Between the Keys

The Coordinator's Column

John Daly

Hello Everyone.

How was your summer?

"Have a good summer!" is what I thought I'd be writing this time around, but our July issue has become Septemberized. Dog-daysed coordinator takes weeks to find his pencil. Lion-hearted editor faces the black void of no submissions and wrests therefrom an article of golden beauty. (And that takes time!) But here you have it, the fruit of Materials Writers SIG's latest effort. My apologies to those of you who have been waiting like Charlie Brown for valentines at your mailbox.

Thinking back to the last issue of *Between the Keys*, in March, I remember that I offered three ideas for projects that we might as a sig pursue. One was to get together for a weekend, another was to contribute materials to a pool of resources, and the third was to help each other with piloting and feedback on materials in the making. When I asked for your reaction to these ideas at jaltmwsig, 2 people responded. 25 people responded later when I asked if my messages were being received, but that leaves me wondering whether the other two thirds of our members are or are not receiving messages. Maybe there's some switch at Yahoo! Central that I need to throw that I am not aware of.

Anyway, we seem to be a rather quiet, unresponsive group. I wonder why. Busy. People are busy. I certainly understand that, being a bizee myself. Or maybe it's because, like me, you wandered into this sig looking to get (ideas, handouts), and

feel that you have nothing yet to give. Or maybe there is just too much Type A blood flowing among us, too many of us introverts laboring alone by candlelight in our garret rooms. Perhaps what we need to do is go out and recruit a bunch of gregarious, outgoing O types.

But we've got to do something. Don't you think? This year the Free SIG campaign is going on, and some new people are joining us, but I feel embarrassed when someone who is thinking of joining asks, "Well, what do you guys do?" Oh, um, well.... (By the way, I got no reaction to the Material Riders motorcycle ad in the April TLT. Does no one share my sense of humor? Am I weird?)

OK, a couple of ideas for September.

First, about the weekend get together. Maybe Fall is not the best time to do it. There's already the national conference in Autumn, and it's a busy season at school. So, how about in March? Spring vacation, people have some free time. Spend a weekend together, take home some fresh ideas to try out in the new school year. Maybe invite a speaker, maybe keep it among ourselves. The program we can work out later, but what we need first are ten or so people who want to be a part of such a weekend. Are you one of them?

Second, our Yahoo! Group has been rather silent. A bit of a flow of information once in a while, but not many ideas being exchanged. So let me offer an observation here, and see if it may lead to some materials-related discussion. It's only an observation, supported with no

From the Editor

Jim Smiley

John Daly makes some very pertinent points in his column. As the editor, I am faced with the task of asking for and collecting submissions for this rag. I enjoy that immensely, yet feel a constant pressure to collect enough material each time. Although we have close on 200 members, the submission rate is tiny. This edition's articles have all been written by MWSIG board members in response to a zero response from our members at large. Maybe we are running this group the wrong way. If so, would you care to inform us of how we can do our jobs better?

In this edition, Daniel Droukis finds all about another, or should I say *the other* material writers' group, MASDA. He also provides a thought-provoking article on the why of materials adaptation, commenting on McDonough and Shaw's sixteen reasons. Jim Smiley discusses readability issues in part one of a two-part article (part two coming in November). Until now, readability has been confined mainly to word choice, but material writers need to be aware of design choices, too.

I am O-gata (blood group O). Maybe that is what John meant. Are there any As, Bs and ABs out there willing to test John's theory? We are waiting. **BK**

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statistical evidence, illustrated with no specific examples. But here it is.

It seems to me that a lot of materials commercially available for use in Conversation classes offer the students attractive pictures, but when you take those pictures away, what you are left with on the page is a rather small number of words, and what words you do find are often in the form of questions, intended to be conversation starters. Things like, "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?", "How often do you play a sport?", "What do you remember about your first day at school?" What the materials usually do not offer the students are ways to answer the questions that are posed.

Why is this? Don't know, but maybe it's because "communicative" teachers don't put words in their students' mouths, but let the students struggle to find the words (and thereby truly acquire them?) among the English they have encountered over the years. Or maybe it's because it's just too hard to anticipate the almost infinite variety of conversational response; it's a lot easier just to make questions.

