

# GEPT and English Language Teaching and Testing in Taiwan

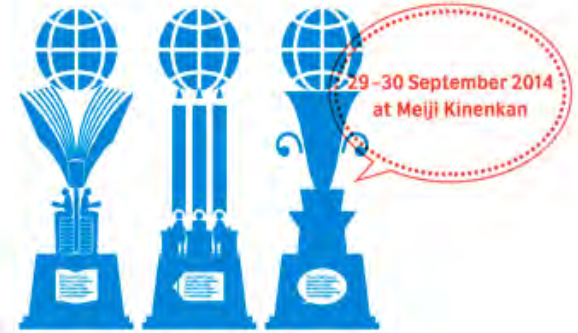
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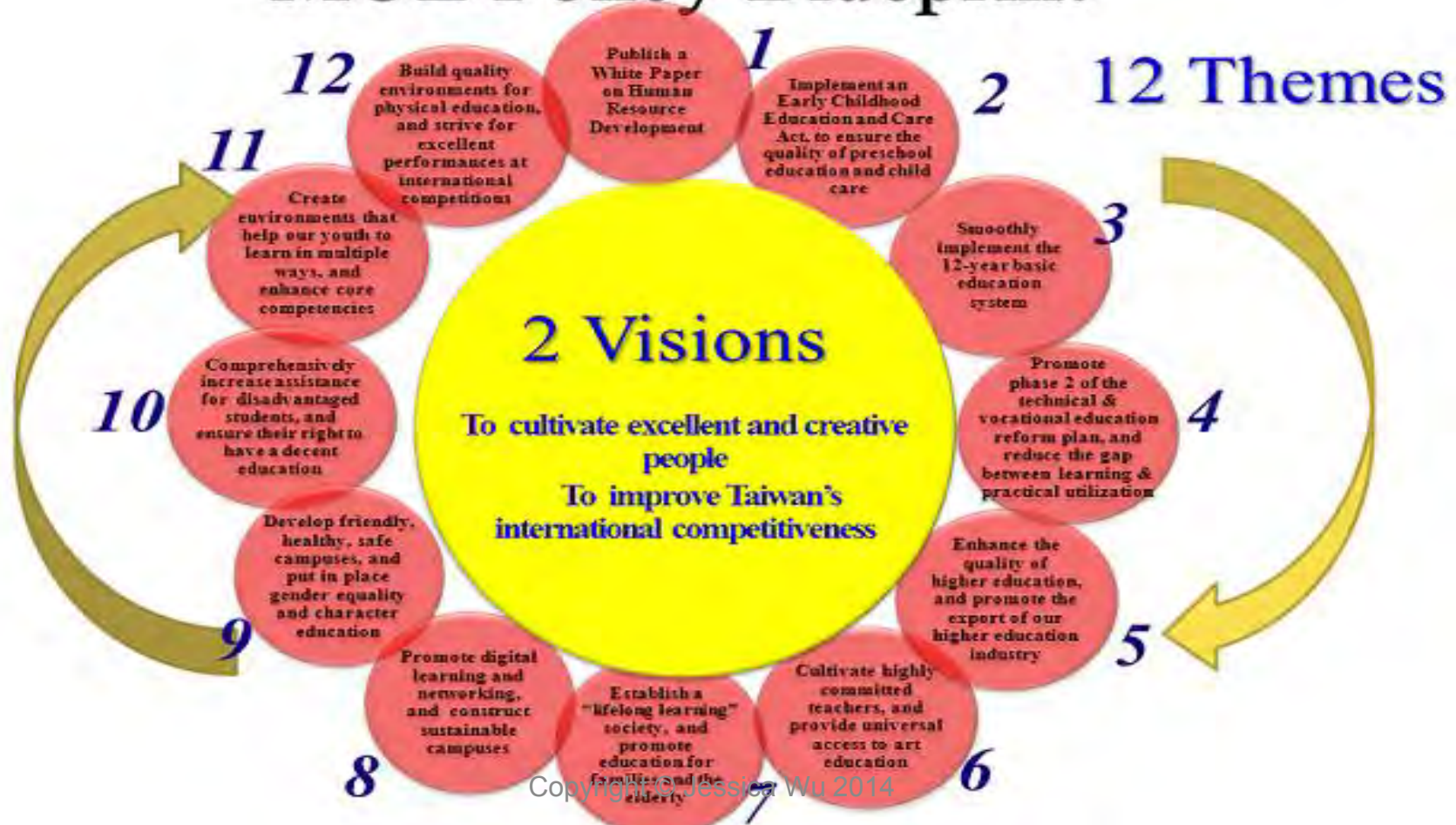


