IP TOEIC Results: NUCB English Majors (2008-2011)[1]

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Abstract

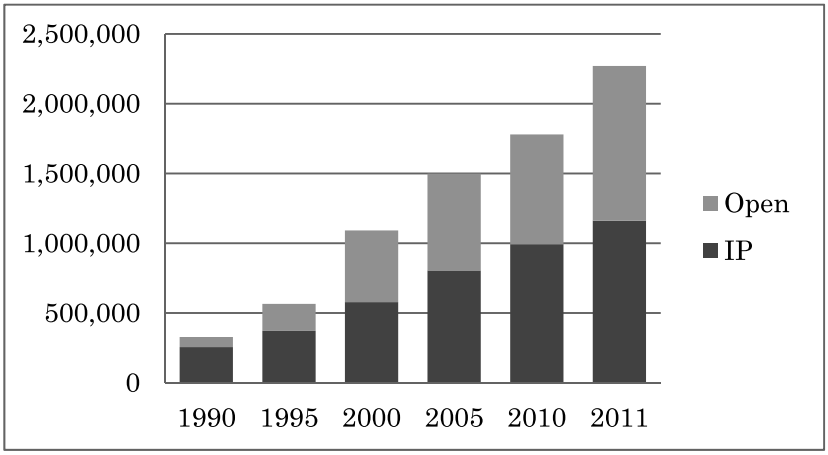
This study analyzed NUCB English majors' IP TOEIC scores from 2008 to 2011. The listening and grammar/reading scores were analyzed separately and compared against the nationwide averages reported in *TOEIC Data and Analysis 2010* (ETS, 2011). The study focused on the analysis of the English majors' performance in two areas: score progress by year of study between 2008 and 2011, and the 2008 program entrants' score progress during their four years of study. The 2008 entrants' progress was further examined according to the highest scores they had achieved: the High Group (above the median of 500) and the Low Group (below the median). The English majors reached the nationwide averages for total score and for listening, but as for grammar/reading, they never reached the nationwide average scores at any point in four years. In the case of the 2008 program entrants, the High Group demonstrated large score increases both in listening and in grammar/reading. They reached the respective nationwide averages in Year 1 for listening and in Year 2 for grammar/reading and continued to surpass the nationwide counterparts in both areas. The Low Group did not reach the nationwide averages in either area. The High Group not only had higher scores at the time of their program entry but also gained much larger score increases over the four years in both listening and grammar/reading. The High Group also demonstrated mid-level listening/reading score correlation while the Low Group showed weak correlation. Overall, the teaching methodology of "target language only" instruction used in our program is effective especially in developing students' listening skills. However, it presents a challenge to low-level students when it comes to their development of grammar knowledge and reading skills. Therefore, level-specific assistance seems necessary to foster lower-level students' learning in those areas.

Introduction

TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is a standardized test used to evaluate test takers' ability to communicate in English. According to Educational Testing Service (ETS), TOEIC is administered in over 120 countries, and the total number of people taking TOEIC is estimated at approximately 6 million worldwide (ETS, 2011, p.1). It has been one of the most popular "qualification examinations" in Japan, and as the importance of "globalization" has been emphasized more in recent years, both in business and in education, the popularity of TOEIC seems to have increased. The number of people taking TOEIC continues to rise, and 1,780,000 people took TOEIC (both open and IP) in 2010 alone in Japan

[1] This research was conducted as part of MEXT-Supported Program for the Strategic Research Foundation at Private Universities, 2008-2012.

(ETS, 2011). This number increased more to 2,270,000 in 2011[2] according to a more recent report available on the Internet (from: http://www.toeic.or.jp/press/36.html). The increases in the number of the TOEIC test takers are summarized in Graph 1.



Graph 1. TOEIC Test Takers (Adapted from: *ETS TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010*, p.1 and http://www.toeic.or.jp/press/36.html)

Additionally, the numbers of companies using TOEIC as part of their internal evaluation have been increasing in Japan. Approximately 2,900 companies reported using IP TOEIC in 2010 (ETS, 2011, p.1). For many university students, TOEIC is no longer just an English test required as part of their coursework. It has actually become an important means of appealing to their English communication skills in job-hunting as well as in their future careers. TOEIC, therefore, can be instrumental to students' motivation and attitudes toward studying English, and university English education cannot ignore students' TOEIC score progress in the current job market where the concepts of "globalization" and "English communication skills" are widely emphasized as part of present-day business needs.

The Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB) English Program aims to develop students' English communication skills so that they will possess "a global perspective and the ability to contribute positively to the business community" (*NUCB Mission Statement*). Instruction is conducted in the target language only, unless bilingual instruction is considered necessary for specific purposes. NUCB has a large number of foreign faculty members, and CALL systems are equipped in some language classrooms and at the self-access study facility. The English majors, therefore, have plenty of opportunities to practice and develop their communication skills in English.

