

The Impact of TOEIC Practice Tests on The English Proficiency Performance of Graduating Students at St Teresa International University, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

As English continues to serve as a global medium of communication in academic, business, and professional contexts, language proficiency assessments such as the TOEIC have become increasingly important, particularly for university students seeking to enhance their employability. This study examined the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in preparing graduating students at St Teresa International University for the actual TOEIC examination. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 148 graduating students through a structured questionnaire. Findings revealed that the TOEIC practice tests were perceived as highly effective, with an overall weighted mean of 3.98, and participants reported improvements in time management, test-taking strategies, familiarity with the examination format, confidence, and reduced anxiety. Statistical analysis further indicated no significant relationship between students' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of the tests' effectiveness ($p > 0.05$). Despite these positive outcomes, challenges in listening comprehension remained evident, particularly in understanding unfamiliar accents, as reported by 73.60% of respondents. The study concludes that TOEIC practice tests play a significant role in enhancing students' readiness for the examination; however, variations in academic background, socioeconomic status, and prior language-learning experiences highlight the need for more targeted instructional interventions. These findings support the continued integration of TOEIC practice tests into university preparation programs while emphasizing the need to refine support strategies and conduct further research into their impact on actual TOEIC performance.

Keywords: TOEIC, practice tests, language proficiency, graduating students, test-taking strategies

INTRODUCTION

As global connections continue to expand, the need for a shared language to support communication across countries and professional fields has become more pronounced. This is especially true in areas such as business, healthcare, education, and international relations, where clear communication is essential. English has taken on this role, serving as a common language

among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Its broad use across various settings highlights its flexibility and practical value, making English proficiency an important skill, particularly in countries where it is not the primary language, such as the Philippines and Thailand.

Language proficiency is generally understood as the ability to use a language effectively to carry out specific communicative tasks (Language Testing International, n.d.). In practical terms, this means being able to use the language appropriately in real-life situations. Developing this ability involves not only learning the structural aspects of a language such as grammar, vocabulary, and syntax but also applying this knowledge through the combined use of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. As Dungal (2023) explains, proficiency develops over time through consistent practice and active use of the language in different contexts.

Because of its importance, language proficiency is commonly assessed through standardized testing. A variety of English proficiency tests are used worldwide, particularly in countries where English is learned as a second or foreign language. Among these, the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is widely used due to its focus on English in workplace settings, making it especially relevant for career-related purposes.

The TOEIC Listening and Reading test, with a maximum score of 990, is designed to evaluate English skills required in professional environments. This focus sets it apart from other tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which are more commonly associated with academic study or migration. In contrast, the TOEIC emphasizes practical workplace communication skills and is often used for hiring, promotion, and internship applications (Santa, 2021).

In Thailand, the Center for Professional Assessment Thailand (CPA Thailand) has been responsible for administering the TOEIC for more than 30 years. Over time, the test has become a widely accepted measure of English proficiency among graduates and job seekers. In response to national higher education policies, St Teresa International University in Nakhon Nayok has introduced a structured TOEIC preparation program to help students meet these requirements. The program offers structured training and regular practice, consistent with research indicating that consistent, focused preparation can improve test performance (Berdina, 2023).

Despite these initiatives, many Thai students still face difficulties in developing strong English skills. Limited exposure to the language and its use mainly as a foreign language often hinder progress, leading to lower performance on standardized tests. These challenges suggest the need for more effective and context-sensitive approaches to language teaching and test preparation.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in improving the performance of graduating students at St Teresa International University. It also seeks to identify strategies to enhance TOEIC scores and overall English proficiency, contributing to ongoing efforts to strengthen language education in similar contexts.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine how TOEIC practice tests influence the performance of graduating students at St Teresa International University. It also sought to identify strategies that may help improve both TOEIC results and overall English proficiency.

Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the students in terms of age, sex, major, family income, training, region, and English grades?
2. How effective are TOEIC practice tests in terms of time management, preparation, familiarity, and reading and listening strategies?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the effectiveness of the practice tests and the students' profile variables?
4. What challenges do students experience when taking TOEIC practice tests?
5. What action plan can be proposed based on the findings?

Scope and Delimitations

This study explores how TOEIC practice tests support the performance of graduating students at St Teresa International University in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand, with a focus on students' views of how these tests contribute to their readiness, particularly in terms of time management, test-taking strategies, and familiarity with the exam format. It also examines selected demographic factors, including age, sex, academic program, and prior attendance at TOEIC preparation sessions, to determine whether they are related to how students perceive the effectiveness of the practice tests. The study involved 148 graduating students who participated in the TOEIC preparation program and completed a structured questionnaire. It is based primarily on self-reported responses and does not include comparisons with actual TOEIC scores or official test results. Since the research is limited to one institution, the findings may not fully apply to other contexts, and factors such as teaching approaches, instructor differences, and external learning resources are not covered in the study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature reviewed in this study establishes a basis for understanding several interrelated concepts, including English as a global language, the role of TOEIC, the use of practice tests, the development of language proficiency, and the impact of learners' attitudes and regular practice. Together, these ideas shape the assumptions and overall direction of the present research.

