Between the Keys

From the Publication Chair
James Essex

For most of us, the summer vacation has already begun, which, if you are anything like me, is a time when you start developing (or re-developing) your classroom materials. Whether those materials be textbooks, supplementary handouts, games (online or otherwise), aimed to improve listening, speaking, reading or writing, there are many things to consider. The most important is, without a doubt, our students. That is why Daniel Jenks' article on student-centred reading choice, in which he describes an approach to designing materials for English reading classes based on topics suggested by students, may be of interest to some.

If writing is more your thing, Keith Ford's article about creating checklists to ensure academic tone in students' writing may be helpful. Based on personal experience and feedback from colleagues, he is keen to share his experiences with other MW SIG members.

Diverging from reading and writing, David Chapman tells us how we can keep successful games for a long time. His advice will surely save time for many of us, perhaps cutting down on material development time in subsequent vacations and more time to recharge our batteries.

Our coordinator starts off with his usual editorial, then reviews recent activites and reports on plans for the JALT Conference. Greg Goodmacher reports on his recent presentations. This issue ends with John Campbell-Larsen reporting on a presentation he gave for us recently in an article entitled, "From research to classroom."

Finally, it is with regret that I will be stepping down as Publications Officer in November of this year. I have reached a point in my studies where I need to devote as much time as possible to that. If anyone is interested in taking over from me, please do get in touch in the usual way. You will be working alongside other officers in the SIG and will be responsible for producing three publications just like this one each year, as well as updating the website from time to time. It usually required 3-4 hours of your time every other month, sometimes less.

Co-ordinator's Column
Jim Smiley, Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University

For many of us the summer has begun. We settle down to our research and take a break from the bustle of the classes. Perhaps this is an ideal time to start a materials writing project, or to update some older materials. If you need ideas, check out our Between the Keys archive: http://www.materialswriters.org/betweenthekeys/archives/ There you can download issues going back 13 years. One of my summer

projects is to upload the most recent years' issues to complete the set of available newsletters.

The MW-SIG has been active with JALT Chapters in the past few months either directly sending speakers to chapters or helping them with the funding for their own events. Greg Goodmacher went to Sendai in March and spoke about materials development for teachers. Greg was also our featured speaker at the Pan-SIG in Kobe in May. He talks about these presentations in a summary article in this edition.

May also saw the 2nd Annual Michinoku English Education Summit hosted by the Iwate JALT Chapter. The MW-SIG helped by funding a plenary speaker, John Larson-Campbell. His report on that is also inside these pages.

In November, the MW-SIG will have a full programme at the JALT International Conference. Let me repeat that title: the International Conference. I've been as guilty as anyone else for simply referring to it as 'the national', but it is far more than that. The range of presentations, plenaries, social events and much, much more represent a truly international event. The JALT International Conference is one of the biggest and best language affairs there is. Something all of us members can be proud of.

We are proud to announce our Featured Speaker. Cameron Romney is a past co-ordinator of this humble rag. His academic work in understanding various processes in materials development has impressed audiences in Japan and elsewhere. Cameron will present a featured speaker talk and conduct a workshop.

Presentation Title: Towards systematic materials design with ADDIE

Abstract: Many teaching materials in the ELT field are not created in a systematic way, but based on a reworking of what was deemed to be successful in the past and the author's intuition about language learning (Tomlinson, 1998). Furthermore, ELT materials are often created to meet the selector's (teachers and/or administrators) beliefs about what materials should be (Tomlinson, 2003), a publisher's existing catalog (Amrani, 2011), or to be as widely appealing as possible (Bell & Gower, 2011). While many researchers have proposed the idea that ELT materials should be created in a more systematic, research based way (see Tomlinson, 2014 for example) few have offered any concrete suggestions for doing so.

Drawing from the relatively new field of Instructional Systems Design (ISD), this presentation will introduce a basic Instructional Design (ID) model called ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate) and how it can be applied to the creation of ELT materials. The presenter will take each step in the model and discuss how instructional

designers use it to create traditional content learning activities and demonstrate how it can be applied to EFL/ESL learning situations.

Participants should come away with a better understanding of the challenges facing ELT materials writers and how ID models can be applied to meet those challenges to create materials in a more systematic way.

