In order to promote honesty in the participants, it was decided not to collect geographical data and not to ask which specific grammar-school they attended. The intention was to avoid both the mortality threat, i.e., loss of subjects (Fraenkel, et. Al, 2012: 167, G-5), where they could hypothetically quit the questionnaire in the process of completing it, and to prevent question evasion due to the high-stakes examination being tied to the participants’ future education.

3.2.3.1 Basic structure

The questions and topics in the questionnaire are structured from the most broad information to the most detailed, so that the participants are eased into the topic. The questionnaire is written in Czech to allow easy administration and to prevent misunderstanding. The phrasing of the questionnaire does not employ any terminology the participants might not understand.

The questionnaire is split into six sections, each of which appears as an individual page, which also displays a progress bar. To progress to the next page, all mandatory questions have to be answered. There are four non-mandatory open-ended questions: Q8, Q20, Q21, and Q22, and one mandatory open-ended question. There is also one use of branching in Q9, where certificate holders are directed to a mandatory question asking what international English-language examination they took, while non-certificate holders are directed to Q11.

Most of the answers are recorded using a 4-point Likert scale employing the forced-choice method, with the exception of two “knowledge questions” that include the fifth “I don’t know” option. The forced-choice method was employed so that the participants would not choose the quick neutral answer and were made to consider their opinion more thoroughly. The majority of the questions is close-ended and employs the 4-point Likert scale, where the participants should indicate their answer on a scale based on agreement or frequency. Most of the questionnaire uses an agreement Likert-type scale, where the participants choose between the answers “zcela souhlasím” (Strongly Agree), “spíše souhlasím” (Somewhat Agree), “spíše nesouhlasím” (Somewhat Disagree), “zcela nesouhlasím” (Strongly Disagree). There are only two questions that focus on frequency and the answers are: “často” (Often), “občas” (Sometimes), “málokdy” (Seldom), “nikdy” (Never).³⁸

The first section of the survey is the introductory instructions. The instructions identify me as the researcher and summarise the focus of this research. The approximate time needed to finish the questionnaire is stated to be fifteen minutes. The introduction asks for the answers to be honest and states that there are no right or wrong answers in the questionnaire. The questionnaire also includes short instructions below each question.

The second section of the survey collects general information on the participants. The answers record the participants’ age, gender, the type of grammar-school (8-year, 6-year, 4-year) they attend, and their year of study. Q5 asks the participants to indicate what type of EFL maturity examination they are choosing (common, profile, certificate). The next three questions focus on school-assessment and self-assessment: Q6 focuses on school assessment and asks the participants to write out their final grade in the last three semesters, Q7 asks the participants to

³⁸ The English translation source is https://mwcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Likert-Scale-Response-Options_MWCC.pdf Vagias, & Wade M. (2006), the source of the Czech version is Chromý (2015) and Měnová (2015).

say, whether they identify or agree with the grades they were given. The voluntary open-ended Q8 offers the chance to comment on their answer in Q7. Questions 9 and 10 focus on obtained English-language certificates: Q9 asks if the participant is an international English-language certificate holder, if they choose “yes”, they are then directed to Q10 in which they should say what certification they obtained.

Q11 concludes the second section and is the only mandatory open-ended question. The participants are to express their opinion on the current form of the EFL matura examination (“11. Co si myslíš o současné podobě maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka?”). I decided to make the question mandatory, hoping that the participants would use this opportunity to reflect on the examination before being influenced by the subsequent questions. The aim was to ascertain what are the most important topics according to the learners.

The third section of the questionnaire focuses on how the participants perceive the EFL lessons at their schools, and includes three 4-point Likert-scale questions.³⁹ Q12 and Q13 are the only two frequency-based questions in the questionnaire. Q12 focuses on how the participants perceive their EFL lessons. The participants are to indicate whether they tend to get bored or enjoy the lessons, how the lesson environment impacts them, and thirdly, they are invited to express their perception of the nature of interaction with their teacher in terms of speaking (Q12 e-h). Namely, the participants should indicate whether they think they have enough room for language production, whether the teacher allows spontaneous discussion, and how often the teacher dominates the lesson by excessive teacher talking time (TTT). Q13 asks the participants to indicate how often particular language skills (listening, writing, accuracy, speaking) are practised during the lessons; the speaking skill is divided into two categories: discussion, and

³⁹ Microsoft Office Forms numbers each title to a Likert-scale list of items but does not number the items themselves. The individual Likert-scale items will be numbered using lower-case letters of the alphabet when needed. The term “question” is used for cohesive navigation in the questionnaire.

independent language production. Parts of Q12 and Q13 focus on whether the participants perceive their EFL lessons as teacher-centred or learner-centred. Q14 asks general questions about the lessons, some of which are related to self-assessment.

The fourth section focuses on questions related to the EFL examination itself. In Q15 the participants are to indicate their agreement with statements related to the preparation for the examination. They are to express whether they perceive the preparation in class as sufficient, whether their EFL lessons largely focus on examination preparation, and whether they prepare independently from their lessons at school. Q16 focuses on the participants' opinions on the format of the EFL matura examination and, in particular, on whether the format of the examination (all three current forms are asked separately) makes sense to them. Q17 asks the participants to express their feelings about the EFL examination in general. It includes two 'cliché' statements that have been overused in the media ever since the common examination was implemented (Q17 a-b). The rest of the Likert-type items are related to motivation, perceived difficulty, and aims of the EFL lessons at grammar-schools. The last two items (Q17 h-i) have the participants state their own opinion on what the aim of EFL lessons should be, namely, whether the examination itself is the main goal of an EFL course, and whether the lessons should be limited by what the examination tests.

The fifth section includes additional questions that did not fit in any of the previous categories. Q18 features statements related to self-assessment, English as a free-time activity outside of school, whether teachers attempt to motivate their students by negative stories (this is the only question, where the topic is not limited to EFL lessons) and the worldwide pandemic impacting the examination. Q19 focuses on the representation of the examination in the media discourse and is the only 5-point Likert scale question in anticipation that not all participants will have the knowledge to answer.

The concluding sixth section includes three open-ended and non-mandatory questions. Here,

the participants can write any additional comments and express their views on the questionnaire (Q20), the EFL matura examination (Q21), and on the future format of the examination (Q22). The last question is intended to make the participants consider what they would change if they had the opportunity to influence the design and aims of the EFL matura examination.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Quantitative data

The data was downloaded from Microsoft Forms in an .xlsx format, which was first analysed in Microsoft Excel and subsequently in SPSS. The demographic data were analysed based on frequency. Some of the demographic data about the participants were compared to the available data about the population, i.e. grammar-school students, gathered by the ČSÚ, Český statistický úřad (Czech Statistical Office). The school assessment from the participants' last three semesters was analysed for the average and the information was used in the analysis of self-assessment questions.

In the first section (general information) of the questionnaire, there was a need for data cleaning, as the participants were asked to type some of the answers. The most cleaning was necessary in the answers where the participants indicated their year of study (Q4), which was largely caused by there being three types of grammar schools where the numbering differed. Some data cleaning was needed in the school assessment question (Q6) as well.

