

[研究ノート]

Integration of the TOEIC L & R Test into a Non-selective Freshman Course

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Abstract

This study explores the feasibility of integrating the TOEIC L & R test preparation guidance into a non-selective freshman course for non-English majors who have been struggling with English. The aim of this study is to explore how to effectively help boost confidence in EFL learners with poor performance in English and fear of the TOEIC L & R test. To achieve this aim, the author introduced a newly-developed teaching method, arranged five tests, conducted a survey and analyzed data in SPSS. The data from the five tests showed that students' overall scores (reading and listening) improved, with more significant improvement in listening sections. The survey also indicated students' major satisfaction in the teaching method. However, the changes in teaching method and scores did not seem to bring desired results in students' motivation in the TOEIC L & R test, and they did not show great interest in individual tutoring.

1. Research Background
2. Research Aim
3. Methodology
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5. Findings and Discussion
6. Conclusion

1. Research Background

(1) Personal perception of the TOEIC program¹⁾

According to the author's experience in using job search websites, it was found that almost all English education related job openings required test scores from widely recognized tests such as the TOEIC program or Eiken at the stage of filling out basic information. Certain TOEIC test scores were even explicitly stated by some institutions. This indicates that the TOEIC program is highly influential in English language education institutions in Japan. The mandatory requirement of TOEIC test scores for their teachers reflects not only the training goal of Japanese educational institutions in terms of English talents, but also the fact that the TOEIC program has distinguished itself from other tests of English to be a major reference for recruitment by organizations in Japan.

(2) Brief statistics about TOEIC in cram schools and conversation schools

In order to investigate the significance of English tests in cram schools and conversation schools, Statistics of 20 leading cram schools and eikaiwas²⁾ were collected and full results are shown in Appendix 1. Results showed that among 20 institutions, 14 provide special preparation courses for Eiken while 10 offer preparation courses for the TOEIC program. This suggests that educational institutions generally attach a high degree of importance to Eiken and the TOEIC program, meaning a high demand for the Eiken and the TOEIC program from Japanese society. In addition, those institutions offer a more diverse range of courses for the TOEIC program than for Eiken. For example, some institutions offer “visiting lecturer services” to universities and companies. This demonstrates that the TOEIC program has been widely accepted as a tool to measure general English proficiency by both universities and corporations.

(3) A random investigation on the TOEIC program at tertiary level

A random investigation of five universities and colleges, two national universities and three private colleges, was conducted. Hiroshima University is a representative national university in the Chugoku-Shikoku region. The TOEIC L & R test was treated as a means of evaluating language proficiency for training global talents, and students are offered two opportunities to take the TOEIC test for free³⁾. In addition, based on each student's TOEIC IP test score, the university updates the desired TOEIC score at the time of graduation every six months. Kumamoto University is a national university in Kyushu region. In order to promote students' English language learning, the university requires sophomore and third year students from the GLC department (Global Leader Course) to take the TOEIC online IP test. In addition, the university offers 600 free opportunities for students across the university to take the TOEIC IP test⁴⁾. Kyoto Sangyo University is a private university in Chubu region. The university has made the TOEIC preparation course mandatory and hires teachers with a TOEIC score of 900 or higher⁵⁾. Tokyo City University is a private university in the Kanto area. For evaluating the effect of students' overseas study, the university requires students to take the TOEIC L & R test before the new semester starts, before and after they go abroad⁶⁾. Hokkai Gakuen University is a private university in Hokkaido region. After the outbreak of Covid-19, in order to raise students' awareness about the youth employment crisis, the university's Seikyo (Consumers' cooperative) website even stated that candidates without a TOEIC score of 700 or higher are not eligible to submit resume to leading companies⁷⁾.

Matsuba (2022) reported a survey of top employers for university graduates. The results showed that 87.9% of companies included TOEIC scores as one of the defining criteria to measure the professional skills of a candidate. Combined with the results of all the above statistics and investigation, it can be concluded that the TOEIC program is highly recognized by universities, educational institutions, and companies, and the importance of the TOEIC program to Japanese society is evident.

(4) Changes in demand for TOEIC scores in the job market before and after Covid-19

After the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, many companies, especially tourism-dependent economies, have been hit by the restricted cross-border movement of people. This has directly affected students' job-hunting outlook. As clearly stated on the Hokkai Gakuen University's Seikyo (Consumers' cooperative) website, the so-called "workers' market," where students gain employment relatively easily has vanished, and they are entering the job market with much more uncertainty. A web-based survey on the impact of English proficiency on income before and after the Covid-19 was conducted by Human Global Talent (2020). The survey revealed that the human resource market had transformed significantly due to Covid-19. Many companies have fewer positions for employees with no experience in the field, preferring candidates with practical skills. The survey showed that the average annual income of employees (all ages) with TOEIC L & R scores of 475 or higher was 1.1 times higher than that before covid-19. For female employees in the 20-year-old age group, the average annual income gap between those with English proficiency at business level (TOEIC L & R score of 735 or higher) and those with English proficiency at daily conversation level (TOEIC L & R score of 475-730) was 110,000 yen higher (1.3 times) than that before the pandemic. The harsh employment situation brought by the pandemic has put postings for college graduates with no work experience at risk, and the low hiring rates for them will directly affect the confidence of high school graduates proceeding to universities. Therefore, there is an urgent need for universities and colleges to equip their students with desirable scores for their Curriculum Vitae.

