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Tobacco company tests "safe cigarette"

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7 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Tobacco company tests 'safe cigarette'

British American Tobacco (BAT) has reportedly created a “safer” cigarette that is due to hit the market in the near future. However, a company spokeswoman denies this and said research into the effectiveness of the cigarettes was “inconclusive”. She did say the production of a less-toxic, reduced-risk cigarette was an “urgent priority”. She added: “This is an ongoing project at a development stage, it is possible that there could be a launch [soon], but it really is far too premature to talk about.” BAT says it has developed a revolutionary “trionic” filter that supposedly prevents many of the 4,000 cancer-inducing toxic compounds from reaching the lungs. The company has denied rumors that a product capable of reducing the risk of cancer by 90 percent was in the pipeline.

Anti-smoking campaigners are up in arms over the new product and its surrounding hype. They say it will be detrimental to people’s health and may encourage people to smoke more, thus hindering their efforts to reduce deaths from smoking-related illnesses. They cite the example of how low-tar cigarettes prompted an increase in tobacco-related deaths, despite manufacturers’ claims that the number of tobacco deaths would fall. Campaigners fear the new product is a cynical way of duping consumers into believing cigarettes are safe. Britain’s *Sunday Times* newspaper quoted a scientist who said: “Anything involving inhaling smoke is unsafe. These new cigarettes [are] like jumping from the 15th floor instead of the 20th: theoretically the risk is less but you still die.”

WARM-UPS

1. CIGARETTE HISTORY: In pairs / groups, talk about your history with cigarettes. Do you have any early memories of cigarettes? Do you have any bad stories about cigarettes? Have you had any arguments about cigarettes? Do you smoke?

2. SAFE CIGARETTES: What do you think of the new, perhaps-soon-to-be-released "safe" cigarette? Do you think a cigarette can ever be safe? Talk about safe cigarettes and these other "safe" products that might one day hit the market:

- Cigarettes
- Guns
- Cars & motorbikes
- Marijuana
- Condoms
- Nuclear power plants
- Nuclear bombs
- Airplanes

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Tobacco / cigarettes / the near future / research / toxins / urgent priorities / the lungs / cancer / arms / health / duping consumers / scientists / smoke

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TOBACCO: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with tobacco. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. OXYMORONS: An oxymoron is a phrase which contains contradictory terms. Talk with your partners about the meanings of the following oxymorons and what you think about them. Do they make sense to you?

- safe cigarette
- virtual reality
- peace force
- hospital food
- ill health
- pretty ugly
- Microsoft Works
- working vacation / holiday
- American history
- just war

6. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: Face your partner and engage in these (for-fun) 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Change partners often.

- Passive smoking doesn't kill people. vs. Oh yes it does.
- There is no such thing as a safe cigarette. vs. There will be soon.
- Smoking will completely disappear one day. vs. Oh no it won't.
- Tobacco companies murder people. vs. How ridiculous!
- Tobacco companies are the worst. vs. Pornography companies are the worst.
- Tobacco advertising should be banned worldwide. vs. That's unfair.
- Smoking should be banned in public places. vs. Many things should be banned.
- Smokers are unfairly treated by society. vs. Smokers should stop smoking.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A tobacco company has made a risk-free cigarette. | T / F |
| b. A tobacco company spokeswoman said tests were conclusive. | T / F |
| c. There are around 4,000 toxic compounds in cigarettes. | T / F |
| d. The new cigarette stops smoke from entering the windpipe. | T / F |
| e. Anti-smoking campaigners waved their arms a lot to clear the smoke. | T / F |
| f. Low-tar cigarettes increased the number of tobacco-related deaths. | T / F |
| g. Campaigners fear safe cigarettes will dupe consumers into smoking. | T / F |
| h. A scientist said jumping from a window is a faster way to die. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| a. reportedly | quote |
| b. denies | under way |
| c. premature | damaging |
| d. inducing | refutes |
| e. in the pipeline | misleading |
| f. up in arms | causing |
| g. detrimental | allegedly |
| h. cite | scornful |
| i. cynical | furious |
| j. duping | early |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. due to hit the | duping consumers |
| b. research into the effectiveness" | at a development stage |
| c. a less-toxic, reduced-risk | toxic compounds |
| d. an ongoing project | efforts to reduce deaths |
| e. 4,000 cancer-inducing | market in the near future |
| f. up in arms over the new product | smoke is unsafe |
| g. hindering their | and its surrounding hype |
| h. low-tar cigarettes prompted an | cigarette was an "urgent priority |
| i. a cynical way of | increase in tobacco-related deaths |
| j. Anything involving inhaling | of the cigarettes was "inconclusive |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHOOPS: Four of the eight words in bold in each paragraph are incorrect. In pairs / groups, find and delete them and think of a better word.

