

Toeic Reading Test: EFL Non-Majors' Attitudes towards and Perceptions of Reading Comprehension and Reading Test-Taking Strategies

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to (1) to find out whether or not English non-majors have a negative or positive attitude towards the TOEIC reading test, taking account of their positive experience (i.e. confidence) and negative experience (i.e. challenges) in the application of test-taking strategies throughout the procedures of comprehending content of a TOEIC reading test, (2) to find out how the instructors at the University of Labor and Social Affairs explain the negative attitudes of the students towards the test, if any. A Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to eighty-six university students from a single university. Descriptive Statistical results revealed that students do not have positive attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test. The results also indicated that students' perceptions of test-taking strategies as practice a lot before exams, time management, do easy parts first, skimming and guessing were appreciated highly. Finally, the limitations in terms of vocabulary knowledge size, some areas of linguistic competence, and test-taking strategies are the challenges students face when taking TOEIC Reading test. This study is significant in the way it contributes to improving ULSA students' reading strategies in a proficiency test in general and TOEIC reading test in particular, and to enhancing teacher's methods of teaching TOEIC reading classes in TOEIC preparation courses to help TOEIC learners to increase their TOEIC scores. Moreover, findings of the study are expected to help raise teachers' awareness of challenges that students face when taking a TOEIC reading test.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the global integration, English is considered as an international language. Consequently, English is one of the necessary requirements for language learners as well as workplaces in all over the world. To assess one's ability of using English, there have been many tests to be used. Developed by the largest testing organization in the United States, Educational Testing Services (ETS), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) has significantly increased its impact on the assessment of communicative English since the late 1990s, especially in Japan and Korea, where the TOEIC test was applied very early. In the late 2000s, in Japan more than 1.7 million people take the test each year. The test results are used by a number of companies, universities and private schools. The test scores have an effect on job recruitment and admission to graduate schools. At present, test preparation for the TOEIC has become increasingly important for many university students. Still, properly defined test taking strategies are not yet available for university students, especially to prepare for TOEIC reading comprehension.

Recently a lot of universities have introduced TOEIC classes in their English curricula to meet students' immediate needs to get high scores on the test because an increasing number of companies claims that they consider TOEIC scores when hiring new employees. In line with this trend, the University of Labor and Social Affairs – HCM Campus (ULSA2) has also started applying TOEIC-oriented English learning and teaching in 2010 and attracted a lot of learners to these TOEIC preparation courses, which satisfy one of the graduation requirements.

However, TOEIC learners at the University have experienced difficulties in getting the target scores as prescribed by the University. From the researcher's personal observations, it has been found out that the students have negative attitudes towards the TOEIC test. They are often anxious about comprehending the content of the TOEIC although they have attended the preparation courses. Their TOEIC scores often ranged, based on casual oral reports, from 300 up to 320 after attending those classes, which is far below the 400-score targeted. Facing these 'grievances' the researcher, in retrospect, has realized that he and his colleagues have devoted themselves in a vain attempt to equipping the students with test-taking strategies. They have wondered why the students have not been confident about taking the test. These students' persistent complaints have created a drive for the researcher to delve into the issue.

The reality has provided an impetus for the study entitled "*TOEIC Reading Test: EFL non-majors' attitudes towards and perceptions of reading comprehension and reading test-taking strategies*" to be undertaken.

The aims of this survey study are two-fold:

- (1) To find out whether or not English non-majors have a negative or positive attitude towards the TOEIC reading test, taking account of their positive (i.e. confidence) and negative experience (i.e. challenges) in the application of test-taking strategies throughout the procedures of comprehending content of a TOEIC reading test.
- (2) To find out how the instructors at the University of Labor and Social Affairs explain the negative attitudes of the students towards the test, if any.

This study attempts to answer:

1. What kinds of attitudes do the non-English majors at ULSA2 have towards the TOEIC reading test as far as their perceptions and behaviors are concerned within the context of the students' experiences relating to their confidence in and anxiety over reading comprehension and applying test-taking strategies?
 - a) *How confident and anxious are the students when taking the TOEIC reading test?*
 - b) *How do students perceive the conditions of achieving success in TOEIC Reading test taking and the challenges in fulfilling the test requirements?*
2. There were possibilities in which the students had negative attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test, how do the themes mentioned by the teachers help to explain the students' negativity?

This paper is significant in the way it contributes to improving ULSA2 students' reading strategies in a proficiency test in general and TOEIC reading test in particular, and to enhancing teacher's methods of teaching TOEIC reading classes in TOEIC preparation courses to help TOEIC learners to increase their TOEIC scores. Moreover, findings of the study are expected to help raise teachers' awareness of challenges that students face when taking a TOEIC reading test. From that, some implications drawn from the results of the study will be a reminder to TOEIC teachers here (at ULSA2) and other educational organizations that they should have a particular adjustment in teaching TOEIC in general, and TOEIC Reading test in particular.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of attitudes

Up to now, there have been different definitions relating to the word *attitude* given the different "theories" that have been put forward in the field of social psychology. Attitudes may involve opinions, beliefs, and ways of responding to some sets of problems (Johnson & Johnson, 1998) or "evaluations" of an object or an event (Eaton & Visser, in Lavrakas, 2008).

Construed as beliefs (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010), attitudes may refer to perceptions about the world (Shaw & Wright, cited in McKenzie, 2010).

Attitudes may be defined as comprising positive or negative feelings about something (Lange & James (1972) and as dispositions to react positively or negatively to an object, a situation, a person, an event (Sarnoff (1970), or past experiences (Eaton & Visser, in Lavrakas, 2008).

The role of attitudes in language

Learners who possess positive/negative attitudes towards a certain language can affect their performance on a language test. In the same way, learners' attitudes towards a certain language proficiency test may have considerable effect on their performance

on their test. Gardner and Lambert (1972) asserts that attitudes toward language can be defined in terms of different directions towards language learning. Major directions are called integrative and instrumental directions.

Attitudes that have been explored in relation to language learning range from anxiety about the language and the language learning situation, through attitudes to L2 learners, the state in which it is used, the classroom, the teacher, other learners, the nature of language learning, particular elements in the learning activities, tests and beliefs about learning in general (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). Bachmann (1976) has argued that high achievement causes positive attitudes and high motivation.

Gardner (1985) agrees that attitudes and other affective variables are as important as aptitude for language achievement.

Definitions of reading

The definition of reading that has arisen in recent decades by many researchers. Urquhart & Weir (1998, p.22) argues that reading is the process consisting of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via written texts.

Similarly, Koda (2005, p.4) indicates that comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates numerous information from the text and combines it with what is already known.

Reading as "... the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately". However, in order to understand the notion of reading, many researchers agree that reading must be put into consideration of a complex combination of processes (Grabe and Stoller 2002, Alderson 2000, Grabe 2009, Carrell 1988a...).

