

Reading English News Articles by Constructing Tables

表作成によるビジネス英語記事のリーディング

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Introduction

This paper shows a way of helping readers to understand the contents of English passages by constructing tables. It is based on three recent business news articles used in the author's 2018 Marketing and Management classes. The paper follows on from the author's previous paper "Authentic Reading on Business News Articles" in Ohkagakuen University's *Journal of the School of Liberal Arts*, Volume 8 (2016), but with an emphasis on the effectiveness of table making for a comprehensive perspective. Table activities are more productive for this than multiple choices or the understanding of detached sentences. The three articles used have the titles "Convenience stores address labor crunch with automation, shorter hours" (The Japan Times, January 11, 2018), "Popular go-kart company MariCar loses court battle over street kart business" (Kyodo, September 28, 2018), and "Toys 'R' Us sells Asia operations and keeps Japan business alive" (SAKURAI, November 17, 2018). The discussion of each is accompanied by a content table to be filled in through reasoning and logic, with a few additional questions.

Tables, as understood here, are constructions that "show numerical values or textual information arranged in an orderly display of columns and rows" and "present a large amount of information efficiently" (American Psychological Association, 2010, 125). Constructing a table of the sort used to solve a logical problem can be an excellent way to obtain a comprehensive picture of information in an article. This paper also demonstrates how this can lead to a more integral understanding of an article through inferences about non-explicit information.

本稿は表を作成することにより英文理解を助ける方法を提示するものである。対象に2018年のマーケティングとマネジメントクラスで用いたビジネス時事英語記事3編を用いる。稿は桜花学園大学『学芸学部研究紀要』第8巻所収「ビジネス英語記事の実際のリーディング」の続編であるが、包括的視野を得るために表を用いることの有効性を特に強調する。理解のために表を作成することは、選択肢設問や脈略の小さい単文理解よりも、生産的である。引用3編は、「コンビニ、自動化と時短で人手不足対応」(ジャパンタイムズ、2018年1月11日)、「人気ゴーカート会社マリカー、路上カート事業で敗訴」(共同通信、2018年9月28日)、「トイザラス、アジア企業売却で日本事業継続」(桜井、2018年11月17日)である。各記事に推論と論理により空白を埋める内容表1点と、若干の追加設問が用意されている。

表は本稿では「列と行で規則正しく配置された数値または文字情報を示し」「豊富な情報を効率的に提示する」(アメリカ心理学会、2010、125)構造図と解釈される。論理パズルで作成されるものと類似の表は、記事情報を網羅的に示すための優れた方法とい

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える。また表を利用し明示されていない情報を推論により導き出し、記事の十全な理解につなげる方法についても示す。

Convenience stores address labor crunch with automation, shorter hours

The Japan Times-JJI

Jan 11, 2018

The major convenience store chains are opening new stores even though the nation's growing manpower shortage is making it increasingly difficult to maintain 24-hour operations. [1]

Some of them are overcoming the shortages, which include part-time staff, by promoting automation. But one big chain has begun closing some branches late at night when traffic is slow. [2]

As competition grows, how each company adjusts to the labor shortage may reflect their differing management styles, experts say. [3]

FamilyMart Co. has experimented with closing outlets late at night or switching to vending machine-based operations. FamilyMart President Takashi Sawada says 24-hour operations aren't necessary at some stores. [4]

Lawson Inc. has developed a system that lets customers conduct transactions at unattended checkout counters late at night using a smartphone app. It will test the system this spring. [5]

Convenience stores can also serve as disaster response and crime prevention bases because they are open 24 hours, Lawson President Sadanobu Takemasu says. [6]

Industry leader Seven-Eleven Japan Co. plans to maintain round-the-clock operations as well. [7]

"The best measure (against the labor shortage) is to prepare a good working environment," Seven-Eleven Japan President Kazuki Furuya says. [8]

"We're not running short of staff," Furuya said, expressing confidence in the company's ability to secure manpower. [9]

There are disadvantages to closing late at night, including with deliveries, Furuya said. [10]

In the meantime, Secoma Co., which runs Seicomart, the largest convenience store chain in Hokkaido, only lets a quarter of its stores run all night. In fact, about half of its stores were closed on New Year's Day. [11]

Secoma, based in Sapporo, makes good working environments and flexible schedules its priority to deal with fluctuating demand, a company official said. [12]

Questions

Q1. Fill in the blanks.

