

Relationship Between TOEIC Advanced Practice Test Scores and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Scores: A Case Study of Fourth-Year English for Business Communication Majors at St Teresa International University, Nakhon Nayok Province, Thailand

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Abstract

Since the relationship between TOEIC advanced practice test (PT) scores and official TOEIC results has not been examined in prior research, the current study aimed to examine it. The respondents were 22 fourth-year English for Business Communication (BE) majors at St Teresa International University in Thailand's Nakhon Nayok Province. As third-year students in 2022, they completed two distinct PT tests, one at the conclusion of the first semester (PT 1) and one at the end of the second semester (PT 2). When they were in year four of the subsequent academic year, 2023, they took the TOEIC exam during the first semester. PT 1, PT 2, and TOEIC scores were acquired for analysis. The association between (a) PT 1 and the PT 2 scores, (b) PT 1 and TOEIC scores, and (c) PT 2 and TOEIC scores was evaluated using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. A strong, significant, positive association was found between the scores of PT 1 and PT 2, PT 1 and TOEIC, and PT 2 and TOEIC. Every PT test result was predictive of TOEIC scores, according to data analysis. The results would help BE students, instructors, and program management improve their TOEIC preparation techniques and raise students' English language competency.

Keywords: TOEIC Scores; TOEIC Advanced Practice Test Scores; Spearman's Rank Correlation; English for Business Communication Program

Introduction

Thailand is a country where English is taught as a foreign language. Since 2016, all Thai university students are required to pass an English exit test in order to graduate (Office of Higher Education, 2016; Higher Education Standards Committee, 2024). For the exit requirement, various institutions use different English proficiency tests (Kasim & Raisha, 2017). For instance, they may use their own English tests or a common examination such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the examination of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). In accordance

with the regulation, St Teresa International University in Nakhon Nayok Province uses the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), which has been used as an exit exam in universities in a number of countries and territories, including Indonesia (Masrul & Rasyidah, 2023), Vietnam (Nhan, 2013; Nguyen, 2015; Nguyen & Gu, 2020), and Taiwan (Pan & In'nami, 2017). As it assesses students' comprehension and application of English in a variety of professional, travel, and business contexts (Craven, 2020), the TOEIC is one of the international standardized tests used in Thailand to evaluate students' English language skills (Sengchuen, 2023).

The University has implemented a number of preparation measures to help students improve their English proficiency and TOEIC performance. Examples include providing pre-college students with an intensive English program prior to their first year in order to prepare them for mainstream classes where English will be the medium of instruction (Casta & Flores, 2019); offering TOEIC courses, weekly TOEIC practices, and tutorials; providing TOEIC preparation series or practice test books in the library (along with others on TOEFL and IELTS in addition to those on the websites); and holding a TOEIC exhibition to raise awareness of the significance of TOEIC for students' academic and future careers (Rutamornchai, et al., 2024).

Most important, a TOEIC advanced practice test (PT) is given to year 2 and year 3 at the conclusion of each semester so that they can have a better understanding of the test's format and setting. When the test-taker takes the official TOEIC exam in the first semester of their senior year before starting their internship in the second semester (Taladngoen et al., 2023), it is hoped that they will have made steady progress after taking PT tests and will eventually score between 500 and 900 (Lougheed, 2018, back cover) or 600-900 or higher (Craven, 2020).

Considering all of the time and energy put into the procedure, one query must be answered: How successful is the TOEIC PT exam? Does giving students a PT test have any advantages beyond letting them know their results? Examining the correlation between PT and TOEIC test scores is one method to respond to this query (Taladngoen & Esteban, 2022). The degree of correlation between the two tests' scores will aid in assessing a PT test's efficacy.

