

Improving TOEIC Training Program of Tokyo Polytechnic University

Hiroshi TANABE*

This paper introduced the total appearance of the program for the preparation for the TOEIC test of Tokyo Polytechnic University since the introduction of the TOEIC test in 2002 to the present situation where 155 students took the TOEIC test and 3 examinees scored over 800 points, 3 over 700, 7 over 600 and 3 over 500 in 2009 and suggested the points of improvement. For the improvement, the program could be extended as a one year course with 30 lecture hours while the students are required to study 1 hour at home, where 300 hours of training for the TOEIC test recommended by Chida, 2010 would be realized ignoring the condition that should be a conversation class with native speakers.

Introduction

Since 2002, Tokyo Polytechnic University has provided the opportunity for the students to take the College TOEIC test, which was a kind of the Institutional Program (IP) test^{*1} for college students and the score had the same quality and value of the public version of the TOEIC test, once or twice in a year on the Atsugi campus. Table 1 shows the results of the TOEIC test and the highest scores and the average scores.

Table 1. Numbers of Examinees and Scores

Schedule	Examinee	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Average
2002	202	905	115	333
2003	114	525	145	302
2004	129	770	120	326
2005	55	665	155	337
2006	125	685	135	323
2007	135	910	180	335
2008	253	915	165	341
2009	155	855	160	364

The TOEIC test was held twice in 2009 and 155 students took the examination with the highest score of 855 and the average score of 364. According to ETS (ETS, 2010)^{*2}, the average score of the year 2008 was 447 and the average score of science technology and agriculture major students was 399^{*3}.

Administration of the TOEIC test

IP test of the TOEIC examination had been held twice in a year. All the students of Tokyo Polytechnic University could take the test for free. The test itself was held by the co-op of Tokyo Polytechnic University and the handbills were prepared by the co-op and they were distributed to the students in the required classes of English. For the announcement for the higher graders who had already taken the required credits of English, the school public-address system was used during the lunch time. Posters announcing the schedule of the TOEIC test were put on the walls of the co-op and the school cafeteria. All

* Associate Professor. General Education and Research Center, Tokyo Polytechnic University
Received Sept. 1, 2010

the applicants were accepted by registering by seven p.m. for the test held in the next day if there was room.

TOEIC seminar

(1) Size of the class

TOEIC seminar had been a selective course for all the students of the faculty of engineering since 2006. It was a three month course for one credit with 15 times of classes and each class had 90 minutes. 45 students registered the course and 10 to 15 students attended the lecture as auditors in the first semester of the year 2010, for example.

(2) Text

Shin TOEIC Tesuto Kanzen Kouryaku Gaido (Complete Guide for the New TOEIC Test) (Helki and Maeda, 2005) was used in the class. The listening part of the textbook was used for the limitation of the schedule.

(3) Philosophy of the class

The TOEIC test (The Test of English for International Communication) had been accepted widely as a valid measure of evaluating the level of the practicality of English of its examinees. The vocabulary and the expressions tested by the TOEIC test had been general and practical and studying for the TOEIC test will guide the students to plan their study and improve the level of their English for general purposes.^{*4} The learning contents in the textbook would contain useful vocabulary for the general and practical English as well as for the TOEIC test itself and the students were strongly recommended to completely master the whole textbook contents as the first step to score the higher points in the TOEIC test.

(4) Syllabus

- 1) Guidance
- 2) Practice test
- 3) Answering questions and explanation (1)
- 4) Answering questions and explanation (2)
- 5) Answering questions and explanation (3)
- 6) Answering questions and explanation (4)
- 7) Midterm examination and summary of the points
- 8) Answering questions and explanation (5)
- 9) Answering questions and explanation (6)
- 10) Answering questions and explanation (7)
- 11) Answering questions and explanation (8)
- 12) Answering questions and explanation (9)
- 13) Answering questions and explanation (10)
- 14) Final examination (1) tested with the same questions and summary of the points
- 15) Final examination (2) tested with the new questions and summary of the points

In the 14th class the same 100 listening questions that were discussed in the class were asked and the new questions for the students that were not dealt with in the class were asked in the 15th class for the

comparison of the mastery of the learning contents of the texts and the mastery of the skills for answering for the TOEIC type of the English test, the acquisition of the general knowledge of English and the improvement in the listening skill.