Workshop Title: Harnessing the power of visual design

Abstract: Many teachers give handouts of some sort in the classroom. Whether these are syllabi, activities or homework, the content of the handout is only half of the document. The other half is the visual elements: graphics, page layout, typography, etc. While lots of thought and energy went into the creation of the content, often the visual elements of the document are ignored. Teachers should be concerned about these elements because research has shown that visual design affects both the comprehension and usability of teaching materials.

This workshop will urge teachers to think about these elements, and offer some simple, concrete suggestions in the form of best practices for improving the visual design of classroom materials. It is intended for any teacher, at any level, who creates his or her own handouts.

The workshop will begin by reviewing some key concepts related to visual design and why they are important. Next the presenter will offer some best practices for teacher-writers to consider. Afterwards the presenter will demonstrate how these best practices can be applied to materials using common word processing software. Finally, participants will have the opportunity to apply these best practices to their own materials or sample materials provided by the presenter. Participants are encouraged to bring copies of their own self-made materials and/or their laptop.

Participants should come away from the workshop with a greater understanding of what the visual elements of a document are, how these visual elements affect usability, and how they can improve their own materials.

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The annual forum addresses the conference theme head on. This year, we will investigate issues involving notions about the student in ELF materials. The panellists are: John Campbell-Larson, David Barker, Melodie Cook, Jim Smiley and John Wiltshier.

Forum title: The Student's Voice in EFL Materials

Abstract: Textbooks are supposed to be models of language for students. Yet they often fail to represent the likely future voices of the learners. An example may be a textbook that is based on L1 corpus linguistics when it is known that L2 users of English generally produce significantly diverse output. The model of the native speaker carries with it implications of accent, modes of delivery and cultural assumptions that our students may not embody. In the MW-SIG forum, Melodie Cook will speak on gender issues in EFL textbooks. David Barker will talk about how L1 interferes with L2 at both the linguistic and cultural levels. Jim Smiley uses systemic functional linguistics to assess naturalness in EFL textbook language. John Campbell-Larson brings in a pragmatics understanding to show ELF writers more critical knowledge of conversation models. And John Wiltshier relates his experience of how writ-

ers struggle to have their 'realistic' text accepted by editors.

Here is a summary of our main events at the International Conference:

Cameron Romney 90-minute workshop: Saturday, Nov 21, 11:00~12:30, room 1001-1

AGM: Sunday, Nov 22, 12:45~1:30, room 904

MW Forum: Sunday, Nov 22, 11:00~12:30, room 903

Cameron Romney 60-minute presentation, Sunday, Nov 22, 2:55~3:55, room 910

Material Design Presentation
Greg Goodmacher

Sharing ideas about adapting and creating teaching materials gives me great pleasure; it is one of the most professionally rewarding activities of my career. Therefore, I was overjoyed when invited to give two presentations for the Materials Writers SIG in 2015.

One workshop-style presentation was at a local JALT chapter meeting in Sendai, and the other presentation was at the PANSIG conference in Kobe. The purposes for the presentations were to communicate my views regarding materials creation, to publicize the work of the MW SIG, and to stimulate idea sharing. My hope was for each attendee to return to their schools feeling enthused about creating and adapting materials. The reason for this paper is to explain the exercises and activities that took place at the two presentations for the benefit of those who could not attend. Due to the time constraints, this paper is divided into two sections. The second part will be published in a future issue of BTK.

The titles of the presentations, "Exploring the Creation of Teaching Material" and "Creativity with Teaching Materials" reflect my belief that design-ing effective teaching materials is an act of creativity. In contrast, many globally-produced textbooks feel as if they have been produced from bland dough and shaped with cookie-cutter molds. Faced with such unappealing choices, dedicated teachers are adapting materials and writing their own from scratch.

Carlos Islam and Chris Mares wrote an excellent article that we material writers can refer to when seeking ideas for adapting materials. The title is "Adapting Classroom Materials." It was published in Developing Materials for Language Teaching (Tomlinson, 1993), which is an overall examination of many aspects of materials design. In my presentations, I explicated my own objectives and techniques and well as some of the techniques that Islam and Mares suggest.

The chief techniques for adapting materials that Islam and Mares (1993) encourage writers to consider are the following: "adding; extending and expanding, deleting; subtracting and abridging, simplifying, reordering, and replacing material" (p. 91). During the presentations, I gave examples of some of these techniques and or discussed such tech-

niques with attendees, who shared their own ideas and techniques.

Adding: Extending and Expanding

Some of the information from the slides of a PowerPoint presentation that I showed attendees is below. The first shows a vocabulary activity that we often find in textbooks. Following that is what a teacher might do if he or she were to use the technique of adding-extending to increase comprehension and practice with new vocabulary.

