

# A Critical Examination in the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) Intermediate Writing Test

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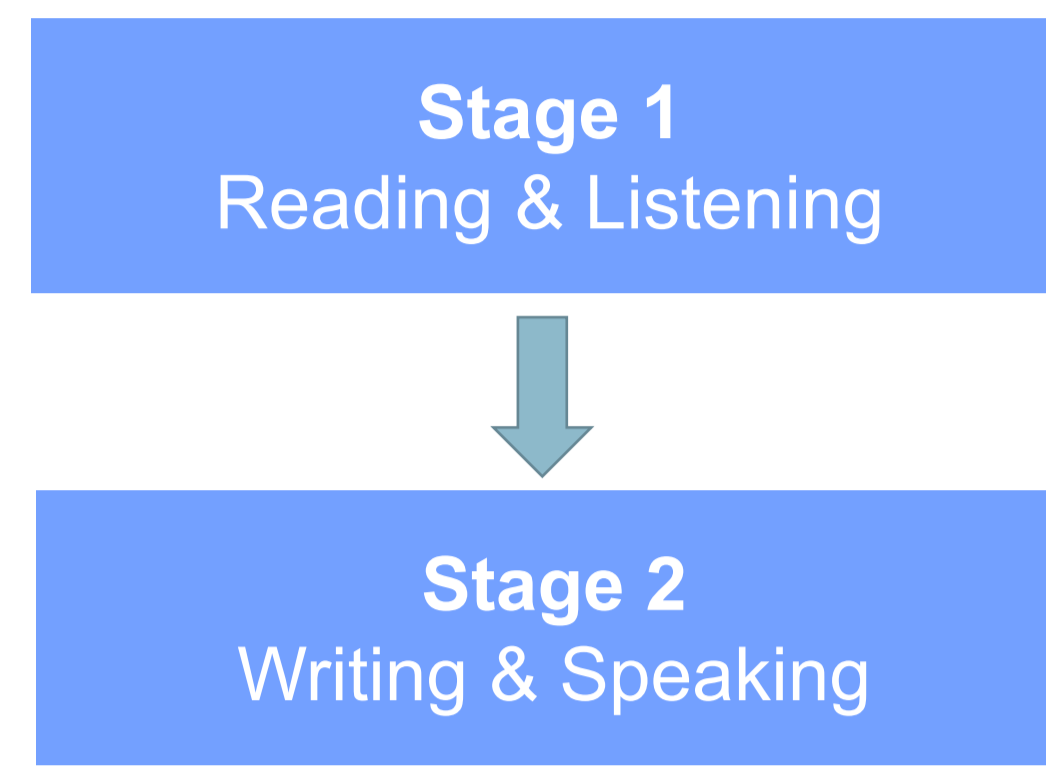
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## General Background of GEPT

- The test is developed by the Language Training & Testing Centre (LTTTC), and it aims to make itself a localized test, serving the needs in Taiwan (both for academic and business purposes).
- The test is divided into five levels, and each level corresponds with the expected English ability in each level of education and CEFR:

GEPT Level	Level of Education	CEFR
Elementary	Grades 7-9 (Junior High School)	A2
Intermediate	Grades 10-12 (Senior High School)	B1
High-Intermediate	Undergraduate	B2
Advanced	Postgraduate / Studying Abroad	C1
Superior	N/A	C2



**Intermediate Writing Task 1**

- Test takers are required to translate 1-2 sentence(s) from Chinese to English.
- It is marked on a 5-band scale and accounts for 40% of the score.

