Students' Perceptions of TOEIC Training for Improving Listening and Reading Scores

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Highlights
Students have a positive perception of the TOEIC training provided by lecturers, believing it helps improve their listening and reading scores. Additionally, interviews reveal that students benefit more from an integrated skills approach using authentic materials rather than relying solely on TOEIC simulation and structured practices. English proficiency.

ABSTRACT: This research aims to distinguish students' perceptions of the TOEIC training given by lecturers for final semester students to help them to achieve the passing grade determined by the campus as a graduation requirement. This research is a qualitative descriptive that revealed the reality of TOEIC training by analyzing relevant data. The selection of research subjects was carried out using a purposive sampling technique on students who had received TOEIC training. Data collection uses a closed questionnaire method which is applied to 186 students from 11 study programs who join TOEIC training. In depth interview was also conducted toward 30 students. The research questionnaire consists of 2 parts, namely: Perception of Learning Quality and Perception of benefits to TOEIC training. The result of this research shows that students have positive perception toward TOEIC training and they agree TOEIC training can improve their listening and reading score. Meanwhile, the interview reveals that students get benefit more from integrated skills approach using authentic material than just simulation and structured practices of TOEIC. This results give insights on future TOEIC Training about its effectiveness to improve students' English proficiency as well as proposing the best method used in the future training of TOEIC.

Keywords: perception, toeic training, listening, reading

Introduction

As one of the vocational education institutions in Surabaya, Politeknik Perkapalan Negeri Surabaya (PPNS) has a mission to develop high-quality human resources that are globally competitive (sustainability-professionalism). To achieve this mission, PPNS strives to produce graduates capable of facing all challenges in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. One manifestation of PPNS's mission to achieve global recognition is by enhancing the English proficiency of its students. The English skills of PPNS students are crucial, given the increasingly intense competition in the global era, where polytechnic graduates require active English skills in both academic and non-academic environments.

In an academic setting, English proficiency can be seen through students' ability to communicate in English with peers, administrative staff, and lecturers. Additionally, students' English proficiency can be evaluated through their presentation scores, exam results, and English proficiency test scores, such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), which assesses their listening and reading skills. TOEIC is a widely recognized standard of English test for evaluating students' English language competence in professional settings, thus really suit polytechnic students. As stated by Agustyowati (2023) a good TOEIC score can also increase the competitiveness of vocational graduate students in the world of work. It measures listening, reading comprehension, and speaking and writing skills related explicitly to work-related contexts However, in reality, many PPNS students rarely use English when communicating on campus, and a significant number of students achieve unsatisfactory scores in TOEIC. From TOEIC test conducted to 895 final year students of Diploma 4 and Diploma 3, there are 359 students got low score, ranging from 220 to 470. This score range is far from the required score for graduation: a minimum of 500. It means the students are still in the level of intermediate whereas the graduation from PPNS should have good English skills at basic working proficiency which can be seen in the table 1 below:

Table 1.
TOEIC can do level (International Test Center)

Can do level	TOEIC Score
General Professional Proficiency	905-990
Advance Working Proficiency	785-900
Basic Working Proficiency	605-780
Intermediate	405-600
Elementary	255-400
Novice	10-250

This situation indicates the need for further encouragement for students to meet the required standards for both communicative English and TOEIC as the English proficiency tests. To support the improvement of students' English skills, supplementary learning methods such as TOEIC training are necessary. Through this training, students will be exposed more frequently to English in both monologues and dialogues, as well as to simple readings commonly used in daily life. A study by Zahruni, et all in 2020 revealed that TOEIC online learning was appropriate since it provided students with a convenient learning environment and materials. However, the drawback is that online TOEIC Course was regarded "not that appealing" for students because it reduces teacher-student connection.

Meanwhile, another study on TOEIC by Hong, et all., (2020) indicates there was a positive change in the self-efficacy of students after they join the TOEIC course. The study also depicts that self-efficacy is considered essential for students' TOEIC achievements as it affects their achievement positively.