Tobacco company tests 'safe cigarette'

British American Tobacco (BAT) has **repeatedly** created a "safer" cigarette that is due to **smash** the market in the near future. However, a company spokeswoman denies this and said research into the effectiveness of the cigarettes was "inconclusive". She did say the production of a **more** toxic, reduced-risk cigarette was an "urgent **priority**". She added: "This is an ongoing project at a development stage, it is possible that there could be a **launch** [soon], but it really is far too **premature** to talk about." BAT says it has developed a revolutionary "trionic" filter that supposedly prevents many of the 4,000 cancer-inducing **toxic** compounds from reaching the lungs. The company has denied rumors that a product capable of reducing the risk of cancer by 90 percent was in the **bloodline**.

Anti-smoking campaigners are up in **legs** over the new product and its surrounding hype. They say it will be **detrimental** to people's health and may encourage people to smoke more, thus hindering their efforts to reduce deaths from smoking-related illnesses. They **site** the example of how low-tar cigarettes prompted an increase in tobacco-related deaths, despite manufacturers' **claims** that the number of tobacco deaths would fall. Campaigners fear the new product is a cynical way of **duping** consumers into believing cigarettes are safe. Britain's *Sunday Times* newspaper quoted a scientist who said: "Anything involving inhaling **tobacco** is unsafe. These new cigarettes [are] like jumping from the 15th floor instead of the 20th: **theoretically** the risk is less but you still **smoke**."

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Tobacco company tests 'safe cigarette'

British American Tobacco (BAT) has _____ created a "safer" cigarette that is _____ the market in the near future. However, a company spokeswoman denies this and said research into the effectiveness of the cigarettes was "inconclusive". She did say the production of a _____, reduced-risk cigarette was an "urgent priority". She added: "This is an ongoing project at a development stage, it is possible that there could be a _____ [soon], but it really is far too premature to talk about." BAT says it has developed a revolutionary "trionic" _____ that supposedly prevents many of the 4,000 cancer-_____ toxic compounds from reaching the lungs. The company has denied rumors that a product capable of reducing the risk of cancer by 90 percent was _____.

Anti-smoking campaigners are _____ over the new product and its surrounding hype. They say it will be detrimental to people's health and may encourage people to smoke more, thus _____ their efforts to reduce deaths from smoking-related illnesses. They cite the example of how low-tar cigarettes _____ an increase in tobacco-related deaths, despite manufacturers' claims that the number of tobacco deaths would fall. Campaigners fear the new product is a _____ way of _____ consumers into believing cigarettes are safe. Britain's *Sunday Times* newspaper quoted a scientist who said: "Anything involving _____ smoke is unsafe. These new cigarettes [are] like jumping from the 15th floor instead of the 20th: _____ the risk is less but you still die."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**low**' and '**tar**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHOOPS: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "SAFE CIGARETTE" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about smoking, tobacco companies and whether there can be such a thing as a "safe cigarette".

