

## AN ANALYSIS OF TOEIC TEST PREP APPLICATION ON THE STUDENT'S LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT STATE POLYTECHNIC OF BENGKALIS

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**Abstract:** *In the era of industry 4.0, most of human's activities cannot be separated from digitalization. Further, the TOEIC instructor or lecturer also has used a TOEIC application while teaching in TOEIC intensive class. The Language Centre of Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis also holds a TOEIC test (offline) to fulfill the industrial world in preparing qualified alumni. This study aimed to investigate the problem faced by the final year students during listening through application which is called TOEIC Test Prep in learning TOEIC materials in the TOEIC intensive class. The participants of the study were 43 Civil Engineering students of State Polytechnic of Bengkalis. They were from two different classes (class A and class B). Class A consisted 18 students and class B consisted 25 students. Both classes had received the TOEIC intensive class using TOEIC Test Prep application in one semester. They learned the listening and reading skill. They had done pre-test and post-test. This study used qualitative method which was questionnaires (20 questions) to look for information about how students identify difficulties and they were analyzed based on three categories; students' background, the general difficulties on TOEIC listening, the challenges during listening through the use of TOEIC Test Prep application.*

**Key words:** *TOEIC, TOEIC Test Prep Application, Listening Comprehension*

### INTRODUCTION

English has become an obligation for job seekers. As a result, most of learners have to engage in worldwide standardize English tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS. This situation forces many educational institutions to offer TOEIC

preparation class based on the students' TOEIC score.

Traditionally, the TOEIC test consists of two categories designed to test two essential qualities of the test taker, listening and reading. Listening is generally considered the most decisive and difficult skill for students

because it contains different types of tasks for different topics. Listening is a great skill and plays an important role. As (Vandergrift, 2004) stated that listening becomes the most difficult skill to learn. The more important to hear, the harder for them to learn. Listening to any language requires concentration and attention. The students majoring in non-English at State Polytechnic of Bengkalis (Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis), they still face difficulties, mainly for two reasons. First, common difficulties in the TOEIC listening test are vocabulary, background knowledge, and pronunciation.

Secondly, several factors can influence each part, such as: speed, length, unfamiliar words, etc. As a result, the lecturer used an application to teach them TOEIC listening skill, which could be downloaded on android, namely *TOEIC Test Prep* application. Since TOEIC is also one of requirements when the students' congregation, which the standard score of TOEIC (400 for non-English majored student and 450 for English majored student), the Language Centre of Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis usually holds a TOEIC Intensive Class to

fulfill the industrial world in preparing a qualified alumni and the lecturer has a responsibility to prepare the students with good preparation to reach the qualification.

For the above reasons, the survey "an analysis of the TOEIC Test Prep application on the students' listening comprehension score at State Polytechnic of Bengkalis" was conducted to gain insight into the use of application in TOEIC listening comprehension. So, based on the impact disposed in this study, students can find the weakness of using the TOEIC Test Prep application during the TOEIC intensive class.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **TOEIC Test**

TOEIC measures a student's English proficiency in four languages domain with grades or scores generalized to the CEFR (Test et al., n.d.). Based on in-depth research, TOEIC provides comprehensive and comparable data. These data can take into account decision-making, mapping and debriefing qualifications in accepting students, or students, and can also indirectly indicate the

convincingness of a particular English language learning program.

TOEIC is very advantageous in accomplishing success for educational institutions. Using TOEIC scores, teachers or instructors can analyze student performance. This will be used as a basis for consideration when setting learning goals to improve students' overall English proficiency. As a completion, the graduates created can become employable workers and enhance the institution's reputation in the sight of the job institution.