On the other hand, this research conducted in polytechnic where TOEIC is a "must" for students to graduate. It focuses on finding out the solution of students' difficulty on understanding TOEIC by capturing their perception on TOEIC training program. By recognizing their perception, lecturers are able to find not just innovative teaching method, but also improve the quality of future TOEIC training.

In addition, given the idea that PPNS has returned to offline TOEIC training and computer-based TOEIC assessment after the pandemic since 2022, there is a great concern on the evaluation of the program. The evaluation is also expected to touch the effectiveness of teaching learning method used in TOEIC training and whether the students get the benefit from it. Therefore, this study comes to the questions of how the students perceive TOEIC training and how they deal with difficulties in TOEIC test.

Method

This research employs a survey method with a descriptive approach, aiming to illustrate the current situation or phenomena (Arikunto, 2010). The study is descriptive in nature and involves analysis. In qualitative research, the process and meaning (from the subject's perspective) are emphasized. Theoretical frameworks are used as guides to ensure that the research focus aligns with the facts in the field. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation is useful in providing an overview of the research background and serves as material for discussing the research findings.

This research examines students' perceptions of TOEIC training in an effort to improve their scores as the requirement for graduation. The selection of research subjects is carried out using purposive sampling focusing on specific characteristics of a certain group of people that are of interest, which help to answer the research questions (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Indeed, the respondents of this research are 186 (out of 359 students) final-year (2023/2024) students who have completed TOEIC training and got more than 500 for the score (range of score is between 500 and 600). They are from 11 study programs and 3 departments in PPNS: Marine Engineering Department, Shipbuilding Engineering Department, and Electrical Engineering Department.

The stages of this research involve surveys and interview with respondents. The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires through Google Forms to 186 students. The in depth interview was administered to 30 students with a variety of TOEIC score. Data collection uses a closed-ended questionnaire method, although there is one question that allows for open responses or feedback. The research questionnaire consists of two sections: perceptions of the quality of learning and perceptions of the benefits and challenges of TOEIC training.

Findings and Discussion
Findings
The results of this study include a discussion on students' perceptions of English Proficiency training, specifically the TOEIC, focusing on listening and reading skills. This section will outline two main aspects of student perceptions: perceptions of learning and perceptions of the benefits of TOEIC

training. This analysis is based on responses to several closed and open-ended questionnaire items, including General Aspects, Listening Aspects, Reading Aspects, Learning Aspects, and Beneficial Aspects, completed by final-semester students participating in the TOEIC training.

In each closed questionnaire item, there are four response scales for students to choose from: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA).

Table 2.

The results of the questionnaire on the General Aspect (GA)

Code	Statement
GA 1	I have taken the TOEIC test.
GA 2	I have taken the TOEIC test several times.
GA 3	I understand the purpose of the TOEIC test.
GA 4	I feel that the TOEIC test is important for assessing my English language proficiency.
GA 5	I understand the sections that are tested in the TOEIC.
GA 6	I received a score that meets the standards at PPNS.

The General Aspect (GA) questionnaire consists of 6 statements focusing on students' general understanding of the TOEIC test and their experiences taking the test. As shown in Table 2, several statements (GA 3, GA 4, and GA 5) indicate their perceptions of the TOEIC test, including its benefits, objectives, and significance in its implementation.

