

An Analysis and Techniques Used for TOEIC Test Takers in Thailand

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Abstract

TOEIC test takers require several techniques in order to achieve the target score. With the limitations of TOEIC preparation, the test takers may look for shortcut techniques to achieve their goals. The current study aims to analyze TOEIC in aspects of its history, studying areas, and characteristics, as well as to provide five effective techniques used for successful TOEIC. As per listening techniques, the test takers must 1) pay special attention to the first keyword of the recordings while looking at the picture, and 2) skim the question items during the gap time before each track of recordings is being played. Regarding reading techniques, the test takers have 3) to detailly read to clarify the complex and attain the accuracy information, 4) to skim and scan the set of question items before starting reading passages; the test takers can save time, stay active, and predict the possible content of the passage. The final technique is 5) to mutually read the question items along with each paragraph of the passage to keep organized the text structures and rearrange ideas of the passage. The proposed five techniques are merely suggestions to those who have already be equipped with basic linguistic competence. Indeed, the test takers require a great deal of vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, practices, extensive reading, and prior knowledge to support their test-taking. Anyhow, further studies should more focus on the implementation of techniques used in the TOEIC preparation course.

Keywords: TOEIC, listening techniques, reading techniques

Introduction

There are different types of English standard tests in Thailand that are widely used in both private and public companies. Since the English language test is a fundamental requirement by an educational institution, leading educational institutions have attempted to create their own test with the notions of reducing the costs of the test fee and facilitate their affiliates to be able to take the English test conveniently. Non-leading institutions with limited resources, however, still cling to the standard test.

TOEIC is the standard test with the reasonableness of cost that most educational institutes used to benchmark with the CEFR. The university students are required to have at least a B2 level according to the Ministry of Education (2014); however, with low proficiency in English of university students, most universities lowered their expectation to B1 level because the majorities of university students are unable to achieve it (Waluyo, 2019; Luksup 2019). Apart from the cost reasonableness, the TOEIC score can also be beneficially used for works (Nguyen & Gu, 2020), especially being one of the requirements in recruiting employees for several universities (Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, 2018; Kalasin University; 2021). Thus, TOEIC is easily accessible and worth analyzing.

An analysis of TOEIC consists of three aspects. First, an analysis of its characteristics such as types of tests divided by its purpose, time, formats, judgment, and stakes of the test (Anderson, 1993; Elbow, 1997; Ericson et al., 2000; Ilyushina et al., 2018; Jacoby & Hollingshead, 1990; Özalp-Yaman & Çağltay, 2010; Shaban, 2014; Shepard, 1979). Second, an analysis of its history and its conversion to CEFR (Damayanti & Gafur, 2020; Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2008) helps the test takers be able to place their current English proficiency level and to continue developing their ability from that point. Finally, an analysis of TOEIC is studied with multiple areas; for example, the use of qualified teachers in teaching TOEIC (Chun, 2014; Klemsen & Seong, 2012; Mahboob, 2004), the implementation of teaching and learning approaches in enhancing TOEIC scores (Cheng, 2020; Im, 2020; Yang et al., 2020), and the involvement of interdisciplinary research studies (Chapman, 2014). These all areas have the mutual aim that is to ease the test-takers in achieving their target goal. Hence, the analysis of TOEIC gives the test takers a broader perspective, gains insight views in different preparatory processes, and provides them the best way for self-development.

As mentioned, TOEIC test takers need a lot of preparation. They may seek several techniques to achieve their target score. In an EFL context, the English language exposure is considered low by nature. As evidenced by the study of Al Zoubi (2018) that English language exposure significantly correlates with the development of English language skills. If EFL learners get exposed to a little piece of linguistic knowledge, their English language development will be relatively low. Thus, the majority problem is about the time of exposure. Less time in English exposure means less time in preparation for English tests. The university students are likely to have insufficient time to expose, practice, and prepare for the English proficiency test. Consequently, less practice may turn the unsatisfied TOEIC score. Alternative techniques may be the shortcuts for them in TOEIC test preparation.

Apart from teaching the piece of knowledge, the previous studies also indicated that the strategy instruction must also be done with the university students. One study claimed that weak learners may need to be taught about learning strategies (MacArthur, 2012), and another study found that EFL students employed metacognitive strategies in learning a language the most (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). Talking about strategies or techniques, there are a number of strategies used for Language learning, which will be further explained in the literature review.

Hence, TOEIC test takers may require specific techniques in order to meet their goals. Several techniques can be proposed by several scholars; however, only particular techniques can be employed for the TOEIC test. Thus, this current study aims 1) to analyze the TOEIC Listening and Reading Test offered by ETS and 2) to investigate the effective techniques used for TOEIC test-takers in Thailand. The study will be useful for both test takers and the language teachers in preparing TOEIC course. They can employ these techniques in the course design. The proposed techniques can also be beneficial for not only the university students majoring in the English language, but also for general people willing to take the TOEIC in near future.

