

【実践報告】

A Practical Activity for a TOEIC Preparation Class

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要旨

本稿では、TOEIC 対策クラスで学生が参加できる実用的なアクティビティと、それに対する学生の意見を紹介する。それは多くの学生が興味を持って取り組み、スピーキングやリスニング能力を伸ばすだけでなく、語彙力を増やすために有効である。さらには将来の就職活動にも役立つものである。アクティビティでは、学生が働きたいと思う会社について、TOEIC 対策で学習した表現を使い発表を行う。終了後のアンケート調査で、約70%の学生が、「TOEIC 対策として英語能力向上に役立った。」という結果となった。それゆえに調査者は、TOEIC 対策クラスでは問題演習に加えて、学生が参加できるアクティビティを取り入れることを提案している。

Key words : TOEIC preparation, students' autonomy, presentation company information

キーワード : TOEIC 対策、学生の自主性、プレゼンテーション、会社情報

Introduction

According to Robb & Ercanbrack (1999), it is clear that students tend to focus on studying the same type of language which is often used for tests all over the world including Japan. The author also found that in general, students try TOEIC-type questions as practice in order to improve their TOEIC scores. Teachers provide explanations of the questions and language which appear on the test in TOEIC preparation classes where the classes tend to lack real language activities.

However, the author would like students to relate their interests and needs to the content of the TOEIC preparatory textbook, and use the expressions they learned from it in a meaningful situation. This is because the author believes students can acquire the target language by using it in order to express their opinions in class by preparing for the TOEIC test. For these reasons, the author created a one-minute presentation activity in which students would be actively engaged and attempted to

encourage them to show their originality and foster their autonomy through the activity in class. It was hypothesized that the students would know more TOEIC related words and expressions because of the activity.

Background of the class

The class was for TOEIC preparation and was an elective course held in the second semester of the 2007 academic year. The goals of the class were 1) students aim to score over 550 on the TOEIC test by enhancing their basic vocabulary and grammar for the test: 2) students will be able to use simple and useful expressions in business settings.

All freshmen took a TOEIC IP test in the first semester. According to the students' TOEIC IP scores, the lowest score was 390 and the highest one was 780 in the author's class. The class included 27 humanities majors and 22 science majors and all of the students except one were freshmen. The class was conducted mainly in English.

An explanation of the activity

Preparation

In the activity, students made a one-minute presentation about the company they would like to work for. Before their presentations, students finished some units in their TOEIC preparation textbook related to it. The author made a presentation in front of the students as an example.

In order to help them make a draft of their presentations, the students were provided with two handouts (Appendix 1 and 2) which explained how the research on the company was carried out and the draft was written. The author explained that the company's information could be found on the Internet and that students could use a variety of sources including the Internet to get the information they needed for their research.

The author also explained that Appendix 1 was a copy of the company's homepage found on the website, and some information of Appendix 1 was translated and summarized in English by the author to make the draft of the presentation (Appendix 2).

After that, the students were taught some vocabulary such as corporate philosophy, business description, and business performance in the example draft (Appendix 2).

Then, the students were told that some expressions which they had learned from their textbook were used in the example draft (Appendix 2). During the winter break, each student chose one company, researched the company, and made a draft of his or her presentation. The students had about a month to prepare.

On the day of the activity

The students were given an evaluation sheet (Appendix 3). The purpose of the sheet was to encourage students to listen to others and take notes. The students were told they could write down what they heard in English or in Japanese - whichever they felt comfortable with. During the presentations, the author was impressed that students in the audience concentrated on listening to others carefully while taking notes. The students' evaluation sheets were collected at the end of the class.

The result of the students' questionnaire

The author made a questionnaire about the activity which was given to the students at the end of the course in February, 2008. Forty-eight students who took the course answered the questionnaire. It was written in Japanese so that students could understand each question more easily and express their opinions freely.

Q1. Was the presentation useful for TOEIC preparation? What was useful or not useful? Explain in detail.

Table 1. Was the presentation useful for TOEIC preparation? (N=48)

	No.	%
Strongly agree	2	4%
Agree	32	67%
Slightly disagree	13	27%
Strongly disagree	1	2%

Thirty-four students agreed or strongly agreed with the usefulness of the activity, representing 71% of the total respondents.

Positive reasons

27 positive opinions were collected and categorized into five main groups.

