

**How Can the National Examination for Talent Selection in Taiwan Meet the 2030
Bilingual National Policy?**

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Author note

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Abstract

Taiwan's central government launched the 2030 Bilingual National Policy in 2018 to develop Taiwan into a Mandarin-English bilingual nation by 2030. It is anticipated that the chain of talent development—education, selection, training, and utilization—should interlock with each other to effectively reach the goal. Being in charge of national examinations, mainly selecting civil servants by conducting Civil Service Examinations (CSEs) and certifying professional and technical personnel by Professional and Technical Examinations (PTEs), the Ministry of Examination (MOEX) is striving to implement the following four measures to meet the policy: (1) Increasing the score share of the English subject in CSEs' general subjects, (2) Adding an English test as an eligibility requirement for taking some CSEs and PTEs, (3) Adding a professional English test in some CSEs and PTEs, and (4) Adding a CSE branch--Consular: English II--for the prospective consular personnel to take a tested-in-English examination. However, these measures are confronted with the main challenge that many stakeholders argue that English is not sufficiently important to be included in or to increase the English component in the CSEs or PTEs for their fields. To resolve the main challenge, it is necessary to not only strengthen communication and advocacy, but also to effectively cultivate English proficiency for all from the education side.

Keywords: bilingual education, personnel selection, English test

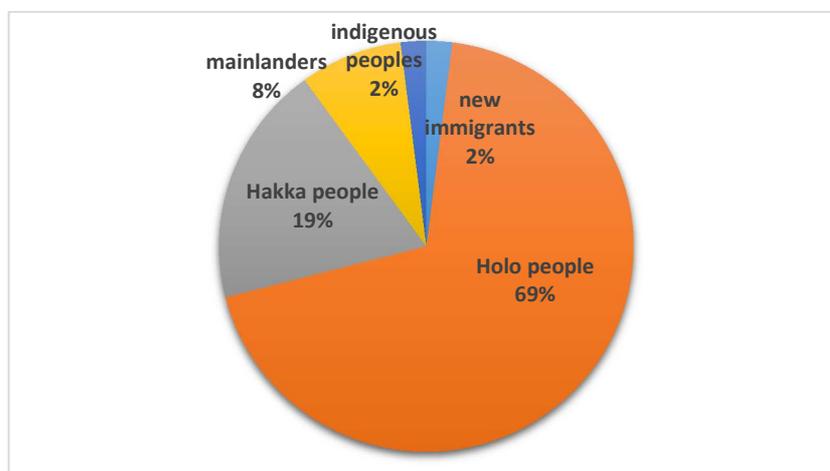
How Can the National Examination for Talent Selection in Taiwan Meet the 2030

Bilingual National Policy?

A Fable Indicating the Importance of a Second Language

The population of Taiwan (about 23.9 million in 2021; henceforth called Taiwanese) can be categorized into the following five ethnic groups in the order in which they arrived in Taiwan: (1) indigenous peoples (more than 2%), (2) Holo/Minnan people (more than 69%), (3) Hakka people (about 19%), (4) mainlanders (about 8%), and (5) new immigrants (more than 2%, 65% of whom are newly immigrated mainlanders) (see Figure 1). The Holo, Hakka, and mainlander groups, comprising around 96% of the population, claim Han ancestry (行政院, 2021; Wikipedia, 2021). However, 85% of Holo and Hakka people have indigenous ancestry, according to a study on the DNA of non-indigenous ethnic Taiwanese conducted by Mackay Memorial Hospital's transfusion medical research director, Mari Lin (Hu, 2007). As ethnic groups are generally intermarried with each other, ethnic differences are becoming increasingly less significant over time.