As the questionnaire was in Czech, all answers to Likert-type questions were automatically replaced by numbers in Microsoft Excel before being pasted into SPSS for further analysis. In SPSS, the values were labelled using the English counterparts. First, the answers to Likert-items were converted to numbers. There were two types of Likert-type answers: agreement and frequency. The agreement-based answers were coded as follows: *strongly agree* was coded as 4, *somewhat agree* as 3, *somewhat disagree* as 2, and *strongly disagree* as 1. There were also

two questions that offered the option of *I don't know*, which was treated as 0. The frequency-based answers followed the same logic, the highest value of 4 was ascribed to *often*, *sometimes* was treated as 3, *seldom* as 2, and *never* as 1. SPSS was then used to calculate the median of all Likert-type items.

As the Likert scale is “an ordinal scale measure” (Wu, & Leung 2017: 527), the median was opted for as the “measure of central tendency,” and combined with the use of frequency or percentage in certain cases (Jamieson 2004: 1217). The median is the midpoint of a distribution (Fraenkel, et. al, 2012: 196), which makes it appropriate to use when the distribution is skewed and when there are “more extreme scores at one end of the distribution than the other” (Fraenkel, et. al, 2012: G-8). While ordinal scales rank the individual points in a specific order, the distance between the points on the scale is not equal (Kuzon et al. 1996: 265-266); in this questionnaire specifically, the distance between *often* and *sometimes* is not the same as the distance between *seldom* and *never*.

Using SPSS, all the Likert-type items were named as groups for easier processing according to their original structuring in the questionnaire and numbered: LC1-LC18 (lesson contents), ME1-ME19 (maturita examination), AQ1-AQ4 (additional questions), and M1-M2 (media). The Likert-type items were grouped and analysed together as follows: EFL lessons from the learners' perspective, school assessment versus self-assessment, maturita examination and its impact on the lessons, external factors.

3.3.2 Qualitative data

The qualitative data consisted of the answers to open-ended questions, specifically: OPEN8⁴⁰ (38 answers), OPEN11 (194 answers), OPEN20 (27 answers), OPEN21 (21 answers) and

⁴⁰ The numbering of the open-ended questions corresponds to how they were originally numbered in MS Forms.

OPEN22 (62 answers). The written answers were analysed by hand in Microsoft Excel using thematic analysis seeking what topics were most pertinent to the learners.

The data gathered from the open-ended questions are used as supplemental information that enables greater insight into the perspectives of the learners. Furthermore, the qualitative data results are then compared to the findings in the qualitative data analysis.

4 Results Analysis

4.1 Quantitative data:

4.1.1 The sample as a representation of the population

The population targeted in this study were grammar-school students in their two final years of study. Out of the 194 participants in the sample, 65.5% were female and 34.5% were male. All participants attended grammar-schools in the Czech Republic. 41.8% attended an 8-year grammar school, 41.2% attended a 4-year grammar school, and 17% attended a 6-year grammar school.

Table 1: participants data - gender, type of grammar school attended

questionnaire	participants	female	male	4-year	6-year	8-year
2020/2021	194	127	67	80	33	81
%		65.5%	34.5%	41.2%	17%	41.8%

The statistics collected by the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ)⁴¹ show the distribution of gender and type of grammar-school in all grammar-school pupils that attended grammar-schools in the school year 2020/2021 and are summarised in the table (*Table 2*) below.

Table 2: congregated ČSÚ data about grammar-school pupils

all grammar schools ⁴²	pupils	female	male	4-year	6-year	8-year
2020/2021	131799	57.1%	42,9%	37.3%	10.1%	52.4%

The two figures below show the comparison between the data collected in the present study and the data collected by ČSÚ, both regarding the school year 2020/2021. The distribution of grammar-school students seems to suggest that the types of grammar schools are comparable in both collected data sets. The left figure (*Figure 2*) shows that 4-year grammar school representativeness is the most comparable. While the proportion of the participants across three types of grammar-schools could seem unbalanced out of context, the congregated ČSÚ data suggests it resembles the real ratio at grammar-schools.

Figure 2: grammar-school students data comparison

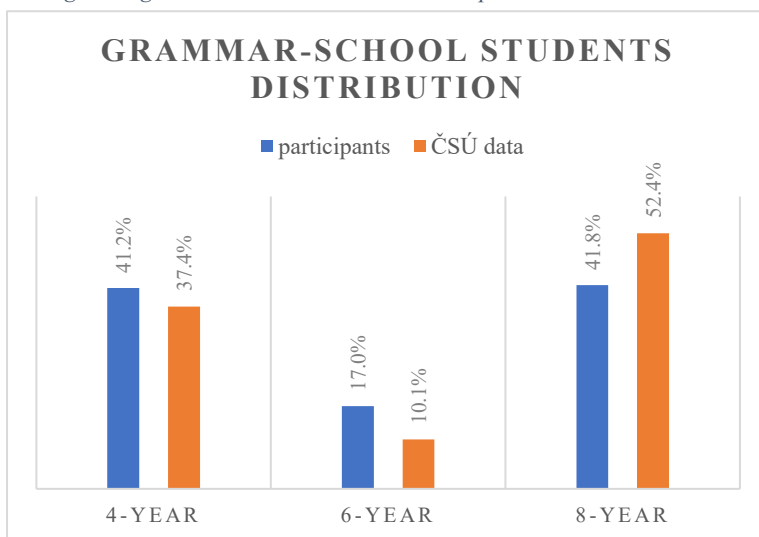
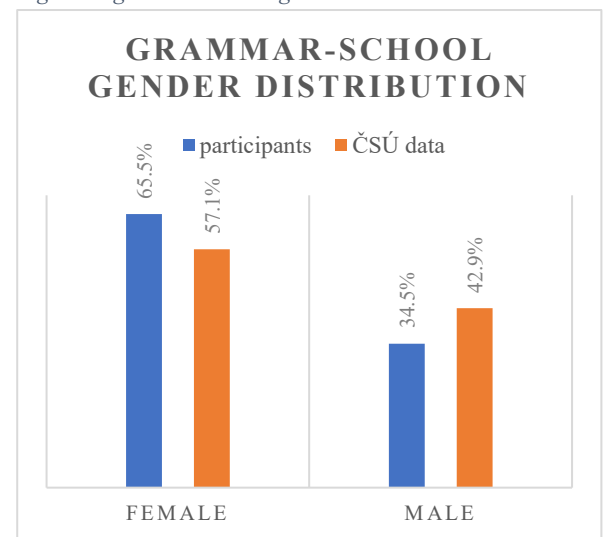


Figure 1: grammar-school gender data



⁴¹ Český statistický úřad (2021) Školy a školská zařízení - školní rok 2020/2021. Accessed 3 January 2022. <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/skoly-a-skolska-zarizeni-tjp3wpnyep>

⁴² The data concerns students attending the grammar schools across all years of study in the given school-year.

The figure on the right (*Figure 1*) shows the comparison between the data collected in this study and the ČSÚ data in terms of gender. Again, the comparison seems to suggest that the data in this study is representative of the population ratio.

