

## A Study of TOEIC Vocabulary Learning Strategies of TNI Students

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### Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students and 2) to compile opinions and suggestions concerning TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students.

Research samples were 357 undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in 2016 academic year, derived through simple random sampling technique. The instruments used for gathering the data were the rating-scale and open-ended questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and content analysis.

Research findings were as follows:

1. TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies using, when considered in each aspect. It was found that *strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary, strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary, and strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary* were at high level.

2. TNI students had various suggestions such as; TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies should be applied in undergraduate class to activate the learners in vocabulary learning, teachers should teach vocabulary learning strategies with TOEIC learning in classroom.

**Keywords:** *TOEIC Vocabulary Learning Strategies*

### Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge plays a significant role in learning English as a second language. It is a crucial part of language learning and teaching and communication. Furthermore, vocabulary teaching has not been receptive to problems in the area, and most language teachers have not fully recognized the great communicative advantage in developing an extensive vocabulary (McCarthy, 1990). Vocabulary often seems to be the least systematized and the least accepted for of all the aspects of learning a foreign language, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, or even pronunciation (Read, 2000).

The teaching and learning of vocabulary has never stimulated the same degree of interest within language teaching as grammatical competence, contrastive analysis, reading, writing, phonology or discourse analysis which have received considerable attention from teachers. This is related to the idea of Hedge (2000) who advocated that an important reason for the abandon of vocabulary that learners themselves do not place considerable significance on vocabulary. Language teachers have been told a great agreement about new discoveries in English grammar, but they have heard much less about ways to assist students learn new words. Additionally, the meanings of words could not be sufficiently taught, so it is better not to try to teach them (Allen 1983).

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In this study the researcher surveyed with undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology. The results of this research will be used for improving instruction and developing teaching materials in English classes to be highly efficient.

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and Samples***

This research was to study study TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in three aspects: *strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary*, *strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary*, and *strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary* which consisted of population and samples as follows:

Population of this research was 5,000 TNI students in 2016 academic year. Samples of the research were 357 TNI students derived through simple random sampling technique. The instruments used for gathering the data were the rating-scale and open-ended questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and content analysis.

### ***Instrumentation***

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher based on TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students.

The first part (Part 1) of this questionnaire asks for the demographic information on their genders and academic year. The participants were asked to report their information by ticking in only one box.

The second part (Part 2) concerns TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students. This part comprises 30 items of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in 3 major areas: 10 items of *strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary*, 10 items of *strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary*, and 10 items of *strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary*. The participants were asked to check by ticking in only one box under the five levels of importance on each item in Part 2 to indicate their TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in each area listed in the questionnaire. Reliability is defined as the proportion of the alpha is a lower bound of the true reliability of the research instrument or the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics is also used to determine the individual summary statistics for each of the 30 items in the questionnaire.

The third part (Part 3) asks for more opinions and suggestions of TNI students about TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies which based on open-ended questions.

### **Data collection**

TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students were accessed through the questionnaire in 2016 academic year.

The administration of the research questionnaire was conducted in English classes. Part 1 concerns the demographic variables about their genders and academic years. The 30 items of Part 2 cover TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students. Therefore, the participants were requested to consider each item carefully and indicate how important each item was for their study. A total of 357 TNI students completed the questionnaire.

The analyses of the research data were conducted by means of descriptive statistics. Responses were employed to report their demographic variables and to indicate the rank order of the items in each area of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies listed in the questionnaire. The frequency distributions were analyzed to determine the proportions of the levels of importance on the 30 items in 3 major areas.

### Data Analysis from Questionnaire

Data analysis from questionnaire both single item and whole questionnaire which presented a form of rating scale. These rating scales were calculated to find out mean and standard deviation and then translated based on criteria developed by Best (1977) as follows:

1.00  $\leq \bar{x}$  < 1.50 refers to TNI students have TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies at the lowest level.

1.51  $\leq \bar{x}$  < 2.50 refers to TNI students have TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies at low level.

2.51  $\leq \bar{x}$  < 3.50 refers to TNI students have TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies at moderate level.

3.51  $\leq \bar{x}$  < 4.50 refers to TNI students have TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies at high level.

4.51  $\leq \bar{x}$  < 5.00 refers to TNI students have TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies at the highest level.