(5) Studies on students' perceptions of the TOEIC L & R test

There are few studies on students' perceptions of the TOEIC L & R test. Kibara et al. (2021) noted that the biggest reason for students to take TOEIC preparation courses was TOEIC's role as a recruitment tool. Iida et al. (2020) found that freshmen expected English education at tertiary level to be different from the test-oriented education they had received before universities and desired for increased opportunities to put English into practice. The author conducted a survey at a non-selective freshman course in the spring semester of 2022, and learned that students generally had only heard of the TOEIC program and took the TOEIC L & R IP test once before the spring semester started. In addition, the students' fear of the listening section of the TOEIC L & R test was most evident because they had not received any training for this section. Kato (2019) has also pointed out that the major focus in junior and senior high schools are reading comprehension and grammar, with a severe lack of time for listening. These findings seem to suggest that despite students' understanding of TOEIC scores as a boost for their entry to the job market, the long history of test-orientated education has caused students to form some biases and resistance before they are even deeply exposed to the TOEIC L & R test.

(6) Research significance

Nishizawa (2010) argues that although many universities are making efforts to improve students' English proficiency, there are not many universities with significant improvement results. The author has been teaching low level student groups and found that the common teaching methods, aiming at developing students' four skills, has not been effective in increasing students' enthusiasm for learning. For example, in a course with communicative activities where students interacted with an American teacher during one semester, most of the students were able to complete the tasks, but they seemed to be doing it for credits and did not gain a great sense of accomplishment from it, nor did they show more interest in communication in the classroom. The fact that the author achieved a full score in TOEIC also failed to motivate students to study for TOEIC. To boost confidence in EFL learners with poor performance in English and fear of the TOEIC L & R test, it seems that alternative ways are needed. During a non-selective Freshman Course in 2022, while ensuring the required contents in the syllabus, the author introduced a newly-developed teaching method. This study examines the feasibility of including the TOEIC L & R test preparation instruction into a non-selective class in hopes of providing some references for fellow instructors.

2. Research Aim

The percentage of students who are active learners and show interest in English language learning is comparatively low. Most students lack effective strategies to score high and need constant encouragement and guidance from their teachers to address their individual needs. Higher TOEIC scores have a major influence on better employment opportunities. Therefore, the research aim is to explore how to effectively help boost confidence in EFL learners with poor performance in English and fear of the TOEIC L & R test. To achieve this purpose, the author proposes the following three sub-objectives to implement the study: 1) to increase students' exposure to the TOEIC L & R test; 2) to increase opportunities to explain strategies for the TOEIC L & R test; 3) to include the investigation of students' perceptions of the TOEIC L & R test.

3. Methodology

(1) Mini tests

The author chose Kitahara (2022) as the primary question bank. Kitahara (2022) is aimed at entry-level students and its difficulty level is set at 400-point range for the TOEIC L & R test. Every unit covers all seven parts of the TOEIC L & R test, and the number of questions is only one-third of that in the IP test. This course is a basic 4 skill training course (30 lessons in total) that happens twice a week, each for 45 minutes. The students of this study are low level non-English major Freshmen, so the difficulty level and the number of questions is proper for their academic level and the length of each lesson. A sample mini test is shown below in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The overview of the test paper is shown in Table 1.

Four parts from each unit of Kitahara (2022) namely, pre-listening vocabulary practice, pre-reading vocabulary practice, grammar explanation, and tips, were excluded because they were not related to the mini tests. In order to present 33 questions into 3 pages of A3 paper, the author fine-tuned the order of each part and the answer sheet. Therefore, the actual test paper was not arranged in ascending numerical order as shown in Table 1, but in the order of 2→3→4→1→5→answer sheet→6→7. Considering the academic characteristics of students, the author referred to Hamasaki (2006) so as to explain strategies in the simplest and enjoyable way possible. Hamasaki is a best-selling author of the TOEIC L & R test with a record of acquiring 990 points more than 70 times. Hamasaki (2006) features manga and charts, making it an easy and amusing guidebook for students of this study. See Figure 4 for a sample picture.

Part 2 Question-Response

You will hear a question or statement and three responses. Listen carefully, and select the best response to the question or statement.

4. (A) (B) (C)
 5. (A) (B) (C)
 6. (A) (B) (C)
 7. (A) (B) (C)
 8. (A) (B) (C)

Part 3 Conversations

You will hear a short conversation between two people. Listen carefully, and select the best response to each question.

9. What will the woman do?
 (A) Go to another store (B) Pay for some purchases
 (C) Try on some shoes (D) Look for a shirt

10. Where are the speakers?
 (A) In a restaurant (B) In a shoe store
 (C) In a bookstore (D) In a doctor's office

11. What are these two people doing?
 (A) Applying for work at Turinco, Ltd. (B) Riding to work together
 (C) Attending a convention (D) Meeting for the first time

Part 4 Talks

You will hear a short talk given by a single speaker. Listen carefully, and select the best response to each question.

12. What is being advertised?
 (A) A trip (B) A restaurant
 (C) A hotel (D) An event

13. What is this report about?
 (A) Pollution of Edgewood Lake (B) Burglaries near the lake
 (C) Police patrols around the lake (D) Residents who live in the lake area

14. What is happening today?
 (A) A chain store is expanding. (B) An independent market is closing.
 (C) A man is ending a nationwide trip. (D) A man is turning one hundred.

Part 5 Incomplete Sentences

A word or phrase is missing in each of the sentences. Select the best answer to complete each sentence.