### **Listening Section in TOEIC**

This section purposes to check your ability to figure out spoken English. In this section, the test consists of 100 questions and is divided into 4 parts (ETS, 2019). They are in the form of photos (pictures), questions (questions and answers), short stories (conversations), and short dialogues (short stories) which played using mp4. Candidates listen to speech and questions in English and respond accordant to their understanding. This section includes:

*Photographs*  
*Question – Response*  
*Short Conversations*  
*Short Talks*

### **TOEIC Test Prep Application**

TOEIC intensive class is not about the technique or strategy but it is also about a media, especially for listening skill. Listening TOEIC intensive class needs visual aids or media to make learners feel that listening is not a “passive or receptive” skill as what (Nunan, 1997) stated in his study. The learners can be provided by the media which may make TOEIC intensive class interesting. In this study, it used *TOEIC Test Prep* application. This application serves an interactive examination practice for TOEIC test freely. It provides a new format of TOEIC test format for listening and reading test. The users may download this application on *Google Play Store* for PC and for smartphone.

### **The Importance and Obstacles of Listening**

Listening is the ability to understand spoken language. Listening is an fundamental skill evident in most activities we do throughout our lives. Learning this skill is very important when learning a foreign language. Listening plays an ~~essential~~ <sup>30 questions</sup> and perhaps dominant role <sup>30 questions</sup> throughout the language learning process. ~~Listening~~ <sup>30 questions</sup>, speaking, reading and writing are the

four skills called the "inseparable domains of communication". They are interrelated and dependent on each other. Moreover, listening is a key skill that allows us to take in, figure out and evaluate shared information. As humans, we seek interaction with each other on a daily basis. According to Nadig (2013) in (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), "Speaking is only half the communication mechanism required to enhance interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding others." Communication is considered unsuccessful if no one is listening to the speaker or if the listener does not understand the message. (Wang, 2016) (Damayanti & Gafur, 2020) (Buck, 2001) state that we all know that hearing a message is not as easy as listening, so the listener needs to understand the information and acknowledge correctly. Often people just listen to respond and don't really understand what's being said. Listening is an important factor for success in learning other languages, specifically English. For this reason, learners should pay concentration to this skill. Listening comprehension is not only about how the learners listen

the audio which played on media player.

Based on the observation through looking up the students' TOEIC listening score (non-English majoring students), the students got difficulties in listening comprehension. The lecturer thought that the learners need a suitable media to teach listening in order to have a good comprehension about it. As (Nguyen et al., 2020) proved on their study that learners' difficulties in TOEIC Listening for freshmen consisting of general difficulties (vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge and psychological) and difficulties in each part in the TOEIC listening test.

That previous study focused only on freshmen (new university students/1<sup>st</sup> semester of non-English majoring students) at Tay Do University. Another study that investigated about the EFL students' listening difficulties was done by (Hardiyanto et al., 2021). The result of the study was the listening comprehension difficulties encountered by the students at tertiary level are not equal based on the students' English proficiency.

Further, (KARMIATI & Kurniawati, 2018) had proved that TOEIC application could be used successfully to teach listening for 32 senior high school students, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, in SMKN 2 Karawang.

This present study had been conducted to find the difficulties and challenges in TOEIC listening after the use of *TOEIC Test Prep* application in the university level and for non-English majoring students.

The objective of this study is to investigate the difficulty of learning TOEIC listening comprehension while using the *TOEIC Test Prep* application. In short, this recent study investigated about the final year students' learning comprehension during the use of the application in vocational university while the previous studies only investigating the learning difficulties in senior high school level and general university level (freshmen).

Therefore, this study purpose to answer the following research questions: (1) Do you often have trouble listening to TOEIC test after using *TOEIC Test Prep* application? (2) What challenges do they face in

learning TOEIC listening during the use of *TOEIC Test Prep* application?

## METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

To response the research questions posed above, this research study was conducted at State Polytechnic Bengkalis (Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis), Riau Province. The participants were non-English majoring students and they answer questionnaires to gather information about the difficulty of learning TOEIC listening during the use of *TOEIC Test Prep* application. The information collected will be analyzed to clarify research goals.

