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Between the Keys

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Co-ordinator's Column

Nate French

Welcome to the winter edition of *Between the Keys*, 2012! There have been a lot of exciting things happening in the SIG recently. First and foremost, we have been very lucky to get some much needed help with officer positions recently. Azusa Sato is our new Program Chair, and Eric Lerstrom is our new Publications Chair. If anyone has a chance to meet them in person, for example at the Pan-SIG Conference in May, please thank them for their hard work! As well, I have been elected co-ordinator with Cameron Romney, and I am also doing the Membership Chair duties until we can find a new Membership Chair. Our very own Jim Smiley, who has done so very much for the MW-SIG, is currently working his ways towards taking a bit less active role in the SIG so that he can take a much needed break. However, he will still continue to be available to us for advice and support when we need it as our SIG Member-at-large.

In other news, the Pan-SIG 2013 Conference is May 18th & 19th and will take place in Nanzan University, Nagoya. We hope that everyone, including those who will not be presenting, will consider

making it down to this conference. Recently, the Pan-SIG conference has been gaining more and more steam, and I'm sure that there will be a great multitude of worthwhile presentations to see there. Submissions to present at this conference will also open soon, so please watch the mailing list and the website for further details!

Speaking of the website, I'd like to encourage our members to make a personal profile on the website for everyone, including non-members, to see. I think that the more we can put ourselves out there, the more of a community our SIG can become. People can put faces to names, read about what our members are up to, and possibly even learn about new techniques and teaching methods from some materials that our members have included in their profile. The Materials Writers SIG starts and ends with all of its members, and we will need to rely on our members to help make the Members Profiles section of our website a success. Please send us your profiles, and I hope that I will be able to read about all of the wonderful things our members are doing soon.

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MW-SIG Web Site

<http://www.materialswritersorg>

The site contains articles on topics ranging from copyright to desktop publishing techniques, an extensive list of publishers including contact information, tutorials and software recommendations, and information on submission requirements for *Between the Keys*.

MW-SIG Mailing List

mw-sig@materialswriters.org

From the Editor

Jim Smiley

With this issue, I pass the editorial reins over to Eric Lerstrom. Eric has sat in with me during the production this time and will be fully in charge from the second this *Between the Keys* hits your electronic mailbox. Thanks, Eric, for stepping up to what I consider the most important job in a SIG: as editor, your output is the single most visible statement of our SIG's identity, culture and activities. Good luck.

Our main article is from the prolific Diane Hawley Nagatomo entitled "Striving toward writing gender-balanced EFL textbooks". Diane examines the background to research in gender awareness in EFL textbooks. She includes a short case study in which she analyses a book written by herself earlier in her career. Diane ends by calling for materials writers to be more aware of sexist stereotypes in their writing. To highlight one important piece of advice from the text, I think that Diane's suggestion that "instead of merely alternating male and female characters' speaking turns, materials writers need to examine the content of the dialogues to ensure that all the characters have equal opportunity to behave in interesting ways", is critical. Gender balance is not merely about equalising turn-taking in role-play dialogues, nor about having the same number of males and females peppered throughout a text, but more importantly it is about representing the likely spoken gestures of the sexes as close to authentically as possible. If both women and men are interesting

in real life, they should be so in our writings.

In "World News Report from VOA", Gerald Muirhead describes his role in the collaboration that led to the production of this Cengage text. The remit was publisher-driven and the scope for creative input limited. This case study is informative not only in its description of key details of timing, levelling, and so on, but also in that Gerald shows how he strived to maintain personal ideas about value in EFL writing within a fairly rigid publisher-driven structure.

Scott Peterson provides us with a My Share activity. "Shopping Story Listening" describes the choices made in the purchase of a present at a shopping mall.

At the JALT National Conference this past October, I wore another MW-SIG hat—that of Programmes Chair—and devised, prepared, and compered our Forum. The event was well attended by both MW-SIG members and non-members. The five panellists were gracious and sent in a short report of their presentation. Well, four did. One, Don Maybin, produced a full-length essay that described his route into EFL publishing in Japan. Written with humour and packed with interesting anecdotes, the full essay is printed here with apologies to the other panellists. Clive Langham describes his involvement in co-authoring a MEXT-authorized high school textbook; Greg Goodmacher explains that materials development is a love and that writing begins with the creation of

the best materials for his own classes; Diane Hawley Nagatomo outlines her experience in publishing and includes—usefully—a short discussion on why a particular project was rejected. Kevin Cleary lists a number of tidbits of advice for aspiring authors. He also alludes to PARSNIPS. In 2006 MW-SIG member Marc Helgesen penned a “Notes from the Apocrypha” in which he shows that PARSNIPS is an acronym listing items that materials writers should avoid

in EFL texts. Both John Wilshire’s featured speaker talk for us and my own introduction to the panel session drew on PARSNIPS—for very different purposes—and Kevin reacts to them in his own way. To ensure that we’re all on the same page, Marc has graciously allowed us to reprint his 2006 article.

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Submission Guidelines

NEXT DEADLINE: February 25

Between the Keys (BtK) welcomes submissions in English on all topics related to the development of pedagogic materials. Between the Keys is distributed [online](#) both in HTML and PDF formats. We gladly review articles for publication from anyone, however priority for publication will be given to current members of the JALT MW-SIG. We invite any interested person to submit articles of the following types:

- main research articles for vetting team inclusion (between 2000-4000 words)*
- research articles for inclusion at the editor’s discretion (1500-3000 words). Longer articles may be divided into sections and published in subsequent issues.
- perspective/opinion pieces (up to 1000 words)
- book reviews (up to 1000 words)
- annotated bibliographies
- short summaries/reviews of journal articles
- responses to BtK articles
- descriptions/reviews of websites

related to pedagogic materials development

- letters to the editor
- My Share-type articles showing materials in use
- interviews with materials-related writers, publishers, academics
- reviews of materials-related technology for upcoming issues.

***BtK** is not a refereed publication on the whole. However, one article per issue will be. This is to improve the quality of materials development research and to further promote individual author’s careers. Main article submissions must follow our [Submission Guidelines](#).

Publication Schedule & Deadlines

Between the Keys is published three times a year, in:

- March (volume one),
- August (volume two)
- and December (volume three).

Submissions for consideration for any

issue should be received by the editor by the 15th of the month prior to publication at the latest, i.e. February 15, July 15 and November 15.

Most articles will be published at the discretion of the editor except for refereed main articles, which will be reviewed by the MW-SIG vetting committee. If you wish your article to be our Main Article, please indicate so in your cover letter.

You can consult the [BtK archive](#) to compare your article for general style, length and appropriacy.

Articles are available to members only for the two years after publication and open access afterwards. The copyright statement is: "All articles contained in *Between the Keys* © 2012 by their respective authors. This newsletter © 2012 by Materials Writers SIG."

This means that individual authors are free to disseminate their own works on, for example, their websites and in open access repositories, but that must be limited to their own article only and not the whole publication.

Furthermore, copyright for the formatting and layout belong to the

Materials Writers SIG, and so any content that is published outside must not be a copy of the BtK article but only the text.

Submissions Process

- Send an email to publications @ materialswriters.org (take spaces out) with your article attached
- Send an email to publications @ materialswriters.org stating your intention to submit before the next deadline. This is very useful in planning the next issue.
- If the document includes graphics, drawings, etc., they should be save as separate files and sent as e-mail attachments.

If you are unsure of the format to use, please ask the Layout Editor: layout @ materialswriters.org

Editor Contact Information:
publications@materialswriters.org

Questions?

Anyone with questions can reach the editor at the email address above.