15. It's a good movie. You _____ go and see it.
 (A) will (B) shall
 (C) could (D) should

16. The windows aren't dirty. We _____ clean them.
 (A) must (B) shall
 (C) need to (D) don't have to

17. The baby was _____ up by a loud noise.
 (A) woke (B) woke
 (C) waken (D) waking

18. Somebody broke into my house but nothing _____.
 (A) steal (B) stole
 (C) was stolen (D) was stealing

19. If you _____ a little sooner, you would have reached me before I left.
 (A) call (B) called
 (C) had called (D) would call

Figure 1. A sample mini test (page 1-2) (From Kitahara (2022) pp.26-29)

20. Our hotel room was dirty, so we _____ a cleaner one.
 (A) asked (B) looked
 (C) stayed (D) requested

21. I cannot _____ his name, but I know I have seen him before.
 (A) know (B) remind
 (C) teach (D) recall

22. This is the first time that we have _____ our sales goal.
 (A) exceeded (B) preceded
 (C) receded (D) proceeded

23. The cafeteria _____ room for 200 students to sit down.
 (A) is (B) does
 (C) has (D) makes

24. During the earthquake, one picture _____ off the wall.
 (A) fell (B) took
 (C) left (D) turned

小テスト (6.15)
 名前 _____
 得点 _____ / 33

Part 1. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
 Part 2. 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____
 Part 3. 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____
 Part 4. 12. _____ 13. _____ 14. _____
 Part 5. 15. _____ 16. _____ 17. _____ 18. _____ 19. _____
 20. _____ 21. _____ 22. _____ 23. _____ 24. _____
 Part 6. 25. _____ 26. _____ 27. _____ 28. _____
 Part 7. 29. _____ 30. _____ 31. _____ 32. _____ 33. _____

Part 6 Text Completion

Read the text that follows. A word, phrase, or sentence is missing in parts of the text. Select the best answer to complete the text.

Questions 25-28 refer to the following information.

Medical Assistant Course

This 16-week course _____ book learning with practical instruction in clinical _____ 25. After medical assisting. Participants will learn from qualified instructors _____ 26. After completing the course successfully, the _____ will have all the requirements for the job title of Clinical Medical Assistant. Graduates will also be able to take the _____ Medical Assistant Associations certification exam. _____ 28.

25. (A) combines
 (B) combining
 (C) had combined
 (D) has been combined

26. (A) Now that you have finished your courses, it's time to look for a job.
 (B) The first four weeks will be focused on how to design simple websites.
 (C) The next step is to download the editing software from the Internet.
 (D) Understanding will be tested by written and practical examinations.

27. (A) athlete
 (B) editor
 (C) graduate
 (D) teacher

28. (A) casual
 (B) optional
 (C) perfect
 (D) strong

Figure 2. A sample mini test (page 3-4) (From Kitahara (2022) pp.30-31)

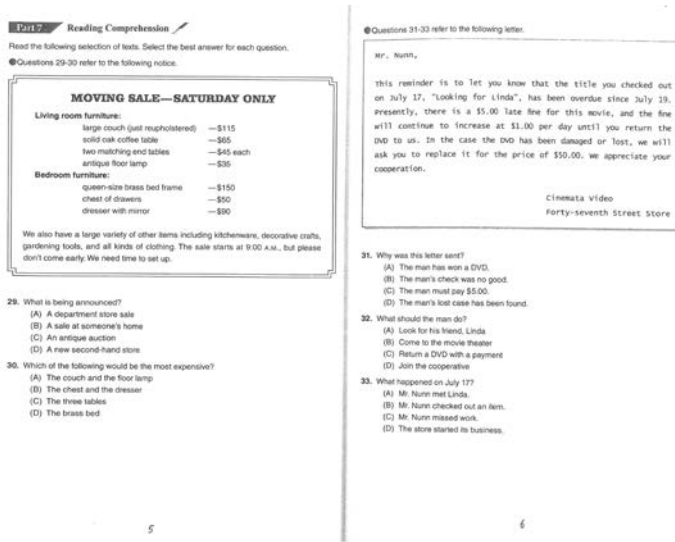


Figure 3. A sample mini test (page 5-6) (From Kitahara (2022) pp.32-33)

Table 1. An overview of the mini test

Question types	Number of questions
Part 1: Photographs	3
Part 2: Question-response	5
Part 3: Conversations	3
Part 4: Short talks	3
Part 5: Incomplete sentences	10
Part 6: Text completion	4
Part 7: Reading comprehension	5
Total	33



Figure 4. A sample picture of using manga for explaining strategies (濱崎潤之輔 「マンガで攻略! はじめてのTOEICテスト全パート対策」 西東社 2006)

(2) A Survey

The purpose of the survey is to examine students' attitudes toward the TOEIC L & R test and their feedback on the new teaching method. The survey (Appendix 2) consists of 14

questions. Four questions (question 1, 2, 3, and 5) are intended for students' attitudes toward the TOEIC L & R test while the rest are for the new teaching method.

Table 2. shows an overview of the survey questions and their purposes. Question 1 investigates students' willingness to take the TOEIC L & R test. Question 2 and 3 are to explore reasons for those who want to take the TOEIC L & R test and those who do not. Questions 2 and 3 are closely related to question 1. Therefore, questions 1-3 are presented one after another. To avoid bias, the author arranges a question in terms of the new teaching method. Question 5 is to understand whether students have a plan for test taking. Question 6 is for students' feedback on introducing strategies for each part. Questions 7-9 are to examine whether students have specific needs for grammar, listening, and reading. Question 10 is for students' feedback on test analysis. Question 11 is to find out about regular mini tests. Question 12 focuses on the effect of providing national data on the test performance of college students in the same field as the author's students. Question 13 is about the willingness of students to receive individual tutoring. Question 14 was designed to understand the effectiveness of manga and chart.

