

Washback Effect of Direct TOEIC Preparation Class on Students' Motivation

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อ 1) สำรวจผลกระทบของการเรียนเพื่อการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC ที่มีต่อแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษา และ 2) เปรียบเทียบแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาที่มีผลคะแนนต่างกัน กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจ จำนวน 37 คน ที่ได้ลงทะเบียนเรียนในรายวิชาการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC ในภาคการศึกษาที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2561 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือแบบสอบถาม และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการเรียนเพื่อการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC มีผลต่อแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาเนื่องจากคะแนน TOEIC มีประโยชน์ต่อการทำงานในอนาคต (4.78) ในส่วนของการเปรียบเทียบแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาที่มีผลคะแนนต่างกันั้น ทั้งกลุ่มนักศึกษาที่มีคะแนนสูง (4.91) และกลุ่มนักศึกษาที่มีคะแนนต่ำ (4.72) เห็นตรงกันว่า การที่ได้คะแนน TOEIC สูงนั้นมีความสำคัญต่ออาชีพในอนาคต นอกจากนี้ นักศึกษาทั้ง 2 กลุ่ม ยังมีแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ เพราะนักศึกษาคาดว่าจะได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการทำงานบ่อยครั้ง นักศึกษาที่มีคะแนนสูง (4.83) มีความเห็นว่าการเรียนเพื่อการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC นั้นส่งผลให้ได้คะแนน TOEIC มากขึ้น แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม นักศึกษาทั้ง 2 กลุ่ม ไม่ได้รู้สึกว่าการเรียนเพื่อการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC ช่วยพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างรวดเร็ว ดังนั้น ในการเตรียมความพร้อมเพื่อการสอบ TOEIC ของนักศึกษา จึงควรมีการส่งเสริมปรากฏการณ์วอชแบคเชิงบวก (Positive Washback)

คำสำคัญ: ปรากฏการณ์วอชแบค การเรียนเพื่อการเตรียมสอบ TOEIC แรงจูงใจ ผลการสอบ

Abstract

This study aimed 1) to investigate how direct TOEIC preparation class influence students' motivation; and 2) to compare students' motivation according to their test performance. The samples comprised of 37 students of the third year Business English majors studied in the second semester of academic year 2017, enrolled in Preparation for TOEIC course, and took the TOEIC in April, 2018. A questionnaire was used to collect the data and the statistics used in data analysis were percentage, mean and standard deviation. The result suggested that for the influence of the direct TOEIC preparation class on students' motivation, the students were motivated to study for the test as it will be benefited for their

future career (4.78). For the comparison of students' motivation according to their test performance, both high score (4.91) and low score students (4.72) viewed that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment. The high score (4.83) and low score students (4.40) viewed that they expect to use English frequently in their future job. Furthermore, for high score students (4.83), they feel that studying for this test will improve their TOEIC score. However, both high score (2.25) and low score students (2.64) opined that they do not feel their English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC. It is recommended that positive washback should be promoted when preparing learners for the test.

Keywords: Washback Effect, Direct ToEIC Preparation Class, Motivation, Test Performance

Introduction

English is considered to be a major international language for many countries in the world. The concept of globalization results in the integration of education and business sectors in which good command of English is required (Griggers, 2004). In Thailand, this integration also affects Thai graduates as stated by the announcement of Ministry of Education on Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF 1) (2017), English language proficiency of English major students, who study in the last academic year, must be at C1 (Proficient User) level according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This English proficiency level can be assessed by taking a standardized test.

