



Effect of TOEIC Short-Course Instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center on Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

The research aimed: 1) to investigate the effect of the Test of English for International Communication or TOEIC short-course instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) Language Center on teacher candidates and 2) to explore the satisfaction of the samples towards the instruction. This was a 30-hour short-course that focused on grammar, vocabulary and techniques in taking TOEIC. The sample group included 32 eligible teacher candidates under an initiative which recruited teachers to work in their hometowns in October 2017. The samples were also BRU alumni from 10 programs, namely Thai, English, Early Childhood Education, Social Studies, Physics, General Sciences, Physical Education, Music and Thai Dramatic Arts from the Faculty of Education. They were selected by using a purposive sampling method. Data were collected by using 1) pre-test and post-test and 2) satisfaction assessment questionnaire. Statistics used in the data analysis were percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and content analysis.

The results showed that most of the samples were females (71.9%) and the majority of the samples were from Social Studies (18.8%). The results revealed the effectiveness of the instruction as the post-test score of the samples was significantly higher than the pre-test score at .00. Moreover, the satisfaction of the samples towards the instruction was also at high level ($\bar{x}=4.59$). Thus, it was suggested that the TOEIC short-course instruction of BRU Language Center on teacher candidates was effective and can be used to enhance the ability of the teacher candidates in taking TOEIC for their future career. However, limitation and suggestions for further studies should be concerned.

Keywords: effect, TOEIC, short-course instruction, teacher candidates

Introduction

The role of English in Thailand is regarded as a foreign language; however, its importance has been emphasized in many fields especially in education (Phakiti, 2006). The importance of English has been evidenced since 2017 when the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) imposed a requirement that the teacher candidates under the “Teachers for Their Hometowns” project must score 400 out of 990 from Test of English for International Communication or TOEIC or they must have one of the following English proficiency scores from the accredited Language Testing Center: (1) the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-Based Test or TOEFL iBT with 40 score out of 120, (2) the Test of English as a Foreign Language Paper-Based Test or TOEFL PBT with 400 score out of 677, (3) the Test of English as a Foreign Language Computer-Based Testing or TOEFL CBT with 120 score out of 300, or (4) the International English Language Testing System or IELTS with 3.5 out of 9 (Mokkhasen, 2017). The need of TOEIC score as one of the qualifications required for the teacher candidates under the “Teachers for Their Hometowns” project urged the final-year education students who wanted to participate in this project to prepare themselves in order to meet this requirement.

Language Center or BRULC is one of the departments in Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) that offers language training courses and arranges language testing service for students, personnel and people in the local area, as BRU is a public institute for local community. The need of TOEIC score as one of the qualifications required for the teacher candidates under the “Teachers for Their Hometowns” project aroused the attention of the researchers who are English lecturers of Business English Program and one of them is the Head of Language Center. Moreover, the TOEIC training short-course was requested by the teacher candidates who were BRU alumni and needed to achieve the score. Besides, due to time constraint, the teacher candidates only had two months left before submitting their English language proficiency scores within October 1, 2017. As a result, the study on needs analysis of the teacher candidates for the TOEIC preparation short-course instruction at Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center was conducted to investigate the actual needs of the teacher candidates for the most effective instruction that meets with their needs.

The result of needs analysis suggested five important aspects that need to be considered in order to arrange the training course that meets the needs of the participants, as follows:

1. Exercises and practice tests were the instructional materials needed by the samples. These materials used during the course can be a benchmark for their progress.



By taking the practice tests as much as they could, they would know themselves if they were ready for the real test or not.

2. Experienced teachers who must be able to teach TOEIC strategies in each part were also needed. They preferred the teachers with the TOEIC score higher than 800 out of 990. It was believed that the teachers with the high score have seen the tests many times or have the strategies and techniques for taking TOEIC to teach and share.

3. The content of the TOEIC short course that the samples needed at the highest level was strategies and techniques for taking TOEIC. They needed to be able to see the structures of the questions or sentences in TOEIC.

4. The learning and instructional activities by doing repetitions and drills for reviewing were also needed in organizing the course. They wanted to be familiar with the format and the structure of the test.

5. Measurement and assessment that the samples needed at the highest level included pre-test and post-test. They reported that pre-test and post-test can be used to measure their progress and implied their readiness in taking the real test.

