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**'If I just get one IELTS certificate, I can get anything':  
An Impact Study of IELTS in Pakistan**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of the high-stakes International English Language Testing System (IELTS) across different stakeholders in Pakistan, and on Pakistani education, society and economy more broadly. The global profile of IELTS means that washback and impact studies (both comparative and country-specific) are now increasingly carried out by Cambridge ESOL (Hawkey, 2006; Moore et al., 2012). These are undertaken not simply with a view to improving the test, but with a view to investigating how it is used and perceived. In Pakistan, as elsewhere, IELTS has assumed great significance on account of its gate-keeping function in emigration, higher education abroad and professional registration. Demand and candidature grow daily. However, specific conditions that pertain in Pakistan, mainly political instability, and major disparities in wealth and development, have a particular effect on the role of IELTS in the country.

The current impact study employs a sequential exploratory concurrent embedded mixed methods design to assess the impact. Phase 1 is a preliminary survey of 20 IELTS preparation institutes, followed by an in-depth qualitative study of two IELTS preparation centres. The qualitative study employs classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers (N=2), informal conversational interviews with test-preparers (N=20), and pre- and post-study testing to assess the efficacy of IELTS preparation. Phase 2 analyses questionnaires from a further ten preparation centres. Respondents comprised 200 IELTS test-preparers, 100 IELTS test-takers and 10 IELTS preparation teachers. The survey was supplemented by a focus group with four test-preparers and semi-structured interviews with five employers and five parents.

The initial survey of the private English Language Teaching industry in Pakistan showed a radical expansion of IELTS preparation courses. Yet the in-depth study of two specific centres showed that the courses are not effective in improving the scores of students. Courses, although relatively expensive, are very short and most test-preparers enter them with lower English proficiency than is appropriate for IELTS. Questionnaires and interviews showed that IELTS test-preparers and test-takers are primarily motivated to take the test for emigration and study abroad. The test preparers have high expectations from the course regarding improvement of their English proficiency which are generally not met. Disappointed test-takers hold some beliefs that their IELTS course and test will be of benefit to them in Pakistan. Although English ability is always considered as part of recruitment, employers interviewed for this project confirmed that an IELTS certificate is never explicitly required. It is likely that the local uses of IELTS that are emerging in Pakistan are much more indirect. I argue that because public education is not meeting the demand for English, IELTS is now perceived as a route of English education and

general certification, and a badge of middle class status if not actual material gain. These findings have implications for both providers of state education in Pakistan, and providers of the IELTS test (Cambridge ESOL). The former needs to address the lack of publicly funded English education and English qualifications; and the latter needs to consider whether IELTS is appropriate for large numbers of low proficiency candidates, and for purposes other than admission to universities abroad and immigration.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for any other degree of professional qualification. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Natasha Memon

May 2015

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## List of Abbreviations

ASL	Arabic as a Second Language
ACE	Australian Centre for Education
BPO	British Process Outsourcing
CAE	Cambridge English Advanced
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
COLT	Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
FCE	First Certificate in English
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary English
GE	General English
GEP	General English Practice
GESE	Graded Examination in Spoken English
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
IATM	Instrument for the Analysis of Textbook Materials
IDP	International Development Programme
PakE	Pakistani English
PET	Preliminary English Test
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
TOEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
TSE	Test of Spoken English
TWE	Test of Written English

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

This study investigates the ‘impact’ of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test across different stakeholders (i.e. IELTS test-preparers, test-takers, test preparation teachers, test preparation providers, parents, and local employers) in contemporary Pakistan. High-stakes English language proficiency tests such as the IELTS test have effects and consequences on the lives of those who take them. They can significantly affect the life chances of individual test-takers through their use in controlling access to international education and employment opportunities. Language tests also affect the educational and social systems in which they are located, e.g. when language test results are used to make important decisions about curriculum planning or funding allocation for schools, immigration policy or the licensing of health professionals such as doctors and nurses. There may also be economic and commercial interests related to language assessment especially when they carry high-stakes. If there is a viable market, publishers produce preparation materials and private tuition centres run preparation courses for these high-stakes tests (Saville, 2009; Taylor, 2005). It is these wider effects and consequences within society which are referred to as language test impact in the field of language testing (Saville, 2009).

According to Saville (2009), the concept of impact in the field of language assessment is relatively new and has only fairly recently appeared in the literature as an extension to the notion of ‘washback’. Both Hawkey (2006) and Saville (2009) define impact as the superordinate concept covering the effects and consequences of tests and examinations throughout society, whereas washback is more limited and refers to the influence of tests and examinations on language learners and teachers, language learning and teaching processes (including materials), and outcomes. Some scholars like Bachman and Palmer (1996), Hamp-Lyons (1997), Shohamy (2001) and Wall (1997) place washback within the scope of impact. Both terms will be

discussed at greater length in Chapter 3 as part of the review of the literature on impact and washback.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996:29), high-stakes tests have an impact on society and educational systems and on the individuals within those systems. They refer to ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ levels in their discussion of impact and test usefulness, explaining that the impact of tests operates at two levels: a micro level (i.e. individuals affected by the particular test used) and a macro level (i.e. the effect on the educational system or society). This suggests that, for some scholars, the term impact can be used for all areas influenced by a language test or language programme, whether it is teaching and learning or a university’s admission policy (Hawkey, 2006). In this thesis, I shall adhere to the distinction of washback and impact following Hawkey (2006) and Saville (2009), where washback covers the influences of language tests on teaching and learning and impact covers the influences of tests beyond the classroom, on the educational system and on society as a whole.

Global impact studies focusing on the IELTS test have been conducted by the Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation Group, as a part of their validation process, to fulfil their obligation to investigate the effects and consequences of such examinations. They need to ensure that these can be reviewed in the light of findings on how stakeholders use the exams and what they think about them (Saville, 2009). For Hawkey (2006), such washback and impact studies are carried out to develop and validate the test, revise the test, complete the monitoring process, make decisions about the test, improve teaching and learning, and study issues having a wider impact on society. These impact studies are a part of the test validation process because the examination boards ‘review and change’ tests and programmes in the light of findings on the use of exams by stakeholders and their view of these exams to ensure the tests’ validity (Hawkey, 2006). He further states that ‘the validation process, of which impact study is a key element, is to collect adequate evidence to support the test developer’s claims about the test’s suitability for its intended purpose’ (2006:21). Moore et al. (2012:6) also point out that scholars take their responsibilities seriously to ensure that language tests do not unfairly impact on test-takers and that the

voices of other stakeholders, on whom the test might also have an impact, are also heard.

## **1.2. IELTS – the world’s most popular test**

The IELTS is an international standardised test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers. IELTS came into operation in 1989 and is jointly managed by the British Council, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), and the International Development Programme (IDP): IELTS Australia (Hyatt and Brooks, 2009). The test was ‘designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is used as the language of communication’ (IELTS, 2001:2). IELTS measures both academic and general English language proficiency, and therefore consists of both an ‘Academic’ and a ‘General Training’ module, each with four components: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. Candidates can choose between the Academic (AC) and General Training (GT) variants depending on their needs. Academic IELTS is intended to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study at university, or register with professional bodies, where English is the language of communication. IELTS General Training is suitable for test takers planning to go to English-speaking countries to undertake non-academic training or work experience, or for immigration to English-speaking countries. In the IELTS application form, candidates are given the following list of reasons to choose from, to indicate why they intend to take the IELTS test: to apply for an extended higher education course (of longer than three months); for a short higher education course (three months or less); for other education purposes; for registration as a doctor; for immigration purposes; for employment; for professional registration (other than medical); for personal reasons; for registration as a nurse; for registration as a dentist; and other. Students who take the IELTS are scored in bands from 0-9 (non-user to expert user). Each of the four skills provides a band score in this range and an average of the four scores determines an overall band score.

In addition to IELTS, a number of other internationally acclaimed English

language proficiency tests exist, including the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Cambridge-administered First Certificate in English (FCE), and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). Of all these tests, IELTS enjoys a high status as one of the most widely taken international English language proficiency tests in the world (Davies, 2008). IELTS is accepted by 9,000 institutions worldwide, including universities, employers, professional bodies, and immigration authorities in 135 different countries. Almost 2 million people took IELTS in 2013 in 130 different countries (IELTS Guide, 2013). Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the main competitor to IELTS as another test widely taken around the world, but in comparison to IELTS, 7,500 institutions accept it and 900,000 people took this test in 2013. According to Coley (1999), Green (2006), Hyatt and Brooks (2009), Merrifield (2012), Merrylees (2003) and O’Loughlin (2011), IELTS is the most widely accepted test by tertiary institutions, immigration authorities and professional associations in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

### **1.3. Background to previous studies**

Of the many IELTS-related projects and studies over the past decade, roughly half have dealt with some aspect of test impact, specifically in native English countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Studies like Brown (1998), Elder and O’Loughlin (2003), Rao et al. (2003), and Read and Hayes (2003) have explored the rate and nature of improvement in IELTS test scores after attendance at English language and IELTS preparation courses. Green (2007) conducted an impact study which investigated the influence of the IELTS test preparation classes and university pre-session courses in improving the writing test scores. Some other studies like Mickan and Motteram (2009) only provide a pedagogical description of an IELTS preparation class without looking at the effect of a test preparation programme on scores gained. Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) have undertaken some of the major Cambridge ESOL funded investigations of the impact of IELTS on a range of stakeholders, test users and test preparation

courses.

Hawkey's (2006) IELTS impact study investigates the washback of IELTS on learners and learning, teachers and teaching, and its impact on stakeholders like educational administrators, testers, writers, candidate selectors and decision-makers. Studies like Hawkey's, conducted on a large scale, aim to be cross-country studies, without focusing on any country's specific conditions. The only country specific study conducted in a non-native context is by Moore et al. (2012) which discusses the washback and impact of the IELTS on stakeholders in Cambodia such as test-preparers, test-takers, test preparation teachers, parents, embassy officials, returned graduates from overseas and local employers. Their study does not provide any detail about instructional practices in IELTS classrooms or information about the impact of IELTS preparation classes on score gains.

#### **1.4. Context and Rationale for this study**

In many South Asian countries, as elsewhere in the world, IELTS is the dominant international English proficiency test and plays an increasingly important role in gate-keeping economic opportunities, such as emigration, higher education, and professional registration abroad, yet no impact studies have been conducted so far in South Asian countries, where a large number of people take the IELTS test every year, the highest number after South-East Asia (Davies, 2008; Hawkey, 2006). This means that conducting an impact study of a high-stakes test such as IELTS in a South Asian context, specifically in a developing country like Pakistan, makes an important contribution to the field.

An increasing number of people in Pakistan aspire to study abroad due to the job opportunities available in multinational companies based in Pakistan (Zafar, 2008). Privatisation in the country, in the 1990s increased the number of jobs available, especially in the areas of Information Technology (IT), telecommunications, banking and insurance, marketing and pharmaceuticals (Mehmood and Faridi, 2013). The best job opportunities in these foreign companies are reserved for those who either have a degree from a private university in Pakistan<sub>5</sub>



or who have a foreign degree. Emigration is an important issue now, more than ever, in Pakistan, as, even although foreign investment has brought opportunities for the middle class, political instability threatens chances for prosperity (Khan et al., 2012). There is heightened awareness of IELTS, as a consequence of its gate-keeping function in these areas, and the test has assumed enormous significance in Pakistan. Given these conditions, it is likely that there are many more test-takers and aspirant test-takers than there are opportunities to go abroad. At present, English language proficiency is in high demand in the employment market for private white-collar jobs as well as certain lower-salaried jobs. However, it is not clear how the private sector in Pakistan currently assesses English proficiency. It is possible that some test-takers may be motivated by perceptions that IELTS has benefits within Pakistan.

As stated in section 1.1 above, according to IELTS Guide (2013) almost 2 million people took the IELTS test in 2013 around the world, but the IELTS organisation website ([ielts.org](http://ielts.org)) does not provide a breakdown of candidates according to their country of origin. To arrive at a crude estimate of the numbers of test-takers in Pakistan, I divided the number of IELTS test-takers (18,00000) by the total number of testing centres around the world (900), which would mean that around 2000 people take the test per testing centre. Pakistan has ten IELTS testing centres throughout the country, which suggests that roughly 20,000 people from Pakistan take the IELTS test every year. The actual figure may be even larger as Pakistan is one of the more populous countries in which the IELTS test is administered. I acknowledge that the number of IELTS test-takers in Pakistan has been calculated using a fairly crude formula as there is no other way of counting the number of IELTS test-takers in Pakistan. The increasing demand for IELTS has led to an expansion of IELTS preparation courses (and general English language courses leading to IELTS). Coleman (2010) estimates that there are 256 English language institutes for IELTS preparation and English language preparation throughout Pakistan. It is unlikely that this figure includes numerous informal preparation courses such as those offered by neighbourhood tutors from their homes. The impact of IELTS is an important area to be researched in Pakistan, where a range of stakeholders are affected by the test and a number of private institutes have opened

up for economic and commercial interests.

According to Billah (2010), Dhattiwala (2005), and Thorniley (2010), English language teaching institutes (which are academies offering tuition in various subjects), as well as private schools (primary and secondary) in many South Asian and South-East Asian countries, including Pakistan, are on the increase due to the low standards of education in government schools and public sector universities. The IELTS preparation courses offered by private English language centres in Pakistan are part of a broader privatisation of English Language Teaching in South Asia (Billah, 2010). Malik (1996) and Rahman (1996) argue that the majority of people in Pakistan study at public sector universities and hence do not possess the necessary English language skills suitable for well-paid jobs in Pakistan or for higher education abroad, so these students usually also attend local private English language institutes to improve their English skills.

The IELTS impact studies mentioned in section 1.3, which have been conducted in English speaking countries, have mostly focused on IELTS preparation courses offered by tertiary institutions or International Development Programme (IDP) Education with a very few focusing on courses offered by private institutes. The present study offers insights into the IELTS preparation courses offered by numerous local providers. Due to the deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan, international organisations like the British Council do not offer any such courses in the country (Rahman, 1996). IELTS preparation courses therefore are only offered by private English language institutes, owned either by local people or by a few international chains. The growth of IELTS candidature in Pakistan, as elsewhere, has introduced economic opportunities for private English language institutes in Pakistan (typically for IELTS preparation courses). This may be where IELTS is having the greatest impact financially, both on test-preparers and the test preparation providers. This study can provide important information for researchers, teachers, administrators and people involved in the validation and development of IELTS at Cambridge ESOL. Furthermore, this study will make an important contribution to the literature on education in Pakistan where the growth of the private English language teaching sector has been completely neglected by the government as well as

individual scholars. No research to date has been conducted into the private English language-teaching sector which has been on the increase for more than two decades. There is a gap in the existing body of IELTS impact literature which this study aims to fill from a South Asian context.

## **1.5. Aim of the study and Research questions**

The aim of the present study is to evaluate the impact of the IELTS test on education, the economy and society in Pakistan. To achieve this aim, it is important to identify the key stakeholders. In studies of the effects of language tests, research questions are raised which concern a whole range of people, called ‘stakeholders’ (Hawkey, 2006:14). According to Weiss (1998:337), ‘Stakeholders have a direct or indirect interest (stake) in a program or its evaluation. Stakeholders can be people who conduct, participate in, fund, or manage a program, or who may otherwise affect or be affected by decision about the program or the evaluation’. According to Rea-Dickins (1997:304) ‘stakeholders are identified as those who make decisions and those who are affected by those decisions’. Rea-Dickins (1997:305) provides a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders in language testing which includes:

language testers, teachers, parents, administrators, teacher educators, sponsors and funding bodies, government bodies, the public, various national and international examination authorities, members of working parties and curriculum committees, test takers (and the larger group of learners of whom they form part)... test administrators as well as test users.

Hawkey (2006) rightly suggests that it is unlikely that any particular study will include all of these stakeholders. It is important however that the Rea-Dickins (1997) stakeholder list stretches beyond the immediate language learning, teaching and testing context. This is mainly because when the stakeholder coverage widens, a study may be moving from washback to impact territory (Hawkey, 2006). According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), stakeholders may be directly or indirectly affected

by the test. When the test has an impact on the societal or educational system at large, virtually every member of the system is indirectly affected by the use of the test. To evaluate the educational, economic and social impact of IELTS in Pakistan, the present research seeks answers to questions on the washback and impact of the test on the following key stakeholders:

- IELTS test preparation providers (private centres)
- IELTS test-preparers
- IELTS test-takers
- IELTS test preparation teachers
- Parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers
- Local employers

To achieve the aim of the study, I have captured an appropriate range of stakeholders. The discussion of test impact on individual stakeholders will help to assess the general systemic impact of IELTS in Pakistan on education, the economy and society as a whole. The IELTS test-preparers and test-takers have been identified as the most central stakeholders to the IELTS enterprise in Pakistan and then other stakeholders can be placed in terms of their relationship to them. As Scott (2007:29) argues:

Test effects are understandably most pronounced and most potent on the individual being tested. These effects are complicated and interwoven with effects on parents, teachers, schools, and society, and it is difficult to separately consider any one of these sectors. Nevertheless, the individual is the one most affected: he is the one whose status in school and society is determined by test scores and the one whose self-image, motivation, and aspirations are influenced.

Based on the research aim, the research has an overarching research question to assess the general systemic effect of test use in Pakistan. This is:

**What impact does IELTS have on education, the economy and society in Pakistan?**

The overarching question deals with the impact of IELTS at the macro level and the following thirteen sub-questions will further help understand the impact of the IELTS test on individual stakeholders (at a micro level).

**Focus on IELTS test preparation providers:**

RQ1: What types of private English language institutes are available in Pakistan?

RQ2: What are the differences between private local and international institutes?

RQ3: How effective are private institutes in improving the IELTS performance of their students?

**Focus on IELTS test-preparers:**

RQ4: What are the profiles of the candidates preparing for the IELTS test?

RQ5: What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses?

RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test?

**Focus on IELTS test-takers:**

RQ7: What are the profiles of the candidates who have already taken the IELTS test?

RQ8: What is the impact of the IELTS test on test-takers?

**Focus on IELTS test preparation teachers:**

RQ9: What are the profiles of the teachers preparing candidates to take the IELTS test?

RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses?

RQ11: What is the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing candidates to take the test?

**Focus on parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers:**

RQ12: What is the impact of the IELTS test on parents of test-preparers and test-takers?

**Focus on local employers:**

RQ13: Is the IELTS test required for any type of job within Pakistan?

In this study I have not included stakeholders such as IELTS test providers, IELTS examiners, or receiving institutions (such as universities abroad) because my main aim was to focus on the main groups of stakeholders within Pakistan. However, the implications of this study for these other groups of stakeholders will be discussed in the conclusion.

**1.6. Overview of research methodology**

Test impact research requires adequate data to illustrate how, and to what extent, the test affects both stakeholders, and also the processes and systems in the context where the test has been developed to fulfil a useful function (Saville, 2009). The present study employs mixed methods research design for the data collection. Of the six major types of mixed methods design, I have employed two and blended them in this study forming a ‘Sequential exploratory concurrent embedded design’ (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Sequential exploratory design uses a two-phase approach: qualitative followed by quantitative, whereas concurrent embedded design collects

both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time. One is determined to be the primary method of data collection and the secondary method is embedded within the primary method (see details in chapter 4).

It is a two phase study: in the first phase, I collected mainly qualitative data through face-to-face surveys in twenty private language centres in order to identify the range of different types of private centres. I then chose two private institutes from my preliminary survey, which were representative of a private local and an international IELTS preparation centre, for in-depth study. At the two centres, I conducted classroom observations of their IELTS preparation classes and semi-structured interviews with teachers, held informal conversational interviews with IELTS test-preparers and carried out a small scale pre- and post-course mock IELTS test to assess the efficacy of the two IELTS preparation centres in improving the performance of their students. No other studies have yet attempted to conduct such an in-depth study of these language centres, which are on the increase in most of the developing as well as some developed countries.

The results of the first phase of the study are suggestive but not conclusive. Therefore, in the second stage of mainly quantitative data collection, I administered three questionnaire surveys to a large sample of IELTS test-preparers, test-takers and test preparation teachers to explore the issues of test impact and washback. With this data, I embedded small-scale qualitative mini focus group with four IELTS test-preparers and semi-structured interviews with five parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers and five local employers.

## **1.7. Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. There are two literature review chapters (chapters 2 and 3) in the thesis as there is a need for a literature review of IELTS in the Pakistan context and a literature review of IELTS in a global context. Chapter two introduces the context of the study, outlining the education system in Pakistan at schools and universities, and general educational policies at different levels in Pakistan. I describe the IELTS testing system in Pakistan, and look at its

implementation as part of a global development. I discuss the major driving factors behind IELTS candidature in Pakistan, namely, levels of migration, desire to study abroad, and constraints on economic opportunities within Pakistan. This is important background information to the IELTS preparation industry which has expanded due to a growth in the number of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers. I review heated debates in local newspapers about the growth of private language centres, particularly concerning lack of regulation, which reflects the perceptions of the broader Pakistani community. This chapter also contextualises private English language teaching institutes within the industry in South and South-East Asia; the privatisation of English Language Teaching is not unique to Pakistan, it is also notable in neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China, and in some English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

Chapter three provides detailed discussion of washback theories and reviews the relevant literature on washback and impact of high-stakes tests, IELTS in particular. This chapter examines the various aims of these impact studies, the methodologies employed, and their findings. It underlines the need to conduct research in the context of a populous, developing country like Pakistan. Chapter four justifies the methodology of this study, and covers the mixed methods approach, research design (instrumentation and tools), validity and reliability of the chosen tools, participants and sampling methods, potential ethical issues, data collection and data analysis techniques.

Chapter five presents the findings from the first phase of the study. A significant economic impact of IELTS is the rapid growth of preparation courses in Pakistan. There is a detailed discussion of the types of private institutes (local and international) and the various courses offered. There is a detailed comparison of two IELTS preparation institutes (one local and one international). I look at the types of candidates preparing at both, the materials and activities used in IELTS preparation classes, the perceptions of candidates about the preparation courses (specifically, expectations and experiences), and the efficacy of the courses. The latter is achieved by measuring candidates' IELTS performance at the start and end of the IELTS



preparation course.

Chapter six presents findings from three questionnaires conducted in the second phase of the data collection from three main stakeholders: IELTS test-preparers, test-takers and test preparation teachers. As it is likely that there are far more people taking IELTS than there are opportunities to go abroad, I have attempted, in the survey of IELTS test-takers within Pakistan, to determine whether those who do not manage to go abroad nevertheless derive economic and social benefits from their IELTS certificate (and preparation course), or whether IELTS has a net cost for them without a positive outcome.

Chapter seven is a discussion of the findings from questionnaires supported by qualitative findings from a mini focus group with test-preparers and semi-structured interviews conducted with other stakeholders such as parents and local employers in Pakistan. In Chapter eight of the thesis, I summarise the main findings of my study by revisiting all my research questions. I then show how the test impacts on education, the economy and society of Pakistan as a whole, thus returning to the main aim of the study. The chapter also considers the limitations of the study, the contribution to the field of language testing, the implications of the study and suggestions for future research on the topic.

## **Chapter 2: Context of the present study**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I aim to present the context of the study. The first section of this chapter discusses the education system in Pakistan (both schools and universities), describing the clear difference between public and private sector education. The outline of various schools and universities in this section offers insights into the educational backgrounds of people attending private English language institutes (undertaking General English or IELTS preparation courses). The current law and order situation in Pakistan mentioned in the introduction of the dissertation is the main reason for the growing number of Pakistani people migrating abroad for permanent emigration and higher education. I have therefore included a detailed section on Pakistanis emigrating to different English speaking countries and Pakistani students going abroad for higher education. Such information lays the foundation for the subsequent examination of the private English Language Teaching industry in Pakistan. In this chapter, I situate the growth of private English language centres in Pakistan in relation to the global growth of the English language teaching industry, in native English speaking countries as well as South and South-East Asian countries.

### **2.2. Pakistan: a brief background**

Pakistan is a multilingual and multicultural country, with a population exceeding 180 million people; it is considered to be one of the most populous countries in South Asia (Pathan et al., 2010). Coleman (2010) reports 72 languages, excluding English, being spoken in the country. Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Siraiki, Urdu and Balochi are the most widely spoken languages in the four provinces of the country. Each ethnic group is primarily concentrated in its home province; Sindhis in Sindh, Balochis in Balochistan, Punjabis and Siraikis in Punjab, Pakhtuns (Pashto speakers) in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, and most Mohajirs (also known as Urdu speakers, these were migrators from India during the partition of British India) residing in urban Sindh. Pukhtuns and Punjabis, however, are found throughout Pakistan (Cohen, 2005). According to the 2008 census, Punjabis constitute 44.17%, Pakhtuns 15.44%, Sindhis 14.12%, Siraikis 10.42%, Urdu speakers 7.59%, Balochis 3.59%, and others 4.66% (Government of Pakistan, 2008). The official language of Pakistan is English: it is the language of the civil and military bureaucracy, and federal and provincial civil service examinations are conducted in English (Baumgardner, 1993; Haque, 1983; Rahman, 2001). Urdu is the national language and the medium of instruction in the majority of state schools, yet is the mother tongue of only 7% of the population in Pakistan (Coleman, 2010). State education costs around 2,264.50 PKR (US\$ 22; this is a conversion from Pakistani Rupees to US\$ as of September 2014) per year and private education (non-elite) costs almost 36,000 PKR (US\$ 360) per year (Rahman, 1999). According to Coleman (2010), 60% of the Pakistani population live on less than US\$ 2 a day, which suggests that most of the people are unable to spare funds for their children's education.

Pakistan is considered to be one the poorest nations in the world. Families from poor backgrounds typically send their children (especially boys) to school only for a short period of time, so that they can start earning at a relatively early age. Girls are less educated compared to their male counterparts, as they are not considered to be as useful in earning an income for their family (Coleman, 2010). Coleman reports Pakistan's illiteracy rate as 46% (the majority being women), which is the fifth highest in Asia. Nayab (2011) divides Pakistani society into the following main social classes: lower lower class (also known as the poor class), lower class (also called as working class), lower middle class, upper middle class, and upper class (also known as the elite class and high-income class). There are no exact boundaries that separate these classes. I will use this set of terms to identify any particular section of society.

### **2.3. Pakistan's language-in-education policy**

There has been no consistency in Pakistan's policy in relation to language education since the country's independence in 1947, as it has changed with each successive government. Following Pakistan's independence in 1947, Urdu was declared both the national language and the state language by the political leaders of the time, who included Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan (Coleman, 2010; Durrani, 2012; Mahboob, 2003). In 1948, Urdu was used as the medium of instruction at primary school level. State run English-medium schools in the country were maintained alongside Urdu-medium schools. Only the elite could afford to send their children to English-medium schools and the rest of the children went to government schools (Mahboob, 2003). In 1959, the 'Sharif Commission' (the commission on national education) was formed, and recommended Urdu as the medium of instruction for primary and secondary education, but English for higher education. In 1977, a new constitution promoted Islamisation and Urduisation which reversed the role of English in education (Coleman, 2010; Mahboob, 2003). It was recommended that English be taught from Class 4 (from the age of 8), but schools were advised to conduct all exams in Urdu by 1989 (Coleman, 2010). The government decreed that further and higher education students should be educated in Urdu, leading to a change to Urdu-medium education in colleges and higher education institutions. Soon after that, there was a rapid expansion of private elite and non-elite English medium schools, as parents still wanted their children to study through the medium of English to improve their job opportunities (English and Urdu medium schools will be fully discussed in section 2.4 below).

The democratic government elected in 1989, revised education policy once more, recommending that English be taught as a compulsory subject from Class 1 (students enter primary school at the age of 5), but implementation was less effective. Governments in place after 1989 did not substantially revise language policy. In 2007, a 'White Paper' on education policy was issued which emphasised that English should be taught as a subject from Class 1 and that mathematics and science should be taught through the medium of English from Class 6 (age 10). According to the

most recent national education policy (Ministry of Education, 2009), English is recommended as a compulsory subject from Class 1 and as a medium of instruction for science and mathematics from Class 4 in all state-run schools. However, Coleman (2010) reports that implementation of the policy depends on the availability of suitably skilled teachers, which tends to be rather limited, especially in rural areas.

In state-run schools, English lessons are not designed or delivered with the aim of encouraging students to speak, listen, or develop critical reading skills. Furthermore, the use of English by teachers in these schools is very rare and they mostly teach English through the medium of Urdu or a local language, because of their own poor English-language skills, especially in rural areas (Rahman, 2004). Thus, Coleman (2010) suggests that in contemporary Pakistan, Urdu is the main medium of instruction in government schools, English is the medium of instruction in private elite and state-run elite English-medium schools and is claimed to be the medium of instruction in private, non-elite English-medium schools. It can be seen that there have been a number of different language policies in place since the independence of Pakistan but these policies have not always been adhered to public sector institutions, which is the reason why many graduates from public sector universities enter the job market with very limited skills in English (Shamim, 2011).

## **2.4. English Language Teaching (ELT) at different educational levels in Pakistan**

### **2.4.1. Education context: three main streams of education in schools**

This section provides a detailed description of the education system in Pakistan and English language teaching at various levels (schools and universities), including the clear difference between public and private sector education. The education system in Pakistan is divided into five levels: primary (grades one to five); middle (grades six to eight); matriculation (grades nine and ten, in which students attain the Secondary School Certificate); intermediate (grades eleven and twelve, in which students attain the Higher Secondary School Certificate); and university, leading to

graduate and advanced degrees. English is taught as a compulsory subject at school, college, university, and madrassas. Different authors have categorised the educational system of Pakistan in different ways. Due to parallel systems of educational institutes, especially at school level, there is a considerable difference in their teaching, syllabi and standard of education.

Rahman (2004) identifies three main types of schools: English-medium schools (which themselves may be one of three types: either state-run, private elitist, or private non-elitist), vernacular-medium schools, and Madrassas. Coleman (2010:10) identifies four main types of schools in Pakistan: Private elite English-medium schools, Private non-elite English-medium schools, Government Urdu-medium schools, and Dini madaris (madrassas). Shamim (2011) identifies mainly two streams of education in terms of medium of instruction, i.e. English-medium and Urdu-medium. The English-medium schools are mostly privately owned, but some are government owned, and they mainly cater for the Pakistani social elite. The Urdu medium schools are generally public sector schools for the lower income groups. Based on categorisations made by these authors, we can therefore broadly categorise the schools in Pakistan as:

- a) Private schools (elitist and non-elitist)
- b) State-run schools (elitist and non-elitist)
- c) Madrassas

## **2.4.2. Private schools**

### **2.4.2.1. Private elitist schools**

The private elite English-medium schools are small in number as they are extremely expensive and cater for a small, affluent social class (Coleman, 2010; Rahman, 2004). These schools are only found in the urban areas (mainly big cities like Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore and Islamabad). According to Shamim (2011), the private schools offer quality education, as they educate children of the elite through the

medium of English. In the 1960s, Pakistan's famous convent schools like Saint Mary's, Burn Hall, and Presentation Convent, were private elite schools run by missionaries. From 1985, these missionary convent schools were superseded by the private Pakistani elitist schools. Most of these schools are chain establishments (such as The City School, Beaconhouse School System, Foundation Public, and Educators) spread throughout Pakistan's big cities. These schools are owned by bureaucrats, business tycoons and members of the parliament and senate of the country (Rahman, 2002). These schools charge high monthly fees along with considerable registration fees, which makes it impossible for people from low or middle class to send their children to them.

According to Rahman (2002), the convent schools were not as expensive as these newer private schools. The teachers of these latter schools are well-qualified, and they often receive training from the school. The Private elitist schools offer a General Certificate of Education (GCE) at Ordinary level (O level) and Advanced level (A level). The students of these schools emerge with a good command of English, due to their immersion in English-medium teaching. In addition, these children have acquisition-rich home environments; hence they are proficient English speakers, with pronunciation which better resembles native speakers, compared to private non-elitist pupils studying in poorly resourced classrooms, who have no exposure to English in the informal domain (Rahman, 2002). The products of English-medium schools therefore possess a higher level of English, which helps them at university, and in their working lives. As the children attending private elitist schools come from higher income brackets, they either enter private universities in Pakistan, or they go abroad for higher education (ibid, 2002:35).

#### **2.4.2.2. Private non-elitist schools**

The private non-elite English-medium schools have grown rapidly due to an increase in demand in recent years. According to Rahman (2002:63) these schools are 'so-called English-medium schools as they do not provide high quality education'.

Shamim (2011) observes that there is a proliferation of so-called English-medium 20

schools, even in rural areas of Pakistan. The rapid expansion of private English-medium schools in rural and remote areas of Pakistan is evidence of the growing demand for private English-medium education. Coleman (2010) agrees with Rahman (2002) that these schools claim to be ‘English medium’, whereas in reality such claims may not be substantiated. These schools have been established in response to the decline in standards and conditions of study in state schools and most of them are comparatively new, commercial ventures (Rahman, 2002). The teachers in these schools are not highly qualified, and they rarely receive any in service training. According to Rahman (2004), the teaching methods used by the private non-elitist schools are not very different from the state-run schools. The private non-elitist schools are marginally better than their state-run counterparts, however, in the sense that a class normally comprises 25-30 students compared to 60-80 in the state schools. They typically have better quality buildings and furniture in the classrooms and the teachers attend regularly, as opposed to state-run non-elitist schools where teachers do not regularly turn up for classes. It is the growing significance of English which has prompted the growth of private non-elitist English-medium schools (Rahman, 2002). The modest fees these schools charge are affordable for the upper and lower-middle classes (Coleman, 2010; Rahman, 2002). The parents send their children to these private schools in the hope that their children will learn English, but unfortunately these schools do not provide a high quality education.

### **2.4.3. State-run schools**

#### **2.4.3.1. State-run elitist schools**

The state-influenced elitist schools are English-medium. Rahman (2004) explains that the state-influenced elitist schools include the top public schools, the federal government model schools, and the armed forces schools. The schools run by state institutions such as the armed forces, the customs department, the Pakistan Railways and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), charge lower tuition fees for the children of their employees. Employees’ children, therefore, comprise the majority of the student body, as the fees for all other prospective students are quite considerable.



For example in a military-controlled school in Rawalpindi (Fauji Foundation), the following rates are charged per month for army personnel: 150 PKR (US\$ 1.5) for retired army non-commissioned ranks; 310 PKR (US\$ 3) for retired officers; 260 PKR (US\$ 2.5) for serving non-commissioned ranks; 450 PKR (US\$ 4.5) for serving officers. By contrast, civilians are charged 1000 PKR (US\$ 100) per month. The Military schools and colleges, Cadet Colleges, and Pakistan Air Force schools, are some examples of this category. Looking at the overall provision of English medium schooling, Rahman (2004:30) observes: ‘English medium schooling can be obtained either by the elite of wealth or that of power’.

#### **2.4.3.2. State-run non-elitist schools**

The state-influenced non-elitist schools offer teaching in the vernacular rather than in English. These government schools are mostly attended by children from poor families. These schools can be found in urban as well as rural areas, with the exception of extremely remote countryside locations (Coleman, 2010). The policy of teaching English as a compulsory subject from Class 1 is not strictly followed in all the government schools and as a consequence, not all the children are taught English for the same number of years (Rahman, 2002). The teaching in these schools takes place in vernacular medium (Urdu or any regional language). The children do not have any exposure to English informally, nor do they receive particularly effective formal teaching; hence they have very limited proficiency in English (ibid). Poor families have the option of sending their children either to the government schools or Madrassas, as they cannot afford to pay the tuition fees of private elite or private non-elite schools (Rahman, 2004). Like government schools, education in the Madrassas is in Urdu-medium. Education and textbooks are provided free of charge in state-run schools. Coleman (2010) observes that the learning outcomes are rarely met in these schools, due to the low quality of education. Coleman (2010) comments on the proficiency level of a student from non-elitist state school:

A child in a government school will need a further 1.5 years to achieve what a child in Year 3 (i.e. Class III) in a private non-elite school has achieved in mathematics in Urdu, whilst the government school pupil needs a further 2.5 years to achieve what a Year 3 in a private non-elite school can do in English (2010:11).

The two streams of education, public and private, are distinguishable in their standards of education and learning outcomes. The majority of the parents therefore aspire to provide English-medium education for their children to improve their future life chances.

#### **2.4.4. Madrassas**

Madrassas offer an Islamic-oriented education, free of charge (Coleman, 2010). They provide their students with food and accommodation and hence are attractive for poor families, for whom government schools are difficult to access (ibid). Madrassas are usually attached to mosques, and provide basic Islamic education which focuses on the reading and memorising of the Holy Quran. According to Rahman (2002), the scholars of these madrassas strongly oppose English as they consider it to be a symbol of the west, therefore students of these madrassas can read English but they do not easily understand or converse in English (Rahman, 2004). Coleman (2010) contradicts Rahman and argues that recently, English teaching has been incorporated into the curriculum. The teachers and pupils of madrassas are found to be highly motivated to learn English in order to get their word spread around the world. Most of the madrassas hire English language teachers, as their own staff members are unequipped to teach the language. A madrassah teacher in Coleman explains that: ‘through English we can communicate Islam to others, we can learn about Judaism and Christianity, and we can achieve harmony’ (Coleman, 2010:3).

#### **2.4.5. Public and private sector tertiary education**

The tertiary institutions in Pakistan can be broadly categorised into public sector and private sector universities. The public sector universities are controlled by the provincial or the federal government, unlike the private institutes and universities which are autonomous. All public and private sector universities in Pakistan are overseen and regulated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, formerly known as the University Grants Commission (UGC), which is an independent, autonomous, and constitutionally established institution. It is responsible for formulating higher education policy as well as accrediting higher education institutions, developing new institutions, and upgrading higher education institutions in Pakistan. The majority of Pakistani students attend public sector universities as they are affordable for the middle classes and those from lower income brackets. The English language courses in the public sector universities are offered at undergraduate level, and some at a postgraduate level as well. In the general universities, the department of English in each institution manages the English language programmes. There is not much student-teacher interaction as classes are large (Shamim, 2011:8). In the public sector institutions, the opportunities for learning English to the levels of proficiency required for professional work and higher education are quite limited. There is dissatisfaction among public sector university graduates with their current level of English proficiency (Shamim, 2011:8). The private sector universities are very expensive, which generally excludes those who are not part of the Pakistani social elite. Students from the highest income brackets (i.e. upper class) either go abroad for higher education, or they attend these private institutes or universities. The private universities are only found in the big cities such as Karachi, Hyderabad, Islamabad, and Lahore. These universities strictly use English as a medium of instruction in all subject areas.

Looking at the education system in Pakistan, it can be seen that upper class students whose families have a high income will be found in elite English medium schools (private and state-run), as well as in private universities. They tend to have higher levels of English proficiency compared to students from lower income

backgrounds (Shamim, 2011). The middle class and working (or lower) class opt for state-run schools or private, non-elitist schools, and the public sector universities, and the poor and rural youth attend the madrassas. As Shamim has recently confirmed: ‘there is a close relationship between students’ socio-economic status and their proficiency in English’ (2011:9). Competent speakers of English tend to belong to a social class in Pakistani society which is well-respected. “A person with an ‘English-medium’ education is considered superior in all dimensions compared to someone with an Urdu medium educational background” (Shamim, 2011:11). Shamim further states that the terms ‘Urdu medium’ and ‘English medium’ are loaded with economic and socio-cultural connotations.

I noted in the introduction to my dissertation that there has been political instability in the country and consequently Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been adversely affected. The specific conditions that pertain in Pakistan, mainly political instability and major disparities in wealth and development, mean that there is a tendency for people to migrate to foreign countries (typically English speaking countries) to provide for their families. Young graduates also aspire to go abroad for higher education so that they can get better job opportunities in their home country after their return. Thus there are two categories of people from Pakistan leaving the country: one for permanent settlement abroad and others for the temporary purposes of undertaking higher education abroad in order to find better job opportunities in Pakistan. This increase in the number of people migrating, either for permanent settlement or temporarily for higher education, has resulted in an increased demand for IELTS, which many IELTS test preparation centres are now taking advantage of. In the following section, I will discuss the migration of Pakistanis, for permanent settlement abroad and temporarily, for higher education, in various countries.

## **2.5. International migration from Pakistan: Permanent emigration and higher education**

### **2.5.1. Introduction**

This section will focus on the trends of migration from Pakistan for permanent settlement and for higher education. Wazir (2012) argues that the present Pakistan's younger generation appear to have profound concerns about their safety, and career prospects. Almost 70% of people feel that they are not as safe in Pakistan as they were in the past. Wazir (2012:12) cites a British Council report which says that: 'Pakistani youth and young adults are plagued by concerns about access to career opportunities, and, in particular, the ability of the Pakistani economy to generate enough jobs for its burgeoning population'. Even with the government's recent moves to strengthen investment in higher education in Pakistan, and so to accommodate a growing population of students in the nation's universities, these same factors are likely to continue to fuel strong demand for study and work abroad among Pakistani students. Observers in the field have noted that factors such as the possibility of permanent residence, ability to work abroad during studies, and international employability weigh heavily in the study abroad decisions of Pakistani students.

According to Arif and Irfan (1997), Pakistan has a long history of emigration. People have moved to different western countries during the last five decades in four distinct migratory streams. The first stream consisted of movement of unskilled and semi-skilled Pakistanis to the United Kingdom in the 1950s. The second stream, which took place during the 1960s and 1970s, saw the emigration of qualified professionals, often termed a 'brain drain', not only to the United Kingdom but also to the United States, Canada and the Middle East. The third stream saw semi-skilled workers emigrate to the Middle East, from the 1970s. The fourth stream of migration is the recent movement of educated Pakistanis to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, which began in the 1990s. Currently the main immigration destinations for most Pakistanis are the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Oda (2009) quantifies the major

concentrations of Pakistanis thus: 800,000 in the United Kingdom, 600,000 in the United States, and 250,000 in Canada (2005 figures).

Most western countries have now introduced a 'points-based system' into their immigration policy. Under such a system, certain points are allocated for age, educational qualifications, career history, and English language proficiency. These countries have tightened up their immigration policies to admit more highly skilled people from developing countries. At present the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and a number of other countries follow a points-based system, each of which is slightly different. Canada was the first country to adopt a points-based immigration system in 1967. New Zealand's points-based system came into effect in 1991. The United Kingdom's system was introduced in 2008 under a tiered system which covers everything from student immigration to highly skilled immigration. Australia recently introduced its points-based system for the General Skilled Migration (GSM) category in 2011.

## **2.5.2. International migration from Pakistan for permanent settlement**

### **2.5.2.1. Immigration of Pakistanis to Britain**

Pakistani people migrated to Britain for permanent settlement under different categories; in this section I will discuss the emigration of labourers, doctors and migration through transnational marriages. According to Dustmann and Fabbri (2003), the largest groups of South Asian immigrants in Britain are from India, Pakistan, and Africa. Substantial numbers of South Asians, including Pakistanis, arrived in Britain after World War II. Arif and Irfan (1997) and Hasan and Raza (2009) observe that Pakistani people started migrating to the United Kingdom in response to a labour shortage in the late 1950s. Small numbers of people, mostly single men, migrated at that time from Mirpur, which is one of the largest cities in Kashmir; most of the people who came from Pakistan were from Mirpur. They spoke a Punjabi dialect and were less educated and skilled than other Punjabis. In the

1950s and 1960s the number of emigrants from this area increased because the Mirpur town and the surrounding areas were submerged by the waters of the Mangla Dam, a mega-irrigation project (Arif and Irfan, 1997). The affected people were given land or money as a means of compensation. Some people settled back in Pakistan, while others used the money to immigrate to the United Kingdom. These newly-arrived migrants settled initially in the counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Bedfordshire, as well as the cities of Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow.

Kashmiris comprised 60% of the Pakistani population who settled in Birmingham, Bradford and surrounding towns. These Pakistani migrants (typically young and male) later applied for British passports and brought over their wives and children from Pakistan, which resulted in permanent settlement (Werbner, 2005). The first generation of Pakistani women who arrived in the United Kingdom as part of this process of family reunion were not well-educated, and lacked fluency in English, hence they struggled to find employment. According to Werbner (2005:475), the process of 'chain migration' then began as the Kashmiris brought fellow villagers with them. The process of family reunion and chain migration resulted in a substantial increase in the number of Pakistani migrants, growth which was later restricted by the 'Commonwealth Immigrants Act' (1961), curtailing the automatic entry of commonwealth citizens to the United Kingdom. In the 1960s, entry visas were required for individuals from countries like Pakistan and various forms of entrance restrictions have endured since then. Since 1962, it has been difficult for adult men to enter Britain (Shaw, 2001). Nonetheless, the migration of Pakistanis has increased steadily even after such tightening of immigration policies. By 1961, almost 32,000 Pakistanis were resident in Britain; this number rose to 170,000 in 1971, according to the British census. In 1981, the number of Pakistanis living in Britain increased and reached 300,000. Arif and Irfan (1997) and Capstick (2011) found that the Mirpuri migrants into the United Kingdom were numerically dominant compared to other groups of people of Pakistani origin.

Adkoli (2006) found that 13,261 highly qualified Pakistanis went abroad between 1961 and 1966; the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia were the main destinations for doctors and engineers. Adkoli (2006) claims that for many Indian

and Pakistani doctors, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and the Gulf countries (especially Saudi Arabia) are the main destinations today. The migration of doctors began in the 1950s, and continued throughout the two decades which followed (Adkoli, 2006). Many doctors and nurses from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan moved to the United Kingdom in search of higher education and better job opportunities. In the 1960s, many doctors from the United Kingdom emigrated to the United States, and the vacancies were filled by Indian and Pakistani doctors. Pakistan produces more than 4,000 medical graduates annually and almost half of these medical graduates intend to migrate to the United States and the United Kingdom, initially to gain higher qualifications, and they usually settle in these countries later as permanent residents. Since 2000, almost 6,424 Pakistani doctors have left the country and migrated to the United Kingdom (Adkoli, 2006). The demand for doctors and paramedics in the United Kingdom and the United States increased in the 1990s.

Apart from the migration of uneducated workers and doctors, a number of Pakistanis (mainly from Mirpur), have also moved to the United Kingdom due to transnational marriages. According to Capstick (2011), transnational marriages are very common among young British Pakistanis. These young British Pakistanis tend to intermarry with individuals from back home, in Mirpur, if their parents have rural origins. They bring their brides or bridegrooms (mostly cousins) with them on their return to the United Kingdom. These transnational marriages are mostly arranged by the parents where the bride and groom may be consulted, but will not necessarily influence the decision of their parents. Shaw (2001) observes an increase in the number of British Pakistanis marrying their Pakistani cousins since 1990. Shaw (2001) documents the Home Office census for Bradford during 1992-4 in which 57.6% of marriages of British Pakistanis were to spouses from Pakistan. Shaw observes, 'Today, for most Pakistanis, the marriage of a man to a woman raised in Britain is the only way that a potential wage-earner may enter Britain, other than by seeking political asylum' (2001:327).

According to Charsley (2005), more than 10,000 Pakistanis (predominantly Punjabis) entered the United Kingdom to join spouses in the year 2000. Charsley



(2005) points out that until 1997, the majority of the spouses were women as there is a culture of the bride moving to her husband's home rather than vice versa. The 'Primary Purpose Rule' prevented the entrance of many male spouses to the United Kingdom as they were suspected of seeking a move abroad for economic reasons. This regulation was later abolished, which resulted in an increase in Pakistani husbands applying to enter the United Kingdom. According to Charsley (2005), spousal migration to the United Kingdom is a predominantly South Asian phenomenon, and Pakistan is the largest contributor. Charsley's informants in Bristol are mainly Mirpuris, and transnational marriages between kin are very common among this group. Charsley (2005) notes an increasing number of male migrants from Pakistan since the abolition of 'Primary Purpose Rule', and describes the problem of 'bogus' transnational marriages in which South Asian men marry British girls and divorce them immediately after acquiring British citizenship. Many Pakistanis in Bristol also enter into fraudulent marriages to secure immigration to Britain. Charsley (2005) argued that there is a gender difference in transnational marriages of this kind. If there is an 'imported husband' language plays a very important role because poor English and limited Pakistani qualifications and employment experience create many difficulties for these people in finding jobs in Britain. Pakistani women marrying British-born husbands are significantly different as most of these women do not work when they arrive in Britain.

The 2001 United Kingdom census reports approximately 750,000 Pakistani immigrants who have settled in the country. However, migration has been affected by the tightening of immigration laws since 2004. According to Papp (2009), there are different aims for introducing tests for citizenship and permanent residency, but the major aim is gate-keeping. Papp (2009) highlights that since July 2004, applicants for United Kingdom citizenship were required to demonstrate knowledge of English. There is, however, a dearth of information about the number of recent migrants to Britain since the introduction of English language testing. There is no evidence of a decrease in migration to Britain after the introduction of English language testing, but the Pakistani media speculates that there may have been a decrease in migration of uneducated or low-skilled people to Britain since the

English proficiency requirement was introduced.

Capstick (2011) investigated the increasing role of English language proficiency in the migration process for spouses of United Kingdom citizens (particularly those of Pakistani origin). In November 2010, the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) changed the immigration rules for spouses of United Kingdom citizens, determining which spouses would have to pass approved English language tests to apply for their visa (Capstick, 2011). He observed that the recent language testing legislation was responsible for the creation of ‘Spoken English’ courses and preparation for IELTS in Mirpur, as there are social and economic benefits of learning English for Mirpuris.

Capstick’s study involved semi-structured interviews and classroom observations at two language schools in Mirpur, one school offering ‘IELTS preparation’ and ‘Spoken English’ classes (both of which aimed to prepare students wishing to migrate), and the other, a private language school offering a range of English language courses, and some Information and Technology courses. Capstick observed several classes at two language schools. He does not provide any information on the number of students attending these classes. He notes that the majority of children in Mirpur attend Urdu medium state run schools, hence they rarely practise English speaking and listening skills as these components are not assessed in state schools. Capstick interviewed four prospective migrants to the United Kingdom from Mirpur: two men and two women in his case study who were preparing for their visa applications to join their husbands and wives already living in the United Kingdom. Both the female participants in his study mentioned that they left school after studying there for a few years, and that they were attending English courses to apply for a visa to join their husbands in the United Kingdom. Both the female participants were unsure whether they would work in the United Kingdom, or stay at home as housewives. They demonstrated that learning English is a complex phenomenon for them. Both the male interviewees mentioned that they wanted to migrate to the United Kingdom to join their British-born Pakistani wives. One of the male respondents, similarly to the two females, left school at an early age. He intended to work as a taxi driver in the United Kingdom. This male respondent and

both the female respondents were attending ‘Spoken English’ classes which specifically aimed to prepare young men and women with low levels of education who wished to migrate. The other male respondent, however, was fluent in English as a result of his elite English-medium schooling and was attending an IELTS preparation course. He had previously sat the ‘Academic’ module of the IELTS test, achieving a band 6 score, but this time he wanted to take the ‘General Training’ IELTS module. He wanted to become a police officer in the United Kingdom. Both the male respondents defined themselves as economic migrants, settling their own lives in the United Kingdom as well as financing their families back in Mirpur. Capstick (2011) reveals the overall complexities of learning English among those who wanted to join their families in the United Kingdom. English undoubtedly plays a gate-keeping role in the country’s immigration control.

#### **2.5.2.2. Immigration of Pakistanis to the United States**

According to Oda (2009), emigration of Pakistanis to the United States is a relatively recent development, compared with movement to the United Kingdom. Before the 1960s, the emigration of Pakistanis to the United States was very limited due to the national origins quota system, which was first introduced under the ‘Emergency Quota Act’ in 1921. Pakistani immigrants from 1945-1965 were mainly students, and the dependents of Pakistanis already settled there. In 1965, the ‘quota system’ ended which resulted in an increased number of migrants entering the country. Preference was given to skilled, and family-related, migrants. Many skilled Pakistanis such as doctors left home to settle in the United States. Oda (2009) observed an increasing number of Pakistani migrants after 1965. There was a significant increase from the late 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s when the United States permitted the immigration of agricultural workers and introduced the ‘Green Card’ system, through which visas were awarded by lottery. As a result, a large number of blue-collar workers emigrated to the United States. In 1991, the number of Pakistani migrants in the United States reached 20,000. The majority were relatively low or unskilled and worked as taxi drivers or shopkeepers. Pakistani immigrants kept increasing until

2001, but due to the 9/11 attacks, tougher immigration policies lowered the number of Pakistani immigrants to the United States. The dramatic fall from 16,448 in 2001 to 9,444 in 2003 was the result of the policies provoked by 9/11. This was a rather short-lived drop in immigration, as numbers began to recover after 2004. The 2000 United States census recorded a total of 230,000 Pakistanis, and in 2005, the estimated Pakistani population reached 600,000 (Oda, 2009). In the year 2006, 17,418 Pakistani immigrants entered the United States. According to Batalova and Ferruccio (2008), between 1997 and 2006, 137,963 Pakistani-born immigrants obtained permanent American residence.

The cities of New York, New Jersey, Chicago and Houston attract substantial numbers of Pakistanis (Oda, 2009). Oda (2009) contrasts incoming Pakistanis to the United States with those to the United Kingdom. The majority of immigrants to the United Kingdom are from Azad Kashmir (Mirpur), are uneducated and have thus taken up low-paid industrial jobs (Gazdar, 2003; Oda, 2009). In contrast, Pakistanis in the United States represent a more diverse range of backgrounds (from rural to urban elite), and their educational level is higher than their United Kingdom counterparts as they usually hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, or they have professional training (mostly in medicine).

### **2.5.2.3. Immigration of Pakistanis to Australia**

Khan (2005) observes that the majority of immigrants in Australia are from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka). According to Khan (2005), there has been an increase in the number of highly-skilled and qualified immigrants from Pakistan since the 1990s, for higher education and better job opportunities. Initially male migrants from Pakistan settled in Australia and then brought their wives and children, as was the case in the United Kingdom. Australian immigration authorities adopted a stricter English proficiency requirement in 1998 (Law, 2011). The immigrant selection process required all skilled category applicants to take an IELTS test in 1998 (Merrylees, 2003). Previously citizenship applicants were not subjected to tough English language tests; less standardised proof of English competence (for 33

example a degree from an institution where English was the medium of instruction) was accepted. From 1998 onwards however if migrants failed to present their test scores, they were not eligible to become Australian citizens. According to Law (2011), the General Skills Migration (GSM) categories require the threshold of language level 6 on all components of the IELTS. Only the principal applicants are required to take an English language proficiency test. Law (2011) believes that the increased emphasis of the Australian government on English proficiency is for economic purposes. The more proficient speakers of English tend to work more and contribute more to that country's economy. Many Pakistani people who moved to Australia before the English language requirements came into force had to take the test later in order to gain residency. Some people even return to Pakistan to prepare for the test as they find preparation courses quite expensive in Australia (Khan, 2005).

#### **2.5.2.4. Immigration of Pakistanis to Canada**

According to Wakil et al. (1981), small numbers of Pakistanis entered Canada before partition (1947) under the quota system. Approximately 28 people a year were allowed to enter Canada during this period. After 1947, immigration policies were relaxed, and immigrants were allowed to sponsor their close relatives. There were some changes introduced to the immigration policies in 1962 which allowed skilled immigrants to enter the country. Pakistani families largely migrated to Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. Almost 350,000 Pakistani people residing in Ontario, for example, have migrated into the country during last few decades (Abbass, 2011).

Jibeen and Khalid (2009) report an increase in the number of Pakistani immigrants between 2001 and 2006, when almost 60,000 Pakistanis immigrated to Canada. Pakistan is included in the top ten countries of origin of immigrants to Canada. According to Khan (2005), there are three main classes of immigrants leading to permanent residence: family class, economic class and refugees.

Pakistanis mainly enter under the economic class, in which skilled workers with spouses and dependents, and business immigrants, can enter the country (Khan,

2005). The assessment for this category of immigrant is based on a 'points-based system' for age, intended occupation, education, work experience, knowledge of English (demonstrated through the results of an IELTS test or another English language proficiency test), and arranged employment in Canada. Nevertheless many highly qualified professional Pakistanis who migrated to Canada ended up working as taxi drivers in cities across the country (Abbass, 2011). These people entered Canada under the skilled category of the points-based system during the 1990s, yet most of these professionals could not get jobs at the appropriate skill level in Canada, and as a result they became taxi drivers in order to provide for their families. Some of them were also students who obtained their degrees in Canada, but nonetheless ended up driving cabs. Abbas (2011) points out that even students with Canadian Masters and PhD qualifications are driving cabs, as they do not have the required professional experience which would lead to a skilled position. Many skilled immigrants work at fast food outlets, coffee shops and Biryani houses rather than in their professions.

#### **2.5.2.5. Immigration of Pakistanis to the Gulf Region**

Oda (2009) estimates that there were around two million Pakistanis in the Middle East in 2005. Around 1.1 million Pakistanis have settled in Saudi Arabia, and 500,000 in the United Arab Emirates. Large numbers of workers in the Middle East come from India, Bangladesh, Korea, Philippines and Thailand. Pakistan is the leading supplier of workers to the Middle East (Oda, 2009). In the 1970s, Arab manpower became scarce, which resulted in the demand for skilled and unskilled labour from developing countries. Consequently, migration to the Middle East countries took off in the 1970s (Oda, 2009; Suleri and Savage, 2006). Mostly low-skilled workers migrated to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, for example construction workers who were in great demand (Gazdar, 2003). Until the 1970s, the United States and the United Kingdom were the main destinations for Pakistani migrants, but the oil boom in the 1970s in the Middle East opened up many opportunities for Pakistanis (ibid). Migrants were mainly unskilled and male, and

were unable to bring their families along because of the strict laws of these Middle East countries (Addleton, 1984). Addleton believes that it is almost impossible to obtain citizenship in an Arab state as he says: 'Migration to the Middle East continues to be more tightly controlled than in many other regions of the world' (1984:578). The number of emigrants from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has increased from 78,093 in 1991, to 184,274 in 2006 (Hassan and Raza, 2009). Many Pakistani doctors have migrated to these countries since the 1990s as they are in great demand in the Gulf region.

It is interesting to note that some of this group ultimately intend to go to western countries, and in pursuit of this goal they initially move to Middle East countries in order to gain some work experience, before trying to find a job in a western country through international companies based in the Middle East (Hassan and Raza, 2009). These days it is very difficult to migrate to western countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, as most of these countries have either enforced tougher restrictions or have stopped accepting any applications for the various categories of citizenship. Some people (mostly women) also migrate to the Middle East countries after getting married as dependents, as in the case of Britain, except that these marriages cannot be categorised as transnational marriages.

Recruitment agencies facilitate the emigration of Pakistanis to the Middle East on a commercial basis, assisting with visas and employment. According to Suleri and Savage (2006), recruitment agencies charge migrants relatively large sums - around 150,000 PKR (US\$ 1,541) for Saudi Arabia and 250,000 PKR (US\$ 2,569) for the United Arab Emirates, in 2006. There are many recruitment agencies in Pakistan sending people of all skills levels, from unskilled to highly professional, to Middle East countries (mainly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). The agencies advertise the available jobs and complete a screening process for international companies. Once the candidates are selected, these agencies also provide visa facilities, at some expense. It can therefore be established that large numbers of Pakistanis leave the country every year to go to English speaking countries as well as to the Gulf region to obtain permanent settlement. The

difference lies in the fact that the immigration authorities of western countries (like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) require proficiency in English, proof of which is provided by certificates like IELTS and TOEFL held by those of non-English backgrounds, whereas migration to the Middle East countries does not require any English language proficiency certificates.

### **2.5.3. Higher education: Pakistani international students abroad**

Vakil (2013) observes that thousands of Pakistani students travel abroad to pursue higher education. The common destinations for most Pakistanis include the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada. According to Haq (2011), Pakistan is one of the main sources of foreign students in America, Europe, United Kingdom and Australia. Between 2009-2011, the United Kingdom and Australia have become the biggest beneficiaries, increasing their market share of the Pakistani education market. According to a British Council report in Haq (2011), in 2011, there were 9,815 Pakistani students studying in the United Kingdom, which put Pakistan among one of the top six countries which account for 54 percent of the United Kingdom's (non-EU) international students. An increasing number of Pakistani students have also enrolled in Australia, where 8,458 Pakistani students studied in 2009/2010, which is an increase of 11.4% compared to the year 2008/2009. Ross (2012) reviews the growth of Pakistani international students in Australia. He observes that Pakistan is one of the top 12 markets from where revenue has risen steadily, more than tripling over the past five years (2008-2011). The foreign student population in Australia declined in 2012, but the number of Pakistanis continued to grow (Ross, 2012). Many Pakistani students are attracted to Australia by the availability of scholarships from both the Australian and Pakistani governments.

There are various international scholarships available to fund studies in Australia such as the Australian Awards Scholarship (AAS), the Australia Awards Leadership Program (AWLP), and the Sydney Achievers International Scholarships (SAIS). There is no information available regarding the number of these scholarships which are available, the numbers of Pakistani candidates applying for these



scholarships and the number of candidates awarded these scholarships every year. According to Ross (2012), in 2012, Pakistani students increased by about 1200 compared to 2011. The Australian International Education Association frequently sends their staff members to Pakistan to help students applying to different universities in Australia.

Haq (2011) reports in the 'Daily Times' that there has been a decline in Pakistani students in the United States and United Kingdom since the 9/11 incident due to strict visa policies for Pakistani students. This has in turn resulted in an increase in enrolment of Pakistani students in Australia (Haq, 2011; Vakil, 2013). Haq (2011) suggests that Pakistan has now become the top growth market for Australia's struggling international education industry. In recent years, the United States has started accepting more Pakistani students with its simplified visa procedures and scholarship opportunities for Pakistani students (e.g. the Fulbright Scholarship Program which is offered to 1,000 Pakistanis every year, see details below). According to Khan (2011), during the academic year 2010-11, the number of Pakistani students in United States universities was 5,297 which was 5% more than in 2009-2010 when 5,045 Pakistani students studied in the United States.

In recent years, Pakistani students have been increasingly attracted by the prospect of an affordable education and a job market in China. According to Lavalley (2013), people from middle class income brackets who lack the means to afford an American or British education go for further studies to China due to cheaper fees. There are around 500 scholarships available for Pakistani students every year from the Chinese government. The Higher Education commission in Pakistan also offers scholarships for certain disciplines to study in China. Lavalley (2013) in the 'Taipei times' also associates the difficulty of getting visas for Pakistani nationals, particularly in Britain and the United States, with the growing number of Pakistanis going to China for higher education. Based on the statistics provided by Haq (2011), Lavalley (2013) and Vakil (2013) in various newspapers, I have presented the enrolment of Pakistani students at higher education institutions abroad in the years 2011-2013 in the table below:

Country of destination	Enrolment in 2011/12	Enrolment in 2012/13
China	8,516	9,630
United States	5,697	5,986
United Kingdom	9,815	10,185
Australia	11,298	11,480
Canada	3,182	3,487

Table 2.1 Pakistani students' enrolment in higher education institutions abroad

The statistics presented in table 2.1 above show that there has been a growth in the number of Pakistani students in higher education institutions abroad, specifically in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada. The director of the International Education Association of Australia (cited in Ross 2012) says that most Pakistani students come for educational purposes, but significant numbers also come to Australia for work and residency opportunities, as 'It's dangerous in Pakistan'. This suggests that the devastating law and order situation in Pakistan is the main reason for the younger generation to move abroad, either for brief periods of study or even permanent settlement. Haq (2011) observes that there are growing concerns among local scholarship organisations that Pakistani students don't return to serve their country but he argues that in actual fact many Pakistanis come back and find better job opportunities compared to their Pakistani graduate counterparts.

The detailed discussion of international migration from Pakistan suggests that there is a growing trend among both the lower and higher income strata of Pakistanis to emigrate in order to earn a decent living and to find better education opportunities for their children. In years gone by, lower income Pakistanis were able to emigrate without demonstrating English proficiency (e.g. the flow of low-skilled migration to Britain, discussed above). Now only proficient English speakers can emigrate, hence the significance of IELTS. The growing number of Pakistanis going abroad for higher education shows the importance of IELTS for acceptance into western educational institutions. Prospective Pakistani students from upper class as well as

upper- and lower-middle class backgrounds apply to go abroad to study. However due to financial constraints, it is likely that most of the people who successfully manage to go abroad for higher education are from the upper classes. Candidates from middle class backgrounds look for scholarships to study abroad. The scholarships available to Pakistanis (foreign as well as local) require candidates to take the IELTS test before applying, hence increasing the demand for the test.

Since 2002, there has been a marked increase in the number of international scholarships provided by the HEC, one of Pakistan's biggest government organisations, which has sponsored many Pakistani students to attend top-ranking universities throughout the world. The scholarships awarded by Pakistan's HEC have increased the demand for IELTS, as potential candidates are required to take this exam before they can apply. Under a scheme which covers full tuition fees and living costs, a total number of 8,721 out of 51,171 applicants were awarded scholarships between 2003 and 2008 (HEC Annual Report, 2007-2008; there is no exact information available regarding students' choice of academic institution or in which country the majority of Higher Education Commission scholars study). All the applicants for this scholarship scheme sit an IELTS test, as this is a condition for obtaining unconditional admission to a foreign university.

There are some foreign scholarships available for Pakistani students. Some of the major scholarships include the 'Fulbright' scholarship funded by the United States educational foundation in Pakistan (students are sent to the United States for higher education). The 'British Chevening' scholarship is funded by the British government for higher education in that country. It is advertised and managed by the British Council in Pakistan. The 'Erasmus Mundus' scholarship is funded by European agencies. 'Endeavour Awards' are a part of a scheme funded by the Australian government's overseas aid programme for study in Australia. These scholarships are usually announced once a year and they have a limited number of places in different disciplines. The eligibility criteria are tough and there is a tight screening process (i.e. strong academic history and a high GRE score), which means that very few students obtain these foreign grants. These scholarships offer both partial and full funding, for periods of study lasting from one to four years (UNDP

Report, 2011). There are some other scholarships available to Pakistani students awarded by the United States and the United Kingdom governments which are jointly managed by the HEC, who are responsible for advertising them. There is no available data on the numbers applying for these scholarships each year, nor on the actual number of awards. Similarly to the HEC scholarships, there might well be many more applicants than the number of scholarships available. However, candidates applying for foreign scholarships mostly belong to the elite class because there is tough competition and the scholarships are awarded to those with a strong academic background. As discussed earlier in this chapter, students from the elite class attend private universities, thus they are more competent than public sector graduates. All applicants for these scholarships have to go through the IELTS test because they are required to present the certificate to the awarding body as part of their application process.

Siddiqui (2006) confirms in a report in the Dawn newspaper that there has been an increase in the number of candidates taking IELTS for emigration and higher education, based on a survey of coaching centres in Lahore. The manager of the 'British Education System and Training Centre' (a private coaching centre) states that: 'Each year the number of students who enrol here increases especially for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) classes as they want to go abroad for further studies and jobs'. The above discussion of migration of Pakistanis to western countries for permanent settlement and higher education suggests that an increasing number of people from Pakistan leave the country every year. The immigration authorities of western countries require proficiency in English through certificates like IELTS or TOEFL. Similarly, Pakistani students studying abroad are also required to take English proficiency exams as part of admission requirements. This suggests that there are greater numbers of students taking the IELTS test in Pakistan. This increase in the IELTS candidature has consequently increased the demand for IELTS preparation courses in Pakistan. In the following section, I will discuss the expansion of the private English Language Teaching industry in Pakistan (particularly IELTS preparation centres).

## **2.6. Private English Language Teaching industry of Pakistan**

The occurrence of private, non-elite English-medium schools in Pakistan shows that privatisation of education began because of the low standards of state-run schools and an increased need to learn English among the middle income groups for better career prospects. The non-elite English-medium schools have not succeeded in ameliorating this situation as they only claim to be English medium schools, whereas the learning takes place in vernacular medium. This situation has further resulted in the creation of private tuition centres where people gain admission to learn different subjects. Before the discussion of private institutes offering IELTS preparation courses, I will first review the tuition centres more broadly in Pakistan because IELTS preparation centres have to an extent emerged from these tuition centres, which have been now functioning for more than three decades.

### **2.6.1. Tuition culture in Pakistan**

Tuition centres, with various names such as coaching centres, academies, and evening classes, abound in various cities in Pakistan (Patel, 2008). From villages to a cosmopolitan city like Karachi, there are thousands of tuition centres across the country. The tuition culture in Pakistan started mainly for subjects like English, Mathematics, Science, Physics, and Chemistry, where students of different levels attended these in the evening after school to complete their homework and any tasks given by teachers in schools. Tuition centres target students of all ages at various levels at school, college, Cambridge General Certification of Secondary Educations (GCSE) Ordinary (O) level and Advanced (A) level, IELTS, TOEFL, SAT and GRE. According to Urooj (2012), these centres also provide assistance to students in preparing them for exams which is better than schools. Khan and Shaikh (2013) estimate that 11% of Pakistani students in rural areas and 54% of Pakistani students in urban areas attend tuition centres after school for various subjects. Observing the exponential growth in the number of students attending tuition centres, Patel argues in the Dawn newspaper: ‘Tuition centres have a high prominence in present

Pakistani society. Every next student, whether gifted or average, rich or poor, is taking tuitions, which has made this culture take root in the present educational system' (Patel, 2008). There is a general belief among students and their parents that joining an academy or a tuition centre is necessary for good grades and some students even feel that joining academies relieves them of the need for independent study.

Urooj (2012:1119) associates the growth of these tuition centres with the devastation of the education system of the country, particularly state schools and 'so called English medium schools'. Patel (2008) and Urooj (2012) observe that the state-run and private non-elite English-medium schools have more than forty students in a class, and as a result teachers cannot pay attention to every student. Due to the declining performance of schools, the tuition centres have secured their place in the educational setup (Urooj, 2012). According to Ahmed (2013), tuition centres became a trend in Karachi in the early 1980s when incompetent teachers infiltrated state-run schools. These teachers did not try to improve their teaching abilities, as a result of which teachers with a good reputation (mostly from private elite schools) started running tuition centres. Khan (2013) argues that teaching is the most underpaid profession in the country and consequently many teachers opt to work in tuition centres in the evening to generate more income. Ahmed (2013) and Khan (2013) further elaborate on this situation and argue that a number of teachers convince their college and school students that they should join their tuition centres to get more individual attention and to gain better grades. These centres are also expanding because many parents are not capable or educated enough to help their children with their studies. Some of the centres offer home tuition as well. The tuition centres advertise their services in local newspapers and on television.

As these tuition centres gained popularity, they started offering English language courses of various lengths: some four weeks, some two months or longer. These are commonly known as 'General English' courses. Anyone aiming to improve their English attends the General English course. As described in section 2.4 above, we know that the students from state-run schools often gain admission to public sector universities, where they also find the medium of instruction either to

be Urdu or another regional language. The students of public sector universities therefore struggle to get good jobs due to insufficient proficiency in English (written and spoken), as there is a high demand for English in the employment market (Shamim, 2011).

After the 1990s, these centres started offering IELTS preparation courses in response to the great demand from IELTS test-takers for immigration and higher education abroad (Rahman, 2006; see section 2.5). Some of the centres also offer preparation for the entry tests of some well-known private universities in Pakistan such as the Aga Khan University, the Lahore University of Management Sciences, and the Institute of Business Administration. The entry test of these universities is quite demanding, so the students attend preparation classes before they sit this. The entry test preparation is offered for 2-3 weeks where the courses aim to provide certain tips and tricks to their students (Shamim, 2011). Along with these courses, a number of institutes also offer preparation for the Central Superior Services examination (commonly known as CSS). CSS is a competitive examination, conducted and supervised by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) in Islamabad every year, for recruitment into the twelve different departments of the civil service such as Customs and Excise, Pakistan Audit and Accounts service, Income Tax department, and Postal service to name just a few. The CSS exam is conducted once a year and a number of candidates apply for the exam to get government jobs. In 2011, almost 12,000 candidates participated but only 8% of them passed the exam. English (Essay and Précis writing) is a compulsory subject in this exam, and most of the students attend preparation centres to prepare for this (Butt, 2013:13).

Today, only a few of the original tuition centres, which started by offering tuition in various subjects and then added General English courses, still exist. A large number of new private centres have opened up offering exclusively General English and IELTS preparation courses. These centres are known by various names such as Coaching Centre, English Academy, Evening Classes, English Language Centre, English Learning Centre, English Language Institute, English Club, and IELTS Preparation Centre (Patel, 2008). In my thesis, I will use these names

interchangeably to refer to the private centres offering General English and IELTS preparation courses.

### **2.6.2. Surging demand for IELTS preparation centres in Pakistan**

Since IELTS has become the preferred test for most organisations abroad and due to its wide popularity and acceptance, substantial numbers of Pakistani people take the IELTS test as a proof of their proficiency in English language every year (see chapter 1). Since there is no published literature available on private English Language Teaching institutes in Pakistan, most of the content reviewed here is the observations of Pakistani journalists, reported in the local newspapers and magazines. The growing demand for IELTS and the consequent expansion of IELTS preparation courses (and General English courses leading to IELTS) has been widely noted in the Pakistani press (Khan, 2008; Patel, 2008; Rehman, 2007; Siddiqui, 2006). In section 2.6.1 above I noted that tuition centres place their advertisements in local English and Urdu newspapers. The new private institutes offering General English and IELTS preparation courses advertise their business extensively on street billboards, through banners, leaflets, and on television. Most of these institutes use various advertising techniques (such as promoting the achievement of high band scores in a short time) to attract more customers (see more details in chapter 5), which has drawn a lot of criticism from Pakistani journalists.

According to Rahman (2001:256-257), the British Council promoted English for more than 50 years in Pakistan in all the major cities, and more than 17,000 students benefitted from the British Council's courses. However after 1990, the British Council began to withdraw from the English Language Teaching field in Pakistan due to political instability, and currently the British Council does not offer any English language or IELTS preparation courses, or run any of the institutes in Pakistan. The private English language institutes exclusively offering General English and IELTS preparation courses in Pakistan appeared on the scene after 1990, and today these can be found throughout all the major cities in Pakistan. Before 1990, Rahman records only one locally-owned private institute, called the Pakistan



American Cultural Centre (PACC), functioning in Karachi (Rahman, 2001). Rahman believes that the subsequent proliferation of English language institutes is profit-motivated, and many prey on false expectations about successful English learning. He says:

All over the cities in Pakistan one can see boards advertising institutions which claim to be English-medium tuition centres claiming to teach spoken English and English for passing all kinds of examinations and interviews. They are in areas ranging from the most affluent to slums and even in the rural areas. They cater to the persistent public demand for English education (2002:290).

Hasan (2009) and Rauf (2006) agree that the new post-1990 institutes which can now be found all over Pakistan's major cities make money by offering very short English language courses of an unsatisfactory quality. Teaching in such institutes in Pakistan is a lucrative business. Rauf claims: 'They have no fidelity to the ethics of service they provide. They don't care whether students will succeed or fail. To them, teaching a class is a burden and perhaps money is the only thing that matters' (2006:2). Rehman (2007) also observes the growth of IELTS preparation centres throughout Karachi since 1990. She gives a detailed description of two institutes, the locally-owned 'Pakistan American Cultural Centre' (PACC), and an international institute 'Berlitz'. She outlines their placement test for every level, the teaching methods, and students' motivations for attending these classes. Rehman (2007) believes that international chains like Berlitz or a local chain like PACC are well established and expensive and therefore do not cater for all sections of society.

The smaller centres are scattered across the city for those who want to study English closer to home. These centres make big promises, she argues, but tend not to deliver. Their teachers rarely hold a Master's degree in English, and are not always very experienced. 'Rising Sun English Academy', for example, is an institute which operates in a small flat in a busy Karachi market place. The owner is the sole teacher at this institute, only teaches small children and girls, and claims to hold a diploma

in English Language. Rehman (2007) strongly opposes these types of institutes and argues that they do not help anyone improve their English. Overall Rehman (2007) believes that small institutes are ineffective in teaching English, but more effective institutions like Berlitz and PACC are inaccessible to large sections of society (i.e. lower income groups), who instead study English closer to home. The end result is that nobody, except elites, is being served.

Hareem (2006) describes his experience of applying for a job at one of the local chains, 'Domino' in Karachi, which attracts people from the local neighbourhood, and runs General English language classes (at three levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced) from 10 am until 11 pm. He visited Domino to apply for a job as an English language teacher and now aims to make people aware of the fraudulence of such institutes. He expected Domino to be like an 'American- or British-standard institute' from the advertisement description. Hareem describes the building of the Domino institute as 'completely worn-out condition with malodorous and very narrow corridors' (2006). He was shocked to find out that the English skills of the principal and the teachers were not very much higher than those of the receptionist. Hareem concluded after meeting all the staff members and touring the entire building that: 'The whole institute is nothing but a bunch of some little educated cheats who are only fooling people' (ibid). He suggests that such institutes should be checked by the authorities, as their linguistic and pedagogical offerings are of such a low quality, that potential customers should be informed and discouraged from applying. Journalists like Hareem are calling for greater regulation, because in their view these types of institutes are fraudulent, both in the quality of the education that they provide, and the exaggerated claims they make, which offer false hope to their students.

Khan (2008) expresses concern over the use of deceptive brand names to confuse local people into thinking that an institute has some affiliation with either the United States or the United Kingdom, when actually no such connection exists. Khan (2008) too believes that these institutes make unrealistic claims about the improvement of IELTS scores. Some private tutors even change their original name to a British or American-sounding one to encourage business, and many of the

institutes even claim to have in their faculty the ‘top and the most experienced IELTS teachers on the planet’. Khan (2008) argues that if this trend continues, and IELTS preparation tutors continue to employ such tricks, then IELTS examinations administrators at foreign universities will require students to take the test upon arrival (especially students from Pakistan), as they will increasingly lose trust in IELTS results coming from centres in Pakistan. The IELTS testing centres in Pakistan are independently maintained by the British Council and Australian Education Organisation (AEO) but Khan’s point about perceptions is still valid. Khan (2008) emphasises that local people should ‘aim for learning English language, rather than learning tricks’, from these tutors.

Patel (2008) and Siddiqui (2006) describe the prominence of the newer style tuition centres in contemporary Pakistani society, and the way in which taking IELTS preparation classes in the evening at private institutes has become a cultural trend, fulfilling a social as well as an economic need. In Siddiqui’s (2006) conversations with students in the private coaching centres of Lahore, he was told that it is ‘cool’ to speak in English at social gatherings. Rehman (2007) agrees that people join evening classes at English language coaching centres to socialise outside of their immediate family and work/school life. Learning English is a secondary goal for many students, who are more interested in meeting friends, and sometimes looking for romance, at these centres. There is a lack of opportunity for romance outside the centres for people attending centres near their home as there are no clubs and pubs. Most of the families are conservative and they do not allow their daughters to socialise with their friends in evening, hence centres are the best option for such students.

Rehman (2007) says in her Daily Times report about a local institute entitled ‘Horizons Coaching Centre’ that ‘the student body wholly comprises of people from the neighbourhood who are all acquainted with one another and who enjoy their time at the institute together’. One of the students interviewed by Rehman (2007) gave the following reasons for taking IELTS preparation lessons: ‘I want to improve my English, and these classes can allow me to meet all my friends. It is a good way to chat with my friends in the evening through coaching centre’. Siddiqui (2006)

points to another kind of English learner: stay-at-home mothers. He observes that learning English for these mothers has become increasingly important in order to communicate with their children who are learning English at school and to participate in their school events. Siddiqui (2006) believes that most of these mothers attend General English courses but occasionally they also attend IELTS preparation courses for learning English.

All the journalists show concern over the growth of these private centres and they are calling for regulation of the industry because they believe that the claims of institutes are fraudulent and hence students do not achieve their language learning aims. The journalists suggest that these institutes are capitalising on the need of the moment and they can make good profits. Some journalists associate the growth of private language centres with the poor state education of Pakistan, but on the whole they have not explored the reasons for the growth of these institutes in much detail. In the next section, therefore, I highlight the reasons for the growth of private language centres in Pakistan.