New Words: majority, minority, ordinary, politicians, citizen

Write the new words above in the blanks in the sentences below.

1. The __ of first-year Japanese college students are required to study English.
2. A __ of students study Russian.
3. A person with the right to vote and participate in public events is a __
4. Governors and mayors are __
5. The __ person might not feel that he or she can influence the government.

The technique of extending is adding more of the same linguistic practice. Notice that five more similar sentences have been added.

1. The __ of first-year Japanese college students are required to study English.
2. A __ of students study Russian.
3. People with the right to vote and participate in public events are __
4. Governors and mayors are __
5. The __ person might not feel that he or she can influence the government.
6. A recent poll showed that a __ of people oppose nuclear power.

7. I think many __ working together can make politicians change their policies.
8. The __ citizen has the right to express an opinion.
9. Women are a __ in government.
10. The __ of world leaders are men.

Adding in an expanding mode means to add another quality to the language point or points being studied. For example, if a textbook requires students to match photographs of jobs with their titles, a teacher can add an exercise such a game of twenty questions that requires students to discuss job duties, locations, salaries, etc., until one student is able to successfully guess the name of a job that another student has chosen.

Replacing Culture and Time Specific References

How many times have you used a textbook that has photographs of famous people, references to past events, and stories of places that your students neither care about nor know anything about? Probably often. A while ago, I was required to use a textbook that had images of Marlon Brando and other individuals from the past. The assignment was for students to describe the people in the images to each other. The students and I couldn't care less about those people. Teachers can stimulate their students by using photographs, events, and places that students care about. With images projected on a wall or cutouts from magazines, students can do the exercises in the textbook but connect those exercises with the more meaningful references provided by the teacher.

Of course, teachers tend to much older than a majority of students, so we are often out of the loop in terms

of pop culture for their generation. I ask my students in advance for their advice.Recently I covered the topic of cultural perspectives of beauty. Before class, I emailed them asking the names of famous people whom they thought that most of their peers would agree are handsome men or beautiful women. Finding images of those people and adding them onto a PowerPoint presentation for the next class was simply and quickly accomplished.

Creating Review Opportunities for Students

Many textbooks companies seem to ignore the importance of reviewing topics and language elements covered in previous classes. Therefore, teachers need to know numerous ways to provide review in exercises that entertain students and yet also challenge their creativity and language abilities. I demonstrated several activities that take very little preparation time.

The first is a game that I learned during my training as Peace Corps TEFL volunteer. The volunteer who taught it to me called it Word Staircase. Fortuitously, it is similar to the Japanese game of Shiritori, so students quickly grasp the directions. There are at least two variations. At the Sendai event, I had attendees play this game in a physical manner. Students stand in lines at the back of the classroom. One student in each group holds a piece of chalk. When the teacher declares the topic, for example, ecology, or whatever else was recently studied, the first student runs to the board and writes a word or phrase connected to the topic and returns to the back where he or she passes the chalk to another student. The second

student must write a word or phrase that starts with the last letter written by the first student. This continues until each student has had a chance to write. The winning group is the group with no spelling errors and which can justify any questionable words.

In the second variation, students sit in groups and write their words or phrases on a piece of paper. When they have written the number of words that the teacher requires, students submit their papers to the teacher. A sample paper with an environmental issues topic might look like the one below:

Eagl**e**
    environmenta**l**
            long line fishin**g**
                    gree**n**
                        nuclear powe**r**
                            reforest

One participant at the Sendai event suggested using this game to review grammar. For instance, the topic could be nouns or verbs, etc. At the Sendai event, we also discussed the use of board games to facilitate review. I explained how one can create a board game that is easily and fairly quickly adapted for many topics. Once the format is created, a game board can be reused with different questions.

Review Board Game

Directions: Play this game with four students. Every student should put a marker on the square at the beginning of the game. Markers can be erasers, coins, or other small objects. One student at a time will roll a die and move his or her marker as many squares as the number

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Start Here. Go This Way→	Would you like to change your gender for a short while?	Do you know the names of any countries with female leaders?	What do you think of people who kiss in public?	Why is American culture so popular in Japan?	What do you think about same-sex marriages? ↓
Who taught you the most about Japanese culture?	What do you think of divorce?	Where in the world can people legally have more than one spouse	Why do men often receive higher salaries than women?	Are there any animals that you would not eat? Why?	How many spouses do you want? ←
What aspects of Japan are popular around the world?	What is good and bad about Japanese culture?	When traveling, will you try strange foods?	What is unique about Japan?	Do you believe in a God or Gods?	What do you know about the continent of Africa? ↓

on the die. That student must ask the question to the student on the left. The other students listen to the answer and then ask follow-up questions. When students land on a square with a picture instead of a question, students must make their own questions. Take turns until all students have finished the game.

