

## **Acknowledgements**

In the process of completing this research paper, I have received a great deal of help, guidance and encouragement from many teachers, friends and my family.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Mrs. Dang Thi Van, my supervisor for her constant and tireless support throughout this study. My sincere thanks also go to other teachers in the foreign language department for their lectures and instructions during the four years which helped me much in completing this study. Especially, I am profoundly grateful to all the members in my family and friends, who always beside me, supporting me to complete this study.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who have kindly given their advice and helped me with source material during the writing of this study.

Hai Phong, June, 2010

Nguyen Thi Hong Hanh

Na1004

# **A STUDY ON HOW TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS IN PART II OF TOEIC TEST**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Part I Introduction**

1. Rationale of the study
2. Aims of the study
3. Scopes of the study
4. Methods of the study
5. Design of the study

### **Part II Development**

#### **Chapter I Theoretical background**

##### **I.1 Listening skills**

I.1.1 What is listening skills?

I.1.2 How to learn listening skills?

I.1.2.1 Listen actively

I.1.2.2 Listen effectively

##### **I.2 Listening skills in TOEIC test**

I.2.1 Comparison between TOEIC and new TOEIC

I.2.1.1 An overview of old TOEIC & new TOEIC

I.2.1.2 Description of part II

#### **Chapter II How to improve listening skills in part II of TOEIC**

##### **II.1 Question in part II**

II.1.1 Different kinds of questions in part II

II.1.1.1 Yes no question

II.1.1.2 Wh question

II.1.1.3 Alternative question

II.1.1.4 Indirect question

II.1.1.5 Negative question

II.1.1.6 Tag question

II.1.2 How to deal with part II of TOEIC

II.1.2.1 Listen English actively

II.1.2.1.1 Activities for listening English

II.1.2.1.2 English varieties

II.1.2.2 Voice emphasis.

II.1.2.3 POE (process of elimination)

II.1.2.3.1 POE

II.1.2.3.2 Examples and explanations

## **Chapter III Some problems related to listening skills**

III.1 Homonyms

III.1 Idioms

III.1.1 True idioms list

III.1.2 Preposition idioms list

## **Part III Conclusion**

III.1 Conclusion remarks

III.2 Suggestions for further study

## **References**

## **Appendix**

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Rationale of the study**

Nowadays, it can't deny that English is becoming the global language. Whether you live and work in an English speaking country or need English for travel and fun, English is the passport to success and a deeper understanding of our quickly changing world. Therefore, teaching and learning English is the best and the shortest way for us to have a great deal of opportunities to reach the success of life. TOEIC (the Test of English for International Communication) test is one way to improve your English. For more than 25 years, businesses, government agencies, educational institutions and English language learning programs around the world have relied on the TOEIC to evaluate the English proficiency of nonnative English-speaking people. With more than 4.5 million test takers per year, the TOEIC test is the global standard for assessing workplace English proficiency. Now, in keeping with our policy of continually reevaluating and improving our tests, ETS (the Educational Testing Service) has made some significant enhancements to the TOEIC test, designed to address the real demands of work place communicative English. The new TOEIC listening and reading test will be administered for the first time in the US and Canada in January 2007. But Vietnamese students have a lot of difficulties in learning and practicing English, especially English listening skill. They often fall into confusion when listening English because lack of professional knowledge, confidence, and good learning methods as well. Besides, the learning passive environment with the same and boring lessons prevent them from practicing and improving English. That is the main reason why they don't get the effective result in learning English, especially the English listening skill. I, myself, sometimes get confused at listening. Thus, I decided to choose "how to improve your listening skills in part II of TOEIC test" as the topic for my graduation paper. And I hope that the study will help English learners improve their listening skills.

### **Aims of the study**

My study aim at helping the students at HP private University improve their skills through part II in TOEIC test to prepare for them the basic knowledge of listening skill with higher requirement to summarize the above, my study is aimed at:

- Giving background knowledge of listening.
- Finding out appropriate techniques to improve listening skills in part II of TOEIC test.

### **Scopes of the study**

Listening is a big theme, however, because of the limited time and my knowledge, in this paper, I only focus on listening skills in part II of TOEIC test.

I hope that this study is a good reference material for all students who wish to get the higher listening skills.

### **Methods of the study**

To complete this study, I myself carry out some following methods:

I collected data (about definition, classification, characteristic, etc.) from text books, reference books and websites.

Then, I selected the specific examples, suitable data (which is easy to understand) for study. Finally, I analyzed them to find out how to improve your listening skills in part II of TOEIC test.

### **Design of the study**

The study contains of three parts:

Part I: the introduction is literature review, aims, scopes, methods and the design of the study

Part II: The development consisted of three chapters. Chapter I “Theoretical background” provides various linguistic concepts necessary for and relevant to the scope of the study such as, definition of listening, how to learn listening skills with active listening and effective listening. In chapter II “How to improve listening

skills in part II of TOEIC test”, show you how to deal with part II of TOEIC test. The last chapter in this part entitled: “Some problems related to listening skills” deals with the most important issue of the study. This chapter mainly focuses on the common homonyms and idioms in TOEIC test, which can be the trap in the test.

The study ends with the part III: Conclusion which summarizes what is addressed as well as implications of the study and some suggestions for further study.

## **PART II: DEVELOPMENT**

### **Chapter I Theoretical background**

#### **I.1 Listening skills**

##### **1.1 What is listening skills?**

The Merriam- Webster Dictionary, 1974 defines: Listening is the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain. Listening leads to the understanding of facts and ideas.

Hearing (or audition) is one of the traditional five senses. It is the ability to perceive sound by detecting vibrations via an organ such as the ear. The inability to hear is called deafness.

([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listen))

Webster (1913) claims that: When we give a more particular attention to some sound, the tympanum is drawn to a more than ordinary tension. We have listening. To pay attention to a sound, to note; To wait for a sound, such as a signal; To accept or obey oral instruction.

([en.wiktionary.org/wiki/listen](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/listen) )

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others. People need to practice and acquire skills to be good listeners, because a speaker cannot throw you information in the same manner that a dart player tosses a dart at a passive dartboard. Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener. Now, we move to next part to get more about listening skills.

##### **I.1.2 How to learn listening skills**

###### **I.1.2.1 Listen actively**

The way to become a better listener is to practice “active listening”. This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is

saying but, more importantly, to try and understand the total message being sent. In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully. You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by what else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments that you'll make when the other person stops speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to lose focus on what the other person is saying. All of these barriers contribute to a lack of listening and understanding.

**Tip:**

If you're finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say it – this will reinforce their message and help you control mind drift.

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are listening to what he or she is saying. To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you've ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what you were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it's even worthwhile to continue speaking. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it's something you want to avoid.

Acknowledgement can be something as simple as a nod of the head or a simple "uh huh." You aren't necessarily agreeing with the person, you are simply indicating that you are listening. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge you are listening also reminds you to pay attention and not let your mind wander.

You should also try to respond to the speaker in a way that will both encourage him or her to continue speaking, so that you can get the information if you need. While nodding and "uh huhing" says you're interested, an occasional question or comment to recap what has been said communicates that you understand the message as well.



## BECOMING AN ACTIVE LISTENER

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they are saying.

### 1. **Pay attention**

Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message.

Recognize that what is not said also speaks loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts. Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.
- Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

### 2. **Show that you are listening**

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like

yes and uh huh.

### 3. **Provide feedback**

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is..." and "Sounds like you are saying..." are great ways to reflect back.

Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say..."  
"Is this what you mean?"

Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

**Tip:**

If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not understand you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"

**4. Defer judgment**

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Don't interrupt with counter-arguments.

**5. Respond Appropriately**

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.

**KEY POINTS:**

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself constantly that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask question, reflect, and paraphrase to

ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

Start using active listening today to become a better communicator and improve your workplace productivity and relationships.

