

How to prepare a 'My Share' article for submission to Between the Keys

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The major purpose of this format is to allow for a greater depth of scope. Authors have space to explain the activity clearly and to discuss in a more academic manner deeper rationales that underpin the activity.

TITLE HERE

Author Name & Affiliation

Contact email

Learner level:	clearly state the level
Length of the activity:	in units of 10 minutes
Resources used:	this relates to the next 'Preparation' section
Goals:	You can't cover everything here. Just state the main overall goal

Preparation

Tell teachers exactly what kind of preparation is required, how long it takes to create the materials, and anything else you think that is necessary in this preparation stage.

Procedure

1. Make each step in the procedure as clear as possible.
2. It's a good idea to get a colleague to read through these.
3. Different people think different things are obvious.
4. Try to cut out as many assumptions as possible.

Options

1. There may be many ways of presenting the activity depending on the learner level.
2. Or the time available for preparation or in the class.
3. Or the particular nature of the class group.
4. You get the idea.

Rationale

The above set out the basic format of the activity. With that, teachers should be able to recreate the activity without too much problems. It is in this 'Rationale' section that you can lay out an argument as to why your activity is good, why it meets a certain need, subsidiary goals, and so on.

You can spend quite a bit of time here. I would recommend no more than 700 words for all but the most intricate arguments. A target of 500 is good as that is what readers would expect. If much more is required, you should consider not writing a 'My Share' but an article that has an activity inside it to support a more detailed point.

Caveats

Don't tie down the above rationale with hums and haws. There are potential pitfalls to any activity. Use this section to clarify a few major problems that teachers may have when putting the activity into practice.

Reference

Ashmore, E., E. Carter, T. Duke, M. Hauck, M. Locke, R. Shearin. (2002). *TOEIC Bridge: Koushiki Gaido & Mondaishu*. ETS: Tokyo. p.8.

Notes

For full information about styles in references, please refer to our <http://www.materialswriters.org/images/btks_submission_guidelines.pdf> Submission Guidelines.

Appendix

You can present an actual example here.

=====Full EXAMPLE of a My Share=====

Discourse Cards

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Learner level:	From high elementary
Length of the activity:	20 minutes upwards for each question set
Resources used:	Thick paper or card
Goals:	To increase learners' ability to respond appropriately to discourse and pragmatic patterns in speech.

Preparation

For each group of students, prepare 24 playing-card sized cards on thick paper. Prepare 3 sets of 4 cards, writing 'question', 'answer', 'comment' and 'statement' on one side of each of the four cards. Also prepare a set of topics on which the activity will be based.

Procedure

1. Form small groups of 3 people. Shuffle the 24 cards and place them face down on the table in the middle of each group. Place a statement card face up on the table.
2. Let each group choose a topic.
3. Student 1 must make a statement on the topic.
4. Student 2 picks the top card from the deck and makes a sentence of the type written on the card.
5. The next student takes their turn, and turns are taken until the cards are used up.

Options

1. Groups of 4 may be used with the fourth student writing down the language produced during the activity. If this is done, care needs to be taken to ensure that the note-taker is not obtrusive which can heighten the others' anxiousness in creating grammatically correct utterances. The aim of the activity is to promote pragmatic appropriateness, not grammatical awareness.
2. The activity can be usefully prefaced by showing video or audio clips of English native speaker discourse. Students can be prepped by introducing to them the four sentence types. During listening, students can attempt to label the sentences. Very often great examples can be found in comedy sit-coms, for example, many dialogues in *Friends* provide useful samples. These are examples of made-up language, this being the nature of an actor's script, but nevertheless they mimic authentic discourse well enough to be useful for students.
3. Once the activity has been done, students can make a home diary in which they record the interactions of selected conversations from their family environment. This follow-up routine promotes the awareness that discourse type is a more universal trait than a language class method.
4. Textbooks in use can provide a useful starting point. Many contain sample dialogues of language that is contrived authentic. These dialogues may be analysed as examples of language in their own right. Alternatively, from the initial printed sentence—and each subsequent one—students can give their own response. This helps some students break away from a dependency on the textbook and make them realise more acutely the malleability in discourse structure.

Rationale

Section Two of the TOEIC Bridge Test evaluates learners' ability to understand discourse and pragmatic patterns in speech. Most of the questions are simple in nature, requiring learners to match a 'WH' question word with an appropriate response. This pattern can be described graphically as 'Q - A'. The teaching of this pattern is straightforward and typically causes learners little conceptual difficulty. However, another pattern that does prove troublesome can be described as 'S - Q': where 'S' stands for 'statement' and 'Q' for question. An example is: "The history teacher isn't in school today. / Why not?" Selecting an appropriate response accurately from the given list requires knowledge of common response behaviours and the ability to recognise situationally-appropriate questions. Lower-level learners typically limit their metacognition of language to the 'what' of language – lexis, grammar, but not the 'why' of language – the illocutionary forces underpinning authentic utterances. They often lack experience of seeing how conversation is structured at the discourse level and of practicing relevant responses. The question was how to provide this experience in a manner that will be directly useful for TOEIC study within a more general framework of supporting practical conversational discourse development?