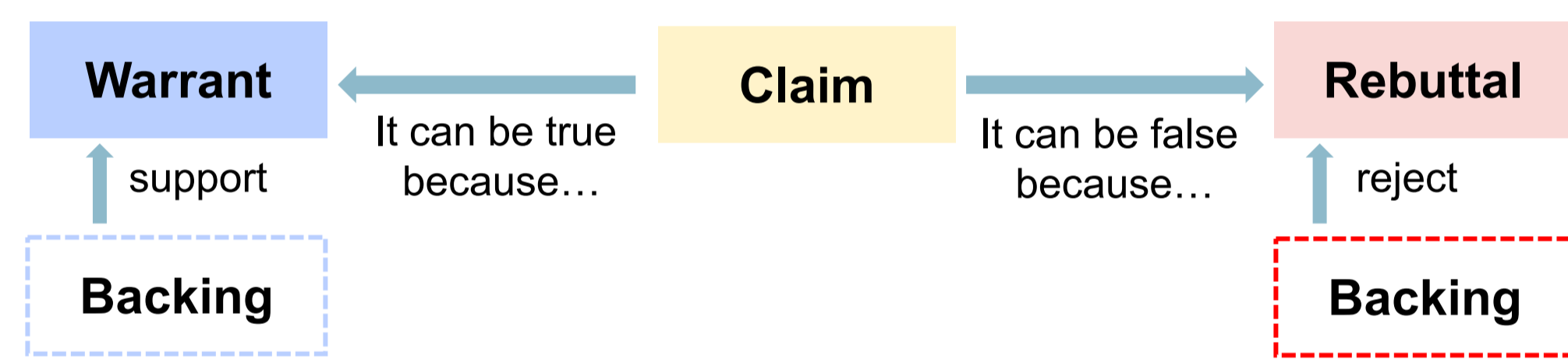
**Intermediate Writing Task 2**

- Test takers are required to write a 120-word article with 10 to 12 sentences based on instructions and/or pictures.
- It is marked on a 5-band scale and accounts for 60% of the score.

- There are only limited validity studies on the test, and they are mostly produced in-house and non-peer-reviewed.

## Assessment Use Argument

<b>Intended Consequences</b>	The consequences of using the GEPT Intermediate Writing Test and of the decisions that are made are beneficial to language learners, test takers, teachers, universities, and companies.
<b>Decisions</b>	The decision made by LTTTC raters to assess whether test takers have intermediate English writing ability reflects existing educational and societal values and Taiwanese educational regulations are equitable for test takers.
<b>Interpretations</b>	The interpretations about the ability to be assessed are meaningful with respect to the national curriculum, impartial to all groups of test takers, generalizable to English writing that intermediate learners encounter at school and in the business world, and sufficient for the decision to be made.
<b>Assessment Records</b>	The scores from the GEPT Intermediate Writing Test are consistent across different forms and administrations of the test, and across students from different backgrounds.



Toulmin's Approach to Practical Reasoning in Assessment Use Arguments<sup>1</sup>

## Validity Issue 2 Generalizability of the Test

### Validity Issue

The Intermediate Writing Test claims to be generalizable to English for every purpose. However, it can only measure the test taker's general, or academic, English ability, but not English ability for other purposes.

Claims of the Test <sup>4</sup>	Actual Tested Constructs
The test result can be interpreted as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The test taker is able to write simple letters, reflections, and stories related to personal situations.</li><li>The test taker has sufficient English ability to work in the service industry.</li></ul>	The test echoes the high school curriculum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The test taker is able to produce accurate and coherent paragraphs and translations.</li></ul>

### Points to Consider

- Only teachers and students were consulted during the test developmental process, so GEPT cannot claim passing the test means having the English ability to work in the service industry.
- General English is not the same as English for specific purposes. (e.g.) IELTS General Training vs IELTS Academic; BULATS

## Validity Issue 1 The Scoring System

### Validity Issue

The stakeholders' (high school teachers and students) comments on the scoring system during the test developmental process were not adopted.

Current Scoring System	Stakeholders' Comments <sup>2</sup>
5-Band Scale	There should be a half point to narrow the differences between each level (10-Band Scale).
Passing Point: Band 4	The threshold is too high for high-school students, and students might not be motivated to prepare for the test because it is too difficult for them.

### Point to Consider

The fact that the stakeholders considered the test too difficult does not necessarily mean the passing point is unreasonable.

- Research has shown that GEPT Intermediate is equivalent to CEFR B1<sup>3</sup>.
- It is reasonable that many high school students do not reach the expected English level.

## Validity Issue 3 Insufficient Supporting Data

### Validity Issue

The backing data of the warrants are mostly outdated, and there is no sufficient peer-reviewed research regarding the validity of the test.

Commonly Used Supporting Data	Problems of the Data
LTTTC (1997)	The report is outdated and is never updated.
Ministry of Education (2018) <sup>5</sup>	Using the national curriculum as the test construct does not necessarily mean the test taker is equipped with the English writing ability at the Intermediate level.
In-house studies and conference papers (e.g., Chan, et al., 2014 <sup>6</sup> , Bax & Chan, 2016 <sup>7</sup> )	They were not peer-reviewed and might be biased.

### Point to Consider

The outdated and non-peer-reviewed backing evidence may reduce the credibility of each claim, in turn weakening the backing of some warrants.

- The claims will thus reduce their credibility, which reduces the validity of the entire test.

## Conclusion & Future Directions

- The test is generally valid if it is used to examine the test taker's general English ability, or used for academic purposes. However, the test is not generalizable for other purposes, such as English for Business purposes.
- LTTTC should explain the rationale behind its scoring system more clearly, and more peer-reviewed validity research is needed.

## References

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