(n/a: not available)				
Convenience store	FamilyMart	Lawson	Seven-Eleven	Secoma
Market share ranking ¹⁾	2			
President ²⁾				
Will maintain 24-hour Operations? ³⁾				
Labor shortage measures	Promoting automation ⁴⁾			
	Working environments ⁵⁾			

Note: '2' in row 1 is outside information, not taken from the article.

Q6. Which is the “one big chain” in Paragraph 2?

Q7. Which words in the text is reflected by the verb *address* in the title?

Q8. If there are 1,200 Seicomart stores, roughly how many of them are said to close late at night?

Q9. Roughly how many Seicomart stores were open on New Year's Day?

Popular go-kart company MariCar loses court battle over street kart business

Kyodo, AFP-JIJI

Sep 28, 2018

The Tokyo District Court on Thursday ordered the operator of a go-kart service that lets customers drive on public roads wearing costumes of Nintendo Co.'s video game characters to pay damages for copyright infringement. [1]

The amount of compensation was not immediately known. Nintendo had sought ¥10 million (\$88,300) when it filed a lawsuit against MariCar Inc. in February last year and demanded it stop using the costumes, which have been popular with foreign tourists. [2]

Visitors to Tokyo and other major Japanese cities are often stunned to see convoys of karts driven by people — usually tourists — dressed up as Mario, Yoshi, Princess Peach and other popular Nintendo characters buzzing around busy streets. [3]

Unlike many countries, Japan has no ban on people driving go-karts on public roads. [4]

But the court ruling looks set to bring such Nintendo-themed antics screeching to a halt. [5]

The video gaming giant said the ruling blocks the MariCAR go-kart service from lending Mario and other characters' costumes to its customers. [6]

Nintendo complained that its popular racing game "Mario Kart" is known widely as "MariKar," just like the go-kart service's name. [7]

It also argued that the go-kart enterprise had not been given permission to allow drivers to dress up as its characters or to use photo and video footage from the racing game in its publicity materials. [8]

"We will continue to take necessary steps against damage being done to our brand and intellectual properties, which we have spent years to build," Nintendo said in a brief statement. [9]

Nintendo noted that it had won damages but did not discuss the financial amount. [10]

Mari Mobility, the go-kart operator which has changed its official name from MariCar, said in a brief statement that it will review the ruling before deciding what to do next. [11]

The company website says its service "is in no way a reflection" of Nintendo's Mario Kart, and tells customers not to race one another, nor throw banana skins or red turtle shells — all

things you can famously do in Nintendo's frenetic racing game. [12]

Occasional accidents among go-karters on Japan's streets have prompted authorities to require that operators improve safety measures, like mandating the use of seat belts and helmets. [13]

Questions

Q1. Fill in the blanks.

Company	Nintendo Co.	MariCar Inc. (Mari Mobility)
How else referred to in the article, other than <i>it</i> ¹⁾		
Products/services ²⁾		
Main points of the legal claim ³⁾		
Date filed ⁴⁾		
Date of court ruling ⁵⁾		
Compensation amount ⁶⁾		
Actions planned after the court ruling ⁷⁾		

Q8. Why are convoys of go-karts driven with foreign tourists often seen in Japan?

Q9. What does "a reflection of" mean in [12]? Put this claim about the Mari Mobility service into easier words.

Toys ‘R’ Us sells Asia operations and keeps Japan business alive

Japanese know-how will power emerging-market push under new top shareholder Fung
YOSHINO SAKURAI, Nikkei staff writer

November 17, 2018

TOKYO — Bankrupt U.S.-based retailer Toys “R” Us will sell its roughly 85% stake in its Asian business to a regional joint-venture partner and creditors, the Asian unit said Friday. [1]

The relatively healthy Japanese operations will continue running. The deal transfers an additional 6% stake to Hong Kong-based partner Fung Retailing to make it Toys “R” Us Asia’s top shareholder, with an overall interest of 21%. The other 79% goes to investment funds and financial institutions owed debt by the toy seller. [2]

Under the new lead shareholder, the Asian business will recraft its strategy to seize on an expected rise in demand for toys and baby products accompanying economic growth in emerging markets like China, India and Southeast Asian countries. Expertise from the Japanese unit is seen as key to Asian expansion. [3]

Eyes had been on the auction process for Asian operations of Toys “R” Us, which filed for bankruptcy protection in the U.S. in September 2017 over its massive debt and stiff competition from online retailers. Toys “R” Us-Japan will remain wholly owned by the Asian business. [4]

Toys “R” Us directly operates around 450 stores across Asia with Fung Retailing, a corporate sibling of multinational retail group Li & Fung. The toy seller has about 160 locations in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, as well as about 130 in Southeast Asian countries including Brunei, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In Macau and the Philippines, licensees operate more than 80 Toys “R” Us stores. Net sales from China and Southeast Asia came to \$375 million for the year ended January 2017. [5]