In order to examine students' attitudes toward the TOEIC L & R test and the new teaching method, five point Likert scales were used uniformly for all questions except questions 2 and 3. Questions 2 and 3 used a six-degree scale and a seven-degree scale respectively for specific reasons behind students' willingness or unwillingness to take the TOEIC L & R test. For the five-degree questions, in order to filter out those who really wanted to take the TOEIC L & R test and approved of my teaching method, the author grouped those who chose "I don't know (when)," "Neither," and "Don't really think so" together with those who chose "no plan", "not interested", and "don't think so".

Table 2. An overview of the survey questions and their purposes

Question	Purpose
1	Interest in TOEIC (willingness)
2	Interest in TOEIC (reasons)
3	Interest in TOEIC (reasons)
4	Opinions in the teaching methods
5	Interest in TOEIC (time schedule)
6	Opinions on the teaching methods
7	Opinions on the teaching methods
8	Opinions on the teaching methods
9	Opinions on the teaching methods
10	Opinions on the teaching methods
11	Opinions on the teaching methods
12	Opinions on the teaching methods
13	Opinions on the teaching methods
14	Opinions on the teaching methods

4. Participants and Context

(1) Participants

The non-selective freshman course for the spring semester consisted of 49 non-English major students, with 36 male students and 13 female students. Six students (four male students and two female students) were removed from this study due to their absence for some mini tests. The remaining 43 students, 32 male students and 11 female students, were the participants in this study. They major in regional policy and international relations. Gender produces no difference in this study.

(2) About the new teaching method

1) The schedule and teaching contents

The schedule for test preparation and teaching contents are detailed in the Table 3. The author arranged three consecutive mini tests from the second to the fourth weeks in order to identify students' average level and challenging question types. In order to support students during adjustment period, the author introduced the official TOEIC data and presented test results in the sixth week. In order to determine the initial effect of the new teaching method, Test 3 was scheduled a month later. From week 7 to week 10, the author systematically introduced features of common question types in each part and their strategies. The results of the first three tests showed that accuracy of the listening section was generally low. Therefore, week 7-9 were devoted to the listening section and week 10 to the reading section. Test 3 and a survey were conducted in week 11. The results showed that the students' scores were on a downward trend, but the majority of them seemed to have accepted my teaching method. In order to encourage students to continue and check their understanding, the author decided that the question types for Test 4 would be within

Table 3. The Schedule and teaching contents for the spring semester

Week	Contents
1	Orientation & Textbook
2	Pre-test & Textbook
3	Test 1 & Textbook
4	Test 2 & Textbook
5	Textbook
6	Test analysis /TOEIC data introduction/ Textbook
7	Listening strategies (Part 1&2)
8	Listening strategies (Part 1-3)
9	Listening strategies (Part 1-4)
10	Reading strategies (Part 5-7)
11	Questionnaire /Test 3
12	Test analysis & Textbook
13	Listening & Reading strategies
14	Test 4 & Textbook
15	Test analysis & Textbook

the scope of that covered in the previous lessons. To help students prepare for the upcoming mini test, lessons focused on easy to grasp strategies. Test 4 was completed in week 14 and its results were revealed in week 15.

2) Teaching contents

The teaching contents consisted of four aspects: motivation, strategy guidance, regular classroom tests and test analysis. The purpose of motivation is to help students adjust their attitudes for the TOEIC L & R test. Students were presented official data analysis of TOEIC L & R test so that they could form an impression that scoring highly can be influential for job hunting. It is also hoped that they could restore their confidence to face English tests. Strategy guidance, regular classroom tests and test analysis are designed to train students for enhanced test-taking skills, and the ability to counter setbacks. The author created opportunities for students to experience a sense of accomplishment by explaining strategies in an amusing and practical way in class. The author also encouraged students to reflect on their current learning styles while trying the test-taking strategies. Mini tests and test analysis are intended for checking their learning effectiveness in a timely manner, for students to understand their level among fellow students, and for the author to tailor teaching contents for the upcoming weeks.

3) Motivation

Other than the IP L & R test, students generally had little knowledge about the TOEIC program. The number of annual test takers and the influential role of TOEIC scores in securing jobs are not clear to them at all. Therefore, the author presented the students with official TOEIC data and test analysis after the first 3 tests. The official TOEIC data included a table of TOEIC scores corresponding to annual income in each industry, the nationwide average TOEIC scores of students in that major at the end of their freshman year, the average scores of graduates, computation of scores for listening and reading sections and more. The test analysis consisted of listening and reading score distribution, current learning problems, and plans for the next stage. After the students had a general understanding of the TOEIC L & R test, and their ranking in the class, the author delivered an energizing pep talk with her personal experience of surviving in Japan with English skills to encourage students to try the TOEIC L & R test again for their own future benefit.

4) Strategy guidance

The results of the first three tests showed that the average score of the listening section was significantly lower than that of the reading section. Therefore, the focus was on strategies for the listening section. During the 4-week guidance, the first three weeks were dedicated to the listening section, and the last week for the reading section. The author followed steps: the characteristics of common question types for each part → strategies for each question type → a list of common words and phrases → verify the effectiveness of each

strategy with practice questions → a summary of steps for each strategy. In addition, the author made lists of basic vocabulary for each lesson and slides for all mini tests. They were uploaded to Moodle together with the audio files for students to download and review.