Literature Review

English Proficiency Tests in Thailand

There are several types of English tests of proficiency available in Thailand. The test scores can be used for higher education as well as future career purposes. Regarding tertiary

education, undergraduate and graduate students must meet their English proficiency standard before graduating from the program. The standard tests employing over the globe includes TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc. Anyhow, due to the limitation in terms of the test fees and convenience, a number of leading universities have created their own testing systems for their students. For example, all top eight universities in Thailand, according to the QS World University Ranking 2021 (University Rankings.ch, 2021), created their own tests such as CU-TEP offered by Chulalongkorn University, MU GRAD TEST found by Mahidol University, TU-GET provided by Thammasat University, CMU eTEGS presented by Chiang Mai University, KU-EPT given by Kasetsart University, KEPT-Exit and KKU ALET recommended by Khon Kaen University, TETET shown by King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, and PSU-TEP suggested by Prince of Songkla University. Compared with the undergraduate studies, all postgraduate students compulsorily need to meet the English standard, in which the target scores will be higher than the undergraduate level. Nevertheless, since the inability to create their own test of the non-leading universities, the majority of them still clings onto the standard tests as such TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS depending on the test takers' preferences. Different tests provide different formats and platforms; however, the current study would like to focus on TOEIC *per se*.

TOEIC has been widely used and accepted as an exit exam by EFL countries. Take Vietnam as an example, it suggested that it is not only to assure the graduates' quality, but it is also to assist teachers in narrowing the teaching content, which will be beneficial for the graduates' future works (Nguyen & Gu, 2020). According to the Ministry of Education, Thailand (2014), the undergraduates must have a B2 level of CEFR, which is equivalent to TOEIC 785. However, it seems impossible since research studies showed that Thai university students were at the levels of A1 and A2 only (Waluyo, 2019; Luksup 2019). Hence, several universities have decreased their expectation from the B2 to B1 level of CEFR (TOEIC = 550). TOEIC score can be used for both educational and professional purposes. In an aspect of education, TOEIC is the cheapest standard test compared with TOEFL or IELTS. Its format, as a multiple-choice test, is easy and practical for general students. The test-takers will be familiar with this type of test format the most. Hence, it is why many universities, without having their own testing system, decided to choose TOEIC to benchmark with the B1 level of CEFR.

TOEIC can be useful for future career purposes, though some private companies do not require an English test score, the employees can be advantaged from an extra income or notably recognized in career progress. Specifically, it is undeniable that educational careers

require good commands in English. As you can see that all educational institutions require all applicants to have English test scores from the very beginning step of the recruitment process. As noticed in an announcement of the English Proficiency Standard, they may use various types of tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL (Paper-based, Computer-based, Internet-based), IELTS (academic module), TU-GET, CU-TEP, or the institution's own testing system, and TOEIC is certainly one of them (Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, 2018; Kalasin University; 2021).

Learning Strategies and Techniques

Arunrueng (2014) has summarized Oxford's 1990 language learning strategies as the following figure.