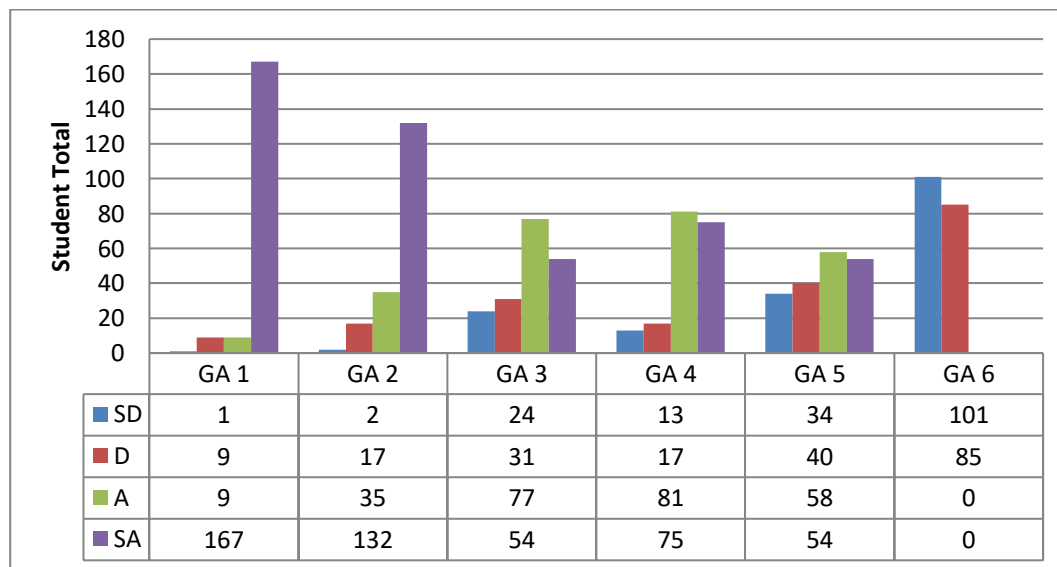|	GA 1	GA 2	GA 3	GA 4	GA 5	GA 6
SD	1	2	24	13	34	101
D	9	17	31	17	40	85
A	9	35	77	81	58	0
SA	167	132	54	75	54	0

Figure 1. Graphic result of General Aspect Questionnaire

In Figure 1, the graph of the questionnaire results shows the trend of students' responses regarding their experiences and understanding of TOEIC. In one statement, GA 1, 176 students answered positively, indicating that 94% of students have previously taken the TOEIC test. Additionally, some students have taken the TOEIC test multiple times. From this, it can be concluded that final-year students at PPNS already have the experience of taking TOEIC test, allowing them to assess their understanding of the test. Statements GA 3, GA 4, and GA 5 reflect that students are aware of the importance of taking the TOEIC, why they should participate in TOEIC training, and the benefits they will gain from taking the test and training. This is evident from the high percentage

of positive responses from students for GA 3, GA 4, and GA 5. Meanwhile, for the final statement, GA 6, which confirms their TOEIC scores, the majority of students state that their scores do not meet the graduation standards at PPNS. The standard TOEIC score required for graduation is 500. A total of 186 students still need to improve their TOEIC scores and participate in TOEIC training.

Student Perception after TOEIC Training

The composition of the TOEIC test consists of two skills: Listening and Reading, with an equal number of questions and balanced scoring weights. Therefore, the questionnaire completed by the students also separately and thoroughly explores their perceptions regarding both skills.

Listening Aspect

In the Listening Aspect (LA) questionnaire, there are 13 statements that delve deeper into students' understanding of the questions in Listening Part 1 to Part 4. Students' responses to these 13 statements also reflect whether they still face difficulties when listening and answering questions in Listening Part 1 to Part 4 after participating in the TOEIC Training. Table 3 presents several statements that explain the level of understanding students have regarding the Listening questions.

Table 3.

Results of the Listening Aspect (LA) Questionnaire

Code	Statement
LA 1	I can listen to the image description in the TOEIC test well.
LA2	I can identify the image in the TOEIC test well.
LA3	I can answer the image description questions in the TOEIC test correctly.
LA4	I have difficulty answering the image description questions in the TOEIC test.
LA5	I can listen to the questions in the TOEIC test well.
LA6	I can respond to the questions in the TOEIC test correctly.
LA7	I have difficulty answering the response questions in the TOEIC test.
LA8	I can listen to conversations in the TOEIC test well.
LA9	I can answer questions about the conversations in the TOEIC test correctly.
LA10	I have difficulty answering the response questions in the TOEIC test.
LA 11	I can listen to monologues about information in the TOEIC test well.
LA12	I can answer questions about the monologues in the TOEIC test correctly.
LA13	I have difficulty answering the monologue questions in the TOEIC test.