### **I.1.2.2 Listen effectively**

We often confuse hearing with listening. While hearing is a function of biology, listening is a function of intentional behavior. It is something we choose to do, and as such, we need to build skills, and practice to be effective at it. There are two major components to effective listening, or in other words, two families of skills that need to be mastered. The first component is your ability to focus your attention on the words, body language, and meaning of the speaker. If you are unable to focus your attention on these in a sustained manner, you will have difficulty understanding the nuances of what the speaker is expressing. In terms of attention, you cannot be an excellent listener if:

- Your attention drifts to other things running around in your head while another person is speaking.
- You judge the speaker while he/she is speaking. Thinking about how you could say it better, the size of the person's nose, or how wrong the speaker is, is going to impede your task of understanding the speaker from the speaker's position.
- You spend most conversational time eagerly waiting for "your turn" to speak.
- You rehearse your response while the other person is speaking.
- You undertake some other activity while the other person is speaking (e.g... checking the time, making extensive notes, answering the phone, etc.).

So, in other words, effective listening requires you to focus your attention, and to acquire the discipline and skill to do this almost automatically. It does not come naturally!

The second component of effective listening relates to your ability to communicate your understanding of what the speaker is saying and meaning. Even if you manage to focus your attention on a speaker, if you cannot communicate this to the speaker, you will be unlikely to reap all of the potential benefits of effective listening.

Two common skills that fall into this category are empathetic listening (expressing your understanding of the feelings of the speaker), and reflective listening, or paraphrasing (expressing your understanding of the details of the speaker's talk).

There are several skill components to effective listening. The most difficult to acquire is the ability to focus your attention on a speaker without being distracted by judgments and thoughts that you generate internally. However, if you do not learn how to focus your attention, you are not likely to understand the speaker sufficiently to respond effectively. As you improve this ability, you will find that you will be involved in fewer misunderstandings, and you will be perceived as a more positive, effective person, regardless of your position in the organization.

## I.2 Listening skill in TOEIC test

### I.2.1 Comparison between TOEIC and new TOEIC

**Comparison between TOEIC and redesigned TOEIC:**

	TOEIC	Redesigned TOEIC
<b>Part</b>	<b>Listening Comprehension Section 1</b>	
1	Photographs: 20 questions	Photographs: 10 questions
2	Question-Response: 30 questions	Question-Response: 30 questions
3	Short Conversations: 30 questions (30 conversations, 1 question each)	Conversations: 30 questions (10 conversations, 3 questions each)
4	Short Talks: 20 questions (6-9 talks, 2-4 questions each)	Short Talks: 30 questions (10 talks, 3 questions each)
	<b>Reading Comprehension Section 2</b>	
5	Incomplete Sentences: 40 questions	Incomplete Sentences: 40 questions
6	Error Recognition: 20 questions	Text Completion: 12 questions (4 reading sets, 3 questions each)
7	Reading Comprehension: 40 questions	Reading Comprehension: 48 questions (single passages: 28 questions; double passages: 20 questions)

## **The differences**

The newly redesigned TOEIC test reflects typical language activities people encounter in today's workplace. Consistent with current business communication styles around the world, it emphasizes authentic language contexts which require learners to use multiple strategies and abilities to comprehend and connect information. While we didn't change all tasks in the test, those we did have essentially been refined to more closely resemble what a person using the language in the real world would have to do. Other notable enhancements include:

### ***Listening section***

The principle changes in the 2006 new TOEIC are an adoption of a variety of English accents (US, British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand) in the listening section, which was formerly recorded using only North American accents. Asian English varieties are not represented on the TOEIC, yet a large percentage of the TOEIC test population is Asian and they are more likely to interact with other non-native English speakers than they are with speakers from the 5-6 national dialects currently on this test. According to Fibster (2004, pp. 9-10), 80% of the in real-life interactions around the world in English are now conducted among non-native speakers of English.

In detail we have some different things such as: Fewer photograph questions in part 1. < 20 photographs reduce to 10 ones.>. In part III we have 10 conversations with 3 questions each instead of 30 conversations with 1 question each; shift from individual questions to set of questions in part III. It may easy for student to get information. Part IV the questions increase from 20 to 30 questions; we have 10 talks with 3 questions each replaced 6-9 talks with 2-4 questions each. Recorded as well as written questions in part III (conversations) and part IV (short talks). Its mean the questions of two parts were recorded as well as written in the test instead of written only.

### ***Reading section***

Replacement of error-recognition questions with text-completion questions in part VI; we have 4 reading sets with 3 questions each in this part. In part VII we have single passages: 28 questions and double passages: 20 questions.

### **The similarity**

Along with many of the question types, the core characteristics of the test remain unchanged

There are 7 parts in TOEIC test

We don't have break during the test

Test time: 2 hours (listening 45 minutes, reading 75 minutes)

Number of question (listening 100, reading 100)

Paper-and-pencil administration

And most importantly the one thing that will never change is our commitment to maintaining the quality, fairness, reliability and validity that have made the TOEIC test the global standard in workplace English assessment. This means you can still rely on TOEIC test scores to guide your most important decisions and help give your organization a competitive edge.

### **I.2.2 Description of part II**

Taking the TOEIC is like playing a game. To play the game well, you need to know the rules of the game, and you must be able to apply the rules without spending a lot of time thinking about them. If you are very familiar with the rules, you will feel less anxious and will be better able to concentrate on the test itself. Here we have the form of part II in TOEIC test; you should get to know it well.

**The directions for Part II of the TOEIC appear on the test as follows:**

**Sample:**

Directions: You will hear a question or statement and three responses spoken in English. They will be spoken only one time and will not be printed in your test book. Select the best response to the question or statement and mark your answer on your answer sheet.

Now listen to the four statements.

You will hear: Good morning, John. How are you?

You will also hear:

(A) I'm fine, thank you.

(B) I'm in the living room.

(C) My name is John.

The best response to the question "How are you?" is choice (A), "I'm fine, thank you."

Therefore, you should choose answer (A).

11. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

12. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

13. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

14. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

15. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

16. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

17. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

18. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

19. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

20. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

21. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

22. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

23. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

24. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

25. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

26. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

27. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

28. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

29. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

30. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

31. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

32. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

33. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

34. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

35. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

36. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

37. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

38. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

39. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

40. Mark your answer on your answer sheet.

In the question-and-response part of the TOEIC listening comprehension section, your task is to listen to a question asked by one speaker, and choose the correct response out of three choices spoken by another speaker. The question and answer choices will not be repeated. In other words, you have one chance to listen and answer. There are 30 question-and-response questions (numbered 11-40) on the test. The speakers may be a man and a woman, two women, or two men.

Read these instructions now and review them ahead of time so that you won't waste any time reading them during the actual test. The only things you need to understand from them are that:

You will hear one speaker asking a question and another speaker giving three possible responses to that question

You have to pick the response that most logically follows the question.

In short, all of the theoretical background including an overview on general listening skills and listening skills in TOEIC test presented above is necessary for the study on how to improve listening skills in part II of TOEIC test which is given in the next chapter.



## **Chapter II How to improve listening skills in part II of TOEIC test**

In the TOEIC test, the question is the only “context” students will get to help them choose the best response, so they can’t afford not to listen closely. Focus on it to determine the purpose of the question. What is being asked for? The best way to determine purpose is to listen for words that always ask questions. Pay close attention to the question words. Now, the most popular questions in part II of TOEIC test were given to help students get to know well.

### **II.1 Questions in part II**

#### **II.1.1 Different kinds of part II**

##### **II.1.1.1 Yes -no questions**

Yes-no question are those that expect only affirmation or rejection.

For example:

*Are you tired?*

*Does he have a cat?*

(Quirk, et al,1985: p823)

There are many *yes/no* questions in the question-and –response section. And there are many response beginning with the words *yes* or *no*. unfortunately, the *yes/no* questions don’t always correspond to the *yes/no* answer choices. In fact, many times the correct answer to a *yes/no* question will not start with *yes* or *no*.

