Relating the GEPT to the CEFR: Policy, Practice, and Reflections

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For what uses is the CEFR intended?

Aims to provide “a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe.”

(Council of Europe, 2001:1)

- Language learning programmes
- Self-directed learning
- Language certification
CEFR in Taiwan

- Primarily used for assessment purposes
- MoE decided to adopt the CEFR in 2005 to use it as a common yardstick to benchmark test results and set English proficiency targets for local learners.
- Test providers are required to calibrate their tests against the CEFR levels.
- A score comparison table from which score users are free to choose an appropriate test.
- College students, English teachers and civil servants are required to demonstrate English proficiency at a certain CEFR level (e.g., English graduation requirement).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cambridge Main Suite</th>
<th>BULATS</th>
<th>GEPT</th>
<th>CEFR</th>
<th>TOEFL</th>
<th>TOEIC</th>
<th>IELTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KET</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCE</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>High-Intermediate</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPE</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• developed with reference to the English curriculum in Taiwan to provide accessible attainment targets for English learners at different stages
• widely used by government sectors and private institutions for recruitment or job promotion, and schools for graduation requirements
• linked with the CEFR to provide further information for interpreting GEPT scores

GEPT-CEFR linking studies
https://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/thesis.htm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Wu &amp; Wu, 2010</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunfaut &amp; Harding, 2014</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu, 2014</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knoch, 2016</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green, et al., 2017</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two-fold purpose:

- Meeting the MoE’s requirement
- Establishing GEPT’s criterion validity

✓ GEPT Research Grants Programs starting 2010
✓ Research reports are available online.
CEFR Linking procedures

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Manual1_EN.asp
Stages in the Linking Process

# GEPT-CEFR Linking Studies

Guided by the recommended procedures set out in the Manual (Council of Europe, 2003 & 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Panelists</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>High-Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wu &amp; Wu, 2010)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>modified Angoff</td>
<td>A2+</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B2-</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Knoch, 2016)</td>
<td>Twin-panel 8+7</td>
<td>Contrasting + Borderline</td>
<td>A2/A2+</td>
<td>B1/B1+</td>
<td>B2/B2+</td>
<td>C1/C1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Green, et al., forthcoming)</td>
<td>Twin-panel 12+3</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>A2/A2+</td>
<td>B1/B1+</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>B2+/C1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The CEFR provides little assistance in identifying the breadth and depth of productive or receptive lexis that might be needed to operate at the various levels.

Little account is taken of the nature of cognitive processing at different levels of ability.

E.g. Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics (B2)

Comparing the GEPT and Cambridge reading test scores at an equivalent level (Wu, 2014)

**Participants:**
- 268 target test takers at the GEPT Intermediate and High-Intermediate levels

**Instruments:**
- GEPT and Cambridge reading tests at B1 and B2 levels,
- Cognitive processing questionnaire, automated textual analysis tools (Coh-Metrix, VocabProfile, and WordSmith), and contextual parameter checklist (expert judgement)

**Results:**
- The GEPT is equivalent to CEFR B1 level in terms of contextual features and cognitive operations.
CEFR in Taiwan – What adopted & What not?

- The planning of language certification
  (overtly used in testing and assessment)
  - Introducing negative impact!!!

- The planning of language learning program
  (promoting transparency and coherence in language teaching)

- The planning of self-directed learning
  (empowering autonomous learning)
Problems & Issues

- CEFR levels as exit benchmarks in tertiary education
  - Test score comparison
  - Validity of the claimed linkage between curriculum and the CEFR
Propositions assumed without proof:
A. Students who have achieved the same CEFR level through different tests have equivalent proficiency in English.

B. Students who complete the English course are considered to have reached the same CEFR level as those who have passed a test.
CEFR levels as exit benchmark in tertiary education

Problems in linking external tests, English courses and the CEFR???

What is the relationship among the criteria in classroom assessment, external tests and the CEFR?

Do these three paths lead to the same product of English language ability?

To what extent is the curriculum linked with the CEFR framework?
### Have you heard of the term, the “CEFR”? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher respondents (N=293)</th>
<th>Student respondents (N=2940)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (N=204; 70.59%)</td>
<td>Yes (N=337; 15.92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No  (N= 73; 25.26%)</td>
<td>No (N=1659; 78.37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure ( N=12; 4.15%)</td>
<td>Not sure (N=121; 5.72%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview results

- Teachers’ limited understanding of the CEFR
- Concerned about the feasibility of designing a CEFR-based English curriculum due to large class size
- CEFR is simply used as a test score conversion tool
- The mandate benefiting testing companies
Bridge the gap between the CEFR and actual learning/teaching practices

- How to bring curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into closer interaction with one another.

Trinity? Trilemma?
The Way Forward (2)

- Improving stakeholders’ understanding of the CEFR
- Offer training workshops to language instructors, TAs, educators, university decision-makers and staff about what the mandate is in relation to the CEFR
- Re-think how the CEFR should be adopted and adapted to meet the local learning and teaching needs in Taiwan
- Invite critical dialogues among scholars in Taiwan regarding approaches of CEFR-based English curriculum design
- Invite language instructors to share experience and difficulty in applying the CEFR-related activities
- More discussion about the roles and limits of using a standard as reference for language teaching and assessment.
All roads lead to Rome?

- Where are we going to take leaners to?
- What kind of impact do we intend to bring?
- Any linkage should be supported empirically (Standard-assessment/curriculum/materials).
- Use the standard/framework as guiding principles or a mandate? Consequences?
Thank you!