### **2.6.3. Reasons behind the growth of private English Language Teaching industry in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, none of the language centres belong to tertiary institutions, as is the case in most of the English speaking countries. Only one public sector institution (the Institute of Business Administration Sukkur) has recently started offering IELTS preparation courses since January 2014. They are currently charging 18,000 PKR (176 US\$) for their eight week programme which is only slightly less than the international institutes (this information was found through one of their advertisements in local newspapers). According to Shamim (2011), some English language teaching projects were established in the early 1980s by setting up an English Language Teaching centre in the public sector universities of Pakistan (in the province of Sindh and Punjab). These five-year projects were funded by foreign organisations and they aimed to enhance the English language skills of the university students by offering short English language courses and preparation for

international examinations like IELTS and TOEFL. The English Language Teaching centres flourished during the first few years, but later they stopped functioning. Shamim (2011) observes that as these were foreign projects, after a few years, there were no more funds for their continuation. The universities did not provide these English Language Teaching centres with any further funding for their staff and resources. Shamim (2011) argues that there is an urgent need for such English language teaching centres in all the public sector universities in Pakistan. According to Mansoor (2005), the absence of English language centres in public sector institutions contributes to the creation of a large private English language teaching industry.

Malik (1996:91) argues that these institutes have arisen from the ‘needs of students to learn English for higher education purposes, for emigration and to qualify for white-collar jobs’. Malik also attributes their growth to unsatisfactory teaching at public sector colleges and universities: ‘The private institutes mushroomed since 1990 because of ineffective teaching of English Language in public universities of Pakistan’ (Malik, 1996:17). The problems of English education in Pakistan have been addressed in detail by scholars like Baumgardner (1993), Hoodbhoy (1998), Mansoor (2005) and Rahman (2002). Outdated curricula, large classes, poor teaching methods, and the dearth of English language teaching resources are some of the major problems faced by students in the public sector.

Zafar’s analysis (2008) of the emergence of private institutes centres on the dissatisfaction with the present English language proficiency of university students, as a result of inappropriate syllabuses and materials at schools and colleges. He notes that students are taught things they do not need, and what they need they are not taught: it is difficult to find close and relevant links between what is taught at public sector colleges and universities, and what is needed in academic and professional settings in Pakistan (ibid). Even after years of learning English, students are still inadequately equipped to cope with the demands of professional English. Zafar (ibid) argues that most job advertisements, especially in the private sector, for doctors, engineers, business executives or even secretaries demand competency in oral and written English, as well as technical knowledge. Students are taught about Hamlet

and Keats in compulsory English classes at public sector colleges and universities, but in reality they need to write summaries, memoranda and reports in their jobs.

Zafar says:

The chasm created by the English language courses offered at colleges and universities and the real needs on entering the job market, force the recent graduates to seek language support through private tuitions or approach English language centres to better their language skills (2008:2).

Hasan (2009) also notes that the founding of English language centres in the last two decades is a response to low educational standards in state schools and universities. He suggests that students sign up to these institutes because most white-collar jobs in Pakistan require fluency in English, and the standards of English language teaching in government-run colleges and universities are below par. Hasan believes: ‘There are a number of employments where mastery over spoken and written English is required and a reasonable knowledge of English guarantees better paid employment opportunities’ (2009:106). He explains:

There is a discrepancy in the availability of learning facilities in government and private sector universities. Private universities provide better learning facilities which help students to learn English language more successfully. Whereas, public sector students seek help from private institutions and hence they keep flourishing (2009:2).

As I have suggested, an unregulated private teaching industry was already functioning before the economic change in 1990, but rapid growth in this sector only took place after the privatisation of many local companies, and the formation of multinational companies in Pakistan, consequently increasing the demand for proficient English speakers in the job market. Today, proficiency in English is not only required in white-collar jobs as noted by most of these scholars, but it is also required for many low paid jobs. Husain (2007) emphasises the importance of

English language skills in getting good jobs, and believes that English has become the language of power in Pakistan. Even low salaried jobs like product sales and service industry jobs in big supermarkets and restaurants require fluency in English because a person is expected to deal with customers belonging to different social classes (Husain, 2007:2). The requirement for written and spoken English for these kinds of low paid jobs recently appeared in job advertisements in local newspapers, in 2012, but there is no discussion found in the literature. The following are the main reasons suggested by different authors and journalists for the growth of private institutes in Pakistan:

1. Poor state education.
2. Better job opportunities for proficient English speakers.
3. Political instability fuelling desire for permanent emigration and/or higher education.

The growth of private institutes is not a uniquely Pakistani issue. The growth of these institutes is common in other countries such as India, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka due to global perceptions about English allowing access to better jobs. The private English Language Teaching sector has also expanded in many English-speaking countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The increase of international students in these countries has led to a greater demand for IELTS preparation courses for people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESBs). In the section below, I will focus on the growth of the private English language teaching industry in English speaking countries.

## **2.7. Private sector English Language Teaching industry in English-speaking countries**

The IELTS preparation courses in the English-speaking countries are attended by international students (typically Asians). In this section, I will discuss the expansion 52

of IELTS preparation courses in countries like Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom as there is a substantial body of literature focusing on these three countries which receive a large number of international students and offer IELTS preparation courses. According to Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), there is a notable growth in private language centres offering IELTS preparation to international students in New Zealand and Australia. Read and Hayes (2003) ascribe the growth in English language teaching programmes to the change of government policies in New Zealand in the late 1980s, which required students from non-English speaking backgrounds to undertake IELTS or TOEFL tests to gain admission to universities in New Zealand. Read and Hayes (2003) report that, due to a growing demand for IELTS, programmes for IELTS preparation have grown, not only in language centres in state sector tertiary institutions, but also in private language schools. IELTS has developed into a 'big business' (Read and Hayes, 2003:189). This increase in the market for IELTS teaching courses has been created in part by immigration requirements and/or registration with professional bodies, but predominantly by international students (Read and Hayes, 2003).

Most of the international students come from Asia (almost 70%), the biggest group being Chinese (Bailey, 2009; Read and Hayes, 2003). Recently there has been a growth in the number of students from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, due to an increase in the number of country-specific scholarships. International students mainly come to New Zealand to gain admission to tertiary institutions, and in order to meet the entry requirements they choose to take IELTS preparation courses. A smaller number of people also take it for immigration, for registration with professional bodies in the health field and for personal reasons (Bailey, 2009; Davies, 2008; Read and Hayes, 2003; Terry, 2003). The study by Read and Hayes (2003) does not explain how international students arrive in New Zealand without IELTS in the first place; presumably they have temporary visitor visas. The student visa requires an unconditional offer letter from the host university, and in order to meet the university's requirements, one has to go through IELTS or an equivalent English proficiency test before landing in the country. It seems therefore that students can get a visa with a university place that is conditional on their taking an IELTS



preparation course before starting their study.

Brown (1998) conducted a study to assess how successfully the IELTS preparation programmes in Australia prepare students for the IELTS test. Brown (1998) observes that many private language centres have opened in order to offer courses such as English for Academic Purposes and IELTS preparation. The majority of students attending IELTS preparation courses in his study were from the South-Asian region. They had completed their secondary education in their home country and were motivated to undertake tertiary education in Australian institutions. Brown (1998) did not specify the countries of origin of his participants attending these IELTS preparation courses. Green (2007) measured the performance of international students in the IELTS writing component of the IELTS preparation courses in the United Kingdom. The majority of the students were from China and Taiwan. According to Green (2007), international students have to gain access to universities by presenting an acceptable IELTS or TOEFL score. Students falling below the required entry level are accepted on the condition that they complete a language course provided by the university to improve their test scores, or that they find a language centre to take the course to gain unconditional entry to the university, similar to the situation in New Zealand. According to Yen and Kuzma (2009), China has become the largest source of international students in the United Kingdom due to its rapid economic growth. They found that international students at the University of Worcester in the United Kingdom are required to obtain a 6.0 band score in the IELTS test as an entry criterion. Yen and Kuzma (2009) argue that, despite students having achieved the required IELTS band score of 6.0, their poor language ability is one of the major obstacles to their learning. Lecturers at the university also mentioned this as a major obstacle.

Gill (2008) reported that in 2007 there were nearly 50,000 Chinese students studying at United Kingdom universities. In 2009, Chinese students made up 40% of total international students (83 out of 207) at the University of Worcester. For those international students who did not obtain 6.0 or above band score in IELTS, the University language centre provided them with a ten week course of English study to raise their IELTS scores. It is clear that the growing demand for IELTS from people

of Non-English speaking backgrounds has resulted in the expansion of IELTS preparation courses in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

The expansion of the private English Language Teaching sector is notable in most parts of South and South-East Asia (such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China). Most of these countries fail to provide a high quality public sector education which gives rise to the demand for private sector English Language Teaching. The language centres offering IELTS preparation in these countries are similar to those in Pakistan; all over this region, demand for IELTS has created a large private industry. In the next section, I review the private English Language Teaching sector in South and South-East Asia which is the largest supplier of overseas students to the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States.

## **2.8. Private sector English Language Teaching industry in South and South-East Asia**

### **2.8.1. English language institutes in India**

Graddol (2010) observes that many parents and learners rely on private supplementation for English learning. Such private language institutes cater for all age groups, but access is better in urban areas. According to Deshpande (2004), Dhattiwala (2005) and Pandit (2009) English coaching classes in India have developed as a result of a lack of educational standards in public sector colleges and universities, a situation largely similar to that of Pakistan. Dhattiwala (2005) observes, of the private institutes in India, that ‘some top bracket institutes cater to the urban elite, others conduct low-cost courses in spoken English for graduates from low income families’. For example, the ‘Shree Institute’ has grown over the years with many branches in different cities in India, and is considered a high-quality institute which caters only for the urban elite. But institutes like the ‘Sharda Trust’ offer low-cost courses, which attract people from low-income families. Pandit (2009) believes that such low-cost courses are only making money for the institute, and do

not benefit students, as it is not possible to learn English in these crash courses. This is similar to what many journalists (such as Hareem, 2006; Khan, 2008; Rehman, 2007) claim about private English language institutes in Pakistan.

A story in an Indian newspaper called 'Express India' (2008) describes the growth of private coaching centres in the city of Pune. The writer observes a large number of private institutes in the city which have increased their business by opening up many new branches. The writer further states that all these institutes cater for housewives, young graduates, and professionals, who hope to be proficient users of spoken and written English. Institutes like 'Elixir' have ten centres in Pune and one each in Satara, Karad, and Kolhapur. 'Chrysalis Institutes' has grown from one to three centres in the last two years. 'CITIS Institutes' has three coaching centres in the city. Raj Mudliar, owner of 'Hank Training Centre', has a turnover of about a hundred thousand rupees a month (US\$ 1,826; this is a conversion from Indian Rupees to US\$, as of September 2014). Mudliar says: 'I had predicted this boom 15 years ago. If I had the finances then, I would have been running 10 centres today and earning a packet'. Prashant Patel of 'Mind Speak Training Academy' explains that they have students from Iran, various countries throughout Africa and South Korea, who come with a very basic level of English, and want to take IELTS. Corporate beginners looking to improve their presentation skills also come to these institutes, and housewives keen to help children with homework also make up part of the student body. Ahmad, an Iranian student at one such institute, is quoted as saying that the business operates under false pretences because a month is not enough time to learn the language.

Those seeking to emigrate to the west need professional help with passing language tests like IELTS. The desire to learn English, therefore, is not simply linguistic, but also economic and utilitarian. When learners are in a hurry, perhaps because they need part-time employment, or to pass IELTS, they often join academies in addition to their undergraduate classes. The institutes mainly target those who need to gain proficiency quickly, or who need to pass certain foreign English language examinations (Hebbar, 2004). The situation in India is largely similar to that of Pakistan, where students need to learn English to obtain better paid

jobs, for applying to positions abroad, or else for helping their children by learning the language. The fee structure in India is also quite similar to that of the IELTS preparation courses in Pakistan.

The local institutes with British or American-sounding names like British Academy for English Language (BAFL), British Learning Arcade, Best Coaching, Unique Institute of English Language, and American Language Centre are quite common in India, as they are in Pakistan. It is quite difficult for many Indians to establish whether these native looking institutes are international language schools or local enterprises. Similar to Pakistan, most of these centres have branches spread throughout the major cities of India, such as Delhi, Pune, and Mumbai. These coaching institutes claim to make people proficient in spoken English. It is usually improvement of communication skills over a short period of time which is emphasised in advertisements.

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in India started in the 1990s and today it has expanded beyond Information Technology to the communication (telecom) and manufacturing industries (Atal, 2004; Graddol, 2010; Hebbar, 2004). According to Graddol (2010) and Hebbar (2004), a new spectrum of job opportunities has opened up for those who know English. India's travel and tourism companies, the outsourcing and off-shoring of service industries, media and communication, and organised retail, mainly require fluent speakers of English, which has resulted in the widespread demand for English speaking courses (ibid). To give an example, Atal (2004) observed that the Information Technology Enabled Service (ITES) sector was at that point poised to create a projected 1.1 million jobs in India over the following four-year period. It is for this reason that many private institutes have started appearing on the scene. Atal notes: 'The burgeoning demand for English proficient people in the Information Technology Enabled Service (ITES) sector, has led to the mushrooming of English language teaching institutes at every nook and corner of the city'. Atal (2004) observes that the British Council in India offers more than 40 different English language courses, including one call-centre training course, and that there has been an increase of almost 30% in student enrolments on these courses in recent times. The most popular course at the British Council is the General English

course.

Dhattiwala (2005) interviewed owners of some private institutes, who confirmed their increasing numbers over time. Dr Surana, the director of the 'Shree Institute of English Speaking' says: 'In the past 10 years, business has grown by 300 percent' (Dhattiwala, 2005). The owner of a private English academy named 'Percept' (which attracts people from vernacular-education backgrounds) in Deshpande (2004) reports that his business has flourished over the last two to three years, because of the call centre and software industries. Some of the institutes like 'Miracle' (a local Indian institute) also provide residential facilities because people come from different countries such as Oman, Yemen, and China to learn English (Deshpande, 2004).

Cowie (2007) reviewed the Indian call centre industry with a detailed study of an agency called 'Excellence', which handles 'accent training' for a number of call centres in Bangalore. The job seekers hired by the call centres spend about three weeks in the agency going through the training. People of different ages and professions are attracted by call centre employment because of the higher rates of pay available (Cowie, 2007:318). The fees of the institutes vary from 1,800-3000 (US\$ 32-54) rupees a month, going up to 5,000 (US\$ 91) rupees a month for call centre training and it is often paid by the call centre who outsource the training (Cowie, 2007). This kind of practice is less common in Pakistan where there are only a few call centres, in the big cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi (Rahman, 2009). The reason behind the limited number of call centres is the fact that, for political reasons, there is limited foreign investment in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO).

According to Banerjee (2010), knowledge of English in India guarantees a job, not just in the services industry, but across a range of sectors. Anyone in jobs such as that of 'hairdresser, chauffeur, waiter, and food and beverage company employee' needs to be well-versed in English, a trend which has been recently noticed in Pakistan. There are many similarities between the private English Language Teaching industry in India and Pakistan, in terms of the range of private local and international providers, the duration of courses, the results guaranteed, the

claims about gains in confidence, and achievement of targets.

### **2.8.2. English language institutes in Bangladesh**

Similar to the situation in both India and Pakistan, many scholars in Bangladesh consider the unsatisfactory quality of English language teaching in public sector institutions to be the reason behind the growth of coaching centres catering for people who are seeking proficiency in English language skills (Khan, 2004; Zafor, 2010). Billah (2010) reports on the dearth of language teachers at all educational levels in Bangladesh. Khan (2004:116) observes that the importance of English, academically and for professional purposes, has resulted in a proliferation of coaching centres and institutions catering for English language teaching in Bangladesh. Azam (2005), notes that ‘Bangladeshi students are incompetent in English, especially in their spoken skills’, even though they study the language from primary to higher secondary level. In the national education system, rote-learning is encouraged, and hence students remain deprived of meaningful language learning. Usually reading and writing are the only two skills tested in examinations, hence students tend not to learn English for practical everyday purposes. Oral communication is only practised in class and is not included in examinations, and as a result students are not interested in working to develop skills that are not going to be tested, hence they fail to acquire oral or aural competence. Zafor (2010) suggests that spoken English should be encouraged at educational institutions, and classes must be conducted in English rather than in the local language.

There is a range of private institutes offering English language courses and IELTS preparation in the city of Dhaka. They help their clients such as students, businessmen, and servicemen to achieve their targets (higher education, emigration, and finding better paid jobs), making exaggerated claims to attract business by offering guaranteed results and learning in a very short period of time. There is no assurance that the candidates at these coaching centres will actually acquire any language skills. These private institutes market themselves as champions, guaranteeing success on their short courses for substantial amounts of money.

Billah says that in most of the centres, the entire class is conducted in Bengali, and nobody speaks English. He expresses concern over these fast growing coaching centres advertising shortcut methods of learning English which promise results, but ‘fail to really provide quality education, offering only gimmicks’ (2010). Apart from Bangladesh, other countries including Sri Lanka have experienced a growth of private language institutes in recent years. According to Raheem and Ratwatte (2004), English language institutes are found everywhere, from urban to extremely rural areas. The students attending these centres are mainly young males seeking employment opportunities.

### **2.8.3. English language institutes in China**

Private English language institutions are also commonly found in South East Asian countries like China. Thorniley (2010), writing about the growth of the private English Language Teaching industry in China, estimates that there are around 30,000 organisations or companies offering private English classes. Since 2005, the market has doubled and is worth around \$3.1bn and according to Tan (2011) reached \$4.5 billion in 2011. Tan (2011) further reports that in the year 2011, almost 400 million Chinese people (one-third of the country’s population) were studying English at these private language centres. Kedwards (2012) observes that in the Chinese education system, people are taught by rote (routine memorisation of words and grammar, similar to Pakistan) and it is only after they finish school they realise they still need to learn English at these language centres.

Smaller local private institutes offering English language courses in China are facing a bleak future due to competition from larger corporates (Thorniley, 2010).

Affluent families in China prefer to send their children to classes staffed by American, Canadian, and British teachers as soon as they start speaking (Kedwards, 2012; Tan, 2011; Thorniley, 2010). Similarly, for the IELTS preparation courses, native speakers are preferred over local teachers. Several smaller, localised teaching institutions with less marketing ability have come under pressure. People of different ages in China are highly encouraged by their parents to attend English Language

classes. Chinese children belonging to affluent families are sent at a very young age to attend English language classes taught by native speakers; and high school students are frequently enrolled in extra-curricular classes to cram for the English component of the university entrance examination. Furthermore, young Chinese professionals, aspiring to a more fulfilling and lucrative career flock to classrooms which offer private English language classes (Graddol, 2006). According to Bolton (2002:195), English teaching institutes attract a large number of learners of different ages and occupations. The most successful example is the 'New Oriental English', China's largest private education provider with 324 learning centres which attracts some of the highest numbers of students to its examination preparation and training courses. Shenzen (2006) estimated that there are some 50,000 private language schools from family-run outfits to chains such as English First, Wall Street English and New Oriental, with 2.5m students enrolled altogether. These private language centres were established for adults but these days an increasing number of children are also gaining admission to learn English.

Some of the privately owned institutes in China are expanding rapidly as most of them operate hundreds of branches across the country (Graddol, 2006). For example, 'Education First' (EF) has more than 130 schools because of the Chinese public's increasing demand for English. Another Chinese-owned institute called 'Global Education and Technology Group' offers IELTS preparation and English language courses at more than 49 institutes. Thorniley (2010) reports that at the end of 2009, some of the longest running local institutes were bankrupted, due to failure in an increasingly competitive market. Despite the demand, Chinese nationals with a good command of English have difficulty getting employment as English teachers, because students and their parents place greater value on international language school chains and native English teachers, which is quite different to the situation in India and Pakistan (Shenzhen, 2006). There are no native speakers of English available to teach in private institutes in Pakistan as the institutes cannot afford to pay them as much, for example, as they would earn in China. This is because most of the students attending these institutes in Pakistan are lower-middle and lower class and pay much less for their courses than students in China who are much better off.



Furthermore, due to the political situation in Pakistan, native speakers of English would not be interested in teaching there.

Thorniley (2010) further reports that there are just 5,000 native speaker English teachers, with more than 300 million students in the education system, which suggests a major staffing shortfall. China is a very different country compared to others like India and Pakistan as there is a growing demand for international institutes. This suggests that in countries like China, students have low proficiency due to the poor quality of education in the state sector but they are likely to get a better quality of private English centres and IELTS preparation courses.

## **2.9. Summary**

This chapter discussed the education system in Pakistan (public and private sector) at different levels which helps understanding the proficiency levels of students attending private English language institutes. The growth of these private centres is mainly driven by the demand for IELTS and for learning English in general, specifically from public sector graduates. The review of comments in the media suggests that the private English Language Teaching industry has been growing due to the pull factor of availability of job opportunities requiring English in Pakistan, but also push factor such as political instability which has resulted in a desire among people for emigration and education abroad and the poor education system in Pakistan. The growth of these private institutes is not unique to Pakistan, but is commonly found in other neighbouring countries such as India, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka and in some English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The process of (mainly low-skilled) Pakistanis' migration to the United Kingdom started in the 1950s, but at present, more highly-skilled people are in demand in western countries and in the Gulf region. All potential emigrants to English speaking countries now require IELTS, as does anyone intending to study abroad. The increasing demand for IELTS for studying abroad and/or emigration purposes has led to the expansion of IELTS preparation courses. A detailed survey

of the private English language teaching industry of Pakistan will be presented in Chapter 4. The next chapter reviews the washback and impact studies of IELTS conducted around the world which provide an appropriate framework for this study.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

### **3.1. Introduction**

I outlined in my introduction that this dissertation aims to assess the impact of IELTS in Pakistan on education, the economy and society as a whole. This chapter reviews the theories that have shaped and guided this study. I start with an exploration of the key concepts of ‘impact’ and ‘washback’, aiming to make a clear distinction between them. The study addresses the issues of both washback and impact, and this breadth is reflected in the title, ‘An impact study of IELTS in Pakistan’. This chapter further reviews the key issues of washback (i.e. the direction of washback, washback variability and washback intensity). It will then illustrate the mechanism of washback which will be followed by a review and critique of empirical studies on the washback and impact of English proficiency exams such as IELTS and TOEFL on a range of different stakeholders in various contexts. Through this, I will determine what constitutes good practice in this study of the impact of IELTS in Pakistan which will highlight the gaps in research that the study aims to address.

### **3.2. Definition of the key terms: washback and impact**

In Chapter 1 I briefly defined washback and impact, where washback covers the influences of language tests on teaching and learning and impact covers the influence of tests beyond the classroom, on the educational system and society as a whole. If we go into these concepts in more detail we can see that scholars have used different definitions for them. It has long been recognised that testing significantly impacts on the educational system and, more broadly, on society as a whole. High-stakes tests are those where the results are seen by students, teachers, administrators, parents or the general public as the basis upon which important decisions are made that immediately and directly affect the test-takers and other stakeholders (Langenfeld et al., 1997; Madaus, 1985). The primary use of high-stakes tests has been ‘to ration

future opportunity as the basis for determining admission to the next layer of education or to employment opportunities' (Chapman and Snyder, 2000:458). This illustrates the power and control aspects of testing, as well as its role in cultural and social reproduction. Taylor (2004) aligns with the above definitions, stating that tests have a significant impact on the careers of test-takers as they provide them with potential access to educational and employment opportunities; they also impact on educational systems and, more widely, on society (2004:154). Test results are used to make decisions about immigration policy for example, and professional registration in some occupations, such as medicine. As such, high-stakes tests are usually public examinations or large-scale, standardised tests. Language tests such as IELTS 'are more and more used in a gate-keeping role in decisions of crucial importance to candidates such as the admission or otherwise to particular programmes, professions or places, thus earning the label of high-stakes test' (Hawkey, 2006:9).

Washback is a prominent notion in applied linguistics, especially in Britain (Messick, 1996). The term washback in the field of applied linguistics and 'backwash' in the field of general education have been used since the 1990s to refer to the effects of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Cheng et al., 2004). Implicit in the notion of washback is the assumption that 'tests or examinations can or should drive teaching, and hence learning' (Cheng and Curtis, 2004:4). Kirkland (1971 cited in Scott, 2007) described how testing affects students (self-concept, motivation, levels of aspiration, anxiety, study practices, coaching effects, opportunities for advancement), parents, teachers (content, teaching methods, evaluation of teaching effectiveness), schools (curriculum and methods) and society (allocation of opportunities, expanded concept of ability, maximising individual potential). A number of other related terms originating in general education measurement literature have similar meanings to washback (Green, 2007). Popham (1987) introduced the notion of 'measurement-driven instruction' which refers to the role of tests in driving teaching and learning. In order to achieve the goal of driving teaching, a match between the content and format of the test and of the curriculum was encouraged. This was referred to as 'curriculum alignment' by Shepard (1993). This alignment, which introduces a new

or revised test into the educational system with the aim of improving teaching and learning, was referred to as ‘systemic validity’ by Frederiksen and Collins (1989). As a result, the test becomes part of a dynamic process in which changes in the educational system are implemented based on the feedback obtained from the test. This was also referred to as ‘test influence’ by Alderson and Wall (1993), ‘test impact’ by Bachman and Palmer (1996) and ‘consequential validity’ by Messick (1996). This range of terms, as used by various researchers, refers to different facets of the same phenomenon – the influence of testing on teaching and learning. The terms washback and backwash have been used interchangeably but in this study, I prefer the term ‘washback’ as it is now commonly used in the field of applied linguistics, language testing and general education (Green, 2007; Hawkey 2006; Saville, 2009).

Pearson (1988:98) pointed out that ‘public examinations influence the attitudes, behaviours, and motivation of teachers, learners and parents, and because examinations often come at the end of the course, this influence is seen working in a backward direction, hence the term “washback”’. Bachman and Palmer (1996) considered washback to be a subset of a test’s impact on society, educational systems, and individuals. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bachman and Palmer (1996) state that the impact of the test is experienced at two levels: the micro-level and the macro-level. In the former, it is the effect of the test on individual teachers and students and in the latter, the effect of the test on wider society and educational systems. Hughes (2003:53) clearly equated washback with test impact by defining it as ‘a part of the impact a test may have on learners and teachers, on educational systems in general, and on society at large’. Hamp-Lyons (1997) also argued against the limitation of focusing on the test effect on teaching and learning and regards washback as only one dimension of test impact, which ‘pervades every aspect of our instruments and scoring procedures’ (1997:299). These scholars, along with McNamara (1996) and Shohamy (2001), have interpreted the term ‘washback’ broadly as encompassing test effects not only on teaching and learning, but also on the education system and society as a whole.

Some researchers in recent years have differentiated between the ‘wider’

and ‘narrower’ effects by calling the former ‘impact’ and the latter ‘washback’. Wall (1997:291) defined test impact as ‘any of the effects that a test may have on individuals, policies or practices, within the classroom, the school, the educational system, or society as a whole’, and washback as ‘the effects of tests on teaching and learning’. Bailey (1996) supported this viewpoint and considers washback as the effect of a test on teaching and learning, and impact as the effects of a test on education and society as a whole. Saville (2009:25) suggests that ‘the extent to which a test interacts with or is conditioned by factors beyond the classroom is a feature of the test’s wider impact on society and educational systems’. As I indicated in the introduction I shall adhere to the distinction of washback and impact based on Hawkey (2006), Saville (2009), and Wall (1997) according to whom ‘washback’ refers to the influences of language tests on teaching and learning, and ‘impact’ refers to the influences of tests beyond the classroom, on the educational system and on wider society. Overall, it is of crucial importance to understand the complex relationships between individuals, the institutions to which they belong, and the broader systems in society in order to reach a clear understanding of what impact is and how it works. In the following section, I will discuss one of the most debated issues in the literature about washback and impact, that is, whether the effect of tests is positive or negative.

### **3.3. Direction of Washback: positive, negative or neutral**

Washback is said to vary along at least two dimensions: direction and extent, strength or intensity (Green, 2007:6). Washback is perceived as bipolar – either negative (harmful) or positive (beneficial). According to Alderson and Wall (1993:117), ‘a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning’. They also emphasised the fact that the more the teachers and students consider that a test controls access to rewards, or threatens sanctions for failure, the more likely they are to change their behaviour. Thus the evidence of washback can be demonstrated in behavioural and attitudinal changes in teachers and learners. They noted that tests

can be powerful determiners, both positively and negatively of what happens in classrooms (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Buck (1988:17) gave a similar but slightly amplified description:

There is a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the tests, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. The influence of the test on the classroom (referred to as washback) is, of course, very important, this washback effect can be either beneficial or harmful.

Some studies have shown that influences of tests on teaching and learning were almost always harmful (see Alderson and Banerjee, 2001; Wall and Alderson, 1993). According to Alderson and Wall, negative washback is the undesirable effect of a particular test on teaching and learning, such as something that the teacher or learner does not wish to teach or learn (1993:115). When teachers focus on teaching only what is testable and neglect the areas which are not going to be tested, this results in negative washback which creates high anxiety and fear of the test results among teachers and students (Shohamy et al., 1996). The most common criticisms of tests are that they narrow the curriculum and encourage mechanical, boring and debilitating forms of teaching and learning (Shohamy, 2001). Thus teachers and learners end up teaching and learning towards the test, regardless of whether or not they fully understand its rationale or aims.

Some researchers, on the other hand, have seen washback in a more positive way (such as Bailey, 1996; Davies, 1985; Wall, 2000). Washback can be beneficial when the assessment procedures result in increased motivation of learners and lead to positive learning outcomes (Saville, 2009). When tuition is geared to ensuring that students pass a test, at least some effects on teaching and learning are considered to be positive. According to Green (2007), among the potential benefits of test preparation programmes are enhanced motivation and clearer, more focused instructional targets. However, there appears to be conflicting reactions toward

positive and negative washback on teaching and learning, and no obvious consensus in the research community as to whether certain washback effects were positive or negative. Pearson (1988:101) summarised the two positions in a rather deterministic way, by concluding that a test's washback effect would be negative if it failed to reflect the learning principles and/or course objectives to which it supposedly related, but it would be positive if the effects were beneficial and encouraged the whole range of desired changes. Furthermore, Alderson and Wall (1993:117-118) emphasised that the quality of the washback effect might be independent of the quality of a test. Any test, good or bad, may result in beneficial or detrimental washback effects.

For some scholars, washback is considered as a neutral term (for example, Alderson and Wall, 1993; Bachman and Palmer, 1996) as they suggest that washback can be planned (intentional) resulting in positive effects, or it can be unintentional resulting in effects that might be positive or negative. Wall (1997) suggests that in order to evaluate the consequences of a test for teaching and learning, the nature of the examination and the educational context need to be investigated. According to Green (2007), test effects which are beneficial to some may be considered detrimental to others, which is termed 'washback variability', that is, the 'differences between participants in how they are affected by a test' (Green, 2006:339).

Besides varying in direction (negative, positive or neutral), washback can also vary in strength, which is known as 'washback intensity' (Cheng, 1997). This concept was developed by Cheng (1997, 2005), Green (2007) and Watanabe (2004) who attempted to identify possible factors that contribute to different forms of 'washback variability'. In their view, participants' perceptions of test stakes, test quality, and test difficulty tend to vary from person to person and therefore lead to differences in the washback effects experienced by individuals. Washback intensity (Cheng, 2005) refers to the degree to which participants will adjust their behaviour to meet the demands of a test. Green (2007) and Popham (1987) suggest that the stakes associated with tests are often regarded as a strong indicator of washback intensity. The higher the stakes associated with a test, the greater the potential for washback. The concept of washback intensity will be fully explained under Green's model of



washback (see section 3.5 below).

### **3.4. Impact and validity**

According to Saville (2009), the extent to which the effects and consequences of a test can be seen as an intrinsic aspect of the test's validity has received particular attention in the literature. Researchers like Frederiksen and Collins (1989) and Morrow (1986) emphasise the importance of evaluating a test's validity according to its effect on teaching and learning. They suggest that a test's validity should be gauged by the degree to which it has a positive influence (beneficial washback) on teaching. Morrow (1986) coined the term 'washback validity', which means that a test is valid when it has positive washback, and conversely, a test is invalid when it has negative washback. Morrow (1986:6) also claimed that 'in essence, an examination of washback validity would take testing researchers into the classroom in order to observe the effect of their tests in action'. Some language testers such as Alderson and Wall (1993) and Messick (1996) contest this and argue that washback is not generally considered to be an important factor when judging the validity of a test. According to Messick (1989:20), 'the social values and the social consequences of a test cannot be ignored in consideration of validity' (cited in Hawkey, 2006:19). Messick's (1989) 'consequential validity' is concerned with the social consequences of test use (cited in Davies, 1997:335).

Messick (1996:242) emphasises that neither washback, as only one form of social consequence of testing, nor test consequences, can be viewed alone as a separate aspect of validity. According to Messick (1996), tests which satisfy validity criteria are more likely to have a positive influence on teaching and learning and so counsels that washback is not a sign of test validity, but that a valid test is likely to generate positive washback. Messick argues that we should 'seek validity by design as a likely basis for "washback" instead of considering washback as a sign of test validity' (1996:252). Messick's view has now been widely accepted in the educational measurement community. Many language testing researchers now locate the concepts of impact and washback within Messick's validity framework, in

which washback is seen as an instance of the consequential aspect of ‘construct validity’, which, along with five other aspects, address the questions that need to be answered in evaluating test validity.

### **3.5. Washback – hypotheses and theoretical models**

The most important issue in investigating washback is to understand the ‘mechanism of washback’ which describes how washback works and helps identify the contextual factors and stakeholders included in the washback process. There have been different hypotheses and models to illustrate the mechanism of washback. Alderson and Wall (1993:120-121) propose 15 ‘Washback Hypotheses’ that researchers can use to examine what effects tests have on teaching and for whom. They established a basis for determining which areas of teaching and learning were commonly affected by washback and which might serve as a basis for further research. Their dichotomous schema assumes that the washback effect may involve two parties (teachers and students) and two processes (teaching and learning):

1. A test will influence teaching.
2. A test will influence learning.
3. A test will influence what teachers teach.
4. A test will influence how teachers teach.
5. A test will influence what learners learn; and
6. A test will influence how learners learn.
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching; and
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching; and
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.
11. A test will influence attitude towards the content and method of teaching and learning.
12. Tests that have important consequences will have washback; and conversely,
13. Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.

14. Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.
15. Tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others.

Alderson and Wall's (1993) 15 hypotheses highlight the complexity of the washback phenomenon by including test effects on different aspects of teaching and learning, and on the attitudes that teachers and learners will have concerning the changes. They also point out a correlation between test consequences and the stakes and the possibility that the test will influence some learners and teachers but not others. They conclude that further research is needed in this area. A further influential conceptualisation of washback is Hughes' (1993 cited in Bailey, 1996) trichotomy of participants, process and products in explaining the mechanism of washback in an educational context. Hughes (1993:2 cited in Bailey, 1996:262) produces a trichotomy which distinguishes between participants, processes and products in both teaching and learning, recognising that all three may be affected by the nature of a test. In Hughes' framework, 'participants' refer to students, classroom teachers, administrators, materials developers and publishers, i.e. 'all of those whose perceptions and attitudes towards their work may be affected by a test'. 'Process' may include materials development, syllabus design, changes in teaching methodology, the use of learning and teaching strategies, i.e. 'any action taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning' (ibid). Finally Hughes' 'product' refers to 'what is learned' (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning (fluency, etc.). Hughes further notes that:

The trichotomy into participants, process and product allows us to construct a basic model of backwash. The nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practising the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of that work (Hughes, 1993:2 cited in Bailey, 1996:262).

Hughes stresses the participants' perceptions and attitudes and how these factors affect what they do. Based on Hughes' (1993) concept of trichotomy which suggests that the participants, processes and products should all be considered in examining washback, Bailey (1996) developed a model in which a test not only affected products through the participants and processes they engaged in, but where the participants and products also in turn provided feedback and thereby also had an impact on the test, as shown by dotted lines in the figure 3.1 below:

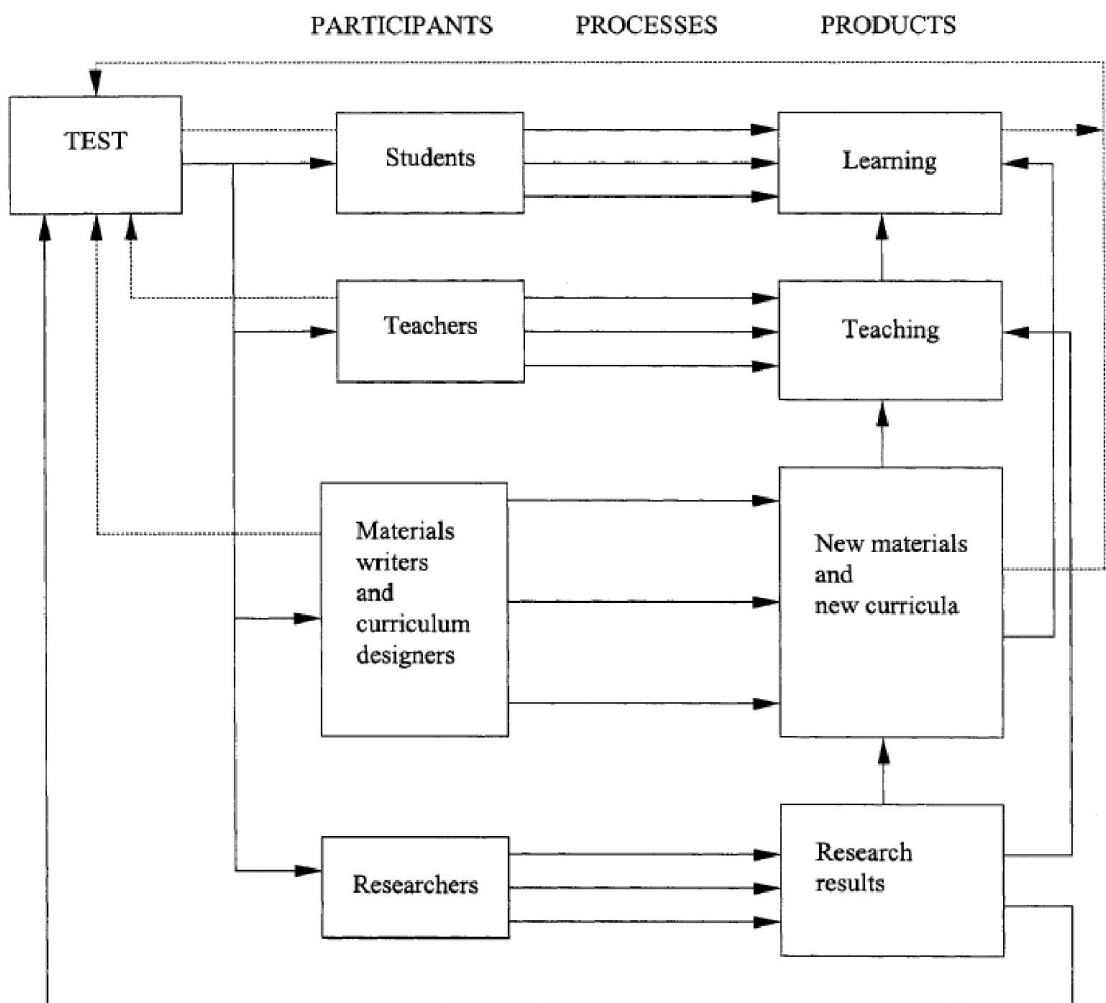


Figure 3.1 Bailey's washback model (1996:264)

The inter-relationship of these three factors is represented in figure 3.1 above. It can

be seen in this model that a test directly influences the participants, who are engaged in various processes, leading to products specific to each category of participant. Furthermore, it shows how in turn products and participants can provide feedback which may bring about changes to tests, signifying the possibility of ‘washforward’ (Bailey, 1996:265, citing van Lier, 1989). Bailey (1996) differentiates between ‘washback to the learners’ which is the influence of test-derived information on learners and ‘washback to the programme’ which includes influence on other stakeholders (administrators, curriculum developers, counsellors, etc.). Bailey (1996) further suggests that Alderson and Wall’s (1993) hypotheses 2, 5, 8, 6, 10 relate to ‘washback to the learners’, while hypotheses 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11 relate to ‘washback to the programme’. Her model shows no link to hypotheses 12-15, as it does not specify the stakes of a test or the similarity and difference among individuals. Bailey’s model does not address the direct impact of teaching on the test, but does include the other three aspects of the products (learning, new materials and new curricula, research results; see figure 3.1). The model not only proposes a relationship between tests and teaching or learning, but it emphasises the importance of the interaction among the different components.

A recent conceptualisation that takes into account the complex interaction between the stakeholders, tests stakes, washback variability, washback intensity, washback direction and the test construct is Green’s model of washback (2007). Green (2007) proposes a model of washback intensity in which he specifies how it can vary in relation to participants’ perceptions of test importance, and test difficulty. His comprehensive model of washback incorporates both Alderson and Wall’s Washback Hypotheses and Bailey’s washback model. He adds a number of other new features, focusing on the process aspects. This model of washback is presented in figure 3.2 below and illustrates washback direction, variability and intensity.

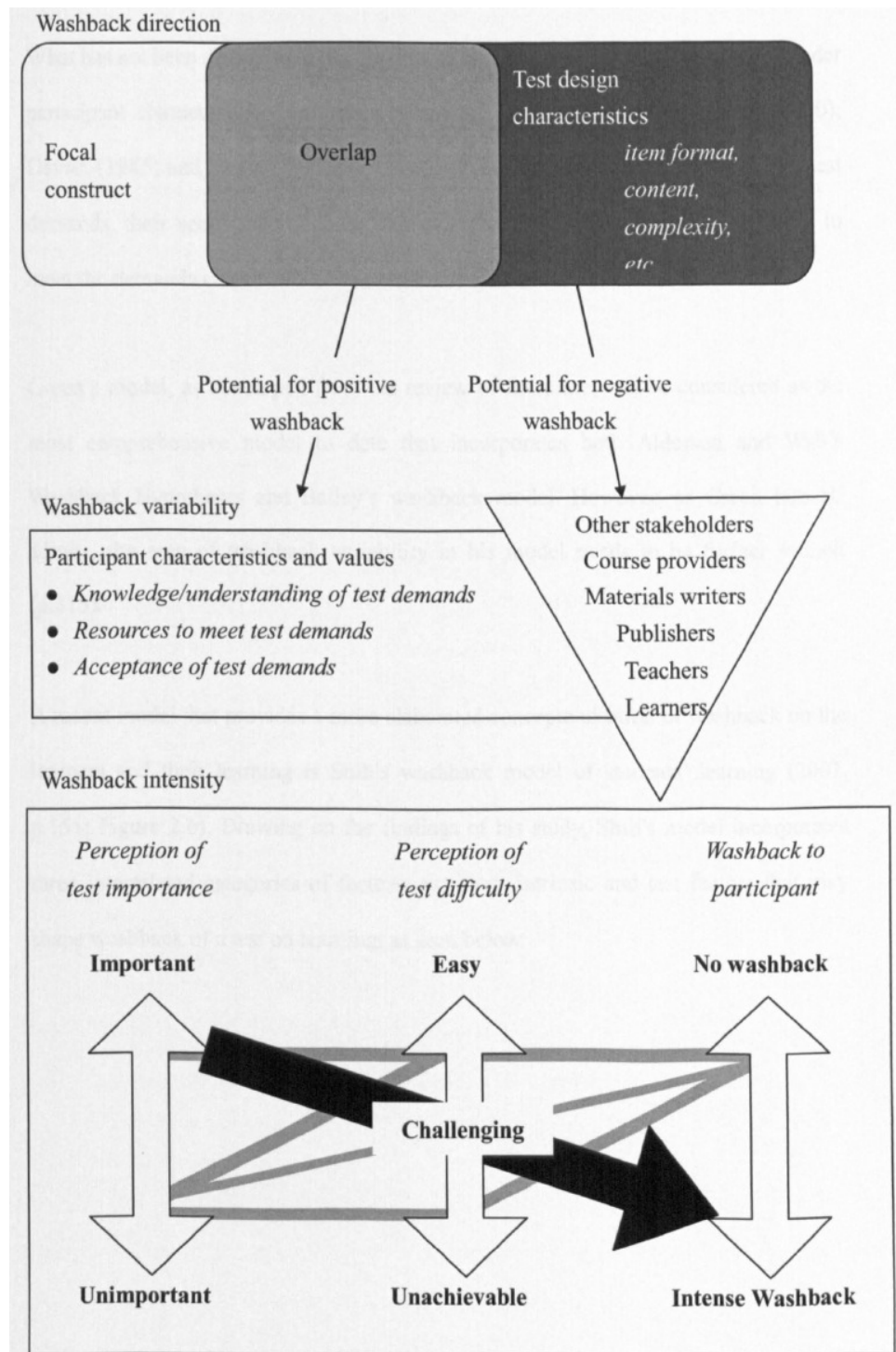


Figure 3.2 Green's model of washback (2007:24)

Green's model of washback presented in figure 3.2 above firstly points out the direction of washback. Green (2007) argues that the direction of washback is the 'overlap' between both test and curriculum and the construct to which they are

directed. For example, the better the IELTS Academic Writing Module represents the writing skills required by university, the more likely it is to engender positive washback. ‘The more closely the characteristics of the test reflect the focal construct as understood by course providers and learners (the greater the overlap), the greater the potential for positive washback’ (Green, 2007:14). The ‘washback variability’ in Green’s model refers to the differences between participants in the ways they are influenced by the tests. Tests alone do not cause washback, but the stakeholders, especially teachers and students, can mediate the differing extent of washback on teaching and learning. The level of washback intensity is indicated by the stakes of a test (Green, 2007; Watanabe, 2004). Green (2007) claims that washback will be most intense (i.e. have the most powerful effects on teaching and learning behaviours) where the participants see the test as challenging and the results as important. Green’s model is considered as the most comprehensive model to date, however, the area of washback variability in his model needs to be further refined as he himself acknowledged (2007:315).

The above theoretical discussions of washback lay a solid foundation for the empirical studies which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter. The conceptualisations of washback mechanism discussed in this section, and the related empirical studies, will show that the present study is situated in washback and impact literature. The review of empirical studies and the discussion of their findings in the following section also inform this study.

### **3.6. Empirical studies of impact and washback**

This section reviews some of the empirical studies conducted on the washback and impact of English proficiency exams such as IELTS and TOEFL on learners, teachers, various stakeholders, test users and preparation courses within different educational contexts. Cheng et al. (2004:1) state that washback, and the impact of tests more generally, has become a major area of study within educational research and language testing in particular. Impact studies look at various stakeholders, as they may experience the impact differently (Saville, 2009:42). Most of these impact

studies are funded by Cambridge ESOL as a part of the test validation process because the examination boards ‘review and change’ tests and programmes in the light of findings on the use of exams by stakeholders and their view of these exams to ensure the tests’ validity (Hawkey, 2006). The Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation Group undertake impact studies for all their exams, including IELTS. They are responsible for the provision of quality assurance services for Cambridge ESOL exams. Research and analysis of both test material and test takers’ performance are carried out to ensure that not only does IELTS provide accurate information for the institutions that recognise it, but that tests are fair to test takers whatever their nationality, first language and gender (Hawkey 2006; Green, 2007). IELTS impact studies are significant in the test validation process as they provide data from learners, teachers, and other stakeholders from different countries on a wide range of impact and test validation areas, such as: candidate profiles, test attitudes, perceptions of test motivation and stress, candidate and teacher perceptions of test relevance, difficulty and reliability, candidate and teacher views on test preparation course content and materials. The data collected on test washback and impact may inform changes designed to improve the test and related systems (Hawkey, 2006; Saville, 2009).

Saville (2009:52) holds the view that the ‘stakeholder’ concept has become increasingly important in the washback and impact study literature since Rea-Dickins provided a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders in language testing (see chapter 1 for all the stakeholders listed by Rea-Dickins, 1997). According to Saville (2009), impact studies cover three groups of stakeholders: the examination developer, the examination taker, and the examination user. Hawkey (2006) suggests that impact studies investigate the influences of language programmes and/or language tests on stakeholders beyond the immediate learning programme context. He says: ‘An impact study might, for example, investigate the effects of a programme or test on school heads, parents, receiving institution administrators, and high-stakes test providers’ (2006:7). Impact studies can help to improve language teaching, learning, methods, materials, activities and attitudes with regards to IELTS.

Given the significance of IELTS, there has been little research conducted on



the impact and washback of the IELTS' high-stakes exam. Some studies have been conducted on the washback and impact of various high-stakes exams used in gatekeeping in different contexts but few have focused on IELTS. In table 3.1 below, I list the major empirical washback and impact studies of two major international English proficiency tests, IELTS and TOEFL, outlining their research methods, stakeholders, and the context of these studies.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Research instruments</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Geographical context</b>
Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996)	Classroom observations and interviews	TOEFL test-preparers, teachers	United States
Brown (1998)	Pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and interviews	IELTS test-preparers	Australia
Elder and O'Loughlin (2003)	Pre- and post-tests	IELTS test-preparers	Australia and New Zealand
Rao et al. (2003)	Pre- and post-tests, questionnaires and interviews	IELTS test-preparers	Fiji
Read and Hayes (2003)	Questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and pre- and post-tests	IELTS preparation providers, teachers, test-preparers	New Zealand
Hawkey (2006)	Questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews and focus groups	IELTS test-takers, teachers, administrators of receiving institutions	Pacific East Asia, South Asia, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Central and South America, the Middle East, North, Central and Southern Africa, North America and Mexico
Green (2007)	Pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and interviews	IELTS test-preparers and students on EAP, teachers	United Kingdom
Mickan and Motteram (2009)	Classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students	IELTS preparation teachers	Australia
Merrifield (2008; 2012)	Documentary data, policies, and telephone interviews	Professional associations	United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States
Moore et al. (2012)	Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations	IELTS test-takers, test-preparers, teachers, examiners, employers, embassy officials, returned graduates, parents	Cambodia

Table 3.1 Overview of studies exploring washback and impact on learners, teachers and other stakeholders

The studies outlined in table 3.1 above are presented in chronological order. Each 79

study in the table above will be now discussed in more detail under the relevant sections below.

### **3.6.1. Studies investigating the washback and impact on teachers and learners**

In this section, I will review the studies that have discussed the washback on teachers, focusing on their teaching content, materials and methods and the learners preparing for English proficiency tests. In the United States, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) investigated the existence and extent of washback of an English proficiency test, TOEFL, on language teaching using interviews with teachers (individual and group interviews) and students (group interviews). They also conducted classroom observations of two sorts of classes: non-TOEFL preparation and TOEFL preparation classes taught by the same two teachers using fieldnotes and audio-recordings. The classes ran for about five weeks, but they conducted observations only during the second week of classes. The results of their study showed that TOEFL was seen to have a more direct washback on teaching content than on teaching methodology, but the extent and type of washback varied among different teachers. They commented that ‘our study shows clearly that the TOEFL affects both what and how teachers teach, but the effect is not the same in degree or in kind from teacher to teacher’ (1996:295). Thus the differences in individuals may result in a difference in washback. The results also showed that it is not just the test that causes washback, but rather the way it is approached by administrators, writers of course materials and teachers themselves. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996:296) suggested that the amount and types of washback which occurred depended on ‘the status of the test, the extent to which the test is counter to the current practice, the extent to which teachers and textbook writers think about appropriate methods for test preparation, and the extent to which teachers and textbook writers are willing and able to innovate’.

The extent of washback on test preparation can also vary because of the interaction between those who have more test awareness and those who have less,

as demonstrated in Mickan and Motteram's (2009) ethnographic case study of an IELTS preparation programme in the Australian adult education context. They documented classroom practice for 24 teaching hours (3 hours per week for 8 weeks) to investigate the teacher/participants' classroom discourse and found that test preparation throughout the programme was dynamic, rather than static. The study included observational notes of classes, audio and video recordings of selected lessons, interviews with teachers, discussions with students and the materials used for instruction. Mickan and Motteram (2009) found, through analysis of classroom instruction, that there was an eclectic teaching approach which included information about the test format, test task practice, awareness of important test tasks, hints and strategies for completing test tasks, and encouragement for independent learning through analysis of classroom instruction. The classroom instruction mostly involved rehearsal for the test. There was a range of materials used by the teachers in IELTS preparation classes such as IELTS course books, practice tests, internet resources, and general English teaching materials.

The teacher had six years' experience of teaching English as a Second Language, but none teaching IELTS specifically. The classroom was well-equipped with a white board, television, video-recorder, overhead projector and screen. The candidates were all non-native speakers of English with diverse backgrounds, mainly from South-East Asian countries like Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and their ages ranged from 18 to 39 years. Students had a goal of applying for permanent residency in Australia, and later on to complete tertiary degrees in the country. Most of the students aimed for a 5.5 band score for the 'General Training' IELTS. The class had over 20 students who were later separated into two classes – an Academic and a General class. The study followed the General class for a full programme period and all the lessons were audio-recorded except for the first, and the last two weeks' lessons were video recorded.

Mickan and Motteram (2009) found that the teacher framed the content of lessons, chose the tasks for the class, and chose appropriate activities for the IELTS exam. Hence the pedagogy was teacher-directed and IELTS-focused. The main activities involved test practice, skills-focused activities, discussion of the exam

situation (e.g. time management, and expectations of the examiner) and explanations about the format and content of the IELTS modules and test-taking procedures. The test preparation programme changed over time, as the teacher gained more awareness of the IELTS test, and through discussions with the researcher. This study provided evidence as to how participants' awareness of test demands can influence the degree of washback, and the role of the researcher as an agent of impact, that can provide teachers with the necessary professional development to achieve the intended washback of a test preparation programme.

Difference in the degree of washback on lesson content can also result from differences in schools. In the second part of their two phase study, Read and Hayes (2003) conducted a comparative classroom study of two IELTS preparation courses in university language centres. The course in School A was specifically aimed at IELTS test preparation, while the course in School B was aimed at developing general and academic English skills alongside IELTS preparation, henceforth referred to as Course A and Course B respectively, each with different aims and structures. Course A was a 32-hour, part-time course which ran for two hours in the evening, four days a week for one month and had nine students. There was no entry test for the course. On the other hand, Course B was offered as a two-hour afternoon option available to the students already studying a General English course at the school and they could enrol for any period from one to eight months (320 hours). Course B had eight students and entry was based on students reaching the mid-intermediate level in the school's placement test. Both courses focused on preparing students for the Academic Module of IELTS.

The data for the second phase was collected through classroom observations over a one-month period and aimed to identify significant activities in IELTS preparation classes; to provide useful insights into IELTS classes; and to identify the differences between the two courses. Read and Hayes (2003) used classroom observation instruments 'COLT, Part A' (unadapted) and 'UCLES instrument Part 2' for the structured observation of test-related activities, task types, text-types, and time spent practising each task. Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) is an observation scheme that provides a macroscopic description of L2

classrooms at the level of activity types and the verbal interactions that take place within them. COLT includes a set of predetermined categories to describe features of instructional input and interaction in L2 classrooms. The instrument consists of two parts. Part A describes classroom practices and procedures at the level of episode and the activity. Part B is designed to describe features of the interactions between teachers and students in greater detail (Spada and Frohlich, 1995). With Part A of COLT, the observer makes detailed notes in real time on the activities and episodes that occur during the lesson, including the time taken for each one. Each activity and episode is timed so that a calculation of the percentage of time spent on the various COLT features can be determined. The use of both these instruments by Read and Hayes (2003) captured valuable information about the two courses and the contrasts between them. Read and Hayes (2003) described tasks and the time allocated to those tasks in the preparation courses, but did not closely investigate learners' behaviours, or evaluate the tasks.

Read and Hayes (2003) found from their classroom observations that the Course A teacher had more control of the lessons compared to the Course B tutor, thus the latter course was less teacher-centred. Course A students practised selected IELTS-type tasks, such as the IELTS reading test, which were completely absent in Course B, where students spent more time on general reading tasks. Both the classes practised all the IELTS modules: as Course A was more IELTS-focused, the students received exclusively IELTS-like tasks under test conditions, whereas students in Course B were introduced to a wider range of activities. The teacher in Course A was considered to be indirectly influenced by the test, when introducing exam techniques and practice. The teacher in Course B however was following one of a series of courses which the students were already studying in the General English programme at the same school. The teaching of language such as vocabulary and grammar were common features of Course B but not practised in Course A. The students in Course A were more engaged in listening skills, for nearly half of the total class time, compared to 20% of the time in Course B, which actually covered all the four skills more evenly. The students in Course B spent more time on speaking and writing skills compared with Course A students.

Aside from the insight gained from using the COLT and UCLES instruments, Read and Hayes (2003) observed some significant activities taking place during the courses. For instance, Course A students received more information about the IELTS test and test-taking strategies than did Course B students. There was variation in the use of classroom materials: published IELTS preparation texts were the predominant source in Course A, whereas Course B used materials developed by the school. The teachers at the two schools thus delivered the courses in different ways: the Course A tutor was more concerned with making students familiar with the structure of the test and practising the skills through test-related tasks, rather than developing academic language proficiency. The goal of Course B's tutor was not only this familiarisation, but also to develop learners' overall language proficiency.

Instead of relying on qualitative data alone to investigate the washback, Hawkey's study (2006) of the impact of IELTS employed 'survey research', using both quantitative and qualitative data (questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation). Hawkey argues that washback and impact issues are complex in nature and require a range of approaches. According to Hawkey (2006), it is important to gather data on washback of test on teaching and learning by conducting questionnaires and triangulating the data with classroom observations. Green (2007) also argues that the teacher questionnaires should be complemented by classroom observations to assess the washback. Furthermore, Green (2007) suggests that questionnaires in impact studies are the most effective means to determine the profile of the test-takers, accessing the views of participants on a test (test stakes and importance, IELTS fairness, pressures, and likes and dislikes), their beliefs about the relationship between test content and desired learning outcomes. Studies such as Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996), Mickan and Motteram (2009), and Read and Hayes (2003) did not conduct questionnaires in investigating the washback on teaching and learning. These studies relied on classroom observations and interviews to assess washback, whereas washback deals with the effects of tests on teaching and learning, it is therefore important to document those effects both by asking teachers and watching teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1999).

Hawkey (2006) investigated the ‘washback’ of IELTS on learners and learning, teachers and teaching, and its impact on participants who had taken the test and on institutions receiving IELTS candidates. He suggests that impact studies investigate the influences of language programmes and/or language tests not only on learners and teachers but also on stakeholders beyond the immediate learning programme context. It is therefore important to include a range of stakeholders to assess impact of tests. According to Hawkey (2006) as the stakeholders coverage widens, a study may be moving from washback to impact territory. If studies of the effects of programmes and tests are limited in their scope, they would not cover programme and test effects on the full range of stakeholders whose reactions and attitudes may be relevant to the programme or test’s validity and usefulness. Therefore it is beneficial for impact studies to seek information from various stakeholders (such as examiners, employers, receiving institutions, funding bodies), so that the examiners can take into account their views in decision of test revision or renewal.

The information gathered for the study from the student questionnaires included gender, age, English language background and academic level of those taking the test and the impact of IELTS on candidates. In total, 572 IELTS candidates drawn from 193 IELTS test centres around the world (North, Central and Southern Africa, Pacific East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Central and South America, the Middle East, North America and Mexico, South Asia and Western Europe) completed the student questionnaire. Eighty-three teachers preparing students for IELTS completed the impact study teacher questionnaire which collected information on their background, views on IELTS, and experience of the IELTS-preparation programme, and 43 teachers completed the instrument for evaluation of the textbooks. Hawkey (2006) conducted classroom observations of some IELTS preparation courses in order to triangulate observed data with learner and teacher perceptions of activities and attitudes, as analysed from the point of view of the IELTS preparation teacher, and responses to the IELTS candidate questionnaires. In total, 10 IELTS preparation classes were recorded and analysed using an IELTS impact study classroom observation instrument (CRO).



Observing the IELTS washback on preparation courses, Hawkey found that 96% of the candidates had attended IELTS preparation courses for the test. The preparation teachers' questionnaires suggested that most of the students were aiming for higher education abroad in countries like the United Kingdom (36%), Australia (28%), Canada (12%), New Zealand (12%), and the United States (5%). Students were enrolled in different types of IELTS preparation courses. 40% were enrolled in a course with IELTS in its title, 42% were enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes/English language study skills course, and 17% in a General English course with an IELTS preparation element. The teachers in the study were involved with different courses. 53% of the teachers were teaching a course with IELTS in its title, 35% were teaching EAP, and 12% were teaching a General English course with IELTS preparation elements. The teacher questionnaire data also reported on IELTS preparation class sizes. The most common class sizes were 6-10, then 11-15, and 16-20 students. The profile of the teachers in IELTS preparation courses around the world showed that most of them were not IELTS-experienced. Hawkey (2006) reported that the teachers who filled out questionnaires were mainly female, from the 31-40 age group. Although most of them had not received any training in preparation for IELTS, the majority of teachers had been teaching English for more than 20 years and had post-graduate certificates or diplomas. Interestingly, more than half of the teachers were trained as IELTS examiners.

In Hawkey's (2006) study, 90% of the participant teachers agreed that the test influenced the content of their lessons and 63% of teachers reported that it affected their methodology. This finding differs somewhat from Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996), Green (2004) and Watanabe (1996), whose teacher respondents reported that their course content was affected by the test, but their methodology was not. Teacher surveys and classroom observations both revealed that teachers used materials from 'within and beyond the textbook' (Hawkey 2006:112). They used supplementary materials alongside the main textbooks such as additional textbooks, materials from the internet, broadsheet newspapers, audio and video recordings, and their own materials. A variety of activities were used, such as group discussions, debates, analysing textual structures, reading and listening at speed. Teachers allowed

learners the time and space to communicate in reading, listening, speaking, and writing (which took place through group work, pair work and role play). The classes included students from different nationalities which resulted in multi-cultural learning and communication activities. The findings further suggested the importance of the teachers' role in mediating the extent of washback on their teaching materials. Hawkey (2006) did not provide a breakdown by country of which teaching methods and content were employed, so we do not know whether teaching methods differ in various countries.

Hawkey's (2006) impact study candidate questionnaire results indicated that IELTS candidature is changing constantly. From 2002-2003 there was an increase of 34% in the number of candidates, particularly of South Asian students and those from the Middle East. The majority of the participants were females (305, compared to 252 males). They were aged mainly between 21-25 and 15-20 years. In terms of English educational background, most of the candidates had studied English from secondary school through to university. The candidates had undergraduate as well as post-graduate education, with very few participants from pre-university education.

Hawkey (2006) also investigated the perceptions of IELTS candidates and teachers of test fairness, level of difficulty, test anxiety, likes and dislikes in the test and time pressures, as these aspects are considered crucial for the validation of high-stakes tests. He found that 72% of the candidates felt that that the test was a fair way to measure their proficiency in English. Most of the students identified the reading module as the most difficult and disliked section in IELTS. The students perceived time pressure as the major problem. Most of the participants mentioned that the test caused anxiety. The majority of the test takers felt they were not able to perform well in the IELTS test mainly because of time pressures and unfamiliarity with the topics. The participating teachers also agreed that the test caused stress for their students and that the reading sub-test was the most difficult section in IELTS.

Students were asked whether their IELTS preparation courses provided them with the language knowledge and the skills they required. 282 (83%) students gave a positive response. In an open-ended question, when all students were asked whether they felt they were successful on the course, the responses were less positive. The

students who gave positive answers to the question said that they had improved their proficiency in English and had become familiar with the test. Most of the students who felt that they were not successful blamed themselves for their lack of success on the preparation courses, giving reasons such as ‘not working hard enough to prepare for the test’ and ‘not putting in enough effort’. Very few students blamed the short duration of the course, it being too academic or not offering enough practice, or the time pressures in the test. Most of the teachers in the study however did consider it successful. Teachers felt a need for more training as most of them had not received specific training in IELTS preparation. The study’s face-to-face interviewees emphasised that the results could be improved at centres running courses for IELTS preparation, by offering better preparation practice, and more seminars for IELTS teachers.

Following Hawkey, Moore et al. (2012) also used mixed methods involving both qualitative (classroom observation, interviews, and focus group discussions) and quantitative (questionnaires) data to investigate the washback of IELTS on course preparation students, on the teachers preparing candidates and on preparation course materials in a country specific study of Cambodia using critical language testing (CLT) framework. The questionnaires were conducted with IELTS test-preparers (N=102), test-takers (N=106), and test preparation teachers (N=11). All three questionnaire instruments used by Moore et al. (2012) were adaptations of those used by Hawkey (2006). Unlike Hawkey (2006), Moore et al. administered separate questionnaires for test-taker students and test preparation course students. Both groups were asked for personal information and English language background. The former group, however, were also asked about their approaches to learning and test-taking and about the IELTS test, while the test preparation students were asked questions about the IELTS preparation classes. The test preparation course teachers filled out two questionnaires: one concerning the preparation of students for IELTS and the second focusing on analysing and evaluating textbook materials.

Moore et al. (2012) found that the profile of test-takers in Cambodia reflected its emerging middle class. They were professionally or educationally goal-oriented with the majority being males (65% to 41% female) aged between 25 and 29 years.

Most of the participants reported taking the Academic module of IELTS, with some of them taking it to qualify for opportunities to study, while others were taking the test to qualify for educational scholarships. Very few participants (5%) were sitting the IELTS test for employment purposes and only 1% was doing so for immigration purposes. The test-preparers were also mostly male (56% to 46% female), and between the ages of 16-19, young compared to their test-taker counterparts. The test-preparers were mostly studying, compared to the test-takers who were employed. However, the majority of the test-preparers also reported preparing for the Academic Module of IELTS for higher education abroad.

The teacher questionnaire data revealed that they were mostly males (eight compared to three females), ranging in age from 31 to over 50. Nine teachers had diplomas in TEFL with some of the teachers having a Masters or a BA-level degree. Five teachers had received training as an IELTS examiner and three reported being certified IELTS examiners with some specific training pertaining to IELTS preparation. These findings align with Hawkey (2006), where most of the teachers were IELTS examiners and one third had received specific training in IELTS preparation course teaching. Ten out of eleven teachers in Moore et al.'s (2012) study reported having experience of teaching IELTS preparation courses, similar to Read and Hayes (2003) where teachers were quite experienced and had been teaching IELTS for three years or more. All the teachers confirmed that the exam influenced their choice of teaching materials and their consideration of topics and some of them indicated that their teaching methodology was influenced by the exam.

Moore et al. (2012) conducted a classroom observation of an IELTS preparation course at the Australian Centre for Education (ACE, owned by IDP Education Australia) to get direct evidence of actual IELTS-related practices. They only observed one lesson in each course (90 minutes) to triangulate with data collected from teacher and student questionnaire responses. The classroom observation provided evidence of preparation textbooks and materials used on the IELTS preparation course, the washback of the IELTS test on courses preparing the candidates to take it, on the teachers preparing candidates, on preparation course materials and on the lessons. Two different types of courses, a ten-week (45-hour)

IELTS preparation course and a General English Programme (GEP) level 12 were targeted in their study. Lessons from both were audio and video recorded. Moore et al. (2012) claimed that the teachers adapted their course content, activities, and teaching methods to suit the needs of students and the IELTS content. They found from classroom observation that teachers mostly used IELTS-appropriate activities for their students. Different exercises were chosen by the teachers to specifically prepare students for test tasks, to help them understand typical topics, and to make them aware of the test framework. The practice activities in the class such as students reading questions and anticipating the topics of listening passages were all heavily influenced by the test. This also aligns with Hawkey (2006) where teachers adapted their course content and teaching methodology.

It is important however to note that the short duration of the classroom observation by Moore et al. (2012) limited the triangulation of the findings with the questionnaire responses about washback. This was particularly the case as the focus of GEP level 12 on the day of observation was on the listening and writing components of the test and the IELTS preparation course focused on the writing and speaking components. None of the classes focused on all four modules of the test. To be able to triangulate effectively with the questionnaires, classroom observations would need to be of longer duration, or conducted over a few days, to capture the complexity of washback of the test on teachers and learners.

In order to assess the washback on learners, Moore et al. (2012) held focus group discussions with six IELTS examiners who were asked about the impact of IELTS in Cambodia. All six examiners had on average 10.8 years experience of working in the Australian Centre for Education (ACE). One of the participants pointed out that in terms of the country's total population (about 14 million), very few actually take the test. The participant examiner further mentioned that not many Cambodians were aware of the IELTS test and they also suggested that Cambodian students are not exposed to writing and reading. IELTS forces them to read and write, thus indicating significant washback on the test-preparers. IELTS examines not only English proficiency but it also tests general knowledge which, according to some examiners, is challenging for Cambodians due to their 'lack of knowledge about the

world beyond Cambodia' (2012:36). On the whole, they considered the impact of IELTS on Cambodian society to be minimal, but believed that IELTS had a substantial impact on the lives of test-takers as they are strongly motivated to prepare thoroughly for the exam, to achieve their required band scores to study abroad or to gain scholarships. Moore et al. (2012) suggests that overall there is a significant washback of the IELTS test on candidates preparing for the exam, on teachers preparing the candidates and on the preparation course materials.

### **3.6.2. Studies investigating the impact of preparation programmes on score gains**

Brown (1998), Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), Green (2007), Rao et al. (2003) and Read and Hayes (2003) are some of the major empirical investigations on the impact of IELTS preparation courses on candidates' performances. Using a mixed-method approach, Brown (1998) compared IELTS preparation and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) centre in Melbourne, Australia. Brown (1998) used pre- and post- (preparation course) tests (focusing on the writing component only) to examine which was the more effective form of test preparation. These were full-time programmes of study offered in ten-week blocks. Students on both programmes had the same motivation, to continue tertiary education in Australia, hence they were comparable to study. Both classes had 13 students, but only nine students from the IELTS group and five students from EAP took part in the study, as some of them had left the course, and others chose not to take part. The teachers on the two courses had postgraduate TESOL qualifications and equal years of experience.

Brown (1998) used redundant IELTS test material at the start and completion of the courses to determine student language proficiency levels at both points. He found that the IELTS preparation programmes were more successful in preparing students, as students on these courses improved their scores statistically more significantly than the students on the general EAP programme. Brown (1998) did not provide any information about his participants' motivation and their educational

background which could have helped determine if either of these factors affected the performance of the students on the two programmes.

In addition to the use of pre- and post-tests, Brown (1998) also conducted classroom observations throughout the ten-week research period and found that the two courses differed considerably. The IELTS preparation programme developed skills in essay writing, as is required by the IELTS examination, using writing tasks from commercially available IELTS preparation course books. The IELTS students completed many different IELTS writing tasks during the programme. Furthermore, they received feedback in the form of an IELTS band score and were made aware of the IELTS writing assessment criteria. In comparison, the EAP group were taught strategies for writing in academic contexts, such as the skills of note-taking in lectures and the preparation of summaries. The teaching material was selected from an academic writing textbook and they received feedback in a less formal fashion. Given the limited information from Brown (1998), it could be speculated that the students who enrolled on the IELTS preparation programme improved considerably compared to those on the EAP programme due to the more focused and IELTS test related activities received on the course. Brown's (1998) study is not generalisable as he acknowledged that his results should be viewed with some caution due to the low sample size of the study.

Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) examined the relationship between intensive English language study and IELTS band score gains with a slightly larger sample of students. They investigated the progress of 112 students (from non-English speaking backgrounds) enrolled in intensive English language courses at four different institutions; two in Australia and two in New Zealand. The academic module of IELTS was administered to gauge the score gained at the beginning and at the end of a 10-12 week period (between 200 and 240 hours of classroom instruction) of intensive English language instruction and to determine the factors associated with score gains in Australia and New Zealand. They found that the students made variable progress on the IELTS course over a three-month period with an average gain of half a band overall. It was also found that students made the greatest gains in the listening module, which could be attributable to the amount of listening practice

in the course. Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) concluded that 10-12 weeks of intensive study did not make a significant difference to performance, as the students on average moved half a band during this period, and slightly higher than half a band on the listening component. Nonetheless, Elder and O'Loughlin also advised to treat the results of their study with caution due to the small sample size but it was much greater than Brown (1998).

Rao et al. (2003) examined the impact of pre-test preparation on IELTS performance at three different centres in Fiji. At each of the three centres, the test preparation was a 30-hour programme conducted over three consecutive weekends (five hours each day). They compared score gains by conducting pre- and post-tests in the reading and writing components of the IELTS General Training module among an experimental group (receiving intensive IELTS preparation) and a control group (not receiving any preparation). The test took two hours (with 40 reading questions and two pieces of writing). The post-test was similar to the pre-test in content and task design, but was taken from a different source. The reading component was marked out of 40, while the writing tasks were marked in bands. This was further supported by questionnaire results from students attending IELTS preparation courses which included information about their age, educational background, years of schooling and use of English on a daily basis. Interviews were held with the same candidates at the end of the preparation programme to obtain their self-assessment of the skills acquired over the duration of the programme.

There were nine candidates in the control group, who did not undertake any preparation, and 48 candidates in the 30-hour, intensive IELTS preparation programme who participated in the pre- and post-study tests. The participants for the study were chosen randomly from candidates intending to take the IELTS General Training module. Out of 48 candidates attending the preparation programme, 60% were male and intended to take the test for migration purposes (53%). Rao et al. (2003) found that the students in the experimental group made a significant gain in the writing sub-test, but showed no significant improvement in the reading sub-test. The students in the control group slightly improved in the reading skill test but showed no change in the writing sub-test.



Rao et al. (2003:251) concluded that the preparation programme made a positive difference to the students' writing skills but their reading scores did not improve significantly mainly because most of the candidates taking IELTS in Fiji were trades-people and para-professionals, so the preparation course was not sufficient in improving their reading scores. This difference in their IELTS performance could be partly due to their familiarity with the test as more than half of the participants had taken it for a second or third time. Furthermore, 77% of the participants in the experimental group reported reading and writing in English every day. In comparison, Rao et al. (2003) did not provide any information about the participants in the control group (e.g. age, education, use of English and motivation), therefore it is difficult to explain the reasons behind their unchanged scores. In addition, it was a very small group (N=9) compared to their sample size in the experimental group (N=48) which raises questions about comparability. Studies like Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) and Rao et al. (2003) have been based on data such as pre- and post-test performance scores, but were not designed to provide descriptions of classroom practices. However, to capture the complexity of factors associated with IELTS score gains, the use of classroom observations can also be beneficial, in addition to the use of pre- and post-tests.

Apart from Brown (1998), another study focusing on the writing component only was the IELTS washback study conducted by Green in the United Kingdom (2007). Green also investigated the influences of test preparation courses on improving the students' IELTS writing scores using a larger sample of students compared to Brown (1998). He made comparisons of score gains among learners in three types of courses, all designed to prepare international students to study in British universities: a) a test preparation programme with a specific focus on the IELTS test, b) pre-sessional courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and c) courses that combined features of both, to determine whether dedicated test preparation was successful in making short term gains in writing test scores over a period of time.

Green (2007) intended to compare whether students on courses involving IELTS preparation (Courses 1 and 3) were able to make greater gains in their scores

compared to students on courses that did not concentrate on the test (Course 2). He administered IELTS writing tests at course entry and exit (pre- and post-tests). Participants in the study were enrolled at fifteen institutions throughout the United Kingdom. In total, 476 students took part in the study (85 students in the IELTS preparation course, 331 students in the pre-sessional EAP programme, and 60 students in the combination course), the highest proportion of which were Chinese. The courses ranged from 4-14 weeks in length (between 15 and 28 hours of instruction). Green (2007) used paired t-tests, and found that a significant score gain in writing occurred in all three course types. Green (2007) concluded that the students on courses with IELTS preparation (Courses 1 and 3) did not show significantly more improvement than those on the pre-sessional EAP courses (Course 2). Thus the dedicated IELTS preparation courses were not necessarily more effective than the courses with no IELTS preparation content. This contrasts with the results of Brown (1998) where he suggested that students attending IELTS preparing courses were more successful compared to those in English for Academic Purposes courses.

In addition to the use of pre- and post-tests, Read and Hayes (2003) included more qualitative material such as interviews with teachers and classroom observations in their comparison of two IELTS preparation programmes in New Zealand (see section 3.6.1 above for the data on classroom observations). Read and Hayes (2003) compared the pre- and post-test performance of all the students (N=17) at two different institutes, to ascertain whether there was any evidence of student progress in their English proficiency for academic study during the four week course. The students were tested on three sub-tests, omitting the speaking component, using a now obsolete version of IELTS. Students were assigned individual band scores for listening, reading and writing, and an overall band score which was the average of the three components. Each student's test paper was assessed separately by three independent, certificated and experienced IELTS examiners, who all had extensive IELTS assessment experience. The students in the two courses were quite similar in features such as age and background. Both language schools had mainly Asian students (specifically Chinese speakers), ranging in age between 18 and 25.

Read and Hayes (2003) did not expect any significant score gains following their pre- and post-tests, as they believed that students required an extended period of study to gain any substantial increase in their IELTS scores. Examination of these scores indicated to Read and Hayes (2003) that five out of nine students in Course A, and four out of eight students in Course B increased their overall scores by between 0.5 and 1.5. All other students' scores remained unchanged except for one student in each course whose score decreased by 0.5. They compared the pre- and post-test mean scores for each class by using a paired t-test and found that, except for the listening scores in Course A, the score gains were not statistically significant in either case. The only statistically significant score increase was in the listening component for the students in Course A (the stand-alone IELTS preparation course). All nine students on the course increased their scores in the listening post-test. They argued that the study showed a significant improvement only in the listening test, at one institute, which was due to the large amount of practice devoted specifically to listening in Course A, similar to the findings by Elder and O'Loughlin (2003).

According to Read and Hayes (2003) the short duration of the courses was the main factor in showing no significant difference in the students' IELTS scores in other sub-tests. In their study they collected information through questionnaires about the participants' background and their previous English language training but they did not provide any information from these questionnaires in their findings. Had they given the background information of their participants this might have explained whether their lack of improvement in English proficiency was due to the factors other than the short duration of the courses. Furthermore, Read and Hayes (2003) did not provide details about the test materials used in their study (such as the types and number of questions included in their pre- and post-tests), therefore it is difficult to know whether factors such as time pressure and difficulty of questions may have affected the performances of their subjects. Similar to Brown (1998), they also acknowledged that the small number of participants in their studies limited their ability to generalise their conclusions about score gains.

Read and Hayes (2003) argue that students mainly seek to gain admission to an IELTS preparation course in the hope of improving their IELTS band scores.

The results of the pre- and post-tests suggested that there was a mismatch between students' expectations and their performance, as they did not significantly improve their scores. Read and Hayes conclude that IELTS preparation does not focus on improving the scores but 'has developed into big business, not only for the language centres associated with the universities and polytechnics, but also for a large number of private language schools which offer IELTS preparation courses as part of their programme' (2003:189). There continues to be a demand for test preparation courses by international students in New Zealand.

### **3.6.3. Studies investigating the impact on test preparation courses, test users and various stakeholders**

The language schools in Read and Hayes' (2003) two phase study included both private language schools (independent commercial enterprises) and teaching centres belonging to public universities. In the first phase of their study, Read and Hayes (2003) surveyed language schools in New Zealand to find out about the nature of courses offered by these schools for the preparation of international students for the Academic module of IELTS. They mailed questionnaires to 98 language schools throughout New Zealand to collect information about the types and lengths of courses offered, a brief profile of their students (focusing on their motivations for taking the test, and their perceptions of it), the teaching materials used by these schools, and a profile of their teachers (qualifications, experience and so on). In total 78 language schools returned the questionnaires with responses which, according to Read and Hayes (2003), showed a high level of co-operation from the schools and their teachers. The questionnaires were supplemented by follow up interviews with 23 teachers of IELTS preparation courses chosen randomly from the sample of 78 centres. These interviews provided detailed information about the ways in which courses were conducted and the impact of the test, as perceived by teachers, on students' overall preparation for academic study at tertiary level.

