

Between the Keys

A Publication of the JALT Materials Writers SIG ©2007

Summer 2007
Volume XV, Number 1

Working Together

Jim Smiley

Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University, Sendai

The new title of this column reflects the role of the coordinator. As I sit in early June I can look back to the Pan-SIG conference and forward to the new momentum within our group with relish and excitement. New things are afoot for our SIG, opportunities that build on the strengths of our membership and hopefully answer our needs as SIG members.

Let's begin with the Pan-SIG conference that took place in May in Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University in Sendai. We had a wonderfully engaging and lively plenary in Marc Helgesen. I was given chocolate all weekend after that. Greg Goodmacher presented our workshop, an event that I had to miss because I was presenting with Brian Cullen at the same time. This was not a scheduling oversight: our members had put together such a powerful and big programme that the occasional overlap of MW presentations was unavoidable. This shows the strength of our membership in a way that is compelling. The Seventh Annual Pan-SIG Conference in 2008 will be in the historic city of Kyoto, and again the MW SIG will be one of the host SIGs. Calls for papers will be invited soon. Get your thinking hats on!

Many members of the MW SIG Executive board were present at the Pan-SIG as well as many members. We took the opportunity to get together and discuss our future. I proposed three new projects for our group, and I'd like to discuss them in brief here.

JALT's 'The Language Teacher' has special issues regularly that are devoted to a single interest area or is done within a single SIG. There is so much energy, talent and knowledge in our member base that it's a crying shame that we haven't put out a special issue yet. When the idea was raised at the meeting, the feeling wasn't a question mark about doing the project or not, it was about when. Kris Bayne, our new member-at-large is in charge of that. All of you will have received the call for papers by now and by the time this newsletter gets to your email box, the proposal to JALT will be nearing its completion. The deadline for submissions is on the evening of the first day of July. There's still time to get a proposal in. We're only asking for abstracts at this stage, not fully-blown articles. This is because JALT's editors will evaluate our proposal on its merits on issues such as balance, interest to the general readership and so on, less than on the quality of writing at this stage.

The second and third ideas are still waiting to be sprung into action. Hopefully, that'll happen the instant you read this. We're looking for folks to man the wheels of these next two projects. If you're interested, please contact jimsmiley@pm.tbgu.ac.jp as soon as you can.

I feel that the time is ripe for a teacher's resource book, similar to Brian Tomlinson's, that discusses materials production in the Japanese context. The work would be a mixture of theoretical papers on the

2

MW's Between the Keys

sociological background to materials in Japan, pedagogical differences between western and eastern applications, practical examples of materials and features on the ins-and-outs of dealing with Japan and Japan-related publishers. Of course, if you, dear reader, have any other suggestions for content, please let us know. The finished work will be the result of the work of our membership, not of a single individual. Eric Skier has written an article on collaborative editing that is included in this newsletter to give us some idea of the process of compiling a multi-authored book. If reading that whets your whistle into joining the project, you know what to do. This project is still at the drawing board stage and most likely won't come into fruition until after the TLT special issue. This is a natural progression and we can learn much from the TLT experience and incorporate that into the book.

The third idea is to re-instigate Greg Goodmacher's excellent idea of a materials contest. This time, rather than be a one-off event, there will be two stages: each stage's deadline will coincide with either the National Conference or the Pan-SIG Conference depending on when the contest gets underway. The rules and judging will be different. Each stage will have a very precise challenge, e.g. write listening materials for a 50-minute class of 30 low-intermediate university students which is designed to help the recycling and proceduralisation of these syntactic

structures – This is my made-up example and in no way reflects what might be set as a challenge – , entries will be submitted anonymously and judged by members anonymously. Exact details have not yet been worked out, but if you are interested in being party to that process, you know what to do.

Greg will be leading our MW Forum at the National Conference in Tokyo this autumn. I don't have details to hand about the exact make up of the forum, but the theme is about the development of the awareness of principles involved in developing materials for different needs and how to create better materials for those needs. For example, such materials might be for increasing or developing critical thinking skills, materials for self study purposes, materials for review purposes, materials for specific skills such as listening or speaking, materials for developing intercultural communication skills. We'll have more on this topic in our next pre-conference newsletter.

You will have noticed that this newsletter is being distributed to you electronically. If you would prefer a paper copy, please contact me and one will be sent out. We do plan on producing paper copies of all issues for archival and presentational purposes, but we've spent virtually all of our membership income on printing and postage costs that we're unable to sponsor big named speakers or subsidise other



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* ©2007 by their respective authors. This newsletter ©2007 by Materials Writers SIG.

events. The issue of going 'all-digital' is a deeply-contested one. Send your opinions to the Yahoo! Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jaltmwsig/>. (If you're not a member, please contact John Daly (john-d@sano-c.ac.jp) who will put you on the list.)

Contents

Technology can be confusing to many. David Lisgo shows how to create crosswords step-by-step and explains in precise terms what equipment and software is necessary in their creation. This should help demystify the process for some. Eric Skier worked on the editorial team for a book on Learning and Autonomy. This article is included in our newsletter because it describes some of the issues on the other side of the writing field. And also, if our intended book project is to take its first breath, the value of Eric's experience will become clear.

Tim Newfields interviewed Allen Ascher, co-author of Longman's *Top Notch* and *Summit*. Finally, we have a conference report on the National in 2005 by Kris Bayne. Our *Between the Keys* issues have been quite large over the last year, but a web-based issue isn't concerned about space so much, and Kris's topic is as relevant as ever

Hopefully, this will be my last issue as editor. The simultaneous tasks of coordinating and editing are fun and challenging, but ultimately, it is best if they are done by different people. Would the next editor (technically Publications Chair) please step up?