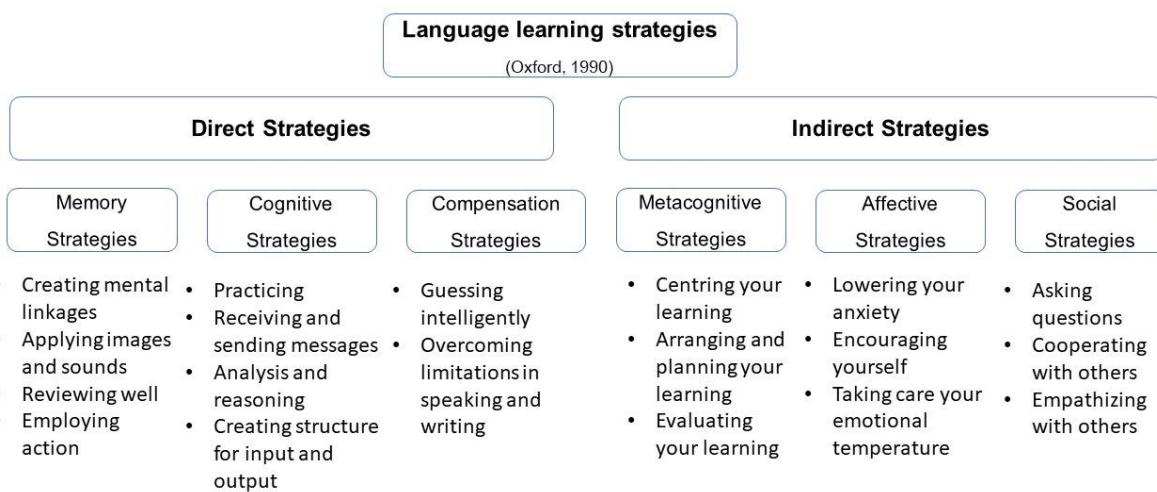


Figure 1 Language learning strategies

According to Figure 1, the test takers can employ a number of techniques during the TOEIC preparation both direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies consist of memorization, cognition, and compensation, while indirect strategies include metacognition, affection, and sociality. However, during the TOEIC test-taking, only particular techniques and strategies can be employed due to the limitation of time. Take the memory strategies as examples, the creation of mental linkages between prior and new knowledge and the application of images and sounds can be used for TOEIC. Whilst, cooperating with other underlying social strategies cannot be used. Thus, only particular techniques of language learning strategies can be employed during the test.

Techniques and strategies for test-taking

Fauzi (2020) studied EFL students' perception of TOEIC practice and mentioned successful listening strategies proposed by Lougheed (2009). There are several techniques for the TOEIC listening test as shown in the below table.

Table 1 Techniques for TOEIC listening section

Techniques for TOEIC listening section			
Part 1 Photographs	Part 2 Question and Response	Part 3 Short Conversation	Part 4. Short Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze photos ● Differentiate similar sounds ● Making inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distinguish types of questions (Wh-question vs yes/no) ● Specify words with the same pronunciation ● Notice negative meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Search for the main idea ● Comprehend the questions ● Understand modal verbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen for wh-questions ● Follow the chronological order ● Make an inference

In Thailand, there are examples of techniques used in Thai EFL test-takers during the TOEIC listening test that are the top-down and bottom-up strategies proposed by Maliwan (2020), it is proved that both techniques effectively enhance test takers scores. It is found that the bottom-up technique, defined as detailly listening content as well as identifying the synonym of particular words, helps to promote detailed oriented skills for the test takers. Also, the top-down technique, defined as listening to the gist and overall understanding of the recordings, successfully supports test takers' listening comprehension.

As per reading techniques, Wannathong and Danvivath (2020) implemented the instructional model consisting of five reading strategies: principles, objectives, content, steps, and assessment. Interestingly, the techniques used in the steps of reading such as activating prior knowledge, modeling, sharing, and reflecting on the reading text were employed along with cognitive and metacognitive strategies. All these can improve the participants' reading

ability. Another technique found to be effective in enhancing reading ability is mind-mapping as proposed by Samonlux and Timwilai (2020). It stated that it is not only enhancing the reading ability but also motivating the continue of reading. However, the rules and regulations of TOEIC indicated that test takers are not allowed to write anything into the paper. Thus, it potentially impossible to draw a diagram or mind mapping.

This current study, however, fills the gap of the previous studies that collecting the effective techniques used for the Thai EFL context, selectively choose the possible techniques that can use during taking TOEIC. Thus, the techniques that the test takers bringing into the testing room should be concise, practical, and worth your time.

Research Method

The current study is qualitative research about an analysis of the TOEIC test as well as the techniques used for the TOEIC test-takers in Thailand as an EFL context. Both primary and secondary data were collected, and the ideas were proposed. To analyze the TOEIC test, the document named, 'Sample Tests of TOEIC Listening & Reading Test' provided by ETS is used as primary data. Its elements were then analyzed through descriptive analysis. After that, the techniques were proposed and supported by the secondary data through the evidence and relevant previous studies. Though the focuses are mainly on the analysis and techniques of TOEIC; however, other relevant factors are also reviewed.

Results

An Analysis of TOEIC

1. Characteristics of TOEIC listening and reading test

Types of tests can be divided by purposes, times of tests, delivering formats, judgments, and stakes of tests. First, types of tests by purposes include proficiency test, achievement test, language-specific purpose test, diagnostic test, and placement test (Anderson, 1993). TOEIC, however, is perceived as a proficiency test. Second, types of tests by the time of tests consist of formative tests, summative tests, and portfolios (Ericson et al., 2000). TOEIC is likely to weigh more on the summative test rather than the formative test.

Third, types of tests by delivering formats can be either paper-based test or computer-based test (Özalp-Yaman & Çağıltay, 2010). TOEIC employed both delivering formats; the paper-based test is seen in an answer sheet, and computer-based tests can be found in the listening part in TOEIC. Forth, types of tests by the judgment of performance include objective vs subjective test (Shaban, 2014), direct vs indirect test (Jacoby & Hollingshead, 1990), norm-referenced vs criterion-referenced tests (Shepard, 1979), and self-assessment vs peer-assessment (Ilyushina et al., 2018). TOEIC is obviously an objective and criterion-referenced test. Finally, types of tests by stakes of tests include high-stakes tests and low-stakes tests (Elbow, 1997), in which the test takers need to decide how much TOEIC is important for them.