English serves as a major means of communication in many non-English-speaking contexts, including Thailand, where it is important in both academic and professional settings (Puengpipattrakul et al., 2007). In line with recent educational reforms, Thai universities require students to achieve certain levels of English proficiency, often guided by frameworks such as

the CEFR, before they graduate (Wudthayagorn, 2021). Within this context, TOEIC has become one of the commonly used assessment tools in higher education.

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), introduced in 1979, is widely recognized for assessing practical English communication skills, especially those needed in workplace environments (ETS, 2015a, 2016a; Powers & Powers, 2015; Hteok & Cheng, 2019). In addition to measuring proficiency, TOEIC is also applied in employment processes, promotion decisions, curriculum design, and tracking learners' progress over time (Yuliant, 2011; Damayanti & Gafur, 2020).

Across countries, TOEIC has been incorporated into higher education either as a graduation requirement or as a placement mechanism. Research conducted in Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia, and Taiwan shows that the test is widely used to gauge students' preparedness for participation in the global workforce (Park et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2015; Robson, 2018; Setiawan et al., 2020; Shih, 2009; Hsieh, 2017). Its continued adoption reflects the growing importance of English proficiency in both academic and professional domains (Schedl, 2010; Fachriyah & Badriyah, 2023).

Using TOEIC as an exit examination supports institutional goals related to maintaining academic standards and improving graduate employability (Aniley, 2022; Marsidi, 2021; Hunduma & Seyoum, 2023). Nevertheless, some researchers argue that exit examinations alone may not provide a complete picture of students' language abilities, highlighting the need for additional instructional and assessment approaches (Humphreys & Gribble, 2013; Arkoudis & Doughney, 2014).

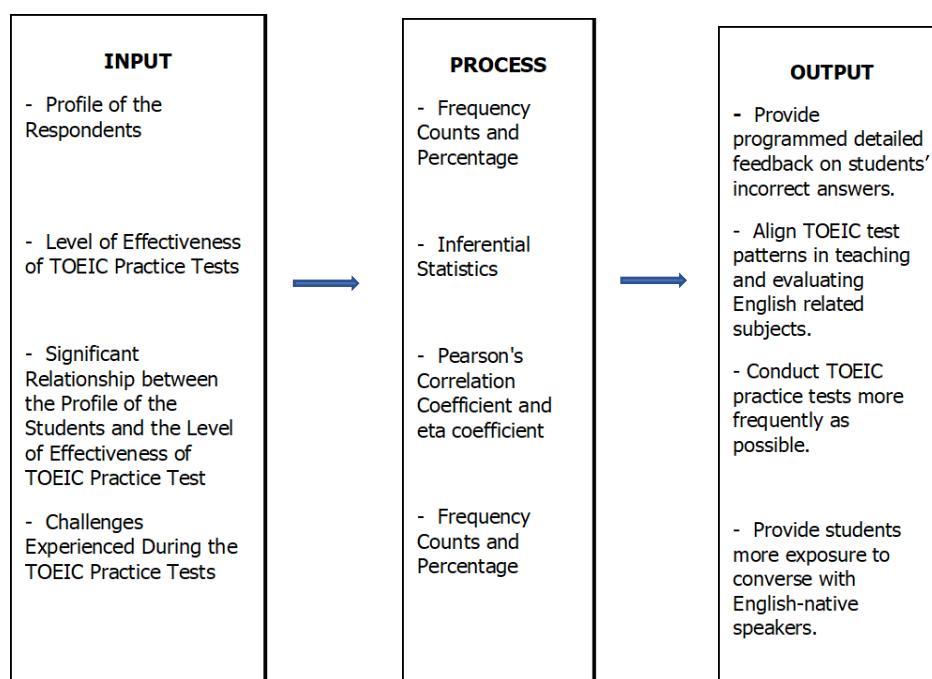
The usefulness of practice tests can be explained by the Transfer of Learning Theory, which posits that skills developed in one context can be transferred to another, such as from practice settings to actual examinations (Cody & Beling, 2023; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Both near and far transfer suggest that repeated engagement with similar tasks can lead to improved performance (Sun et al., 2022; Prado & Riddle, 2022).

Related perspectives, such as the Familiarity Hypothesis and Skill Mastery Theory, further emphasize the value of repeated exposure and continuous practice. Becoming familiar with test formats can help reduce anxiety and improve cognitive processing (Greul et al., 2023; Zajonc, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). At the same time, mastery-oriented practice allows learners to recognize their weaknesses and gradually improve through feedback and sustained effort (Petrosoniak et al., 2023; Bernacki et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023; Cummings, 2020).

Language proficiency, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is essential for performing well on assessments such as the TOEIC (Omoboye et al., 2024; Richards, 2018). It develops through continuous exposure, frequent use, and a solid linguistic foundation (Gomez, 2023; Chung et al., 2018). In addition, learners' motivation and attitudes play a significant role in shaping their level of engagement and achievement, with consistent practice and positive perceptions contributing to better outcomes (Chen, 2022; Brown, 2006; Karlin & Karlin, 2021; Berdina, 2023; Naujoks et al., 2022; Adesope et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The study uses an Input–Process–Output (IPO) model to explain its conceptual framework and show how the variables are organized and analyzed. The input covers the respondents' profiles, the perceived effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests, the relationship between student characteristics and test outcomes, and the difficulties experienced during the tests, all of which form the basis of the study. In the process stage, the data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, and inferential tools, such as Pearson's correlation and eta, to examine the strength and significance of relationships. The output then presents practical recommendations drawn from the results, including targeted feedback on students' errors, aligning teaching strategies with TOEIC test formats, increasing practice-test exposure, and providing more opportunities for students to use English in real-life contexts, thereby connecting the findings to instructional improvements.



