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Exploring Strategy Use in L2 Speaking Assessment:  
The Case of the GEPT Intermediate Level

**Abstract**

The General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) constitutes a standardized English proficiency measure designed for the English learners in Taiwan with the intent to (1) promote a balanced development of all four language skills and (2) offer a reference for the industries and academic institutions to determine the English levels of their staff or students. Targeting the GEPT Intermediate Speaking Test (GEPTI-S), this research project explored the test-taking strategies associated with this speaking test in an effort to contribute to the literature on L2 speaking test-taking strategies, offer additional validity evidence for the score inferences made for the performance on the GEPTI-S, and unearth the relationships between the test-taking strategy use and performance on this test.

The researcher obtained two sets of GEPTI-S from the Language Training and Testing Center and developed a custom-made inventory entitled Strategy Inventory for the GEPTI-S (SIG). By capitalizing on these instruments, he collected the research data from a total of 244 Taiwanese EFL learners. Data analysis consisted of preliminary analyses and primary analyses. The preliminary analyses performed several data cleaning and preparation tasks, including reliability examinations, statistical assumption checking, and exploratory factor analyses. The primary analyses followed the two-step structural equation modeling procedure by first specifying and testing a measurement model and then creating and inspecting a full latent variable model.

Three major findings arose from the statistical analyses conducted on the gathered data. First, the GEPTI-S test-taking strategy use comprised three sets of strategic behaviors: cognitive strategy use, communication strategy use, and affective strategy use. Second, the GEPTI-S did induce construct-relevant strategic behaviors, which offered evidence to bolster the validity argument for its score interpretations. Third, communication strategy use influenced GEPTI-S performance in a direct manner, while cognitive strategy use and affective strategy use both did so indirectly. In light of these findings, the researcher proposes implications for L2 speaking assessment theory, methods, and practice.