2. The History of TOEIC and its Conversion to CEFR level.

TOEIC is abbreviated from the Test of English for International Communication originally offered by ETS® (Educational Testing Service). The test is about various situations in international working circumstances (Exam English. (2021). There are actually three programs of TOEIC; TOEIC listening and reading test, TOEIC speaking and writing tests, and TOEIC Bridge Test. (Educational Testing Service, 2021). In Thailand, there is only the TOEIC listening and reading test, which is administered by the Center for Professional Assessment (Thailand). The CPA (Thailand) Offices are currently located in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Moreover, the upcountry test-hosting services can be arranged on a case-by-case basis, for example, TOEIC by HUSO KKU as located in Khon Kaen Province (Khon Kaen University, 2021) and MSU TOEIC as located in Maha Sarakham Province (Mahasarakham University, 2021).

TOEIC listening and reading test is a paper-based test, in which the test takers are required to complete two hundred multiple-choice items: 100 items for listening, and another 100 items for reading. There are forty-five minutes and seventy-five minutes for the listening and reading sections respectively (Educational Testing Service, 2021). Thus, the test takers have less than a minute per item. The below table presents detailed information about each part of TOEIC.

Table 2 The detailed information about each part of the TOEIC listening and reading test.

Listening	Number of items	Number of items	
		(Old TOEIC)	(New TOEIC)
Part 1. Photographs	45	10	6
Part 2. Question-Response	minutes	30	25
Part 3. Conversations		30	39
Part 4. Short Talks		30	30
Reading			
Part 5. Incomplete Sentences	75	40	30
Part 6. Text Completion	minutes	12	16
Part 7. Reading Comprehension		48	54
- Single passages		(28)	(29)
- Multiple passages		(20)	(25)

According to Table 2, the listening section comprises four parts: photographs, question-response, conversation, and short talks. The reading section includes three parts: incomplete sentences, text completion, and reading comprehension. Recently, there was an update regarding the number of items in each part. It is also found that new TOEIC tentatively increased the numbers of difficult test items while reducing the number of easy test items, which implies that new TOEIC is more difficult to earn scores than the old one. (Cid et al., 2017; Kanzaki (2018)

The TOEIC score is various from 10 up to 990. It can be divided into six different levels. First, the score between 905-990 (91%-100%) is considered as International Professional Proficiency, in which the test takers will be able to use English in all circumstances. Second, the score between 785-900 (79%-90%) is considered as Working Proficiency Plus, in which the test takers can meet the general work requirements. Third, the score between 605-780 (61%-78%) is considered as Limited Working Proficiency, in which the test takers can respond to limited social desires and required works. Forth, the score between 405-600 (41%-60%) is considered as Elementary Proficiency Plus, in which the test takers can start the predictable dialogue. Fifth, the score between 255-400 (26%-40%) is considered as Elementary Proficiency, in which the test takers can functionally speak with familiar face-to-face topics. Lastly, the

score between 10-250 (0%-25%) is considered as Basic Proficiency, in which the test takers can survive the instant desire (Waikato Institute of Education. (2021).

According to the Council of Europe (2020), it roughly provides the global scale of common reference levels, which are three different types of users: basic user, independent user, and proficient user. Basic user includes A1 and A2 levels of CEFR, independent user consists of B1 and B2 levels of CEFR, and a proficient user comprises C1 and C2 levels of CEFR. In 2008, the TOEIC was mapped on the CEFR level by ETS. Tannenbaum and Wylie (2008) illustrated TOEIC listening section into five levels of CEFR: A1 = 60, A2 = 110, B1 = 275, B2 = 400, and C1 = 490. Whilst the reading section were also divided into four levels of CEFR: A1 = 60, A2 = 115, B1 = 275, B2 = 385, and C1 = 455. In 2020, TOEIC can be obviously separated into six different levels; novice, elementary, intermediate, basic working proficiency, advance professional proficiency, and general professional proficiency, in which the ranges of the scores are 10-250, 225-400, 405-600, 605-780, 785-900, and 905-990 respectively (Damayanti & Gafur, 2020). The following table shows the TOEIC score conversion to the CEFR level.

Table 3 TOEIC Score conversion to CEFR

CEFR Level	TOEIC Score		TOEIC Score (Damayanti & Gafur, 2020).
	Listening section	Reading section	
C2	-	-	-
C1	490	455	945-990
B2	400	385	785-940
B1	275	275	550-780
A2	110	115	225-545
A1	60	60	120-220

Table 3 illustrates the TOEIC score conversion into CEFR level by separating the listening section, reading section, and overall score. Interestingly, in case test takers have the same scores of listening and reading sections, they will be placed on different CEFR levels. The overall score, however, provides the ranges of scores that the test takers may be in.

