Between the Keys

A Publication of the JALT Materials Writers SIG ©2008

Working Together

Jim Smiley
MW-SIG Coordinator

The Pan-SIG Conference in May featured a strong MW-SIG contingent culminating in a superb workshop hosted by Miles Craven our guest speaker. The sense of community among our SIG members was strong and we had our first group meal in a few years. Both the excellent programme and the social spirit helped reinforce the deeper meanings of life with a SIG. We must build on these and work towards a mutually profitable future.

MW-SIG will be a host SIG in next year's Pan-SIG, too. The conference will be in Chiba's Toyo Gakuen University, site of this year's Tokyo ETJ Expo, so a number of you will know the venue from that. The effervescent Andy Boon will lead the conference into its biggest show so far: nine SIGs (with CALL in a supporting role) is just over half of the total number of SIGs. It's not inconceivable that a future Pan-SIG will comprise all of the SIGs. The 2009 event is proud to announce J D Brown and Deryn Verity as the plenary speakers. Our SIG will have a featured speaker. More on that anon. See their website for more details.

My arithmetic is basically okay, but the sharp-eyed among you will be thinking that double nine does not match the sixteen SIGs JALT lists on its Chapters and groups page. This year, a few new groups have reached 'forming SIG' status, meaning that they have enough paid-up members and a working committee to satisfy JALT's regulations regarding SIG start-up and a few others are in the pipe-line. They are, alphabetically, Business English, Eikaiwa, Extensive Reading, Study Abroad and Teachers Helping Teachers (THT).

The upcoming International Conference truly deserves that epithet; as well as having speakers from the Pan-Asian Consortium (PAC) countries, the Asian Youth Forum will see around 100 young people from all over Asian gathering to discuss issues relating to Asian youths in English. Both THT and AYF got featured in this month's The Language Teacher (September 2008).

Here is what Daniel Stewart, ER-SIG Coordinator says;

"The ER SIG exists to help teachers create and improve ER and Extensive Listening (EL) programmes. Considering the interest in Japan in extensive reading, it seems amazing that there has never been an ER SIG. Finally one has been created and it is off to a good start. A small talented team is running things and there are already many members. The first newsletter, Extensive Reading in Japan or ERJ, has been released. A hard copy of the newsletter is sent to all SIG members and a PDF file is available on the website a few months later. The first edition with contributions from Krashen, Day and Bamford among others is already on the website for free downloading.

The SIG also hosts the ER Colloquium at the JALT national convention. Eight presenters including the amazing Marc Helgesen will be presenting Saturday November 10th from 4:10 to 5:50.

For those not going to JALT this

year, several of the same presenters will be giving an ER seminar in Hiroshima on October 12th.

Finally we would love to have articles for the ERJ Journal. We hope some of the Materials Writers SIG members will have something to contribute.

For more information, check out…   www.jaltersig.org"

Daniel Stewart
ER SIG Coordinator

Andrew Atkins of the Study Abroad SIG describes his group;

"The Study Abroad SIG (forming)

We are really pleased that the Study Abroad Special Interest Group (SA SIG) has been officially recognized as a forming SIG. The group hopes to provide language teachers, students, study abroad professionals and institutions committed to international education with opportunities to reflect on the issues and concerns related to study abroad. In addition to creating an avenue for dialogue among its' members, the Study Abroad SIG aims to publish insightful essays, thought-provoking research articles, interviews and book reviews to add to the innovation and development of this area which needs and deserves attention. This is a new group and there are a few executive and non-executive positions, which have yet to be filled. If you are interested in becoming part of this exciting new group and having an influence on the future of study abroad research in Japan, please contact Andrew Atkins or

Todd Thorpe at studyabroadsig@ gmail.com or come visit our table at the 2008 JALT National Conference in Tokyo."

Of course, the MW-SIG will have a ball this year. Our SIG's contribution to the conference will be increased this year. It gives us great pleasure to announce that Dorothy Zemach will be our featured speaker, and there'll be a panel session comprising Dorothy, Marc Helgesen, Steve Gershon, Junko Yamanaka and Brian Cullen discussing the advent of the 'Successful Textbook Writer'. What an event to look forward to!

We'll also have our AGM where policy and business discussions take place. There will be some changes in the MW-SIG Executive board. This is your chance to get on board the MW-SIG team to help out and be involved in the decision making at this exciting time. We really need volunteers, i.e. YOU, to come forward to help with the smooth running of our SIG. Without that base, our more inspiring plans simply won't take off. We need you. ✘

Tanabata Festival: Sendai

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From the editor

Kristofer Bayne
MW-SIG Publications Chair

There is a scene in the movie, The Wizard of Oz, where Dorothy (Judy Garland) has had quite enough of the Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton) and nails her with a bucket of water. W3 responds, as she dissolves feet first, "I'm melting, I'm meeeeltiii-ing." It has always reminded me of summer in Japan, the contrast being, of course, that a nice cool bucket of water sounds quite inviting! We have had our melting moments in Japan this summer, and if you have not been able to get away to somewhere cool, let?s hope that you have not collapsed into a steaming puddle of goo. Anyway, sit back with your favourite beverage, or bucket of water, and enjoy this issue of *Between The Keys*.