But it also seems to me that my students come to me wanting me to put

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words in their mouths, wanting me to teach them, to tell them what to say. In the past few years I have resorted to writing (I confess) dialogs!, those dinosaurs from the misty swamps of the audio-lingual era. I have done this because I want to teach my students pieces of conversational language (things like "Either is ok with me" and "I went bowling for the first time in a long time"), and the context of a dialog can make the meaning and use of these expressions clear. And my students seem to appreciate being taught these things. Trouble is, it's kind of boring presenting and practicing these dialogs, and their long-term effectiveness is questionable.

So I have been thinking about this: How can I write materials that will put words into my students' mouths, words that will enable them to have conversations in English, and do it in an interesting and effective way, and in a way that will allow the personality of the student to be expressed. Answer-based materials, not question-based.

A couple of days from now, I'll invite you to express at jaltmwsig your reaction to what I have written here. Maybe we can get a little discussion going. And if you would like to work together with me to develop some "answer-based" materials, that would be great.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

P.S. If you are a new member, and have not yet become a member of the Yahoo! Group, jaltmwsig, let me know at <john-d@sano-c.ac.jp>, and I'll sign you up.

John

BK

Volunteering to help your Materials Writers SIG doesn't take much time, and is relatively pain free. Contact John Daly for more information.

MW

Quick!

Painless

Arguments in Favour for the Adaptation of Published Pedagogic Materials

Daniel Droukis, Kyushu Kyoritsu University

Introduction

Adapting a textbook can be the alternative to forcing irrelevant material on students. While there are many reasons for adapting the materials, the most critical factor is that of relevance. If the material is not relevant to the students then what is the purpose of our efforts? The good teacher will always be looking to make the material and lessons relevant to the learners. In order to make the lessons relevant there must be what Madsen and Bowen (1978) referred to as "congruence". Their basic principle evolves around the concept that, "effective adaptation is a matter of achieving congruence" (Madsen and Bowen 1978:ix).

The principle of "congruence" informs teachers of the need to find an appropriate and consistent relationship between a variety of factors including the course materials, methodology, the students, objectives, the target language and its context and the teacher's personality and teaching style. Making these factors involved in education fit the situation is (or should be) the goal of every educator. Achieving congruence through adaptation is a key factor in the success of language learning. This article looks at sixteen reasons given by McDonough and Shaw (2003) behind the main reasons for needing to adapt pedagogic materials and discusses their implications for congruence.

Reasons for adapting

Attaining congruence relies on individual teachers analysing their individual teaching situations and considering many factors which influence the decision of how or if to adapt materials. McDonough and Shaw (2003: 77) list the following as important reasons for adapting:

1: Not enough grammar coverage

2: Not enough practice of grammar points of difficulty to students

3: The communicative focus means that grammar is presented unsystematically.

4: Reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary.

5: Comprehension questions are too easy because the answers are lifted directly from the text with no real understanding.

6: Listening passages are inauthentic because they sound too much like written material being read out.

7: Not enough guidance on pronunciation.

8: The subject-matter is inappropriate for learners of this age or intellectual level.

9: The photographs contained in the text and other illustrative material not culturally acceptable and therefore could lead to problems in the administration's acceptance of the material for use in the classroom.

10: The amount of the material is too little/great to cover in the time allocated to lessons.

11: No guidance for teachers on handling group work and role play activities with a large class.

12: The dialogues are too formal and not
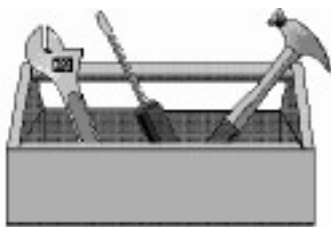
really representative of everyday speech.

13: The audio material is difficult to use because of problems to do with room size and technical equipment.

14: There is too much or too little variety in the activities.

15: Vocabulary lists and keys to exercises would be helpful.

16: Accompanying tests needed.