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is one of the most widely used for assessing business English skills in Thailand. It is used as a benchmark for employment, promotion, and other workplace benefits (Brown, 2006). Specifically, at Buriram Rajabhat University, TOEIC score is used as one of the assessment tools for Business English major students in order to graduate. In addition, TOEIC score can also be used to determine English proficiency level, as set in accordance with CEFR, of the students before they graduate (Ministry of Education, 2017). Table 1.1 shows correlation between TOEIC scores and the CEFR levels (Educational Testing Service, 2016)

Table 1 Correlation Table of TOEIC scores and the CEFR Levels

Total minimum scores	CEFR Levels	
945	C1	Proficient user – Effective Operational Proficiency
785	B2	Independent user – Vantage
550	B1	Independent user – Threshold
225	A2	Basic user – Waystage
120	A1	Basic user - Breakthrough

As shown in Table 1.1, C1 level is required for graduation which means that students must score at least 945 out of 990 of TOEIC. However, the average score of Thai TOEIC test takers in 2017 was only 482 which was at fifth among 6 Asian countries as shown in Table 1.2 (Educational Testing Service, 2018).

Table 2 2017 Average TOEIC Scores

Country	Average Score (Out of 990)
1. The Philippines	727
2. Malaysia	642
3. China, people's republic	600
4. Vietnam	496
5. Thailand	482
6. Indonesia	447

Source: Educational Testing Service (2018)

It can be seen that the average score of Thai test takers was far from the goal set by the Ministry of Education as the score only falls in A2 level of CEFR according to Table 1.1. The inadequate English proficiency is a barrier in future career for Thai university graduates. Thus, it is important for the students to prepare themselves for taking the test.

At Business English Program, Buriram Rajabhat University, TOEIC score is used as an exit test for the students. Before the announcement of Ministry of Education on Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF 1) in 2017, third year students must score more than 400 of TOEIC in order to get in an internship and graduate. They already had a hard time getting the required score. This TQF 1 announcement of English proficiency level seems impossible for them to achieve the goal. As a result, Business English Program's curriculum offers Preparation for TOEIC course for third year students in order to get the students ready for taking the test and to score well which will be beneficial for them in both

graduation and future employment. Given to the importance of TOEIC score, this paper aims to investigate how direct TOEIC preparation class influence students' motivation and to compare students' motivation according to their test performance.

Literature Review

The term 'washback' has been defined by several researchers. McNamara (2000) defined 'washback' as the influence that the test has on curriculum design and planning. In addition, 'washback' is also viewed as the impact that the test has on teaching and learning (Baker, 1991; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Wall, 2000). Likewise, Popham (1987) refers 'washback' as a measurement-driven instruction that can help improve overall quality of education when the high stakes tests are implemented to determine the proficiency of the learners. Alderson and Wall (1993) proposed the washback effects that a test has on teachers and learners as followed:

1. A test affects the structure of classroom teaching and learning.
2. A test affects viewpoints of the content, method and curriculum design of teaching and learning.
3. A test that has essential results on teachers and learners will have washback.
4. A test that has no essential results on teachers and learners will not have washback.
5. Not every teacher and learner will be affected by washback effects of a test.

There are both positive and negative washback effects. The positive washback helps strengthen the curriculum and direct testing will have positive influence than indirect testing as the test takers know that which skills they have to practice in order to complete the test (Hughes, 2003). Also, learning in TOEIC preparation class has strengthened students' listening and reading abilities (Liu, 2014). Conversely, negative washback effects happened when the test narrowed the curriculum and content of the class (Alderson & Wall, 1993) as the teachers have to assist learners to gain high score, they only teach the content that will be in the test. In the study entitled *Can Exams Change How and What Learners Learn? Investigating the Washback Effect of a University English Language Proficiency Test in the Turkish Context*, Saglam & Farhady (2019) found that the test had positive and negative washback on the learning. The samples viewed that using source-based information and their notes taken while the listening task into their writing raised awareness in generating, organizing, and linking ideas including modeling vocabulary and sentence structures. However, they opined that there was a negative washback because they were inclined to prioritize test-oriented practice which means being successful on the test was focused by narrowing of learning towards tested skills. The students emphasized their preference of test taking strategies as a learning strategy for boosting their test scores (Saglam & Farhady, 2019). As above mentioned, the concept of washback is about the impact, both positive and

negative, that the test has on teaching and learning. Thus, it is important to promote positive washback when preparing learners for the test.

