
Reading and TOEIC Test Preparation: A Task-based Approach for Underprepared Learners

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Introduction

Standardized English language proficiency tests such as the TOEIC and TOEFL are often a key element in language programs and curriculums worldwide. Whatever their thoughts on the value or uses of these tests in their own teaching and learning circumstances, many ELT classroom teachers – at least those who have accepted reality – may now find themselves very much in the business of teaching exam classes. One way to begin to get a handle on such classes is to use a textbook chosen from an ever-mounting storehouse of test specific preparation materials. A survey of these publications reveals many are cut from the same cloth; they offer little more than full-length practice tests that purport to mimic the sections and questions on the real test. To be sure, practice tests have a role to play in exam and other types of classes. They may often be quite appropriate for self-study as well. But classroom teachers who use these textbooks need to keep several points in mind. For one thing, overuse of practice tests may cause students' and teachers' eyes to glaze over. Further, as May (1998) suggests, there is always the danger that teaching becomes testing and students learn the test, not the language. These potential pitfalls of an exam course need to be made clear, in particular, to students with low-level skills. A number of these learners may be anxiously and unrealistically looking for a "quick fix" to achieve significant test score gains. With so-called underprepared students as a target group, this paper offers some ideas for TOEIC test reading preparation. A good portion of the tasks to be presented allows for both retention of original TOEIC textbook practice material and alternatives to the policy of "going through the book" in a traditional page-by-page manner.

Background

The task-based approach discussed here was developed in the process of teaching two sections of TOEIC improvement classes for second year students at a Japanese college. Students were required to take the class because they had not achieved a 450 test score minimum as freshmen. Though the 59 members in the two classes had taken the test several

times and were familiar with the format, the mean highest TOEIC score for the groups combined was under 340. This number by itself does not necessarily mean all these students can be classified as "underprepared." Within a Japanese college EFL context, what it means to be "underprepared" is perhaps not so easy to quantify. In any case, it was clear from several years of teaching the same kinds of students that this group lacked confidence in their English abilities and was weak in such areas as study skills, knowledge of metalanguage (language for understanding and being aware of learning English as a process) and the importance of making their own learning choices. (In terms of day-to-day teaching, assigning meaning to "underprepared" reminds one of the U.S. Supreme Court opinion in which one member "defined" pornography by writing, "I know it when I see it.")

Taking what was known before the class began and information from the first couple of meetings (including a class questionnaire), it was possible to establish some guidelines for materials development:

1 The class textbook, "Oxford Preparation Course for the TOEIC," was too difficult for our students. In particular, the vocabulary load was just too heavy. There was clearly a need to make book material more accessible for "underprepared" learners.

2 From past experience, much of it learned the hard way, it was evident that school administrators equated proficiency test instruction with proficiency practice tests, or, at the very least, a book with "TOEIC" in the title. Further, our class questionnaire revealed the students thought the same thing. There was no getting around the idea, for at least some of the time, of dealing with material directly from the practice tests in the book.

3 Whatever was to be done with the textbook practice tests had to be done with a bit of creativity and variety of presentation in mind. (The alternative, slogging through non-understandable questions with nonunderstandable explanations, was too awful to contemplate).

4 Changing around the practice test format by making it more interactive and getting students more engaged in the material would be a useful way to "demystify" the test. If students could achieve some success in working with manageable bits of unchanged book content, they might find the actual test questions a little less intimidating.

5 The class questionnaires, in addition to a quick study of TOEIC subsection scores, established reading, especially Part VII (short passages), as a main area of student concern. This factor accounts for making readings from Part VII a course and materials focal point.

Approach / Materials

Part VII of the TOEIC includes a variety of mostly quite short reading material. Test takers can expect to encounter readings in broad categories such as notices, short newspaper articles, several types of business communication, charts, forms, graphs, and advertisements. Each reading is followed by multiple choice items, with a total of forty for the section. Rogers (2001) provides a list of reading skills needed to do well on Part VII: (1) Ability to read short passages quickly (2) Ability to decide topics and main ideas in short readings (3) Ability to find details in short readings (4) Ability to recognize paraphrased material and (5) Ability to make inferences based on short readings.

With guidelines and necessary skills understood, it was possible to start on actual task development. The fact the course was being offered for the first time contributed greatly to the sort of ad hoc nature of the following materials, most of which were developed as the class unfolded.

