

Hello, this is a presentation for JALT2020 Online. My name is Masaya Kanzaki, and I teach at Kanda University of International Studies. Thank you for your interest in my presentation, entitled “IELTS vs. TOEIC: Scores and Test-Taker Reactions.”

Rather than giving you a handout, I’ve made some supplementary material available online. A shortened URL to the page is bit.ly/mkjalt2020, all in lower case. You can also use this QR code to access it.



On the supplementary page, there’s a link to an Excel file, in which you’ll find information about the participants, SPSS output of score statistics, scatterplots, questionnaire results, and raw data collected in the study. Also, on the supplementary page are links to some IELTS- and TOEIC-related information.

Now, the purpose of the study is to compare IELTS and TOEIC by reviewing the scores and opinions of a group of test-takers. I got the idea of comparing IELTS and TOEIC when the Japanese Ministry of Education published a CEFR-based comparison chart for eight English proficiency tests in March 2018.

CEFR	ケンブリッジ 英語検定	実用英語技能検定 1級-3級	GTEC Advanced Basic Core CBT	IELTS	TEAP	TEAP CBT	TOEFL iBT	TOEIC L&R/ TOEIC S&W
C2	230 200 (210)			9.0 8.5				
C1	199 180 (190)	3299 2600 (2599)	1400 1350 (1400)	8.0 7.0	400 375	800	120 95	1990 1845
B2	179 160 (170)	2599 2300 (2304)	1349 1190 (1280)	6.5 5.5	374 309	795 600	94 72	1840 1560
B1	159 140 (150)	2299 1950 (1980)	1189 960 (1080)	5.0 4.0	308 225	595 420	71 42	1555 1150
A2	139 120 (120)	1949 1700 (1728)	959 690 (840)		224 135	415 235		1145 625
A1	119 100 (100)	1699 1400 (1456)	689 270 (270)					620 320

These tests were selected for use as an application requirement for national universities, and in their effort to compare the results of different tests, the Ministry of Education made a comparison chart. IELTS and TOEIC were among those eight tests, and I was intrigued by the idea of converting IELTS and TOEIC scores into the same scale. On the one hand, IELTS and TOEIC are different in design; IELTS is designed to measure the English ability needed to study at an English-medium university, while TOEIC is designed to measure the English ability required for the workplace. Since their purposes are different, their scores are essentially incomparable. On the other hand, IELTS and TOEIC both measure English ability—not academic or occupational competency. And the English ability needed in these settings may not be so different. If the two tests, then, purely measure English ability, their scores must be comparable to some extent. So, I thought it would be interesting to see how closely IELTS and TOEIC scores correlate with each other.

Also, I was interested to see how test-takers feel about the face-to-face interview of IELTS and the computer-based speaking test of TOEIC. From my own test-taking experience, I feel that speaking to a person and speaking to a computer are quite different, and that the former is much easier than the latter. Do other people feel the same way? I wanted to find out.

The method of the study was simple: I had the participants take IELTS and TOEIC and fill out a questionnaire about the tests, and then I analyzed the test scores and questionnaire results. I also conducted interviews.

Eighty-four university students took part in the study on a voluntary basis and in exchange for a monetary reward of 5,000 yen. The exam fees were covered by research grants.

(Caption on screen)

Acknowledgements

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Two types of IELTS are available, Academic and General Training, and there are two modes of delivery: paper-based and computer-delivered. The one used in this study was paper-based IELTS Academic.

As for scores, the IELTS website reads: “The Test Report Form provides your Overall Band Score and band scores for each of the four components. The Overall Band Score is the average of the four component scores, rounded to the nearest whole or half band.” So, for example, test-takers whose average scores are 4.75, 4.875, 5, or 5.125 all get the same overall score of 5.

	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Average	Overall
Test-taker A	4.5	5	4.5	5	4.75	5
Test-taker B	4.5	4	5.5	5.5	4.875	5
Test-taker C	5	5.5	5	4.5	5	5
Test-taker D	5	5.5	5	5	5.125	5

I thought a simple total of the four component scores would be a more accurate representation of a test-taker’s total ability than the rounded average, so I added the total scores of IELTS in my analyses.

Just a little clarification about TOEIC. TOEIC Listening and Reading is one test—the listening and reading sections have to be taken together. TOEIC Speaking and TOEIC Writing are different tests, and they can be taken together or separately. In this presentation, however, I sometimes refer to the three TOEIC tests as a single test and the TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests as the speaking and writing sections of TOEIC so as to align them with IELTS.

The participants took both IELTS and TOEIC on campus, IELTS on Saturday, September 7, 2019 and TOEIC on Tuesday, September 10, 2019. And they filled out the questionnaire on Google Forms after taking the tests. The exact wording of the questions on the questionnaire and the participants’ responses, including their comments, are included in the raw data section of the Excel file on the supplementary page.

Let's take a look at the results. First, here are the descriptive statistics for the IELTS scores.

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Listening (0–9)	5.30	0.68	3.5	7
Reading (0–9)	5.46	0.93	3.5	8
Speaking (0–9)	5.54	0.82	3.5	8
Writing (0–9)	5.33	0.51	3.5	6
Total (0–36)	21.63	2.33	16	27
Overall (0–9)	5.45	0.61	4	7

The average reading score is higher than the average listening score, and the average speaking score is higher than the average writing score.

Here are the descriptive statistics for the TOEIC scores.

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Listening (5–495)	383.15	76.28	145	495
Reading (5–495)	330.06	80.19	85	470
Speaking (0–200)	137.74	19.35	90	190
Writing (0–200)	144.76	22.41	70	190
Total (10–1980)	1412.40	221.58	715.75	1855.75

Possible listening and reading scores are between 5 and 495, whereas possible speaking and writing scores are between 0 and 200. In order for all four scores to be weighted equally in the total scores, the combined speaking and writing scores were divided by 400 and multiplied by 990 before being added to the listening and reading scores.

The average listening score is higher than the average reading score, and the average writing score is higher than the average speaking score, which is the exact opposite of the IELTS score comparisons.