For example, the question might be, “Do you want to go to lunch with us?” this is a *yes/no* question. The correct answer, however, may be, “I can’t right now. I have to finish this report.” What this mean is that you may or may not want to go to lunch, but you *can’t* go to lunch. The response doesn’t contain the word *no*, though.

Don’t automatically assume that an answer choice beginning with *yes* or *no* is the correct response to a *yes/no* question. On the other hand, the correct response to

yes/no question could easily begin with yes or no. just stay alert and be prepared for either possibility.

### II.1.1.2Wh- questions

Wh- questions are those that expect a reply supplying an item of information

For example: what is that noise?

Commonly used question words are *who*, *what*, *why*, *when*, *where*, and *how*.

Know what type of answer each question word should get. For instance, the question “who” should be answered with the name of a person.

Questions in detail:

<b>Question Word</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Example</b>
what	asking for information about something	What is your name?
	asking for repetition or confirmation	What? I can't hear you. You did what?
what...for	asking for a reason, asking why	What did you do that for?
when	asking about time	When did he leave?
where	asking in or at what place or position	Where do they live?
which	asking about choice	Which color do you want?
who	asking what or which person or people (subject)	Who opened the door?

whom	asking what or which person or people (object)	Whom did you see?
whose	asking about ownership	Whose are these keys? Whose turn is it?
why	asking for reason, asking what...for	Why do you say that?
why don't	making a suggestion	Why don't I help you?
how	asking about manner	How does this work?
	asking about condition or quality	How was your exam?
how + adj/adv	asking about extent or degree	see examples below
how far	distance	How far is Pattaya from Bangkok?
how long	length (time or space)	How long will it take?
how many	quantity (countable)	How many cars are there?
how much	quantity (uncountable)	How much money do you have?
how old	age	How old are you?
how come (informal)	asking for reason, asking why	How come I can't see her

(Quirk, et al,1985: p823)

### II.1.1.3 Alternative questions:

A question that offers the listener a choice of two or more alternatives and is characterized by rising intonation on each alternative except for the final one, which has falling intonation.

For example:

*Would you like tea or coffee?*

*(Quirk, et al, 1985: p823)*

There are two types of alternative question, the first resembling a yes-no question, and the second a wh-question:

*Would you like chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry?*

*Which ice-cream would you like? Chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry?*

*(Quirk, et al, 2002: p197)*

The first type differs from a yes-no question only in intonation; instead of the final rising tone, it contains a separate nucleus for each alternative: a rise occurs on each item in the list, except the last, on which there is a fall, indicating that the list is complete. The difference of intonation between alternative and yes-no question is important, in that ignoring it can lead to misunderstanding- as the contrast between these replies indicates:

*Alternative: Shall we go by bus or train? By bus*

*Yes-no: Shall we go by bus or train? No, let's take a car.*

*(Quirk, et al, 2002: p197)*

The second type of alternative question is really a compound of two separate questions; a wh-question followed by an elliptical alternative question of the first type.

*Which ice-cream would you like? Would you like chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry?*

*(Quirk, et al, 2002: p198)*

### II.1.1.4 Indirect questions in English

If you want to ask a question that is quite sensitive, try using one of the indirect phrases below:

Can you tell me...

Could you tell me...

I'd be interested to hear...

I'd like to know...

Would you mind telling me...

These questions are followed by either **about**, a "**wh word**" or **if**. Then you add the subject, then the sentence.

You don't need an 'auxiliary', such as 'do', 'does', 'did', or 'can'.

"Can you tell me what you like most about your present job?"

"Can you tell me what do you like?"

"Would you mind telling me if you have applied for a similar position before?"

Consider the following situation: You are talking to a man at a meeting that you have never met. However, you know his name and also that this man knows a colleague named Jack. You turn to him and ask: *Where is Jack?* The man seems a little bothered and says he doesn't know. He isn't very friendly. You wonder why he seems bothered... It's probably because you didn't introduce yourself, didn't say 'excuse me' AND (most importantly) asked a **direct** question. Direct questions are often considered rude when speaking to strangers. To be more polite we often use **indirect** question forms. Indirect questions serve the same purpose as direct questions, but are considered more formal. When using an indirect question, use an introductory phrase followed by the question itself in **positive sentence structure**. Connect the two phrases with the question word or 'if' in the case the question is a 'yes', 'no' question.

Introductory phrase + question word (or if) + positive sentence

*Examples:*

*Where is Jack? > I was wondering if you know where Jack is?*

*When does Alice usually arrive? > Do you know when Alice usually arrives?*

Here are some of the most common phrases used for asking indirect questions. Many of these phrases are questions (i.e., *Do you know when the next train leaves?*), while others are statements made to indicate a question (i.e., *I wonder if he will be on time.*).

Do you know ... ?

I wonder / was wondering ....

Can you tell me ...?

Do you happen to know ...?

I have no idea ...

I'm not sure ...

I'd like to know ...

Have you any idea...

*Examples:*

*Do you know when the concert begins?*

*I wonder when he will arrive.*

*Can you tell me how to check out a book?*

*I'm not sure what he considers appropriate.*

*I don't know if he is coming to the party this evening.*

*(Quirk, et al, 1985: p824)*

### **II.1.1.5 Negative question**

Negative questions are used in many different situations. One of the most common is when you think the other person will answer in agreement with you. For example, if someone asked me, "Isn't it hot today?" I would understand that the person asking thinks it is hot and also expects that I think it is hot as well and will agree. In contrast, if the person asked me, "Is it hot today?" I would understand that the person actually does not know if it is hot or not (maybe they haven't been outside yet that day) and is asking me to provide that information.

Another function is to check information. Maybe you see someone at a party who looks really familiar and you feel like talking to them. You think they were in one of your classes last semester. You can ask, "Weren't you in Professor X's history class last semester?" or "Were you in Professor X's history class last semester?" The meaning is the same, but which one you use depends on how sure you are. If you are very sure, use the negative (you expect them to answer yes, similar to the example above). If you are less sure use the regular form. Negative questions are of two kinds: contracted and subcontracted. They have different word order.

#### **Contracted negative question**

**Word order: auxiliary verb + not + subject**

- Why **don't you** listen to me?
- **Don't you** understand?
- **Hasn't she** any friends to help her?
- **Aren't they** ready?

#### **Un-contracted negative questions**

Un-contracted negative questions are more formal than contracted negative questions.

### **Word order: auxiliary verb + subject + not**

- Why **do you not** listen to me?
- **Do you not** understand?
- **Has she not** any friends to help her?
- **Are they not** ready?

### **Contracted negative questions**

Contracted negative question beginning with *Won't you ...? Wouldn't you...? Or why don't you ...?* Are very common in polite requests, invitations, offers, complaints and criticisms.

- **Wouldn't you** like a cup of coffee?
- **Why don't you** come and stay with us?

In a reply to a negative question, **yes** suggests a positive answer, and **no** suggests a negative answer.

- 'Haven't you written to her?' 'Yes.' (= I have written to her.)
- 'Haven't you told her about us?' 'No.' (= I haven't told her about you.)

*(Quirk, et al, 1985: p824)*

### **II.1.1.6 Tag question**

A tag question is a special construction in English. It is a statement followed by a mini-question. The whole sentence is a "tag question", and the mini-question at the end is called a "question tag". A "tag" is something small that we add to something larger. For example, the little piece of cloth added to a shirt showing size or washing instructions is a tag.



We use tag questions at the end of statements to ask for confirmation. They mean something like: "Am I right?" or "Do you agree?" They are very common in English.

The basic structure is:

+	-
Positive statement,	negative tag?
Snow is white,	Isn't it?
-	+
Negative statement,	positive tag?
You don't like me,	Do you?