Handout #1 - As has been noted, the difficulty and amount of unknown textbook vocabulary was a real challenge for our students. A further trouble area was reading speed; computer lab timed reading exercises showed most students at a rate of under 100 words per minute. On tests like the TOEIC, where wrong answers don't count and scores are based on the number of correct items, keeping up a decent reading pace is critical. This first handout therefore offered practice with several types of scanning and skimming, including word search and paragraph matching to reading categories. Students did the handout using seven short readings taken from Part VII of the first TOEIC practice test in their textbook. In order to keep the vocabulary load relatively light, two key words – chosen on the basis of utility and importance for understanding content – were picked out of each of the seven readings. Initially, students were simply asked to circle the words in the readings and pair them with a category.

For the next part of the handout (Part III), it is important to note that half of the class had one set of seven words (plus meanings) while the other half had a different list of eight (plus meanings). This set up a listening gap exercise that students had to bridge using a short dialogue. The dialogue gave students a means to use English to fill in a chart for the seven (or eight) words and meanings they didn't have. If they did their work well, each student came away with a list of all fifteen words, and their meanings. Once the charts were completed, the class worked through the items for stress and pronunciation. (Handout #1 is in Appendix A).

Handout #2 – To review the vocabulary, to deal with reading content to a degree and to put the words into more meaningful context, the next task was for students to do the True/False exercise in Appendix B. The "new" words from handout #1 were highlighted in an effort to reinforce and keep them on the class radar screen.

Handout #3 – The first activity from this paper was simply a repeat of what had been done in handout #1. To remind students of the "big picture," they were once more asked to look at the seven readings and to categorize them by reading type. (Seemingly easy, you'd think, but it was obvious in class that most needed the refocusing). Part II featured a pair work information gap question and answer activity. Students took turns reading aloud questions their partners didn't have and then together scanned for answers in reading passages. These questions were meant to serve as a lead-in to the practice test questions in the book.

With enough background provided, students were seemingly in position to tackle the Part VII book practice test questions. Again, the task was done using material straight from the textbook, but with an important change in format: Rather than do a typically rote, individual multiple choice exercise, students were able to work together on an interactive information gap basis. Note that the number of reading passages includes the original seven, plus four "new." These had been introduced earlier and gone through in a manner not unlike the first lot discussed here. The principals concerning other aspects of the task should be clear from a look at Appendix C.

Handout #4 – This last set of tasks was an attempt to give students at least one strategy for working with TOEIC Part VII test questions of different difficulty levels. Questions on the TOEIC can vary greatly in terms of difficulty, and, correspondingly, in the amount of time it takes to complete them. Thus, one possible tactic for test takers is to quickly answer the easy questions, and skip the tougher time consuming ones, with the idea in mind to go back and try these harder items later. Students looked at a series of Part VII readings with multiple choice questions and chose what they considered to be the easiest to answer for each reading. To build vocabulary, they also picked words from the reading passages they thought were important for global understanding. They then wrote a meaning for each new word, as used within the context of the passage, before finishing by using the word in a written sentence of their own. (Handout #4 is in Appendix D).

Before turning to a look at the test used in connection with the handouts, it may be useful to summarize the handout content in terms of tasks and skills. This is done in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF HANDOUT MATCHING TASKS AND SKILLS

Handout	Tasks	Skills
#1	<p>A) Matching categories to paragraphs</p> <p>B) Word search</p> <p>C) Matching words to paragraphs</p> <p>D) Dialogue/Chart completion using text information (information gap)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading speed (scanning, skimming) • text classification • reading speed (scanning) • reading speed (scanning) • interactive oral practice with classroom language • finding details in short readings • listening for specific information • vocabulary building
#2	<p>A) True/False questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading for specific information • ability to make inferences • vocabulary building
#3	<p>A) Matching categories to paragraphs</p> <p>B) Answering open-ended questions (information gap)</p> <p>C) Multiple choice questions (information gap)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading speed (scanning, skimming) • text classification • reading for details • listening for specific information • reading for topics/main ideas • reading speed (scanning) • ability to recognize paraphrase • ability to make inferences • reading for details • reading for topics/main ideas • ability to recognize paraphrase • listening for details
#4	<p>A) Multiple choice questions (choose the easy answer)</p> <p>B,C) Word definition/Sentence writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to make inferences • ability to recognize paraphrase • analytical thinking • reading (meaning from context) • vocabulary building • ability to make inferences • written production