An article about another board game is located here (http://www.materialswriters.org/betweenthekeys/16_2/goodmacher.php).

Creative Redesign of Reading Texts

Another topic that I introduced was using reading texts in various ways that make them more challenging and interesting than the traditional approach of having students read a text and answer typical comprehension questions. First, teachers can move the comprehension questions to the front. Second, instead of the teacher giving the students the correct answers after students have finished reading, the students compare their answers together. When the answers are different, the students should discuss and decide on the best answer. Prior to this, a teacher should provide students with necessary language examples.

Another suggestion is to turn a reading passage into a running dictation exercise. To do this, divide one's class into many pairs. Student A has the first paragraph at his or her desk at the front of the classroom. That student reads and remembers as much as possible of a short text. Then, the student runs to the back where Student B waits. Student A dictates as much as student A remembers to Student B. Student A returns to the front, reads more, and repeats the process until the text is completed. Students then switch roles. Students love this exercise.

I also shared and demonstrated how to turn a reading text into a very communicative reading exercise that promotes critical thinking, listening, and speaking skills. Although, it takes a bit of time to create the activity, the results are worth the effort. First, type the words of a reading text onto a Word document. Then, make two copies, an A and a B version. Then change some of the information in

each version. Students will take turns reading paragraphs aloud and silently. The student reading silently as his or her partner reads aloud is to interrupt when the information differs and state what the difference is. Both students write the different information onto their texts. This process continues until both students have finished. The second step requires students to now put their papers together, discuss the differences, and decide which information is correct. Finally, the teacher can read a text with all of the correct information aloud while students listen and read silently to check their answers, or the teacher can distribute a copy of the correct text to the students. For more specific details and for more information on adapting reading materials, please read [this article*](#) about collaborative and communicative reading.

The presentation attendees and I discussed many other points regarding materials revision and creation. These will be offered in a future paper. One of the purposes of the Materials Writers SIG is to serve as a resource for teachers who want to continually develop themselves. These presentations were of great benefit to me because I learned so much from the attendees. If any of the attendees are reading this report, you have my sincere thanks.

* http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/ fckeditor/publications/polyglossia/ Polyglossia_V18_Greg_Kajiura.pdf

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Student-centred topic choice in Reading materials

Daniel Jenks, Chiba University

This paper describes an approach to designing materials for English reading classes based on topics suggested by students, which is intended to increase learner engagement with the materials.

Background

Over several years of teaching university-level academic English reading classes with a selection of different textbooks, I have settled in to a regular formula for my lesson plans. Each week we tackle a new text, which is introduced towards the end of the lesson with a set of pre-reading discussion questions in groups. We then read through the text quickly, sometimes aloud taking turns with a partner and sometimes following along with an audio recording. For homework, students are asked to read the text again, answer a set of "true or false" comprehension questions, and find one sentence in the text that they thought was interesting. In the following class, after being assigned a new partner, students share answers to the homework questions, then work together to complete additional activities that focus on developing their understanding of the text and its topic through use of a particular reading skill. This is followed by vocabulary exercises to reinforce new

words from the text.

This formula allows students to practice reading a range of material for a variety of purposes, and pre- and post-test results have demonstrated benefits for their vocabulary acquisition. However, in end-of-semester review activities it has become clear that students remember very little of the material that they have been given to read, and are often hard-pressed even to pick a favourite topic from a list of those that we have covered. This indicates to me that despite their efforts in class, they may lack any real interest in the material, and are really only reading what they are given in fulfilment of their duties as students.

Perhaps this could be blamed on "the bland irrelevance of many teaching materials" (Maley, 2003:192), which seem to present only "a sanitized world of clean-living teenagers untouched by 'sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll'" (Cook, 2003:278), or whatever else might actually be interesting to them. In any case, students' level personal interest and involvement with a topic seems to be a major factor in their enthusiasm and motivation to study, especially when they are confronted by texts that are difficult to understand (Hudson, 2007). For this reason, "engaging affect should be the prime concern of reading materials" (Masuhara, 2003:351), with a suitably chosen variety of topics achieving this by providing meaningful context for language forms (Richards, 2001) as well as allowing for exposure to an array of written styles and genres (Nation, 2009).