Look at these examples with positive statements:

positive statement [+]				negative tag [-]			notes:
subject	auxiliary	main verb		auxiliary	not	personal pronoun (same as subject)	
You	are	coming,		are	not	You?	
We	have	finished,		have	not	We?	
You	do	like	coffee,	do	not	You?	
You		like	coffee,	do	not	You?	You (do) like...
They	will	help,		wo	n't	they?	won't = will not
I	can	come,		can	't	I?	
We	must	go,		must	n't	we?	
He	should	try	harder,	should	n't	he?	
You		are	English,	are	n't	you?	no auxiliary for main verb <b>be</b> present & past
John		was	there,	was	n't	he?	

Look at these examples with negative statements:

negative statement [-]						positive tag [+]	
subject	auxiliary		main verb			auxiliary	personal pronoun (same as subject)
It	is	n't	raining,			is	it?
We	have	never	seen		that,	have	we?
You	do	n't	like		coffee,	do	you?
They	will	not	help,			will	they?
They	wo	n't	report		us,	will	they?
I	can	never	do		it right,	can	I?
We	must	n't	tell		her,	must	we?
He	should	n't	drive		so fast,	should	he?
You			are	n't	English,	are	you?
John			was	not	there,	was	He?

Some special cases:

I <b>am</b> right, <b>aren't</b> I?	aren't I ( <i>not amn't</i> I)
You <b>have</b> to go, <b>don't</b> you?	you (do) have to go...
I <b>have been</b> answering, <b>haven't</b> I?	use first auxiliary
<b>Nothing</b> came in the post, <b>did</b> it?	treat statements with nothing, nobody etc like negative statements

Let's go, shall we?	let's = let us
He'd better do it, hadn't he?	he had better (no auxiliary)

(*Quirk, et al, 1985:p 825*)

Notice that we often use tag questions to ask for information or help, starting with a negative statement. This is quite a friendly/polite way of making a request. For example, instead of saying "Where is the police station?" (Not very polite), or "Do you know where the police station is?" (Slightly more polite), we could say: "You wouldn't know where the police station is, would you?" Here are some more examples:

- You don't know of any good jobs, do you?
- You couldn't help me with my homework, could you?
- You haven't got \$10 to lend me, have you?

We can change the meaning of a tag question with the musical pitch of our voice. With rising intonation, it sounds like a real question. But if our intonation falls, it sounds more like a statement that doesn't require a real answer

## **II.1.2 How to deal with part II of TOEIC**

### ***II.1.2.1 Listen English actively***

#### ***II.1.2.1.1 Activities for listening English***

Practice listening to English is fairly obvious, but it bears repeating. Practice listening to English whenever possible. Although the TOEIC claims to be a test of all forms of English. They all have standard accents, which mean they speak the way the reporters on the national television news speak. A great way to practice listening to the standard accent is to listen to radio broadcasts over the internet. This is wonderful because you can listen to them from any computer with internet access anywhere in the world. Also, you can listen to a story as many times as you

need to, and some sites have written transcripts of the stories so you can read along as you listen. While there are hundreds of websites for local American stations, the website [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) is the website of National Public Radio. They have reports on all sorts of topics, so this is the mother lode of radio reports.

As is often said in the English language, “practice makes perfect”. In other words, if you want to learn to do something well, you should do it over and over again until you have mastered it. If you wanted to, say, learn to play the piano, or help lead your basketball team to the finals, you would probably put in several hours of practice per week. The same goes for learning a new language.

Here are a few activities you can practice to help prepare you for the listening comprehension section of the TOEIC:

- Talk on the telephone (in English). Speaking on the phone eliminates facial expressions, gestures, and any other clues as to what the person on the other end of the line is saying. The same is true for the listening comprehension section; you can rely only on the speakers’ voices to answer the questions.
- Listen to talk shows and news reports on the radio or over the internet. Find a television or radio program that approximates real talk. In other words, the ideal program would have some period where the speaker talks for several minutes, uninterrupted. A sermon, speech or lecture is ideal, they are also easy to find.
- Practice speaking English where it is difficult to hear. If you have friends with whom you can practice speaking English, go to noisy places to do it, such as restaurants or nightclubs, or even train stations.

#### **II.1.2.1.2 Some feature of English varieties**

*“I can understand my teacher’s English, but when I talk to ‘real people’ I can’t understand them”*. This is a comment I am sure that many teachers have heard. While it is a bit of exaggeration, students clearly feel that class-based practice does

not prepare them for real world. Now, the new TOEIC will help you approach varieties of English. There are some different pronunciation of varieties of English.

### English common

The English [ɑ:] as in *ask*, *path*, *castle* is pronounced as [æ(:)], the open o of top is unrounded, *wh* is voiceless. On the other hand, the [æ] occurs, too, in words where Irishmen would tend to [a:], as in *dance*. Rhoticity is there, but not realized by the STE [ɹ], the American [ɹ] is retroflex (constituting a great amount of the "American sound"). Intervocalic voiceless plosives are "weakened": p, t, k become b, d, g; like in English dialects, but here also in relatively cared pronunciation, full syllables are omitted in certain, lexically determined cases, like *I'm gonna* instead of *I'm going to*. The ing-form is pronounced [ɪn], especially if it is participle, less often as gerund. Unlike IE, the monophthongization phenomenon has nothing to do with an influence from a substratum. So, the STE diphthongs do not just turn to single vowels, rather the American pronunciation reflects an older English one; they extend from [e, o] to [ei, ou]. In England, this pronunciation changed to (RP)[æʊ] in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (up to [ʌi, aʊ] in the Southern dialects)

(<http://reese.linguist.de/English/index.htm>)

### American English

- Post-vocalic /r/ is pronounced in words like ‘four’, ‘car’, ‘perhaps’, ‘father’.
- /æ/ is used instead of /æ:/ in words like ‘dance’, ‘France’, ‘laugh’, ‘glass’
- /a: / is used in words like ‘pot’, ‘stop’, ‘bottle’.
- /d/ is used instead of /t/ in words like ‘matter’, ‘bottle’, ‘Saturday’.
- /j/ is left out before /u: / in words like ‘due’, ‘during’, ‘attitude’.

AE	BE
[ɪædvəɹɪ'tʰaɪzmənt]	[əd'vɜ:tʰɪsmənt]
[ˈsɛɹɪmənɪ]	[ˈsɛ.ɪmənɪ]

[ˈdɪkʃənəri]	[ˈdɪkʃnəri]
[ˈlæbɪətʰəri]	[ləˈbɔɪətʰəri]

### Northern English

- Words like ‘dance’ and ‘daft’ have /æ/
- /ei/ and /ði/ are either narrow diphthongs, monophthongs or even opening diphthongs
- /ʌ/ does not exist. There is no distinction between ‘put’ and ‘putt’, both having //

### Scottish

- /ɛ:/ does not occur. Instead // is used, as in ‘world’, or /e/, as in ‘certain’
- Diphthongs are monophthongized, for example: ‘boat’, ‘pole’, ‘nose’, ‘bay’, ‘plate’, ‘remain’
- /u:/ is often used in words has /a:/, such as in ‘house’, ‘mouse’.
- /ʌ/ is present in words like ‘hut’, ‘funny’, ‘cup’

### Australian English

- /æ/ is often used in words like ‘dance’, ‘sample’, ‘plant’, ‘branch’.
- Post-vocalic /r/ is not pronounced
- Intervocalic /t/ is often realized as /d/ such as ‘city’, ‘better’

### Canadian English

In fact, only Canadian themselves and people from the U.S. will be able to recognize Canadian English is distinctive from the U.S. way of talking.

Yet there are Canadian specialties, we even find regional variation within this vast country. Only in Canada, the ai- and au-diphthongs exist in two allomorphs: one before voiceless, the other one before voiced consonants: [ɪaɪt - [ɪaʊd], [ɪaɪt/ɪəɪt] - [ɪaɪd]. The replacement of the question tag by the word *eh?* has been known as a stereotype of CE (Bailey, 1982: 161).