(5) Rules of the class

Students were required to attend at the first class and follow the guidance, where they were told to keep the higher level of motivation to keep their study to improve the score of the TOEIC test. More than four times of the absences of the class would lead to the failure of taking the credit of the class. The review of the contents were needed by listening to the same part of the CD as they learned in the class every time. The same part of the questions were tested each time to evaluate their mastery of the contents.

(6) Teaching contents

Strategies and skills to deal with the TOEIC type of the English tests were introduced before the practice of answering listening questions. Following are the strategies and skills of each section^{*5}:

Techniques

a) Part 1 (Photographs)

Hilke (2005) pointed out the techniques for Part 1:

- i) Deleting misleading pronunciation
- ii) Checking general information such as the situation, the subject, the act of the people in the picture
- iii) Comparing the people in the picture
- iv) Ignoring non-existent
- v) Avoiding guessing

In addition to the descriptions above, the following points were introduced in the lecture.

- vi) Guessing points of questions according to the picture given
- vii) Ignoring the less obvious points in the picture
- viii) Ignoring the misleading words and expressions

b) Part 2 (Question-Response)

Hilke (*ibid.*) pointed out the techniques for Part 2:

- i) Listening to the first word carefully
- ii) Avoiding keywords
- iii) Listening to WH-questions
- iv) Finding correct answers to the patterns such as suggestions, orders and requests
- v) Not answering in Yes or No forms for yes/no questions

c) Part 3 (Short Conversations)

Hilke (*ibid.*) pointed out the techniques for Part 3:

- i) Reading the choices before listening to the questions
- ii) Reading the choices as the clues to the questions
- iii) Understanding the patterns of the questions for Part 3

d) Part 4 (Short Talks)

Hilke (*ibid.*) pointed out the techniques for Part 4:

- i) Reading the choices before listening to the questions
- ii) Ranking the questions according to the difficulty order
- iii) Understanding the patterns of questions according to the topic types

Contents

As was already stated *Shin TOEIC Tesuto Kanzen Kouryaku Gaido* (Complete Guide for the New TOEIC Test) (Helki and Maeda, 2005) was the only text used in the class. The coverage of the vocabulary and expressions assumed to be enough for the beginners as had not been examined. The acquisition of the basic vocabulary and expressions for the TOEIC test was expected by mastering the whole contents of the textbook.

Procedure

To realize the mastery of the learning contents, the students answered the questions, checked their answers, listening to the explanations and repeating answering questions at home. The achievement of their study was checked in each class.

Method

There were three times of practice examinations that were given exactly in the same way and with the same type, number and level of questions. The first test was given in the second and third class and the second test was given in the fourteenth class and the third test was in the fifteenth class. The tests given in the first and the fourteenth class were exactly the same one to check the mastery of the contents. The test contents of the fifteenth's^{*6} were new and unknown for the examinees .

Results and Discussion

Table 2. Scores

	Listening	Reading	Total	Converted Score*
1) Initial (N=38)	31.1	27.8	51.9	352.4
2) Same (N=33)	74.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
3) New (N=12)	32.7	27.6	60.3	347.9

*Converted score was calculated according to the table attached in the practice tests. Hilek&Maeda (2005) for the first test and Ishi (2007) for the third test.

In the comparison between the first and the third test, The average number of the correct answers of the listening part improved from 31.1 to 32.7 (+1.6) while that of the average number of the correct answers of the reading part was from 27.8 to 27.6 (-0.2). The average of the total number of the correct answers of the listening and reading parts improved from 51.9 to 60.3 (+8.4).

The comparison of converted scores, though, showed the different view about the result. The result of the third test was lower than the initial test by 4.8 points.

As only the contents of the listening part of the TOEIC test was taught in the class, the reading part of the third test might be assumed to be the transfer of the practice in the listening part, but as far as the result of the comparison between the first test and the third test showed there did not seem to be any significant improvement in the score in the third test. That might tell that in the class in that condition the basic skills and knowledge to improve the score of the TOEIC test were not directly related to the improvement of the score.

