

**“True Increases” on the TOEIC for Intensive English IIIA Participants**  
**集中英語 IIIA 受講生の TOEIC スコアにおける「真の向上」**

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### 1. Introduction

English IIIA and B “Challenge Courses” are elective courses held during the summer and spring breaks for second through fourth year students who wish to better their business English and TOEIC scores. See Harrison et al. for a detailed description of the courses materials and course format.<sup>[1]</sup> The TOEIC is a tool which was originally designed to measure proficiency; however, it is often used to measure achievement. With this in mind, the tool’s creators, Educational Testing Services (ETS), have included a “Policies and Guidelines” section in the TOEIC User Guide.<sup>[2]</sup> This report will discuss the TOEIC scores of the English IIIA participants looking at both the average scores of the group and the individual scores with consideration for the ETS User Guide. Both methods of analysis show positive results.

### 2. Methods

The course was scheduled with 3 days of intense study led by teachers, followed by approximately 1 month of self-study, and then 2 more days of teacher-led study. Three teachers taught a total of 23 participants who all took the TOEIC once on July 11, 2014, completed the course, and then took the TOEIC again on September 5, 2014. These participants were from 7 departments: Civil Engineering, Transportation Systems Engineering, Town Planning and Design, Precision Machinery Engineering, Aerospace, Electronic Engineering, and Mathematics.

Class time was divided equally between study for the reading and the listening sections. A non-native English speaking teacher taught the reading section, and two native English speaking teachers taught the listening section. For both sections, a testing strategies textbook<sup>[3]</sup>, other supplemental materials and online resources were used. Online materials included BBC<sup>[4]</sup>, VOA<sup>[5]</sup>, TED<sup>[6]</sup>, NetAcademy 2<sup>[7]</sup> and participant selected websites. This was a blended course with resources available on a Moodle CMS.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Considering the average TOEIC scores of the participants, there are positive gains of roughly 25 points on both the listening and the reading sections for a total average gain of approximately 50 points (Table 1). As a group this is positive; however, this method of evaluation, although common, is misleading. ETS states that for a “real difference” in level proficiency, test takers and administrators must consider the standard error of measurement, and “The *SEdiff* for the TOEIC listening and reading sections is about 35 scaled score points each.” Therefore, to interpret TOEIC scores, a “true increase in the TOEIC score” is “plus or minus 1 *SEdiff*, or 35 points.”<sup>[2]</sup> Therefore, if a 40 point difference is observed, there has been a true increase or decrease. The yellow highlights in Table 1 indicate that which participants showed true score increases. Table 2 summarizes true increases of participants for both sections, one section, or not at all. Of the 23 participants, 16 (70%) demonstrated true increases in at least one section, and 3 (13%) demonstrated true increases in both sections. None of the participants had true decreases in proficiency level.

### 4. Conclusion

In sum, 70% of the English IIIA participants demonstrated “true” improvement, via the TOEIC, in their English proficiency between July 11 and September 5, 2014. Although successful, participant motivation, teaching methods, and time constraints are areas to consider as 30% of the participants did not attain true increases and many participants only showed true proficiency increases on one section.

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**Table 1.** TOEIC Results

Participant	July 11 Test			September 5 Test			Difference		
	Listening	Reading	TOTAL	Listening	Reading	TOTAL	Listening	Reading	TOTAL
1	410	330	740	405	345	750	-5	15	10
2	210	150	360	285	190	475	75	40	115
3	255	185	440	240	155	395	-15	-30	-45
4	295	135	430	320	260	580	25	125	150
5	305	145	450	355	285	640	50	140	190
6	220	285	505	320	265	585	100	-20	80
7	305	200	505	285	165	450	-20	-35	-55
8	345	260	605	355	310	665	10	50	60
9	380	295	675	450	335	785	70	40	110
10	340	210	550	310	280	590	-30	70	40
11	265	260	525	330	235	565	65	-25	40
12	230	265	495	270	265	535	40	0	40
13	240	240	480	275	230	505	35	-10	25
14	305	135	440	345	120	465	40	-15	25
15	305	190	495	350	215	565	45	25	70
16	275	220	495	315	235	550	40	15	55
17	305	240	545	305	280	585	0	40	40
18	220	210	430	275	230	505	55	20	75
19	275	200	475	330	195	525	55	-5	50
20	300	165	465	330	260	590	30	95	125
21	270	210	480	285	210	495	15	0	15
22	245	230	475	220	245	465	-25	15	-10
23	275	185	460	255	210	465	-20	25	5
Average	286	215	501	313	240	553	28	25	53

**Table 2.** True Increases (n=23)

Both Listening and Reading	3 (13%)	16 (70%)
Listening	8 (35%)	
Reading	5 (22%)	
Neither Listening nor Reading	7 (30%)	

## 5. References

- [1] Jonathan Harrison, Akira Tanioka, Takashi Suzuki, Joseph Falout, Ruth Vanbaelen, Fuminori Nakamura, Makiko Otaguro: “English IIIA Challenge Course: Students’ TOEIC Goals and Actual Outcomes”, 第 56 回日本大学理工学部学術講演会 (CD-ROM), 日本大理工工学部, 2012 年.
- [2] Educational Testing Service. (2013). TOEIC User Guide: Listening & Reading, p.10. Available: [http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/Test\\_of\\_English\\_for\\_International\\_Communication/TOEIC\\_User\\_Gd.pdf](http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/Test_of_English_for_International_Communication/TOEIC_User_Gd.pdf).
- [3] Grant Trew (2007). Tactics for TOEIC: Listening and Reading Test. New York: Oxford.
- [4] BBC Learning English. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/>
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- [7] ALC NetAcademy 2. Restricted: <https://na2.wbt.cst.nihon-u.ac.jp/anet2/login.aspx>.