As to the NUCB English majors' TOEIC score progress, the instructors are aware from semi-annual reports that the students' listening scores are much higher than their grammar/reading scores. However, this statement alone does not provide much value or insight because TOEIC average listening scores are always higher than average grammar/reading scores both in open tests and IP tests nationwide (ETS, 2011, p.2 and p.3). More detailed analysis is necessary if we intend to grasp our students' levels and their pro-

[2] *The ETS TOEIC Data & Analysis 2011* was not published yet at the time of this research. This is probably due to the fact the EST's IP TOEIC test data is based on Japanese academic year of April to March. However, the total number of test takers from the calendar year of 2011 is available on their official website. Thus, the figure for 2011 comes from the website (http://www.toeic.or.jp/press/36.html).

gresses on TOEIC. This study, therefore, analyzes the NUCB IP TOEIC results from 2008 to 2011 and compared the results against the nationwide IP TOEIC averages of university-level students. The aims of the study are: to investigate the NUCB English majors' performance on IP TOEIC over the past four years in comparison with the nationwide averages; to identify our students' strengths and weaknesses; and to apply the findings to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, which uses the target-language-only teaching methodology.

1. Literature Review

As the popularity of TOEIC has been increasing, IP TOEIC tests and TOEIC Bridge tests are now administered even at many high schools, technical colleges (*koutousenmongakkou* 高等専門学校), and universities. Katagiri (2010) reports that it was difficult to see progress in a one-year period at the high school level even in a top-ranking high school and that the progress in listening scores particularly was not observed even over a three-year period. At Arikake National College of Technology, it was reported that fourth-year students had difficulties in working on longer passages both in listening and reading (Tokuda, Abe, Mito, Murata, Grumbine, & Yamasaki, 2008). Some schools have implemented a minimum TOEIC score requirement for graduation. For example, Hachinohe National College of Technology set the score of 400 for graduation. It is reported that 80% to 90% of their students clear the target score, but some require individual tutoring and assistance, and vocabulary building was considered an important way of improving these students' English skills in limited amount of time (Kikuchi, 2010). At the university level, *TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010* (ETS, 2011, p.8) explains that 494 universities participated in the IP TOEIC in 2010. A wide range of research has reported on various aspects of TOEIC and university English education (e. g., Kozuka & Takeuchi, 2010; Maruyama, 2011; Takeda, 2010; Umeda, 2011; Yonamine & Willcox, 2005; Watanabe & Aoki, 2011).

As to the effectiveness of English-only instruction on TOEIC scores, Lee & Jin (2009) looked at the TOEIC score increases of 44 first-year medical students who received English-only instruction in Korea. These students were encouraged to use the target language only, and they participated in different listening and reading activities including presentations, role-playing, and acting. They also received explicit grammar instruction. They were intermediate to advance learners (mean TOEIC score=702, Minimum=515, Maximum=945), and 78% of the students improved their TOEIC scores after 16 weeks of instruction. Lee & Jin (2009) also conducted a survey with these students. Most of the students responded favorably to this approach, and it was concluded that the English-only instruction was effective for these higher-level students. Lee & Jin (2009), however, clarify that "studying the English language through English-only may not be equally profitable to all level students even though they are aware of the fact that it helps them improve better" (p.32).

In Japan, some universities offer rigorous academic English curricula and curriculum-wide content courses taught in English, such as International Christian University (Tomiyama, 2006) and Akita International University (Nakajima, 2010), to name the two most well recognized programs. Our English program at NUCB, on the other hand, is a language-focused, English communication program instructed through the "target language only" teaching methodology. Our general assumption is that target-language-only instruction is effective for improving our students' language skills and also for improving their TOEIC scores. The current study evaluates this assumption by analyzing our English majors' IP TOEIC score progress from 2008 to 2011. It examines English majors' score progress by year of study and by two levels, high and low. It also analyzes the students' progress by examination of the two sections of the TOEIC: listening and grammar/reading.

2. Methods

2.1. Data

The data consists of 12 sets of the NUCB IP TOEIC results from the academic years of 2008-2011. An IP TOEIC is administered in April every year, and all English majors entering the program take this April TOEIC. The university additionally conducts two IP TOEIC tests every year, one in June and the other in December. Thus the data used in this study consists of 12 sets of IP TOEIC results from April, June, and December of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011.

NUCB English majors are required to take the IP TOIEC unless they are excused for valid reasons such as participation in study-abroad programs, official school events, and job-hunting activities. Because NUCB IP tests are also open to non-English majors who choose to register on their own, the raw data of the test results consists of both English majors' and non-English majors'. The data here includes the English majors' IP TOEIC scores only. Additionally, this study refers to *TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010* (ETS, 2011) for the 2010 nationwide IP TOEIC results for the college-level group, which is based on the 2010 academic year from April 2010 to March 2011 (ETS, 2011, p.1). Additional figures come from the scores by year-of-study for college-level IP TOEIC data. This paper does not use the "English majors" data in *TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010* because the "English majors" data includes non-college level results, and the average scores by year-of-study for "English majors" at the four-year university level alone are not available in *TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010*.