(<http://reese.linguist.de/English/index.htm>)

## **Recommended English Language LISTENING Links:**

[World English.](http://www.world.english.org/listening.htm/) [www.world.english.org/listening.htm/]

Visit this site for links to some of the best English language radio stations broadcasting over the internet.

[BBC Radio.](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/)[www.bbc.co.uk/radio/]

The premier online English language broadcaster. Lots of different radio stations to listen to including the excellent [Radio 4.](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/)[www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/]

[Foreign Languages for Travellers.](http://www.travlang.com/languages/)[www.travlang.com/languages/]

An interesting site for people who want to quickly learn some useful English or other foreign language phrases.

[OM Personal English Conversation.](http://www.ompersonal.com.ar/omaudio/contenidotematico.htm)

[www.ompersonal.com.ar/omaudio/contenidotematico.htm]

Over

fifty useful, interesting English mp3 conversations in three levels with interactive activities.

[BBC Online English Learning.](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml)

[www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml]

Listen to news and specially recorded material for learners of English.

[ABC Australia.](http://www.abc.net.au/news) [www.abc.net.au/news]

Listen to news in Australian English.

[Voice of America Webcasts](http://www.voanews.com/webcasts/index.cfm) [www.voanews.com/webcasts/index.cfm]

Listen to VOA English programs.

[CNN Streaming Video News.](http://www.cnn.com/videoselect) [www.cnn.com/videoselect]

Watch CNN headline news online using real player.

[www.rcinet.ca.radio] Radio Canada international



In short, people in different countries or dialects can use the same words with their own pronunciation and it helps creating the English varieties all around the world and each way of pronunciation is typical for its own dialect.

### ***II.1.2.2 Voice emphasis***

When speaking to the people face to face, visual clues help you understand not only the words they use, but also the meaning of those words. Facial expressions, hand gestures, and body posture can all help you understand what a person is saying. However, in the TOEIC listening comprehension section, you can't see the speaker, so you are forced to rely solely on vocal cues.

In spoken English, people place emphasis on certain words in a given sentence to convey additional meaning beyond dictionary definitions. The most common way to place emphasis on a word is by raising or lowering the pitch or volume of one's voice. This will enable that word to stand out from the rest of the sentence. One of the things that vocal emphasis can tell you are which information in the sentence the speaker considers being the most important.

In the following sentence, every word is stressed equally.

*Jane's red bag is on the table.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p32)*

However, when emphasis is placed on specific words in the sentence, the intention of the speaker changes slightly.

***Jane's*** red bag is on the table.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p32)*

When the sentence is spoken with emphasis placed on the word ***Jane's*** that word becomes the most important in the sentence. In other words, the primary goal of the speaker is to communicate the ownership of the bag. The person the speaker is

talking to probably think the bag belonged to someone else, and the speaker wants to clear up the misunderstanding.

*Jane's **red** bag is on the table.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p33)*

When the emphasis is on **red**, the color of the bag is what's important. The other person most likely thought that a different bag was being discussed, probably of another color.

*Jane's red **bag** is on the table.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p33)*

Now the emphasis is on the actual item. The other person may have thought that something else belonging to Jane was on the table, such as a red book or a red sweater.

*Jane's red bag is **on** the table.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p33)*

The emphasis is on **where**. The other person may have just said, implied, or thought that the bag was not on the table.

*Jane's red bag is on the **table**.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p33)*

The speaker wants to make clear that the bag is **on**- not under, next to, in front of, or behind- the table. The other person probably misunderstood the location of the bag.

*Jane's red bag is on the **table**.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p33)*

Again, the speaker clarifies the location of the bag for the other person. In this case, the other person was probably confused about **what** the bag was on. He or she

might have thought that the bag was on something else, such as the cabinet, the stairs, or the bed.

In spoken English, it's sometimes acceptable to speak in ways that violate the rules of written grammar. One of the most common violations is speaking in incomplete sentences, this is possible because one speaker can use the context supplied by the other speaker, without having to repeat it. Here's an example.

*There's an elephant at our door.*

*What's at our front door?*

*An elephant.*

*It's where?*

*At the front door!*

*At whose front door?*

*Ours!*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p34-35)*

If you looked at any of these "sentences" by themselves, they wouldn't make any sense. But since you know what the first speaker said, the meaning is clear.

Many words in English take on additional meaning when spoken aloud. You can often recognize these situations because if you took the meaning of the words literally, the sentence wouldn't seem to mean anything. Many of these expressions use exaggeration or sarcasm to make a point. Take a look at these examples.

*You **could** help me with the dishes.*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p35)*

The speaker doesn't mean that the other person "has the ability" to help with the dishes. The emphasis on **could** carries with it the implication that the speaker believes the other person should help with the dishes. The speaker is being

sarcastic. The other person would probably respond by apologizing and would start to help.

*It **can't** be eleven o'clock already!*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p35)*

Another use for can. The speaker doesn't mean that it's impossible for it to be eleven o'clock. Rather, the speaker knows it is eleven o'clock and is very surprised by how quickly time has passed. Depending on the context, the speaker is either happily or unhappily surprised by the time.

*You can say **that** again*

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p35)*

Here, the speaker probably doesn't want the other person to really say the same thing over again. By emphasizing that, the speaker shows that he or she agrees strongly with what the other person said/

*Do you need a little help?*

*Help? I need a **miracle!***

*Are you hungry?*

*Hungry? I'm **starving!***

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p35)*

In each case, the person answering the question uses exaggeration to mean "yes, I certainly do!" or "I certainly am... but much more than you can imagine!"

### **II.1.2.3 The process of elimination**

While everyone else is listening to the instructions you should be setting up your test booklet to help you use POE (process of elimination) successfully. Next to each question, write the letters *A*, *B* and *C* (three are only three responses in this section) in a vertical line, like this:

A

B

C

With your booklet set up this way, when you hear the statements, you can cross out letters that correspond to statements you know aren't correct

This setup is just as important on the question-and-response questions section of TOEIC as it is on the photograph section. Writing down the letters and physical crossing them off in the test booklet enables you to keep track of the answer choices. When it planned this section, ETS was counting on the fact that you would not be able to keep all the answer choices straight in your head. Keeping track of them on paper gives you a huge advantage over anyone else taking the test. Don't get lazy and forget to write down the letters, as this wastes the best opportunity you have to beat the test makers at their own game.

The real problem with this section is that there's no context for the questions and responses. You have no idea who the two speakers are. They could be coworkers, friend, store clerk and customer, train conductor and passenger, or any other individuals. This makes it very difficult to understand enough of the question to focus on which answer choice is the best response.

#### **II.1.2.3.1 POE (process of elimination) in part II of TOEIC test**

The correct answer is always in front of you. You never have to fill in a blank, or come up with the answer on your own. And because there are usually three times as many wrong answers as there are right answers, it's often easier to eliminate the wrong answers than to pick the correct one. By identifying and eliminating the incorrect answers, it is easier to find the correct answer.

As you listen, you should be able to determine that some of the answer choices are not correct. Eliminate them immediately by crossing out the letters you wrote down

in your test booklet. There are some special incorrect answer choices that you will see over again on the question-and-response questions.

### **Sound-alike**

Sound-alike is responses that contain words that sound like words in the question. In other words, the question might ask, “how far did she drive?” but the sound-alike answer choice would say, “The music was live”. The words “drive” and “live” sound similar, so anyone not listening to hear exactly what the question asks could be tricked into picking this answer choice. Let’s look at answer choice (A) in our example question.

(A) Yes, the *leaves* at the airport have turned brown.

The word *leaves* sounds like *leave* and the word airport is in both the question and the answer choice. The question doesn’t ask anything about leaves, though. Eliminate this answer choice.