Indeed, the test takers can estimate their overall level of CEFR by equalizing the range of their TOEIC score as provided in the overall score column.

3. TOEIC and multi-area studies

The previous studies show that TOEIC has been studied by different dimensions. First, scholars investigated TOEIC through the issues about the most effective ways in teaching TOEIC between using native teachers or non-native teachers. In 2004, there was a study about the students' perception towards non-native teachers and native teachers in teaching TOEIC. The result showed that non-native teachers were preferable due to the administration's bias and students' preferences. (Mahboob, 2004). In 2012, there was a study about teaching TOEIC using either native teachers or Korean teachers. The results showed that native and non-native teachers provided the same opportunity in successfully achieving the target score. Anyhow, the students will be beneficial from the non-native teacher in case of having short-time preparation. With plenty of time, the native teachers are likely to be advantaged (Klemsen & Seong, 2012). In 2014, there was a study about EFL learners' beliefs about native and non-native English-speaking teachers. The result showed both native and non-native speakers can be beneficial for the students. Native teachers support the students' linguistic competence, while non-native teachers support students' psychological perspectives (Chun, 2014).

Second, TOEIC has been studied with several teaching and learning approaches, one of them is the Blended Learning approach. There was a study about the effects of Blended Learning on university students' TOEIC Achievement. The results show that despite the inexperience of the blended-learning approach, the students are satisfied with using the Blended Learning approach. Both online and onsite learning methods are provided by the teachers. At the initial stage, the online learning method was found to be problematic than the onsite learning method (Im, 2020). Another study employed a Game-based Learning approach in building TOEIC vocabulary size. The result showed that the students had positive attitudes, was highly motivated, showed greater confidence, and enhanced learning outcomes (Cheng, 2020; Yang et al., 2020).

Third, TOEIC has also studied other disciplinary areas apart from the linguistic field, such as critical thinking skills. There was a study about critical thinking and TOEIC. It concludes that students are required to be equipped with CT-based skills for an interpretation of the contents and choices found in the TOEIC listening and reading test. They need to critically

guess, recognize patterns, manage time, and practices to gain more techniques in order to attain their TOEIC score (Chapman, 2014).

In brief, TOEIC has been studied in multiple areas with one mutual aim, which is to support test takers to achieve their target scores. As you can see that the scholars tried to employ ways in promoting TOEIC scores by either focusing on the teachers, teaching and learning approaches, and involvement of interdisciplinary research in order to enhance the test takers' TOEIC scores. With the same aim, the current study collected all aspects of TOEIC research studies to deliberately cover all potential techniques used for the success of TOEIC test takers.

Techniques used for TOEIC listening and reading test

1. Techniques used for TOEIC Listening section

According to Table 1, there are two main sections: listening and reading. Regarding the listening section, there are four parts: photographs, question-response, conversation, and short talks. The following details explain each type of test and technique used.

Part 1 photographs. There will be six items the test takers have to look at the provided pictures and choose one best answer for each. The recording normally speaks at normal speaking speed, in which non-native speakers can perceive it very fast. Then, the first technique is to catch up with the very first keyword of the sentence such as *what, where, when, why, how*, etc. while looking at each picture. This technique relates to the usage of dual skills: listening to the recording and noticing what is in the picture. The previous study showed that EFL listeners faced three major problems when listening to the English language: unfamiliar words, high speaking rate, and the linking sounds between words (Ai-hua, 2013). Another study also reported the EFL listeners found it difficult for the regional accent, high speaking rate and listening only one time. Moreover, jokes and cultures can somehow prevent the EFL listeners' comprehension (Khamprated, 2012). Among the speaking rate, and other difficulties, if the test takers can pay special attention to the beginning of the words, it will be a good start to pick up other upcoming sounds. Though it might seem to be the easiest part of the test; however, neglect of catching up with the first keywords might reduce the TOEIC total score.

Part 2 is question-response. The test takers have to listen to twenty-five question items and choose one best answer for each. There are no photographs provided. Hence, it is important to listening carefully. The first techniques can be still useful.

Part 3 is the conversation. There are thirty-nine items the test takers must listen to the conversations of the multiple speakers. Indeed, the test takers require to complete three-question items for one conversation. Moreover, the new TOEIC may supply the figures for some set of questions as well. The test takers have to see if the figures go along or go against the recordings or not. The second technique is to skim a set of three questions and their choices to see what it is about before the conversation starts. This technique helps the test takers utilize time during the pause of the recordings, or the transition of each part of the listening test. Skimming also supports timesaving. Recently, there is an invention of automatic skimming proposed by Dey and Jain (2020). They come up with the “Quick info”, which is the automatic skimming button for the users, which helps the readers quickly access the information, save their time, and ease their decision-making. Hence, this technique is not only timesaving but skimming the set of questions and their choices also helps to predict the potentials conversation of the upcoming recordings.