2.2. Procedures

This study analyzed the NUCB English majors' performance in two stages. The first stage examined the score progress by year of study for the academic years of 2008-2011. The second stage analyzed longitudinally the score progresses of the English majors starting the program in 2008 (2008 Entrants hereafter). Additionally, this study looked at the 2008 Entrants' progress according to two levels of achievement: high and low.

Because the number of the students included in each stage of the analysis is different, the details of the procedures are further explained in the corresponding findings sections.

3. Findings and Discussion

This section presents both the details of the procedures and the summary of the study's findings.

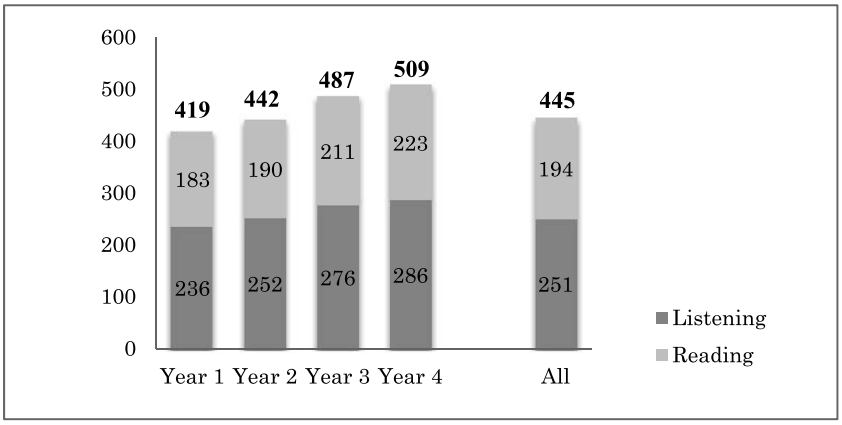
3.1. Nationwide IP TOEIC Scores

According to *TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010* (ETS, 2011, p.8), 494 universities administered IP TOEIC in 2010, and the nationwide average total score is 445[3]. The breakdown for listening and grammar/reading is 251 and 194 respectively. The nationwide university-level average IP scores by year of study are: 419 for Year 1, 442 for Year 2, 487 for Year 3, and 509 for Year 4[4] (ETS, 2010, p.9). The listening

[3] The total number of test takers included here is 387,154. This figure is based on the number of test takers and average scores for four-year universities registered to administer IP TOEIC tests (ETS, 2010, p.8).

[4] The total number of test takers included here is 324,864. This number is smaller than the number quoted in Footnote 3 above. ETS explains that this figure is based on the data written on the test-takers' answer sheets and does not match the total number of test takers quoted in Footnote 3 (ETS, 2010, p.9).

and grammar/reading scores for each year of study are shown in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Nationwide University-level IP TOEIC Scores by Year of Study (Adapted from *ETS TOEIC Test Data & Analysis 2010*, p.8 and p.9)

In Year 2, university students nationwide reach the overall nationwide average for listening (Year 2= 252, All=251), and they also come close to the nationwide average score in grammar/reading (Year 2=190, All=194) and in total scores (Year 2=442, All=455). They continue to increase their scores both in listening and grammar/reading in Years 3 and 4. This study treats these figures for each year of study as benchmark figures for university students' normal progress, and the NUCB English majors' scores are compared against these scores.

3.2. Score Progress by Year of Study (2008-2011)

NUCB English majors' scores during academic years of 2008-2011 were first analyzed by year of study. For this part of the analysis, this study used the IP TOEIC scores of the English majors in Years 1-4. The average scores by year of study are summarized in Table 1. The data came from the *NUCB TOEIC Reports* of 2008-2011. See Appendix A for details of the scores reported for each year.

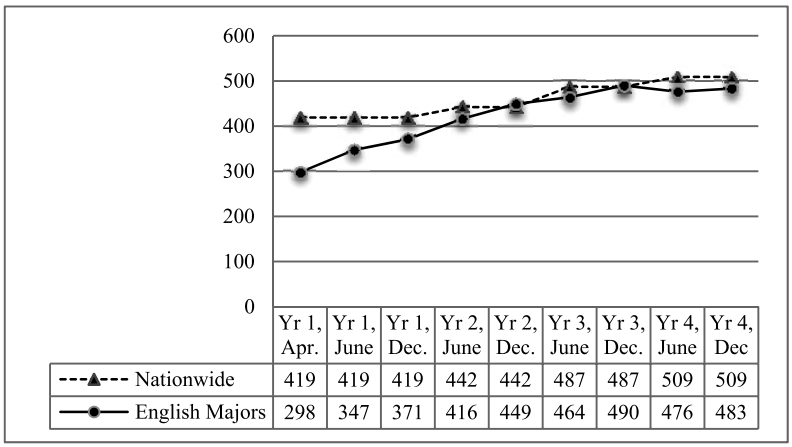
Table 1. Average Scores by Year of Study (2008-2011)

	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Entry	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.
Total	298	347	371	416	440	464	490	476	483
Listening	178	216	235	262	276	288	302	299	296
Reading	120	131	137	155	164	176	190	182	186

The progresses of English majors' average scores are shown in Graph 3 (total scores), Graph 4 (listening scores), and Graph 5 (grammar/reading scores). The nationwide average scores cited earlier are also indicated in the graphs for comparison. The same nationwide scores are used for the all tests administered during each respective year of study (e. g., Year 1 nationwide average total score of 419 for April, June, and December of Year 1).