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- reportedly
- inconclusive
- urgent
- premature
- inducing
- pipeline
- arms
- hindering
- prompted
- cynical
- quoted
- theoretically

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of tobacco companies?
- c. Do you think cigarettes have any use?
- d. What do you think of the idea of a "safe" cigarette?
- e. What is your opinion on banning people from smoking in all public places?
- f. What do you think of tobacco ads full of fit and healthy young people surrounded by beautiful nature?
- g. Do you think tobacco companies should compensate smokers for illnesses related to smoking?
- h. Do you think a non-smoker should be able to sue a smoker for endangering his/her health?
- i. Do you think the "safe" cigarette is a cynical advertising ploy aimed at duping consumers?
- j. Do you think smokers should have to pay higher health insurance premiums?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think the tobacco industry can survive the world's increased efforts to reduce smoking?
- d. What do you think of the fact that there are 4,000 dangerous chemicals in cigarette smoke?
- e. Have attitudes to smoking changed in your country?
- f. Governments are reluctant to regulate tobacco companies because tax revenues would fall. What do you think of this?
- g. Why do you think smokers take such big risks with their lives?
- h. Why do you think tobacco company executives are proud of their companies, which kill millions each year?
- i. What questions would you like to ask the CEO of a tobacco company?
- j. What do you think his/her replies would be?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. Did you like this discussion?
- b. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- c. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- d. Was there a question you didn't like?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

“SAFE” CIGARETTE ROLE PLAY: Should tobacco companies be allowed to promote and advertise a “safe” cigarette?

Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – TOBACCO COMPANY CEO

You want to be more responsible in your business. You are worried that so many people die from smoking. You want to create a risk-free cigarette. The new “safe” cigarette is the first step. Soon, everyone in the world will be able to smoke without worrying about his/her health. Smoking will be cool and trendy again.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY SAFE CIGARETTES ARE A GREAT IDEA.

Role B – ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGNER

Tobacco company CEOs have lied for decades. They knew smoking killed people but covered the facts up. They are murderers. They make billions of dollars from killing people. The safe cigarette is the latest in their long line of dirty tricks to get people hooked on their products.

THINK OF REASONS WHY CIGARETTES SHOULD BE BANNED.

Role C – JO PUBLIC (SMOKER)

You have been smoking for many years. You feel great. You know all of the facts about the dangers of smoking. You are fed up with people attacking your lifestyle. You think the new safe cigarettes will save millions of lives and make smoking acceptable again.

THINK OF REASONS WHY SAFE CIGARETTES ARE A GOOD IDEA.

Role D – JO PUBLIC (NON-SMOKER)

You think a cigarette is a cigarette. Whatever the tobacco companies call them, cigarettes kill millions. Passive smoking destroys the health of non-smokers. There is absolutely no value in cigarettes or smoking. The “safe” cigarette is a huge trick to boost flagging sales. You want all cigarettes banned.

THINK OF REASONS WHY CIGARETTES SHOULD BE BANNED.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Discuss whether the new “safe” cigarettes should be allowed to be advertised as being “safer”.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the damage smoking does to health. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. CAMPAIGN: Design a poster either (a) from an advertising executive of BAT that shows the benefits of the new safe cigarette or (b) from an anti-smoking organization denouncing the new safe cigarette. Show your poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the CEO of British American Tobacco. Tell him/her what you think of the new "safe" cigarette. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. reportedly	allegedly
b. denies	refutes
c. premature	early
d. inducing	causing
e. in the pipeline	under way
f. up in arms	furious
g. detrimental	damaging
h. cite	quote
i. cynical	scornful
j. duping	misleading

PHRASE MATCH:

a. due to hit the	market in the near future
b. research into the effectiveness"	of the cigarettes was "inconclusive
c. a less-toxic, reduced-risk	cigarette was an "urgent priority
d. an ongoing project	at a development stage
e. 4,000 cancer-inducing	toxic compounds
f. up in arms over the new product	and its surrounding hype
g. hindering their	efforts to reduce deaths
h. low-tar cigarettes prompted an	increase in tobacco-related deaths
i. a cynical way of	duping consumers
j. Anything involving inhaling	smoke is unsafe

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