Through the survey of 78 institutes, Read and Hayes (2003) found that the majority of the New Zealand centres were private language schools, and that they

had mainly Asian students enrolled on their courses. 60 centres reported that they mainly offered IELTS preparation courses, while a few centres had courses like EAP and TOEFL preparation. Read and Hayes suggested that this indicated a strong preference for the IELTS test in New Zealand, and a subsequent wide availability of IELTS preparation courses to international students in the country. These schools had been preparing students for five years or more. The schools mentioned that their students were mainly motivated to take the test in order to gain admission to tertiary institutions, with a small number of candidates interested in immigration and professional registration. Read and Hayes discovered through teacher interviews that nearly half of the centres used a specific assessment procedure to screen students for their IELTS preparation courses and some of the institutes reported using IELTS test tasks for screening and admitting applicants who showed some degree of variation within the required 4.5 to 5.5 band score. Some teachers confirmed that students at intermediate level were accepted on to the course, while some accepted students only at upper intermediate level. Some language schools also had to accept lower level students. Read and Hayes explained that:

Some schools operating on a commercial basis in a competitive environment found it necessary to accept lower level students into an IELTS course to avoid losing them to another school, in which case teachers had to cope as best as they could (2003:164).

The majority of the language schools reported having a separate IELTS course with a median length of 50 hours, while a very few reported having only six hour, part-time courses, just to familiarise the students with the test tasks. The profile of IELTS teachers in these centres suggested that many had certificates such as CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), and some had experience of teaching, while a few others were selected on the basis of their knowledge of IELTS. Read and Hayes therefore reported that ‘IELTS preparation is generally entrusted to well-qualified and experienced teachers’ (2003:165). The teachers tended to use IELTS preparation materials in classes where the focus was primarily on practice of

the test. The IELTS test was mainly preferred to TOEFL in New Zealand by both students and teachers who had positive views about it, considering it to be the best proficiency test according to its suitability for academic study. From the survey of these institutes, Read and Hayes (2003) chose two centres for in-depth investigation in the second phase of their study (discussed in section 3.6.2 above).

Studies like Hawkey (2006), Merrifield (2008; 2012) and Moore et al. (2012) have assessed the impact of IELTS on test-users and stakeholders other than learners and teachers. In order to assess the impact of IELTS on receiving institutions, Hawkey (2006) conducted interviews and focus groups with receiving institution administrators. The administrators in the United Kingdom (in two universities and four language centres) reported that they accepted different IELTS scores (ranging from 6.0-7.0) for entry on to various courses in different departments. The university teachers in language centres believed that students with a level 6 score should be accepted onto an IELTS preparation course, whereas students with lower scores should study on General English courses. Some administrators also reported taking students below level 6.

I discussed in the introduction to this thesis that, apart from higher education and emigration, IELTS is widely used to screen overseas qualified health professionals seeking professional registration (particularly with health professional bodies) in English speaking countries. Two impact studies by Merrifield (2008; 2012) similarly assessed language testing for professionals in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (2008), and in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada (2012), both studies sharing similar aims, scope, and methodology. The studies by Merrifield differed from other impact studies such as those by Hawkey (2006), Moore et al. (2012) and Read and Hayes (2003), in the sense that Merrifield's work did not cover the impact of the test on IELTS preparation courses, teaching material and methods, test-takers, test preparation students or teachers. Both studies focused instead on the wide acceptance and use of IELTS as an entry criterion by different professional bodies in six English-speaking countries; the majority, though not all, of the professional associations surveyed operate in the health care sector.

The objectives of the two studies included exploring the history of, and rationale for using IELTS as a criterion for entry into a profession; comparing the required minimum IELTS band score for membership of professional associations or for registration; identifying the main competitors to IELTS; the English language requirements of different professional bodies; examining users' perceptions of how well IELTS fits its purpose; and making certain recommendations if required for the development of educational and marketing programmes, their outcomes, and appropriate uses.

Merrifield (2008; 2012) observed that English language testing is becoming increasingly important in registration for professional bodies. IELTS has been adopted by a number of professional associations in many English-speaking countries as a reliable means to assess English proficiency for professional workplaces. It was originally designed to assess an individual's proficiency for academic study in English speaking countries but now it is being used outside of academia by professional organisations and employers, the majority operating in the health care sector (Merrifield, 2008:3). Merrifield (2012) observed that the number of professional bodies registered as accepting IELTS has grown dramatically, from five to ten between 2004 and 2009 in Canada, and from nine to thirteen in the United Kingdom and Ireland over the same period. Merrifield (2008; 2012) conducted a qualitative study involving desk research. The advantages of this method are that it pulls together a wide range of information that is already available but may not be readily accessible (e.g. official statistics). The process is consequently relative fast and inexpensive. In the studies by Merrifield (2008; 2012) desk research was a helpful method to examine documentary data (such as policies and evaluation of assessment programmes), alternative examinations and assessment systems, and to identify key contacts and the targeted associations that are registered with IELTS. This was followed by face-to-face, telephone and semi-structured email interviews (with key stakeholders). In total, twenty-four professional associations were approached to participate in the study but only fourteen agreed to take part.

IELTS is the predominant testing system for professional bodies in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Ireland

however is not a significant market for IELTS. Merrifield (2008; 2012) notes that professional bodies in Australia and New Zealand accept other tests as well, such as TOEFL, Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE), but that IELTS has advantages over these tests due to its broad testing network, the timely reporting of results, tight test security and reliable outcomes. As the overall IELTS candidature kept growing between 2004-2006 in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, there was a significant increase in the number of candidates taking the test for professional growth, particularly in the United States. Merrifield (2008) found that the required band scores vary among professional bodies like the Australian Medical Council, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Australian Pharmacy Examining Council, the Nursing and Pharmacy Councils of New Zealand, and the American Veterinary Medical Association, but all these professional bodies require a band score of 6.5 and above.

The Canadian pharmacy organisations mostly accepted an IELTS score of 6.0 (Merrifield, 2012). It was also found that many candidates indicated a preference for IELTS, as they perceived it to be ‘easier than alternative assessment systems’ (2012:38). The Association of Teachers in Canada reported accepting TOEFL or IELTS with a score of 6.5 or 7.0, which should be gained within one sitting of the IELTS test (normally students have further attempts if they fail to achieve their desired band score at the first attempt). The professional associations and registration bodies in the United Kingdom and Ireland requiring IELTS from their potential candidates are generally within the health care professions. Professional bodies like the British Acupuncture Council, the Faculty of Public Health and the General Dental Council mostly accept IELTS as a requirement to demonstrate English proficiency, with varying band scores. Almost all the medical, nursing and pharmaceutical organisations accept IELTS, with a particular band score required, which places IELTS in a strong position. It was interesting to discover that some of the professional bodies in the United Kingdom accepted IELTS exclusively. The major competitors to IELTS are the Occupational English Test (OET) in Australia and New Zealand, TOEFL in the United States (Merrifield, 2008), and the internet-based TOEFL in Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland but IELTS seems to



have maintained the advantage for the reasons mentioned above (Merrifield, 2012).

Moore et al. (2012) evaluated the impact of IELTS on different stakeholders in contemporary Cambodia, such as parents and guardians of test-takers and local users of test results (for example local employers and scholarship officers). They conducted interviews with prospective local users of the test including six embassy officials who were responsible for managing scholarship programmes for overseas study, and with seven employers to ascertain the English proficiency level they required from their employees. Moore et al. (2012) found that, as the dominant test used in various educational domains, IELTS has a significant impact on facilitating opportunities for Cambodians to pursue higher education abroad, and to win scholarships to do so. Many officials regarded IELTS as an expensive test for Cambodians (US\$ 175).

Moore et al. (2012) expected that the major private sector or NGO employers would be the 'main local users' of IELTS test results in Cambodia. There was little evidence of the impact of IELTS on gaining direct entry to good jobs: interviews with local employers confirmed that they do not formally use IELTS scores as part of their recruitment process. However, in Cambodia, employers do take IELTS results into consideration, if these are mentioned by job applicants. The employers said that, 'the results would be noticed and possibly used as corroborative evidence of language proficiency' (Moore et al., 2012:40). They might be used in place of their in-house assessments if this proved to be a cheaper option. This would suggest that some test-takers in Cambodia might take the test in order to find employment there. There was, however, no direct evidence that any of the test-takers took the test for this purpose, as Moore et al. (2012) did not ask about this explicitly. It would have been useful to establish if IELTS was taken to help get jobs in Cambodia by including questions about this in questionnaires or interviews with IELTS test-takers, in addition to asking employers.

In a focus group discussion with three parents and guardians of test-takers, it was found that they knew little about the IELTS test. Two parents felt IELTS to be an expensive exam which discouraged many financially disadvantaged students from sitting the test. This corroborates the views of Moore et al.'s (2012) employers who

also thought IELTS was an expensive exam. This suggests that Cambodians consider the cost of IELTS to be prohibitive. Parents and guardians nevertheless felt that the impact of IELTS in Cambodia was ‘100% positive’ (2012:37). With this group, focus groups were not particularly successful, resulting in a ‘group interview’ lacking in in-depth discussion (Moore et al., 2012:53).

### **3.7. Implications for this study**

The above sections (3.6.1, 3.6.2, 3.6.3) show that there have been a number of studies conducted in native English speaking countries exploring the impact and washback of high-stakes exams such as IELTS and TOEFL. The review of these impact and washback studies has informed the present study in several ways. The studies which investigated the impact of IELTS preparation on score gains, such as Brown (1998), Elder and O’Loughlin (2003), Green (2006), Rao et al. (2005) and Read and Hayes (2003), considered the effects of test preparation courses of varying lengths on scores. The courses examined in these studies were typically either provided by tertiary institutions or IDP Education owned centres in English speaking countries. This suggests that there is a need to conduct impact studies in non-native English speaking contexts, focusing on the IELTS preparation courses offered by private IELTS preparation centres. These have been neglected by previous studies, where the focus has been on tertiary institutions or Australian centres (such as ELICOS and ACE). The present impact study has therefore focused on private IELTS preparation centres, which are on the rise in a number of South and South-East Asian countries (see chapter 2).

Most of the studies discussed above have compared an IELTS preparation course to an English for Academic Purposes course and have obtained conflicting results with no consistency in the IELTS score achieved. This might possibly be due to the variation in sample size and course duration. Thus the findings of these studies should be viewed cautiously and be read as suggestive of trends rather than definitive. These studies have examined aspects of preparation programmes but their scope has been restricted, for example, to particular skills (Brown 1998; Green, 2007; Rao et

al., 2005) or to a small sample (such as Brown 1998; Read and Hayes, 2003). Furthermore, Green (2007:94) has called for more research on IELTS preparation programmes in countries other than the United Kingdom, (covering all the sub-tests) to explore the effectiveness of test preparation outside the United Kingdom. Therefore in the present study, as opposed to these others, I have attempted to compare two IELTS-specific preparation courses and have assessed the proficiency of IELTS candidates in the four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking).

In some studies (particularly those focusing on the impact of preparation courses on score gains), there are limitations in terms of the methodology they used, and also on the extent to which they investigated factors that might explain individual differences among learners (such as Brown, 1998; Rao et al., 2003). There are few descriptive studies of the classroom instruction in IELTS courses. Brown's (1998) description of classroom behaviours was limited to summaries of teachers' allocation of time to tasks related to the four skills and a discussion of the teaching of writing. Qualitative research into IELTS preparation programmes is needed to gain an understanding of candidates' experiences of instruction prior to taking an IELTS test. Alongside the undertaking of pre- and post-tests in this study, I conducted classroom observations of complete IELTS preparation courses at two institutes in order to obtain a fuller picture of washback of the test on teachers and learners and the factors impacting on score gains.

Those studies particularly examining washback collected data through conducting questionnaires as well as classroom observations (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Hawkey, 2006; Moore et al., 2012; Watanabe, 2004). Some of the studies showed that there is a washback of the test on teaching content and on methodology (Hawkey, 2006; Moore et al., 2012; Read and Hayes, 2003). However others argue that the test only influences the content but there is no washback on teaching methods. It may also be differential; it occurs with some teachers, but not others (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996). This may be the reason why evidence of washback can be seen in some classes but not in others, even in similar contexts. This reflects 'washback variability' (Green, 2007; see section 3.3 above). The

degree of washback can also vary with the difference in courses or level of test awareness (Mickan and Motteram, 2009; Read and Hayes, 2003). There are certain factors that induce or constrain washback which include the following (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Cheng, 2005; Shohamy et al., 1996; Wall and Alderson, 1993; Watanabe, 2004): *test factors*, such as test methods and content, the skills tested, and the purpose of the test; *prestige factors*, such as the stakes of the test, and the status of the test within the entire educational system; *personal factors*, such as teachers' attitudes towards the test, teachers' educational backgrounds, their familiarity with a range of teaching methods and their beliefs about the best methods of teaching/learning, and their personalities and willingness to innovate; *micro-context factors*, such as the school setting in which the test preparation is being carried out; and *macro-context factors*, that is, the society where the test is used.

These studies have implications for the methodology used in the present study. It should be noted that washback on teaching methods and content can be better captured using both questionnaires and classroom observations. The information on preparation activities can be most accurately obtained from classroom observations. According to Green (2007), data obtained by asking participants about their behaviour does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that washback occurs to teaching and learning processes; empirical evidence of what occurs in classrooms is also required. Furthermore, various factors that induce or constrain washback (i.e. prestige factors, personal factors, and micro-context factors) may only be evident through classroom observations (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996). Green (2007) further suggests that scholars like Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996), Bailey (1999) and Watanabe (1996) have discovered in a variety of contexts, evidence from the classroom may contradict or recast the claims made by participants. The washback deals with the effects of tests on teaching and learning, it is therefore important to document those effects both by asking teachers and watching teaching and learning (Bailey, 1999). Both Alderson and Wall (1993) and Bailey (1999) suggest that teacher questionnaires should be complemented by classroom observations to assess the washback. As noted above, no study has been conducted in the present context, thus, in an attempt to fill this gap, the present

study will investigate the washback and impact of the IELTS test on Pakistani society as a whole by consulting a range of stakeholders (i.e. test preparation providers, test-preparers, test-takers, teachers, parents and employers). A mixed methods approach incorporating questionnaires, classroom observations, pre- and post-testing, interviews and focus group discussion was adopted in this study (see chapter 4 for research design employed in this study).

I mentioned in section 3.2 above that high-stakes tests have a significant impact on test-takers as they provide them with potential access to educational and employment opportunities, which illustrates the power and control aspects of testing (Shohamy, 2001). In the section below, I will discuss the criticism of high-stakes tests.

### **3.8. Criticism of high-stakes tests**

High-stakes tests are highly criticised in the light of their impact on society and learning. High-stakes tests often occur at gateways, controlling access to opportunities and/or controlling the flow of people between societies. Tests are often subject to much criticism, but in spite of all the criticism levelled at them, they continue to play a key role in many countries. Different scholars are concerned about the neutrality of language tests. Some scholars believe that tests are powerful and they are used for control (Shohamy, 2001). Other authors believe that high-stakes tests are biased as they focus on native speaker norms (Brown, 2004; Davies et al., 2003; Khan, 2009). In the sections (3.8.1. and 3.8.2) below I will briefly discuss the criticism of high-stakes tests by these scholars.

#### **3.8.1. Bias in high-stakes English proficiency tests**

There is a strong criticism of high-stakes international English examinations (such as IELTS and TOEFL) that they are specific to inner circle varieties of English (e.g. the United Kingdom and the United States) (Davies et al., 2003). Davies et al. (2003)

conducted a study to assess whether high-stakes international English examinations are biased against non-native speakers of the language who may be proficient in using English for international communication but have not been exposed to certain nuances of an inner-circle variety of English. They compared the norms used in international English language proficiency tests like IELTS and TOEFL and national English language proficiency tests in four countries where English is used as a second or foreign language. They hypothesised at the beginning of their article that international English tests are biased, as they require a particular type of English from candidates to which they have not been exposed. 'These tests represents the old colonial Standard English of the UK, USA, etc., a kind of English that is not known, or only partly known, to many of those who have learnt English as an additional language (e.g. India, Singapore and Malaysia)' (Davies et al., 2003:571). They attempted to assess the possibility of bias by reviewing an existing body of literature in this field and seeking the views of English Language Teaching experts from Malaysia, Singapore, China, and India on the use of English language and local standards in their respective countries. Davies et al. (2003) held a seminar in Hong Kong which was attended by representatives from China, Singapore, Malaysia and India. They analysed the content of their local English test materials, and also that of IELTS and TOEFL. They also investigated and compared international and local tests of English proficiency to check which standards were being tested.

Davies et al. (2003) found varied results when they assessed local examinations: Malaysia adopts a mix of standard International English and local English usage. In China, there is a mix of British English, American English and Chinese English. China uses a local version of English for school-level instruction but not at university level, while Singapore and India do not use local English, as their teachers prefer British English. The authors reported the presence of bias in international tests, for example, TOEFL is biased against those who may be proficient in using English as an international language but are not familiar with American English. They found several words in the TOEFL sample that have different meanings in British, American and Australian English. They also found words that are culturally specific to North American contexts. The authors

acknowledged that their claims are based on their preliminary analysis of the different elements of proficiency tests and not on empirical study. There is however a need for larger scale data for the assessment of bias in international high-stakes examinations such as TOEFL and IELTS.

Brown (2004) extended this analysis, identifying two distinct levels of bias: at the test item level and at the test score level. Brown (2004) suggested that test bias comes from various sources within the testing process including administration procedures, test directions, test content, test knowledge selection, testing method, rating/scoring, score interpretation, and norm sample selection. He listed eight categories (2004:318) that have an impact on tests. He believes that a test is free from bias if all eight 'Englishes' are the same. These include:

1. the English(es) of the test-takers' local community,
2. the dominant English of the test taker,
3. the English(es) of the test content,
4. the English(es) of the test proctors,
5. the English(es) of the test scores/raters,
6. the English(es) of the decision target community,
7. the English(es) of the decision target purpose,
8. the English(es) of the decision makers.

In the Middle East, a number of higher education institutions have adopted the TOEFL test and use it for admission purposes. Khan (2009) investigated bias against non-native speakers focusing specifically on TOEFL. She conducted a case study at a private college in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where TOEFL is used as an entrance exam. She investigated the perceptions of teachers and students of the use of TOEFL in their local educational context in a preparatory English programme. Khan (2009) recruited 24 female students aged 18-21 and five teachers from the English language programme. She conducted four focus group interviews (with six students in each group) and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the teachers. Teachers were invited to share their views about the various test items in TOEFL,

and the rationale behind the use of TOEFL in the college. Students were asked to express their views regarding TOEFL test items, their experience of taking the TOEFL test, and their suggestions for their preferred assessment procedures.

TOEFL is considered as a 'conduit to Americanisation' by some faculty members interviewed by Khan (2009:198). Regarding the reasons for the use of TOEFL, the teachers participating in the study believed that TOEFL appeals to the idea of Americanisation in Saudi Arabia. One of the teachers mentioned that TOEFL is popular with individuals and institutions in Saudi Arabia due to its multiple-choice questions. Saudi students prefer these to other types of tests where they have to do more writing. Another teacher believed that TOEFL has a special position in the college because a lot of the top management studied in the United States where TOEFL was the standard, so they believe that it should be standard in Saudi Arabia too. It is considered to be the top standard test, which according to Khan, echoes the 'educational imperialism' of Phillipson (1992) where decision makers in the educational field maintain strong links to inner-circle countries and tend to promote the educational ideologies of those countries, hence strengthening the 'hegemony of inner circle countries' (2009:198). The teachers further believe that TOEFL is a benchmark for international standards which give students and their families assurance about the quality of education in their college. It is used by colleges as a 'marketing ploy' to impress students and increase recruitment. These colleges use this high standard test without thinking whether it is useful for their purposes or not. Two of the participating teachers suggested that TOEFL has an international currency. As it can be used in different parts of the world, it will continue to be highly regarded and is not likely to be replaced by a local entrance test.

Most of the students felt that TOEFL was not a suitable test for the college because it uses American English. Students mentioned that they faced difficulties in answering TOEFL questions due to the cultural content and American English dialect. One of the students said: 'the English represented on the test is only American language... they speak in American English and not how everyone speaks'. Khan suggested that students realise that 'English used in TOEFL does not reflect the English used by global speakers of English' (Khan, 2009:199). Students and



teachers expressed their anxiety and frustration with the linguistic and cultural content of TOEFL. Regarding the different items used in TOEFL tests, Khan further mentioned that students faced difficulties with the ‘excessive use of idiomatic expressions specific to North American culture’ (2009:200). The nature of the questions in the grammar section also posed problems for the students. Many students and teachers were concerned that the reading comprehension section in the TOEFL test contained texts about American lifestyle and history. The students overall felt that such reading passages might be useful for those who are going to live and study in the United States but not for those who do not plan to study in North American universities.

One of the teachers in Khan (2009:201) commented that ‘English is not the property of single nation, it needs to be internationalised more in the way that it is taught and in the way that it is tested as well’. Teachers felt that, as students communicate and interact with non-native speakers, the tests should include ‘neutral’ content and should not privilege a specific culture. Another teacher suggested that a local test should be created. Khan (2009) suggested that students are aware of a bias in TOEFL, which is evident from the differences in the ‘Englishes’ involved in the test (Brown, 2004). They dislike the test because it is difficult, long and inappropriate, and promotes American English: ‘in this regard TOEFL is biased’ (Khan, 2003:203). Khan suggests that TOEFL is not a useful test in second and foreign language contexts because the English used in these local contexts is more international than American (2009:193).

### **3.8.2. Test as a means of control**

Shohamy (1998:332) has developed a framework known as critical language testing (CLT) which deals with the social and political role of tests. Her critical language testing theory assumes that the act of testing is not neutral. Rather, it is both a product and an agent of cultural, social, political, educational and ideological agendas that shape the lives of individual participants, teachers and learners. According to Shohamy (1998:332), ‘tests are most powerful as they are often the

single indicators for determining the future of individuals. As criteria for acceptance and rejection, they dominate other educational devices such as curriculum, textbook and teaching'. Tests can have an enormous influence on the lives of test takers, as they 'create winners and losers, successes and failures, rejections and acceptances' (Shohamy, 2001:16). Because of these detrimental effects, test-takers are often willing to do almost anything in order to achieve the maximum score. Consequently, tests can be used as disciplinary tools, for example test-takers can be forced to change their behaviour to meet the demands of the test.

Tests affect a range of stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, administrators, government agents, funding organisations, and national educational bodies. These stakeholders can be classified into educational, social, and political groups and each group has a different type of interest in, and intention for, utilising tests as a source of power. Shohamy (2001) believes that centralised educational systems have introduced tests as a means of controlling and imposing specific knowledge on students, teachers, and educational systems. Politicians have a great deal of power and they have capitalised on language tests to tackle political issues, and make decisions based on test scores. Tests control access to opportunities within societies, and/or control the flow of people between societies. According to Shohamy, 'on the political levels, tests are used to control citizenship, include, exclude, gatekeep, maintain power' (Shohamy, 1998:338). Politicians set the benchmark for passing a language test for immigration purposes. In countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, governments use language ability tests as a criterion to control immigration. For example, two language tests, the 'access' and the 'step' were introduced as a means of gatekeeping immigrants to Australia. Shohamy suggests that test-takers should have the right to question the test itself, its value and its methods. She advocates 'critical testing' which promotes critical strategies to investigate the uses and consequences of tests, to monitor the power of tests, to minimise their detrimental forces, to reveal misuses, and empower the test takers.

Drawing largely on assessment practices in Israel, Shohamy (2001) claims that tests (language tests in particular) can serve as tools to maintain and perpetuate

the dominant knowledge of majority groups. A new national test, of Arabic as a Second Language (ASL), was introduced by the Ministry of Education for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students learning Arabic as a second foreign language. Shohamy (1993) investigated the impact of this test, which was intended to raise the prestige of Arabic among Hebrew speakers, increase the motivation of teachers and students, standardise the levels of Arabic teaching and force teachers to increase the amount of Arabic taught. She found that the test had an impact on teaching and learning activities as the teachers replaced textbooks with worksheets identical to test materials, conducted 'testlike' activities in class and prepared students specifically for the test prior to its taking place. After the test had been administered, teachers reverted to their regular teaching practices. The test did not raise the status and level of the subject, nor did it increase the number of students studying Arabic (an indication of its lack of prestige).

In the same study, Shohamy (1993) examined the uses of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) oral proficiency test which is an achievement test administered at the end of twelfth grade to all students graduating from high school. The test consists of an oral interview, a monologue, and a role play. The declared purpose for introducing the test, as stated by the EFL inspector, was to ensure that teachers paid more attention to oral language in order to improve students' oral proficiency, and to ensure they taught more oral language skills, thus upgrading the level of speaking proficiency of students graduating from high school. Results showed that the teachers spent considerable time teaching oral language skills but only used tasks and activities identical to those included in the test. Thus both tests (the Arabic test and the English oral proficiency test) had some degree of impact as the teachers focused on areas that had not been taught before.

In a subsequent study, Shohamy et al. (1996) conducted surveys and interviews with teachers and found that the influence of the ASL test only lasted for a short period of time, because the stakes of the test were low and teachers thought that it was not particularly useful to facilitate higher-level learning in Arabic. However, teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reported focusing their teaching exclusively on the oral skills and tasks tested in high-stakes EFL exams and of

allocating more class time to test preparation. Shohamy et al. (1996:314) concluded that, 'washback can change over time and that the impact of tests is not necessarily stable'. It depends on a number of factors such as language status, the purpose of the test, the format of the test, and the skills tested.

Shohamy et al. (1996) also used a questionnaire to explore learners' perceptions of test influences. They found that learners experienced a higher level of anxiety about the EFL oral test than the ASL test, as they perceived the former to be more important and higher-stake than the latter because English language has a higher status than Arabic in that society. To the best of my knowledge, Shohamy has not analysed high-stakes English language proficiency tests such as IELTS and TOEFL using her CLT paradigm.

Despite the considerable number of studies on washback and impact which have been carried out across the world, relatively few have been conducted within the framework of critical language testing. I mentioned previously (see section 3.6.1) that Moore et al. (2012) broadly conceptualised their study within a critical language testing framework. In order to fully understand the impact of IELTS in Cambodia, they analysed their findings using the CLT paradigm. They adopted Lynch's framework (2001), in which Shohamy's principles of CLT are melded with Pennycook's notions of critical applied linguistics (see Pennycook, 1994, 1999; Shohamy, 2001). Moore et al. (2012:7) suggest that using the CLT paradigm is appropriate because 'the IELTS test is both a market leader in English language proficiency testing and a high-stakes test with the power to make a significant social impact'.

According to Moore et al. (2012), the IELTS test is controlled by western institutions as a gate-keeping instrument for migration or for entry into higher education, thus the Cambodians are subject to the rules and regulations imposed by these institutions. In the context of Cambodia, the IELTS test serves the agendas of universities in developed countries, who have greatly increased their numbers of international students in recent years. Cambodians are increasingly taking the test to gain admittance to these universities in order to have the best possible career prospects.

Moore et al. (2012) consider the IELTS test as one way of controlling and imposing specific knowledge on students and teachers. IELTS test-takers in Cambodia complained that the test was too ‘Eurocentric’, in that it favours European test-takers. In addition to developing their English proficiency skills, Cambodian candidates have to acquire ‘world knowledge’ to achieve their required band scores. Some of the Cambodian returned graduates, returning from overseas, criticised the difficulty of the reading topics in the IELTS test. However, overall in Cambodia, the IELTS test is considered to be fair and an accurate means of measuring a candidate’s English proficiency.

Moore et al. (2012) suggest that the IELTS test has a minimal impact in Cambodia generally but has a significant impact on facilitating opportunities for some Cambodians to get scholarships to pursue higher education overseas at English-medium institutions. Furthermore, Moore et al. (2012) also suggest that the voices of Cambodian stakeholders should be heard and their democratic rights should be respected. It is therefore important for the IELTS testing authorities to take account of the views of all stakeholders impacted on by language testing regimes to better understand the impact on the lives of ordinary people.

In the context of this study, I also address the ‘detrimental effects’ of the IELTS test on test-preparers and test-takers, referred to by Shohamy (2001). I treat these detrimental effects as the negative impact or net cost on test-preparers/test-takers. Shohamy (2001) believes that the organisations which own and manage the tests are powerful institutions as they exercise power and control over individuals and educational systems. In this study these include Cambridge ESOL, immigration agencies and universities in western countries. These, however, are not the focus of this particular study.

It would be a mistake to treat all stakeholders in Pakistan as powerless. It is interesting to explore how many of the stakeholders are, despite the obvious costs, deriving benefits from taking the test. The IELTS test preparation providers are the stakeholders who are the most obvious beneficiaries in this situation. However, the test-takers and test-preparers are also beginning to broaden their outlook about what benefits the test can give them. In this study, therefore I examine the impact of

IELTS on different stakeholders and assess the costs and benefits for each stakeholder and their perceptions, both positive and negative, to arrive at a balanced overview of the impact of the IELTS test in Pakistan. I also consider how the relevant literature about washback and impact can effectively address the issues of the IELTS test in the Pakistani context.

### **3.9. Summary**

This chapter started with making a distinction between the key terms washback and impact, and discussed other related concepts. A number of studies were reviewed to discuss the mechanism of washback, including Alderson and Wall's (1993) 15 washback hypotheses, Bailey's (1996) model based on Hughes' (1993 cited in Bailey, 1996) trichotomy, and Green's (2007) model of washback. These models helped to determine the nature of washback and how washback works in educational contexts. They are, therefore appropriate for this investigation which was undertaken in a Pakistani context to find out how an English proficiency exam such as IELTS impacts on education, the economy, and wider society. The washback of IELTS was also assessed to see whether the test influences the teaching processes or not.

It is noticeable that the washback and impact studies conducted in the last decade have used a wider range of methods of gathering data from various stakeholders. In comparison, earlier impact studies were more limited, using mainly qualitative data collection instruments with only one or two research questions. This shows that, with the passage of time, impact and washback studies have become more complex in nature. The present study also focuses on a range of stakeholders and addresses a number of research questions, employing the mixed-methods approach, which uses both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed in detail the washback hypotheses offered by scholars like Alderson and Wall (1993), Bailey (1996), Green (2007), and Hughes (1993 cited in Bailey, 1996). I also looked at some major research studies of the washback and impact of IELTS, the methodologies employed, the major findings and the implications for this study. In this chapter, I begin by recapitulating my research questions, which were stimulated by the models and studies discussed in the previous chapter. The review of research questions in the first section will help to justify the choice of research methodology employed in this study. After a brief discussion of methodological considerations from other studies, I will then discuss my research design for the current study. I will discuss all the data collection instruments employed, with specific reference to the individual research questions. The final section will present the ethical considerations of the study.

### **4.2. Research Questions**

I outlined in Chapter 1 that the overall aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of the IELTS test on education, the economy, and society in Pakistan. In the previous chapter I established that my study covers both washback and impact on a range of stakeholders. In the introduction to my dissertation, I showed that impact studies include data collection from a range of stakeholders. Studies can move from washback to impact territory when the stakeholder coverage widens (Hawkey, 2006). In order to answer my overarching research question ‘What impact does IELTS have on education, the economy and society in Pakistan?’ I consulted a range of stakeholders, including, IELTS test preparation providers, IELTS test-preparers, test-takers, test preparation teachers, parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers and local employers. Below I restate the sub-questions which were formulated to assess the impact of IELTS on each stakeholder and ultimately to achieve the overall aim

of the study.

**Focus on IELTS test preparation providers:**

RQ1: What types of private English language institutes are available in Pakistan?

RQ2: What are the differences between private local and international institutes?

RQ3: How effective are private institutes in improving the IELTS performance of their students?

**Focus on IELTS test-preparers:**

RQ4: What are the profiles of the candidates preparing for the IELTS test?

RQ5: What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses?

RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test?

**Focus on IELTS test-takers:**

RQ7: What are the profiles of the candidates who have already taken the IELTS test?

RQ8: What is the impact of the IELTS test on test-takers?

**Focus on IELTS test preparation teachers:**

RQ9: What are the profiles of the teachers preparing candidates to take the IELTS test?

RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses?

RQ11: What is the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing candidates to take the test?

**Focus on parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers:**

RQ12: What is the impact of the IELTS test on parents of test-preparers and test-takers?



**Focus on local employers:**

RQ13: Is the IELTS test required for any type of job within Pakistan?

The thirteen sub-questions above, which were outlined in Chapter 1, focus on the six main groups of stakeholders. After a detailed discussion of the data collection instruments employed in the study and the participants, I will revisit these questions, at the end of the chapter, to assess how effective the research instruments reviewed were in addressing them (see tables 4.6 and 4.7).

**4.3. Methodological considerations from other washback and impact studies**

Hawkey (2006:30) notes that ‘it is nowadays quite rare to encounter impact studies that do not, to a greater or lesser extent, claim to combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches’. Saville (2009) agrees with Hawkey and adds that impact studies most usually employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Test impact studies are concerned with the wider effects of the test on the community, from which a range of stakeholders may be consulted. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observational methods are all relevant to test impact research (Saville, 2009). Hawkey (2006) maintains that requirements for different impact data demand different types of data collection. For example, when attempting to understand attitudes of candidates to the test, and their preparation for it, a multi-faceted investigation using questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations is beneficial. The review of washback and impact studies in Chapter 3 showed that methods employed to elicit data in previous research studies tended to involve surveys, classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and pre- and post- testing. Different research methods employed by different scholars discussed in Chapter 3 are relisted in table 4.1 below.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Research instruments</b>
Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996)	Classroom observations and interviews
Brown (1998)	Pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and interviews
Elder and O'Loughlin (2003)	Pre- and post-tests
Rao et al. (2003)	Pre- and post-tests, questionnaires and interviews
Read and Hayes (2003)	Questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and pre- and post-tests
Hawkey (2006)	Questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews and focus groups
Green (2007)	Pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and interviews
Mickan and Motteram (2009)	Classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students
Merrifield (2008; 2012)	Documentary data, policies, and telephone interviews
Moore et al. (2012)	Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations

Table 4.1 Research methods employed by some of the significant washback and impact studies

A few researchers, for example Mickan and Motteram (2008) and Read and Hayes (2003) conducted a complete observation of IELTS preparation courses. A number of studies have assessed the effects of preparation courses on score gains by conducting pre- and post-tests (e.g. Brown, 1998; Elder and O'Loughlin, 2003; Green, 2007; Rao et al., 2003; Read and Hayes, 2003), mostly focusing on testing one or two components of the IELTS test. Studies like Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) administered a large number of questionnaires as their main data collection instrument, supplemented by interviews, classroom observations and focus group discussions to assess the issues of washback and impact from a range of stakeholders. This suggests that these studies (particularly the recent ones) have not been confined to using one method of data collection; rather they have employed mixed-methods to assess the washback and impact of IELTS.

#### **4.4. Research methodology for this study**

Drawing on the methodological considerations detailed in Chapter 3, and briefly revisited in section 4.3 above, the research in the present study employs a mixed

methods approach. Mixed methods research is becoming increasingly recognised as the third major research approach or paradigm (Johnson et al., 2007; Robson, 2011; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Tashakkori and Teddlie also call mixed methods the ‘third methodological movement’ (2003:ix). Philosophically, mixed methods research adopts a pragmatic method and system, based on a view of knowledge as being both socially constructed and based upon the reality of the world we experience and live in (Johnson et al., 2007). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) clarify the differences between methodology, design and methods. According to them:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (2007:4-5).

Mixed methods design is defined as ‘the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, concepts or language into a single study’ (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17). Creswell et al. (2003) defined mixed methods as ‘the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, and involve the integration of data at one or more stages in the process of research’ (Creswell et al., 2003:212). In mixed methods design, the quantitative and qualitative methods can be used interdependently (and in a range of different sequences) or independently, focusing either on the same research question or different questions. Many different terms are used for this approach, such as integrated, hybrid, combined, synthesis, quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-method, methodological triangulation, and mixed methodology, but ‘mixed methods’ is the preferred term for most of the researchers (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

Reams and Twale (2008:133) suggest that a mixed methods research

approach is ‘necessary to uncover information and perspective, increase corroboration of the data and render less biased and more accurate conclusions’. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination is advantageous because ‘together they form a more complete picture of the problem than they do when standing alone’ (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:7). According to Cohen et al. (2007), a mixed methods strategy can check the potential bias in any single research method and can be used to compensate for the weaknesses of an individual method. In addition, mixed methods research allows data to be compared, which may provide the researcher with more interesting results.

For the present study, a mixed methods approach for data collection seemed to be appropriate because this area is under-researched, which made it difficult to collect the data quantitatively without first exploring the issues through conducting qualitative research. This way, the qualitative phase (phase 1) of my study helped to explore the potential issues and was followed by the quantitative phase (phase 2) which gathered data on a large scale. Like some other impact studies conducted around the world, the present impact study of IELTS in Pakistan is a complex research project involving a range of stakeholders and use of instruments, which would be only possible by mixing qualitative and quantitative data. It is an ‘emergent’ mixed methods design, in which a second approach is added after the study is underway because one method is inadequate to answer the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The present study started with the collection of mainly qualitative data (face-to-face surveys, classroom observations, and interviews) with small-scale quantitative pre- and post-testing. A second phase was then added, of mainly quantitative data (questionnaires) with further qualitative interviews and a focus group discussion. Hence, it is a two-phase study, with predominantly qualitative data in the first phase and quantitative data in the second.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), two characteristics are common to many classifications of mixed methods design (concurrent or sequential schemata): either the purpose of the design is to merge (or bring together) the qualitative and quantitative data in a parallel or concurrent way, or to have one type of data (quantitative or qualitative) build on or extend the other in a sequential way.

There are six common mixed methods designs: convergent design, embedded design, explanatory design, exploratory design, transformative design, and multiphase design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The present study mainly employs the ‘sequential exploratory’ mixed methods design with some characteristics of ‘concurrent embedded’ design in its data collection process. The sequential exploratory design is a means of enquiry whereby the initial data collection results inform the subsequent phase of the enquiry (Creswell, 2003). Questions or procedures from one strand emerge from, or are dependent on, the previous strand. Sequential exploratory design is mainly where the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study occur in chronological order. Researchers using a sequential exploratory design begin by exploring the topic with qualitative methods and then build to a second, quantitative phase where the initial results may be tested or generalised. Thus, the process looks like the following:

‘Qualitative data and results → Quantitative data and results → Interpretation’

(Source: Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011:72)

This design is particularly useful when a researcher needs to develop and test an instrument because one is not available, or to identify important variables to study quantitatively when the variables are unknown. It is also appropriate when a researcher wants to generalise results to different groups to test aspects of an emergent theory or classification or to explore a phenomenon in depth and then measure its prevalence (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). I mentioned above that there is a lack of research into the impact of IELTS in the South Asian context. Sequential exploratory design is particularly helpful to understand the washback and impact in this field and then to investigate impact through questionnaires undertaken on a larger scale. I mentioned earlier that, as it is mainly a sequential exploratory design, my study has some elements of embedded design, which is where researchers embed a qualitative component within a quantitative component or quantitative data within qualitative methodology, concurrently or sequentially (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). An embedded design can be a two-phase study which includes the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

My study starts with a small sample and builds up to larger samples, as is typical of an exploratory study. When sequential exploratory designs are used, the individuals in the first stage of data collection are typically not the same participants as those in the second stage (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The individuals in the qualitative study are not the same participants as those in the second stage of quantitative study. I have used this mix of a ‘sequential exploratory’ and ‘concurrent embedded’ design because it provides a better understanding of my research problem and to answer the research questions of my study. Thus, the design of my study can be represented by the figure 4.1 below:

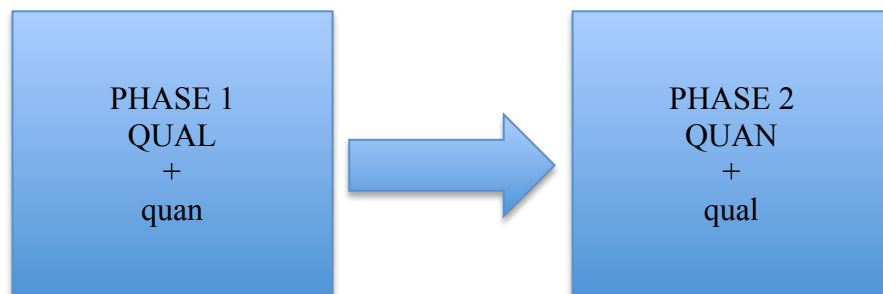


Figure 4.1 Sequential exploratory concurrent embedded design

In the figure 4.1 above, ‘QUAL’ indicates qualitative as the main data and ‘quan’ (quantitative), is secondary to this data. In the first phase of my study I conducted qualitative surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers and students, with small scale quantitative pre- and post-testing. This means that my secondary method (i.e. quantitative) is nested within the predominant qualitative method. In the second phase of my study, ‘QUAN’ indicates that the main data is quantitative and ‘qual’ is secondary data, where I conducted three questionnaires on a large scale with test-preparers, test-takers, and teachers. This was followed up by interviews with parents, employers, and a focus group with test-preparers. In this second phase, the qualitative method is secondary and embedded within the quantitative method. Thus, the figure clearly demonstrates the collection of data in the two phases sequentially as well as concurrently, where ‘+’ in both the phases

indicates that quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently, and the ‘→’ between the two phases indicates that quantitative and qualitative data are collected sequentially, thus representing a typical example of ‘sequential exploratory concurrent embedded design’. This design has not been used by any of the washback and impact studies reviewed in Chapter 3. The time frame for the first phase of my study was six months (October 2009-March 2010), whereas the second round of data collection was slightly shorter, around three months (June 2013-August 2013). During both phases of the study, data was collected on field trips to Pakistan by the researcher.

#### **4.5. Data collection instruments and analysis procedures**

The first phase of my study used mainly qualitative data from face-to-face surveys and an in-depth study of two IELTS preparation courses at Berlitz and Pakistan American Cultural Centre (PACC<sup>1</sup>). The latter consisted of classroom observations and interviews with teachers and test-preparers, supplemented by small scale pre- and post-tests of test-preparers on these courses. The second phase collected mainly quantitative data using questionnaires issued to IELTS test-preparers, test-takers, and test preparation teachers. These were supplemented by qualitative data from interviews with employers and parents of the test-preparers and test-takers, along with a focus group with test-preparers. The data collected using these different methods in the two phases of my study complement each other, which is essential in washback and impact studies (Wall and Alderson, 1993). Table 4.2 below outlines the data collection instruments, stakeholders and targeted number of participants in both phases (qualitative and quantitative) in chronological order. Each of the data collection instruments will be discussed further individually, along with the ways of analysing the data.

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth Pakistan American Cultural Centre will be referred to as PACC.

S.No	Instruments	Stakeholders	Targeted number of participants	Timeline
<b>Phase One</b>				
1.	Preliminary face-to-face survey of private institutes	IELTS test preparation providers	20 institutes	2009-10
2.	Classroom observations of IELTS preparation courses at Berlitz and PACC institutes	IELTS test preparation providers, IELTS preparation teachers, IELTS test-preparers	2 centres, 2 teachers, 20 test-preparers	2009-10
3.	Semi-structured interviews with teachers at Berlitz and PACC institutes	IELTS test preparation teachers	2 teachers	2009-10
4.	Pre- and post-testing at Berlitz and PACC	IELTS test-preparers	20 test-preparers	2009-10
5.	Informal conversational interviews with students at Berlitz and PACC	IELTS test-preparers	20 test-preparers	2009-10
<b>Phase Two</b>				
6.	Questionnaire survey	IELTS test-preparers	200 test-preparers	2013
7.	Questionnaire survey	IELTS test-takers	100 test-takers	2013
8.	Questionnaire survey	IELTS test preparation teachers	10 teachers	2013
9.	Semi-structured interviews	Local employers	5 employers	2013
10.	Semi-structured interviews	Parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers	5 parents	2013
11.	Focus group discussion	IELTS test-preparers	4 test-preparers	2013

Table 4.2 Summary of data collection instruments, stakeholders, number of participants and time frame

Cohen et al. (2007) described the fieldwork as the most difficult part of social research and the most time consuming part of the research process. Accessibility was a real challenge in this research, in both phases of my data collection. Difficulties of access and how these were overcome will be discussed in relation to each data collection instrument. As a mixed-methods study, the current study makes use of a wide range of instruments as well as identifying a wide range of stakeholders. The study did not rely on any single sampling strategy. It has used both probability and non-probability sampling strategies to select samples. Each of the different types of sampling strategy used will be discussed under the individual data collection instruments, along with the analysis of data collected from each of these instruments.



#### **4.6. Preliminary face-to-face survey of the private institutes**

I outlined in Chapter 2 of my thesis that General English and IELTS preparation courses in Pakistan are only offered by private language centres. There are no state-owned language centres or institutes typically associated with universities in Pakistan which offer these courses as is mostly the case in developed countries. There has been a significant growth of these centres in Pakistan since 1990 and today they are very noticeable (see chapter 2), but to date there is no published literature in Pakistan on the growth of private English Language centres, and in order to fill this gap, I have conducted a survey of these language centres to obtain a broad overview of teaching institutes in Pakistan. I suspect that this is where IELTS is having the greatest impact financially, both on test-preparers and the test preparation providers. Being a part of Pakistani society, I know the context very well. I had background knowledge and information about the IELTS preparation industry. My prior knowledge of these institutes, and information gathered through newspapers, websites and blogs, could have been sufficient to form the backdrop. Conducting face-to-face surveys in the institutes was a conscious step to avoid any bias regarding these institutes and to ensure objectivity in the data collection procedure. This way I was able to avoid preconceptions about these institutes.

The majority of the private English language centres are locally owned, whereas a few are international franchises, thus we have two broad categories; locally owned and internationally owned private institutes. In comparison to Hawkey (2006) and Read and Hayes (2003), the present study conducted face-to-face surveys in the private institutes, which is more advantageous than mail, online and telephone surveys as the researcher is able to spend some time (at least 2-3 hours) in each centre gathering information, as well as observing and if possible, speaking to students and teachers. I started my fieldwork with a preliminary face-to-face survey of private institutes in Pakistan, which was important for the present impact study in order to establish the following:

- Range of different types of institutes (offering General English and IELTS preparation courses),
- the ratio of local to international providers of these courses,
- the types of courses offered (such as General English, IELTS, TOEFL, and any other courses),
- duration of their courses,
- their entry requirements,
- the profiles of their students and teachers (specifically the typical socioeconomic status of their students),
- the fee structure of these providers.

Compared with mail, online and telephone surveys, face-to-face surveys offer significant advantages in terms of the amount and complexity of the data that can be collected (Doyle, 2005). Face-to-face surveys typically offer the highest response rates obtainable. They also offer advantages in terms of data quality, as the researcher has control over the data collection process and environment. If the respondent finds a question to be confusing or ambiguous, they can ask for clarification which would not be possible with a mail survey (Doyle, 2005). In the present context of the study, there are some particular difficulties with mail or online surveys; for example, electricity failure for about 12-14 hours is very common which would delay filling out online surveys. Also, most of the institutes do not have either computer or internet connections so online questionnaires could not be used. Mailing questionnaires was also not considered a reliable way to gather information as people would either not fill in the form or post it back to the researcher in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Therefore, face-to-face surveys best fit the purpose of the study to gather information from the private institutes. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first IELTS impact study which has conducted face-to-face surveys of private institutes. In the present context, it was practically difficult to conduct a survey of these private institutes because the institutes do not allow access to the researchers and they are reluctant to share any information. I managed to access the institutes by showing official letter from the University of Edinburgh and sometimes by using

personal contacts.

The survey was conducted at the beginning of the first phase of the fieldwork of my study which took place over a six month period from October 2009-March 2010 in Pakistan, carried out in Karachi and Hyderabad. My data collection cities are representative of tier 1 and tier 2 cities in Pakistan: Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan, is the capital of the province of Sindh, and representative of tier 1 cities in the country. Hyderabad, on the other hand, is the second largest city in Sindh province, and representative of tier 2 cities. Before conducting this survey, the relevant information regarding these institutes (such as locations, opening hours, and contact numbers) was gathered for some thirty-seven centres, through newspaper advertisements, their websites, internet blogs and street billboards. Some centres were not appropriate for inclusion due to their remote location or, for security reasons travelling in their neighbourhood areas was risky for a lone woman, and some other institutes did not allow access, so ultimately I included twenty private centres through 'stratified random sampling'; fifteen from Karachi and five from Hyderabad. I had a very limited access of these centres which were included for survey. For example, they did not allow me to see their classrooms, observe any IELTS preparation classes or to speak with their teachers regarding test preparation materials and methods. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogenous groups, each group containing subjects with similar characteristics (Gray, 2009). I mentioned earlier that there are two broad categories of institutes in Pakistan: local and international institutes. The international institutes do not have any sub-groups, so I only divided the local institutes into different sub-groups (e.g. neighbourhood tutors, chain institutes and so on, see chapter 5) and then randomly chose institutes from the different strata. These constituted a representative sample of private institutes offering General English and IELTS preparation courses in Pakistan.

The information from the chosen institutes was gathered via informal conversational interviews with the administration staff. None of the language centres permitted me to record the interviews. This did not affect the data collection as I used an information sheet which made it convenient to fill in all the relevant information in appropriate boxes during the interview (see appendix 1). The main purpose of

these face-to-face surveys was to collect information about these centres rather than eliciting attitudes so the verbatim quotes are not so important for these interviews. Furthermore, I also made detailed notes immediately after conducting interviews, so there was no issue with not tape recording these interviews. As discussed above, administering questionnaires like Hawkey (2006) and Read and Hayes (2003) was not a reliable method, therefore gathering information through informal conversational interviews was the most suitable method in the present context. Interviews are particularly useful for getting in-depth information around the topic (Kvale, 2007). For example, with interviews I had the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions unlike questionnaire surveys. In each interview with the administration staff, I took notes on: location, name of the institute, types of courses offered, duration of General English and IELTS preparation courses, placement test, classroom setup, average number of students, tuition fees, teaching materials and other additional information. Most of the administration staff preferred to speak to me in Urdu, while only a few people provided information in English. It is mainly because the administrative staff is neither well-educated nor fluent speakers of English. It took me almost two months to survey these institutes (from 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009-10<sup>th</sup> December 2009). I spent almost 45 hours gathering information from the centres, spending an average of 2 hours at each one. Before gathering any information, I visited most of the centres more than once to contact their owners/managers to gain access to collect the data. I was able to speak with these owners only for about 10-15 minutes explaining them about my research and getting their consent to conduct a survey. To do this, I sometimes had to wait for an hour or so due to their busy schedules. The consent form detailed all relevant information about my research, assuring confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any stage (see appendix 2). Once I received their consent, I had to visit some of the centres more than once due to the busy schedule of their administrative staff or for certain other reasons (such as electricity failure, and unplanned strikes).

I mentioned earlier that I was not allowed to record the interviews conducted with the administration staff at the private centres. I sometimes noted things in English, for example the fee structure, and duration of their classes. But any other

information, I noted in Urdu. To analyse the face-to-face surveys, I initially translated any information which was written in Urdu as most of the administration staff preferred to speak in Urdu. I then prepared Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets and filled in the information for every participating institute in the relevant boxes. The information was broadly categorised under the type of institute in the presentation of findings (Doyle, 2005).

#### **4.7. In-depth study of two private centres**

The data from the surveys of private language centres in Karachi and Hyderabad helped me to select two centres (a local and an international) for in-depth investigation of their IELTS preparation courses including an assessment of their efficacy in improving the IELTS performance of their students. I chose two language centres through ‘purposive sampling’ strategy. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling strategy in which the researcher deliberately selects the subjects against one or more traits to give what is believed to be a representative sample (Gray, 2009:152). Out of the twenty surveyed institutes, these two were chosen as they are typically representative of private local and private international institutes in Pakistan. PACC represents locally owned private centres, and Berlitz represents private internationally owned institutes in Pakistan. Both centres are located in Karachi. The two institutes are comparable as they both aim to prepare students for the IELTS exam and provide preparation over an eight week period (40 hours). The institutes gave me access to classes for observation and allowed me to interview teachers and students and conduct pre- and post-testing. These methods of data collection helped to identify differences (if any) between private local and international institutes (e.g. their teaching methods, materials, background of students) in Pakistan and also helped to find out their students’ motivations, their expectations of the course and to assess the efficacy of these courses.

In order to gain access to the two centres, I visited them and met with their administrative staff and scheduled an appointment with their senior managers (heads). I explained the project to them and the data collection procedure. Both the institutes

required a letter from my university (showing my status as a PhD student). Once they agreed to participate, they signed the consent form (see appendix 3). After gaining access to these two centres, I relied on ‘volunteer sampling’ to gather participants from IELTS preparation courses. This is a type of non-random sampling strategy in which the researcher has to rely on volunteers, for example students who happen to be interested, or those attending courses (Cohen et al., 2007; Gray, 2009). PACC had eight students enrolled on their IELTS preparation course, and their whole cohort volunteered to take part in the study, while Berlitz had sixteen students on their course, out of which twelve students volunteered. Two students were not regularly attending the classes and the two other students showed no interest. I therefore had a total of twenty participants from both centres who signed the consent form to participate in the study (for pre- and post-testing, classroom observation and informal conversational interviews).

In the first week of conducting the study at these two centres, all twenty participants were given a background information sheet to complete. This aimed to gather information about participants’ background (such as age, gender, their L1), reason(s) for taking the test, intended country of destination, intended fields of study, and their English education at school and college. This background information was required so that connections could be made between the information provided and the participants’ performance in the pre- and post-tests (see appendix 4 for background information sheet and the consent form). The IELTS preparation course at both the centres (Berlitz and PACC) was scheduled to start from 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 and run for eight weeks. Below I will discuss the methods employed to gather in-depth information about the IELTS preparation courses in both Berlitz and PACC.

#### **4.7.1. Classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC**

Classroom observations seek empirical evidence of what is actually happening in the classrooms rather than what is said to be happening or to have happened. Classroom observations are helpful to explore the teaching materials, learning activities, the physical settings, the interactions occurring in the classrooms, and to assess the

washback of IELTS on teaching methods and materials. It is a time-consuming process but provides a more accurate picture of reality (Cohen et al., 2007). I observed the entire block of eight weeks at the two centres by adopting a non-participant, semi-structured observation technique because I was interested in observing the participants in their natural context without any interference from myself. Both the centres held IELTS preparation classes three days a week for 2 hours each day, Berlitz from 7-9 in the evening and PACC from 3-5 in the afternoon. These different days and time made it convenient to observe the two sessions. In table 4.3 below, I present a comprehensive schedule of the classroom observations conducted at Berlitz and PACC. In total, I observed their classes for 80 hours, spending 40 hours at each of the preparation centre.

Institutes	Berlitz (Dates and hours of classroom observations)			PACC (Dates and hours of classroom observations)		
	Mon	Tue	Fri	Mon	Wed	Thurs
Week 1	4 Jan (2 h)	5 Jan (2 h)	8 Jan (2 h)	4 Jan (30 mins due to pre-test)	6 Jan (2 h)	7 Jan (2 h)
Week 2	11 Jan (2 h)	12 Jan (2 h)	15 Jan (2 h)	11 Jan (2 h)	13 Jan (2 h)	14 Jan (2 h)
Week 3	18 Jan (2 h)	19 Jan (2 h)	22 Jan (Public holiday)	18 Jan (2 h)	20 Jan (2 h)	21 Jan (2 h)
Week 4	25 (Public holiday)	26 Jan (2 h)	29 Jan (2 h)	25 Jan (Public holiday)	27 Jan (2 h)	28 Jan (Tutor on sick leave)
Week 5	1 Feb (2 h)	2 Feb (2 h)	5 Feb (2 h)	1 Feb (2 h)	3 Feb (2 h)	4 Feb (2 h)
Week 6	8 Feb (2 h)	9 Feb (Tutor on sick leave)	12 Feb (Tutor on sick leave)	8 Feb (2 h)	10 Feb (2 h)	11 Feb (2 h)
Week 7	15 Feb (2 h)	16 Feb (3 h)	19 Feb (3 h)	15 Feb (2 h)	17 Feb (2 h)	18 Feb (2 h)
Week 8	22 Feb (Post-test)	23 Feb (2 h)	26 Feb (Mock-test by Berlitz)	22 Feb (Post-test)	24 Feb (2 h)	25 Feb (2 h)
Week 9	1 March (2 h)	-	-	-	-	-
Total hours of observation	40 hours			40.5 hours		

Table 4.3 Schedule of classroom observations conducted at Berlitz and PACC

The complete IELTS preparation course observation in the course of the present

study stands in contrast to some of the impact and washback studies such as Brown (1998), Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), and Rao et al. (2005), who considered the effects of test preparation courses on scores, but did not provide detailed descriptions of classroom practices and to studies like Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) who have conducted classroom observations of a few IELTS preparation classes only to triangulate the data from questionnaires and interviews.

Scholars like Alderson and Wall (1993) and Bailey (1996) suggest that classroom observations are essential in washback research designs as the questionnaires cannot fully capture the classroom activities and their impact on learning. Similar to other impact studies, the classroom observations in this study are advantageous as they aimed to investigate the content and nature of IELTS preparation classes, the nature of teaching methods and materials and the difference in the teaching between a local and an international IELTS preparation course. In impact studies like this, classroom observations also allowed to investigate the extent of the washback of the IELTS test on teaching and learning, which may have a consequential impact on students' learning. Secondly, observations can reveal behaviours of learners and teachers that they are reluctant to share in the interviews and questionnaires (Hawkey, 2006; Saville, 2009). Another key advantage is that observations can attenuate the biases in questionnaires and interviews. For example, IELTS preparation teachers may report using certain teaching materials and methods in their classrooms but these may contradict with classroom observations. Furthermore, the classroom observations in this study will help to find out the factors that induce or constrain washback such as 'personal factors' and 'micro-context factors' which aren't always evident from the questionnaires.

In this study, it is helpful, methodologically, to triangulate the data with teacher and student interviews and make connections between the students' performance and the teaching methods and materials used in the classrooms. Audio and video recording were not permitted in either of the preparation courses, so all the lessons were documented through detailed fieldnotes. Audio or video recordings could have provided rich data but at the same time recording could have interrupted the lessons and affected the normal teacher and student interaction. It could also



have affected student participation in the classroom activities, as the students (especially females) were very shy when they had to speak in English in the class. I sat with the test-preparers (usually at the back of the classroom) to observe all the lessons and took detailed fieldnotes as lessons progressed. My fieldnotes comprised detailed descriptive accounts of what happened in the classroom so the absence of audio and video recordings did not influence the data collected (Gray, 2009).

A number of observation instruments have been developed for classroom observations specifically for studies of washback. Some of these have been discussed in the previous chapter, such as COLT and UCLES, as employed by Read and Hayes (2003). In order to compare the features of the two courses in terms of classroom organisation, instructional focus and student modality, I used the instrument 'Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT)'. COLT consists of two parts. The categories in Part A focus on what teachers and students actually do in the classroom and how they interact (Allen et al., 1984:232). Part B of COLT consists of a set of categories which describe aspects of the verbal interactions that take place between teachers and students within activities (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995).

I only employed Part A in this study, as I was interested to find the differences in organisational patterns and interactions in classroom activities between the two IELTS preparation courses, at Berlitz and PACC. COLT is a validated observation scheme that has been widely used in washback studies to capture elements of washback among classroom interactions (Cheng, 2005; Read and Hayes, 2003; Watanabe, 1996).

As lessons were not recorded at either of the institutes, the time spent on practising each activity is an approximate calculation. Part A was adapted to make it suitable for my research purposes: 'Depending on the user's purpose, there is scope for adaptation in the categories on the COLT scheme, if a category is not useful for a purpose, it can be discarded or adapted' (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995:10). Watanabe (1996) also suggests that COLT can be refined and adapted to fit the purposes of the research by selecting two or three of the categories.

Part A of COLT consists of seven categories: time, activities and episodes, participant organisation, content, content control, student modality and materials, as

given by Spada and Fröhlich (1995). I did not include the categories ‘activities and episodes’ and ‘content’ because I covered these in my detailed fieldnotes. I also did not include the category ‘content control’ as, in the present context, teachers have the authority to control the content of the lesson and to decide what topics to teach or discuss. I thus ended up including the following categories: time, participant organisation, student modality (referred to here as components), and materials used. The adapted COLT instrument therefore consists of four categories as shown in table 4.4 below.

Time	Participant Organisation				Components				Materials used		
	Whole		Group	Individual	R	W	L	S	W	A	V
	T to S/C	S to S/C									

T to S/C = teacher to students or class as a whole      S/C = student to students or class as a whole. R=Reading W=Writing      L=Listening S=Speaking  
W=Written, A=Audio V=Visual

Table 4.4 Adapted Classroom Observation Scheme (COLT, Part A)

In the first category, the starting time of each episode/activity is entered. This helps to calculate the time spent on the various features of COLT. The next category of ‘participant organisation’ refers to the way in which students are organised. The patterns of organisation in this category are: teacher to student or class where the teacher interacts with the whole class or with individual students. The second organisation is student to student, or student to class, where by one activity led by a student or students occurs (e.g. a group of students reading out something provided by the teacher or a textbook). In the next category, students work in groups or pairs. In the third pattern, students work on their own, either on the same or different tasks. The category ‘components’ identifies the different skills practised in a classroom

activity. This helps to indicate whether students are listening, speaking, reading or writing, or whether these skills occur in combination. The final category of the classroom observation scheme, 'materials used', includes discussion of the various types of materials used in the IELTS preparation classrooms (such as textbooks, audio and visual resources).

I simply ticked the categories of participant organisation and components during observations, but made some notes under the materials used in the classrooms and the time was calculated in the first category. To enhance the reliability of the data from classroom observations, I went back to my detailed fieldnotes to make sure that all the activities, components and materials used in the classrooms had been consistently categorised under each category of the classroom observation scheme (Gray, 2009).

I started analysing the data from classroom observations through notes made on the coding sheets (COLT) and my detailed fieldnotes (I also noted additional information in my diary such as student attendance, classroom setup and any interesting events taking place in the classroom). I started with the components (i.e. listening, reading, writing and speaking) and participant organisation categories. These were ticked during the observation, so I first tried to find out how frequently each of the components was practised in the eight weeks' programme. I calculated the percentage of time spent on each component and the participant organisation to see what components of IELTS were practised most and the ways participants were organised in the classroom (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995). I then focused on the materials used in both the IELTS preparation classes to identify any differences between the two courses. I mentioned earlier that I do not have any recordings for the classroom observation; therefore the time spent on each activity is an approximate calculation which has been rounded off.

#### **4.7.2. Semi-structured interviews with Berlitz and PACC teachers**

I employed interviews in my study to complement the classroom observations that I used. As a researcher-observer, I had to interpret the teachers' or the students' behaviour from my own point of view, which might have increased researcher bias. Follow-up interviews offered me an opportunity for clarification and confirmation before I could make any credible conclusions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I conducted semi-structured interviews with the two IELTS preparation teachers; one at each institute (Cohen et al., 2007; Gray, 2009). Only one teacher is responsible for teaching the IELTS preparation course at both these centres.

Both the participating IELTS teachers volunteered to participate in the study and signed the consent form. They were interviewed twice, at the beginning and at the end of the preparation course, similar to Read and Hayes (2003). The pre- and post-course interviews were helpful to obtain the teachers' perspectives about their courses. Each teacher was interviewed separately in an empty classroom at the centre. The first block of the interview, which was conducted at the beginning of the course, lasted for about 15-20 minutes and the main aim was to find out about the teacher's background, the materials used in the classroom, the methodology employed, the washback of IELTS on their teaching methods and materials, and their perceptions of their students. The second block of the interview, conducted at the end of the preparation course, was comparatively shorter, about 8-10 minutes, and mainly focused on their impression of the class, perceptions about their students' progress, and their overall experience of teaching the IELTS preparation course. The interviews were all conducted in English and audio recorded (see appendix 5 for the consent form and full list of questions for both interviews).

The process of conducting an interview is typically guided by an interview guide or guide. The guide served as a 'framework within which the interviewer would develop questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth' (Patton, 2002:344). I prepared an interview guide for issues that I wanted to explore in interviews. I roughly described the issues for discussion to the participants before the interviews were conducted so that the

participants could feel easy by knowing what would be discussed beforehand. For example, I mentioned to the teachers that in the pre-course interview, I will ask them certain questions about their teaching materials, methods and about their students. The interview guide included some of Kvale's (2007) question types including: introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions and interpreting questions. The interview guide was flexible as it included some questions which were based upon previous responses of the participants. The analysis of the interviews with the IELTS preparation teachers will be discussed at the end of the discussion of data collection instruments. The other stakeholders (i.e. test-preparers, parents and local employers) were also interviewed, so similar methods of analysis were adopted for analysing the interview data.

#### **4.7.3. Pre- and post-testing of Berlitz and PACC students**

Many private institutes make exaggerated claims about improving the proficiency of their clients in a short period of time (i.e. in six to eight weeks). In order to understand their effectiveness in making a difference to the performance of the students, I measured progress in IELTS performance objectively by testing students on IELTS material upon entering the programme (pre-test) and upon departing the programme (post-test) at the two chosen institutes, to assess whether the courses had a measurable effect on the IELTS performance of their students. This is a quantitative process which supplemented the main qualitative study of phase 1 of the study. Pre- and post-testing is a commonly used method to evaluate learner outcomes of educational programmes. It helps to measure the initial knowledge or proficiency level of the learner and compare it to the knowledge the learner gained from the programme (Gray, 2009). Through testing the students at the two centres, it was possible to investigate whether the progress for each cohort at the two institutes differed. Students were tested on all the four skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) in the first and last weeks of the preparation course, unlike Brown (1998), Rao et al. (2003) and Read and Hayes (2003) who did not test students on these four

components of the IELTS. The pre- and post-tests were conducted in empty classrooms at Berlitz and PACC. Both the tests were conducted under normal examination conditions, fully invigilated, and with strict control of timing. All twenty students took part in the pre- and post-test of my study voluntarily because they regarded this as additional preparation for the test, and at the same time they were also interested to see the difference in their proficiency level by the end of the IELTS preparation course. It is a small sample, slightly more than Brown (1998) and Read and Hayes (2003) who conducted pre- and post-testing with fourteen and seventeen test-preparers respectively.

In order to achieve a comparable performance assessment across both institutes, all students were tested using the same format and using material from the 'Official IELTS Practice Materials' (IELTS, 2009) which contains sample questions for all four components and comes with a CD for listening practice. The reason for selecting testing material from the Official IELTS Practice Materials (IELTS, 2009) was to ensure it was relevant for the students. Had I used a different test, it would have been difficult to convince the students to take it and participate in the study. I used an updated version of IELTS practice material from March 2009. It was ensured that the pre- and post-testing materials met the validity and reliability criteria in various ways. First of all it was confirmed that the book was not available at any of the bookshops in Pakistan and that the British Council did not provide this material to any of the institutes in Pakistan. Students in Pakistan, therefore, did not have access to this book, so they would not have seen this practice material before. The only other option available for testing was the 'Cambridge IELTS' practice material, but this book is readily available in many Pakistan bookshops, so it would not be appropriate for my study. I also approached the British Council to use their past versions of the tests which are no longer in use, but unfortunately the material is highly confidential and restricted for the use only of those funded by Cambridge ESOL.

The practice material in the Official IELTS Practice Materials (2009) involves tasks that accurately represent the content and difficulty of the official IELTS tasks, so there is no doubt about the selection of material for pre- and post-

testing. The testing material is a publication from Cambridge ESOL, who specialise in producing and publishing the practice material for international examinations like IELTS, which further ensured the validity of the pre- and post-testing material used in my study. According to Cohen et al. (2007), such tests are objective, standardised, piloted and refined, and thus reliable and valid to be used for research purposes.

Most of the students attended the preparation classes at the two centres straight from their office or university and they left the institute soon after finishing, so they were not able to take the full test. Students were not able to take the test at the weekends either, so the best way was to cut down the actual test length. This reduced the total time of the test by half, so all the participants could easily take it before or after class. Everyone arrived punctually to take the test. I used the same testing material at both the institutes for the pre- and post-tests. The questions for each component used in the pre-test were different from the post-test and both the institutes received the same pattern and material. The majority of students at both the institutes were taking the 'Academic' module of IELTS, therefore the material for all the students was chosen from the 'Academic' module (the Official IELTS Practice Materials, 2009 contains practice material for both the Academic and General Training modules of IELTS). Each of the pre- and post-tests was conducted using two listening sections, one reading passage and one writing task (task 2 of the real test). The participants in my study took the test on the same day at both the Berlitz and PACC institutes. Below I will discuss the pre- and post-test materials used in the study in detail.

#### **4.7.3.1. Pre- and post-testing material**

As discussed above, the pre- and post-test tasks were shortened to make it convenient for everyone to take the test, so each test took 1 hour 20 minutes. In the pre-test, the listening part contained sections 2 and 3 and in the post-test, sections 1 and 4 from the book selected. Students were given 15 minutes to complete the listening task. In the listening component, there are four sections, 40 questions in total, but I tested

students on two sections only, so there were 20 questions in the listening part of the test. The reading section in the pre-test consisted of reading passage number 2 from the Official IELTS Practice Materials, entitled 'Revolutions in Mapping'. In the post-test, students received reading passage number 1 entitled 'Spider silk cuts weight of bridges'. Students were given 20 minutes to complete the reading task. Both the passages contained 13 questions each (multiple choice, gap filling, and true or false). For the writing task, students were tested on the 'essay question' which is task 2 of IELTS. All the students were given the same topic for the writing part of the test and were given 40 minutes to complete this task. The pre-test essay question differed from the post-test essay question. The speaking test was conducted the next day because of time limitations.

The tutor at Berlitz did not permit me to conduct the pre-test (three components of reading, writing and listening) of my study during class, so the test had to be arranged before the class began. The PACC tutor on the other hand was willing to conduct the pre-test during class, so half of the class time was taken up conducting the test and students were tested on three sections (listening, reading and writing). The 'speaking' component of the real IELTS test has three parts. For this study, I tested students on the second part alone in which a cue card on a given topic is given to the student and they are required to speak on that topic for between one and two minutes. The speaking test for the pre-test was conducted with the help of the tutors at the two centres. At Berlitz, speaking practice began in the first week of the session. The tutor and the students gave consent to recording their speaking section during the class practice in the first week. Every student was given a different topic by the tutor; randomly chosen from her set of cue cards. During the first speaking practice, the students were recorded and it was used for my speaking pre-test. In the same way, the PACC tutor also started the speaking practice on the first week and gave cue cards to all his students who were recorded for the pre-test of the study. The tutor at PACC was enthusiastic about his students sitting the test to check their proficiency level at the beginning of the course. The pre-test (consisting of three sections: listening, reading and writing) was therefore conducted on day one of the first week and the pre-test speaking on the second day of the first week at both



institutes.

The post-test at Berlitz was conducted during class by the tutor in the last week of the session, as the tutor felt it would give extra practice for the students before they finished the course. As I recorded students' speaking during class practice for the pre-test, similarly to the post-test, the tutor conducted the speaking test on the same day and I recorded every student for the speaking post-test. This way the complete post-test (all four sections) was conducted on the same day. At PACC, the tutor was again willing to conduct the post-test during class time. The test was conducted on the second last day of the course because the PACC tutor used my post-test as a mock test to diagnose the students' level of improvement. The speaking topics were provided by the tutor on the same day and every participant was recorded in the class. The complete post-test was conducted in one day at PACC. The post-test was also conducted on the same day at both institutes and the same test was used at both (the complete pre- and post-test of three skills, except speaking, is attached as appendix 6). The speaking topics for the pre- and post-tests are not included in the appendices because every student received a different topic.

#### **4.7.3.2. Marking the pre- and post-testing material**

To analyse the pre- and post-testing data, I started marking with the listening and reading parts of the test as all the answers were given at the end of the Official IELTS Practice Materials (2009). Each question of the reading and listening parts is worth one mark, so the listening section of the test used in this study is worth 20 marks in total. Similarly, there is one mark for each correct answer of the reading section of IELTS. The reading passage in the pre- and post-test contained 13 questions each, so there was a total raw score of 13. Each correct answer was assigned one mark, so the students were given marks from a total of 20 in the listening and 13 in the reading section. The number of questions was similar in the pre- and post-test, so a similar pattern was maintained throughout both stages of the test.

To mark the speaking and writing parts of the test, I sought an examiner

who had official accreditation to mark IELTS tests. On approaching the British Council and Cambridge ESOL it was made clear that official examiners are not allowed to take on any IELTS-related work outside of actual testing, and the identities of examiners are never revealed. The main purpose of this study is to obtain an objective measure of IELTS performance, so I employed a postgraduate student with over two years' experience of preparing students for IELTS privately. The examiner teaches an English language course at two colleges in Edinburgh (the names of the colleges will remain confidential, at the request of the examiner). She is a native speaker of English and does not have contact with anyone from my research context.

The examiner had plenty of experience preparing students by marking and grading their work according to IELTS criteria, despite not having the 'official training'. She has taught IELTS classes focussing on oral and written skills to small groups and individuals over the last two years (about 12 people in total, studying for an average of one month). She has also taught more general exam classes using IELTS writing assessments to a larger number of students (about 70 in total). She also participated in a study about native and non native-speaking markers, which involved using the IELTS rating scale (for 98 papers and oral interviews). With a good experience of teaching and grading students on IELTS criteria, she was thought to be a suitable person to mark the speaking and writing sub-tests of the study. The transparency of marking the two sub-tests (writing and speaking) further ensures the reliability of my results as they were marked by a native English speaker with over two years experience of preparing students for IELTS.

All the participants' pre- and post-essays and speaking tests were marked according to IELTS criteria and the participants were assigned a band score. All the essays were handwritten by the students and then typed for the examiner and given a code name so they would be marked anonymously and fairly. The interviews were also transcribed and handed to the examiner to mark and comment on. The examiner did not see the transcriptions before listening to the recorded interviews of the participants. After going through the interviews a couple of times, the examiner then put down her comments on the transcriptions and assigned a band score. All the

pre- and post-tests were actually randomised, so that the examiner could assess them without knowing which stage of the process any one test belonged to. There were 20 participants in my study from both institutes, so there was a total of 40 transcripts of the ‘writing’ section, and 40 ‘interviews’, including both the pre- and post-tests. There are four main criteria for assessing the writing component of IELTS mentioned in Official IELTS Practice Materials (2009) and the ‘IELTS Scores Explained’ DVD (IELTS, 2009). These are 1) Task response 2) Coherence and Cohesion 3) Lexical Resource and 4) Grammatical Range and Accuracy. The examiner marked the writing sections of the participants based on above criteria and assigned a particular band score. The ‘speaking’ component of IELTS is assessed using the following four criteria: 1) Fluency and Coherence 2) Lexical Resource 3) Grammatical Range and Accuracy and 4) Pronunciation. The examiner marked the speaking sections according to these four main criteria and assigned a particular band score. All the writing and speaking transcripts were given comments by the examiner, also based on these criteria.

In order to establish whether there was any significant improvement for each cohort in each module, I used the ‘Wilcoxon signed-rank test’ to compare the scores in the two conditions (pre- and post), as the small sample size required a non-parametric test (Cohen et al., 2007). I did not attempt to conduct pre- and post-testing in the second phase of data collection because the results from the first phase were not conclusive, and neither were the other pre- and post-tests mentioned in Chapter 3. I determined that it was more important to learn about students’ motivations for taking IELTS, their educational background, and the role that the test has played in their lives subsequently which I explored further through questionnaire surveys in the second phase of my study.

#### **4.7.4. Informal conversational interviews with Berlitz and PACC students**

I conducted informal conversational interviews with all twenty IELTS preparation students at Berlitz and PACC during the last week of the IELTS preparation. After

conducting the classroom observations, I wanted to find out the opinions or feelings of the students regarding their preparation course, which could help to clarify or modify my own interpretations. I employed informal conversational interviews to further reduce any subjectivity in my research (Gray, 2009).

The interview guide for the students was prepared using Kvale's (2007) question types as discussed earlier (see section 4.7.2). I started the interview with a short briefing session where I told the respondents about the purpose of my interview. The respondents were then informed about their anonymity and their right to withdraw from the interview at any point (the consent form was already signed when they completed the background information sheet). Next, I told them generally about the questions to be covered, and asked their permission to record the interview. I assured them that the recordings would only be handled by me and that they would to be transcribed and then deleted. They were given the opportunity to refuse recording, or to withdraw from the interview. All of the respondents gave their approval for using a recorder. Throughout the interview, I also used a combination of probes to obtain more information from the respondent, for instance asking the respondent to further explain, or clarify, a previous utterance (Ary et al., 2006), and pauses of at least 5 seconds, to give the respondent space to keep talking, or to think about the question posed (ibid, 2006). After the interviews I spent some time taking down notes about my immediate thoughts about the interview.

The students were invited to discuss their overall impression of the preparation course, such as the duration of the course, teaching methods, materials used in the classroom, the environment of the institute, fee structure, their satisfaction with the course, and their expectations about their IELTS results (see appendix 7). An informal conversational interview scheme was designed to achieve a balance between the freedom that the participants required to voice their opinions and my own research pursuits (Gray, 2009). Conducting questionnaires with test-preparers at the end of the preparation course, like Read and Hayes (2003), for the same purpose could be risky as most of the students are in hurry when the course ends and it becomes impossible to get questionnaire responses at this stage. In this particular context, therefore, conducting interviews was a more convenient option.

The interviews enabled me to gain insight into the participants' understanding of their own experience and the teaching/learning process. At the end of the interview, I also invited the participants to raise any issues related to their IELTS preparation course. Each participant was interviewed separately in an empty classroom, or a café in the language centre for about 5-7 minutes. The issues discussed with students in the interview have been explored in detail using questionnaires in the second phase of data collection.

In the first phase of my study, the chosen sample of institutes (N=20) for face-to-face surveys are representative of a larger group of institutes (local and international) which are prevalent in cities like Karachi and Hyderabad. An in-depth investigation in two centres (Berlitz and PACC) through classroom observations provided information about the materials and methods used in their IELTS preparation classes and the washback of IELTS on teaching materials and methods. However, data from only two institutes, with a small sample of test-preparers (N=20), limits the ability to generalise the results to a wider population. 'Generalisability' requires data on large populations (Saunders et al., 2007:598), therefore in the second phase of my study, I decided to collect quantitative data, through the use of questionnaires, with three groups of stakeholders, i.e. IELTS test-preparers, IELTS test-takers and IELTS preparation teachers (each will be discussed separately in the subsequent sections below) to further explore the washback and impact of IELTS in Pakistan and to generalise the results. In the following section, I will discuss the instruments used to collect data in the second phase of my study (questionnaires followed by interviews and a focus group).

#### **4.8. Questionnaire for IELTS test-preparers**

The IELTS test-preparers in my sample were preparing for the test at different private English language centres in Karachi and Hyderabad. In this study, test-preparers are defined as candidates attending IELTS preparation institutes for a specific period of time, who have never taken the test before. They intend to take the test after completion of the IELTS preparation course. These kinds of

questionnaires in impact studies are advantageous as they typically determine the profile of the test-preparers (i.e. age, gender, educational background), assess the impact of IELTS on candidates preparing to take the test, and determine perceptions of IELTS fairness, pressures, and likes and dislikes. According to Green (2007), questionnaire surveys are the most effective means of accessing the views of participants from a potentially large number of subjects (which is the case in the current study) or when the population is widely distributed. These have the further administrative advantage that the answers to a questionnaire are often comparatively straightforward to analyse (Cohen et al., 2007; Gillham, 2005).