The participants of this study were 43 students from non-English majoring students (Civil Engineering) of the fifth semester. They were from two different classes (class A and class B). Class A consisted 18 students and class B consisted 25 students. Both classes had received the TOEIC intensive class using *TOEIC Test Prep* application in one semester. They learned the listening and reading skill. They had done pre-test and post-test. It is the foundation for becoming familiar with TOEIC. Therefore, there are fewer easy level questions than the actual TOEIC test. This present

reputable results and generalizes research findings.

Questionnaire is a widely used tool or instrument in the social sciences for collecting data on difficult-to-observe phenomena such as attitudes, motivations, and self-image. Researchers therefore used questionnaires to look for information about how students identify difficulties and how they improve their listening skills.

In this survey, the questionnaires consisted of 20 questions. 43 copies of English-language questionnaires were distributed to students in major non-English classes. The questionnaires were divided into three parts, as follow:

**Table 1** The Content of Questionnaire

<b>Group</b>	<b>Summary of the content of the question group</b>
a. 1,2,3,4	Students' background
b. 5,6,7,8,9	General difficulties in TOEIC listening
c. From 10 to 20	The challenges on listening comprehension during the use of the <i>TOEIC Test Prep</i> application

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This part presents the results of research reported on reliable data from questionnaires. The results demonstrate the difficulty of studying the TOEIC listening comprehension

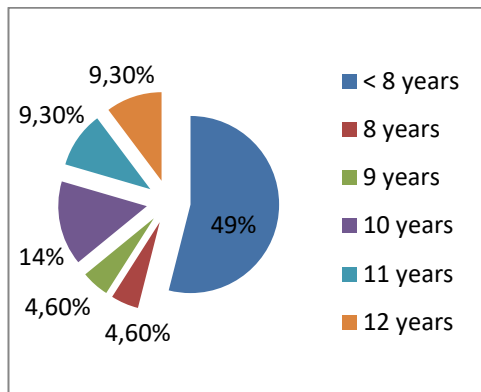
of non-English majors through statistical evidence and the challenges on listening comprehension during the use of the *TOEIC Test Prep* application.

**The Result of Questionnaire**

The researchers received a lot of valuable and authoritative information from the participants thanks to the questionnaire. The results were grouped into three basic factors: student background (student attitudes and student assessment of listening), general difficulties on TOEIC listening and student challenges in learning TOEIC listening using the *TOEIC Test Prep* application.

**Students' Background**

Apparently, in order to identify the students' level and knowledge, researchers required to obtain data about their years of English learning. The pie chart below presents the participants' English learning years figured from the current year (2022).



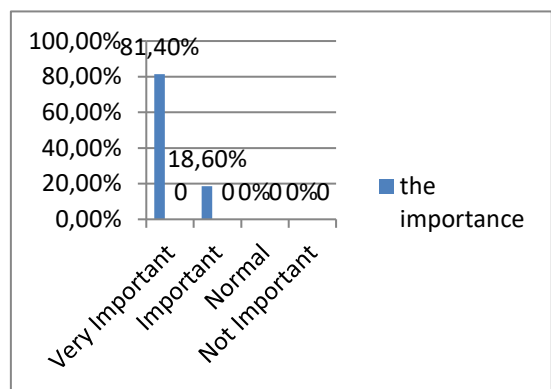
**Figure 1:** The Students' Year of Studying English

Looking at the graph, the largest part of the pie chart accounts for 49% (21/43) of the participants who have been learning English for under 8 years. This means that most of the students has been studying English since elementary school. Students who have studied English for above 13 years were 4.6% (2/43). Further, there were 14% (6/43) students have learned English for ten years.

In short, the percentage of students who have learned English since the age of 10 is bigger than the age of 7. Unfortunately, this could not be a judgment that the years number of learning English reflect a good listening skill because the listening skill cannot be identified from how long the students have spent time to study English.

### Students' Attitude towards English Listening Skill

English has developed into an universal language and is also a useful tool to meet professional needs in many countries around the world. Most jobs today require some qualification related to English. Thus, student beliefs towards the importance of learning English are reflected in this chart.