Let us look at each in turn.

1: Not enough grammar coverage

The textbook you have chosen may not contain the focus on grammar you wish to teach your students. In this case you will need to add materials to the lessons which will supplement the book and offer students the appropriate amount of grammar focus that will help them to better understand the language.

2: Not enough practice of grammar points of difficulty to students

No book will ever provide enough coverage for every potential grammar problem the students may have. We as teachers can never accurately predict which grammar problem will cause problems for our students thus we may find that the book does not suitably address the grammar problems we need to focus on for a particular group of students.

3: The communicative focus means that grammar is presented unsystematically

If the material is presented unsystematically it may cause confusion amongst the students and the material is not serving to help develop the language skills of the student.

4: Reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary

No book can completely assure the teacher that the vocabulary will be relevant to the students in every situation. However, if the students must constantly consult a dictionary to complete text material then the learning process will be stalled and result in frustration for both the learners and the teacher.

5: Comprehension questions are too easy because the answers are lifted directly from the text with no real understanding

Materials will sometimes provide questions for particular segments of the course. If they do not require the students to consider or interact then there is little understanding communicated. Questions that allow the students to simply respond may also become tiresome and result in a decline in the students' motivation and participation.

6: Listening passages are inauthentic because they sound too much like written material being read out

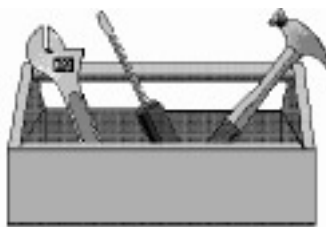Listening passages can be a difficult area for the teacher. They must suit the level of the students involved yet we want the student to be exposed to authentic language. Unfortunately, authentic also can come to mean language that is too fast or complicated for a student at a particular level to learn quickly. Sometimes teachers will be tempted to read out listening passages rather than to use the tape because of fears that the tape is too inauthentic.

However, this solution is in itself equally inauthentic. This may mean that alternative listening materials may have to be used in order to give the students the experience with authentic language. This will be a complicated endeavor for the teacher as it will be quite difficult to match the appropriate level with the material being used and the student's ability to digest the material.

7: Not enough guidance on pronunciation

The guidance for pronunciation can be supplemented with other materials that specifically target pronunciation. Many textbooks contain pronunciation exercises that are ignored by classroom teachers, particularly native speak-

ers of the language. The reasoning for many is that the language that the teacher is using in the classroom contains many examples of correct pronunciation and that focusing more on the pronunciation is more appropriate for the Japanese teacher who can more adequately explain the intricacies of pronunciation to the students in their own language.

8: The subject-matter is inappropriate for learners of this age or intellectual level

When textbooks are chosen initially, it is easy to see where material may not be appropriate for the targeted students well before it is to be introduced into the classroom. Therefore, it is probably a matter for material evaluation which will help to eliminate the book as a potential textbook well in advance of it being found in the classroom.

9: The photographs contained in the text and other illustrative material not culturally acceptable and therefore could lead to problems in the administration's acceptance of the material for use in the classroom

This again, is a matter that could be avoided through the initial evaluation procedure and would be avoided as a matter of materials adaptation.

10: The amount of the material is too little/great to cover in the time allocated to lessons

This aspect is very difficult for the teacher to anticipate. In many university classrooms there is no assurance that the students in any particular class will be of the same level, nor is it assured that they will all be of the level required to work with the material as it has been originally intended. Therefore, at this level a need for the knowledge in the area of material adaptation is great.

11: No guidance for teachers on handling group work and role play activities with a large class

Guidance is an important consideration in choosing your book. Classroom size is often unpredictable and therefore the teacher needs to be adequately prepared for classes that are smaller than expected as well as those that are too large for the particular book to be used as was originally intended by the authors. Techniques for teaching large classes should be examined by all those who may have the possibility of being unexpectedly confronted with classes that are far larger than the norm. If the teacher is adequately prepared for this eventuality then it will help to make the situation easier for both the students and the teacher to deal with.

