Abstract

As a follow-up concurrent study based on Wu & Chin’s (2000) pilot study focusing on the listening components of Japan’s STEP (Society for Testing English Proficiency) test and Taiwan’s GEPT (General English Proficiency Test), this study expands the scope of that research to examine Taiwanese EFL learners’ performance on the other components of the two tests. In the study, 67 Taiwanese EFL learners at the intermediate level took the first-stage and second-stage examinations in STEP’s Second Grade and GEPT’s Intermediate Level. These two tests were chosen and compared because both require of successful examinees an English proficiency level equivalent to that of a senior high school graduate. The first-stage examinations in both tests similarly assess vocabulary, idioms, usage, structure, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. The second-stage examinations in the two tests, however, differ in terms of components and test formats: STEP includes an interview-style speaking test, while GEPT includes a tape-mediated speaking test and a writing test.

Analysis of the examinees’ performance on different components of the two tests produced the following noteworthy findings. First, with regard to the first-stage examinations, the two test forms were quite close in terms of overall difficulty level. Second, we found that the examinees’ unfamiliarity with the task format of Sentence Construction might have had a significant effect on their test performance, as evidenced by the low scores they obtained in this task. Third, despite the apparent dissimilarities in the test formats of the STEP Second and GEPT Intermediate speaking tests, the examinees’ scores obtained from the two tests were significantly correlated. It is hoped that the findings obtained in this study will provide cross-referencing information about the two tests useful to our stakeholders as well as test development.