The needs of learning English cannot be separated from Indonesian students as EFL learners. It proved from the data above that 81.40% (35/43) of non-English majoring students at Polytechnic of Bengkalis stated that learning English is very important. On the other side, there is none of them stated that learning English is not important or normal.

Before entering the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis, the non-English majoring students also took

the TOEIC test as the requirement. Here are the aims that the students chose when taking TOEIC test:

**Tabel 2** The students’ purpose of taking TOEIC test

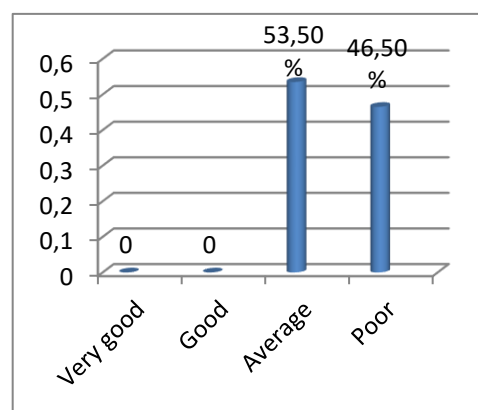
The purposes of taking TOEIC test	Finding s
a. To fulfill the requirements of campus graduating	69.8%
b. To be prepared for the job	23.3%
c. To improve English proficiency	4.6%
d. To satisfy yourselves’ interest	2.3%

The percentage of students who chose to take the TOEIC test only to fulfill the campus requirement was the highest, accounting for more than half (69.8%) with the statement “I would like to obtain a TOEIC certificate”. There were 23.3% students who stated that they need TOEIC test for getting a better job in the future.

**Students’ Assessment on their Listening Ability**

A student's level of listening comprehension may depend on the number of years they have been studying and their goals for learning English. When asked, "How would you rate your listening skills?" There was none of the students considered their listening skills to be very good or excellent. They had no confidence in their abilities. In sum, most of the non-English majoring students felt that their listening ability

was standard. This is evidenced by the highest proportion of participants which was 53.5% (23/43). Furthermore, 46.5% (20/43) of students stated their listening skills were poor. In other words, although they have spent many years for learning English, until now they are getting difficulties when answering TOEIC listening test:

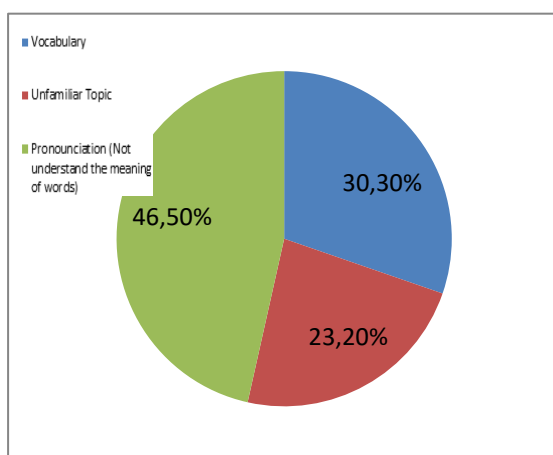


**Figure 3:** Students’ Self-evaluation on their Listening Skill

**Students’ General Difficulties in TOEIC Listening**

Vocabulary is examined as a fundamental part of learning English. Without vocabulary, students cannot learn English well. However, it is not easy for students to have an understandable vocabulary, especially for non-English majoring students at Sttate Polytechnic of Bengkalis. As a result, it was one of the students’ difficulties in TOEIC listening.





**Figure 4:** Students' Difficulties in TOEIC Listening

From the figure, it could not be denied that the students got difficulties on pronunciation of the TOEIC's speakers (46.5%). The second difficulty that the students face while TOEIC Listening was vocabulary (unfamiliar words) which was 30.3%. Another general difficulty for them was unfamiliar topic (23.2%) from TOEIC listening.