Therefore, the TOEIC short-course instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center on teacher candidates was organized according to the needs of the samples in the previous study and the effect and satisfaction of the samples were examined in this study.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of the TOEIC short-course instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center on teacher candidates.

2. To explore the satisfaction of the teacher candidates towards the TOEIC short-course instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center.

Research Methodology

1. Samples

Thirty-two eligible teacher candidates under the “Teachers for Their Hometowns” project, which is an initiative that recruited teachers to work in their hometowns in October 2017, were the samples of this study. The samples were purposively chosen because of the following reasons: 1) they are eligible teacher candidates who needed TOEIC scores of 400 out of 990 in order to meet the requirement of the project; 2) They are BRU alumni from 10 programs, namely Thai, English, Early Childhood Education, Social Studies, Physics, General Sciences, Physical Education, Music and Thai Dramatic Arts from the Faculty of Education; and 3) they signed up for the TOEIC short-course of BRULC. They were both males and females aged 23-25.

2. *Research Instruments*

There were two instruments used in this study.

2.1 Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and post-test used in this study were Model Test 1 from BARRON's TOEIC 5th edition by Dr. Lin Lougheed (2010). This practice test is widely used in preparation for TOEIC, as the test questions are similar in format and type to those on the actual TOEIC. As the TOEIC test is standardized, each test taker experiences "essentially the same test and context of administration" (Fulcher and Davidson 2007: 198).

2.2 Satisfaction Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first part focused on their personal information: genders and programs; the second part was about their satisfaction with the TOEIC short-course instruction of BRULC (19 items); and the third part was other suggestions. The questionnaire was developed according to the related research studies and then sent to three experts to examine for the appropriateness of the content, language used, and validity. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence or IOC scores were given from the experts. Then the overall IOC was calculated and it was in the range of 0.67-1.00, which means that the questionnaire could be used. Then the questionnaire was developed according to the suggestions of the experts. Later, 30 sets of the questionnaire were used in a try-out with 30 fifth year students from the Faculty of Education. The results gained from the try-out were used to develop the questionnaire before using it with the sample group.

3. *Data Collection*

The data of this study were collected during July, 22nd – September, 3rd 2017. This was a 30-hour short-course that was arranged only at weekends as the samples had to work on weekdays.

The pre-test and post-test were administered in order to investigate the improvement in the TOEIC score of the samples before and after the training. In the first session of the course, the researchers provided the pre-test for the samples in order to measure their ability and knowledge before being involved in the course. Then, the researchers, who were also the trainers, started the TOEIC short-course in which the content of the course was organized according to the result from the needs analysis which emphasized on strategies and techniques in taking TOEIC. Also, instructional materials used in the course were based on the samples' needs, which were exercises and practice tests compiled from TOEIC preparation books and the practice tests from the Internet. During the course, the trainers provided techniques and tips in taking the test which can be used when the samples have to take the real TOEIC.

The post-test was distributed at the last session of the course in order to investigate the improvement of the samples after participating in the course. Then, the questionnaire was provided to explore the satisfaction of the samples towards the course.

4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed by using t-test and the data from part 1 and 2 of the questionnaire were examined by using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) in SPSS program. The data gained from the responses of the samples in part 3 of the questionnaire were evaluated by using content analysis.

Research Results

The results of this study were presented according to the research objectives.

1 Personal Information of the Samples

The result representing the personal information of the samples was shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Personal information of the samples

| No. | Personal Information | Frequency (n=32) | Percentage (%) |
|-----|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Genders | | |
| | Male | 9 | 28.1 |
| | Female | 23 | 71.9 |
| 2 | Programs | | |
| | Thai | 4 | 12.5 |
| | English | 2 | 6.3 |
| | Early Childhood Education | 2 | 6.3 |
| | Social Studies | 6 | 18.8 |
| | Math | 3 | 9.4 |
| | Physics | 2 | 6.3 |
| | General Sciences | 2 | 6.3 |
| | Physical Education | 2 | 6.3 |
| | Music | 4 | 12.5 |
| | Thai Dramatic Arts | 5 | 15.6 |

From Table 1, it can be seen that there were 32 samples in total and most of the samples were female (71.9%). Also, the majority of the samples were from the Social Studies program (18.8%).

2. Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Table 2

Pre-test and post-test scores of the samples

| Paired Samples Statistics | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Pair 1 | Pretest | 321.8750 | 32 | 89.21476 | 15.77109 |
| | Posttest | 395.1563 | 32 | 96.03834 | 16.97734 |

As shown in Table 2, the mean score (\bar{x}) of the pre-test was 321.87 and the standard deviation (S.D.) was 89.21. The mean score (\bar{x}) of the post-test was 395.15 and the standard deviation (S.D.) was 96.03. In order to determine a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test average scores, mean scores (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) Pair Samples Test was used.

Table 3 Paired samples test

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-----------|--------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest | -73.28125 | 60.08877 | 10.62229 | -94.94556 | -51.61694 | -6.899 | 31 | .000 |

From Table 3, it can be seen that the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were significantly different by 0.00 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the TOEIC short- course instruction helped improve the ability of the samples.

3. Data from Satisfaction Questionnaire

The results were analyzed by using SPSS in terms of mean scores and standard deviation according to the following ranges (Sclove, 2001):

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| Very high | = | 4.50-5.00 |
| High | = | 3.50-4.49 |
| Moderate | = | 2.50-3.49 |
| Low | = | 1.50-2.49 |
| Very Low | = | 1.00-1.49 |

Table 4

The satisfaction of the teacher candidates towards the TOEIC Short-Course Instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center

| Items | \bar{X} | SD | Level |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| <u>Location/Materials</u> | | | |
| 1. Location of the course is suitable. | 4.91 | 0.30 | Very high |
| 2. Instruction media and tools are well prepared. | 4.88 | 0.34 | Very high |
| 3. Suitable materials | 4.81 | 0.40 | Very high |
| Total | 4.86 | 0.30 | Very high |

| <u>Instructors</u> | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 4. Knowledge and ability of the instructors | 4.94 | 0.25 | Very high |
| 5. Ability to answer the questions | 4.69 | 0.47 | Very high |
| 6. Ability to yield the knowledge | 4.63 | 0.49 | Very high |
| 7. Ability to give techniques and methods for taking the test and preparation for TOEIC | 4.69 | 0.47 | Very high |
| 8. Having interesting teaching procedure | 4.66 | 0.48 | Very high |
| Total | 4.72 | 0.33 | Very high |
| <u>Time</u> | | | |
| Items | \bar{X} | SD | Level |
| 9. Duration of the course | 4.91 | 0.30 | high |
| 10. Duration of the training for TOEIC preparation | 4.88 | 0.34 | high |
| Total | 4.86 | 0.30 | high |
| <u>Knowledge and Comprehension</u> | | | |
| 11. Knowledge before participating in the course | 3.13 | 1.45 | Moderate |
| 12. Knowledge after participating in the course | 4.34 | 0.65 | High |
| 13. Can demonstrate benefits of this course | 4.47 | 0.51 | High |
| 14. Can explain the details of the course | 4.34 | 0.55 | High |
| Total | 4.07 | 0.70 | High |
| <u>Knowledge Application</u> | | | |
| 15. Having knowledge in taking Listening Comprehension section of TOEIC | 4.28 | 0.58 | High |
| 16. Having knowledge in taking Reading section of TOEIC | 4.06 | 0.67 | High |
| 17. Ready for taking TOEIC after finishing this course | 4.13 | 0.66 | High |
| 18. Providing the knowledge about taking TOEIC gained from the course to others | 3.84 | 0.72 | High |
| 19. Giving suggestions and recommendation to others about taking TOEIC | 3.94 | 0.76 | High |
| Total | 4.05 | 0.56 | High |
| Overall Total | 4.59 | 0.50 | Very high |

The results from Table 4 revealed that the samples (n=32) had very high satisfaction with the TOEIC short-course instruction with the mean score (\bar{X}) of 4.59 and the standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.50.

Specifically, the result suggested that the samples were satisfied with the knowledge and ability of the instructors with the highest mean score (\bar{X}) of 4.94 and the standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.25. Moreover, it can also be concluded from the table that the samples had very high satisfaction with the location and instructional materials used during the course with the highest total mean score (\bar{X}) of 4.86 and the standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.30.

However, the time and duration of the course, according to the result, received the lowest total mean score (\bar{X}) of 4.02 and the standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.94. This was in accordance with the suggestions in part 3 of the questionnaire that most of the samples wanted to extend the duration of the course in order to obtain more techniques and practices.