We have six items in our Summer BTK edition. The two key articles are on writing issues. Firstly, Simon Cooke describes his very practical approach to (quickly) introduce writing to high school students. Next Richard Walker shows how the Criterion evaluation system can be used to compliment a corpus-based approach to materials for writing class. Greg Goodmacher. Greg features twice in this issue. Firstly, he describes a game, based on the Japanese game, Shinkeisujiyaku, to encourage students to use review. Greg has also been convinced, in *Toot Your Own Horn*, to give us some insight into his materials

development background, from his 'swim-in-the-deep-end' start with the Peace Corp to his hopes for future projects. Finally, Brian Tomlinson has yet another edited book on materials to his credit. Kris Bayne gives a short overview to whet your appetite. And last (actually first) but not least we hear from our Coordinator, Jim Smiley, in his regular column, *Working Together*.

Enjoy what is left of your summer and if you do venture out into the heat (or the rain!) you?ll surely see that, as Dorothy explains to Toto (Terry), "We?re not in Kansas." But at least be comforted in knowing that the average summer temperature is about the same?

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8th annual j.a.l.t.
pan-s.i.g. conference
toyo gakuen university
nagareyama campus
chiba
may 23-24 2009
http://pansig/2009/

participating s.i.g.s
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gender awareness in
 language education
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other language
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pragmatics
study abroad
testing & evaluation

supporting groups
west tokyo chapter
yokohama chapter

call for papers:
feb 15, 2009

plenary speakers:
j.d. brown
deryn verity

infinite possibilities:
expanding limited opportunities
in language education

Introducing writing to Japanese high-school students

Simon Cooke, Sendai Ikuei Gakuen High School

Outline

At the beginning of May 2007, I was asked to prepare 1st year senior high school students for an essay competition taking place at the end of July. A pre-programme questionnaire revealed student's perceptions of improving their writing skills to be both difficult and unnecessary. In an attempt to overcome those negative perceptions, a set of three activities was developed and used: 'speed writing', 'jumbled paragraphs' and 'learning from example'. The outcome pointed to an improvement in writing ability, but showed no significant change in student perceptions.

Activities

The three activities that were chosen for the students to practice in class was a set selected from older materials. The materials were selected for ease of use for both student and teacher, requiring little preparation time. The activities were carried out during just thirty minutes of each weekly, hour-long class for a period of ten weeks. The length of texts for each activity was adjusted so that at least two of the three activities could be completed in each class.

Speed writing The purpose of this activity was for the students to generate and write down ideas within a set time, without worrying about 'surface errors' such as spelling or grammatical mistakes. As Jacobs states "When writers try to consider content and form simultaneously, the result is often slow, painful, uninspired writing; or worse, 'writer's block' sets in and nothing comes out" (Jacobs, 1986). Jacobs' study explicitly recommends the introduction of 'quickwriting' to second-language students as a key invention strategy.

Jumbled paragraphs In this activity, students were required to re-assemble essays or paragraphs that had been cut into individual sentences and placed in an envelope. Students then compared their version of the reconstituted paragraph with other groups before coming to a class consensus on the final version. Tomlinson, in his article on an approach to writing, which promotes exposure, use and analysis of written materials, recommends this practice as one method of exposing the novice writer to authentic writing. By using such methods, Tomlinson believes the students "will not only increase their 'knowledge' of the forms and functions of specific language items, but will also 'learn' more about how functions are performed in written English." (Tomlinson, 1983)

Learning from example As a continuation of the jumbled paragraphs activity, this activity saw students exposed to a variety of texts and examples to engender further familiarity with conventions of written language. The students were encouraged to seek out authentic English paragraphs for themselves and their fellow students to examine in class. The articles were submitted to the teacher before class and re-written when deemed to be over-complex for the average English level of the classes.

Including this activity incorporates the importance of 'meaningful reading' in a writing programme, by which means other aspects of literacy skills, including writing styles, vocabulary, grammar usage and spelling are positively influenced (Krashen, 2000).

Student profile

The two classes in the programme each consisted of approximately twenty-five first-year senior high school students between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. The school's English programme for these students consisted of six hours of classes taught by Japanese teachers (incorporating reading, listening and grammar) and one hour of Oral Communication (OC) classes, taught by a native English teacher. However, until the second year of senior high school, the students do not have designated English writing classes, apart from some limited Japanese-English translation drills which can be found in the latter stages of their designated textbook for the year. Due to the relatively high 'contact' time with English, the students are generally regarded to be low-intermediate to intermediate English level students. Based on this analysis, the expectation was for the students' perceptions of the importance of writing to improve commensurately with their own skill.

Materials profile

Speed Writing?In three minutes, students were required individually to brainstorm any words connected to the topic and write them down. In the first class of the programme, the topic of 'Japan' was chosen. One student completed the task like this:

> Asia, many people, sushi, samurai, Tokyo, Okinawa, islands, Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyuushu, Shikoku, Mt. Fuji, fishing

The students were asked to convert their brainstormed ideas into a paragraph for homework. The same student used the above notes to create the following paragraph:

> Japan is four islands. Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyuushu and Shikoku. Japan has many people. Japan like sushi. The capital is Tokyo. Fuji is a famous mountain. Japan was samurai.

Other titles suggested by the teacher and the students during the programme included "me", "my friend" and "my favourite sport."