Between the Keys is published by the JALT Materials Writers Special Interest Group (MW-SIG). The editors welcome contributions in the following areas: publishing issues, classroom activities, page layout or desktop publishing, experiences in publishing or materials design, announcements of materials-related meetings or newly published materials, or any other articles focusing on aspects of materials writing or publishing. For information about reprinting articles, please contact the editor. All articles contained in *Between the Keys* ©2012 by their respective authors. This newsletter ©2012 by Materials Writers SIG.

Striving toward writing gender-balanced EFL textbooks

Diane Nagatomo
Ochanomizu University

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MW's *Between the Keys*

This paper discusses the importance of creating gender balanced EFL textbooks. It first provides several examples of sexism and gender stereotypes found in early EFL textbooks, and then it introduces several analytical frameworks that have been used to examine such stereotypes. The paper also briefly discusses a study conducted by the researcher where she had analyzed an EFL textbook that she had published in 1994 to investigate whether or not gender stereotypes and gender bias had inadvertently been included. The paper concludes with a call for all materials writer to examine their own writing to ensure that both male and female characters are represented equally and fairly.

Examining sexist stereotypes in EFL materials

Early investigation of sexism in language teaching focused on gender stereotypes and on who spoke first in dialogues (Hartman & Judd, 1978). One stereotypical sentence found that might make us laugh today was, "Boys become men. Girls become housewives" (Alt and Kirkland, 1973, cited in Hartman and Judd, 1978). Women's professions (when women were not being depicted as housewives, teachers, or mothers) were trivialized by "adding a title to differentiate its referent from the norm—a male" (Porecca, 1984, p. 717), as in the following example: "A T.V. host

is interviewing a famous woman author who is eighty-five years old" (Fingado, Freeman, Jerome, & Summers, 1981, cited in Porecca, p. 717). Female characters were underrepresented in dialogues, and in some cases, not represented at all (Hellinger, 1980). They generally spoke when spoken to by male characters and were not the ones to initiate a conversation. Furthermore, illustrations of female characters in textbooks were far fewer than those of male characters; men engaged in adventurous pursuits or in challenging careers, but women, if shown, engaged in typically "feminine" activities. Interestingly, 16 of the 27 authors in textbooks analyzed by Hartman and Judd (1978) and 15 of the 29 authors of the textbooks analyzed by Porecca (1984) were women, and in Porecca's study, the textbook with the most examples of sexism was written by a woman.

Porecca's (1984) study expanded on Hartman and Judd's (1978) analytical framework by providing six categories to measure gender dominance in language teaching materials: (1) omission of female characters; (2) firstness, meaning which gender initiates a speaking turn; (3) occupations held by characters; (4) nouns used to describe characters (i.e. brother, sister, man, woman); (5) masculine generic constructions that generally exclude females; and

(6) adjectives (female characters are often described according to their appearance—pretty or lovely—whereas male characters are often described by their ability—strong or clever).

Unlike textbook writers of the past, current materials developers, both male and female, are likely to be more aware of gender bias in language, and they may make conscious (or unconscious) effort to avoid it. They are likely to avoid obvious gendered stereotypes in reading passages and dialogues, to replace the generic “he” with the less cumbersome “they”, to select gender neutral vocabulary items (i.e. police officer vs. policeman) and to use an equal number of gender specific words (i.e. boys and girls). I believe that there is also a better balance in terms of character visibility. A cursory examination of language teaching materials published today indicates a more balanced ratio of male and female characters than in the past. The issue of firstness also seems to be somewhat addressed because male and female characters generally initiate dialogue in an equal number of turns. Nevertheless, recent analyses of EFL and linguistic materials have found that sexism still exists in terms of both linguistic and non-linguistic representation (e.g. Sunderland, 1992; Jones, Kitetu & Sunderland, 1997; Ma, 1998; Farooq, 1999; Cook, 2005).

Furthermore, increasing the degree of visibility of female characters in textbooks by how often they appear, how often they speak first, and how often they are referred to may not be a complete indication of gender equality in textbooks. Leskin (2001) offers an additional perspective for materials writers to consider when creating

textbook dialog drawing upon the work of Halliday (1985) to examine gender bias in language teaching materials in terms of communicative prominence and social prominence. These two areas of prominence are more than the amount of *exposure* given to male and female characters; they reveal the degree of attention that is paid to them. A character initiating an exchange may not be the one who achieves a position of communicative prominence; it is accorded to the person who gives the important part of the message. According to Leskin:

People who are centers of conversations, topics of writing, or the information focus would seem to have more social prominence than people who are not. We communicate about people who are in some way of interest us or are important to us; those who are not of interest are not the focus. Thus people can be perceived as having different degrees of social prominence by the degree of interest shown in them (p. 277).

To illustrate how this works, let us look at several short exchanges that could feasibly appear in language textbooks published in Japan.

Example 1.

- A. Hi. Where are you going?
- B. Oh, I'm going to school.
- A. On a Saturday?
- B. Yes. I have club practice. We have an important game coming up so our team meets every day.
- A. Do you think you have a chance of winning?

- B. I hope so. We are really practicing hard.

Example 2.

- A. Hi, what are you doing?
B. I'm reading a book about travel. I'm planning to go to Europe this summer
A. Europe? Don't you have to start looking for a job?
B. Yeah, but I want to take a short trip to France. If I don't go now, I may not be able to once I start working.
A. Yeah, you're probably right. But aren't you worried all the good jobs will be gone by the time you come back?
B. A little bit. But it is important to me to follow my dream.

In the two conversations above, we can see that (A) and (B) had equal number of speaking turns. Although (A) occupies the position of firstness, it is clear that (B) occupies the position of dominance within these conversations by talking about what he/she is doing and thinking. On the other hand, (A)'s main role is to get (B) to talk about him/herself. In other words, speaking first doesn't necessarily matter. But having important things to talk about, being the center of attention, and having opportunity to talk about oneself does. I do not mean to suggest that a person who initiates a conversation is always in a weaker conversational position. It depends, of course, upon the entire dialogue. What I want to say is that instead of merely alternating male and female characters' speaking turns, materials writers need to examine the *content* of the dialogues to ensure that all

the characters have equal opportunity to behave in interesting ways.

Japanese female students and their relationship with English

English is important for both male and female secondary school students in Japan because of its central role in university entrance examinations, but it is far more popular among female students as an area to specialize in. Many females have an emotional attachment toward English called *akogare* (a yearning or desire) because they believe that English will provide them with a better job, a more fulfilled life, sophistication and even a boyfriend (Bailey, 2006, Habu, 2000; Kelskey, 2001; Piller & Takahashi, 2006). Many students major in English because they perceive it to be the key to success, but according to Kobayashi (2002, 2007), the existing corporate culture selects its workforce mainly from male graduates of prestigious universities. She argues that because of the corporate discriminatory practices that "attaches paramount importance to men with certain backgrounds as the legitimate labor force" (2007, p. 567) Japanese women, especially those from lower tiered all-female institutions, may not be able to convert their degrees in English into well-paid careers. English ability alone is insufficient, but to a certain extent it can be, and has been utilized as a stepping-stone for Japanese women to obtain advanced degrees abroad or in Japan that might facilitate some career door-opening (Nagatomo, 2012).

English is also perceived by many Japanese women as a vehicle through which they can express themselves in ways they would

ordinarily be unable to because of cultural and linguistic constraints. Some language teachers in Japan have incorporated feminist ideals into their language classes as a way to empower their students (Simon-Maeda, 2004; McMahill, 2001), but unfortunately English is quite often treated like a “finishing school subject” to increase female students’ cultural capital to ultimately aid them in selecting a marriage partner (e.g. Fujimoto, 2005).