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed an inferential research design to examine the relationship between the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests and selected profile variables of graduating students. Inferential statistics allow findings from a sample to be generalized to a larger population (Jose & Szabo, 2017). This approach was chosen to identify possible associations between students' characteristics and perceived test effectiveness while extending insights beyond the sample.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at St Teresa International University in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand, which offers programs in Nursing Science, Business Administration, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Public Health. The institution was selected due to its strong

focus on English language development, particularly through TOEIC preparation programs, making it an appropriate setting for evaluating their impact on student performance.

Research Flow

The research followed a systematic process, beginning with proposal approval and university permission. The questionnaire was developed, validated, and distributed online. Collected data were organized, coded, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Results were then interpreted to form conclusions and recommendations.

Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The population included 236 graduating students, and a sample of 148 was selected using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation from each faculty. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and platforms such as Facebook Messenger and Line Messenger. The instrument gathered demographic data, perceptions of TOEIC practice test effectiveness, and experienced challenges.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages described respondents' profiles, while inferential tools assessed test effectiveness in areas such as time management and test strategies. Pearson's r and eta coefficient (η) were used to determine relationships between variables, and frequency counts identified common challenges.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The null hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between TOEIC practice test effectiveness and students' profile variables. Statistical tests (Pearson's r and η) were applied at a 0.05 significance level. The questionnaire was validated by experts in English language teaching to ensure content validity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Approval was obtained from the university, and participation was voluntary with informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and all data were used strictly for research purposes.

Study Limitations

The study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. It was also limited to a single institution, thereby affecting generalizability. Online data collection may have excluded some participants, and other factors influencing TOEIC performance such as motivation or instructional quality were not explored in depth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All data presented in this chapter were collected through a questionnaire created by the researcher using Google Forms, verified by trusted validators and TOEIC experts from different universities, and distributed to 148 respondents, graduating students, via social media

applications. After several days of distributing the survey questions to the respondents and employing appropriate statistical designs, the following findings and analysis were presented.

Profile of the Graduating Students at St Teresa International University

The researcher gathered demographic information, including respondents' age, gender, specialization or major of study, family's monthly income, number of relevant training sessions attended related to English language or TOEIC test-taking, region, and letter grade in English-related subjects, from 148 departing students.

Table 1
Profile of the Graduating Students at St Teresa International University (n=148)

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-23	139	93.9
	24 and above	9	6.1
Sex	Female	115	77.7
	Male	33	22.3
Specialization or Major of Study	Business	59	39.9
	Administration		
	Education	9	6.1
	Humanities and Social Sciences	15	10.1
	Nursing Science	61	41.2
	Public Health	4	2.7
Family's monthly income	Below 20,000	40	27.0
	21,000 – 30,000	34	23.0
	31,000 – 40,000	30	20.3
	41,000 – 50,000	20	13.5
	51,000 – 60,000	8	5.4
	61,000 – 70,000	11	7.4
	71,000 and up	5	3.4
Number of relevant trainings attended related to English language / TOEIC test-taking	1 to 3	79	53.4
	4 to 6	36	24.3
	7 to 9	12	8.1
	10 and above	21	14.2
	North	19	12.8
Region	Northeast	39	26.4
	Central	72	48.6
	East	11	7.4
	West	5	3.4
	South	2	1.4
Letter grade in English Related Subject	A	5	3.4
	B+	23	15.5
	B	49	33.1
	C+	47	31.8
	C	18	12.2
	D+	5	3.4
	D	1	0.7

Table 1 presents seven profile variables or demographic information regarding the 148 respondents, who are graduating students from St Teresa International University. It includes the frequency counts and percentages for each category.

The demographic results indicate that most respondents fall within a narrow age range: 93.9% are aged 21–23, reflecting a typical graduating cohort, while only 6.1% are 24 years old and above. In terms of sex, females account for the majority (77.7%), suggesting a gender imbalance that may be linked to program enrollment patterns. The distribution across academic fields is also uneven, with the Faculty of Nursing Science representing the largest group (41.2%) and the Faculty of Public Health the smallest (2.7%). Such differences may affect students' exposure to English and their performance on related assessments.

Regarding socioeconomic background, 27% of respondents come from households earning 20,000 THB or less per month, while only 3.4% report family incomes of 71,000 THB

or higher, indicating that most participants belong to low- to middle-income brackets. In terms of preparation, more than half (53.4%) attended 1 to 3 English or TOEIC-related training sessions, whereas only 8.1% attended 7 to 9 sessions. Most respondents are from the Central region (48.6%), with very few coming from the Southern region (1.4%). Their academic performance in English-related subjects appears generally moderate, with the highest proportion receiving a B (33.1%) and only a small number receiving a D (0.7%).

These patterns underscore the relevance of learner profile variables in understanding language proficiency outcomes. Consistent with the findings of De Paepe et al., not all background variables exert a direct influence on achievement, although they shape learning conditions. Similarly, Bennett et al. demonstrate that distinct learner profiles can meaningfully differentiate performance, while Tarihoran et al. highlight the importance of aligning instructional strategies with students' characteristics.