The results of the questionnaire illustrate the extent to which students feel capable of answering the Listening questions from Part 1 to Part 4. For example, in statement 3: "I can answer the image description questions in the TOEIC test correctly," 143 students responded positively by choosing Agree and Strongly Agree. This statement is supported by statement 4: "I have difficulty answering the image description questions in the TOEIC test," where the majority of students chose the options Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Positive responses regarding the results of the TOEIC training are echoed in the subsequent statements, as students feel capable of answering Listening questions, starting from Question and Response (Listening Part 2), Conversation (Listening Part 3), and Short Talk (Listening Part 4). This is evident from the high percentage of students who answered positively (Agree and Strongly Agree), averaging 86.4%.

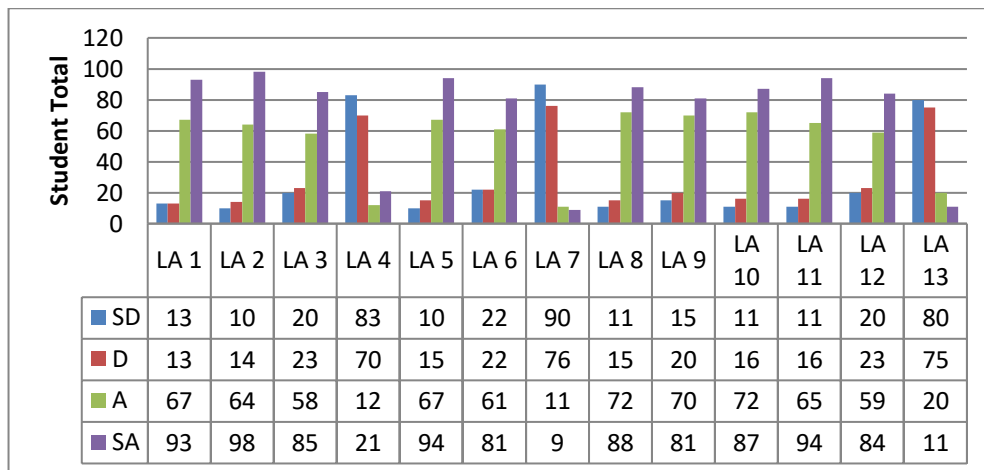|	LA 1	LA 2	LA 3	LA 4	LA 5	LA 6	LA 7	LA 8	LA 9	LA 10	LA 11	LA 12	LA 13
SD	13	10	20	83	10	22	90	11	15	11	11	20	80
D	13	14	23	70	15	22	76	15	20	16	16	23	75
A	67	64	58	12	67	61	11	72	70	72	65	59	20
SA	93	98	85	21	94	81	9	88	81	87	94	84	11

Figure 2. Graphic result of Listening Aspect Questionnaire

In Figure 2, the trend of student responses to each statement is shown, indicating that students feel more capable of answering TOEIC Listening questions after undergoing intensive TOEIC training for 20 hours. Only a small percentage of students experienced difficulties in understanding monologues, describing images, and comprehending conversations, as evidenced by an average percentage of 13.6%.

Reading Aspect

In the Reading Aspect (RA) questionnaire, there are 12 statements that delve deeper into how well students understand the questions in Reading Parts 5 to 7. Student responses to these 12 statements also indicate whether they still face difficulties in understanding the reading material and answering the Reading Part 5 to 7 questions after participating in the TOEIC training. Table 4 presents several statements that illustrate the level of student comprehension regarding the Reading items.

Table 4.

