

Teacher Washback from English Certification Exit Requirements in Taiwan

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To motivate students to study English in order to enhance both their English proficiency and workplace competitiveness, one third of technical universities/colleges in Taiwan have established English certification exit requirements, which require students to pass an approved English proficiency test such as the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to graduate. If students do not pass a certified test, they are required to take a supplementary course. This study aims to determine the impact of such exit requirements on teaching practices. In this study, 160 teacher questionnaires and 25 teacher interviews were collected from two groups of technical colleges throughout Taiwan, one group with and one group without exit requirements. Findings show that neither “teaching to the test” nor “integrating the four skills with regular teaching” was prevalent in schools with exit requirements. Although both groups of teachers consider test factors the lowest priority in their pedagogy, teachers at schools with exit requirements employed test-related instruction and a variety of communicatively oriented activities at marginally higher rates than their counterparts.