The comparison of the average number of correct answers between the first and the second showed the significant difference, though. In the comparison between the first and the second test, The average number of the correct answers of the listening part improved from 31.1 to 74.9 (+43.8).

As was stated before, the most important goal of the class was to master the fundamentals of vocabulary and the expressions for the practical use of English, which might be reflected in the improvement of the score of the TOEIC test in the future. As shown in Table 1, the total average score of the students began to improve from 2007 one year after the TOEIC seminar class began, even though there was no evidence that the class affected the score.

Chida (2010) said to raise 100 points in the TOEIC test 300 hundred hours of learning in the English conversation course by native lectures of English was necessary^{*7}. The class in this paper offers 15 lecture hours in less than 3 months. Calculated according to the criterion the raise of the score in 15 hours would be one twentieths of 100 points, which is 5 and as has been already discussed. The average of the total number of the correct answers of the listening and reading parts improved from 51.9 to 60.3 (+8.4) in the seminar, which might be in a margin of error, though if the number of the correct answer would be calculated according to the conversion table.

Improvement of the class

To cover the gap of the length of the time, the self-training by the student themselves would be necessary. Assume the goal of the class is to raise the points by 100 points, it would be impractical for the science major students to study English for 100 hours a month that will be more than three hours a day. If students are required to study 1 hour everyday for 1 year, 300 hundred hours of study will be realized only if the length of the time for study is in focus ignoring the quality of the training. The problem would be to what extent the difference in the condition between the conversation class with native instructors and the self-learning by the students based on studying textbooks for the TOEIC test.

The seminar could be a one year course with 30 lecture hours while the students are required to study 1 hour everyday at home, where 300 hours of training for the TOEIC test would be realized ignoring the condition that should be a conversation class with native speakers.

The effects of the 300 hours of self-training by students with 30 hours of TOEIC preparation course will be the next theme of inquiry.

References

- [1] Chida Junichi. 2010. Level Up Dojo (Level Up Class) in the Official TOEIC Homepage
- [2] Hilke Robert, Maeda Horo. 2005. *Shin TOEIC Tesuto Kanzen Kouryaku Gaido* (Complete Guide for the New Version of the TOEIC Test) , ALC,
- [3] Ishi Tatsuya. 2007. *Shin TOEIC Test Zen Pato Kanzen Kouryaku* (Perfect Capture for the New Version of the TOEIC Test). ALC

Appendix

*1 Following are the explanation of IP test provided by Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2009): TOEIC programs are administrated through two programs: the Secure Program (SP) test and the Institutional Program (IP) test. SP test is conducted on a date and at location designed by the Institute for International Business Communication while the IP test is conducted on the date and at location determined by each school, corporation or organization.

*2 According to TOEIC test data & analysis 2008 in the official homepage of ETS, 2010.

*3 Number of examinees and average scores by types of major in ToEIC test data & analysis 2008. (ETS, 2009) According to ETS, the data had been obtained from examinees who filled in the section on “Major” in the TOEIC IP tests conducted by universities, junior colleges, vocational schools and technical colleges in the official homepage of ETS, 2010.

*4 This is from the syllabus of TOEIC seminar of Tokyo Polytechnic University for the year 2010.

*5 Hilke presented the skills and strategies for scoring points in the TOEIC test in Robert Hilke, Horo Maeda. 2005. *Shin TOEIC Tesuto Kanzen Kouryaku Gaido* (Complete Guide for the New TOEIC Test) , ALC.

*6 Tatsuya Ishi (2007) showed a conversion table from the raw points of the total to the imaginable score of the TOEIC test in *Shin TOEIC Test Zen Part Kanzen Kouryaku* (Perfect Capture for the New Version of the TOEIC Test). ALC.

*7 Chida (2010) in the Reberu Appu Dojo (Level Up Class) in the Official TOEIC Homepage said to raise 100 point in the TOEIC test 300 hundred hours of learning in the English conversation course by native lectures of English was necessary.