To this end, I made the decision to abandon my textbooks and develop a set of reading materials for my own classes. My aim was to produce texts that would engage and motivate my students to read, and to do so out of interest in the topic as much as out of necessity for my classes.

Process

I began by compiling a list of potential themes for my texts. This preliminary set of topics consisted of fairly broad subject areas – typical school subjects, items from the contents pages of existing textbooks, categories of news stories, and so on. This list was deliberately not exhaustive, as it was to be presented to my students during our first class of the semester, at which time they would work in small groups to briefly discuss what each topic meant, and to try to add their own suggestions for other topics that they might like to read about.

With a supplemented list of around fifty prospective topics now projected on a screen in front of the class, the next stage was to determine which of these the students would be most interested in reading and learning about. To establish their general areas of greatest interest, I asked each student to order the full list of topics from "most appealing" to "least appealing", reminding them that they would ultimately be deciding the content of the next several months' classes. Having collected their ranked lists, and while the students were distracted with a timed reading activity to measure their reading speed, I assigned points to each topic according to their rankings. I then announced the twenty most popular topic choices.

With a fifteen-week semester, allowing two weeks to explore a single topic with two separate reading texts, I still needed to reduce this pool to seven topics. The final stage of selection was

to ask small groups of students to choose three items from the Top Twenty list that they especially wanted to read about, and between one and three items that they did NOT want included. This stage allowed me to account for any strong individual preferences amongst the students, as I tried to keep all of the favourite topics and discard the particularly undesirable ones. Although this was not possible in absolutely every case, I did finally end up with seven topics that I could justifiably state were chosen to appeal to the largest possible section of my class.

Having chosen our topics, the problem of exactly what content to include for each one remained. Topics like "Education", "Technology", and "Crime" still left plenty of scope for losing the students' interest, should I have chosen to write texts that focused on uninteresting aspects of each subject. To tackle this, I asked my groups of students to write down a question or two for each topic that they would like to have answered when we read about it. Again, I mentioned that our subsequent classes would be based on their ideas here, and that I would try to provide them with the answers that they wanted for each topic. I therefore stressed that their questions should concern information that they genuinely wanted but did not already possess – in effect, I wanted referential questions rather than display questions. I also gave them example questions, as well as suggested template sentences for forming their own questions, as shown below.

EXAMPLE TOPIC: Food
EXAMPLE QUESTION: Where does the food that we eat come from?
EXAMPLE QUESTION: What health problems are caused by common foods?
EXAMPLE QUESTION: What effect do science and technology have on our food?

QUESTION SENTENCES:
What is causing the problem of...?
What are some of the reasons for...?
What is the effect of...?
What are the advantages / disadvantages of...?
What is the difference between _____ and _____?
How are _____ and _____ connected?
How can we improve...?
How will our homes / our lives / the world be different if...?
What happens in other countries when...?
Why...?

Their resulting questions gave me insight into what they might already know about each topic, and therefore needn't be covered in my texts. It also allowed me to focus my texts on providing them with authentically interesting and useful content. These texts were produced week-by-week over the next semester, enabling me to monitor the students' responses to my writing and manage the level of the language that I used to match their comprehension ability.

Reflections

At the end of the semester, vocabulary tests results and retention of the reading skills that we practiced were roughly similar to previous years. In our review activities during the final class, I was able to elicit a complete list of the topics that we had read about, and groups of students held lively discussions concerning which topics they

had found most interesting, or most difficult, or most relevant to their own studies. I was also able to present them with the questions that they had asked about each topic at the beginning of the semester, and use this as an informal test of their comprehension and recollection of the reading material. While statistical comparison of these results with those of previous years (and previous textbooks) is not possible, and I cannot claim to have measured an increase in their reading ability or topic knowledge, I found that students at least reacted positively to the experience, and appeared to enjoy reflecting on the things that they had learned about each topic.

The materials created during this process were specifically tailored to the interests and needs of one group of students. However, because of the time and effort required to produce a weekly reading article, I decided to use the same texts again with subsequent classes. These could, of course, have been adapted by collecting new questions on each topic from new students, and editing the texts to add or remove material as appropriate. However, even using the existing texts without revision led to repeated positive results. While every group of students is unique, there are likely to be patterns in their interests and knowledge about these topics, meaning that materials customised for one class may still be more appropriate for another similar class than a published textbook.