Arra best,

Jim Smiley



An Interview with Allen Ascher

Tim Newfields, Toyo University

timothy@toyonet.toyo.ac.jp

Allen Ascher, co-author of *Top Notch* and *Summit* (Pearson Longman), has been a teacher and teacher-trainer in China and the U.S. He served as academic director of the International English Language Institute at Hunter College in New York and later, as vice-president of publishing at Longman, he played a key role in the creation of hundreds of widely used ELT textbooks for adults. Mr. Ascher has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Ohio University and has presented ELT workshops throughout Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East.

This interview was conducted on November

19, 2006 in Tokyo.

Q: *How did you become interested in ESOL materials development?*

A: It came out primarily from the various experiences I had as a learner, and in the field as a teacher, teacher trainer, and administrator. These experiences all contributed to my becoming a materials writer and publisher. My first book, *Think About Editing*, came out of my experiences as a teacher—seeing students continue to make the same basic grammar errors in their writing. Later, as a publisher, I worked with a lot of new authors, helping

them develop their ideas into published products. In the process of doing that, it became clear to me that materials creation was what I wanted to do most.

Q: *So you've worn many hats. From your experience as an editor, what is one point you feel authors often neglect to consider?*

A: In retrospect, after having been an editor, I would have written *Think About Editing* quite differently if I had known then what I know now. As a publisher, you look for what we call “transparency”, that is, the ability to write in such a way that anybody can pick up the book and know what to do with it. First-time writers often write what works for them in their own classroom. This unfortunately doesn't always translate easily to other teachers' classrooms. So one of the key points is to be able to think about what you can do to help teachers be successful rather than holding too tightly to your own practices.

Another point is maintaining a good balance between content and pedagogy. Lacking that, you either end up with a dull book or one that doesn't work successfully in the classroom.

Q: *What was the main idea behind the **Top Notch** series?*

A: The goal that Joan Saslow and I had was “making English unforgettable.” We wanted to address the lack of English outside the classroom for learners in the EFL environment—to help those learners remember new language from class to class. One way we do that is by providing multiple exposures to new language, so that students see and hear that language in a variety of contexts. We also provide lots of opportunities to practice that language

while speaking or writing. So a decision was made to systematically recycle language from unit to unit and from level to level. As Joan and I wrote units, we would give each other feedback about where we thought there were opportunities for recycling. We also did this by using different media very carefully: the video, songs, and art are all designed to serve a pedagogical purpose - none of it is just there simply for entertainment or decoration.

Q: *What is the hardest as well as most rewarding aspect of working on educational materials?*

A: It is a very humbling experience as a writer to discover that everything you write isn't golden. There are a number of other people involved in the process and whose opinions about what works and doesn't might not match your own. You need a bit of a thick skin to write and to be open to criticism. With *Top Notch*, we were lucky to have a great editorial team who we encouraged to be honest and blunt with us in their criticisms. If they did not like something, they didn't hesitate to tell us it was “lame.” And fortunately they also told us what they liked, which is just as important.

So you have to have a lot of humility in writing: stubbornly resisting feedback can keep you from making positive improvements. It's not that you have to give up your personal vision by any means, but you have to be open to the feedback that is offered and in doing so you end up with a much stronger product. It helps a lot to try and pay attention to the need that is being expressed, rather than getting too caught up in the specifics of the critique. Then you can work together to figure out how to best address the need, which can

be very rewarding.

It is also challenging to create something that works universally for people who teach and learn in tremendously different situations. To do this you need a wide range of feedback. One teacher will tell you one thing, and another teacher will say something else, and you have to balance all of the comments with your own experience. But again it can be very rewarding coming up with those solutions.

Q: *In the process of developing the **Top Notch** series, how have your ideas about materials development changed?*

A: Dealing with a course the size of **Top Notch** is tremendously complex and a lot of people need to be involved to make it work. You have to be vigilant about errors and learning gaps and, to do that well, many eyes are needed. At the same time, it needs a clear vision to keep it on track and from turning into a patchwork of different styles and ideas. You can't just spit a course like that out without a great level of care. As an editor, I think I knew that. But having experienced creating a course as an author has opened my eyes further to just what huge undertaking it is.

Q: *What is the overall research and writing process for a large-scale EFL text book such as **Top Notch**?*

A: Research on a project like this begins way before any writing starts. We learned a lot about teacher and learner needs by traveling and speaking with EFL teachers and students in a lot of places. We kept our ears to the ground to hear what they thought was working—and not working -- with their current materials. We also analyzed a lot of those materials ourselves

to explore what we might do differently or more effectively.

After this research phase, we wrote a sample unit and sent it out for review. We also took it with us in our continuing visits to schools. The feedback we got enabled us to confirm what we got right and revise what we didn't and helped us refine and finalize a unit design.

Then after we wrote each manuscript, we sent it out for review. *Top Notch* had consultants around the world who read entire manuscripts and gave us detailed feedback for each unit, written both as details in the margins of the manuscript and in as general comments in a separate report. In addition, we sent out sample units for teachers for either review or pilot test in the classroom. We still have piles and piles of these reviews on our shelves.

Q: *What incentives do you offer these reviewers?*

A: We had about 25 consultants who provided detailed comments about all of manuscripts and they were paid for their contributions. Teachers who reviewed or pilot tested sample units were either provided materials or some other remuneration.

From a publisher's perspective, a course like **Top Notch** is a huge investment, so it is worth spending the money to make sure you are doing it right. If you don't do it right and the text book orders drop the next year, it is a tremendous loss of time and money.

