

The Effect of a Three-Month TOEIC Training Program

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The effects of a TOEIC training program in a semester of Tokyo Polytechnic University was examined in both of the quantitative and the qualitative way. The effects were not clear from the quantitative data, but the qualitative data showed the motivational changes for English learning among the participants. The amendment of the course is also suggested.

Introduction

Tokyo Polytechnic University began to offer a TOEIC course as one of its regular English courses. This paper reports the contents of the course and the effects of the program by examining the results of the TOEIC examination given at the beginning of the course and after the three months of learning in the course.

Method

The subjects were twelve students who took the TOEIC course offered for the first year students as one of the elective courses. TOEIC listening test and a common examination for all the other English courses were given after the twelve times of the classes. The results of these tests were compared with the other students' who did not take the TOEIC course. A questionnaire with 9 items were given to the subjects for the improvement of the program.

Description of the subjects

The subjects were 12 students including 1 non-Japanese student who took TOEIC Practice as a regular elective course for the first year students at Tokyo Polytechnic University. The course is basically available for all the students studying at TPU, but in the first year of the introduction of TOEIC Practice was open only for the first year students for their credits because of the Act of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. The specifications about the subjects are in Table 1.

Description of the course

There were thirteen classes in total during the three months. The first and the last class were spent for the TOEIC examinations.

Textbooks

The following three textbooks were used. The first two were composed of the questions, the answers and the explanations for the answers. The first one has the similar questions originally made by the author and this one follows the style of the new version of the TOEIC test. TOEIC examination changed the forms and the styles of the questions from the first term in 2006. In this paper, all the tests given to the subjects followed the old style as the official version of the college TOEIC given in the first term took the form of the old one.

The second textbook had real questions from the old TOEIC tests given in the past.

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There were three sets of the real but old tests, answers and explanations for them.

The third one contains 1080 words frequently used in the TOEIC test.

- 1) Masatoshi Shirakawa. *Preparation for the New Version TOEIC Test*. ALCpress Inc. 2005.
- 2) George W. Pifer, Hideaki Honda, Tetsuo Kimura. *TOEIC Test Super Moshi 600*. ALCpress Inc.1996
- 3) Chizuko Tsumatori, et. Al., *Word Master Approach for the TOEIC Test*. Seibido. 2004.

Syllabus of the course

Week 1 Introduction of the course and the initial test. Distribution of the textbooks.

Week 2 Challenging the listening part of the TOEIC test.

Week 3 Challenging the reading part of the TOEIC test.

Week 4 Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 1 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1.

Week 5 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 1 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1.

Week 6 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 2 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1 and 2.

Week 7 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 2 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1 and 2.

Week 8 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 3 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1 and 2.

Week 9 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 3 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1 and 2.

Week 10 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 4 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1.

Week 11 The test of vocabularies. Explaining the contents of the test of vocabularies and the first

ten vocabularies and sample sentences. Challenging Section 4 and Explanation of the problems in the section of the text 1.

Week 12 TOEIC Test Listening part. The common examination.

Week 13 College TOEIC test

Results and Discussion

Followings are the results of the tests.

Table 1. Test Results

	Listening	Reading	Total*	Final (Listening)	Common	College TOEIC		
						(L)	(R)	(Total)
A	29	20	49 (320)	96	90	180	115	295
B	28	23	51 (330)	100	70	165	130	295
C	38	43	81 (484)	51	82	285	180	465
D	26	36	62 (387)	-	-	-	-	-
E	25	16	41 (279)	37	72	180	80	260
F	35	21	56 (356)	38	75	240	70	310
G	33	33	66 (407)	100	86	230	185	415
H	31	15	46 (305)	57	57	165	80	245
I	32	37	69 (423)	100	-	-	-	-
J	24	29	53 (341)	41	-	235	165	400
K	-	-	-	76	85			
Avg.	30.1	27.3	57.4(361)	63.3	77.1	210	125.6	335.6
Avg. (63 students of the other classes)					71.4			
Avg. (86 students of Tokyo Polytechnic University)						204.1	121.8	325.9 (approx.47.1*)

*The number of the correct answers and approximate scores were calculated according to the reduction formula in Pifer (1999).