A two-proportion z -test was conducted⁴³ in order to determine whether the population and the sample are proportional in terms of gender distribution and grammar-school students distribution. An alpha level of 0.05 was used. The test revealed that most of the data are not proportional. Specifically, it determined that the proportion of the sample of 4-year grammar-school students and the ČSÚ data are not statistically different, which makes this part of the sample statistically significant ($z = -1.093, p = 0.27572$) and representative. The other calculated p values showed that the sample and population (ČSÚ) are statistically different, and the sample is largely not representative.

The table (*Table 3*) below shows the p values calculated using the two-proportion z -test.

Two proportions z-test	female	male	4-year	6-year	8-year
ČSÚ	75195	56604	49341	13361	69097
participants	127	67	80	33	81
z value	-2.3651	2.3651	-1.093	-3.1679	2.9746
p value	0.01778	0.01778	0.27572	0.00152	0.00298

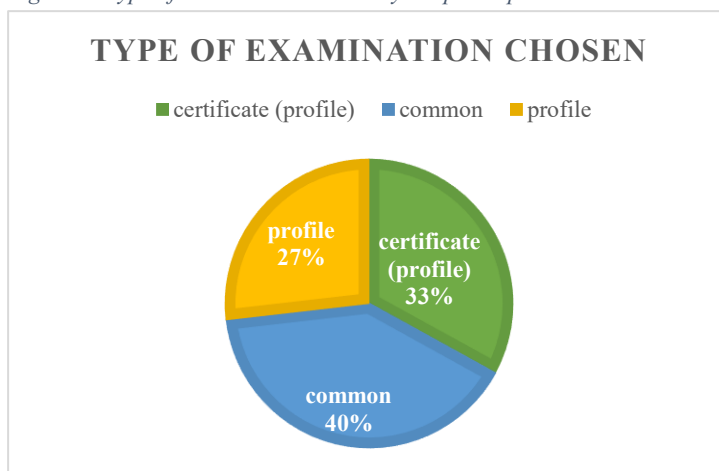
Table 3: two-proportion z-test results

The participants in this study either sat their maturita examination in Spring/Autumn 2021 (60.8%) or are about to sit their examination in Spring/Autumn 2022 (39.2%) based on their indicated year of study. At the time of completing the questionnaire, the participants indicated

⁴³ *Social Science Statistics*. "Z Score Calculator for 2 Population Proportions." Accessed 4 January 2021. <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest/default2.aspx>. The settings were set to significance level 0.05 and two-tailed hypothesis.

that their chosen form of the EFL matura examination was the common examination in 40.2%, the profile examination in 26.8%, and 33% participants indicated that they would use an international English-language certificate as a substitution of the profile examination. The figure (*Figure 3*) shows the ratio between the types of EFL matura examination chosen by the participants. I found no available data published by Cermat that would show this information.⁴⁴

Figure 3: Type of examination chosen by the participants



4.1.2 EFL lessons from the learners' perspective

This section groups Likert-items that are related to how the learners perceive their EFL lessons. In items LC1 (median = Sometimes) and LC2 (median = Sometimes), the learners indicated that sometimes they enjoy their EFL lessons, and sometimes the lessons appear boring. In LC3 (median = Often) the learners expressed that the learning environment in their EFL lessons is often positive, while it is seldom negative (LC4 median = Seldom).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cermat used to publish statistical analyses after each matura examination period (Spring-Autumn), the last published report does not indicate the type of EFL examination the students chose, and it also does not specify how many (or what percentage of) grammar-school students took the examination or what type of grammar-school they attended. Cermat. "Výsledky maturitní zkoušky v roce 2019 a její vývoj od roku 2011." Accessed 21 January 2021. https://data.cermat.cz/files/files/Zaverecne_zpravy/MZ2019_zaverecna_zprava_FINAL.pdf

⁴⁵ The translation of items LC3-4 is not a literal translation of the Czech phrasing in the questionnaire, which uses the terms "příjemná atmosféra" and "nepříjemná atmosféra." The words "positive" and "negative" were substituted for these more neutral terms due to the pandemic connotations.

4.1.2.1 Teacher-centred versus learner-centred approach

Some research has indicated a direct link between teacher-centred lessons, teacher talking time, drilling activities, and teaching to the test (Furaidah et al. 2015: 49; Prodromu 1995: 13). This section analyses to what extent the learners indicated their lessons to be teacher-centred or learner-centred. While the learners' perspectives on the teachers' methods are limited by them not necessarily being aware of the teaching methodology in use, the Likert-items focused on the learner-centredness of the EFL lessons, specifically contrasting teacher talking time (TTT) to the time allotted for the learners to practise language production.

In LC8 (median = Sometimes), the learners indicated that their teachers sometimes talk more often than they do; however, the learners also expressed that their teachers often welcome the learners being proactive in their EFL lessons participation (LC6: median = Often). The teachers also sometimes let spontaneous discussions happen (LC7: median = Sometimes), which suggests that some teachers are willing to diverge from their original lesson plan in order to endorse spontaneous language practice.

In LC5, the learners expressed that they often have enough room for practising spoken English (median = Often). The language skills practice was considered both in terms of independent language production (LC12), and discussion (LC13): the learners expressed that they get to practise speaking independently often (median = Often), and that discussion practice occurs sometimes (median = Sometimes). LC13 corresponds to LC7 that examined spontaneous discussions in the EFL lessons.

4.1.2.2 English language skills practice

The items LC9-LC13 focused on how often individual English language skills are practised during the EFL lessons. The learners expressed that grammar is practised often (LC10: median = Often), which could indicate that some drilling takes place, which could point to teacher-

centred lessons. Items LC9 and LC11 showed that both listening and writing are practised sometimes (median = Sometimes). The answers to speaking-related items (LC5, LC7, LC12, LC13) seem to suggest that the learners perceive speaking practice to be an important feature of their EFL lessons. These language skills are also tested in the examination itself.

The topic of the individual language skills featured in the answers to the open-ended questions as well, which reaffirmed that the learners emphasise the need for communicative interactive tasks to be featured in the EFL lessons.

4.1.2.3 Geographical and cultural topics in EFL lessons

There were two items that focused on the topic of EFL lessons including geographical and cultural information about English-speaking countries. While the learners somewhat agreed (LC14: median = Somewhat Agree) that factual information should be part of the lessons themselves, they also expressed a slight disagreement with this information to be part of the EFL examination (ME10: median = Somewhat Disagree).

The topic of factual information and its inclusion in the examination featured in many of the answers to open-ended questions, in OPEN11 specifically, the learners mentioned this topic without prompting. The inclusion of factual information in the oral examination specifically often featured in negative light (OPEN 20-22).

4.1.3 Maturita examination and its impact on the EFL lessons

This section discusses the learners' perspective on how the concluding EFL maturita examination impacts the lessons in terms of examination preparation and sheds light both on their opinions on the form of the examination and on their beliefs relating to what the goal of EFL lessons should be.

4.1.3.1 EFL examination preparation

In terms of the preparation for the EFL examination during the lessons, the answers demonstrate that the learners believe there should be more preparation included in the lessons (ME1: median = Somewhat Agree), but another item (ME4: median = Somewhat Agree) shows that the learners somewhat agree that the examination preparation in their EFL lessons is sufficient. This could indicate that there are some underlying learner beliefs about the success in testing to depend on coaching or drilling, which is not what research shows (Spratt, 2005: 24).