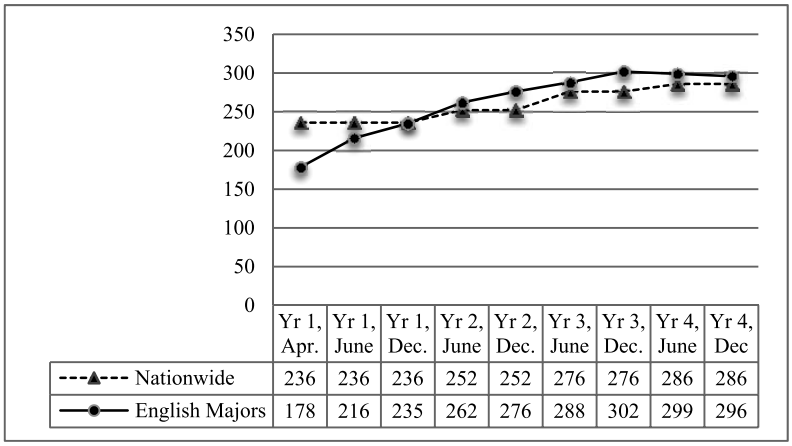
The English majors' average score at the time of entry is much lower than the nationwide average score for the first-year students (English majors=298, Nationwide=419). This may imply that many stu-

dents admitted into the program did not have enough foundational English knowledge and skills expected for university-level English at the time of entry into the program. Even though the English majors' total average scores remained below the nationwide average during Year 1, they reached the nationwide counterpart by the end of Year 2, and the students seemed to be performing at about the same level or slightly below the nationwide average for Year 3. For Year 4, the English majors' scores are below the nationwide average. Over all, the NUCB English majors seem to be performing at about the same level or slightly below the nationwide average level after they enter the program, making large increase in the total scores especially during the first year of study. (See Graph 3 below).



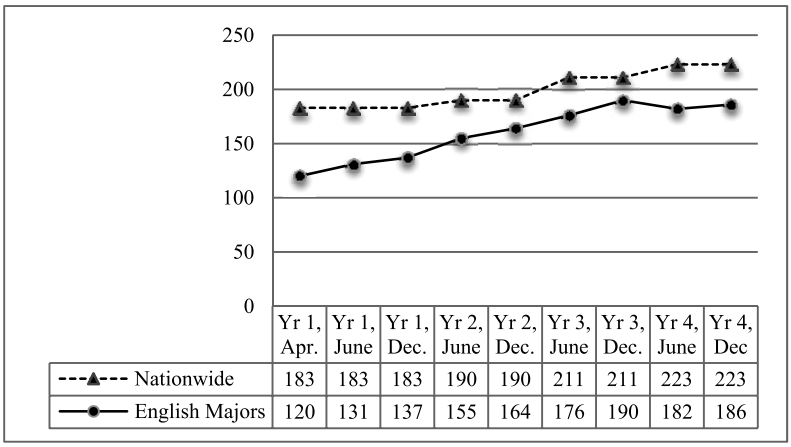
	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	419	419	419	442	442	487	487	509	509
English Majors	298	347	371	416	449	464	490	476	483

Graph 3. Progress by Year of Study (Total Scores)



	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	236	236	236	252	252	276	276	286	286
English Majors	178	216	235	262	276	288	302	299	296

Graph 4. Progress by Year of Study (Listening Scores)



	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	183	183	183	190	190	211	211	223	223
English Majors	120	131	137	155	164	176	190	182	186

Graph 5. Progress by Year of Study (Grammar/Reading Scores)

For listening, the English majors' average score at the time of entry into the program (178) was also much lower than the first-year nationwide average (236), but our students' average increased considerably during the first year and almost reached the nationwide average by December of Year 1 (English Majors= 235, Nationwide=236). The English Majors' listening score surpassed the nationwide counterpart in June of Year 2 by 10 points (English Majors=262, Nationwide=252), and it continued to surpass the national average for Years 2, 3 and 4 as shown in Graphs 4. This suggests that, unlike typical high-school instruction, which did not improve the students scores much even at a top-level high school (Katagiri, 2010), our methodology helped to develop students' listening skills very much even in one year of instruction. Thus, our program and its target-language-only instruction are effective in terms of improving our students' listening skills both short-term and long-term.