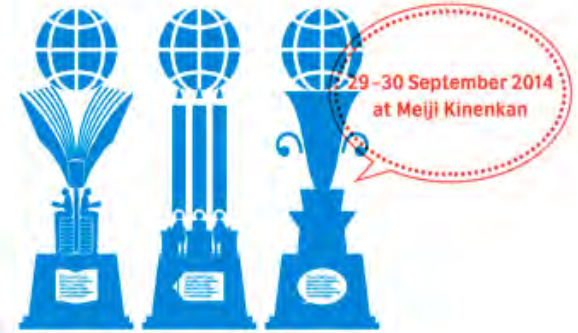
New Directions English:  
Role of English assessment in Internationalisation





# MOE Policy Blueprint





- The importance of English is unquestionable at all levels of education.
- English learning starts from the elementary level (Grade 1 or 3). The communicative approach is valued in the curriculum. Teaching places more emphasis on learners' ability to communicate in English.
  - Textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels can be developed by private publishers who follow explicit guidelines as stated in the national curriculum standards.
  - Curricula at the tertiary level: Each university formulates their English curriculum.
- As the degree of autonomy in English language education increases, a common standard of expected English ability is lacking.

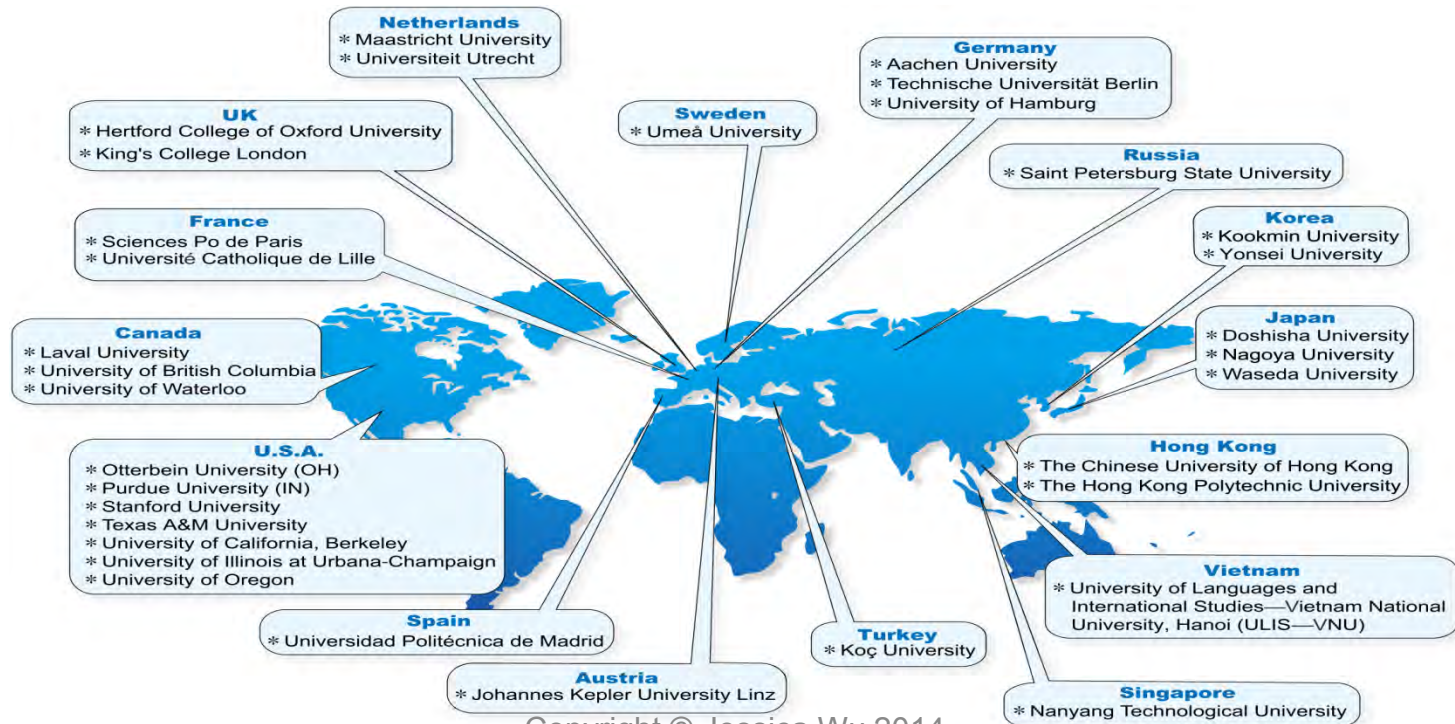
# General English Proficiency Test (GEPT)

