

Relating the BESTEP speaking test to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

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The proposed study will investigate the relationships between a) the speaking component of a standardized English productive skills test developed by LTTC for use in conjunction with Taiwan's Program on Bilingual Education for Students in College (BESTEP) and b) the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001).

The new test reflects the language abilities required in Taiwan's EMI learning context and CEFR levels A2 to B2+. It assesses college students' readiness in terms of the oral and written ability expected in such a context and aims to improve the teaching and assessment of English productive skills in Taiwan's tertiary education. CEFR levels are widely used in Taiwan to set minimum proficiency levels in English for students in higher educational institutions. It is therefore desirable to establish how the new test relates to the framework.

A number of empirical studies on the relationship between the CEFR and LTTC's GEPT suite have been carried out, and the research outcomes are publicly available (Wu and Wu, 2010; Weir, Chan and Nakatsuhara, 2013; Brunfaut and Harding, 2014; Wu, 2014; Weir et al, 2013; Knoch and Frost 2016; Green, Inoue, and Nakatsuhara, 2017). Building on this legacy, this project will relate the speaking component of the new test to the framework. Given the stakes of the test, it is essential that the nature of the relationship should be maintained over time. The link to the CEFR should be embedded in routine test production procedures and linking exercises should be repeated at regular intervals. Recommendations on maintaining the relationship will be included in the report.

The proposed study will be guided by the approach recommended in the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009). The CRELLA researchers propose to develop and employ an online standard setting approach to facilitate collaboration between external researchers and staff at examination boards when working in geographically diverse locations.