It is often difficult to construct questionnaires that are valid, reliable and objective; therefore I have adapted the questionnaires used and validated by Hawkey (2006) which contain appropriate questions to be used in an impact study like this where the researcher is interested to know about IELTS preparers' background, their motivations in preparing for the test and their test preparation approaches. Hawkey's (2006) questionnaires contain mixed types of questionnaire items, i.e. classification questions, open questions, closed questions, rank ordering, rating scales, multiple choice questions, dichotomous questions, matrix questions, and Likert scale questions.

I contacted 13 institutes in Hyderabad and Karachi to distribute the test-preparer questionnaires, through stratified random sampling. Again I divided the centres into local and international private institutes. I further sub-divided the local institutes according to the duration of their courses, their fees and the standard of the institute. I ended up including 10 centres in total (seven in Hyderabad and three in Karachi); the three other centres did not take part as they were not running IELTS preparation courses at that particular time. This way I was able to achieve a representative sample of IELTS test-preparers studying at various local institutes in Pakistan. In comparison, Moore et al. (2012) did not have a representative sample of IELTS test-preparers as they were all drawn from single centre (i.e. Australian Centre of Education Cambodia). All the chosen centres' IELTS preparation courses were offered for eight weeks (40 hours) and almost all were towards the end of the course during the period of this study (seven centres were at the end of week six,

two were in week seven and one was in week eight). Out of the 10 centres, only one was an internationally owned institute. Eight were local institutes with branches and one was a stand-alone institute (details of these different types of institutes are discussed in chapter 5). This also stands in contrast with studies using questionnaires such as Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) where the centres either belonged to tertiary institutions or IDP Education Australia. I was able to get my required sample of 200 test-preparers from the 10 centres as some of them were running two or three different IELTS courses at the same time, in their various branches. I had a bigger sample of test-preparers compared to other country specific studies such as Moore et al. (2012). After gaining access to the ten centres to collect the quantitative data for the study, I invited the test-preparers to fill out the questionnaire. The best way to obtain the desired sample was through using 'cluster sampling'. According to Cohen et al. (2007), in cluster sampling, the researcher can select a specific number of schools and test all the students in those selected schools. I administered the questionnaires at all the institutes myself with the help of the tutors. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that the presence of the researcher is helpful in that it enables any queries or uncertainties to be addressed immediately with the questionnaire designer. It also ensures a good response rate. I gained access to the classes to get the questionnaires filled out during the class time. Students on average took 35-40 minutes to complete the questionnaire. They asked for clarification if they had any problems.

I discussed in Chapter 3 that Moore et al. (2012) also used the questionnaire from Hawkey (2006) but they used different sections to prepare two separate questionnaires: one for the test-taker group and one for the test-preparer group. Following Moore et al. (2012), I also used separate questionnaires for test-takers and test-preparers. The only difference between the questionnaires used in this study and Moore et al. (2012) is that their study collected data which also happened to overlap. They received a total of 208 test-taker questionnaires, including 106 respondents who only sat the IELTS exam without taking an IELTS preparation course, and 102 test-preparers who also enrolled in a test preparation course, thus filling out both the test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires. The current study, unlike Moore et al.

(2012) recruited separate subjects for test-takers and test-preparers. I recruited 200 test-preparers and 100 test-takers to fill out the questionnaires for this study (questionnaires with IELTS test-takers will be discussed in the following section). I was mainly interested to recruit people from two different ends: those who were still preparing to take the exam and those who had already taken it. I was not interested in including those test-takers who had gone abroad after taking IELTS because their aim in taking the test was clear and they had achieved it. I mainly wanted to know about those who had taken IELTS and had never gone abroad. In comparison, studies like Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) conducted questionnaires with IELTS test-takers to know about their perceptions of test fairness, likes and dislikes, pressures, test difficulty and test performance levels. As I discussed in my introduction (section 1.4), a number of students prepare in institutes to take the IELTS exam but it is likely that there are larger numbers of students taking the exam than there are opportunities to go abroad. This was my main aim for including the test-takers in this study to gain insights into their perceptions regarding the socio-economic purposes of IELTS.

The IELTS test-preparer questionnaire contains 31 questions in total divided into two parts (see appendix 8 for the consent form and the questionnaire). Part one of the questionnaire gathered information about the English language background of IELTS test-preparers. The second part of the questionnaire includes information about their IELTS preparation (e.g. the institute used for preparation, the cost of preparation and taking the exam, test preparation activities and their overall views of their preparation course). I adapted a section on ‘learning, study and test-taking approaches’ which is a part 2 in Hawkey’s questionnaire because most of the items in the section do not fit the context of the present study (i.e. items such as students learning grammar from their own mistakes, improving their ability in English by spending time with native speakers, trying to improve speaking in English by repeating what native speakers say) and there was too great a number of items. These types of questions are suitable for studies such as Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) where the test-preparers have prepared for the test with the native or near native teachers. Therefore, in the second part of my questionnaire I included some



Likert scale questions, asking students about their practising strategies in IELTS at home. The questionnaire also did not include information on their IELTS status as all the participants in the study were at the test-preparation stage and they had not taken the test before; furthermore there are no questions seeking information on the regional backgrounds or countries of origin of candidates.

#### **4.8.1. Piloting and the IELTS test-preparer questionnaire**

I piloted the test-preparer questionnaire with nine students before its use in the study to check the clarity of questionnaire items and amend problematic questions. Piloting also increases the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2007). The participants were recruited from two different centres in Hyderabad at the beginning of June 2013. After gaining their consent, the pilot was conducted at the centres with their students. The respondents were asked questions about the clarity of questions and their instructions, any difficulty in understanding the language, and the length of questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2007). Based on the results of this pilot process, minimal changes were made to the questionnaire, mainly changes in vocabulary to remove unfamiliar terms such as ‘kindergarten’ and ‘sitcom’ and excluding certain options from questions related to reason(s) behind taking the IELTS exam. There was also the addition of an open-ended item so that students could voice anything else regarding their IELTS preparation course.

The questionnaires conducted in the second phase of the study with three groups of stakeholders were all adapted from Hawkey (2006). Therefore, similar procedures were adopted to analysing the questionnaires to Hawkey’s (2006) and Moore et al.’s (2012). All the data gathered from the questionnaires (except open-ended items) was entered on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for each of the stakeholders involved in the study. ‘Descriptive statistics’ were collected for all the three types of questionnaires (test-takers and test preparation teachers’ questionnaires, which were analysed in the same manner as the test-preparer questionnaires are discussed below), and these are presented in tabular form in chapter 6 (Cohen et al., 2007). The open-ended questions were analysed manually. The qualitative data was 150

organised in tables according to the questions. I then identified the smaller units of meaning in the data (a process called ‘unitizing the data’). Unitizing is done by breaking sentences into single concept phrases, which later serves as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). My respondents’ answers to the open-ended questions were, on average, one to two sentences. Each answer was broken down into separate statements containing one idea. The categories that emerged from the data were counted using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

#### **4.9. Questionnaire for IELTS test-takers**

During the first phase of my data collection, which included surveys of various centres and a detailed study of two centres, I found some emerging trends regarding the local uses of IELTS in Pakistan. Thus, I conducted a larger questionnaire-based survey of IELTS test-takers in Pakistan in the second phase of my study. Similar to Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012), the test-taker questionnaire in this study aims to look at the profile of test-takers, the impact of IELTS on those who have already taken the test, their perceptions of IELTS fairness, pressures, likes and dislikes. In addition, the questionnaire aims to find out how test-takers use their IELTS certificate when they do not manage to go abroad, about their perceptions of the local uses of IELTS and if there are any socio-economic benefits associated with the IELTS certificate in Pakistan. These areas were not investigated by any of the impact studies conducted around the world. I recruited 100 IELTS test-takers living and working in various organisations in Pakistan, who took the IELTS test but never went abroad.

Hawkey (2006) uses the same questionnaire for test-preparers and test-takers with the inclusion of a separate section (i.e. section 4) to be completed only by those who have taken the IELTS test. But, as I mentioned in my previous section, I separated the questionnaires for IELTS test-takers and test-preparers (following Moore et al., 2012). The questionnaire completed by the IELTS test-takers contains 38 items in total divided into four parts. Part one of the questionnaire gathered

information about the English language background of the IELTS test-takers. Part two sought information about the employment of these test-takers. This information helped to determine whether or not IELTS was required for getting their job and/or the English language requirements for getting their jobs. The data gathered through these questionnaires will be triangulated with the interviews conducted with local employers (see later in this chapter). This part of the questionnaire is an addition and was not used by Hawkey (2006) or Moore et al. (2012). It was added, as the present study is interested in finding out about the local uses of IELTS. I mentioned in my previous chapter that Moore et al. (2012) considered employers as local users of IELTS but they did not include any questions regarding the requirement of IELTS for jobs in their test-takers' questionnaire. Part three of my questionnaire sought information about the IELTS test (e.g. motivation in taking the test, achieved band scores, difficulties, the students' anxiety, likes and dislikes about the test and the cost of taking the exam). The final part of the questionnaire asked about test-takers' IELTS preparation (e.g. whether or not they attended an institute for IELTS preparation, and their overall views about their preparation course; see appendix 9 for the test-taker questionnaire and the consent form).

I recruited participants to fill out this questionnaire through a 'snowball sampling' strategy (Gray, 2009:153). I looked for people who were in full-time employment, had taken the IELTS test and never went abroad for education and/or employment. It was difficult to recruit participants who had already taken the test and had never left the country. Snowball sampling (also called chain referral) has been found quite useful where respondents are difficult to identify and are best located through referral networks. I invited some participants to fill in the questionnaire through visiting organisations such as banks, hospitals, restaurants, mobile and landline providers, and hotels. Candidates from these places then suggested other likely candidates, and through this I was able to achieve the desired sample. I personally met with all participants and handed them a questionnaire along with a consent form. Some of the participants filled out the questionnaires during their tea break, while others took their questionnaires home to complete and sent me a text message when they were ready for collection. I was mostly based in

Hyderabad during the second phase of data collection, so some of the participants in Karachi sent me their completed questionnaires by post.

#### **4.9.1. Piloting the IELTS test-taker questionnaire**

The test-taker questionnaire was first piloted with a few respondents before its use in the study. I recruited four respondents (three from a bank, and one from a mobile company) to complete the questionnaire and to indicate any questions that might be unclear or confusing. After completing the questionnaire, I interviewed each respondent individually regarding any recommended changes. Based on the results of this piloting process, minimal changes were made to the questionnaire which mainly included modifying the vocabulary.

#### **4.10. Questionnaire for IELTS preparation course teachers**

IELTS test preparation teachers are also important stakeholders as their work essentially involves ‘teaching to a test’, with the very clear goal of maximising students’ scores in the IELTS exam (Moore et al., 2012:14). The teachers preparing students to take the IELTS exam are in a position to shed light on how IELTS impacts on the lives of both teachers and students and they will also have some insights into the challenges Pakistani students face in preparing for the IELTS test; students’ motivations in taking the test; and teachers’ own perceptions about students’ progress; washback of the IELTS test on their teaching content and methods; and their overall impression of IELTS. Making further use of Hawkey’s questionnaires, I adapted a teacher questionnaire to survey IELTS course preparation teachers at the same ten preparation centres where I conducted my test-preparer questionnaires. Similar to IELTS test-preparers, I was able to achieve a representative sample of IELTS teachers to fill out the questionnaires for this study as they were recruited from a range of local institutes in Pakistan. It was helpful that all the teachers from those centres agreed to take part. I approached 10 IELTS preparation teachers, one

from each centre, to fill out the questionnaires. The chosen participating teachers signed a consent form before filling them out. Six out of ten teachers asked me to leave the questionnaires with them to fill out during their free time and contacted me to collect them once they were ready. Four other teachers filled out the questionnaires during my presence at the centre while I was administering test-preparer questionnaires.

The IELTS preparation teacher questionnaire contains 60 questions in total, divided into four parts (see appendix 10 for the consent form and the questionnaire). Part one of the questionnaire gathered information about the background of teachers. The second part of the questionnaire collected information about their students, e.g., the students' ages, their level of education, and their intended module of IELTS. This aimed to find out the experience of teachers in preparing students of different backgrounds. Part three consisted of questions about teachers' perceptions of the IELTS test. The final part of the questionnaire asked about their IELTS preparation classes (e.g. the size of classroom, common teaching materials used, and methods employed). This section specifically sought information on the washback of IELTS on teaching materials and methods employed in the classrooms. Similar to Hawkey (2006), the present study aimed to find out about the profiles of IELTS preparation teachers, their test preparation methods and materials, and the washback of the IELTS test on them, therefore the majority of the questions were adopted from Hawkey (2006), only a few questions were slightly edited or excluded. The teacher questionnaire was piloted with two teachers working at different institutes in Hyderabad, with teaching experience of over 10 years who were preparing students for IELTS. Only slight adjustments were suggested where I excluded some questions or slightly adjusted them according to the present context of the study.

#### **4.11. Semi-structured interviews with employers**

After conducting questionnaires with the test-takers, which involved questions about whether IELTS is required for any jobs in Pakistan, I went on to investigate this

further with local employers. In July 2013, I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with five different employers in Karachi and Hyderabad. The interviews aimed to explore their English language requirements and to find out whether they ever require the IELTS certificate for any of their corporate posts. Rather than conducting structured interviews, I planned to carry out semi-structured interviews in order to facilitate each interviewee providing the most useful information for this study (Gray, 2009). These interviews were undertaken to gain information about the recruitment process of companies in Pakistan who normally recruit people without involving any agencies. English language is seen to be a 'must have' skill in many job advertisements in the newspapers, but it is through interviewing local employers that their actual English language requirements can be established.

I contacted employers from the public as well as the private sector to share information regarding their recruitment procedure. Inviting employers for interviews for the study was a challenge, as it involved a lot of effort to gain their confidence to share the information and convince them to participate. I had to therefore rely on 'volunteer sampling' strategy. I approached friends working in different kinds of organisations to gain access to, or get appointments with, their employers. Some of them agreed to participate as they were interested in the research, while some others wanted to help me and hence volunteered to be interviewed. In total, I contacted eight different companies to take part in my study but only five of them agreed as the rest were not prepared to share any information. The participating employers signed the consent form and a time was then scheduled with them for an interview (see appendix 11 for the consent).

I developed an interview guide by adapting Moore et al.'s (2012) interview questions and asked them in more detail about their overall recruitment procedure, their English language requirements, their ways of assessing employees' English skills, whether they required IELTS, their knowledge about the IELTS, backgrounds of their employees, their views on the IELTS preparation industry and their views on socio-economic benefits associated with getting the IELTS certificate in Pakistan (see interview questions in appendix 12). All the interviews were conducted in English, were audio-recorded and lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. The interviews

were conducted at the employers' offices at times which suited them. The business activities of the participant employers are summarised in table 4.5 below. Although it was a small sample it can be noticed that a good representation was achieved of the different types of employer requiring English proficiency amongst their key employees and the main aim was to triangulate this with test-taker questionnaire data.

S.No	Business type	Location	Interviewee	Gender
1	Bank	Hyderabad	Manager	M
2	Hotel	Hyderabad	Manager	M
3	Government hospital	Hyderabad	Doctor	F
4	Mobile phone provider (Mobilink)	Karachi	Administration officer	M
5	Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL)	Hyderabad	Director	F

Table 4.5 Information about participating employers

#### **4.12. Semi-structured interviews with parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers**

In the present context of Pakistan, similar to Cambodia, parents play a very important role in guiding their children towards obtaining the best education opportunities for their future prospects. Many parents in Pakistan encourage their children to go abroad for better quality education and support them financially in preparing for and taking the IELTS test (if they are able to do so). The children, upon completion of their education, provide security to aging parents either by returning to the country or by settling abroad. Thus, parents have an important stake in their children's success in undertaking the IELTS exam.

In the second phase of my study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with

parents of IELTS test-takers and test-preparers to test my assumption that parents are exclusively focused/interested in sending their children abroad and to assess the impact of IELTS on them. In contrast to Moore et al. (2012), I conducted interviews rather than focus groups because parents would not feel comfortable in a group discussion and also it can be very difficult to get everyone to attend a focus group in the one place at the same time. Furthermore, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, Moore et al.'s (2012) parents did not address each other and therefore their focus group ended up as a group interview, so it was considered better for this study to conduct individual interviews rather than have a focus group discussion.

In order to find parents of IELTS test-preparers/test-takers, I had to rely on the 'volunteer sampling' method. In this method, samples could be included from personal friends, or friends of friends. I contacted the parents of friends who have taken the test or are preparing to take the test. The parents volunteered to take part in my study, as they wanted to help me with it. I interviewed parents either at their homes or at my home depending on what was most feasible. Parents were chosen according to the following main criteria: parents who had child/children above 16 years of age; parents who had some knowledge about IELTS; those whose child/children had taken the IELTS test or were preparing to take the exam; parents who were educated (at least to graduate level). All the participating parents belonged to the middle-income group. As I included only those parents who were educated, I found the participants to also be well-qualified.

Moore et al.'s (2012) country specific impact study invited five parents/guardians, considering this to be a reasonable number of participants; I also included five parents in my study (four fathers and one mother). Before conducting the interview, I briefly introduced the topic and purpose of my research, and asked them to sign a consent form which included all the guidelines regarding confidentiality, anonymity and their rights to withdraw at any point (see appendix 13). The interview questions were adapted from Moore et al.'s (2012) focus group discussion of parents. They mainly asked their participants about the number of times their children had taken the IELTS exam, what they themselves knew about the test, if they perceived IELTS to be a burden, and what impact they thought it had, in



Cambodia. As well as including of all these questions asked by Moore et al. (2012), I asked some additional questions of the participants regarding their views on the cost of preparing and taking the IELTS exam; the benefits their children can get after taking the exam; the impact of IELTS on their finances; and whether or not they encourage their children to go abroad (see appendix 14 for full list of questions). All the interviews were audio-recorded and they lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

#### **4.13. Focus group of IELTS test-preparers**

Another method of qualitative data collection in the second phase of the study was the use of focus groups. A focus group discussion is a unique method of qualitative research that involves discussing a specific set of issues with a pre-determined group of people. It is guided by a trained moderator who introduces each issue and facilitates the discussion in such a way that detailed information is gained on each issue. In the context of Cambodia, Moore et al. (2012) conducted one focus group with IELTS examiners which consisted of six participants and one focus group with the parents of IELTS test-takers in which three participants participated. The focus group with the IELTS examiners proved to be helpful as they offered various views about the impact of the IELTS test in Cambodia. The focus group with the parents was not successful, as it resulted in 'group interview' and lacked in in-depth discussion (Moore et al., 2012:53).

I carried out a mini focus group with IELTS test-preparers at one of the preparation centres in Hyderabad. Focus group discussion is generally considered to be more useful than individual interviews as people may be more chatty and forthcoming in a group of their peers. Thus the focus groups yield high quality data through group interaction. According to Hennink (2007) participants usually find the focus group environment comfortable and enjoyable, which impacts their contribution to the discussion. There were certain advantages of conducting a focus group for this study. The greatest advantage of this method comes from the group nature of the data collection. At a practical level, one-hour focus group discussion can generate a large volume of data and identify a greater variety of views, opinions

and experiences than the same time spent in individual interviews. Morgan (1998:12 cited in Flick 2009:203) states that ‘The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’.

The interactive nature of a group discussion also influences the quality of data collected. The group environment not only encourages the participants to express their opinions but it also gives them an opportunity to listen, formulate their ideas, react to the comments of others in the group which may lead to reflection, refinement or justification of the issues raised, thus providing a researcher with a deeper insight into the issues and context in which these are discussed. Patton (1990:335–6) states on this issue that focus group discussions can be a ‘highly efficient qualitative data-collection technique [which provides] some quality checks on data collection in that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views’. This type of social moderation of the discussion is not evident in individual interviews. For this study, a focus group therefore, provided an opportunity to understand the views of some of the IELTS test-preparers on various issues who completed the questionnaires for the second phase of the study.

The focus group discussion requires a skilled and experienced moderator. The moderator needs to facilitate a discussion that generates useful, detailed and varied responses on the research issues (Patton, 1990). In addition, the moderator needs to foster a comfortable and permissive environment in the group that will elicit open responses. In the present context of the study, hiring a skilled external moderator to conduct effective group discussion for this study was not possible due to the lack of resources for research in Pakistan. Furthermore, it was difficult to identify those interested to help with this project and provide them with training to conduct a focus group due to shortage of time. Therefore, I as a researcher also acted as a facilitator for this focus group discussion.

Some authors consider a size of 5-10 participants to be the best size of focus group, while others consider it to be between 4-12 (Cohen et al., 2007). Hennink (2007) suggests that typically a focus group involves between six and ten

participants. According to Krueger and Casey (2008), the traditional recommended size of the focus group is 10 to 12 people. For non-commercial topics, small focus groups or mini-focus groups, with four to six participants are becoming increasingly popular because smaller groups are easier to recruit and host and are more comfortable for participants. In general, the size of the group discussion needs to be 'small enough for everyone to have an opportunity to share insights' (Krueger and Casey, 2008:10). Smaller groups are useful to gain more in-depth insights. They also provide more time for each participant to contribute to the discussion, so are suitable when the purpose of the research is to identify detailed experiences from a smaller pool of participants. Morgan (1996) argues that small groups may be desirable with certain types of research topics or certain types of participants. An important factor in determining group size is the desired level of detail required from participants in order to effectively answer the research questions. According to Morgan and Scannell (1998), small focus group discussions are appropriate if the research purpose is to identify detailed experiences, when high involvement is anticipated from each participant and when the participants are few in number.

The topic guide for the focus group was developed from the test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires. Conducting two or more focus groups would have provided more data but due to time constraints and recruitment problems (particularly non-arrival of participants), I was only able to conduct one. Questions to elicit qualitative data were embedded in the main questionnaire surveys, therefore from the focus group I was able to gain further insights into some of the questions which had already been included in the test-preparers and test-taker questionnaires. The focus group questions were based on Krueger and Casey's (2008) five categories of questions: opening question, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and ending questions. I wanted to invite the test-preparers to share their views on the IELTS test (their reasons for taking the IELTS test, the most difficult module of the test, anxiety caused by the test, test preparation techniques); the IELTS preparation industry (reasons behind the growth of IELTS preparation courses, the fee structure and duration of these courses); usefulness of attending IELTS preparation classes (activities in the classes, materials and methods used by the tutor,

their perceptions on their progress); and their overall satisfaction with the IELTS preparation course. The prompts were designed according to these broad categories, which were drawn from IELTS test-preparers and test-takers questionnaires (see appendix 15 for full list of questions). The focus group proved to be useful in gaining a better understanding of the students' responses to the questionnaire. It was also useful for obtaining information on those issues which students were reluctant to share in the questionnaires.

The composition of a focus group is characterised by homogeneity, so I included four test-preparers from one of the IELTS preparation centres (Silverman, 2011). The participants were selected from the questionnaire survey completed by 200 test-preparers. It was difficult to recruit students to participate in the planned focus group. Firstly, identifying those interested in participating and then arranging a mutually convenient time for the focus group to meet proved to be a challenge. The questionnaire filled in by every individual test-preparer also contained a section on background information (such as address, contact number and email). I invited two different centres to participate, but only one of them agreed to do so.

Before conducting the focus group, I sought the tutor's permission to conduct it at his institute before his class started. Afterwards I selected 10 students through simple random sampling and sent them text messages, explaining the purpose of my focus group and inviting them to participate. Non-arrival of participants is the greatest problem in focus groups, therefore I did over-recruitment to compensate for non-arrivals (Bloor et al., 2002). Out of 10 students, seven people agreed to attend the focus group discussion. A time was set before their IELTS class and this was found to be convenient for everyone attending. The focus group was conducted in their IELTS preparation centre. Out of seven agreed participants for the focus group, only four took part, two of them cancelled one hour before the scheduled time for the interview and one did not attend, without giving any further information. My focus group, therefore, included four test-preparers in total. The participants' IELTS preparation class was scheduled for 7:00 in the evening, so I invited them at 5:00 for the focus group discussion. All the participants arrived by 5:15, and I allowed them five minutes to chat so everyone would feel comfortable. The tutor allowed me to

conduct the focus group discussion in his office during his absence. When all my subjects were comfortable, I explained the nature of a focus group (something which none of the participants had ever previously participated in) with the key goal being to generate discussion amongst the participants, I defined my role as a moderator, told them the duration of the discussion, and finally requested them to switch off their mobile phones during recording. Afterwards, all the participants signed the consent form which confirmed their confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any point (see appendix 16). Due to time constraints I did not provide my participants with the topic guide to read and note down their responses. Rather I outlined the key areas of discussion and ensured that every participant was comfortable with these topics. The focus group discussion started at exactly 5:30 pm. All of the participants were comfortable speaking in English, so the discussion took place in English, was audio-recorded and lasted for about 1 hour 13 minutes. At the end of the focus group discussion, all the participants were given sweets as a token of appreciation for taking part in the study.

#### **4.13.1. Data Analysis of Interviews and Focus group**

The data collected through semi-structured interviews with IELTS preparation teachers (N=2), parents of IELTS test-preparers (N=5), local employers (N=5), informal conversational interviews with IELTS test-preparers (N=20) and focus group discussion with IELTS test-preparers (N=4) were all analysed using same procedure.

The entire process of analysis was conducted manually. In the first stage of data analysis, all the interview tape recordings and a focus group discussion conducted for the present study were fully transcribed by the researcher (see appendix 17 for a sample of transcription). All the interviews were conducted in English so there was no need to translate any data. Transcribing the group discussion is more time consuming compared to the individual interviews. I produced verbatim transcripts, which means transcribing everything rather than selected portions from the tape-recording. At the transcription stage, it is difficult to determine which

information is more or less relevant to the research questions, therefore the transcription should include everything that is said on the tape-recording (Silverman, 2011). In addition to speech, other oral communication was indicated on the transcript, for example pause, hesitation, laughter and interruption. These were however later edited to make the text readable in the reporting stage (Bloor et al., 2002).

In the next stage after transcription, I cleaned the data to ensure that there are no errors or inconsistencies, which can be done by reviewing the completed transcripts for accuracy and completeness (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is a useful way to become quickly familiar with the data (Hennink, 2007). From an ethical point of view, in this stage, a 'Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet' was created in which all my participants were assigned with a code such as S1, T1, E1 and P1 (where S stands for students, T for teachers, E for employers and P for parents, followed by a number, for anonymity). To facilitate analysis, I edited the transcripts a bit by deleting repetitive sentences and correcting some sentences which did not make any grammatical sense (Gillham, 2000).

I used 'Thematic Analysis' which is a strategy for categorising qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). I started analysing the data after reading each transcript two to three times to familiarise myself with the information contained within it. I then coded the important features of the interview transcripts manually (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding data can range from a single word to a full sentence, a paragraph or an entire page of text (Saldaña, 2009). Codes were created through both the 'data-driven coding' and 'concept-driven coding'. It is considered as a crucial step of analysis as it enables the researcher to organise and group similarly coded data into categories because they share some characteristic (Saldaña, 2009). When the major categories are compared with each other and consolidated in various ways, various themes are formed. Thus, a theme is an outcome of coding and categorising the data. I paid attention not only to issues related to the research questions, but also to others of interest which emerged. Similar codes were later collated into broader categories and then themes based on the research objectives and interview questions (Creswell and Plano Clark,

2007:131). The themes were developed from codes and categories using Saldaña's model (2009) shown in figure 4.2 below.

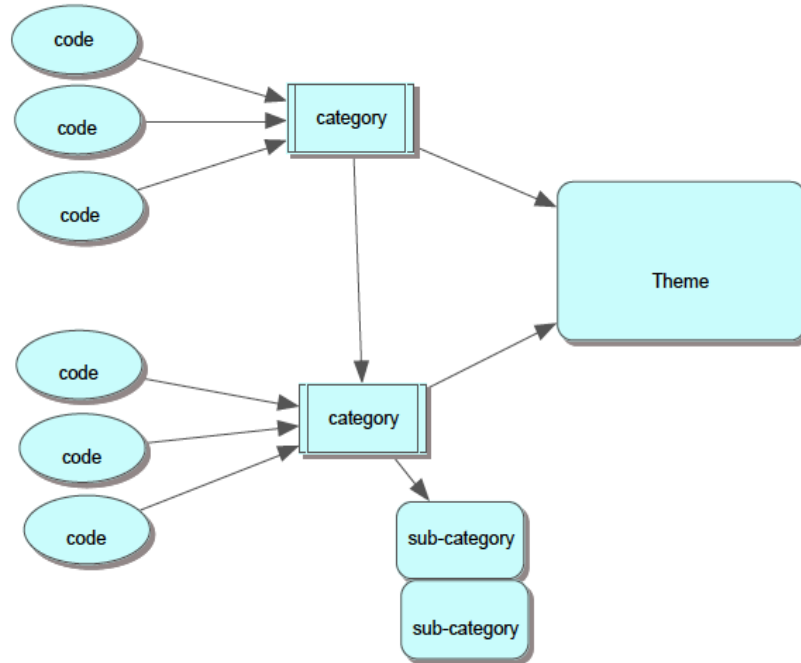


Figure 2.2 Development of themes from codes and categories (adapted from Saladana, 2009:12)

A number of similar themes were identified by data gathered from interviews and focus group discussion. The emerging themes from interviews and focus group discussion were then revised and refined by comparing a range of issues within and across different methods of data collection to identify what the discussion collectively reveals (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This way, one thematic framework was created consisting of main themes and sub-themes (see chapter 7, section 7.1 for the overall thematic framework and appendices 21 and 22).

#### **4.14. Research questions revisited**

The detailed discussion in this chapter indicates how different methods were employed in the two phases of the study to collect data, the number of participants, procedures and the issues of access. In the two tables below, I show how each of the data collection methods used in this study answers the research questions of the study and targets relevant stakeholders. Table 4.6 below focuses on phase 1 of the study and table 4.7 focuses on phase 2. It can be noticed that some of the research questions appear more than once in same phase or both phases of the study.



S.No	Data collection instruments	Stakeholders	Research questions
1.	Preliminary face-to-face survey of private institutes	IELTS test preparation providers	RQ1: What types of private English language institutes are available in Pakistan?
2.	Classroom observations	IELTS test preparation providers, IELTS test-preparers, IELTS preparation course teachers	RQ2: What are the differences between private local and international institutes? RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test? RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses? RQ11: What is the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing candidates to take the test?
3.	Pre- and post-testing	IELTS test-preparers	RQ3: How effective are private institutes in improving the IELTS performance of their students?
4.	Semi-structured interviews	IELTS test preparation teachers	RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test? RQ9: What are the profiles of the teachers preparing candidates to take the IELTS test? RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses? RQ11: What is the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing candidates to take the test?
5.	Informal conversational interviews	IELTS test-preparers	RQ5: What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses?

Table 4.6 Phase 1 research questions, data collection instruments, and stakeholders

S.No	Data collection instruments	Stakeholders	Research questions
1.	Questionnaires	IELTS test-preparers	RQ4: What are the profiles of the candidates preparing for the IELTS test? RQ5: What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses? RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test?
2.	Questionnaires	IELTS test-takers	RQ7: What are the profiles of the candidates who have already taken the IELTS test? RQ8: What is the impact of the IELTS test on test-takers? RQ13: Is the IELTS test required for any type of job within Pakistan?
3.	Questionnaires	IELTS test preparation teachers	RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test? RQ9: What are the profiles of the teachers preparing candidates to take the IELTS test? RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses? RQ11: What is the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing candidates to take the test?
4.	Semi-structured interviews	Parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers	RQ12: What is the impact of the IELTS test on parents of test-preparers and test-takers?
5.	Semi-structured interviews	Employers	RQ13: Is the IELTS test required for any type of job within Pakistan?
6.	Focus group	IELTS test-preparers	RQ5: What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses? RQ6: What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses which prepare candidates to take the test? RQ10: Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses?

Table 4.7 Phase 2 research questions, data collection instruments and stakeholders

## **4.15. Credibility of research findings**

Both qualitative and quantitative researchers need credibility of the research. Without rigour, research is worthless; hence, a great deal of attention is applied to reliability and validity in all research methods (Bryman, 2012). Examining the data for reliability and validity assesses both the objectivity and credibility of the research. Validity relates to the honesty and genuineness of the research data, while reliability relates to the reproducibility and stability of the data (Silverman, 2001).

### **4.15.1. Validity**

According to Kvale (2007), validity refers in ordinary language to the truth, the correctness and the strength of a statement. The validity of the study can be gauged through ‘triangulation’ and ‘respondent validation’. Triangulation is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings (Golafshani, 2003; Denzin, 2012; Patton, 2002). It is also a procedural strategy which can help to enhance confidence in the findings by the use of more than one approach to the investigation (Bryman, 2004). Employing a two-phase study using different tools involves using the approaches of both ‘methodological triangulation’ and ‘data triangulation’. In mixed-methods triangulation, the quantitative and qualitative methods are used in a complementary fashion to answer different questions and present well-integrated picture of the situation (Flick, 2009).

In order to further ensure the validity of my data and findings, I carried out ‘respondent validation’ (Gibbs, 2007:94) (also called pragmatic validation, member validation and participant verification) within a few weeks of conducting interviews and focus group by going through 2-3 of my interview transcripts with IELTS test-preparers, teachers, employers and parents who were participants in my study (Bryman, 2012). I sent my transcripts to these participants to get their feedback. Three test-prepares, two employers, one teacher and one parent responded confirming that the transcripts were correct. I was ready to make modifications if the members did not corroborate any of my transcripts.

Apart from triangulation and respondent validation, transferability is another key criteria for assessing the validity of the qualitative study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is therefore crucial for a researcher to thoroughly describe the research context, research situation and methods, so the reader can determine whether it is similar to their own (Gray, 2009). I tried to capture adequate detail of the classroom setting, the participating teachers and students, the materials used and the teaching methods employed in the classroom so that I could provide ‘thick description’ to my readers (Geertz, 1983 cited in Crocker, 2009). Thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turn leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves. By providing thick description the readers note the specifics of the research situation and compare them to the specifics of an environment or situation with which they are familiar. If there are enough similarities between the two situations, readers may be able to infer that the results would be the same or similar in their own situation, thus they ‘transfer’ the results of a study to another context (transferability). The questionnaires in the second phase of the study were conducted to generalise the findings to a wider population. The ability to generalise findings to wider groups and circumstances is one of the most common tests of the validity of quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003).

#### **4.15.2. Reliability**

In the second phase of my study, I adapted all the questionnaires conducted with IELTS test-preparers, test-takers and test preparation teachers used by Hawkey and piloted them to increase the reliability and practicability of the questionnaires (Cohen et al., 2007). To enhance the reliability of the interview and focus group data, I went back to a sample of interviews and recoded them again to make sure that I had been consistent in analysing the data. In addition, I also considered inter-rater reliability. A fellow doctoral colleague was invited as a second coder to examine a sample of 5 interviews. Agreement was reached about 95% of the sample. The verbatim transcriptions and the data analysis of interviews and focus group was done systematically to ensure the reliability of the qualitative data (Seale, 1999). High

reliability in qualitative research is associated with what Seale (1999) calls low-inference descriptors. As Seale puts it, this involves: ‘recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, for example, rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting’ (1999:148).

#### **4.16. Ethical considerations**

Throughout this project, I followed the accepted principles of research ethics, such as informed consent, right to withdraw, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and data protection (Gray 2009; Robson, 2011). Gray (2009) highlighted two major aspects of ethical responsibility towards conducting research: (1) voluntary informed consent, and (2) privacy/confidentiality/anonymity. In the first phase of my study, I presented the institutes surveyed as well as the two studied in depth with a letter from the University of Edinburgh confirming my status as a PhD student, thus gaining their written permission to access the research site and collect data from the participants. I promised to keep the identities of their teachers and students confidential and anonymous and that the information regarding their teaching methods and materials would only be used for my research purposes.

Before obtaining consent, the participants were informed about the research purposes, the nature of the research, data collection procedure and the length of time it would take. I made sure that all participants were not coerced but took part voluntarily in my research. They were informed of their rights to abstain from participation or to withdraw at any stage of the research (Cohen et al., 2007). Consent forms were then given to the participants containing all the relevant information, were signed by them and returned to the researcher. Signed consent proves that consent was obtained. With regards to the classroom observations, I decided to minimise any potential disruption to the normal teaching and learning in the class by adopting a non-participant observation approach. Furthermore, as

mentioned earlier, audio or video recordings were not allowed, which were ethical considerations in minimising any disruption to the teaching and learning. A similar procedure, of getting consent forms signed, was followed with all participating interviewees: students, teachers, employers, and parents. For the second phase, however, it was relatively easy to gain access to the institutes as I only conducted questionnaires on their premises and conducted one focus group.

The fundamental principle of the UK Data Protection Act (1998) is the protection of the rights of individuals in respect of personal data held about them by a data controller, including academic researchers who will present and publish their materials (Gray, 2009). Researchers are responsible for protecting the identities of their participants by keeping them anonymous and keeping the data confidential. Following the rules of the UK Data Protection Act and in line with the ethical guidelines for educational research proposed by the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA, 2005), the procedures used to assure confidentiality were specified on the questionnaires. Pseudonyms were adopted for the participating teachers, students, parents and employers, and no information regarding the teaching methods and materials was disclosed from one institute to the other.

#### **4.17. Summary**

At the beginning of this chapter, I briefly recapitulated methodologies employed by some of the major impact and washback studies. Mixed methods design is increasingly becoming popular in washback and impact studies and most of them have used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Using mixed-methods is advantageous over using either qualitative or quantitative methods alone since each single method has its individual weaknesses (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). The present impact study also employed a mixed methods approach because of its complex nature. As data was required from a range of stakeholders, this was gained through various methods (questionnaires, surveys, interviews, classroom observations, pre- and post-testing and focus group). This study is unique in that it

employed elements of both sequential exploratory and concurrent embedded design. I have given a detailed discussion of my two research phases, the data collection instruments, sampling process, and the data analysis procedures. This clearly demonstrates how each research question using these instruments will be answered by the various stakeholders. The issues of validity, reliability, transferability and objectivity in my research have also been adequately addressed for both the qualitative and quantitative data (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The chapter concludes with the ethical issues of the study. The adoption of mixed methods design and the use of various instruments for this study will best serve to answer the research questions. The next chapter presents findings and offers detailed discussion of the data gathered in the first phase of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion of Phase 1 of the study**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter it was established that the data for this study was collected in two phases. This chapter aims to report the findings of the first phase, which consists of qualitative data: a face-to-face survey of private institutes, along with the in-depth study of two IELTS preparation centres. The focus on the two centres features embedded small-scale quantitative pre- and post-testing. The survey of private institutes investigated the range of private institutes offering General English and IELTS preparation classes; the ratio of local to international providers of these courses; the types of courses offered; the duration of the courses; entry requirements and placement tests; typical socioeconomic status of students; the profile of their teachers; and the fee structure. After conducting my preliminary face-to-face survey, I chose two private institutes for further in-depth study through classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, and pre- and post-testing.

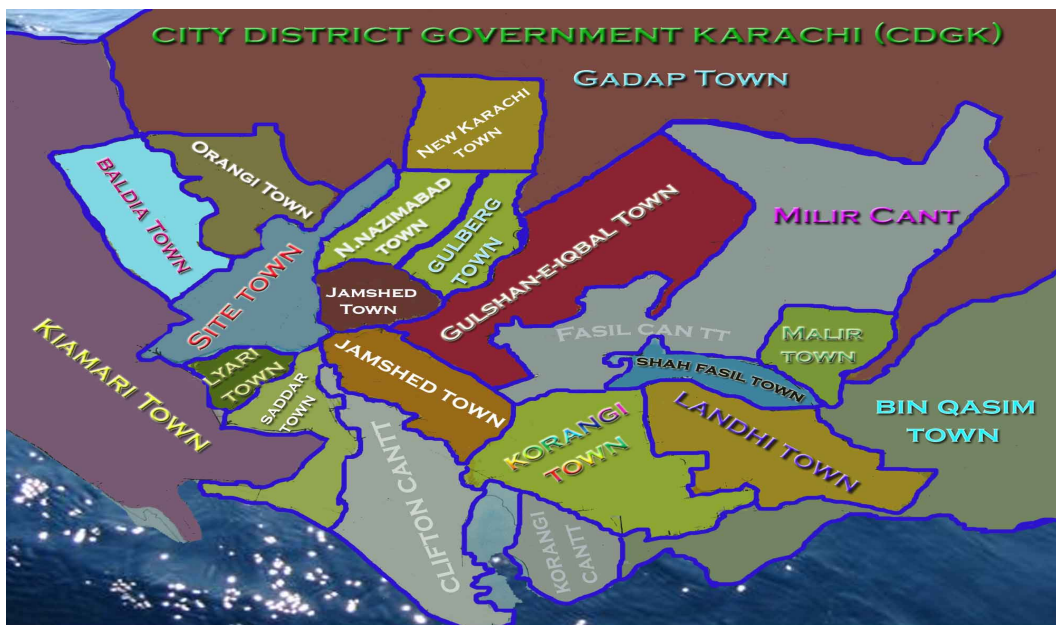
### **5.2. The survey results: types of private institutes in Pakistan**

The survey of private institutes was conducted to find out about the types of preparation courses available in Pakistan. Private English language institutes in Pakistan differ according to the courses they offer and the social classes they cater for. Some of the private centres offer a wide range of General English language courses at different levels, Business English courses, as well as preparation for international exams like IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, GMAT and SAT, and local exams like the Central Superior Services of Pakistan (see chapter 2). Some of the centres also exclusively offer IELTS preparation courses, while some others offer preparation for entry tests for private universities in Pakistan along with the IELTS preparation courses. The majority of English language institutes claim to make



learners proficient English users within a stipulated time, and charge them heftily for doing so. Most of the institutes cater for people of less elite socioeconomic and educational backgrounds (this will be discussed later in the chapter), and thus large numbers of institutes are found in low-income residential areas, whereas very few are located in high-income residential areas (see the maps 5.1 and 5.2 below). These institutes are mostly owned by local Pakistanis, but a small number are international franchises. The two types can be broadly categorised as:

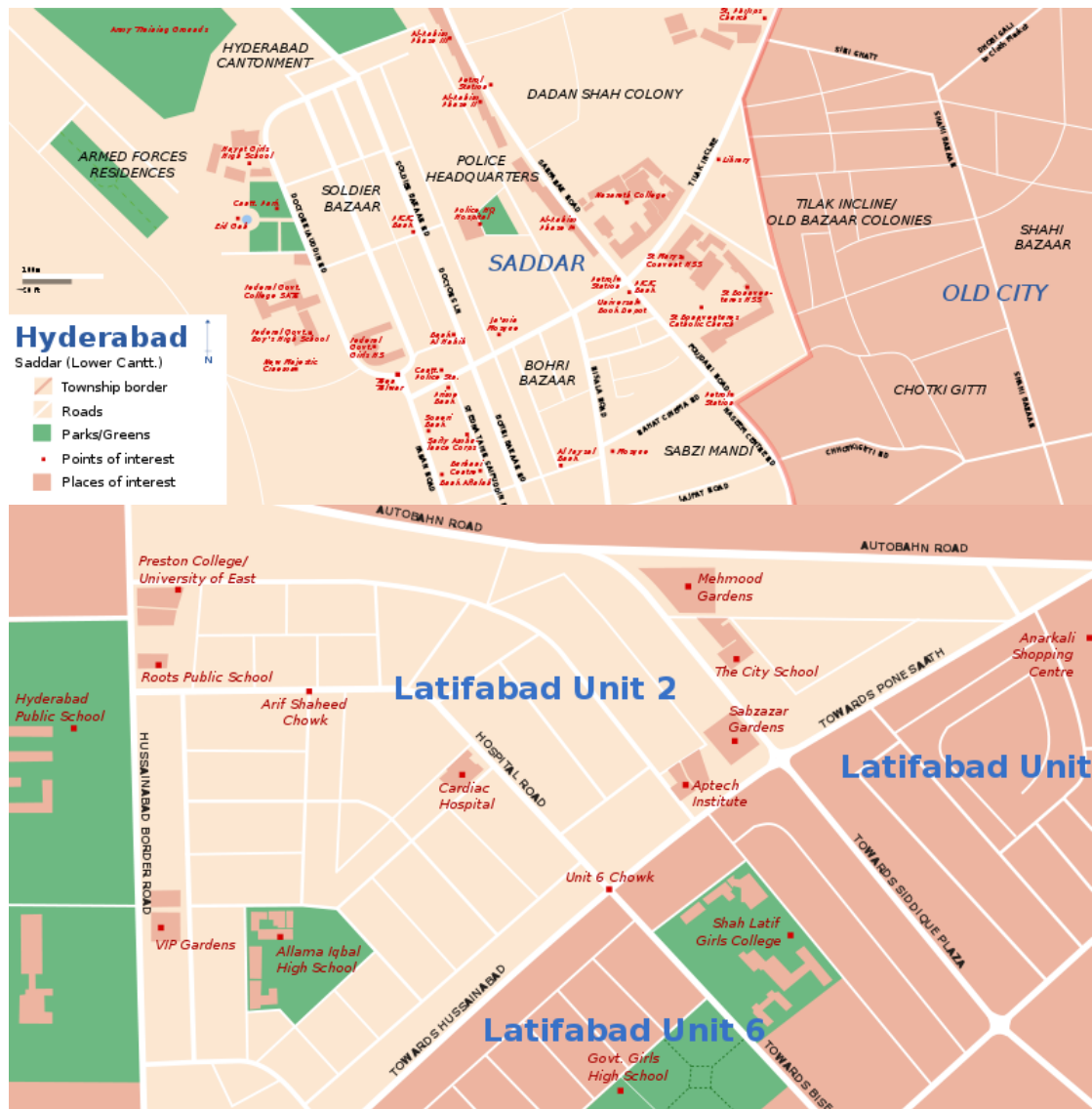
- Locally owned private institutes.
- Internationally owned private institutes.



Map 5.1 City of Karachi, Pakistan (Source: [www.apna-karachi.info](http://www.apna-karachi.info))

The map 5.1 above shows the main areas of Karachi. Areas such as Gulshan-e-Iqbal Town (G.I Town), Milir Cant, N.Nazimabad Town, Malir Town, and Lyari Town are low-income residential areas, and there are a number of institutes located in these areas. The Clifton Cantt and some nearby areas are the main high-income residential areas of Karachi. The survey of private institutes was mainly conducted in ‘Gulshan-e-Iqbal Town’ and ‘Clifton Cantt’ with inclusion of some other areas. As mentioned

earlier, it is very rare to find private institutes in affluent areas. ‘Clifton Cantt’ was chosen, however, as it is a mix of residential and commercial, whereas most other areas are only residential, so it was easier to find institutes located here. Also, both the areas chosen for survey are easily accessible via public transport. The map 5.2 below shows the main areas of Hyderabad.



Map 5.2 City of Hyderabad, Pakistan (Source: <http://www.apnahyderabad.com>)

In the map 5.2 above, ‘Saddar’ is an affluent area with a mix of residential as well as commercial. ‘Latifabad’ is also a mixed area, comparatively less expensive than ‘Saddar’. ‘Old city’ in Hyderabad is mainly a low-income residential area, where a

number of private institutes are located. I chose one institute from ‘Saddar’, two from ‘Latifabad’ and two centres from the Old city (mainly tilak incline, see map above). ‘Saddar’ and ‘Old city’ are easily accessible by public transport, but ‘Latifabad’ is quite far away from the ‘Old city’ which can be accessed using auto rickshaw or a personal conveyance. It is important to note that these maps are very basic as they do not show every area of Karachi and Hyderabad, so there may be discussion of some areas not shown in the maps 5.1 and 5.2 above.

### 5.2.1. Locally owned private institutes

Within the broad category of locally owned institutes, there are a number of different types. First of all there are centres which are owned by a single individual who is commonly known as a neighbourhood tutor. The second type of private institutes are established in an office/commercial space and a third type has more than one branch. Figure 5.1 below shows the division of locally owned private institutes. Each of these institutes will be further discussed individually in the subsequent sections below.

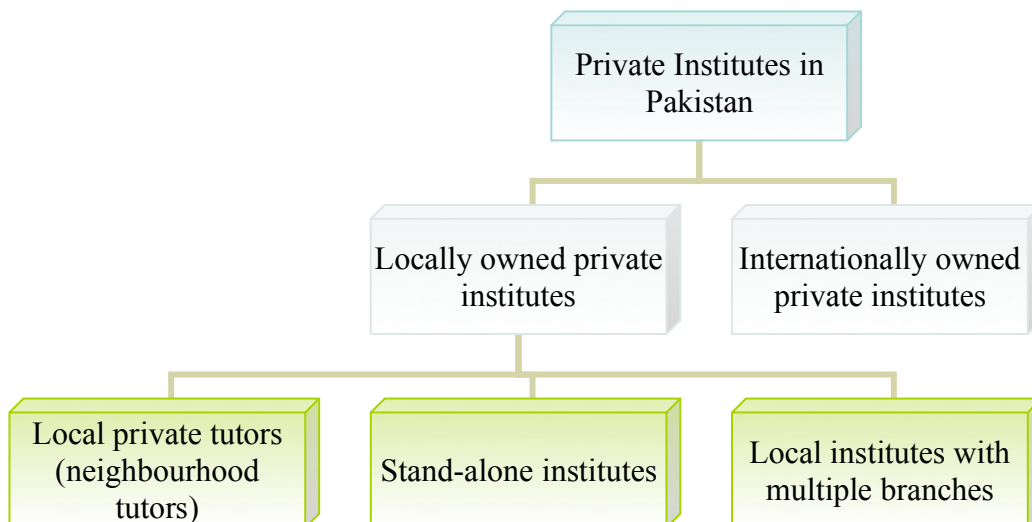


Figure 5.1 Types of private institutes in Pakistan

### **5.2.1.1. Local private tutors/Neighbourhood tutors**

In figure 5.1 above, the first category of local institutes comprises self-employed tutors. The centres are owned by one person, who is also usually the sole tutor at the institute, but who will typically employ some administrative staff. There is a large number of these local private tutors in the low-income residential areas of Karachi (such as G.I Town and Milir Cant) and Hyderabad (such as Old City), whereas they are never found in high income areas. These institutes are set up in the proprietor's small flat (usually consisting of one bedroom) or small bungalow. Such institutes typically offer IELTS preparation alone. Students interested in a General English language course or Business English course are also accepted by these tutors but they are encouraged to attend IELTS preparation classes to improve their English. None of these tutors have a placement test which shows that, due to the fierce competition in the market, they accept everyone applying for their course. The class comprises 12-15 students or more, depending on the number of admissions. The private tutors offer IELTS preparation classes of various lengths; some of them for five hours in total, some for one week and others for one month.

These institutes are not very well equipped; classrooms have chairs and a whiteboard, but no audio-visual facilities. Courses are not very expensive (charging roughly 5000 PKR, US\$ 51) and are therefore easily affordable for people from low socioeconomic backgrounds (lower class). All private tutors tend to have a similar fee structure. The students look for the most reasonable price on the market, and they are easily attracted by tutors offering them a slight discount (typically 100 or 200 PKR, US\$ 1-2). The institutes are usually attended by people who live nearby because their mobility is very limited; they cannot afford to use public transport and hence prefer to study near their homes. These students hope to learn some English at these institutes, often alongside friends and relatives. Some examples of private tutors in the city of Karachi include Sir Raja Amir, Sir S.M Imran, Sir Rymenz, Sir Faisal, and Sir Yousuf. In Pakistan, as in some other South Asian countries, a male teacher is called 'Sir' and a female teacher is called 'Madam'. These are only a few examples of such tutors, who are found in abundance all over Karachi in low-income

residential areas.

Examples of this category in Hyderabad include tutors like Sir Aslam, Sir Naeem and Sir Panday. These tutors also teach at their homes and are found in low-income residential areas of Hyderabad. The tuition centre is recognised by its owner's name, so for example Sir Raja Amir's tuition centre, or Sir Faisal's tuition centre. Some of the tutors also replace their names with a more American or British-sounding one. For example Sir Rymenz is a private tutor in Karachi whose real name is Sir Rameez, and Sir Waqas is another Karachi-based private tutor who is known to the public as Sir Vicky. In this way, these tutors present themselves as native English speakers. While most prospective clients recognise them as Pakistani tutors, some students believe that they are native English speakers who have come from abroad to teach English. These tutors offer a free demonstration class, in which they attempt to convince potential clients that only by preparing with them will they achieve high IELTS band scores. Some of the neighbourhood tutors also offer incentives like free IELTS preparation books and CDs or fee discounts. All such institutes in Pakistan are unregistered, do not pay tax, and are therefore unchecked by the law.

The private tutors offering English language classes and preparation for international exams like IELTS and TOEFL advertise in local English and Urdu newspapers (such as, The Dawn, Daily Times, The News and Jang), on billboards, as well as on different websites. They do not have websites because people attending belong to low income groups and have very limited internet access. It is likely that many prospective students go through newspaper and billboard advertisements when opting for a private tutor. Some students who have the internet in their homes, or internet cafes nearby, search advertisements on different websites and read student blogs. As mentioned above, they are well attended by people living locally, therefore prospective students in the local area can easily see their large billboards. Local tutors like Raja Amir, Rymenz and S.M. Imran are very visible on street boards and in newspapers. Their advertisements consist of a mix of Urdu and English, making them easier to understand. All these methods of advertising play a very important role in the decision making of students who wish to attend these institutes. In table 5.1 below, I have presented information about all the private tutors surveyed in

Karachi and Hyderabad. These tutors' classes are well attended and there is stiff competition for new business between them in the private English Language Teaching market.

Name of the Tutor	Location	Courses offered	Duration of their IELTS courses	Fee structure of IELTS courses	Any incentives
Sir Raja Amir	G.I Town Karachi	IELTS preparation	5 hours	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	Free IELTS material
Sir S.M. Imran	G.I Town Karachi	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	No
Sir Faisal	G.I Town Karachi	IELTS preparation	One week (8-10 hours)	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	Free consultancy for UK visa
Sir R.M Farooq	G.I Town Karachi	IELTS preparation, General English, Business English	IELTS for one month (24 hours)	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	No
Sir Vicky	Malir Town Karachi	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	Free IELTS CDs
Sir Rymenz	G.I Town Karachi	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	5,000 PKR (US\$ 51)	Free IELTS books
Sir Riyan	Latifabad Hyderabad	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	4,000 PKR (US\$ 41)	No
Sir Panda	Old city Hyderabad	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	3,000 PKR (US\$ 31)	No

Table 5.1 Comprehensive information about local private tutors

The information presented in table 5.1 above shows that private tutors mostly offer IELTS preparation alone, except for Sir R.M Farooq who also offers General English and Business English courses. All of the above mentioned neighbourhood tutors make exaggerated claims in their newspaper advertisements and guarantee 100% results (typically for a 7-8 band score) within a stipulated time (see some advertisements in appendix 18). These tutors state in their newspaper advertisements that they possess foreign qualifications but in actual fact they are mostly undergraduates or have a diploma in an arts or science subject. They typically offer an IELTS preparation course over a month (meeting three times a week, for 24 hours in total). An exception is Sir Raja Amir who claims to prepare students within the shortest possible time of 5 hours. Their fee structures are almost the same, with a few exceptions. The growth of these centres suggests that IELTS preparation courses are in greater demand in low-income residential areas. They are mostly attended by extremely low proficiency students, so it is unlikely that their students would get

the required IELTS scores to study abroad. Even if any of these students do manage to get above a 4.0 band score, they do not have the resources to go abroad. There is no information available about what the remainder do with their IELTS certificate when they do not manage to go abroad.

As I mentioned previously, that there has been no research conducted or published on the growth of the private English Language Teaching industry in Pakistan, therefore there are no statistics available on the number of institutes and the number of test-preparers. Only Coleman (2010) estimates that there are 256 centres in Pakistan, but I suspect that this number does not include the numerous informal neighbourhood tutors found in abundance throughout the major cities of Pakistan. Due to lack of availability of research in this field, there is no way of gathering information about the number of institutes in Pakistan and the number of students attending them. Using a crude formula, I have attempted to roughly calculate the number of institutes in Pakistan based on my face-to-face survey of private institutes and the number of students attending these institutes each year. First of all, I have divided the cities according to the availability of IELTS preparation centres, which are only found in tier one and tier two cities in Pakistan. A rough estimate of the total number of private tutors found in these cities and the average number of students attending their classes per year is shown in table 5.2 below.

	<b>Number of private tutors</b>	<b>Average number of students per IELTS session</b>	<b>Average number of students per year</b>
Karachi	80	80x12=960	960x6=5,760
Hyderabad	20	20x12=240	240x6=1,440
Islamabad	80	80x12=960	960x6=5,760
Lahore	60	60x12=720	720x6=4,320
Faisalabad	80	80x12=960	960x6=5,760
Peshawar	20	20x12=240	240x6=1,440
Multan	20	20x12=240	240x6=1,440
Total	360	4,400	26,000

Table 5.2 Rough calculation of number of private tutors and students attending each year

In the above table, I have first estimated the number of private tutors in each city. I discussed earlier that these tutors usually get 12-15 students in their IELTS

preparation classes per session and most of them run their IELTS preparation classes for a month. Multiplying the total number of private tutors in each of these cities with an average of 12 students shows that almost 4,400 students attend these private tutors' classes. It is likely that these tutors do not run IELTS preparation courses every month due to limited enrolment of students, so on average if they run six IELTS preparation courses in a year, there are about 26,000 test-preparers going to these neighbourhood tutors each year. In the next section, I will discuss the second category, of local private institutes.

### **5.2.1.2. Stand-alone institutes**

Within this same category of locally owned institutes, there are some centres which have a dedicated building with at least three or four classrooms, an administrative office and a small staff room. These institutes cater primarily for lower middle class people but sometimes also attract people from the lower class. Students from the local neighbourhood can easily access these centres. These institutes have very deceptive names like Anglophile, British Academy, The American Centre, British English Language Learning, Brit-Pak school, and The American Communication Council to name just a few. It is very difficult to establish how many of these local institutes possess either British or American names, but by using such English names they appear to the public to be internationally-owned franchises. They also, like the private local tutors, offer a free demonstration class. Classrooms are furnished simply and very few of these institutes are equipped with audio-visual facilities for learning English. Some of them offer English language courses (for one month or longer), while others only offer preparation for IELTS and TOEFL. They charge almost double or more for their IELTS preparation compared to the private tutors. The staff members are not highly qualified. They are university or college graduates (in any subject) and they are not required to provide any English language certificate or degree related to English language teaching. They usually have 12-15 students per session but sometimes the classes are crowded, with 20 or more students (depending on the uptake), as, like the private tutors, there is no admission or placement test. 181



These institutes are better known than those of the individual tutors because of their tall and prominent buildings, and their names, which show their apparent affiliation with American or British institutes. These institutes also advertise in local newspapers and on billboards. Unlike private tutors, these institutes have websites where they provide course information. I surveyed four institutes in this category: The American Centre (TAC), Anglophile and Pak-British institutes in Karachi and the British English Language Learning (BELL) in Hyderabad. The information gathered from these institutes is summarised in table 5.3 below.

Name of the institute	Location	Courses offered	Duration of their IELTS courses	Fee structure of IELTS course	Any incentives
The American Centre (TAC)	PECHS Karachi	IELTS preparation, GE, Business English	Six weeks (36 hours)	12,000 PKR (US\$ 123)	Free IELTS books
Pak-British Institute	Milir Cant	IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	10,000 PKR (US\$ 100)	No
Anglophile	G.I Town	IELTS preparation	Six weeks (36 hours)	10,000 PKR (US\$ 100)	No
British English Language Learning (BELL)	Saddar Hyderabad	IELTS preparation	Three months (80 hours)	25,000 PKR (US\$ 256)	Free IELTS books

Table 5.3 Comprehensive information of stand-alone institutes

It can be noticed in table 5.3 above that there is a variation in the duration and fee structure of the language centres in this category. Due to their relatively high fees compared to the private tutors', they are also attended by a few people from the upper middle class (see section 2.2 for class categorisation). These institutes, like the private tutors, also make exaggerated claims and guarantee high scores to their test-preparers in newspaper advertisements. Due to the high enrolment of people with low-proficiency in English and similar limitations in teaching as the private tutors, it is unlikely that the test-preparers will go abroad, due to financial constraints and/or not attaining the required IELTS scores, similar to their counterparts attending private tutors. In order to make a rough estimate of the number of stand-alone institutes in Pakistan and the number of students attending them, I have used the same formula and come up with the calculation presented in table 5.4 below.

	<b>Number of stand-alone institutes</b>	<b>Average number of students per IELTS session</b>	<b>Average number of students per year</b>
Karachi	100	100x12=1,200	1200x6=7,200
Hyderabad	60	60x12=720	720x6=4,320
Islamabad	100	100x12=1,200	1200x6=7,200
Lahore	80	80x12=960	960x6=5,760
Faisalabad	100	100x12=1,200	1200x6=7,200
Peshawar	60	60x12=720	720x6=4,320
Multan	60	60x12=720	720x6=4,320
Total	560	6,800	40,000

Table 5.4 Rough calculation of number of stand-alone institutes and students attending each year

In table 5.4 above, I have estimated around 560 private stand-alone institutes in the major cities in Pakistan. These institutes have 12 or more students and most of them offer courses for one month or six weeks. On average, if these institutes have 12 students in their IELTS preparation course, and run their courses about six times a year, they cater for about 40,000 students per year. Below I will discuss the third category of locally owned institutes.

### **5.2.1.3. Local institutes with multiple branches**

The largest types of local institutes are those which have at least three or four branches in one city, and sometimes they may have a branch in other cities as well. Institutes like Domino English Learning Centre, Anees Hussain, Anees Hassan, Aptech, Alpha Institute, Innovative Learning Centre and Parlance all fall within this category. These institutes do not explicitly include in their names anything which makes a connection with either the United Kingdom or the United States, as the other, similar local institutes do. They are mainly attended by upper middle class people, with some clients from the lower and lower middle classes. These types of institutes are mostly located in low-income residential areas of Karachi and Hyderabad, but can occasionally be found in expensive areas as well. They offer English language

courses, Business English, IELTS and TOEFL preparation classes like many other local institutes. They have, in their buildings, some classrooms, a reception area, a waiting room, an administration room, and a staff room. Such institutes commonly advertise in newspapers and on billboards. Unlike private tutors and local private centres, they do not offer any incentives or free demonstration classes. These institutes provide comprehensive information on their websites as well. They have a placement test for their General English and Business English courses, but, similar to other categories of local institute, there is no test for their IELTS preparation course. There is no maximum limit on the intake per session, and classes usually have between 12 and 15 students but occasionally more (20 or above), depending on the number of admissions. The teachers at these centres are also quite similar to the private tutors and those in the stand-alone institutes in terms of their qualifications. Some of the better attended institutes surveyed, which fall into this category, are presented in table 5.5 below.

Name of the institute	Number of branches	Location	Courses offered	Duration of their IELTS courses	Fee structure of IELTS courses
Domino English learning centre	5	Karachi	General English and IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	15,000 PKR (US\$ 150)
Innovative English learning centre	3	Karachi	General English and IELTS preparation	One month (24 hours)	11,000 PKR (US\$ 123)
Alpha institute	3	Hyderabad	General English and IELTS preparation	Two months (40 hours)	15,000 PKR (US\$ 150)
Anees Hussain	5	Karachi and Hyderabad	Entrance tests for local universities and IELTS preparation	Two months (40 hours)	16,000 PKR (US\$ 160)
Pakistan American Cultural Centre (PACC)	3	Karachi and Hyderabad	General English and IELTS preparation	Two months (40 hours)	7,000 PKR (US\$ 70)
Aptech	3	Karachi, Hyderabad and Lahore	IELTS, Computer courses	Two months (40 hours)	14,000 PKR (US\$ 140)

Table 5.5 Comprehensive information of private institutes with multiple branches

It can be seen in table 5.5 above that these institutes have a number of branches, which can be found in the same or in other cities, and also that they all offer other, different courses as well their IELTS preparation courses. Their fee structure is

slightly higher than the second category of private institutes except for the PACC institute which offers the IELTS preparation course for the cheapest price (7,000 PKR, US\$ 71) which is only slightly higher than the fee charged by the private neighbourhood tutors. The PACC course is therefore mainly attended by lower middle class with a few students from the lower class. As mentioned earlier, the majority of students attending these centres belong to the upper middle class and therefore tend to be slightly more proficient than students attending the other two types of local institutes. They have a thin chance of getting a band score of above 4.0, to meet the requirements for going abroad. Some of the students might also be able to find funds of their own while others look for scholarships to go abroad. Table 5.6 below gives a rough calculation of the number of institutes with multiple branches in Pakistan and the number of IELTS test-preparers attending these centres.

	<b>Number of institutes with multiple branches</b>	<b>Average number of students per session</b>	<b>Average number of students per year</b>
Karachi	80	80x12=960	960x3=2,880
Hyderabad	20	20x12=240	240x3=720
Islamabad	60	60x12=720	720x3=2,160
Lahore	60	60x12=720	720x3=2,160
Faisalabad	60	60x12=720	720x3=2,160
Peshawar	20	20x12=240	240x3=720
Multan	20	20x12=240	240x3=720
Total	320	3,840	11,520

Table 5.6 Rough calculation of number of institutes with multiple branches and students attending each year

Local institutes with multiple branches (N=320) tend to have fewer students than the private tutors (N=360) and the stand-alone institutes (N=560). This is mainly because the enrolments are spread across two or three branches in the same city or across different cities and their courses run for two months compared to the local tutors and stand-alone institutes which offer their courses for only a month. On average, if the institutes with multiple branches have 12 students per course, they would cater for about 11,520 IELTS test-preparers per annum by running their IELTS preparation session three times a year. In the next section, I will discuss the second main category of private institutes which are those owned by international franchises.

### 5.2.2. Internationally owned private institutes

The second category of institutes, which are internationally owned, are very rare in Pakistan and are found only in big cities like Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore, with one or two branches in each. In Karachi there are three internationally owned institutes, namely, Berlitz, Inlingua, and Queen’s Language Centre. These institutes have all been established very recently in Pakistan (after 2000). They are located in high-income residential areas of Karachi. Two international institutes were surveyed and the information regarding these is presented in table 5.7 below.

Name of the institute	Number of branches	Location	Courses offered	Duration of their IELTS courses	Fee structure of IELTS courses
Berlitz (American franchise)	2	Sh.Faisal, Clifton Cantt	General English course, IELTS and TOEFL preparation, Arabic, and French, and call centre training	Two months (40 hours)	22,000 PKR (US\$ 223)
Inlingua (Swiss franchise)	1	Zamzama (near Clifton Cantt)	General English course, IELTS and TOEFL preparation and French.	Two months (40 hours)	25,000 PKR (US\$ 253)

Table 5.7 Comprehensive information of internationally owned private institutes

The international private institutes offer a General English course which is regarded as a stepping stone to IELTS and is offered to those who fail to attain a pass mark in their placement test for the IELTS preparation course. The administration staff in these institutes explained that the majority of the students on their General English courses are aiming to move on to the IELTS preparation course. These internationally owned institutes have a limited intake of students (10-12 students per class), so their classes are never crowded like some of the locally owned institutes. Inlingua is slightly more expensive than Berlitz, but both of them would be too expensive for lower middle class families. These institutes are largely attended by people belonging to elite families (those of landlords and businessmen). A few are upper middle class, but they can only afford to study there by doing part-time jobs.

The classrooms in the international institutes are air-conditioned, and well-

decorated with good quality furniture. Their classrooms are well equipped with multimedia technology and a CD player, facilities rarely found in locally owned institutes. Other facilities provided at these centres include free photocopying and printing on campus and standby generators to cope with electricity failure which is a major problem in most of the cities in Pakistan. They possess computer labs for their students to improve their listening skills and practise online material. The faculty members of the internationally owned institutes are all postgraduates in different subjects, some of them in linguistics, and are therefore highly competent English speakers. Sometimes they also recruit native speakers of English for their General English course. A full training is provided to all their teachers after recruitment as the centres have their own syllabus and teaching methods, especially for the General English course. These institutes run their sessions from morning to evening, attracting housewives in the mornings, college and university students in the afternoon and professionals in the evening. The students attending these institutes come from a better educational and financial background compared to students attending the private, locally owned institutes. Therefore, these students have a relatively high chance of achieving their required band scores and have sufficient funds to go abroad. In table 5.8 below, I have shown the number of international institutes in Pakistan and an estimate of the number of students attending their IELTS preparation courses per year.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of international institutes</b>	<b>Average number of students per session</b>	<b>Average number of students per year</b>
Karachi	3	10x3=60	60x3=180
Islamabad	3	10x3=60	60x3=180
Lahore	3	10x3=60	60x3=180
Faisalabad	1	10x3=30	30x3=90
Total	10	210	630

Table 5.8 Rough calculation of number of international institutes and students attending each year

In table 5.8 above, the information regarding the number of international institutes is accurate. However the number of students attending their IELTS preparation per session and per year is a rough estimate. These institutes enrol 10-12 students on

their IELTS preparation course, so on average, if they enrol 10 students per session and offer the IELTS preparation course three times a year, they prepare approximately 630 students per year for an IELTS exam.

The findings from the survey of private English language institutes suggest that the majority of them are owned by local Pakistani people and found in the low-income residential areas of Pakistan. There is no limit on student intake in the lower end private institutes whereas international institutes like Berlitz only take 10-12 students per session. Due to the tough competition, these local institutes do not have any placement test for IELTS which contrasts with the survey results of Read and Hayes (2003) where students were only admitted to an IELTS preparation course in New Zealand if they achieved around a 5.0 band score. Fierce competition means that these language centres have to accept lower level proficiency students (below 5.0 band score) in order to avoid losing them to other language schools. Read and Hayes (2003) also reported some language schools accepting lower proficiency students in New Zealand in a competitive environment (see chapter 3). The situation is similar in Pakistan but on a much larger scale as it is very common for most of the institutes to accept students with a low proficiency level (those achieving below a 5.0 band score) in order to avoid losing them to other private centres.

Candidates belonging to lower-middle or lower income groups with limited proficiency in English find it difficult to emigrate, mainly because of limited sources of funding. The majority of Pakistani IELTS preparation teachers in locally owned institutes are not well qualified and experienced compared to those found in other parts of the world such as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Elder and O'Loughlin, 2003; Green, 2007; Read and Hayes, 2003).

To recapitulate from the introduction of this dissertation, I estimated from the information available by Cambridge ESOL that there are roughly about 20,000 people taking the IELTS test per year in Pakistan. Combining the total number of private local and international institutes using the formula mentioned above, it can be assumed that there are about 1,250 institutes in the country, preparing almost 78,000 students for the IELTS exam per year. This figure of test-preparers contrasts strikingly with the rough estimate of 20,000 people taking the IELTS exam every

year in Pakistan. I acknowledge that the number of institutes available in Pakistan and the number of students attending these centres have been calculated using a fairly crude formula. However, they are a useful guide for our purposes here, as there is no other way of counting these institutes and the number of student enrolments in them. It may be that there is an even greater number of these institutes and students enrolling than I have estimated.

### **5.3. In-depth study of two private institutes: one local and one international**

The survey of private (local and international) institutes provides a detailed depiction of the types of preparation courses available in Pakistan. It is worth re-emphasising here the considerable choice that people seeking admission to IELTS preparation courses have, as there is a wide range of private centres, and people can opt for an institute according to its suitability (location of the centre, duration of the course, fees etc.). From the institutes I surveyed, I chose two IELTS preparation institutes, one local and one international, for in-depth investigation, to find out the differences between private local and private international institutes including the textbooks, materials and activities used on their courses. The investigation also aimed to assess the efficacy of their preparation courses and the washback of the IELTS test on courses and teachers preparing candidates to take the test. The Pakistan American Cultural Centre (PACC) is representative of most of the local institutes with multiple branches in Pakistan, and Berlitz of the international institutes. There are considerable differences between the two in their teaching methods, tuition fees, the social classes they cater for, and their classroom settings. In the section below, I will provide background information about both of these institutes.



### **5.3.1. Background of the institutes**

#### **5.3.1.1. Pakistan American Cultural Centre (PACC)**

The Pakistan American Cultural Centre (PACC) is typical of a local institute with branches, owned by a consortium. It was established in 1959 in Karachi, and a branch was set up later, in Hyderabad, in 1990. I mentioned earlier, in Chapter 2, that this was the first private institute to be established in Pakistan (Rahman, 1990). It offers English language courses, Business English, and preparation for IELTS and TOEFL. PACC is famous for its English language courses because it was the first private institute to offer English language courses in Karachi and Hyderabad at a reasonable price. All other courses offered at PACC are newer additions. All of PACC's Karachi branches are found in low-income residential areas. Unlike all the other larger local institutes, it has no branch in G.I Town. The inclusion of 'American' in its name is deceptive, given its actual status as a local, rather than an international (American), company; this is similar to other local institutes such as the British Academy and Anglophile, for example. PACC is nevertheless quite well-known in comparison to these other institutes because of its longevity. It has earned fame because of the apparent quality of the education and its experienced teachers. It is attended by people of various backgrounds, usually lower and upper middle classes, but sometimes by lower income groups as well due to its low fee structure (see table 5.5 above). The faculty members are usually aged 40 or over, and typically have more than ten years of teaching experience (a figure which compares very favourably with many other institutes).

There is a placement test for the General English language course, but not for the IELTS preparation course, and apparently all students are accepted onto the course irrespective of their aims, motives, and educational background. The General English classes are equipped with audio-visual facilities, so the students feel well supported in their English learning in this respect. Classes run from morning to late evening, so all the faculty members work part-time. Not all the Karachi branches offer IELTS - only the Cantonment branch provides this. The PACC's Cantonment area branch (not shown on the map 5.1 above) is a very large building with many

classrooms. The building is old but still in good condition. The furniture in the classroom is acceptable, though there are no air-conditioned classrooms. There is a small cafeteria and a large auditorium and staff room. Their General English course books are Cambridge editions (PACC did not share the names of their books), and these materials are provided by PACC itself because they are not easily available to students otherwise. People leaving public sector colleges or universities prefer to go PACC rather than other local institutes to attend various levels of the General English course to improve their English language skills (Rehman, 2007; see chapter 2). PACC only advertises for new intakes at the start of a session, or to publicise their placement test; otherwise their advertisements are rarely seen on billboards or in local newspapers.

### **5.3.1.2. Berlitz**

Berlitz is an American franchise which has operated in Pakistan since 2001. Currently there are two branches of Berlitz in Karachi but one of them is much busier because it is in a better location (that is to say, more accessible by public transport). Berlitz is a well-attended language centre not only for its English language courses and IELTS preparation but also because of their different language courses (e.g. Arabic, and French). Berlitz also offers corporate services (call centre training, a recruitment agency for many public and private sector industries, and English language courses for employees). The Berlitz centre where IELTS preparation classes were observed is located on the Shahr-e Faisal (an expensive area which is mostly commercial). The campus has 15 classrooms, a computer lab, a staff room, three administrative rooms and a cafeteria. All their classrooms are air-conditioned, well-decorated with good quality furniture, and the institute is very clean. Their faculty members were mainly postgraduates in linguistics, and therefore highly competent speakers of English. Two of their staff members were native speakers of English, one from Australia and one from Europe. Berlitz claims that since they also act as a recruitment agency (the only private institute in Karachi to do so), the certificate provided at the end of the English language course helps students to get good jobs in multinational companies like Pepsi, Berger Robialac, ICI paints, private and semi-government banks like Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Barclays, Soneri Bank, Al-Habib and Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB), and pharmaceutical

companies like Abbott, and Adamjee, to cite just some examples. It also provides training to employees of many banks, industries and other organisations. Unlike private local institutes, international institutes like Berlitz do not offer a free demonstration, nor do they advertise (exaggerated) claims or results on websites or in local newspapers. Their advertisements rarely appear in newspapers, and they simply provide contact numbers for anyone interested in further details. The fee for their English language course is 15,000 PKR (US\$ 154), relatively expensive compared to all the other institutes, and 22,000 PKR (US\$ 223) for IELTS preparation classes (more expensive than PACC).

The placement test is the same for General English and IELTS preparation courses, but with a different marking criteria and pass mark. The test takes place in two parts. First, they conduct a one hour long online test in the computer lab. This test is controlled by their head office, so a similar test format is used throughout the world. There are a total of 64 questions and candidates are allowed a maximum of 60 seconds, to answer each one. After 60 seconds if the question is not answered, the next questions appears on the screen automatically. All the questions are multiple choice, for which four options are given. An online test comprises different types of grammatical questions (use of articles, use of the correct form of the verb, synonyms, and sentence completion), questions related to vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The test also contains some listening questions for which a student listens to a short recording and answers the related questions. At the end of the test, the result appears on the screen, and the student is assigned a level. After completion of the online test, there is an interview lasting about 15-20 minutes to assess speaking skills. At the beginning of the speaking test, there are questions related to the reason for taking the General English course, and studying at Berlitz. Afterwards there is a list of set questions which are asked to assess speaking skills (Berlitz kept the list of questions confidential). At the end of the speaking test, a particular level of the General English course is assigned to the student by the counsellor (the person who conducts the interview with the students is known as a counsellor at Berlitz). No one is rejected admission to Berlitz entirely; the students are enrolled in level 1 if they are of too low proficiency.

In total there are six levels of General English course (level 1 is known as beginners and level six as advanced). Students are admitted to a particular level of the General English course according to the result of the placement test. If a student aims for their IELTS preparation course but does not achieve at least level 4 on their placement test, then they are recommended to take the General English course

(level 4 being the entry requirement for IELTS preparation, so for example if a student achieves level 3 on the placement test, then he has to complete level 3 and 4 of the General English course before he could enrol on their IELTS preparation course). The level assigned to the student could be the same as the outcome of the online test, or it could be different, depending on the speaking test result and the needs of the student. Berlitz accepting students on to their IELTS preparation course at level 4 implies that there are plenty of people below a 4 who are signing up for IELTS classes elsewhere where there are no placement tests (typically private local institutes).

### **5.3.2. Candidate profile information sheet**

I explained in Chapter 4 (see section 4.7) that before I started classroom observations and pre-testing, I gave all twenty participants from Berlitz and PACC a background information sheet to complete which gathered information about their background. Table 5.9 below summarises the profiles of all twenty candidates preparing for the IELTS test at both the institutes.

<b>Institutes</b>	<b>Berlitz (N=12)</b>	<b>PACC (N=8)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	8	5
Female	4	3
<b>Age</b>		
15-20	1	2
21-30	9	4
31-40	2	2
<b>Reason for taking IELTS</b>		
Emigration	3	2
Higher education	7	6
Professional registration	2	-
<b>Module of IELTS</b>		
Academic	8	6
General Training	4	2
<b>Country of destination</b>		
United Kingdom	4	4
Canada	5	3
Australia	3	-
United States	-	1
<b>Medium of instruction at school</b>		
English	8	2
Urdu	4	6
<b>Medium of instruction at college/university</b>		
English	8	2
Urdu	4	6
<b>Intended fields of study/work</b>		
Information technology	5	3
Business and Accounting	5	3
Other (Engineering, teaching, medicine and law)	2	2

Table 5.9 Profile of candidate participants at Berlitz and PACC (N=20)

The information presented in table 5.9 shows that more than half of the participants at both institutes are male, and in the 21-30 age group. In Pakistan, it is much more common for men to apply for emigration, as they tend to be the breadwinners, and can easily travel abroad for higher education, compared to their female counterparts who usually have to accompany a man (be it a husband, father or brother) if they wish to emigrate permanently, or even leave Pakistan temporarily for higher education. IELTS test-takers commonly fall within the 21-30 age-group because people typically seek to travel abroad for higher education at a young age; consequently, more than half of the participants in this age-group take the ‘Academic’ module of IELTS, for entry into higher education or professional registration in health professions abroad. Roughly a third were preparing instead for the ‘General Training’ module of IELTS, for emigration purposes. The United Kingdom for

higher education and professional registration, and Canada for emigration are the most popular destinations for the participants at both centres. Three test-preparers from Berlitz also cited Australia as their intended destination for higher education and emigration.