What should materials writers do?

Where do EFL materials writers come in with regards to gender issues? Obviously the most important role of materials writers is to provide engaging and effective materials that enable students (both male and female) to develop their English language skills. But it is also important for us to pay attention to how we do this, especially considering that many, if not the majority of our students in Japan are female. Hartman and Judd (1978) argue that materials writers, even feminists, should review their texts and images for unintentional instances of sexism and gender stereotypes that occur because they are deeply ingrained in our subconscious.

I decided to examine the first EFL textbook that I had written nearly twenty years ago, *Conversation Topics for Japanese University Students*, to see if unintentional and ingrained sexism were present. Because I wrote the book long before I was aware of gender bias in language teaching materials, I was somewhat afraid of what I might find. My results are reported in detail elsewhere (Nagatomo, 2012) but I will provide a brief summary here.

First, in terms of visibility,

female characters outnumbered male characters in terms of illustrations, the number of sentences spoken, the number of turns, and the number of instances of firstness. Those who spoke first generally had more speaking turns in a conversation. However, I did not find much difference between male and female characters in terms of social prominence. In terms of language, gender-neutral nouns far outweighed gender specific nouns and there was very little gender bias in the language. The most commonly used pronoun throughout the book was “you” to create a conversational tone throughout the book. An example of this is the following: “When you hear the word, ‘Hollywood,’ what is the first thing that comes to your mind? If you are like most people, you probably think of movies” (p. 12).

There are instances of where typical gender stereotyping seems to be avoided. For example, the following excerpt appears in a chapter about fashion:

Someone who is working in an office would probably need tailored skirts and jackets, and a housewife would need to have casual and comfortable clothes for working at home. The same principles of smart shopping also apply to men who want to buy clothes. Unless a person is wealthy, it is a smart idea to plan fashion purchases carefully. By examining your wardrobe... (p. 34).

This excerpt discusses the importance of fashion for both men and women, and attempts to shift stereotypical

images of male and female workers. In reading the first half of the first sentence, readers might expect to see the word the “suit” (typically worn by male office workers) to appear instead of “tailored skirts” (female apparel). This sentence may also present the image of a woman working in a career position, because in Japan “office ladies” (the most common form of non-career and temporary employment for Japanese female graduates) generally do not wear suits at work, but corporate uniforms that symbolize their clerical status.

Unfortunately, I did find numerous instances of sexist stereotypes in other parts of the book. Most notably, the book’s illustrations were quite stereotypical in their portrayal of male and female characters. I was not responsible for the illustrations, but had I been more aware of gender bias in language teaching materials at the time of writing the book, I might have asked the illustrator revise some of them. (In a subsequent textbook, I did have the illustrator revise racially stereotypical illustrations that portrayed foreigners with enormous noses). Another area of gender stereotypes was found in the chapters’ topics, which included shopping, cooking, dating, and fashion. There were also heavier topics such as AIDS, careers, and travel, but I had mainly selected lightweight themes that I imagined my students (who at that time were mainly female students in a private coeducational university) wanted to talk about. By the way, the chapter with the most embarrassing gender stereotype appears in a dialogue in the chapter on cooking. A bumbling husband tries to help his wife cook, but he manages to break the eggs,

perpetuating the idea that a man cannot be trusted in a kitchen.

Conclusion

The analysis of my book revealed that the same sort of gender imbalance regarding visibility of male and female characters as noted in some of the earlier studies (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Porecca, 1984) was not found. In contrast, female characters played a much more visible and active role than the male characters. I am not sure why this was so. It may have been because as a female writer I sympathized with the female characters and wanted to offer them a greater voice. It may also be because the image that I had in my head when constructing dialogue was that of my students, who were predominantly female.

My analysis indeed shows how easy it is for an author to inadvertently incorporate gender stereotypes into teaching materials. But it also shows that materials writers can also avoid promoting stereotypical images in language teaching materials. As materials writers we have power to shape, albeit in small ways perhaps, the way our students view the world and how they think about themselves. We can promote images of strong female characters, just as we can promote images of sensitive male characters. In a way, language educators and materials writers are opening windows to an outside world for our male and female students. But to do this, we need to mindfully select topics that engage and empower students, and we need to ensure that both genders are represented equally and fairly.

Bio data

Diane Hawley Nagatomo has been living and teaching in Japan since 1979. She is an associate professor at Ochanomizu University and has published EFL textbooks books for university students and books for the general public. She is interested in teacher and learner identity and in EFL materials development. Her academic book *Exploring Japanese University English Teachers* was published by Multilingual Matters in February 2012. [Hawley. diane.edla@ocha.ac.jp](mailto:diane.edla@ocha.ac.jp)

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My Route to Publishing

Don Maybin
 Shonan Institute of Technology

Like many aspects of my life in this country, my forays into the world of publishing have been unplanned. To date, I have worked with one international publisher, the local division of an international publisher, and three Japanese companies on projects of varying scale. This is the background to the impressions in this essay.

My first writing project ever was to “co-author” a teacher’s manual for an English textbook by a well-known British author. I caught the publisher’s eye thanks to several JALT workshops I had conducted on teaching techniques and classroom activities. These presentations received good reviews, and subsequently, the company asked if I would be interested in writing the teacher’s manual.

I jumped at the opportunity and spent one very long year faxing and mailing (e-mails had yet to be invented) materials to the UK: one set to the author and another set to the official editor. I quickly discovered that major projects handled by international publishers are given very detailed

consideration; I was writing for two people and the editing process seemed to take forever!

I took my time before committing to another writing project and did so under questionable conditions – while drinking with a close friend (yes, another JALT connection). My friend confessed that, although he respected me as a teacher and was impressed by my wealth of ideas for teaching communication strategies, he was disappointed that I had never made an effort to collect my materials in a form that could be accessed by other teachers: in other words, a textbook. My retort was that, if he really felt such disappointment, perhaps he’d care to write something with me. (After all, we were drinking...) And that’s what we did.

I followed the traditional route of preparing a “scope and sequence” with sample units and a brief analysis of how we positioned our work vis-à-vis competing texts already on the market. Tapping into my connections from the JALT circuit, I approached the Japan rep of an international publisher with

our idea for a textbook to train learners in communication strategies. It was well received; however, he insisted that his company would only consider a series with at least two books. And so began a long stretch of commuting to my university every weekend with my writing partner to work on our books, punctuated by occasional meetings in Tokyo with the Japanese editor assigned to us by the publisher.

In this case, although we were provided with a contract – something I have never had with a local publisher – the editorial input was extremely limited (of the “I-found-a-spelling-mistake” variety). Essentially, the material was self-edited, a common occurrence for texts prepared by native English-speaking authors in Japan, where many publishers assume the drafts are camera ready. Working with the local division of an international publisher proved to be a hybrid experience.

My next writing efforts were with three local publishers. The first was a major project working with a team developing official high school texts for a large Japanese publisher. In fact, another person was approached for the job, but she was about to leave Japan and offered me up as an alternative saying that I had experience with the target students and could function in Japanese.

Once I tentatively agreed, I was taken to lunch by three staff members to confirm whether I could really function in nihongo. This need soon became obvious. Although the textbook was for teaching English, all other aspects of this project are conducted in Japanese, including the critical selection of unit themes. We are given literally hundreds of articles to skim through before

choosing the core topics for each new series of books. Topics should be au courant with little likelihood of dating (one unit on Obama was rescued by the last election) and avoid specific taboos (liquor, cigarettes, sexuality). Units dealing with neighboring countries (i.e. China and Korea) are handled with kid gloves. Meetings lasted for as long as four hours with discussion on obscure grammatical or syntactical points on the agenda. For those interested in this type of work, I would suggest one more critical qualification – patience!