Q: *How is the lifespan of an educational textbook actually decided?*

A: ELT titles have always tended to have

pretty long shelf-lives. I think we all know titles that have been out there for ten years or longer, some twenty years or longer. Successful titles like *New Interchange* have been used for quite a few years before second editions were published. However, there seems to be a trend in ELT in which the market expectation for new editions has shortened. Single-title ELT books are generally revised no more than every seven years or so. But we are seeing revisions of multi-level courses occurring in less time than that. Considering the investment and time required to produce large courses, this is a real challenge for both publishers and authors.

Q: *When you get contradictory responses from reviewers, how do you respond?*

A: In the case of **Top Notch**, we tried to balance responses from reviewers with what we learned ourselves in the field. For example, there was a unit in **Top Notch 3** that was criticized by a reviewer in one country because she thought the topic was too sensitive for students there and she suggested we replace it. The unit goals included talking about and asking about politics and discussing controversial issues. Well, we then spoke to two of our editors were from that country. After a lot of discussion neither they, nor we, felt the lessons were controversial enough to cause problems in class. However, we revised a number of the activities to try and avoid some of the problems this reviewer was concerned about.

Q: *This brings out an interesting issue. Don't you think the role of a text book is to ask critical questions rather than just deal with the bland or comfortable topics? Shouldn't textbooks be pushing the edges a bit and encouraging students to consider controversial issues?*

A: Yes and no. I don't think it's the role of a language textbook to push the author's agenda on teachers or learners. However, that doesn't mean topics need to be bland or "comfortable." I feel that a good language course should provide the raw material and the opportunities for teachers to play that role if they see fit. I also don't think it's the role of an ELT textbook to ask critical questions exclusively from a US / European / Western point of view. In **Top Notch** we try to maintain an international perspective and to provide opportunities for critical thinking. Admittedly, with some topics, there's a balancing act you have to play in respecting the huge investment a publisher is making in the product. So far, we've had very positive feedback about the topics raised in **Top Notch** and *Summit*.

Q: *Is there such a thing as an 'agenda-less' textbook?*

A: Ultimately, probably not. . . But I don't think your agenda needs to hang out. As an author I want teachers and learners with differing views to feel comfortable using my materials. And I definitely want them to be interested in the topics.

References

Allen, A. (1992). *Think about editing: A grammar-editing guide for ESL writers*. Boston: Thomson.

Saslow, J. and Ascher, A. (2006) *Top Notch: English for Today's World*. White Plains, NY: Pearson /Longman.

Saslow, J. and Ascher, A. (2006) *Summit: English for Today's World*. White Plains, NY: Pearson/Longman.

Editing MAYA: Managing a dialogic, collaborative, and humanistic approach to an anthology project

Eric M. Skier, Tokyo University of Pharmacy and Life Sciences
Miki Kohyama, University of Edinburgh

When asked what was it like editing a book on autonomy, *Learner and Teacher Autonomy in Japan 2: More Autonomy You Ask!*, with contributions from over 30 teacher-researchers from around the world, the image of herding cats quickly comes to mind. Now don't get us wrong, we love cats, but as you are well aware of, cats are pretty quick to do what they want, when they want. Well, we are here to tell you that educators who believe in fostering autonomy in their students and institutions aren't much different.

an alternative approach that incorporated a dialogic, collaborative, and humanistic approach to writing. Authors of chapters not only collaborated with their co-writers, but a writers retreat was held early on in the writing process so individuals could share their research questions with others in hopes of gaining insights. An online forum was set up for contributors to continue their discussions post-retreat, and during the first phase of writing, writers of chapters were assigned partners from within the project to specifically

“[T]hey coordinated writers to work collaboratively like ... weavers – inserting ‘threads’ here and there, tugging, twisting, and so on, to make a great ‘tapestry’ of a book.”

Following will be a brief account of the ups and downs we experienced while editing a 250-page book in the hopes that you, the reader, may learn from both our mistakes and successes alike.

AYA and MAYA

More Autonomy You Ask! (MAYA) was the second in a series of anthologies on autonomy in teaching contexts in Japan. The first book, *Autonomy You Ask!* (AYA) was definitely a blueprint for the two of us. Having been contributors to AYA, we were familiar with the approach the editors of AYA, Andy Barfield and Mike Nix, had attempted to incorporate. It was

collaborate and assist one another. Another novel approach AYA had was that of critical reader responders. These were teacher-researchers from within the field, who would read and respond to or raise questions about the chapter they were assigned in 500 words. This written response was then included in the book at the end of the respective chapter. Mike and Andy not only edited AYA, they coordinated writers to work collaboratively like orchestra conductors, or as I prefer to think, weavers – inserting “threads” here and there, tugging, twisting, and so on, to make a great “tapestry” of a book.

We Take the Plunge

Observing and listening to the highs and lows of Andy and Mike's experience, we thought, when the time came, we would give it a try. Sure enough at JALT2004 in Nara, the project began to take shape and we volunteered to edit. Well, as was mentioned previously, we had a blueprint for MAYA, AYA, and went through many of the same paces: call for submissions, planning and holding a writers retreat, setting up an online discussion forum, matching up projects for the collaboration to begin, and so on. All with a release date of JALT2006 in mind. We learned much from Andy and Mike's experience and we couldn't have edited MAYA without their guidance and support.

Obvious First Issues

However, it became very clear from the beginning that among the teacher-researchers writing for us, a gap existed

end, we both agreed that this near-peer role model approach was very helpful.

What's Your Question?