The correct response will hardly ever contain a word from the question. So if you hear a word that sounds like a key word from the question, eliminate it. Remember that this section is supposed to simulate the language of the real question and answer. When people answer a question in conversation, they usually do not repeat the question. For example, if someone asks you, “how are you feeling?” you would not be likely to answer, “I’m feeling fine” you would probably just say, “fine”.

### **II.1.2.3.2 Examples and explanations**

#### **Yes/no question**

- Have you been to the construction site lately?
- (A) Yes, it’s really coming along.
- (B) Yes, my vision is much better since the surgery.
- (C) No, we expected it sooner.

(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p74)

Answer choice (B) refers to visual “sight” instead of a location “site” refers to in the question. Get rid of it. Answer choice (C) uses “sooner” to reference the word late, not the word lately in the question. Eliminate it. Answer choice (A) answers the question.

- Does Mr. Ramos work in the Houston office or the Austin office?

(A) He used to work in the Austin office, but he was transferred last month.

(B) No, there is no opening in the building.

(C) Yes, his papers are in order.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p74)*

Answer choice (B) does not say anything about Mr. Ramos. Eliminate it. Answer choice (C) mention “paper”, which are not in the question. Cross it off too. Answer choice (A) tells where Mr. Ramos works. So the answer is (A).

- Can you send the shipping department an e-mail for me?

(A) Yes, the package will arrive.

(B) Yes, as soon as I find the address.

(C) No, I haven’t done it yet.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p74)*

Answer choice (A) mentions a package. Cross it off. Answer choice (C) talk about the past, but the question asks about the present. Get rid of this one. Answer choice (B) answers the question.

### **Wh-questions**

- When was the train supposed to arrive?

(A) No, not until 5:30.

(B) I didn’t bring an umbrella today.

(C) Haft an hour ago.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p75)*

The questions word when needs an answer containing a time reference. Eliminate answer choice (B). A question word can't have a yes or no answer. Cross off (A).

Answer choice (C) tell when the train was supposed to come.

- What's the number you called to get a taxi?

(A) Yes, that's the one I use all the time.

(B) It's easy 777777

(C) I can't drive my own car because it's being repaired

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p75)*

Answer choices (A) and(C) answer different questions about taxi than the one being asked. Eliminate them. Answer choice (B) gives the number.

- Where did Elaine write down her password?

(A) Right before she went on vacation.

(B) No, you should turn left down Herald Pass

(C) It's on a note on her computer.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p75)*

Answer choice (A) answer when not where. Cross it off. Answer choice (B) uses sound-alike's "Herald Pass" for "her password". Eliminate it. Answer choice (C) tells where the note is.

- Who won the employee of the year award?

(A) Mr. Johnson in marketing.

(B) It'll be held at three o'clock this afternoon.

(C) The sales department will be relocated.

*(Sisa,2007: p80)*

Answer choices (B) and (C) don't mention person. So the answer must be answer choice (A).

- Why was the presentation postponed?

(A) He's in a meeting right now.



- (B) I think the chairperson is sick.
- (C) The notice will be posted on the board.

(Sisa,2007: p86)

There is no “he” or “notice” mention in the question. But we have chairperson who controls the presentation in answer choice (B). So the answer must be answer choice (B).

- How long do you need to finish the project?
- (A) At least a week.
- (B) The overhead projector is in the marketing department.
- (C) It’s the wrong way.

(Sisa,2007: p90)

The question asks how long, and the answer gives a time. The answer is (A).

How many people are coming to the conference?

- A) There were 70 people there.
- B) I don't think she is coming.
- C) At least 150 people.

(Sisa,2007: p90)

Choice A has a distracter called a related word. When you hear the words, "how many" your brain automatically looks for a response with a number in it. This is an error that the test maker expects you to make. Also, the response is in the past tense, but the question asks about the future. Choice B is a distracter called a repeated word. The word "coming" is in the question but the answer B does not make sense. This is another common error that the test maker expects you to make. The correct answer choice is C.

### **Negative question**

- Doesn't this hotel offer a dry cleaning service?
- (A) Yes, but they are closed.
- (B) We've already cleaned all of the rooms.
- (C) It sounds like a good offer.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p75)*

Both answer choice (B) and (C) does not mention the "dry cleaning service", all they do are giving words "cleaned" and "offer" to make a distracter called a repeated word. The answer is the answer choice (A).

Didn't Mr. Nakamura approve the proposal?

- (A) Yes, John did it.
- (B) No, he's still reviewing it.
- (C) Yes, it has really improved.

*(Elizabeth Rollins, 2006: p75)*

In the question the subject is Mr. Nakamura, but in the answer choice (A) the subject is John. Cross it off. The answer choice (C) has the subject is "it"? Cross it off. So the answer is the answer choice (B).

### **Tag question**

- This is your first office party, isn't it?
- (A) A lot of people didn't come to the party.
- (B) Yes, so I'm looking forward to it.
- (C) I don't know anyone in the office.

*(Sisa,2007: p104)*

Both answer choice (A) and (C) does not mention the "office party", they mention the people, they give words "party" and "office" to make a distracter called a repeated word. The answer is the answer choice (B).

### **Alternative question**

Should I call you in the morning or in the afternoon?

- (A) That's what it's called.
- (B) Sorry, I didn't get a call this afternoon.
- (C) Either one is fine.

(Sisa,2007: p106)

The question requires the answer about time but both answer choices (A) and (B) do not mention time. Cross it off. The answer is answer choice (C).

Is next year's trade fair going to be in Thailand or China?

- (A) Train fare is six dollars in Beijing.
- (B) I've never been there before.
- (C) They haven't decided on a location yet.

(Sisa,2007: p106)

The answer choice (A) uses the sound alike word "train fare" (trade fair) to make a distracter. Cross it off. The answer choice must be related to place. So cross the answer choice (B). The answer is (C).

### **Indirect question**

Did you hear that Mark got promoted to director of marketing?

- (A) Yes, he did a good job last year.
- (B) It's our new promotion campaign.
- (C) Sorry, I can't hear you.

(Sisa,2007: p108)

The answer choice (B) does not mention Mark's promotion, "it's our new promotion". So cross it off. The answer choice (C) answer for phrase "did you hear". So cross it off. The answer is (A).

Do you know where Jane put the revised script?

- (A) No, I'd rather not.
- (B) Almost ten pages.
- (C) I think it's on her desk.

(Sisa,2007: p108)

Only the answer (C) answer for where question. So the answer is (C).

As, I see it, there is a need for students to be prepared for more TOEIC. I wish to stress the importance of acquiring this skills to be prepared for the challenges they will encounter when starting a new TOEIC.

## Chapter III: Some problems related to listening skills

In this chapter, I have presented some typical lists of homonyms and idioms that most common in TOEIC test.

### III.1 Homonyms

The trap you need to know about when listening is homonyms – words that are spelled differently, but sound alike. These are used to fool you. The following is a list of some common pairs of homonyms. This is by no means a complete list. We have not included every definition for each word- just the most common definition. Remember, when you come across a homonym, the most important thing to do is to put the word into context.