- Started as an LTTC in-house project; funded by Taiwan's Ministry of Education.
- Aiming to encourage the study of English (**life-long learning**); to achieve **beneficial washback effects**.
- **Academic support:** R&D Team, GEPT Advisory Committee, and GEPT Research Committee (domestic & international experts – external consultants: Charles Alderson, Lyle Bachman, Antony Kunnan, Tim McNamara and Cyril Weir).
- First administered in 2000; over 100 test sites; 6.0 million test-takers so far.
- The most widely used English language test in Taiwan; scores are accepted by government, private enterprises, high schools, and universities as graduation requirement.



# International Recognition of the GEPT

- More than 80 universities around the world have accepted GEPT scores to admit Taiwanese students to various types of programs.
  - offer students another option when selecting a test to demonstrate their English language ability – **Lessening students' financial burdens.**
  - give foreign universities another reliable and valid tool to assess Taiwanese applicants' English proficiency



# Features of the GEPT

<p><b>Elementary</b> <b>CEFR A2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has basic ability in English</li> <li>• Can understand &amp; use rudimentary language needed in daily life</li> <li>• Roughly equivalent to that of a <b>junior high graduate</b> in Taiwan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intermediate</b> <b>CEFR B1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can use basic English to communicate about topics in daily life</li> <li>• Roughly equivalent to that of a <b>high school graduate</b> in Taiwan</li> </ul>
<p><b>High-Intermediate</b> <b>CEFR B2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a generally effective command of English</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advanced</b> <b>CEFR C1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a strong command of English, comparable to that of someone who has received a degree from a <b>university or graduate school in an English-speaking country</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Superior</b> <b>CEFR C2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can communicate effectively in all kinds of situations</li> <li>• Has English abilities approaching those of a native English speaker who has received higher education</li> </ul>

For the first two levels of the GEPT (Elementary & Intermediate), test content is guided by the national curriculum objectives of junior high and high schools, respectively.