Taken together, the results suggest that while the cohort shares similar demographic traits, variations in academic background, socioeconomic status, and training exposure may contribute to differences in TOEIC-related performance. These variables, therefore, serve as a critical analytical basis for evaluating the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests, as examined in the subsequent analysis.

Level of Effectiveness of the TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students

The researcher administered a questionnaire to the respondents to assess the level of effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests on the performance of graduating students, considering five components or specific aspects (time management, test preparation, test familiarity, test-taking strategies on reading comprehension, and test-taking strategies on listening comprehension), including 5 indicators for each component. Each indicator required the respondents to choose from the 5 given scales.

Table 2
Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students in terms of Time Management (n=148)

Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students	VHE	HE	ME	LE	NE	M	DE
A. Time Management							
The TOEIC practice tests...							
1. enabled me to manage my time effectively during the actual TOEIC Test.	33	71	39	3	2	3.88	HE
2. provided me with time management techniques that I used to pace myself during the actual TOEIC Test.	37	74	31	5	1	3.95	HE
3. enabled me to allocate specific time when approaching different sections of the actual TOEIC Test.	34	68	38	6	2	3.85	HE
4. made me realize the importance of time management.	56	65	20	3	4	4.12	HE
5. made me realize that the time allotted for the real TOEIC Test was sufficient to complete the whole test.	37	69	30	6	6	3.84	HE
Mean	3.93	– Highly Effective					

As shown in **Table 2**, Component 1 (Time Management), comprising 5 indicators, had a weighted mean of 3.93, indicating Highly Effective (HE). Among the indicators, the provision

of time management techniques for pacing during the actual TOEIC test recorded the highest frequency of Highly Effective responses ($n = 74$). Meanwhile, the item emphasizing awareness of the importance of time management yielded the highest mean score ($M = 4.12$). These findings indicate that the TOEIC practice test effectively enhanced students' ability to regulate time and recognize its importance in high-stakes testing contexts.

The results underscore the critical role of time management in academic performance and test success. Consistent with Liu, time management is a fundamental skill for academic achievement and is transferable across learning contexts. Similarly, Pluta & Rudawska emphasize its indispensability for learners, while Sulistia & Widigdo highlight that effective time use involves prioritizing tasks based on importance, an ability reflected in the respondents' improved pacing strategies.

Furthermore, the findings align with prior empirical evidence linking time management with enhanced academic outcomes and reduced anxiety. Studies by Adams & Blair and Ahmad et al. confirm that efficient time utilization contributes significantly to improved performance and achievement. Additional support from Napoles et al., Philips et al., and Rutte et al. further emphasizes that structured planning, self-regulation, and motivation are essential components of successful time management.

Overall, the findings suggest that the TOEIC practice test is an effective mechanism for developing students' time management skills, which are integral to optimizing performance on high-stakes English proficiency assessments.

Table 3
Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students in terms of Test Preparation (n=148)

<i>Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students</i>	VHE	HE	ME	LE	NE	M	DE
B. Test Preparation							
<i>The TOEIC practice tests...</i>							
1. helped me in building my confidence before and during taking the actual TOEIC Test.	38	75	29	1	5	3.95	HE
2. helped me alleviate my test anxiety.	33	72	33	6	4	3.84	HE
3. helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses in different areas of the test.	47	72	22	3	4	4.05	HE
4. improved my accuracy and speed in answering questions.	33	77	33	3	2	3.92	HE
5. enabled me to anticipate what to expect on the actual TOEIC Test and prepare accordingly.	33	79	33	2	1	3.95	HE
Mean						3.94	Highly Effective

Table 3 displays the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in Test Preparation (Component 2), with a weighted mean of 3.94, indicating Highly Effective (HE). Among the indicators, the ability to anticipate the actual TOEIC test and prepare accordingly obtained the highest frequency of Highly Effective responses ($n = 79$). Meanwhile, identifying strengths and weaknesses across test areas recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.05$). These results indicate that practice tests play a critical role in enhancing learners' readiness and self-awareness prior to the actual examination.

The findings are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of structured preparation and repeated exposure to test formats. Phan et al. highlight that consistent and varied engagement with English significantly contributes to TOEIC success, while Bernacki et al. note that training improves performance in subsequent tasks. Similarly, Zhang et al. identify practice tests as effective tools for enhancing actual exam performance.

Moreover, the results align with Kim's argument that test preparation often prioritizes score improvement, which can be understood through Messick's typology: enhancing relevant language abilities, minimizing anxiety, and strengthening test-taking strategies. In this context, TOEIC practice tests appear to support all three dimensions by improving familiarity with test demands, reducing uncertainty, and refining strategic responses.

Overall, the findings suggest that TOEIC practice tests are highly effective in preparing students for the examination by fostering strategic awareness, performance readiness, and targeted skill development essential for success in standardized language assessments.