*(<http://www.editingandwritingservices.com/homonyms.htm>)*

**By:** near “her house is by the shopping mall”

**Buy:** to purchase “I want to buy a new car”

**Banned:** not allowed “short skirts are banned at her school”

**Band:** a music group “the band at the party played only the most popular songs”

**Cell:** the smallest unit of living matter “the amoeba consists of a single cell”

**Sell:** to make a sale “I want to sell this old car and buy a new one”

**Die:** to become dead or expire “the man will likely die from his severe injuries”

**Dye:** used to color things “what dye did you use to get that interesting purple color?”

**Fair:** festival, carnival “the town fair is held every summer”

**Fare:** cost “the round trip fare by airplane is \$200”

**Flower:** daisy, tulip, rose “I love to grow flowers in my garden.”

**Flour:** ingredient in baking “I need two cups of flour for the cake.”

**Here:** this place “comes here right now!”

**Hear:** listen “did you hear what I said?”

**Hire:** to employ someone “I need to hire a tutor to help me with my studies.”

**Higher:** more elevated “put the book on a higher shelf.”

**Hole:** an empty space “last week, I dug a big hole to plant those seeds”

**Whole:** entire “he ate the whole pie before anyone else could even have a piece.”

**Hour:** a sixty-minute time period “this class is one hour long”

**Our:** possessive form of we “we like our new teacher”

**I:** me, myself “I am taking a vacation next month”

**Eye:** what you see with “my eyes are bothered by cigarette smoke”

**Jeans:** denim pants “jean is really comfortable to wear”

**Genes:** biological units of inheritance “he inherited blue eyes from his mother’s genes”

**Maid:** someone who cleans “the maid will clean your room”

**Made:** past tense of make “I made the bed myself”

**New:** not used “I bought this new dress today with the money I earned”

**Knew:** past tense of know “I knew that you were going to show up at the party!”

**Pale:** light in color “Jane is pale- she hasn’t been to the beach”

**Pail:** a container “she carries a pail of milk from the barn”

**Plain:** simple, unadorned “this dress is too plain; there are no designs on it”

**Principal:** the head of a school “Principal Jones supervises the whole school”

**Principle:** belief “stand by your principles”

**Red:** the color “stop at a red light”

**Read:** past tense of read “I read a whole book last night.”

**Reflex:** unconscious movement “I pulled my hand out of the warder in a reflex”

**Reflects:** casts back an image “the lake reflects the trees perfectly”

**Sail:** on a boat “the sail catches wind and pushes the boat.”

**Sale:** a discount, bargain “I bought this coat on sale and saved a lot of money”

**Sea:** ocean “we swam in the sea today”

**See:** to view, use your eyes “I see that you are wearing the sweater I gave you for your birthday”

**Scene:** where something takes place “that scene in the movie was filmed in New York city”

**Seen:** past tense of see “I’ve seen that movie three times”

**Sew:** use a needle and thread “I want to sew the rip on these jeans”

**So:** who cares? “So what? I really have no interest in what you are saying”

**Son:** male child “she has one son and two daughters”

**Sun:** the Earth revolves around it “the sun is very hot today!”

**Soul:** spirit “Buddhists believe that the soul is reincarnated”

**Sole:** only “he was the sole survivor of the train accident”

**Tale:** story “that was some tale Jack told us”

**Tail:** at the end of an animal “don’t pull the cat’s tail”

**Wait:** to pause, stop “wait for me, I’ll be right there”

**Weight:** heaviness “the weight of this package is three pounds”

**Way:** direction “which way should we go”

**Weigh:** to figure out how heavy something is “did you weigh these vegetables?”

**Weather:** atmospheric conditions, what it’s like outside “the weather report calls for rain.”

**Whether:** if “I need to know whether you will go”.

**Won:** defeated an opponent “we won the game by 2 to 1.”

**One:** the number 1. Or alone “there is only one girl on the softball team.”

**Wood:** material from tree “the furniture is made of wood.”

**Would:** form of will “I would like a new table.”

**Worn:** past tense of wear “have you worn those shoes yet?”

**Warn:** to caution “I warn you, he is a tough teacher”

### III.2 Idioms

Idioms are words or phrases that do not translate literally.

There are two types of idioms you should learn to do well on the TOEIC. One is the true idiom, an expression that is specific to a language and that can not be understood by understanding the individual words that make it up. The other kind

of idiom is a phrase containing a preposition. There is no logic to the way prepositions appear (in any language, but especially English), so these phrases can only be learned by use. In this sense they are idioms as well.

[\(http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/\)](http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/)

### **III.1.1 True idiom list**

True idioms are words or phrase that does not translate literally. For example, “break down” does not mean to beak something in a downward motion, but to lose control.

**Break down:** a collapse of physical or mental health; failing to work

When she heard that her pet iguana had escaped, she broke down and cried in front of the whole class.

After their car broke down, they had to walk five miles to the nearest service station.

**Break in:** to enter forcibly. With an item of clothing, it can mean to wear in and make comfortable

The thief broke into the museum and stole all the artwork.

I finally broke in those shoes, but not before they gave me some terrible blisters.

**Breakthrough:** a sudden achievement or understanding

The new vaccine represented a significant breakthrough in the battle against the virus.

**Break up:** to separate or collapse; to divide and disperse.

In 1969, the Beatles officially broke up after playing together as a band for more than a decade.

**Clear away:** to free from something

When all this trouble clears away, he’ll be able to go back to school.



If you clear away the dishes, I'll wash them.

**Clear out:** to leave a place, usually quickly.

The fire marshal ordered the people to clear out of their homes due to the possibility that the brush fires would spread.

**Come about:** to happen

The train wreck came about as a result of the engineer's negligence.

**Come across:** to find or meet by chance

We came across my grandmother's old diary while cleaning out the attic.

**Come down with:** to get sick

When she came down with a terrible case of laryngitis, Kathy Lou Kelly wasn't able to perform at the benefit concert.

**Come up with:** to produce something or have an idea.

It was Juan who came up with the scheme to trick Mrs. Hittable

**Come from:** to derive or originate from

The English language comes from many sources, such as Greek and Latin

**Come of:** result from

"Nothing good will come of that sort of behavior" my mother always said

**Come out:** to disclose

The news finally came out; cholesterol is not as bad for you as scientists originally believed.

**Come through with:** to do what is needed

The union finally came through with an offer to negotiate rather than strike.

**Come to:** to regain consciousness; add up to

After Dorothy came to, she saw that she was in her own bed in Kansas

That dress and those shoes will come to about \$100

**Come to terms with:** to understand or absorb mentally.

She had trouble coming to terms with her dog's death, it seemed so sudden.

**Do without:** to get along without

During the drought, residents had to do without long, luxurious shows.

**Drop in/ drop by:** to visit casually and sometimes unexpectedly

After the movie, we'll drop in and see if Margie is home.

On your way to the dorm, drop by the library to see if the book is on reserve

**Fall back on:** to turn to for help

Fortunately for John, after he lost all his spending money, he had some savings to fall back on.

**Fall behind:** to fail to keep up with

Mark had fallen behind so badly in his studies, it seemed he'd never be able to finish all his work and pass his courses.

**Fall for:** be taken in by; duped

I can't believe that John fell for that trick, it was so obvious.

**Fill in:** to substitute for

Mary Jones will fill in for Patty Smith during the race, as Patty is too ill to come today.

**Fit in:** to make time for; to conform

The doctor will fit you in at about three o'clock for an appointment with her.

Teenagers often try to fit in with their friends by wearing the same style clothes and listening to the same music.

**Give away:** make a gift of

The store was giving away a new scarf with every purchase in order to bring in more customers.

**Give in:** to surrender

In Hessen's Siddhartha, the main character's father finally gives in and allows his son to leave home.

**Give up:** to stop; to yield to; to part with

He finally gave up smoking after years of hearing all the health warnings.

She wouldn't sign the legal papers yet, she wasn't sure if she wanted to give up her right to a trial.

**Go along with:** to agree to

The president would go along with the decision to hire more people if the department could bring in more revenue.

**Go down:** when referring to food this means it can be swallowed and digested.

Ice cream was the only food that would go down easily after her operation.

**Hang on:** to hold on to; to wait or persevere

Indiana Jones managed to grab onto the cliff and hang on for dear life.

The receptionist told me to hang on while she consulted her appointment book.

**Hang around:** to loiter

On a hot summer day, the kids like to just hang around at the beach.

**Keep in touch:** to stay in communication with.

Please keep in touch with us after you move to France.

**Lay off:** to terminate someone's employment

The Bindley Corporation had to lay off ten percent of its employees due to decreased sales.

**Leave out:** to omit

“Don’t leave out Aunt Mary from the wedding invitations!”