#### **Students' Challenges in TOEIC Listening Through *TOEIC Test Prep* Application**

Based on the result of the questionnaires about the *TOEIC Test Prep* application, there were some challenges that could be concluded:

##### **1. *Time management***

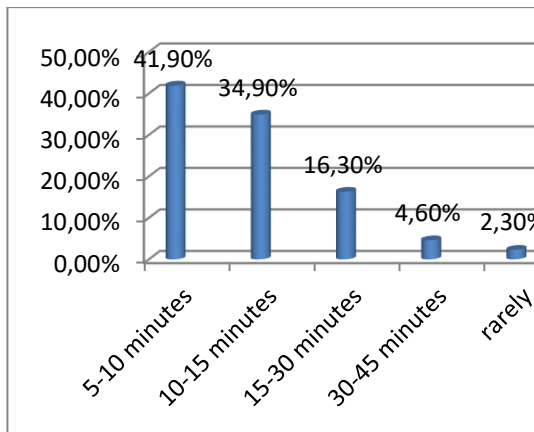
The students only had 2 hours for each meeting in TOEIC intensive class. The *TOEIC Test Prep* application serves 35 practices for TOEIC listening practice and TOEIC

full test. The non-English majoring students in Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis had two language skills to be mastered during TOEIC intensive class (reading and listening). As a result, all the students' class meetings were not only for mastering listening. This *TOEIC Test Prep* application really helped the students when they wanted to master and practice the listening comprehension outside of the class since they had their own application on their hand.

The students had the challenge from themselves which they had to practice 1 practice per a day from the application. If they students do not practice, the application will not move to the next level (new listening practice). The students have to pass one by one the listening practice in the *TOEIC Test Prep* application. The students had to force themselves to finish all the practices on the *TOEIC Test Prep* application if they had encouragement to get a good comprehension of listening.

Other than that, the students should have much time to self-study using the *TOEIC Test Prep* Application because listening is also about habitual or routine acts to

become familiar with the pronunciation, the words, and the topics in TOEIC test.



**Figure 5:** The students' time allocation on using the *TOEIC Test Prep* application after the class

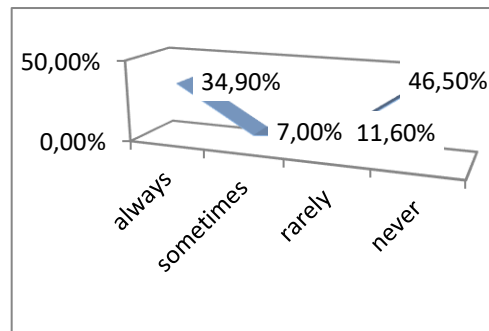
From the figure, it can be seen that only 4.6% of the participants who had spent much time to practice listening in the *TOEIC Test Prep* application. Moreover, there were 2.3% of participant seldom to do listening practice the *TOEIC Test Prep* application. Fortunately, there were almost half of the participants always do the listening practice even for 5 to 10 minutes per a day. In summary, the number of students who regularly review and practice listening was adequate.

**2. Self-management**

Since the *TOEIC Test Prep* application does not have a person to control, there would be a possibility for the students to find the meaning of

certain words on internet. Here, the students were forced to have a good confident with their own ability without any helps from any other applications or search engine machine.

From the data, there were some students who looked up the Google translate during the listening practice in the *TOEIC Test Prep* application.



**Figure 6:** The students' habits to use Google translate while doing the listening practice.

The data showed that the number of students who never looked up the Google translate was higher than the number of students who always used the Google translate during the listening practice in the *TOEIC Test Prep* application.

Those are some challenges faced by the non-English majoring students while learning and practicing using the *TOEIC Test Prep* application.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The non-English majoring students in Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis had difficulties in TOEIC listening which were vocabulary (unfamiliar words), pronunciation and unfamiliar topic. Hence, the *TOEIC Test Prep* application was proved that it was one of applications to make the students become familiar with the topic, pronunciation, and vocabulary in TOEIC test. Moreover, the students faced the time management and their selves' control management while using the *TOEIC Test Prep* application. For further research, it would be better to conduct the mixed research method (quantitative-qualitative) with huge number of participants to explore a depth-result.

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