Part 4 is short talks. There are thirty items the test takers have to listen to and choose the best choice. This part is similar to Part 3; however, only a single speaker provides the information. Still, the test takers need to complete three questions after each talk. The skimming technique can still be employed as additional figures can be found.

To conclude, the listening test is certainly a multiple-choice test, in which the test takers listen to the recordings and choose the best answer for each question. The information transfer test can also be found a little from the photos and figures provided along with the recordings. Thus, there are two techniques used for the listening sections which are 1) to catch up on the first keyword, and 2) to skim the set of questions before listening to the recordings.

2. Techniques used for TOEIC Reading section.

A previous study reviewed that reading has been problematic in Thailand. Chawwang (2008) indicated that there are three areas of reading problems in Thai students: English structure, vocabulary, and comprehension. In 2012, the research also reviewed another main reading problem such as word unfamiliarities such as technical terms, and the complexity and long length of the sentence, in which the students employed two reading strategies: memory

and cognitive strategies (Pangsapa, 2021). In 2015, the research also showed that students also employed comprehension strategies, memory strategies, retrieval strategies, global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies in reading as well (Kasemsap, 2015; Tantawat & Suksiripakonchai, 2019). Recently, conducted the reading strategies that teacher normally employed in their classroom such as generating questions, answering questions, guiding on how to use a dictionary, predicting skills, monitoring comprehension, skimming, scanning, and summarizing. These reading strategies help students to comprehend the difficult text (Wibowo, 2020). However, due to the specific format of TOEIC, some strategies can be employed only. Regarding the reading section, there are three parts incomplete sentence, text completion, and reading comprehension. The following details explain each type of test and technique used.

Part 5 is incomplete sentences. There are thirty items the test takers need to fill in the missing words or phrases for the sentences. The reading test can measure the test-takers about grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, transition words, and overall comprehension of texts.

Part 6 is text completion, which is sixteen items. The test-takers need to select the words, phrases, sentences that are missing from the paragraphs. This type of test format is popularly called the rational cloze test. Similarly, grammar, vocabulary, and overall comprehension of texts are assessed. The third technique is detailed reading. Part five and six do not contain much text, and the focus weighs more on the accuracy of the statement. The technique of detailed reading or close reading is required an analytical skill since the test takers need to be sensible to the language used by the authors (Козак, 2011). This technique can be applied in other reading parts when the passages get complex and confused. Nevertheless, the detailed reading is time-consuming. Time should also be carefully spent.

Part 7 is reading comprehension of the single, double, and triple passages. Multiple passages are provided, and the test-takers need to answer the fifty-four questions. There will be 2-5 question items per passage. The level of text difficulty is gradually increased, and the length of the passage is getting longer and longer. For short and easy passages, it is specifically focusing on overall comprehension that the test takers need to transfer knowledge from the passages to the question items. The fourth technique is to skim and scan the set of question items before reading the text. Skimming the questions helps the test takers to know what the question is about, while scanning makes you search for the particular keywords in the question that relates to the text. The previous research study confirmed that skimming and scanning

make the readers got better scores in the reading test compared with the control group (Lana Nofelia H.U, et al., 2015). Skimming and scanning also make the students to be active when participating in the classroom activities as well as achieve the reading learning process (Blitary, 2016). As mentioned, skimming and scanning can be a time-saving method for test-taking. However, skimming can help improve students' reading ability in terms of grammatical features, conjunctions, and tenses as well (Dhillon et al., 2020). Plus, skimming and scanning the questions can also predict the potential directions of the passage leading to an ability to guess the potential answer.

With an increase in the length of passages and the difficulty level, the use of the previous technique maybe not sufficient. Thus, the fifth technique is to read the question items along with each paragraph of the reading passage. An idea of breaking down a passage into smaller paragraphs makes the passages be manageable as supported by the previous studies that breaking down the whole piece of the overwhelmed task into smaller pieces, makes the task manageable and accurately done. Moreover, breaking tasks into microtasks can increase the quality of the outcome as well (Cheng, 2015; Whitacre, 2020). Hence, it is clearly seen that it not only supports the test takers' time management, but it also helps the test takers to rearrange the ideas while completing the question items. When test-takers are well-organized, they are likely to be more understanding of the reading passage as evidenced by the research studies that an organizational strategy can increase comprehension (Clewell & Haidemos, 1987). Whilst, both external (heading, subheading, etc.) and internal organization (structure of ideas) are important (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2020). Anyhow, as mentioned, the level of difficulty is gradually increased. Employment of skimming and scanning methods can make the test takers get confused. The test takers can switch to detailed reading anytime they feel stuck or confused.