The learners indicated that the majority of their EFL lessons focus on preparing them for the maturita examination (ME2: median = Somewhat Agree), but they disagreed with the notion that most of their EFL lessons focus on preparation for the common examination specifically (ME3: median = Somewhat Disagree). Another item showed that the learners do not prepare for the examination outside of their EFL lessons (ME5: Somewhat Disagree).

4.1.3.2 EFL examination form

In the items ME6-ME8, the learners stated their opinions related to the form of the examination. The learners indicated that the differences between the common and profile EFL examination types are clear (ME8: median = Somewhat Agree), and did not express confusion relating to the form of either type (ME6, ME7).

The topic of the third type of the examination, i.e. substituting the profile EFL examination by a language certificate, proved very important to the participants, as they expressed welcoming the option to substitute (ME9: median = Strongly Agree). The topic was a significant feature in the answers to the open-ended questions as well.

4.1.3.3 Learners' beliefs about the EFL examination

In items ME18-19, the learners expressed whether the primary goal of EFL lessons should be

for the learners to pass the concluding EFL examination, and whether the lessons should be limited to what is tested in the EFL examination. The learners strongly disagreed with the notion that the lessons should be aimed solely at the examination itself (ME18: median = Strongly Disagree, ME19: median = Strongly Agree).

Items ME11-12 revealed that the learners perceive the profile (school) EFL examination to be somewhat more demanding than the common examination. In ME11 the learners expressed that they do not believe they would be able to pass the profile examination in their first year of grammar school (ME11: median = Somewhat Disagree), but in ME12 they expressed that they somewhat agree that they would pass the common examination in their first year of grammar school.

Items ME14-16 asked about the EFL examination in general without specifying a sub-type. The learners expressed that the examination is more easy than difficult (ME14: median = Somewhat Agree; ME15: median = Somewhat Disagree), and also indicated that they perceive the examination neither as motivating (ME16: median = Somewhat Disagree), nor as fear-inducing (ME17: median = Somewhat Disagree).

4.1.4 School assessment versus self-assessment

This section discusses how the learners perceive their own English skills, the way their schools assess them and how they assess themselves. There are multiple Likert-type items considered and the participants' answers to one open-ended question are included (OPEN8).

The learners indicated that they believe their EFL lessons somewhat improved their language proficiency (LC17: median = Somewhat Agree) and that some of the skills they acquired in their lessons are transferable to real-life (LC18: median = Somewhat Agree). In terms of self-assessment, the learners expressed a strong belief in knowing what aspects of their language skills needed to be improved upon (AQ1: median = Strongly Agree). In addition to that, the

learners expressed that they do not believe their actual language proficiency is accurately assessed by the EFL matura examination (ME13: median = Somewhat Disagree)

When it comes to their school assessment, 80.4% of the participants expressed that they agree with their EFL teachers' evaluation and final grades in the last three semesters (Q7) that they entered in Q6. The average of the grades the participants entered was 1.56. They were then given the option to comment on this assessment in OPEN8.

Thematic analysis of OPEN8 showed the following emerging themes of the opinions the 38 participants that chose to answer shared (Table 4):

OPEN8: themes	count
positive self-assessment	16
appropriate	5
high achiever - happy	5
deserve higher	2
could do better	4
negative self-assessment	7
deserve lower	4
deserve lower (+ self-criticism)	3
assessment comments	14
assessment does not reflect reality	8
assessment is irrelevant	3
assessment should change	2
assessment - online lessons more fair	1
unsure	1
total	38

Table 4: OPEN8 thematic analysis

The learners expressed both their opinions regarding their grades, and their opinions on the school assessment. 42% of the answers showed positive self-assessment, where the learners were either satisfied with their final grades, or believed they had the skills to improve their formal assessment. 18% of the learners expressed the belief that their final grades were earned

undeservedly and several of them also included some degree of self-criticism. 36% of the answers focused on the assessment, the largest number of respondents believed that formal assessment does not accurately reflect the reality, some believed the assessment is an irrelevant measure of their skills, and that it should change.

4.1.5 External factors

This section analyses two items that were not presented to the participants in sequence. The items relate to the learners' motivation, the media coverage of the maturita examination, and the impact of the pandemic.

The learners expressed that their EFL teachers do somewhat motivate them to improve and do better (LC16: median = Somewhat Agree), and they also indicated that they have not had much experience with their teachers, i.e. not only EFL teachers, sharing horror stories about the examination in order to scare them into preparing for the examination (AQ3: median = Somewhat Disagree).

The two media-related items were the only two Likert-type items on a 5-point scale. Due to including the neutral answer, most of the learners expressed that they did not know, whether the media coverage about the examination is impartial (M2: median = I don't know). However, the majority of the learners expressed a strong belief that the media do not cover the examination topic sufficiently (M1: median = Strongly disagree).

As the questionnaire was distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the learners were asked whether they felt concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the maturita examination under these current circumstances, and they expressed a strong concern (AQ4: median = Strongly Agree).

4.2 Qualitative data

This section discusses the themes found in the participants' answers to the several open-ended

questions.⁴⁶ The following table (*Table 5*) shows the count of collected written answers to the open-ended questions and the percentage of participants that answered them:

	OPEN8 ⁴⁷	OPEN11	OPEN20	OPEN21	OPEN22
answer count	38	194	27	21	62
total participants	194	194	194	194	194
percentage	19.6	100.0	13.9	10.8	32.0

Table 5: Open-ended questions count and percentage

4.2.1 OPEN11: opinions on the current form of the examination

This was the only mandatory open-ended question and the participants answered it before seeing the questions asked in the questionnaire itself, and there were 194 recorded answers. The most emphasised themes were: negative opinion of the examination, the examination being easy, and the examination being appropriate.

27.8% of the participants of this study deem the EFL maturita examination form to be appropriate.⁴⁸ 6% then responded with indifference, which was partly caused by half of the indifferent respondents opting for using a language certificate to substitute for the profile examination, which made them indifferent about the form of the EFL examination itself.

15.5% of the participants commented on the examination being easy, and some of these even indicated that the examination was excessively easy. Several people specified that they were commenting on the common type of the EFL examination.

35% of the participants expressed various negative views of the examination. Some commented

⁴⁶ The full thematic analysis tables can be found in section 8.3 of the Appendix. The entirety of the open-ended questions data is included in the Enclosure file.

⁴⁷ OPEN8 was included in section 4.1.4. and will not be included in this section.

⁴⁸ The answers that were grouped as “appropriate” expressed being content with the examination form.

on the examination not being relevant to real-life (8.8%), others commented on the chaotic nature of the examination system (9.8%), which was partly caused by the two parallel systems of the EFL examination. 7 of the participants criticised that the certificate route is not accepted by their schools.

4.2.2 OPEN20: additional questionnaire commentary

The participants used this question to express some of their views that they did not have the opportunity to express in the course of the questionnaire. 25% of the answers were related to the contents of the questionnaire as such.