Jumbled Paragraphs ? These paragraphs consisted of texts either written by the teacher or adapted from magazine articles on a wide variety of topics. Care was made to write/ use texts that did not stray too far from the students' current English levels. An example paragraph that was used in the programme:

> Southern All-Stars is a famous band in Japan. Southern All-Stars' members are: Keisuke Kuwata (lead vocals and guitars), Yuko Hara (vocals and keyboards). Other mquoteember are Kazuyuki Sekiguchi (bass), Hiroshi Matsuda (drums) and Hideyuki "Kegani" Nozawa (percussion). The band's first single was "Katte ni Sindbad" in 1977. This song got into the top ten in the Oricon chart! Since then, Southern All-Stars have been one of the best-selling music groups in Japan.

The jumbled version looked like this:

> Southern All-Stars' members are: Keisuke Kuwata (lead vocals and guitars), Yuko Hara (vocals and keyboards). Southern All-Stars is a famous band in Japan. Other member are Kazuyuki Sekiguchi (bass), Hiroshi Matsuda (drums) and Hideyuki "Kegani" Nozawa (percussion). Since then, Southern All-Stars have been one of the best-selling music groups in Japan. The band's first single was "Katte ni Sindbad" in 1977. This song got into the top ten in the Oricon chart!

Learning from example ? These paragraph(s) consisted of articles chosen by the teacher or the students and were similarly adapted for suitability of grammar and sentence structure. One student submitted this for use in class:

> Lord Voldemort is a fictional character of the Harry Potter book series written by J.K. Rowl-

ing. He first appeared in the bestseller Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997) as the archenemy of the hero, Harry Potter. Throughout the series, he is shown as a Dark wizard who wants unmatched power and immortality; he also hates all non-magical humans. In all books, his name is so feared that many wizards refuse to say it and most of the characters refer him only as "You-Know-Who" or "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," even his followers will not call him by his name, and refer to him as "The Dark Lord." (Adapted from Wikipedia, 2007)

Before and after the writing programme

Before beginning the writing program, a simple questionnaire was designed to find out the students' opinions of writing in English. The first question asked students to rate the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Writing was given a low score by students in both classes. In a space for comments the majority of students wrote that they saw both reading and writing as being unimportant in their English education.

The next survey question asked students to gauge their writing skill prior to instruction. Students answered that although they could identify the difference between written and spoken English, they had little confidence in writing even a correct sentence, let alone a paragraph or an essay in English.

The final two questions of the survey asked the students to identify the areas which they thought would be the most important in writing in English. The large variety of answers given to this question suggested general uncertainty concerning the construction of an English essay. One point which was repeatedly made concerned the students' general confusion regarding the correct way of expressing meaning in the written form, the construction of content.

Before any instruction, to determine cur-

rent writing levels, the students were asked to write a paragraph for homework on the topic of introducing a friend or an interest.

The paragraphs of two students, A and B are given below:

Student A:

My friend's name is Mamiko. She is 15 years old and lives in Sendai. Her hair is short and she is tall. She is always cheerfully, friendly and considerate. She's a really great girl. She's my best friend. I hope we are good friends forever.

Student B:

My friend's name is Hiroaki. He likes soccer. We both like Vegalta Sendai. He is one of my best friends.

As shown in the above examples, the students had tendencies to create pieces of writing which echoed the drill-like responses often heard/seen in the text-based English classroom (Xiaoju, 1984). The sentences are curt, predictable and lacking emotion, with simple sentence structures. Subsequent interviews with the students concerning their writing processes revealed that their essays for this assignment were either first or second drafts. Second drafts were universally altered for grammatical errors only, rather than for content.

After 10 weeks, the students were asked again to write a paragraph introducing a friend or an interest. These paragraphs, from the same two students as above are shown below:

Student A:

I am a big fan of Mr. Children, so I will write about this band. First, their words sink into my heart. They sing about love, our daily life and a certain way of life. I often learn something from their songs and they lift my spirits. Second, Kazutoshi Sakurai, who is the

vocalist, has a voice of great range, so their songs are difficult to sing at karaoke but it sounds great. I listen to their music every day. I hope everyone will listen to it at least one time and feel something.

Student B:

He is my friend. I met him when I was a first year Shukoh middle school student. He is very noisy and strange, but he is a very good and funny boy. He likes watching sports very much, especially soccer so we sometimes talk about Vegalta Sendai. Now maybe you have a question. Who is "he"? The answer⋯he is Hiroaki. He is one of my best friends.

As we can see, after the ten-weeks of classes, there was a marked change in the style and construction of the paragraphs from the two students. The sentences are not only longer and more complex, but show the freedom and unpredictability in English usage pre-scribed in communicative activities by Xiaoju and other proponents of the communicative approach.

Despite the improvements in writing styles, a post-programme questionnaire revealed no change in students' perceptions of their English writing skill or in the importance of writing in English.

Future adjustments and improvements

The simple activities that the students completed in just ten weeks, shows the ease by which improvements were made in students' written work. Nevertheless, in its present state, the concept of 'improvement' in students' writing may be seen as rather arbitrary, which is perhaps reflected in the students' lack of perceived improvement in their writing. In order to produce a more quantifiable measurement of improvement, both subjective and objective measurements could be incorporated into the materials and the classes:

At the end of each class and task, word count and/or timing boxes could be added to the students' worksheet for comparison and reference throughout the programme.