Next, here are the correlations between the same skill scores of IELTS and TOEIC as

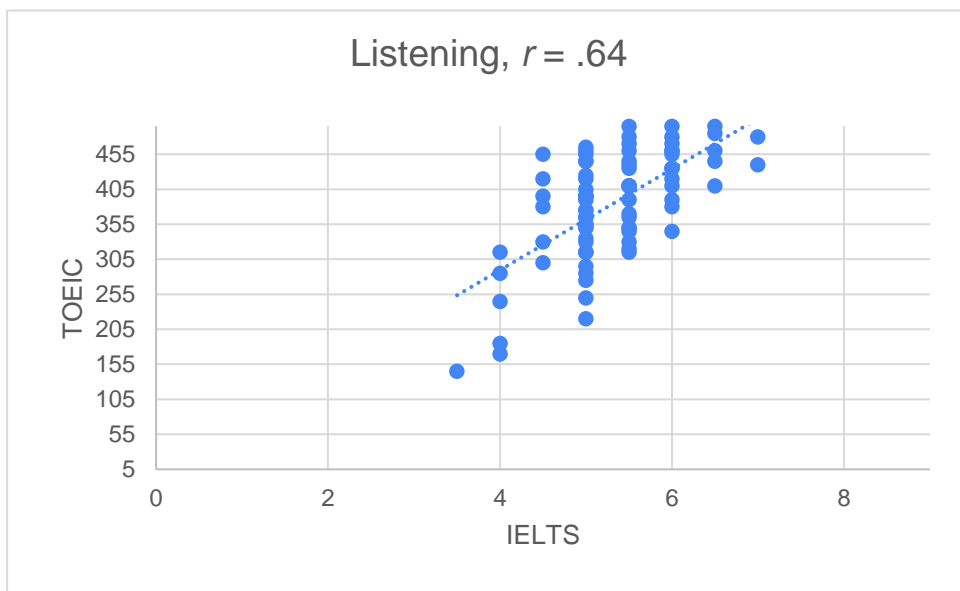
well as those between the total scores of the two tests and the IELTS overall and TOEIC total scores.

	Correlations
Listening	.64
Reading	.69
Speaking	.50
Writing	.58
Total	.81
IELTS Overall —TOEIC Total	.79

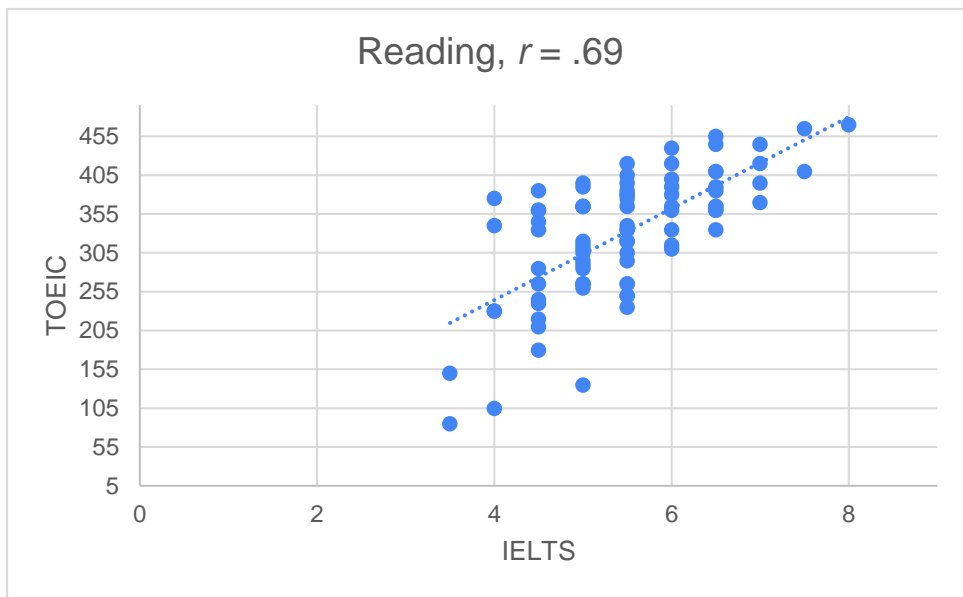
Among the four skill scores, the reading scores are the most strongly correlated at .69 and the speaking scores are the most weakly correlated at .50. The IELTS total scores correlate with the TOEIC total scores more strongly than the IELTS overall scores. If you round the scores, that makes the correlation weaker.

Here are the scatterplots of the scores.

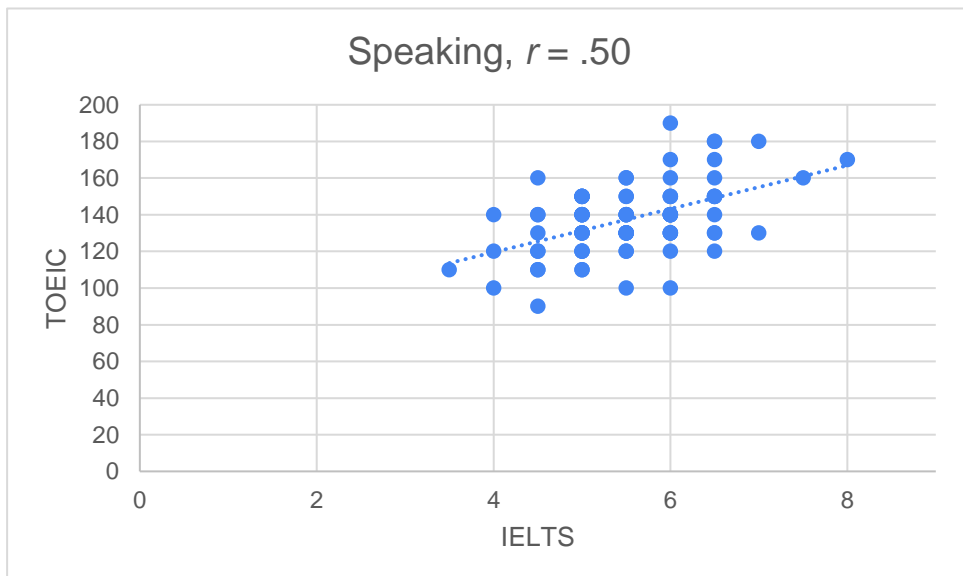
Between the listening scores, the correlation is .64.