It is common that when students prepare for a test, they review the previous tests and emphasize on the types of language and test items that are recognized to appear on the test (Robb & Ercanbrack, 1999). Therefore, many teachers use Direct Test Preparation for preparing their students to take TOEIC because the test scores are emphasized (Saglam & Farhady, 2019). However, preparing students for international standardized tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS is often seen unethical because of the main concerns as narrowing the curriculum, overemphasizing test- strategy instruction and mechanical practice, neglecting high-order thinking skills, and causing test-wisness (Haladyna et al, 1991; Hamp-Lyons, 1998; Miller, 2003; Noble & Smith, 1994 cited in Yi-Ching, 2010). Many researchers suggested that various types of instruction should be incorporated into the TOEIC class. Saglam and Farhady (2019) recommended theme-based instruction. Maliwan (2018) was using direct method and also audio-lingual method in her study. Apichatrojanakul (2011) suggested that there should be some practical ways to teach TOEIC such as creating a balance between the teaching-centered approach and the child-centered approach by using pair work and group activities in teaching plans, using 4-mat approach (communicative approach), pointed out the benefits of getting high scores, or giving positive reinforcement to the students. The positive reinforcement can be providing useful free learning resources to them such as websites and instead of focusing on listening and speaking, a variety of activities for incorporating writing and speaking should be added such as dictation and role playing (Liu, 2014). Yi-Ching (2010) offered teachers metacognitively-based approach: a variety of activities to teach TOEIC listening and reading test interactively because if the teachers employ suitable activities specially designed for the lessons, the students can learn the language from the test and also receive the higher test scores.

Among several factors that affect the level of success in language learning, motivation in learning the language is of particular significance (Lee & Oh, 2011). Motivation of learners was defined by Brown (1994) as an internal state/condition of need/desire that initiates, directs, and maintains the person's behavior to perform certain performance to be successful in learning. Motivation is a process that promotes students to pay more attention to study TOEIC and prepare them for taking TOEIC. Thomson (2012) examined motivating reasons for studying for the TOEIC and found that their reasons included to meet university requirements and to get a job, respectively. There were some studies regarding students' motivation and their test performance. Yi-Ching (2014) pointed out that the exit requirements for English have motivated students to take external English proficiency tests and intermediate and high proficiency exit students had more favorable opinions of the exit tests than their low proficiency counterparts had. Moreover, the three proficiency level students thought that the tests are important for their graduation, job applications, and further education (Yi-Ching, 2014).

Research Methodology

Samples

The samples of this study comprised of 37 third year Business English major students who studied in the second semester of academic year 2017. They enrolled in Preparation for TOEIC course and took TOEIC in April, 2018 organized by the university. Table 3 showed the score range of the samples.

Table 3 TOEIC Score Range of the Samples

TOEIC Score Range	Frequency	Percent
100-195	1	2.7
200-295	1	2.7
300-395	23	62.2
400-495	9	24.3
500-595	1	2.7
600-695	2	5.4
Total	37	100.0

Students who scored more than 400 (12 students) were considered to be in a high TOEIC score group and students scored lower than 400 (25 students) were in a low TOEIC score group. This is because in Business English Program, students have to score more than 400 in order to graduate and participate in on job training session.

Data Collection

The data were collected at Buriram Rajabhat University during the second semester of academic year 2017 by using questionnaires. The questionnaire used to collect the data was adapted from Yi-Ching (2014) which was divided into 4 sections: gender, TOEIC score, students' motivation and other comments and suggestions. The format of the questionnaire was 5 point-rating scale.

Results

Research Question 1: How does direct TOEIC preparation class influence students' motivation?