In most markets, the Babies “R” Us brand often shares retail space with the toy business. But in Japan, the baby goods brand is strong enough to expand on its own. It has drawn praise for expertise in attracting customers of child-rearing age, mainly with events targeting mothers. The Japanese unit can supply this know-how to Asian markets with strong growth prospects for baby goods, according to Toys “R” Us-Japan [as Toys “R” Us, Japan] President Dieter Haberl. [6]

Sales at the Japanese unit edged down on the year to 139.4 billion yen (\$1.24 billion) for the year ended January, but strong showings at Babies “R” Us helped net profit surge roughly 30% to 2.2 billion yen, according to Tokyo Shoko Research. Toys “R” Us-Japan operates about 160 stores nationwide, and Haberl has expressed optimism about room for growth

despite the shrinking population. [7]

The company plans to continue opening Japanese stores at a pace of 10 a year, focusing on smaller shop floors — about 30% to 50% the size of its larger locations — in such prime spots as commercial facilities near train stations. It also intends to bolster online shopping operations. [8]

Questions

Q1. Fill in the blanks.

Market	Toys ‘R’ Us operator	Number of Toys ‘R’ Us stores	(n/a: not available)	
			Sales amount (\$ million; January 2017-end)	Net profit
Japan ¹⁾				
Hong Kong, China, Taiwan ²⁾				
Southeast Asia ³⁾				
Asia total ⁴⁾				

Q5. If there were no separate Babies “R” Us brand, how much is said to the net profit of Toys “R” Us-Japan have been for the year ended January 2017?

Q6. In what ways are Toys “R” Us-Japan’s operations healthy? Give evidence from the article.

Solutions

“Convenience stores address labor crunch with automation, shorter hours”

(n/a: not available)				
Convenience store	FamilyMart	Lawson	Seven-Eleven	Secoma
Market share ranking ¹⁾	2	3	1	4 or below (or n/a)
President ²⁾	Takashi Sawada	Sadanobu Takemasu	Kazuki Furuya	n/a
Will maintain 24-hour Operations ? ³⁾	No	Yes	Yes	No
Labor shortage measures	Promoting automation ⁴⁾	Yes	Yes	Probably (or n/a)
	Working environments ⁵⁾	Probably (or n/a)	Probably (or n/a)	Yes

1. On an assumption that FamilyMart [Paragraph 4], Lawson [5], and Seven-Eleven [7] are the largest three, Seven-Eleven occupies the largest market share as “Industry leader.” Given the added information that FamilyMart is the second largest, Lawson has to be the third. Though the rank of Secoma [11] is not clear, it could be large enough to follow FamilyMart.
2. The names can be filled in from paragraphs [4], [6] and [8], while the President of Secoma is not referred to.
3. Their present position regarding 24-hour operations can be found in [4], [5, 6], [7] and [11].
4. Promoting automation is emphasized by FamilyMart [4] and Lawson [5]. It could be suggested, too, in Seven-Eleven and Secoma’s concerns for “(a) good working environment(s)” [8, 12].
5. While working environments are referred to by Seven-Eleven [8] and Secoma [12], they are not reported from the interviews with FamilyMart [4] and Lawson [5, 6]. Yet it’s likely that the latter two have a policy for improving their working environments when it is hard to recruit staff.
6. In the table as constructed above, FamilyMart stands out as the “big chain” that “has begun closing some branches late at night” [2].
7. The verb *address* here means “to think about a problem or a situation and decide how

you are going to deal with it” (Oxford, 2010). The equivalent expressions in the text are “are overcoming” [2] and “adjusts to” [3].

8. Since Secoma “only lets a quarter of its stores run all night” [11], the other three quarters close. If there are 1,200 stores, this means that around 900 stores would close late at night.
9. “About half of its stores were closed” [11] means that the other half were open. In other words, around 600 stores out of 1200.

“Popular go-kart company MariCar loses court battle over street kart business”

Company	Nintendo Co.	MariCar Inc. (Mari Mobility)
How else referred to in the article, other than <i>it</i> ¹⁾	The video gaming giant	the operator of a go-kart service, the go-kart enterprise, the go-kart operator, the company
Products/services ²⁾	Video games like Mario Kart	the MariCAR go-kart service
Main points of the legal claim ³⁾	MariCar let customers drive on public roads wearing costumes of Nintendo’s video game characters without Nintendo’s permission. Nintendo had demanded MariCar stop using the costumes.	
Date filed ⁴⁾	February 2017	
Date of court ruling ⁵⁾	September 27, 2018	
Compensation amount ⁶⁾	¥10 million or less	
Actions planned after the court ruling ⁷⁾	Will continue to take necessary steps against damage being done to their brand and intellectual properties.	Will review the ruling before deciding what to do next.