Recent research has looked at the correlation between the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) English Language Proficiency Requirements scores and the TOEIC scores of 100 Thai Airways International flight attendants (Sirikanjanawong and Wasanasomsithi 2018). In another study, 110 students from the Institute of Aviation and Aerospace Technology at Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-OK, Thailand, had their TOEIC scores compared to their grade point averages for four English courses (Santisiria & Aksornkittib, 2023). Wongs (2018) looked at the correlation between the attitudes of 389 Thai TOEIC test takers toward the test and their TOEIC scores. Anuyahong (2018) looked into the connection between the English language skills of 70 first-year undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology and their TOEIC exam scores. In a 2017 study, Isarankura examined the correlation between 54 fourth-year

undergraduate students majoring in English at a private university in Bangkok, Thailand, and their performance on the TOEIC reading portion and four mandatory English reading courses. On the other hand, Tangsakul (2024) investigated the relationship between the vocabulary size and the reading performance on TOEIC reading item types of 88 second-year English majors at a northeastern university in Thailand. While Kanzaki (2020) investigated the association between the IELTS and TOEIC scores of 84 students from a private university in Japan, Jacinto (2023) tried to correlate the listening and reading scores of 525 TOEIC takers in the first term of a Philippine institution.

The present study was carried out because, according to the literature review above, there appears to have been no prior research on the relationship between PT scores and TOEIC scores. This study would determine the degree to which the PT tests are associated with the official TOEIC scores by employing Spearman's rank correlation. Students would be better prepared to achieve even higher TOEIC scores if the results were proven to be related. Additionally, English instructors would find this information very useful in assessing their students' present proficiency levels and preparing them for the upcoming official TOEIC exam.

Research Objectives

The current study's primary goal was to examine the correlation between the PT and TOEIC scores.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to determine the correlation between the year four BE students' PT and TOEIC scores

1. Respondents

Twenty-two fourth-year BE students from the 2020 class took part in the study. Even though there were actually 23 people in the batch, one of them was not included in the samples since the person had not taken the official TOEIC exam at the time of the current study. Despite the small sample size of 22, it was adequate for correlation analysis because at least 10 pairs of data were required to apply the Spearman's rank correlation test (Field Study Council, n.d.).

All respondents provided their informed consent through an informed consent form, guaranteeing their voluntary and knowledgeable involvement. Additionally, throughout the study, ethical principles, such as anonymity, were upheld.

2. Data and data collection

For the current study, three sets of test results were collected from the respondents who took two distinct PT tests in their third year, and one official TOEIC test in their fourth year. The details are as follows:

A. The first PT test, known as PT 1, was given in September 2022 at the end of the first semester of the 2022 academic year.

B. In February 2023, a different PT test, called PT 2, was given at the end of the second semester of the 2022 academic year.

C. The Center for Professional Assessment (Thailand), or CPA (Thailand) (2025), the sole agent for the TOEIC test in Thailand, conducted an institutional test on-site during the first semester of the academic year 2023 in August 2023.

All three tests were taken by university fourth-year students, including the respondents. While the official TOEIC exam was administered by CPA (Thailand) in a university hall, the two PT exams were administered in a traditional classroom setting during the final exam period.

2. Statistics used

The relationship between each of the two sets of data was evaluated using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient in the manner described below:

- (1) between the PT 1 scores and the PT 2 scores
- (2) between the PT 1 scores and the TOEIC scores
- (3) between the PT 2 scores and the TOEIC scores

In addition, means and standard deviations were computed.

Research Results

The correlation coefficients between the PT 1 and PT 2 scores, the PT 1 and TOEIC scores, and the PT 2 and TOEIC scores are displayed in Tables 1, 2, and 3 below, respectively.

1. Relationship between PT 1 and PT 2 scores

According to the data in Table 1, the Spearman correlation coefficient was .70, statistically significant at < .001. This indicates that there was a significant positive correlation between the PT 1 and PT 2 scores. That is, it was expected that respondents who performed well on the first exam would also perform well on the second. Conversely, individuals who scored lower on the PT 1 test were likely to score lower on the PT 2 test. Over the course of five months, data analysis of correlation between the PT 1 and PT 2 scores showed that the respondents could continuously maintain their proficiency in English.