Results of the Reading Aspect (RA) Questionnaire

Code	Statement
RA 1	I understand English vocabulary well.
RA2	I understand English grammar well.
RA3	I am able to answer vocabulary questions correctly.
RA4	I am able to answer grammar questions correctly.
RA5	I have difficulty answering vocabulary questions on the TOEIC test.
RA6	I have difficulty answering grammar questions on the TOEIC test.
RA7	I am able to read letters/emails well.
RA8	I can complete words/phrases in the text correctly.
RA9	I have difficulty answering the correct words/phrases in the text.
RA10	I am able to read English texts such as emails/announcements/information/chats well.
RA 11	I can answer questions related to the text of emails/announcements/information/chats correctly.
RA12	I have difficulty answering questions related to the text of emails/announcements/information/chats correctly.

The graph depicting student perceptions in Figure 3 shows the extent to which students feel capable of answering questions in Reading Parts 1 to 7. For example, in statement 3: "I am able to answer vocabulary questions correctly," 47 students responded positively by answering Agree and Strongly Agree. This statement is supported by statement 5: "I have difficulty answering vocabulary questions on the TOEIC test," where a portion of students (35) chose the options Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The positive response regarding the outcomes of the TOEIC training is also represented in students' responses to subsequent statements, indicating that they feel capable of answering Reading questions ranging from Vocabulary, Grammar, to understanding functional texts and Business Letters. This is reflected in the high percentage of students who responded positively (Agree and Strongly Agree), averaging 85.4%.

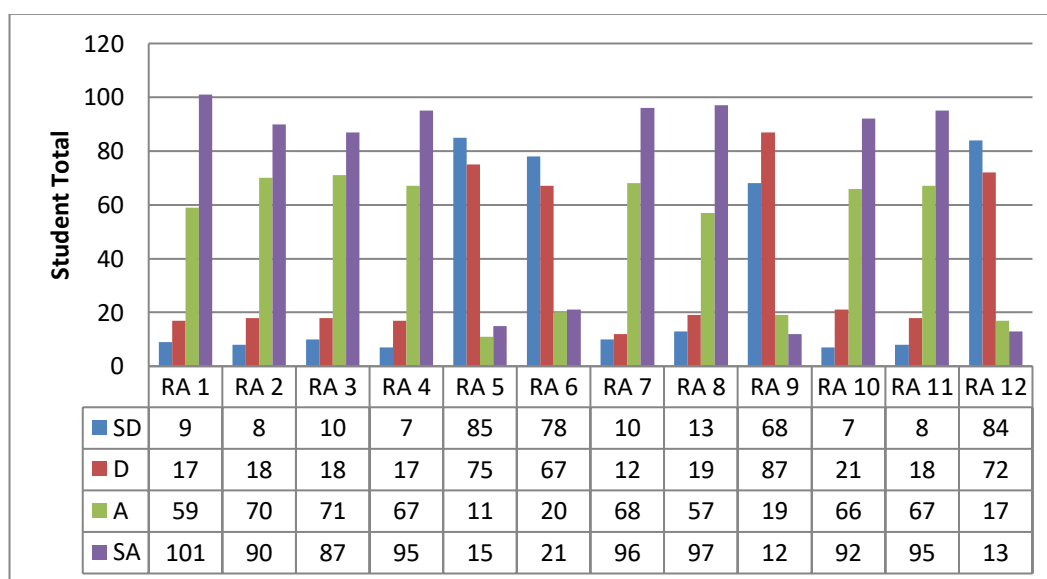|	RA 1	RA 2	RA 3	RA 4	RA 5	RA 6	RA 7	RA 8	RA 9	RA 10	RA 11	RA 12
SD	9	8	10	7	85	78	10	13	68	7	8	84
D	17	18	18	17	75	67	12	19	87	21	18	72
A	59	70	71	67	11	20	68	57	19	66	67	17
SA	101	90	87	95	15	21	96	97	12	92	95	13

Figure 3. Graphic result of Reading Aspect (RA) Questionnaire

The graphs from the Listening Aspect and Reading Aspect questionnaires are certainly not the only indicators of students' positive responses to the TOEIC training. Another consideration is the results of interviews conducted with students. From the in-depth interviews with each student, it was found that they felt significant benefits from the TOEIC training. The majority of students stated that the TOEIC training helped them better understand the analysis of answers to Listening and Reading questions on the TOEIC test.