As to the grammar/reading scores, the English majors never reached the nationwide average scores at any point during their four years even though the gap between the English majors' scores and the nationwide average scores became smaller year after year. While nationwide average scores continued to increase even in Year 4, our fourth-year students' scores went down both in listening and grammar/reading. This is probably due to the fact that our students' exposure to English tends to decrease much during Year 4. Continuous exposure to English, therefore, seems to be an important factor, and the areas of grammar knowledge and reading skills are identifiable as our students' weaknesses. See Graph 5 for the progress of the grammar/reading scores.

The analysis of the English majors' IP TOEIC score progress by year of study, therefore, indicates that our program is generally effective to help the students increase their TOEIC total scores. It is particularly effective in developing their listening skills, but grammar/reading skills remain as our students' weakness.

3.3. 2008 English Majors' Score Progress (2008-2010)

In order to further examine the details of the students' progress over the four years, a longitudinal analysis was conducted on the score progress of the 2008 Entrants. The data here includes 9 sets of IP TOEIC test these students took during the four years (April[5], June, and December of 2008, June and December of 2009, June and December of 2010, and June and December of 2011). In order to analyze their

[5] The NUCB TOEIC Reports imply that the 2008 April IP TOEIC was administered at the very end of March instead of the beginning of April. The term "2008 April" is used in this paper to keep the consistency in terminology with the other years.

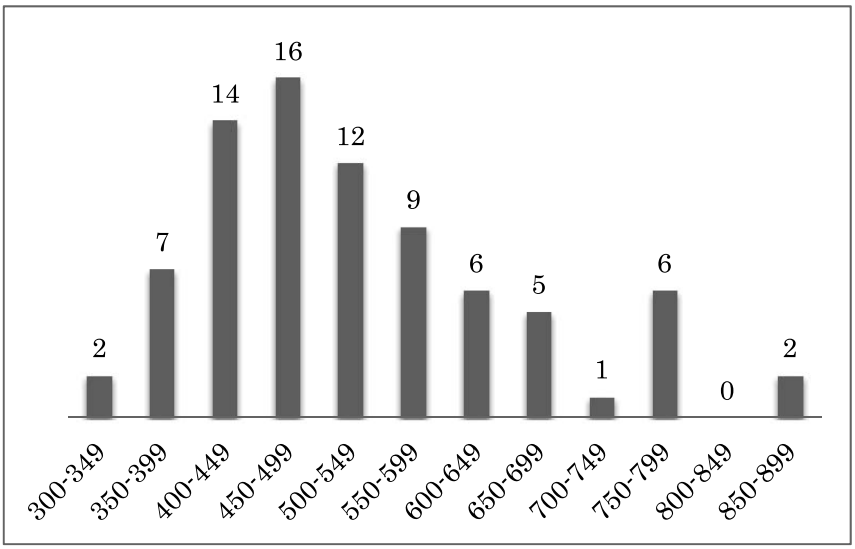
progress more accurately, the students who stopped taking IP TOEIC during the first three years were excluded from the data. The total number of the 2008 Entrants included in the data was 80[6].

First, the highest total scores the 80 students had obtained during the four years were identified. These scores and their corresponding listening/reading scores were made into a separate data set. The mean of the highest total scores is 527, and the median is 500. Table 2 below summarizes the results of this data set.

Table 2. 2008 Entrants' Highest Scores (Total)

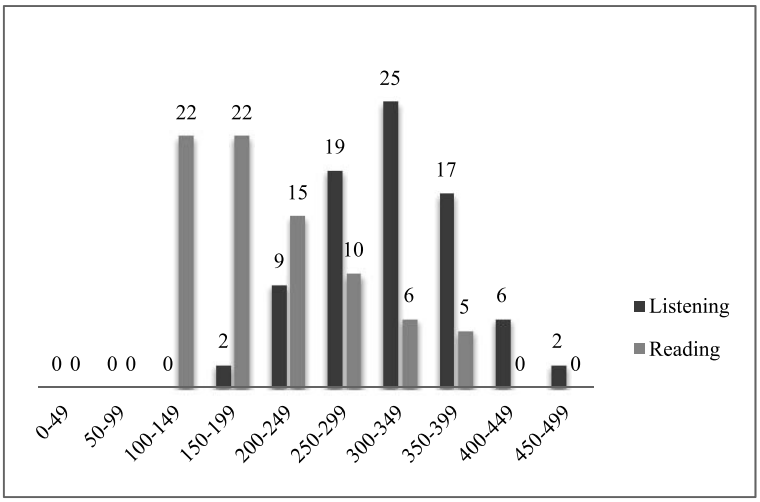
	Total	Breakdown	
		Listening	Grammar/Reading
Mean Score	527	321	206
Maximum Score	870	485	390
Minimum Score	300	190	100
Median	500	320	180

The distribution of the 80 students' highest total scores is shown in Graph 6. Graph 7 shows the distributions of their listening/reading scores. While both the total scores and listening scores indicate more or less a normal distribution, the grammar/reading scores show a distorted distribution, shifting heavily towards the lower end.