### The statistics used for analyzing the data

The collected data was analyzed using a computer program. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and content analysis.

## Results

### Results of Data Analysis

Phase 1: The results of demographic variable of TNI students in the 2016 academic year is presented in the first section deals with genders and academic years as following table.

Table 1: Table of the results of demographic data of respondents

| Demographic data of respondents | n=291      | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1. Gender                       |            |            |
| 1.1 Male                        | 144        | 40.33      |
| 1.2 Female                      | 213        | 59.67      |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>357</b> | <b>100</b> |
| 2. Academic Year                |            |            |
| 2.1 First Year                  | 112        | 31.37      |
| 2.2 Second Year                 | 100        | 28.02      |
| 2.3 Third Year                  | 77         | 21.56      |
| 2.4 Forth Year                  | 68         | 19.05      |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>357</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table showed that percentages of respondents in genders ranged from 59.67% for female and 40.33% for male; in academic years ranged from 31.37% for 1<sup>st</sup> year, 28.02% for 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 21.56% for 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and 19.05% for 4<sup>th</sup> year.

## Phase 2: TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students

Table 2: Table of mean and standard deviation of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in total and in each aspect

| Components   | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Level       |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary           | 4.47        | 0.72        | high        |
| Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary | 4.41        | 0.69        | high        |
| Strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary           | 4.39        | 0.77        | high        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4.42</b> | <b>0.72</b> | <b>high</b> |

The table above indicated that TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in overall ( $\bar{x}$ =4.42), when considered in each aspect, it was found that the students had high levels of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in all aspect.

Table 3: Table of mean and standard deviation of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in the area of *Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary* in overall and in each item

| Listening skills   | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Level       |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1) Guess the meaning from a single vocabulary item to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items                                       | 4.55        | 0.77        | highest     |
| 2) Guess the meaning from contexts to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items   | 4.39        | 0.69        | high        |
| 3) Guess the meaning from word classes, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items       | 4.37        | 0.67        | high        |
| 4) Guess the meaning from grammatical structure of a sentence to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items                            | 4.39        | 0.86        | high        |
| 5) Guess the meaning by analysing the structure of words (prefixes, roots, and suffixes) to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items | 4.49        | 0.73        | high        |
| 6) Guess the meaning from real situations to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items  | 4.38        | 0.71        | high        |
| 7) Guess the meaning from gestures to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items   | 4.66        | 0.69        | highest     |
| 8) Use an English-English dictionary to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items   | 4.54        | 0.67        | highest     |
| 9) Ask classmates or friends to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items   | 4.49        | 0.72        | high        |
| 10) Ask teachers of English to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items  | 4.44        | 0.69        | high        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4.47</b> | <b>0.72</b> | <b>high</b> |

The table above indicated that TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in the area of *Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary* in overall ( $\bar{x}=4.47$ ), when considered in each item, it was found that the highest item was item 7 *guess the meaning from gestures to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items* ( $\bar{x}=4.66$ ), item 1 *Guess the meaning from a single vocabulary item to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items* ( $\bar{x}=4.55$ ), and item 8 *use an English-English dictionary to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items* ( $\bar{x}=4.55$ ). For the rest, it was found that level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in this area was at high level.

Table 4: Table of mean and standard deviation of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in the area of *Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary* in overall and in each item

| Speaking skills   | $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Level   |
|---|-----------|------|---------|
| 1) Say vocabulary items in sentences repeatedly to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items   | 4.44      | 0.78 | high    |
| 2) Listen an English conversation of other people (classmates, friends, teachers, native speakers of English) to retain the knowledge of newly learned vocabulary items | 4.39      | 0.74 | high    |
| 3) Use vocabulary items to converse with classmates or friends  | 4.41      | 0.69 | high    |
| 4) Use vocabulary items to converse with teachers of English to retain the knowledge of newly learned vocabulary items  | 4.51      | 0.66 | highest |
| 5) Look at words' affixes (prefixes and suffixes) to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items   | 4.57      | 0.59 | highest |
| 6) Make a vocabulary list with meanings and examples in one's notebook to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items  | 4.41      | 0.74 | high    |
| 7) Write vocabulary items with meanings on papers and stick them in one's bedroom to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items                             | 4.36      | 0.64 | high    |
| 8) Group vocabulary items according to the synonyms and antonyms to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items  | 4.37      | 0.69 | high    |
| 9) Associate pictures to vocabulary items to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items   | 4.29      | 0.71 | high    |
| 10) Use semantic maps to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items   | 4.35      | 0.66 | high    |
| <b>Total</b>  | 4.41      | 0.69 | high    |