The writing team is made up of a very dedicated group of professionals teaching in universities, as well as junior and senior high schools. The publisher’s representatives are also actively involved and bring their own unique perspective. Oftentimes it seems like we are caught between a rock and a hard place, trying to meet the Ministry of Education’s ever-changing directives, while producing a product that is innovative but that does not alienate the core group of teachers who buy the book year after year (i.e. the customers). It is an ongoing struggle to meet educational goals and achieve commercial viability, but everyone makes a sincere effort. Which leads me to another problem.

When I was approached initially, I was led to believe that I was making a one-year commitment. That was over fifteen years ago. It seems development of this textbook series is ongoing and, if you are not a long term resident, stay away from this type of work. To be honest, after two or three years, there is little new to learn, and the time requirements, though seasonal, can be very demanding. But once you have been vetted, leaving the group is a

rather difficult thing to do, kind of like being a member of the Mafia.

Although a contract was never signed, the company has treated me fairly as a full member of the writing team with annual royalty payments. This has meant a lot to me since most local publishers seem to prefer one-shot native speaker involvement with a flat fee for the use of one's name on the back cover. But perhaps the main reason I have stuck it out this long is because the members of the writing team have become friends and moving on would feel like a betrayal. In Japanese, it's called "ningen-kankei" (personal relationships). After every work session, we go out for a meal and talk shop or about life in general. So I continue, assuming I will have one foot in the grave before I can comfortably be excused.

My involvement with this high school text writing team has led to two other adventures with smaller Japanese publishers. The first came from a team member and was an out-of-the-blue request to be the native informant/editor on a bizarre English phrasebook. Apparently a rival publishing house was planning to imitate a best seller centered on English colloquialisms not taught in schools. The proposed book copied the format of theme-based units written by well-known academics. The latter arbitrarily chose words and phrases that caught their fancy, described them briefly in Japanese, then offered a selection of phrases to illustrate how the new language could be applied. The project sounded promising but, as it turned out, the writing styles varied wildly in each unit and some sections required a major rewrite. And there was a deadline: two days hence!

Unfortunately, the word "no" doesn't really exist in my family's lexicon. (I swear this is a genetic disorder on my father's side.) As a result, I found myself sitting up for 48 hours straight to complete the job. Some sections were clear and concise. Others were incredibly messy and took hours of bleary-eyed correction. Although I was paid well for my efforts and had my name on the cover as a consultant, I will avoid this type of work in the future for health reasons.

The second writing project also came via a high school text team member. It was a reference book for English grammar which targeted junior high school students. The publisher was looking for a native speaker to design interactive components and to proofread contributions from the Japanese members of the writing team. I liked the idea of being responsible for a specific section and agreed on the condition that I would be treated as an equal with royalty payments like the other Japanese members of the team. The young woman I was negotiating with immediately agreed resulting in six months of weekly trips to Tokyo to complete my writing component of the project, and to finish a massive volume of proofreading.

In the end, I spent hours trying to come up with interesting material that I thought would appeal to the junior high school students I had taught in the past. The work was stimulating and everyone was delighted with my contributions. Then I received a payment in my bank account before the book had even hit the shelves. I asked what this was for and was told by the accounting section that it was the payment for my work. What happened to the royalties payments?

The company's understanding was I would be paid a flat fee for my work. When I mentioned the verbal agreement in the initial negotiations with the company's representative, I was told she no longer worked for the company and that there was no written record of the exchange. I had learned to trust a world without contracts; however, I now know that verbal agreements must be witnessed, ideally by long term employees!

This experience left a particularly bad taste in my mouth since the book has turned out to be a bestseller and has been reprinted seven times. With each reprinting, I receive a copy of the latest edition. Feels like salt in the wound. I have been asked to work on other projects by this company; however, I absolutely refuse to and have requested they remove my name from the cover of the original book. "Ningen-kankei" goes both ways.

So what have I learned about the differences between international and Japanese publishers? For me, the main differences between writing for an international publisher and a local publisher seem to be that you get much more editorial input with the former and a contract is the norm, while for many local publishers there is an assumption that, as a native speaker of English, your work is more or less camera ready. As for the contract though, things seem to be changing; however, my experience has been that a contract is not the norm and you need to make sure there are witnesses to any discussion of what the project involves, in particular, the type of remuneration.

To close, if you are planning to make a fortune through writing, I would recommend you investigate

another profession. On the other hand, if you feel that you have something new to contribute to the teaching field, love the process of putting your thoughts to paper and/or working with others to develop materials, then writing may be in your blood. And, as you can see from the above, JALT is certainly an excellent channel for making contacts in the publishing world.

Recently though, there is another platform which you can exploit as a creative outlet – the Internet. I have moved most of my materials development work to my language training website, www.sulantra.com, and to my creative writing efforts to my blog, blog.donmaybin.com. I get frequent feedback – some good, some bad – from readers/users and know that an audience is being reached, which is very satisfying. That audience has included two publishing firms, an international one suggesting they would be interested in a joint endeavor if I add a licensing component to Sulantra.com. The other is from a local publisher who that feels there is a market for the essays on my blog if they were translated into Japanese. Both prospects are tempting; however, I am not so sure that I want to get locked into several months/years of deadlines. And, if I do take the leap, I will definitely request a contract for either project. ■

World News report from VOA

Gerald Muirhead
Tohoku Gakuin University

Introduction

For several years I had considered writing a textbook for EFL classes in Japan. In particular I was interested in writing a textbook that could promote students' intercultural awareness by providing them with interesting glimpses into overseas lifestyles and current social phenomena through the study of English. So when a colleague asked me to co-author such a textbook, I didn't have to think twice.

In this article I will outline the process of co-authoring a textbook, and detail my experience of collaborating on and publishing a textbook that covered news topics, which were based on broadcasts and accompanying texts provided by a major news corporation. I will explain how we hoped our textbook would be different from others at the time of writing. Then I will describe some of the advantages or potential limitations of working on a publisher driven project. Furthermore, I will attempt to explain the main factors that influenced our decisions during the writing process, and elucidate our decision to include L1 support throughout the textbook.

At the time of writing, the available textbooks covering news stories that I previewed, included only an accompanying audio CD. I had not seen any other books that also allowed the student to download English news broadcasts, in the form of a podcast

from a designated website to a portable, personal audio device such as an iPod or Mp3 player. Our book 'World News Report from VOA' can be used with the accompanying CD or in conjunction with the VOA English language radio broadcasts, titled 'World News Report.' These can be downloaded from the internet to MP3 portable audio devices such as iPods via podcasts from <http://www.voanews.com/>. The language used in the 'Special English News' section is based on a core vocabulary of 1500 words and the audio is spoken at around 70% of native speakers' natural speed. It contains short relatively simple sentences in the active voice without idioms.

Our textbook is B5 format, I have previewed around twenty of these books and would conclude that B5 now appears to be the most prolific size used for news content textbooks for EFL classes in Japan at this time. It seems to be preferred by Japanese publishers and teachers.

The writing process

Initially my colleague Kenichiro Tachibana received a publisher-driven request from Cengage Learning, in conjunction with Voice of America (VOA) on-line news broadcasts, to write support materials for a proposed English language textbook focusing on current world topics. He then asked me to collaborate on the project and

become the co-author.