1. Students can become familiar with business related words and expressions. (8 responses)
 - "Business related issues and words are frequently used on the TOEIC test, so the activity is useful."
 - "I got a chance to research about business and knew how to use a variety of technical terms."
 - "I learned business terms many times and increased vocabulary."
2. Students can learn new vocabulary. (8)
 - "I was able to know words which I don't usually use."
3. Students can benefit from the actual use of English. (5)
 - "I think I can easily acquire vocabulary by using English as my own words. (e.g. find-found-found/ found-founded-founded)"
 - "I can use English in which I am interested."
 - "Speaking in front of people is "real English" rather than TOEIC."
4. Students can practice writing. (5)
 - "It was a good opportunity to write what I want to say."
5. It will be useful in the future. (2)
 - "I think it will be useful to gain knowledge about business."

Regarding groups 1 and 2 above, TOEIC covers expressions from daily life to business life which students are not familiar with. Students are especially not familiar with business terms. However, the students' reactions showed that the activity was very helpful in learning new vocabulary.

In regard to group 3, the first opinion was written by the student whose TOEIC score was 525. In her opinion, she wanted to say that the base form of "found" is the same as the past and past participle form of "find", so it was very confusing. However, when she actually used them, she acquired the words.

Negative reasons

29% of the students thought that the activity was not useful for TOEIC preparation. 11 negative opinions were collected and mainly divided into two groups.

1. It was not directly related to TOEIC. (5 responses)

- "Writing is not required for TOEIC." (2)
- "Trying TOEIC questions is better."
- "It will be useful when I go abroad."
- "It was good to practice presentations, but I'm not sure about it was good for TOEIC preparation."

2. Other reasons (6)

- "It was easy."
- "Expressions were too difficult to learn."
- "Everyone used the same expressions."
- "I just researched and wrote."
- "I don't think I can improve my English in such a short time."
- "I didn't learn anything special from it."

Q2. Did you enjoy working on the presentation?

Table 2. Did you enjoy working on the presentation? (N=48)

	No.	%
Strongly agree	2	4%
Agree	28	59%
Slightly disagree	15	31%
Strongly disagree	3	6%

Thirty students agreed or strongly agreed with the enjoyableness of the activity, representing 63% of the total respondents.

Q3. Was listening to your classmates' presentations useful, and why?

Table 3. Was listening to your classmates' presentations useful, and why? (N=48)

	No.	%
Strongly agree	6	13%
Agree	26	54%
Slightly disagree	13	27%
Strongly disagree	2	4%
Non applicable	1	2%

Thirty-two students agreed or strongly agreed with the usefulness of listening to

their classmates' presentations, representing 67% of the total number of the respondents.

Positive reasons

23 positive reasons were collected and classified into three main groups.

1. Ss can learn about a variety of companies. (13)
 - "I was able to learn not only about various types of company but also English expressions."
 - "It was interesting to listen to because every one was interested in different companies."
 - "I got a deep understanding of companies and it was helpful to know what classmates think about their career."
2. Ss can improve their listening skill. (7)
 - "I have seldom had a chance to listen to English pronounced by the Japanese."
3. Ss can learn from other students by realizing the difference of each presentation. (5)

With regard to group 1, it was interesting to know which companies were popular among students. For example, one of the major travel agencies in Japan was popular at that time. Also, both a science major and a humanities student chose Japan's largest car manufacturer. In this way, it was very informative for the students to know a variety of companies' names.

Regarding group 2, TOEIC currently deals with five varieties of spoken English - American, Australian, New Zealander, Canadian and British. Therefore, TOEIC test takers need to get used to different varieties of English. However, in the activity the students listened to their classmates who were native speakers of Japanese. So this listening practice was not directly related to the TOEIC test, but some students felt they could enhance their listening skills.

Negative reasons

Only five negative opinions were collected as follows.

Ss were not able to listen to classmates. (5 responses)

- "I couldn't understand what they said because they spoke fast or in a low voice."

(4)

- "Everyone was not so good at pronunciation, so I didn't think it was a listening practice." (1)

Regarding this issue, we did not have time for questions and answers, but if we had, the students could have asked the presenters to repeat what they had said and the problem could have been solved.

Advantages of the activity

The following are advantages of the activity based on students' reactions and the author's findings.

1. It is interesting and practical for many students.
2. It is student-centered.
3. It increases students' vocabulary related to business.
4. It improves their listening and speaking abilities.
5. It enhances other skills such as summarizing and translating.
6. Students get information about a variety of companies.
7. Students learn from other students and are inspired by them.
8. It provides an opportunity to think about their career.
9. It is useful for students of all levels from low to high English ability.