The table above indicated that TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in the area of *Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary* in overall ( $\bar{x}=4.41$ ), when considered in each item, it was found that the highest item was item 5 *Look at words' affixes (prefixes and suffixes) to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items* ( $\bar{x}=4.57$ ) and item 4 *Use vocabulary items to converse with teachers of English to retain the knowledge of newly learned vocabulary items* ( $\bar{x}=4.51$ ). For the rest, it was found that level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in this area was at high level.

Table 5: Table of mean and standard deviation of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in the area of *Strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary* in overall and in each item

| <b>Reading skills</b>   | $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Level   |
|---|-----------|------|---------|
| 1) Listen to English songs to expand the knowledge of vocabulary  | 4.31      | 0.79 | high    |
| 2) Listen to English radio programmes to expand one's knowledge of vocabulary   | 4.28      | 0.83 | high    |
| 3) Converse with teachers of English in English to expand the knowledge of vocabulary   | 4.59      | 0.71 | highest |
| 4) Read English articles from different sources, such as texts, newspaper, brochures, leaflets, to expand the knowledge of vocabulary | 4.57      | 0.69 | highest |
| 5) Study vocabulary items from advertisements, public relations notices, traffic signs, etc. To expand the knowledge of vocabulary    | 4.33      | 0.85 | high    |
| 6) Watch English programme channels on TV to expand the knowledge of vocabulary   | 4.54      | 0.77 | highest |
| 7) Watch an English-speaking films with subtitles to expand the knowledge of vocabulary   | 4.22      | 0.73 | high    |
| 8) Play English games, such as scrabble, crossword puzzles, to expand the knowledge of vocabulary                                     | 4.31      | 0.81 | high    |
| 9) Practise using a dictionary regularly to expand the knowledge of vocabulary  | 4.32      | 0.79 | high    |
| 10) Take an extra job at tour offices, hotels, etc. to expand the knowledge of vocabulary   | 4.43      | 0.73 | high    |
| <b>Total</b>  | 4.39      | 0.77 | high    |

The table above indicated that TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in the area of *Strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary* in overall ( $\bar{x}$ =4.39), when considered in each item, it was found that the highest item was item 3 *Converse with teachers of English in English to expand the knowledge of vocabulary* ( $\bar{x}$ =4.59), item 4 *Read English articles from different sources, such as texts, newspaper, brochures, leaflets, to expand the knowledge of vocabulary* ( $\bar{x}$ =4.57), and item 6 *Watch English programme channels on TV to expand the knowledge of vocabulary* ( $\bar{x}$ =4.54). For the rest, it was found that level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies in this area was at high level.

**Phase 4: The results of suggestions of TNI students about TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies as following:**

1) TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies should be applied in undergraduate class to activate the learners in vocabulary learning.

2) Teachers should teach vocabulary learning strategies with TOEIC learning in classroom.

## Conclusions

According to the study and data analysis, the results of this study were concluded as follows:

1. TNI students had a high level of TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies using, when considered in each aspect. It was found that *strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary, strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary, and strategies to expand the knowledge of new vocabulary* were at high level.

2. TNI students had various suggestions such as; TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies should be applied in undergraduate class to activate the learners in vocabulary learning, teachers should teach vocabulary learning strategies with TOEIC learning in classroom.

## Discussion

According to the study and data analysis the results of this study could be discussed as follows.

The results of using TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies of TNI students in overall were at high level ( $\bar{x}=4.42$ ). It might be because TNI students used TOEIC vocabulary learning strategies continuously in their learning. Moreover, they applied learning strategies about guessing the meaning of words presented in context in daily life learning. This is related with the idea of Thornbury (2002) who advocated that an effective strategy for learning vocabulary items is guessing the meaning of words presented in context. Likewise, testing vocabulary items should be tested through the context of the sentence related to the aspects of what represent of knowing a word. Moreover, Read (2000) stipulated that language learners who were presented with the words in an affluent context were significantly better at guessing what they meant than those who did not have the advantage of contextual clues.

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### **Bio Data**

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