A self-analysis print could be distributed for students to complete with information regarding what they had learned from the class/task and from whom (their group-work, self-study or from the teacher).

The students could be encouraged to create their own dictionaries or glossaries of new words and terms that they have met during the programme.

All of these follow-up tasks would help both the student and the teacher to evaluate progress and task difficulty throughout the programme. Furthermore, these additional elements introduced to the programme could also lead to an increased appreciation of the 'usefulness' of the writing programme itself, for both students and other teachers. ⌐ K

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Improving the worth of *Criterion* with corpus-informed materials

Richard Walker, Meiji Gakuin University

There's a part-time colleague at work who I'm sure everybody knows. Every now and then he'll announce a gap in his schedule, and follow up with 'Have you heard anything'? Forever on the lookout for classes, he seems to consider anything and everything. Well, almost everything. There's one type of class that he'll refuse point blank. In fact, the merest mention of 'Writing classes' stops him in his tracks, makes his face turn pale, and precipitates a swift scurrying away. It's a very useful conversational tool, by the way. Jesting aside, it's easy to sympathise with his fear: the normal demands of planning lessons and assignments are compounded by a marking process that makes great demands on our time.

A desire to reclaim time and reduce the marking load is one reason why instructors might consider Criterion, writing evaluation software from ETS (Educational Testing Service). It's a tool that provides automated evaluations on prompts found within the software or inputted separately by an instructor. Evaluations are fuelled by NLP (Natural Language Processing) programs which calculate grades and provide feedback on vocabulary relevance, lexical complexity, grammar usage, and other discourse elements (Attali and Burstein 2006, 1-14). In short, it can provide benefits to time-stretched instructors and students alike. Instructors are assisted, rather than replaced, which creates more time for creativity. Designing materials that meet specific needs of assignments is an attractive challenge for many, and two aspects of Criterion makes the provision of finely-tuned materials, that consider prompt-specific word

frequencies, a necessity.

The first reason arises from the software's computations. When evaluating prompts, the system searches internal corpora of past prompt responses; to score highly, topic-specific words are expected (Burstein, Chodorow, and Leacock, 2004, 31-32). If students don't have this language they can, and do, resort to translation, which may exacerbate the number of meaningless, yet grammatically correct, sentences that are accepted; adversely affecting the worth of a software whose 'holistic' scores have been shown to be as accurate as human graded scores (Chodorow & Burnstein, 2004). Secondly, in another study, Otoshi (2005) found that it overlooked certain errors uncovered by 'human' instructors, including 'word choice' errors, noun and article related errors, and those related to discourse context (Otoshi, 2005, p.36). These are hardly surprising given that the 'pervasive ambiguity' of Natural Language allows sentences to have 'several million possible meanings' (Bunt and Muskens, 2007, p.1); it would, thus, be expecting much for automated 'error detection' to attain the same accuracy as human instructors, whose sentience makes it easier and quicker to disambiguate possible meanings. Instead, the creation of materials that emphasise the key language of prompt topics help militate against the production of 'overlooked' errors.

Some errors are easier to reduce than others. 'Word choice' errors, we could postulate, are increased by inadequate instruction and insufficient time spent on prompt-specific vocabulary. These errors may, thus, be reduced by tasks that emphasise and recycle such

vocabulary. Before planning tasks, however, such vocabulary has to be located. This can be done, of course, by intuitive means. But the use of corpus tools allows us easier access to word frequencies, and (collocation) patterns which are often undetected by the conscious mind. Last year I utilised one such tool when preparing material for a prompt on 'modern conveniences' (see table one below) and created a corpus of 150 articles from The Japan Times related to the prompt topic. After being chosen, articles were cut and pasted, transferred to notepad and moved to Wordsmith 4, a corpus tool with three main functions: concordance, word list and key word.

> Modern conveniences such as fast food, automated teller machines, and labor-saving appliances promise to make life easier. Do these products and services actually make our lives more convenient or do they simply create new problems? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

TABLE ONE: 'MODERN CONVENIENCES' CRITERION PROMPT.

The most useful results came from the keyness facility, which detects words with an unusually high frequency in comparison with a large scale reference corpus (Scott, 2006, p.55). 'Key' words fell into three main categories: 'convenience', 'financial' and 'Japan-related' (see table two below), with the latter posing an interesting dilemma. Although authenticated within an English language newspaper, these words are not necessarily recognised by Criterion, and their use may, therefore, lower student score. However, they were considered for use within materials: a 'Japanese' English may well be developing, and words such as 'otaku',

the 15th most 'key' word, has a semantic meaning that transcends English translations (e.g. 'geek' or 'nerd'), and might be evidence for language change. High frequency words are required, and if such words are 'key' in a news corpus, then, arguably, they should be considered for use in materials.

#	Key Word	Freq	#	Key Word	Freq
1	Japan	453	11	Bank	185
2	Yen	228	12	Resona	37
3	Japanese	287	13	Vending	49
4	Tokyo	1755	14	McDonalds	54
5	Internet	94	15	Otaku	42
6	Food	270	16	Prefecture	40
7	Percent	127	17	Appliances	59
8	Convenience	88	18	Machines	106
9	ATMs	47	19	Biothanal	30
10	Japan's	78	20	Customers	114

TABLE TWO:TOP TWENTY 'KEY' WORDS IN THE JAPAN TIMES 'MODERN CONVENIENCE' CORPUS.