Bio data

Daniel Jenks has taught in Japan since 2002, and is currently a lecturer at Chiba University. <daniel@chiba-u.jp>

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MW-SIG Web Site

http://materialswriters.org/

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*.

Making Checklists Material for Maintaining Academic Tone in EFL Student Writing

Keith Ford

A few years ago a colleague of mine at a meeting concerning the academic writing program of a Japanese university seemed to be dumbfounded at students' apparent refusal to write sentences beginning with appropriate academic-style transition words (such as Also, However, Therefore) rather than using the compound sentence connectors and, but, and so to begin sentences. This was despite constant instruction on this point of academic style. When asked to expand on the process of submission and marking of the students' work, it turned out that writing assignments were simply handed to the instructor at the beginning of class and then returned to students the following week with various marking comments.

Probably, as writing instructors, we have all done this at some time: correction and instruction until blue in the face, perhaps being reduced to the demonstrative use of exclamation marks. However, it is clearly neither a solution to consistent student errors, nor beneficial for instructors' mental health. Indeed, it may be suggested that if students' inadequate work is accepted in the first place (literally accepted on face value as a submission by the instructor and the student), the student may be of the mind that they have completed the task satisfactorily even if not at a high level. To solve this problem I argue for the importance of student self-checking and accountability, guided by a clear set of criteria, something that must be explicitly encouraged and, initially, carefully monitored by the instructor. Furthermore, any self or peer checking needs to be on the basis of students recognizing a clear role focus, such as checking specifically for academic tone, or for paragraph structural elements, or for formatting of work.

Sometimes, the practical things we do as teachers, either intuitively or based on sound theory, may seem absolutely obvious to ourselves but not to others, and vice-a-versa, of course. In this short article I highlight what I consider to be the essentials of maintaining academic and objective tone in student academic writing, and how students' adherence to these considerations can be achieved. I hope it may be of some practical use, especially keeping in mind that one of our aims as academic writing instructors must be the selfish one of reducing our own marking burden, particularly when often students may not even respond to handwritten marking, or they have not understood it, or have not been able to even read it.

The underlying principle I would like to emphasize here is to get students to be more rigorous in their attention to detail so that they can make continued progress and become consistent in their writing process and product. Students must understand that the requirements for maintaining academic tone, as with other aspects of academic writing, are

actually prescriptive and can not be blurred into the realms of possibility and choice.

Before proceeding further, I would like to focus on what the term academic tone means at a basic level of student writing. First, it is important to make the distinction between academic style and that of narrative, descriptive or reflective styles of writing which, for example, relate significant personal experience and are more subjective in tone. In fact, there are writing textbooks available that have "Academic Writing" in the title but which focus primarily on writing tasks of a personalized nature, with students writing about their own personal experiences and lives, and with model paragraphs of similar personalized content (see for example Butler, 2013; Savage & Shafiei, 2012). In these texts the concept of academic tone is not highlighted as a student writing requirement. For the purpose of my comments in this article, I consider academic writing to be a non-personalized, objective style of writing.

Academic tone is something that needs to be emphasized to students at the point of undertaking their first paragraph of academic writing. I would argue that to encourage the development of a style which is objective in tone, students should adhere to at least the following requirements: Do not use personalized pronouns which make writing style sound too familiar, conversational, and subjective; Do not write about personal experiences; Do not ask questions to the reader; Do not use the compound sentence connectors to begin sentences; Do not use colloquial, conversational language; Do not use contractions of verb forms; Do not use the vague language of and so on or etc.; Avoid using phrasal verbs which are commonly used in speech and informal writing; Make good use of compound and complex sentences. I should emphasize that students, of course, get instruction on these points before doing their first piece of paragraph writing.

I have no doubt that some people may disagree with some of the points listed above. For example, it can be argued that personal I is often used in journal articles and particularly in reflective writing. I make no apologies for using it frequently here. Most EFL students, however, need to learn the basics of academic style first, and any model needs a set of clear criteria of dos and don'ts to guide them, particularly when it comes to self-checking. Furthermore, it can be argued that many skilled writers often begin sentences with the connectors And, But, So, perhaps for the purpose of emphasis. This is particularly true in narrative styles of writing and journalistic prose, but again students need a clear understanding of the basics of academic style before they can start to incorporate the more subtle uses of these words in more creative ways. Certainly, I would argue that at a basic level students need to see the academic writing process and product as highly rule-governed.