With seasoned veteran and novice teacher-researcher alike, we encountered the issue of formulating research questions. As Miki and I were both trained at Teachers College, Columbia University, our professors were very particular about having "a" question in mind, as opposed to "questions," before undertaking any research. "What specifically are you intending to investigate?" was a question that was easier asked than answered in many cases. Furthermore, the issue of novelty would arise. Unless deliberately intending to replicate someone else's work, there is no need to conduct research and publish work that has already been done. As editors, we were trying to help authors stretch the boundaries of what qualifies as publishable work. In doing so, we believe

"[W]e were attempting to produce something ... that may help others understand more clearly what is occurring in classrooms in Japan."

between the levels of familiarity with academic writing and more importantly with conducting research in the first place. However, instead of refusing to accept the work of the novice writers, Miki and I were determined to work with and find any means possible to assist them in sharing their findings. Even with some of the writers who had been published previously, issues of confidence often arose. In this respect, the pairing of projects within MAYA was often a great help. Instead of the editors telling them everything would be "OK," someone who was in the same boat, experiencing the same issues, was telling them things would work out. In the

we were able to help realize some novel approaches to writing. But, encouraging novelty for its own sake was never a goal of ours; instead we were attempting to produce something different, i.e. MAYA, that may help others understand more clearly what is occurring in classrooms in Japan.

Issues with Language

Speaking of "Japan," since reading about Orientalism, or Othering, (Susser cited in Pennycook, 1999), and the free use of stereotypes in publishing research in the fields of ESL and EFL conducted in Asia, we decided very early on in the

project, that certain language and claims would be completely unacceptable in MAYA. We both agreed that the use of terms such as “Japanese learner” and any dependence on stereotypes was unacceptable, unprofessional, and even demeaning. We hope other writers and editors in ESL and EFL circles, when writing about their research, take the same approach. It will only improve the image and professionalism of our field!

Dealing with Deadlines and Values

As we stated earlier, the deadline for the release of MAYA was JALT2006, and a piece of invaluable advice from our predecessors was to work back from that date. We decided to give Malcolm Swanson, who did the layout and liaised with the printer, two months, just to be safe. So we needed the writers to get their final drafts to us by the end of September. Wow, that was wishful thinking! Probably the biggest issue throughout the project was with individuals not meeting deadlines. This isn't to say that no one did, but more often than not, we, the editors, were waiting days and even weeks for work that had to be into us in order for the project to proceed. On a related note, it was startling to see how working environments affected deadlines and the adherence (or lack of) to them. If your project is going to span years, two in our case, then make sure about the commitment you receive from your writers. Make sure they understand that while certain unforeseeable events, such as deaths in the family (there were three in our project!) occur, just going off on a vacation *for two months* and leaving your work untouched isn't really showing professionalism!

A Necessary Evil: E-mail

For a project like this, e-mail as a medium

for communication had its good and bad points. The speed and simplicity in which you can contact people is certainly a plus. However, it was shocking to see how little time people put into actually reading what was sent. Eventually, if our message was really important, we inserted something like “READ CAREFULLY” in the title of the e-mail. Too often there were misinterpretations or other issues with this medium. At the same time though, with critical reader responders scattered throughout the world, e-mail was indispensable to the project. I think when the dust had settled, over the 18+ months of the project, we had sent out and received over 2,500 e-mails. Not sure if that is a good thing, though!

The Beauty of MS Word: Highlighting, tracking changes, and inserting comments

As editors, we felt that it would be both environmentally friendly and convenient to use the three editing functions of Microsoft Word (MS Word). However, we forgot that not everyone was as computer savvy as us (and we are not “hi-tech” people by any stretch of the imagination!). In addition to all of the other work we were doing with MAYA, we also had to teach about and troubleshoot computers and MS Word. In the end though, we wouldn't have had it any other way. These functions of MS Word were just too convenient to go unused. We highly recommend them for editing, peer reviewing, and so on.

“Chinese Whispers”

Have you ever been involved in the communication experiment where five people get in a line and the first person whispers something like, “I want a ham sandwich,” to the person next to them? Then, the second person whispers to the

third, and so on. The person at the end of the line then announces the message, “I went to a hot spring with my fiancé,” and everyone is shaking his or her head wondering what went wrong. Well, this phenomenon equally applied to the anthology. We are sure you can imagine our chagrin at seeing obvious typos and other errors, not that there are that many mind you, in MAYA. But, looking back, we had so many files and versions of the same chapter going here and there; it was pretty impressive that MAYA turned out like it did. First, there were versions of chapters that were being commented on by: editors, collaborative partners (1 and 2), two critical response readers, and even colleagues and friends completely

The Power of Just Asking

In the end, a lesson learned a while ago from Kip Cates in a Global Issues practicum at Columbia, i.e. you never know until you ask, was possibly the most impressive lesson we as novice editors learned. Whether it was in relation to the writers, the LD SIG, who sponsored the publication, JALT, whose auspices MAYA ultimately fell under, the guest writers, including Stephen Krashen, and so on, thinking to ourselves and saying, “Oh that wouldn’t possibly be doable,” would have been the easy way out. Instead, we asked the questions we had and more times than not were met with positive responses to our inquiries. The positive feedback we received in turn energized us to tell the

“MAYA turned into [...] a shining example of the power of dialog, collaboration, and a humanistic approach to academic writing.”

unrelated to the project. Then, “final” versions of those chapters were sent to volunteer proofreaders from within the LD SIG. We, the editors, implemented recommendations and proofing from the readers, and the final “final” versions were then sent out to Malcolm for layout. After that they went out to the printer and came back for a final final “final” check. Feedback was then provided to Malcolm and the printer, and still there were errors. Our advice: the fewer the people involved in the editing process, the better the odds of not missing anything. Even more maddening were the errors caught by numerous people, which were surely corrected, and still managed to show up in the final product. We swear in one case we corrected the same “error” at least four times. In the end, the error won out. Chinese whispers....

writers that within MAYA you never know until you ask. With that attitude in mind and in practice, we feel MAYA turned into much more than just another anthology. It was and will always be a part of us, and a shining example of the power of dialog, collaboration, and a humanistic approach to academic writing. We hope someday, you too, will be able to enjoy the same experience.