This discovery of 'key' language is useless, however, unless tasks that stimulate students are created. Tasks intended to do this were incorporated into a task-based framework, influenced by Willis (2003, 53-68), which recycled language within tasks that used different skills and ensured sufficient time was spent on key language prior to attempting the prompt. This framework (see table 3 below) was used in two classes, and made use of two news articles from the corpus (Dillon, 2000; Terada, 2007) which were adapted and complemented by tasks that also made use of 'key' and 'high frequency' words.

Task	Frequency
1. Speaking/ Reading	Corpus + article vocabulary (pair work)
2. Speaking/ Reading	Mainly article vocabulary (vocabulary sorting)
3a.Speaking/ Reading 3b. Speaking	Elicitations about article (pair work) Presentations of ellicitations (group work)
4. Reading	The 'adapted' text (+ the 'authentic' text)
5a. Writing (week 1) 5b. Discourse Items (week 2)	Guided 'free-writing' on the promt topic. A consciousness-raising reading + 'gap-fill'
6. Prompt Title (week 2)	Title given and approaches discussed

TABLE THREE: CORPUS-INFORMED TASKS USED (OVER TWO WEEKS).

The spoken tasks are especially significant for first year students. Despite terms like 'Japanese learner' having unsatisfactory, or 'demeaning' (Skier and Kohyama, 2007) connotations, first year students share an experience of studying English in secondary schools where "communicative approaches to teaching English are not prevalent" (Nishino and Watanabe, 2008, 134-135), and are dominated by read and translate methodologies. Therefore, spoken pair and group exercises used in tasks (see tasks 3a and 3b) have much importance: they can be used to practice key vocabulary and are useful in strengthening a beneficial skill. The below worksheet (Figure 1), used in task 3, shows characters, photos (from Stockxpert.com) and phrases from the article that were used to encourage negotiation of meaning within pair work and create mini 'presentations' within groups.

[See Worksheet at the end of the article]
TABLE FOUR: WORKSHEET

Students came to the third class with drafts to be commented upon by peers and instructor. After class, students inputted their work onto Criterion, but could continue editing and drafting during the term with instructor advice and automated evaluation. The first draft results, however, gave an insight into the effectiveness of corpus-informed instruction and materials. They were overwhelmingly favourable. In comparison with an equivalent level class from the previous year, who prepared without corpus-informed materials but took the same amount of time, superior essays were produced. The first draft score on Criterion was significantly higher ? 3.8/6 compared with 2.9/6. Considerably more words in total were also used, and a wider range of discourse items were utilised.

Though used by instructors for much of this decade, there has been little discussion on ways to maximize the worth of Criterion. This brief piece has attempted to change this by showing a snapshot of experimental research that indicates how corpus-informed materials, designed around specific prompts, can be used to improve performances. Ultimately, however, it shows that the value of Criterion is dependent upon the quality of 'human' instruction and the creation of contextually appropriate materials.

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MW-SIG Committee

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MW-SIG Resources

MW-SIG Web Site -- new!

> http://materialswriters.org/

> (old one) 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.

Worksheet

E-CASH SILENCES THE JINGLE OF CHANGE!

You are going to read an article about electronic money, or 'cash'. An interviewer talks to a Japanese couple who disagree about many things! In pairs, use the pictures and words and phrases to discuss what they are talking about. Be specific One of you will be presenting your ideas!
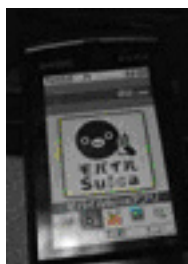
The Topic

Pre 2001: cash only   Post 2001: Suica card, convenience stores, Pasmo card
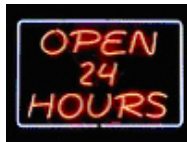
The Characters: Kenji, Hiroko, + interviewer

KENJI	Hiroko
She spends money without pulling out her purse! It's too convenient!	W-wallet functions are convenient, cool and make life easy. They can do my calculations. I don't mind.
The Suica penguin is not cute. Real penguins are becoming extinct, and nobody cares! Neither am I a robot – are you?	The robot and the penguin are cute – so I want to use the cards. Why do you use tickets – they are slow and inconvenient...
Mobile phones are the 'new' cigarettes. Use might lead to brain cancer...	Don't be silly! Using mobile phones to pay for goods won't lead to cancer! Our lives are short anyway...
Convenience culture is leading to much change. One day, we will might pay for goods by microchips inside our body....	No way! I know some places use ''implanted microchips' for money, but not me! But, it might be convenient...

Old road to cancer?   *New road to cancer?*

Microchips will replace cash?

New Tomlinson

Kristofer Bayne, MW-SIG Publications Chair

English Language Learning Materials: A Critical Review

Edited by Brian Tomlinson
Pub Date: 17 Mar 2008
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hardcover
352 Pages

Brian Tomlinson has already put his considerable energy, effort and expertise as a contributor and editor into two significant research works, Materials Development in Language Teaching (1998) and Developing Materials For Language Teaching (2003). We are now treated to a third, English Language Learning Materials: A Critical Review (2008). The two earlier works are regarded by many as 'bibles' in the field of materials writing. Whilst their pages are heavily populated with writers in the European and international milieu, they nonetheless cover an extremely wide range of issues for materials writers and the lack of North American-based authors should not diminish their considerable contributions to the field. The same is true for his latest offering.