Apart from lessons in the classroom, the author also conducted individual tutoring. Since the second week of the spring semester, several students have been contacting the author for individual tutoring opportunities. What these students had in common was that although they had planned to take the TOEIC L & R test (one of them even having a target company in mind), they suddenly felt a sense of crisis after seeing the official TOEIC data and wanted to receive more systematic and efficient tutoring. Therefore, the author offered to regularly provide customized advice on making and adjusting their study plans, and the selection of learning materials.

5) Mini tests

A total of five tests were scheduled for this semester. Pre-test, Test 1 and Test 2 were completed in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th weeks respectively. After a month-long test-taking preparation, students took Test 3 in week 11. Having received two weeks of intensive training, students took Test 4 in week 14. The specific time allotted was 10 minutes for the listening test, 20 minutes for the reading test, and 10 minutes for checking the answer and self-grading.

6) Test analysis

The author presented the test analysis from four aspects: the chart for listening bands, the chart for reading bands, reasons for the improved parts, and the plan for the next stage. Figure 5 is an example the chart for listening bands. Students were most interested in the

Listening(test 4)			
素点	換算点範囲	バンド	人数
96-100	475-495	A	0
91-95	435-495	B	0
86-90	405-470	C	3
81-85	370-450	D	0
76-80	345-420	E	7
71-75	320-390	F	6
66-70	290-360	G	0
61-65	265-335	H	5
56-60	240-310	I	9
51-55	215-280	J	0
46-50	190-255	K	7
41-45	160-230	L	4
36-40	130-205	M	3
31-35	105-175	N	0
26-30	85-145	O	0
21-25	60-115	P	2
16-20	30-90	Q	0
11-15	5-70	R	1
6-10	5-60	S	0
1-5	5-50	T	0
0	5-35	U	0

Figure 5. Computation for listening bands in Test 4

results of the test in terms of their ranking in the class and computation for TOEIC scores. Based on the TOEIC Scores Conversion Table, the author grouped scores into 21 bands for the listening and reading sections respectively from A to U in alphabetical order. Students received two band slips for reading and listening bands on the day for test analysis. The charts displayed in class allowed students to visualize the overall level of the class, their position and the conversion of their test scores to the official test. In addition, to examine students' response to the new teaching method, ANOVA was run to analyze mini tests.

(3) A survey

The survey was conducted before Test 3. It took 10 minutes for students to complete the survey on Moodle. Students were required to use the Moodle system for this course.

5. Findings and Discussion

(1) Findings for four mini tests

Table 4. describes the relationship between the number of tests and the accuracy. Since the author intends to focus on the effect of the whole test (reading and listening) on the accuracy, N equals 86 by adding 43 (reading) and 43 (listening). The results show that the number of tests has a significant effect on the accuracy ($F(4,425) = 8.38, p < 0.001$). It can be concluded that students' accuracy increases as they took more tests.

Table 4. Descriptives for the number of tests and the accuracy

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Pre-test	86	.4905	.14066	.01517	.4603	.5206	.07	.83
Test 1	86	.4380	.18998	.02049	.3973	.4788	.07	.89
Test 2	86	.5181	.13935	.01503	.4883	.5480	.26	.89
Test 3	86	.4805	.17278	.01863	.4434	.5175	.07	.95
Test 4	86	.5785	.18245	.01967	.5394	.6176	.11	.89
Total	430	.5011	.17203	.00830	.4848	.5174	.07	.95

$F(4,425) = 8.38, p < 0.001$

Table 5. shows that the accuracy of the listening section was significantly varied by each test. The results in Figure 6 indicated that the accuracy of the listening section increased significantly as students took more tests. The accuracy for Test 4 was significantly higher than the first three because its testing points fully reflected question types covered in the previous classes.

Table 5. Comparison of the listening sections from four mini tests

	Test 1		Test 2		Test 3		Test 4		F (3,126)
	(N=43)		(N=43)		(N=43)		(N=43)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Accuracy	0.32	0.14	0.48	0.12	0.46	0.18	0.58	0.17	30.03

**p* < 0.001

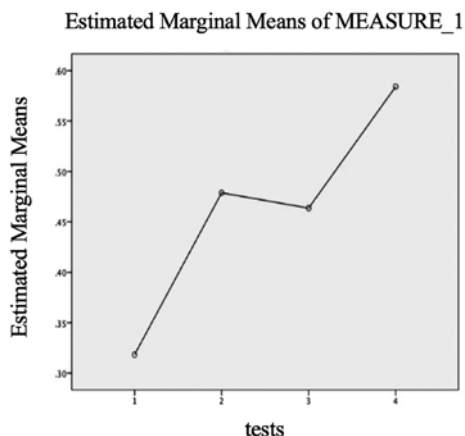


Figure 6. Estimated Marginal Means of the Accuracy of the Listening Section through Tests

Table 6. shows that the accuracy of the reading section significantly varied by each test. The results in Figure 7 indicate that, generally speaking, the accuracy of the reading section increased as students took more tests. However, the increase was not significant. The accuracy dropped significantly in Test 3 because the length and word difficulty were higher than the first two. Test 4 was of the same length as the third, with a slight lower word difficulty. In addition, the question types were within the scope of the teaching content. Therefore, the accuracy for Test 4 was significantly higher than the first three.