Table 4
Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students in terms of Test Familiarity (n=148)

<i>Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students</i>	VHE	HE	ME	LE	NE	M	DE
C. Test Familiarity							
<i>The TOEIC practice tests ...</i>							
1. made me become familiar with the format and structure of the actual TOEIC Test.	40	81	21	3	3	4.03	HE
2. made me prepared for the types of questions encountered on the actual TOEIC Test.	33	87	23	4	1	3.99	HE
3. accurately represented the content and difficulty level of the real TOEIC Test.	37	75	31	5	0	3.97	HE
4. positively impacted my performance in the actual TOEIC Test because of the test familiarity I acquired doing practice tests.	41	77	28	1	1	4.05	HE
5. covered the topics and skills assessed in the actual TOEIC Test.	38	78	29	3	0	4.02	HE
Mean		4.01 – Highly Effective					

Table 4 shows the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in Test Familiarity (Component 3), with a weighted mean of 4.01, indicating Highly Effective (HE). The indicator related to preparedness for question types in the actual TOEIC test recorded the highest frequency of Highly Effective responses (n = 87). Additionally, the item highlighting the positive impact of familiarity on actual test performance achieved the highest mean score (M = 4.05). These results suggest that repeated exposure to test formats through practice tests significantly enhances students' confidence and performance.

The findings support existing literature emphasizing the role of familiarity in shaping positive learning outcomes. Read & Sougne argue that familiarity can elicit positive emotional responses, thereby improving performance. Likewise, Greul et al. and Robert Zajonc demonstrate that repeated exposure to stimuli leads to more favorable evaluations and attitudes.

Furthermore, the results align with Shaffer & McDermott, who highlight the role of familiarity in enhancing the effectiveness of retrieval practice. In the context of TOEIC

preparation, such familiarity is developed through engagement with practice tests that closely mirror the actual examination, thereby reducing uncertainty and improving performance.

Overall, the findings indicate that TOEIC practice tests are highly effective at fostering test familiarity, which, in turn, contributes to increased confidence, reduced cognitive load, and improved outcomes in high-stakes language assessments.

Table 5
Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students in terms of Test-taking Strategies on Reading Comprehension (n=148)

<i>Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students</i>	VHE	HE	ME	LE	NE	M	DE
D. Test-Taking Strategies on Reading Comprehension							
<i>The TOEIC practice tests on reading comprehension...</i>							
1. equipped me with strategies like scanning and skimming passages.	38	81	26	3	0	4.04	HE
2. provided me with strategies for identifying key information in passages.	35	71	39	3	0	3.93	HE
3. supplied me with strategies using context clues.	38	77	29	2	2	3.99	HE
4. developed my skill in eliminating incorrect answer choices.	37	76	30	2	3	3.96	HE
5. trained me to read the questions first.	40	78	27	1	2	4.03	HE
Mean						3.99 – Highly Effective	

Table 5 depicts the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in terms of Test-Taking Strategies in Reading Comprehension (Component 4), which yielded a weighted mean of 3.99, indicating Highly Effective (HE). Among the indicators, the use of strategies such as scanning and skimming recorded both the highest frequency of Highly Effective responses ($n = 81$) and the highest mean score ($M = 4.04$). These findings indicate that practice tests effectively equip students with the essential reading strategies needed to manage time and extract key information during the test.

The results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of strategic competence in test performance. Namsaeng highlights that using diverse test-taking strategies is crucial for achieving target scores. Similarly, studies by Mohammed, Andrew D. Cohen, Cohen & Upton, Aek Phakiti, and Paula Winke demonstrate that practice tests function as effective strategic tools that enhance actual test performance by helping learners respond more efficiently to test demands.

Moreover, test-taking strategies are often viewed as compensatory mechanisms that help learners address limitations in language proficiency or test-taking skills. This perspective is supported by research on reading strategies across L1 and L2 contexts, including studies by Assiri & Alodhahi, Alfassi, Mokhtari & Sheorey, and Pressley & Afflerbach, which highlight the critical role of strategic reading in improving comprehension.

Overall, the findings suggest that TOEIC practice tests are highly effective in developing reading-related test-taking strategies, enabling learners to better manage test difficulty, compensate for skill gaps, and improve overall performance in high-stakes language assessments.

Table 6
Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students in terms of Test-taking Strategies on Listening Comprehension (n=148)

<i>Level of Effectiveness of the TOEIC Practice Test on the Performance of Graduating Students</i>	VHE	HE	ME	LE	NE	M	DE
E. Test-Taking Strategies on Listening Comprehension							
<i>The TOEIC practice tests on listening comprehension...</i>							
1. enabled me to identify key information in the audio texts during the actual TOEIC Test.	39	72	31	3	3	3.95	HE
2. enhanced my skill in inferring meaning.	40	74	28	3	3	3.98	HE
3. helped me to stay focused on audio texts.	41	73	31	2	1	4.02	HE
4. made me realize the importance of taking notes while listening to audio texts.	47	75	24	2	0	4.13	HE
5. provided me with strategies for paraphrasing.	47	76	22	2	1	4.12	HE
Mean		4.04	Highly Effective				
Overall Mean		3.98	Highly Effective				

Note: DE=Descriptive Equivalent;

Legend: 1.00-1.50 (NE – Not Effective);

2.51-3.50 (ME – Moderately Effective);

4.51-5.00 (VHE – Very Highly Effective)

M= Weighted Mean

1.51-2.50 (LE – Less Effective);

3.51-4.50 (HE – Highly Effective);

Table 6 exhibits the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests in Test-Taking Strategies in Listening Comprehension (Component 5), with a weighted mean of 4.04, indicating Highly Effective (HE). Among the indicators, paraphrasing strategies recorded the highest frequency of Highly Effective responses (n = 76), while the recognition of the importance of note-taking during listening tasks had the highest mean score (M = 4.13). These findings indicate that practice tests effectively develop learners' strategic listening skills, particularly in processing and retaining auditory information.