Students at Berlitz have mostly received English-medium instruction during both secondary and tertiary education, compared to PACC students' typical experience of Urdu-medium education. PACC students' desired career paths are typically Information Technology and Business and Accounting, as these are the best-known and most popular courses in Pakistan. Further enticements to students are the higher demand and better opportunities in job markets abroad in these fields. Like those at PACC, the students at Berlitz also mainly seek to study Information Technology and Business and Accounting. When/if these students return, there are many private sector jobs available in these fields in Pakistan which offer good salary packages, and the younger generation has become more interested in working in private companies in the last 20 years, due to the greater benefits offered compared to the government sector (see chapter 2). Many of these jobs are with multinational companies in Information Technology, business, banking and pharmaceuticals. The students taking Information Technology and Business at universities in Pakistan can continue this specialism abroad. In the next section, I will discuss the findings from classroom observations of IELTS preparation classes conducted at Berlitz and PACC.

### **5.3.3. Classroom observation of IELTS preparation course at Berlitz**

#### **5.3.3.1. Introduction to the IELTS format and preparation materials at Berlitz**

In the first week of preparation, the teacher outlined the course and gave her students a very detailed explanation about all the four components of IELTS. At the beginning of their IELTS test preparation course, most students are not familiar with the test content, so the first week is usefully spent learning about this, including the format of the test, time allocated for each component, marking criteria, test techniques and time management for each task. The tutor introduced the different types of questions found in all four sub-tests. She gave information to the students about how to cope with the tasks, particularly related to the time pressure created by 195

the test. Each component of the IELTS test was then discussed and practised in detail after the first week. The tutor at Berlitz started practising the ‘speaking’ component in the first week, which was recorded as the pre-test of this study (see chapter 4).

The materials used for IELTS preparation at Berlitz are taken from various sources. All the exercises used were directly relevant to test preparation, and were taken from books provided by the British Council in Karachi, as well as some foreign editions. These books are not designed for Berlitz exclusively, but they are part of a textbook series. Berlitz does not design any books for IELTS, nor is there any prescribed syllabus and the tutors use a range of books. The practice of having IELTS preparation books provided by the British Council is quite uncommon in local institutes in Pakistan, and the reason they use them in Berlitz is probably because of the institute’s international status. The tutor never used ‘Cambridge IELTS’ practice material (official practice material from the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations reprinted locally at an affordable local price) which is commonly used in most of the local institutes. As the books used for practising IELTS were mainly foreign editions which are not easily available on the market, students did not have access to these materials and relied on photocopies provided by the tutor. The tutor used some of the following books in the classroom:

- Study English-IELTS Preparation (Shymkiw and Larbalestier, 2001)
- Essential Tests for IELTS (Scovell, 2004)
- Barron’s IELTS Preparation (Lougheed, 1998, 2004)
- Achieve IELTS (Harrison and Cushen, 2006)

All these books contain reading comprehension and writing tasks, sample speaking test questions, and tapes for listening practice. They are not commonly used in private local institutes for preparing for IELTS as they are expensive and not readily available at local bookstores. Barron’s IELTS Preparation is the only book which is easily available at nearby book stores as it is reprinted locally. All other books can only be ordered or bought online. Berlitz has photocopying and printing facilities on the premises which makes it easy for the tutors to reprint the material and provide it to their students.

### 5.3.3.2. 'Speaking' sub-test practice

The speaking and reading sub-tests were the most practised components of IELTS at Berlitz. IELTS preparation at Berlitz started with a speaking practice tutorial which highlighted fluency, relevance, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation as the most important features of the IELTS speaking module. The tutor had a pile of cue cards, which are cards with a speaking topic written on them, with some bullet points. The tutor gave a cue card (see appendix 19 for a sample cue card) to all the students each time they started speaking practice. She shuffled all the cards before distributing the speaking topics to the students. No student was given the same topic during the next speaking test because the tutor was careful to note down the topics practised by each student. Once all the students had received a cue card, they were allowed one minute to think about the topic and to make some notes. The tutor then asked the students to speak for 2 minutes exactly and she used a stopwatch for this purpose. For additional practice at home, the tutor also emailed speaking topics to all the students. Students were given a lecture on how to make a 'web design' (making bullet points and then explaining them), a very useful technique which could be used for the writing as well as the speaking component. Students are encouraged to read a newspaper every day, and to discuss important issues in class as a part of their speaking practice. At the end of every class, students are asked to note down ten new words at home to improve their vocabulary. Students are strongly encouraged to use newspapers and the internet to gather information on any given topic.

In their speaking practice students are given feedback on errors when they finish speaking. The tutor takes notes of all their errors (related to grammar, pronunciation, and use of Urdu words) and discusses them at length so that they do not repeat these in future (see below for a discussion of the teachers' treatment of errors). The tutor reminded students that grammar was not being covered in any detail in the course so she encouraged them to correct their own errors. After a few weeks, there was a one-to-one interview with every student rather than just a cue card session, so all three sections of the speaking component were covered. Two different students were interviewed every day for a few weeks; their errors were noted on a separate sheet by the tutor and then discussed with the whole class.

While chatting with the tutor I suggested to her that some 'IELTS Scores Explained' DVDs are helpful for students to see the speaking test. The tutor asked me to lend her a DVD for a day so she could play it for her students. It was not ideal for me to provide any material, as I was only supposed to be there to study the



material in use by the class, but in that situation I felt obliged to lend the DVD, because unless I agreed to this request they might not have allowed me to sit in the class. The 'IELTS Scores Explained' DVD (IELTS, 2009) which they borrowed from me was played in the class to listen to some interviews of IELTS candidates. The DVD contained a speaking practice test which illustrated all three sections of the test. Each speaking section was followed by a description of the band score and the examiner's comments. All the interviews were played back and the marking criteria, for the three sections of the speaking sub-test were discussed. The students found the video excerpts and the explanation of the marking of the interviews very useful. One of the interviewees in the DVD was a Pakistani male student who got a 7.5 band score in his speaking test, so the tutor played the recording twice and then highlighted the examiner's comments on the DVD. This activity was carried out for the first time, because the DVD is not made available to Berlitz by the British Council. After having played the DVD to the Berlitz students, I decided to also provide it to PACC, so that my two cohorts remained comparable.

The tutor always took note of mistakes during the speaking practice and these were then discussed at the end of every speaking session with the whole class. This way all students received feedback on their speaking. The tutor specifically addressed past tense marking, copula omission, pronunciation, sentence structure, third person singular marking, prepositions, and the use of Urdu words. The tutor did not pick up on article deletion, a well-known feature of Pakistani English (Mahboob, 2004; Rahman, 1990). Most students either omitted the articles or they used them inappropriately. Errors were noted by the tutor in every class and discussed after the speaking practice finished. Below are some examples of the features flagged up by the tutor:

- Copula Omission: She (?) very nice girl.
- Simple past not marked: I choose hotel management. I get my qualification from there. I please to receive that painting.
- Pronunciation: Honour /ɒnər/ pronounced as /ha:nər/. Pleasant /plezənt/ pronounced as /ple:sənt/.

Note that this list does not include typical Pakistani pronunciation features like the v/w, or article deletion (Rahman, 1990). It is unlikely that the tutors are able to recognise errors in these features in their own English. This activity seemed to be

helpful for students as everyone took note of these errors. Whenever the tutor discussed these types of features, most of the students noted them and tried to improve on them in their next speaking session.

### **5.3.3.3. 'Listening' sub-test practice**

The listening practice was carried out during the last few weeks of the course. There was a tutorial on the IELTS listening component at the beginning of listening practice classes. Students were then given listening tests from different books used by the tutor, and at the end of each class all the listening tests were played again to check the answers. Normally forty listening questions were given, to be completed in one hour. The answers were discussed at the end of each listening practice test. The tutor also used multimedia a number of times, showing documentaries to improve students' listening skills. Many interviews and talk shows from the BBC and CNN were also played, which kept listening practice interesting for the students.

### **5.3.3.4. 'Reading' sub-test practice**

Before giving any reading tests to the students, the tutor started with a tutorial on the reading module of IELTS during week 1. She provided time management advice on three reading passages (students often feel that the time allocated for the reading component is not sufficient for completing three reading passages). Handouts were given to underline nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, so the basic grammatical categories were covered before the actual reading. It was very difficult to understand the tutor's idea behind introducing this activity in class and how it could help students in reading the actual test content. Afterwards there was practice of 'true/false/not given' questions which occur frequently within reading passages. The tutor introduced her students to some reading techniques such as 'skimming' and 'speed reading'. Skimming was emphasised as a very important technique used in reading passages. Afterwards, some reading passages were given for skimming practice and then students were asked if they were able to explain the main idea of every passage. The tutor gave her students some reading passages to do at home. The next activity related to the reading module was 'speed reading' in which students were asked to look at the questions from the reading passage first and then to read

the given passage. Students are very challenged by the reading module which is considered to be the most difficult section of IELTS (Hawkey, 2006:122). The tutor usually gave students three reading exercises to complete in sixty minutes. All the answers were discussed at the end of every class, and if the students were experiencing difficulties with reading comprehension, they were given extra time by the tutor.

### **5.3.3.5. 'Writing' sub-test practice**

There was a tutorial on 'Academic' writing and 'General Training' writing, as with all other components, before the start of writing practice. Students were asked to explain the difference between objective and subjective writing, and were then given some topics for 'web designing' (making bullet points before writing). Some handouts were given regarding how to tackle task 1 of the writing test which includes a diagram (bar-graph, pie-chart, and flow chart). The students were asked to write an essay on 'Telecommuting' at home. The students' essays were routinely checked and feedback provided by the tutor. They were also encouraged to write essays at home to be submitted for corrections, if they wanted extra writing practice. The tutor provided the students with feedback on their writing which was not discussed in the class. The feedback on the writing module conducted during the mock-test was discussed in front of the class. Berlitz conducts a mock-test at the end of their IELTS preparation courses, an activity which is rare to find in the local institutes. The tutor picked up on past tense marking, copula omission, and use of informal language (the information was shared by the tutor; I do not have a record of students' transcripts for their Berlitz mock-test). The students wrote six to eight essays on different topics in the class during the preparation session and they were also encouraged to practise writing at home.

### **5.3.4. Classroom observation of IELTS preparation course at PACC**

#### **5.3.4.1. Introduction to the IELTS format and preparation materials at PACC**

At the beginning of the session, students were given a detailed description about

each IELTS component: the total time allowed for the test, number of questions, types of questions etc. The first week was helpful for most of the students to learn about the structure, format, marking criteria and modules of the test. Each module was then discussed in detail after the first week of the session as in the case of Berlitz. The tutor at PACC used the textbook, 'Cambridge IELTS', and this was the only book used during the entire session, unlike the tutor at Berlitz who used various foreign edition books. All the sub-tests were chosen from this book which contains practice material for all the four components and comes with CDs/tapes for listening practice (extracts from the textbook can be found in appendix 20). The 'Cambridge IELTS' practice book is readily available in book stores because it has been reprinted locally. PACC does not have any printing or photocopying facilities on the premises.

#### **5.3.4.2. 'Speaking' sub-test practice**

The students did not get a detailed description of the speaking component (for instance, types of questions, time allotted for each task, and examiners' expectations). The practice for speaking started with a general discussion of the three sections of the test. The first topic provided by the tutor to his students was 'Importance of English language in our lives'. Students discussed the topic in detail, and every student was given a chance to express his/her viewpoint, the purpose of this activity being to encourage speaking. Students were then engaged in a one-to-one interview, for section 2 of the speaking test. The tutor did not have any cue cards for the speaking practice, like those commonly used at Berlitz. He randomly chose topics from the textbook and asked the students to speak on these for about two minutes. Sometimes three or four students were given same topic, leading to repetition of students' answers. Also, no additional list of speaking topics was given to the students to practise at home. This is most likely because whereas the students at Berlitz had access to the internet at home, PACC students had very limited access to the internet. The tutor did not practise all three sections of the speaking component, which suggests that students only practised part 2 and were therefore not familiar with parts 1 and 3. The tutor did not make a note of any errors: at the end he mentioned only those errors which he remembered, and as a result he missed many of them. I noted down students' mistakes in a diary at the tutor's request so he could discuss them at the end of the speaking session with each student. At this point I was asked for help with writing down the mistakes, and I felt unable to refuse, as this

was the only favour they asked. This suggests that, normally, the PACC tutor does not take notes of students' speaking errors.

When I recorded the students for my pre and post-tests, the tutor asked me to play some recordings so that the students could listen to their speaking, and errors be flagged up. This was another instance of my becoming part of the class which I was observing. This was not normally practiced at PACC during IELTS sessions but as the tutor knew that I was recording the speaking sessions, he asked me to play back the recordings to help him and his students. The tutor commented on past tense marking only; he discussed these errors with his students and classified them as 'wrong use of past tense'. Other features like copula omission, omission of plurals, article deletion, pronunciation and omission of third person singular were not mentioned. The tutor picked up some past tense markings such as the following:

- My mother meet me last year.
- I go to Islamabad last summer vacation with family.
- I enjoy the party with a friend yesterday night.

The tutor overlooked many repeated errors. The lack of speaking practice and feedback suggests that students were unlikely to improve significantly, or even at all, in the post-speaking test.

#### **5.3.4.3. 'Listening' sub-test practice**

The classroom where the IELTS course was held was not equipped with audio-visual facilities, so the students were not able to practise listening with the aid of any BBC programmes or other news reports as observed at Berlitz. There was only one classroom in the campus with audio-visual facilities which was mostly used by students on the General English course, so access for IELTS preparers was very limited. In the first week, the listening sub-test was discussed for about 10-20 minutes, with the tutor writing the main points on the board and discussing them with the students. Afterwards students were given handouts for practising the listening test which then took up two weeks. Most of the local private institutes like PACC do not possess the kind of material that Berlitz has from the British Council as it is relatively expensive and not available on the local market, therefore they heavily rely on locally published books like 'Cambridge IELTS'. In each class, the students

were given four listening tests. Each test consisted of 40 questions divided into four different sections. The recording was played and the students were given 20 minutes to complete the listening test. After providing the questions, the tutor left the class and returned much later when the test was finished. In the meantime, some students copied each other's answers. This raises the question of whether the listening practice received by PACC students was either sufficient, or at all useful. At the end of each class the tutor checked the students' answers collectively and gave them the correct answers.

PACC students were not given many techniques for solving different listening questions. For example, when synonyms were used in the recorded conversation, students were not able to attempt questions about these because they expected to hear the same word in the audio recording as they found in the question paper. Students did not have an extensive enough vocabulary to attempt some questions, such as when they heard slightly more advanced words like 'suburbs' or 'humid', because they did not understand their meaning. Vocabulary exercises to deal with such problems were completely absent at PACC. At Berlitz the tutor gave the students ten words every day to improve their vocabulary, or sometimes asked them to bring ten new words to discuss in the class. Such exercises at PACC might have helped students to solve listening tasks. For the tutor to play my IELTS DVD, PACC had to borrow a DVD player as there was no facility available in the campus.

#### **5.3.4.4. 'Reading' sub-test practice**

The tutor initially gave a tutorial on the IELTS reading component in which the test formats for both the 'Academic' and 'General Training' modules were explained, and the types of questions that followed the reading passages were discussed thoroughly. Students were asked about the terms skimming and scanning which are used for reading passages, but they all seemed unfamiliar with these concepts, and they had to be explained later by the tutor. The students did not practise skimming reading passages like their counterparts at Berlitz, but were only given a short explanation about these techniques. The tutor then discussed a few techniques like those used for the reading questions, before going through the entire reading passage, allocating equal time to all three given passages. He then gave a few reading comprehension exercises taken from the 'Cambridge IELTS' practice material, and discussed it with the students. Students were also given some reading passages for

homework. During the last two weeks of the IELTS session, the tutor encouraged students to read newspapers to improve their reading skills and learn new words.

#### **5.3.4.5. 'Writing' sub-test practice**

A tutorial was given on the IELTS writing module at the beginning of the course. There was a detailed discussion of the formats used for writing an essay, writing a letter, and describing bar-graphs, pie-charts, and diagrams etc. with both the 'Academic' and 'General Training' students. At the end of the tutorial, the tutor gave all the students a bar graph to describe. Students were also given a topic to write an essay about in the class. Each student was then asked to read out their essay in front of the class and the tutor corrected their mistakes as they read these, in a style which was less consistent than that used at Berlitz. The tutor missed many errors, as with the speaking sub-test, and he only rectified those which he noticed; most remained unnoticed. Some more essay topics were discussed during the session, but there was no formal feedback given to the students. The tutor did not offer written feedback; he only commented on their errors while they read their essays in class, which was very different to the way the Berlitz tutor helped her students.

Overall it was observed that the practice received by PACC students on every component of IELTS involved less use of different techniques than those given to the Berlitz students. The material used for practising all the modules was restricted to the 'Cambridge IELTS'. There was no practice of vocabulary building, or synonyms and antonyms, as given by the Berlitz tutor. Detailed observation at both institutes suggests that students at Berlitz receive much better overall preparation, and we would therefore expect them to show greater improvement in the post-test compared to PACC students. In the next section, I will compare the IELTS preparation at two institutes by using the classroom observation instrument 'COLT, Part A' which has been adapted to suit this study.

#### **5.3.5. Use of the classroom observation scheme (COLT, Part A)**

COLT is an observation instrument that has been widely used in washback studies. I noted in Chapter 4 (section 4.7.1) how I adapted the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT), Part A, which breaks down classroom instruction in 204

terms of the types of activities that take place, in real time (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995). Part A of the COLT is explicitly designed to relate quantified classroom processes to differential learning outcomes, that is perhaps the main reason why the COLT has proved to be such a popular tool in washback studies. The use of COLT demonstrates its value in capturing broad similarities and differences in classroom organisation, instructional focus and student modality. The four categories of the modified classroom observation scheme were coded as shown in table 5.10 below.

Time	Participant organisation			Components				Materials used		
	Whole	Group	Individual	R	W	L	S	W	A	V
	T to S/C	S to S/C								
4:30   5:30	√				√			Textbook		
7:05   7:30	√				√			Textbook		

T to S/C = teacher to students or class as a whole      S/C = student to students or class as a whole. R=Reading W=Writing      L=Listening S=Speaking  
W = Written, A = Audio, V = Visual

Table 5.10 Sample sheet of adapted Classroom Observation Scheme (COLT, Part A)

The two courses were compared to investigate what materials teachers used in their teaching such as non-pedagogical materials, commercially written textbooks, exam practice workbooks, components focused on during the lessons (reading, writing, speaking or listening) and whether the lessons were student-centred or teacher-centred. The data was analysed in terms of the above categories of the classroom observation scheme. Immediately after each observation, while my memory was fresh, I completed the notes. The time teachers and students spent on each of the categories were calculated as a percentage of the total lesson time (length of lessons minus breaks). In the section below, I compare the individual categories of the classroom observation scheme of the two courses in order to see the differences between the IELTS preparation courses at Berlitz and PACC.



### 5.3.5.1. Participant organisation

Table 5.11 below summarises the interaction patterns of the tutors at the two institutes:

Institutes	Participant organisation			
	Teacher-student/class	Student-student/class	Group	Individual
Berlitz	83%	2%	4%	11%
PACC	93%	3%	1%	3%

Table 5.11 Participant organisation in the IELTS preparation classes

The first category of the classroom observation instrument looks at the type of interaction. Table 5.11 above shows that the most common type of interaction was teacher to students/class in both the preparation courses. Both the teachers spent the majority of class time talking to the whole class which is typical of education in Pakistan in general. At Berlitz, activities involving students working individually was more common than the students interacting as a class or working in a group. From the detailed discussion of the classroom observation at Berlitz, we saw that students received many tasks to complete individually, related to reading, writing, speaking and listening. Similarly, the students at PACC did not interact much with their fellow students or in the group. Unlike the students at Berlitz, they were not given many tasks to complete individually. The tutor at PACC talked to the whole class for the majority of the lesson time (93%).

### 5.3.5.2. Components

The next category of the classroom observation scheme focuses on all four language skills practised by students in class, either separately or in combination. The percentage of time spent practising each of these, at Berlitz and PACC, are provided in table 5.12 below.

Components	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Berlitz	9%	40%	19%	32%
PACC	14%	35%	14%	35%

Table 5.12 Time devoted to practising each component out of total class time

In the table above it can be noticed that students at both the institutes received more practice for the ‘Reading’ component of the IELTS than any other which may be because the reading component is generally considered to be the most difficult section of the IELTS test. Berlitz spent comparatively more time on the reading component of IELTS than PACC. ‘Speaking’ was the second most practised component at both centres. For the ‘Listening’ and ‘Writing’ parts of the test, students at PACC received almost equal practice, but Berlitz students received more practice in ‘Writing’ compared to ‘Listening’. It is interesting to note that I did not find significant differences between the two institutes in terms of practising the four components of the test. However, detailed classroom observations revealed that the way they practised these four modules differed considerably. Berlitz used many different activities (such as, vocabulary, speed reading, skimming, web designing) which were completely absent at PACC.

### 5.3.5.3. Materials

The last category of the classroom observation scheme covers the teaching materials used in the class. I have included the types of materials, such as textbook, audio and video, without any further sub-division (as done by Read and Hayes, 2003). Table 5.13 below summarises the use of materials by the tutors at Berlitz and PACC.

Materials used	Textbook	Audio	Video
Berlitz	75%	19%	6%
PACC	95%	3%	2%

Table 5.13 Materials used for IELTS preparation

Both the tutors relied mainly on textbooks for practising all four language skills. The tutor at Berlitz used different textbooks (foreign editions) compared to the PACC

tutor who relied only on local IELTS practice material. In comparison to the use of audio and video facilities at Berlitz, the PACC tutor only occasionally used these as they were not available in the IELTS preparation classroom at PACC. Overall, comparing the two IELTS preparation courses through the use of the adapted classroom observation instrument (COLT, Part A), did not reveal substantial differences between the two courses in terms of the IELTS components practised in the class, participant organisation and the materials employed for teaching. In both the courses, the teachers dominated most of the classroom interaction and students received minimal opportunity for oral practice. Use of materials for both the courses was limited mainly to textbooks while occasionally audio and video facilities were utilised.

From my fieldnotes of classroom observations of both institutes, it emerged that the Berlitz tutor arranged different activities for practising all four components. She taught to the IELTS format; outlining test-taking strategies (e.g. time management); and administering practice tests. She used materials other than the main textbooks including the internet, and BBC and CNN talk shows to improve her students' listening; and skimming and speed reading techniques to help them cope with the reading component. The more dynamic quality of the IELTS preparation lessons at Berlitz aligns with the quality of IELTS preparation lessons found in studies such as Hawkey (2006), Mickan and Motteram (2009), Moore et al. (2012) and Read and Hayes (2003). The activities mentioned by the IELTS preparation teachers in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012), for example, also included learning quick and efficient ways of reading text and reading quickly to get the main idea of the text. The types of activities used in the Berlitz classroom were all heavily influenced by the test which suggests that there is a substantial washback from the test to the course and on the teacher preparing the candidates, as she adapted the course content, activities, and teaching methods to suit the needs of students and mostly used IELTS-appropriate activities. A range of exercises was chosen by both the teachers to specifically prepare students for test tasks, helping them understand typical topics, and making them aware of the test framework. But the lessons at PACC did not involve practising activities such as skimming, web design, and vocabulary exercises which suggests that, in this centre, there is little or no washback from the IELTS test to the course and on the teacher preparing the candidates.

## 5.4. Interviews with IELTS preparation teachers

### 5.4.1. Pre-course interview

To recapitulate from my methodology chapter, I conducted semi-structured interviews with IELTS preparation teachers at Berlitz and PACC twice, at the beginning and at the end of the preparation course. The first phase of the interview captured information on the profile of the teachers preparing candidates to take the test, the textbooks, materials and activities used in the classroom, methodology employed, the influence of test on the content of their lessons and methodology, and their perceptions of their students. The second round of interviews, conducted at the end of the course, was comparatively shorter, to gain information on the teachers' overall impression of their class, perceptions about their students' progress, and their overall experience of teaching the IELTS preparation course. The teacher interviews also helped to triangulate the data from classroom observations. As noted in Chapter 4 (section 4.13.1), the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, the following three main themes were identified from the pre- and post-course interviews: washback of IELTS test on teachers, English proficiency of IELTS candidates and students' progress. In table 5.14 below, I have presented background information about the IELTS preparation teachers at both the institutes.

Institutes	Gender	Age	Qualification	Years teaching	Trained as an IELTS examiner	Received training in preparation of students for IELTS
Berlitz	Female	42	Medical graduate	7	No	Yes (from British Council)
PACC	Male	45	Medical graduate	6	No	No

Table 5.14 Profile of IELTS preparation teachers at Berlitz and PACC

The background information of teachers presented in table 5.14 above suggests that the tutors at the two centres do not hold any relevant qualifications for teaching the IELTS preparation course. However, both the teachers were fluent speakers of English, since this is the main criterion for recruiting teachers in these institutes.

Coincidentally they are both medical graduates and have been preparing students for more than five years. None of the teachers were trained as IELTS examiners, a typical feature of Pakistani IELTS preparation teachers. These findings contrast with Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012), where most of the teachers were IELTS examiners.

The teacher at Berlitz was, however, trained in preparing students for IELTS, which could be one of the reasons for the differences in the teaching methods of the Berlitz and PACC tutors as found from the classroom observations. Berlitz, being an international institute, encourages their teachers to attend British Council workshops/seminars and short courses for IELTS preparation. These courses are quite expensive and the cost is borne by the institute. The local institutes, such as PACC, do not pay for any such courses; therefore their teachers do not receive any training and so are not trained in preparing students for the IELTS exam.

#### **5.4.1.1. Washback of IELTS test on teachers**

The tutor at PACC referred to ‘Cambridge IELTS’ practice material and the Berlitz tutor referred various books which were discussed under the ‘classroom observation’ section (see sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4) although she may not have listed all the books that she uses. Both teachers described using audio-visual facilities in their sessions to facilitate learning. From my observations this appears to be true for Berlitz but PACC hardly used any audio-visual facilities during the course due to limited access to these resources. Regarding the washback of the IELTS test on the teachers preparing the students, I found that both of them confirmed that the test influenced their choice of teaching material, their consideration of topics, and their teaching methodology. The tutor at Berlitz said:

I have to adapt my teaching methods to suit the IELTS content. The IELTS test is very demanding and the student is tested on all four skills so group work, pair work, individual work, all are encouraged along with using so many different activities and books which could help students raise their scores.

The comments of the tutor at Berlitz regarding washback of the IELTS test, corroborates the findings from classroom observations. She used various teaching

materials and methods to improve her students' four language skills. During classroom observations at Berlitz, it was also noticed that she discussed the exam structure, exam question types, and test-taking strategies with her students. For example, she always asked her students to complete three reading passages in 60 minutes and used stopwatch for the practising speaking. These activities helped students to prepare for the exam. This suggests that the test influenced her teaching methods and the materials used in the IELTS preparation course. The PACC tutor commented:

There are many different activities which I plan for the IELTS class suiting needs of students. I have to keep in mind the four modules of IELTS like reading, writing, listening and speaking which all need different teaching methods, so I try my best to bring different materials in class and involve students in a number of class activities related to IELTS.

Similar to the Berlitz tutor, the comments of the PACC tutor also suggest that he adapted his teaching methods and materials to suit the format of the IELTS test. His views regarding the washback of IELTS on his teaching methods and content contradicts his teaching methods and activities observed in class where he only used one textbook and did not introduce any additional materials to teach his students. He did not involve his students in different activities to prepare for the four modules of the test. The analysis of classroom observations through the use of COLT, Part A (see section 5.3.5) also suggests that he used textbook for 95% of the classroom time and the tutor talked to the whole class for majority of the lesson time. The students at PACC did not interact much with their fellow students or in the group.

#### **5.4.1.2. English proficiency of IELTS candidates**

I asked the teachers to share their overall perceptions of IELTS preparation students. The tutor at PACC said that: 'The students on our IELTS course are usually of too low a proficiency, and they cannot benefit from IELTS training and I think my teaching methods and classroom practice are not enough to improve the students' proficiency level, because of their initial low standard of English'. The tutor

attributes this to the absence of a placement test for the IELTS course. This is in line with Read and Hayes' (2003:189) findings from surveys of IELTS preparation courses in New Zealand, where many language institutes accept students on to an IELTS course who are of too low proficiency to achieve their required IELTS score.

The PACC tutor claimed that students expect the IELTS preparation course to be similar to the General English course where they learn grammar. The unrealistic expectations of students at PACC, that they will learn English grammar on an IELTS preparation course, suggests that the local neighbourhood tutors have created this perception in the general public. The local neighbourhood tutors, in accepting every student on to their IELTS preparation course (whether they apply for IELTS preparation or the General English course) have created an expectation that both courses are similar. So, people enrolling on to the IELTS preparation course at PACC might also come with an expectation that it is similar to the General English course. In contrast, the tutor at Berlitz described students as, 'highly motivated and serious to prepare for the exam'. She explained: 'They come from good schools and colleges actually, so their hard work and our efforts to offer best practice of IELTS help them to achieve their desired score'. The comments of these tutors are the opposite of each other, with the PACC tutor clearly highlighting the low proficiency of students and the tutor at Berlitz stating that students arrive with a very strong motivation to prepare for the IELTS test and that they come from good educational backgrounds. This implies that Berlitz attracts better educated students which is mainly ensured by their screening test compared to their PACC counterparts who do not have much exposure to English and thus possess limited proficiency in English, and are not screened.

## **5.4.2. Post-course interview**

### **5.4.2.1. Students' progress**

In the second round of interviews, I asked the two teachers if they had met their objectives for the course. The teacher at Berlitz thought that the course had gone reasonably well as she said: 'My main aim was to make students aware of the IELTS format, to make them practise the four modules and to teach them how to do time management. I have spent considerable time on each of these and I hope my

students will achieve the band score according to their requirements'. The tutor at PACC, however, felt frustrated due to lack of time and limited availability of audio-visual facilities. He commented that: 'It is quite hard to teach such an intensive course especially when students have got so much expectations from the course. I have dealt with teaching them whatever comes in exam but of course not verbs and tenses'. This suggests that the PACC tutor felt he had a problem in meeting the objectives of his course due to the low proficiency of students. He felt that the students had been typical of those he usually had on courses where they expected to learn grammar.

I asked the teachers about their views on the progress of their students. It would be interesting to relate their views to the pre- and post-test scores and to students' views on their own progress (see sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 below). The Berlitz tutor was very positive about her students' progress:

Except for one or two students who need extra practice at home, I think everyone else is ready to take the test. The plus point is that they all are fluent in English so they pick things easily. And they have also improved through my feedback on their essays and speaking skills. I am very happy especially with Masoom who was at the very low end and now he has improved remarkably.

The Berlitz tutor highlights the fact that her students' fluency in English helped them in the IELTS preparation course which strongly contrasts with the low proficiency of English of the students at PACC. The PACC tutor said that: 'I think students need more practice for IELTS, though they have improved but if the course were longer, I could have spent more time with those students who are very weak. My four students have improved a lot in this course which means they have worked very hard'. Overall the Berlitz tutor felt that she had met the learners' needs in terms of giving them knowledge about the exam and test taking strategies which helped them to improve during the course, but the PACC tutor thought that the course was not long enough to meet the students' needs to improve their General English proficiency.



## **5.5. IELTS pre- and post-tests conducted at Berlitz and PACC**

### **5.5.1. Introduction**

The pre- and post-tests were conducted to find out the efficacy of private institutes in improving the IELTS performance of their students. Twenty IELTS test-preparers in total from the two centres took the IELTS pre- and post-tests. In my methodology chapter, I explained that I assessed the listening and reading components myself because both sections contained multiple choice questions, the answers to which were found at the back of the book used for the source material and I assigned raw scores for both the components. The speaking and writing sub-tests were assessed by my hired examiner and therefore both these modules' results are given as a band score. Table 5.15 below shows the scores of each individual on every component of the test. This gives a comprehensive picture of the pre- and post-test scores of every individual at both institutes.

<b>STUDENT NAME</b>	<b>W</b>		<b>S</b>		<b>L</b>		<b>R</b>	
<b>PARTICIPANTS AT BERLITZ</b>	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
	Band score	Band score	Band score	Band score	Raw score	Raw Score	Raw Score	Raw Score
					20/	20/	13/	13/
AMIR	5.5	5	5.5	6	12	16	5	7
ABBASS	7	6.5	6	8.5	10	13	4	4
ABDUL QAYUUM	7	8	7	7.5	15	13	8	12
ASSAD	6.5	6.5	6	6.5	10	12	6	7
DANIYAL	7	6.5	8.5	6.5	18	16	7	7
HIBA	5	4.5	6	7	7	10	3	4
KANWAL	7	7	7	7	15	11	5	5
MASOOM	5	5	5	6.5	8	15	8	8
NIKHAT	6	7	6.5	8	13	10	3	8
SUMERA	5.5	7	6	4.5	9	12	3	8
TAUFIQ	7	5.5	6	7	10	10	5	5
UBAID	6	4	5	5	10	13	4	4
<b>PARTICIPANTS AT PACC</b>								
					20/	20/	13/	13/
AISHA	4	6.5	4	5.5	9	11	2	3
AYAZ	3	4	6.5	5	8	6	1	5
LEVIN	5	7	8	7.5	9	18	3	4
MARIA	6.5	6.5	5.5	6.5	12	10	5	8
MUBINA	6.5	6	7	5	12	14	7	6
NARESH	3	3	4	5	6	8	5	4
WAQAS	4	4	5	6	12	10	2	3
WASIM	5	6	5	5	10	10	2	4

Table 5.15 Berlitz and PACC students' scores for all four modules

Table 5.15 displays the band score and raw score data from the pre- and post-tests for each participant in the study. The first column on the left gives the names of each student (all pseudonyms) under each institute. Other columns show the scores for the modules of writing, speaking, listening, and reading denoted by W, S, L, and R respectively. There is a score for each student in the pre- and post-tests which gives a comparison of the difference between the scores and indicates the score gain or loss achieved by each student during their course of instruction.

As previously stated, the two institutes typically cater for two different social classes, so it is useful to see the difference in the relative performance of the students at both. It is clear that there is a difference in the starting level of the students at the two institutes, as shown in table 5.15 above. As explained earlier in this chapter, PACC is a local, private institute which attracts people from middle or lower

middle class families. Furthermore, these students usually attend state schools and public universities, and given such institutions' tendency towards Urdu- rather than English-medium instruction, they come to the private institute with a low level of English proficiency. Berlitz on the other hand caters for people from an elite or upper middle class background and most of their clients attend English-medium, private universities, or at least have some background education in English (secondary schooling or a graduate degree), therefore they have a better English proficiency level than the PACC cohort. In the next section, I will discuss the average results at both the institutes for each module. Due to the raw score and band score division, I will show the results for listening and reading separately from those for speaking and writing.

After consideration of the average scores, there is a discussion of the examiner's comments on the speaking and writing components. As mentioned previously, the examiner commented on the transcripts, adhering to the general criteria for assessing IELTS. Next, I will assess the progress of individual students to see if progress (or lack of progress) is uniform across the groups. In the final section, I will discuss the results of some of the students at Berlitz who sat the IELTS test and compare their actual scores with my post-test scores. These students took the test immediately after finishing the preparation course and provided me with their results by email. This will help determine whether the post-test results in my study are meaningful.

### **5.5.2. Comparison of average scores at Berlitz and PACC**

In this section, the pre- and post-test scores were averaged across students in order to obtain the overall result for each institute and for each participant at both the pre- and post-test stages. Sometimes an institute showed no score gain and sometimes it showed a slight variation (positive or negative) from pre-test to post-test. I have separated the writing and speaking band scores discussion from the reading and listening raw scores. The average results are shown on the graphs below.

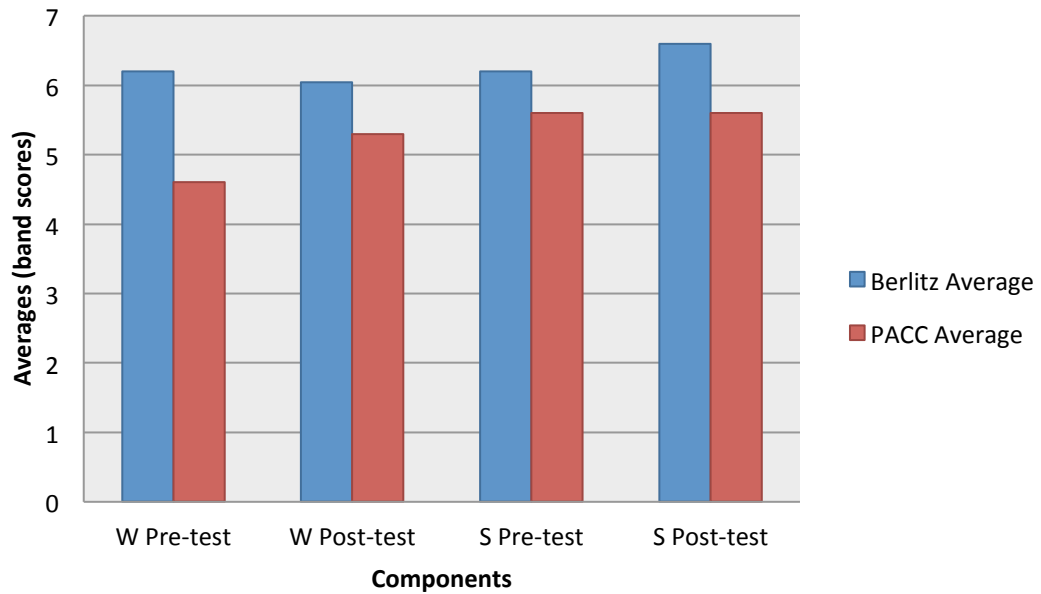


Figure 5.2 Berlitz and PACC writing and speaking sub-tests average scores

Figure 5.2 above shows the average band scores from Berlitz and PACC in the writing (W) and speaking (S) components for both the pre- and post-tests. I will firstly consider the average pre-test scores of both institutes. In the pre-test writing component, Berlitz secured a 6.2 band score, whereas PACC secured 4.6. In the pre-test speaking module, Berlitz secured a 6.2 band score and PACC 5.6. From the students' background information discussed above (see section 5.3.2) it was estimated that Berlitz students started with better proficiency, and this is confirmed by these pre-test results.

Turning to the average post-test results, PACC students on average made a slight improvement in the writing component of the post-test. The Berlitz improvement level in writing is not remarkable. Berlitz's pre-test writing average score is 6.2, higher than PACC's 4.6. Berlitz scored 6.04 in the post-test which is again higher than PACC's 5.3. Berlitz's average band in the pre-test speaking component is 6.2, whereas PACC's is 5.6. In the post-test speaking Berlitz averaged 6.6, which is again higher than the 5.6 average at PACC. PACC's average score of 4.6 in the writing pre-test slightly increased to 5.3 in the post-test, indicating a slight improvement in performance at PACC. Whereas, PACC's average speaking score in the pre- and post-tests remained constant, showing no improvement. Berlitz's

average writing score dropped very slightly from 6.2 to 6.04 in the post-test. The speaking scores for Berlitz, however, showed a slight improvement in the post-test, with the average rising from 6.2 to 6.6, indicating some positive effects from the speaking practice gained at the institute.

In order to be certain whether the pre- and post-test score differences at both institutes are significant or not, I used the ‘Wilcoxon signed-rank test’ to compare the scores in the two conditions. I tested pre- and post-test scores for each module for each institute. By testing Berlitz’s writing and speaking results, it was found that the differences in the pre- and post-test values are not significant, showing  $p=0.238$  for speaking and  $p=0.632$  for writing. For PACC, the test values are  $p=0.932$  for speaking and  $p=0.078$  for writing. The differences in the results are not statistically significant, although the PACC writing module comes close.

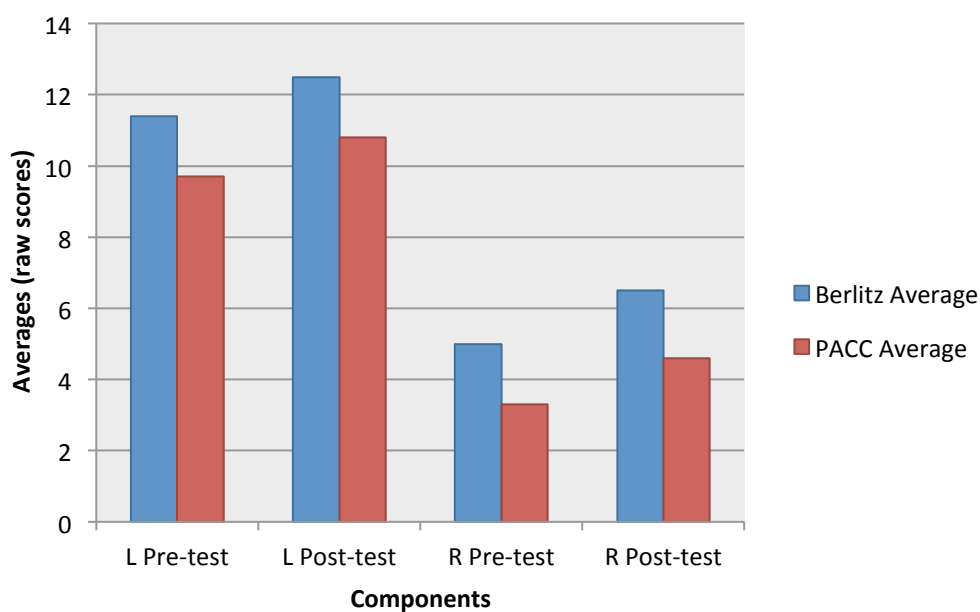


Figure 5.3 Berlitz and PACC listening and reading sub-tests average scores

Figure 5.3 above shows the average scores of the listening (L) and reading (R) components. The averages are shown as raw scores for both institutes. In the pre-test listening module, Berlitz secured an average score of 11.4, whereas PACC secured 9.7. In the pre-test reading module, Berlitz secured an average of 5.0 and PACC

secured 3.3. Again Berlitz starts off with a better score in both components compared to PACC.

Both the institutes improved their scores overall in the post-test in both these components. Berlitz's average score in the listening sub-test slightly improved from 11.4 to 12.5. In the reading section also, there was an improvement from 5.0 to 6.5. PACC's listening sub-test average increased from 9.7 to 10.8. The reading scores also increased from 3.3 to 4.6 in the post-test. Comparing the performance of Berlitz and PACC, there is not much difference from the previous modules in which Berlitz performed better than PACC. To sum up, the average scores of all four modules in Berlitz are higher than those of PACC. However, the improvement made by Berlitz is not much different from that made by PACC. Using the 'Wilcoxon signed-rank test' for the two sub-tests, I found that the p-values for Berlitz are  $p=0.224$  for listening and  $p=0.027$  for reading, which constitutes a significant improvement ( $p<.05$ ). For PACC, the test values are  $p=0.527$  for the listening and  $p=0.085$  for the reading sections. This shows that the only significant improvement among all four is seen in the reading component for Berlitz. Thus, the large amount of class time devoted to reading tests and exercises seemed to pay off for the students at Berlitz. Yet the results for the PACC writing and reading components are close to significant. The average results from both the institutes for all four sub-tests are interesting; looking at the pre-test results of Berlitz and the IELTS preparation they received, it was expected that the Berlitz group would show a greater improvement in all four sub-tests, but in actual fact the only significant improvement was shown in the reading section. On the other hand, PACC students also improved their scores in the reading sub-test, but less so and their improvement is only close to significant. It is likely that if I had surveyed more participants from the two institutes, the study might have achieved more reliable results. The results are in line with the studies conducted by Green (2007), Rao et al. (2003), and Read and Hayes (2003) where students on the IELTS preparation courses did not show significant improvement on all the four modules. Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) found that the students made the greatest gains in the listening module. In Rao et al.'s (2003) study, the experimental group made a significant improvement in the writing component only. In the study

conducted by Read and Hayes (2003), students on Course A significantly improved in the listening component but their reading and writing scores did not improve. This suggests that students made variable progress on these courses. Read and Hayes (2003) explain that an extended period of study is required to gain any substantial increase in the IELTS scores.

### **5.5.3. Examiner's comments on the 'speaking' and 'writing' sections of the test**

This section reports on the examiner's comments on the speaking and writing components of the pre- and post-test. I will compare the pre- and post-test comments to see if they are in line with the scores she awarded. This will ensure the validity of the marks assigned by the hired examiner for this study. On each transcript of the test, the examiner highlighted mistakes which are considered to be important in an IELTS examination, and she also provided comments at the end of each transcript of the speaking and writing sub-tests, according to the criteria used to assess real IELTS transcripts. From these comments, we can see how each individual performed in the pre- and post-test modules. If an individual made any progress, as indicated in the scores, I needed to know whether the examiner's comments reflected this improvement. I will discuss some of the participants' scores from both institutes by looking at the band scores for each module of the pre- and post-tests, and then look at the examiner's comments on the tests. As discussed in Chapter 4, all the tests were coded and randomised so that the examiner would not be able to identify any of the participants.

<b>Name of student/pre- and post-test scores</b>	<b>Comments on pre-test</b>	<b>Comments on post-test</b>
Masoom (5.0-6.5)	There is some hesitation with pauses with limited lexical resources. There are some errors in articles and tenses.	He is overall a good and fluent speaker. The lexical resources and grammatical range is okay.
Abbass (6.0-8.5)	His fluency is okay with some hesitation.	He is very fluent and coherent, he has used accurate tenses.
Nikhat (6.5-8.5)	There is some hesitation in the speaking but task completed. Inappropriate use of articles.	The task is completed; she is fluent with some rephrasing and self-correction. Overall she is very clear.
Taufiq (6.0-7.0)	Not much relevant to the topic but fluent speaker, tenses bit problematic.	He is quite fluent with appropriate discussion of the topic. Correct use of tense.
Aisha (4.0-5.5)	She hesitates and repeats a lot. There are too many grammatical errors.	She hesitates with some grammatical errors. There is some repetition but overall it is okay.
Levin (5.0-7.0)	Does not address the question directly, problem with paragraphing and some grammatical errors.	Well attempted, some problem with paragraphs but generally okay.

Table 5.16 Examiner's comments on improved writing and speaking scores at PACC and Berlitz

Table 5.16 above shows the examiner's comments on the pre- and post-tests on students' completion of the writing and speaking components. The improvement in scores made by these students varied and the examiner's comments suggest that the IELTS test-preparers improved their language skills related to writing and speaking components. Masoom from Berlitz improved his speaking by a 1.5 band score, and the examiner's comments suggest that he greatly improved his fluency in the post-test, compared to some hesitations and pauses in the pre-test. Abbass from Berlitz improved more substantially, by a 2.5 band score, in the speaking post-test. There was some hesitation in his speech in the pre-test which but not in the post-test, according to the examiner's comments. Similarly, Nikhat also showed a clear improvement, with a 2.0 band score increase; she had some article errors and hesitation in the pre-test but these were not evident in the post-test, hence the improvement in her score. Taufiq made a slight improvement of a 1.0 band score, and the examiner's comments reflected the improvement in his relevancy to the topic and use of tenses in the post-test.

Aisha at PACC increased the score in her speaking module by a 1.5 band.



According to the examiner, she improved on her grammatical errors, but her hesitation and repetition remained the same in both tests. Levin from PACC had a 2.0 band improvement in his writing sub-test. He did not make a very good attempt to answer the question in the pre-test but did in the post-test. The examiner's comments on the improvement made by these students are clearly reflected in her assigned band scores and the significant differences between them. Consider the comments in the following table where students at the two institutes had decreased their scores in the post-test.

<b>Name of student/pre- and post-test scores</b>	<b>Comments on pre-test</b>	<b>Comments on post-test</b>
Daniyal (8.5-6.5)	Fluent, good collocations and accurate.	Generally good but simple, self corrects with some repetition.
Sumera (6.0-4.5)	Fluent, argues logically and slightly simplistic.	Lots of hesitation, lack of stress in many sentences and some errors.

Table 5.17 Examiner's comments on decreased writing and speaking scores at PACC and Berlitz

In table 5.17 above, both students from Berlitz showed a decrease in their scores in the post-test. Daniyal's score dropped by a 2.0 band score; he went from being quite fluent in the pre-test to repeating himself more frequently in the post-test. Sumera dropped her score by 1.5 bands and according to the comments, she was fluent in the pre-test speaking with no errors, but she showed lots of hesitation, as well as some errors in her post-speaking test. I have also included some examples in the table below where students' scores did not change.

Name of student/pre- and post-test scores	Comments on pre-test	Comments on post-test
Assad (6.5-6.5)	Question largely answered, generally accurate with grammar, overall good.	Good written, appropriate style, overall excellent and well controlled.
Kanwal (7.0-7.0)	Clear structure with examples, generally good with some inaccuracies, sentences too long.	Paragraphs are generally good, overall appropriate, some complex sentences.
Maria (6.5-6.5)	Arguments logically supported, no paragraphing and overall good.	Good, not enough paragraphing and overall okay.

Table 5.18 Examiner’s comments on unchanged writing and speaking scores at PACC and Berlitz

The students in table 5.18 above showed no change in their post-test scores, when compared with their pre-test results. The comments of the examiner are balanced and indicate there was not much difference in the pre- and post-tests performance of these students. For example, Assad was accurate in grammar and the examiner remarked that overall his essay was good. She also remarked that his work in the post-test was good overall. Similarly, Kanwal’s pre- and post-tests were generally good with a clear structure. PACC student Maria’s unchanged score was reflected in the examiner’s comments where both tests were noted as good, and that she presented good arguments with only minor paragraphing problems in both tests. Overall, the examiner’s comments reflected the band scores awarded for the pre- and post-tests, whether there was improvement, decline, or no change.

#### 5.5.4. Comparison of the rate of improvement of each student

This section examines the rate of improvement for each participant in each module at the two institutes. From my results section (see section 5.5.2 above), it can be seen that there was some improvement, although this was not the same, for both institutes. It is important to look at the individual scores to understand apparent improvement or lack of improvement. From the candidate profile questionnaire and the observation

of IELTS preparation, it is clear that Berlitz possesses more proficient speakers than PACC. We know that they start with better scores in their pre-test. The IELTS training received by students at Berlitz is apparently much better than at PACC, thus it was expected that students at Berlitz would improve their scores in the post-test more than their PACC counterparts. However, after seeing the results, this does not appear to be the case. I have shown each student's results on the bar-graph to compare the rate of improvement across the two institutes. I have also provided a data table under each graph which gives the maximum and minimum score gains, together with the median, mean and standard deviation in the pre- and post-tests. The point of examining individual differences is to find out how many students at each centre increased or decreased their scores, or remained unchanged, and how this affects the change in the overall score of any of the components. For example, significant improvement is only found in the reading component at Berlitz. This analysis of individual scores will also show if all or only some of the students, improved.

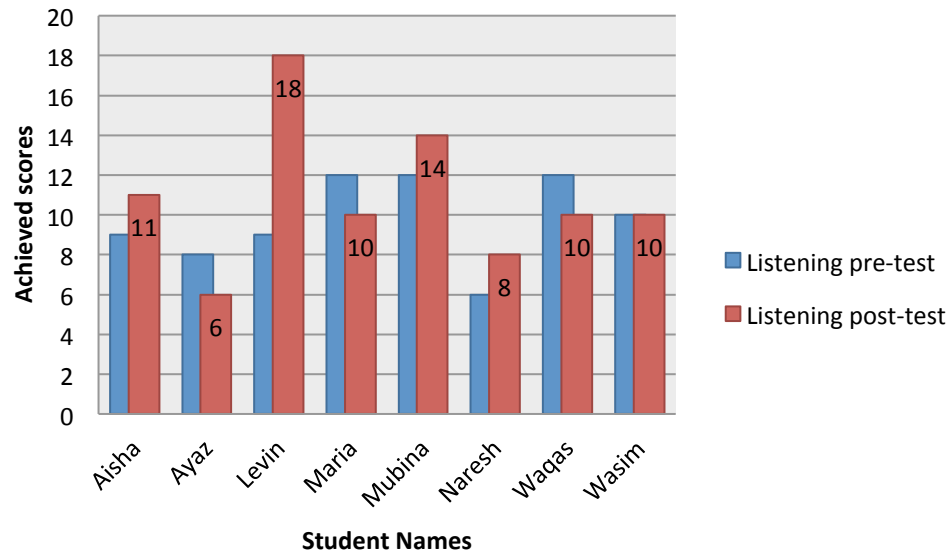


Figure 5.4 Participants' pre- and post-test listening scores at PACC

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
PACC	8	9.7	10.8	1.1	1.0	2.1	3.6	-2	9

Table 5.19 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS listening component

Figure 5.4 shows the scores for each student at PACC in the listening component. It can be seen that some students like Aisha, Levin, Mubina and Naresh improved their scores in the post-test. With the exception of Levin, these participants achieved the same improvement of two marks in the post-test. Levin's progress by nine marks in the post-test stands out among all the participants. The improvement overall is not significant, as was indicated in the previous discussion, as most of the participants, except for Levin, improved with only a slight change in their scores. If it had not been for the significant improvement in Levin's score there would have been no overall improvement in the post-test scores of the PACC students in the listening component. Wasim is the only participant to have maintained his score in both tests. It is interesting to note that those students with decreased scores, namely, Ayaz, Maria, and Waqas, all decreased by the same rate in the post-test.

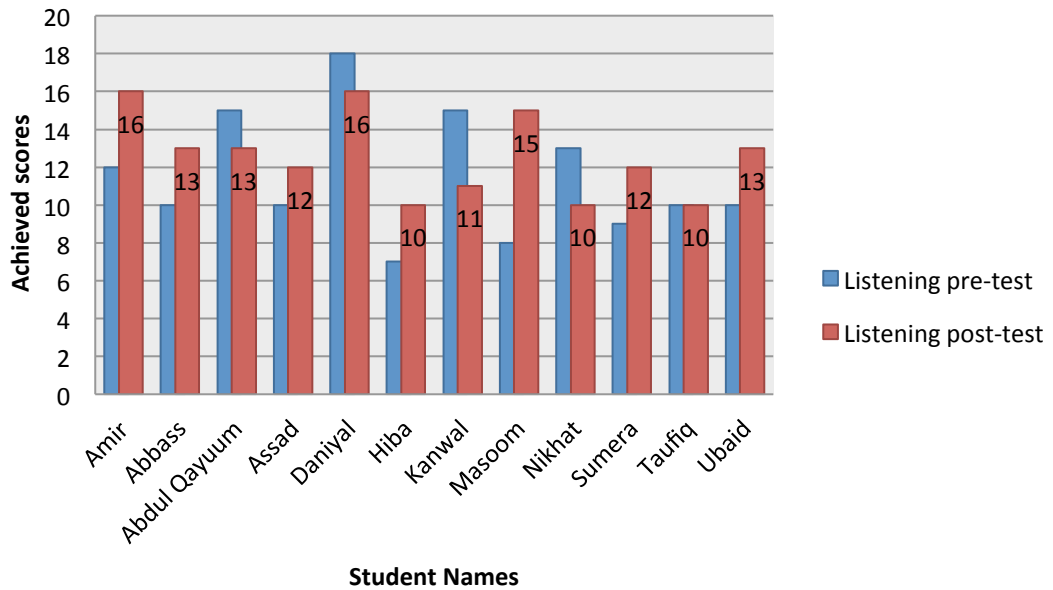


Figure 5.5 Participants' pre- and post-test listening scores at Berlitz

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
Berlitz	12	11.4	12.5	1.1	2.5	3.2	2.1	-4	7

Table 5.20 Pre- and post-test scores for IELTS listening component

Comparing the results of the Berlitz students, it can be seen that out of the 12, seven improved their post-test score in the listening component. Some students' scores also decreased, like those of Abdul Qayyum, Daniyal, Kanwal, and Nikhat, by between two and four marks. Taufiq's score stayed the same in the post-test. Among those who improved their scores, Masoom made an outstanding improvement in his listening by seven marks, whereas all the others only improved slightly, either by two or three marks. Berlitz did not show a significant improvement in the listening component of IELTS as only about half of their students improved their scores, while others dropped theirs by two or three marks.

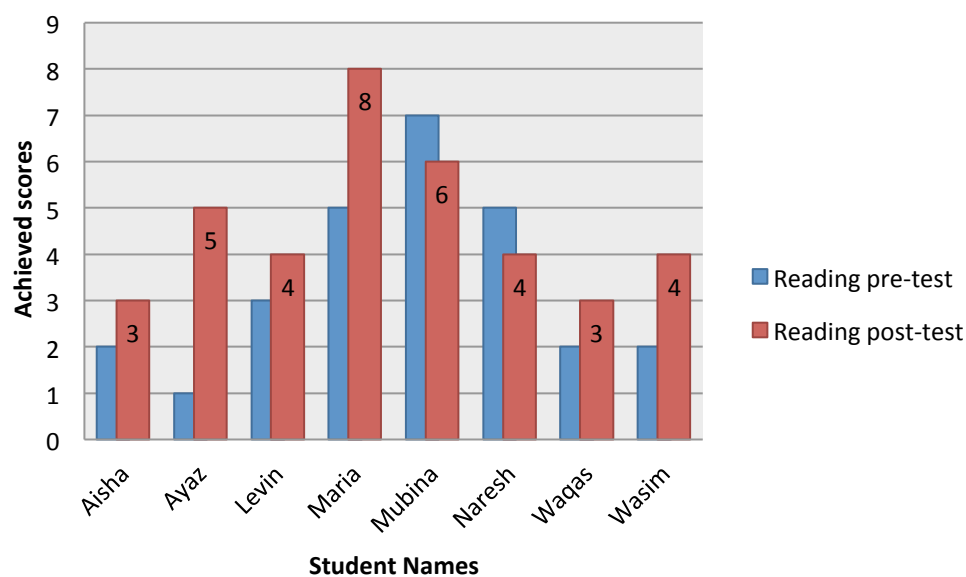


Figure 5.6 Participants' pre- and post-test reading scores at PACC

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
PACC	8	3.3	4.6	1.2	1	2.0	1.6	-1	4

Table 5.21 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS reading component

Figure 5.6 shows the scores for the reading component of the PACC students. All the students improved their post-test scores except Mubina and Naresh who decreased by one mark each. Among those who improved their scores in the reading module, Ayaz and Maria showed the greatest difference, Ayaz going from one to five, and Maria from five to eight. The overall improvement is  $p=0.085$  which is borderline significant. The results, however, show that many students improved, but only one or two by a large margin, so it is quite likely that more students improving at the same rate might have had an effect on the level of significance of the results. All others improved their scores by one mark, except Wasim who improved by two.

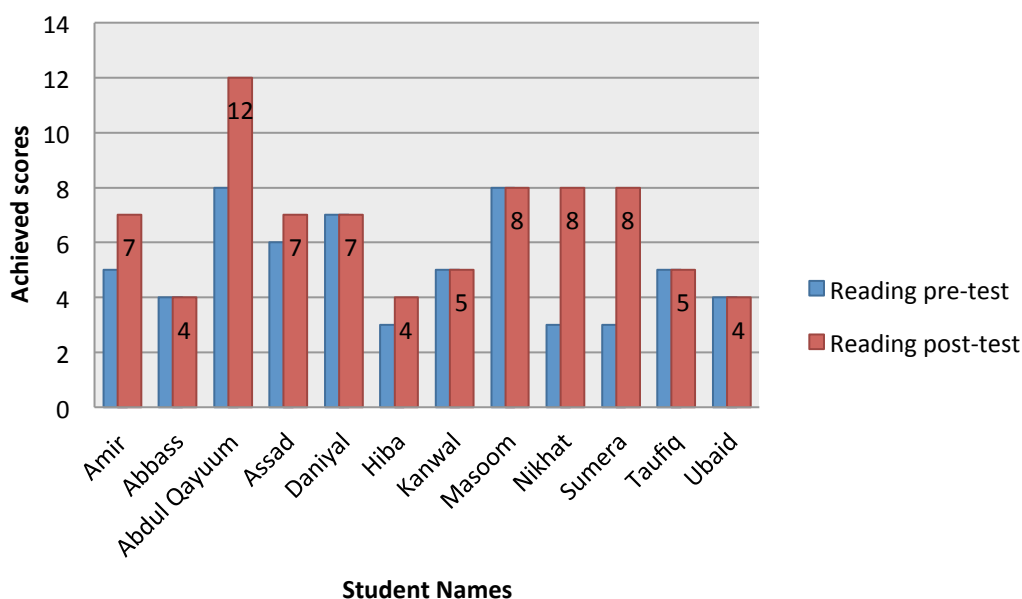


Figure 5.7 Participants' pre- and post-test reading scores at Berlitz

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
Berlitz	12	5.0	6.5	1.5	0.5	1.8	2.3	0	5

Table 5.22 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS reading component

The Berlitz students' pre- and post-test scores are very interesting in terms of the students who either improved or stayed the same. Half of the total number of participants remained constant, and half of them improved their scores. In the post-test, Sumera and Nikhat's scores increased by five marks each, and Abdul Qayyum's by four marks. All others improved slightly, by one or two marks, in the reading section. This was the only overall improvement that was significant ( $p=0.027$ ). The individual scores, indicating that the students either improved their scores or stayed constant, shows that they made a significant improvement in the 'reading' component of the test. It is likely that the students significantly improved their reading because of the different reading techniques they received during IELTS preparation at Berlitz. The tutor's emphasis on reading techniques like skimming, speed reading, and vocabulary exercises, and encouraging practice of all these techniques, including time management for the three reading passages, seems to

have been helpful for the Berlitz students.

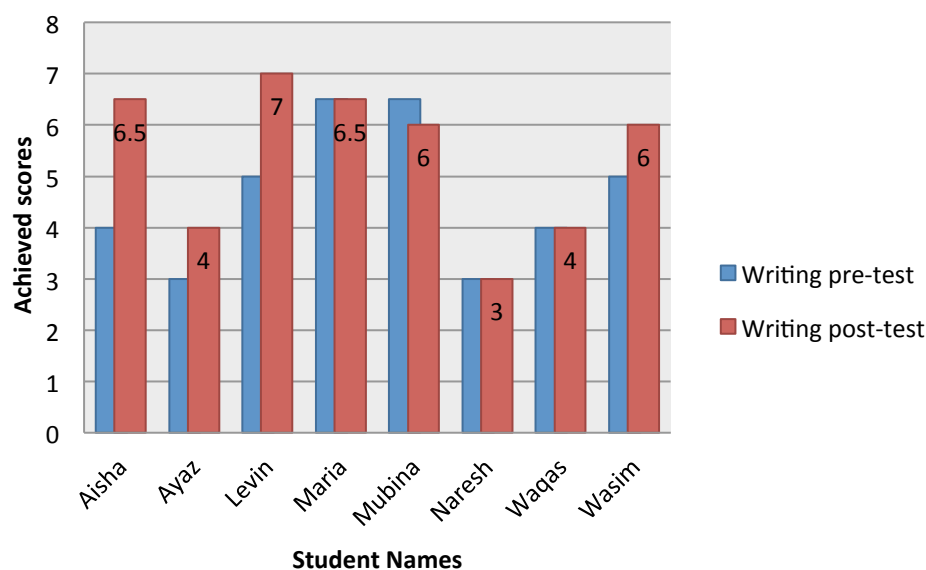


Figure 5.8 Participants' pre- and post-test writing scores at PACC

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
PACC	9	4.6	5.3	0.7	0.5	1.3	1.4	-0.5	2.5

Table 5.23 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS writing component

In the writing test at PACC, Mubina is the only student who showed a decrease, by a 0.5 band score. The scores of other students, like Maria, Naresh, and Waqas, stayed the same in the post-test. Participants who improved their scores included Aisha, who improved by a 2.5 band score, Levin by a 2.0 band score, and Ayaz and Wasim by a 1.0 band score each. The overall improvement is quite close to significant ( $p=0.078$ ). These individual differences show that the considerable improvement by Aisha and Levin might be the reason for this result, so it is possible that more students improving at the same rate could have helped to achieve a significant level of improvement in PACC's writing sub-test scores.



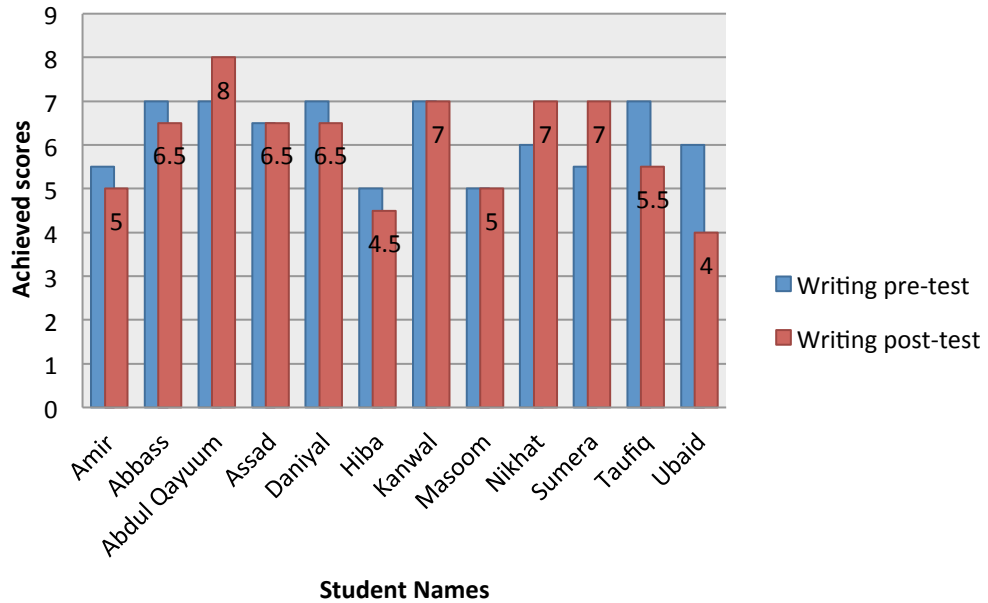


Figure 5.9 Participants’ pre- and post-test writing scores at Berlitz

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Median Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
Berlitz	12	6.2	6.04	-0.1	-0.2	0.8	1.2	-2.0	1.5

Table 5.24 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS writing component

In the writing component, the scores of a number of the Berlitz students decreased in the post-test. Some students like Amir, Abbass, Daniyal and Hiba made a slight decrease of a 0.5 band score. Taufiq decreased by 1.5 and Ubaid decreased most, with a 2.0 band score. The students whose scores did not change include Assad, Kanwal, and Masoom. The remaining students, who improved, included Sumera with a 1.5 band score increase and Abdul Qayyum and Nikhat who each improved by a 1.0 band score. The overall improvement is not significant ( $p=0.632$ ) as only a limited number of people improved their scores, and their level of improvement was minimal.

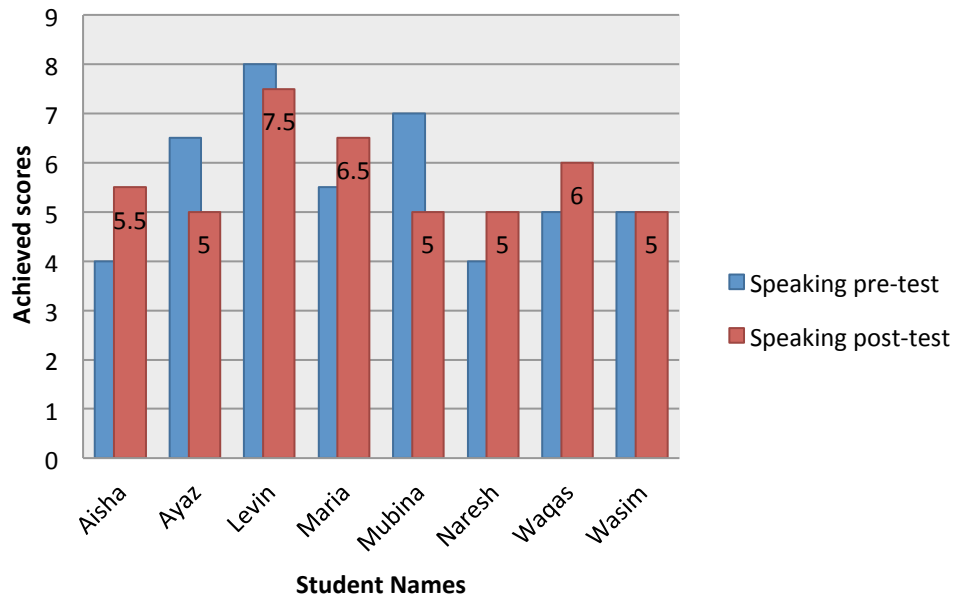


Figure 5.10 Participants' pre- and post-test speaking scores at PACC

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
PACC	8	5.6	5.6	0.0	1.4	0.9	-2.0	1.5

Table 5.25 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS speaking component

In the speaking component of the post-test, Wasim's score remained unchanged. Aisha improved by a 1.5 band score, whereas Maria, Naresh, and Waqas improved by a 1.0 band score each. Of those who decreased their scores, Mubina dropped by a 2.0 band score, Ayaz by a 1.5 band score and Levin slightly by a 0.5 band score, though his score in all other modules improved. The overall improvement is not significant ( $p=0.932$ ) which is obvious from the low rates of improvement made by the students.

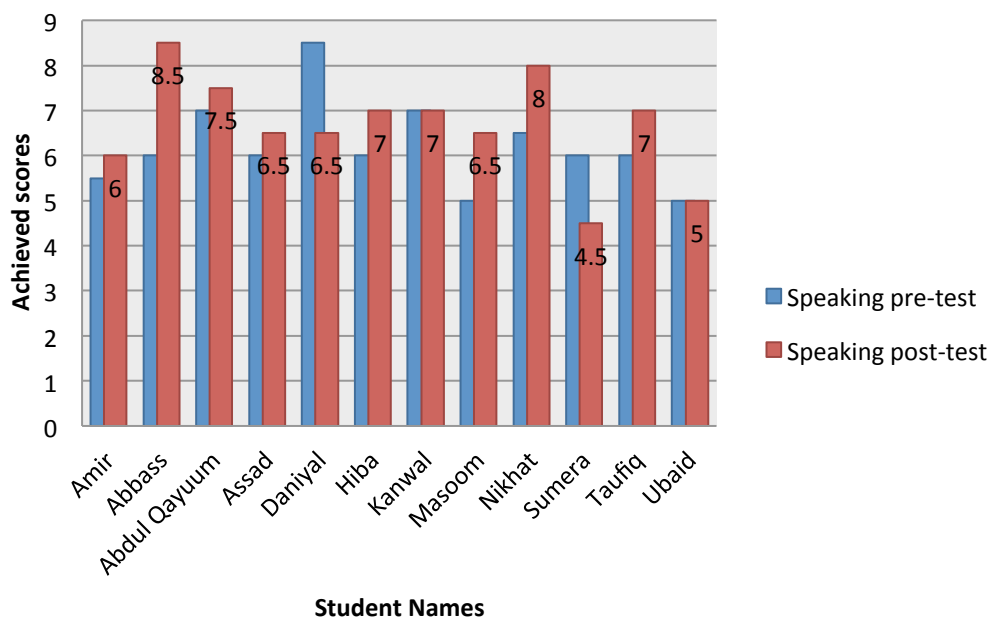


Figure 5.11 Participants' pre- and post-test speaking scores at Berlitz

Institute	N	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Mean Change	Std. Deviation for the pre-test	Std. Deviation for the post-test	Min. Change	Max. Change
Berlitz	12	6.2	6.6	0.4	0.96	1.1	-2.0	2.5

Table 5.26 Pre- and post-test scores for the IELTS speaking component

Looking at the speaking scores at Berlitz, Kanwal and Ubaid remained unchanged in the post-test. Amir, Abdul Qayyum, and Assad slightly improved their score by a 0.5 band score, Hiba and Taufiq improved by a 1.0 band score each, and Masoom and Nikhat improved by a 1.5 band score each. The greatest improvement was made by Abbass, with a 2.5 band score increase in the speaking module. Daniyal and Sumera's scores dropped in the post-test by a 2.0 and a 2.5 band score respectively. Looking at the pre- and post-scores (average gains), and individual progress made by each student at each module, it appears that the students at both PACC and Berlitz did not show any pattern of increase or decrease in their scores.

The pre- and post-test results in my study show that the institutes are not very effective in raising the proficiency level of their students, as the results are not

statistically significant, with the exception of the reading module at Berlitz.

Comparing the pre- and post-test scores of both institutes it is clear that neither of the two cohorts improved considerably. The rate of improvement is very similar in both institutes. The improvement made by each institute for individual modules varies, as there is no regular pattern of score gains, consistent with studies like Brown (1998), Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), Green (2007), Rao et al. (2003), and Read and Hayes (2003). It is difficult to generalise from the results of this study of students' IELTS score as it was conducted on a small scale. This is similar to Brown (1998) and Read and Hayes (2003) who also acknowledged that the small number of participants in their studies limited the ability to generalise their conclusions about score gains. But even results from research conducted on a large scale such as Elder O'Loughlin (2003) and Green (2007) suggest that instruction does not make a significant difference to performance. It appears that shorter IELTS preparation courses (i.e. eight to ten weeks) do not make a significant difference to the performance of test-preparers, whether the studies are conducted on a small scale such as Brown (1998) and Read and Hayes (2003) or with a large sample such as that undertaken by Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) and Green (2007).

The pre- and post-test results of the studies on IELTS score gains such as Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), Green (2007), Rao et al. (2003), and Read and Hayes (2003) are quite conflicting. These conflicting results make expected improvement hard to predict. Overall the IELTS training received by students at Berlitz was apparently much better than at PACC, thus it was expected that students at Berlitz would improve their scores in the post-test more than their PACC counterparts, but this does not appear to be the case after examining the results. The lack of improvement on both the IELTS preparation courses could be due to the short duration of these courses, and the uneven practice of all four components. These studies attribute lack of improvement to these factors. It is obvious that the lower end courses do not offer participants anything for their money; but the students attending the top end (expensive) preparation courses are also not getting much for their money. This implies that clients at all levels are being short-changed.

### 5.5.5. Discussion of actual IELTS results

Half of the test-preparer participants from Berlitz took the IELTS test soon after finishing the preparation course, being eager to do so at the earliest opportunity. The PACC students were also contacted by email within a month of finishing the course to find out their IELTS scores, but none of them replied, so it was not possible to obtain their results. Out of the 12 participants from Berlitz, six students supplied their IELTS results after sitting the exam. Students who had indicated that they were going to sit the examination soon after completing the course were contacted by email and asked about their results. These students reported how well they performed in the examination and whether they achieved their target band score. The results of the test-preparers who took the test are given in table 5.27 below.

Name	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Achieved score	Required score
Kanwal	7.5	6.5	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.5
Nikhat	7.0	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Abdul Qayuum	7.5	8.0	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.0
Masoom	7.0	4.0	6.0	7.0	6.0	6.5
Abbass	6.5	5.5	6.0	6.0	6.5	6.0
Daniyal	7.5	5.5	6.0	6.0	6.5	7.0

Table 5.27 Actual IELTS results of students at Berlitz

In the table above, I have given the band scores for each component of the test and the overall scores achieved. In the last column, I have provided the band score the test-preparers actually required to see if they were able to achieve these. The tutor at Berlitz was quite happy with the overall progress of Kanwal, Nikhat, Abdul Qayuum, Masoom, and Daniyal. She suggested after the mock-test that all these students were ready to take an examination soon after exiting the course. It is, however, interesting to note that Masoom and Daniyal were unable to secure their required band scores, missing out on their targets by only 0.5 of a band score. The tutor often made

reference to the significant improvement made by Masoom in class, and to his being ready to take the test without delay (see the tutor's post-course interview above; see section 5.4.2). Masoom progressed very well during the course and he also performed well in the mock-test. He was quite confident during the last class of the session because of the tutor's comments about his progress; nonetheless, he narrowly missed his target band score, and had to take the test again. Masoom might have taken some more time to prepare at home after completing the preparation course at Berlitz, had he not been so confident after his mock-test result, hence deciding to take the test very soon after finishing the course. Daniyal also secured half a band less than his desired score. The tutor considered him to be an outstanding student due to the overall progress made during the course and his performance in the mock-test and suggested that he would be able to achieve his required band score. He has to now re-sit the test in order to get his desired band.

Abbass secured half a band score more than his requirement. The tutor, however, had not been happy with his performance and she had actually asked him not to take the test. From the tutor's point of view, his writing had not been satisfactory, and he was asked to take time to improve before sitting the test. Abbass was eager to take the test as soon as possible, however, and he did achieve his desired band. The contrast between the achieved band scores and the tutor's comments suggests that the tutor at Berlitz was not able to predict the results very accurately, as we see from the cases of Daniyal, Abbass and Masoom. The results predicted by their tutor were different from what the students actually achieved in their test.

#### **5.5.6. Comparison of students' actual IELTS results with post-test results**

This section compares the band scores achieved in the post-test of this study with the actual IELTS results of the six participants who sat the test. The participants took the IELTS exam within a week of having completed the IELTS preparation programme, so the period of time between the post-test and real IELTS exam was minimal. I

have compared the results of only two sub-tests because my post-test results of the writing and speaking components are in the band score format, whereas the listening and reading results are in the form of raw scores, so they cannot be compared with the band scores of the real exam results. The band scores of six participants for both the components are shown in table 5.28 below.

Name	Writing (post-test results)	Writing (actual IELTS result)	Speaking (post-test result)	Speaking (actual IELTS result)
Kanwal	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Nikaht	7.0	6.5	8.0	6.5
Abdul Qayuum	8.0	7.5	7.5	7.5
Masoom	5.0	6.0	6.5	7.0
Abbass	6.5	6.0	8.5	6.0
Daniyal	6.5	6.0	6.5	6.0

Table 5.28 Comparison of Berlitz students' writing and speaking post-test and actual exam results

Kanwal's scores in the writing and speaking sub-tests are the same in the post-test and the actual IELTS examination. Nikhat's speaking scores show great variation, given that her actual IELTS examination score is a 1.5 band score lower than what she achieved in the post-test of the study. There is also a very slight difference of half a band score in the writing part. Abdul Qayuum's score remains the same in the speaking test with only a slight variation in the writing score. Similarly for students like Masoom and Daniyal, the results of the actual IELTS examination do not differ greatly from the scores assigned by the examiner in the study. The most prominent difference is found in the speaking score of Abbass, as he secured 2.5 band scores less in the examination that he did in the post-test. This comparison between the two sets of results shows that the band scores assigned by my hired examiner are in most cases accurate; any differences that arise are typically very small, a 0.5 band score difference, for example, though in two cases there is more variation (1.5 to 2.5 bands). As well as there not being much difference between the pre- and post-test

scores, the actual results do not differ much from the pre-test scores either. It is important to bear in mind that the evaluation of the writing and speaking sub-tests is largely impressionistic and difficult to standardise. The 'IELTS Scores Explained' DVD (2009) suggests that the speaking and writing assessments not only follow certain criteria for marking but they also depend on the examiner's experience and style of assessment.

The results are close in some cases, but there is a difference in others, due to the variation in the examiners' experience. Also, there is a difference in the actual IELTS speaking and writing components compared to pre- and post-tests (e.g. the speaking test in this study involved a short recording of 1-2 minutes compared to the speaking element of the actual IELTS test which was about 11-15 minutes). The slightly lower scores of students in the real test, compared to the post-test, could be due to the examination situation and different marking criteria. Obviously the circumstances in the real IELTS examination are very different, and performance can be affected by factors such as time pressure, difficulty of questions and anxiety. This is the weakness of comparing the results of the post-test with those of the actual IELTS test. Nonetheless, it is worth comparing the scores of the study's post-test with the actual IELTS results as it provides some validity for the results of the study.