Table 6. Comparison of the Reading Sections from Four Mini Tests

	Test 1		Test 2		Test 3		Test 4		F (3,126)
	(N=43)		(N=43)		(N=43)		(N=43)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Accuracy	0.56	0.16	0.56	0.15	0.50	0.17	0.57	0.19	3.40

**p* < 0.05

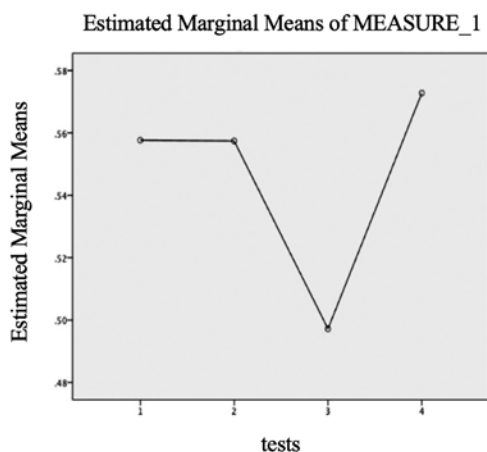


Figure 7. Estimated Marginal Means of the Accuracy of the Reading Section through Tests

Table 7. shows that among seven parts of each test, the accuracy significantly varied in only four parts (Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, Part 7). Therefore, the author will explain reasons for the changes in the accuracy of these four parts.

As described in Table 8, there was an overall upward trend for the accuracy in Part 1. When the number of picture of people was greater than that of objects and landscapes, the accuracy tended to be higher. There are two reasons why pictures of objects and landscapes are more difficult. First, students are required to identify locations of objects and be able to decide whether a preposition or prepositional phrase is used correctly. Second, it is more challenging for students to process information when statements contain negation such as 'no' or 'unoccupied'.

Accuracy in Part 2 was the lowest among four parts, but it has been steadily increasing. The accuracy in Test 4 even surpassed that of Part 3. This indicates that students are beginning to adapt to strategies for this part, especially the common question types. Business-related words, fixed expressions, and tag questions remained rather challenging for students.

Part 3 also showed a general upward trend even though the increase was not significant. The questions with low accuracy were concentrated in the questions about speakers' action, such as "What is the woman going to do next?". There are two reasons for this. First, this type of question requires students to remember the questions. Is the subject male or female? Is the question about the past, present or future? Second, it requires students to determine whether the content is relevant to the question. To do so, students need to predict the location of the answer. Is it likely to appear in the beginning, in the middle or in the end?

The reason why accuracy in Test 1 ranked highest is that the articles are short with very few business-related words, and simple factual questions. The length of articles increased for the rest of the tests and the number of business-related words also increased. Accuracy for Test 2, 3 and 4 was steadily increasing, indicating that students were gradually adapting

to question types. Main idea questions and the familiarity of frequently occurring words are two hindering factors on students' performance.

Table 7. Comparison of the Number of Tests and Accuracy of Seven Parts

Parts	F (3,168)	p	Significance
Part 1	14.43	p < 0.001	Significance
Part 2	11.02	p < 0.001	Significance
Part 3	7.76	p < 0.001	Significance
Part 4	2.44	p > 0.01	Non- Significance
Part 5	2.28	p > 0.01	Non- Significance
Part 6	0.65	p > 0.01	Non- Significance
Part 7	5.23	p < 0.01	Significance

Table 8. Comparison of Accuracy of Four tests (Part 1, 2, 3, 7)

Part	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4
1	46.5	76.8	67.5	82.5
2	28.0	41.5	41.0	59.0
3	29.4	47.3	52.7	52.5
7	73.5	59.1	53.5	69.5

(2) Findings for the Survey

The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, four of which were about students' perception of the TOEIC L & R test. The results in Table 9. show that 20 students, less than half of the students, were willing to take the TOEIC L & R test. 65% of those students chose "for career purposes" (就職のため) which turned out to be much higher than other reasons. Among those 20 students, the number of these students who had a plan for taking the TOEIC L & R test was 15 (75%). The number of students who were not interested in the TOEIC L & R test was 23, and the biggest reason for this was due to their poor performance in tests before entering university.

The author believes that there are two reasons behind students' unwillingness to take the TOEIC L & R test. First, students focus on jobs having little to do with English. Due to poor performance in English tests, dislike of English, or no English necessary jobs available, students, intentionally or unintentionally, exclude English from their job-hunting choices. Second, students have a wait-and-see attitude toward the TOEIC L & R test. Eight of the 11 students who were uncertain about their willingness to take the test also had no specific plan for taking the TOEIC L & R test, while two planned to take the test in their second year, and one in their first year. The students had been in college for less than six months and were still experiencing an adjustment period. They were still not quite convinced about how much the TOEIC L & R test would mean to them. In addition, the lack of emphasis on the importance of the TOEIC L & R test in the orientation session, other English courses, or career education, may also lead to students' wait-and-see attitude.

Table 9. Questionnaire about interest in the TOEIC L & R tests

Question	Purpose	Number of students
1	Students who are willing to take TOEIC L & R tests	20/43
2	Students who have a time schedule for the test	15/43
3	The dominant reason for interest in the test: future jobs	13/20
5	The dominant reason for no interest in the test: poor performance in previous tests	10/23

Table 10. shows students' feedback regarding the teaching method. First, almost all students were satisfied with strategies for the TOEIC L & R test being explained (question 6). However, there was no marked preference for listening, reading, or grammar (questions 7-9). Second, the data for TOEIC score and annual income (question 4) and strategies presented in the form of manga/chart (question 14) were highly approved by the students, and the majority of students were willing to take the regular mini tests (question 11). Students' accuracy in the four mini tests (Figures 2 and 3) also revealed that students' understanding of the contents was satisfactory. The feedback on the teaching method in Table 9. (question 14) shows that the use of manga and charts to explain strategies was suitable, both subjectively (students' feedback) and objectively (accuracy).