The results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of test-taking strategies in listening performance. Studies by Abdul Aal, Amer, Derisbach & Keogh, Foster & Karn, and Tian highlight that strategic approaches significantly enhance learners' ability to process spoken input. Similarly, Obah, Andrew D. Cohen, and Green underscore the growing emphasis on explicitly teaching test-taking strategies to improve test performance.

Furthermore, the findings align with Ketworrachai & Sappapan, who note that successful test performance depends not only on content knowledge but also on the effective use of strategies. In the context of listening, Ozturk identifies key metacognitive strategies such as planning, problem-solving, directed attention, and mental translation that support comprehension. These strategies are reflected in the respondents' reported use of paraphrasing and note-taking.

Overall, the findings suggest that TOEIC practice tests are highly effective in enhancing listening-related test-taking strategies. Through repeated exposure and strategic engagement, learners are better able to manage cognitive demands, improve comprehension, and achieve higher performance in listening components of standardized language assessments.

Relationship Between the Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) Practice Test and the Profile Variables of the Graduating Students

The researcher aimed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the seven respondents' profile variables and the effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Tests.

Table 7
Relationship Between the Perceived Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test and the Profile Variables of the Graduating Students

Profile Variables of the Graduating Students		Perceived Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test					Overall Mean
		Time Management	Test preparation	Test familiarity	Test-taking strategies on reading comprehension	Test-taking strategies on listening comprehension	
Age	r	-0.094	-.152*	-0.085	-0.112	-0.119	-0.112
	Sig	0.159	0.024	0.213	0.098	0.081	0.084
Sex	r	0.033	0.031	0.055	0.016	0.078	0.036
	Sig	0.642	0.664	0.445	0.820	0.280	0.596
Family's monthly income	r	0.052	0.025	-0.003	0.002	0.029	0.029
	Sig	0.410	0.691	0.965	0.970	0.654	0.631
Number of relevant trainings attended related to English language / TOEIC test-taking	r	0.079	0.036	0.016	-0.022	0.091	0.035
	Sig	0.234	0.593	0.812	0.746	0.180	0.585
Letter grade in English Related Subject	r	-0.110	-.152*	-.190**	-.144*	-.145*	-.160*
	Sig	0.089	0.019	0.004	0.027	0.027	0.010

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 indicates that there is no significant relationship between selected profile variables: sex ($p = 0.596$), family income ($p = 0.631$), and number of relevant English/TOEIC-related trainings ($p = 0.585$) and the perceived effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests, as all p -values exceed the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests is not dependent on these demographic and experiential factors.

However, age shows a weak but significant negative correlation with perceived effectiveness ($r = -0.112$) and with the test preparation component ($r = -0.152$). Similarly, a low negative relationship is observed between English-related grades and perceived effectiveness ($r = -0.160$). These results imply that older students and those with lower English grades tend to perceive TOEIC practice tests as less effective.

The findings are generally consistent with prior studies, indicating that profile variables often do not significantly influence learning outcomes. Dunlosky et al. emphasize that practice testing is broadly effective across learners, regardless of individual differences. Likewise,

Queroda, Antipolo & Rogayan, Chua & Archog, and De Guzman & De Vera report no significant differences when profile variables are analyzed independently.

From a theoretical perspective, the results can be partially explained by the familiarity hypothesis, which posits that repeated exposure to test formats enhances confidence and reduces negative test-related emotions, thereby improving perceived effectiveness. Nonetheless, the findings also contrast with studies such as Shulha & Wilson and Im et al., which argue that practice tests may have limited predictive validity because they focus on format rather than comprehensive skill assessment.

In contrast, other research, such as that by Bilocura et al., demonstrates that profile differences can significantly influence learning engagement, suggesting that the role of demographic variables may vary across contexts.

Overall, the findings indicate that while TOEIC practice tests are broadly effective across different student groups, certain factors such as age and English proficiency may influence how effective they are perceived to be. This highlights the need for more nuanced approaches that account for individual learner differences to maximize the benefits of practice testing.

Table 8
Relationship Between the Level of Effectiveness of TOEIC Practice Test and Profile (Specialization or Major of Study and Region)

Level of Effectiveness of the TOEIC Practice Test	Specialization or Major of Study	Region
A. Time Management	0.063	0.071
B. Test preparation	0.098	0.053
C. Test familiarity	0.078	0.064
D. Test-taking strategies on reading comprehension	0.083	0.057
E. Test-taking strategies on listening comprehension	0.030	0.024
Overall Mean	0.044	0.033

For Eta Coefficient, the minimum tolerance for a statistically significant association between variables is above 0.2.

Table 8 utilizes the eta coefficient in order to reveal the association between perceived level of effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests and the other profile variables, such as Specialization or Major of Study, and region, and as a result, there's no significant association between the variables after achieving 0.044 and 0.033 eta coefficients, which are greater than the minimum tolerance value of 0.2.