Reference

Pennycook, A. (1999). Development, culture and language: ethical concerns in a postcolonial world. Retrieved January 20, 2007, from http://www.languages.ait.ac.th/hanoi_proceedings/pennycook.htm#Said

BK

Computer-generated Crosswords for Use in University False Beginner Classes

David Lisgo, West Side English School & National Institute of Fitness and Sports
stedefaest@ybb.ne.jp

Grabbing and keeping the attention of 40 freshmen, taking 'English Communication 1', is a challenging and demanding task. For many students it is their first time in an English only environment. Some are excited, some fearful, others hardly present, and their abilities may vary from near fluency to complete beginner. It is the exceptional teacher that can hold their attention and teach them something, for the entire lesson. Yet, as teachers good or not, this is what we are paid to do. There is no magic way out of the problem. In this article, I present one possible solution; computer-generated crosswords and worksheets. In my experience, I have found that crosswords often hold the attention of students. I explain what equipment is necessary, how to create the crosswords and present some examples.

Materials and Equipment

A computer, printer and access to a photocopier is essential. If you are going to make your own materials on a regular basis, you will also need clipart, publishing- and worksheet-generating software, a laminator, a guillotine and stationery supplies. The best source of online clipart is clipart.com. The yearly subscription is expensive, but the choice of images is amazing. If you buy your own clipart then I recommend Art Explosion for Windows or Mac; I copied mine to hard drive and

now I use my computer search facilities to find the right picture quickly. The best free and legal online clipart is Microsoft Clip Art and Media.

Any publishing software will do, but for simplicity, I recommend 'PrintMaster' for Windows and 'the printshop for Mac'. Both are made by Broderbund and are simple to use. They also come with their own clipart galleries and are relatively inexpensive. (CorelDRAW, Windows and Mac, is another easy program to work with.) PrintMaster gives you free access to Broderbund's Million Image Club. I have an A3 laminator, a Howard-Packard hpdeskjet 930c printer and a levered guillotine, which is great for speed.

There is a lot of worksheet generating software available but I will recommend just three packages, they are:

1. EclipseCrossword for Windows (free download).
2. Vocabulary Worksheet Factory for Windows (\$60 download).
3. Puzzlemaker for Windows and Mac (\$50 on CD).

Creating a picture based crossword puzzle

The word clues to a traditional crossword puzzle often confuse the student instead of helping, and word clues puzzles

are not really multilevel; too easy for high-level students and out of reach for low-level students; they are usually better as homework. A picture-based crossword puzzle is visually attractive, accessible and challenging to all levels of students. Here is how to produce one using EclipseCrossword, clipart and PrintMaster, on a food and drink topic.

First write a list of about 30 food and drink items. Items must be relatively easy to visualise, then find clipart images to match your list. If you cannot find a suitable picture, then choose a new item. Open your crossword generator and create a new word list, ensuring that clues and target words are identical i.e. spaghetti-clue-spaghetti. Save your word list and move on to selecting the size. Let's make a puzzle with 10 clues across and 10 clues down. Set the size and 14 squares wide by 13 squares tall. Click 'next' to generate your crossword. If you get too many hits, reduce the size, and if too few, increase the size. The target is 20 hits with 10 items across and 10 down. You may have to generate several crosswords before getting the correct balance. Once you have succeeded, save the puzzle, print out the clues, select 'publish crossword' and then export the crossword as a Windows metafile (WMF).

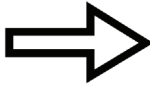
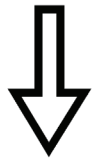
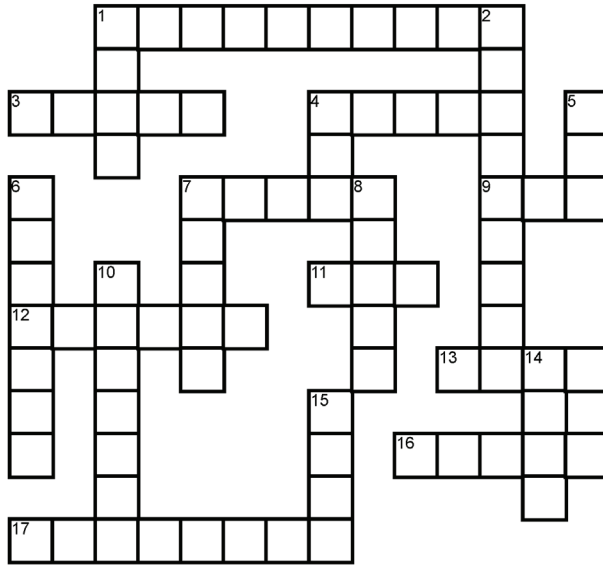
To prepare your puzzle grid, open it using PrintMaster's 'Advanced Drawing' tool. Select the credit at the bottom of your puzzle and click on 'delete'. (You can reinstate the credit later if you wish). Select 'All' and increase your font size by one point increasing readability. Select 'Solid Line' and increase your lines to the next level to ensure good results when photocopying. Now save your puzzle. If for some reason the grid doesn't 'import' correctly with

PrintMaster; the numbers move up and slightly out of position, resave your grid to WMF using CorelDRAW, which solves the problem. You can also use Microsoft Paint, but you will need to 'fill' the black areas with white before converting. Using Paint is very easy, but the some resolution is lost.