Figure 1 The distribution of the five ethnic groups in Taiwan



Between the 1950s and 1980s, Taiwan's education system stressed Mandarin/Mandarin Chinese at the expense of dialects such as Holo and Hakka. At present, most Taiwanese speak Mandarin. Around 70% of them also speak Holo and 10% speak Hakka. Japanese speakers are becoming rare as the elderly generation who received education during the Japanese rule are dying out. Many young Taiwanese choose English or Japanese as a second language (Wikipedia, 2021).

There is a fable as follows. It indicates the importance of a second language no matter whether you are a "mouse" or a "cat."

One day, the mouse mother took her little mice to play outside. Suddenly, she found that a tabby cat was approaching them. The mouse mother hurriedly took her little mice to hide in a hole to wait for the tabby cat to walk far away. However, the tabby cat, who could not catch the mice, lay near the hole to sleep. The mouse mother got an idea and imitated a dog barking. Because of being afraid of dogs, the tabby cat got up and ran away when hearing the barking. The mother mouse walked out of the hole with her little mice, and said with a sigh, "It's really impossible to be unable to speak a second language these days!"

Another day, a little mouse was playing near the hole alone. Suddenly seeing the figure of the tabby cat, the little mouse immediately ran to the hole to hide. The hole was very small, so the little mouse was still very safe. When thinking about what to do, the little mouse heard a few dog barks. The little mouse thought that the tabby cat must have run away since a dog was nearby. Thus, the little mouse happily walked out of the hole. As soon as its front foot came out, the little mouse was caught by the tabby cat. The tabby cat grinned and said to the little mouse: "It's really impossible to not know a second language nowadays!" (痞客邦, 2015)

Many Taiwanese know the above fable and place a high value on English. According to a survey conducted in 2018 by the Professor Huang Kun-huei Education Foundation, 87% of Taiwanese support making English a second official language for Taiwan (Huang, 2018).

The 2030 Bilingual National Policy Aims to Develop Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030

In 2021, there were about 1.35 billion people worldwide speaking English either natively or as a second language, slightly more than the 1.12 billion Mandarin speakers at the time of the survey (Szmigiera, 2021). That is to say, English and Mandarin accounted for the first and second most widespread languages that year. Before the Development of National Languages Act was announced in 2019, Mandarin was officially referred to as Taiwan's national language. In addition, English has long been included in Taiwan's national curriculum. For example, in the current national curriculum, English is a mandated subject for grades 3-12 (Ministry of Education, 2014). However, according to a joint survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and the British Council, one-fifth of 12th graders in Taiwan have an English proficiency level of B2 or above in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR, see Appendices A and B). However, the four aspects of English proficiencies--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--are not balanced. The 12th graders' "reading" and "listening" proficiencies have reached bilingual national standards, but "speaking" and "writing" are far from an adequate level (林曉雲等, 2021).

Considering that Taiwan is a major trading nation and plays a key role in the global supply chain, Taiwan's central government launched the 2030 Bilingual National Policy in 2018 to develop Taiwan into a Mandarin-English bilingual nation by 2030 (National Development Council, 2018). This policy has been guided by a twofold vision, namely, helping Taiwan's

workforce connect with the world and attracting international enterprises to Taiwan (National Development Council, 2021). Based on the ideal that the chain of talent development—education, selection, training, and utilization—should be aligned with each other, the following six goals are the main focuses of the policy: accelerating the development of bilingual higher education; balancing and optimizing bilingual conditions for schools at the senior high school level and below; developing digital learning; expanding provision of affordable English proficiency tests; raising civil servants' English proficiency; and establishing an administrative body dedicated to policy promotion and implementation (National Development Council, 2021). Certainly, the government's strategy to reach the above goals includes improving the English proficiency of civil servants. The strategy will first give priority to civil servants dealing with international business, and improve their proficiencies through selection and training.