12: The dialogues are too formal and not really representative of everyday speech

Every teacher has experiences seeing a book or material that used overly formal language that is not particularly useful for their students. However, these materials can be used as a guide for students learning the language and the teacher probably will not need to be overly concerned about this as long as it is adapted in the classroom activities by giving the students the opportunity to create their own conversations and activities which will be in language they are already familiar with.

The problem is that when the students are particularly unfamiliar with the language they may be confused by the formality and complexity and therefore little communicative value will be found. In using materials for beginners this type of speech should be avoided and alternate materials selected beforehand.

13: The audio material is difficult to use because of problems to do with room size and technical equipment
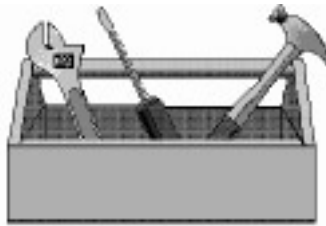
This can be something that the teacher has
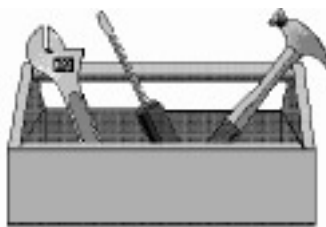
no choice in. Institutions may not have the proper facilities that offer a good learning environment for language students. Choosing audio materials is equally important for the classroom. Students can benefit from listening activities but if equipment or the physical situations are not conducive to learning the teacher or institution will need to come carefully consider where and how they are offering their language classes.

14: There is too much or too little variety in the activities

If there is little variety in the materials the students will soon be bored. By supplementing the text with authentic materials or other activities which involve movement, the teacher can keep the classroom atmosphere fresh and the positive learning environment can be maintained. However, the students also learn through repetition and some activities which reinforce will also be necessary. These activities should involve as much action and fun as possible so that the teacher can rely on them to help improve the classroom atmosphere when the situation is warranted.

15: Vocabulary lists and keys to exercises would be helpful

Most teachers' guides contain the necessary vocabulary lists and keys to exercises. If they do not then the book should probably be avoided. However, these can also be produced by the teacher as s/he goes about preparing for classes. Handouts with exercises or vocabulary activities will break the monotony of using the same material for each lesson. Using the lists to help the teacher focus on what is important is also an important consideration for including them in the textbook or the accompanying guide.

16: Accompanying tests needed

Almost every teacher has some testing program to go along with the course. Some teachers like to have the tests provided by the publisher. However, these tests do not take into consideration our own goals in teaching the class and therefore may be totally inappropriate for our students. If the teacher religiously follows the book each day then perhaps the tests may be of use. They may also be of use as a guide to the other teachers who do not follow the book as closely as they provide an overview of the material that the book covered. It is then possible for the teacher to use the test and then delete material and substitute items that more closely reflect the classroom situation.

As they add, "undoubtedly much more could be added to this list" (p. 77), other writers have produced their own criteria for materials adaptation. Cunningsworth (1995: 136) provides further justification and asks us to consider the following five factors that are unique to each learning situation and thus may affect the decision of whether or not to adapt material.

- The dynamics of the classroom.
- The personalities involved.
- The constraints imposed by syllabuses.
- The availability of resources.
- The expectations and motivations of the learners.

Conclusion

As we have seen here there are numerous solid reasons for adapting a course book. They may often be reasons that are beyond control of the teacher, and thus the teacher should feel no sense of hesitancy when deciding to adapt a book or material that everyone has used for years or that has been specifically required by an institution. The guide provided by McDonough and Shaw with my commentary gives us all ample reasoning to persuade higher authorities that the book being used will need some adjustment to make it a successful tool for the students to learn.