Open PrintMaster and create a new portrait format blank page and set your page to A4 size. Paste, import, or 'add from disk' your puzzle grid to your page, resize it and centre it horizontally near the top of your page. Saving your work regularly is highly recommended. Open a text box and name your crossword and put a place for the student to write her name. Draw a vertical line and centre it horizontally in the bottom half of your page to separate your across and down clues. Open four text boxes, resize them to tall and narrow and put in your clue numbers, five in each box. I put my across boxes to the left and down boxes to the right. Now import your picture clues and put them adjacent to your numbers. It is best to convert your colour images to black and white, but if you don't have time or you don't yet know how to, then use coloured images but set your printer to print 'black' only when you finally print out your puzzle. Put a horizontal arrow above your across clues and a vertical arrow above your down clues. Put your name on your creation. Before printing, preview your work and make final adjustments. Finally, print your puzzle to A4 size, but when photocopying, place two puzzles side-by-side and reduce to 50%, then guillotine the puzzles to A5 size to save on resources. Producing outline crosswords (no black squares) also saves on printer toner. A very similar procedure, to the above, can be used with almost any publishing program.

Food and Drink

Name _____



14

MW's Between the Keys



(C) David Lisgo 2006

We have our crossword, but we are not yet ready for the classroom. More preparation needs to be done to make our puzzle accessible to all. Let's go back to our original "30 food and drink items". All of these words can be used in your lesson and a set of flashcards will prove most useful when used during the lesson while students are doing their crossword puzzles.

To make your flashcards, create a new A4 portrait blank page in PrintMaster. Add a grid of 2 columns by 5 rows and size to full-page. Insert the first 10 full-colour pictures into your rectangles and print onto A4 sized card. Replace the pictures and print, continuing until all your pictures are printed. Clear your pictures from your grid and type in the words for the backs of the cards, remembering that the left and right hand columns are reversed. I usually use a 24 point typeface, printing the words on the backs of the cards. Laminate your cards and cut to 10 by 5.5 centimetres. You will have 30 small flashcards ready to use during your lesson while students do the crossword.

Many teachers grade students on classroom participation but it's not easy to remember who participated well and who did not. Before giving a crossword I always tell my students that they can get a bonus point by completing the puzzle before the end of the lesson, and almost all students are excited by this. This is how I incorporate this technique into my lesson schedule. Around 10 to 15 minutes before the end of the lesson I handout the day's crossword, and on a few unoccupied desks at the front of the class, I display the flashcards. Students are allowed to look at the flashcards and at the words on the backs but are not allowed to take notes at that desk; they must hold

the spelling in their head and go back to their own desks before writing the word. Some students will use their dictionaries. Some will ask me "What is this?" and others will look at the flashcards. It is very rare that a student does not participate in this activity. When they have finished they hand in their completed puzzle to me and can leave the class. Usually, even when the bell goes, no one rushes for the door because most students want to complete their puzzle to get their bonus point.

Your first crossword may take a long time to complete, but if you make them on a regular basis, you can bring the time down to under one hour and you will have a very useful resource which you can use again and again with different classes. The crossword puzzle is just one of many puzzles and activities you can with PrintMaster, EclipseCrossword, Vocabulary Worksheet Factory and Puzzlemaker. I myself have made many hundreds of different puzzles for David English House's children's worksheet course "Blending a Hand".

Doing it on a budget

Most of my printing is done on my Howard-Packard hpdeskjet 930c printer, which I bought for JPY2000 on Yahoo! auctions. I refill my own ink cartridges, sometimes with ink bought from the hundred yen store. You can buy PrintMaster for just \$4 from Cyber City. For easy to use, cheap to buy, royalty free clip art, then try 'FastTrak - Mammoth 800,000 Clipart' Windows (ASIN: B00063989K) and Macintosh (ASIN: B0009WHTJO), find it on eBay UK for around 15 pounds Sterling. Masterclips (Windows and Mac) is another good source of cheap royalty free clip art, it usually comes with a free one-year subscription to clipart.com, that's

why I bought 'Masterclips 1,250,000', if you do buy this, then make sure the 'key number', which comes with MasterClips and allows me free access to clipart.com. is included, sometimes the box where the number is located is thrown away to save on postage.

References

EclipseCrossword: <http://www.greeneclipse.com/>

PrintMaster: <http://www.broderbund.com/>

CorelDRAW: <http://www.corel.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=Corel3/Home>

Vocabulary Worksheet Factory: <http://www.schoolhousetech.com/index.html>

Puzzlemaker: <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>

Blending a Hand: http://serv1.davidenglish-house.com/en/resources/blending_a_hand.html


Art Explosion: <http://www.novadevelopment.com/>

Clipart.com: <http://www.clipart.com/en/index>

Microsoft Clip Art and Media: <http://office.microsoft.com/clipart/default.aspx?lc=en-us>

Cyber City Software: <http://www.cyber-citysoftware.com/index.html>

David Lisgo is owner of West Side English School, creator of Blending a Hand and part-time teacher at the National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya. E-mail stedefaest@ybb.ne.

This article originally appeared in 'Language and Culture Vol.3 March 2006' published by the Foreign Language Centre, National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya. 

A Report on Publishing-Related Sessions at JALT2005, Part 3 of 3

Kristofer R. Bayne

"A Panel on Materials Writing"

Forum, Saturday

Materials Writers SIG

Organizer & Chair: Greg Goodmacher

The Materials Writer SIG Forum assembled representatives from five publishing houses:

- Sean Bermingham – Singapore-based Editorial Manager for Thomson Learning Global ELT <Sean.Bermingham@thomson.com>
- Helen King – Cambridge University Press <hking@cambridge.org>

- Ian Martin – Thomson ELT market manager <Ian.Martin@thomson.com>

- Edward Roosa – head of the Japan-based publisher Intercom Press <eroosa@intercompress.com>

- Keiko Sugiyama – Research Editor for the Japan market, Longman Asia ELT <Keiko.Sugiyama@pearsoned.co.jp>

Based on issues and questions suggested by MW-SIG members and in consultation with the panelist the follow areas were covered:

- a) Submitting a Proposal
- b) What Publishers want
- c) Market-specific or international
- d) Publishing Process
- e) Author/Editor/Publisher Relationship
- f) Future of ELT Materials (Time did not allow for this section)

I will include comments from the panel and the Floor on each area.