After we had agreed to work together on the project the publisher provided us with the main VOA texts for several topics. However we were unable to modify the text content or length as it was accompanied by a corresponding audio program. Nevertheless we were able to choose the units we wanted to include in the textbook. We accepted all but one of the topics, the topic we decided to reject was out of place with the others as we felt it was not in the high interest category, also the language level was lower than other units.

Cengage asked us to complete a pilot-unit within three weeks. After the pilot-unit was accepted we set up regular weekly meetings, and began creating and writing grammar, vocabulary and listening comprehension exercises for the other units. Each completed unit was then sent to the publisher. After our final drafts were accepted the publisher decided that the level of the book was most suitable for students with a TOEIC test score of around 310 – 520, therefore it is (upper) beginner to low intermediate level.

The deadline for completion of all the units was around seven months. As with the pilot unit we began by scrutinizing the text and the audio components we then discussed our approach and pedagogical goals and based our writing strategy on VOA's text and audio. After a period of brainstorming we decided that we wanted students to be able complete vocabulary, synonym and antonym, dictation, reading comprehension exercises and a summary section. We also intended to include a debate section. However this was not accepted by the editor.

Firstly we selected words for the

glossary and produced a variety of exercises and support materials, by deciding which were the most relevant words and phrases in the context of each unit. We had to assume that our target audience (low-intermediate students) had no, or possibly only low, prior knowledge of the subject matter. We then based our pedagogical theory on a form of “backwards design, i.e. define what students are supposed to be able to do (e.g. solve problems) and write a book that enables them to do so” (Schnieder, 2007). Therefore we decided what we wanted students to be able to do by the time they had completed the textbook and utilized a combination of exercises intended to use all four language skills to build a basic understanding of each topic. We based our appraisal of “backwards design” on the following criteria: clarity, accuracy & relevance of words, phrases and content. We narrowed the choices further by identifying, evaluating and selecting those that were most appropriate to our pedagogical objectives, for instance, our textbook should be used for direct instruction using reading, writing and listening components.

After we had completed the first draft of each unit we decided to get some feedback from colleagues. Proofreading by another person is one of the most important parts of the post-writing process. My colleague did the Japanese proofreading. I undertook the English proofreading for the first six units. As we were nearing the deadline I asked a friend who had ample knowledge and experience editing English textbooks to do the proofreading of the final few units.

My colleague and I also received correction feedback from a few Japanese

teachers of English concerning line and paragraph numbers of the six words we chose for each 'Synonym and Antonym' section, and the words we eliminated in order to leave a blank for the dictation. This process was important because the publisher had altered the text lay-out to fit the format of the textbook, so the reference line numbers from our previous notes were incorrect after the changes. This was confusing at first but we quickly included the necessary corrections and got back on track.

Japanese language support

Our textbook incorporates Japanese language support to help Japanese students in the EFL learning environment, in the form of descriptive notes and explanations of activities. We chose to include these annotations in Japanese as we decided that they would help facilitate students' understanding and clarify what they were required to do in order to eliminate any procedural errors.

The L2 support covers all the main points in the support activities i.e. before the main reading and listening exercises and includes translations of key words in the 'Notes' section, in the order they appear in text -not alphabetically- including personal names, acronyms, etc. There are also brief explanations in Japanese on how to complete the exercises in the Vocabulary, Synonym and Antonym, Listening and Reading Comprehension sections. Finally there is a more extensive translation for the Summary section.

Book Structure

Each unit in our World News Report is four pages in length, consisting of

the main text and activity questions. Each chapter culminates in a summary section. We have utilized the same structure for all twelve units. We placed the less challenging units first and the most difficult last. Also we always followed one topic category, e.g., education or health, with a different category such as scientific development or sport.

Each Unit is comprised of an Introduction, main unit text, Notes including a translation of the key concept items, Vocabulary, Synonym and Antonym, Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension and Summary sections.

Impressions on the writing process

Although our goal was to engage learners in a variety of authentic, up to date global news topics through the English language, I got the impression that our creativity was a bit constrained during the task making process due to the fact that we were unable to alter the text and audio components provided by the editor/publisher.

Most of our suggestions during the writing process were accepted and utilized in the textbook. However a few were not and these are listed below. This gave me the impression that the editorial staff and/or publisher had different ideas and priorities concerning the content and presentation of the textbook. I now realise that publishers & editors may often have their sights on a marketing niche- that the author(s) might be unaware of. But not to accentuate the negative I found working with the editor/editorial staff generally satisfying.

My colleague dealt directly with the editor, and he was quick to communicate any questions or points that I had with the editor, and any developments from the editor back to me. Nevertheless the following proposals were not accepted by the editor/publisher:

1. Originally we wanted to include 15 units, but this was reduced to 12.
2. We planned an expansion activity i.e. a discussion section at the end of each unit for pedagogical reasons as there were no other open-ended activities included.
3. We hoped to provide lists for personal research such as relevant website links, further reading, etc.

Soon after the first edition was printed we received some complimentary sample copies for examination. My colleague and I corrected several printing errors and a few grammatical errors. We then sent the corrections back to the publisher and these were subsequently corrected in the second edition.

Afterthoughts

I have described the writing process and some of my impressions, now I would like to reflect on my observations during that time.

- The personality of the teacher you team up with and your/their ability to build an effective partnership to communicate constructively and develop some form of synergy is important. So that ultimately the outcome of the collaborative planning, creating and writing process is greater than the individual inputs.
- Clarification of which aspects are shared and which are the main

responsibility of one of the authors further helps to facilitate the writing process.

- Since starting the textbook I have become more aware of the importance, when co-authoring a book, to make sure from the outset that both authors are equally well informed and up to date concerning any modifications and/or amendments with the publisher/editor during the writing process.
- Concerning what I learned along the way; I agree with Farrell's view that; "Most teachers recognize that their professional development is enhanced by looking critically at what they do, and why they do it." Farrell, T.S.C (2007) In hindsight, although we scheduled regular meetings and attempted to use our time as productively as possible, I wish we had put a little more time into the planning stage. I have subsequently learned the importance of having a clear set of objectives from the outset. I understand now – more than ever – that thorough planning of objectives and strategies is a prerequisite for a successful outcome, followed by careful implementation. Furthermore pausing from time to time to systematically evaluate progress and budgeting time to stay within the time parameters to meet the deadline are also of prime importance.

I feel that my colleague and I were able to build rapport and work effectively as a team to draw on our own strengths, i.e. Professor Tachibana's background in journalism and as a

college lecturer and my own experience in language schools and college EFL classes. We already had a good working relationship and managed to share the relevant responsibilities. I would also advise anyone undertaking such a project with a co-author to collaborate with someone they have worked with on a professional level and know well.

In conclusion, after a long period of planning, writing, drafting and editing, I am satisfied that my colleague and I have created a textbook that is informative and relevant within the field of EFL learning. Although the information in our textbook won't provide a seismic shift in their English language ability or knowledge of the world, it is my hope that it will contribute to their English

language development, communicative ability and offer them an opportunity to learn more about overseas life-styles and newsworthy events in the world we share.

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NeuroELT: Incorporating the Findings of Neuroscience into EFL Materials

Brian Cullen

Nagoya Institute of Technology

Avril Haye-Matsui

Nanzan University

Welcome to Writer's Point. This column explores different types of material writing projects and feature materials writers from around the world.

Recently, we had the opportunity to talk to Robert Murphey who is well known in EFL circles in Japan for his work in bringing the findings of neuroscience to EFL, especially through the FAB conferences. Robert's background in language teaching goes way back to his days growing up as a teenager in Japan at an international school student in Kobe at the Canadian Academy. His

first experiences were teaching local Japanese students in their homes, classrooms, and at Eikaiwa summer camps. Like many of us, Robert's first impressions of teaching were important, and he says "I remember enjoying watching the teaching-learning process unfolding before my eyes, so I guess those early experiences put me on this road quite early on."