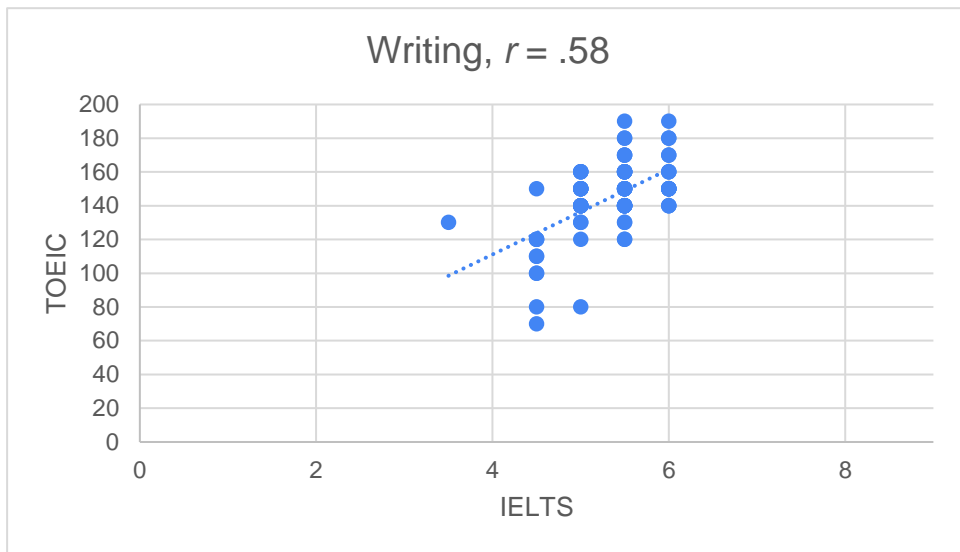
Between the reading scores, the correlation is .69.



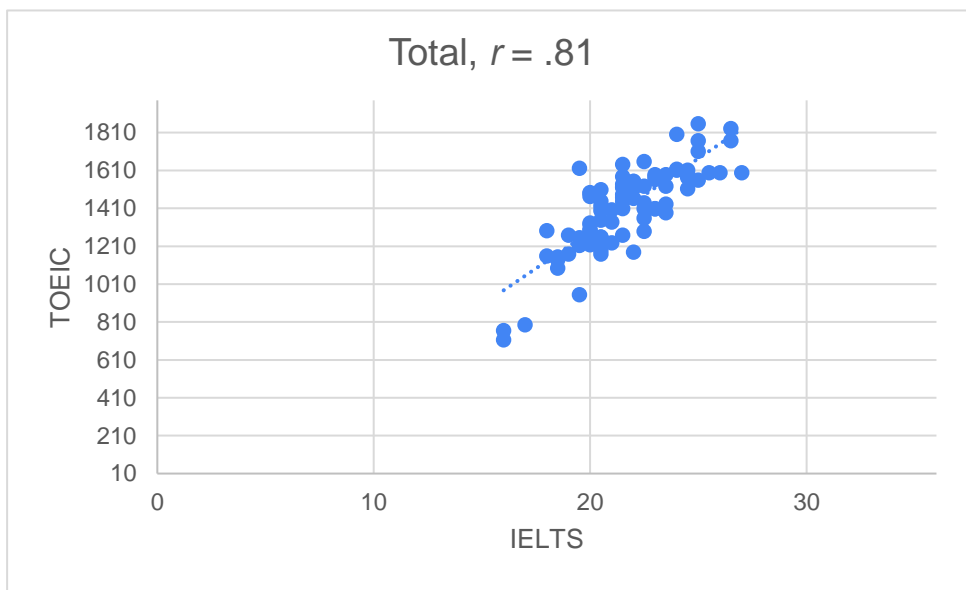
Between the speaking scores, the correlation is .5.



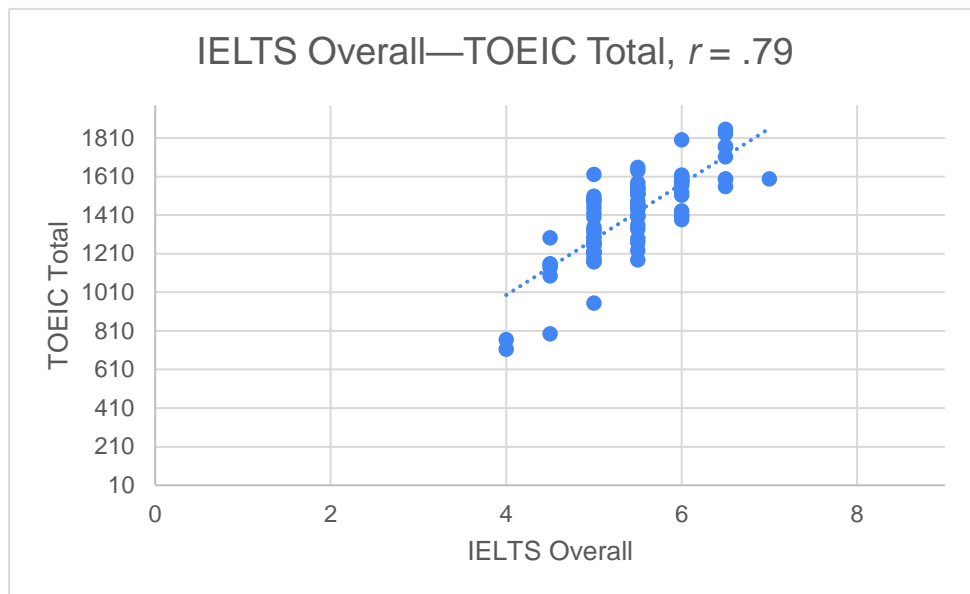
Between the writing scores, the correlation is .58.