The learners who chose to comment on their EFL lessons voiced their negative views on the contents of the lessons: emphasis being put on grammar instruction at the expense of speaking practice, too much emphasis on factual information, and remote learning having restricted examination preparation time. While two learners mentioned their teachers being a negative influence on their experience in the EFL lessons, there were also two learners who viewed their teachers as detrimental to their success in the examination.

Some learners used this opportunity to comment on the topic of the language certificates, stating that the rules of using the certificate to substitute the EFL profile examination are unclear.

4.2.3 OPEN21: additional EFL matura examination commentary

There were several themes that the learners highlighted in their commentary on the EFL matura examination. Specifically, they focused on the topic of factual information being tested in the oral examination, which they perceive to receive undue emphasis. However, there was also one answer that deemed the inclusion of facts about English-speaking countries to be very positive.

Some of the learners expressed feeling nervous about the examination, concerns about the assessment of the examination, and the unclear form of the examination. Two of the learners

mentioned that the circumstances of the worldwide pandemic make the EFL maturity examination more difficult to pass due to remote learning and restricted time.

4.2.4 OPEN22: what the learners would change about the EFL examination

This open-ended question revealed the most contrasting answers and recorded the second highest number of responses (62). The emerging themes overall were: the form of the EFL examination, the proficiency/difficulty level choice, specific suggestions for how the design of the examination could be altered, the certificate option, and a variety of opinions on possible changes.

While some learners referred to a need for the option of choosing between two levels of proficiency/difficulty, others opposed this by expressing it is necessary for the examination to have only one form (instead of the two parallel systems of the common and profile examination), so that everyone is assessed using the same criteria.

20% of the responses focused on the oral examination, on the approach to how speaking is included in EFL lessons and how it is examined. It seems that quite a few learners see speaking as an essential part of the EFL maturity examination, some suggest there should be more practice of communicative tasks, others suggest for the examination to consist solely of speaking, or to be examined in pairs, so that the communication partner is a peer, not a teacher, and some expressed the desire for the examination to be more complex, and to, for instance, include a mock-thesis defence.

41% of the responses commented on the notion of changing the examination form. 11% asserted for there is no need for changes. There were also several suggestions for the EFL examination form to revert back to one of its previous designs. 8% of the learners said that the topic selection should be different, which seems to be a natural assertion of various subjective preferences. There were also some critical comments on the changes to the examination form having been

rather abrupt, and the suggestion to announce any upcoming changes to the maturity examination system a few years ahead of the implementation.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The questionnaire covered the aspects of washback to learning that would be perceivable to the learners. From the analysis of the Likert-based items, it appears, that the direction of washback is not overall negative. Even though it is apparent that the learners feel that the EFL maturita examination impacted their EFL lessons, the opinions they expressed suggest some beneficial washback to be occurring, as well. Based on both the quantitative, and qualitative data, it appears that Czech grammar-school learners perceive for the examination to not always assess and reflect skills that would be relevant to real-life.

Some of the aspects that the learners focused on in their answers to the open-ended questions seemed to suggest that the design of the examination does not inspire intrinsic motivation; namely, the learners expressed confusion at the abrupt changes to the system, they also reflected on of factual information being tested in the EFL maturita examination, and often mentioned that the examination is not relevant to real-life. As most of the typed answers reflected some negative views on various aspects of the EFL examination, one could surmise that those learners that are experiencing harmful washback could be more vocal, while the satisfied learners who reflected the examination design as appropriate, might not have been as motivated to provide any additional comments.

In terms of teacher-centredness versus learner-centredness to the lessons, the qualitative data did not indicate for there to be a prevalent tendency for teacher-centred lessons, or for TTT (teacher talking time), which would restrict the space for the learners to practise language production. The median measures of Likert-type items focusing on speaking, and opportunities for the learners being an active part of the EFL lesson indicated that there is a tendency to strive towards a communicative approach to teaching. Furthermore, the answers to the open-ended

questions suggested that the learners appreciate an emphasis speaking and communicative tasks in their EFL lessons, which would seem to suggest that there are quite a few learners experiencing beneficial washback due to their EFL lessons being in accordance with their own beliefs.

In terms of the quantitative data, the findings that were related to examination preparation and teaching-to-the-test taking place did not provide conclusive data, and there were also some inconsistencies to the answers, which might suggest that I did not formulate all of the maturity preparation questions carefully enough. While the learners indicate a belief that the EFL lessons should include more examination preparation, they then contradict that view by asserting the for there to be sufficient examination prep. This result could also be connected to a social desirability bias, where the learners could have attempted to choose the perceived “correct” answer. This would also seem to suggest that there is not a significant amount of coaching on the teachers’ end.

As far as the three types of the examination are concerned, the analysis of the Likert-type items suggested that many of the learners feel very strongly about the inclusion of the certificate option being very positive; however, as some of the long answers indicated, the certificate option is not accessible to everyone. Both sets of data indicated that the learners believe the EFL lessons should not be limited by what the EFL examination tests.

Overall, the results seemed to have indicated for there to be both beneficial and harmful washback taking place. Based on both sets of data, it appears that when the learners are satisfied with the contents of their EFL lessons and the methods their teachers use, harmful washback is less probable. It is unclear, whether the learners perceive for their EFL teachers and lessons to overly prioritise examination preparation over communicative tasks.

5.2 Limitations and further research

The limitations of the present thesis were largely caused by the sample chosen to be examined. In having chosen grammar-school students in particular, there might have been a larger representation of the so-called “good learners” and high-achievers, which could have skewed the results towards a more beneficial washback taking place.

Future research should strive towards including both washback to teaching, and washback to learning, which would allow for the perspectives to be compared, which could lead to a deeper understanding of the principles of washback. In the Czech Republic specifically, more academic research should be conducted, and more stakeholders should become involved in the way the EFL maturita examination is designed.

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7 Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá tzv. washback efektem, tedy tím, jak výuku angličtiny na českých gymnáziích ovlivňuje současná podoba maturity z anglického jazyka a jak konkrétně ovlivňuje studenty třetích a čtvrtých ročníků gymnázií. Cílem této diplomové práce je pomocí dotazníkového šetření mezi studenty posledních ročníků českých gymnázií zjistit, zda a v jaké podobě dochází na těchto školách v hodinách anglického jazyka k tzv. washback efektu v souvislosti s maturitní zkouškou a pokusit se stanovit, jakým způsobem je možné případný negativní dopad minimalizovat. Práce sestává z pěti hlavních částí, tedy z části úvodní, části teoretické, části metodologické, části analytické a části závěrečné, která obsahuje jak část diskuzní, tak část popisující omezení studie a samotný závěr.

Úvodní část práce představuje základní terminologii washbacku, ke kterému dochází, když jsou kurzy zakončeny zkouškou, a který popisuje, jakým způsobem může závěrečné testování studentů ovlivnit samotnou formu výuky a všechny její účastníky. Aplikovaná lingvistika tento jev popisuje a zkoumá již dlouho a ve světě vzniklo množství empirických studií zaměřených na konkrétní projevy washback efektu u jazykových zkoušek. Tato práce si klade za cíl navázat na zjištění již publikovaných prací a aplikovat je do českého prostředí na současnou podobu maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka. V České republice dosud vznikly jen dvě studie zabývající se washbackem a obě tento jev zkoumaly z pohledu učitelů, jedna ze studií se zabývala NATO STANAG zkouškou z anglického jazyka (Svoboda 2010) a druhá studie zkoumala vliv maturitní zkoušky z českého jazyka na učitele středních škol připravujících své studenty na tuto zkoušku (Štěpáník 2018).