## **5.6. Interviews with IELTS test-preparers**

I conducted informal conversational interviews with all 20 participants at Berlitz and PACC at the end of their IELTS preparation session. It was a short interview session where I briefly asked students about their satisfaction levels with the IELTS preparation course and their perception about their improvement during the course. The students' perceptions will be cross-referenced with their actual improvement on the course (according to the pre- and post-test scores). Students were also encouraged to discuss anything relating to the IELTS preparation class (like classroom setup, the duration of the course and the fee structure). The questions related to these topics helped to find out about their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with any of the elements of



the course.

### **5.6.1. Students' views about their IELTS preparation course**

There was no formal procedure for gathering feedback from the students at the end of the IELTS preparation course at either of the centres. Berlitz students' comments showed an overall satisfaction with the preparation they received, with three or four students completely dissatisfied with the course. At PACC, however, more students demonstrated a lack of satisfaction with the preparation course. The following examples illustrate that the Berlitz students were generally satisfied with the materials and methods employed by the tutor, as the students said:

Masoom: I am happy with Berlitz course, I think tutor is good and she is very helpful. It was difficult for me to study at home because I find not much time but when I took admission here I come to study here, so I hope I will get my required band in IELTS.

Hiba: Berlitz is the best institute to prepare for IELTS. In terms of teaching, course, methodology, and syllabus – it is one of the best institutes. The tutor was very helpful, co-operative and the course was good. I enjoyed studying at Berlitz.

Despite their overall satisfaction, the following students at Berlitz complained about the fees and the short duration of the course:

Amir: It was good to study at Berlitz. I like teaching of our tutor. But still I am not perfect to take the test. I don't know what can I do. I think tutor should give extra classes free of cost to the weak students so we can improve. I am not able to pay more money because the fee was very expensive now I can't get again admission. So I don't know what to do but maybe I will prepare at home.

Assad: The preparation course is okay. I think it is not an extraordinary institute. The fee is very high for their air conditioner classrooms and good furniture. I can prepare at home if I want. I just don't find time to do the practice but my English is good.

Nikhat: I have benefitted from the IELTS programme. The speaking and reading sections were sufficient for us. Writing sessions were quite satisfactory but there was not enough time for practice of the listening section which started near the end of class sessions. I think our basic problem with listening is to understand foreign accents and to follow the flow. I think the tutor was competent and very cooperative. I would like to say that the Berlitz class sessions have helped in brushing up my existing capability but I have not felt any significant improvement in my proficiency level. The days of IELTS class sessions are not sufficient and this should be increased.

The few comments above from the test-preparers at Berlitz suggest that they were mostly satisfied with the preparation course, except they felt that the duration of the course was insufficient, and in Amir's case that the fee was too expensive. He is a rare example of a student from a lower middle class background attending Berlitz. His performance is relatively low on all the four components of the test and that is why he wanted extra classes free of charge. I also spoke with the IELTS preparation students at PACC who were not very satisfied with the course. Their chief complaint was that they expected to be taught English grammar in the IELTS preparation class, as they were weak in this area. They also felt that the practice they received from PACC was insufficient, and that they would be unable to achieve their desired band score. Two of the test-preparers said:

Ayaz: I hoped that I will learn English in IELTS class but the tutor did not give focus on grammar. I think it is not good to take admission in IELTS because sir never check my essays. So I should complete English language course first and then study IELTS. I think I waste my money. Wish I have prepared at home or some other centre.

Aisha: Our teacher is good but he speak sometime in Urdu. My grammar is very weak and I think I will learn grammar but I not learn it. I will not get my band in IELTS so I will again practice at home with my husband and then I will do the test because it is very costly test.

These students at PACC did not comment on the individual skills practised in the course, but their overall dissatisfaction was linked to the lack of grammar practice. The comments of the test-preparers at PACC correspond to those of their tutor who mentioned that the students had expectations of learning English grammar on the IELTS preparation course (see the IELTS tutors' interviews in section 5.6 above). It is interesting to note that the tutor at Berlitz did not focus on grammar teaching, and none of her students expressed dissatisfaction with this. It was clear from these interactions that most of the students at Berlitz were fluent English speakers, due to their English-medium education and use of English at work in some cases. They mainly joined Berlitz to become familiar with the test format, to do some test practice and to learn about effective time management during the IELTS examination, and the different types of test tasks. The students at PACC probably complained about the absence of learning basic grammar skills because of their low level of proficiency in English. As has already been mentioned, the tutor at PACC explained that, due to a lack of screening, everyone applying for the IELTS preparation course is admitted, and most of them expect to learn grammar on the course. Students like Maria commented on the short duration of the course and the material used in the class by saying: 'The practice was not very helpful because it was very little time. The Cambridge book is also very common so I don't think it is sensible to study here. I have prepared some other place I wish'. The following two students showed some

sort of satisfaction with the PACC course:

Mubina: The IELTS course was okay. Of course the fee they take they give same preparation. If it was very expensive institute then the teacher was wonderful and the standard was very high but in this price the course was fine. The tutor was helpful, I have not improved my English but I have learned what comes in the examination of IELTS.

Levin: The tutor was nice and I think it's good to practice here. I don't have problem in English but I just wanted to learn the techniques and the format of the test. And I think I have learned from PACC. The institute is not very expensive. It is fine.

Levin's comments reflect his having taken the IELTS preparation course with the aim of learning about the test and doing some practice, rather than to learn English or to improve his grammar skills. Out of the eight students at PACC, he was the only student who commented on this, which could be because of his better English proficiency (see table 5.15 for his pre- and post-test scores) and better performance compared to those of his classmates. In this way he was similar to the Berlitz students, whose main aim on the course was to prepare for the test and who were therefore satisfied, whereas those at PACC, who had come with an expectation of learning grammar, were dissatisfied.

### **5.6.2. Students' perceived and real improvement**

Not every student discussed their perceived improvement, as some of them were unsure about their rate of progress. I will discuss their perceived improvement against the background of their post-test and actual IELTS test scores. Masoom from Berlitz was persuaded that he was improving, claiming: 'Tutor says that I am improving and I also feel much better now after finishing the course'. Masoom's tutor repeatedly told him that he had made significant improvement during the

course and in the mock-test. The study test results also showed improvement in some areas, or, at the very least, consistent performance in others. But in the IELTS examination he only secured a 6.0 band score, and had to re-sit to achieve his required score of 6.5. The tutor's prediction and Masoom's perception regarding his progress were not realised by his actual exam results.

Nikhat was another student at Berlitz who was working full-time in a university, was a regular student and actively participated in the class. She always did very well in the tests set by the tutor. She said that: 'Berlitz class sessions have helped in brushing my existing capabilities but I have not felt any significant improvement in my proficiency level'. Nikhat's comments contradict her post-test results, where she showed an improvement on her pre-test scores, except for the listening sub-test in which she slightly dropped her score, perhaps because of insufficient listening practice. She complained about the small amount of time devoted to practising this part of the test (see comments above in section 5.6.1 above). While her comments suggest that she did not think she benefitted a great deal from the preparation course, she did secure her desired band score in the actual IELTS examination. Her views about her progress did not correspond with her examination result.

Kanwal from Berlitz expressed dissatisfaction with her progress: 'I think I have not much improved. I am trying to get high band score but I do not think I will be able to'. Kanwal's comments are in line with the results of our study. Her scores remained unchanged in the three components in the post-test, although in the listening test she dropped by four marks. Nonetheless, Kanwal was able to secure a 7.0 band score, which was 0.5 higher than her desired score. She had not felt confident about securing her required band score, but this contrasted with the actual results of her IELTS examination. Sumera is another Berlitz student who did not show satisfaction with her progress: 'I do not think I have improved maybe because I missed few classes and because of not enough practice at home'. Sumera's comments contradict the results of my study where she improved in all the components except for speaking. She did not attend classes very regularly, which she identified as a contributing reason for her not having shown any improvement.

Sumera did not sit the IELTS examination immediately after the completion of her course.

I mentioned earlier that none of the students at PACC sat the actual IELTS examination during the time of the study, so I will discuss their comments in relation to their results in my post-tests. Naresh showed no signs of progress saying: 'I have no improve a lot here so it is not very good at practicing IELTS'. Naresh's results contradict his perceptions as he made some improvement in two of the components. Wasim said: 'I am not satisfied with the course and I think I will not get good result in my IELTS'. Wasim's comments suggest that he did not improve, and he expressed no satisfaction with the preparation course. My results indicate, however, that he showed consistency, or even a slight improvement in two of the components. Aisha did not feel she had made any progress: 'I will not get my band in IELTS that I want I think, so I have again practice at home with my husband'. Aisha's comments were contrary to her results in the post-test, because she actually improved her scores in all four modules, but she did not perceive any improvement to have been made from attending the preparation course.

As mentioned earlier, Levin showed greater satisfaction with PACC's IELTS preparation course and he claimed to have improved from the practice at PACC: 'I have learned from PACC, the practice of IELTS is fine for me'. Levin's comments are in line with his results, as he improved in the three components, though saw a 0.5 band score drop in his speaking test. The perceptions of all of these students about their progress were in contradiction to their actual results in the post-tests of this study and the actual IELTS examination. This could be due to the fact that the improvements made were quite small and so perhaps were not perceived as being significant. Some of the students felt satisfied with the preparation they received, whereas some other students remained completely dissatisfied with the course and lacked confidence about attaining their required band scores. The results align with Read and Hayes (2003) where most test-preparers were not satisfied with their courses. Read and Hayes argue that the students mainly seek to gain admission to an IELTS preparation course in the hope of improving their IELTS band scores. The results of their pre- and post-tests suggest that there is a mismatch between students'

expectations and their performance as they did not significantly improve their scores. As discussed in Chapter 3, Read and Hayes conclude that IELTS preparation does not focus on improving the scores but ‘has developed into big business’ (2003:189).

## **5.7. Summary**

This chapter started with a discussion of a survey of private English Language Teaching institutes in Pakistan, providing useful information about the nature of the private English language teaching industry, distinguishing between different types of institutes, the courses offered, course duration and fee structure. There is a range of private institutes which aims to cater for different sections of society. The majority of the institutes that have sprung up cater for low-income candidates with little experience of English-medium education in the second- and third-tier cities in Pakistan; many are local neighbourhood tutors. These small businesses co-exist alongside international franchises, which cater for test-takers with higher incomes and some degree of English-medium education. The private (both local and international) institutes attract substantial numbers of clients. I discussed in Chapter 1 that the growth of IELTS test-preparers has resulted in economic opportunities for IELTS test preparation providers. IELTS, therefore, has had a significant financial impact on both test-preparers and test preparation providers.

Based on this broad survey of private institutes, two private language centres were then chosen for an in-depth study of their IELTS preparation courses. From the classroom observations of both institutes, it was expected that the students at Berlitz would improve more than their PACC counterparts. The teaching methods, resources, and IELTS practice at Berlitz are better than at PACC. However, through the use of the classroom observation instrument, it appeared that Berlitz and PACC were not dramatically different in practising all four language skills, or in their methods of interaction. Berlitz used audio and video facilities, resources which were very limited at PACC.

Berlitz attracts better English speakers due to their screening; they admit

more proficient speakers from the outset than PACC, and this can be seen from the pre-test results. The students at Berlitz started with a better score compared to those at PACC. Unfortunately the pre- and post-test results revealed that the two institutes are not very effective in raising the proficiency level of the students. Comparing the pre- and post-test scores of both institutes, neither of the two cohorts improved considerably. The rate of improvement that was observed is almost similar in both institutes. The only statistically significant improvement is made by Berlitz in the 'reading' component of the test. This can be attributed to the maximum time spent there on practising the reading section of the test.

Analysis of the interviews with the teachers suggests that they do not hold qualifications relevant to IELTS preparation but are fluent speakers of English. The interviews further revealed that the students enrolled at Berlitz mostly had their expectations met regarding the preparation course and indicated their satisfaction. Students at PACC were disappointed by the preparation course, as they mainly expected to learn basic grammar due to their low proficiency in English. Despite differences between the two courses, I found the rate of improvement to be almost the same in both institutes. It seems that people at Berlitz come from elite backgrounds, and they do better in IELTS because of the amount of prior exposure to English which is typical for such individuals. The teaching and the course offered, therefore, do not make much difference to this. The PACC intake does not tend to include good English speakers and they do not make major improvements in their level of proficiency during the course. The first phase study is mainly qualitative with small scale quantitative pre- and post-testing which limits the ability to generalise the results. In the next chapter, I will report the results from the second phase of the study which consists of mainly quantitative questionnaires from three main groups of stakeholders: IELTS test-preparers, test-takers, and test preparation teachers.



## **Chapter 6: Questionnaire survey results (Phase 2)**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter presented findings and discussion from the first phase of data collection which included a survey of private institutes and a detailed study of two IELTS preparation centres (Berlitz and PACC). Through the survey of private institutes, I established that there is a range of these institutes in Pakistan offering IELTS preparation and General English courses. They are mostly locally owned and situated in low-income residential areas in Pakistan. An in-depth study of two institutes was useful to find out the differences between a private local and an international institute, in terms of their teaching methods, materials, washback of the test on teaching methods and materials, the profile of students and teachers, and the effect of these courses on their students' performance. I explained in the methodology chapter that, due to the lack of research conducted in this field, it was important to gather qualitative data, which I undertook in the first phase of my study. The findings of the first phase were suggestive but due to the small sample of test-preparers (N=20) and IELTS preparation teachers (N=2), these findings could not be generalised and there was a need to explore the issues further on a larger scale. Therefore, I provided questionnaires to three important stakeholders: IELTS test-preparers, IELTS test-takers, and IELTS test preparation teachers. This chapter of my study reports the results from these three questionnaires. The discussion of these findings is presented in the next chapter.

To recapitulate, I visited 10 private institutes (seven in Hyderabad and three in Karachi) in June 2013, where I recruited 200 IELTS test-preparers and 10 IELTS test preparation teachers to fill out the questionnaires for this study. Furthermore, I recruited 100 IELTS test-takers to fill out the test-taker questionnaire. The test-takers sampled were full-time employees from different companies, who had taken the IELTS test but had never gone abroad. In this chapter I will firstly analyse the data from the test-preparers' and test-takers' questionnaires, examining the profiles of the two groups, their motivation(s) for taking the IELTS exam and their preparation for 246

the exam (such as attending IELTS preparation centres and the type of activities undertaken). Next, evidence will be presented on test-takers' perceptions of the fairness of the IELTS test, their likes and dislikes, pressures and motivation, test module difficulty and validity, and their achieved band scores. The final part of the chapter will analyse the data from the IELTS test preparation teacher questionnaires, examining their profiles, their perceptions of the influence of IELTS on their teaching methods and content (washback of IELTS) and their views about their IELTS preparation classes.

## **6.2. Analysis of questionnaires from IELTS test-preparers and test-takers**

### **6.2.1. Introduction**

As indicated in Chapter 4, I adapted questionnaires from Hawkey (2006) and then, following Moore et al. (2012), I developed two different questionnaires for the IELTS test-preparers and IELTS test-takers. In the first few sections of this chapter, I will report the results from the test-takers, alongside the results of test-preparer respondents, for those questions which were same for both groups (on a few occasions, I will report the results of some questions asked from either group). By presenting the results together, comparisons between the two categories can easily be highlighted. It is important to note here that the differences between the test-preparer and test-taker samples are at least partly due to sampling methods. My test-preparer sample was recruited from ten different IELTS preparation centres in Hyderabad and Karachi. The test-takers, on the other hand, were recruited from different organisations in Pakistan and had already taken the test within the last two years, with or without attending an IELTS preparation course. I will then report the results of the questions which were different for each group, separately. The questionnaire responses therefore are not presented in the same sequence as given in the questionnaire but are selected and discussed under specific categories.

## 6.2.2. Personal characteristics of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers

To address the profile of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers, I will first describe the personal characteristics of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers, in table 6.1 below.

	Test-preparer respondents (N=200)			Test-taker respondents (N=100)		
		No.	Percent		No.	Percent
<b>Sex</b>	Male	153	76.5%		68	68%
	Female	47	23.5%		32	32%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>	16-19	30	15%		-	
	20-25	110	55%		-	
	26-30	38	19%		20	20%
	31-35	4	2%		47	47%
	36-40	16	8%		29	29%
	Over 40	2	1%		4	4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Employment/education status</b>	Employed	35	17.5%		100	100%
	University student	135	67.5%		-	
	High school student	33	16.5%		-	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Private or public sector</b>	Private	77	38.5%		31	31%
	State-run school	123	61.5%		69	69%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Private college	4	2%		2	2%
	State-run college	196	98%		98	98%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Private university	22	11%		11	11%
State-run university	178	89%		89	89%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 6.1 IELTS test-preparers and test-takers' personal characteristics

Table 6.1 above provides information about the background of typical IELTS candidates in Pakistan preparing to take the IELTS exam and also for those who have already taken the test. Out of 200 test-preparers and 100 test-takers, the majority of respondents in both groups were males (TP<sup>2</sup>, N=153, 76.5% and TT, N=68, 68%),

<sup>2</sup> Test-preparers are referred as TP and test-takers as TT.

with only a few females (TP, N=47, 23.5% and TT, N=32, 32%). The majority of test-preparers and test-takers in Moore et al. (2012) were also males, but the respondents in Hawkey (2006) were mainly females. More than half of my test-preparer (N=148, 69%) respondents fall in the 20-30 age bracket, far more than teenagers (N=30, 15%). A few participants (N=20) were between 31-40 and only two respondents were above age 40. Hawkey's (2006) respondents in majority also fall in age brackets from 15-20 (34.7%) and 21-25 (36.9%). In contrast, almost half (41%) of the test-preparers in Cambodia (Moore et al., 2012) were teenagers between 16 and 19 years. This suggests that the reason there are so many people in these age groups is because most of the Pakistani students intend to go on to higher education after completing their undergraduate (at the age of 23) or postgraduate degrees (at the age of 25). In Cambodia however, teenagers mainly intend to go abroad after completing their secondary education (Moore et al., 2012:20).

The majority of my test-preparer respondents (N=135, 67.5%) were university students, while some (N=35, 17.5%) were in full-time employment, and almost an equal number (N=33, 16.5%) were high school students. Moore et al.'s (2012) test-preparers were mostly teenagers but in comparison were mostly employed (TP=41%). Moore et al. (2012) did not present any further discussion about the types of employment of the test-preparers and test-takers. Looking at the high numbers of test-preparers and test-takers employed in Cambodia, I speculate that people tend to get jobs more easily in Cambodia and start employment at an early age. In Pakistan, however, the rate of unemployment is increasing and many graduates remain unemployed and find it difficult to go abroad to find job opportunities. Apart from the devastating law and order situation in Pakistan, unemployment is one of the main drivers for people leaving the country (Khan et al., 2012). All the test-takers in the present study were above age 25. The majority were above 30 years of age and from the age group 31-35 (47%), and 36-40 (29%). All the test-takers (N=100) in the present study were employed full-time. None of them were full-time university or high school students, except for 12 participants who were part-time students attending MBA classes in the evening twice a week. Cambodian test-takers (Moore et al., 2012) were also mainly employed with a few university and

high school students.

As expected, more than half of the test-preparers and test-takers have attended public sector schools (TP=61.5%, TT=69%). However, almost a third of respondents from both groups (TP=38.5%, TT=31%) mentioned that they attended private schools. In chapter 2 I described the two main types of private schools found in Pakistan - private non-elite English medium schools and private elite English medium schools. In both of my questionnaires (test-preparers and test-takers), I included an open-ended question to ask respondents about the name of their school, college and university to ascertain the type they had attended. There are only a few private elite English medium schools in Hyderabad and Karachi, so it is not difficult to distinguish between these and private non-elite English medium schools. Most of the schools mentioned by the test-preparers and test-takers can be identified as private non-elite English medium schools. For most of these schools, there is a nominal difference between a private non-elite and a state-run school. Moore et al. (2012) did not include any such open-ended questions in their questionnaires, so we do not know whether the test-preparers and test-takers attended private or state-run schools.

The profile of the test-preparers and test-takers who completed questionnaires aligns in terms of age and gender with the small sample in phase one of this study (N=20) from Berlitz and PACC, where the majority were male (N=12) and aged between 21 and 30. It was established in the previous chapter that international institutes like Berlitz are rare and extremely expensive to attend for majority of the people in Pakistan. Most of the test-preparers (N=189, 94.5%) who filled out questionnaires were enrolled at locally owned institutes and their educational background aligns with my sample of test-preparers from PACC (also a locally owned institute) who also reported attending state schools followed by public sector universities. Thus it can be expected that the test-preparers' proficiency in English would be similar to the students at PACC.

Regarding the languages spoken by the two respondent groups, Urdu and Sindhi are the two most widely spoken languages at home, in Hyderabad and Karachi. As the two groups of respondents were recruited from these cities, most

respondents (TP=47% and TT=43%) reported using Urdu with an almost an equal number using Sindhi (TP=43% and TT=33%). Only a few (TP=4% and TT=3%) said they spoke both Urdu and Sindhi at home. A small number of respondents said they spoke several languages on a daily basis (such as Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi and Siraiki).

### **6.2.3. Motivation(s) for preparing/taking the IELTS exam**

More than half of the test-takers (62%) reported taking the Academic module, and almost one third of test-takers (38%) took the IELTS General Training module. Similarly the majority of test-preparers (84%) were preparing for the Academic module and a few (16%) for the General Training module of IELTS. Both groups of respondents were given nine different options to describe their motivation(s) to prepare for or for having taken the exam. The test-preparer and test-taker respondents were asked to choose one option from the 9 listed. The two groups of respondents mentioned the following main reasons for preparing for, or having taken the IELTS exam:

Reason for taking the IELTS exam	Test-preparer respondents (N=200)		Test-taker respondents (N=100)		
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
1. To study abroad	119	59.5%	32	32%	
2. To emigrate	21	10.5%	20	20%	
3. To get professional registration	7	3.5%	-	-	
4. To get a job within Pakistan	20	10%	30	30%	
5. To determine my English language ability	6	3%	18	18%	
6. To study abroad with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan	20	10%	-	-	
7. To emigrate with a fallback option to find job within Pakistan	7	3.5%	-	-	
8. To get professional registration with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan	-	-	-	-	
9. To determine my English language ability with a fallback option to work within Pakistan	-	-	-	-	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
					<b>100%</b>

Table 6.2 Motivation(s) of IELTS test-preparers and IELTS test-takers

In table 6.2 above, it can be seen that, for the majority from both groups of respondents, the main reason for preparing or taking the test was to study abroad (TP=59.5%, TT=32%). This corroborates my phase one results, where the majority of the test-preparers at Berlitz and PACC (13 out of 20) were intending to take the Academic module of IELTS with the aim of studying abroad. The test-preparers, of an almost equal percentage (10.5% and 10%), indicated that they intended to take the test for emigration purposes or to find a job within Pakistan, respectively. In contrast, almost a third (30%) of the total number of test-takers mentioned that they took the test to find a job within Pakistan, with the next main reason being to emigrate (20%). Less than a third of test-takers (18%) took the test to determine their English language ability, with a few number of test-preparers (3%) giving this reason.

I only asked the test-preparers about their intended countries of destination. More than half of the test-preparer respondents (66%) intended to go to the United Kingdom for higher education, with the rest of them either intending to apply to Australia (20%), Canada (11%) and New Zealand (3%). The test-preparers who wanted exclusively to immigrate (10.5%), along with those who mentioned it with a

fallback option to work within Pakistan (3.5%), mostly mentioned Canada as their main destination (8.5%), with a few (3%) giving Australia as their choice of destination. Those test-preparers who were intending to apply for professional registration (3.5%) also mentioned the United Kingdom as their main destination. This aligns with Hawkey's (2006) study where the test-takers identified the following countries for academic study or other entry purposes: United Kingdom (36%), Australia (28%), Canada (12%), New Zealand (12%) and the United States (5%). In Moore et al.'s (2012) study, however, Australia and New Zealand were the most popular destinations with the test-preparers and test-takers. These two studies did not separate the test-preparers and test-takers' intended countries of destination according to their motivation, so we do not know exactly what countries were chosen by the Academic module test-preparers and which were chosen by General Training test-preparers.

It can be observed in table 6.2 that none of the test-takers ticked options from 6-9. In comparison, 13.5% of test-preparers mentioned that they intend to take the test to study abroad (10%) or emigrate (3.5%) with a fall back option of finding a job within Pakistan. Additionally 10% (N=20) exclusively wanted to take the test to find a job within Pakistan. The data clearly shows that there is a greater number of test-takers indicating that their sole aim is to get a job locally (30%) compared to test-preparers (10%). The higher number of test-takers compared to test-preparers not making any choice with a fallback option suggests that the test-takers are not ambiguous about their motives. They have already taken the test, so they are clear about their motivations so did not choose options from 6-9 which included a main motivation with a fallback option. A third of test-takers and 10% of test-preparers were taking the IELTS test to find job opportunities within Pakistan which clearly shows that some people, have a perception that the IELTS certificate can help them in finding work and are therefore taking the test for this purpose.

The higher percentage of respondents' preference to study abroad aligns with the findings of Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012). As well as for reasons like immigration and determining their English language ability, test-preparers in Moore et al. (2012) also chose to take the exam to secure a scholarship. I did not include



this as an option in my questionnaire. Although I mentioned earlier (see chapter 2) that any applications to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for scholarships to study abroad require proof of acceptance from a foreign university which requires an IELTS certificate. While piloting my questionnaire, I noticed that even those students who wanted to gain scholarships chose the option 'to study abroad' which is why this was taken out of the questionnaire.

All my test-taker respondents had taken the test within the previous two years, most within the last year (87%). Most had taken the exam once (86%), and a small number of test-takers had taken it two or more times (14%). The private language centres are well-attended in many parts of Karachi and Hyderabad; therefore it is likely that the test-takers have attended IELTS preparation courses before taking the test. I asked the test-taker respondents whether or not they had attended an IELTS preparation centre to prepare for the test and the majority (N=92 out of 100) indicated that they had. This aligns with Hawkey (2006) where 96% of candidates were attending or had attended an IELTS preparation course prior to taking the test. I did not ask this question of the test-preparers as they were all drawn from IELTS preparation centres. Only a small number of test-preparers (3%) had previously attended IELTS preparation courses. I included a question in the test-preparer questionnaire asking respondents about the reason for choosing a particular institute. There were mixed responses but mostly the students chose a particular institute because of its reputation (32.5%) or convenience of location (27%). Some indicated that their friends studied at these centres (23.5%). A few test-preparers (17%) also gave more than one option for choosing that particular institute.

The next question asked test-preparers to give their required band scores. As most of them were preparing for the Academic module of IELTS, they stated that their required band scores were between 6.5 and 8.0, while those intending to take the General Training module gave their required scores as between 4.0 and 6.5. The test-takers were also asked about their achieved and required band scores which will be discussed later in this chapter (section 6.2.9). Those test-preparers and test-takers who ticked the options to study abroad (TP=69.5%, TT=32%) and to find a job locally (TP=23.5%, TT=30%) were asked about their intended fields of study and

work. The majority of the test-preparers and test-takers indicated three main fields of study, i.e. Business and Accounting (TP=40.5%, TT=20%), Information Technology (TP=18.5%, TT=7%), and Engineering (TP=8.5%, TT=2%). A range of other fields were also mentioned by a few test-preparers and test-takers, such as Health and Service, Musicology, Literature, English language, Telecommunication, Geology, Law and Architecture (N=1 in each field). This also aligns with results from my small sample of test-preparers at PACC where students pursued mainly Business and Accounting, Information Technology, and Engineering. In the study by Hawkey (2006), Business and Finance, Health and Social Service, and Education and teaching were found to be the most chosen fields of study by participants. The test-preparers and test-takers whose motivations was to find a job within Pakistan mostly intended to work in private banks (TP=15%, TT=18%), and Telecommunication companies such as mobile phone or landline providers (TP=7.5%, TT=11%). These private sector companies have a number of highly paid jobs so many people choose to find work with them.

#### **6.2.4. IELTS test-preparers and test-takers' experience of English language education at various levels**

Table 6.3 below summarises the experience of English language instruction for the two respondent groups (test-preparers and test-takers) at various levels. From the background information of the participants, we know that most of them attended state-run schools or private non-elite English medium schools. The table below shows from which stage these respondents started studying English as a compulsory subject in their formal education and whether or not they studied English outside of their formal education.

Did you study English as a compulsory subject in ...								
	Test-preparer respondents (N=200)				Test-taker respondents (N=100)			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Kindergarten (KG)	66	33%	95	47.5%	30	30%	69	69%
Primary school	144	72%	56	28%	86	86%	14	14%
Secondary school	183	91.5%	17	8.5%	78	78%	22	22%
College	168	84%	32	16%	80	80%	20	20%
University	122	61%	78	39%	63	63%	37	37%
Extra language classes	123	61.5%	77	38.5%	77	77%	23	23%

Table 6.3 Experience of English instruction at various levels

Table 6.3 above shows that the majority of the test-preparer and test-taker respondents experienced English language instruction from an early age (i.e. primary school) through to the university. Kindergarten classes are not offered at state schools and, as most of the test-preparers and test-takers reported they had attended state-run schools, this explains why only a third of respondents from both groups studied English in kindergarten. It is also interesting to find out that more than half of the respondents from both groups (TP=61.5% and TT=77%) reported a higher involvement in ‘extra’ or private language classes. This suggests that test-preparers and test-takers have already attended General English courses. In contrast, Moore et al.’s (2012) test-preparers and test-takers reported a lower percentage of having English instruction at an early age (kindergarten and primary school); the higher percentage of those learning English is from secondary level through to university. Similar to my sample, respondents in Moore et al. (2012) also showed a high involvement in extra language classes. The next question asked test-preparers and test-takers about the amount of time teachers spoke in English in teaching it as a compulsory subject in their classrooms and this is summarised in table 6.4 below.

Amount of time teachers of English speak to you in English								
	Test-preparer respondents (N=200)				Test-taker respondents (N=100)			
	At primary school	At secondary school	At college	At university	At primary school	At secondary school	At college	At university
All the time	14%	8.5%	7%	8%	18%	8%	8%	18%
More than half	12.5%	11.5%	9.5%	50.5%	11%	18%	10%	38%
About half	22.5%	25.5%	42.5%	26.5%	31%	33%	50%	32%
Less than half	27.5%	23.5%	28%	8%	26%	27%	20%	16%
Never	21%	31%	13.5%	7%	14%	14%	12%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 6.4 Teachers' use of English when teaching it as a compulsory subject

In the questionnaires for the two groups, I asked about the use of English in the classroom, when it was taught as a compulsory subject, by teachers at the various stages of the participants' education (see table 6.4 above). Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al.'s (2012) test-preparer questionnaires did not separate out the use of English by teachers at different stages of education, but rather included a general question asking about the overall use of English by participants' teachers. The breakdown in this study of the use of English, by English teachers at various stages, provides a clearer picture than that found in the other two studies.

As is shown in the table, a minority of test-preparer and test-taker respondents reported that their English teachers used English in compulsory English classes from school through to university, all the time. A few test-preparers reported the use of English in compulsory English class all the time in primary (TP, 14%, TT, 18%) and secondary school (TP, 8.5%, TT, 8%). The majority of test-preparers reported the use of English in compulsory English class for about half of the time (22.5%, 25.5%) or less than half of the time (27.5%, 23.5%) in their primary and secondary schools respectively. A similar response was found in the test-takers, where almost one third reported that teachers spoke English at their primary and

secondary school about half of the time (31%, 33%) or less than half (26%, 27%) respectively.

There was a slightly higher level of use of English in compulsory English classes at colleges and universities compared to primary and secondary schools. A higher number of test-preparer respondents (42.5%) reported that teachers at college spoke in English for about half of the class time. Exactly half of the test-taker respondents (50%) also reported the use of English for about half of the class time. In comparison, the use of English is more common at university, where almost half of the test-preparers (50.5%) and a third of test-takers (38%) reported that it was used more than half the time. This suggests that English teachers at public sector universities use English in their classes more than state-run schools and colleges. Moore et al. (2012) found that the teachers used English ‘more than half’ and ‘all the time’ in their classes. In contrast to the findings of my study, they found that English teachers in Cambodia frequently spoke in English all the time in their classes but this could be due to the difference in the samples. As mentioned earlier, Moore et al. (2012) did not provide any background information about the schools attended by their respondents, so I assume that the Cambodians in their study were selected from elite English medium schools where teachers frequently speak in English in the class.

#### **6.2.5. Use of English in daily life by test-preparers and test-takers**

The questionnaire included a section for both groups of respondents with questions related to their current daily use of English. Questions in this section asked whether they used English for socialising, communicating with friends overseas, engaging with media, the workplace, reading English texts in specialised subjects, or writing English on a daily basis. The data for questions related to current daily use of English is presented in table 6.5 below. For the option on use of ‘English for work’, I asked only those test-preparers who were employed full-time to fill it in, while those working part-time did not complete this part. Only a small number of test-preparers (N=36) were employed full-time and completed this section. All the test-takers were employed full-time, so they all answered this section.

Test-preparers and test-takers' current use of English (TP=200, TT=100)		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Use English for socialising	TP	23	11.5%	131	65.5%	34	17%	12	6%
	TT	9	9%	44	44%	27	27%	20	20%
English contact with friends overseas	TP	29	14.5%	53	26.5%	83	41.5%	35	17.5%
	TT	4	4%	18	18%	46	46%	32	32%
Exposed to English in the media	TP	112	56%	65	32.5%	16	8%	10	5%
	TT	58	58%	10	10%	25	25%	7	7%
Use English for work	TP	3	8.3%	15	41.6%	6	16.6%	12	33.3%
	TT	12	12%	36	36%	18	18%	34	34%
Read texts in English in specialist subject	TP	11	5.5%	53	26.5%	128	64%	8	4%
	TT	9	9%	28	28%	40	40%	23	23%
Write in English in a day	TP	29	14.5%	47	23.5%	88	44%	36	18%
	TT	7	7%	13	13%	69	69%	11	11%

Table 6.5 Test-takers and test-preparers' current use of English

Not surprisingly, given the sample population in the current study (students mostly from state-run schools and public sector universities), in response to almost all the questions, test-preparers and test-takers reported that they currently spoke English 'sometimes' and 'rarely', as shown in table 6.5 above. Exposure to English in the media is relatively high for both groups of respondents compared to other uses of English. It can also be noted that few people in Pakistan are in the habit of writing or reading English texts (both groups chose 'rarely' for this activity). It is also noticeable that the use of English for work for the test-taker group is either reported as 'sometimes', 'rarely' or 'never', despite the fact that proficiency in English is explicitly required for a number of high-paid as well as some low-salaried jobs in Pakistan (see chapter 2). The test-preparers and test-takers in Moore et al. (2012:23), in contrast, indicated that they used English for work 'often' or 'sometimes', which suggests that the use of English for work is slightly higher in Cambodia compared to Pakistan or that the nature of employment is different and requires people to use English more often.

The results of this study contrast with Moore et al. (2012) in another respect in that the majority of Cambodian test-takers and test-preparers opted for 'often' and 'sometimes' for reading and writing in English. This is another indication that the sample in the Cambodian study (Moore et al., 2012) might belong to an elite group, schooled in the medium of English, who subsequently use English frequently in

their daily life. Moore et al. (2012) did not report on the socio-economic status of their respondents, so we do not know about their social status and the types of schools they attended. On the contrary, the sample of test-preparers and test-takers in the present study comprises a majority from low standard institutes who have studied in non-elite English medium schools and are not as 'elite' as the Cambodian group. Therefore, the use of English in daily life reported by Pakistani test-preparers and test-takers is very limited especially in the 'reading' and 'writing' skills.

### **6.2.6. IELTS test-preparers and test-takers' views on IELTS preparation courses**

Both the questionnaires included open-ended questions seeking information from the two groups of respondents about their IELTS preparation. As mentioned earlier (see chapter 4), all the test-preparers were near the end of their course, so I asked them whether they thought they had been successful. A quarter of the test-preparer respondents indicated that they felt that they had been successful (23%), yet more than half (54.5%) felt they had not. The other respondents (22.5%) were unsure whether they had been successful or not. This question was followed by an open-ended question, asking them to provide reasons for why they thought they had been successful or not. The students who felt they had been successful, attributed this solely to an improvement in their English proficiency level (15%); the remaining respondents mentioned that along with an improvement in their proficiency level, they had increased their familiarity with the test. Conversely, students who felt they were not successful in the course attributed this exclusively to the brevity of the course (39%). Some others (25.5%) pointed to insufficient improvement in skills and a few respondents (17%) also mentioned insufficient practice material along with the brevity of the course.

As discussed earlier (see section 6.2.3 above), the majority of the test-takers (92%) had attended IELTS preparation centres to prepare for the test, so they were also asked whether attending IELTS preparation courses had been useful for them. More than half of test-takers had not found the course useful (73.5%), while others

(22.5%) reported that it had been useful to attend the IELTS preparation centre. The students who felt that the course was useful thought they had improved their English proficiency (13.5%) and had become more familiar with the requirements of the test (9%). Those who felt the course was not useful attributed this exclusively to the brevity of the course (43%), similar to the test-preparer respondents, and had not had their expectations of learning the English language met (30.5%). In contrast, almost half of the test-preparers in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) believed that they had been successful on the preparation course, and those candidates who believed that they had not been successful on preparation courses in Hawkey (2006) focused mainly on problems of their own rather than with the course itself. For example, in response to an open-ended question, some of Hawkey's respondents (15%) complained of not having enough study time and not working hard enough (9%). Others (12%) reported challenges intrinsic to the target language.

In response to an open-ended question regarding ways to prepare for studying abroad if IELTS was not required, a majority of test-preparers (63.5%) in my study indicated that if they had not been required to take the IELTS test, similar preparation would not have been useful. Some of them (37.5%) explained that such a course does not improve communication skills, others pointed out that the course does not help with learning grammar and General English (25%), while a few mentioned that it is too narrowly focused on the IELTS exam (11%) and is too limiting. Less than a third of test-preparer respondents (12.5%) in my study felt that even if they had not been required to take the IELTS test, a similar preparation course would have been helpful, particularly for students who wished to study abroad. The rest of the participants did not answer this question. In contrast, a majority of test-preparers in Moore et al. (2012) determined that if they had not been required to take the IELTS test, a similar preparation would have been helpful for those intending to study abroad. This positive response of test-preparers could be due to the better quality of IELTS preparation courses offered in Cambodia compared to private local institutes of Pakistan and/or the expectations of Pakistani students of learning General English on the course. Another question asked test-preparers if the IELTS preparation course is helpful if they are currently studying/working in an



English-medium environment. Most of the test-preparers (88%) responded that the course did not improve their General English skills.

Another, open-ended question invited test-preparer respondents to comment on whether an IELTS preparation course is a good way to learn English for someone who is not going to take the IELTS exam. The majority of the test-preparer respondents (67%) did not think the course was appropriate for learning English as it is exam specific and does not involve learning English grammar. Only a small number of respondents (18.5%) thought that the course could help them learn English due to the practice of all four language skills given on the course. The rest of the students did not respond to the question. In another question, most of the students (77%) indicated that the IELTS preparation course would not be useful for someone who is not going to university.

Both the questionnaires included an open-ended question and invited both groups of respondents for their general views about the IELTS preparation course. Most of the test-preparer respondents (77%) complained about the short duration of the course, some students (10%) said using only one textbook in class was very restrictive and that a range of different books should be used for practice by tutors. A majority of the same group (83.5%) also complained of the expense of IELTS preparation courses. Commenting overall about their IELTS preparation course, more than half of the test-taker respondents (52.5%) felt that it was expensive to attend IELTS preparation classes. Most of the test-taker respondents (78%) also complained about the short duration of the course and misleading tutors. One of the test-preparers said: 'This course is not enough as months pass quickly. It is ideal if the IELTS course is longer than 3 months' (TP7). A few test-preparer and test-taker respondents (11% and 13% respectively) complained about the absence of grammatical exercises on the course. Three of the respondents said:

TT9: IELTS preparation course was very expensive to attend. You only go for eight weeks to attend and pay them so much amount in which you can easily study in university for one year. I remember it was not very helpful but just time pass or money waste.

TP82: Hyderabad and Karachi are full of many false teachers. There are lots and lots advertisements in the newspaper which tell about such fraudy teachers. It is hard to believe who is real IELTS preparation teacher. Sometimes you have to choose a tutor who is not very good because it is difficult to know who is real or who is not real.

TP77: I was think before coming to the course here that teachers will make us practice of English grammar and we will improve our grammar skills but sad that it is wrong because teacher never practice us English grammar. I think I waste my money.

Some respondents (9%) also complained about the absence of audio-visual facilities in their classes. These comments echo those of the IELTS test-preparers at Berlitz and PACC who also complained about the short duration, expensive IELTS preparation courses and limited facilities when asked about their level of satisfaction with the course (see chapter 5). One of the responses above (TP77), regarding the absence of grammar, aligns with that of the students at PACC in the first phase of my study who complained about not learning English grammar in their IELTS preparation course and felt they had wasted their money in attending IELTS preparation. A large majority of the students attending local institutes expected IELTS to be a similar to the General English course. In the following sections, I will discuss the results of the questions which were either included in the test-preparer or the test-taker questionnaires, separately for the two groups of respondents.

### **6.2.7. IELTS preparation classes and activities for test-preparers**

Part two of the test-preparer questionnaire sought information about their IELTS preparation activities. They were asked, in general, to indicate the proportion of class time allotted for each language skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and other language focus (grammar and vocabulary); they were also given three options

(very useful, quite useful, not very useful) to choose to indicate how useful each language skill was for the IELTS test. The test-preparer responses are presented in table 6.6 below.

		Very useful		Quite useful		Not very useful	
Percentage of time in class		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Reading	25%	188	94%	12	6%	0	0%
Writing	20%	170	85%	30	15%	0	0%
Listening	19%	166	83%	34	17%	0	0%
Speaking	11%	179	89.5%	21	10.5%	0	0%
Vocabulary	10.5%	157	78.5%	41	20.5%	2	1%
Grammar	9.5%	167	83.5%	30	15%	3	1.5%
Other	5%	119	59.5%	73	36.5%	8	4%

Table 6.6 Macro-skill time proportion and usefulness

According to the test-preparer responses, the proportion of time was relatively balanced among all four skill areas, with reading, writing, and listening (approximately 25%, 20%, and 19% respectively) reported as being allotted slightly more time in class, with speaking (11%) being given comparatively less time. Vocabulary and grammar associated activities were reported to occur during approximately 10% of class time (10.5% and 9.5% respectively). Any additional activities were reported with less frequency (5%). All respondents indicated that activities in all skill areas were very or quite useful, with the reading component considered the most useful (94%). When comparing the test-preparers' responses to the questionnaire regarding practice of all four skills, with the classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC, in phase one of the study, I found that reading was the skill most frequently practised at both centres, followed by speaking. The test-preparer respondents here suggest that writing and listening were practised more than the speaking component. The differences between the responses of the test-preparers and those from the classroom observations does not mean that the test-preparers' responses are not reliable, but suggests that they may be unable to give a rough estimate of the components frequently practised in the classroom; or there could be a variation among different IELTS preparation centres.

Moore et al.'s (2012) respondents indicated the following breakdown of class time: reading (21%), writing (20.94%), listening (19.38%), speaking (15.79%), vocabulary and grammar (10.82%, 9.48%) and other activities (2.17%) which is quite close the responses of my test-preparers. I discussed in Chapter 4 that Moore et al. (2012:42) conducted classroom observations for 90 minutes only, in each of the two courses (GEP level 12 and IELTS preparation course). The focus of GEP level 12 on the day of observation was on the listening and writing components of the test and the IELTS preparation course focused on the writing and speaking components. As the classroom observations were undertaken for a limited period of time, this limits the ability to triangulate the information gained with the test-preparer responses as only two components were practised in each of the classes.

In the next question, the test-preparers were asked whether or not the following specific activities (taken from Hawkey's questionnaire, 2006), related to each of the four skills areas, took place during the course. The responses of the test-preparers are given in table 6.7 below.

	Yes		No		Not sure	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>LISTENING</b>						
L.1. Reading the questions and predicting what listening passages would be about.	182	91%	18	9%	0	0
L.2. Listening to live, taped or video talks/ lectures and taking notes.	176	88%	24	12%	0	0
L.3. Listening and taking part in seminar/workshop activities.	68	34%	132	66%	0	0
L.4. Using information from a lecture or talk to write reports.	72	36%	26	13%	82	41%
L.5. Reading questions and guessing the type of answer required.	184	92%	16	8%	0	0
L.6. Practice in recognising previous information repeated in different words.	94	47%	68	34%	36	18%
<b>READING</b>						
R.1. Analysing text structure and organisation.	68	34%	36	18%	48	24%
R.2. Interpreting statistics/graphs/diagrams.	140	70%	6	3%	54	27%
R.3. Reading texts to predict test questions and tasks.	80	40%	70	35%	10	5%
R.4. Learning quick and efficient ways of reading texts in English.	172	86%	20	10%	8	4%
R.5. Reading articles, reports, books in their specialist subject area.	60	30%	132	66%	48	24%
R.6. Using English-only dictionaries to complete reading tasks.	10	5%	112	56%	78	39%
R.7. Reading quickly to get the main idea of a text.	180	90%	16	8%	4	2%
<b>WRITING</b>						
W.1. Copying out good paragraphs and model answers.	22	11%	176	88%	2	1%
W.2. Describing a graph/ a process/ statistical data.	190	95%	10	5%	0	0
W.3. Learning how to organise essays.	192	96%	8	4%	0	0
W.4. Practising using words or phrases to organise a written text (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, therefore).	80	40%	68	34%	32	16%
W.5. Learning how to write in different styles.	78	39%	122	61%	0	0
W.6. Short report writing.	36	18%	160	80%	4	2%
W.7. Planning written answers to test questions.	44	22%	156	78%	0	0
W.8. Editing written work.	20	10%	180	90%	0	0
W.9. Writing parts of test answers.	60	30%	116	58%	24	12%
W.10. Writing long essays, reports (over 1000 words)	40	20%	160	80%	0	0
<b>SPEAKING</b>						
S.1. Practising making a point and providing supporting examples.	170	85%	25	12.5%	5	2.5%
S.2. Planning and delivering oral presentations.	120	60%	80	40%	0	0
S.3. Group discussions/ debates.	160	80%	20	10%	0	0
S.4. Practising using filler words to cover silences in your speech (e.g. well..you see)	22	11%	166	83%	12	6%
S.5. Practising using words or phrases to organise your speech (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, I have two points).	50	25%	110	55%	40	20%

Table 6.7 Occurrence of skill activities in IELTS preparation classes

The activities related to listening passages were reported as the most common within this skills area (i.e. reading questions and predicting what listening passages would be about, 91%; reading questions and guessing the type of answer required, 92%). Listening to and taking part in seminar or workshop activities were less common (34%) which is mainly because the test-preparers attending private institutes are not encouraged to attend any seminars or workshops to improve their listening. Furthermore, the institutes they attend do not organise any seminars or workshops to improve the listening skills of their students. Identifying the main ideas and increasing reading speed (90% and 86% respectively) were important reading skills that were included in class activities. A considerable number of respondents indicated that they were not sure whether the activities related to reading skills occurred in their preparation classes (e.g. analysing text structure and organisation (24%), interpreting statistics, graphs and diagrams (27%), reading subject-specific texts (24%) and using English only dictionaries (39%)). The absence of these activities in the IELTS classes is due to the fact that the teachers mostly focus on how to answer questions from reading passages. Their teachers do not consider analysing text structure and using dictionaries as relevant to improving the reading skills. Conversely, with regards to writing, 96% of test-preparer respondents indicated that describing statistics, graphs and diagrams, and learning how to organise essays were included in their classes. Other activities related to the writing skill (e.g. learning how to write in different styles (39%); planning written answers to test questions (22%); copying out good paragraphs and model answers (11%)), and making use of transition words were (10%) less common. The activities like writing in different styles, use of transition words took place at Berlitz but the local institutes like PACC do not focus on such activities.

Practising making a point and providing supporting examples (85%) and engaging in group discussion or debates (80%) were the most commonly reported activities related to speaking skills, while using words/phrases to organise speech (25%) and using filler words to cover silences in speech (11%) were also frequently reported. I mentioned previously that the majority of the sample of test-preparer

respondents belonged to private local institutes with multiple branches. Most of the activities mentioned by the test-preparers as occurring in their classrooms do not correspond to what was observed at the IELTS preparation centres in the first phase of this study, especially at PACC. For example, in the activities related to listening skills, most of the test-preparers chose options like reading the questions and predicting what listening passages would be about (91%) and reading questions and guessing the type of answer required (92%). These activities were not obviously taking place in either the Berlitz or the PACC classrooms. One of the activities identified by test-preparers for the reading skill included interpreting statistics (70%), which was also never observed at either of the institutes. The high response of test-preparers for writing activities, such as learning how to organise essays (96%), practising using words or phrases to organise a written text (40%) and learning how to write in different styles (39%) also contradicts with teaching activities which were observed taking place at PACC.

Some of these activities however did take place at Berlitz, but as the majority of respondents filling out this questionnaire were from the local institutes, it is very unlikely that these activities occurred. It is likely that most of the test-preparer respondents just ticked a list of options without making sense of what was happening in their IELTS preparation class, therefore one has to be quite sceptical about the responses received through using questionnaires. There is no difference between the choice of activities made by test-preparers in this study and those in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012).

One of the questions asked the test-preparers to identify the most difficult section of IELTS. The majority of the test-preparers (N=171) ranked the reading sub-test as the most difficult of the four IELTS test modules, followed by the writing, speaking and listening sub-tests. Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al.'s (2012) IELTS test-takers also found 'reading' the most challenging component of IELTS. The test-preparers were asked to calculate the total percentage of class time spent on practising each of the specific exam practice activities received on their IELTS preparation course and this is presented in table 6.8 below.

	<b>How much of the following kinds of specific exam practice do/ did you do on your preparation course (each type as approximate percentages, added together should equal 100%):</b>	
	Specific IELTS Exam practice	Approximate % of course time
1	Information about the contents and format of the test	29%
2	Looking at past papers	3%
3	Taking practice tests	38.5%
4	Receiving feedback in the form of IELTS band scores	3.5%
5	Techniques for taking the test (please specify)	14%
6	Others (please specify)	12%
	Total	100%

Table 6.8 Specific exam practice on the course

Regarding class activities specifically related to the IELTS exam, slightly more than a third of test-preparer respondents (38.5%) reported using practice tests. Test-preparers also indicated that they were provided with information about the exam (29%) and with techniques for taking the exam (14%). Students reported receiving feedback in the form of IELTS band scores and looking at past papers less frequently (3.5% and 3% respectively). Some other specific test-taking techniques were also included in preparation classes (e.g. time management, skimming/scanning, predicting answers and understanding exam instructions). The Cambodian test-preparers in Moore et al. (2012) also frequently reported using practice tests in their classes.

The majority of test-preparers (88%) commonly reported using the ‘Cambridge IELTS’ practice textbook, while a few (6%) also mentioned using ‘Barron’s IELTS’ practice book and an equal number (6%) mentioned ‘foreign edition books’. This also corroborates the findings from my classroom observations where ‘Cambridge IELTS’ practice material was found to be the only textbook used. The small number of test-preparers (6%) who mentioned the use of ‘foreign edition books’ attended an international institute. These test-preparers could not name the books used in their classrooms because they were provided with photocopied



material from these books by their tutors, as detailed in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.3). Most respondents reported that the textbooks provided language skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) activities, practice tests and test-taking strategies. These activities were reflected in the test-preparer respondents' answers related to positive aspects of the textbooks: most of them (42%) indicated that the textbooks provided useful advice and strategies, as well as practice tests (32%) and test-taking techniques (5%). Shortcomings of the textbooks reported were an insufficient number of practice tests (38%), the less challenging nature of some of the reading tests (16%) and a limited number of essay topics (8%).

Only a few respondents (22%) reported the use of supplementary materials by their teachers which included handouts and internet resources. This aligns with classroom observations at PACC where it was rare to find any use of supplementary materials. In contrast, more than half of the test-preparer respondents in Moore et al. (2012) reported using supplementary materials, such as internet and media resources. Most of my test-preparer respondents (74%) suggested that successful students should invest more time in improving their reading skills, practise solving past papers, and do extra practice at home, while some other respondents did not answer this question.

In the test-preparer questionnaire, I also included a section which sought information from test-preparers about extra practice for IELTS outside of their classrooms. As discussed earlier, in the methodology chapter, I did not include part 2 of Hawkey's questionnaire but instead I used the following list to ask the students about their involvement in activities which gave them extra practice. The respondents were asked if they watch international or/and local channels in English to improve their listening; whether they try to improve their reading skills by going through novels, magazines and English newspapers; whether they try to improve their vocabulary; and whether they try to improve their speaking and writing skills by doing extra practice at home or with their friends. This part included Likert scale items using a 6-point scale (slightly disagree, moderately disagree, strongly disagree, slightly agree, moderately agree, and strongly agree). Table 6.9 below summarises how frequently the test-preparers undertook activities which gave extra practice for

## IELTS outwith their classrooms.

	<b>Slightly disagree</b>	<b>Moderately disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Slightly agree</b>	<b>Moderately agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. I try to improve my listening skills by watching:	n/percent	n/percent	n/percent	n/percent	n/percent	n/percent
a. Pakistani English news.	37 (18.5%)	11 (5.5%)	8 (4%)	35 (17.5%)	50 (25%)	59 (29.5%)
b. News of English speaking countries.	5 (2.5%)	5 (2.5%)	8 (4%)	31 (15.5%)	44 (22%)	107 (53.5%)
c. Pakistani English comedy programmes.	26 (13%)	26 (13%)	17 (8.5%)	74 (37%)	41 (20.5%)	25 (12.5%)
d. Comedy programmes of English countries.	17 (8.5%)	26 (13%)	17 (8.5%)	62 (31%)	35 (17.5%)	46 (23%)
e. Pakistani English movies.	29 (14.5%)	20 (10%)	32 (16%)	65 (32.5%)	19 (9.5%)	41 (20.5%)
f. Movies of English countries.	5 (2.5%)	11 (5.5%)	2 (1%)	28 (14%)	21 (10.5%)	133 (66.5%)
2. I read English texts (newspapers, magazines) to improve my reading skills.	3 (1.5%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	16 (8%)	29 (14.5%)	148 (74%)
3. I look for new words to expand my vocabulary.	2 (1%)	6 (3%)	2 (1%)	20 (10%)	40 (20%)	121 (60.5%)
4. I learn new words to expand my vocabulary that teacher gives in the classroom.	2 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	4 (2%)	36 (18%)	34 (17%)	116 (58%)
5. I write essays on different topics to improve my writing skills.	2 (1%)	5 (2.5%)	5 (2.5%)	41 (20.5%)	56 (28%)	91 (45.5%)
6. I try to speak English at home to improve my speaking skills.	7 (3.5%)	10 (5%)	11 (5.5%)	68 (34%)	43 (21.5%)	59 (29.5%)
7. I speak English outside of home (with friends, cousins, neighbours etc).	8 (4%)	8 (4%)	7 (3.5%)	32 (16%)	71 (35.5%)	74 (37%)
8. I try to speak with friends outside the classroom to improve my speaking.	11 (5.5%)	8 (4%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)	74 (37%)	79 (39.5%)
9. I go over the materials that the teacher gives me at home.	5 (2.5%)	5 (2.5%)	8 (4%)	32 (16%)	59 (29.5%)	91 (45.5%)
10. I solve practice tests at home to get extra practice of all four skills.	8 (4%)	11 (5.5%)	11 (5.5%)	26 (13%)	29 (14.5%)	115 (57.5%)

Table 6.9 Frequency of doing extra IELTS practice by test-preparers (N=200)

For the practice of listening skills, more than half of the test-preparer respondents (53.5%) ‘strongly agreed’ that they watched the news from English speaking

countries, while less than a third (29.5%) 'strongly agreed' that they listened to Pakistani English news. This is an interesting finding which suggests that Pakistani students are more interested in improving their language skills by listening to English news channels rather than local, Pakistani English channels. For improving their listening by watching entertainment channels, students showed slight agreement for watching comedy programmes from English speaking countries (37%) but they showed a strong preference for watching English movies from western countries (66.5%). The choice of this strong preference also reflects the fact that the Pakistani film industry does not produce English movies on a regular basis; hence there is a very limited choice for those who are interested in watching English movies.

For the practice of reading skills, the majority of test-preparers (74%) 'strongly agreed' that they read English texts (such as newspapers and magazines) to improve their reading skills and also tried to expand their vocabulary by looking for new words (60.5%) and learning new words provided by teachers in the classroom (58%). This contradicts their choice of 'reading texts in English in specialist subject' where they responded with 'sometimes' or 'rarely' when asked about their use of English in daily life (see table 6.5 above). This contrast indicates that there might be a difference between their use of English for speaking in daily life and to practise for IELTS. For example, the test-preparers spend little time reading and writing English in their daily lives but they spend considerable time practising the reading and writing components of IELTS which shows their strong motivation in preparing for the test.

Regarding the practice of writing, there was only some agreement about writing essays on different topics to improve writing skills. Just less than half of the participants (45.5%) strongly agreed with this, while almost a third of test-preparers (28%) showed moderate agreement, and less than a third (20.5%) showed slight agreement. For the improvement of their speaking skills, the test-preparer respondents showed more preference for speaking in English outside of their homes (for example with their friends), than speaking in English in their homes. This reflects the fact that respondents are not able to communicate in English at home because of the limited English skills of their family, yet they are ready to improve

their language skills with friends. In response to a general question about going through the IELTS material at home, just less than half of the test-preparers (45.5%) showed strong agreement and more than half of the respondents (57.5%) also indicated that they solved practice tests at home for all the four language skills. This shows that students are highly motivated, as they prepare for the test outside of their classes (at home and with their friends). However they have very high band score requirements compared to their low proficiency levels in English, due to the fact that most of them attended non-elite, English medium schools.

### 6.2.8. Employment of IELTS test-takers

Part 2 of the test-takers questionnaire sought information about respondents' employment status. All the respondents (N=100) were full-time employees except for a few who were part-time evening students as well. The majority (42%), were employees in the banking sector (mostly in private banks in Pakistan), followed by people related to the health profession (22%). Among the respondents 16% reported working in fast food restaurants, with a few (8%) working in 'Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited' (PTCL, the only landline provider in Pakistan) and mobile phone providers (8%), and a few reported working in hotel management (4%). Regarding the use of English at work or speaking in English at work, the test-preparer respondents made the following choices (see table 6.10 below)

Test-takers' current use of English (TT=100)	Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Test-takers</b>	12	12%	36	36%	18	18%	34	34%

Table 6.10 Test-takers' current use of English (N=100)

When asked about the compulsion of speaking English at work, the majority of the respondents (88%) indicated that it is not compulsory for them to speak in English at work. A small number of participants (12%), for whom it is compulsory to speak in

English at work, belonged mainly to the banking and health professions.

Answering a yes/no question about the requirement of the IELTS certificate for their jobs, none of the test-taker respondents indicated that this was a requirement for their job. In order to find out about the English proficiency requirements for different kinds of jobs, I asked respondents how English proficiency is assessed. Most of the participants (77%) replied that they were only required to attend an interview, while a few (8%) also had to complete a written test. Some respondents (15%) underwent both written and oral assessments for their jobs, mostly from the banking sector and health profession (doctors and nurses). The requirement for the test-taker respondents to demonstrate good spoken English to obtain work contrasts with their limited use of English at work (88% of respondents mentioned that it is not compulsory for them to speak in English at work). This indicates that most jobs require fluency in English but there is no compulsion for employees to speak in English at work.

### 6.2.9. Test-takers' IELTS band scores

The majority of respondents (97%) had not taken any other English proficiency exam, while 3% had taken the TOEFL exam. As mentioned earlier, more than half of the test-takers (62%) reported that they took the Academic module, and almost one third (38%) took the IELTS General Training module. They reported having achieved band scores between 4.0 and 6.0 as shown in the table below.

<b>Band score received</b>	<b>Percent of test-takers</b>
6.0	9%
5.5	14%
5.0	16%
4.5	31%
4.0	30%

Table 6.11 Test-takers' achieved band scores (N=100)

In the Cambodian study (Moore et al., 2012) only three test-taker respondents took the IELTS General Training module, all others took the Academic module. Most test-taker respondents scored between 5.0 and 6.5 inclusively (5.0, 25%; 5.5, 24%; 6.0, 22%; 6.5, 21%). This clearly shows that none of the participants in Moore et al. (2012) scored below the 5.0 band, whereas many Pakistani test-takers scored bands below 5.0. This variation in the English proficiency of students further indicates that the participants in the Cambodian study attended better English medium schools compared to the test-takers in the present study. Regarding the achievement of the required band score, less than a third of my participating test-takers (24%) reached their overall band score requirement; they required the following band scores: 7.5 (26%), 7.0 (35%), 6.5 (15%). In Moore et al.'s (2012) study a third of test-takers (33%) achieved their required score.

This suggests that the test-takers in my sample who achieved their required band scores were those who took the IELTS General Training module, to emigrate from Pakistan, because universities abroad require more than a band 6.0 score, especially in the United Kingdom (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/ieap/entrance-requirements>), whereas my test-takers' highest score was band 6.0. More than half of the participants (72%) did not achieve the band score they expected. In Moore et al. (2012) 43% of test-taker respondents achieved the band score they expected which is in contrast to the number of those who actually achieved their required scores (33%). Moore et al.'s (2012) study provides no further detail about why 43% of their test-takers achieved the band score they expected, whereas only 33% achieved their required scores. It suggests that some of test-takers might have expected to gain a lower score than the score they actually required. The majority of my test-takers (76%) taking the Academic module of IELTS could not attain their required band scores and almost the same number (72%) did not achieve their expected scores. These test-takers are clearly not very proficient as their scores show and they had unrealistic expectations about their score gains which could not be met, mainly due to the limited provision of English medium schooling.

### 6.2.10. Test-takers' experience of the IELTS exam

The questionnaire asked respondents to consider the IELTS test experience. Similar to the responses of the test-preparers, most of the test-takers (87%) also ranked the 'reading' sub-test as the most difficult of the four IELTS test modules, followed by the writing, speaking, and listening sub-tests. Following Hawkey's questionnaire (2006), the test-taker respondents were given five choices to indicate which affected their performance while taking the test. Most of them mentioned that time pressure was an influential factor affecting their performance (57%). Respondents also struggled with the unfamiliarity of topics (17%) and their general fear of tests (15%). They also indicated that difficulty with the language was a problem for them in the exam (11%), which could be due to limited vocabulary practice in their classes (see chapter 5). As a result, more than half of the participants (76%) felt that they did not perform their best in the exam and almost the same number of participants (77%) reported that they worried a lot about taking the IELTS test, mainly about the reading module. The test-takers in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) also reported that time pressure was the factor that most affected their performance and the majority reported not performing to the best of their ability in the IELTS test.

In general, even although the majority of test-takers failed to attain their required scores, a number of participants (81%) indicated, when asked, that they considered the exam to be fair. The reasons they gave, when asked an open-ended question, included, the ability of the exam to cover all skill areas and accurately reflect the test-takers' actual language proficiency. The international reputation of the test was also mentioned as a positive attribute. Yet, others (19%) felt the exam was not completely fair because the test-takers needed to have a broad general knowledge (which is not necessarily related to language ability), as some of the students said:

TT68: The exam is mainly about the English language but I don't know why a lot of general knowledge is needed in exam. For example in the reading test and also in writing test you will need a lot of information to write the essay or answer the reading passage which is I think biased. They should only check

whether our English is good or not.

TT71: This was very tough exam for non English speakers, lot of English and knowledge is need to pass this test. It is little bit unfair. The knowledge to write on so many different topics is very challenging. Similarly the reading also comes from many different topics which are sometime too difficult to understand. They should be easy for people.

The above test-taker respondents, complaining about the inclusion of general knowledge in the test, align with Moore et al. (2012) where some of their respondents also complained about the need to have a broad general knowledge. Moore et al. (2012) did not report on the comments of their respondents. The test preparation teachers in their study (2012:43) also suggested that the Cambodian test-takers do not have 'world knowledge' which is very important for the IELTS writing and reading sub-tests. A small percentage of Hawkey's respondents (28%), who saw the test as unfair, gave various reasons but none of them mentioned the inclusion of general knowledge in the test.

In the next open-ended question test-takers were asked about which skills other than language ability were required to achieve a good IELTS score. Of the participants in this study who felt that the exam was fair, nearly 50% stated that general knowledge was also important in order to gain a high score in the exam. Test-taking strategies by 33% and time management by 21% of the respondents were also seen as valuable. The test-takers were asked if the IELTS exam was appropriate for people from the following groups: those over 15 years of age, undergraduates, postgraduates, professional people, all nationalities/cultures and students in all subject areas. Most respondents felt that the test was most appropriate for undergraduates, postgraduates and professional people. A majority felt that the exam was appropriate for individuals from all countries and cultures, for undergraduates, postgraduates and for students in all subject areas. These respondents did not comment much on the reasons for its appropriateness or non-appropriateness. Overall the test was viewed as covering all skills adequately, fairly, and clearly by 55% of



the respondents; it was also liked due to the challenging variety of topics and tasks by 44% of the test-takers. Some respondents disliked the time constraints (37%), level of difficulty (31%), and the complexity of the reading module (29%). The following were the most common responses when asked what advice the respondents would give others who were preparing for the IELTS test: Hard work (89%), time management (87%), increasing general knowledge (78%) and vocabulary building (61%). Other advice included being prepared for the exam (attending a good IELTS preparation course, 65%), becoming familiar with the test (47%), and being confident and relaxed (35%). Many respondents (87%) considered IELTS an expensive test and at times stressful and difficult. Moore et al.'s (2012) test-takers' questionnaire did not include any question related to the cost of IELTS test, but the same question was asked of employers in Cambodia, who considered it to be an expensive test and gave this as the main reason for not including it as a compulsory requirement in their recruitment process. This suggests that the cost of the IELTS exam might be borne by employers if they were to start requiring this, but in Pakistan the cost is currently borne by the test-takers.

I reported earlier, in section 6.2.6, that a majority of test-takers (92%) attended IELTS preparation classes before taking the exam but that most of them felt that attending these preparation classes was of little value to them. It was suggested in the previous section that a third of the test-taker respondents took the test in order to find jobs within Pakistan, whereas in actual fact no employers require IELTS and none of these respondents were asked for IELTS when applying for jobs. As a consequence, the majority of the respondents (84%) reported that it was not ultimately useful for them to take the IELTS exam, with only a few (16%) mentioning that they found it useful. Out of 100 test-taker respondents, just over half (64%) gave a reason for their answer. Those who thought that taking the IELTS exam was useful for them, mentioned that they improved their English after taking the exam (3%), increased their confidence (2%), and gained some knowledge and experience which could be used when taking other exams (1%). Some successfully applied to study abroad (8%), and to emigrate (2%) but did not have the resources/freedom to take up these opportunities. Those test-takers who did not find

taking the IELTS exam useful complained of not finding a job in Pakistan with the IELTS certificate (29%), not managing to go abroad (11%) or to emigrate due to an insufficient score and/or funds (8%). In the next section, I will report the results from the test preparation teacher questionnaires.

### **6.3. Analysis of teacher questionnaire response data**

#### **6.3.1. Profile of IELTS preparation teachers**

To recap from my methodology chapter, the teacher questionnaire from Hawkey (2006) has been adapted to suit this study. In total, ten teachers who were involved in preparing students for IELTS at private centres in Hyderabad and Karachi filled out the questionnaires. Only one of these was teaching the IELTS preparation course at an international institute, while all the others were recruited from local private institutes. The first section of the questionnaire gathered information about the test preparation teachers' backgrounds. All the participating teachers (one female, nine male) who completed questionnaires were instructors at different institutes and ranged in age from 31-40, similar to Hawkey's (2006) participating teachers, but different from the majority of Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers who were older, ranging from 41-50. My participants had between six and ten years of specific experience teaching IELTS preparation courses at various institutions which is comparatively less than Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers who had more than 20 years experience.

Most teachers in Pakistan do not hold postgraduate degrees. Only one teacher in this study had completed a Master's degree and nine had BA level degrees. Participating teachers in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) had various levels of qualifications but they mostly had postgraduate certificates or diplomas. In line with the tutors of the first phase of the study, none of the teachers were trained as IELTS examiners. The sole tutor from an international institute reported having received training in teaching IELTS from the British Council, similarly to the Berlitz tutor. Two other participating teachers indicated that they had experienced training

specific to IELTS preparation (British Council Pakistan workshops for one week), whereas the rest of the teachers (N=7) did not receive any training for teaching IELTS, similarly to the PACC tutor. Because the local institutes do not pay for the training of their teachers, most of them remain untrained.

The single week of training is in contrast to that of the tutor at Berlitz who undertook a three months' training course. Unlike the teachers in this study, most of the teachers in Hawkey (2006), Moore et al. (2012) and Read and Hayes (2003), had received training in preparing students for IELTS (professional development or conference workshops). Furthermore, half of the teacher respondents in these studies were trained as IELTS examiners. Two teachers in my study also had experience of instructing test preparation classes for other English language examinations, including the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). In Cambodia, there were a number of teachers who had experience of instructing preparation for TOEFL, TOEIC, PET, FCE, CAE and GESE (Moore et al., 2012).

### **6.3.2. Information about students enrolled on the IELTS preparation courses**

The second part of the questionnaire collected information from teachers about their students (ages, level of education, and their intended IELTS modules). The teachers had students on their courses from various age groups (16 years to over 40). Students' level(s) of education ranged from secondary (up to 16 years) to postgraduate, with the highest number at undergraduate or equivalent level. Most of the students in the teachers' preparation courses were preparing for, or applying to, programmes in the United Kingdom and a few to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The students intending to emigrate mostly wanted to go to Canada and Australia and those who intended to go for higher education wanted to go to the United Kingdom. This is similar to the responses given by the IELTS test-preparers (see section 6.2.3) and the students at Berlitz and PACC who also reported that the United Kingdom was the main destination for higher education and Canada and Australia for immigration.

All the teachers indicated that most of their students were preparing to take the Academic module of the IELTS test, while a few were preparing for the General Training module. Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers also indicated that their students were preparing for the Academic module of IELTS. All teachers in my sample indicated that they were working with students who had never taken the IELTS test before. This also aligns with the responses of the test-preparers where the majority mentioned that they had never taken such courses in the past. This indicates that students typically do not attend IELTS preparation courses for the second time, even if they wish or may have to re-take the test.

### **6.3.3. Teacher perceptions of the influence of IELTS on course preparation, content and methods**

This section consists of questions about teachers' perceptions of the IELTS test. The test preparation teachers were asked whether they considered the IELTS test to be appropriate to candidates' future English language needs at various levels i.e. at undergraduate, postgraduate and pre-university levels or for vocational studies, professional work or immigration purposes. There was broad agreement among the teachers that the exam is suitable for use at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as for professional work and immigration purposes. There were mixed opinions when the suitability of the exam at pre-university and vocational levels was considered. Half of the participating teachers (N=5) were not sure about its suitability for vocational studies, while three participants considered it to be suitable, and two teachers ticked option 'no' when asked about its suitability for vocational studies. All teachers indicated that the IELTS test motivates their students, and they all also agreed that the exam causes unhelpful amounts of stress for students.

Regarding the washback of the IELTS test on teachers preparing candidates to take it, I found that almost all the teachers (N=9) believed that the test influences their choice of content in their classes, their identification of students' needs, their consideration of topics for, and types of, writing. Additionally, the framework of the test also influences the teachers' choice of style of questions, content, and type of

exercises, all of which are chosen in order to mirror those found in the exam, to better prepare students. All the teachers but one indicated that the exam also influences their teaching methodology. Teachers reported using exam related activities and skills in their classes. The teacher responses show that according to the teachers there is an IELTS washback on the preparation courses in terms of content and methodology. This corroborates the results of Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) where the majority of their participant teachers agreed that the test influenced the content of their lessons and their methodology. The Cambodian teachers (Moore et al., 2012:30) claimed that their choice of topics, content and types of exercises are similar to those found in the exam, in order to give students the best preparation. They also reported using the exam marking criteria and a systemic approach to teaching all four skills which suggests that the exam also influences their teaching methodology. In chapter 5 we saw from the interviews with test preparation teachers at PACC and Berlitz that the IELTS test influenced apparently their choice of content and methodology. But from classroom observations, this was only seen to be the case at Berlitz, where the teacher used different methods and a variety of exercises and content similar to those found in the exam. The tutor at PACC, however, used only one textbook and used a very limited choice of exercises relevant to the exam. This suggests that there was little or no washback on the content and methodology of the tutor at PACC. The majority of teachers completing the questionnaires are from institutes similar to PACC, so it might be the case that the test influences some of the teachers' content and methodology while for others there is little or no washback in these areas.

Teachers were invited to respond to an open-ended question about the positive and negative aspects of teaching an IELTS preparation course. The positive aspects, mentioned included having clear goals and objectives in the class; being able to observe clear progress in their students; the challenge of helping students with low proficiency to get a high score; dealing with a variety of modules in a short time, and working with students who are highly motivated. On the other hand, teachers felt that the structured nature of the IELTS preparation courses stifled creativity and became repetitive and boring at times (with an emphasis on practice tests). Teachers also

mentioned that dealing with students' fears and exam pressure is also frustrating at times. They further described how students also seem to have unrealistic expectations of the gain that could be expected from such a course. As three of the teachers said:

TH1: A students of very low proficiency level thinks he can get 6.5 or above score which is nearly impossible because we cannot make such a big difference in their score. This course is very short and then making such big difference in short time is unrealistic.

TK3: Some students come with high expectations at the centre. They want to take a eight week course and believe they can get 7.0 band score which is difficult to attain in short duration. They think we are magicians and can easily give them band they require.

TY7: The IELTS preparation course is too short as people are in rush to do the course and take the test. In such short course, we cannot prepare students to get 6.5 score or above if they are low proficient because they are mostly from village or sometimes government schools.

The above teachers' comments confirm that students of too low a level of proficiency require or expect to gain 6.5 or above, which is not realistically possible to achieve in a two-month course. And indeed, most of the IELTS test-takers reported not achieving their expected and required band score. In the next question, the test preparation teachers were asked about the expectations of the IELTS test-preparers attending their test preparation courses. Similarly to the PACC tutor, who talked about his students' expectations to learn grammar, some of the teacher respondents to the questionnaire also mentioned that their students expected to learn English grammar although this is not included in the course. They responded:

TK2: Some students think they can learn English grammar in IELTS preparation course, whereas this course is designed for IELTS practice. Many students come here to study English grammar like verbs and tenses whereas in actual only those students can get good preparation who already know grammar.

TS9: Our students think to learn English grammar in this course which is actually not practical as this course is purely designed to teach IELTS exam techniques and give practice. General English is suitable for those people who want to English grammar.

The above comments from the tutors suggest that students attending private local institutes commonly consider the IELTS preparation course to be identical to the General English course, whereas the former is designed to prepare students for the IELTS exam by giving practice and techniques and not to focus on grammatical skills like a General English course. Teachers were asked about the knowledge or skills required to achieve a good IELTS grade other than proficiency in the English language. For students to achieve good results in the test, teachers suggested that vocabulary and general knowledge related to global issues, are important. This aligns with some of the test-takers who also mentioned that it is important to have good general knowledge in order to gain high scores in the exam, and also with Moore et al.'s teachers who complained that Cambodian IELTS test-takers lacked general knowledge. Teachers also mentioned that time management for all four skills is very important to achieve the desired score in the test. There was also a suggestion by some of the teachers that students should control their nerves to overcome their stress during the exam, so that they can perform well. Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers also indicated that students should be able to manage their time and overcome their stress in order to perform better during the exam.

Nevertheless, when asked for suggestions to other teachers of IELTS preparation courses, the teacher respondents in the current study said that understanding the IELTS test (format, scoring criteria, and structure) was very

important, along with understanding students' needs related to the exam. Some teachers encouraged others to get professional training from the British Council, although they were themselves usually untrained. One of the teachers also suggested bringing non-IELTS oriented activities into the classroom to break the potential monotony of more structured classroom instruction. The tutor might have suggested this because students get frustrated and bored with materials which are closely linked to IELTS. Another teacher suggested distinguishing between low and high proficiency students in order to pay more attention to low proficiency students.

In line with the test-preparers and test-takers, the teachers also rated 'reading' as the most challenging component of IELTS, followed by the writing, listening, and speaking sub-tests. In another question, teachers were provided with a list of statements to choose from (indicating for each, 'yes/no/not sure') regarding the structure and requirements of the IELTS test. The responses indicated that the teachers shared a common understanding of the structure and requirements of the IELTS test. They agreed that the exam does not include a dedicated grammar section; that candidates do not have to ask questions in the Speaking module; candidates have only one opportunity to hear the passages in the Listening modules; candidates are required to write at least 150 words for the first Writing task; candidates cannot refer back to the reading texts when they complete the Reading sub-test (the Reading sub-test contains three sections); and, during the Listening sub-test, candidates may be required to label a diagram. Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers also showed a clear understanding of the structure and requirements of the IELTS test.

#### **6.3.4. Teachers' views about their IELTS preparation classes**

The final section of the questionnaire asked teachers about their IELTS preparation classes (e.g. the size of classroom, common teaching materials used, methods employed). Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) included a question which asked teachers about their particular type of preparation course (such as a course with IELTS in its title, English for Academic Purposes and General English course with



IELTS preparation elements). I did not include this question in my teacher questionnaire because all the preparation courses offered have IELTS in their title and are called 'IELTS preparation courses' (see chapter 2). When answering a yes/no question regarding the placement test for gaining admission onto their IELTS preparation course, almost all the teachers (N=9) confirmed that they do not conduct a placement test. This corroborates the results of my survey of the institutes, where all the local institutes mentioned the absence of a placement test. Only one teacher, from an international private institute, used a placement test for their IELTS preparation course which includes both a written and a spoken test. These types of international institutes which have placement tests, also have more proficient students, as was found in Berlitz (see chapter 5).

Almost all the teachers (N=9) indicated that 11-15 is the most typical class size, while only one teacher indicated the common class size as 6-10. The average number of students in IELTS preparation classes in Pakistan shows a similarity to IELTS-related classes globally (Hawkey, 2006). I included a question about the duration of the courses which was not included in either Hawkey (2006) or Moore et al.'s questionnaires (2012), so there is no information available about the length of their IELTS preparation classes. All the teachers (N=10) participating in this study offered IELTS preparation courses for two months (about 40 hours).

All the teachers who completed questionnaires said that they were the only IELTS' tutors at their preparation centres. Eight of them were the owners of the centres and two of them were employees. In the previous chapter, I noted that institutes at the lower end typically have a single tutor who is the owner of the institute. The local private institutes with different branches also tend to have one tutor for their IELTS preparation classes. This trend was also noticeable at the international institutes, where a single tutor is responsible for teaching their IELTS preparation classes. This contrasts with Moore et al. (2012), where the IELTS preparation centres have more than one tutor for their classes. Moore et al. (2012) carried out their study at the 'Australian Centre for Education' (ACE) which is quite different to the sample institute in this study. The centres in Cambodia run a range of IELTS preparation courses at any one time and employ more than one IELTS tutor.

In comparison, the institutes in Pakistan are mostly local and they run one IELTS preparation course at a time with only one tutor. The data from Moore et al. (2012) suggests that they have 10 or more teachers dealing with 100 or more students, whereas in Pakistan an individual tutor usually has 15-20 students, and sometimes more than 20 (see chapter 5).