Challenges Experienced by the Graduating Students in Taking the TOEIC Practice Test

The questionnaire includes items asking respondents to identify challenges they encountered during the TOEIC practice tests.

Table 9
Challenges Experienced by the Graduating Students in Taking
the TOEIC Practice Test (n=148)

Challenges Experienced	Frequency	Percent	Ranking
Unfamiliar voices in the Listening Comprehension Section	109	73.60	1
Limited vocabulary knowledge	103	69.60	2
Lack of grammar knowledge	95	64.20	3
Difficulty in understanding the questions and contents	89	60.10	4
Insufficient time to finish the test	74	50.00	5
Limited knowledge of techniques and strategies when taking the test	71	48.00	6
Preparation is inadequate	67	45.30	7
Lack of concentration skill	62	41.90	8
The background knowledge in English is low	50	33.80	9
Learning styles are not suitable	35	23.60	10

Table 9 introduces the major challenges respondents experienced during TOEIC practice tests. The most frequently reported difficulty was unfamiliar voices in the listening comprehension section (73.60%), followed by limited vocabulary (69.60%) and limited grammar knowledge (64.20%). Mid-ranked challenges included insufficient time to complete the test (50%) and limited knowledge of test-taking techniques and strategies (48%). In contrast, learning style mismatch was the least reported concern (23.60%). These findings indicate that linguistic and listening-related factors remain the most prominent barriers to effective test performance.

The results are consistent with prior research highlighting the complexity of listening comprehension and language proficiency in standardized testing. Studies by Burgess & Head and Burapharat & Tiansoodeemon emphasize the need for effective preparation to support integration of multiple language skills under time constraints. Similarly, Mohammed, Andrew D. Cohen, Cohen & Upton, Aek Phakiti, and Paula Winke demonstrate that practice tests and strategic training can mitigate these challenges by improving learners' ability to respond to test demands.

Furthermore, the findings support Dawadi, who identifies preparation as a key determinant of performance, and Saravanan, who highlights the effectiveness of active listening strategies such as note-taking and summarizing. Evidence from Larsen et al. and Agarwal et al. further suggests that repeated and spaced testing enhances long-term retention and learning outcomes.

In particular, the prominence of listening-related difficulties aligns with Rungsinanont, which identifies speaker-related factors (e.g., accent and speed), linguistic limitations (e.g., vocabulary), and learner proficiency as key barriers to comprehension. These challenges closely mirror those reported by the respondents, indicating that listening remains a critical area for intervention.

Overall, the findings suggest that while TOEIC practice tests are effective in preparing students, persistent challenges particularly in listening comprehension and language proficiency continue to affect performance. Addressing these issues through targeted strategy instruction and sustained practice may further enhance test readiness. Moreover, these insights provide a basis

for future research comparing challenges in practice with those in actual TOEIC tests and examining the relationship between practice-test performance and actual-test outcomes.

Action Plan Proposed based on the Findings of the Study

Table 10
Action Plan Proposed based on the Findings of the Study

	Activities	Duration or Timeline	Materials or Resources	Point Persons	Budgeting Requirements
1. Conduct more frequent TOEIC practice tests.	- Incorporate TOEIC practice tests into students' midterm and final exam schedules. - Assign facilitators or invigilators to monitor students' attendance and participation in the practice tests. - Follow up with students who miss practice tests and ensure they complete the missed tasks.	- 1 month planning - conduct the TOEIC practice tests 4 times every academic year for 5 years	- TOEIC reference books - TOEIC tests papers - TOEIC audio files	- TOEIC assigned team, IT department, homeroom teachers, class heads	- 10,000 thb / academic year
2. Align TOEIC test patterns in teaching and evaluating English related subjects.	- Arrange meetings with English subject lecturers. - Implement TOEIC test patterns consistently in teaching and evaluating students.	- 1 semester planning - 5 year implementation	- TOEIC reference books - Samples of lesson plans and evaluation sheets	- Academic Affairs Office, TOEIC assigned team, English subject lecturers	- 15,000 thb / academic year
3. Provide students more exposure to converse with English-native speakers.	- Schedule meetings with native English-speaking lecturers. - Integrate activities, projects, or subjects aimed at developing students' English listening skills.	- 1 month planning - 4 days of activities per semester - 5 year implementation	- TOEIC reference books - TOEIC audio files	- Academic Affairs Office, TOEIC assigned team, Native English-speaking lecturers	- 20,000 thb / academic year
4. Impose strict implementation of weekly and bi-weekly	- Incorporate TOEIC practice tests into class schedules.	- 1 semester planning	- TOEIC reference books	- Academic Affairs Office, TOEIC	- 15,000 thb / academic year

This proposed action plan primarily focused on enhancing students' performance in the actual TOEIC examination. Accompanying the overarching objectives were specific goals aimed at facilitating the achievement of the primary objective, including:

- Cultivating active participation and engagement among students during TOEIC practice exams.
- Ensuring alignment between teaching and evaluation methods in English-related subjects with TOEIC test patterns.
- Enhancing students' English listening skills.
- Promoting students' involvement and engagement in TOEIC practice tests.

- Broadening students' comprehension of the TOEIC test.