A Test Based on the Materials

Having worked their way through the handouts, the next step was for students to take a four-part test based on the materials. The test covered the same textbook pages and short readings that had been studied in class. The format for the first three test sections was open book, with students allowed to use any books, notes or class handouts they wished. Part I included eleven true/false questions, while the second section consisted of ten pronoun reference items. (Pronoun reference was studied in class, though not featured in the materials discussed here.) Part III of the test had twenty new open-ended short answer questions, from which test takers could choose any fifteen. At one point each, the first three test sections were worth a total of thirty-six points.

In an effort to get at written production, Part IV (books closed, no reference papers allowed) required students to first select four words from a word bank of sixteen. Over half of these words had been discussed in class, with the rest appearing somewhere in the previously examined short readings. Students then were asked to take the four vocabulary items they had chosen and write four sentences of at least seven words in length. The four sentences counted for two points each, bringing the total of test items to forty and test point total to forty-four. (The test is in Appendix E).

The test scores for the two classes were quite similar: One class ($n = 26$) had a mean of 69.61%, while the other ($n = 33$) totaled 69.02%. For all 59 test takers together the mean for the test was 69.28%. Some implications of these numbers will be touched on in the next section.

A few other points in connection with testing and statistics are perhaps worthy of mention. At the conclusion of a TOEIC preparation course, it is logical to assume that class members would actually take a TOEIC test as a progress check. In fact, an Institutional TOEIC test was administered for our students towards the end of the school term. However, sitting for the test was voluntary, and only 36 of 59 students actually took it. The small size and incomplete nature of the sample are only two reasons one hesitates to go down the slippery slope of proficiency test gain score analysis. To offer one further example, there is the question of the limited number of class hours – 24 – provided by the course. Still, for cautionary purposes of illustration, it may be appropriate to note several statistical items. Of the 36 students who took the test, 24 registered gains over their most recent, previous score (from 3 to 6 months earlier), 9 registered losses and 3 recorded no change. The average score gain was 32.36 points. The key point here is not so much the time at which the

students had taken their most recent TOEIC, but the fact that all 36 had sat for the test at least three times. This means though the precise reasons for the gains remain problematic, multiple exposures to the test decrease the influence of the so-called "practice effect." (The practice effect refers, in this context, to likelihood that a large gain score on a second administration of a different form of the same test is due mainly to familiarity with test format, rather than true improvement in language proficiency. See, for example, Brown [1991] and Childs [1995]). Again, what more, if anything, these numbers indicate, is discussed in the following section.

Observations and Conclusion

Based on class evaluations conducted at the end of the term, most students seemed to have at least tolerated what could have been a very uncomfortable class for both them and their teachers. Two other indicators of student motivation are attendance and completion of homework assignments; there were few absences in either class and the turn in rate for homework exceeded 90%.

Given that students seemed reasonably satisfied with the class, where do the materials under discussion figure into the equation? At this point, it is worth reviewing the test numbers from the criterion and norm-referenced tests mentioned above. While a 69% class mean on a criterion-referenced test is not a ringing endorsement for the materials used to prepare for it, neither is it an indictment of them. This is especially true when considering the low-level skills of the test takers. At the same time, recall that two-thirds of those taking the Institutional TOEIC achieved gains over their most recent test score and that the mean increase was 32.36 points. The main concern is not to construct an airtight statistical argument for the effectiveness of the handouts used in preparation for these two tests, but to suggest that the materials have the students heading *in the right direction*. Moreover, combining this idea with reasonably high class evaluations and good student motivation leaves the distinct impression that further use of TOEIC task-based test preparation materials, possibly for other test sections besides Part VII, is well worth pursuing.

In conclusion, underprepared students can make progress using textbook test prep material seemingly beyond their skill levels under certain conditions:

- 1) Vocabulary is pretaught and recycled. Further, there is the need for students to develop the sense that some words carry more "weight" than others. It's not the flavor of the day, but Japanese learners seem to be comfortable and to do well with word lists.