Between the total scores, the correlation is .81.

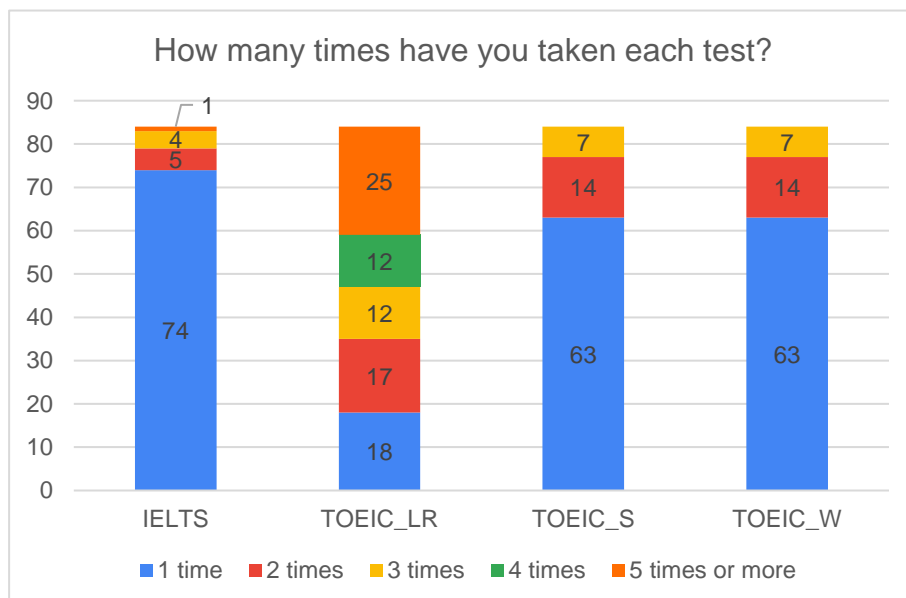


Between the IELTS overall and TOEIC total scores, the correlation is .79.



If you compare the four skill scores separately, the correlations are not very strong, but if you compare the combined scores, the correlations are fairly strong.

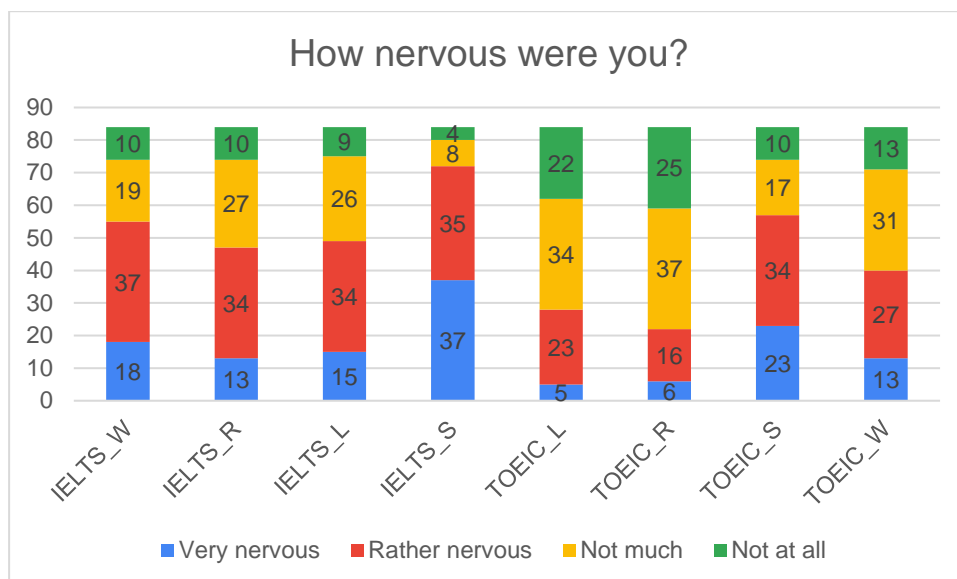
Let's move on to the questionnaire results. The first question was: How many times have you taken each test, including the ones for this study? And here are the results.



Most of the participants had taken TOEIC Listening and Reading previously to the study, but 74 of them were taking IELTS for the first time, and for 63 of them, this was their first experience taking TOEIC Speaking and TOEIC Writing.

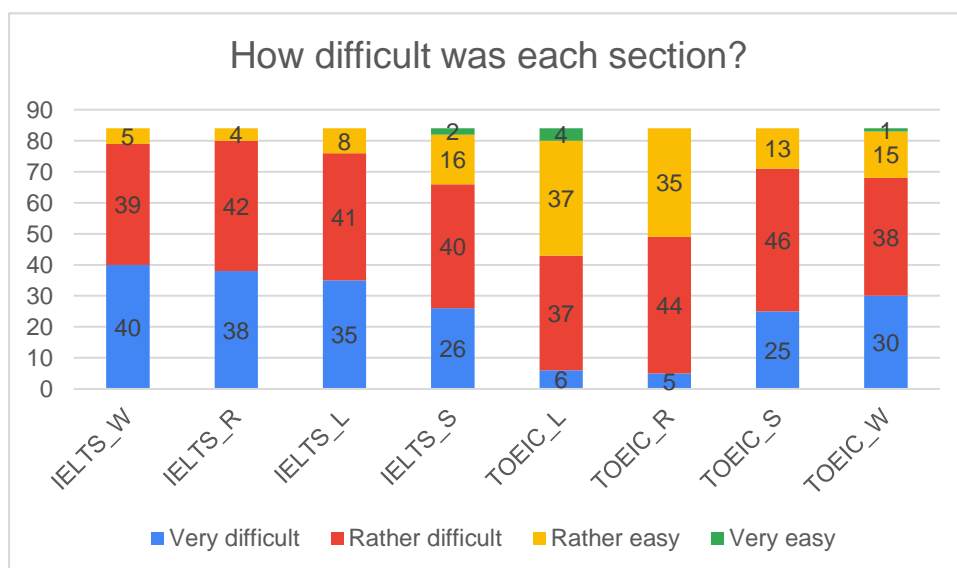
The second question asked: How nervous were you during each section of the tests?