When Robert did his Master's degree in TEFL/TESL at the University of Birmingham, he became very interested in neuroscience and carried out his dissertation on cognitive development

and pedagogy, with assistance from Kurt Fischer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (specifically his Mind, Brain, and Education program). The Birmingham program led Robert to spend a lot of research hours connecting neuroscientific research to better teaching practice, and eventually he decided to spread these findings firstly by writing textbooks based on the neuro-pedagogic findings, and secondly by presenting as much as possible on the neuro-pedagogic findings.

Textbooks

The neuro-based textbooks are of course most relevant to readers of this publication, but Robert realizes that these textbooks may also be ultimately more effective than presentations in spreading the findings of neuroscience because, while presentation participants may enjoy a presentation and take good notes, how much actually trickles down to their students and becomes incorporated into their teaching the next Monday morning? Whereas it is a bit too much to consider that a single presentation could totally revolutionize another classroom teacher's teaching, Robert believes that;

If a teacher has one of my textbooks in front of them and all they have to do is follow the steps, I can from a distance elegantly incorporate the neuro-based activities into that teacher's classroom without having to worry about the particular teacher's recollection of the theoretical underpinnings of the activities. Revolutionary changes in the classroom can therefore be

accomplished elegantly via the power of textbooks.

Although most teachers and students feel very confident and comfortable with typical mainstream PPP-style textbooks, Robert suggests that;

This is unfortunate because neuroscience clearly tells us that the typical PPP-style training simply puts students through the motions, but very little actual learning and understanding is happening in the brain. Ironically though, PPP 'feels and looks' like real learning, so both the student and the teacher feel happy by just going through those motions. And that is why PPP-style textbooks sell so well around the world.

In contrast, he continually aims to base his textbook designs and activities on neuroscience and notes this can result in books that are the opposite of PPP in many ways. It can, of course, be unsettling for PPP-trained teachers to adopt this new way of teaching, and Robert is therefore trying to raise wider awareness of the importance of these new neuroscience based models of learning in order to help more teachers become aware of the underlying concepts, too. That is one reason that he also does a lot of presenting and teaching training to get the word out about brain efficient teaching.

FAB Conferences and Books

To date, the main forum for getting the word out have been the FAB Conferences (International Brain Conferences) which

have been held around Japan in the last few years. Coming up soon are FAB4 and FAB5 which are planned for Kitakyushu and Nagoya in 2013. Having attended several of the FAB conferences, we agree with Robert that it is exciting to see so many new teachers getting into this emerging field that we call NeuroELT.

As well as the conferences, Robert is also coordinating a book project to spread the findings to a wider audience. Teacher-researchers that participated in the FAB conferences over the years are writing chapters in what is going to be a book divided between 50% theory and 50% practical material. Robert is very excited about this and hopes it will make a positive impact on ELT in Japan.

Key findings of Neuroscience for Language Learning

There are many findings from neuroscience that are relevant for language learning, but Robert emphasises two key points that all teachers should understand.

1. Emotion Guides Learning

Spock from Star Trek had it all wrong. Without emotion, there can be no learning or real understanding. We only learn, even at the neuronal level, what our brain-body physically deems interesting. All else is ignored. Robert is not just referring here to conscious or explicit learning. We do of course learn things implicitly and unconsciously, but even then, learning can only happen when at least some parts of the brain find the incoming information stimulating enough to activate the learning process. So, as teachers we need to bring more emotion into the classroom.

2. Memory is a Real-time Creation

Memory is a real-time creation, is dynamic, and is derived from lingering fragments of past analyses. Memory does not work like computer RAM or ROM. We actually re-create our 'memories' every time we attempt 'recall.' In that sense, we actually don't have concrete memories. Memory, or the real time product of attempted recall, is affected by our immediate biological and psychological context. Whatever happens to be on our mind at the time of attempted recall significantly affects the outcomes of our recall. Because context affects cognition at such a fundamental level, education must make a shift from focusing on rote memorization/recall to the deeper understanding of underlying concepts per subject matter so that even though context may affect recall, the student will have a better chance at using the surfacing information in a more meaningful way. Rote learning does not equate to understanding.

Incorporating these Findings into EFL Materials

As materials writers, we are interested in how these findings can be incorporated into materials and textbooks. Robert is expanding the research in this area through his doctoral work under the supervision of Zoltán Dörnyei at the University of Nottingham with the main aim of investigating and establishing protocols for a neuro-dynamic ELT syllabus. When the protocols are completed, he will be analysing mainstream ELT textbooks to see just how neuro-dynamic they are in design. He will also analyze his own textbooks using the same criteria and in a nice example of pragmatic action research, he intends to completely revise and

update his own series of textbooks based on his PhD research.

A primary goal is to make sure students are emotionally engaged with the presented content. Robert describes several ways to achieve this;

“One way is to let the students make their own learning choices along the way. For example, for each section in each learning module, [material writers should] provide a variety of learning activities to choose from. By making choices in each section, the students automatically get emotionally involved with the learning process, much more so than if they were forced to do the activities without question. Another way to get emotions involved is to require the usage of emotion words for each activity. Find ways to connect emotion words directly with whatever the learning goals are.”

With some thought and careful planning, adding this kind of emotion-based activity should not prove difficult for materials writers, and it can automatically makes the learning experience much more meaningful

for the students and the teachers. Robert leaves us with the comment, “Remember, dry teaching is boring for the brain; the information does not go anywhere and will soon be lost, but emotional learning may stick with students forever.”

Learning More

For materials writers and teachers who want to learn more about this field, details of FAB conferences can be found at fab-efl.com, and below Robert has provided a short list of recommended books where you will find much more information.

Recommended Books

- *Mind, Brain, and Education Science: A Comprehensive Guide to the New Brain-Based Teaching* (Paperback) by Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa
- *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning: Insights from a Neurologist and Classroom Teacher* (Paperback) by Judy Willis
- *How the Brain Learns* (Paperback) by David A. Sousa

More book suggestions can be found at <http://fab-efl.com/page7/index.html>



MW-SIG FORUM 2012

Kevin Cleary

Many thanks to the MW-SIG organizers for the invitation to be a panelist at the MW-SIG Forum at JALT2012, to my fellow panelists for their stimulating talks, and to the audience for their keen questions. We all learned a lot and had a very good time while doing so.

I feel that most PARSNIPS topics do not apply strongly in Japan. Topics that might alienate or agitate those who have a strongly held belief, from religion to politics or political correctness, generally do not bother Japanese. However, any material that might make a student or teacher uncomfortable is generally shunned by publishers in Japan. While I do my best to create materials that will not ask students to divulge private information or that will embarrass them, I relish the freedom from PARSNIPS that exists in the Japanese market. Also, there is now a welcome trend for books with controversial topics such as abortion, the death penalty, and whaling. It seems that using English to mediate such topics lessens any embarrassment.

Regarding the submission process, be sure to check the publisher website and don't be shy about meeting editors or salespeople at a conference or other event and talking to them in person about potential projects. Although thousands of books have been produced in Japan for the domestic language learning market, publishers are constantly looking for new titles.