- 2) Material is gradually introduced in manageable bits, recycled, added onto, and then recycled some more. "Scaffolding" may be the operative term here. For students who don't have a lot of confidence in their English skills this process is crucial. Starting with easier tasks may give students the motivation to tackle the tougher ones to come.
- 3) Material can be taken directly from books and used in the classroom if it is judiciously reformatted. The opportunity to work in pairs and groups with classmates on exercises that students don't normally associate with interactive study will appeal to many. If a test prep book consisting mainly of practice tests – and complicated answer keys only in English – is the focus of the class, going through it page-by-page is the equivalent of a death march.
- 4) Students require lots of practice with the skills tested on the TOEIC, and these skills, as with vocabulary and content, should be recycled as well. With some creativity and forethought, the same skill can be recycled using very different kinds of tasks.
- 5) The issue of reading speed is key. As noted previously, students reading at a rate of 100 words per minute, or less, aren't going to be able to answer enough questions within the allotted time on tests like the TOEIC. This leads back to point number one and the idea that learners need some ability to distinguish the words that "count" from those of lesser importance.

At the end of the day, the exercises that follow in the appendices are the heart of the matter. Perhaps these materials provide a modest start in addressing the many challenges of test preparation for learners with less than stellar EFL skills.

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Appendix A

Handout #1 (Student X) TOEIC – Part VII – Reading Comprehension

X

Remember this part of the test has a number of short readings. Most of the readings can be put into the following 5 categories:

- 1 Notices – this type of short reading gives information to the public. Examples: the announcement of a class, a new show at a museum, the opening of a business
- 2 Articles – these readings are like short parts of articles that you can find in a newspaper or magazine
- 3 Business Communication – the most common types are letters, but you may see faxes, memos and e-mail messages. Examples of business communication: applying for a job, to apologize for a mistake, to confirm an order, to thank someone, to ask a question about a problem
- 4 Charts, Tables, Forms – these “readings” often don’t have complete sentences or paragraphs. Examples: a train schedule, a company sales graph, a form to get a driver’s license
- 5 Advertisements – in this type of reading, a company or person wants to sell you something

I. TASK A. Look at pages 32-37. Take a pencil and label each big box (A,B,C,D,E,F,G).

Scan (read quickly) and decide the category for each short reading (see above 1-5). Write the category in pencil in your book, next to each box.

II. TASKS B, C. Now scan pages 32-37 again. Find the words below, and circle them in your book. Then write the letter of the reading (A,B,C,D,E,F,G) in the blank next to the correct word. One example is done for you.

- E **itinerary** (travel plan)
- incorporating** (bringing in; including)
- minimize** (make small)
- leak** (come out through a small opening)
- pick-up** (go somewhere to get something and take it away)
- confirm** (check to see if something is okay)
- sources** (people who know and tell information)
- registration** (signing up; officially become a member of a group)

III. TASK D. Dialogue. Find a partner (X → Y, Y → X)

S1: What word do you have for reading _____ on page _____?

S2: What reading? What page?

S1: Reading _____, on page _____?

S2: Okay. The word is _____. (See II, above)

S1: Could you please spell that?

S2: (Spell the word.) (S1 should listen and write the word in the chart below.)

S1: Do you know what _____ means?

S2: Yes. It means _____. (See II., above)

S1: I got it. Thank you very much. (S1 should listen and write the meaning in the chart below. S1 can ask for spelling or repeats, if needed.)

WORDS YOU DON'T HAVE (Do the dialogue and fill in the missing information).

	rd	page	word	meaning
EXAMPLE	A	32	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#1	A	32	* registration	* _____ _____ _____
#2	B	33	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	B	33	* pick-up	* _____ _____ _____
#3	C	34	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	C	34	* minimize	* _____ _____ _____
#4	D	35	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	D	35	* sources	* _____ _____ _____
	D	35	* leak	* _____ _____ _____
#5	E	35	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	E	35	* itinerary	* _____ _____ _____
#6	F	36	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	F	36	* incorporating	* _____ _____ _____
#7	G	37	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
	G	37	* confirm	* _____ _____ _____

Appendix A

Handout #1 (Student Y) TOEIC – Part VII – Reading Comprehension

Y

Remember this part of the test has a number of short readings. Most of the readings can be put into the following 5 categories:

- 1 Notices – this type of short reading gives information to the public. Examples: the announcement of a class, a new show at a museum, the opening of a business
- 2 Articles – these readings are like short parts of articles that you can find in a newspaper or magazine
- 3 Business Communication – the most common types are letters, but you may see faxes, memos and e-mail messages. Examples of business communication: applying for a job, to apologize for a mistake, to confirm an order, to thank someone, to ask a question about a problem
- 4 Charts, Tables, Forms – these “readings” often don’t have complete sentences or paragraphs. Examples: a train schedule, a company sales graph, a form to get a driver’s license
- 5 Advertisements – in this type of reading, a company or person wants to sell you something

I. TASK A. Look at pages 32-37. Take a pencil and label each big box (A,B,C,D,E,F,G).

Scan (read quickly) and decide the category for each short reading (see above 1-5). Write the category in pencil in your book, next to each box.

II. TASKS B, C. Now scan pages 32-37 again. Find the words below, and circle them in your book. Then write the letter of the reading (A,B,C,D,E,F,G) in the blank next to the correct word. One example is done for you.

_____ **installing** (putting something in place; setting up)

E _____ **via** (through, by using)

_____ **gathered** (collected, brought together)

_____ **refinery** (a kind of factory that treats oil from the earth and makes it usable for humans)

_____ **donate** (give something away for free)

_____ **contribute** (give or add something, for example money or time)

_____ **prompted** (pointed in the right direction: helped by giving some information)

III. TASK D. Dialogue. Find a partner (X → Y, Y → X)

S1: What word do you have for reading _____ on page _____?

S2: What reading? What page?

S1: Reading _____, on page _____?

S2: Okay. The word is _____. (See II, above)

S1: Could you please spell that?

S2: (Spell the word.) (S1 should listen and write the word in the chart below.)

S1: Do you know what _____ means?

S2: Yes. It means _____. (See II., above)

S1: I got it. Thank you very much. (S1 should listen and write the meaning in the chart below. S1 can ask for spelling or repeats, if needed.)

WORDS YOU DON'T HAVE (Do the dialogue and fill in the missing information).

	rd	page	word	meaning
EXAMPLE	A	32	* gathered	* _____ _____ _____
#1	A	32	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#2	B	33	* donate	* _____ _____
	B	33	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#3	C	34	* installing	* _____ _____ _____
	C	34	* _____	_____ _____ _____
#4	D	35	* refinery	* _____ _____
	D	35	* _____	* _____ _____
	D	35	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#5	E	35	* via	* _____ _____
	E	35	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#6	F	36	* contribute	* _____ _____
	F	36	* _____	* _____ _____ _____
#7	G	37	* prompted	* _____ _____
	G	37	* _____	* _____ _____ _____

Appendix B

Handout #2

Short Readings, pp.32 –37

Use the readings from your book on pages 32-37 and decide if the sentences below are **True** or **False**. Write **T** or **F** in the blanks.

Reading A, page 32,

- 1 People can **register** for the job fair from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. _____
- 2 More than 100 employees will **gather** at the job fair. _____

Reading B, page 33

- 3 The cancer Society will send people to your house for **pick-up** items. _____
- 4 Volunteers are people who **donate** their time. _____

Reading C, page 34

- 5 The plan for **installing** new computers has been changed. _____
- 6 According to the memo, **installing** all the new computers at the same time would **minimize** work disruption. _____

Reading D, page 35

- 7 The two **refinery** explosions were caused by a **leak**. _____
- 8 Dasco Company **sources** in Dallas reported that the oil **refinery** will close by year's end.

Reading E, page 35

- 9 Mr. Baer will go from Philadelphia to San Francisco **via** Chicago. _____
- 10 Mr. Baer's travel **itinerary** covers a period of 5 days. _____

Reading F, page 36

- 11 20 non-members would have to attend the lecture for **contributions** to be 200 dollars.

- 12 The local chapter of PTS has **incorporated** the national organization. _____

Reading G, page 37

- 13 If you are **prompted** to enter a 4 digit password, using your birthdate is a good idea.