Table 1 - Comparison of PT 1 and PT 2 scores

	Max	Min	Mean	SD
PT1	750	240	527.05	127.42
PT2	755	255	507.27	128.05

$r = .70$ $p < .001$

Table 1 also shows that the maximum and minimum scores in the PT 2 test were slightly higher than those in the PT 1. The mean score of PT 2, however, was slightly less than that of PT 1.

2. Relationship between PT 1 and TOEIC scores

According to the data in Table 2, the Spearman correlation coefficient was .83, statistically significant at $<.001$. This indicates a strong positive correlation between the PT 1 scores and the TOEIC results. It seemed anticipated that respondents with high PT 1 scores would also have high TOEIC scores. Conversely, individuals with lower scores were probably also less successful on the TOEIC.

Table 2 - Comparison of PT 1 and TOEIC scores

	Max	Min	Mean	SD
PT1	750	240	527.05	127.42
TOEIC	835	310	542.50	153.96

$$r = .83 \text{ } p < .001$$

According to the data in Table 2, the Spearman correlation coefficient was .83, which is statistically significant at $<.001$. This indicates a significant positive correlation between the TOEIC scores and the PT 1 results. It seemed anticipated that respondents with high PT 1 scores would also have high TOEIC scores. Conversely, individuals with lower scores were probably also less successful on the TOEIC.

Additionally, Table 2 shows that the PT 1 test's maximum, minimum, and mean scores were all lower than the comparable TOEIC exam results. This suggests that the respondents thought the PT 1 was harder than the actual TOEIC test; in other words, the TOEIC test was harder than the PT 1 compared to what they had anticipated.

3. Relationship between PT 2 and TOEIC scores

As shown in Table 3, the Spearman correlation coefficient was .85, statistically significant at $<.001$. This indicates that there was a strong positive association between the PT 2 scores and the TOEIC scores. Once more, the data demonstrated that respondents with higher PT 2 scores were likely to score higher on the subsequent TOEIC test, and those with lower PT 2 scores were likely to score lower on the subsequent TOEIC test.

Table 3 - Comparison of PT 2 and TOEIC scores

	Max	Min	Mean	SD
PT2	755	255	507.27	128.05
TOEIC	835	310	542.50	153.96

$$r = .85 \text{ } p < .001$$

The maximum, minimum, and mean scores of the PT 2 test were all lower than the corresponding TOEIC test scores, as Table 3 further demonstrates. On the actual TOEIC test, respondents once again did better. According to the data analysis in 4.2 and 4.3, it was reasonable to presume that the respondents' TOEIC exam scores were continuously higher than the PT's.

4. Comparison of PT 1, PT 2, and TOEIC scores

The data analysis above indicates that there was a strong, significant positive correlation between each PT scores and the TOEIC scores, as well as between the two sets of PT scores. Given the close relationship between the respondents' current PT scores and their future official TOEIC scores, the PT results could be used to forecast the final TOEIC results.

Table 4 - Comparison of maximum, minimum, and mean scores of PT 1, PT 2, and the TOEIC scores

	Max	Min	Mean	SD
PT1	750	240	527.05	127.42
PT2	755	255	507.27	128.05
TOEIC	835	310	542.50	153.96

Table 4 shows that the two PT tests had very similar maximum, minimum, and mean scores - 750 / 755, 240 / 255, and 527.05 / 507.27, respectively.

Conversely, each of the three values' PT scores was lower compared to the TOEIC's, that is mean scores of 527.05/507.27 vs. 542.50, minimum scores of 240/255 vs. 310, and maximum scores of 750/755 vs. 835. In summary, respondents were more likely to score higher on the TOEIC than on the PT.

In summary, the data analysis results showed a strong positive correlation between each PT's score and the TOEIC scores, as well as between the scores of the two PTs. In addition, each PT's mean, maximum, and minimum values were consistently lower than those of the TOEIC exam itself.