# Features of the GEPT

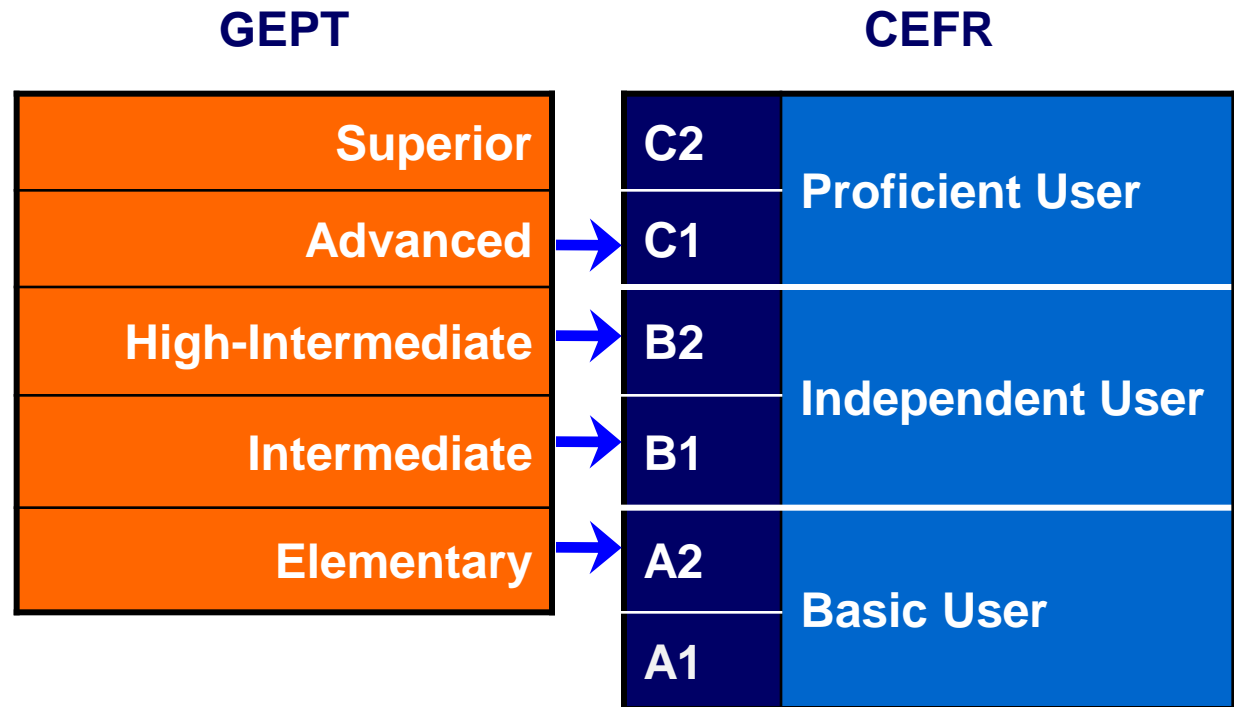
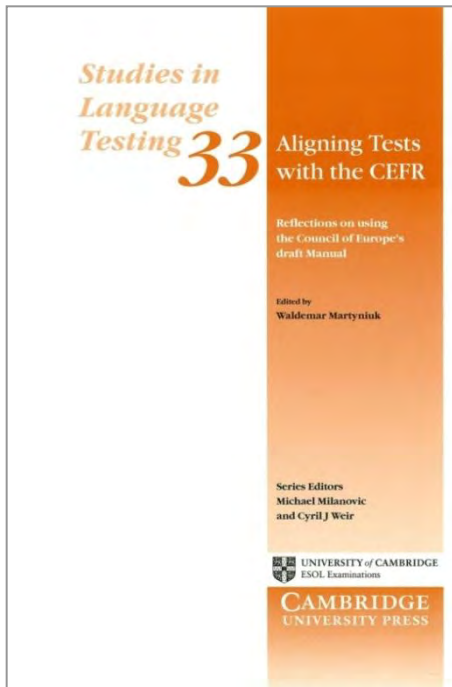
<p><b>Elementary</b> CEFR A2</p>	
<p><b>Intermediate</b> CEFR B1</p>	
<p><b>High-Intermediate</b> CEFR B2</p>	<p>For the upper three levels of the GEPT (High-Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior), test content was developed through textbook analysis, needs analysis, and teachers' forums.</p> <p><i>Assessing listening, reading, speaking, writing – listening and speaking weren't assessed in large-scale testing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mistakes do not significantly hinder his/her ability to communicate</li> <li>• Roughly equivalent to that of a <b>college/university graduate (non-English majors)</b> in Taiwan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advanced</b> CEFR C1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can communicate fluently, with only occasional errors related to language accuracy and appropriateness</li> <li>• Can handle academic or professional requirements and situations</li> <li>• Roughly equivalent to that of a graduate of a <b>college/university (English majors)</b>, or to that of someone who has received a degree from a <b>university or graduate school in an English-speaking country</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Superior</b> CEFR C2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can communicate effectively in all kinds of situations</li> <li>• Has English abilities approaching those of a native English speaker who has received higher education</li> </ul>



# Mapping GEPT with CEFR as a validity criterion (Wu, 2011; Wu & Wu, 2010)

## External evidence

*Aligning Tests with the CEFR: Reflections on Using the Council of Europe's Draft Manual (pp. 204-224), CUP*



# Washback and Impact of the GEPT



# Definitions of washback and impact

- Washback is a useful metaphor to help us explore the role of language tests in teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall 1993).
- Individual learner's/teacher's attitudes and behavior, classroom environment, teaching/learning materials.
- On a continuum stretching from negative (harmful) at one end and into positive (beneficial) at the other end.
- The use of tests and test scores can impact significantly on the career of individual test-takers and on educational systems and on society more widely.
- These wider consequences are often referred to as 'test impact' (Bachman and Palmer 1996).



# Washback and Impact

- Washback as one dimension of impact, describing effects on the educational context
- Washback and impact as separate concepts relating respectively to ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ effects within society.
- Locating both concepts within the notion of ‘consequential validity’ in which the social consequences of testing as part of a broader, unified concept of test validity (Messick 1996).
- Most language testers now acknowledge washback and impact to be highly complex phenomena requiring systematic investigation.