1. Nintendo is referred as “the video gaming giant” [6]. MariCar (Mari Mobility) is described as “the operator of a go-kart service” [1], “the go-kart enterprise” [8], “the go-kart operator” [11], and “the company” [12].
2. The products of Nintendo are video games like Mario Kart [1, 7, 12]. The service provided by MariCar is a go-kart service [6].
3. MariCar let customers drive on public roads wearing costumes of Nintendo’s video game characters [1] without Nintendo’s permission [8]. Nintendo had demanded MariCar stop using the costumes [2] on grounds of copyright infringement [1].

4. In the article of September 28, 2018, Nintendo reportedly “filed a lawsuit against MariCar Inc. in February last year” [2]. The date is thus February 2017 (day unknown).
5. In the same article, it is said that “The Tokyo District Court on Thursday ordered the operator ... to pay damages for copyright infringement” [1]. The date of the article, September 28, 2018 falls on a Friday, so the court ruling must have been a day earlier, on Thursday, September 27, 2018.
6. From the two reported facts that “Nintendo had sought ¥10 million (\$88,300)” [2] and “did not discuss the financial amount” [10], the amount of compensation can be understood as coming to ¥10 million or less.
7. Nintendo will continue to take necessary steps against damage being done to their brand and intellectual properties [9], while Mari Mobility will review the ruling before deciding what to do next [11].
8. Because this is an enjoyable way of roleplaying popular Japanese characters and, unlike many countries, Japan has no ban on people driving go-karts on public roads [4].
9. The clause “its service ‘is in no way a reflection’ of Nintendo’s Mario Kart” is to deny that the MariCar service contains any kind of reference to Nintendo’s Mario Kart game.

“Toys ‘R’ Us sells Asia operations and keeps Japan business alive”

Market	Toys ‘R’ Us operator	Number of Toys ‘R’ Us stores	(n/a: not available)	
			Sales amount (\$ million; January 2017-end)	Net profit
Japan ¹⁾	Toys “R” Us -Japan	160	1,240	20
Hong Kong, China, Taiwan ²⁾	Toys “R” Us with Fung Retailing, and licensees	160	375	n/a
Southeast Asia ³⁾		130 (plus 80+ under licence)		
Asia total ⁴⁾	All of the above	450 (plus 80+)	1,615	n/a

1. For Japan, the operator is Toys ‘R’ Us-Japan, with 160 stores, sales of \$1,240 million (\$1.24 billion), and net profits of \$20 million (2.2 billion yen) [7]. The dollar amounts are calculated on an exchange rate of 112 yen to the dollar.
2. The operators for Hong Kong, China and Taiwan are Toys “R” Us and Fung Retailing,

with 160 stores [5].

3. In various countries in Southeast Asia, the same operators, Toys “R” Us and Fung Retailing, run another 130 stores directly, and 80 or so more through licensees [5]. The net sales from all of these Asian stores excluding Japan amount to \$375million [5]. The profits are not indicated in the article.
4. The totals for Asia including Japan are 450 stores (plus 80+ under licensees) [5] and net sales of \$1.615 billion, obtained through calculation. The net profits cannot be calculated.
5. The strong performance of the Babies “R” Us brand helped net profits in Japan to rise roughly 30% in comparison with the general brand, to 2.2 billion yen (\$20 million) [7]. Without this, the net profits for Toys “R” Us-Japan would have been 1.7 billion yen (\$15 million).
6. There are strong growth prospects for baby goods [6], despite the shrinking population, as shown by the Babies “R” Us net profits [7]. The company plans to continue opening Japanese stores at a pace of 10 a year, focusing on smaller shop floors [8].

Conclusion

In the author’s classes for Marketing and Management, the course is taught on four current news articles, two of which are prepared by the instructor, while the other two are selected by the students. The three articles shown were taken from eight used for which some reading assignments were set to be filled in by students. Successful students’ feedback included reactions such as “I was surprised to see how well the table could be filled in by reading the text and doing the calculations.”

Reading authentic articles, answering content questions by drawing up tables, and then creating one’s own questions can provide a fine training arena for operations of reasoning and logic, essential supports for reading that are all too often underexamined in multiple choice tests. In devising the tables and questions, learners are also led to discover untold gems of information.

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