What the National Examination Is Doing to Meet the 2030 Bilingual National Policy

Taiwan has a long history of recruiting and selecting civil servants through national examinations, administered by the Ministry of Examination (MOEX). In fact, the MOEX mainly conducted the following two strands of national examinations:

1. Civil Service Examinations (CSEs)—Employment examinations to select highly qualified professionals for government employment; and
2. Professional and Technical Examinations (PTEs)—Qualification examinations to certify professional and technical personnel allowed to work in occupations that closely affect public interest or the people's lives, mental or physical health, property or other rights, and are required by law to pass relevant examinations to obtain qualifying certification.

In 2020, more than 414,000 examinees in total registered for the 20 national examinations. A profile of the examinations is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 A Profile of National Examinations Conducted in 2020

	Strands		Total
	CSEs	PTEs	
Times held	10	10	20
Categories	501	113	614
Registered Examinees	251,357	162,963	414,320
Qualified Examinees	14,602	31,246	45,848
Net Qualification Rate*	8.38%	25.30%	15.40%

Note : *The percentage of qualified examinees divided by attending examinees

Considered as a national human resource agency in Taiwan, the MOEX has been dedicated to the following four measures to meet the 2030 Bilingual National Policy:

1. Increasing the score share of the English subject in CSEs' general subjects

In addition to special examinations for people with disabilities, English subjects have been fully included in CSEs' general subjects for years. The new measure is to increase the score share of the English subject. For example, the proportion of the English score in general subjects at CSE-Level III and the Local Government CSE-Level III has been increased from 4% to 8%.

2. Adding an English test as an eligibility requirement for taking some CSEs and PTEs

The consular personnel have been considered as those for whom English is most relevant. Therefore, in addition to the necessary professional languages subjects, passing the English test has been added as an eligibility requirement for examinees to take part in the special examination for consular personnel since 2014 (黃明昌, 2021). Eight English tests linked to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels (see Appendixes A and B) are recognized. At present, Levels B2 and B1 are required for the prospective consular personnel who intend to be placed in English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries, respectively. That is, adding an English test as an eligibility requirement for taking CSEs and PTEs is one of MOEX's new measures. Certainly, the first priority is given to those who will deal with international business such as international economic and commercial personnel and diplomatic administrators.

3. Adding a professional English test to some CSEs and PTEs

There are some CSE and PTE categories which have not yet included a professional English test. The MOEX has solicited opinions from their administrative authorities, professional organizations, and educational institutions to discuss the possibility of adding a professional English test.

4. Adding a CSE branch--Consular: English II--for the prospective consular personnel to take a tested-in-English examination

In order to select the consular personnel with good English proficiency, the MOEX newly added a CSE branch--Consular: English II--for the prospective consular personnel to take a tested-in-English examination.

In sum, the MOEX is striving to meet the 2030 Bilingual National Policy in its talent selection by means of broadening, deepening, and/or accelerating the inclusion of an English proficiency threshold or assessment. It is also expected that someday passing an English test will replace the English subject in the CSE general subjects, and the public in Taiwan will be able to take the English test in a more affordable and convenient way.

The Main Challenge and Its Fundamental Solution

The above measures are confronted with the main challenge that many stakeholders argue that English is not sufficiently important to be included in or increased in the CSEs or PTEs for their fields. This author suggests applying the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability (MOA, Success = Motivation x Opportunity x Ability; study.com, 2020) model to communicate with and persuade the stakeholders. For example, successful cases demonstrating good English ability/proficiency creating more opportunities for individual and/or organizational successes should be promulgated.

The endeavors for the earlier-mentioned chain of talent development—education, selection, training, and utilization—are the collaborative responsibility of relevant governmental organizations (GOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Bilingual National Development Center. Communication with and persuasion of stakeholders also need relevant GOs and NGOs to work together and to work harder. Based on the principle of “education for utilization, selection for utilization, and training for utilization,” the organizations employing talents have to work harder to clarify the English proficiencies that their civil servants or professional and technical personnel must, should, and better have. This clarification will help the aspects of education, selection, and training to do the right thing and do the thing right.