Improving Document Readability

Jim Smiley, Ohu University

Introduction

"CAN'T see the trees for the forest? A sea of undifferentiated text can obscure even the most finely-crafted written message. Careful attention to text design and formatting enhances not only readability, but comprehension as well." (from <http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/infomap/>)

Or more poetically,
"The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promise'd joy!"[1]
(Robert Burns 'To A Mouse' 1785)

Even when armed with brilliant ideas and informed by pedagogically sound techniques, we may wonder why our newly-produced materials fail. Among the possible reasons for failure lies readability problems: over-concentration on the activity design to the neglect of the page design. To many, 'design' conjures up ethereal, chimerical, or even scary feelings: the designer's art is vague, impressionistic and more importantly, outside the capabilities of the ordinary teacher. Yet the reality of readability is founded in very simple principles and is accessible. Materials writers need to be aware of readability issues as they physically affect the crucial interface between the writer and the end user.

In academic practice, however, 'readability' usually means 'word choice' and does not encompass the wider view of the term. Johnson (1998) shows the wider view and divides readability into three areas: motivation, print legibility and word complexity. Each area forms a separate domain of study, and within each, a considerable body of research has been developed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as motivation deals with psychological issues, print with technical and aesthetic issues and word complexity with linguistic issues, there is little overlap between these connected areas.

Motivation in second language reading teaching typically focuses on content (see, for example, Nuttall, 1996. p.130, and even Johnson's use of the term motivation only covers content), although studies on first language readers show that better page layouts and design choices promote short-term motivation (Boiarsky, 2002). Readability studies rarely discuss font choices despite studies showing that font choices do affect memory retention and comprehension (Bernard, Chapparo, et. Al, 2003). Technical traditional print and web sources frequently make claims that certain design choices aid readability on the psychomotor level, yet fail to underpin the claims with research findings. For example, one of the most respected style manuals, *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition, 1993), makes numerous assertions for better readability without supporting any, even indirectly in their bibliography.

Johnson's third domain, word complexity, has been, by far, the most studied, at the academic level at least. Since the 1940s, dozens of readability indexes and formulas have appeared, the best known being the Flesch and the Flesch-Kincaid, which are included in the English version of Word for Windows software packages. Yet, in second language learning, it is only recently that serious empirical study interest in word complexity has begun, and to date, there are only three empirical studies available (see Greenfield 2004). It is not surprising, therefore, that none of the mainstream TESOL textbooks for teacher training

even touch on print legibility. More worrying is that none of the books specifically aimed at materials producers do, either. The remainder of this article sets out to address this imbalance and will concentrate on the print legibility aspect of readability.

Print legibility issues fall into two areas; global and type. Global considerations include: margin settings, both of the page and of columns, if any; line length; grid layouts; positioning; balance and contrast; and white space. Type considerations include: typeface choice and number; font choice; emphasis at the word, or sentence level; textual organisation of headers, sublevel headers and so on; and leading and kerning. All of these elements interconnect, and decisions affecting one will affect others. In Part 1, I will consider only margins and line length from the global set, and I will discuss type in Part 2.

Global
Margin Settings
Most English-language word processing packages' automatic settings for page margins have an even inch of white space around the page. Japanese software typically sets left and right margins at 30 mm and the top and bottom margins at 35 mm. Neither systems offer ideal settings. The western eye runs from left to right and from top to bottom, and the speed at which the eye can locate the word on the left after a line break is increased when more space is given on the left (Japanese well-produced books have more space on top for the same reason) and on the top after a page break. Right-hand margins can be minimal as there is no requirement for the eye to jump further right at the end of a line. Usability affects the bottom and left margins. Pages are usually held at the side or the bottom, rarely if ever at the top. Wider bottom and left margins allow easier handling.

Facing pages present another problem of balance. If the left-hand page's right-hand margin is too tight, the corresponding page's left-hand margin will be problematic, furthermore if the binding, or page quantity, make the page bulge in the middle. Cheap novels, where there is no aesthetic requirement and publishers typically drown pages with text, often have right-hand pages' margin settings which make usability very difficult. With all of this in mind, the standard advice is to have the margins set as follows from widest to narrowest; left–bottom–top–right, and larger margins are favoured.

On a more practical note, printer margins dictate the minimum setting allowed, but these are usually enough for all cases. If a graphic is required to run off the edge of the page, set the paper at a larger size and trim down.