Grabe (2009, p.14) defines that reading can be understood as a complex combination of processes including (1) a rapid process, (2) an efficient process, (3) a comprehending process, (4) an interactive process, (5) a strategic process, (6) a flexible process, (7) a purposeful process, (8) an evaluative process, (9) a learning process, (10) linguistic process.

Models of Reading

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), the bottom-up process of reading is defined as a serial model where the reader begins with the printed word, recognizes graphic stimuli, decodes them to sound, recognize words, and decode meanings (Paran 1997; Alderson 2000).

According to Salataci (2000, cited in Grabe & Stoller), readers whose language proficiency is low follow bottom-up strategies to get the meaning. The reader has to succeed step by step and complete the chain in order to get the meaning at the end.

Contrary to bottom-up models, in top-down models, the reader is expected to bring his/her background knowledge to the text. Grabe and Stoller (2002) emphasize that top-down models assume that reading is mostly directed by reader goals and expectations, which is why top-down models characterize the reader as someone who has a set of expectations about text information and samples enough information from the text to confirm or reject these expectations.

According to Alderson (2000), in top-down approaches, the importance of schemata, and the reader's contribution to the incoming text is emphasized. Schema theory deals with what readers bring to the text they read and schema plays an important role in top-down processes. Schema theory attempts to describe the efficiency of previous knowledge. It is thought that the previous knowledge of the readers impacts their comprehension of the text. He also defines schemata as interlocking mental structures representing readers' knowledge.

The variables affecting the nature of reading.

Readers

Research has looked at the way readers themselves affect the reading process and product, and has investigated a number of different variables. The state of the reader's knowledge, broadly speaking, constitutes one significant field of research, as does the readers' motivation to read, and the way this interacts with the reasons why a reader is reading a text at all. The strategies that readers use when processing text have received considerable recent scrutiny, to some extent superseding earlier attempts to establish what skills are required by good readers in order to process text efficiently. In addition, relatively stable characteristics of readers, like sex, age and personality, have been studied alongside physical characteristics, like eye movements, speed of word recognition, automaticity of processing and, such like. I will now highlight the main findings of relevance to assessment.

Knowledge of language

According to Alderson (2000, p. 34), readers will have great troubles in processing the text if they do not know the language of the text. And indeed in studies of first language reading the language knowledge of the reader is often taken for granted. However, this implies that first language readers are homogeneous with respect to their knowledge of their mother tongue, yet this is manifestly not the case. A reader's linguistic knowledge continues to develop with age and experience: vocabulary size and depth develop; knowledge of the conventions associated with particular types of text develops well into adulthood, and the ability to process the more complex linguistic structures associated especially with written language must inevitably develop with increasing literacy.

Knowledge of subject matter/topic

Alderson (2000, p. 44) argue that if a reader knows absolutely nothing about the topic of a text, he/she will find it difficult to process, such a common-sense approach cannot explain how readers can learn new information, and indeed understand texts in unfamiliar areas.

Alderson and Urquhart (1985) stated that reading tests on texts in subject disciplines that students were studying or had studied were sometimes easier to process than those which were not, but not always. Some texts outside their subject disciplines proved easier to understand than texts within the disciplines, despite being of roughly equivalent difficulty.

Reader skills and abilities

Readers not only have knowledge, they have abilities: abilities not only to learn new knowledge, but also abilities to process information. Researchers have long been concerned that readers may have relevant knowledge but that they may not possess, or have learned, the ability or skill to process text.

Perkins (1987, as cited in Alderson, 2000) found a very close relationship for second-language readers between proficiency in finding the common set of features which constitute a single graphic pattern or multiple patterns in a set of stimuli, and the ability to understand text and especially the story structure of texts. He recommends that the operations of exploring the conventional structure of stories and performing a non-verbal schematic concept formation task might be similar.

Text variables

According to Alderson (2000), the other side of the coin in the reader-text interaction is the text itself. Many aspects of text that might facilitate or make difficult the reading process have been studied, from a variety of different disciplines. Although linguistics is the obvious major source of insight into the language of text, texts have often been studied from a linguistic perspective without concern for the reader. It has all too often been assumed that the analyst represents a typical reader, and that what results from the analysis can therefore be assumed to be true of any language processor.

Text analysts from other backgrounds, including education, psychology, the study of rhetoric, sociology and even journalism and communication studies, have contributed to our understanding of those factors in text that influence the process. These factors range from aspects of text content, to text types or genres, text organization, sentence structure, lexis, text typography, layout, the relationship between verbal and non-verbal text, and the medium in which the text is presented.

Text topic and content

Alderson (2000, p.62) agrees that it is generally assumed (and has long been established) that abstract texts will be harder to understand than texts describing real objects, events or activities. The more concrete, imaginable and interesting, the more readable the text is. Texts on arcane topics are likely to be harder to process (although what is arcane for one person may well be familiar to another — an illustration, if one were needed, of the intimate and complex interrelationship between text content and reader knowledge). Texts located in familiar settings, on everyday topics, are likely to be easier to process than those that are not.

Text types and genres

Another variable that makes texts difficult can be text type and genre. It is style of texts, or it's the features that make one text different from another, and that give rise to a number of different classifications of text type.

The study of text types has received recent impetus from the pioneering work of Swales (1990). His studies of the abstracts to scientific articles is a landmark in such work, clearly presenting the way in which the structure of article abstracts derives from the function of the abstract and from the purposes of the writer.

According to Salager-Meyer (1991), there is an interaction between text structure and familiarity with the topic of a passage. In moderately familiar texts, deficient structuring had a negative effect only on less skilled readers. And in unfamiliar texts, the highly structured format did not enhance the reading performance of either skilled or less skilled readers. Thus text variables only have a crucial role when materials are conceptually more difficult or unfamiliar and when readers are relatively less able.

Text organization

One thing that distinguishes one text type or genre from another is the way the text is organized. Text organization - how the paragraphs relate to each other, how the relationships between ideas are signaled or not signaled — has long been an object of study. Even within one genre, researchers have been concerned to show how different organizations might lead to different outcomes or processes.

Text that is coherent is much easier to comprehend than less coherent text: for example, texts that present facts with little explanation of relationships between them, forcing readers to make many connecting inferences (Beck *et al.*, 1991). Text written in such a way as to expose the reasoning that connects a cause to an event, and an event to a consequence is easier to understand than text that fails to make causal sequences clear, for first-language readers as well as second-language readers.

Factors affecting the difficulty of reading test items

Language of questions

Alderson (2000) indicates that multiple-choice questions in the first language are easier than the same questions translated into the second language, and, similarly, open-ended questions in L1 are easier than open-ended questions in L2. She speculates that this fact is possibly explained by reduced anxiety, especially among low-level learners.

Types of questions

Anderson *et al.* (1991) also used this classification scheme but do not report relationships with item difficulty or discrimination (item discrimination is the ability of an item to distinguish between good and poor students; an item with good discrimination will be responded to correctly by many more good students than poor students, most of whom will get the item wrong). However, Anderson *et al.* failed to find any relationship between question type and the strategies used by candidates to answer the questions.