To sum up, the reading test is obviously a multiple-choice and an information transfer test. The test takers must read the text, comprehend, critically choose the most appropriate choice. The advantages of information transfer tests are realistic and suitable for testing comprehension, but its disadvantages involve cultural and educational biases and the complexion of the tasks (Riabtseva et al., 2004). Hence, there are three more techniques introduced from the reading section; 1) to detailly read whereas the accuracy and complexity exist especially issues of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, 2) to skim and scan the questions before going through the reading the text, in which this actively timesaving

technique can help predict the possible answer for the question, and 3) to read the questions along with the reading passages makes the reading passage be manageable and increases the quality and accuracy of comprehension.

Additional factors influencing TOEIC listening and reading test

There is literally no shortcut to being master in the English language, the proposed five techniques earlier can partially help test-takers in achieving their target score; however, other factors are supporting the successful TOEIC test-taking such as vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, practicing, extensive reading, and prior knowledge.

First, vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of tests. Vocabulary is an important component in creating the sentence. As known, to be able to read comprehensibly, the L2 learners should know around 95-98 percent to understand the reading text (Schmitt & Grabe, 2011). Vocabulary knowledge gives learners a wide capability in well-organized writing as well as understand the statement clearly (Viera, 2017). Knowing the only vocabulary is likely to partially succeed in communication. That is the reason why there are plenty of commercial books over the shelves about TOEIC vocabulary. Take Barron's vocabulary, for example, Lougheed (2008) gathered Barron's 600 essential words for TOEIC, which are categorized into ten areas: general business, office issues, personnel, purchasing, financing & budgeting, management issue, restaurant & event, travel, entertainment, and health. (Lougheed, 2008)

Second, English grammatical knowledge seems to be problematic for EFL learners, and a lot of scholars try to invent the most effective teaching methods to solve it (Matkasimova & Makhmudov, 2020). Obviously, grammars help EFL learners in revising and improving their writing, and a piece of English language can be acquired unconsciously. However, grammatical knowledge acts as solid ground in referencing when linguistic becomes ambiguous (Debata, 2013). Since English structure differs from a mother tongue; hence, EFL learners require sufficient drills and exercises in order to be mastery in English grammars (Debata, 2014). Thus, TOEIC test-takers will strong grammatical knowledge will be able to gain scores as expected.

Third, practices can be either reading practice, TOEIC test practice, or time-management practice. These are all required for TOEIC test takers. The more practicing, the perfect you become. As suggested by Al Zoubi (2018), the EFL learners need to expose to the English language such as reading different kinds of books such as magazines and newspapers, listening to the radio, watching movies, surfing the internet, and practicing conversation with

the native speakers. This basic suggestion from Al Zoubi (2018) is all found and sufficient in TOEIC practices. Moreover, ETS provides four preparation tips that the test takers can do in everyday life. First, listening to authentic materials such as music, podcast, TV programs. The listening practice will allow the test takers to acquire new words, be familiar with the tonation of the sentences. Second, reading authentic materials like news by starting at your preferences and English level. Third, the usage of English in daily life in any form will indirectly obtain general English language skills. Finally, ETS suggested the test takers write a diary every day and read it; consequently, the test-takers will be able to think in the target language rather than translating into their mother tongue (Educational Testing Service, 2021).

Forth, extensive reading means to read a lot of materials freely and quietly with different reading abilities, in which graded reading is being used (Nation & Waring, 2020). Thus, it is not only the topics you like or are familiar with but also the topics that can be potentially found in TOEIC. This helps broaden your new knowledge and new perspectives that you may not have known before. Anyhow, the self-implementation of extensive reading creates a number of problems such as being unenjoyed and getting difficulty in gaining knowledge from extensive reading (Martina et al., 2020). Yet, if it is implemented appropriately and effectively, the learners will be more motivated, more understandable, and led to critical thinking (Aliponga, 2013).

Finally, prior knowledge helps the test takers get some hints in deriving new knowledge (David, 2017). There is a study about the two-type prior knowledge: declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge and found that learners' achievement is greater when implementing prior knowledge from the former course. The teachers should include prior knowledge in designing instruction and planning the curriculum for learners' benefits (Hailikari et al., 2008). Hence, it implies that prior knowledge is important for TOEIC test-takers in linking new knowledge with the prior knowledge so that they have a deeper understanding and clearer picture of the relevant matters.

Apart from positive factors, there are a number of adverse factors preventing test takers from successfully achieving the target scores such as stress, anxiety, psychological aspects, and bad time management. Especially as an aspect of anxiety, it is found that anxiety affects TOEIC test takers' reading ability, especially in high achievement groups in particular. Moreover, the test takers with no confidence in reading have negatively influenced their anxiety (Ju, 2020).