Line Length
We, as educated professionals, are accustomed to dealing with texts whose line lengths are quite long. However, most material which has been designed professionally and is directed to the mass public has far shorter lines and is deliberately easier to read. Let us dwell on this point—"is easier to read". Typography theory has very important implications for another group of language users—our learners. I am sure that our learners balk when faced with texts which most native speakers would find daunting, a serious demotivation problem.

Line length calculations set the line at 1.2 times the font size. If the font is 10.5 points, the length should be 8.75 cm. Reading a line which is too long forces the eye to jump backwards when confirming meaning rather than have the text within peripheral vision. Lines which are too short force too many unnecessary eye movements, slowing down reading time.

Johnson and others emphasise that only reading speed is affected by line length. As of yet, there are no published studies on second-language learners of memory retention and

Key Concepts

      Type
      Page Layout
      Aesthetics

Jim Smiley
Design Basics for English Teachers
Chiba JALT
6 June, 2004

Document Design Theory

Producing Better Handouts for Pedagogic Purposes

Type
How many fonts?
Bold? Italic? Size?
How many headings, or subheadings, or body text paragraphs are there?

Page Layout
Can you find the underlying grid?
How much of the page is black? is white?
How long is each text line?

Aesthetic Considerations
How does the page feel?
How are elements linked?
How are they separated?
Does the eye move smoothly or not?

Key Concepts in Material Design

A properly designed page is one which is both readable and useable. There are three key areas in material design: type, page layout and aesthetic considerations.

Type

    Typeface choice
    Font choice
    Size
    Emphasis
    Textual organisation
    Leading and kerning

Page Layout

    Columns and margin settings
    Line length
    Grids
    White space

Aesthetic Considerations

    Balance and contrast
    Rule of thirds
    Positioning

"CAN'T see the trees for the forest? A sea of undifferentiated text can obscure even the most finely-crafted written message. Careful attention to text design and formatting enhances not only readability, but comprehension as well."

From *http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/infomap/*

This document was created on Word for Windows using text boxes as the placement method for text.

comprehension levels being affected by line length or other design factors (other than my own, to be published in Ohu University's journal in December 2004). I wonder if really short line lengths or other strange typographical quirks might force learners to pay more attention to the text and, thereby, enhancing comprehension. I know that after reading handwritten Japanese, I remember more of the message. However, this line of thinking opens up an altogether opposite train of thought from the present thesis.

How then should a 9-centimetre line be placed onto an A4 page? The amount of white space implied seems daunting. One may begin to question the appropriateness of A4 and consider B5 or other sizes. Another solution is to set up two columns of 9 cm, which fit neatly inside the 21 cm page, but leave the margins a touch tight. Another is to utilise the excess area as a placeholder for graphics, or vocabulary and grammar help boxes.

A note about Word Processors

There is a critical difference between the terms 'word processing' and 'document design'. In word processing, you start at the beginning and type until you finish. You might include some paragraph breaks, some font changes, like adding bolds and italics, or you might insert a graphic, or a table. You might do many things, and the final length of the document is not known until you finish. Think of the term 'process' and you'll realise that there's a journey involved. Making a document using a word processor often involves editing, cutting and pasting blocks of text, rewriting and many other changes.

Page layout design, on the other hand, starts where processing finishes. The number of pages, the placing of headings, graphics and other page elements are decided on as the first part of the workflow. Physically, word processed documents look different,

too. They lack the deliberateness of designed pages. Even the term 'design' implies forethought, while 'processing' implies working through an idea.

Word processor programmes, like Microsoft's Word for Windows, allow for both types. They utilise textboxes as the placement method for text and graphics. This quasi-layout software function mimics the method used by PageMaker, Quark and InDesign, although their functionality is severely limited. I recommend 'processing an idea' in Word, then 'designing the page' afterwards, in any programme available.

The example on page 11, a handout made for a talk I gave to the Chiba JALT chapter in June, was made on Word for Windows to show that programme's possibilities.

Note

1 A rough translation of the Burns Poem:
"The best thought-out plans of both mice and men/ often go wrong/ and leave us nothing but grief and pain/ instead of the joy we had imagined!"