Discussion

From the results of the pre-test and post-test scores and questionnaires, it can be seen that the TOEIC short-course instruction could help improve the ability of the samples in taking TOEIC. Therefore, the effectiveness of the TOEIC short-course instruction was discussed based on the results of the present study.

1. The result revealed that the post-test score was significantly higher than the pre-test score. The TOEIC short-course instruction prepared the samples for taking TOEIC. This short-course benefited the samples in the way that their English listening and reading abilities were improved. This is in line with the study of Tzu Liu (2014) which stated that studying TOEIC preparation course helped strengthen listening and reading abilities of the learners, which can lead to the improvement in the TOEIC score of the samples. In addition, Robb and Ercanbrack (1999) also examined the effect of direct test preparation on TOEIC gain scores of Japanese students. The results of their study indicated that the samples' TOEIC score was enhanced after taking the preparation course. Moreover, as this TOEIC short-course instruction was created based on the needs of the samples in terms of instructional materials, content, instructors, learning and instructional activities and measurement and assessment, the effectiveness of the course was revealed. This conformed to Wright (2001) that a comprehensive needs analysis is the absolutely crucial step to be taken by the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners who wish to design the course that will be beneficial to their learners at the maximum level.

2. Regarding the satisfaction of the samples, the highest satisfaction was reported in "the knowledge and ability of the instructors" with the highest mean score. As the samples had a high expectation and need for the instructors to experience taking the test, the instructors of this short-course gained more than 900 out of 990. It was



believed that the teachers with the high score have seen the tests many times or have the strategies and techniques in taking TOEIC to teach and share. From the previous needs analysis, the samples agreed that they have limited time to prepare themselves for taking TOEIC. So, they needed experts in this field. This is in line with the study of Tokunaga (2007) entitled “Students’ Assumptions for TOEIC Classes” that 92% from 217 students agreed or strongly agreed that the Japanese teachers who teach TOEIC should have experience in taking TOEIC. Some of the reasons regarding this issue were listed as follows:

1) If the teacher has no experience taking the test, the students cannot ask questions with confidence. Also, the teacher cannot teach with confidence.

2) TOEIC requires some techniques, so the teacher need to know the techniques from their experience.

3) It is not right to teach something you have never experienced.

4) The teacher without experiences lacks conviction.

5) Knowledge alone cannot prepare students for the test, so the teacher needs experience.

6) Learning TOEIC from the teacher who has never taken TOEIC is like learning about architect from somebody who is not an architect.

7) The teacher should not teach something he is not sure of. That would make the students nervous.

8) It is meaningless to learn from somebody who does not know TOEIC. Moreover, the samples had very high satisfaction with the location and instructional materials used during the course with the highest total mean score. The instructional materials used during the course were also based on the previous needs analysis. This is in line with Trew (2007) who stated that when selecting appropriate materials for TOEIC, the student needs must be considered. Thus, exercises and practice tests were used as instructional materials. By taking the practice tests as much as they could, they would know themselves if they were ready to take TOEIC or not. It is necessary for them to have the exercises and practice tests in hand to practice and review. However, the time and duration of the course, according to the result, received the lowest mean score in total. This was in accordance with the suggestions in part 3 of the questionnaire that most of the samples wanted to extend the duration of the course in order to obtain more techniques and practices.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect and the satisfaction of the teacher candidates towards the TOEIC short-course instruction of Buriram Rajabhat University Language Center. The results of this study confirmed that the TOEIC short-course instruction that was designed based on the needs of the samples in terms of instructional materials, content, instructors, learning and instructional activities and measurement and assessment enhanced the samples' TOEIC score. Also, very high satisfaction towards the course was reported. Thus, organizing the TOEIC short-course instruction at the BRULC that meets with the needs of the test takers will offer the maximum benefits to the test takers who need the TOEIC score.

Recommendations for Further Studies

1. More time should be given in organizing the TOEIC short-course instruction.
2. Other groups of samples should be included to see the differences in score improvement.
3. More samples should be examined so that the results could be generalized.
4. The needs analysis on the topics used in the instructional materials in the TOEIC preparation short-course should be examined in detail so that the students will gain the most benefits out of the instructional materials.

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