# GEPT Washback Observed

Intended washback achieved, including

- Promoting life-long learning
- Introducing positive influences on English teaching & learning
  - teachers' and learners' behaviors
  - learning outcomes



## ○ Life-long learning

2000 ~ 2013			
LEVEL	Student(%)	Non-student(%)	Age
Elementary	92	8	15.2
Intermediate	90	10	17.7
High-Intermediate	76	24	20.7
Advanced	46	54	25.9

	Elementary to Intermediate	Intermediate to High-Intermediate & Advanced
within one year	21%	9%
1-2 years	22%	14%
2-3 years	19%	10%
3-4 years	14%	5%

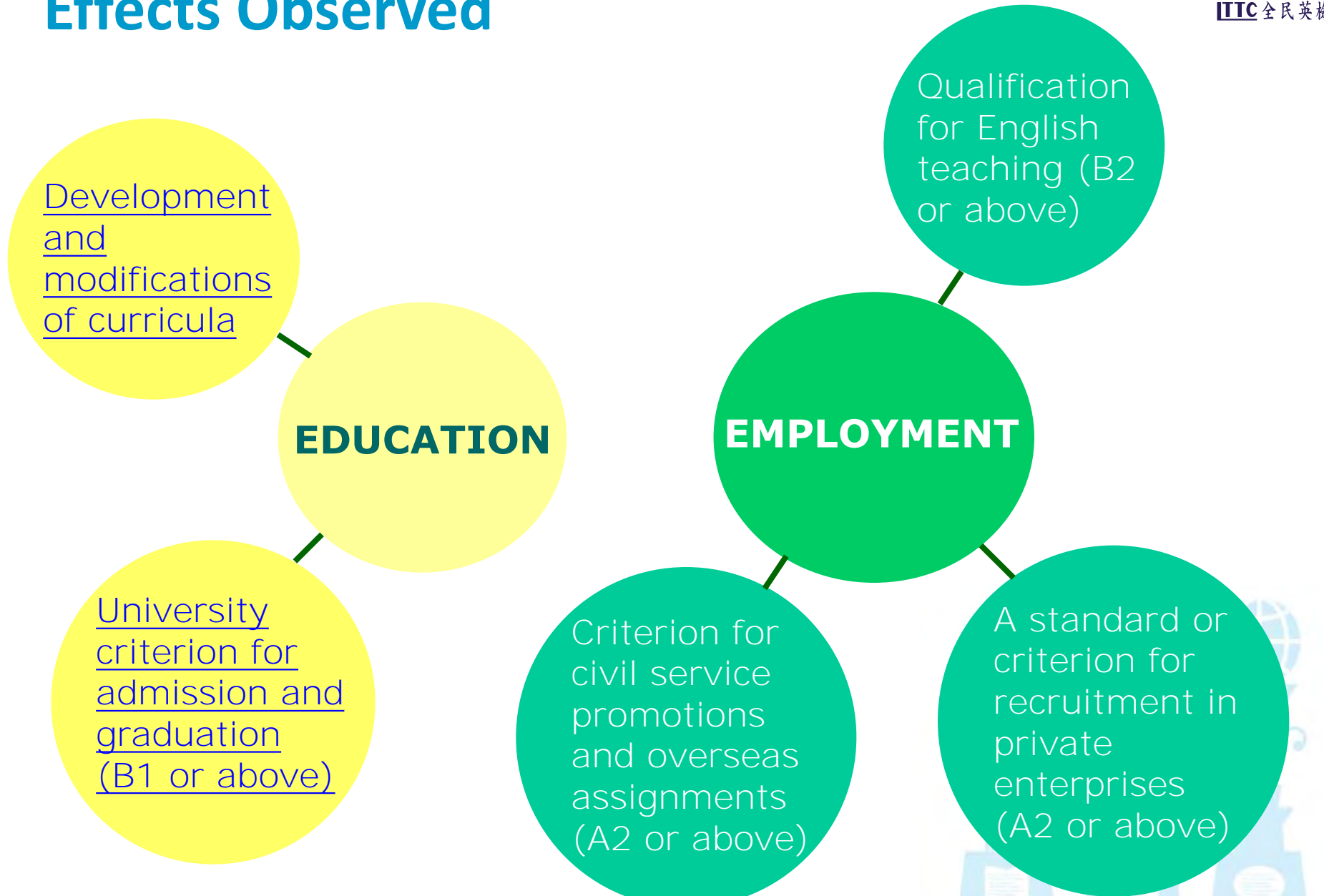
# Positive Washback on Teaching and Learning