This research question aimed to investigate students' motivation in overall aspect that has been affected by direct test preparation. The result was presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Stude As showed in Table 4, it can be seen that Item 7: "I feel that getting

Items	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
1. I feel that studying for this test will improve my TOEIC score.	4.43	.72
2. I feel anxious to perform well on the TOEIC test.	4.27	.93
3. I feel I can perform more daily activities in English because of studying for the TOEIC test	3.83	.72
4. I would be more likely to take the TOEIC Speaking or Writing tests if the places and times were more convenient.	3.16	1.01
5. I do not feel my English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC.	2.51	1.23
6. I feel that studying for this test will improve my English communication skills.	4.00	.91
7. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment.	4.78	.53
8. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for my future education.	4.35	.78
9. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for my personal life.	3.89	1.12
10. I expect to use English frequently in my future job.	4.54	.60
11. I prefer studying TOEIC to studying conversation.	3.54	.69
12. Studying TOEIC makes me interested in learning English.	4.10	.69
13. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is more important than learning the language.	2.83	.83
Total	3.86	.83

As showed in Table 4, it can be seen that Item 7: "I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment" received the highest mean score (\bar{x} = 4.78, S.D.=.53). However, Item 5: "I do not feel my English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC." received the lowest mean score (\bar{x} =2.51, S.D.=1.23). This can be concluded that students were motivated to study for the test as it will be benefited for their future career.

Research Question 2: Are there any differences in students' motivation according to their test performance?

This research question can be answered by comparing students' motivation between students with high and low TOEIC score. The results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 High and Low Score Students' Motivation and Direct Test Preparation

Items	High Score Students (n=12)		Low Score Students (n=25)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1. I feel that studying for this test will improve my TOEIC score.	4.83	.38	4.24	.77
2. I feel anxious to perform well on the TOEIC test.	4.41	.79	4.20	1.00
3. I feel I can perform more daily activities in English because of studying for the TOEIC test	4.08	.79	3.72	.67
4. I would be more likely to take the TOEIC Speaking or Writing tests if the places and times were more convenient.	3.41	.99	3.04	1.01
5. I do not feel my English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC.	2.25	1.48	2.64	1.11
6. I feel that studying for this test will improve my English communication skills.	4.16	1.02	3.92	.86
7. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment.	4.91	.28	4.72	.61
8. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for my future education.	4.50	.67	4.28	.84
9. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for my personal life.	4.25	.96	3.72	1.17
10. I expect to use English frequently in my future job.	4.83	.38	4.40	.64
11. I prefer studying TOEIC to studying conversation.	3.58	.66	3.52	.71
12. Studying TOEIC makes me interested in learning English.	4.08	.79	4.12	.66
13. I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is more important than learning the language.	2.41	.90	3.04	.73
Total	3.97	.78	3.81	.83

Table 5 revealed that Item 7 “I feel that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment” received the highest level in both high score ($\bar{x} = 4.91$, S.D. = .28) and low score student ($\bar{x} = 4.72$, S.D. = .61) followed by Item 10 “I expect to use English frequently in my future job” ($\bar{x} = 4.83$, S.D. = .38), ($\bar{x} = 4.40$, S.D. = .64). In addition, for high score student, Item 1 “I feel that studying for this test will improve my TOEIC score” also gained high level of motivation ($\bar{x} = 4.83$, S.D. = .38). However, Item 5 “I do not feel my English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC” received the lowest mean score for both high ($\bar{x} = 2.25$, S.D. = 1.48) and low score students ($\bar{x} = 2.64$, S.D. = 1.11). As a result, it can be concluded that the motivation to study for the test for both high score and low score students was not different as they viewed that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for their future employment.

Discussions

The results of the study will be discussed according to the objectives of this study as follows: 1) to investigate how direct TOEIC preparation class influence students' motivation; and 2) to compare students' motivation according to their test performance.