Teoretická část diplomové práce zasazuje washback do kontextu testování jazykových schopností a jejich hodnocení. Nejdříve jsou porovnány principy sumativního a formativního hodnocení, a je poukázáno na jeho souvislost s washback efektem. Dále jsou popsány termíny

reliability a validity. Reliabilita testu **se značí tím**, že při zopakování testu by byly výsledky stejné, či alespoň srovnatelné. Test je potom validní, pokud měří to, co měřit má, a souvisí i s tím, jak jsou testy vyhodnocovány. Potom je uveden koncept tzv. „critical language testing“ (CLT), který je ve výzkumu používán k označení kritického zkoumání principů testování jazyků. Hlavní výzkumnou osobností CLT je E. Shohamy (2001, 2008, 2017), která poukazuje na nutnost zkoumat způsoby, kterým jsou testy používány, a někdy zneužívány. Tento koncept je často provázán s výzkumem zásadních zkoušek („high-stakes testing“), jejichž výsledky rozhodují o budoucnosti testovaných, jsou to například právě maturitní zkoušky, mezinárodní jazykové certifikáty a také například mezinárodní srovnávací testy. Výsledky takových testů pak mohou být politicky zneužity, a proto je při zkoumání jakýchkoli testů zásadní uvádět je do jejich sociálního, kulturního a politického kontextu.

Druhá sekce teoretické části popisuje základní aspekty washback efektu, rozlišuje jej na pozitivní a negativní, přibližuje, jak washback působí na jednotlivé účastníky výuky a jak ovlivňuje koncepci výuky samotné. Dále se sekce soustředí na vliv washbacku na učitele a na studenty. Obě části jsou tématicky provázané, právě protože tito účastníci procesu výuky spolu fungují v tak úzkém kontextu. Zatímco empirický výzkum se poměrně často soustředí na vliv washbacku na učitele, méně studií používá pro zkoumání washbacku perspektivu studentů. Dále jsou uvedeny příklady dvou studií z České republiky, které se zabývaly washbackem pomocí empirických metod.

Čtvrtá sekce teoretické části popisuje základní aspekty české maturity z anglického jazyka. Zabývá se jak postupným vývojem státní maturitní zkoušky, tak podobou, kterou měla maturitní zkouška z angličtiny před zavedením státní maturitní zkoušky v roce 2011. Dále je popisován vývoj od doby zavedení státní maturitní zkoušky včetně změn, kterými prošla, až do roku 2020. Metodologická část v úvodu popisuje účastníky této studie v základních demografických parametrech, tedy udává, že studie se zúčastnilo 194 studentů gymnázií, z nichž bylo 127 žen a

67 mužů. Více než polovině účastníků bylo v době vyplnění dotazníku 18 let, nejmladšímu bylo 16 a nejstaršímu 19 let. Z gymnazistů navštěvovalo čtyřletá gymnázia 41,2 %, šestiletá gymnázia 17 % a 41,8 % navštěvovalo čtyřletá gymnázia. 60,8 % účastníků uvedlo, že v době vyplnění navštěvují poslední ročník gymnázia a 29,2 %, že navštěvují předposlední ročník gymnázia.

Druhá sekce metodologické části popisuje metodologické nástroje použité v této práci. Nejdříve byl přiblížen předvýzkum, který byl proveden formou polo-strukturovaného rozhovoru se čtyřmi studenty posledních ročníků pražských gymnázií, a který určil zaměření této práce. V rámci rozhovorů byly zkoumány skutečné postoje studentů, které naznačovaly, že studenti jsou skutečně ovlivněni tzv. washback efektem. Výsledky analýzy rozhovorů ukázaly, že u dvou účastníků pravděpodobně vznikl negativní washback, a u druhých dvou nastával pozitivní washback. Zdálo se, že studenti zažívající negativní washback byli pod tlakem okolí, který postupně vedl k nízkému sebehodnocení a zvýšenému strachu z nadcházející zkoušky, což vedlo ke snížení jejich vlastní motivace pro účast na výuce anglického jazyka. Ačkoli předvýzkum naznačoval podobu washbacku, kvůli malému vzorku nebylo možné vyvodit zobecnitelné závěry. Předvýzkum ale prokázal, že je záhodno provést rozsáhlejší výzkum a pokusit se rozšířit zkoumaný vzorek účastníků, což vedlo k rozhodnutí založit tuto diplomovou práci na dotazníkovém šetření. Předvýzkum také naznačil, že pro porozumění perspektivy studentů by bylo vhodné zjistit více informací o průběhu výuky anglického jazyka a přípravy k maturitě z anglického jazyka, která na hodinách probíhá.

Třetí sekce metodologické části popisuje pilotáž dotazníku a jeho podobu. Dotazník byl vytvořen pomocí Microsoft Office Forms a mezi studenty byl rozšířen s pomocí jejich učitelů anglického jazyka na gymnáziích, kteří byli kontaktováni s prosbou o šíření dotazníku mezi studenty anglického jazyka na svém gymnáziu. Sběr dotazníků byl zahájen 11. listopadu 2020 a ukončen 24. listopadu 2020, kdy dosáhlo číslo odeslaných dotazníků počet 194.

Dotazník sestává ze šesti částí, obsahuje čtyři nepovinné otevřené otázky a jednu povinnou otevřenou otázku. Převážná většina odpovědí je zaznamenána pomocí čtyřstupňové Likertovy škály s výjimkou dvou vědomostních otázek, které používají pětistupňovou Likertovu škálu. Čtyřstupňová škála, tedy tzv. vynucená volba, byla zvolena proto, aby účastníci více zvažovali své odpovědi namísto snadného zvolení neutrální možnosti. První část dotazníku obsahuje obecné instrukce a základní informace o výzkumu a v dotazníku jsou také použity konkrétní instrukce, které slouží pro snadnější orientaci, když se změní způsob odpovídání na otázky. Druhá část dotazníku zjišťuje obecné informace o respondentech, tedy jejich věk, pohlaví, typ gymnázia, které navštěvují a v jakém se nachází ročníku studia. Respondenti jsou také dotázáni na typ maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka, který si zvolili (popř. plánují zvolit): státní, školní (profilovou) a možnost nahradit školní maturitu mezinárodním jazykovým certifikátem z anglického jazyka. Dále respondenti uvádějí, jaké známky dostali na vysvědčení z anglického jazyka v posledních třech pololetích, a zda se s nimi ztotožňují. Sekce obsahuje i dvě otevřené otázky, jedna se soustředí na sebehodnocení a druhá (povinná) otázka studenty žádá o vyjádření svého postoje k současné podobě maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka.