- 14 After your account number is **confirmed**, you can use your bank card. _____

Appendix C

Handout #3 (Student X)

TOEIC – Part VII – Reading Comprehension

X

This part of the test has a number of short readings. Most of the readings can be put into the following 5 categories:

- 1 Notices – this type of short reading gives information to the public. Examples: the announcement of a class, a new show at a museum, the opening of a business
- 2 Articles – these readings are like short parts of articles that you can find in a newspaper or magazine
- 3 Business Communication – the most common types are letters, but you may see faxes, memos and e-mail messages. Examples of business communication: applying for a job, to apologize for a mistake, to confirm an order, to thank someone, to ask a question about a problem
- 4 Charts, Tables, Forms – these “readings” often don’t have complete sentences or paragraphs. Examples: a train schedule, a company sales graph, a form to get a driver’s license
- 5 Advertisements – in this type of reading, a company or person wants to sell you something

I. TASK A. Identifying categories. Look at the short readings on your second paper. These readings all come from your book. Scan (read quickly, don’t read every word) and match the readings with the categories above; write in the category on the line next to each reading. A has been done for you as an example.

II. TASK B. Scanning for information. Look at the page with the readings **A,B,C,D,E,F**. Work with a partner. Take turns reading the questions below. You should both scan for the answers; read quickly and write a short answer on the lines.

- = **read aloud to your partner, scan, write a short answer on the line**
- + = **listen to your partner, scan, write a short answer on the line**

- 1 Which reading has farming information? (A,B,C,D or E) _____
- + 2 _____
- 3 Which 2 readings mention telephones? _____
- + 4 _____
- 5 Who has an office in Los Angeles? _____
- + 6 _____
- 7 Where is the 3:30 meeting? _____
- + 8 _____

Now look at the page with the readings **G,H,I,J,K**. Follow the same procedure as above.

- + 1 _____
- 2 Which 2 readings have the digits “20”? _____
- + 3 _____
- 4 Which 2 readings mention seats? _____
- + 5 _____
- 6 Who has an office in Boston? _____
- + 7 _____
- 8 How many tickets do you have to buy for a free trip? _____

Skills required for Part VII:

- 1 reading short passages quickly
- 2 ability to decide topics/main ideas of a short reading
- 3 ability to find details in short readings
- 4 ability to recognize paraphrased material (material that is written using different words).
- 5 ability to make inferences (good guesses) based on information in a short reading

You might want to think about your use of these skills as you look at the next section.

III. TASK C. Part VII TOEIC Style Multiple Choice. Work with a partner. You each have two of four possible answers to a question. Read your answers aloud to your partner, look at the readings, and together write the best answer on the line.

1 **Look at reading A.**

Q: Why are they having a meeting on Friday? best answer (a,b,c or d) = _____

- a To finish the paperwork.
- b To accommodate people who can't meet today.

2 **Reading B**

Q: What step has not been taken? best answer (a,b,c or d) = _____

- c Pesticides were sprayed.
- d Specialists are working on the problem.

3 **Reading C**

Q: At what time of day are the most flights? _____

- a Early in the morning.
- b At noon.

4 **Reading D**

Q: What item is being offered at no charge? _____

- c Multiple lines.
- d Start-up.

5 **Reading E**

Q: Where does Mr. Johns suggest holding the meeting? _____

- a In Gaylor St.
- b In Spain.

6 **Reading F**

Q: What type of clothing may not be worn in the lobby? _____

- c Running outfits.
- d Bathrobes.

7 **Reading G**

Q: What has been identified as part of the problem? _____

- a Untrained drivers.
- b Velocity.

8 **Reading G**

Q: What is Hurley planning to do for customers? _____

- c Fix the old tire.
- d Stop manufacturing the product.

9 **Reading H**

Q: Why did Mr. Marquez write the letter? _____

- a To warn of pending action.
- b To thank Ms. Sagura for her payment.

10 **Reading I**

Q: What is the main topic of the notice? _____

- c The format of the evening.
- d The actors in the play.

11 **Reading J**

Q: Which answer is not true? _____

- a The number of questions in Parts I and IV, added together, is equal to the number of questions in Part V.
- b The reading section lasts longer than the listening section.

12 **Reading K**

Q: What is being advertised? _____

- c An airline.
- d A shuttle service.

Appendix C

Handout #3 (Student Y)

TOEIC – Part VII – Reading Comprehension

Y

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- 5 Advertisements – in this type of reading, a company or person wants to sell you something

I. **TASK A. Identifying categories.** Look at the short readings on your second paper. These readings all come from your book. Scan (read quickly, don’t read every word) and match the readings with the categories above; write in the category on the line next to each reading. A has been done for you as an example.