1. The result suggested that for the influence of the direct TOEIC preparation class on students' motivation, the students were motivated to study for the test as it will be benefited for their future career. This is in line with the findings of Thomson (2012) that one of the motivating reasons for studying for the TOEIC was to get a job. This, also, in accordance with Yi-Ching (2010) that tests are important for job applications since the test is used as a benchmark for employment, promotion, and other workplace benefits (Brown, 2006). Alderson and Wall (1993) stated that a test that has essential results on teachers and learners will have washback. If the students have high score from taking the test, it will offer the students positive washback. However, when the test narrowed the curriculum and content of the class (Alderson & Wall, 1993) as the teachers try to assist learners to gain high score, many teachers only teach the content that will be in the test which is called Direct Test Preparation. This may cause negative washback because the students may incline to prioritize test-oriented practice and neglect other skills such as speaking skill and high-order thinking skills (Haladyna et al, 1991; Hamp-Lyons, 1998; Miller, 2003; Noble & Smith, 1994 cited in Yi-Ching, 2010). Speaking skill is crucial for future career, especially airline personnel as Sirikanjanawong and Wasanasomsithi (2018) stated that there must be English speaking test to ensure that the airline applicants are truly qualified to use English speaking skills effectively to fulfill their job requirements. Moreover, various types of instruction in the TOEIC preparation class should be incorporated such as theme-based instruction (Saglam & Farhady, 2019), creating a balance between the teaching-centered approach and the child-centered approach by using pair work and group activities in teaching plans, using 4-mat

approach (communicative approach), pointed out the benefits of getting high scores, or giving positive reinforcement to the students (Apichatrojanakul, 2011), and metacognitively-based approach (Yi-Ching, 2010). For this study, the researchers recommended that communicative approach and learner-centered should be implemented and other resources such as TOEIC related websites and TOEIC related mobile applications are recommended to the students to practice their English and TOEIC.

2. For the comparison of students' motivation according to their test performance, both high score and low score students viewed that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment. The high score and low score students believed that they expect to use English frequently in their future job. Furthermore, for high score students, they feel that studying for this test will improve their TOEIC score. However, both high score and low score students opined that they do not feel their English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC. As seen from the results, it can be said that both high score and low score students placed their emphasis on future employment, expect to use English frequently in their future job, so it is important for the students to prepare themselves for taking the test. This is in accordance with Yi-Ching (2014) that the three proficiency level students thought that the tests are important for their graduation, job applications, and further education. At Business English Program, Buriram Rajabhat University, TOEIC score is used as an exit test for the students: the third year students must score more than 400 of TOEIC in order to get in an internship and graduate. They already had a hard time getting the required score. This certainly affects their motivation in taking the TOEIC preparation class which can be interpreted from the answer received from the questionnaire that high score students feel that studying for this test will improve their TOEIC score. Still, both high score and low score students opined that they do not feel their English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC. The teachers can help promote positive washback by encouraging the students to practice English both inside and outside TOEIC preparation class. As Liu (2014) stated that learning is not only confined in class, it can be everywhere. They can learn faster if they immerse themselves in English atmosphere. Liu (2014) recommended that after class, students can have autonomous English development by listening to English radio, speaking to peers in English, reading English newspaper and doing practice questions on TOEIC related websites, etc.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study were 1) to investigate how direct TOEIC preparation class influence students' motivation; and 2) to compare students' motivation according to their test performance. The samples were 37 third year Business English majors studied in the second semester of academic year 2017, enrolled in Preparation for TOEIC course, and took the TOEIC in April, 2018. A questionnaire was used to collect the data and the statistics used

in data analysis were percentage, mean and standard deviation. The result suggested that for the influence of the direct TOEIC preparation class on students' motivation, the students were motivated to study for the test as it will be benefited for their future career (4.78). For the comparison of students' motivation according to their test performance, both high score (4.91) and low score students (4.72) viewed that getting a high score on the TOEIC is important for future employment. The high score (4.83) and low score students (4.40) viewed that they expect to use English frequently in their future job. Furthermore, for high score students (4.83), they feel that studying for this test will improve their TOEIC score. However, both high score (2.25) and low score students (2.64) opined that they do not feel their English is improving quickly while studying for the TOEIC. It is recommended that positive washback should be promoted when preparing learners for the test.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The results of the study can be used to prepare TOEIC preparation class where positive washback should be promoted for boosting students' motivations. The questionnaire was used in the study, using more data collection tools are recommended in the further research studies such as a focus group discussion or an interview for better generalizability. The further studies should examine the activities or approaches for promoting positive washback and demoting negative washback.

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