Using the CEFR in Taiwan: 
the perspective of a local examination board

Jessica R. W. Wu & Rachel Y. F. Wu 
The Language Training and Testing Center

Abstract

English learning and assessment in Taiwan is undergoing a critical change, particularly in relation to the establishment of a common standard of English proficiency through the adoption of the CEFR framework by the Ministry of Education starting 2005, and in the meantime, there is a pressing need to solve the problems that have occurred as consequences of this change. Firstly, this article will review how English language tests have been applied in such a context. Secondly, it will describe the new challenges and responsibilities faced by a local examination board, primarily improvement of stakeholders’ understanding of this change. Thirdly, the paper will report on the experience of the Examination Board of the GEPT (General English Proficiency Test), a high-stakes testing system established with the support of the government in 2000, concerning the alignment between the GEPT and the CEFR framework by following the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR. As the CEFR framework is a rather new input to the Taiwanese EFL context, by presenting our observation of and novice experience in using the CEFR from the perspective of a local examination board, we hope to provide some input to the revision of the CEFR, and we also look forward to insights from the colleagues working in the European nations where the CEFR is more commonly applied.