Here are the results.



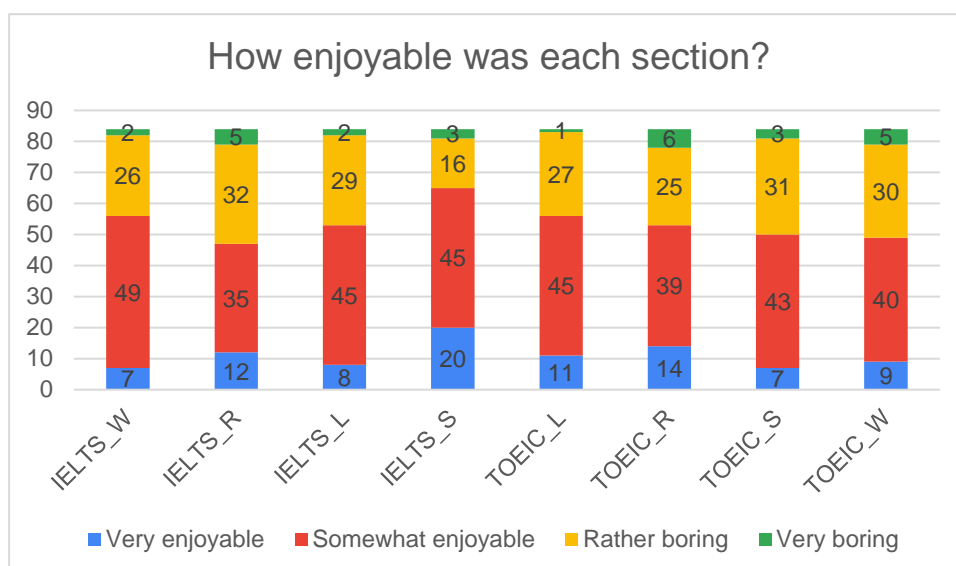
The percentage of “Very nervous” and “Rather nervous” combined is the highest for IELTS Speaking, followed by TOEIC Speaking. It’s lowest for TOEIC Reading, followed by TOEIC Listening.

The third question was: How difficult was each section of the tests? And the results...



IELTS Writing and IELTS Reading were the two most difficult, and TOEIC Listening was the easiest, followed by TOEIC Reading.

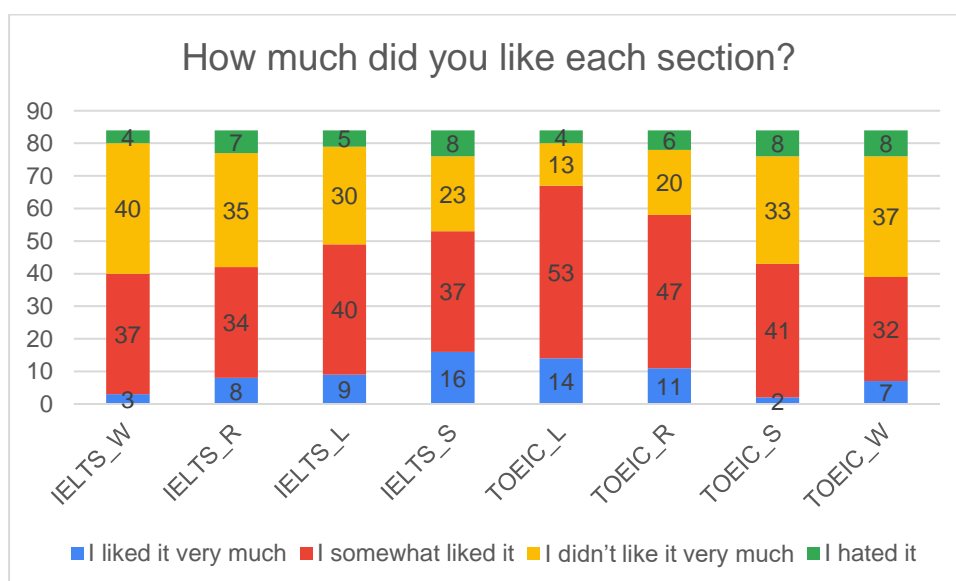
The fourth question asked: How would you describe your experience of taking each section of the tests in terms of enjoyment? And here are the results.



IELTS Speaking was the most enjoyable of the eight.

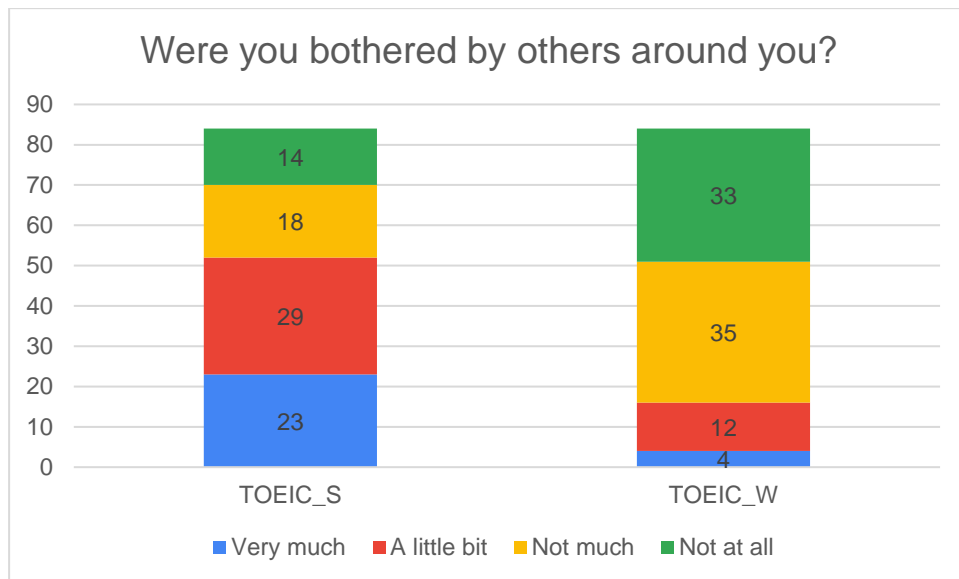
The fifth question was: Please indicate how much you liked each section of the tests.