Graph 6. Distribution of Highest Total Scores (2008 Entrants, n=80)

[6] This includes the three students who started out in the Department of International Studies but transferred to the Department of English Communication at the end of their first year. Those three students graduated as English majors in March of 2011.



Graph 7. Distribution of Listening/Reading Scores (2008 Entrants, n=80)

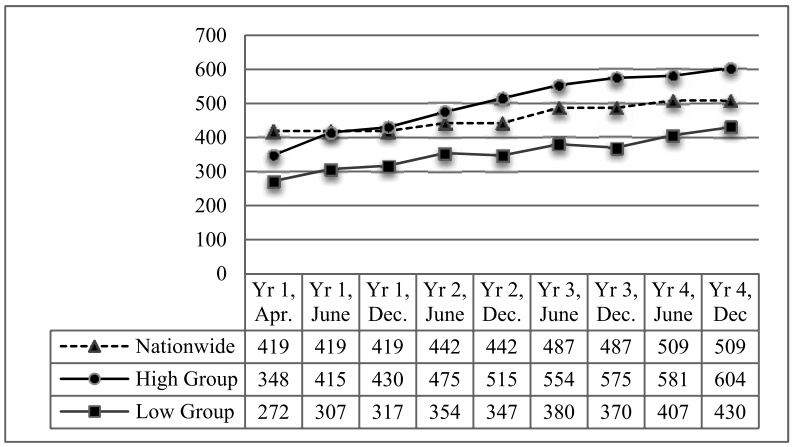
In the next step, these 2008 Entrants were divided into two levels based on the highest total scores so that the differences between higher-level and lower-level students could be identified. The median score of 500 was used here as the cut-off score. This seems well justified because 500 is not only the mean score of this data set but also the minimum score required for the students to be qualified to participate in the Frontier Spirit Program, one of the NUCB study-abroad programs. The same score is also used as the requirement for enrollment in the *Advanced Study for TOEIC* courses.

The number of the students who scored above 500 (High Group hereafter) is 41, and the number of the students who scored below 499 (Low Group hereafter) is 39. Table 3 shows the number of students included in each group. Even though the pool of students remains the same, the number of test takers differs for each test due to the students' absences from participation in study-abroad programs, official school events, and job-hunting activities.

Table 3. The Number of 2008 Entrants Analyzed (High Group/Low Group)

	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	April	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.
High	40	32	39	36	36	35	38	17	16
Low	39	33	36	32	38	35	34	22	14
Total	79	65	75	68	74	70	72	39	30

This next section compares the two groups' progress over the four years (2008-2011). The progress of the 2008 Entrants' total scores by the two levels is shown in Graph 8. The nationwide university-level IP TOEIC average scores (ETS, *2010*, p.9) are used again as the benchmark figures.



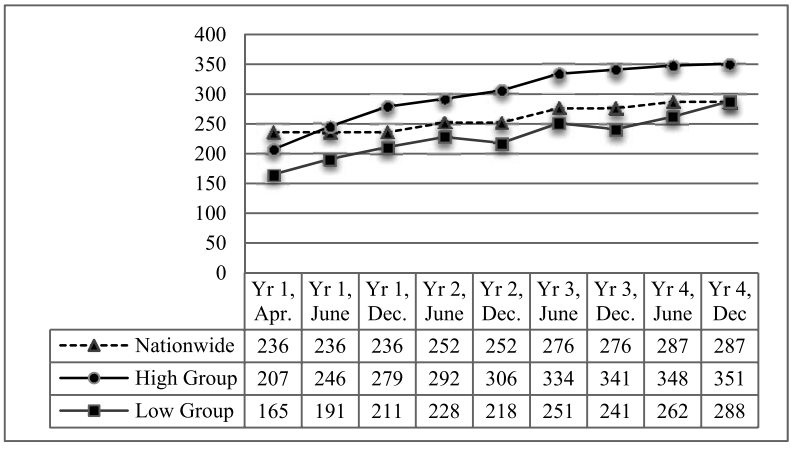
	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	419	419	419	442	442	487	487	509	509
High Group	348	415	430	475	515	554	575	581	604
Low Group	272	307	317	354	347	380	370	407	430

Graph 8. 2008 English Majors Total Score Progresses by Levels (2008-2011)

The High Group almost reached the nationwide average total score by June of Year 1 (High=415, Nationwide=419), which was after approximately nine weeks of instruction. They surpassed the nationwide average by December of Year 1, and they continued to further surpass the nationwide counterparts during Years 2, 3 and 4. The Low Group never reached the nationwide average total scores at any point during the four years.