II. **TASK B. Scanning for information.** Look at the page with the readings **A,B,C,D,E,F**. Work with a partner. Take turns reading the questions below. You should both scan for the answers; read quickly and write a short answer on the lines.

- = **read aloud to your partner, scan, write a short answer on the line**
- + = **listen to your partner, scan, write a short answer on the line**
- + 1 _____
- 2 Which reading can be found at a hotel? _____
- + 3 _____
- 4 How many planes go to London each day? _____
- + 5 _____
- 6 Which 3 readings mention meetings? _____
- + 7 _____
- 8 How much money damage did the fly cause last time? _____

Now look at the page with the readings **G,H,I,J,K**. Follow the same procedure as above.

- 1 Which reading has information about actors? _____
- + 2 _____
- 3 Which 3 readings mention the word “time”? _____
- + 4 _____
- 5 which tire usually blew up? _____
- + 6 _____
- 7 Who makes tires for Hurley? _____
- + 8 _____

Skills required for Part VII:

- 6 reading short passages quickly
- 7 ability to decide topics/main ideas of a short reading
- 8 ability to find details in short readings
- 9 ability to recognize paraphrased material (material that is written using different words).
- 10 ability to make inferences (good guesses) based on information in a short reading

You might want to think about your use of these skills as you look at the next section.

III. TASK C. Part VII TOEIC Style Multiple Choice. Work with a partner. You each have two of four possible answers to a question. Read your answers aloud to your partner, look at the readings, and together write the best answer on the line.

7 Look at reading A.

Q: Why are they having a meeting on Friday? best answer (a,b,c or d) = _____

- c To sign up outside her office.
- d To go over the old health plan.

8 Reading B

Q: What step has not been taken? best answer (a,b,c or d) = _____

- a A special meeting was called.
- b Vegetable growers were told.

9 Reading C

Q: At what time of day are the most flights? _____

- c Mid-afternoon.
- d Late evening.

10 Reading D

Q: What item is being offered at no charge? _____

- a Local service.
- b One line.

11 Reading E

Q: Where does Mr. Johns suggest holding the meeting? _____

- c At her office.
- d At the L.A. office.

12 Reading F

Q: What type of clothing may not be worn in the lobby? _____

- a Swim attire.
- b Golf shoes.

7 **Reading G**

Q: What has been identified as part of the problem? _____

- c Poor bike design.
- d Tire installation.

8 **Reading G**

Q: What is Hurley planning to do for customers? _____

- a Release a new motorcycle.
- b Exchange the tires.

10 **Reading H**

Q: Why did Mr. Marquez write the letter? _____

- c To cancel an account in Villarica.
- d To congratulate Ms. Sagura on her expansion.

10 **Reading I**

Q: What is the main topic of the notice? _____

- a The renovation of the theater.
- b The illustrations in the lobby.

11 **Reading J**

Q: Which answer is not true? _____

- c Section I is half an hour shorter than Section II.
- d For the whole test, the number of minutes is greater than the number of items.

12 **Reading K**

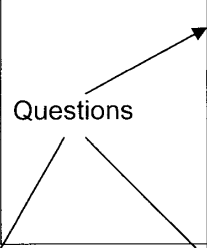
Q: What is being advertised? _____

- a A hotel chain.
- b A new restaurant.

Appendix D

Handout #4

Part VII of the TOEIC, from Oxford Preparation Course for the TOEIC Test pp.29-37
 (Note: Boxes for pages 32 to 37 are not included here.)

Page	Questions 	TASK A (In this box, students were asked to choose the easiest question and copy this question and its correct answer).
TASK B		TASK C (Students were asked to write a new sentence using the word chosen in task B. The sentence was supposed to be seven words or longer in length).
(Students were asked to copy one difficult word from any of the questions and write a meaning for the word as used in context).		

p.29	Qs. 161-162	

p.30	Qs. 163-165	

Appendix E

Name: _____

ID #: _____

Active English I – Test I (30 June / 03)

Part I. True/False Questions. (11 points). Go to the page in the book for each reading. Look at the sentence for each reading and decide if it is T(true) or F(false). Write T or F on the lines.

page 34

_____ 1 The purpose of the memo is to announce a change in plans.

page 35

_____ 2 Scott Baer is the manager of East West Airlines.

page 36

_____ 3 The PTS has meetings once a month.

page 37

_____ 4 To activate your Bank Card, you have to give information about your birth date.

page 38

_____ 5 Because she is disappointed, Ms. Brown will pay for only half of what she ordered.

page 39 first reading (at the top of the page)