Learning Aspect

Students' perceptions of their abilities in the TOEIC after the training are reinforced by the results of the questionnaires and interviews regarding the Learning Aspect. Table 5 summarizes that students' perceptions of the TOEIC training can be seen from their responses and answers to 6 statements. Some statements confirm the benefits of the TOEIC training and indicate that it supports their TOEIC capabilities.

Table 5.

Results of the Learning Aspect (LrA) Questionnaire

Code	Statement
LrA 1	I attended the TOEIC training to improve my score according to the standards at PPNS.

LrA2	I was able to participate in the training well.
LrA3	I received good materials for answering TOEIC questions during the training.
LrA4	I feel that the classroom/audio facilities for the training were good.
LrA5	I feel that the tutor delivered the training on how to answer TOEIC questions effectively.
LrA6	I experienced benefits from the TOEIC training, especially regarding graduation.

Students perceive that the implementation of the TOEIC training ran well and that they were able to participate effectively. This is represented in Figure 4, where the majority of students responded positively to the TOEIC training. The responses to the statements "I attended the TOEIC training to improve my score according to the standards at PPNS" and "I experienced benefits from the TOEIC training, especially regarding graduation" indicate that students fully understand the purpose of the training and the TOEIC test, and they can feel the benefits of this activity.
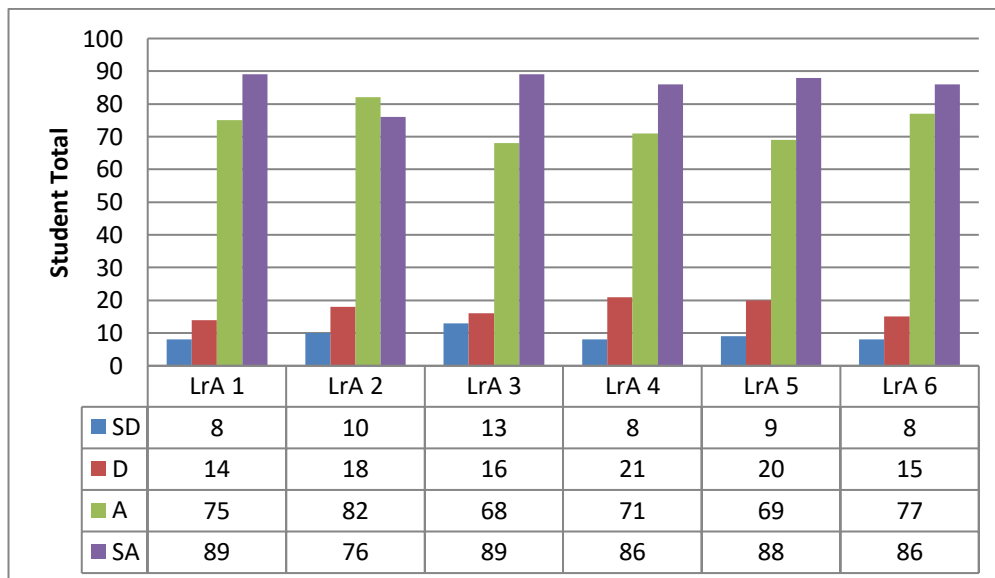

	LrA 1	LrA 2	LrA 3	LrA 4	LrA 5	LrA 6
SD	8	10	13	8	9	8
D	14	18	16	21	20	15
A	75	82	68	71	69	77
SA	89	76	89	86	88	86

Figure 4. Graphic result of Learning Aspect (LrA) questionnaire

Discussion

The findings statistically represent students' perception toward their performance before and after they are exposed to TOEIC training. They perceive that their understanding of TOEIC questions are improved after they are trained for 10 days and get the reading and listening strategy from the lecturers. This leads to the idea that teaching method becomes the concern in this discussion. It is like the result of the interview given to the students, most of them respond that the teaching learning method used in the training has more authentic materials and easy to understand and apply in practice test.