Testing skills

Skills refer to informational processing techniques that are automatic, whether at the level of recognizing grapheme-phoneme correspondence or summarizing a story. Skills are applied to a text unconsciously for many reasons including expertise, repeated practice, and compliance with directions, luck, and naive use. He argues that many automatized processes in word recognition, including phonological processing, orthographic processing, and lexical access can be seen as skills (Grabe, 2009: 221).

Role of grammar in reading tests

According to James E. Purpura (2004), grammar, the structural glue, the “code” of language, is arguably at the heart of language use, whether this involves speaking, listening, reading or writing. Grammar has also been central to language teaching and assessment historically, from the Middle Ages, when “rhetoric” was a key component of a university education, to the “skills-and-components” models of the 1960s that informed both language pedagogy and language testing.

Grabe (2009, p.199) reported that it’s necessary for readers to use information from grammar to build comprehension. Briefly, there is little recognition (or even awareness) of how grammar works to support understanding the texts. He also states that as a reader begins to look at a text, visual word-recognition processes are engaged, the first words are recognized, and the extraction of syntactic information begins. Syntactic processing builds the phrasal and clausal units that support the construction of semantic propositions. Structural information is taken from the words that are recognized, and specific word groupings are recognized for the structural information that they provide

Role of vocabulary in reading tests

The crucial role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been well recognized in first language (L1) situations and this has appeared to be true of second language (L2) settings as well.

In recent years, the significant role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been well recognized in first language (L1) studies and this has appeared to be the case in the second language (L2) settings as well. Researchers have suggested several models to describe the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Hurst (2012) states that vocabulary plays an important role in word recognition.

Stanovich (1986, 2000) makes a strong argument for a reciprocal causal relation between reading and vocabulary. He indicates that vocabulary growth leads to improved reading comprehension, and amount of reading leads to vocabulary growth.

Factors affecting the difficulty of reading test texts

Text length

A problem that all reading-test designers face is how long the texts should be on which they base their tests. Up to now text length is still a surprisingly under researched area.

Engineer (1977) realized that when texts longer than 1,000 words were used, the abilities that could be measured changed. The suggestion is that longer texts allow testers to assess more study-related abilities and to reduce reliance on sentential processing abilities that might tap syntactic and lexical knowledge more than discourse processing abilities. Similarly, the ability to identify the main idea of long texts might be thought to be qualitatively different from the ability to identify the main idea in shorter texts

Testlets

According to Alderson (2000, p.109), many reading tests, like the TOEFL and TOEIC are characterised by a number of (usually short) passages, each accompanied by comprehension questions. Since the questions all relate to the same text, they are often regarded as a subtest and are referred to increasingly as 'testlets'.

Reading strategies and Test-Taking strategies

Recently, reading strategies that are used by test takers on reading comprehension tests have been interested by many researchers. There has been an increasing respect of the position of acquiring a better understanding of how reading and test-taking strategies are used on tests as part of the process of construct validation: "the relationship between test performance and the construct, or ability, it is intended to measure" (Anderson, Bachman, Cohen, 1991, p.42).

Conceptual framework

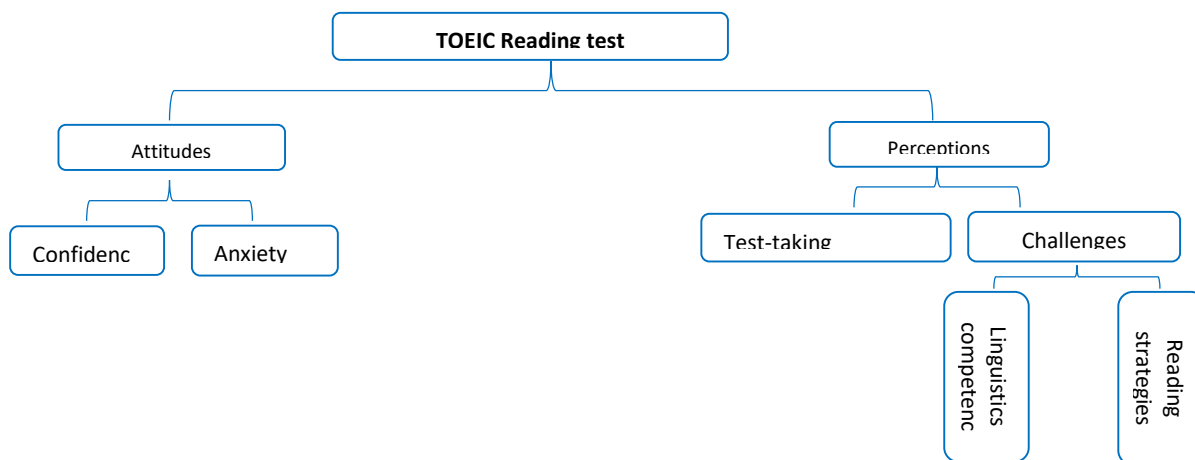


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of the study

In an attempt to mitigate any potential issues that might arise in the study, a conceptual framework is carefully shaped to guide the researcher through each step of the whole investigation procedure, concerning a number of core facets (Figure.3)

The present study attempts to investigate students' attitudes and perceptions of the TOEIC reading test. According to Garcia *et al* (2012), anxiety and confidence are factors associated with students' attitudes.

To investigate students' perceptions of the TOEIC reading test, this study will examine students' perceptions of test-taking strategies and challenges of linguistic competence and reading strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research questions

The purpose of this research study was to (1) to find out whether or not English non-majors have a negative or positive attitude towards the TOEIC reading test, taking account of their positive experience (i.e. confidence) and negative experience (i.e. challenges) in the application of test-taking strategies throughout the procedures of comprehending content of a TOEIC reading test, (2) to find out how the instructors at the University of Labor and Social Affairs explain the negative attitudes of the students towards the test, if any. Thus, the present study focused on addressing the two following main research questions:

1. What kinds of attitudes do the non-English majors at ULSA2 have towards the TOEIC reading test as far as their perceptions and behaviors are concerned within the context of the students' experiences relating to their confidence in and anxiety over reading comprehension and applying test-taking strategies?
 - a) *How confident and anxious are the students when taking the TOEIC reading test?*
 - b) *How do students perceive the conditions of achieving success in TOEIC Reading test taking and the challenges in fulfilling the test requirements?*
2. If there were possibilities in which the students had negative attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test, how do the themes mentioned by the teachers help to explain the students' negativity?

Research design

Research Site

The research study was conducted at ULSA2, located in District 12, from April, 2021 to September, 2021. This university, which belongs to the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids, & Social Welfare, trains students in 5 majors including Human Resources Management (HR), Social Insurance (SI), Business Administration BA), Social Work (SW), and Accounting(A).

