

Did English proficiency “slip” In Taiwan?
Sent to the Taipei Times, Nov 9, 2018

Did English proficiency really “slip” in Taiwan? (“Taiwan’s English proficiency ranking slips in EF’s index,” November 9, 2018. This conclusion was based on performance on the EF English Proficiency Index, an English test that is taken voluntarily on-line. We know nothing about who took the test and nothing about why they wanted to take it. Also, Taiwan’s slip was tiny, less than one quarter of a point, probably not a statistically significant drop. I don’t think the results of this test should be taken seriously.

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original article:

Taiwan’s English proficiency ranking slips in EF’s index
By Jake Chung / Staff writer, with CNA

Taiwan saw its English-language skills ranking drop from 48th to 40th out of 88 countries and regions in Education First’s (EF) English-language proficiency index for this year. Sweden topped the list, followed by the Netherlands and Singapore, the report by the Switzerland-based firm showed.

Taiwan had an average score of 51.88, down from 52.04 a year earlier, placing its English proficiency level in the “low” category; the other four categories being very high, high, moderate and very low.

Taipei performed best among the six special municipalities, followed by New Taipei City and Tainan, the report showed.

In terms of gender and age group, women outperformed men by a slight margin, although both scored below the global average.

The 21-to-25 age group performed the best, with scores that are higher than the global average, followed by the 18-to-20 age group.

English-language proficiency is usually indicative of greater productivity, EF senior director of research and academic partnerships Minh Tran (陳彥銘) said.

Europe ranked highest globally in terms of English proficiency, while Asian countries exhibited something of a bipolar extreme, with English education in certain countries still fixated on rote memorization, Tran said.

EF Taiwan branch chief executive Yang Ai-lin (楊愛麟) said that adopting bilingual education is not a short-term goal, as it requires fostering a friendly environment for such a policy and changing the public mindset.

The annual index is based on the scores of test-takers from each country or region, EF said, adding that the online exam is free of charge and available to all.

Only cities or countries with more than 400 examinees aged 18 or older are included in the index, the company said.

A total of 1.3 million people took part in the examinations, which were conducted last year, in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, it said.

Compared with last year's report, which saw 80 countries participating with 1 million examinees, 92 percent of the test takers were younger than 40, of which 60 percent were women and 40 percent men, it said.