- Has successfully promoted a shift **toward a more communicative orientation**, with a greater focus on acquiring **listening and speaking** proficiency.
- Increasing teachers' language test and assessment literacy

- Learn  
what

*Teachers reported that they had actually learned some new ideas about assessment, and they subsequently used them in the classroom. The full coverage of macro-skills in the GEPT has encouraged them to include listening and speaking in their classrooms (Wu, 2008).*

# Effects Observed





# GEPT Brand Identity and Customer Satisfaction Survey

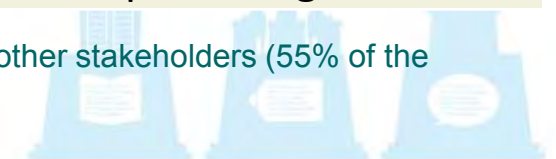
## Top 5 Brand-Name Associations

- 1 I am aware of the GEPT brand.
- 2 I am willing to recommend the GEPT to other test-takers.
- 3 When I need to take an English proficiency test, I think the GEPT is a reliable choice.
- 4 The GEPT has a good reputation in terms of quality and service, and I think it is a trustworthy test.
- 5 I am willing to take the GEPT (again).

## Top 5 Characteristics of the Brand: The GEPT...

- 1 comprehensively evaluates the listening, reading, speaking and writing abilities of test-takers.
- 2 meets the needs of local learners.
- 3 takes Taiwan's English education system into consideration.
- 4 includes different levels; promotes life-long learning.
- 5 is widely recognized by schools, universities, and other private and public organizations.

Conducted in Taiwan in Dec. 2013; 400 randomly selected test-takers, teachers, and other stakeholders (55% of the respondents had taken the GEPT before and 45% had not.)