Submitting a Proposal

Birmingham started off by outlining three important considerations:

1. Research the market – why is your work better than what exists, does it exist etc.
2. Overview – send enough information in a professional manner. E-mail is best.
3. Follow-up – ask about follow up. Find out who to talk to. Be `pro-active`.

Being clear was stressed (Martin). King followed up by suggesting that *talking* in detail with a publisher was very important before going too far into a venture. Sugiyama pointed out that most publishers had guidelines which should be obtained and followed. She added that a ‘good and complete’ presentation, one that the author feels satisfied with, was vital. This was because even rejected proposals have impact. They may not be rejected because they were ‘bad’, and a well-organised and presented proposal will indicate something about the person(s). This may lead to contact from the publisher later (Sugiyama). A comment from the audience went further to suggest authors should try to “be visual” by doing things other than submitting (e.g. reviewing, making contacts with authors and publishers etc.) Martin later echoed this by saying potential

authors need to “build a profile”. Roosa concluded the panel responses by saying follow-up contact was important, though authors must be realistic particularly about the time it takes to process a proposal. Also authors need to understand that follow-up includes being available for promotional purposes should their work reach the publication stage.

Questions from the Floor

Q. How much is a ‘sample’ for inclusion in a proposal package?

Roughly enough to show the structure and concept clearly. Perhaps 10 pages. If applicable samples for lower and upper levels.

Q. How should graphics be shown?

Only a description of the graphics (“artwork brief”) is necessary, but it must be clear enough, including main focus, background requirements, reason etc.

What Publishers Want

For this area each panelist offered an interesting perspective. Martin outlined six trends he regarded as important to consider.

1. Technology – the role of technology in the language learning classroom.
2. Emerging markets, such as India and China.
3. Issues concerning the ‘ownership’ of English – the training of teachers, and Native and Non-Native Speakers in the field.
4. State system English beginning earlier in more countries, often from K-6.
5. Standardized tests and their importance.
6. More of a ‘non-trend’ - the lack of a “big idea” to take the market or materials

design in a new direction.

King picked up on this last point by suggesting that the next 'big idea' may be market-specific materials (a 'big small idea?'). The trend may not be the same kind of paradigm shift we have been in the past but a more mixed or eclectic approach. Sugiyama added that sustain was important in any idea. She pointed out that we may need to identify and cater more directly to student trends. She cited the decrease in grammatical skills among recent college age students in Japan as a result of fewer classes at high school, or the need for improved listening skills to pass exams such as the Centre Test. Roosa, carrying the banner for the small Japan-based publishers, asked for practical materials geared to local situations. Bermingham added the need to consider teacher support (native/non-native, new/experienced etc.), interesting content, and flexibility (other markets, levels, teaching time etc.).

Questions from the Floor

Q. How much is a 'market share'?

Martin emphasized the 'cost return' or return on the investment. According to a formulae publishers may calculate potential market share/longevity against production costs, particularly if a wide range of materials (size, colour, technology etc.) is involved. King again stressed the need to talk before advancing too far into a project. A comment from the Floor added that Japanese publishers (not represented on the panel) are completely different. They will publish *your* vision if they think someone will buy it.

Market-Specific Vs. International Publishers

Roosa pointed out that there are options with Japan-based publishers such as

Intercom Press and also Japanese publishing houses. Smaller ventures may take on what other larger ones would not. Bermingham picked up on this by saying that if an author wants to their work to be international they must not use too many country-specific references, examples or contexts. King said that if an author knew Japan best it may be better to stick to that, but urged authors to talk to the publisher early about their idea at it may well be flexible. Sugiyama made several interesting points about publishing outside of Japan. A text that sells globally (e.g. *Side by Side*) is quite rare and where you send a proposal, the USA or the UK, may determine the area in the world in which it will be marketed. If authors feel their text shows promise for outside of Asia, sending a proposal to an overseas base is a better option. If authors feel that they know the Japanese or Asian market best, send it locally.

Publishing Process

King explained that after the initial concept discussions and manuscript development the editorial/production process takes at least a year, though time depends on the demands of the materials.

1. Discussion about development and how it would translate into workable materials. This stage includes proposals and then samples.
2. Market issues – target audience, etc.
3. Manuscript and feedback.
4. Editorial stage (this will be simpler if the previous steps have been done right).
5. Final stages to publication.

Sugiyama pointed out eight stages:

1. Internal review – is it viable?
2. Financial review – what will it cost?
3. External independent review – will it

work?

4. Acceptance decision – yes or no?
5. Manuscript & market research
6. Editing
7. Production – design & field testing
8. Printing

Roosa, being a smaller publisher, indicated they do the same things but more informally. He did stress that the initial stages are very important. Factors also include how developed the project is before it actually comes to the publisher. Bermingham added that there was also the ‘promotional’ stage which may be ongoing.

Questions from the Floor

Q. Where does piloting happen?

Often panels of teacher/advisors can be called on to judge a proposals viability, and increasingly there is less and less piloting than in the past (King). Bermingham suggested that self-piloting is very important with Martin adding that the more you can say or show the materials have been taught by a number of teachers the better. Sugiyama pointed out that finding piloters, particularly among experienced teachers, is difficult and most welcome. She reiterated a point that offering to pilot materials and giving good feedback may lead to being asked to write or be involved at a later date Sugiyama can be contacted for forms for this). King supported this idea that developing a relationship is good start.