As like stated by Aprilia (2017) authentic materials as effective solutions for listening ability in students of English as a foreign language. It shows the relevancy between the sources of the material for listening with the competency tested in listening skills. For instance by listening the news report more frequently, the students are able to answer the Listening questions covering question and response, short conversation, and single talk. They would rather to get real example from the news report than they get the material from the practice sheet. For instance, in listening section part 1 about pictures description, the lecturers give podcasts which are relevant to workplace situations or

travel experiences. Students are also exposed to products commercials, social media post and business presentation.

For listening part 2, Question and Response, students get authentic materials like podcasts, radio shows, and Youtube Question and Answer session which include segments that listeners ask questions, hosts answer listener questions, more specifically in business and travel fields. When it comes to listening part 3 and 4 about short conversation and talks, the lecturers give students other authentic materials such as Youtube interview, webinars, and recorded speeches and ask them to answer questions and make a summary of each.

Using authentic materials for reading practice in preparation for the TOEIC exam can help students improve their comprehension skills and familiarize themselves with real-world contexts. For example by giving business article, company website, product catalogue, and email. With this kind of material for reading, the lecturers make the students more familiar about texts frequently used in TOEIC. It is like stated by Anggaira (2016) that by using authentic material in teaching reading can improve the students reading interest. It is also said by Sari (2020), Authentic material can also encourage students' interests because they contain interesting topics. Supported by Beresova (2015) in the other words, undoubtedly, the materials will be meaningful learning for the students. It means by using the authentic source for reading skill is very helpful for the student to answer the question in reading test such as text completion and reading comprehension.

The notion of using authentic materials for reading is depicted in the interview results. Students state that they understand more about the use of business correspondence in the real workplace since the lecturers give them authentic business letters from industries. For reading part 5, 6, and 7, students learn from product descriptions, brochures, news websites, and emails from companies. Students are also provided with instruction manuals or user guides used in the laboratory and workshops. Therefore, students can easily comprehend TOEIC reading sections as they can relate it to their real activities in the workshop and laboratory during their study.

Conclusion

PPNS students demonstrated a positive response toward the TOEIC test and its training. This conclusion is drawn from the results of questionnaires and interviews administered to students before and after the TOEIC Training. Prior to the TOEIC Training, students completed a General Aspect questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire and interviews reflect that the students were already aware of the importance of taking the TOEIC test, the reasons they needed to participate in both the test and training, and the benefits they would gain from doing so.

After participating in the TOEIC Training, students provided their opinions in interviews and responded to questionnaires regarding the Listening and Reading Aspects. These questionnaires include statements about their comprehension of the Listening and Reading sections. The results indicated a positive response, with an average of 86.4% of students being able to answer the Listening section questions correctly, and 85.4% demonstrating an ability to comprehend the reading passages and answer the Reading section questions. The conclusion regarding the students' positive perceptions of the TOEIC was further supported by the results of the Learning Aspect questionnaire, which revealed that students believed the TOEIC Training was conducted effectively and that they were able to follow the program well. Additionally, they reported benefiting from the training, as they felt more confident in answering TOEIC questions after completing the training program.

Furthermore, method of teaching becomes the most important role in teaching learning especially for TOEIC training such as the use of authentic sources that significantly effective for the students to recognize and analyze the questions in both listening and reading skills.

This research comes with its delimitation as it does not investigate the effectiveness of TOEIC Training from the eyes of experimental design. Therefore, it is considered necessary for future research to compare students' scores before and after TOEIC training to obviously see the effectiveness of TOEIC Training, thus promote the best method to improve the quality of the training. Furthermore, future researchers may also seek for the correlation between student's perception of TOEIC training quality and its' impact on their motivation to study TOEIC and their language proficiency improvements.

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