Although the utilization aspect has to do a better job of assessing and informing their needs, the following fable implies that the four links/aspects in the chain are interlocked with each other, and the previous link lays the foundation for the next.

Two friends, A and B, have a picnic by the river. Suddenly, they hear a cry from the water: A child is drowning. Both A and B jump into the water without thinking, rescue the child, and swim back to shore. Before catching their breath, they hear another child calling for help, so they jump back into the river and rescue the second child. Then another drowning child floats over...there is another...and another, and A and B are almost too late to save the children. Suddenly, B sees A stepping out of the water, seeming to leave B alone in the river. "Where are you going?" B asked. A replied: "I'm going upstream to deal with the guy who keeps throwing the children into the water." (許禮安, 2021)

In the above fable, the upstream of the river is like the previous link in the chain. English has long been mandated in the national curriculum. If the education offered by families, schools, and communities could effectively equip students with good English proficiencies, the national examinations would not need an English proficiency threshold or assessment (Watt, 2021). This is in line with W. Edwards Deming's saying "Quality comes not from inspection, but from improvement of the production process."

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Appendix A: The Common Reference Levels of CEFR

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: Council of Europe, 2021.

Appendix B: Eight English Tests Linked to the CEFR Levels

CEFR Levels	English Tests												
	G E P T	TOEIC	TOEFL		Cambridge English Qualifi- cation	Lingua- skill Business		Lingua-skill General		IELTS	FLPT		
			ITP (Total Score 677 pts)	iBT (Total score 120 pts)		L/R	S W	L/R	S W		L/R	S	W
C2 Mastery	Superior				C2 Proficiency	L/R	S W	L/R	S W	T ≥ 7.5	L/R	S	W
C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	Advanced	T ≥ 945 L ≥ 490 R ≥ 455 S ≥ 180 W ≥ 180	T ≥ 627 L ≥ 64 R ≥ 63	T ≥ 95 R ≥ 24 L ≥ 22 S ≥ 25 W ≥ 24	C1 Advanced	T ≥ 180	C1	T ≥ 180	C1	T ≥ 6.5	240~ 330	≥ S-3	A
B2 Vantage	High- Interme- diate	T ≥ 785 L ≥ 400 R ≥ 385 S ≥ 160 W ≥ 150	T ≥ 543 L ≥ 54 R ≥ 56	T ≥ 72 R ≥ 18 L ≥ 17 S ≥ 20 W ≥ 17	B2 First	160~ 179	B2	160~ 179	B2	T ≥ 5.5	195~ 239	S-2+	B
B1 Threshold	Interme- diate	T ≥ 550 L ≥ 275 R ≥ 275 S ≥ 120 W ≥ 120	T ≥ 460 L ≥ 47 R ≥ 48	T ≥ 42 R ≥ 4 L ≥ 9 S ≥ 16 W ≥ 13	B1 Preliminary	140~ 159	B1	140~ 159	B1	T ≥ 4	150~ 194	S-2	C
A2 Waystage	Element- ary	T ≥ 225 L ≥ 110 R ≥ 115 S ≥ 90 W ≥ 70	T ≥ 337 L ≥ 38 R ≥ 31	S ≥ 10 W ≥ 7	A2 Key	120~ 139	A2	120~ 139	A2	T ≥ 3	105~ 149	S-1+	D
Remarks	No sub- items	L, S, R and W must reach its standard, respective- ly.	ITP only assesses listening compre- hension, gramma structure and reading, so the assess- ment of speaking and writing in iBT has to be taken.	L, S, R and W must reach its standard, respective- ly. The transcript printed from the iBT website is accepta- ble.		Its former test is BULATS, retired at the end of 2019: L and R must be above average while S and W must reach the individual standards.		L and R must be above average while S and W must reach the individual standards.	Types Acade- mic and General Train- ing are both acceptab- le. T must reach its stand- ard.				

Notes: L-Listening score, R-Reading score, S-Speaking score, T-Total score, W-Writing score