Participants

As seen in Table 3 below, the students' ages ranged from 22 to 25. The majority of the students (62.8%) were 22 years old. The predominant gender of the study was female (n=51, 59.3%), outnumbered male students (n=35, 40.7%). Although their length of time studying English was different, their English proficiency levels are reported to be at intermediate. All of them had already learnt the TOEIC reading strategies.

Table 3 *Description of students' characteristics*

Age				Gender	
22 years old	23 years old	24 years old	25 years old	Male	Female
54	25	6	1	35	51
62.8%	29.1%	7%	1.2%	40.7%	59.3%
Total: 86				86	

Research Instruments

The research method was of the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and attitudes. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Meanwhile, quantitative research is used to quantify attitudes, perceptions and other defined variables – and generalize results from a larger sample population.

Before designing the questionnaire, a pilot interview was conducted with 10 TOEIC-teachers who have been teaching in TOEIC-preparation courses in order to get the information related to TOEIC reading test including: the test format, test content, difficult problems and some test taking strategies that they teach students. The pilot interview also carried out with ten students who had taken the TOEIC test. There were two of them ranking *Basic Proficiency*, two students ranking *Elementary Proficiency*, two students ranking *Limited Working Proficiency*, and the last two students ranking *International Professional Proficiency*.

A month prior to carrying out questionnaires, these interviews were carried out in Vietnamese in order to catch the interviewees' implication clearly and in details. The ideas note-taken and recorded from the piloted interview would be used for draft version of the questionnaires.

The questionnaire was designed in the format of close-ended questions rated on a five-point Likert scale which ranges from (1) *strongly disagree*, (2) *disagree*, (3) *neutral*, (4) *agree*, and (5) *Strongly agree*

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was handed from July 1st to July 18th, 2021. The questionnaires were administered in all these TOEIC-preparation courses. Before handing the questionnaires, all the participants were explained clearly about the purposes of the questionnaire with the hope that the true reality in students' perceptions would be given.

Data were collected and entered into 22 of statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to compute descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading Test.

Table 4. *Student's attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading Test*

Q1	Test Value=3						
	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the Difference		
	.660	85	.511	.058	lower	upper	
					-.12	.23	

Table 4 reveals that of 86 students of ULSA2 responded to the questionnaires. In general, most of the students do not have a fairly positive attitude and not a fairly negative attitude towards the TOEIC Reading test.

Table 5. *Summary of One Sample T-test about students' attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading Test*

Students' attitudes towards TOEIC reading Test	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
	86	2.08	4.17	2.95	.39948
Students' confidence	86	1	5	2.00	.982
Students' anxiety	86	1	4.5	3.33	.621

The results from the one-sample t-test in Table 5 reveals that the difference between the sample mean ($M=2.95$) is not statistically different ($p=.511$) from the neutral value set at 3 of the 5-point Likert scale. As displayed in Table 5, the central tendency of the students' attitudes of the mean score is not higher than 3 which is an aggregation of the two variables – confidence and anxiety. The students are not quite confident ($M=2.00$) about their performance in the test and were somewhat anxious ($M=3.33$) for taking the test.

Students' confidence in TOEIC Reading test

Table 6. *Students' confidence in the TOEIC Reading test*

Table 3: Students' confidence in the TOEIC Reading test														
Q1	In general, when you take a TOEIC Reading test,	N = 86										M	SD	
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)				
	you are confident	30	34.9%	36	41.9%	11	12.8%	8	9.3%	1	1.2%	2.00	.982	

Table 6 related to students' confidence in Reading test. As seen from the follow table, thirty-six out of eighty-six students are not confident when taking a TOEIC reading test ($Mean=2.00$). However, we cannot conclude that all of them are not confident when taking the TOEIC Reading test. Some of them are still confident because the S.D. indicated in the table shows that the data is spread out over a large range of values ($S.D=.982$).

Students' confidence towards parts of the TOEIC Reading test.

Table 7. *Students' confidence in parts of the TOEIC Reading test*

		N = 86											
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Q2	In general, when you take a TOEIC Reading test, you are confident with:	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		M	SD
A	Part 5 (Incomplete sentence).	2	2.3%	5	5.8%	16	18.6%	45	52.3%	18	20.9%	3.84	.906
C	Part 7 (Reading Comprehension)	0	0%	12	14%	41	47.7%	29	33.7%	4	4.7%	3.29	.765
B	Part 6 (Text completion)	5	5.8%	38	44.2%	33	38.4%	7	8.1%	3	3.5%	2.59	.859

Table 7 above presents students' confidence in parts of the TOEIC Reading test. As indicated in the table 5, students are the most confident in Part 5 (Incomplete sentence), which tests the test takers about vocabulary and grammar at sentential level. 73.2% of participants are confident when taking the TOEIC Reading test (M=3.84). The second part that students are confident is Part 7 (Reading comprehension) (M= 3.29). Accordingly, students do not feel confident in Part 6 (Text Completion), which tests students about grammar and vocabulary at textual level (M= 2.56).

Students' confidence in common types of grammar items found in part 5

Table 8. Students' confidence in common types of grammar items found in part 5

Q3	In Part 5, types of grammar items that you are confident is about:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
A	tenses	1	1.2%	11	12.8%	19	22.1%	42	48.8%	13	15.1%	3.64	.932
D	pronouns	1	1.2%	12	14%	25	29.1%	36	41.9%	12	14%	3.53	.942
E	parts of speech	1	1.2%	15	17.5%	26	30.2%	34	39.5%	10	11.6%	3.43	.952
B	phrasal verbs	1	1.2%	10	11.6%	43	50.6%	29	33.7%	3	3.5%	3.27	.758
G	conjunctions	1	1.2%	18	20.9%	33	38.4%	28	32.6%	6	7%	3.23	.903
F	similar words	2	2.3%	21	24.4%	34	39.5%	26	30.2%	3	3.5%	3.08	.884
H	passive voice	13	15.1%	35	40.7%	23	26.7%	14	16.3%	1	1.2%	2.48	.979
C	prepositions	15	22.1%	35	40.7%	8	9.3%	22	25.6%	2	2.3%	2.45	1.165

As reflected in Table 8 above, a large number of survey students agreed that they are confident with tenses (63.9%, M=3.64), pronouns (55.9%, M=3.53) and parts of speech (51.1%, M= 3.43). Phrasal verbs took the fourth place (M= 3.27) while conjunctions (M=3.23), and similar words (M=3.08) were in the following positions respectively. Prepositions and passive voice received the lowest mean score from students. Fifty (62.8%) out of eighty-six survey students did not feel confident in prepositions and only fifteen (17.5%) out of eighty-six survey students are confident in passive voice.