The difference of the total scores between the High Group and the Low Group was 76 points at the time of entry (High=348, Low=272), but this difference increased to 205 (High=575, Low=370) in December of Year 3. The High Group students not only had higher total scores at the time of the entry into the program but also gained much larger score increases during their study than the Low Group students.

The Graph 9 shows the progress of the 2008 Entrants' listening scores.



	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	236	236	236	252	252	276	276	287	287
High Group	207	246	279	292	306	334	341	348	351
Low Group	165	191	211	228	218	251	241	262	288

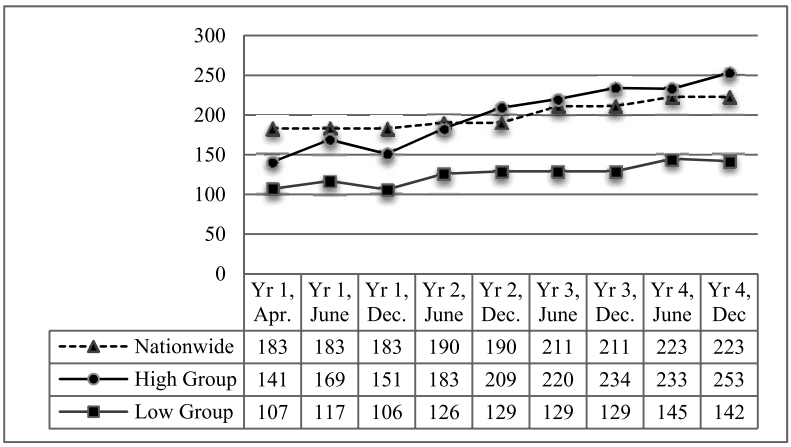
Graph 9. 2008 Entrants Listening Score Progresses (2008-2011)

The High Group surpassed the nationwide first-year listening average by June of Year 1 (High=246, Nationwide=236), and they continued to surpass the nationwide counterparts for Years 2, 3, and 4. The Low Group did not reach the nationwide average until December of Year 4 (Low=288, Nationwide=287);

however, they demonstrated steady score increases over the four years. The difference between the Low Group and the nationwide average was 71 points at time of entry (Nationwide=236, Low=165), but it became 31 points in December of the third year (Nationwide=276, Low=241). Even though their score progress showed some fluctuation (i. e., December of Year 2, December of Year 3), the difference from the nationwide averages became smaller as the year of study progressed.

As to the score difference between the High Group and the Low Group, it was 47 points at the time of entry, and it continued to become larger as the year progressed during the first three years (68 in December of Year 1, 88 in December of Year 2,100 in December of Year 3). For Year 4, the Low Group increased the scores more than the High Group even though the number of the students taking IP TOEIC during Year 4 was smaller for both groups. This is probably due to the fact that the Low group students had to keep taking more English courses during their fourth year in order to keep up with the expected academic progress required for graduation, while the High group students most likely had already met all the requirements and did not have to enroll in English courses anymore. Therefore, the Low group students who took the IP TOEIC during Year 4 had much more exposure to English than the High group students, implying the importance of continuous exposure to English for improving listening scores.

For grammar/reading, the High Group surpassed the nationwide average score in December of Year 2 (High=209, Nationwide=190), and they continued to surpass the nationwide counterparts during Years 3 and 4 as well. The Low Group never reached the nationwide average at any point during the four years. Graph 10 shows the progresses of the grammar/reading scores.



	Yr 1, Apr.	Yr 1, June	Yr 1, Dec.	Yr 2, June	Yr 2, Dec.	Yr 3, June	Yr 3, Dec.	Yr 4, June	Yr 4, Dec
Nationwide	183	183	183	190	190	211	211	223	223
High Group	141	169	151	183	209	220	234	233	253
Low Group	107	117	106	126	129	129	129	145	142

Graph 10. 2008 Entrants' Grammar/Reading Score Progresses (2008-2011)

Furthermore, the Low Group showed very little score increase over the four years. The gap between the Low Group and the nationwide averages did not get smaller but remained about the same or even became greater as shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Grammar/Reading Score Differences between Nationwide Averages and Low Group

	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	April	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.
Difference*	76	66	77	64	61	82	82	78	81

* Difference = Nationwide Average Grammar/Reading Score for the Respective Year – Low Group's Score

In order to further analyze the High-Low group differences, the two groups' listening-reading score correlations were compared for each test (Table 6). While the High Group constantly demonstrated mid- to high-level correlations (0.58~0.88) between their listening and grammar/reading scores, the Low Group's scores showed from low to no correlations (0.02~0.49). Thus, the lower-level students do not seem to have connected listening and reading. Similar results were observed at Ariake National College of Technology: they also observed a mid-level correlation in their high group's listening/reading scores but found no correlation in their low group scores (Tokuda, Abe, Mito, Murata, Grumbine, & Yamasaki, 2008).