As written above, many advantages were found. In respect to no.1, since each student independently researched the company he or she was interested in, this experience will be very helpful for his or her job hunting. Howrey (2007, p. 342) writes, "Another benefit is that presentations encourage independent learning." In addition, the students will have some chance to speak in front of people in other classes and / or make presentations after graduation. Therefore, it will be a good experience for their future. Howrey (2007, p. 343) quotes Stein's opinion (1995), "Doing presentations in class is also beneficial as a life skill."

With regard to no.5, the author visited some homepages of the companies the students chose and found that such companies had both English and Japanese homepages. But the author was pleased to notice that the students did not copy the

sentences of the English homepages, but summarized relevant sections in their own words. Also, some companies had homepages, only in Japanese. In such cases, students had to translate Japanese into English and so were able to practice summarizing and translating. The author was impressed by the students' hard work.

Regarding no. 8, since students have limited working experience, they are unfamiliar with business issues in the TOEIC test. Studying for the TOEIC exam is a good chance for the students to think about their careers.

In regard to no.9, the activity worked well though the class had a wide range of levels of students with TOEIC scores ranging from 390 to 780. Surprisingly, the author found that the low level students successfully made presentations as well as high level students. The author thinks the presentation example (Appendix 2) was helpful to the students.

Conclusion

This activity was helpful in preparing for only some aspects of the TOEIC test and an inquiry about the students' TOEIC scores should have been done after the activity. However, this one-minute presentation motivated the students and it had many benefits. The results show that some students could enhance their vocabulary and knowledge related to the TOEIC test. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to include some interactive activities for their students. The author thinks TOEIC is beneficial for students' career development. This is because TOEIC has a lot of cultural and career development content that makes students interested and more aware of their careers. For example, students can read job advertisements, cover letters, and business letters in TOEIC questions. By preparing for the TOEIC test, therefore, students can enjoy a variety of language activities which they can relate to and show their creativity and originality, and express their opinions. The author hopes this paper will provide some useful information for future research on the effect of speaking and listening activities on TOEIC scores and for teachers who are conducting TOEIC preparation classes.

References

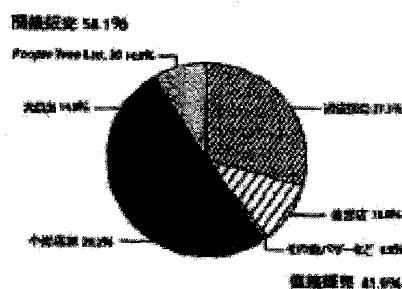
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会社概要 Appendix 1

名称 フェアトレードカンパニー株式会社
住所 東京都世田谷区奥沢 5-1-16-3F (地図はこちら)
 Tel 03-5731-6671 Fax 03-5731-6677
設立 1995 年 1 月、環境保護と途上国支援を目的とした、ビジネスの実践と波及を目指して設立
代表者 サフィア・ミニー
従業員数 40 名
資本金 6 千万円
事業内容 環境と人に優しい衣料品、手工芸品、食品、日用雑貨等の商品開発および輸入・販売
 株式会社大地、関西よつ葉連絡会、株式会社ナチュラル・ハウス、らでいっしゅぽーや株式
主要取引先 会社、株式会社ライブコットン、WWF Japan (財団法人世界自然保護基金日本委員会)、ア
 ニュー株式会社、株式会社オーサワジャパン、阪神総合レジャー株式会社、Zakka Cafe
 INE、コミュニティ・トレード al、国際協力ショップぐらする一つ、風²。他、日本全国約 350 軒
 の小売店
取引銀行 三菱東京 UFJ 銀行 自由が丘支店
 三井住友銀行 自由が丘支店

販売実績

1995 年度	3,400 万円
1996 年度	6,450 万円 (前年度比 190%)
1997 年度	10,914 万円 (同 169%)
1998 年度	17,369 万円 (同 159%)
1999 年度	27,856 万円 (同 160%)
2000 年度	38,611 万円 (同 139%)
2001 年度	48,973 万円 (同 133.2%)*
2002 年度	56,351 万円 (同 115.1%)
2003 年度	61,800 万円 (同 109.7%)
2004 年度	63,900 万円 (同 103.4%)
2005 年度	75,900 万円 (同 118.4%)
2006 年度	75,602 万円 (同 99.7%)



2006 年度

*本数値は消費税抜きの換算値で比較

<http://www.peopletree.co.jp/about/company.html>

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ホームページ www.peopletree.co.jp