Students' confidence in common types of grammar items found in part 6

Table 9. Students' confidence in common types of grammar items found in part 6

Q4	In Part 6, types of grammar items that you are confident is about:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
C	time conjunctions	1	1.2%	12	14%	22	25.6%	40	46.5%	11	12.8%	3.56	.928
B	pronouns	1	1.2%	14	16.3%	26	30.2%	39	45.3%	6	7.0%	3.41	.886
D	comparisons	1	1.2%	16	18.6%	32	37.2%	26	30.2%	11	12.8%	3.35	.967
F	prepositions	9	10.5%	38	44.2%	20	23.3%	16	18.6%	3	3.5%	2.60	1.021
E	verb patterns	10	11.6%	38	44.2%	21	24.4%	15	17.4%	2	2.3%	2.55	.990
A	... words in contexts	8	9.3%	39	45.3%	24	27.9%	15	17.4%	0	0%	2.53	.890

Table 9 above shows a description of students' confidence in common types of grammar items that were found in Part 6 of TOEIC Reading test. As can be seen from the Table 9 above, almost all of the students (59.3%) agreed that they felt confident with time conjunction (M=3.56) and over fifty (52.3%) percent of survey students are confident with pronouns (M=3.41). Next, comparison received the third position with the mean score was 3.35. Meanwhile, students do not feel confident with types of grammar items tested such as words in context, verb patterns, and prepositions, comprising M= 2.53, M= 2.55, and M= 2.6 respectively.

Students' confidence in parts of Part 7 of TOEIC Reading test

Q5	In Part 7, you are confident about:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
A	Single passages	0	0%	5	5.8%	14	16.3%	47	54.7%	20	23.3%	3.95	.796
C	Main idea questions	0	0%	7	8.1%	31	36.0%	35	40.7%	13	15.1%	3.63	.841
J	Skimming	0	0%	11	12.8%	26	30.2%	41	47.7%	8	9.3%	3.53	.836
B	Double passages	0	0%	11	12.8%	43	50%	26	30.2%	6	7.0%	3.31	.786
G	Guessing skills	1	1.2%	19	22.1%	30	34.9%	33	38.4%	3	3.5%	3.21	.869

D	Detail questions	0	0%	25	29.1%	38	44.2%	19	22.1%	4	4.7%	3.02	.840
H	Analyzing skills	5	5.8%	15	17.4%	40	46.5%	25	29.1%	1	1.2%	3.02	.867
E	Inference questions	9	10.5%	39	45.3%	24	27.9%	11	12.8%	3	3.5%	2.53	.966
I	Synthesizing skills	13	15.1%	34	39.5%	22	25.6%	16	18.6%	1	1.2%	2.51	1.003
F	vocabulary questions	9	10.5%	40	46.5%	24	27.9%	12	14.0%	1	1.2%	2.49	.904

Table 10. Students'

confidence in parts of Part 7 of TOEIC Reading test

Table 10 describes students' confidence in parts of Part 7 of TOEIC Reading test. Taking a detailed look at Table 10 above, when regarding to comprehension passages in part 7, most of the survey students agreed that they were more confident with single passages (M=3.95) than double passages (M=3.31). There are sixty-seven in eighty-six students (78%) agreed that they were confident in single passages.

In respect to type of questions, of four types of questions in TOEIC Reading texts, the highest mean scores were that of Q5C (main idea questions), with 3.63, while the most modest one was taken by Q5F (vocabulary questions), standing at a mere 2.49. Moreover, inference questions also received quite a low mean score (M= 2.53). Thirty-eight out of 86 survey students (44.2%) marked "not sure" for detail questions.

In relation to reading comprehension skills, nearly sixty percent of the students (57%) agreed that they were confident with skimming skills when taking the TOEIC Reading test, with the mean score of Q5J (skimming skill) was 3.53 from students' responses. The second position was word meaning prediction skills. The mean score for this (Q5G) was 3.21 as 41.9%. There were also 40 out of 86 survey students (46.5%) marked "not sure" for analyzing skill. Surprisingly, students seemingly did not feel confident with synthesizing skills when taking the TOEIC Reading test. The mean score for this skill was 2.51

In general, in Part 7 (Reading comprehension), students are quite confident with single passages, main idea questions, and skimming skills (reading quickly to get the main idea of the text), whereas inference questions, synthesizing skills, and vocabulary questions are constructs that student did not feel confident at all.

Students' anxiety about TOEIC Reading test

Table 11. Students' anxiety about TOEIC Reading test

Q6	You feel anxious when taking the TOEIC Reading test due to:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
A	Lack of time management skills	4	4.7%	9	10.5%	15	17.4%	39	45.3%	19	22.1%	3.70	1.075
E	Not getting the target score.	3	3.5%	9	10.5%	20	23.3%	38	44.2%	16	18.6%	3.64	1.016
D	Past performance on exams	2	2.3%	8	9.3%	26	30.2%	41	47.7%	9	10.5%	3.55	.890

B	not guessing word meaning	3	3.5%	8	9.3%	29	33.7%	34	39.5%	12	14%	3.51	.967
C	no understanding the questions	7	8.1%	18	20.9%	30	34.9%	23	26.7%	8	9.3%	3.08	1.087

Table 11 shows a detailed description of students' anxiety about TOEIC Reading test. In general, most students proved themselves to be so anxious when taking the TOEIC Reading test. In particular, as indicated in Table 9, their anxiety came from lack of time management skill ($M=3.7$), not getting the target score ($M= 3.64$), past performance on exams ($M=3.55$), and not guessing word meaning ($M=3.51$). From table 11 above, there are fifty-eight out eighty-six students (67.4%) felt anxious because they did not manage the time when taking TOEIC reading test. The second one that made students anxious was not getting the target score (62.8%). The previous results were remarkable factors that made students anxious. There were fifty out eighty-six students (58.2%) feeling anxious by this. Surprisingly, fifty-six students (65.2%) did not feel anxious with little practice before exams.

Students' perceptions of the challenges when taking the TOEIC Reading test

Table 12. Students' perceptions of the challenges of parts in a TOEIC Reading test.

Ingeneral,when you take TOEIC Reading test, you have difficulties in:	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Part 7 (Reading Comprehension)	86	2.08	4.85	3.23	.479
Part 6 (Text Completion)	86	1.67	4.00	3.07	.490
Part 5 (Incomplete sentences)	86	1.88	4.75	3.01	.506

Table 12 shows a description of students' perceptions of the challenges of parts in a TOEIC Reading test. As can be seen in table 12 below, of three parts of TOEIC reading section, students had difficulties most in Part 7 (Reading Comprehension) ($M=3.23$). The second challenge that students faced was Part 6 (Text Completion) ($M=3.07$). Part 5 (Incomplete sentences) received the lowest mean scores ($M=3.01$). Students did not have many difficulties in this part.

Students' perceptions of challenges that they face in Part 7 of a TOEIC Reading test.

Table 13. Challenges that students face when taking Part 7 of TOEIC Reading test

Challenges in Part 7 (Reading comprehension)	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Vocabulary	86	1.00	5.00	3.46	.814
Question types	86	1.75	4.75	3.29	.512
Text types	86	1.86	4.86	3.13	.587

Regarding to Part 7 (Reading comprehension), the questionnaire asked for students' challenges in term of vocabularies, types of questions, and text types.