A basic yet generative activity was needed to give learners practice in discerning utterance purposes as the first step in developing their metacognitive abilities in labelling utterance propositions and, subsequently, in selecting appropriate responses to utterances. The simple labels of 'question' and 'answer' offer some insight into illocutionary forces. Their roles have, however, become entrenched as both an exam and conversation textbook format. Without exposure to more extended

examples of discourse, their place within discourse becomes obscured, and learners often fail to see them as indicators of discourse elements and regard them, instead, as test or textbook commands. A broader educational framework elucidating the purpose of utterances would contain these simple labels, but it would reframe them within a wider context. To broaden the discourse function scope, two further labels were chosen: one because of its immediate relevance to the TOEIC Bridge test format, and the other due to its high frequency in native speaker conversation. ‘Statement’ was described earlier. To this, ‘Comment’ adds a generative element to conversation discourse practice. The list of potential choices is endless: ‘Exclamation’, ‘Play for time’, ‘Attack the speaker’ and so on, but for the present purposes, the four chosen allow for adequate initial exploration for the purposes of the test and for general conversation practice.

Like ‘question’, ‘answer’ and ‘comment’, ‘statement’ refers to an abstract quality: its purpose. Unlike the other terms, ‘statement’ is of a greater abstraction. The other three require a reference to a previous utterance whereas ‘statement’ can be utilised at any time. There are many discourse reasons for statements, but a full awareness of these reasons seems difficult for elementary students, and in practice, translating ‘statement’ (陳述 / jinjutsu) fails because of the complex and abstract nature of the concept.

At least two other factors also contribute to confuse elementary level students about the concept of ‘statement’. The first is that the same utterance may be employed differently. The second is that language taught to elementary students is often single-sentence based and lacks contextual support and deeper levels of meaning. Furthermore, some sentences contain propositional meanings only extractable through context. Teaching that exposes beginners only to sentence-level language obscures the deeper principles underpinning spoken discourse, and confusion arises because lower-level learners, not being exposed to extended language, do not see how English conversation develops. The activity aims to provide valuable practice in the creation of extended discourse and, thereby, to offer learners a concrete metacognitive framework for discourse.

Caveats

In actual practice, a number of issues arise that need careful monitoring. The first is that students can become disorientated when placed in a situation that requires they generate emotive language without adequate support. To reduce this possibility, the sentence types are limited to four less aggressive ones, but even still, some students balk at the prospect of having to comment on something they have no knowledge or interest in. They may find the creation of a question difficult when they lack any background in that topic. Especially for the less adventurous, copious examples are needed.

Another—more serious—problem is that during failing to recognise the real-life utility in the activity, some students become angry at, for example, the idea of following a question with another question, or not answering a question directly, or starting a new topic with a statement card before the previous topic is finished. They perceive these turn-takes as being rude. That this happens in polite conversation often needs both to be pointed out and shown—through copious examples—to learners.

Reference

Ashmore, E., E. Carter, T. Duke, M. Hauck, M. Locke, R. Shearin. (2002). TOEIC Bridge: Koushiki Gaido & Mondaishu. ETS: Tokyo. p.8.

Appendix 1

Example of student output. These students were around TOEIC 330.

Starting Point: question **Have you ever travelled in an unusual way?**

A: answer No, I haven't.

B: comment Oh, that's too bad.

A: statement I always drive my car.

B: statement I want to travel.

A: comment That's a good idea.

B: statement I think I want to use a train or an aeroplane.

A: comment I want to travel on an aeroplane.

B: comment I think that we can travel very enjoyably on an aeroplane.

A: answer I'd like to go to Thailand.

B: question What do you like about Thailand?

A: question Do you like Thailand?

B: comment The food is delicious, and when I think of Thailand, I imagine elephants.

Notes

This dialogue demonstrates a few pedagogic points aptly.

1. The numerous comments and statements in the beginning were a result of the way the cards turned up. Yet, the sentence types allowed each speaker the chance to express various important information that was felt to be relevant to the given topic.
2. The second answer seems to come from nowhere. These discourse cards are useful in explaining and developing awareness of underlying and as yet unexpressed ideas.
3. The repeated questions near the end were uncomfortable at first but were taught as a method of gaining thinking time during a conversation. Also, this interchange demonstrated the very common conversational ploy of asking a question in the hope that the interlocutor will ask the same one back.