Conclusion and Discussion

An analysis of TOEIC found that, despite the creation of the English testing system provided by leading universities in Thailand, TOEIC is still being popularly used by the majority of non-leading universities. There are actually three types of TOEIC, in which Thailand has only one type: TOEIC Listening and Reading test. New TOEIC is tentatively to be more difficult than the old one. Most question items assess the test takers listening and reading skills; however, the information transfer test is hidden, in which the test takers need to deliberately interpret within a limited time before selecting the most suitable choice. TOEIC has been studied in a number of areas such as an aspect of instruction, various types of teaching and learning approaches, and interdisciplinary research. TOEIC is perceived as a proficiency test due to its purpose, and it weighs more on the summative test rather than the formative test. It is both a paper-based and a computer-based test. It is likely to be an objective test and criterion-referenced test. TOEIC can be a high-stake test in which the test takers required a high score for their work path.

There are five techniques used for successful TOEIC test takers. Regarding the listening section, first, the test takers need to catch up on the very first keywords of the sentences that normally question words (such as what, where, when, why, how, etc.) while looking at the pictures or figures of the question items. This technique can be helpful for part 1 (photographs) and part 2 (question-responses). Second, the test takers must skim the set of questions before the recording is being played. It helps test takers having more time during the gap of question items as well as being able to predict the potentials conversation of the upcoming recordings. This technique can be helpful for part 3 (conversation) and part 4 (short talks). As to the reading section, the third technique is detailed reading. This technique works best for the reading test that requires accuracy of the information and analytical skills. This technique can be essential for part 5 (incomplete sentence), part 6 (text completion), and any parts that need clarification of the complex information. The fourth technique is to skim and scan the set of question items before reading the passage. It helps the test takers to search for particular words in the questions as well as relate them with the reading passage. Skimming and scanning make readers save time, stay active, improve reading ability, and being able to predict the content of the passage. This technique works for part 7 (reading comprehension). The last technique is to read the question items along with each paragraph of the reading passage. When breaking a passage into paragraphs, the test takers feel manageable and increase the

accuracy and quality of the information. Consequently, it not only helps the test takers save time but also reorganizes text structures and ideas of the passage. This technique also works best for part 7 (reading comprehension). However, test takers can switch to the detailed reading techniques anytime they feel stuck, confused, and overwhelmed. The summarized techniques can be illustrated in the following figures.

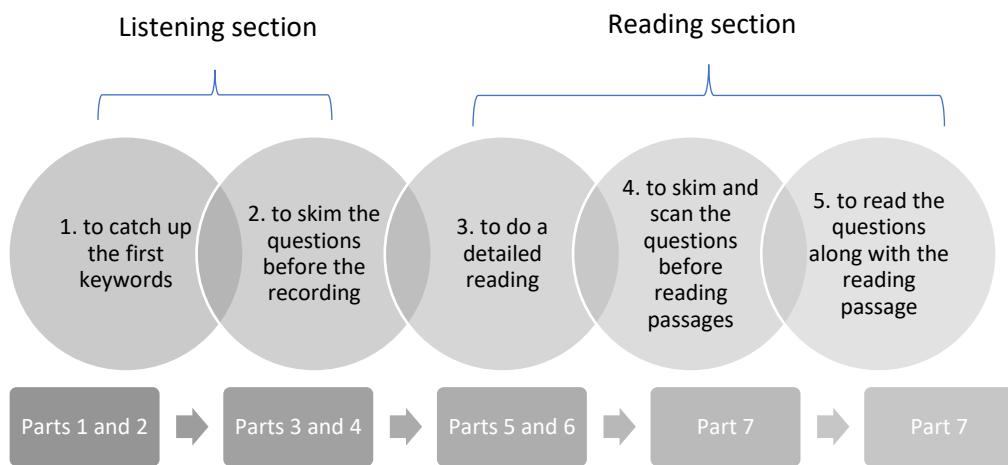


Figure 2 Techniques used for seven parts of TOEIC listening and reading test

Anyhow, the proposed five techniques are merely supportive factors in elevating successful TOEIC test-takers, who have already known some pieces of linguistic knowledge. There are also additional important factors promoting test takers to well prepare before the test-taking such as to know the words meaning, to master the language structure, to keep practicing, to extend their knowledge through extensive reading, and to have general knowledge of particular matters. Whilst the performance of the test takers may interfere with adverse factors like being stressful, anxious, panic, disorganized, etc. Thus, the test takers must restrain their positive factors while employing techniques during taking the test.

Suggestion for further studies

This current study was conducted based on the primary data *per se*, the further studies should be made through both primary and secondary data. Plus, the systematic implementation into actual TOEIC preparatory classes would bring benefits to the students or the potential TOEIC test takers. Since this current study explored the techniques used for TOEIC, an expansion of techniques used for other types of tests may be fulfilled and brought about vital distribution to the area of linguistics.

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