1) The results of the TOEIC examination compared with the other students that did not take the course:

As the TOEIC scores in the initial test were calculated according to the reduction formula in Pifer (1999), the data might not be compared with the official scores of the test given in the thirteenth week. The alternative will be to compare the official scores of the subjects with the average of the other students including the subjects of TPU.

The average point of listening was 204.1 while that of the subjects was 210. The points of the reading section showed the same tendency, with the average point of 121.8 and 125.6 of

the subjects. The differences of the points were 5.9 in listening and 3.8 in reading won by the subjects. There was a slight difference between the average of reading and listening. The listening part that were dealt with in the course showed 2.1 points higher than the reading part. The interpretation or the evaluation of 10.3 points difference is hard to describe, though. In the case of TOEIC score, 50 points in the total score are always held as a margin of error. In order to identify the cause of the difference in the points, the official TOEIC test should have been given at the beginning of the course.

2) The contents and the results of the common examination:

Results of the common examination

63 students of the first year students who did not take the TOEIC course took the common examination explained above. The average point of the examination was 71.4 and the average point of the subjects who took the course exceeds the non-takers by 5.7 points.

Points

The following points were given to the correct answers.

a) 2 points for each letter. b) 1 point for each number. c) 1 point for each word. D) 4 points for each sentence.

a) Write down the English alphabet from “a” to “z” in both of the capital letters and small letters.

Except for one student who wrote “m” and “n” back to front in confusion, all the students could write the English alphabet in the subject group, while the only one student out of 63 students could not complete it.

b) Write down the number from 1 to 20 in English.

4 subjects could not write the numbers completely. The numbers they could not write were “three”, “four”, “twelve”, “thirteen”, “fourteen”, and “twenty.” One non-Japanese student could write only “one”, “three” and “ten”.

c) Translate or explain the meanings of the following words into Japanese.

i) subject ii) questionnaire iii) item iv) discussion v) *e.g.* vi) method vii) research viii) *i.e.*

The average point of this part of the subjects was 2.9, while that of the other group was 3.5. This is because the words presented in the test were dealt with in the other classes. This might show the effect of teaching words to the other group members. The improvement of overall competence by the TOEIC practice course was not concluded from the data.

d) Translate the following sentences into English.

i) *Korewa watashiga katta hondewa arimasen.* This is not the book I bought.

ii) *Watashiwa ima touchakushita tokorodesu.* I have just arrived.

iii) *Watashiwa karega daredaka shirimasen.* I don't know who he is.

iv) *Ketaiwo motte imasuka.* Do you have a mobile phone?

v) *Watashiwa tsukini 5senyen ketaini tsukaimasu.* I spend five thousand yen on my mobile phone.

1 out of 20 points was the average of the subjects, while 3.5 was that of the other group's. This section again was taught to the other members of the group in the regular English class. This might show that teaching translations in English courses have some effects. The TOEIC Practice did not seem to be enough to improve their translation ability.

The results of the questionnaire

1) Your instructor introduced 10 words in each class with explanation. Was the explanation necessary for your study?

Yes 9 No 1

Reasons for the positive answer:

The use of vocabulary is made comprehensible.(8) The explanation helps memorization of the sentences.(3)

Reasons for the negative answer:

I have to analyze the sentences for myself anyway afterwards. (1)

2) Your instructor introduced 10 words in each class with explanation. Was the number of the words appropriate for your study?

Too many (0) Good (9, Two students answered 15 words are reasonable.) To small (1, 25 words)

3) We focused on listening in the classes. Do you think we should deal also with reading?