Table 13 shows challenges that students face when taking Part 7 of TOEIC Reading test. As reflected in Table 13 above, the first challenges that students faced related to vocabulary ($M= 3.46$, $n= 86$). The question types took the second place ($M= 3.29$) while text types received the lowest mean scores ($M= 3.13$).

Table 14. Students' perceptions of challenges of vocabulary

Q10		N = 86		
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	In part 7, you have difficulties in passages having vocabulary about:	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		M	SD
A	...technical terms	1	1.2%	12	14%	23	26.7%	42	48.8%	8	9.3%	3.51	.891
B	...idioms	3	3.5%	14	16.3%	22	25.6%	38	44.2%	9	10.5%	3.42	1.000

Close look into Part 7, when asking students about challenges of vocabulary, a large number of students agreed that they faced challenges of technical terms (M= 3.51) and idiomatic vocabularies (M= 3.42). As reported in Table 4.10 below, fifty out eighty-six students (58%.1) agreed that they found it difficult with texts containing technical terms and idioms (44.7%).

Table 15. Students' perceptions of challenges of types of question.

Q9	In part 7, you have difficulties in types of questions as:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
D	Vocabulary questions	1	1.2%	2	2.3%	33	38.4%	44	51.2%	6	9.3%	3.60	.708
C	Inference questions	1	1.2%	4	4.7%	33	25.6%	39	45.3%	9	10.5%	3.59	.788
A	Main idea questions	3	3.5%	20	23.3%	38	44.2%	22	25.6%	3	3.5%	3.02	.881
B	Detail questions	3	3.5%	25	29.1%	30	34.9%	27	31.4%	1	1.2%	2.98	.894

In Part 7, the second challenges that student faced were question types. Table 15 reports students' perceptions of challenges of question types. As shown in Table 15 above, the majority of students (60.5%) agreed that vocabulary questions were the most difficult. The mean score for this was 3.60. The second position that made students difficult was inference questions (M= 3.59). There are forty-eight students (45.8%). Noticeably, students did not have difficulties in main idea questions (M=3.02) and detailed questions (M=2.98).

The third challenge in Part 7 that students faced was types of text. Table 4.12 below reflects students' perceptions of challenges of types of text. As can be seen from the table 4.12 below, the majority of the students (65%) reported that they had difficulties in texts as research reports (M=3.52). The second position that challenges students is charts. 41.9 % of them had difficulty in charts. The mean score for this is 3.26. The next places that challenge students are texts belonging to articles, public announcements, business correspondences and schedules, comprising the mean scores are M=3.14, M= 3.07, M= 3.01, and M= 3.00 respectively. Noticeably, texts about advertisements did not challenge students much. The mean score for this is only 2.98.

Table 16. Students' perceptions of challenges of types of text.

Q11	In part 7, you have difficulties in types of texts as:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree			
D	research reports	1	1.2%	11	12.8%	26	30.2%	30	44.2%	10	11.6%	3.52	.904
F	charts	1	1.2%	16	18.6%	33	38.4%	32	37.2%	4	4.7%	3.26	.857

E	articles	1	1.2%	19	22.1%	39	45.3%	21	24.4%	6	7.0%	3.14	.883
A	public announcements	2	2.3%	26	30.2%	27	31.4%	26	30.2%	5	5.8%	3.07	.968
C	business correspondence	4	4.7%	24	27.9%	31	36.0%	21	24.4%	6	7.0%	3.01	1.000
G	schedules/ timetables	2	2.3%	26	30.2%	34	39.5%	18	20.9%	6	7.0%	3.00	.946
B	advertisements	4	4.7%	25	29.1%	30	34.9%	23	26.7%	4	4.7%	2.98	.970

Students' perceptions of challenges that they face in Part VI of a TOEIC Reading test

In TOEIC Reading test, Part 6 (Complete text) is a challenge that students find it difficult. Table 17 below shows students' perceptions of challenges that they face in part 6 of a TOEIC Reading test. As reflected in the below table, a large number of students (44/86, 43,2%) challenges towards using right words in contexts, with the mean score is 3.45. Forty-four students (51.1%) claimed that preposition was the second challenge (M=3.16). The third place came phrasal verbs (M=3.00) as 29.8%.

Table 17. Students' perceptions of challenges in Part 6 of a TOEIC Reading test

Q8	In part 6, grammar items that you have difficulties are:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
F	words in context	0	0%	13	15.1%	29	33.7%	36	41.9%	8	9.3%	3.45	.863
B	prepositions	3	3.5%	18	20.9%	21	24.4%	26	30.2%	18	20.9%	3.44	1.144
E	phrasal verbs	1	1.2%	20	23.3%	32	37.2%	30	34.9%	3	3.5%	3.16	.866
D	comparisons	3	3.5%	23	26.7%	35	40.7%	21	24.4%	4	4.7%	3.00	.920
C	conjunctions	4	4.7%	30	34.9%	31	36.0%	17	19.8%	4	4.7%	2.85	.952
A	pronouns	5	5.8%	44	51.2%	22	25.6%	14	16.3%	1	1.2%	2.56	.876

Exercises related to conjunctions and pronouns did not seem to challenge students much. As shown in the Table 17 above, only one out eighty-six students (1.2%) completely agreed that challenge came from pronouns. The mean score for Q8A received the lowest value (M=2.56). There are thirty-four out sixty students (39.1%) did not agree that time conjunctions are challenges.

Students' perceptions of challenges that they face in Part 5 of a TOEIC Reading test

Table 18 below reports students' perceptions of challenges that they face in Part 5 of a TOEIC Reading test. As can be seen in the table below, of common types of grammar items, prepositions are the first on the list. Fifty-six out eighty-six survey students (65.1%) agreed that they had difficulties in sentences of prepositions (M=3.56).

Table 18. Students' perceptions of challenges that they face in Part 5

Q7	In part 5, grammar items that you have difficulties are:	N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
F	prepositions	2	2.3%	23	26.7%	5	5.8%	37	43.0%	19	22.1%	3.56	1.174
H	similar words	1	1.2%	16	18.6%	28	32.6%	33	38.4%	8	9.3%	3.36	.932
G	family words	0	0%	20	23.3%	29	33.7%	33	38.4%	4	4.7%	3.24	.867
D	phrasal verbs	0	0%	23	26.7%	36	41.9%	24	27.9%	3	3.5%	3.08	.829
B	passive voice	5	5.8%	24	27.9%	32	37.2%	21	24.4%	4	4.7%	2.94	.974
E	conjunctions	1	1.2%	28	32.6%	36	41.9%	19	22.1%	2	2.3%	2.92	.829
C	pronouns	4	4.7%	44	51.2%	22	25.6%	14	16.3%	2	2.3%	2.60	.898
A	tenses	11	12.8%	43	50.0%	17	19.8%	13	15.1%	2	2.3%	2.44	.977

Second came the challenges which belong to similar words (M=3.36). Meanwhile, challenges interfering with word family (M=3.24). Accordingly, phrasal verbs (M= 3.08), passive voice (M=2.94) and conjunctions (M=2.92) should be on the waiting list respectively.

