

Glocalization in English language examinations: Aptis and GEPT comparison study

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Abstract

Glocalization is globalization mixed with local diversity, which illustrates the value of global uniformity while accounting for local differences. One well-known example of this concept is McDonalds, which creates specialized menus for different countries across the globe in order to attract the consumers in the region. However, we rarely find examples of glocalization in international English language examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL, despite the fact that each local examinations market differs uniquely in terms of culture, perceptions of and attitudes toward examinations, purposes of taking examinations, etc. It would be wrong for international examination providers to believe that an examination that works well in the home market will be equally effective in international markets, and an examination that is suitable in the very local market will be appropriate in another one, without understanding the specific market context. Furthermore, an examination provider should investigate what types of modifications should be applied to the examination.

Under this remit, an Aptis and GEPT comparison study was conducted as part of the glocalization efforts to provide the Aptis in Taiwan. The Aptis, developed by the British Council, is designed to help organizations and institutions identify the English levels of their staff or students. The GEPT, developed by the LTTC, a local examination center, is the most widely recognized English language examination in Taiwan. Both examinations have been linked with the CEFR, which provides a common ground for the comparison.

The study, jointly carried out by the British Council and the LTTC, also aimed to show how local insights can contribute to the glocalization of an international examination. Equally important, by comparing the locally-produced GEPT with an international examination, the LTTC was able to re-examine the GEPT's construct and criterion-related validity.

The comparison study aimed to explore the relationships between similar skill sections of the GEPT and the Aptis by answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Aptis scores correlate with GEPT scores?
2. To what extent do the constructs of the Aptis match the GEPT?
3. What are the test-takers' views towards the Aptis in terms of test tasks?
4. How does the Aptis differ from the GEPT from the perspectives of test-takers?

A total of 146 learners who had taken the GEPT within the previous six months were invited to take the Aptis and complete a post-test attitudinal questionnaire. In addition to quantitative analyses of the score data and questionnaire responses (e.g. CTT, Rasch, correlation, factor analysis, regression), qualitative analyses of the contents of both examinations were also performed.

The paper will report the research framework and preliminary findings. Based on the findings, possible modifications to the Aptis in Taiwan will be discussed. It is hoped that the study will also provide a small-scale demonstration of procedures that global and local test developers can employ in tandem to enhance test usefulness and to result in more beneficial effects on the educational and societal contexts within each region.