And the results...



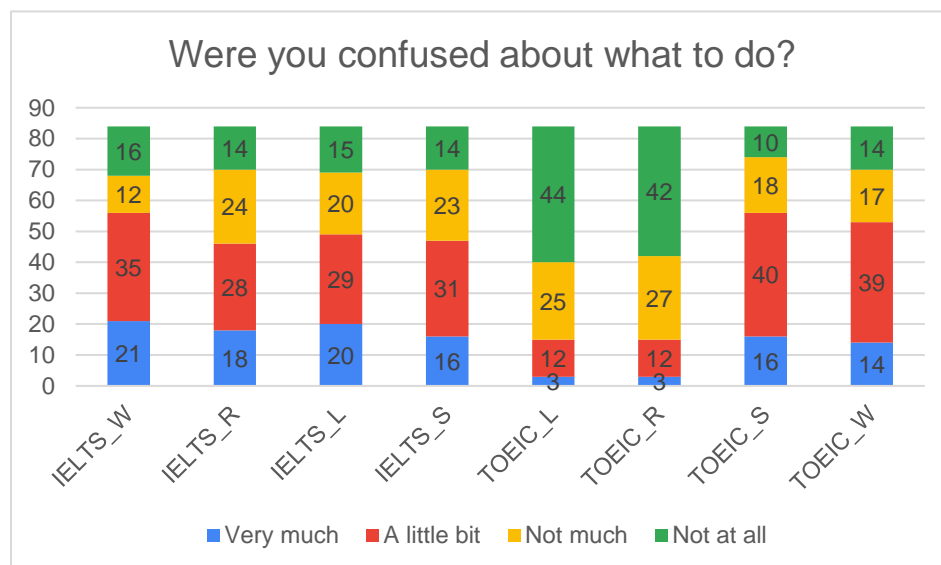
IELTS Speaking has the highest number of “I liked it very much,” but when the numbers for “I somewhat liked it” are added, TOEIC Listening comes out on top, followed by TOEIC Reading.

The sixth question asked: Were you bothered by any voices or other sounds from the test-takers around you during TOEIC Speaking and Writing? All the participants took TOEIC Speaking and Writing together in one room. They could hear other test-takers’ voices during the speaking test, so I thought some of them might have been distracted by that.



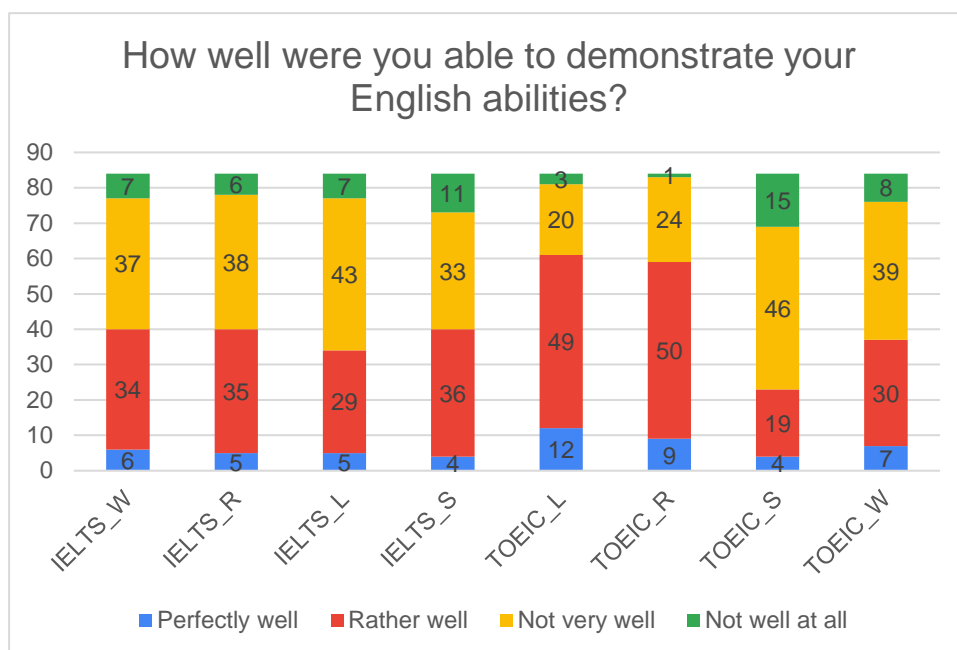
The results suggest there should be a certain distance between test-takers during a computer-based speaking test so as to reduce distraction. A computer-based writing test, however, is less problematic in that typing on a computer is not as loud.

The seventh question was: Were you confused about what to do during any sections of the tests because the test formats were unfamiliar to you? The results...