Noticeably, a number of students reported that they did not get lots of trouble in tenses (M= 2.44) and pronouns (M= 2.60)

Students' perceptions of test-taking strategies to be used when taking the TOEIC Reading test.

Table 19. Students' perceptions of test-taking strategies

To get high scores in a TOEIC Reading test, you need to:		N = 86										M	SD
		Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Not sure (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)			
Q13	...practice a lot before taking exams.	1	1.2%	4	4.7%	6	7.0%	43	50.0%	32	37.2%	4.17	.843
Q14	...manage time well	2	2.3%	2	2.3%	10	11.6%	43	50.0%	29	33.7%	4.10	.868
Q12	...do easy parts first.	1	1.2%	7	8.1%	8	9.3%	40	46.5%	30	34.9%	4.06	.938

Q18	...skim to look for the main idea.	0	0%	4	4.7%	14	16.3%	43	50%	25	29.1%	4.03	.804
Q16	...read in phrases.	1	1.2%	4	4.7%	17	19.8%	44	51.2%	20	23.3%	3.91	.849
Q15	...read words by words	4	4.7%	1	1.2%	17	19.8%	57	66.3%	7	8.1%	3.72	.821
Q21	...read the questions and then read the text to look for the answers.	3	3.5%	6	7.0%	19	22.1%	39	45.3%	19	22.1%	3.76	.993
Q17	...ignore unknown words and guess the meaning through sentences	2	2.3%	15	17.4%	20	23.3%	34	39.5%	15	17.4%	3.52	1.049
Q19	...identify the meaning through family words	0	0%	14	16.3%	26	30.2%	41	47.7%	5	5.8%	3.43	.834
Q22	...read the first sentence of each passage to identify the answer.	4	4.7%	11	12.8%	32	37.2%	31	36.0%	8	9.3%	3.33	.975
Q20	...to read the first or the last sentence of each paragraph to identify the main idea.	0	0%	14	16.3%	36	41.9%	34	39.5%	2	2.3%	3.28	.762

Table 19 above reports students' perceptions of test-taking strategies to be used when taking the TOEIC Reading test. As indicated in Table 19 above, a large number of students agreed that in order to get high scores in TOEIC Reading test, test takers need use test-taking strategies as practicing a lot before taking exam (87.2%, n= 86), managing time well (83.7%, n= 86), doing easy parts first (81.4%, n= 86), and skimming to look for the main idea (79.1%, n= 86). Next strategy group includes guessing the meaning through sentences, reading in phrases, and reading words by words, and reading the questions and then read the text to look for the answers comprising 74.5%, 74.4%, 56.9% and 53.5% respectively. The third place consists of strategies as ignoring unknown words and guessing the meaning through sentences and identifying the meaning through family words while strategies as reading the first sentence of each passage to identify the answer and reading the first or the last sentence of each paragraph to identify the main idea received lower mean scores were 3.33 and 3.28 respectively.

Findings from the interviews

Reasons for students' negative attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test

Based on the results presented above, it can be clearly seen that a large number of students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs did not have positive attitudes towards the TOEIC reading test. When asked about the students' negative attitudes, the teachers (N=6) at the University of Labor and Social Affairs provided the following reasons: (1) students' low proficiency (N=4 of 6 teachers), (2) mixed-level classes (N= 5 of 6 teachers), (3) insufficient time given to the preparation courses (N=4 of 6 teachers), (4) students' irregular class attendance (N=4 of 6 teachers)

Reasons for students' low confidence about TOEIC Reading test.

According to teachers' views, the probable reasons for the reason why students did feel more confident with Part 5 in a TOEIC reading test than the others might be students' better command of grammar than the others (N=4 of 6 teacher), teachers' grammar teaching highlights (N= 3 of 6 teachers), other parts require more lexical knowledge from students (N=2 of 6 teachers).

Another teacher had the idea:

We gave the students grammar highlights in TOEIC preparation reading class

In part 5 and part 6 of a TOEIC reading test, according to teachers' views, the reasons why student lacked confidence about using the grammar features as prepositions, similar words, passive voices, words in context, and verb patterns might lie in their lack of vocabulary knowledge size (100%, N= 6), limitation of memorization (50%, N= 3 of 6 teachers)

One of the teachers said:

My students are so lazy. They do not enrich their vocabulary knowledge at all.

Another one added:

They forgot everything after the lesson

In Part 7, the limitation of vocabulary knowledge size was the biggest problem (100%, N= 6 teachers). To explain the reason why students were not confident about inference questions and vocabulary questions might be the reason that teachers did not underscore these parts (N=2 of 6 teachers).

Part 6 and part 7 requires students have a huge vocabulary knowledge size in order to process the meaning of the text.

Reasons for challenges of TOEIC reading test.

When asked the cause why students faced the challenges in Reading Section of a TOEIC Reading test, most of the teachers interviewed gave out the explanation in terms of lack of vocabulary knowledge (N= 3 of 6 teachers), students' lack of practice (N= 5 of 6 teachers), negative past experiences (N=2 of 6 teachers)

One of the teachers said: *"My students are so lazy. They do not enrich their vocabulary knowledge at all"*

Students' perceptions of reading strategies that they use when taking a TOEIC reading test.

When asked the reasons why students why did not highly appreciate a few reading strategies as skimming skill, read the first or the last sentence to identify the main idea, reading the first sentence to identify the answer. The explanation for this might lie in the lack of clear explanation from teachers in TOEIC reading lessons (N=3 of 6 teachers).

One teacher said: *"I just ask my students to skim the text to look for the answer, but I do not specify it"*

Discussion

Research Question 1: *What kinds of attitudes do the non-English majors at the University of Labor and Social Affairs have towards the TOEIC reading test as far as their behaviors are concerned within the context of their positive and negative experiences in reading comprehension as well as their perceptions of the conditions of high achievement of and challenges in fulfilling the test?*

With regard to the first research question, the findings show that the students had a mixed attitude towards the TOEIC Reading test. The students did not have either a positive or a negative evaluation (i.e. attitude) towards the TOEIC Reading test. 76.8% of

the students (N=66 of 86) expressed their lack of confidence when taking the test (see Q1 in Appendix 1A) and 74.4% of the students (N=64 of 86) agreed that they had anxiety to do the test. The results indicate that not all of the students surveyed had negative attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test. 23.3% of the students were confident (N=20 of 86) and 25.6% of them were not anxious (N=22 of 86) to perform the test.