Table 5. Listening-Reading Score Correlations (High Group vs. Low Group)

	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	April	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.
High	0.58	0.68	0.55	0.74	0.67	0.61	0.62	0.88	0.75
Low	0.22	0.14	0.30	0.49	0.28	0.29	0.47	0.02	0.28

Additionally, the data in this study indicates that, even though the higher-level students surpassed the nationwide average listening score in just nine weeks of instruction, it took them almost two years to reach the nationwide average in grammar/reading. Increasing grammar/reading scores, thus, takes longer and is a much more difficult task for the students in our program.

The findings show that the target-language-only instruction is effective for overall improvement of the students' TOEIC total scores. It is particularly effective in increasing their listening scores. It helps the higher-level students both in listening and grammar/reading, and it also helps the lower-level students' listening scores. This methodology, however, seems to present much challenge to the lower-level students when it comes to improving their grammar/reading scores. The findings, thus, support the conclusion and the statement that Lee & Jin (2009) make: the English-only instruction is effective for higher-level students but may not be equally profitable for all levels of students.

4. Pedagogical Implications and Conclusion

This analysis of our IP TOEIC results is obviously not complete and needs to be continued. Some of the further research areas are: the need for a more detailed level-specific analysis, an analysis by grammar/reading questions, and an analysis of contributing factors for the high/low level differences. I believe the findings should be reanalyzed according to three levels (high, mid, and low) instead of two levels. This is because one-third of the 2008 Entrants analyzed here fall into the score category of 450-550, which is 50 points below and 50 points above the mean score of 500. Analyzing how this population performed against the high-level and low-level students may give us further insights. Another area for further research is a more detailed analysis of the students' performance by the three parts (Part 5, Part 6, and Part 7) of the grammar/reading section so that the students' weaknesses in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and reading could be identified more specifically. In particular, one of the main concerns of the faculty seems to be related to the low-level students' lack of vocabulary. The low-level students may have enough vocabulary to handle daily English conversation, but they do not know the type of vocabulary used in written business language, which is necessary to increase scores in the TOEIC grammar/reading parts. Further research in this area is definitely necessary. Additionally, possible contributing factors to the differences between the two groups, such as students' attitudes toward TOEIC and their levels of L1 grammar and reading, should be investigated.

This study not only provides some insightful information regarding our English majors' performance on the IP TOEIC tests but also has important implications for our English instruction and program content. It compared the NUCB English majors' IP TOEIC scores against the nationwide averages. It shows that our higher-level students did well both in listening and grammar/reading because they demonstrated high score increases surpassing the nationwide averages in both areas. These students had higher scores at the time of the entry into the program, but more importantly, they gained large score increases over the four years of their study in the program. Therefore, target-language-only instruction is effective for these higher-level students, and this approach works well for the students of this level.

The lower-level students also managed to come close to the nationwide average level for listening, but their grammar/reading scores were considerably below their nationwide counterparts throughout the four years. This implies that lower-level students face difficulties in developing their grammar knowledge and reading skills under the current program content. The findings suggest that changes be made in order to address, target, and meet the needs of the lower-level students. The findings also support the importance of students' continuous exposure to English.

Next time when our faculty members make the statement that our English majors' listening scores are higher than their grammar/reading scores, I hope they would not conclude the statement there but explain the details: our students' listening scores are higher than the nationwide average scores but our students' grammar/reading scores are lower than the nationwide counterparts. We can also state that our higher-level students' scores are above the nationwide averages both in listening and grammar/reading. However, our low-level students' grammar/reading scores are below the nationwide averages even though their listening scores continue to improve under the current teaching methodology. The continuing improvement to meet the level-specific, skill-specific needs of our lower-level students seems to be the challenge we face in our English program.

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Appendices

Appendix A: NUCB IP TOEIC Scores by Year of Study

Average Total Scores by Year of Study (2008-2011)

Year of Entry	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Entry	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.
2005								465	488
2006						465	497	494	478
2007				401	423	453	469	458	446
2008	305	343	368	413	419	457	475	485	521
2009	301	362	374	425	461	480	518		
2010	309	360	373	425	457				
2011	276	322	370						
Average	298	347	371	416	440	464	490	476	483

Average Listening Scores by Year of Study (2008-2011)

Year of Entry	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Entry	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	Dec.	June
2005								286	308
2006						282	309	298	286
2007				248	278	282	283	291	276
2008	184	210	241	260	256	288	300	321	312
2009	176	228	233	270	286	299	314		
2010	189	226	236	268	283				
2011	162	200	228						
Average	178	216	235	262	276	288	302	299	296

Average Grammar/Reading Scores by Year of Study (2008-2011)

Year of Entry	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Entry	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	Dec.	June
2005								179	180
2006						183	187	196	192
2007				153	145	171	186	167	170
2008	121	133	127	153	163	169	183	185	200
2009	125	134	141	156	175	181	204		
2010	120	134	137	157	174				
2011	114	122	142						
Average	120	131	137	155	164	176	190	182	186