Třetí část dotazníku zkoumá to, jak respondenti vnímají průběh hodin anglického jazyka na své škole, a zda vnímají prostor pro procvičení a zlepšení svých schopností jako dostatečný. Čtvrtá část dotazníku se zaměřuje na samotnou maturitní zkoušku z anglického jazyka, na to, jak vypadá příprava na zkoušku v rámci hodin i mimo ně, a dále zjišťuje, co si studenti myslí o současné podobě maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka. Pátá část dotazníku obsahuje několik dodatečných otázek k maturitě a dvě otázky zaměřené na to, jak média v České republice reflektují maturitní zkoušku. V závěrečné části dotazníku odpovídají studenti na tři nepovinné otázky vybízející k okomentování dotazníku a maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka, a nakonec jsou dotázáni, jak by vypadala maturitní zkouška z angličtiny, kdyby mohli ovlivnit její podobu.

Třetí a poslední sekce metodologie přibližuje způsob zkoumání dat sesbíraných pomocí dotazníku. Analýza kvantitativních dat probíhala v programech Microsoft Office Excel a SPSS. Demografická data o účastnících byla zkoumána pomocí frekvence a dále byla porovnána s daty o studentech gymnázií ve školním roce 2020/2021, které zveřejnil Český statistický úřad (ČSÚ). Odpovědi zaznamenané pomocí Likertovy škály byly pomocí Excelu kódovány pomocí čísel reprezentujících jednotlivé hodnoty na škále (1–4), kde nejvyšší hodnotu má nejvíce souhlasná odpověď (zcela souhlasím) a nejnižší má nejvíce nesouhlasná odpověď (zcela nesouhlasím). Pomocí SPSS potom byla vypočítána hodnota median, pomocí které byly otázky na Likertově škále dále vyhodnoceny. Kvalitativní data sestávala z odpovědí na otevřené otázky, a byla analyzována ručně pomocí Excelu a tématkové analýzy, aby vyvstala témata, která studenti považovali za nejzásadnější. Kvantitativní a kvalitativní data byla poté porovnána.

Závěrečná část práce shrnuje kvalitativní i kvantitativní data a naznačuje, že maturitní zkouška z angličtiny u některých studentů způsobuje pozitivní washback a u některých washback negativní. Zdá se, že převažuje pozitivní vliv maturity na výuku anglického jazyka na gymnáziích. Nicméně práce byla částečně limitována vybraným vzorkem studentů gymnázií, který pravděpodobně obsahuje mnoho studentů, kteří jsou motivovaní ke studiu.

8 Appendix

8.1 Pre-research study: semi-structured interview questions and statements

Předvýzkum

PROFIL

1. Řekni mi něco o sobě: záliby, oblíbené předměty, vztah k angličtině, typické známky (AJ).
2. Věnuješ se anglickému jazyku i mimo školu?
3. Účastníš se nějakých soutěží v anglickém jazyce (olympiáda, apod.)?

ŠKOLA

4. Proč sis vybral/a právě svoji školu? (+ Kdo tě učí?)
5. Hlásíš se na hodinách AJ?
6. Míváte v rámci hodin AJ prezentace, projekty, diskuze?
7. Jaký je tvůj hlavní zdroj informací o maturitě?
8. Zkoušíte ve škole maturitu nanečisto? Jaké části?
9. Zkus vyjádřit v procentech, kolik času je na hodinách věnováno jednotlivým částem maturity?
10. Stačí příprava ve škole, nebo se připravuješ na maturitu spíše sama?
11. Co očekáváš od ústní zkoušky?
12. Jaký je na tvé škole rozdíl mezi státní a školní maturitou?

ZKOUŠKA

13. Přijde ti forma maturitní zkoušky náročná?
14. Co od zkoušky očekáváš?
15. Máš ohledně své zkoušky nějaké starosti, obavy?

STATEMENTS

16. Řekni, jestli a proč souhlasíš s následujícími tvrzeními.
 - a. Maturitní zkoušku z angličtiny bych složil/a už v prvním ročníku.
 - b. Maturitní zkouška z AJ mě motivuje.
 - c. Maturitní zkouška je příliš snadná/náročná.
 - d. Maturitní zkouška je postavená logicky.
 - e. Většina mých učitelů mluví o maturitě pozitivně. / Většina učitelů nás maturitou straší.

ZMĚNY

17. Co bys poradil/a někomu, kdo má maturitu teprve před sebou?
18. Kdybys mohl/a na maturitě z anglického jazyka v budoucnu něco změnit, co by to bylo?

8.2 Washback to learning questionnaire

Maturitní zkouška z anglického jazyka: perspektiva studentů

Úvod

Dobrý den,

jsem studentka magisterského oboru Anglický jazyk na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy. Následující dotazník tvoří základ mého výzkumu k diplomové práci.

Výzkum je zaměřen na perspektivu studentů gymnázií na maturitní zkoušku z anglického jazyka. Tento dotazník je určen studentům posledních a předposledních ročníků gymnázií v České republice, kteří mají maturitní zkoušku teprve před sebou, a to v jakékoli formě, ať už se jedná o státní, či profilovou (školní), anebo o použití certifikátu. Hlavním cílem výzkumu je stanovit, zda a do jaké míry současná podoba maturitní zkoušky ovlivňuje koncepci výuky anglického jazyka na gymnáziích, průběh hodin a pocity účastníků.

Vyplnění dotazníku by mělo zabrat přibližně 15 minut. Většina odpovědí je formou výběru z možností na škále, několik nepovinných otázek potom vyžaduje vlastní formulaci. Na začátku dotazníku je vyžadováno několik osobních údajů nutných pro vyhodnocení výsledků a písemná odpověď na jednu otázku.

Souhlas s účastí na výzkumu: Vyplněním dotazníku souhlasím s tím, že data získaná pomocí dotazníku budou uložena a použita k dalšímu zpracování. Uložení a zpracování veškerých dat bude striktně anonymní v souladu s GDPR.

Ráda bych Vás požádala, abyste na dotazník odpovídali upřímně. Žádné odpovědi nejsou správné či špatné a je důležité, abyste odpovídali výhradně dle svého přesvědčení.

Mockrát děkuji za Vaši ochotu a Váš čas.

Bc. Eva Rösslerová

V případě zájmu o výsledky výzkumu mě prosím kontaktujte na této e-mailové adrese: eva.rosslerova@email.cz .

Obecné otázky

1. Kolik je ti let? *

2. Pohlaví *

žena

muž

Jiné

3. Typ gymnázia, které navštěvuješ *

osmileté

šestileté

čtyřleté

4. V jakém jsi ročníku? (Odpovídej prosím ve formě číslice a tečky.) *

5. Kterou formu maturitní zkoušky z Aj si zvolíš / sis zvolil/a? *

státní

profilovou (školní)

certifikát (místo profilové zkoušky)

6. Jaké známky z anglického jazyka jsi měl/a na vysvědčení v posledních třech pololetích? (Odpovídej prosím ve formě číslic oddělených čárkou.) *

7. Ztotožňuješ se se svými známkami? *

Ano

Ne

8. Pokud chceš, okomentuj svou volbu v předchozí otázce:

9. Získals / získalas certifikát z mezinárodní jazykové zkoušky z AJ? *

Ano

Ne

10. Jakou mezinárodní jazykovou zkoušku jsi složil/a a na jaké úrovni? *

11. Co si myslíš o současné podobě maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka? *

Průběh hodin AJ

12. Průběh hodin anglického jazyka *

Na škále od často po nikdy zhodnot prosím následující tvrzení. Ke každému tvrzení vyber vždy jen jednu odpověď.