- **Positive/intended consequences**
- **Negative/unintended consequences**

Negative

Positive

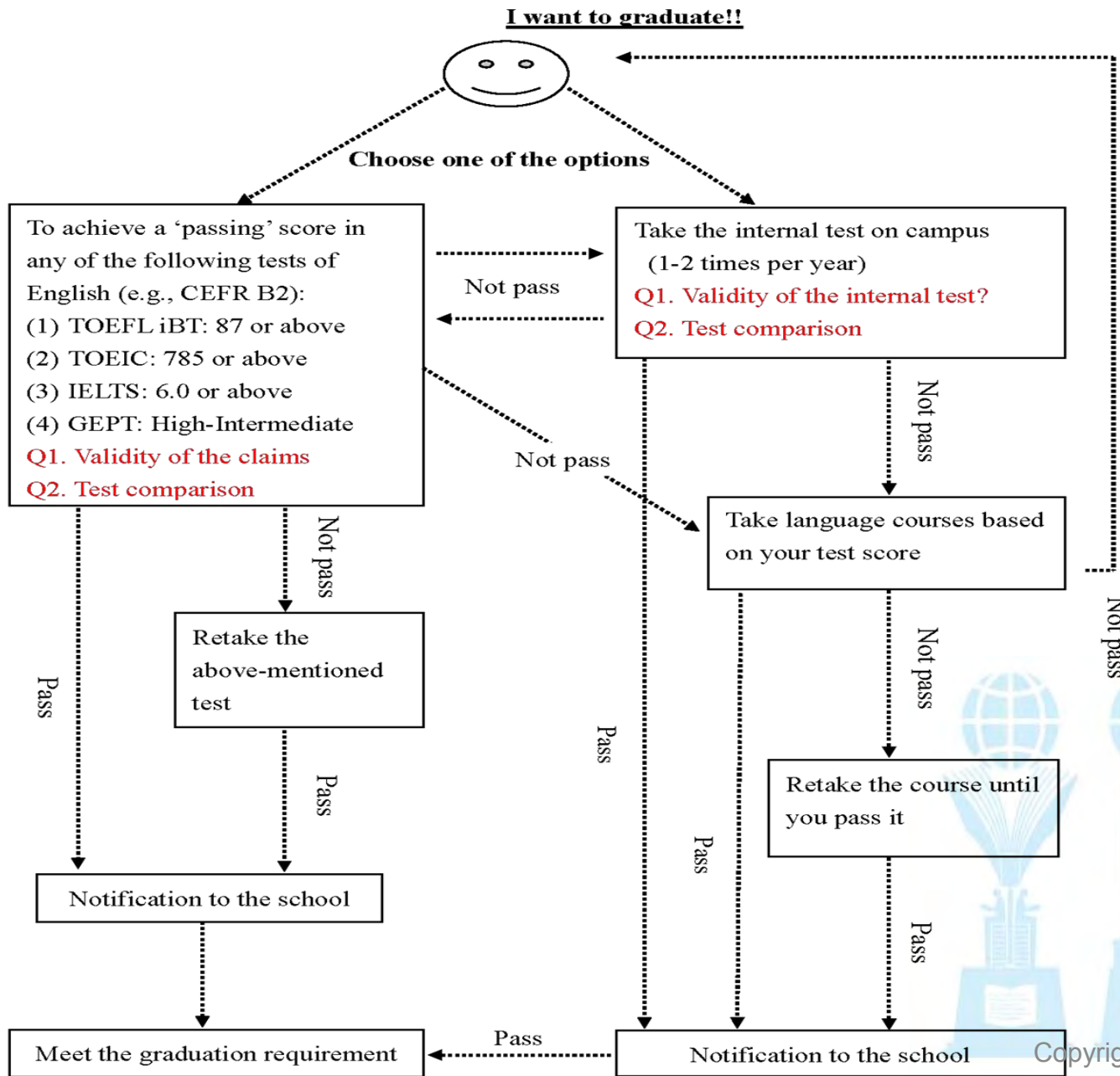


# CEFR and the use of English language tests in Taiwan

- Primarily used for assessment purposes; MoE started in 2005 using the CEFR to establish a common standard of English proficiency and to assist test-takers in choosing a test that they considered appropriate for themselves.
- College students, English teachers, and civil servants are required to demonstrate English proficiency at a certain CEFR level, through taking an external test.
- Test providers are required to calibrate their tests against the CEFR levels.



**A general model of requirements for proficiency in English for graduation**  
(adopted and translated from National Central University)



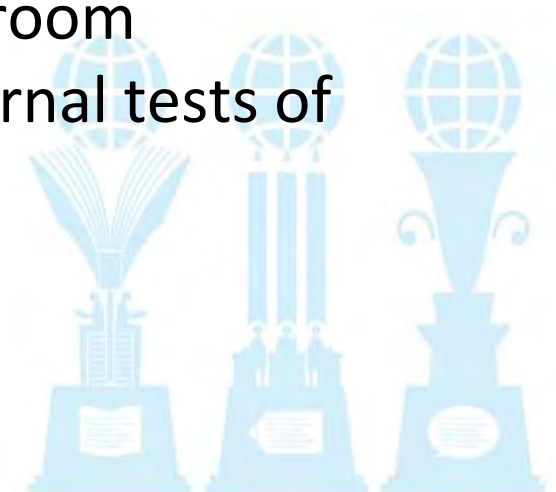
# A Score Concordance Table

Cambridge Main Suite	BULATS	GEPT	CEFR	Credit	TOEFL	TOEIC	IELTS
KET	Level 1	Elementary	A2	2	--	350	3
PET	Level 2	Intermediate	B1	4	57	550	4
FCE	Level 3	High-Intermediate	B2	5.5	87	750	5.5
CAE	Level 4	Advanced	C1	6.5	110	880	6.5
CPE	Level 5	Superior	C2	7	--	950	7.5



# Problems and Issues

- Different tests scores are compared via the CEFR–Score concordance.
- Choosing one which allows them to achieve a CEFR level more easily.
- Ignoring the differences between tests (Bachman, 1995; Davies et al., 1999; Taylor, 2004)
- The validity of the claimed linkage is questionable.
- Gap between the criteria set out in classroom assessment and those set out in the external tests of English.



# Joint Efforts

- The power of tests and the potential for test misuse/overuse.
- Test developers' responsibilities do not end with test development.
- Greater professional and social responsibilities due to the changing context of test use (Shohamy, 2000)
- Intended uses (improving English, promoting positive washback)



- Lack of assessment literacy  
(decision makers, teachers, test-takers)
- Competitive culture

Unintended uses (selection for admission & employment)

## Solutions:

- Promoting language assessment literacy
- Communicating with stakeholders







# The case of GEPT

- Ensure quality by compliance with internationally recognized standards
- Continuing efforts in facilitating dialogues with the global community through research, academic, and educational networks, including
  - GEPT-research grants
  - YLE impact study with Cambridge English Assessment
  - Aptis-GEPT comparison study with British Council
- Global and local test developers can work together to enhance test usefulness and to result in beneficial effects on the educational and societal contexts in Taiwan.