As for the editing process, I always work with at least one co-author,

and we tend to bring in the editor as a member of the team as well, albeit through a madoguchi (window person). It is important for the editor to be in frank and constant contact with the author(s), but also important for only one author to talk directly with the editor. Also, keep in mind that a book that is headed for the classroom first must be chosen by teachers. Editors based in Japan understand what Japanese teachers want, and so you should take their advice seriously. When writing a poem or a novel you have more reason to stick to your original idea; if an editor suggests that something in your textbook might be difficult for a Japanese teacher to understand or accept, it might benefit you to save that battle for another day.

Twenty years ago there were few acceptable textbooks, but today there are hundreds, if not thousands, of good textbooks. Although the quality of the material in textbooks in Japan has increased markedly, the level of the language used has fallen dramatically. In any case, teachers now are confronted with too many good textbooks to choose from. However, Japanese publishers can profit from a book that sells a small number of copies for many years. Thus, if you have a strong interest in a specific area, you may be able to create a unique book that will appeal to a niche in the market.

In closing, be thankful that global publishers have to satisfy a diverse market and thus use PARSNIPS to reduce resistance to their products.

In Japan, you can use the ability of a Japanese publisher to find a loyal audience for your material by making a book that reflects your passionately followed hobby or a specialized area of knowledge that you possess. It is a privilege to be in a position to create materials in which you share your interests, and help people learn a language to boot. Best of luck to you in your materials writing endeavors!

Diane Nagatomo

In my presentation, drawing upon my personal experience of having a number of books published, I discussed criteria that materials writers should be aware of when writing college English textbooks for the Japanese market. These criteria are: 1) Make it easy for the teachers to use. The main purchasers of textbooks published in Japan are Japanese teachers, who may not be specialists in TESOL, but hold degrees in literature or linguistics. It is extremely important to write a useful and attractive book for them. Publishers know that this is their greatest target audience. 2) Aim for the lower-level student rather than the higher-level student. Teachers for high-level students tend to choose authentic texts or textbooks published by foreign publishers. To write for Japanese publishers, you need to aim at those with lower ability. I do not mean that you should dumb down your text, but to try write at an appropriate level that will motivate students. 3) Keep the difficulty level uniform throughout the book and try to create a chapter that is doable within one class period. It is not a good idea to write a textbook where skills build upon each other because of the high rate of absenteeism by

Japanese students. It is unlikely that the students will make great linguistic progression through the 15 weeks of the semester they use the text. Instead, the textbook should be aimed at broadening their awareness of the English speaking world, enhance their motivation, and be somewhat enjoyable.

After I discussed criteria that make a successful textbook, I then covered reasons why my most recent textbook proposal was rejected. Unfortunately, I forgot to follow my own rules. 1) My proposed book failed to focus one linguistic skill. These days, according to the editor, four-skills textbooks are not very popular. 2) My sample chapters contained too many tasks making it impossible to complete during one class period. The editor said that the sales staff was afraid that teachers would not want to buy the book because skipping parts of an expensive book is seen to be a waste. 3) The difficulty levels were not uniform. The editor felt the reading tasks were much more difficult than the speaking tasks. She said that if students were able to read such difficult passages they should be able to speak at a higher level. Although I do not entirely agree with her comments, the people who ultimately purchase the textbook probably would. 4) And finally, she felt that the aim of the textbook was unclear. The editor did not know what the students should be able to achieve from this book.

Although I had previously authored and coauthored more than 10 textbooks, I was not surprised, or even hurt that my proposal had been rejected by the publisher (one with whom I had already published a number of books). The editor's comments were completely correct. I had forgotten to pay attention

to the market. Next time I write a proposal I will be sure to follow my own rules for writing for the Japanese EFL textbook market.

Greg Goodmacher

During my part of the panel I expressed my opinions and related my personal experiences in response to various questions that were asked before the panel presentation.

The first question I answered was "How did I get into the business of writing textbooks?" My teacher-training experiences while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer and while studying for a MA in TESL/TEFL emphasized materials development. Moreover, I always felt great satisfaction when my materials stimulated student interest. When I started teaching in Japan, I was fortunate to work with Junko Yamanaka and Kevin Miller who were writing textbooks. Observing their work encouraged me to find a publisher. At that time, I was creating materials to supplement a textbook that wasn't filling the needs of my students. I put together a proposal and showed it to editors at a JALT conference. While explaining my proposal, I also invited the editors to attend a workshop that I would soon give. During that presentation, attendees, including one editor, used the materials in my book proposal. The presentation, my proposal, and my first textbook were successful.

I continue developing materials because this is what I love. Writing is what I do. Materials development is one of the most satisfying aspects of my teaching job. So far, all of my books have

been the result of creating materials for classes that I teach. While writing my materials, I am also piloting them.

Teachers who wish to be published (I am not writing about self-publishing) should consider the following points:

1. Approaching many publishers at the same time is acceptable.
2. Listen carefully to editors and express willingness to compromise.
3. Check the proposal guidelines of each publishing company.
4. Provide at least two sample chapters and a sample table of contents.
5. Know the market or niche you will write for.
6. Do not be shy. Point out why your proposal is great.
7. Read the contracts closely and ask questions.
8. Develop good relationships with sales staff and editors. Salespeople sometimes become editors or managers.

Regarding which publishing companies to work for, I made a few suggestions and comments:

1. Does the publishing company have marketing power? Some companies have many salespeople while others have few.
2. Is there a shotgun publishing philosophy? Some publishing companies release so many new books each year that your book may not get enough editorial assistance and marketing assistance. Other publishing

companies focus more on quality than quantity.

3. Does the publisher have a new book in your niche every year? If this happens, the salespeople might try hard to market your book the first year only.
4. Will the publisher market your book repeatedly? Some book companies believe in the quality of a book and author and will advertise the textbook for many years.
5. If you have a choice of publishing company, talk to many writers who have worked with that

company, but be critical of what you hear. Disgruntled writers complain a lot.

I have written *Nature and the Environment*, *Stimulating Conversation*, *This is Culture*, and *Multicultural Perspectives*. These books were published in respective order by the following companies: Seibido, Intercom Press, Nan'undo, and MacMillan Languagehouse. If anyone has any questions about these textbooks or about writing for these companies, feel free to contact me at ggoodmacher@hotmail.com. ☐

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Shopping Story Listening

Scott Peterson
Seijoh University

The Shopping Story Listening activity revolves around a trip to the mall to buy a birthday present. It reviews vocabulary for the different types of business establishments at a typical shopping mall and what one can buy or obtain at each. One can classify it as an information-transfer activity.

Time estimated: 20 minutes +

Materials: A simple graphic of a mall made from a table with lines turned off to simulate a horse-shoe shaped mall (Figure 1).

Objectives: This activity reviews the names and activities of various business establishments. Most establishments will be stores, but malls will also house restaurants, banks or a post office.

Level: The teacher can adjust the activity by adjusting the level of the story, the nature of the activity (listening or reading) and the follow-up of the story. I will present three levels to illustrate.

Procedure: The teacher will have covered the various places given in Figure 1. He or she should also have presented language for understanding what can happen in each. For example, in a post

office you can get stamps; in a bank you can get money from an ATM; and so on.

The teacher then presents the story, either as a listening activity or a reading activity, or both. The teacher can then follow up the story by having the students write their own stories and presenting them to other students. Some examples are given below.

Elementary: A little boy's birthday

The elementary example is a reading passage. Students must read and label the stores.

My friend's son has a birthday. I want to buy a birthday present. I am shopping. First, I go in the entrance. I have to get some money. I go to store 1. I come out of store 1. I go to store 2. I look in the window of store 2. I see many puppies. They are so cute, but they are expensive. I can't buy one because I am poor. I look in the window of store 2 and I see my hair. It is too long. I need to go to store 3 and get a haircut.

