

STUDENTS AWAIT THE RESULTS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST

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The results of the Foreign Language Proficiency Test that was held on March 13, and are eagerly anticipated by all students involved. The results of the test, as decided last year, should be entered as 'Very good' , 'Good' and 'Pass' on student academic transcripts instead of in percentage, as commonly practiced in Taiwan. This new way of evaluation has received positive response by most faculty members in the College of Foreign Languages (CFL), the organizer of the test, despite some concerns from the students.

Students from the English Department, for example, are concerned about the influence of their results on their future application for graduate schools and work. Unlike TOFEL, which can be taken repeatedly until a satisfactory score is reached, they feel that this proficiency test is worrying as it can 'seal their fate' just by one single try. In response to that, the CFL explains that a three-level evaluation is already 'a fairly generous way' of demonstrating students' four years' effort. Furthermore, every student that needed to take part in the test was often reminded of the requirements of passing the test, thus should have had ample time to prepare. However, the test is on a three-year trial run, the evaluation system will be assessed three years later. Hopefully by then, there will be enough data emerging which can help design a more precise evaluation system in predicting the true level of students' proficiency. One of the examination board members, Professor Wang Hui-chuan of the English Department, also wishes for a more accurate evaluation system. She points out that the exam questions of the test in fact modeled after TOFEL yet the current scoring system does not do justice to the true level of each student.

It seems that Russian majors are less concerned about the evaluation

system. Their test was divided into three parts: Listening Comprehension, Grammar and Composition. As Composition test was already given a few days before March 13, students were not under too much pressure while answering the rest of questions. One senior, Chiu Ji-san did not regard the test as too difficult and thus should serve as a reliable indicator to their basic proficiency. Her fellow student, Tsai Shan-chuan, who came back from Russia for a one-year Exchange Program, says which is perhaps the most effectively way of learning a language, sees the test as an equally good motivation for learning a language, so she encourages her younger fellow students to learn hard for the test.

The proficiency test for Spanish, similarly, was not considered too difficult as voiced by Kuo Yue-lin, a senior of Spanish Department, because the questions could be answered by anyone who does his/her homework regularly. However, he did find the Listening Comprehension part of his test harder as he has never been abroad studying the language. In overcoming such a deficiency, he advises other students to work on grammar and vocabulary in order to do well. His predicament with listening comprehension is apparently shared by most students of languages in similar position. Lin Wan-si from the French Department confesses that the Listening Comprehension part in their test is also hard for those who have not been abroad, whereas Yu Shuan-cheng from the German Department, on the other hand, regards his edge over his classmates is listening comprehension exactly due to the fact that he has been to Germany for an Exchange Program.

The Listening Comprehension in the English test, however, attracts criticism, some deserving and some perhaps not so deserving, as several students comment on the quality and the authenticity of the accent/pronunciation on the tape. They feel that their performance in this regard was somewhat hampered by that factor. The same cannot be said about Composition part (the other two parts in the test are Grammar and Reading). The topic of the composition is describing the different gender roles in

students' generation and that of their parents, which, according to most examinees, allows the flowing of some creative juices. All in all, in line with the tests of other languages, the English test has the right level of difficulty. Wong Tsi-hwei from the English Department who was one year abroad on an Exchange Program even considers that this test is easier than TOFEL and other similar tests.