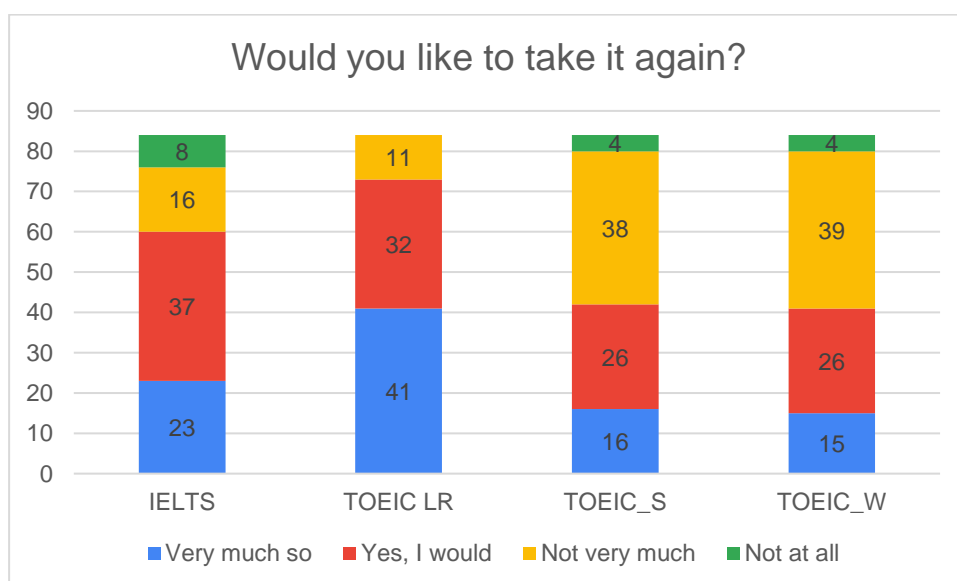
TOEIC Listening and TOEIC Reading were by far the least confusing. This must be because most of the participants had taken them before. Also, the exam formats of TOEIC Listening and Reading are straightforward.

The eighth question asked: How well were you able to demonstrate your English abilities for each section of the tests? And the results...



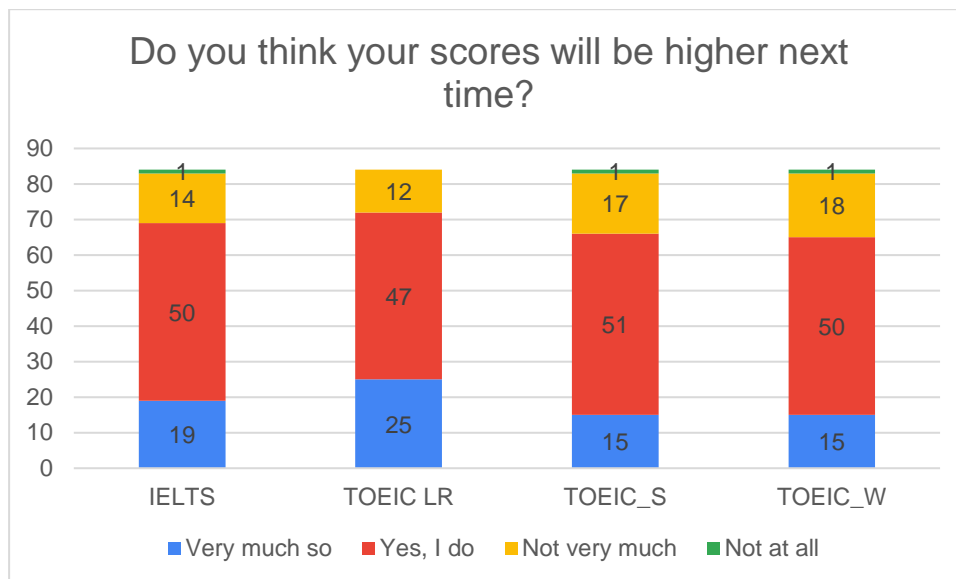
The numbers for “Perfectly well” and “Rather well” are noticeably higher for TOEIC Listening and TOEIC Reading compared to the other six. Again, this must be because most of the participants had taken them before and were thus familiar with the exam formats. The percentage of those who were not able to demonstrate their ability well is highest for TOEIC Speaking.

The ninth question was: Would you like to take IELTS, TOEIC Listening and Reading, TOEIC Speaking, and TOEIC Writing again? And here are the results.



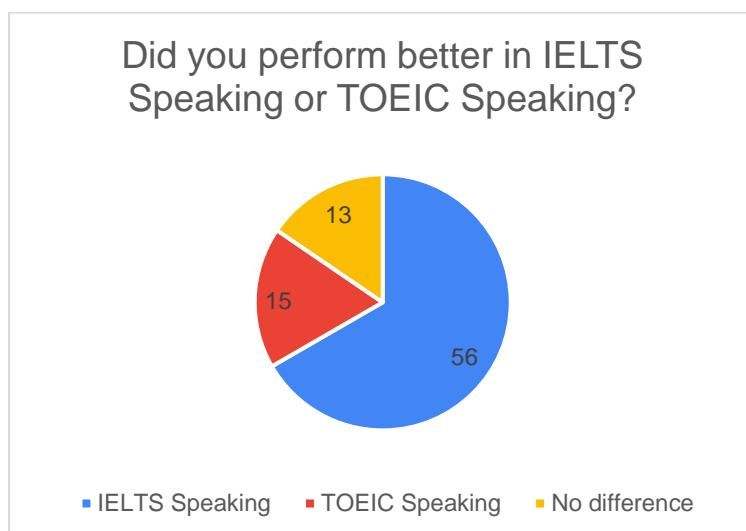
TOEIC Listening and Reading was the most popular of the four.

The tenth question asked: If you take IELTS, TOEIC Listening and Reading, TOEIC Speaking, and TOEIC Writing again, do you think your scores will be higher? The results...



The percentage of “Very much so” and “Yes, I do” combined is slightly higher for TOEIC Listening and Reading compared to the other three.

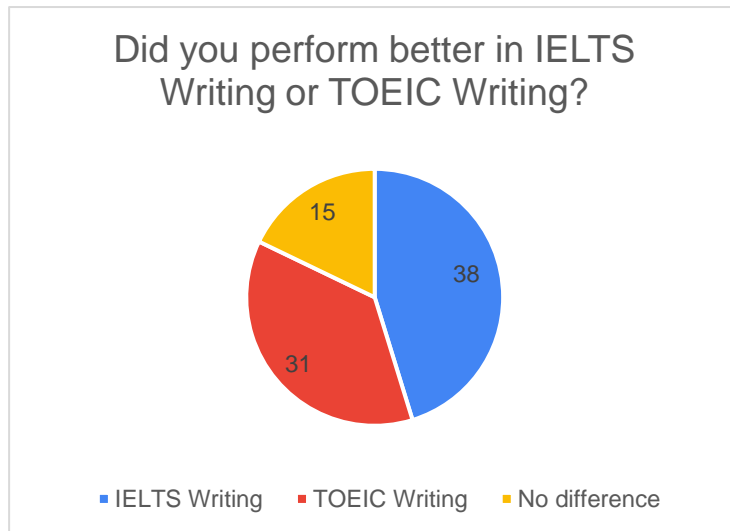
The eleventh question was: In which speaking test were you better able to demonstrate your speaking skills, IELTS (speaking to an interviewer) or TOEIC (speaking to a computer)? And here are the results.