To achieve the aforementioned general and specific objectives, five projects have been proposed. The first project involves conducting more frequent TOEIC practice tests. To accomplish this, the university must integrate TOEIC practice tests into students' midterm and final exam schedules. Additionally, facilitators or invigilators should be assigned to monitor students' attendance and participation in these practice tests. It is imperative to follow up with students who miss practice tests and ensure they complete the tasks they missed. A one-month planning timeline and a five-year implementation period will suffice for this project. An allocation of 10,000 THB per academic year will be designated for this specific initiative.

Project 2, "Aligning TOEIC test patterns in teaching and evaluating English-related subjects," will involve arranging meetings with English subject lecturers to ensure consistent implementation of TOEIC test patterns in teaching and evaluating students. The planning stage for this project will span one semester, with a five-year implementation period. Using TOEIC reference books, lesson plans, and evaluation sheet samples will help achieve the objectives of this project. A budget of 15,000 THB per academic year will be allocated for Project 2.

Project 3, titled "Provide students more exposure to converse with English-native speakers," entails scheduling meetings with native English-speaking lecturers and integrating activities, projects, or subjects aimed at developing students' English listening skills. The responsible individuals for overseeing this project will be selected from the Academic Affairs Office, the TOEIC-assigned team, and Native English-speaking lecturers. After one month of planning, four-day activities will be conducted per semester. TOEIC reference books and audio files will serve as significant materials for this project. A budget of 20,000 THB per academic year will be allocated to achieve the objectives of Project 3.

Project 4, titled "Impose strict implementation of weekly and bi-weekly TOEIC practice tests," aims to integrate TOEIC practice tests into class schedules. Designating facilitators or homeroom lecturers to monitor students' attendance and participation in these practice tests, and notifying students who miss them to ensure completion of any missed tasks, will be essential. This project will undergo one semester of planning and a five-year implementation period. The same individuals responsible for Project 3 will oversee this initiative: the Academic Affairs Office, the TOEIC-assigned team, the IT department, homeroom lecturers, and class heads. A budget of 15,000 THB per academic year will be allocated for Project 4.

The final project, titled "Provide programmed detailed feedback on students' incorrect answers for the purpose of knowledge retention," will require coordination with English subject lecturers to establish a platform for students to access feedback on incorrect answers. This collaboration aims to provide students with detailed feedback to support knowledge retention. The project will undergo one semester of planning, followed by a five-year implementation period. To accomplish this project, TOEIC reference books and the Moodle platform will serve as valuable tools. Additionally, designated point persons will oversee the project's execution. A proposed budget of 20,000 THB per academic year will be allocated to support Project 5's activities.

With the implementation of this proposed action plan and the support of university administrators and persons involved, a greater number of TOEIC success stories can be anticipated.

SUMMARY

The results suggest that TOEIC practice tests are a useful means of improving students' readiness for standardized English assessments. They appear to support the development of key skills such as time management, strategic test awareness, and effective approaches to both reading and listening tasks. With regular practice, students become more familiar with the test format, which can lessen mental strain, increase confidence, and lead to better overall performance.

At the same time, although participants share broadly similar demographic profiles, differences in academic background, socioeconomic conditions, and prior training experience appear to affect TOEIC performance. Age and English proficiency also influence how students view the usefulness of practice tests, underscoring the need for more tailored, learner-sensitive instructional approaches.

While TOEIC practice tests are generally beneficial, some difficulties remain, particularly in listening comprehension and overall language proficiency. These ongoing challenges suggest that more focused strategy instruction and continuous practice are necessary to address specific weaknesses. In addition, the findings open opportunities for further research, especially to explore how practice test results relate to actual TOEIC performance and to compare the types of difficulties students face in both testing contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the study's findings, the researcher has drawn the following

1. The majority of the respondents were aged 21-23 years old, female, taking up the major of Nursing Science. Most respondents' families had monthly incomes of 20,000 THB (Thai baht) or less. Moreover, the majority of them attended 1-3 training sessions on English language/TOEIC test-taking. Most of them came from the Central region of Thailand with a letter grade of B.
2. TOEIC practice tests are Highly Effective (HE) after considering the five components/specific aspects with 5 indicators each.
3. There is no significant relationship between the perceived level of effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests and the profile variables of sex, family's monthly income, number of attended trainings related to English language / TOEIC test-taking, specialization / major of study, and region after achieving greater significance values. However, the profile variables of age and letter grade in the English-related subject show a significant negative association with the perceived effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests.
4. The topmost challenge that our respondents encountered while doing the TOEIC practice tests is "Unfamiliar voices in the Listening Comprehension Section".

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The university may conduct TOEIC practice tests as frequently as possible in order for the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests to be Very Highly Effective (VHE).
2. The university may align TOEIC test patterns in teaching and evaluating English-related subjects.
3. The university may provide its students with more exposure to converse with English-native speakers to enhance their English listening skills and comprehension.
4. The university may impose strict implementation of weekly and bi-weekly TOEIC practice tests.
5. The university may provide programmed, detailed feedback on students' incorrect answers for the purpose of knowledge retention.
6. The university may undertake a study to pinpoint the challenges faced by TOEIC test-takers during the actual TOEIC tests. The findings of this study could assist the university administration in enhancing the effectiveness of TOEIC practice tests and preparation, ultimately leading to improved performance among future generations of TOEIC test-takers in the actual examination.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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