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Check out the MW website at: http://uk.geocities.com/ materialwritersig/ index.html%00

Once the teacher has successfully found "congruence" then the course should proceed smoothly. Preparation may be helpful to prevent problems in the classroom but it is certain that preparation alone will not eliminate the need to adapt during our lessons and courses. The ability to achieve congruence is probably most greatly affected by the human factor in the classroom. If we want to consider our students individually then their needs will have to be met individually and the materials adapted accordingly. No matter how reputable the author or book may be no one has written one that will completely meet the needs of every student in every situation. Until that time comes adaptation is the next best step.

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A Partner in Materials Writing
MATSDA
Daniel Droukis, Kyushu Kyoritsu University

What is it?

Those of us involved in teaching EFL in Japan will constantly have issues with materials whether we are writers or consumers. Further involvement in this aspect of language teaching will be of interest to all of us in JALT, particularly those of us in the Material Writers Special Interest Group. Another avenue to pursue our interest in materials exists outside of JALT in the form of MATSDA, The Materials Development Association founded by Brian Tomlinson in 1993 in order to bring together material writers to develop higher quality language learning materials.

Publications

Two books, which are essential for the library of those interested in materials development edited by Brian Tomlinson, are *Materials Development in Language Teaching* (1998) Cambridge University Press and *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (2003) Continuum Press. The 1998 book is clearly divided into four distinct areas; data collection and materials development; the process of materials writing, the process of materials evaluation and ideas for materials development with chapters written by the highest authorities in the field and then commented on by Brian Tomlinson. The recently published book features chapters on evaluation and adaptation of materials; the principles and procedures of materials development; developing materials for target groups; developing specific types of materials and training in materials development again with comments made by Brian Tomlinson.

In addition to these two books MATSDA also publishes a journal, *Folio* twice a year where members can keep abreast of the theoretical and practical issues influencing materials development. Writing for *Folio* would be an excellent opportunity for those of us in Japan to inform the rest of the world on what is going on in this country. The most recent issue of *Folio* features an interview with JALT MW-Sig member and renowned materials writer, Marc Helgesen. Topics in recent issues included; activities for cultural awareness, getting into publishing and difficulty and creativity in task design.

Folio sections include:

Practical Perspectives introduces materials that can be tried in our own classrooms.

Research Perspectives contains articles based on research in materials development.

Individual Perspectives allows writers the opportunity to describe personal experiences or points of view on materials development.

Publishing Perspectives has articles on commercial materials development.

Reviews offers analysis and evaluation of published materials.

Spotlight on a Materials Writer puts one writer in focus for a personal look at materials writing.

Membership

Those who join MATSDA will become members of a truly international group. MATSDA members can be found in Britain, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden in Europe. Africa is represented with members in Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Sudan. The Middle East has finds members in Oman and United Arab Emir-

ates. Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Malaysia have members. South America has members in Argentina and there are also members in Australia. This is a truly international group! More information can be found at their website *<http://matsda.org.uk>*.

Events

MATSDA also helps promote materials development through workshops and conferences. In January of this year the MATSDA Annual Conference was held in Dublin, Ireland. It was a two-day affair which included workshops and plenary sessions on materials for testing and the role of corpora in materials development. Most recently in June a MATSDA Workshop, "Innovative approaches to Materials for English for Academic Purposes" was held. The program included demonstrations of materials in use as well as sessions where participants produced their own materials. The workshops and conference both look

interesting. Hopefully, members from Japan will have opportunities to attend and bring back information to present to other JALT Material Writers members.

Final thoughts

I have been a member of MATSDA only a short time. The articles I have read in *Folio* have already inspired me to make more efforts in material writing and have given me a lot to consider as I try to further develop skills in material writing. Hopefully through further involvement in JALT Material Writers and MATSDA I will be a better materials writer and user for the sake of my own students.

Thank you

I want to express thanks to Hitomi Masuhara and Stephen O'Sullivan for their help as I tried to explore MATSDA and I hope that this short article will help bring the members of the two organizations closer together.   ᴮK

On the Inside

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.

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