Q. (Citing the academic protocols that a manuscript cannot be sent to multiple publishers) can authors send the same proposal to different publishers?

All panelists said that there is no such limitation. A comment from the Floor suggested that developing a relationship

with one publisher may eventually see a better chance of gaining increased editorial control, however.

Relationships

Roosa pointed out that the smaller the publisher the closer the relationship, but that in the end it will be the company that finances the project and author need to understand that. There needs to be a level of trust in the company to make the right decision on behalf of both parties. Bermingham added to this by saying the author is not always in the best position to know what is clear to others. Editors will in most cases and author need to accept that. Martin listed some desired features of publisher/author relationships: respect, honesty and clarity, and clarity of purpose. King suggested that having the same editor from start to finish is best. It is a creative and ‘investment’ process for both sides, but admitted that this relationship is not always the case as personnel changes happen. Communication is vital at all stages no matter what happens and having everything in writing helps both sides. Sugiyama also pointed out that the two parties have the same goal: a book that is right for the market. Negotiation and consideration of ideas from both sides must be expected. A comment from the Floor summarized many of the points of view in that publishing is a ‘people business’ meaning the human element is central.

Questions from the Floor

Q. How much in royalties can be expected?

While this was a very difficult question to answer generally as it would depend on many factors, Roosa point out quite honestly that money coming to the author may really depend on whether the author is ‘know’ or not.

Commonalities

The combined sessions described in Parts One, Two and Three provided many, many insights into the process of publishing EFL materials, both from the writer and the publisher point of view. They also gave background to the expected and unexpected. I would like to try and break these into a list of key points that more or less represents the process and requirements.


1. The seeds of your publication may be in your hand – classroom success can often be translated into a textbook.
2. Time spent developing, refining and testing your ideas before moving to the proposal stage would be time worth spent.
3. Details, details – be very clear with what needs to be included in a proposal and be meticulous in their preparation.
4. Be aware of what is going on in the market and also of where you hope to fit in.
5. Find out who you are dealing with – get names in the publishing business.
6. There will be ‘control’ issues – be ready for your idea to be influenced, positively and/or negatively, by others.
7. There will be considerable time investment through the entire process – proposal to publication and beyond to promotion.
8. There may be repercussions on your life due to the time investment – are you prepared for this intrusion?
9. The personal side of publishing is vital. There must be clear, reasonable and honest communication between all parties.
10. There are other avenues into publishing

– be visible, be eager and be ready to do (almost) anything.

11. Each experience in the process of publishing a text will vary – be ready for anything.
12. Be realistic about the financial returns – don’t buy that Roppongi Hills penthouse just yet.
13. Be pro-active – get involved and ask questions.
14. Be professional in your presentation and attitude.
15. Be patient – every step takes time.

Thank you to all the seven presenters for their sessions at JALT and for their feedback and clarifications on this report.

Related Reading on Publishing in Tomlinson (Ed.) 1998 & 2003

- Bell, J. & Gower, R. (2003) “Writing course materials for the world: a great compromise.” In Tomlinson, B. *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Continuum. pp. 116-129.
- Donovan, P. (1998) “Piloting – a publisher’s view.” In Tomlinson, B. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 149-189.
- Mares, C. (2003) “Writing a Coursebook.” In Tomlinson, B. *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Continuum. pp. 130-140
- Prowse, P. (1998) “How writers write: testimony from authors.” In Tomlinson, B. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 130-145.
- Singapore Wala, D. A. (2003) “Publishing a coursebook: Completing the materials development cycle.” In Tomlinson, B. *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Continuum. pp. 141-161. 

MW-SIG Committee

Executive Officer Positions

Jim Smiley	Coordinator	jimsmiley@pm.tbgu.ac.jp
Greg Goodmacher	Programmes	ggoodmacher@hotmail.com
Scott Petersen	Treasurer	petersen@ma.medias.ne.jp
Cameron Romney	Membership	wcromney@andrew.ac.jp
Jim Smiley	Publications	jimsmiley@pm.tbgu.ac.jp
Daniel Droukis	Records	droukis@kyukyo-u.ac.jp

Non-Executive Officer Positions

Derek Di Matteo	Newsletter layout	derek@blueturnip.com
Bob Long	Newsletter distribution	long@dhs.kyutech.ac.jp
John Daly	Yahoo group webmaster	john-d@sano-c.ac.jp

Note:

'Executive Officer Position' refers to the names we supply to JALT Central Office (JCO) and are put on the web. We need to have these positions filled. 'Non-Executive Officer Positions' are positions that are non-JCO registered names, but are, none-the-less extremely valuable to the group. These people are, of course, recognised at the group level as committee members.

MW-SIG Resources

MW-SIG Web Site <http://uk.geocities.com/materialwritersig/index.html>

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 Yahoo! Group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jaltmwsig/>

The Yahoo! Groups site houses our discussion list, a database of members' publications, a file repository for sharing work and ideas, a space for photos, and the ability to conduct polls, create a calendar, and have a live chat session.

On the Inside

Working Together	2
An Interview with Allen Ascher <i>Tim Newfields</i>	4
Editing MAYA: Managing a Dialogic, Collaborative, and Humanistic Approach to an Anthology Project <i>Eric M. Skier and Miki Kohyama</i>	8
Computer-generated Crosswords for Use in University False Beginner Classes <i>David Lisgo</i>	12
A Report on Publishing-Related Sessions at JALT2005, Part 3 of 3 <i>Kristofer R. Bayne</i>	16
MW-SIG Committee Members	21

The Materials Writers SIG is dedicated to continually raising the standards in the creation of language teaching materials, in all languages and in all media, whether for general consumption or for individual classroom use. The editors encourage participation from colleagues using new media or teaching languages other than English.

Summer 2007 Volume XV, Number 1