GEPT and English Language Teaching and Testing in Taiwan

DR JESSICA WU
R&D Program Director
New Directions English:
Role of English assessment in Internationalisation
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Role of English assessment in Internationalisation

MOE Policy Blueprint

2 Visions
To cultivate excellent and creative people
To improve Taiwan’s international competitiveness

1. Implement an Early Childhood Education and Care Act, to ensure the quality of preschool education and child care.
3. Smoothly implement the 12-year basic education system.
4. Promote phase 2 of the technical & vocational education reform plan, and reduce the gap between learning & practical utilization.
5. Enhance the quality of higher education, and promote the export of our higher education industry.
6. Cultivate highly committed teachers, and provide universal access to art education.
7. Establish a “lifelong learning” society, and promote education for families and the elderly.
8. Promote digital learning and networking, and construct sustainable campuses.
10. Comprehensively increase assistance for disadvantaged students, and ensure their right to have a decent education.
11. Create environments that help our youth to learn in multiple ways, and enhance core competencies.
12. Build quality environments for physical education, and strive for excellent performances at international competitions.

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The importance of English is unquestionable at all levels of education.

English learning starts from the elementary level (Grade 1 or 3). The communicative approach is valued in the curriculum. Teaching places more emphasis on learners’ ability to communicate in English.

- Textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels can be developed by private publishers who follow explicit guidelines as stated in the national curriculum standards.
- Curricula at the tertiary level: Each university formulates their English curriculum.

As the degree of autonomy in English language education increases, a common standard of expected English ability is lacking.
General English Proficiency Test (GEPT)

- Started as an LTTC in-house project; funded by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education.
- Aiming to encourage the study of English (life-long learning); to achieve beneficial washback effects.
- First administered in 2000; over 100 test sites; 6.0 million test-takers so far.
- The most widely used English language test in Taiwan; scores are accepted by government, private enterprises, high schools, and universities as graduation requirement.
International Recognition of the GEPT

- More than 80 universities around the world have accepted GEPT scores to admit Taiwanese students to various types of programs.
  - offer students another option when selecting a test to demonstrate their English language ability – Lessening students’ financial burdens.
  - give foreign universities another reliable and valid tool to assess Taiwanese applicants’ English proficiency.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Elementary**| • Has basic ability in English  
• Can understand & use rudimentary language needed in daily life  
• Roughly equivalent to that of a junior high graduate in Taiwan |
| **Intermediate**| • Can use basic English to communicate about topics in daily life  
• Roughly equivalent to that of a high school graduate in Taiwan |
| **High-Intermediate**| • Has a generally effective command of English  
• Can handle a broader range of topics |
| **Advanced**| • Can communicate fluently, with only occasional errors related to language accuracy and appropriateness  
• Can handle academic or professional requirements and situations  
• Roughly equivalent to that of a graduate of a college/university (English majors), or to that of someone who has received a degree from a university or graduate school in an English-speaking country |
| **Superior**  | • Can communicate effectively in all kinds of situations  
• Has English abilities approaching those of a native English speaker who has received higher education |

For the first two levels of the GEPT (Elementary & Intermediate), test content is guided by the national curriculum objectives of junior high and high schools, respectively.
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>High-Intermediate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can handle a broader range of topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mistakes do not significantly hinder his/her ability to communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roughly equivalent to that of a college/university graduate (non-English majors) in Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Can communicate fluently, with only occasional errors related to language accuracy and appropriateness</td>
</tr>
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For the upper three levels of the GEPT (High-Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior), test content was developed through textbook analysis, needs analysis, and teachers’ forums.

Assessing listening, reading, speaking, writing –
listening and speaking weren’t assessed in large-scale testing.
Mapping GEPT with CEFR as a validity criterion (Wu, 2011; Wu & Wu, 2010)

External evidence

Aligning Tests with the CEFR: Reflections on Using the Council of Europe’s Draft Manual (pp. 204-224), CUP
Washback and Impact of the GEPT
Definitions of washback and impact

• Washback is a useful metaphor to help us explore the role of language tests in teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall 1993).

• Individual learner’s/teacher’s attitudes and behavior, classroom environment, teaching/learning materials.

• On a continuum stretching from negative (harmful) at one end and into positive (beneficial) at the other end.

• The use of tests and test scores can impact significantly on the career of individual test-takers and on educational systems and on society more widely.

• These wider consequences are often referred to as ‘test impact’ (Bachman and Palmer 1996).
Washback and Impact

- Washback as one dimension of impact, describing effects on the educational context
- Washback and impact as separate concepts relating respectively to ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ effects within society.
- Locating both concepts within the notion of ‘consequential validity’ in which the social consequences of testing as part of a broader, unified concept of test validity (Messick 1996).
- Most language testers now acknowledge washback and impact to be highly complex phenomena requiring systematic investigation.
GEPT Washback Observed

Intended washback achieved, including

- Promoting life-long learning
- Introducing positive influences on English teaching & learning
  - teachers’ and learners’ behaviors
  - learning outcomes
## Life-long learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000 ~ 2013</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Student(%)</th>
<th>Non-student(%)</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Intermediate</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>within one year</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Washback on Teaching and Learning

- Has successfully promoted a shift toward a more communicative orientation, with a greater focus on acquiring listening and speaking proficiency.
- Increasing teachers’ language test and assessment literacy
- Learners’ listening ability has improved significantly, which is evident across the country. Teachers reported that they had actually learned some new ideas about assessment, and they subsequently used them in the classroom. The full coverage of macro-skills in the GEPT has encouraged them to include listening and speaking in their classrooms (Wu, 2008).