	často	občas	málokdy	nikdy
Hodiny AJ mě baví.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hodiny AJ mě nudí.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Atmosféra v hodinách AJ je příjemná.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Atmosféra v hodinách AJ je nepříjemná.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V hodinách AJ mám dostatečný prostor mluvit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V hodinách AJ učitel vítá zapojení studentů.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V hodinách AJ vznikají spontánní diskuze.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Učitel AJ mluví v hodinách více než studenti.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Jak často je v hodinách AJ věnován prostor procvičování následujících dovedností? Ke každé dovednosti vyber prosím vždy jen jednu odpověď. *

	často	občas	málokdy	nikdy
poslech / listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gramatická cvičení / grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
psaní / writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
samostatné mluvení / speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
diskuze / discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Obecné otázky k výuce anglického jazyka *

Na škále od zcela souhlasím po zcela nesouhlasím prosím zhodnot' následující tvrzení. Ke každému tvrzení vyber vždy jen jednu odpověď.

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
Učení se o reáliích zemí, jejichž jazyk se učím, do hodin cizího jazyka patří.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
S výukou AJ na své škole jsem spokojený/á.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Učitel AJ mě motivuje k lepším výkonům.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hodiny AJ zlepšily mou jazykovou úroveň.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Během hodin AJ se zlepšuji v jazykových dovednostech, které využiji v reálném životě.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Maturitní zkouška z AJ

15. Příprava na maturitní zkoušku z anglického jazyka *

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
V hodinách AJ bychom se měli více věnovat přípravě na maturitní zkoušku.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Většina hodin AJ v naší škole se zaměřuje na přípravu k maturitní zkoušce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V hodinách AJ se věnujeme primárně přípravě na státní maturitní zkoušku.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Příprava na maturitní zkoušku v AJ v hodinách je zcela dostatečná.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Na maturitní zkoušku z AJ se z velké části připravuji samostatně.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Forma maturitní zkoušky z anglického jazyka *

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
Současná forma státní maturitní zkoušky z AJ dává smysl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Současná forma profilové (školní) maturitní zkoušky z AJ dává smysl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chápu rozdíly mezi státní a profilovou (školní) zkouškou z AJ.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vítám možnost složit mezinárodní certifikát a nahradit tak profilovou (školní) maturitní zkoušku z AJ.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zkoušení z reálií zemí, jejichž jazyk se učím, by mělo být součástí maturitní zkoušky.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Postoje k maturitní zkoušce z anglického jazyka *

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
Státní maturitní zkoušku z AJ bych dokázal/a složit už v prvním ročníku gymnázia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Profilovou (školní) maturitní zkoušku z AJ bych dokázal/a složit už v prvním ročníku gymnázia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška AJ má vypovídající hodnotu o mých jazykových dovednostech.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška z AJ je snadná.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška z AJ je náročná.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška z AJ mě motivuje.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška z AJ mě děsí.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturitní zkouška je primárním cílem výuky cizího jazyka.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Výuka cizího jazyka by měla vzdělávat nad rámec požadavků maturitní zkoušky.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Doplňující otázky

Na škále od zcela souhlasím po zcela nesouhlasím prosím zhodnot' následující tvrzení. Ke každému tvrzení vyber vždy jen jednu odpověď.

18. Doplňující vyjádření *

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
Vím, ve kterých oblastech AJ bych se měl/a zlepšit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anglickému jazyku se věnuji ze zájmu i ve svém volném čase.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Většina učitelů nás maturitní zkouškou straší.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nejasnost průběhu maturitní zkoušky ve školním roce 2020/2021 kvůli pandemii mě znepokojuje.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Mediální obraz *

	zcela souhlasím	spíše souhlasím	nevím	spíše nesouhlasím	zcela nesouhlasím
Sdělovací prostředky věnují maturitní zkoušce dostatečnou pozornost.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sdělovací prostředky informují o maturitě nezaujatě.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Závěrečné otázky


Odpovídání v této sekci je sice nepovinné, ale písemné odpovědi jsou pro výzkum velice cenné.

20. Vyjádři se k jakékoli části dotazníku, pokud chceš:

21. Napiš jakýkoli dodatečný komentář k maturitní zkoušce z AJ, pokud chceš:

22. Kdybys mohl/a v budoucnosti ovlivnit formu maturitní zkoušky z cizího jazyka, jak by zkouška vypadala?

Microsoft tento obsah nevytvořil ani neschválil. Data, která odešlete, se pošlou vlastníkoví formuláře.

 Microsoft Forms

8.3 Full thematic analysis tables (OPEN Qs)

OPEN11

themes	count
appropriate	54
certificate	10
certificate - appropriate	4
certificate - indifferent	6
positive	2
easy	30
easy	15
easy - bad	11
easy - common	4
negative	68
negative	2
negative - certificate expensive	2
negative - certificate not accepted	7
negative - changes	12
negative - difficult	3
negative - length	2
negative - proficiency level	1
negative - school	3
not relevant to real life	17
chaotic	8
chaotic - two parallel systems	11
indifferent	6
neutral	13
unclear	11
total	194

Table 6: OPEN11 maturita opinions pre-questionnaire themes

OPEN20

theme	count
certificate	3
certificate - fear of failure	1
certificate - indifferent to examination	1
certificate - unclear rules	1
EFL lessons content	5
lessons content	2
lessons content - grammar	1
lessons content - online limited prep time	1
factual information should be less important	1
teacher	3
teaching methods not up to date	1
teacher determines my success (+)	2
recent changes chaos	2
too much English everywhere	1
questionnaire commentary	7
no comment	2
unclear	4
total	27

Table 7: OPEN 20 additional questionnaire commentary themes

OPEN21

theme	count
certificate	2
factual information	5
factual information - important	1
factual information - negative	4
EFL maturita examination	5
maturita - easier than certificate	1
maturita - hope to pass	1
maturita - inaccurate assessment of one's skills	1
maturita - writing should not be examined	1
maturita - does not reflect real-life needs	1
scared	2
unclear changes	1
unclear form of examination	2
pandemic - difficulty higher	2
no comment	2
total	21

Table 8: OPEN21 additional maturita examination commentary themes

OPEN22

theme	count
examination form	4
common - should be harder	2
common - school should assess tests	1
common - should be easier	1
proficiency / difficulty level choice	5
choice needed	4
same for all necessary	1
design specifics	21
less factual information examined	3
no factual information	2
less drilling	1
no writing	2
speaking - more communicative tasks	6
more speaking	3
speaking - only	1
speaking - with a peer, not a teacher	1
more complex examination, mock thesis defence	2
certificates (profile)	2
certificates should be accepted everywhere	1
only C1 certificates should be accepted	1
changes	26
there should be no abrupt changes	3
changes to the system	1
should reflect real-life needs	3
topics should change	5
everything should change	1
no changes needed	7
same as before	3
same as before - writing	1
same as certificates	2
unsure	2
unclear	2
total	62

Table 9: OPEN22 what the learners would change about the examination