Lack of test-taking strategies and inability to concentrate for long are two of the most evident academic characteristics of the author's students. How to encourage them to make continuous efforts is one of the biggest concerns. Through this study, the author has concluded the following three points. First, the length of explanation should be within 15 minutes. Second, the contents are best presented in the form of images and charts. Third, for students with long term frustrating experience in English learning, not seeing progress can easily cause them to give up. After the first three mini tests, the students' scores showed a downward trend, which triggered the author's reflection on "Teaching to the Test" vs. "Testing What You Teach". The first three tests were centered around vocabulary, grammar, and question types that are basic for the TOEIC L & R test. Grammar has already been covered at junior and senior schools, supplemented by the common business-related vocabulary for the TOEIC L & R test. To score high in these tests, strategies for questions types in the seven parts are essential. It is almost impossible to raise students' poor grammar skills to a desirable level within three months. If the author continued to give questions in the same difficulty level, it will definitely discourage students. Therefore, the author shifted the question types for Test 4, choosing "Testing What You Teach".

It must be noted that students' interest in individual tutoring (question 13) was much lower than the others. Among 13 students willing to receive individual tutoring, 11 of them were willing to take the TOEIC L & R test while the remaining two were wait-and-see students. In addition, seven out of 13 students had a clear plan for their test taking, with six of them having no plan. The author thinks there are two reasons for low interest in individual tutoring. The first one is Japanese students' typical shy personality. The biggest difference between individual tutoring and classroom lessons is whether students will stand

out. Facing their instructors by themselves, learning problems are exposed, resulting in the increase of mental pressure. Unless there is a very strong desire to improve English or a close bond with the instructor, students tend to avoid their instructors after classes. Second, a lack of a sense of crisis prevents students from becoming active students. Japanese students have a wide range of employment options, which creates a general lack of a sense of crisis among them. The author found that even students who take the initiative to ask for individual guidance failed to complete their tasks on time because of assignments from other courses, part-time jobs or club activities. They tend to report their learning progress only when the author offers to check for their understanding in class and challenges they had at home.

Table 10. Questionnaire about teaching methods

Question	Purpose	Rates for satisfied students
4	Table of TOEIC score & career/income	90.7%
6	Test techniques	97.6%
7	Allocation (listening)	60.5%
8	Allocation (reading)	53.5%
9	Allocation (grammar)	60.5%
10	Data analysis for tests	79.1%
11	Regular mini tests	88.4%
12	TOEIC scores of peers nationwide	81.4%
13	Willingness for receiving private tutoring	30.2%
14	Manga & illustrations	93.0%

6. Conclusion

This study, on top of completion of contents in the syllabus, integrated the TOEIC L & R test preparation guidance for freshmen non-English majors for one semester. Findings from four mini tests showed that students' overall scores have improved, with the most significant increase in the listening section. The survey showed that most students also accepted the newly designed teaching method (including manga, official TOEIC data, and test analysis). However, the changes in teaching method and scores did not seem to bring desired results in students' motivation in the TOEIC L & R test, and they did not show great interest in individual tutoring. With the survey conducted only once, it was not possible to examine changes in student attitudes. Overall, this study was effective in improving students' ability to cope with the TOEIC L & R test, although it did not produce the desired effect in alleviating students' fear of the TOEIC L & R test.

The author believe that it can be possible to motivate students from the following two aspects. First, several readjustments in the syllabus for TOEIC L & R test preparation classes should be made. According to the current syllabus, the orientation class focuses on introducing the 7 parts of the TOEIC L & R test. The last class is a mock test. The rest of the classes are devoted to the explanations of strategies for each part. The author proposes

that the orientation class should be given the most emphasis because students will not be convinced of TOEIC's significance unless they are presented with data and a pep talk. Second, the perceptions of the TOEIC L & R test among English teachers also affects how much importance students attach to the test. Without a consensus of opinion on this issue, it will result in a lack of correlation between TOEIC L & R test preparation classes and other English classes. If other teachers can make frequent references to the TOEIC L & R test in their classes, joint efforts may help strengthen students' understanding of the TOEIC L & R test.

TOEIC official data (2019) shows that more companies are adopting scores from both the IP test and the SP test (secure program /公開テスト) as one of the defining criteria during the hiring process. The number of university IP test takers was highest in the freshman year and decreased each year, while the number of university SP test takers reached its peak in the third year with test takers in the senior year on the rise. This indicates that universities and colleges devote more to the TOEIC L & R test in the first two years than the rest. However, from the students' point of view, they come to realize the importance of TOEIC scores for their career choices and income only when they have started job hunting. Therefore, it is advisable that universities offer intensive TOEIC training courses for senior students. The author's future studies will be conducted in terms of two aspects. One aspect is a continued study on non-English major freshmen, aiming to improve their English learning strategies and restore their confidence. Based on "Testing What You Teach" principle, the author plans to explore effective ways of integrating the TOEIC L & R test into a non-selective freshman course by arranging several surveys, and an experimental group and a control group. The second study will be dedicated to providing short-term intensive training for senior year students with a strong need for high scores. Due to students' individual needs, the training will be a combination of on demand and face-to-face instruction. In the on-demand section, students practice questions types for their target score range and download the corresponding vocabulary list. In the face-to-face part, the author addresses their concerns and help students work out and adjust their plans.