You may recall a number of years ago that Brian Tomlinson put out a call for contributors interested in participating in a review of language materials from around the world. This is the result. The new book, English Language Learning Materials: A Critical Review, is really two parts, 'bookended' with commentaries from Tomlinson.

It opens with Tomlinson's views on the state of materials for English as a second/foreign language and what might constitute 'good' materials. Always good value. For those familiar with Tomlinson's views, expect to be perhaps nodding your heads again. For those unfamiliar, Tomlinson (again) takes mainstream publishers/materials producers to task, mainly for their approach being to produce teaching rather than learning materials. He presents some quite interesting and extensive checklists.

Moving into Part One there is a collection of articles looking at English used for specific purposes. While we do get some recurring themes such as CALL, EAP issues, self-access and so on, it is an interesting cross-section that also includes articles on English for young learners, and they are all written by people who know their stuff. Personally I found the article on Extensive Reading very interesting, not because it is new but because it was by Alan Maley, a key figure in the field, and it was extremely clear and practical.

Part Two takes up English around the world. A big task! Each region or country represented is covered by authors working, or who have worked, in those areas. They outline the basic approaches taken and offering the pros and cons. The areas featured are: the USA, Europe (including separate pieces on the UK, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union), Africa, Japan, Southeast Asia, The Middle East, Argentina and the Southern Cone of South America. (If you are wondering who took care of Japan, look no further than our own SIG coordinator, Jim Smiley.) Considering the range, a reader may be inclined to skip those regions not of immediate interest.

But it is also very interesting to read about the historical development of EFL/ESL materials in different places, and it at least made me even more aware of how easy we have it in Japan!

As the other 'bookend', Tomlinson synthesizes and collates common themes, drawing on all the region-specific articles to illustrate his earlier observations. While it might be somewhat predictable that they support his own views on materials, he also points out what is going right.

As is usual with his books, I found English Language Learning Materials: A Critical Review very entertaining and enlightening. Seeing as (I believe) people in different regions put their hands up to write about their particular context, there are some noticable absences. There is no coverage of materials in China (Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland) or South Korea, for example, and The Pacific does not get a mention. But I can't help but admire Brian for the concept and also the tenacity of his views. In fact, perhaps this book, even more so than the others, would be of great interest to materials writers since it deals more directly with what is going on at the chalkface.

References

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About the National Conference

Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

31 October – 3 November, 2008
National Olympics Memorial Youth Center
Tokyo, Japan

Our JALT2008 International Conference promises to be a very special event for language learners and educators alike. It will not only mark the 34th annual JALT conference but also the 7th joint conference of the Pan Asian Consortium (PAC) as well as the 6th Asian Youth Forum (AYF). We are pleased to be hosting PAC members from ThaiTESOL (Thailand), KOTESOL (Korea), ETA-ROC (Taiwan), FEELTA (Russian Far East), ELLTAS (Singapore), and PALT (Philippines) as well as many visiting young people from across Asia who will be participating in the Asian Youth Forum.

The conference theme, Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads, reflects the international focus of the conference. It also refers to the important interrelationships between learners and teachers, languages and cultures, communities and nations, as well as the connections between thought and language, interdisciplinary studies, elementary and secondary education, oral

A Review Board Game Based on *Shinkeisujiyaku*

Greg Goodmacher, Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture

Review is, in my opinion, an important but often unsupported aspect of the language learning process. Unfortunately, many textbooks that I use do not provide enough opportunities for review. In my classes, I want to provide an enjoyable way to review information and to facilitate interaction among students. To achieve that, I created an educational activity which is a version of Shinkeisujiyaku, a Japanese game that many students are familiar with. This activity reviews information that students have studied, helps with remembering new vocabulary, and gives students practice with asking and asking questions.

I have used this activity in many content-based English language classes. The particular example below was developed for use in a culture-content based class which focused on the United States of America. The activity can be used with just about any educational content in large or small classes.

Students are separated into two teams of two students, and one additional student serves as a judge for the two pairs. The two teams receive one piece of paper with directions and a table. The student who works as a judge receives another piece of paper which only that student may read. The directions may seem difficult for foreign teachers who are unfamiliar with Shinkeisujiyaku. However, Japanese students usually get the idea quickly, especially if the teacher plays the part of a judge with some students while the others listen and watch. Remember to make sure that students do not listen and write notes. Tell students to do their best to remember what they hear. The goal is for one pair to match more questions with answers than the other pair. If my explanation is confusing, please read the directions that they students receive.

Creating this activity for the first time, took a long time. However, I can use the format again and again. The activity was created with Microsoft Word. Each time that I recreate the board game for different content, all I have to do is type over the questions and answers and save the file under a different name. Doing so makes adapting the material for other content into a speedy process. The two pairs receive this:

Question and Answer Game

Directions: This game is similar to the Japanese card game called "Shinkeisuijyaku." Play this in a group of five, two pairs (pair A and pair B) and one judge. Match the questions with answers. One pair reads a question aloud and also guesses the letter of the answer. The judge reads the answer aloud and tells students if it is a match or not. Students must remember what the judge says. If the answer and question match, the students write "PAIR__ A" or "PAIR__B" under the question and under the letter of the answer. Students who correctly match a question and answer get another turn. If they make a mistake, it becomes the turn of the other pair. The pair with the most matches is the winning pair.