Discussion

The primary goal of the current study was to look at the correlation between BE year four students' PT scores and their official TOEIC results. Since the data analysis results indicated a strong, significant positive correlation between the PT and TOEIC scores, this study offers fresh insights into the vital role and efficacy of the PTs. They are more than just practice tests; they provide crucial information about respondents' present level of English ability as well as their upcoming formal TOEIC exam. The study results have many implications and applications in several aspects for students, instructors, and program management and policymakers, some of which will be covered below.

1. The study's PT test results were acquired many months prior to the respondents' TOEIC test, and it was possible to draw the conclusion that the PT scores may predict the TOEIC scores because of the strong, significant positive correlation between the two tests. In other words, the PT tests possess predictive validity, which is the capacity of a test to forecast a future result (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

Students, instructors, and program management involved in English language teaching and learning can utilize the results due to the predictive validity. First of all, students might be even more prepared for the TOEIC test after completing a PT test and learning their results. To improve their TOEIC scores, the more capable pupils can practice more, and the less capable individuals can work harder on the TOEIC tasks. They are therefore more prepared to handle the TOEIC test thanks to their PT results. To put it briefly, PT scores are a reliable predictor of students' current proficiency in English as well as their future success.

The results of data analysis assist instructors in tracking their students' development, allowing them to devise methods or tactics to improve their student's scores through further TOEIC-related tutorials, exercises, and practice exams. They can also inform them about the importance of PT practices and delivering instruction that is appropriate for the material covered in the PTs.

Program management and policymakers can develop strategies for improving students' English language competency in light of the advantages of PTs, which will raise TOEIC results. Along with the measures already in place, they can, for instance, separate students who are less capable based on their PT score levels and offer them frequent practice or tutorials on language-related topics that they are having trouble with. Given their ability levels, additional practice ought to be able to strengthen their areas of weakness and improve their English proficiency as measured by the TOEIC scores.

2. The fact that the PT test's maximum, minimum, and mean scores were consistently lower than the TOEIC test's could be due to the fact that the PT test's questions were in fact harder than the TOEIC test's. If this were the case, students taking PT tests shouldn't be deterred by their poor results; rather, they might be told that if they concentrate more, they could eventually score higher on the TOEIC exam. Even better, as early as their first year, they ought to be told about the effects of their TOEIC practice. Long-term preparation is actually essential for students hoping to achieve a good TOEIC exam grade (Agoestyowati et al., 2024).

As regards the samples used in the research, the tiny sample size of just 22 respondents and only one significant group—which may limit generalizability—is one of the study's limitations. Consequently, future research using a larger sample size and a wider range of subject majors would undoubtedly clarify this element of their relationship.

Conclusions

The relationships between the PT and TOEIC scores of students pursuing different degrees from the University's faculties of Business Administration, Education, Nursing, and Public Health, as well as finally all fourth-year university students, are still unexplored, for instance. Additional samples from a wider range of sample groups will increase the generalizability of the correlation.

Recommendations

The scope of the present study was admittedly very limited; several other aspects of relationship between PT scores and TOEIC scores warrant further investigation. A few of them are recommended below.

1. Conducting longitudinal studies that monitor students' TOEIC performance over a number of years is one challenging future research endeavor. Monitoring their progress from year one to year three using PTs and the official TOEIC exam in year four is pertinent to the current investigation. The results of this four-year study will undoubtedly shed even more light on their English language acquisition phases.

2. Investigating the association between lower year level scores and final year TOEIC scores—specifically, (1) between first-year PT scores and fourth-year TOEIC scores (2) between their second-year PT results and fourth-year TOEIC scores will be another fascinating research project. The aim of this study is to determine whether test results from as early as their early years may be used to predict their final year TOEIC performance.

3. It would be beneficial to do further research to investigate the relationship between the PT and TOEIC scores of the reading and listening parts in greater detail, as the current study's objective was to review the relationship between the total TOEIC scores. Additional information about how well students perform in each language skill may be obtained from such independent studies.

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