These results, on the one hand, shared some similarities with those yielded by Shohamy (1993). In her study on the impact of the Arabic test on students, Shohamy found that the test had negative impact on the students. On the other hand, the findings have coincided with those reported by Liu (2012), as far as the mixed reactions are concerned. Nevertheless, the current results are quite different from Liu's in terms of the fact there was a high percentage of those students who agreed that the TOEIC reading test did cause anxiety (74.4%), whereas in Liu's study a high percentage of the students (53%; N=8) agreed the TOEIC test did not cause anxiety or frustration. (It is likely to infer that if Liu's samples had been larger, the results might have been different.)

Another major finding regarding this research question concerns the students' experiences with the TOEIC Reading test. Some aspects of the test must have provided them with either confidence (i.e. positive experiences) or anxiety (i.e. negative experiences) (Eaton & Visser, in Lavrakas, 2008). First, the results have revealed that the students did not feel confident (M=2.59) in part 6 (text completion), though they were somewhat confident (M=3.84) in fulfilling part 5 (incomplete sentences) and part 7 (M=3.29), which involves reading comprehension. Second, their anxiety which has to do with test-taking strategies (e.g. time management) (M=3.33) was higher than that of language ability (M=3.11). A breakdown of the challenges concerning language ability reveals that the students perceived part 7 (reading comprehension) (M=3.29), among the three parts (part 5, part 6, part 7) to be the most challenging to them. This may contradict their confidence mentioned earlier that they were less confident in part 6 than part 7. It may be argued, however, that what they perceive to be confident may present more challenges to them.

These findings have been partially mentioned by other researchers. Soonjeong Jee & Hee-Cheol Kim (2013), for instance, in their questionnaire studies to understand Korean university students' preparation for the TOEIC test have found that the students had problems in vocabulary (43.4%) and grammar (22.8%), which hindered their reading comprehension. Test-taking strategies (19.3%) were also considered by the researchers' participants as another kind of problem that limits their reading comprehension. In this study, language ability has been agreed by the students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs that to be a problematic issue. However, this study is different from the two Korean researchers in that the students agreed that they were deficient more in test-taking strategies (M=3.33) than in language ability (M=3.11).

The last finding regarding the first research question is how students perceive the conditions of achieving success in taking the TOEIC Reading test. In this study, the students did not highly value the reading strategies (M=3.62) which should contribute to the success of comprehending a text, agreed that test-taking strategies (M=4.11) are those which could contribute to their success. This finding, which is partly similar to what Soonjeong Jee & Hee-Cheol Kim's study (2013) in which the author mentioned test-taking strategies were considered by the students to be less problematic than vocabulary and grammar problems, might alarm instructors in their TOEIC preparatory courses in which they have to balance students' attention to both reading strategies and test-taking strategies.

To sum up, in this research question, this study has answered the question that the students did not have a totally positive or negative attitude towards the TOEIC Reading Test. They were not confident in taking some parts of the test. The causes of their anxiety lie much in their deficiency in test-taking strategies and language ability, namely vocabulary guessing (M=3.51). One question that arises at this point: What are the explanations for the students' anxiety to do the test? The findings from the second research question may provide some insights.

Research Question 2: *If there were possibilities in which the students had negative attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test, how do the themes mentioned by the teachers help to explain the students' negativity?*

The results from the interview with the teachers about the reasons for the students' 'negative' attitudes and the roots of their anxiety can be categorized into the following themes:

Insufficient authentic practice test

The first reason to explain why students do not have positive attitudes towards the TOEIC test is that students might be lack of authentic practice test. In reality in our school, we just have a TOEIC preparation course for the students and they are just given mini tests before they take the real test (T1, T3, and T4). Therefore, they might not have many opportunities to do further exercises related to the TOEIC reading test before taking the authentic one. They do not clearly know the test format and contents. This might lead to students' less confidence with some aspects of the reading test.

Inconsistent TOEIC instruction highlights

Another reason might cause students' less attitudes may lie in the fact that TOEIC instruction highlights. The results show that there some inconsistent factors in TOEIC preparation courses:

First, the factors related to test-taking strategies have been emphasized properly by TOEIC teachers, whereas the factors related to reading strategies haven't been emphasized. For example, as can be seen from the results, students appreciate highly the role of some test taking strategies as practicing a lot before exams ($M=4.17$), time management ($M=4.10$), doing easy part first ($M=4.06$), and skimming ($M=4.03$), while a few important strategies are appreciated lower as read the first or the last sentence to identify the main idea ($M=3.28$), reading the first sentence to identify the answer ($M=3.33$).

Second, some tactics related to reading teachers might emphasize one aspect, but they do not specify it. For instance, teachers may ask students to skim to read fast to get idea; however, they do not specify the way to skim (T1, T3). Probably, teachers do not focus much on concrete tactics such as to read fast may involves reading the first sentence and the last sentence.

Third, teachers may overemphasize top-down processing, while they make light of bottom-up processing. Students might not have been encouraged to learning set phrases such as prepositions, verb patterns, or phrasal verbs. This might be another reason that explains for students' lack of confidence when face knowledge related to vocabularies and grammar.

Low motivation

Students' input quality is low, they are non-majored students; therefore, their language knowledge might be limited (T2, T4). This is the reason why they have low motivation of English. The university put some efforts to improving their English, but those efforts do not seem to match the desire outcomes. They do not appreciate highly items required complex grammar features, reading texts containing many new words, or reading texts belonging to uncommon genres. The results show that most of students agree that the limitation of vocabulary knowledge is one of challenges that they face when taking the TOEIC reading test.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The statistic results from the data and the interview from the TOEIC teachers acquired have answered the research questions above. Firstly, the results acquired from the questionnaire show that students have less high level of attitudes towards the TOEIC Reading test. Secondly, the results also present students' perceptions of challenges when taking the TOEIC reading test. Finally, the test-taking strategies to be used when taking the test were revealed.

The results of the present study have definite implications for TOEIC teachers and educational institutions.

First, schools should have a lot of TOEIC-related resources tests in order that students will be able to self-study for the exam. Accordingly, they can familiarize the test format and content, which helps students know what to do in a real test.

Second, schools should have labs which contain mock TOEIC tests, which give students many opportunities to take many more tests and they can know their levels in order that they can manage their study.

Third, teachers should have a good understanding of what students need to develop in order to improve their scores. From that, teachers can provide students with test tactics related to specific test-taking strategies and reading strategies that can help students apply in a real test effectively.

Finally, teachers should give students more tasks and exercises to help students to develop their linguistic knowledge in TOEIC preparation courses.

The issues mentioned in this study can be reviewed and studied again. Hopefully future researchers would find this study useful, so that they could conduct their own studies, particularly on the same matter, in a more successful way. Due to the limit of time and knowledge, this research merely focuses on the reading section of the TOEIC test. Therefore, further studies might look into the following undone aspects of the research such as strategies for the Listening section of the TOEIC test or problems and factors that affect the students' performance on the TOEIC test.

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