**Live up to:** to fulfill

We expect that Jim will live up to our plans to become the first member of family to attend college.

**On the mark:** exactly right

“Boy, were you on the mark about Irene- you were the only one who thought that she’d play so well in that concert”.

**Pass up:** to refuse

We couldn’t believe that Jose would pass up an opportunity to travel all around the country for free.

**Think better of:** to change your mind

Mark had considered dropping out of school to work, but a discussion with his parents made him think better of it, and he decided to stay in school.

**Up to date:** current

Her clothes are always so stylish and up to date- she must read all the fashion magazines.

### **III.1.2 Preposition idiom list**

The meanings of these phrases are obvious, as they follow the dictionary definitions of the words. Therefore we have not included definitions of the words. Instead, we have provided sentences illustrating the proper use of these idioms.

**Able to, ability to**

I am no longer able to run 10 miles as fast as I used to.

Sloths have the ability to sleep while hanging from their toes.

**Accede to:** Once defeated, the military dictator had to accede to NATO's demands.

**Access to:** After the home team lost, reporters were not given access to the coach's office.

**According to:** According to the etiquette expert, it is very rude to stick out your pinkie as you drink tea.

**Account for:** The Brazilian rain forest accounts for 40 percent of all species of tree frog.

**Accuse of:** I accused my little brother of stealing my favorite football jersey.

**Acquaint with:** When I moved to London, I had to acquaint myself with English social customs.

**Agree with:** I don't agree with your viewpoint

**Allow for:** When you budget your money, you should allow for emergency expenses.

**Amount to:** When the trial was canceled, the entire lawyer's preparation amounted to nothing

**Appear to:** The natives of this island don't appear to be very friendly.

**Apply to:** Traffic laws don't apply to international diplomats.

**Argue over:** The newly married couple didn't argue over money very often.

**At a disadvantage:** Our desperate financial situation put us at a disadvantage while we were negotiating.

**Call for:** Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Claim to my uncle claim to have eaten 200 hot dogs in half an hour.

**Consequence of:** Bankruptcy is usually a consequence of poor money management.

**Consider:** Dr. Mentis is considered the world's foremost authority on medieval manuscripts.

**Isolate from:** People who are infected with the Ebola virus must be isolated from other patients.

**Neither... nor:** Neither rain nor sleet shall keep me from the swift completion of my appointed rounds.

In short, the lists above are not exhaustive, but they contain a good number of the homonyms and idioms that could appear on the TOEIC. If learners have time and want to study them seriously, the best way is probably to make flash cards out of them. The act of writing the idioms onto cards will help learners remember them. Then learners can study the cards whenever they have a spare minute.

## **PART III CONCLUSION**

### **III.1 Conclusion remark**

In conclusion, there are a lot ways to improve your listening skills. However, due to my limitation of time as well as my knowledge I have just only mentioned some listening skills that are supposed to be the most popular. Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well learners listen has a major impact on their job effectiveness, and on the quality of their relationships with others. Clearly, listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving. Listening is one way of understanding. By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating good and lasting impressions with others.

This graduation paper has been carried out with the aim to find out effective and various techniques for listening. Some related background knowledge as what is listening skills, how to learn listening skills, listening skills in TOEIC test were presented in Chapter I. The most effective techniques to apply in each step of listening have been clearly introduced in Chapter II. In chapter III some conclusions and suggestions were demonstrated. However, beside the strong points, weak points are unavoidable. Due to limitations of time and knowledge the study can not cover all listening skills.

Finally, I do hope that in the near future, many other activities for students' interests in listening will be studied to help learners study English well.

### **III.1 Suggestion for further study**

Vietnamese learners have a lot of difficulties learning and practicing English listening such as: Learners sometimes even don't know that there are English varieties and so they meet lots of difficulties. For example, learners who study one kind of English varieties will get confused when they face with the rest and they feel like these are new worlds. The more various English is the more words learners need to learn and that is really a big deal. Instead of learning one new word they might have to learn four or more. For those problems, learners need to

have the overview of English varieties and have planned to learn different words or different meaning of words used in different dialects or countries. When they have the overview they will not get confused when they meet the strange words in a familiar context. If I have opportunity to study more about listening skills of English varieties, I would be focus further about British English and American English but the others. Because they are the most popular and standard with the biggest speakers in the world. If learners do that it will help them reduce lots of time but still can cover the hugest aspect of it.



## References

### Books

Crystal, David, 2003. *English as a global language*. Cambridge: university press.

English-English-Vietnamese dictionary, 2006. Van Hoa Thong Tin press.

Elizabeth Rollins, N. 2006. *Cracking the TOEIC*. Young publisher.

Lee Seongryong, et al, 2007. *Tomato TOEIC compact*. Nhan Tri Viet's limited liability company.

Macmillan Heinemann, 2008. *Essential dictionary for learners of English*. Macmillan University.

Quirk, et al, 1985. **A comprehensive grammar of the English language**. Longman Group limited.

YBM Sisa, N. 2007. *Rainbow TOEIC*. Nhan Tri Viet's limited liability company.

### Websites

<http://www.editingandwritingservices.com/homonyms.htm>

<http://www.en.wiktionary.org/wiki/listen>

<http://www.enc.slider.com/Enc/British-english>.

<http://www.ets.org/TOEIC>

[http://www.jalt.org/test/cha\\_new.htm](http://www.jalt.org/test/cha_new.htm)

<http://www.reese.linguist.de/English/index.htm>

<http://www.sil.org/linguistics/bibliographylingustics/quirkgreenbaumleechandsvartvik.htm>

<http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms>

<http://www.wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>

## APPENDIX

### *Exercise 1:*

Complete the question with their question words:

1. .... helping me with this suitcase?
2. .... buy that car, is he?
3. .... on Friday, doesn't she
4. .... first visit to the United Kingdom?
5. .... a ride to the theater this evening?
6. .... stay late today, or finish this in the morning?
7. .... to confirm that appointment?
8. .... Coffee or tea?
9. .... Last year's conference, didn't we?
10. .... That proposal done on time?

Now, choose one suitable response to each question from this list

- A. That's right.
- B. No, I've never been there.
- C. That would be a great help.
- D. I just don't see how I can.
- E. No, she didn't.
- F. I certainly hope not.
- G. No, I've been here a couple of times.
- H. No, not at all.
- I. Not as far as I know.
- J. Coffee, please.
- K. Yes, that's an excellent proposal.
- L. I've never seen that suitcase before.
- M. She actually goes on Saturday morning.
- N. We might as well get it done today.

**Exercise 2:** match the questions with the appropriate responses

Questions

1. Who's coming to the reception?
2. When are you taking your vacation?
3. Is it okay if I change the air filter?
4. Do you know why they built the new museum so far from the old one?
5. The play starts at 8:30, doesn't it?
6. You're not really taking a new job, are you?
7. Shouldn't we hire a new designer?
8. Would you like to join us for lunch?

Responses

- A. Nothing closer was available.
- B. Yes, I start in two weeks.
- C. The entire department is invited.
- D. Yes, we should.
- E. I thought it was at eight.
- F. I haven't decided yet.
- G. Sorry, but I have a noon meeting.
- H. Only if it's really dirty.

**Key for exercises**

Exercise 1

Complete questions:

9. Would you mind helping me with this suitcase?
10. He's not going to buy that car, is he?
11. She leaves on Friday, doesn't she?
12. Is this your first visit to the UK?
13. Would you like a ride to the theater this evening?
14. Shall we stay late today, or finish this in the morning?
15. Did Mr. Richardson phone to confirm that appointment?

16. Would you prefer coffee, or tea?

17. We met at last year's conference, didn't we?

18. Do you think you will get that proposal done on time?

Suitable responses:

1. H

2. F

3. M

4. G

5. C

6. N

7. I

8. J

9. A

10. D

Exercise 2:

1. C

2. F

3. H

4. A

5. E

6. B

7. D

8. G