*Teachers reported that they had actually learned some new ideas about assessment, and they subsequently used them in the classroom. The full coverage of macro-skills in the GEPT has encouraged them to include listening and speaking in their classrooms (Wu, 2008).*
Effects Observed

**Development and modifications of curricula**
- University criterion for admission and graduation (B1 or above)

**EDUCATION**
- Criterion for civil service promotions and overseas assignments (A2 or above)

**EMPLOYMENT**
- Qualification for English teaching (B2 or above)
- A standard or criterion for recruitment in private enterprises (A2 or above)

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### GEPT Brand Identity and Customer Satisfaction Survey

#### Top 5 Brand-Name Associations

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am aware of the GEPT brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am willing to recommend the GEPT to other test-takers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When I need to take an English proficiency test, I think the GEPT is a reliable choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The GEPT has a good reputation in terms of quality and service, and I think it is a trustworthy test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am willing to take the GEPT (again).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Top 5 Characteristics of the Brand: The GEPT...

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>comprehensively evaluates the listening, reading, speaking and writing abilities of test-takers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>meets the needs of local learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>takes Taiwan’s English education system into consideration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>includes different levels; promotes life-long learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>is widely recognized by schools, universities, and other private and public organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducted in Taiwan in Dec. 2013; 400 randomly selected test-takers, teachers, and other stakeholders (55% of the respondents had taken the GEPT before and 45% had not.)

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- Positive/intended consequences
- Negative/unintended consequences
CEFR and the use of English language tests in Taiwan

- Primarily used for assessment purposes; MoE started in 2005 using the CEFR to establish a common standard of English proficiency and to assist test-takers in choosing a test that they considered appropriate for themselves.
- College students, English teachers, and civil servants are required to demonstrate English proficiency at a certain CEFR level, through taking an external test.
- Test providers are required to calibrate their tests against the CEFR levels.
A general model of requirements for proficiency in English for graduation
(adopted and translated from National Central University)

I want to graduate!!

Choose one of the options

To achieve a ‘passing’ score in any of the following tests of English (e.g., CEFR B2):
(1) TOEFL iBT: 87 or above
(2) TOEIC: 785 or above
(3) IELTS: 6.0 or above
(4) GEPT: High-Intermediate
Q1. Validity of the claims
Q2. Test comparison

Take the internal test on campus
(1-2 times per year)
Q1. Validity of the internal test?
Q2. Test comparison

Take language courses based on your test score

Retake the course until you pass it

Pass

Retake the above-mentioned test

Pass

Notification to the school

Meet the graduation requirement

Pass

Notification to the school

Pass

Pass

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# A Score Concordance Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cambridge Main Suite</th>
<th>BULATS</th>
<th>GEPT</th>
<th>CEFR</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>TOEFL</th>
<th>TOEIC</th>
<th>IELTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KET</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCE</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>High-Intermediate</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPE</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Problems and Issues

- Different tests scores are compared via the CEFR–Score concordance.
- Choosing one which allows them to achieve a CEFR level more easily.
- Ignoring the differences between tests (Bachman, 1995; Davies et al., 1999; Taylor, 2004)
- The validity of the claimed linkage is questionable.
- Gap between the criteria set out in classroom assessment and those set out in the external tests of English.
Joint Efforts

- The power of tests and the potential for test misuse/overuse.
- Test developers’ responsibilities do not end with test development.
- Greater professional and social responsibilities due to the changing context of test use (Shohamy, 2000)
- Intended uses (improving English, promoting positive washback)
  - Lack of assessment literacy (decision makers, teachers, test-takers)
  - Competitive culture

Unintended uses (selection for admission & employment)

Solutions:
- Promoting language assessment literacy
- Communicating with stakeholders

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Responsibilities of test developer and decision maker at different stages of assessment development and use

Test developer’s responsibility

1 Initial Planning

2 Design

3 Operationalization

4 Trialing

5 Assessment Use

Decision maker’s responsibility

Needs to understand

Primary responsibility

Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 432

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The case of GEPT

- Ensure quality by compliance with internationally recognized standards

- Continuing efforts in facilitating dialogues with the global community through research, academic, and educational networks, including
  - GEPT-research grants
  - YLE impact study with Cambridge English Assessment
  - Aptis-GEPT comparison study with British Council

- Global and local test developers can work together to enhance test usefulness and to result in beneficial effects on the educational and societal contexts in Taiwan.
The Way of Language

- A Chinese language, non-academic publication that discusses issues related to language teaching and testing
- Published every six months; suitable for everyone with an interest in language education

GEPT Research Highlights

- Provides a brief and comprehensive picture of the GEPT validation efforts
- Shares research results with local and international teaching and testing community
Language testing: a weak profession

- There are limits to what language tests can tell us about test takers and there are limits to what test developers can do in their professional role.
- Test developers and users need to collaborate to strengthen their role as promoters of professionalism in the field of language testing.

*Fruitful cooperation toward a common goal is possible only if all the stakeholders are sufficiently equal in power and ability (Matthew 2004, p. 123).*
THANK YOU!

ありがとうございます。

ありがとうございました。
Taiwan’s EFL Learner Corpus (TELC) (Aug. 2010~Jul. 2013)
- GEPT test-takers’ written performances (2 m wds)
- About 50 papers and theses were written about the GEPT from various aspects, including critical review, validity, and impact.

GEPT Research Grants (2010~)
The findings will be helpful in defending the claims with sufficient evidence and more convincing argumentation.

A project jointly undertaken by the LTTC and NTU’s Graduate School of Linguistics.

- A Comparability Study on the Cognitive Processes of Taking GEPT (Advanced) and IELTS (Academic) Writing Tasks Using Graph Prompts
- Linking the GEPT Listening Test to the CEFR
- An Investigation into the Comparability of the GEPT and TOEFL iBT

The findings will be helpful in defending the claims with sufficient evidence and more convincing argumentation.

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<tr>
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<tr>
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