As mentioned above, most of the teachers considered reading to be the most difficult section of IELTS; likewise, teachers indicated that they spent most of the class time on reading (20-40%) and writing (20-35%) skills; somewhat less time on listening (15-30%) and speaking (10-20%); and the least amount of time on vocabulary building and grammar (5-15% each). Comparing the questionnaire responses of the teachers to my classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC, I also found that reading was practised frequently. But speaking was practised more than writing, which was contrary to the teachers' views in the questionnaire. In the case of PACC, there was no grammar practice or vocabulary building in class. It is quite likely that these IELTS preparation tutors have their own priorities in how they approach the four language skills and it might also be the case that the way they have calculated the percentages has no bearing on what is actually taking place in the IELTS preparation classrooms. It is therefore important to treat the findings from these questionnaires with caution. The information obtained through the questionnaires describes to a large extent what happens in IELTS preparation classrooms but does not necessarily reflect the exact activities taking place. The teachers filling out the questionnaires belong to local institutes, therefore it is highly likely that there is a complete absence of grammar and vocabulary building exercises and teachers appeared to have ticked the options without considering what actually happens in their classrooms.

There was broad agreement among the teacher respondents concerning the activities they used to prepare their students for the different skills necessary for the test. There was a general agreement about the form of listening used in practice activities (live or recorded talks or lectures while taking notes) and most teachers indicated that they teach students to read questions, anticipate the topic of an upcoming listening passage and teach the types of answers required. While the

teachers also drew the students' attention to words repeated in a listening passage, they did not seem to make use of authentic situations where listening skills are necessary, such as taking part in a seminar discussion. During the classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC, I noticed that the teachers practised these activities although they did not draw students' attention to repeated words. At times, students had to struggle with their limited vocabulary and this was not practised at all at PACC, although there was some vocabulary practice at Berlitz (see chapter 5). When developing reading skills, teachers selected the following from the list as goals in their preparation classes: analysing text organisation; interpreting graphic information (statistics, graphs, and diagrams); learning how to read efficiently and effectively; and identifying the main idea of a text quickly. There is some mismatch between these responses and those of the test-preparers to the same questions, as the test-preparers were not sure if the following activities had taken place in the class: graphs, diagrams and statistics. The use of monolingual dictionaries and reading general texts was not encouraged. This was also confirmed during my classroom observation, that the above mentioned activities took place at Berlitz, while at PACC, I did not notice the teacher giving any practice in analysing text organisation or identifying the main idea of a text quickly. For the writing sub-test, the activities mentioned by the tutors included, describing graphs and diagrams, essay organisation, and components of the writing process such as drafting, editing, and revision. Teachers did not encourage their students to write short reports and long essays. This also corroborates the questionnaire responses made by the test-preparer respondents.

For the speaking component, delivering presentations, using supporting examples, engaging in group discussion, organising ideas (with specific transitional vocabulary) and increasing fluency (including using filler words to fill in gaps of silence) were options chosen by test preparation teachers as taking place in their classrooms. This also aligns with the test-preparers' responses. During my classroom observations, I found neither of the centres practising using filler words and delivering presentations. Activities like reading questions and predicting text and answer types; listening to live or recorded talks and note-taking; analysing text structure and organisation; reading quickly to get the main idea of the text; and

group discussions, were also reported to be used by teachers in the studies by Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012). For some of the IELTS preparation course activities, the mismatch between my classroom observations and the teacher questionnaire responses suggests that it is not always possible to get reliable information from questionnaires. The information on preparation activities can be most accurately obtained from classroom observations. This supports the view of Alderson and Wall (1993) and Bailey (1999) who suggest that teacher questionnaires should be complemented by classroom observations (see chapter 4). As we know that the washback deals with the effects of tests on teaching and learning, it is therefore important to document those effects both by asking teachers and watching teaching and learning (Bailey, 1999).

When considering the introduction of the specific mechanics, organisation and assessment criteria of the IELTS test, teachers were asked about the approximate percentage of class time spent on specific exam practice. They were given the following options, similar to those given to the test-preparers: i.e. information about the content and format of the test, looking at past papers, taking practice tests, marking and giving feedback in the forms of IELTS band scores, and techniques for taking the test. All the participating teachers placed more emphasis on using practice tests in their preparation classes (30%), providing information about the content and format of the test (25%); and somewhat less emphasis was placed on looking at past papers (17%), marking and giving feedback in the form of IELTS band scores (15%) and techniques for taking the test (5%). Regarding specific exam practice, Moore et al.'s (2012) teachers also placed emphasis on aspects of the test such as providing information about the content and format, taking practice tests and test-taking strategies. There is a slight mismatch between the test-preparers' responses and the teachers' responses for some of the options. For example, the test-preparers reported that they received feedback in the form of IELTS band scores for only 3.5% of the total class time compared to the 15% which the teachers reported. In about 13% of cases students reported that they were taught techniques for taking the exam but this was reported less frequently by the teachers (2%). It might be the case that some teachers provide feedback in a form other than IELTS band scores or they verbalise

potential band scores in their discussions with students but they ticked the option indicating that they provided their students with feedback in the form of IELTS band scores when this was not the case. This is supported by classroom observations where I did not notice any feedback provided by teachers in the form of IELTS band scores.

Similar to the findings from classroom observations and test-preparer questionnaires, more than half of the participating teachers (N=8) mentioned using the 'Cambridge IELTS' practice book exclusively in their classroom. One of the teacher respondents mentioned using 'Barron's IELTS' practice book in addition to the 'Cambridge IELTS' practice book, while one of the respondents did not give the names of the books used in her classroom for reasons of confidentiality. The choice of the 'Cambridge IELTS' practice book by majority of the teachers reflects the fact that the book is readily available on the market and affordable for the students. The book is reprinted locally; hence it is sold at a cheaper cost.

In general, the teachers were pleased with the textbook they used (i.e. the textbook covered information about the format of the exam, question types, relevant topics and a range of reading and writing passages, and contained challenging practice material). On the other hand, the perceived shortcomings of the textbook were that it contained limited speaking topics and some of the practice material was less challenging for students. The reliance of Pakistani tutors on one textbook contrasts with the studies by Moore et al. (2012) and Read and Hayes (2003) where teachers reported using a range of textbooks in their IELTS preparation classes.

In addition to textbooks, the teachers also listed other teaching materials used in their IELTS preparation course using audio visual facilities, such as online practice material, newspapers, magazines, BBC reports and documentaries. In addition to the use of these, Hawkey's (2006) teachers also reported using materials from TV and radio, audio and video and teachers' own materials in the class apart from textbooks. This contrasts with my classroom observations, where PACC had limited or no access to these resources, thus they did not tend to use materials from TV or audio and video. They were only used in a few international institutes. This also contradicts the responses of the test-preparers as only a small number of

students reported the use of supplementary materials in their classrooms.

In response to an open-ended question, teachers were asked for their opinions on what successful learners should do on the IELTS preparation courses. The teachers' responses highlighted some of the following activities which a successful student should do: students should acquire general knowledge, have good time management skills, read articles and newspapers, expand their vocabulary and study longer than the average student. If, however, the IELTS test was not required, the majority of teacher respondents (N=9) would not have prepared students in the same way for their future studies, but rather would have focused on General English skills. This is similar to the test-preparer respondents when they suggested that they would take a General English course if IELTS was not required, rather than an IELTS preparation course. This implies that teachers realise students' needs and their low proficiency in English and so they would prefer to offer a General English course.

All the teachers believed that an IELTS preparation course does not benefit anyone, or is not useful for anyone learning English to go to university, unless they are planning to take the IELTS test. This suggests they might consider a General English course to be more useful for those who do not want to take the test but only want to learn English. It seems they do not doubt the quality or authenticity of IELTS but they consider a basic General English language course to be more appropriate for their students rather than an IELTS preparation course. The majority of the students attending IELTS preparation courses have low English proficiency and they cannot benefit from short courses (see chapter 5). Furthermore, the majority (N=8) of the teachers also indicated that the IELTS preparation course cannot provide sufficient English language learning for someone wanting to attend university in English. Two teachers wrote in the questionnaire:

TR5: IELTS has lots of practice of reading, writing, speaking and listening tests. If someone is not required IELTS, then General English course is perfect for those who want to study abroad. In that course, we not only focus on tests but give grammar skills and accent as well.

TB8: For those test-preparers who don't take IELTS but want to go abroad for higher education, IELTS course can be helpful but General English can be more helpful. IELTS is the exam practice of four language skills, but General English course covers many areas of language like vocabulary and grammar, so General English is more suitable than the IELTS preparation course.

These teachers' comments suggest that they consider IELTS as a demanding exam for their low proficient students. The IELTS preparation courses do not provide their students with basic grammatical skills as they are mainly designed to provide them with practice tests. Therefore, these teachers are in favour of a General English course rather than an IELTS preparation course for those who want to study abroad as the longer duration of their General English courses will ensure a higher level of English proficiency.

Moore et al.'s (2012:32) teachers also suggested that an IELTS preparation course is not useful for those who do not plan to take the IELTS test. There is a difference, however, between Pakistani and Cambodian teachers in this respect. Pakistani teachers realise that the students are of too low a proficiency level to take an IELTS test if it is not required and that they should be offered a General English course. Cambodian teachers, on the other hand, believe that the IELTS test influences both the materials and curriculum development of the courses, which may not be helpful for those who do not wish to take the IELTS test. They also indicated that 'if the IELTS test were not required, they would have focused on more traditional English for Academic Purposes study skills (e.g. summary writing, critical thinking skills, research skills, note taking etc.)' (Moore et al., 2012:49). From this it appears that the Cambodian teachers do not believe that IELTS preparation provides study skills for university. Nevertheless the Cambodian teachers believe that the IELTS preparation course can help those who are planning to attend university.

The teachers in my survey, when commenting on the progress of the test-preparers in response an open-ended question, all reported that their students were making good progress on their preparation courses. One of the teachers claimed: 'I

can see positive change in my students and I am confident that they are improving. When they finish course they can take the test and easily get their scores' (TB10). Given the educational background of these test-preparers, it is unlikely that most of them would get their desired band scores, as was indicated from the pre- and post-testing results of the PACC students. It seems that the teachers might be overstating the progress made by their students. The progress perceived by these teachers could be marginal and might not result in any significant improvement in the students' performances.

None of the participating teachers commented on their overall IELTS preparation course except for one tutor who mentioned the short duration of the course as a major problem sometimes in helping low proficiency students. The short duration of the course reported by all test-preparers, test-takers, and even test-preparation teachers suggests that all three groups consider that if the IELTS preparation course was offered for a longer duration, the students (especially those with low proficiency) would have better chances of improving their scores.

## **6.4. Summary**

This chapter reported the results gathered from the questionnaires conducted with IELTS test-preparers, test-takers and test preparation teachers. The profiles of test-preparers and test-takers provide baseline information about the typical candidates preparing for and taking the IELTS exam. The majority of the respondents in the two groups are from public sector schools and universities, thus possessing low proficiency in English. Similar to the students at PACC, the test-preparers and test-takers have had limited provision of English education as they attended private non-elite English medium schools. Furthermore, the use of English in the daily life of test-preparers and test-takers is also very limited. The majority of respondents prepare for or have taken the Academic module of IELTS with the intention to study abroad, but a significant proportion of test-takers and a small number of test-preparers also mentioned they were preparing for or had taken the test to find job opportunities in Pakistan, either exclusively or as a fall back option.



In the previous chapter, from the rough estimate of the number of people attending IELTS preparation classes, I speculated that there are proportionately many more people in Pakistan preparing for the IELTS exam than there are people actually taking the test or going abroad. However, it is hard to determine what the remainder do with their IELTS certificate. The motivation mentioned by a significant proportion of people preparing for or taking the test, to find job opportunities in Pakistan, suggests that IELTS has assumed some socio-economic significance in Pakistan. Today in Pakistan, IELTS not only impacts on those who wish to go abroad but also on those who wish to use it locally. The IELTS preparation industry is thus growing due to this increase in demand, not only from those test-preparers who wish to go abroad, but also from those who intend to remain in Pakistan. Most of the test-preparers possess unrealistic expectations of the course regarding the IELTS score gains, which mostly cannot be attained due to the short duration of the course and the low proficiency of the students. Furthermore, as their expectations are not met, most of the test-preparers and test-takers report little satisfaction with their IELTS preparation course. The majority of the test-taker respondents blame the IELTS preparation course rather than themselves for their poor performance in the IELTS exam.

The profile of IELTS preparation teachers suggests that, in comparison to other studies, the teachers in Pakistan typically do not have much experience of teaching, and most of them do not receive any training for teaching IELTS. None of the teachers report to be IELTS examiners. Some of the classroom activities listed by IELTS preparation teachers contrast with those observed during the data collection at Berlitz and PACC. Nonetheless, all the teachers mentioned that the IELTS affects their teaching content and methodology. The IELTS exam is generally considered to be fair by the test-takers and the reading sub-test is experienced as the most difficult skill by all groups of respondents. Test-takers mentioned time pressure, unfamiliarity with the topics and examination fears which have also been mentioned by the IELTS teachers.

In order to explore some of these issues emerging from test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires, I conducted a focus group with IELTS test-preparers at one of

the centres in Hyderabad where I mainly focused on these issues. In the next chapter, I will discuss the major findings from these three questionnaires along with the qualitative data gathered from the focus group discussion and interviews with local employers in Pakistan and the parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion of phase 2 results**

### **7.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I reported the results from questionnaires conducted with IELTS test-preparers, test-takers, and test preparation teachers. I established in the methodology chapter that the second phase of my study included the collection of some small-scale qualitative data along with the quantitative questionnaires. In this chapter, I aim to interpret the significant results from the three questionnaires discussed in the previous chapter. This will be undertaken through examining qualitative data gathered from a mini focus group with four IELTS test-preparers, as well as semi-structured interviews with five local employers and five parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers. The data from the interviews and focus group will flesh out the findings from the questionnaires. As discussed previously, the focus group participants were chosen from the students who had completed the test-preparer questionnaires, and this was set up to gain a greater insight into some of the issues raised by the questionnaires. As well as the focus group of test-preparers, semi-structured interviews were held with employers and parents which aided the interpretation of the questionnaire results.

In section 7.2 below, I will firstly provide background information on the focus group participants and interviewees (i.e. parents and local employers). I explained in Chapter 4 (section 4.13.1) that a number of similar themes emerged from interviews and focus group. The thematic frameworks from interviews and focus group were revised and one thematic framework was created consisting of main themes and sub-themes (see appendix 21 for sample of themes which were created from codes and categories using Saldaña's model, 2009 as discussed in chapter 4, figure 4.2). This chapter is organised into the following key themes; the English proficiency of the IELTS candidates, the unrealistic expectations of the test-preparers, the quality of IELTS preparation institutes in Pakistan, the washback of IELTS on test preparation teachers, the growth of students intending to study

abroad, the use of IELTS test beyond its intended purposes in Pakistan, English and the workplace in Pakistan, and IELTS – a big brand (see appendix 22 for interview and focus group thematic frameworks and an overall thematic framework). The data from the interviews and focus group is integrated into the discussion of the findings from the questionnaires under these subheadings. Where relevant, I will also compare the findings with the results of first phase of the study.

## **7.2. Background information of the participants**

In the semi-structured interviews with five local employers in Pakistan, I aimed to find out more about their English language requirements and whether they ever require an IELTS certificate for any of their corporate roles. Recruiting both from the public and private sectors, I achieved a good representation of different types of employers. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I recruited one employer from each of the following organisations: bank, mobile phone provider, landline provider, hospital and a hotel (see chapter 4 for details on samples). Interviewing employers from these sectors was useful because the majority of the test-preparers and test-takers were working, or intending to work, in these sectors as detailed in Chapter 6. The parents (four fathers and one mother) of the IELTS test-preparers and test-takers were interviewed to find out their views on the IELTS exam, as they are also an important group of stakeholders in Pakistan. Four of them were working in different sectors, while one was a retired civil servant. Two of the participating parents' children had already taken the test and gone abroad for higher education. The children of three of the other parents were preparing to take the test at local institutes (two for higher education and one for immigration).

For the focus group, I chose four test-preparers from those who filled out questionnaires at one of the IELTS preparation centres in Hyderabad. The focus group participants were invited to share their views on areas related to the IELTS exam and its preparation, which were drawn from the test-preparer questionnaire. In table 7.1 below, I have provided some background information about the focus group participants which was taken from the questionnaires.

Name	Age	Profession	Intended Module	Required band score
Nisab	23	Student	Academic	7.0
Shaji	24	Student	Academic	7.5
Habib	38	Teacher	General Training	6.5
Atif	26	Student	Academic	7.0

Table 7.1 Background information of focus group participants

All four participants in the focus group discussion were males (Nisab, Shaji, Habib and Atif). The participants' names used here are all pseudonyms for the purpose of anonymity.

### 7.3. English proficiency of IELTS candidates in Pakistan

The test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires revealed that the majority of the respondents in the two groups belonged to middle and lower income families and had attended public sector institutions or private, non-elite English medium schools, while a few respondents from both groups were from elite backgrounds and had attended private schools and universities. This is consistent with the educational background of test-preparers at PACC, mainly because most of the participants who filled out the questionnaires were sampled from institutes similar to PACC. I explained in Chapter 2 that the private and state elite English medium schools are very expensive therefore those enrolling are predominantly from upper-middle class or high-income families. Parents from the lower-middle and lower classes either send their children to state schools or to low-cost, private English medium schools.

Due to the poor quality of education in the public sector and limited provision of English education from an early age, the majority of IELTS candidates in Pakistan (i.e. test-preparers and test-takers) have poor proficiency in English. This is despite the fact that, in the Pakistani educational system (in the public as well as the private sector), English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary level (see chapter 2).

Both groups of respondents (test-preparers and test-takers) reported studying English as a compulsory subject from an early age (either from kindergarten or primary level). Pakistani teachers, however, who teach English as a compulsory subject, do not speak in English all the time in their classes in state-run schools and non-elite private schools. Most of the participating test-preparers and test-takers reported that their English teachers either used English for less than half of the class time, or they did not use English at all in the classrooms. Both groups of respondents reported that English was used slightly more by teachers in universities than in state-run schools and colleges. I asked the focus group participants about the use of English by their English teachers in class. Two of them said:

Habib: I don't live in Hyderabad. I am teaching at a university in Hyderabad so I come every day from my village. My school was in Tando Adam where our English teacher never used English. May be one or two times she has used English but mostly Sindhi. I then got admission in government boys college in Tando Adam where the teacher not once used English. He always used Sindhi or Siraiki in class. When I came to Hyderabad to study in Mehran University, our English teacher mostly used English in class.

Atif: I studied from White Rose school and then public college, English teacher sometime used English but not always of course. If she was not speaking in English, she was speaking in Urdu with us. In college, it was more English than school. In university I think almost same amount as teacher speak in college but school was little bit less.

All three focus group participants except Habib lived in Hyderabad. Habib came from a small town in rural Sindh. Both Habib and Atif studied at private, non-elite English medium schools, but in contrast to Atif, Habib's English teacher never used English in his English class at school. However, both respondents reported that their teachers mostly used English in English classes at university. This suggests that the slightly greater use of English at university compared to schools and colleges

reported by the test-preparer and test-takers might be due to the fact that the sample included respondents from rural areas (like Habib) who completed their primary education in their villages and then moved to urban areas (such as Hyderabad) for higher education. The use of English in state-run schools and universities in urban areas is marginally higher than in state-run schools in rural areas. In comparison, Hawkey's (2006) respondents reported that there was less English instruction at an early age (kindergarten and primary school) but that more than a third of participants had studied English from secondary school onwards. Similarly, Moore et al.'s (2012) test-preparers and test-takers also learned English at secondary school and university. The boom in English language learning in Cambodia was seen only after 1993 (Igawa, 2008). Hence, for the subjects in Moore et al. (2012), the teaching of English language was only seen from secondary level. However, as reported by most of the test-preparers and test-takers (Moore et al., 2012), Cambodian teachers used English either all the time or more than half of the time in their classrooms.

In this study, apart from the use of English in formal education, the test-preparer and test-taker respondents' use of English in their daily life is also very limited. They reported using English rarely for reading, writing and socialising. This aligns with Shamim (2011) who suggests that Pakistani students attending state-run or low-end English medium schools (i.e. private non-elite) have little or no exposure to English in their daily lives. While a few respondents from both groups reported using English often for socialising (TP=11%, TT=9%), reading (TP=5.5%, TT=9%) and writing (TP=14%, TT=7%), it is likely that these respondents belong to high income groups and attended English medium schools. I suggested in Chapter 2 that the students attending elite English medium schools get exposure to English not only in their classrooms but also outside. They speak informally with their friends, watch English cartoons, read English comic books, English popular fiction and watch television programmes in English in everyday life. It is this exposure to English which crucially differentiates a child from an elite, English medium school from a child attending a mediocre one (Rahman, 2004). I reported in Chapter 6 that compared with the Pakistani test-preparers, Cambodian students often used English for reading and writing (Moore et al., 2012).

The information from the questionnaires regarding the use of English in class by English teachers, and in the daily life of test-preparers in Moore et al. (2012:23), generally indicates the elite background of the Cambodian test-preparers and test-takers, who were probably schooled through the medium of English. Thus, they have a higher proficiency level to start with compared to the test-preparers and test-takers in Pakistan. The majority of Pakistani test-preparers have attended state-run schools and they have limited exposure to English in their daily life. Because, as we now know, IELTS preparation courses do not improve proficiency, it is more likely that candidates starting with a higher proficiency level will achieve their desired band score, thus the test will benefit such candidates and its impact will be positive. The low starting proficiency level of Pakistani candidates suggests that fewer will be likely to achieve their desired band scores and will not benefit from the IELTS test, which will then have a negative impact. Furthermore, the Pakistani candidates and the Cambodian candidates are aiming for the same band range (around 6.5.). A wide range of variation means that there will be some, however, with a high enough proficiency level to achieve satisfactory IELTS scores.

The lower English proficiency of Pakistani students is further confirmed by the test-takers' reports of their scores. The majority reported band scores from 4.0-6.0. This score is quite low given the fact that more than half of the test-takers took the Academic module of IELTS. The test-preparer respondents stated that they made an effort to improve their IELTS scores by doing extra practice at home. This suggests that the test-preparers are highly motivated to improve their four language skills. Their efforts to improve their listening skills by watching English news and entertainment channels; to improve reading skills by reading newspapers and magazines; to improve their writing through practising essays; and practising their speaking skills with friends, all show their serious commitment to IELTS. Yet, as the Berlitz and PACC in-depth studies also showed, those test-preparers with low proficiency from a non-elite educational background may not be able to improve significantly during their preparation courses.



## **7.4. The unrealistic expectations of IELTS candidates**

Looking at the educational background of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers, it can be established that the majority of the IELTS preparation institutes in Pakistan deal with a low proficiency clientele. Apart from a few international institutes like Berlitz which cater for students from elite backgrounds who have better proficiency in English, all other institutes are attended by people who have low proficiency in English. These prospective IELTS preparation students have unrealistic expectations of their IELTS preparation course regarding the score gains. The questionnaire responses from the IELTS test preparation teachers showed that their students expected to achieve a band score of 6.5 or above, the same score as the test-taker respondents expected to achieve.

The test-preparers aiming for the Academic module of IELTS required band scores from 6.0-7.5, whereas those intending to take the General Training module required scores from 4.0-6.5. Looking at the types of schools they attended, it would be expected that the majority of the IELTS test-preparers would start with a low band score. This suggests that there is a large gap between students' actual proficiency level and their required band scores. The IELTS test-preparers/test-takers expectations of gaining high scores in a two month preparation course, are, rather unrealistic. The responses of IELTS preparation teachers suggested that attaining a band score of 6.5 or above is very difficult for their students, mainly because the length of the IELTS preparation course (two months) is too short and the students overall are of too low a proficiency level. This aligns with the observations of the PACC tutor who also argued that the test-preparers are generally not very proficient and unlikely to benefit from such a short IELTS preparation course. In contrast to what the teachers believe to be the case, the advertisements for many of the private centres explicitly claim to guarantee an 8.0 band score or above to their prospective students within their two months preparation course. In actual fact, however, attaining such high scores is impossible because of the non-elite, English medium educational background of their students and the short duration of the course (see chapter 5). This is clearly a marketing tactic to attract more clients.

The majority of the test-takers in this study attained band scores from 4.0-4.5 which was below what they expected. In comparison, Moore et al.'s (2012) test-takers were more proficient, as they scored between 5.0 and 6.5. Just less than half of the test-takers (43%) in that study achieved the band scores they expected. It is likely that the IELTS preparation courses in Cambodia are of a better quality than those in Pakistan. The proficiency level of Cambodian students is higher to start with and they receive higher quality IELTS preparation classes which help them attain their required band scores. The students in Pakistan have a lower proficiency level at the start and receive poor quality IELTS courses; consequently they achieve lower results overall compared to their Cambodian counterparts. Some IELTS preparation teachers in their responses attributed the acceptance on to the course of students with too low a proficiency in English to the lack of placement tests, which was similar to the view of the tutor at PACC. Almost every student applying to go on the course gains admission irrespective of their educational background and proficiency level. This contrasts with the less typical, international institutes like Berlitz where low proficiency students are excluded due to the more demanding placement test, as well as the higher cost of their IELTS preparation course.

Furthermore, a considerable number of test-preparers and test-takers expected to acquire basic English grammar skills. They considered the IELTS preparation course to be much like a General English course. This aligns with the test-preparers at PACC where students had similar expectations which were not met. I asked the focus group participants whether they expected to learn grammar on their IELTS preparation course. All had studied at non-elite English medium schools except Shaji, and all the three participants except Shaji expected to improve their general English proficiency as well as learning about IELTS. Atif said: 'I expected to practise tests, get exam practice and many exercises which will help in exam. I also like to write good essay may be improve past tense and other such thing'. In a similar vein, Habib said: 'In my village, the teachers in school never taught us grammar you know. So it is possible that teacher help me to improve my sentence structure which will of course help me to improve my essay writing for the exam'. These participants' expectations, to learn grammar and improve their writing skills, are typical of

students who attended non-elite, English medium schools and are missing this basic instruction. On the other hand, students like Shaji were not concerned about learning grammar on the IELTS preparation course. It is likely that the expectations of these students cannot be met as these are very short courses focusing on practice tests rather than on grammatical skills.

## **7.5. Quality of IELTS preparation courses**

Given the likelihood of a number of test-preparers and test-takers not acquiring English grammar or achieving their required/expected scores due to a low starting proficiency, it is unsurprising that a considerable number of test-preparers (54.5%) and test-takers (73.5%) felt that they had not been successful on the course. I explained in Chapter 6 that most of the test-preparers in Hawkey (2006) and Moore et al. (2012) believed that they were successful on the course and blamed any lack of success, on themselves, due to not having enough study time or not working hard enough, rather than anything to do with the course. Pakistani students in comparison, complained about the brevity of the course, insufficient practice material, being unable to attain their required scores and not having the opportunity to improve their grammatical skills. Pakistani students are, therefore, considerably less satisfied with their preparation courses compared to students in other parts of the world.

According to Mansoor (2005) and Rahman (2000) the conventional Pakistani education system encourages rote learning. Children remain dependent on their teachers from their early education, so it might be the case that IELTS test-preparers consider IELTS preparation in the same way as their formal education, where they expect everything to be learned in the classroom and do not expect to learn independently. This may not be entirely true, as the test-preparer respondents indicated that they undertook some practice at home (see chapter 6; section 6.2.7) but may be a case of too little too late.

These findings further indicate that students in Pakistan are quite unfortunate, as not only do they have low English proficiency but their IELTS preparation courses

are of low quality. In other parts of the world, such as China, students may have low proficiency due to the poor quality of education in the state sector but they are likely to get better quality preparation courses due to the fierce competition among preparation centres (Kedwards, 2012; Tan, 2011; Thorniley, 2010; see chapter 2). The focus group participants in this study summarised the quality of IELTS preparation as follows:

Nisab: You know it is okay here. I was thinking before that it may be excellent where you learn everything like English which missed at school, but I don't think it is best centre in Hyderabad. I don't know why some people praise this centre a lot. It is very simple as other centres not very extraordinary quality.

Atif: I am not very much happy because earlier I was thinking that teacher will start with basic English and then slowly he will give test material. But no teacher immediately start test, I waste time may be. Till today teacher has not taught grammar now only two weeks are remaining. You know you can only afford admission one time. Now I cannot go and find admission in any other centre for IELTS preparation.

Shaji: Well I believe that it is good preparation course. Our teacher gives us practice material every day for all the skills. And I think this is how you can get practice of IELTS. I don't see any problems here so I am overall satisfied here.

The comments of these IELTS test-preparers confirm that test-preparers from state schools or non-elite English medium schools (such as Nisab and Atif) received limited teaching of English at school and do not have much satisfaction with their course due to their expectations of learning grammar. Students from elite schools on the other hand (such as Shaji) do not expect to learn grammar on these courses, so are generally satisfied. Shaji's attitude in this respect is more aligned to the attitude

of Berlitz candidates described in the first phase of my study, and also to that of one of the PACC participant (Levin) who was more proficient compared than all the other test-preparers there and indicated his satisfaction with the course. The reason behind the dissatisfaction of test-preparers may not always be to do with the low quality of the courses but may be due to their unrealistic expectations of learning basic grammar skills.

Test-preparers such as Atif, who attend private local institutes, do not know enough to discriminate between good and bad institutes. If people like him are dissatisfied with their IELTS preparation course, they cannot afford to apply for admission elsewhere to start again. There is no information available to these test-preparers to help them in choosing, so the students have to make their own decisions about which IELTS institute to attend.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the interviews with parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers helped me understand their views on the IELTS exam. Their children were either preparing for the exam or had taken it and gone abroad to study in higher education. In one of the interview questions, I asked them to share their views on the growth and quality of IELTS preparation centres. One of the parents, commenting on the quality, strongly suggested that students need help in choosing an institute: 'Student should verify from the other students or from the net about the results. How much score, how many students have been admitted, so they must conduct a sort of a pre-entry survey and then in a job related market, the reputation counts' (IP3). This parent is suggesting that it would be useful to have some informal regulation such as a website where there could be a rating system which would help prospective test-preparers to choose an appropriate institute. However, there is no such rating system and, as I noted in Chapter 5, most of the institutes do not have their own websites to provide basic information about their courses, the duration and fee structure to their prospective students.

Another parent (a retired civil servant) had experience of preparing students for a civil service exam (CSS) in a private local centre where IELTS preparation classes were also available. The interviewee had a good knowledge of these centres and the differences between fraudulent and genuine institutes. He said:

IP1: There are variety of coaching centres in Pakistan depending upon the real, genuine, professionally qualified centres who do know how to teach. Then there are also number 2 type of institutions in Pakistan. Number 2 means the bogus one or not the real, the commercial type who are not equipped with qualified teachers. The fraudulent institutes just fleece the students in the name of a high sounding names like Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard coaching centres.

I described these local private centres with British and American sounding names, in Chapter 5. From the comments of IP1 it is not clear which institutes he would categorise as genuine and which would be bogus. But the comments indicate that he might consider as fraudulent those institutes which have deceptive names (typically neighbourhood tutors and stand-alone institutes). He might consider institutes with branches such as PACC to be more legitimate. It seems that more highly educated people like him find it easy to discriminate between low quality (such as locally owned) and high quality (such as internationally owned) institutes. But there is still a large group of people who cannot distinguish between these centres and continue to apply to those of a low quality. The majority of students learning English in these small centres fail to achieve their desired goals (like obtaining a better job, or going abroad to study or work) even if they receive an IELTS certificate (usually with a low score) and thus remain dissatisfied. Nonetheless, many poor people are futilely allocating a substantial amount of their income to pay these centres' tuition fees. Consequently local authors and journalists like Hareem (2006), Khan (2008) and Patel (2008) (reviewed in chapter 2) are calling for the industry's regulation, as it is believed that these short English language and IELTS preparation courses are merely run by profit-making organisations that do not offer any real education. It is difficult to know whether there will be any state regulation of these institutes in the future.

## 7.6. Washback of IELTS on test preparation teachers

I noted in the previous section that all the focus group participants except Shaji showed dissatisfaction with their IELTS preparation course, apparently due to their expectations of learning basic English grammar not being met. In order to find out more about their dissatisfaction with their course, I asked them about the teaching materials and methods used in their IELTS preparation classes. The focus group participants said:

Nisab: Teacher has no facility like projector just teaching from one book or may be two books. I mean if sir use magazines, newspapers or any other things it will be interesting. Sometime I find nice material on internet but I don't know why sir used this book which is very common book available everywhere in Hyderabad. That's why I try to find good material on internet at home and do extra practice.

Atif: There is no extraordinary qualities or facilities provided like internet material or showing any good films in English or other English programmes so sometimes we can read and write and sometime watch movies and improve our listening test in IELTS.

Habib: Mostly sir use Cambridge IELTS book. We all have this book so he comes and ask us to open any writing exercise or any other exercise. We do it and that's all. I don't like this method as I am also a teacher as I told you at Mehran University and students become bore like this. If teacher use any other materials like not textbook and use multimedia to teach, it will be more interesting for students. I can only say simple book simple method.

As well as complaining about the lack of learning grammar on the course, as seen in the previous section the focus group participants pointed out the limited use, or absence, of audio video facilities in their classrooms. This is evidence that most of

the local institutes are generally under-resourced and do not have adequate facilities in their classrooms (such as audio and video resources). Some IELTS test-preparers such as Nisab have access to internet outside of class which helps them in preparation for the test. Additionally, these three participants commented on the lack of use of supplementary materials in their class. This contrasts with the questionnaire responses of the test preparation teachers. In the questionnaires, all the teachers reported using exam related activities to specifically prepare students for test tasks, exposing them to typical test topics, and making them aware of the test framework. In addition, they reported using additional teaching materials such as online practice materials, BBC reports, newspapers and magazines. This suggests that there is a mismatch between what teachers report doing in their classrooms and what they actually do. It might be the case that these teachers occasionally arrange audio-visual facilities for their classes, in the same way as the tutor at PACC does (once or twice in a two month course). But by, ticking these options in the questionnaires, the teachers seem to imply that they use these on a daily basis and have easy access to audio-visual facilities. As I mentioned previously, all the IELTS preparation centres but one are local institutes, similar to PACC. Therefore from the classroom observations at PACC and the comments of the focus group of test-preparers, it can be assumed that the teaching methods of all the teachers who completed questionnaires would be similar, i.e. that none of the activities ticked on the questionnaires actually take place very often.

Almost all the teachers (N=9) filling out the questionnaires responded that the test influences their choice of content and their teaching methodology (see chapter 6). However, in contrast to the teachers' responses, comments from the focus group participants and findings from the classroom observations at PACC indicate that these teachers do not adapt their teaching methods and content, hence there is little or no washback from the test on their teaching. The washback of IELTS is likely to be found only on teachers working in international institutes like Berlitz, hence there is washback on some teachers but not others. I discussed in Chapter 3 that some research studies have shown that tests had limited or no washback on teaching methods and materials (such as Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Cheng, 2005;



Wall and Alderson, 1993). Washback may also be differential; it occurs with some teachers, but not others (see Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Watanabe, 2004). Out of the fifteen washback hypotheses of Alderson and Wall (1993), only the fifteenth can be corroborated by findings in this study: ‘tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others’ (Alderson and Wall, 1993:121; see chapter 3). Furthermore, the individual differences reflect ‘washback variability’ among teachers (Green, 2007:24; see chapter 3). Bailey’s (1996) basic model of washback, based on Hughes’ trichotomy (1993 cited in Bailey, 1996) does not address similarity and difference among individuals, so the reason for the differences in washback among teachers in the present study cannot be explained using her model.

The individual differences between the teachers working at private local and international institutes could be due to ‘personal factors’ (such as teachers’ attitudes towards the test, teachers’ educational backgrounds, their familiarity with a range of teaching methods, teaching styles and their beliefs about the best methods of teaching and learning) that induce or constrain washback (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Cheng, 2005; Shohamy et al., 1996; Wall and Alderson, 1993; Watanabe, 2004; see chapter 3). The majority of teachers (N=9), typically those working at private local institutes have not received any training for teaching their IELTS preparation course students. The students’ comments also show that they do not use much variety of teaching materials or have access to necessary resources. This suggests that the personal factors could be one of the reasons that constrain the washback on teachers’ methods and materials, especially those working at local institutes like PACC.

## **7.7. Growing number of students intending to go abroad**

A considerable number of the test-preparer and test-taker respondents (TP=69.5%, TT=52%) reported that they are taking or have taken the IELTS test with the intention to go abroad, either to settle permanently or to study. I explained in Chapter 2 that only a limited number of local scholarships (such as from the Higher

Education Commission) and a few international scholarships are available to Pakistani students. Since the majority of people studying in these institutes belong to middle or lower income groups, it seems unlikely that many people will find the funds to go abroad. In order to find out why people intend to go abroad and whether or not they can find sufficient funds to do so, I invited the focus group participants and the parents to share their views. I started with a general discussion and asked them whether everyone in Pakistan who takes the test is able to go abroad and then I asked them to give the reasons for the growing number of people leaving the country. All four focus group participants agreed that it is not possible for everyone to study abroad due to financial constraints. Habib explained:

See many of us are from families who can hardly give their children good education. Sending their child in foreign country is almost impossible for poor parents and that's why everyone is trying hard to get scholarship from Higher Education Commission so they can go and study in western country. If you ask anyone in our class, all will say want to take test to get degree from London, Canada, or Australia except only some people who want to immigration. But it looks like not possible that all of them will actually go and study there because of financial difficulties. May be half or I think less than half of them can go.

From information available from Cambridge ESOL on the number of test centres around the world, I estimated in Chapter 1 (see section 1.4) that almost 20,000 people in Pakistan take the IELTS test every year. Habib estimated that only half or less of the total number of test-takers actually go abroad, which would be around eight to ten thousand. Nisab agreed with Habib that, as well as financial constraints, it is also very difficult for girls to go abroad because most conservative families do not allow their daughters or wives to go alone to study abroad: 'In our country it is mostly girls who have difficulty. They take IELTS exam but many cannot go because going alone for them is very difficult and of course it is a poor country so we all rely on scholarship'. I mentioned earlier in Chapter 5 that most of the girls have

to accompany a man (father, brother or husband) if they want to go abroad.

The desire to study abroad is driven in part by the opportunities that follow, once back in Pakistan. An increasing number of Pakistani people aspire to graduate abroad due to the opportunities this provides whether they have the funds to do so or not. The most well-paid job opportunities in multinational companies and private local companies are reserved for competent candidates who either have qualifications from private universities in Pakistan or for those who have foreign degrees (see chapter 2). This means that foreign graduates clearly have better opportunities in Pakistan on their return. There are many sectors where people are hired because of their foreign qualifications and there are certain jobs in Pakistan (especially in the education sector) where not only does a foreign degree have value but it is also an indication of candidates' exposure to western culture. I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that local private universities in Pakistan are very rare and extremely expensive for people to attend, so they prefer to go abroad and strive for scholarships to do so. When I asked the parents about the reasons behind the growth in the number of test-takers, one of them said:

IP4: Yes I very much encourage my children to get better quality education from abroad like for example UK, USA, Canada or may be Australia, because when I was student I myself wanted to go abroad and do my PhD in English. This way when my children finish education from there, they can get best jobs in homeland or anywhere in the Middle East or even in English countries. Middle East is a good option to go because it is near to Pakistan so we can meet our children on Eid and other occasions and everyone knows that the salary they give their employees, no employees here in Pakistan can give them even if they have foreign degrees in any subject.

The above parent suggested that he mainly encouraged his children to go abroad for their future employment prospects. Some of the participants attributed much of the increase in people going abroad to unrest in the country. A focus group participant, Atif said:

Country condition in Pakistan is very poor, there are like daily target killing and bomb blasts in Karachi and Hyderabad are getting common. So that's why many people are going to foreign day by day. If they study for few years abroad and come back, the country condition might be better and they get best jobs in the market, or may be these people change the plan in future and get the jobs abroad and never come back to Pakistan because of course I think salary package is better there. I also want to go due to this.

Atif considered political unrest to be the main reason for Pakistani people looking for opportunities abroad. In line with Atif, one of the participating parents also encouraged his children to study abroad due to the deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan:

I really want all my children to study and then settle in Canada so that finally we can also move there because it is very unsafe to live now in Pakistan. Bomb blasts, target killing are very threatening situation these days, therefore I personally think, I mean it is better to move from this country and live peacefully and safe somewhere else (IP5).

This parent is so concerned about the political situation in Pakistan that he not only wants his children to go abroad but he wants his whole family to settle permanently abroad. It is difficult to estimate the number of Pakistani students returning to Pakistan after completion of their degrees and those seeking permanent settlement abroad. I explained in Chapter 2 that local as well as foreign scholarships strictly require funded Pakistani students, to return to Pakistan after completion of their studies. Even so, some scholars have breached surety bond agreements with the Higher Education Commission and have not returned to Pakistan. It seems that those people who leave the country mainly due to unrest settle abroad permanently, whereas those intending to find a job in Pakistan return after completing their education.

## **7.8. IELTS outside of its intended purposes**

In Chapter 5, roughly estimating the number of people attending IELTS preparation classes, I speculated that there are proportionally many more people in Pakistan preparing for the IELTS exam than there are people actually taking the test and then going abroad. IELTS in Pakistan today is not only taken for its intended purposes (study abroad, emigration or professional registration), but also by those who do not wish to go abroad. From the test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires, it was found that almost a third of test-takers (30%) and a small number of test-preparers (10%) were preparing for, or took the test, to find employment within Pakistan. A further 13.5% of test-preparers admitted taking the test to go abroad with a fallback option of finding a job in Pakistan. In addition, a few test-preparers (3%) and some test-takers (18%) mentioned taking the test solely to determine their English language ability. There is no information about why they needed this but one reason might be that these respondents were intending to apply for jobs within Pakistan, where many jobs require fluency in English, so the test would be useful for this purpose. This suggests that the growth in the number of test-preparers and test-takers does not necessarily mean that they all intend to go abroad. Obtaining the IELTS certificate for these test-preparers and test-takers has become important to improve local job prospects or to assess one's English language competence. In the subsequent sections, I will discuss the views of employers, focus group participants and parents on whether the IELTS certificate can help with getting employment locally.

### **7.8.1. Does IELTS guarantee a job?**

Despite the fact that some of the respondents from both groups reported taking the test to find jobs in Pakistan, it does not appear that the IELTS certificate is required there for any kind of job. All the test-takers sampled from different sectors (such as banking, telecommunication, hotel management and health profession) said that their employers did not require IELTS. I asked the participating employers what they thought of this widely held perception of the value of the IELTS certificate in

finding jobs locally. I wanted to know whether local employers require IELTS for any particular kind of job, or whether they might require this in the future. Firstly, I asked whether they require IELTS for positions such as managers, directors, doctors, and nurses. In line with the responses of the test-takers, none of the employers admitted formally using IELTS as part of their hiring practices. Two of the employers commented:

EM1: It is basically test for all who going abroad, it has nothing to do with the job here in country. Jobs have different requirements of course, we need qualification, we need to see some experience and we take interview. If someone come with IELTS certificate, it does not mean we will not conduct their interview. We still have to take the candidate interview in English. This way I don't think IELTS is fit or good for getting any job in Pakistan, may be it is possible in foreign countries.

EL5: No no, we I mean our company never take IELTS certificate or any certificate because it is for students or people who permanently go countries like in Canada. We have a different system of taking interview and seeing if anyone is suitable for our job. How can IELTS will be suitable for us.

Both employers suggested that, not only did they do not require an IELTS certificate but also that they did not consider it to be appropriate for getting a job in Pakistan. They regarded it as a certification used by students who want to study abroad or for those who want to emigrate. Furthermore, the first employer also suggested that if any of their job applicants said they had an IELTS certificate, it would not be considered an evidence of their English language proficiency. This contrasts with Moore et al. (2012:40) where several employers said that, 'if IELTS results were reported by a job applicant, it would be possibly used as corroborative evidence of language proficiency'.

Looking at the significant proportion of test-takers and test-preparers who intended to take or had taken IELTS to find a job in Pakistan, I asked the

participating employers if they would ever be likely to use IELTS in the future to establish the proficiency of their employees. All the employers said that they did not consider IELTS relevant for the assessment of the English proficiency of their employees, thus would not use the certificate. They explained:

EC2: It is not possible to make the IELTS test compulsory to get the job because it is actually for those students and other people for immigration and not good and perfect for those who want to apply in our bank. Here we ask different questions relevant to their education and their experience. But the test of IELTS has not anything which is best fit for our interview that we take from our candidates. I don't think in any bank it will be made compulsory to do IELTS test or they will ask people for it in future.

EP3: No that is impossible to start assessing English of people with the help of IELTS certificate. There is no connection between these two things. I am not saying that it is not a reliable certificate or not good certificate but the thing is actually that our company has different test for those who want to apply. We have a list of questions to ask from our employees and replacing them with IELTS would not be suitable. And I also believe that IELTS has all reading, writing, speaking and listening. So reading and listening we can never test because it is not useful for us to check. We mostly conduct interview with the people. Yes also it depends upon the job nature so we may ask different questions for different people. IELTS in this way cannot satisfy the requirements for our different kinds of jobs.

EH4: My prospective employees are screened in a very different way. Yes I agree that English is compulsory requirement for our jobs but we cannot make IELTS as compulsory because it is not possible. You don't know what can happens in the future but at least my knowledge says it is not possible. See there are many private tuition centres which are now everywhere in the

Hyderabad and Karachi they are selling their services by cheating people. If any students are giving this exam and think he can get job with IELTS, it can be due to these tutors.

These employers' comments clearly suggest that they do not consider IELTS as relevant to their job requirements and would not consider replacing their procedures for screening English proficiency with IELTS in the future. They assess the proficiency of their prospective employees through their own tests (oral and/or written). The last comment, by an employer of a hotel (EH4), is very interesting as it suggests that private centres have become so noticeable in the country that even employers are aware of what is happening in them. The fact that private English language centres have been making false statements to their prospective students and encouraging them to take the IELTS test might have devalued IELTS for employers, as they neither require IELTS nor accept it as a proof of English proficiency.

Answering one of the open-ended questions, almost all the teachers (N=9) suggested that the IELTS preparation course does not benefit those who just want to learn English or do not intend to go abroad. This might be an indirect signal by IELTS preparation teachers to students preparing for and intending to take the test for purposes other than those intended (such as getting better job opportunities and/or improving proficiency in English) that they are unlikely to benefit from it. It also suggests that IELTS preparation teachers are well aware of the motivations of their students, but they do not refuse them admission due to the financial gains to be made. This clearly suggests that there is a mismatch between the perceptions of test-preparers and test-takers, and employers. It is also difficult to ascertain whether employers are only giving part of the picture as they might be impressed by the IELTS scores presented by their employees.

The Cambodian employers did not require IELTS either because they felt that taking the exam was expensive, although a few of them noted that if it was made cheaper, it had the potential to become a commonly used requirement for employment (Moore et al., 2012). This contrasts with the views of Pakistani employers who did not consider IELTS as useful requirement for employment.



From the questionnaire responses of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers in this study, I anticipated that the considerable number of people taking IELTS to find job opportunities within Pakistan would give a clear indication that IELTS was useful and that employers would be ‘local users’ of the IELTS test, but this proved not to be the case. The test-taker responses and semi-structured interviews with local employers, representing a wide range of commercial enterprises, confirmed that they do not require any English proficiency certificates like IELTS, or, indeed, any local General English certificate from private institutes for any of their corporate positions. This is in spite of the fact that English (both written and spoken) is required from potential employees for different kinds of high-paid and even some low salaried jobs. When necessary, English proficiency is ascertained through interviews or a company’s own test. However, IELTS candidates who are motivated to get the certificate to find better employment might want to demonstrate their proficiency in English through presenting the certificate. It is still possible that IELTS could become a requirement for employment in the public sector in the future; for example, there has been a running debate for some years now among universities as to whether to require lecturers (in all subjects) to provide an IELTS certificate (HEC Annual Report, 2007-2008).

### **7.8.2. Usefulness/suitability of IELTS in getting local employment**

None of these focus group participants ticked the option in their questionnaires ‘to find a job within Pakistan with the help of IELTS certificate’ (see table 7.1). I asked them whether they thought IELTS is taken by people who do not intend to go abroad. All four participants agreed that IELTS is taken by a number of people who do not wish to go abroad, and interestingly, they all agreed that the IELTS certificate could be used indirectly to help obtain a job in Pakistan. Shaji explained:

Yes, if someone is seeking a job in a good company then they might ask applicant to give his English proficiency evidence as they normally ask everywhere to be English proficient in writing and speaking skills. So it can 318

be helpful to appear in a job test which can be same like IELTS. Or if they ask about English and the candidate has no good English background, then he can show his IELTS certificate to the employer and he can get a job.

Shaji believed that the IELTS certificate could be useful in two ways. Firstly he suggested that the experience of going through the IELTS exam (especially the speaking and writing components) can be helpful in getting through job screening as he believed that the screening tests for different jobs are designed on the IELTS format. The employers above mentioned that they assessed the English proficiency of their potential employees through conducting a spoken test and/or a written test, so test-preparers like Shaji might believe that the job tests are similar in structure or level of difficulty to the IELTS test. If this is the case, then employers might be unaware of it, or may be unwilling to admit it, as none of the employers above mentioned this.

Secondly, in Shaji's opinion, English proficiency requirements can be evidenced with the help of an IELTS certificate, whether or not it is explicitly required by the employer; however the employers I interviewed did not accept the IELTS certificate as proof of English proficiency (see above). People like Shaji believe that the certificate can be used to offset or waive employers' English language requirements. This demonstrates the wider significance of IELTS in Pakistan, if people believe that it can either be used to evidence the English proficiency requirements of a job, or it can help them get through job tests. When I asked the parents whether IELTS could be used for purposes other than immigration and education abroad, three replied affirmatively, one as follows:

IP2: It is a rewarding experience if you take IELTS. Not necessarily you have to go abroad after IELTS. You can also serve in banking, police service of Pakistan, you can join army, navy and any corporate sector. It is due to their entry tests which are closely modelled on the IELTS system. I mean to say that their tests are very similar to IELTS. You can also go through other

tough exams to get jobs like Central Superior Services of Pakistan (CSS) and Public Service Commission of Pakistan (PCS) because your English is improved. So if you can't go abroad, you can still get other jobs in Pakistan after gone through the experience of IELTS.

This participant partly agrees with Shaji regarding the usefulness of IELTS in getting jobs in Pakistan and also points to two different ways of utilising the IELTS certificate in finding a job. Firstly, similarly to Shaji, he believes that the written and oral exams for many jobs are very similar in format to the IELTS, so it would make getting through the exams much easier, in order to obtain these jobs. However, we cannot compare the job tests to IELTS as they are not in the public domain. The parent (IP2) also mentions taking the public service commission exams, such as CSS, after getting through the IELTS exam. The CSS exam includes English as a compulsory subject (see chapter 2), which is perhaps why IP2 assumes that the IELTS preparation course might improve a candidate's English which would in turn help with passing the public service commission exams. Another parent, agreed: 'Once your English become perfect after IELTS, you can apply for call centre job or appear into any other examination. You cannot say that you waste if you cannot go abroad' (IP3). This parent interestingly does not believe in the power of certification like many other test-preparers and test-takers but rather believes IELTS preparation improves proficiency in English. He makes the same error as some test-preparers and test-takers when he considers IELTS preparation to be equivalent or similar to a General English course which can help students to improve their English language skills rather than providing practice for an exam.

The responses of these parents and those from the focus group corroborate the findings from the questionnaires of the IELTS test-takers and test-preparers, who intend to take the test in order to find jobs within Pakistan. It seems that there is a general public perception that IELTS, being an international exam, can be helpful for this purpose and that it can either be accepted directly anywhere, as proof of English language competence, or indirectly could help to pass a screening test. Therefore a growing number of people have started taking the IELTS test locally for these

purposes. The employers in section 7.8.1 above clearly mentioned that they neither require IELTS nor accept it as a proof of English proficiency. In Pakistan, the government authorities do not list IELTS as a requirement for internal jobs.

## **7.9. English and the workplace in Pakistan**

In the discussion above, the employers were adamant that they do not require IELTS. However, proficiency in English (written, oral or both) is required for many different jobs. Previously it was only a requirement for white-collar jobs but nowadays proficiency in English (mostly spoken but sometimes written) has also become a requirement for a number of low salaried jobs such as beautician, salesman, fitness club trainer and security guard (see chapter 2; section 2.6.3). There is a clear need and demand for English in many sectors such as retail, financial services, Information Technology, beauty and wellbeing, tourism and healthcare in many South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Erling, 2014). It is surprising to find, therefore, that the use of English in the work place is very limited. The majority of the test-taker respondents reported that it is not compulsory for them to speak in English at work. Only a small number of respondents reported that they used English ‘often’ at work.

I found out from the employers’ interviews that they all require proficiency in English for most of their vacancies and this is established mainly through conducting interviews in English. Only one of the participating employers mentioned a written test along with the interview. The employers interviewed did not reveal exactly what they ask their employees in the interview, for reasons of confidentiality, but they mentioned that the interview is conducted in English, when employees are asked about their educational background, work experience and various other things to establish whether they are eligible for the specific job or not. This shows that spoken English is prioritised over written English; potential employees are mainly tested in oral English although a few companies also screen candidates according to their written English.

In order to find out the reasons behind the limited use of English in the workplace, I asked the participating employers if it is compulsory for employees to speak in English. I initially believed that there might be certain differences between local companies (like the National Bank of Pakistan) and international organisations (such as Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays), where the latter would require their employees to use English more frequently at work. But all the employers said that they do not require their employees to speak in English at all times. Commenting on this, one of the employers said: ‘Sometime yes in business meeting they have to speak in English or with some client otherwise no one really speak in English. They are free to speak Urdu. They are required to write reports, memorandum, and emails in English more frequently’ (EB5). This suggests that, although Pakistani employers require proficient English speakers, they do not expect their employees to always speak in English at work. Having found from both the test-takers and employers that it is not compulsory to speak in English at work, I asked the employers why they conducted their interviews in English. One of the employers said:

You know it is quick to check English with taking interview. We easily come to know who has good English and who has not. When we advertise our job we get hundreds of application, and many are those people from government college or university. When after asking some question in English we come to know who is good and then choose the applicant by looking education and experience (EL3).

The comment of the above employer suggests that one reason behind requiring fluency in English could be a way of separating out applicants (the highly proficient from those with low proficiency) but it has no functional value. Assessing their oral English might be the first step to identify people suitable for a particular job. Furthermore, this also indicates that employers are well aware of the educational background and the proficiency level of their workers (people mostly from state universities) so they do not compel them to speak in English at work. It might be quite challenging for employees from non-elite English medium schools to speak in

English at all times if this was required by their employers; however they are only occasionally required to do this.

In order to find out about the employees' English proficiency level, I asked the participating employers about the educational background of their employees. All the participants said that most of their employees had typically attended either state-run schools or non-elite, private English medium schools with the majority having graduated from public sector universities. Only a few employees had attended elite private schools followed by private sector tertiary education. Given this information, it might be expected that the employees would generally not be very proficient in English. To find out if these employees make any effort to improve their English before applying for a job, I asked the employers whether their employees had attended any private language centres or taken English lessons outside their university. All the employers confirmed that, before applying for jobs, most of their applicants attended private centres to improve their English skills due to their weak English language background. One of the employers said:

Most of the times people apply in bank and they have already gone to institutes like PACC or Domino to attend English language classes in the evening when they are studying in universities because in our schools and universities, children are not taught about speaking fluent English or writing very well and so on. So by the end of course the people have to ask for help for some tuition centres. Once they think their English is improved then they apply for job (EH1).

The employer's comments confirm that most of their employees have attended private centres before applying for jobs. It is highly likely that these employees attended an IELTS preparation course to take the IELTS test, as was found from the responses of the test-takers. These people might have slightly better English compared to those who did not attend private language classes, thus enabling the employers in distinguishing between candidates in job interviews. The apparent

requirement of English proficiency highlighted in job advertisements by these employers is the main reason why many people attend private centres in the evening (either for a General English or IELTS preparation course) to improve their English, as well as attending university or college during the day.

Knowing that most of the people applying for jobs have attended state sector schools and universities, I asked the employers if their employees face any difficulties, due to their weak English proficiency, in understanding work interactions that need to take place in English. The participants explained that their employees mostly face difficulty in writing reports (such as medical histories and complaints), memoranda and writing emails in English. Two of the employers also mentioned that poor speaking skills do not create much difficulty as it is not compulsory to speak in English in the office but if people have poor written English, this can create problems as it is commonly used in documentation. This contrasts strikingly with the way the English proficiency of employees is assessed, where the majority of employers said that they conduct interviews in English to establish the proficiency of their clients, whereas practically they should be assessing the written skills of their employees as well, especially as they complained about their poor writing skills.

## **7.10. IELTS – a big brand**

From the test-preparer and test-taker questionnaires, it was found that job seekers, as well those wanting to determine their English skills and learn grammatical skills, enrolled in an IELTS preparation course in order to gain an IELTS certificate rather than a General English course, where they would achieve a local General English certificate. When the focus group participants mentioned that a number of people take the IELTS test for reasons other than study abroad and immigration, I asked them why this group would prefer an IELTS certificate over a General English certificate. One of the focus group participants (Atif) explained why:

People you know respect and think that English certificate which is authenticated by UK or USA is trustworthy. If a person takes local English language certificate for a job, the employer may be suspicious as you know what happens in our country commonly that people are not judged on real merit. So I think it is actually the international certificate that is why it is more famous and has a big name. And also that is why I have seen many people say they want to take the IELTS exam so they can get jobs of their choice in multinational companies or somewhere else.

This implies that, as an international standardised benchmark exam, the IELTS test may be gaining significance in Pakistan for socio-economic reasons. IELTS is increasingly becoming such a recognisable brand that the majority of the people in Pakistan want to achieve that certificate rather than any local General English certificate. The IELTS brand is held up as the best due to its international status (a foreign language exam) and its cost. Because IELTS is an international English language exam and is relatively expensive, many students in Pakistan consider it better quality than the local General English certificate which is comparatively cheaper; therefore they strive to get the IELTS certificate through gaining admission onto these IELTS preparation courses. Shaji emphasised the transparency associated with IELTS:

IELTS score you know can only be checked through a website whether it is a genuine or not. Who can trust a local General English certificate, I think no one. You can easily get such certificate in Pakistan even without attending any General English course. Therefore I think people are relying on a exam like IELTS which is very very trustable.



## **7.11. Summary**

This chapter discussed some of the main findings from the three different questionnaires which were presented in Chapter 6. In addition, a focus group of IELTS test-preparers, and semi-structured interviews with parents and local employers also helped to interpret these findings. The small-scale qualitative data collected in the second phase of the study proved useful in understanding some of the issues, as described in this chapter. In the next chapter, I will revisit the research questions, which were outlined in the introduction to the dissertation and also in the methodology chapter, in order to answer these. The next chapter will also outline the implications of the study, its limitations and suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

### **8.1. Overview**

This study investigated the impact of a high-stakes English language proficiency test (IELTS) on a range of stakeholders in Pakistan, employing a mixed methods approach. In this chapter, I will discuss the significant findings of this study from a macro level perspective. In section 8.2 below, I will firstly summarise the major findings of the study in relation to the research questions. I will then address the overarching research question which is the impact of IELTS on education, the economy and society in Pakistan. I will highlight how this study contributes to existing studies of the impact of IELTS, and consider the implications of the study for institutions which are producers and end-users of the test. I will also highlight the limitations of my study and will conclude the chapter with proposals for the direction of further research.

### **8.2. Summary of major findings by revisiting research questions**

In the introduction to this thesis I explained that the effect of language tests on teaching and learning in the classroom is referred as ‘washback’ and the influence of tests beyond the classroom (e.g. on the school, the education system and society) is termed ‘impact’. Some researchers describe impact as the ‘wider’ effect, and washback as the ‘narrower’ effect of tests (Bailey, 1996; Wall 1997). When a test impacts on the educational system, or society as a whole, every member of that society is indirectly affected by its use. This research investigated the washback and impact of the IELTS test on the following key stakeholders:

- IELTS test preparation providers (private centres)
- IELTS test-preparers
- IELTS test-takers
- IELTS test preparation teachers
- Parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers
- Local employers

Considering the test impact on individual stakeholders helps to assess the general systemic impact of IELTS in Pakistan on education, the economy and society as a whole. The overarching research question of this study was: ‘What impact does IELTS have on education, the economy and society in Pakistan?’ This question can only be adequately answered when all the other research questions have been addressed. Below, I will briefly revisit the thirteen sub-questions which focused on the above six main groups of stakeholders.

### **8.2.1. What types of private English language institutes are available in Pakistan? (RQ1)**

[Source: face-to-face surveys]

The face-to-face surveys conducted at twenty private English language centres in Karachi and Hyderabad, discussed in Chapter 5 of the dissertation, showed that there is a substantial private English language teaching industry in Pakistan. The two broad categories of private language centres are: local institutes which are found in abundance all over the country and international franchises, of which there are only a few, located in the large cities in Pakistan such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. The private local institutes can be further divided into three categories: local neighbourhood tutors (private tutors), stand-alone institutes, and institutes with a number of branches. Among the wide variety of local institutes, the most common are those with branches (such as the Pakistan American Cultural Centre). The

private local institutes are of low quality and attended by people with limited proficiency in English, either from low or middle-income groups. The international institutes are attended by the elite section of Pakistani society, as they are considerably more expensive than the local institutes. Most of the private institutes offer IELTS preparation alone, and there is fierce competition between the centres. They are unregulated, unregistered, do not pay taxes and go unchecked by the government.

### **8.2.2. What are the differences between private local and international institutes? (RQ2)**

[Source: classroom observations]

Classroom observations of complete IELTS preparation courses of eight weeks length, conducted at Berlitz and PACC (see chapter 5), reveal substantial differences between the two institutes. The international institutes like Berlitz are better-resourced overall than local institutes such as PACC as they provide well-equipped classrooms, foreign edition textbooks, a wide variety of teaching materials and methods, and trained IELTS preparation teachers. Institutes like Berlitz, have a demanding screening process and only admit candidates on to their IELTS preparation courses who have had an English medium education (typically those who have attended private elite English medium schools). There is, however, no placement test at local institutes, meaning that anyone applying for the course is taken on without undergoing any screening process. PACC mainly caters for the middle-income group but also for some people from the lower-income section of society, while Berlitz is attended only by people from the high-income section of society.

### **8.2.3. How effective are private institutes in improving the IELTS performance of their students? (RQ3)**

[Source: pre- and post-testing]

The results of pre- and post-tests undertaken with twenty IELTS test-preparers, at Berlitz and PACC (reported in Chapter 5), showed there was a similar, low level of improvement in both institutes. Due to their better proficiency in English, test-preparers at Berlitz started off with better scores in all the four components of the test compared to the PACC cohort. Looking at the overall, better quality of IELTS preparation received by students at Berlitz, it was expected that they would significantly improve in all four components. However, comparing the pre- and post-test scores of each institute, a statistically significant improvement was found only in the reading component at Berlitz. This shows that neither of the two cohorts made any considerable improvement. Similar to studies such as Brown (1998), Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), Green (2007), Rao et al. (2003) and Read and Hayes (2003), the improvement made by each institute for individual modules varied, as there was no regular pattern of score gains. The results imply that both types of institute are not very effective in raising the proficiency level of the students.

### **8.2.4. What are the profiles of the candidates preparing for the IELTS test (test-preparers) and the candidates who have taken the IELTS test (test-takers)? (RQs 4 and 7)**

[Source: test-preparer questionnaires, test-taker questionnaires]

Test-preparers and test-takers answered the same questions regarding their English language background and the use of English in their daily life. The two research questions eliciting background information about test-preparers and test-takers profiles are answered together in this section, thus highlighting similarities and differences between the two cohorts. The questionnaire responses of IELTS test-

preparers (N=200) and test-takers (N=100) reported in Chapter 6 of the dissertation indicated that the majority attended either state-run schools or low-cost (non-elite), private English medium schools. The test-preparers and test-takers had a limited proficiency in English due to the lack of English instruction in these schools. Consequently, more than half of the test-preparer and test-taker respondents took extra language classes to learn English, at the same time as attending college or university. The majority of respondents from the two groups were preparing for, or had taken the test to go abroad, but a considerable number were doing the test to find local employment prospects within Pakistan. The sample of test-preparers and test-takers did not use English very frequently in their daily lives for social and educational activities. However, the test-preparers were highly motivated to improve their four language skills outside of their classrooms by doing extra practice for the test at home.

#### **8.2.5. What are the expectations and level of satisfaction of IELTS test-preparers with their IELTS preparation courses? (RQ5)**

[Source: test-preparer questionnaires, informal conversational interviews with test-preparers, focus group discussion]

The interviews with IELTS test-preparers (N=20) at Berlitz and PACC reported in Chapter 5, and the questionnaire responses of IELTS test-preparers (N=200) and test-takers (N=100) who attended IELTS preparation courses detailed in Chapter 6, and focus group with test-preparers (N=4) in Chapter 7 showed that people attending IELTS preparation courses have high expectations of these courses. Most of the test-preparers and test-takers expected to gain band scores of 6.5 or above (typically those intending to take the Academic module of IELTS) despite their low starting proficiency. Some of the test-preparers and test-takers expected to learn General English skills (grammar and communication skills) on the IELTS preparation course, suggesting they viewed the course as similar to a General English course.

The majority of the test-preparers did not see their preparation course as

successful as they subsequently failed to improve their IELTS band scores, or due to the lack of improvement in their General English skills. Because of their limited English education, attaining band scores of 6.5 or above was quite unrealistic for these test-preparers and test-takers. Similarly, the test-takers either failed to attain their required band scores or did not improve their grammatical skills on the preparation courses. Consequently, most of the test-preparers and test-takers showed a lack of satisfaction with their preparation course. They complained about the short duration of the course, lack of resources, use of limited practice materials, absence of learning General English skills and the cost of their IELTS preparation courses. In comparison, the test-preparers from international institutes were satisfied overall with their course.

#### **8.2.6. What is the washback of the IELTS test on courses and the teachers preparing candidates to take the test? (RQs 6 and 11)**

[Source: teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom observations, test-preparer questionnaires, focus group discussion]

From the face-to-face survey of private institutes in Chapter 5, I found that the majority of the IELTS preparation teachers are the owners of the institutes. They design the content and structure of their IELTS preparation course, and therefore I have answered research questions 6 and 11 together here. It is useful to see how the test influences their IELTS preparation courses and their choice of teaching contents and methods. The data from questionnaires completed by ten IELTS preparation teachers; from interviews with two IELTS preparation teachers at Berlitz and PACC; questionnaires completed by IELTS test-preparers (N=200), focus group discussion with test-preparers (N=4) and classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC helped answer these two research questions. Almost all of the IELTS test preparation teachers responded that the IELTS exam influences their choice of course content and that they also adapt their teaching methods. This suggested that there is substantial washback from the test, both on the courses and on the teachers.

However, from what was recorded during classroom observations of IELTS preparation classes, especially at private local institutes such as PACC and from the responses of test-preparers, this washback appears to be very limited. The exercises and activities taking place at local private institutes did not expose students to typical test topics. The types of exercises in class were not heavily influenced by the test. However, students were generally well-motivated by the IELTS exam as they reported to prepare for the test outside of their classes. It has been indicated that teachers working in local institutes are not trained to prepare their students for the IELTS test; nor do they use much variety of teaching materials or have access to other necessary resources.

The tutor at Berlitz, on the other hand, used a range of teaching materials and methods to prepare her students for the test, and she adapted her course content and methods which suggest that there was a substantial washback from the IELTS test on her teaching. She exposed them to typical test topics and made them aware of various test-taking techniques. The differences found in individual teachers could be due to ‘personal factors’ (such as their attitudes towards the test, their educational background and beliefs about the best methods of teaching and learning) and ‘micro-context factors’ (such as the school setting in which the test preparation is being carried out) that induce or constrain washback (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Cheng, 2005; Watanabe, 2004; see chapter 3).

### **8.2.7. What is the impact of the IELTS test on test-takers? (RQ8)**

[Source: test-taker questionnaires]

The IELTS test-takers’ responses (N=100) reported in Chapter 6 showed that almost a third (32%) took the IELTS test to study abroad; just less than a third (30%) to get a job within Pakistan; 20% to emigrate; and 18% to determine their English ability. The test-takers were strongly motivated, as the majority of them (92%) attended IELTS preparation courses to attain their required band scores. The majority of the test-takers (91%) failed to achieve their aims. Those intending to go abroad were



unable to do so either due to financial constraints or not achieving the required band score. Those who intended to find employment locally could not make use of the IELTS certificate because it is not required for any jobs in Pakistan. IELTS therefore negatively impacts on them as they face financial stress in preparing for and taking the IELTS exam. It is likely however that taking the IELTS exam for these test-takers has some indirect employment benefits. For example, during the recruitment process, employers might take account of their English ability when interviewing them for jobs. Because of their low proficiency in English overall, and general fears about the test, the test-takers felt that they had not performed to the best of their ability. On the whole, the test-takers considered IELTS as a fair way of assessing their proficiency in English.

#### **8.2.8. What are the profiles of the teachers preparing candidates to take the IELTS test? (RQ9)**

[Source: teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews at Berlitz and PACC]

The background information about IELTS preparation teachers, working at Berlitz and PACC, was gathered from the interviews and questionnaire responses from ten teachers were reported in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. These IELTS preparation teachers were generally not highly qualified. Most had a BA level degree while only one had a Master's degree. None of the Pakistani IELTS preparation teachers were trained as IELTS examiners. The majority of the IELTS preparation teachers working at private local institutes were not trained to prepare students for the IELTS test. The teachers from international institutes, however, received extensive training from the British Council to prepare their students. The IELTS test preparation teachers had between six and ten years of specific experience teaching IELTS preparation courses at various institutions.

### **8.2.9. Which textbooks and other materials are used on IELTS test preparation courses? (RQ10)**

[Source: teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom observations, test-preparer questionnaires, focus group discussion]

The classroom observations at Berlitz and PACC and interviews with their teachers (N=2) reported in Chapter 5, along with the questionnaire responses of IELTS preparation teachers (N=10) and test-preparers (N=200) reported in Chapter 6 and focus group with test-preparers (N=4) in Chapter 7, showed that there is a difference in the use of textbooks and teaching materials between private local and international institutes. The local institutes only rely on one or two local editions of IELTS textbooks, whereas international institutes use a wide variety of international edition textbooks. In addition to international textbooks, they also use a range of supplementary teaching materials on their IELTS preparation course such as: online practice material, newspapers, magazines and BBC reports. Provision of such materials at local institutes is very limited as most of them do not have access to the internet and audio-visual facilities.

### **8.2.10. What is the impact of the IELTS test on parents of test-preparers and test-takers? (RQ12)**

[Source: semi-structured interviews with parents]

The semi-structured interviews with parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers (N=5) reported in Chapter 7 showed that they clearly believe that IELTS is beneficial for their children if they intend to study abroad or apply for immigration. In their opinion, higher education abroad will be particularly helpful for their children's future employment prospects (within Pakistan as well as abroad). Parents considered IELTS an expensive exam (both in terms of preparation and taking the exam). Similar to the test-taker respondents, three of the parents interviewed also had a

possible misperception that IELTS could be helpful in getting employment opportunities within Pakistan. On the positive side, parents support their children to take the test as they believe the potential gains to be so considerable, but they feel it is a financial burden as they were concerned about the cost of preparing for and taking the exam.

### **8.2.11. Is the IELTS test required for any type of job within Pakistan? (RQ13)**

[Source: test-taker questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with employers]

According to the IELTS test-takers' questionnaire responses (N=100) in Chapter 6, the IELTS certificate is not required for getting any kind of job in Pakistan. Furthermore, none of the employers interviewed (N=5) claimed to use IELTS formally as part of their hiring practice. Proficiency in English is required for white-collar jobs as well as some low-salaried jobs in Pakistan. This proficiency is mostly ascertained through conducting an interview in English but also in some cases through both a written test and an interview. Despite the limited use of English at work reported by test-takers, their oral proficiency in English is assessed by their employers. This shows that there is a widespread misperception amongst test-takers that the IELTS certificate can improve job opportunities in Pakistan whereas in reality employers have their own ways of screening prospective employees (typically through conducting interviews in English). However there may be an implicit benefit to employers from those who have taken the IELTS exam. As the employers interviewed mentioned that they conduct interviews in English to short list candidates, those with some extra English training might be more likely to be selected by these employers.

### 8.3. Systemic impact of IELTS in Pakistan

In section 8.2 above, I have answered all the research questions focusing on six major groups of stakeholders. In this section, I will return to the overarching research question which looks at the wider impact of IELTS on education, the economy, and society in Pakistan. These wider effects and consequences of the IELTS test are referred to as the ‘test impact’ in the present study.

Private English language institutes have acquired prominence in contemporary Pakistani society. They were initially set up as small tuition centres offering tuition in various subjects and later started offering General English courses along with preparation for university entrance examinations, CSS, IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, SAT and GMAT. After 1990, there was a rapid expansion of these tuition centres exclusively offering General English and IELTS preparation courses. A number of small businesses (neighbourhood tutors) sprung up in low-income areas in the second- and third-tier cities of Pakistan in response to the increasing demand for IELTS preparation. IELTS preparation courses and tests in Pakistan are mainly taken by those who intend to go abroad, either temporarily for higher education, or for permanent settlement. There is also a small number who perceive IELTS as a route to increased socio-economic benefits in Pakistan. At a rough estimate, there are over a thousand IELTS preparation centres in Pakistan which contrasts strikingly with Rahman (2001) who mentioned only one private institute functioning in Pakistan before 1990. These institutes are preparing an estimated 78,000 students per year for the test, whereas only an estimated 20,000 people from Pakistan actually take the test according to my calculations derived from Cambridge ESOL figures.

This suggests that the IELTS preparation providers are making profits from preparing students for the test whether candidates succeed or not. There is fierce competition between the test preparation institutes, which means they generally accept low proficiency students. This is similar to the situation in New Zealand mentioned by Read and Hayes (2003:189), but on a much larger scale. The private English language teaching industry in Pakistan creates many jobs for teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers are not well paid in Pakistan, but they have the

opportunity to make extra money by working in these institutes, so both the institutes and their employees are benefitting economically from the growing number of test-takers. In contrast, the government does not benefit from these institutes because the majority of them are unregistered and do not pay taxes.

The majority of these private institutes fail to provide quality education to their customers due to having untrained staff and under-resourced classrooms. Despite this, many centres guarantee fluency in English and high band scores in a short time. The majority of students remain unsatisfied as they fail to achieve their goal of going abroad to study or work (either due to financial constraints or band score requirements), or to increase their job prospects within Pakistan, even if they receive an IELTS certificate with a low score. IELTS is widely considered to be an expensive exam by the test-takers and their parents, for whom attending IELTS preparation classes and taking the test is an altogether costly experience. They mostly belong to sections of society where finding funds for such courses and exams is very difficult and this is especially problematic if it does not lead to the desired outcomes.

Families (particularly parents) of IELTS test-takers have a vested interest in their children's success, as they support them financially in the hope that this will enable access to scholarship opportunities to study overseas. The IELTS test is required in order to gain scholarships for higher education. They know that after finishing their higher education abroad, doors can open for a good career for people on their return to Pakistan. Therefore, parents are motivated to invest for their children to prepare for and take the IELTS test, as they will be the main beneficiaries when their children successfully complete their degree programmes and return to take up careers in Pakistan. Investment in these courses will not necessarily pay off, however, even for those students who successfully achieve their required band score, because only a limited number of scholarships are available for foreign study. Most of the parents whose children do not get scholarships to study abroad eventually lose the money spent in preparing for and taking the test. Due to the potential for economic gain attached to having an IELTS certificate, a large number of people are futilely allocating a substantial amount of their income to pay tuition fees and for the IELTS test itself, without seeing any significant reward. There is a significant

financial impact on these parents as they fail to get what they paid for.

English language is perceived by many Pakistanis to be a ticket to a better job because job interviews are mainly conducted in English. The IELTS test-takers and local employers confirmed that the IELTS certificate is not required for better job opportunities in Pakistan. Even though they do not require employees to have IELTS certificates, they benefit from this widespread misperception among people that IELTS can help them find better jobs. Local employers in Pakistan may be getting more proficient candidates for their jobs, as it is more likely that they have gone through the IELTS preparation and exam (although the courses are too short for their English to improve very much). The employers interviewed mentioned that most of their employees have attended English language classes (either a General English course or an IELTS preparation course) before starting their jobs, in order to improve their English. This implies that the local employers are interested in getting proficient speakers of English. We know that IELTS courses do not improve English proficiency but the certificate may indirectly help employers to filter out prospective employees with very weak English. Even if they do not specifically require IELTS, it might be of economic benefit to these employers to hire those who have gone through an IELTS preparation course and have taken the test.

The description of the education system in Pakistan in Chapter 2 showed that the state-run schools do not provide a quality education. Teacher absenteeism, lack of resources, lack of qualified teachers, and gender discrimination are some of the major issues facing public sector schools. Rahman (2001) believes that the state does not trust its own system of education, as the children of officials and bureaucrats invariably attend either state-run elite or private elite English-medium schools. This situation has resulted in the formation and expansion of private education. A number of private, non-elite English medium schools and private tuition centres have opened up due to the poor quality of education in the public sector.

The private schools provide hope to parents who want to educate their children through the medium of English and have become popular among the middle and lower income groups due to the lack of quality education in the state sector. The number of private schools has increased greatly since their inception, but Mansoor

(2005) and Rahman (2001) refer to them as ‘so-called English medium’, because the teachers rarely use English in class. These are profit-making organisations that do not offer a high standard of education. This is one reason why a number of students from these non-elite, English medium schools attend tuition centres in the evening. The majority of the students belong to lower or middle income groups and possess only limited proficiency in English. They gain admission to these private centres to improve their English.

This situation in Pakistan is typical of many South Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Low-income families have to pay for the private education of their children either at an earlier age by educating them through private elite-schools (if they can afford to) or through sending them to evening classes at a later stage. Children belonging to affluent families obtain access to better schools and more exposure to the English language than children from lower income families, who then have less opportunities. Many IELTS test-preparers intending to improve their English by attending these classes are actually paying privately for an English education which is not provided by the state. Private education in Pakistan continues in various forms which have taken root in the present education system (Patel, 2008). The test-preparers and test-takers consider taking IELTS as a form of English education, believing that taking IELTS is equivalent to learning English. This suggests that IELTS is having a significant impact on education in Pakistan, where a number of people are relying on taking the test even if they do not intend to go abroad. English education for them is a fuel that drives economic growth and social progress. Some people also take IELTS simply to demonstrate their competence in English. So IELTS is like the final certificate at the end of a long and complex system of private education.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, local commentators Patel (2008), Rehman (2007) and Siddiqui (2006) describe how Pakistanis join evening classes at English language coaching centres (especially IELTS preparation courses) to socialise outside of their immediate family and school life. Stay-at-home mothers attend General English and later IELTS preparation courses to communicate with their children (Patel, 2008). Thus, attending IELTS preparation courses and taking the test has, for many

Pakistanis, become a cultural trend, fulfilling a social as well as a perceived economic need. This situation suggests that IELTS has a significant impact on education, the economy and society in Pakistan.

## **8.4. Implications of the study**

The findings of the present study of the impact of IELTS in Pakistan has implications for 1) policy makers in education in Pakistan (i.e. the Higher Education Commission), 2) IELTS producers (Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation Group), and 3) end-users of the IELTS certificate (such as universities abroad and immigration authorities).

