

Exploring the reciprocal interaction between BESTEP and EAP courses at tertiary institutions in Taiwan

Executive Summary

This paper examines the reciprocal relationship between the BEST Test of English Proficiency (BESTEP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in Taiwan. Situated within Taiwan's Program on Bilingual Education for College Students (BEST) launched in 2021, which aims to enhance university students' English proficiency for academic and professional communication, this study explores the interplay between the BESTEP speaking and writing tests and two EAP courses developed by two universities in northern Taiwan: the English-Medium Instruction Preparation Program (EMIPP) at National Taiwan University (NTU) and Global Communication in English (GCE) at National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST).

This study was jointly conducted by the LTTC, NTU, and NTUST. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrated qualitative and quantitative data from test and course design documents, instructor interviews, course materials, and student performance records. Findings revealed a strong alignment between the speaking and writing components of BESTEP and EAP courses in terms of core competencies, communicative functions, and task types. More significantly, instructors not only align course content with BESTEP requirements but also adapt their teaching strategies and materials to address students' specific learning needs.

The study further examined the impact of BESTEP on students' academic literacy development. Analysis of pre- and post-test performance shows statistically significant improvements, though with small effect sizes, in speaking and writing proficiency, suggesting that structured exposure to academic English through EAP courses fosters measurable language gains. A small-scale qualitative analysis of writing samples indicated increased syntactic complexity, lexical diversity, and cohesion, underscoring the role of targeted EAP instruction in enhancing academic literacy. These findings align with principles advocated in Learning-oriented Assessment (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2015) and Comprehensive Learning System (O'Sullivan, 2021), reinforcing the value of performance-based assessment tasks grounded in well-defined language competency descriptors to support student success.

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for collaboration between test developers and educational institutions to integrate curriculum design and assessment tools within a clearly defined model of language competence progression tailored to the educational context. It also reinforces BESTEP's context and consequential validity and its potential to enhance EAP programs in Taiwan. Future research should explore the long-term effects of standardized EAP assessments on language development and identify best practices for incorporating learning-oriented assessment into EAP curricula. These insights will be instrumental in shaping Taiwan's ongoing bilingual education initiatives under MOE's BEST program.

探討 BESTEP 與臺灣高等教育學術英語課程之互動關聯研究

摘要

本研究報告旨在探討「培力英語能力檢定測驗 (Best Test of English Proficiency)」(簡稱「培力英檢 (BESTEP)」) 與臺灣大專校院學術英語課程之間的互動關聯。教育部於 2021 年推出「大專校院學生雙語化學習計畫」(簡稱 BEST 計畫)，目的在全面提升大專學生的一般與專業英語能力。為落實 BEST 計畫，教育部積極協助各大專校院發展學術英語課程，並委託財團法人語言訓練測驗中心 (LTTC) 研發專為大專校院學生設計的 BESTEP 測驗。

本研究為 LTTC 與國立臺灣大學及國立臺灣科技大學共同完成，旨在檢視 BESTEP 口說與寫作測驗與兩所北部大學開設的學術英語課程之間的互動關聯，兩項課程分別為國立臺灣大學開設的「全英培力課程」(EMI Preparation Program, EMIPP) 及國立臺灣科技大學的「全球英語溝通課程」(Global Communication in English, GCE)。研究採用混合方法收集質化與量化資料，透過綜合分析 BESTEP 測驗與學術英語課程設計文件、教師訪談及課程教材內容，並對比學生在 BESTEP 前後測與課堂評量的英語口說與寫作表現。

研究結果顯示，BESTEP 口說與寫作測驗與兩項學術英語課程在核心識能、溝通功能及任務類型方面具明顯的契合度。另一方面，教師不僅將課程內容與 BESTEP 測驗設計進行連結，並依據每班學生的需求與特質，調整教學策略、教材及教學與評量活動。

本研究亦探討了 BESTEP 對學生學術英語能力發展的影響。比對分析學生在 BESTEP 前測與後測的表現，在口說與寫作能力方面有統計上顯著提升，雖然效果量較小，但顯示了系統性的學術英語課程可以促進學習進程。前後測寫作樣本的小規模分析則進一步發現，學生在句法複雜度、詞彙多樣性及篇章連貫性均有所提升，亦凸顯系統性學習對提升學術素養的重要性。以上研究果與近年來以學習者為中心的評量核心理念相符，例如「學習導向評量」(Learning-oriented Assessment) (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2015) 及「整合學習系統」(Comprehensive Learning System) (O'Sullivan, 2021)，證實依據明確語言能力描述發展的實作評量任務，能有效支持學生的學術英語能力發展。

整體而言，本研究展現了測驗研發與教育機構合作研究的成果，雙方在共同的語言能力指標基礎之上，促進課程與評量設計的整合，有效推動學習進程。本研究亦為 BESTEP 口說與寫作測驗的語境與後果效度累積實證基礎，顯示本測驗設計與大學學術英語課程設計具明顯的契合度，並對增進學生學術英語能力具有潛在助益。未來研究應進一步探討標準化測驗對於學術英語能力發展的長期影響，並探討將學習導向評量融入大學英語課程的最佳實踐方式，期能促進 BEST 計畫更為深化與精進的落實。