# The Way of Language

- A Chinese language, non-academic publication that discusses issues related to language teaching and testing
- Published every six months; suitable for everyone with an interest in language education



# GEPT Research Highlights

- Provides a brief and comprehensive picture of the GEPT validation efforts
- Shares research results with local and international teaching and testing community


Research Highlights

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**T**he General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) is a five-level criterion-referenced EFL testing system implemented in Taiwan to assess the general English proficiency of EFL learners. In 1999, with the aims of encouraging the study of English in general and engendering beneficial washback effects on the teaching and learning of English, the Ministry of Education lent its support to the Language Training and Testing Center (LITC) for the development of the GEPT. After more than a decade of effort, the GEPT has gained wide recognition in Taiwan. To date, over 5.8 million people have taken the test. To answer the growing need for a test of workplace English tailored to businesses in Taiwan, the LITC, adding to its existing five-level test battery, launched the GEPT Pro (<https://www.geptpro.org.tw>), an ESP test measuring English ability in finance, management, and related business fields in October 2013.

The GEPT is intended to serve as a fair and reliable testing system for EFL learners in Taiwan; therefore, numerous GEPT validation studies, investigating scoring reliability, concurrent validity, content validity, criterion-related validity, rigorous analyses of test-takers' performance, test impact, test fairness, and other test-related issues, have been conducted and published as technical monographs, conference papers, refereed articles in books and journals. Providing a brief and comprehensive picture of the GEPT development and validation efforts, this booklet includes an annotated bibliography that describes major research studies related to the GEPT that have been published in the past five years. Complete and more up-to-date information about the GEPT research publications may be found at <https://www.litc.ntu.edu.tw/theis.htm>.

LITC-GEPT Research Grants

In order to assist external researchers in conducting quality research on the GEPT and further enhance its reliability and validity, the LITC offers the LITC-GEPT Research Grants. The annual call for research proposals is announced every October, and research projects are funded up to a maximum of NT\$1,800,000 each.

Since 2011, grants have been awarded to academic institutions and researchers in Hong Kong, the UK, and the USA, for projects that include comparing the GEPT to IELTS and TOEFL, and aligning the GEPT with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). For complete and more up-to-date information about the grant scheme, please visit <https://www.litc.ntu.edu.tw/litc-gept-grants.htm>.



# Language testing: a weak profession

- There are limits to what language tests can tell us about test takers and there are limits to what test developers can do in their professional role.
- Test developers and users need to collaborate to strengthen their role as promoters of professionalism in the field of language testing.

*Fruitful cooperation toward a common goal is possible only if all the stakeholders are sufficiently equal in power and ability (Mattew 2004, p. 123).*



# THANK YOU!

# ありがとうございます。

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# Increased Interest in Research

- Taiwan's EFL Learner Corpus (TELC) (Aug. 2010~Jul. 2013)

- GEPT test takers' written performances (2 m wds)

A project jointly undertaken by the ITTC and NTU's

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- GEPT

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- Examining the Criterion-Related Validity of the GEPT Advanced Reading and Writing Tests: Comparing GEPT with IELTS and Real-Life Academic Performance (Weir, et. al., 2013).
- A Comparability Study on the Cognitive Processes of Taking GEPT (Advanced) and IELTS (Academic) Writing Tasks Using Graph Prompts
- Linking the GEPT Listening Test to the CEFR
- An Investigation into the Comparability of the GEPT and TOEFL iBT

# GEPT Research Grants (since 2010)

University of Bedfordshire UK	Examining the Cognitive Validity of GEPT High-Intermediate and Advanced Reading: an Eye Tracking and Stimulated Recall Study
University of Melbourne Australia	Linking the GEPT Writing Sub-test to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
California State University USA	An Investigation into the Comparability of the GEPT Advanced Level and TOEFL iBT
Lancaster University UK (Completed)	Linking the GEPT Listening Test to the Common European Framework of Reference
Hong Kong Polytechnic University (completed)	A Register Analysis of Advanced GEPT Examinees' Written Production
University of Bedfordshire UK (completed)	Examining the Criterion-Related Validity of the GEPT Advanced Reading and Writing Tests: Comparing GEPT with IELTS and Real-Life Academic Performance
University of Bristol UK (completed)	A Comparability Study on the Cognitive Processes of Taking GEPT (Advanced) and IELTS (Academic) Writing Tasks Using Graph Prompts