A trip to the mall

bank, barber shop, bookstore, coffee shop, drugstore, pet shop, post office, toy store, travel agency

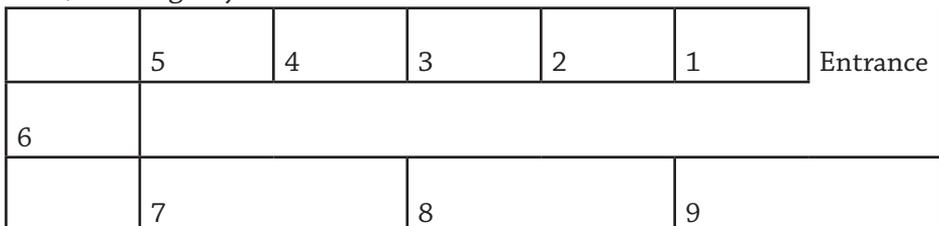


Fig. 1

After the haircut, I am fresh. I look at store 4. I see a big poster of Hawaii. A trip to Hawaii!!! But it is too expensive. I can't go to Hawaii. I remember something. I need some medicine. I go to store 5 and buy some medicine. I think, "What is a nice present for a little boy?" Maybe the son wants a nice toy. Let's go to the toy store. I walk. Store 6 is the post office. The next store is the toy store. I buy a nice toy. I am so tired. I start walking to the entrance. I look at store 9. Yes, I can buy chocolate cake and have some coffee. I go into store 9 and have cake and coffee.

Note that store 8 will have no label.

Intermediate: present for a wife

The teacher could easily rewrite the story above using more complex sentence structures and present it aurally. As an illustration, I have written a second story for this level.

My wife's birthday is tomorrow and I would like to get her a really nice present. I am going to go to the new mall in my neighborhood. First, I go to Place 1 because I need some money. When I come out, I start thinking, "what would be a good present for my wife?" She likes cats and she likes to read. A good mystery is good. There is a bookstore next to the bank. I go into the bookstore and I look at the books. Maybe, but I decide to wait to see if I can find a nice cat. First, I need a haircut so I go to Place 3. In the next store I look in the window. I see a poster

for a trip. My wife and I could go to Hawaii, but it is so expensive to travel to Hawaii. I remember I need to get some aspirin while I'm here, so I go into Place 5 and buy some aspirin. Place 6 is a post office. Then, I look at the window of Place 7. I see many toys. Not for my wife. I look in the window of Place 8, and I see such cute little dogs and cats. They are so adorable. There is this cute little black and white cat. My wife would love it, and I buy it. I come out of the Place 8 and I am tired. I need some refreshment, so I go into the last place, sit down, and order a cup of tea and a piece of cake. I need a rest.

A good way to handle presenting the story orally would be for the teacher to become familiar with the story, but to deliver it off the cuff, so that students get practice with real speech.

After presenting students with the story, a teacher could follow up by having the students write their own stories. They then present them to other students, either reading from a manuscript or trying to speak freely. I have tried this and the students came up with various renditions. One student's shopper (a man) ended up forgetting to buy any present. The character kept buying something for himself. This would make a suitable intermediate activity, since it allows for free expression, but less proficient students have a fairly well-delimited pattern they can imitate.

Notes from the Apocrypha

Mark Helgesen
Miyagi Gakuin Women's University

A few years ago, I was at materials writers conference in the UK. Some of us were discussing things we could and couldn't include in our textbooks. A British ELT author, someone older and wiser than I, said she had been told early on to "avoid PARSNIPS" in any textbook. "Parsnips? Is there some kind of a vegetable rights thing that I don't know about?" No, PARSNIPS stood for:

Politics
Alcohol
Religion
Sex
Nudity
Israel
Pork
Smoking

I don't know if the Parsnips story is literally true or if it is something of a joke that reflects the conservatism that often come up in publishing.

A couple stories that I know are literally true, because they happened to me or close friends. In a project I was working, we had a multi-cultural unit that included holidays around the world. Two that got edited out were "Christmas in Australia" and "Ramadan." Both got the boot because "you can't include religion in a textbook."

Never mind that nearly every culture has holidays that are somehow connected to belief systems. The "Christmas in

Australia" piece I had written was mostly about Santa Claus on Bondi Beach, a religious icon only to Surfies.

Ramadan being bounced was a shame. Most of us know next to nothing about Islam—this in a time we really should find out more. What little we do know is often based on partial knowledge. ("They don't eat during Ramadan. No wonder they are so crabby"—not realizing Ramadan is actually a time of feasting. It is just those feasts happen at night). My co-authors and I thought it was a chance to inform and share something interesting. We lost. (When finally published, the book did include Bob Marley Day, a holiday in Jamaica. No mention of Rastafarian sacraments.)

A friend is a respected author. In a textbook project that was strongly informed by corpus linguistics, my friend's team wanted to include the word "smoking." But, of course, they weren't stupid. They included it in the context of talking about rules, in this case, "No smoking." But even that fell awry of the PC police: "No smoking" here, implies that smoking is OK somewhere else. So out it goes.

Of course, authors and publishers have to use common sense. And different publishers have different views. I've included most of the "parsnips" topics in commercially viable textbooks. My main point in writing this short piece is to share some stories most of us can enjoy.

But I do believe that, as publishing becomes more international and more commercial, there is a danger of being dominated by rules. That is so much easier than thinking.

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A MEXT-authorized Textbook

Clive Langham

Nihon University School of Dentistry

In my short talk, I dealt with the process of co-authoring a series of Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)-authorized high school textbooks with a group of Japanese teachers of English.

Most MEXT-approved textbooks have an average of 8 co-authors, although some have as many as 15. Of these, one or two are native speakers, whose duties are to write a number of units, as well as comment on and proofread the units of other co-authors.

Textbooks are governed by various rules made by MEXT, concerning things like front and back covers, color pages, size, number of pages and type of paper. MEXT produces curriculum guidelines, but these are general, rather than specific, and are not strictly adhered to. They contain suggestions as to the type of functions, situations, vocabulary and grammar to be introduced but lack directives on types of activities or how material should be presented.

Writing a textbook requires considerable work with monthly meetings and a lot of work done online. The following shows the timeline for one textbook to be completed: 1999 first meeting, 2001 textbook submitted to MEXT, 2002 approved, 2003 used in schools. In addition to the textbook, other materials that have to be written are as follows: teacher's manual, teaching procedure, workbook, and tests.

The completed textbook is submitted to MEXT for screening. This is done by three full-time members of the Textbook Division of the Elementary

and Secondary Education Bureau, and a team of part-time reviewers, some of whom are native speakers. After screening, the editors and co-authors have to attend a meeting at MEXT to get the results. For the books I was involved in, most of the comments concerned the following points: typographical errors, grammar, lexis, illustrations and factual errors. A revised version of the book must be submitted within 35 days.

Once authorized, the textbook will be marketed and, hopefully, adopted by schools throughout Japan. Concerning sales figures, for the Oral Communication course, the most popular textbook sold 200,000 copies a year, while the least popular one sold 2,000 copies. Yearly sales figures for MEXT-approved textbooks are available on the Internet.

For people interested in co-authoring a high-school textbook, one way is to contact the chief author, whose name appears at the top of the list of co-authors at the back of the book. Publishers and chief authors are looking for writers who are members of academic societies, publish articles in journals, have a reasonable level of Japanese and are probably long-term residents of Japan.

Co-authoring a high-school textbook is time-consuming and can involve quite high levels of frustration. It is, however, a useful addition to your resume and can be a talking point at job interviews. It also offers the opportunity of influencing English language education in high schools in Japan.

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