### **8.4.1. Implications for the policy makers in education in Pakistan**

The increased enrolment at private language centres is mainly due to the lack of English language learning in state schools and public sector universities. The findings of the present research should therefore be of great interest to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan which is one of the largest local organisations sponsoring a number of Pakistanis for higher studies, abroad as well as locally (see chapter 2). They receive large amounts of foreign aid to spend on state-sector higher education institutions (Khan, 2011). The HEC, which has responsibility for all the public and private sector universities in Pakistan, could consider spending some of their funds on the establishment of English language teaching centres at public sector universities (similarly to English speaking countries where such courses are offered by tertiary institutions).

In Chapter 2 I described how English Language Teaching centres were established in the 1980s at public sector universities in Pakistan by some foreign agencies. The aim was to enhance the English language skills of public sector graduates and to offer preparation for international foreign English language exams



like IELTS and TOEFL (Shamim, 2011:11). Such projects were successful for the initial few years but did not survive long due to the negligence of staff and administration at these universities, as there was a lack of a sense of ownership at the centre. This suggests that such English Language Teaching Centres could be successful in the long run if financially supported and managed by the higher education authorities. It is therefore in the interest of HEC, not only financially, but also educationally, to establish such English Language Teaching Centres at all the public sector universities in Pakistan and also to encourage foreign organisations such as the British Council in Pakistan to invest in the formation of these centres.

Once English Language Teaching centres are established in public sector universities, General English Language courses and preparation for international English Language examinations such as IELTS will be available at a lower cost. I mentioned in Chapter 2 that the ‘Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sukkur’ is the first public sector institute to have started offering IELTS preparation, in 2014. They are currently charging 18,000 PKR (176 US\$) which is only slightly less than the private international institutes. This suggests that setting up these centres in public sector institutions (such as IBA Sukkur), purely for commercial purposes, will not offer any benefit to the majority of those attending, who are from middle- and low-income backgrounds. Offering General English and IELTS preparation courses at public sector universities would help graduates to attain their goals at these centres, rather than attending private language centres. It is generally recognised that students need an intensive and usually extended period of study to achieve any substantial increase in their score on a proficiency test. Therefore, the university authorities could usefully offer test preparation courses for a longer duration (six months or a year) to assist students in improving their scores. This way the students attending public sector universities could attend these classes alongside their degree programmes. A number of students attending private institutes want to find better employment opportunities. By attending the English language courses alongside their degree programmes, these graduates would be able to apply for jobs straight away, rather than wasting more time and money at private English language centres.

The United States Agency of International Development (USAID) provides

a large amount of funding for primary education in Pakistan, especially in rural areas (Curtis, 2007). They build new schools, provide materials, and train the teachers. Most of their education projects are jointly managed with the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan. Foreign agencies such as USAID could also consider spending a certain amount of funding for the enhancement of English language learning at the higher education institutions. Investing some funding towards the formation of English learning centres for young graduates at low cost would certainly prove to be beneficial for a number of those from lower-middle and lower-income groups. This study has shown that most of the English language institutes appear fraudulent and they take advantage of people who need to learn English for various reasons. Due to lack of regulation by the government, they remain unregistered and do not pay taxes. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Higher Education policymakers to eradicate these types of private English language learning centres by establishing English Language Teaching centres and diverting some foreign funding towards the formation of these centres in public sector institutions.

#### **8.4.2. Implications for Cambridge ESOL**

The results of this study raise important questions for the examination providers (i.e. the British Council, Cambridge ESOL and IDP Australia). The IELTS test developers conduct detailed research and analysis of test material and test takers' performance to ensure that not only does IELTS provide accurate information for the institutions that recognise it, but that the tests are fair to test-takers whatever their nationality, first language and gender (Green, 2007; Hawkey, 2006; Saville, 2009). This study provides important information for Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation Group who undertake impact studies of IELTS as an integral part of the ongoing process of monitoring, validation and evaluation of the IELTS test (Hawkey, 2006; Saville, 2009; see chapter 1, section 1.1). The research findings, for example, low overall proficiency in Pakistan, can help this body to understand and consider ways of improving language teaching, learning, methods, materials and activities

with regards to IELTS.

The IELTS partners have funded a small number of empirical studies focusing on the preparation courses provided in developed countries where the IELTS preparation courses are mostly offered by the British Council and the IDP Education. None of their studies so far have addressed the growth of IELTS preparation courses and their relationship with test scores in developing countries in South Asia. With an increase in the desire for higher education opportunities and immigration abroad, the IELTS candidature has grown exponentially; as a consequence, IELTS test preparation courses have mushroomed in developing countries like Pakistan. Due to a lack of regulation in Pakistan, a large number of fraudulent institutes are making profits from their IELTS preparation courses and this, consequently, has a detrimental effect on the test-preparers. Lots of poor people invest to prepare for the test and take the exam but they get nothing out of it. The prevalence of such a large number of private institutes (typically the lower end ones with fraudulent names) is a serious concern.

Given that the IELTS partners are responsible for the routine monitoring of their high-stakes tests such as IELTS, they arguably have responsibility to also monitor how people prepare for the IELTS test in developing countries like Pakistan and the effect that it has on the lives of stakeholders. In Chapter 3 I cite researchers such as Hawkey (2006) who have noted the growth in the number of South Asian students taking the IELTS test. However, given this noticeable growth, it is not clear why there is such a lack of research in this area.

IELTS is meant to measure the English proficiency level of those who want to go abroad for various reasons. The misperceptions of Pakistani test-preparers and test-takers regarding the use of IELTS within Pakistan for employment purposes have also have an implication for the testers. Both Hawkey (2006) and Saville (2009) suggest that as the part of the test validation process, the testers see how stakeholders use the exams and what they think about them. It is therefore essential for the testers to confirm the extent to which the test is functioning as intended and to identify mis-selling of IELTS. As mentioned previously (section 1.2), in the IELTS application form, candidates are given a number of options to choose from, to indicate why

they intend to take the IELTS test. One of the options is ‘to take the test for employment purposes’. This option may in fact contribute to the perception among some of the test-takers in countries like Pakistan that the test can be used as qualification for local employment. This raises the question of whether IELTS providers have any duty to address these kinds of perceptions. Arguably, perceptions are not concrete and are therefore difficult to deal with directly. It is not hard to imagine however, that an employer within Pakistan may in the near future explicitly ask for IELTS certification. In such a scenario, IELTS providers would have to consider whether a test which has been designed for universities and immigration officials is a good fit for such employers, whether they would as a consequence change the test in any way, or whether they would discourage such a practice.

There is a further regulatory issue which needs to be addressed by test providers. Journalists (see sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3) have argued that it is the responsibility of the Pakistani government to regulate IELTS preparation centres; some of my participants have suggested that they may be regulated by an informal public system; a third position is that preparation centres should be in some way regulated by IELTS providers themselves.

### **8.4.3. Implications for the end-users of IELTS**

IELTS plays an important role in gatekeeping opportunities such as study abroad, control of immigration and professional registration in English speaking countries. As discussed in Chapter 1, IELTS is widely taken and accepted by a number of institutions across the world compared to other international English language proficiency tests. According to Shohamy (2001), high-stakes tests have become useful instruments for central authorities to exercise power and control over individuals and educational systems but they have a detrimental impact on students’ lives. A number of institutions across the world are now heavily reliant on IELTS which suggests that the end-users of IELTS such as receiving institutions (i.e. universities in English speaking countries), immigration authorities and professional registration bodies should also take some responsibility to see how people in

countries like Pakistan prepare for it. They could also have more responsibility for the regulation of preparation centres in developing countries where a large number of people prepare for the test.

### **8.5. Contribution to IELTS impact studies**

I discussed in the introduction that this is the first impact study of IELTS in Pakistan which has focused not only on the most important stakeholders such as IELTS test-preparers, test-takers and IELTS preparation teachers but also on test preparation providers, parents and perceived local users (employers). An impact study of a high-stakes English proficiency exam such as IELTS in a South Asian context is an important contribution to the field of language testing literature as large numbers of people in the region take the IELTS test every year (Hawkey, 2006). This study, although not funded by Cambridge ESOL, nevertheless makes a contribution to the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and validation of IELTS from a country-specific perspective (specifically a non-native English speaking developing country).

Previous impact studies have been funded by Cambridge ESOL and conducted in English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The only country-specific IELTS impact study conducted in a non-native English speaking context is the study by Moore et al. (2012) which focused on the relatively small developing country of Cambodia where English language has been promoted quite recently. In this respect, Moore et al. (2012) is not representative of the IELTS situation in other South Asian and South-East Asian countries. Furthermore, Moore et al. (2012) focused on IELTS preparation courses offered by the Australian Centre for Education (ACE) which is owned by IDP Education Australia, whereas in developing countries like Pakistan, the large number of local private language institutes offering preparation for IELTS cannot be ignored. Moore et al. (2012) claimed to assess the impact of IELTS on Cambodian society as a whole, but there is much to suggest that their sample of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers was mainly drawn from an elite section of society who had better proficiency in English compared to the sample of test-preparers and test-takers in

this study, who have a low level of proficiency in English.

The present study has taken account of the typical IELTS preparation courses (private enterprises) found in a number of South Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Due to the lack of regulation in the private English language teaching sector in Pakistan, more fraudulent institutes have appeared on the scene. This expansion of private language centres is witnessed not only in South Asia but also in English speaking countries like New Zealand, as suggested by Read and Hayes (2003). A number of studies were conducted previously to assess the impact of IELTS preparation courses provided by higher education institutes on the score gains (such as Brown 1998; Elder and O'Loughlin, 2003) but none of the studies have so far focused on these private preparation providers.

This study has also examined the use of IELTS outside of its intended purposes. This issue was addressed by Moore et al. (2012) to a limited extent when they interviewed local employers, as perceived local users of IELTS, but they did not ask their sample of test-preparers and test-takers about this. Similarly to Pakistan, some people in Cambodia might have taken the IELTS test exclusively to find better job opportunities. The widespread misperception among Pakistanis that IELTS can help them find a job could be prevalent in other neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh, and China. Due to a lack of research in this field, it is not known whether IELTS is considered helpful in accessing better job opportunities in these countries.

## **8.6. Limitations of the study and directions for future research**

While it is hoped that the present study will make a positive contribution to knowledge in the area of impact, there are certain limitations which need to be highlighted. Due to the lack of prior research in the current context of the study, I had no research studies to draw on to understand the research problem I was studying. I started my fieldwork by collecting qualitative data by surveying private institutes and conducting an in-depth study of two IELTS preparation centres. I sampled relatively small numbers of students (N=20) from the two institutes in the first

phase of the study. Ideally if I had more test-preparers, I could have achieved more interesting and reliable results but practically it was not possible to have a larger sample, mainly because on average the maximum number of students enrolled on IELTS preparation courses is between 12 and 15 per session (see chapter 5). Nevertheless, the qualitative data from the first phase of the study highlighted certain issues which required further exploration through questionnaires.

In the second phase of data collection, it would have been helpful to have conducted more classroom observations at two or three IELTS preparation institutes, in order to triangulate the data from these with the questionnaire responses. However, almost all the institutes sampled are similar to PACC where I was able to triangulate the questionnaires with the data from classroom observations. I interviewed only one employer from an international corporation because accessing more of these employers was extremely challenging, as many of them declined to take part or share any information for reasons of confidentiality. Had there been more interviewees from foreign multinational companies, it might have proved to be the case that some of them did accept the IELTS certificate if presented by prospective employees, even if they did not explicitly require the certificate for any of their jobs, as in Cambodia (Moore et al., 2012).

Bearing in mind the above limitations, one possible direction for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study on the impact of the IELTS test on various stakeholders. In a longitudinal study, research would be conducted over a longer period of time with a bigger sample of test-preparers sampled from all the different types of local institutes (i.e. neighbourhood tutors, stand-alone institutes). It would be helpful to follow these test-preparers from the day they start attending an IELTS preparation course till they attain their goals. The study over longer period would allow to see changes in their motivations, test preparation activities, their final IELTS test results, and their perceptions of the test. It would be useful to obtain more detailed socioeconomic profiles, and more information about participants' educational background, choice of test preparation centre, their aims and whether or not they are able to achieve their aims. Some test-preparers do not immediately take the test after finishing their IELTS preparation course, so conducting a study over a

longer period of time would mean that there would be more opportunity to find out their IELTS scores and to know if they managed to go abroad. Also, we could find out if their original motivation in taking the IELTS exam changed over time (if they did not meet their original aims).

As I have mentioned above this study is not a Cambridge ESOL funded project and I therefore did not have the advantage of gaining access to any of their data, such as the exact number of IELTS test-takers from Pakistan per year, the number of people leaving the country after taking the IELTS test and their motivations for taking the test. In future research, a similar study could be conducted with the support of Cambridge ESOL. There has been only one study conducted in non-native context of Cambodia (Moore et al., 2012) funded by IELTS partners. More studies assessing the impact of IELTS in non-native countries are definitely required in collaboration with Cambridge ESOL. In this way, more reliable information on the number of test-takers and the motivations of those leaving the country could be accessed, which would give a clearer picture of the original goals of the test-preparers and their achievement of these. Conducting such in-depth research in a non-native English speaking context, where IELTS is taken by a considerable number of people to derive local socioeconomic benefits, would be very helpful for Cambridge ESOL's test validation purposes. Most of their studies are undertaken in English speaking countries where the courses are usually conducted and regulated by tertiary institutions. There is a great need to conduct studies in South Asian countries (such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) where a large number of people take the IELTS test every year. In carrying out these studies, it would be important to ensure that the voices of other stakeholders, such as IELTS examiners and staff in receiving institutions, could also be heard. This could be particularly beneficial in assessing the validity of high-stakes English proficiency tests such as IELTS, which are used as a device for gatekeeping opportunities to study abroad, immigration and professional registration.



## 8.7. Chapter and thesis summary

This chapter has summarised the significant findings of the study from a macro level perspective. This was followed by the implications of the study for the providers of state education in Pakistan, providers of the IELTS test (Cambridge ESOL) and end-users of the test. I have highlighted the contribution of this study to existing studies of the impact of IELTS. The limitations of the study were discussed with proposals for the direction of further research.

This study looked at the wider impact of IELTS on education, the economy, and society in Pakistan. I surveyed the range of private English language teaching institutes, the efficacy of IELTS preparation courses, washback of the IELTS test on courses and teachers, IELTS test-preparers and test-takers' expectations and level of satisfaction with their courses, the impact of IELTS on test-takers and their parents, and the requirement of IELTS for local jobs in Pakistan. The findings of the study suggest that the IELTS preparation providers are benefitting economically from preparing a large number of students for the test. The majority of the test-preparers and test-takers are negatively impacted, as they fail to achieve their goals. The employers in Pakistan do not require IELTS but they may be indirectly benefitting from candidates with some additional English practice. The situation in Pakistan suggests that IELTS has a significant impact on education as a whole. The test-preparers and test-takers consider taking IELTS as a form of English education, even if they do not intend to go abroad, believing that taking IELTS is equivalent to learning English.

There are certain limitations of this study, yet it makes an important contribution to existing literature. There is a need for similar studies by Cambridge ESOL in small developing countries like Pakistan where a large number of people prepare for and take the test every year.

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## Appendix 2: Consent form for the private institutes in Pakistan

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to assess the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. The aim of this survey is to ask some questions about the different types of courses offered at the institute, the duration of these courses and the background information about the students attending these courses.

I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. If you participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, and allow her to conduct an interview under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

Best wishes

### Appendix 3: Consent form for BERLITZ and PACC

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to assess the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. My research is to investigate the motivations of IELTS test-preparers, the teaching methods and materials used on IELTS preparation course and the impact of the course on their IELTS performance. I aim to conduct the following activities at your institute:

- 1) two individual interviews with IELTS preparation teacher
- 2) observation of IELTS preparation classes for eight weeks
- 3) pre- and post-testing with the IELTS test-preparers
- 4) informal conversational interviews with IELTS test-preparers

I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. If you participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, and allow her to conduct an interview under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Name of the institute:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

Best wishes

## **Appendix 4: Consent form and Background Information sheet for IELTS test-preparers at PACC and Berlitz**

### **Informed consent**

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to investigate the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. Your participation in this research will involve you in the following activities:

- 1) an individual interview with me at the end of your IELTS preparation course
- 2) observation of your class for eight weeks
- 3) pre- and post-testing at the start and end of the course
- 4) opportunities to comment and provide feedback on the data analysis.

The interviews will be audio-taped and the pre- and post-testing (speaking component) will be audio-taped.

As recommended by the ethical guidelines provided by the SERA, I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, cooperating with her, and allowing her to be an observer in my classrooms, conduct pre- and post-testing, and interview at the end of the course under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:  
Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

## Information Sheet

1) Name \_\_\_\_\_

2) Age \_\_\_\_\_

3) Sex

Male

Female

4) What is your mother tongue?

Urdu

Sindhi

Punjabi

Pashto

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5) What is the reason to appear in the test of IELTS?

Higher education

Immigration

Professional registration

Other \_\_\_\_\_

6) What module of IELTS will you take?

Academic

General Training

8) What is your intended country of destination?

---

9) What is your intended field of study/work?

---

10) What is the name of your school, college and university?

---

11) Which language was used as a medium of instruction at school?

English

Sindhi

Urdu

Punjabi



11) Which language is/was used as a medium of instruction at University/college?

- English
- Sindhi
- Urdu
- Punjabi

12) For how many years have you studied English as a compulsory subject?

- 14 years
- 16 years
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

13) Will you be taking IELTS for the first time?

- Yes
- No

Please provide your contact details, which will remain highly confidential.

Mobile phone number:

Email address:

Thanks for filling out this information sheet.

## **Appendix 5: Consent form for Berlitz and PACC teachers and interview questions**

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to investigate the motivations of IELTS test-preparers, the teaching methods and materials used on IELTS preparation course and the impact of the course on their IELTS performance. Your participation in this research will involve you in the following activities:

- 1) two individual interviews with me (at the start of the course and at the end of the course)
- 2) observation of your classes while you teach for eight weeks
- 3) conduct pre- and post-testing with your IELTS test-preparers
- 4) opportunities to comment and provide feedback on the data analysis.

The interviews will be audio-taped and the observations will be audio-taped twice only for the pre- and post-testing (particularly speaking component) purpose. As recommended by the ethical guidelines provided by the UoE and SERA, I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, cooperating with her, and allowing her to be an observer in my classrooms under the circumstances that she will ensure anonymity of all participants and will not interfere in the normal activities in my classrooms and will also not interfere in the decisions about the classrooms and the lessons. I also allow her to conduct interviews at the start and end of the course.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

## Interview questions for teachers at Berlitz and PACC

### **A. Pre-course interview:**

1. Please introduce yourself (give your qualification and current profession).
2. For how long have you been preparing students for the IELTS test?
3. Have you been trained as IELTS examiner?
4. Have you received training in preparing students for the IELTS test (if so, please explain the duration of the training and the details of the training provider)?
5. Which textbooks do you use on your IELTS preparation course for preparing the students?
6. Do you use any additional materials other than textbooks (for example materials from the internet, newspapers etc.)?
7. Do you use facilities in your classrooms such as any audio visual facilities?
8. Does the IELTS test influence your choice of the content of your IELTS preparation lessons? If so, please tell me how it influences the content?
9. Does the IELTS test influence your choice of methodology? If so, please tell me how it influences the way you teach?
10. Please tell me about your IELTS preparation students, their educational background, their motivations in preparing for the test and what they expect to learn on the course.

### **B. Post-course Interview:**

1. Do you think you were able to meet your objectives on the course?
2. Would you like to comment on your students' progress? Do you think they have improved?
3. Is there anything further you would like to say about your IELTS preparation course?

## Appendix 6: Pre-test Material

### Writing sub-test

3

**WRITING TASK 2**

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

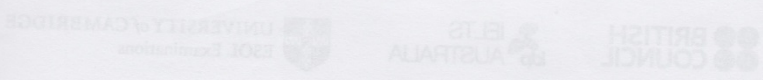
Write about the following topic:

**Many old buildings are protected by law because they are part of a nation's history. However, some people think old buildings should be knocked down to make way for new ones because people need houses and offices.**

**How important is it to maintain old buildings? Should history stand in the way of progress?**

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.



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**READING PASSAGE 2**

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 14-26**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 on pages 6 and 7.

**Revolutions in Mapping**

Today, the mapmaker's vision is no longer confined to what the human eye can see. The perspective of mapmaking has shifted from the crow's nest of the sailing vessel, mountain top and airplane to new orbital heights. Radar, which bounces microwave radio signals off a given surface to create images of its contours and textures, can penetrate jungle foliage and has produced the first maps of the mountains of the planet Venus. And a combination of sonar and radar produces charts of the seafloor, putting much of Earth on the map for the first time. 'Suddenly it's a whole different world for us,' says Joel Morrison, chief of geography at the U.S. Bureau of the Census. 'Our future as mapmakers – even ten years from now – is uncertain.'

The world's largest collection of maps resides in the basement of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The collection, consisting of up to 4.6 million map sheets and 63,000 atlases, includes magnificent bound collections of elaborate maps – the pride of the golden age of Dutch cartography\*. In the reading room scholars, wearing thin cotton gloves to protect the fragile sheets, examine ancient maps with magnifying glasses. Across the room people sit at their computer screens, studying the latest maps. With their prodigious memories, computers are able to store data about people, places and environments – the stuff of maps – and almost instantly information is displayed on the screen in the desired geographic context, and at the click of a button, a print-out of the map appears.

Measuring the spherical Earth ranks as the first major milestone in scientific cartography. This was first achieved by the Greek astronomer Eratosthenes, a scholar at the famous Alexandrian Library in Egypt in the third century BC. He calculated the Earth's circumference as 25,200 miles, which was remarkably accurate. The longitudinal circumference is known today to be 24,860 miles.

Building on the ideas of his predecessors, the astronomer and geographer Ptolemy, working in the second century AD, spelled out a system for organising maps according to grids of latitude and longitude. Today, parallels of latitude are often spaced at intervals of 10 to 20 degrees and meridians\*\* at 15 degrees, and this is the basis for the width of modern time zones. Another legacy of Ptolemy's is his advice to cartographers to create maps to scale. Distance on today's maps is expressed as a fraction or ratio of the real distance. But mapmakers in Ptolemy's time lacked the geographic knowledge to live up to Ptolemy's scientific principles. Even now, when surveyors achieve accuracies down to inches and satellites can plot potential missile targets within feet, maps are not true pictures of reality.

\* cartography: mapmaking

\*\* meridians: lines of longitude on the earth running north to south

However, just as the compass improved navigation and created demand for useful charts, so the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century put maps in the hands of more people, and took their production away from monks, who had tended to illustrate theology rather than geography. Ocean-going ships launched an age of discovery, enlarging both what could and needed to be mapped, and awakened an intellectual spirit and desire for knowledge of the world.

Inspired by the rediscovered Ptolemy, whose writing had been preserved by Arabs after the sacking of the Alexandrian Library in AD 931, mapmakers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century gradually replaced theology with knowledge of faraway places, as reported by travelling merchants like Marco Polo.

Gerhardus Mercator, the foremost shipmaker of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, developed a technique of arranging meridians and parallels in such a way that navigators could draw straight lines between two points and steer a constant compass course between them. This distortion formula, introduced on his world map of 1569, created the 'Greenland problem'. Even on some standard maps to this day, Greenland looks as large as South America – one of the many problems when one tries to portray a round world on a flat sheet of paper. But the Mercator projection was so practical that it is still popular with sailors.

Scientific mapping of the land came into its own with the achievements of the Cassini family – father, son, grandson and great-grandson. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Italian-born founder, Jean-Dominique, invented a complex method of determining longitude based on observations of Jupiter's moons. Using this technique, surveyors were able to produce an accurate map of France. The family continued to map the French countryside and his great-grandson finally published their famous Cassini map in 1793 during the French Revolution. While it may have lacked the artistic appeal of earlier maps, it was the model of a social and geographic map showing roads, rivers, canals, towns, abbeys, vineyards, lakes and even windmills. With this achievement, France became the first country to be completely mapped by scientific methods.

Mapmaking has come a long way since those days. Today's surveyors rarely go into the field without being linked to navigation satellites. Their hand-held receivers are the most familiar of the new mapping technologies, and the satellite system, developed and still operated by the US Defense Department, is increasingly used by surveyors. Even ordinary hikers, sailors and explorers can tap into it for data telling them where they are. Simplified civilian versions of the receivers are available for a few hundred dollars and they are also the heart of electronic map displays available in some cars. Cartography is pressing on to cosmic frontiers, but its objective is, and always has been, to communicate a sense of 'here' in relation to 'there', however far away 'there' may be.

Turn over ►

## Questions 14 – 18

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.

Write the correct letter in boxes 14-18 on your answer sheet.

14 According to the first paragraph, mapmakers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- A combine techniques to chart unknown territory.
- B still rely on being able to see what they map.
- C are now able to visit the darkest jungle.
- D need input from experts in other fields.

15 The Library of Congress offers an opportunity to

- A borrow from their collection of Dutch maps.
- B learn how to restore ancient and fragile maps.
- C enjoy the atmosphere of the reading room.
- D create individual computer maps to order.

16 Ptolemy alerted his contemporaries to the importance of

- A measuring the circumference of the world.
- B organising maps to reflect accurate ratios of distance.
- C working out the distance between parallels of latitude.
- D accuracy and precision in mapping.

17 The invention of the printing press

- A revitalised interest in scientific knowledge.
- B enabled maps to be produced more cheaply.
- C changed the approach to mapmaking.
- D ensured that the work of Ptolemy was continued.

18 The writer concludes by stating that

- A mapmaking has become too specialised.
- B cartographers work in very harsh conditions.
- C the fundamental aims of mapmaking remain unchanged.
- D the possibilities of satellite mapping are infinite.

## Questions 19 – 21

Look at the following list of achievements (Questions 19-21) and the list of mapmakers below.

Match each achievement with the correct mapmaker, **A, B, C** or **D**.

Write the correct letter, **A, B, C** or **D**, in boxes 19-21 on your answer sheet.

- 19** came very close to accurately measuring the distance round the Earth
- 20** produced maps showing man-made landmarks
- 21** laid the foundation for our modern time zones

## List of Mapmakers

- A** Mercator  
**B** Ptolemy  
**C** Cassini family  
**D** Eratosthenes

## Questions 22 – 26

Complete the summary below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 22-26 on your answer sheet.

Ancient maps allow us to see how we have come to make sense of the world. They also reflect the attitudes and knowledge of the day. The first great step in mapmaking took place in **22** ..... in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Work continued in this tradition until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD but was then abandoned for over a thousand years, during which time maps were the responsibility of **23** ..... rather than scientists. Fortunately, however, the writings of **24** ..... had been kept, and interest in scientific mapmaking was revived as scholars sought to produce maps, inspired by the accounts of travellers.

These days, **25** ..... are vital to the creation of maps and radar has allowed cartographers to map areas beyond our immediate world. In addition, this high-tech equipment is not only used to map faraway places, but cheaper versions have also been developed for use in **26** .....

Turn over ►



## Listening sub-test

4

### SECTION 2

### Questions 11 – 20

Questions 11 – 13

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.

- 11 The Bridge Hotel is located in
- A the city centre.
  - B the country.
  - C the suburbs.
- 12 The newest sports facility in the hotel is
- A a swimming pool.
  - B a fitness centre.
  - C a tennis court.
- 13 The hotel restaurant specialises in
- A healthy food.
  - B local food.
  - C international food.

Questions 14 and 15

Choose **TWO** letters, **A-E**.

Which **TWO** business facilities are mentioned?

- A internet access
- B mobile phone hire
- C audio-visual facilities
- D airport transport
- E translation services

Questions 16 – 20

Complete the table below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

SHORT BREAK PACKAGES		
Length of stay	Cost (per person per night)	Special features
2 days	16 £ .....	Full cooked breakfast Entertainment in the 17 .....
3 days	£60	As above, plus: – a 18 .....
5 days	19 £ .....	As above, plus: – free beauty therapy on two of the days – full-day membership of a 20 .....

Turn over ►

## SECTION 3

## Questions 21 – 30

Questions 21 and 22

Complete the sentences below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.

### Research Project

- Harry and Katy have to concentrate on coastal change for their next project.
- 21 Their work could be delayed by the .....
- They plan to get help from the Marine Biology Unit.
- 22 Before they go to the beach, they need to visit the .....

Questions 23 – 26

Who will do each of the following tasks?

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| A | Katy                |
| B | Harry               |
| C | Both Katy and Harry |

Write the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**, next to questions 23-26.

### Tasks

- 23 take photographs .....
- 24 collect samples .....
- 25 interview people .....
- 26 analyse data .....

Questions 27 – 30

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.

- 27 Why does Harry want to do the presentation?
- A to practise skills for his future career
  - B to catch up with his course requirements
  - C to get a better mark than for his last presentation
- 28 What is Katy's attitude to writing up the project?
- A She is worried about the time available for writing.
  - B She thinks it is unfair if she has to do all the writing.
  - C She is concerned that some parts will be difficult.
- 29 Why does Harry want to involve the other students at the end of the presentation?
- A to get their opinions about the conclusions
  - B to help him and Katy reach firm conclusions
  - C to see if they have reached similar conclusions
- 30 Katy agrees to deal with any questions because
- A she feels she will be confident about the material.
  - B Harry will be doing the main presentation.
  - C she has already told Dr Smith she will do this.

Age of falcons	What occurs
1-12 months old	More than half of falcons
13 months old	The falcons
14-15 months old	The falcons
16 months old	The falcons
17 months old	The falcons
18 months old	The falcons
19 months old	The falcons
20 months old	The falcons
21 months old	The falcons
22 months old	The falcons
23 months old	The falcons
24 months old	The falcons
25 months old	The falcons
26 months old	The falcons
27 months old	The falcons
28 months old	The falcons
29 months old	The falcons
30 months old	The falcons

Turn over ►

# Post-test Material

## Writing sub-test

### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

***In many countries children are engaged in some kind of paid work. Some people regard this as completely wrong, while others consider it as valuable work experience, important for learning and taking responsibility.***

***Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.***

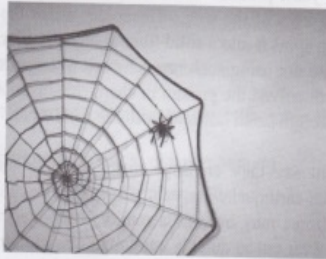
Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13, which are based on Reading Passage 1 on pages 2 and 3.

## Spider silk cuts weight of bridges



### *A strong, light bio-material made by genes from spiders could transform construction and industry*

- A** Scientists have succeeded in copying the silk-producing genes of the *Golden Orb Weaver* spider and are using them to create a synthetic material which they believe is the model for a new generation of advanced bio-materials. The new material, biosilk, which has been spun for the first time by researchers at DuPont, has an enormous range of potential uses in construction and manufacturing.
- B** The attraction of the silk spun by the spider is a combination of great strength and enormous elasticity, which man-made fibres have been unable to replicate. On an equal-weight basis, spider silk is far stronger than steel and it is estimated that if a single strand could be made about 10m in diameter, it would be strong enough to stop a jumbo jet in flight. A third important factor is that it is extremely light. Army scientists are already looking at the possibilities of using it for lightweight, bullet-proof vests and parachutes.
- C** For some time, biochemists have been trying to synthesise the drag-line silk of the *Golden Orb Weaver*. The drag-line silk, which forms the radial arms of the web, is stronger than the other parts of the web and some biochemists believe a synthetic version could prove to be as important a material as nylon, which has been around for 50 years, since the discoveries of Wallace Carothers and his team ushered in the age of polymers.
- D** To recreate the material, scientists, including Randolph Lewis at the University of Wyoming, first examined the silk-producing gland of the spider. 'We took out the glands that produce the silk and looked at the coding for the protein material they make, which is spun into a web. We then went looking for clones with the right DNA,' he says.

- E** At DuPont, researchers have used both yeast and bacteria as hosts to grow the raw material, which they have spun into fibres. Robert Dorsch, DuPont's director of biochemical development, says the globules of protein, comparable with marbles in an egg, are harvested and processed. 'We break open the bacteria, separate out the globules of protein and use them as the raw starting material. With yeast, the gene system can be designed so that the material excretes the protein outside the yeast for better access,' he says.
- F** 'The bacteria and the yeast produce the same protein, equivalent to that which the spider uses in the drag lines of the web. The spider mixes the protein into a water-based solution and then spins it into a solid fibre in one go. Since we are not as clever as the spider and we are not using such sophisticated organisms, we substituted man-made approaches and dissolved the protein in chemical solvents, which are then spun to push the material through small holes to form the solid fibre.'
- G** Researchers at DuPont say they envisage many possible uses for a new biosilk material. They say that earthquake-resistant suspension bridges hung from cables of synthetic spider silk fibres may become a reality. Stronger ropes, safer seat belts, shoe soles that do not wear out so quickly and tough new clothing are among the other applications. Biochemists such as Lewis see the potential range of uses of biosilk as almost limitless. 'It is very strong and retains elasticity; there are no man-made materials that can mimic both these properties. It is also a biological material with all the advantages that has over petrochemicals,' he says.
- H** At DuPont's laboratories, Dorsch is excited by the prospect of new super-strong materials but he warns they are many years away. 'We are at an early stage but theoretical predictions are that we will wind up with a very strong, tough material, with an ability to absorb shock, which is stronger and tougher than the man-made materials that are conventionally available to us,' he says.
- I** The spider is not the only creature that has aroused the interest of material scientists. They have also become envious of the natural adhesive secreted by the sea mussel. It produces a protein adhesive to attach itself to rocks. It is tedious and expensive to extract the protein from the mussel, so researchers have already produced a synthetic gene for use in surrogate bacteria.

Turn over ►

Questions 1 – 5

Reading Passage 1 has nine paragraphs, A-I.

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter, A-I, in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet.

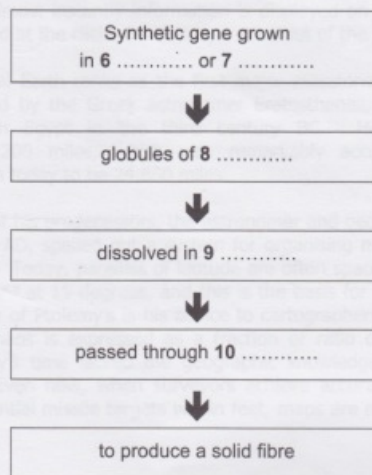
- 1 a comparison of the ways two materials are used to replace silk-producing glands
- 2 predictions regarding the availability of the synthetic silk
- 3 ongoing research into other synthetic materials
- 4 the research into the part of the spider that manufactures silk
- 5 the possible application of the silk in civil engineering

Questions 6 – 10

Complete the flow-chart below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 6-10 on your answer sheet.





Questions 11 – 13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 11-13 on your answer sheet, write

- TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information
- FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information
- NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

- 11 Biosilk has already replaced nylon in parachute manufacture.
- 12 The spider produces silk of varying strengths.
- 13 Lewis and Dorsch co-operated in the synthetic production of silk.

Turn over ►

Listening sub-test

✓ 2

**SECTION 1** Questions 1 – 10

Questions 1 and 2

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.

Example

Penny's interview took place

- A yesterday.
- B last week.
- C two weeks ago.

- 1 What kind of shop is it?
  - A a ladies' dress shop
  - B a department store
  - C a children's clothes shop
  
- 2 What is the name of the section Penny will be working in?
  - A the Youngster
  - B the Youngset
  - C the Young Set

## Questions 3 – 10

Complete the notes below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

<b>Pay:</b>	\$6.50 an hour
<b>Breaks:</b>	one hour for lunch and <b>3</b> ..... coffee breaks
<b>Holidays:</b>	three weeks a year in the first two years four weeks a year in the <b>4</b> .....
<b>Staff training:</b>	held on the <b>5</b> ..... of every month
<b>Special staff benefits or 'perks':</b>	staff discount of <b>6</b> ..... on everything except sale goods
<b>Information on pension:</b>	see Personnel Manager, office in <b>7</b> .....
<b>Boss's name:</b>	<b>8</b> .....
<b>Duties:</b>	serve customers <b>9</b> ..... check for shoplifters check the stock
<b>Expected to wear:</b>	a <b>10</b> ..... , a red blouse, and a name badge

Turn over ►

**SECTION 4****Questions 31 – 40**

Questions 31 – 33

Complete the sentences below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.**Peregrine Falcons**

- 31 The Peregrine falcons found in ..... are not migratory birds.
- 32 There is disagreement about their maximum .....
- 33 When the female is guarding the nest, the male spends most of his time .....

Questions 34 – 37

Complete the table below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

Age of falcons	What occurs
20 days old	The falcons 34 .....
28 days old	The falcons are 35 .....
2 months old	The falcons 36 ..... permanently
1-12 months old	More than half of falcons 37 .....

Questions 38 – 40

Complete the notes below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

**Procedures used for field research on Peregrine falcon chicks**

- First: catch chicks
- Second: **38** ..... to legs
- Third: **39** ..... of chicks
- Fourth: take blood sample to assess level of pesticide
- Fifth: check the **40** ..... of the birds

**Appendix 7: Interview questions for informal conversational interviews with Berlitz and PACC students**

1. What are your overall views about your IELTS preparation course?
2. Are you satisfied with the way it was conducted? Please give reasons.
3. Do you think the teaching methods and materials used by the tutor were helpful?
4. How would you comment on your overall progress on the course? Do you think you have improved? Please give reasons for your answer.
5. Do you think you will be able to achieve your require band score?
6. Is there anything further you would like to say about your IELTS preparation course (e.g. course fees, facilities, etc.)?

## Appendix 8: IELTS Test-preparer Questionnaire

### Brief statement and consent form

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research survey to assess the impact of IELTS in Pakistan for my doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. I would like to ask you about your educational background, your motivation for taking the IELTS exam and your test preparation activities on the course. To help me, please fill in this questionnaire based on your own experience. It should take no more than 30-40 minutes to complete. Your response to this questionnaire will be treated in confidence, and only used for the stated purpose of the study.

Thank you for your valuable time. I will be grateful if you would complete and sign the consent form below:

Yours sincerely  
Natasha Memon  
University of Edinburgh

Your consent to participate in the IELTS impact study

I understand that:

- the purpose of the study is to collect and analyse information from those familiar with the IELTS;
- my name will not appear in any project publication;
- the information I give, but not my name, may be quoted;
- I am free to refuse to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time;
- my completed questionnaire is for the study only; it will not be shown to anyone not connected with the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Part One: English language background		
1. Age		
2. Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Answer one of the following:		
3.1. Are you a high school student? Provide the name of your school.		
3.2. Are you a university student? If yes, what is your major subject (in university) and the name of your university?		
3.3. Do you work? If yes what type of work you do? Name the organisation/company where you work.		
3.4. Other (such as businessman, house wife etc.)		
4. What language(s) do you usually speak at home?		
5. Did you study English as a compulsory subject in:	Yes	No
5.1. Kindergarten (KG)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2. Primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3. Secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4. College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5. University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6. Extra language classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How much of the time in class did your teachers of English speak to you in English? (tick the appropriate options)					
	All the time	More than half	About half	Less than half	Never
6.1. At School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2. At College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3. At University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. In your country, how often:				
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7.1. Do you use English for socialising (talking or writing to friends)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2. Are you in English contact with friends overseas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3. Are you exposed to English in media?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4. Do you use English or speak in English for work? (only for those who are working full-time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.5. Do you read texts in English in your specialist subject?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.6. Do you write in English in a day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



<b>Part two: About your IELTS preparation</b>					
8. What is the name of your IELTS preparation institute?					
9. Did you attend such classes in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please name) <input type="checkbox"/> No				
10. I chose to study at this institutes because: (tick all that applies to you):	10.1. It is affordable for me. <input type="checkbox"/>	10.2. It is a reputable institute. <input type="checkbox"/>	10.3. It is at convenient location. <input type="checkbox"/>	10.4. My friend study at this institute. <input type="checkbox"/>	10.5. Other <input type="checkbox"/>

11. Are you intending to take:	General Training module <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Academic module <input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Why do you want to take the IELTS test? (please tick an appropriate box)	12.1. To study abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.2. To emigrate	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.3. To get professional registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.4. To get a job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.5. To determine my English language ability	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.6. To study abroad with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.7. To emigrate with a fallback option to find job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.8. To get professional registration with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12.9. To determine my English language ability with a fallback option to work within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. If you plan to study abroad, what do you wish to study?		
14. If you want to find a good job within Pakistan, what kind of work are you looking for?		
15. Intended country of destination:	15.1. For immigration.....	
	15.2. For higher education.....	
	15.3. For professional registration.....	
16. What is your required IELTS band score?		

17. What proportion of 100% of the time on your IELTS-preparation course is/was spent working on the following, and how useful do you believe they are for the IELTS test?				
Skill, component etc	% of time	For IELTS		
		Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful
17.1. Reading		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.2. Writing		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.3. Listening		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.4. Speaking		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.5. Vocabulary		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.6. Grammar		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.7. Other (please specify)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Did/do any of the following happen in your IELTS preparation classes?	Yes	No	Not sure
<b>Listening:</b>			
18L.1. Reading questions and predicting what listening texts will be about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18L.2. Listening to live, cassette or video talks/ lectures and taking notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18L.3. Listening and taking part in seminar/ workshop activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18L.4. Using information from a lecture or talk in written reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18L.5. Reading questions and guessing the types of answers required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18L.6. Practice in recognising previous information repeated in different words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Reading:</b>			
18R.1. Analysing text structure and organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.2. Interpreting statistics/ graphs/ diagrams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.3. Reading texts to predict test questions and tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.4. Learning quick and efficient ways of reading texts in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.5. Reading articles, reports, books in your specialist subject area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.6. Using monolingual dictionaries to complete reading tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18R.7. Reading quickly to get the main idea of a text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Writing:</b>			
18W.1. Copying out good paragraphs and model answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.2. Describing graph/process/ statistical data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.3. Learning how to organise essays.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.4. Practising using words or phrases to organise a written text (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, therefore).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.5. Learning how to write in different styles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.6. Short report writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.7. Planning written answers to test questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.8. Editing written work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.9. Writing parts of test answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18W.10. Writing long essays, reports (i.e. over 1000 words).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Speaking:</b>			
18S.1. Practising making a point and providing supporting examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18S.2. Planning and delivering oral presentations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18S.3. Group discussions/ debates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18S.4. Practising using filler words to cover gaps in speech (e.g. well, you see).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18S.5. Practising using words or phrases to organize a speech (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, I have two points).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19.	How much of the following kinds of specific exam practice do/did you do on your preparation course (each type as approximate percentages, added together should equal 100%)	
		Approximate % of course time
19.1	Information about the contents and format of the test	
19.2	Looking at past papers	
19.3	Taking practice tests	
19.4	Receiving feedback in the form of IELTS band scores	
19.5	Techniques for taking the test (please specify)	
19.6	Others (please specify)	

20. Please rank the IELTS test sections in order of difficulty (1= more difficult.....4= less difficult etc):	Sub-tests	Rank order:
	20.1. Reading	
	20.2. Writing	
	20.3. Listening	
	20.4. Speaking	

<p>21. Do you use textbook(s) on your IELTS preparation course? If so, what is/are the title(s), (approximately if you cannot remember exactly)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>22. If you do/did use textbook(s), please give your opinions of the good and less good points here.</p> <p>Good points:</p> <p>Not so good points:</p>

<p>23. What other teaching materials do you use on the preparation course (e.g. online materials, handouts, supplementary materials)? How were they (e.g. useful/not useful; difficult/easy; enjoyable/not enjoyable)?</p>
<p>24. What does a successful student do on the IELTS preparation course that an unsuccessful student one does not?</p>
<p>25. If an IELTS score had not been a requirement, would you have prepared for your studies abroad in the same way?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Why?</p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/> Why not?</p>
<p>26. If you are already studying/ working in an English-medium situation now, do you find that your IELTS preparation course provided you with the language knowledge and skills you need? Please comment.</p>
<p>27. Would the IELTS preparation course be a good way to learn English for someone going to university but who is not going to take IELTS? Why? / Why not?</p>
<p>28. Would the IELTS preparation course be useful for someone who is not going to university? Why/ Why not?</p>
<p>29. Please note here anything else you wish you say about your IELTS preparation course (e.g duration, teaching, books, etc.).</p>
<p>30. Do you think you are successful on the IELTS preparation course(s)? Why? Why not?</p>

31. Please put a tick in the column that best suits your doing extra practice of IELTS test at home	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
31.1. I try to improve my listening by watching:						
a. Pakistani news in English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. News of English countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Pakistani English comedy programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Comedy programmes of English countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Pakistani English movies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Movies of English countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.2. I read English texts (newspaper, novels, magazines etc.) to improve my reading skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.3. I look for new words to expand my vocabulary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.4. I learn new words to expand my vocabulary that teacher gives in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.5. I write essays on different topics to improve my writing skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.6. I try to speak English at home to improve my speaking skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.7. I speak English outside of home e.g. with friends, at parties etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31.8. I try to speak with friends outside classroom so I can improve my speaking skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.9. I go over the materials that the teacher gives me at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.10. I solve past papers at home to get extra practice of all four skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name:

City:

Cell phone number:

Email ID:

Note: The above information is taken only for internal records and to contact you again for further information. Your identity or personal information will not be shared with anyone else.

Thank you very much for filling out this questionnaire.

## Appendix 9: IELTS test-taker Questionnaire

### Brief statement and consent form

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research survey to assess the impact of IELTS in Pakistan for my doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. I would like to ask you about your educational background, your motivation for taking the IELTS exam and your experience of taking the IELTS exam. To help me, please fill in this questionnaire based on your own experience. It should take no more than 30-40 minutes to complete. Your response to this questionnaire will be treated in confidence, and only used for the stated purpose of the study.

Thank you for your valuable time. I will be grateful if you would complete and sign the consent form below:

Yours sincerely  
Natasha Memon  
University of Edinburgh

Your consent to participate in the IELTS impact study

I understand that:

- the purpose of the study is to collect and analyse information from those familiar with the IELTS;
- my name will not appear in any project publication;
- the information I give, but not my name, may be quoted;
- I am free to refuse to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time;
- my completed questionnaire is for the study only; it will not be shown to anyone not connected with the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Part One: English language background</b>			
1.Age			
2.Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
3.Background of your education:	3.1.Name of your school	3.2.Name of your college	3.3.Name of your university
4.Employment status	Full-time <input type="checkbox"/>	Part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	If you a part-time student at present? If yes, Please specify: <input type="checkbox"/>
5.What language(s) do you usually speak at home?			
6.Did you study English as a compulsory subject in:	Yes	No	
6.1.Kindergarten (KG)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.2.Primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.Secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.4.College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.5.University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.6.Extra language classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

7. How much of the time in class did your teachers of English speak to you in English? (tick the appropriate options)					
	All the time	More than half	About half	Less than half	Never
7.1. At School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2. At College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3. At University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. In your country, how often:	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
8.1. Do you use English for socialising (talking or writing to friends)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.2. Are you in English contact with friends overseas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.3. Are you exposed to English in media?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.4. Do you use English or speak in English for work? (only for those who are working full-time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.5. Do you read texts in English in your specialist subject?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.6. Do you write in English in a day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



<b>Part two: About your job</b>		
9. What is your current profession?		
10. What is your designation and the name of your organisation for which you work?		
11. Is it compulsory for you to speak in English at work?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
12. Were you asked for IELTS certificate as proof of English proficiency by your employer?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
13. Were you asked for any other proficiency certificate for the job as a proof of English proficiency (e.g. GE certificate, TOEFL)? If yes, please specify	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
14. How was your English proficiency assessed for your job? (e.g. written test, interview etc.) Please specify.		

<b>Part three: About IELTS test</b>		
15. When did you take the IELTS test? (please include all dates if you have taken the test more than once.)		
16. Why did you take IELTS? (please tick an appropriate box)	16.1. To study abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.2. To emigrate	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.3. To get professional registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.4. To get a job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.5. To determine my English language ability	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.6. To study abroad with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.7. To emigrate with a fallback option to find job within Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.8. To get professional registration with a fallback option to find a job within Pakistan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16.9. To determine my English language ability with a fallback option to work within Pakistan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. If you planned to study abroad, what did you wish to study?		
18. If you wanted to find a good job within Pakistan, what kind of work were you looking for?		
19. Have you taken other similar tests? (such as TOEFL)? Why?		

20. Did you take:	General Training module <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Academic module <input type="checkbox"/>	
21. IELTS Band score:	19.1. Which band score(s) did you get when you took the test?	
	21.2. Which band score(s) did you need for your studies, immigration, or other requirement?	
	21.3. Which band score(s) did you expect to get after taking the test?	

22. Did you worry about taking the IELTS test?	Very much 1	2	3	Very little 4
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. What worried you most about the test?				
24. Please rank below the sections of the IELTS test according to how difficult you found them:				
	The most difficult	Second most difficult	Third most difficult	The easiest
24.1. Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.2. Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.3. Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.4. Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Did you feel that you performed to the best of your ability in the test?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>			
	No <input type="checkbox"/>			

26. When you took the IELTS test, what affected your performance from below?				
	A lot	Quite a lot	Not a lot	Not at all
26.1. Difficulty of the language used on the test.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.2. Difficulty of the questions included in the test.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.3. Unfamiliarity of the topics on the test.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.4. Time pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.5. My fear tests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.6. Others (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. Do you think IELTS is a fair way to test your proficiency in English: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (why)
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<input type="checkbox"/> No (why not) _____			
28. Except for language ability, what other knowledge or skills (if any), are needed for a good IELTS score?			
29. In your opinion, is IELTS exam appropriate for the following groups?			
	Yes (why)	No (why not)	No opinion
29.1.All ages 15+	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.2.University students (undergraduates)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.3.Graduate students (Post-graduates, Masters, PhD)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.4.Professional people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.5.All nationalities/cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.6.Students in all subject areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. What did you like about the IELTS test?			
31. What did you dislike about the IELTS test?			
32. What advice would you give someone who is going to take the IELTS test?			
33. Please write here any other comments about IELTS, which were not covered in the above items:			
34. Do you think it is expensive to take IELTS?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
35. Do you think it was useful for you to take IELTS exam?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Why:	
	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Why not?:	

<b>Part four: About your IELTS preparation</b>	
36. Did you prepare for the IELTS test any any private centre	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please name <input type="checkbox"/> No
37. Did you find the institute useful for IELTS preparation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (why?) <input type="checkbox"/> No (why not?)
38. Give any comments about your IELTS preparation course (e.g. books, teaching methods, duration of the course, fee structure etc.)	

Name:

City:

Cell phone number:

Email ID:

Note: The above information is taken only for internal records and to contact you again for further information. Your identity or personal information will not be shared with anyone else.

Thank you very much for filling out this questionnaire.

## Appendix 10: Appendix: IELTS Test Preparation Teacher Questionnaire

### Brief statement and consent form

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research survey to assess the impact of IELTS in Pakistan for my doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. I would like to ask you about your educational background, your students preparing for the IELTS exam and your test preparation activities and materials on the IELTS preparation course. To help me, please fill in this questionnaire based on your own experience. It should take no more than 30-40 minutes to complete. Your response to this questionnaire will be treated in confidence, and only used for the stated purpose of the study.

Thank you for your valuable time. I will be grateful if you would complete and sign the consent form below:

Yours sincerely  
Natasha Memon  
University of Edinburgh

Your consent to participate in the IELTS impact study

I understand that:

- the purpose of the study is to collect and analyse information from those familiar with the IELTS;
- my name will not appear in any project publication;
- the information I give, but not my name, may be quoted;
- I am free to refuse to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time;
- my completed questionnaire is for the study only; it will not be shown to anyone not connected with the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Section A: About you</b>						
1. Your full name						
2. Your age		below 30 <input type="checkbox"/>	31- 40 <input type="checkbox"/>	41- 50 <input type="checkbox"/>	51- 60 <input type="checkbox"/>	60+ <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Name of the institute where you work?						
4. Number of years you have been teaching English and/or offering IELTS preparation						
5. Your qualifications:						
6. Have you been trained as an examiner for IELTS or other international proficiency test(s)?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>			
7. Have you received any training in how to prepare students for IELTS? If yes, please describe briefly.		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>			
8. Have you taught any other programme other than IELTS? If yes, please specify		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>			

<b>Section B: About your students</b>						
9. Ages of your IELTS students?						
10. Your IELTS students' level(s) of education? (tick all that applies to your students)		Secondary up to 16 years. <input type="checkbox"/>	Higher secondary 17-19 years <input type="checkbox"/>	Undergraduate degree or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/>	Post-graduate <input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Applying for which country(ies)?						
12. Taking which IELTS modules?			All	Most	Half	A few
		Academic module	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		General training module	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Proportion of students who have already taken IELTS?		All <input type="checkbox"/>	Most <input type="checkbox"/>	About half <input type="checkbox"/>	A few <input type="checkbox"/>	None <input type="checkbox"/>

If you have taught students who have already taken IELTS, please answer questions 14-18. If not, go to section C.

14-18. Comparing your students' results in the IELTS test with your own assessment of their language ability				
Compared with their IELTS results, I consider:	Higher	About the same	Not consistently related	Lower
14. My students' actual general English proficiency level is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. My students' actual level in reading is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. My students' actual level in writing is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. My students' actual level in listening is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. My students' actual level in speaking is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Section C: About the IELTS</b>			
19-24. Do you consider the IELTS test appropriate to candidates' future English language needs:	Yes	No	Not sure
19. At undergraduate level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. At postgraduate level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. At pre-university level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. For vocational studies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. In their professional work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. For immigration purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. Does the IELTS test provide positive motivation for your students?	Yes	No	Don't know
26. Does the test cause unhelpful stress for your students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Does the IELTS test influence your choice of the content of your IELTS preparation lessons (i.e. what you teach)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. If yes, please note here how the test influences your decisions on lesson content:			

29. Does the IELTS test influence your choice of methodology (i.e. the way you teach) for IELTS preparation lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. If yes, please note here how the IELTS test influences the way you teach?			

Please complete the following statements:		
31. What I like about teaching for IELTS is: ..... .....		
32. What I dislike about teaching for IELTS is: ..... .....		
33. What are your students' expectations of the IELTS preparation course? ..... ..... .....		
34. What knowledge or skills other than proficiency in the English language do you think help students achieve a good IELTS grade?		
35. What advice would you give to a colleague who was about to prepare students for IELTS for the first time?		
36. Please rank the IELTS test sections in order of difficulty for most of your students (1= more difficult.....4= less difficult etc):	Sections	Rank order:
	36.1. Reading	
	36.2. Writing	
	36.3. Listening	
	36.4. Speaking	

37-44. Are the following statements about the IELTS test correct?	Yes	No	Not sure
37. The IELTS test includes a section testing grammar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. In the speaking module, candidates have to both ask and answer questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Reading and Writing together carry more than half of the marks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Candidates have two opportunities to hear the cassette in the listening module.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. Candidates have to write at least 150 words for the first task in the writing module.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Candidates often need to refer to the reading texts when they do the writing module.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. The reading module has three sections.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



44. In the listening module, candidates may have to label a diagram.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>Section D: About IELTS preparation classes</b>						
45. Is there any placement test for getting admission into your IELTS preparation? If so, please explain its procedure. ..... ..... ..... .....						
46. How many students on average attend the IELTS class(es) you teach?	1-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	11-15 <input type="checkbox"/>	16-20 <input type="checkbox"/>	21-25 <input type="checkbox"/>	25+ <input type="checkbox"/>
47. What is the duration of your course? (weeks and hours)						
48. Are the IELTS courses normally taught by one, or more than one teacher? Please explain: ..... ..... ..... .....						

49. What proportion of the time on your IELTS-preparation course is normally spent working on the following, and how useful do you believe they are for the IELTS test?				
Skill, component etc	% of time	For IELTS		
		Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful
49.1. Reading		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.2. Writing		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.3. Listening		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.4. Speaking		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.5. Vocabulary		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.6. Grammar		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.7. Other (please specify)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

50. Which of the following activities take place in your normal IELTS-preparation class?	Yes	No	Not sure
<b>Listening:</b>			
50L.1. Reading questions and predicting what listening texts will be about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50L.2. Listening to live, cassette or video talks/ lectures and taking notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50L.3. Listening and taking part in seminar/ workshop activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50L.4. Using information from a lecture or talk in written reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50L.5. Reading questions and guessing the types of answers required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50L.6. Practice in recognising previous information repeated in different words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Reading:</b>			
50R.1. Analysing text structure and organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.2. Interpreting statistics/ graphs/ diagrams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.3. Reading texts to predict test questions and tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.4. Learning quick and efficient ways of reading texts in English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.5. Reading articles, reports, books in your specialist subject area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.6. Using monolingual dictionaries to complete reading tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50R.7. Reading quickly to get the main idea of a text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Writing:</b>			
50W.1. Copying out good paragraphs and model answers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.2. Describing graph/process/ statistical data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.3. Learning how to organise essays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.4. Practicing using words or phrases to organise a written text (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, therefore).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.5. Learning how to write in different styles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.6. Short report writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.7. Planning written answers to test questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.8. Editing written work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.9. Writing parts of test answers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50W.10. Writing long essays, reports (i.e. over 1000 words)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Speaking:</b>			
50S.1. Practising making a point and providing supporting examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50S.2. Planning and delivering oral presentations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50S.3. Group discussions/debates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50S.4. Practising using filler words to cover gaps in speech (e.g. well, you see)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50S.5. Practising using words or phrases to organise a speech (e.g. firstly, furthermore, secondly, I have two points)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

51.	How much, if any, of the following kinds of specific exam practice do you give on your preparation course (as approximate percentages, 100% of the course):	
		Approximate % of course time
51.1	Information about the contents and format of the test	
51.2	Looking at past papers	
51.3	Taking practice tests	
51.4	Marking and giving feedback in the form of IELTS band scores	
51.5	Techniques for taking the test (please specify)	
51.6	Others (please specify)	

<p>52. Do you use textbook(s) on your IELTS preparation course? If so, what is/are the title(s), (approximately if you cannot remember exactly)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		
<p>53. If you do/did use textbook(s), please give your opinions of the good and less good points here.</p> <p>Good points:</p> <p>Not so good points:</p>		
54. What other teaching materials do you use on your IELTS preparation course(s) and why?	IELTS prep-course teaching materials	Reason
55. What does a good/successful student do on the IELTS preparation course that an unsuccessful student one does not?		

<p>56. If an IELTS score had not been a requirement, would you have prepared your students for their future studies abroad in the same way?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>57. Would your IELTS preparation course be a good way to learn English for someone going to university but who is not going to take IELTS? Why?/ Why not?</p>
<p>58. Would the IELTS preparation course be useful for someone who is not going to university? Why? / Why not?</p>
<p>59. Please comment on your students' progress on the IELTS preparation course.</p>
<p>60. Please note here anything else you wish you say about your IELTS preparation course (e.g. duration, teaching, books, etc.).</p>

Thank you very much for filling out this questionnaire.

## **Appendix 11: Consent form for employers in Pakistan**

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to investigate the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. The aim of this interview is to ask questions about the process of recruitment in your company, about the English language requirements, and the background of your employees.

The interviews will be audio-taped. As recommended by the ethical guidelines provided by the SERA, I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, and allow her to conduct an interview under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

Best wishes



## **Appendix 12: Interview questions for Employers**

### **A. Recruitment Procedure:**

1. Do you ever recruit through agencies? If so, please name the agencies and say how they recruit employees for your company?
2. Briefly explain how recruitment is conducted in your company?
3. Do you require employees to be proficient in English?

### **B. IELTS as a requirement:**

4. What do you know about the IELTS exam?
5. Do you require IELTS from your employees for any kind of job? If so, what band score do you require?
6. If not, do you require any other General English language certificate?
7. Do you think IELTS certificate can be helpful in finding a job in Pakistan?
8. Would you ever require IELTS certificates from your employees as a proof of their English proficiency?
9. Do you think IELTS can be useful for those who do not go abroad?

### **C. English language requirement:**

10. How do you assess the English proficiency of your employees? Is it by conducting interview in English or a written test in English or both?
11. Is it compulsory for employees to speak in English at work?
12. If not, then why do you conduct a job test (interview, written or both) in English?

### **D. Information about employees:**

13. What is the typical educational background of prospective employees who apply for jobs? What types of schools, colleges and universities have they attended?
14. Do employees face any difficulties in understanding work interactions that need to take place in English (e.g. reading instructions, attending business meetings, international conference calls)?

### **E. Information about IELTS preparation centres:**

15. Have any of your employees attended private language centres? If so, why do you think they attend these?
16. Have you noticed a growth in the number of IELTS preparation centres in Pakistan?
17. Is there anything else you would like to say about IELTS preparation centres?

### **Appendix 13: Consent form for parents of IELTS test-takers and test-preparers**

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to assess the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. The aim of this interview is to ask questions about your views on the IELTS exam.

The interviews will be audio-taped. As recommended by the ethical guidelines provided by the SERA, I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. If you participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, and allow her to conduct an interview under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

Best wishes



## **Appendix 14: Interview Questions for parents of IELTS test-preparers and test-takers**

### **A. Background information**

1. Please tell me about your education and your current profession.
2. How many children do you have?
3. Please tell me about the education of your children.

### **B. The IELTS test**

4. Do you encourage your children to go abroad?
5. If so, why do you encourage them to do this? Is it beneficial for their career, and why?
6. What do you know about the IELTS exam?
7. Why do you think people take this exam?
8. What do you know about the composition of the test?
9. How many of your children have taken the IELTS exam?
10. What was the purpose, for them, of taking the IELTS exam?
11. Do you think it is helpful, or an unnecessary burden for students? Why?
12. Do you know how much it costs to take the IELTS exam?
13. Do you think it is an expensive exam?
14. Do you know about any other English language proficiency tests?

### **C. The IELTS preparation centres**

15. Did your children attend IELTS preparation classes or are they currently attending any?
16. Do you think that the number of IELTS preparation centres is growing?
17. What do you know about the different types of IELTS preparation centres?
18. What do you know about the quality of these different IELTS preparation centres?
19. How much does it cost to prepare for the test?
20. Do you think it is costly to attend these centres?

### **D. Growth of IELTS test-takers**

21. Do you think everyone who takes IELTS can manage to go abroad? If not, do you think IELTS could be useful for any other purposes?
22. What are the reasons behind the growth in the number of IELTS test-takers?
23. Why do you think an increasing number of people are motivated to go

abroad?

24. What impact do you think IELTS has specifically on test-takers, their parents and the preparation centres?
25. What impact do you think IELTS has in Pakistan more generally?

## **Appendix 15: Focus group discussion points for IELTS test-preparers**

### **A. Educational background:**

1. What is your current profession?
2. What is your qualification? Please tell me the name of your school, college/university.
3. For how much time in the class did your English teachers speak English at school?
4. For how much time in the class did your English teachers speak English at college and university?

### **B. Motivation(s) for taking the IELTS test:**

5. Why do you intend to take the IELTS test?
6. Do you think that the IELTS test is taken by people who do not intend to go abroad? If so, what could be the purpose of taking the IELTS test?
7. How you think IELTS could be useful for those who cannot manage to go abroad?
8. Do you think IELTS preparation courses are attended by those who do not wish to go abroad?
9. If so, why do you think they attend the IELTS preparation course, rather than a General English course?
10. How many people do you think take the IELTS test every year? Do you think the number of people taking the test is growing?
11. What could be the reasons behind the growing number of people leaving the country?
12. Do you think everyone in Pakistan who takes the test is able to go abroad?
13. If not, why can they not manage to go abroad?
14. Do you think the IELTS exam is expensive?

### **C. About your IELTS preparation course:**

15. What teaching materials and activities are used on your IELTS preparation course?
16. Do you think it is useful to attend an IELTS preparation course?
17. Are you satisfied with your course?
18. Have you improved your four language skills?
19. Do you think you will be able to achieve your required band score?
20. Is there anything further you would like to say about your course (such as duration, fee structure etc.)?
21. Do you think the IELTS preparation course can improve your English

grammar skills?

22. What do you expect to learn on this course? Do you think you will only get IELTS practice or do you also expect to learn grammar on this course?

**D. IELTS preparation centres:**

23. Why did you choose this centre for your IELTS preparation?
24. Do you think the number of private centres offering IELTS preparation courses is growing?
25. Why do you think the number of private centres is growing?
26. What are your views about the different types of IELTS preparation centres?

## Appendix 16: Consent form for focus group participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research for my doctoral study in the University of Edinburgh. My research is to investigate the impact of the IELTS on different stakeholders in Pakistan. The aim of this focus group is to ask questions about the IELTS exam.

The interviews will be audio-taped. As recommended by the ethical guidelines provided by the SERA, I would like to have a formal consent from you. Anonymity of all data will be ensured and your data will be used solely for this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. I would be very grateful if you could tick the boxes below and sign your name and date.

I agree to participate in Natasha Memon's research, and allow her to conduct an interview under the circumstances that she will ensure my anonymity.

I agree to anonymised use of all the data I will provide for Natasha Memon's research in conference presentations and academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Email ID:

Telephone number:

If you have queries about the research, please contact me at:

Natasha Memon ([natashamemon@gmail.com](mailto:natashamemon@gmail.com))

Best wishes

## **Appendix 17: Sample of Transcriptions**

### **An example from a focus group discussion**

Interviewer: Do you think that the private centres offering IELTS preparation are growing? What do you think the number of private centres is growing?

Focus group participant 1: 'I would like to quote something, most people say that "necessity is the mother of invention". So you can say that they are taking the advantage of the necessity. So I need to know about IELTS, so before coming here, seriously I didn't know that there are four language skills in IELTS. Though my English is not that bad, I don't say that it is very good but it is not that bad. But frankly speaking I didn't know that there are four skills in IELTS but it's a necessity for me, it's a requirement for me so I have to come here. In order to learn how to give, in order to learn the tips, so I think mainly they are targeting the necessity of the students'.

Focus group participant 2: 'I think it is the demand of the people, people are going to take the test, they want to learn the tips and the tricks. Our school, college or university teacher don't know anything about IELTS, their English is good, but they don't have any knowledge. So when see so many people want to do the test, every where centres are growing'.

### **An example from an interview with a participating parent**

Interviewer: What impact do you think IELTS has on test-takers, on parents, and on preparation industry?

Parent 1: 'It has generated a sort of parallel private industry also commercialisation is there. People have opened up centres and job opportunities have been created for teachers with private sector have also jumped in, they are minting lot of money from these teaching centres. I think more than 75% students can't study alone and pay very heavy fees to the commercial people who are running these centres. I think

looking at Pakistani economic condition, the inflation and the depression and the lower middle class are under pressures, they have so many other you know demands on their monthly income. So salary class people find it difficult actually to finance their offsprings, their children to appear in this test, second time specially. It is such a heavy burden on the pocket of parents you know’.

Appendix 18: Advertisements of IELTS preparation centres offering guaranteed 7-8 band scores

**IELTS**  
**WITH SIR FAISAL**

**7-9 BAND GUARANTEED** **100% RESULTS** **STUDY IN UK**

→ UNIQUE TEST TIPS & TECHNIQUES  
→ EXCLUSIVE COURSE MATERIAL  
→ SEPARATE CLASSES FOR LADIES

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**ACADEMIC ENGLISH**  
**ONE YEAR COURSE**  
LOW COURSE FEES  
A TRUSTED COLLEGES  
**MINIMUM REQUIREMENT**  
INTER + IELTS 4.5 BAND

جائزے آج 2010 میں سب سے بہترین Result کس کا ہے

**IELTS**

**8.0 Band** by پورے پاکستان میں  
**FATIMA** 001418 دوسری پوزیشن

اب 2010 میں 4-Positions

**FAHAD** 7.5 Overall Band 006630  
**RAHIM** 7.5 Overall Band 006735  
**SHAHINA** 7.5 Overall Band 006335  
**AJLAL** 7.0 Overall Band 006407

I Challenge-No One can Break My Record

**The ONE & ONLY**  
**Sir S.M. IMRAN**  
Call: 0321-8700-455

**GULSHAN** **NORTH** **SHARAE FAISAL**

marksman



## Appendix 19: Sample cue card for speaking

Sample cue card:

‘Describe the memorable event of your life’

You will discuss following points:

- What was that event, when and where it took place
- Speciality of that event
- Why you remember it

## Appendix 20: Excerpts from 'Cambridge IELTS' practice materials

16 ACADEMIC READING TEST ONE

ACADEMIC READING 60 minutes

READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–15 which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

### NETWORKING

**N**etworking as a concept has acquired what is in all truth an unjustified air of modernity. It is considered in the corporate world as an essential tool for the modern businessperson, as they trot round the globe drumming up business for themselves or a corporation. The concept is worn like a badge of distinction, and not just in the business world.

People can be divided basically into those who keep knowledge and their personal contacts to themselves, and those who are prepared to share what they know and indeed their friends with others. A person who is insecure, for example someone who finds it difficult to share information with others and who is unable to bring people, including friends, together does not make a good networker. The classic networker is someone who is strong enough within themselves to connect different people including close friends with each other. For example, a businessman or an academic may meet someone who is likely to be a valuable contact in the future, but at the moment that person may benefit from meeting another associate or friend. It takes quite a secure person to bring these people together and allow a relationship to develop independently of himself. From the non-networker's point of view such a development may be intolerable, especially if it is happening outside their control. The unfortunate thing here is that the initiator of the contact, if he did but know it, would be the one to benefit most. And why? Because all things being equal, people move within circles and that person has the potential of being sucked into ever growing spheres of new contacts. It is said that, if you know

eight people, you are in touch with everyone in the world. It does not take much common sense to realize the potential for any kind of venture as one is able to draw on the experience of more and more people.

Unfortunately, making new contacts, business or otherwise, while it brings success, does cause problems. It enlarges the individual's world. This is in truth not altogether a bad thing, but it puts more pressure on the networker through his having to maintain an ever larger circle of people. The most convenient way out is, perhaps, to cull old contacts, but this would be anathema to our networker as it would defeat the whole purpose of networking. Another problem is the reaction of friends and associates. Spreading oneself thinly gives one less time for others who were perhaps closer to one in the past. In the workplace, this can cause tension with jealous colleagues, and even with superiors who might be tempted to rein in a more successful inferior. Jealousy and envy can prove to be very detrimental if one is faced with a very insecure manager, as this person may seek to stifle someone's career or even block it completely. The answer here is to let one's superiors share in the glory; to throw them a few crumbs of comfort. It is called leadership from the bottom.

In the present business climate, companies and enterprises need to co-operate with each other in order to expand. As globalization grows apace, companies need to be able to span not just countries but continents. Whilst people may rail against this development it is for the moment here to stay. Without co-operation and contacts,

(3)

specialist companies will not survive for long. Computer components, for example, need to be compatible with the various machines on the market and to achieve this, firms need to work in conjunction with others. No business or institution can afford to be an island in today's environment. In the not very distant past, it was possible for companies to go it alone, but it is now more difficult to do so.

The same applies in the academic world, where ideas have been jealously guarded. The opening-up of universities and colleges to the outside world in recent years has been of enormous benefit to industry and educational institutions. The stereotypical academic is one who moves in a rarefied atmosphere living a life of sometimes splendid isolation, a prisoner of their own genius. This sort of person does not fit easily into the mould of the modern

networker. Yet even this insular world is changing. The ivory towers are being left ever more frequently as educational experts forge links with other bodies; sometimes to stunning effect as in Silicon Valley in America and around Cambridge in England, which now has one of the most concentrated clusters of high tech companies in Europe.

It is the networkers, the wheeler-dealers, the movers and shakers, call them what you will, that carry the world along. The world of the Neanderthals was shaken between 35,000 and 40,000 BC; they were superseded by *Homo sapiens* with the very 'networking' skills that separate us from other animals: understanding, thought abstraction and culture, which are inextricably linked to planning survival and productivity in humans. It is said the meek will inherit the earth. But will they?

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet write

- YES if the statement agrees with the information
- NO if the statement contradicts the information
- NOT GIVEN if there is no information about the statement

Example	Answer
Networking is a concept	Yes

- 1 Networking is not a modern idea.
- 2 Networking is worn like a badge exclusively in the business world.
- 3 People fall into two basic categories.
- 4 A person who shares knowledge and friends makes a better networker than one who does not.
- 5 The classic networker is physically strong and generally in good health.

(4)

Questions 6–10

Using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage, complete the sentences below.

- 6 Making new acquaintances ..... , but also has its disadvantages.
- 7 At work, problems can be caused if the manager is .....
- 8 A manager can suppress, or even totally ....., the career of an employee.
- 9 In business today, working together is necessary in order for ..... to grow.
- 10 Businesses that specialize will not last for long without .....

Questions 11–15

Using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage, answer the questions below:

- 11 In which sphere of life have ideas been protected jealously? .....
- 12 Which type of individual does not easily become a modern networker? .....
- 13 Where is one of the greatest concentrations of high tech companies in Europe? .....
- 14 Who replaced the Neanderthals? .....
- 15 What, as well as understanding and thought abstraction, sets us apart from other animals? .....

Before you check your answers to Reading Passage 1, go on to pages 19–20.

(5)

Report Writing

Writing

## WRITING

### WRITING TASK 1

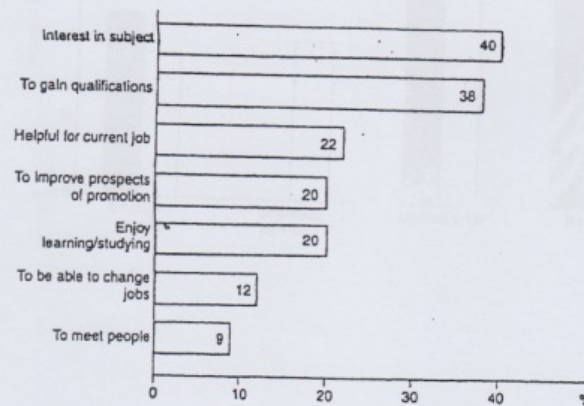
You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The charts below show the results of a survey of adult education. The first chart shows the reasons why adults decide to study. The pie chart shows how people think the costs of adult education should be shared.

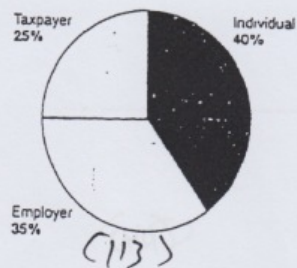
Write a report for a university lecturer, describing the information shown below.

You should write at least 150 words.

Reasons for study

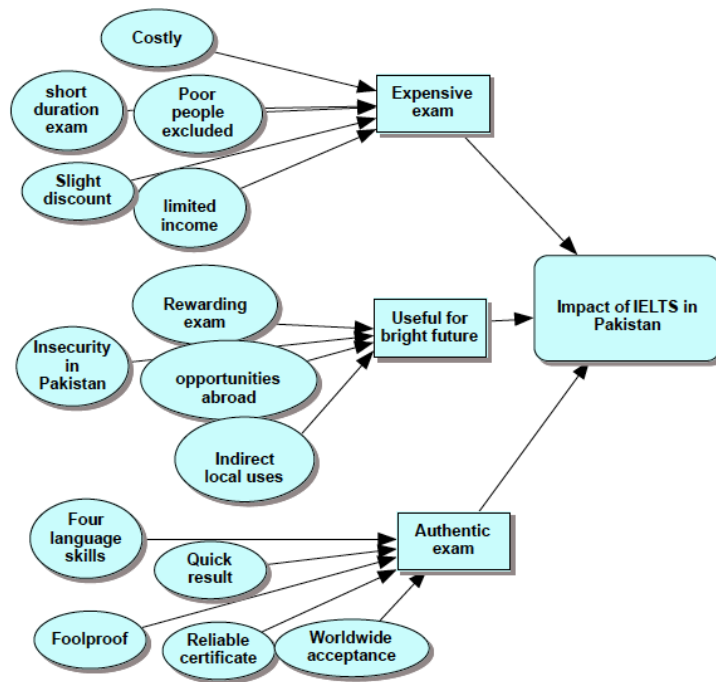


How the costs of each course should be shared

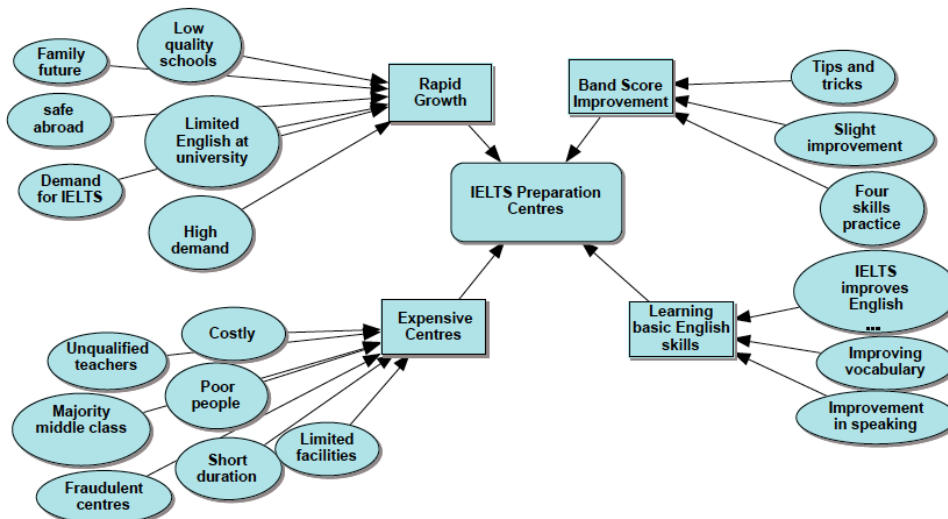


## Appendix 21: Formation of themes from codes and categories

A sample of thematic analysis of interviews with parents of IELTS test-preparers



A sample of thematic analysis of focus group with IELTS test-preparers



## **Appendix 22: Thematic frameworks**

### **The interview thematic framework (parents of IELTS test-preparers)**

1. Different types of private institutes in Pakistan
  - 1.1. Expensive centres
  - 1.2. Job opportunities for teachers
  - 1.3. Low quality centres
    - 1.3.1. Unqualified teachers
    - 1.3.2. Deceptive Names
    - 1.3.3. Middle class people
    - 1.3.4. Rating system
2. IELTS exam for various purposes
  - 2.1. IELTS for higher education and immigration
  - 2.2. IELTS for jobs in Pakistan
3. Impact of IELTS in Pakistan
  - 3.1. Expensive exam
  - 3.2. Useful for bright future
  - 3.3. Authentic exam

### **The interview thematic framework (local employers)**

1. IELTS for jobs in Pakistan
  - 1.1. Benefit for employers
  - 1.2. Growth of IELTS preparation industry
2. English at work
  - 2.1. Interviews in English
  - 2.2. Employees' English proficiency level

### **The focus group thematic framework**

1. English proficiency of IELTS test-preparers
  - 1.1. Non-elite English medium schools
  - 1.2. English in daily life
2. IELTS exam
  - 2.1. Expensive exam
    - 2.1.1. Stressful and challenging exam
    - 2.1.2. Target middle class
  - 2.2. Beneficial for local employment
  - 2.3. Impacts teaching and learning
  - 2.4. Growth of test-takers for higher education
    - 2.4.1. High-paid jobs
    - 2.4.2. Political instability in Pakistan
    - 2.4.3. Permanent settlement abroad
3. IELTS preparation centres
  - 3.1. Rapid growth
  - 3.2. Expensive centres
  - 3.3. Band score improvement
  - 3.4. Learning basic English skills

### **Overall Thematic Framework**

1. English proficiency of IELTS candidates in Pakistan
2. The unrealistic expectations of IELTS candidates
3. Quality of IELTS preparation courses
4. Washback of IELTS on test preparation teachers
5. Growing number of students intending to go abroad
6. IELTS outside of its intended purposes
  - 6.1. Does IELTS guarantee a job?
  - 6.2. Usefulness/suitability of IELTS in getting local employment
7. English and the workplace in Pakistan
8. IELTS – a big brand