The majority of the participants indicated that they were better able to demonstrate their speaking skills in IELTS Speaking than in TOEIC Speaking.

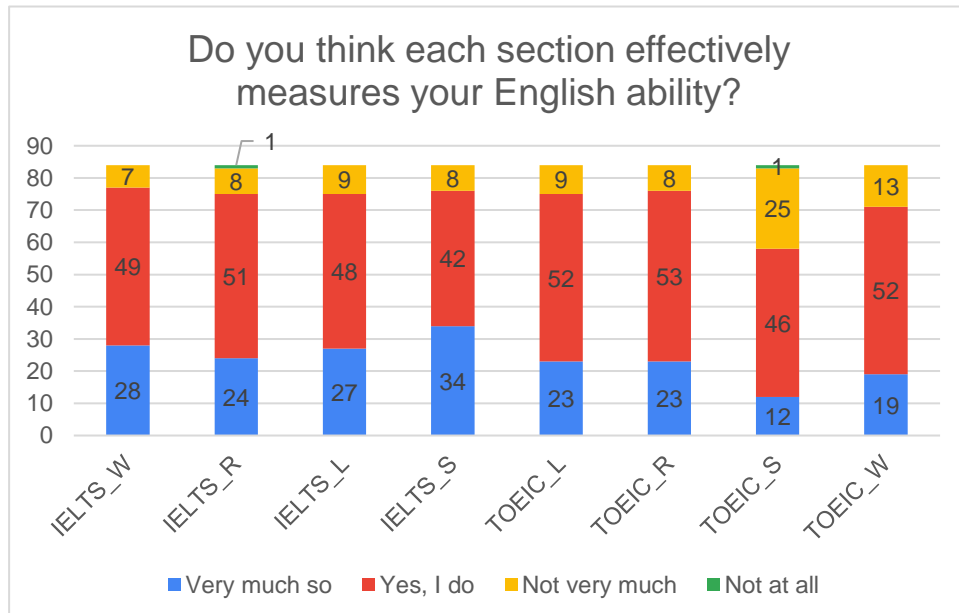
The twelfth question asked: In which writing test were you better able to demonstrate

your writing skills, IELTS (on paper) or TOEIC (on a computer)? And the results...



Unlike for the speaking tests, the numbers for IELTS and TOEIC are close.

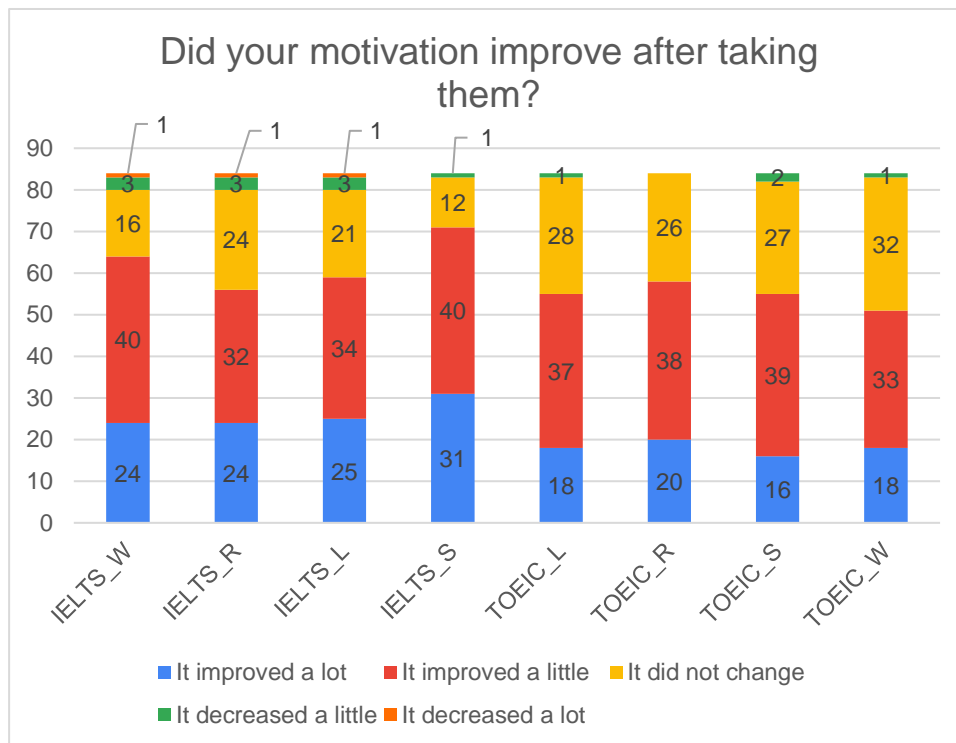
The thirteenth question was: Do you think IELTS and TOEIC are effective for measuring the English ability that each of their sections is designed to measure? Here are the results:



The percentage of “Very much so” and “Yes, I do” combined is by far the lowest for TOEIC Speaking.

The fourteenth and final question was: Did your motivation improve after taking each section of the tests? This question is focused on your motivation in general for studying English.

And here are the results.



The numbers for “It improved a lot” and “It improved a little” are the highest for IELTS Speaking.

To sum up, the questionnaire results suggest that IELTS Speaking left the most significant impressions on the participants. It made them more anxious than the other seven. At the same time, interestingly, it was considered to be the most enjoyable. It was also regarded as having the most positive effect on their motivation. That’s the power of communicating with an actual person, face to face.

Okay, we’ve come to the end of my presentation. Thank you so much for listening.