Notes

- 1) The TOEIC program: Listening and Reading (L & R), Speaking and Writing (S&W), and TOEIC Bridge. This study focuses on Listening and Reading (L & R), and the author refers to it as the TOEIC L & R test.
- 2) 20 cram schools and eikaiwas were chosen according to the following two rankings: 【オリコン顧客満足度】2022最新英会話教室ランキングhttps://juken.oricon.co.jp/rank_english/ [英語専門の塾・学習塾ランキング] <https://terakoya.ameba.jp/juku/ranking/000000000000100/> (Retrieved September 15, 2022)
- 3) https://www.iibc-global.org/toEIC/corpo/seminar_event/201707/01.html (Retrieved September 15, 2022)
- 4) https://www.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/kokusaikouryuu/global-suishin/GLC_TOEIC (Retrieved September

- 15, 2022)
- 5) https://www.iibc-global.org/toEIC/corpo/seminar_event/201707/02.html (Retrieved September 15, 2022)
- 6) https://www.iibc-global.org/toEIC/corpo/seminar_event/201707/03.html (Retrieved September 15, 2022)
- 7) <https://www.hokkaido.seikyoku.ne.jp/hokkai/news/news-8667/> (Retrieved September 15, 2022)

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Appendix 1

	Cram schools & Conversation schools	TOEIC	Eiken	TOEFL	Others
1	Berlitz	Test Preparation courses (lessons for less than six students & private tutoring)	Private tutoring possible	Private tutoring possible	IELTS
2	英会話イーオン	TOEIC® L & R Test Preparation courses	A track record of certificate holders		
3	ECC外語学院	Intensive TOEIC® L & R Test Preparation courses	Eiken Preparation courses	TOEFL® Test Preparation courses	
4	GABA	Test seminars; Visiting lecturer services; TOEIC® L & R TEST GABA Preparation courses		Test seminars	
5	NOVA駅前留学	TOEIC® L & R Test Preparation courses・TOEIC (R) Visiting lecturer services for universities and colleges		TOEFL® Test Preparation courses	Visiting lecturer services for corporates
6	シェーン英会話	TOEIC® L & R Test Preparation courses	Eiken Test Preparation courses		IELTS Test Preparation courses
7	トレイ式英会話	TOEIC® L & R Test Preparation courses	Eiken Test Preparation courses		TEAP
8	WiLLies ENGLISH	TOEIC® Test Preparation courses	Eiken Test Preparation courses		
9	英語専門塾 MICASA		Eiken Test Preparation courses		
10	ハピクル英語塾		Eiken Test Preparation courses for primary and middle school students		
11	KECこども英語 教室				GTEC (Junior)
12	英数塾らくだ				
13	英検スタディ		Eiken S-CBT Test Preparation courses		

14	KIDS Vacation		Small group Eiken Test Preparation courses; other classes also cover contents of EIKEN		JET (Junior)
15	グローバルLIVE 英会話				
16	英検アカデミー		Teachers are Eiken certificate holders, or previous interviewers		
17	ウィングローブ 英語塾	Adult lessons	Adult lessons		
18	トリプレット イングリッシュ スクール				
19	コア英語教室	Lessons training students with abilities good for taking the TOEIC tests	Lessons training students with abilities good for taking the Eiken tests		
20	英語塾エベレスト		Reach the level of Eiken Grade Pre-2 at the sixth year of primary school, the level of Eiken Grade 2 at the first year of middle school, and Eiken Grade 2 before senior high school.		

Appendix 2

授業アンケート

1 あなたはTOEICを受けたいと思いますか？

- とてもそう思う
- ややそう思う
- どちらでもない
- あまり思わない
- 思わない

2 とてもそう思う ややそう思う を選んだ人は、その理由を教えてください。

- 就職のため
- 収入のため
- 昇進のため
- 順位を上げるため
- 家族や友人の影響
- その他

3 どちらでもない あまり思わない 思わない を選んだ人は、その理由を教えてください。

- 就職とは関係ないから
- 英語が好きでないから
- 英語の成績がよくないから
- 時間がないから
- 一緒に勉強する人がいないから
- 金銭的理由
- その他

4 TOEICの成績と職業選択及び収入との関係表は役に立つと思いますか？

- とてもそう思う
- ややそう思う
- あまり思わない
- 思わない
- わからない

5 次回はいつTOEICを受けようと思いますか？

- 1年時
- 2年時
- 3年時
- 4年時
- わからない

6 授業中の試験対策の内容は役に立つと思いますか？

- とてもそう思う
- ややそう思う
- あまり思わない
- 思わない

わからない

7 TOEIC試験対策の配分について：リスニング指導を増やしてほしい

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

8 TOEIC試験対策の配分について：リーディングの内容を増やしてほしい

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

9 TOEIC試験対策の配分について：文法の内容を増やしてほしい

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

10 TOEIC小テスト後の試験分析（平均点、クラス内での自分の位置）は役に立っていると思いますか？

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

11 授業での定期小テストはあなたの学習にとって役に立っていると思いますか？

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

12 全国と同じ専攻の大学生の成績データはあなたの学習にとって役に立っていると思いますか？

とてもそう思う

ややそう思う

あまり思わない

思わない

わからない

13 英語学習の方法について教師の個別指導を望みますか？

- とてもそう思う
- ややそう思う
- どちらでもない
- あまり思わない
- 思わない

14 漫画や図表を用いた解説はあなたの理解にとって役に立ちますか？

- とてもそう思う
- ややそう思う
- あまり思わない
- 思わない
- わからない

Keywords: Certification Exam Guidance, TOEIC Listening & Reading Test

(Hao Jingxin)