Yes (6) No(4)

Reasons:

Reasons for the positive answers

I want to prepare for the reading part, too. (5) I want to improve my reading speed. I want to know the techniques for the reading part.

Reasons for the negative answers

Introduction of reading part into the class schedule will be too tight for one semester. I want to focus on listening in the class.

4) Was this course helpful for your preparation for the TOEIC test?

Yes (10) No (0)

Reasons:

The class was a good introduction to the TOEIC examination. (2) Just good. (1) I felt the real test of the listening part is read so slow and could concentrate on the meanings of the questions.

The listening in the training was faster than the one in the real test. (2) I think I could improve my English in the class. (1) I could comprehend the style of the TOEIC test. (3) I could improve my listening skill a little. (1)

5) What points do you think to be improved?

Comments:

I wanted to learn the reading part in the class. (2) Listening to the different materials will be necessary to train our competence to comprehend utterly new materials rather than train the same materials repeatedly. (1) Students should be more strictly controlled to maximize the effects of the comprehension checks given in each class. (1)

6) Did you have any motivational change during or after the course?

Yes (10) No (0)

Reasons:

I was motivated for some reasons! (1) I began to like English. (1) I could understand difficult words. (1) I knew I could accomplish when I try something. (1) I became able to solve the TOEIC problems. (1) I want to be able to speak English. (2) I want to try to speak to foreign people to test what I learned. (1) The episodes introduced by the instructor in the class motivated my learning. (1)

7) Do you think you improved in other aspects of your English competence?

Yes (8) No(1) Neither (1)

Reasons:

Reasons for the positive answers

The class was good and I will do my best. (1) I need to learn the spellings and the grammar of English. (1) I learned vocabularies. (3) I could improve listening. (4)

Reasons for the negative answers

I don't know. (1) I forgot English after the entrance examination to the university and the class schedule of once in a week is not often enough. (1) I still have a problem in vocabulary. (1)

8) Do you think this course should extend the period as one-year program with 2 credits dealing with both of the reading section and the listening section?

Yes (8) No (2)

Reasons:

Reasons for the positive answers

We could learn at a good pace. (2) I need credits. (1) I want to learn a lot more in the class. (3) I want to learn listening in both of the first and the second semester. (1) We can choose listening or reading as needed. (1) The class schedule was not very good for me. (1)

Reasons for the negative answers

Both of the reading and the listening parts should be covered in a semester. (1)

9) Which section do you think should be specially focused on in the course?

Part 3 (2), Part 4 (5),

Reasons:

Concentration tend to break in Part 4. (1) Part 4 is the most difficult. (2) Listening to a

dialogue is difficult. (2) Part 3 and 4 are difficult. (2)

Conclusion

In the three months program of teaching TOEIC, there was not a clear evidence that the course directly improved the scores of the students. This came from the lack of quantitative data because of the smallness of the number of the participants in the TOEIC practice course. To this problem, the arrangement of the schedule will help a little. In this study, the qualitative data from the questionnaire were available. The questionnaire given showed positive motivational changes in the students and this might work as clues to improve this course in the next semester. The choice of listening materials, for example, will be from new sources to expose the students with new dialogues and stories. In the vocabulary building 10 to 15 words will be presented at each time with the explanation about the use of the vocabulary.

For the further study, the performance of the TOEIC examination at the beginning of each semester will be necessary. This might help to compare the scores.

Lastly, some students hoped the course be given twice in a year with different contents, one for the listening part and the other for the reading part of the TOEIC examination. This concerns the management of the university, but it is also the matter of better education for the students.

<References >

- Masatoshi Shirakawa. *Preparation for the New Version TOEIC Test*. ALCpress Inc. 2005.
Chizuko Tsumatori, et. Al., *Word Master Approach for the TOEIC Test*. Seibido. 2004.
George W. Pifer, Hideaki Honda, Tetsuo Kimura. *TOEIC Test Super Moshi 600*.
ALCpress Inc.1996