Example dialog:

PAIR A: We choose question one. "Who was the first president of the U.S.?" We think Answer W is the answer.

Judge (Incorrect guess): Answer W is "Hamburgers are popular." This is not a match.

Judge (Correct guess): Answer W is "George Washington." This is a correct match.

1. Who was the first president of the U.S.A? PAIR_____	2. Where did most of the slaves in America come from? PAIR_____	3. Who was the president before Bush? PAIR_____	4. Where did hamburgers originally come from? PAIR_____	5. How many wars did the U.S. and Britain fight against each other? PAIR_____
6. How many stars are on the American flag? PAIR_____	7. What is the name of a holiday in November? PAIR_____	8. What are the two largest cities in America? PAIR_____	9. How many islands are in Hawaii? PAIR_____	10. Which country gave the Statue of Liberty to America? PAIR_____
11. When were American women allowed to vote? PAIR_____	12. What does the Statue of Liberty symbolize? PAIR_____	13. What is a truly American art form? PAIR_____	14. Where was Coca Cola first sold? PAIR_____	15. What became popular in America and changed world culture in the 1950s? PAIR_____
16. What is Las Vegas famous for? PAIR_____	17. How old was your teacher when he learned to drive? PAIR_____	18. What U.S. city is the home of jazz? PAIR_____	19. Where did hip hop music start? PAIR_____	20. When were women first allowed to vote? PAIR_____

Answer A	Answer B	Answer C	Answer D	Answer E
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Answer F	Answer G	Answer H	Answer I	Answer J
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Answer K	Answer L	Answer M	Answer N	Answer O
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Answer P	Answer Q	Answer R	Answer S	Answer T
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The judge receives this:

Answer Sheet for Judge

Directions for the judge: Listen to the students' choice of questions and answers. Read the chosen answer aloud. If the answer is on the same line of this page as the question, the answer is a match. Tell the students if the question and answer are a match or not a match.

Answer	#	Question
Answer M He was George Washington.	1	Who was the first president of the U.S.A?
Answer Q Most of the slaves came from Africa.	2	Where did most of the slaves in America come from?
Answer D Bill Clinton	3	Who was president before George Bush?
Answer R The German town of Hamburg.	4	Where did hamburgers originally come from?
Answer F America fought two wars against Britian	5	How many wars did the U.S. and Britian fight against each other?
Answer B There are fifty stars.	6	How many stars are on the American flag?
Answer P Thanksgiving.	7	What is the name of a holiday in November?
Answer A New York and Los Angeles.	8	What are the two largest cities in America?
Answer O 8 large islands and 124 very small ones.	9	How many islands are in Hawaii?
Answer S France gave it to America.	10	Which country gave the Statue of Liberty to America?
Answer L They were allowed to vote in 1919.	11	When were American women allowed to vote?
Answer J It symbolizes liberty.	12	What does the Statue of Liberty symbolize?
Answer H Jazz is an American art form.	13	What is a truly American art form?
Answer G It was sold in drugstores.	14	Where Coca Cola was first sold?
Answer I Television became popular.	15	What became popular in America and changed world culture in the 1950s?
Answer N Gambling, shows, and quick marriages.	16	What is Las Vegas famous for?
Answer K He was sixteen years old.	17	How old was your teacher when he learned to drive?
Answer E The home of jazz is St. Louis.	18	What U.S. city is the home of jazz?
Answer T It started in New York City.	19	Where did hip hop music start?
Answer C Women could vote in 1920.	20	When were women first allowed to vote?

Toot Your Own Horn

Greg Goodmacher, Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture

Hello. My name is Greg Goodmacher. My language teaching career jumpstarted when I became a Peace Corps volunteer in a remote part of Southern Thailand. The Peace Corps teacher training course strongly influenced how I create and adapt teaching materials. The focus was on teaching preparation and actual teaching. This course did not introduce second language acquisition theories. During the training course, trainees had to write extensive lesson plans that included where to write on the blackboard, how to show visual aids, when to check for confirmation, and many other specific details. Master teachers demanded that we justify every word, every picture, and every class direction. If they disapproved of our lesson plans, trainees had to plan and create new materials before being allowed to teach students. Every moment of our teaching during this course was also strictly evaluated by several reviewers, so the training course was a very beneficial but stressful experience.

Approximately two and a half years later, I returned to the U.S., convinced that TEFL/TEFL would be my lifelong career and that I needed to study this profession in more depth. At San Francisco State University, I studied second language education from a more theoretical perspective. Harvard University accepted me as an apprentice teacher in their summer ESL program. Under the supervision of a master teacher and with a group of three other apprentice teachers, I taught listening classes and prepared lessons utilizing authentic television, radio, and video materials.

The three language education programs that I experienced introduced me to the theo-retical side and the practical side of language education. The practical side, in my opinion, is much more valuable. My major interest in the field of language education has always been materials creation and materials adaptation. Teaching materials should be the pragmatic conclusions to theories about language learning and teaching. I believe that theories are useless if they cannot be put into actual practice with teaching materials.