_____ 6 In general, residents who own trucks will pay higher fees than car owners.

page 40

_____ 7 The information in the reading is probably most useful for people who drive their cars to work.

page 41

_____ 8 Ms. Kang wants to meet with Ms. Nguyen to tell her she is returning to Korea.

page 42 second reading (at the bottom of the page)

_____ 9 Packages should be registered first, then weighed.

page 42

_____ 10 The court found Acre Foods treated its minority workers unfairly.

page 43

_____ 11 Rachel and Harriet work for the same company.

Part II. Pronoun Reference. (10 points). Write the referents for the circled words.

Example: Z. The teacher doesn't look well today because he is sick.

What word or phrase does he refer to in the sentence above? teacher

A. Between now and your scheduled date, you should make copies of all necessary documents and store them on a disk.

1. What word or phrase does them refer to in the sentence above?

B. The employees went to management with their concerns. When no action was taken, they contacted legal representation. Ten of the twenty workers lost their jobs within a month of filing complaints.

2. What word or phrase does they refer to in the sentences above?

3. What word or phrase does their refer to in the sentences above?

C. Dear Ms. Nguyen:
I met with Lori Uzark last week in San Francisco and she suggested that I contact you.
Sincerely,
Sun Hee Kang

4. What word or phrase does I refer to in the letter above?

5. What word or phrase does you refer to in the letter above?

D. Non-profit agencies around the city demonstrated today in front of Brisco Services. Over 100 people took part in the planned event to express their frustration at high property prices. 3 They claim that large companies, which are able to pay skyrocketing rents, are pushing real estate prices out of control. Community service organizations and other 5 non-profit groups, who often aren't able to pay the rents, may be forced to leave the city. They warn that they won't be able to provide the necessary services to those people who need them the most. The agencies are asking some of the most profitable companies to work with them in developing creative solutions. 10 The agencies claim that their services benefit Brisco and the community.

6. What word or phrase does they in Line 3 above refer to?

7. What word or phrase does them in Line 8 above refer to?

8. What word or phrase does them in Line 9 above refer to?

E. In order to increase the amount of contributions, the Cancer Research Society announced in advance that its volunteers would be collecting conations in various areas of the city.

10. What word or phrase does its refer to in the sentence above?

Part III. (continued)

page 38

11 What is the name of the restaurant where Ms. Brown works?

page 39 (the first reading, at the top of the page)

12 By when must residents pay the fee?

page 39 (the second reading, at the bottom of the page)

13 Why were people frustrated?

page 40

14 Where can you find an indication of the value of the pass?

page 41

15 Where did Ms. Kang study business?

16 Who is Lori Uzark?

A) Ms. Kang's friend from school B) Ms. Nguyen's employee

page 42 (look at both readings)

17 There are two readings on page 42. Which one is a newspaper article?

A) the reading at the top B) the reading at the bottom

page 42 (look at the second reading, at the bottom of the page)

18 Who complained?

page 43

19 What's Roberto's job?

20 Who is "the group?"

A) satisfied customers B) new sales managers

Name _____

ID No. _____

For Part IV, your books must be closed, and your papers must be put away!

Part IV: Writing Sentences. Choose 4 words from the box below and write a sentence for each one of them. Every sentence must be 7 or more words long. You may add *-s* to nouns and *-s, -ed, -ing* to verbs. You may add other endings to change the form of the word. One example has been done for you. (Every sentence = 2 points)

contained	investment	register	promotion
resident	confirm	donate	contribute
organization	suggest	leak	incorporate
minimize	production	employee	profitable

Example. Many foreign words have been incorporated into the Japanese language.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Abstract

The article describes the development of a set of task-based TOEIC test reading preparation materials for Japanese college students with low-level English skills. The materials are discussed in terms of course textbook format and content. A design rationale for exercise development matches tasks with reading skills identified as useful to tackle Part VII. of the TOEIC. A qualitative assessment of the materials and their connection to the class textbook leads to a kind of double conclusion: (1) Developing and using further task-based exercises based on original textbook content is well worth consideration and (2) Under the right circumstances, students can still benefit from textbook material that may be above their proficiency levels.