Despite my education in language educa-tion, I confess that I still feel ignorant, and I often wonder about ways that people learn languages and ways to teach languages. I have studied various theories, have observed many students, have reflected on my own learning, and I have created, used, and evaluated many teaching materials. As a result of my experi-ences, I conclude that that there is no one best approach, method, or material for language education. In other words, there are no abso-lute truths. Nonetheless, there are various theories, techniques, and other considerations which influence me. These guide me when I write and evaluate materials.

Perhaps, the foremost guiding concept is "personalization." Most people naturally want to communicate about themselves. Moreover, students seem to show more interest and to understand language points and abstract content better when the lesson is connected to their own lives. An example from Stimulating Conversation, a book I am currently writing now, shows one way that I have done this in connection with the topic of globalization. One homework exercise requires students to examine their home in order to find and list ten imported items. In the next class, students

discuss what they have found at home. In the process, students learn new vocabulary, practice grammar structures, and hopefully realize how their own lives are affected by globalization.

Another important concept that guides me is the simple, but often neglected idea of review. Because many textbooks do not provide sufficient recycling of vocabulary, grammar, and concepts, I usually have to create additional materials for my students. Board games, surveys, and card games are some exercises that promote review. I believe textbooks should provide more review opportunities, so busy teachers do not have to create so many themselves.

When I first read about Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, I was struck by how plausible the theory seemed and how it echoed my own observations of students. In addition, articles that I read about language learning styles also seemed sensible. When I write materials for my students, I try to keep in mind the differing mental potentials, which need stimulation, and the differing learning preferences of students. In terms of creating materials for my students, I write or adapt exercises that I believe can benefit many students. For example, post-reading exercises could involve drawing scenes from a text, conversation questions about a text, multiple questions about a text, role plays or drama based on a text, etc. To be honest, I find it difficult and overly time consuming to attempt to make each lesson multidimensional, but I attempt to do so whenever feasible.

In general, I dislike textbooks that follow the same pattern chapter by chapter. Therefore, I provide a variety of exercises for my students. Some teachers and materials writers may argue that repetition of exercises in a textbook is reassuring and less demanding for many students and that repetition also reduces the need for teacher preparation. I understand these points, but, for me, as a language learner

and a teacher, "variety is the spice of life."

Materials writers need to keep their eyes open for new techniques. My teaching eyes opened wide when I first learned about the technique of visualization in the teachers manual for English Firsthand Plus. Marc Helgesen now refers to this technique as "guided journey." This technique requires students to imagine something. In the case of the book mentioned above, students listened to a text and imagined what they heard. Then they discuss their imagined experience. I have used visualization exercises to facilitate learning about environmental issues, cultural stereotypes, and even grammar. For example, I gave students a list of the past tense forms of many verbs that I anticipated they might want to use in conversation. Then, I asked students to close their eyes, to breathe slowly, to relax, and to remember an especially happy childhood event. I asked them to imagine or remember the sounds, smells, sights, the people, and the conversations around them. While students were engrossed in their private worlds, I could see them smiling. I asked them to return to the classroom, and to discuss their experiences. Because each student had a uniquely personal and happy experience, the motivation to engage in discussion was quite high, and I observed them actively scanning the verb lists for the best words to share their memories.

Techniques of eliciting the imaginative power of each student in the language learning process are, I believe, very useful, yet rarely employed. In the future, I would like to write a textbook which emphasizes exercises that elicit the imaginative powers of students, and I want to write articles on visualization and language learning.

My career in EFL/ESL has been very rewarding in various ways, especially in terms of seeing the world and interacting with other people. Since my first full-time teaching job in Thailand, I have taught

survival English to Indochinese refugees in the U.S., English for art purposes to various nationalities in the U.S., English for business in South Korea, general English classes to women in the United Arab Emirates, and a variety of English language skills courses in Japan. Most of my current classes at the Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture are either America content-based classes or global issues content-based classes. I have written materials for all of the teaching contexts that I have experienced.

My education as a language teacher is always continuing, just as the materials that I create are never truly finished. My materials can always be improved, adapted, or revised to better suit particular educational environments. My teaching can always be improved, and I want to be a part of an organization of teachers who enthusiastically share their ideas and concerns. It is my hope that the membership of the Materials Writers SIG will become more active. If you wish to comment on what I have written, please contact me via the discussion board on our MW Yahoo group site.

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Materials Writers SIG: More than you asked for

and written communication, theory and research, and much more. We are looking forward to a productive conference sharing ideas, issues, and concerns which face language learners and teachers throughout Asia today. The presentations by members of JALT, ThaiTESOL, KOTESOL, ETA-ROC, FEELTA, ELLTAS, and PALT will focus on content areas currently in the forefront of dialogues in these respective organizations. We are also pleased to have the added perspective of our future educators through the discussions and presentations of participants in the concurrent Asian Youth Forum.

Through the collaborative efforts of presenters and participants from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, everyone will benefit in a multitude of ways. This interweaving of ideas from our many unique experiences, our cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and our different teaching and learning situations will produce a spectacularly colorful tapestry of shared ideas to take back to our homes and educational institutions. May the 34th International JALT Conference also strengthen the ongoing sharing of ideas and interweaving of our lives with our colleagues and friends in PAC. We look forward to your participation.

Caroline Latham & Alan Mackenzie,
JALT2008 Conference Chairs

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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.*