The in-class process I use for developing student rigor and accountability regarding academic tone is as follows. Students bring a printed copy of their submission to class as well as having their copy open on their computer screen. I should add that having your academic writing class in a computer room with printing access is essential for monitoring the changes students are making, and so that they are able to print out again when changes have been made. With their hard copy in front of them, the academic tone checklist is given out (see Appendix One). While reading through

their potential submission, students put a check (√) or a cross (X) in the brackets. If they put a cross against any point, then that needs to be improved/corrected immediately using bold underlined print to show where changes have been made. They then print their paper again and pass it to a classmate who then uses another copy of the checklist page. If their classmate returns their paper and checklist without any crosses then they are ready to submit. If there are some crosses, they need to address those points, again using bold underlined print, and then print out again ready for final submission in class. If there are any doubts about their classmate's checking, they should consult their instructor.

Clearly, some class time is needed for this checklist process before moving on to further class instruction. To carry out this kind of process effectively the class must function relatively autonomously in that when one student finishes the process (checking their own work, making any necessary changes, printing out their revised copy, passing it to a peer, doing a peer check on a classmate's piece of writing), they move on to the next set of instructional materials or exercises, or even on to beginning the next writing assignment. Therefore, class instructional materials should be prepared and available so that students can move on to them and work relatively independently and at different paces according to how many changes they need to address.

There are various ways of assisting students to focus on appropriate language usage and awareness exercises that can help maintain an academic and objective sounding tone. To avoid using the personalized subjects, objects, or possessive pronouns, language instruction can focus on examples of using more

objective and specific vocabulary to show exactly who is being referred to; also, students need practice in making good use of passive grammatical structures or lead-in phrases like It is necessary to or It is important to (see Appendix Two for example handout). Another example that can assist them is highlighting how phrasal verbs are generally used in English in speech and informal writing whereas in academic writing more formal verbs tend to be used (see Appendix Three for example handout). Also, an example handout can be given out for avoiding the use of simple word choices (see Appendix Four). The class time that students have after checking their own and a classmate's piece of work could be spent on independently working on various exercises that highlight this kind of language use.

The self and peer checklist approach that I have outlined in this article can, of course, be applied to various aspects of students' writing product, such as checking formatting of work or checking the structural requirements of a piece of writing. However, I would argue that it is important that any self or peer checklist needs to have a specific focus. As students get used to engaging more and more in taking this kind of responsibility for the adherence of their work to specific academic requirements and criteria, they should be acquiring such knowledge, and therefore the whole checklist process should be come quicker and more efficient.

Our role as instructor of an academic writing class should be to help our students' writing skills advance, building week by week, showing that they have learned to incorporate aspects of writing for which they have received instruction, and that they can work more indepen-

dently by following clear sets of criteria. We should not be repeating the same comments week after week because students have not made a conscious and focused attempt to follow instructional guidelines and requirements.

Some readers of this article with a proof reader's eye may have noted a missing apostrophe in its title. However, I should like to emphasize that I am using the word material in its adjectival sense (meaning important, necessary as opposed to immaterial), as I want to emphasize that we should make checklists a very evident and visible part of the academic writing classroom. In so doing, and by following the process I have outlined here, I have found that that the amount of actual marking of papers because of errors that contradict recent instruction is considerably reduced, therefore freeing up teacher time that can be used more productively.

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Appendix One: Student Checklist for Maintaining Academic Tone

Maintaining Academic Tone

In order to make sure that your writing has an academic and objective tone there are various points to follow about language and style. You must follow all of these. As you read again through your writing, put a check (√) in the bracket if you have followed that point. Put a cross (X) if you have not followed that point. Any point you have not followed in your writing must be improved before submitting it to your instructor. Use bold underlined print when you make any changes to your writing. Remember your writing must follow all of these requirements.

• Do not use personalized pronouns such as I, my, me, mine, you, your, and we, us which make your writing style sound too familiar and conversational ( )

• Do not write about your personal experiences ( )

• Do not ask questions to the reader ( )

• Do not use the vague language and so on or etc. ( )

• Do not use the compound sentence connector and to begin sentences, but rather use appropriate transition words, such as In addition, Also, Furthermore ( )

Do not use the compound sentence c
• onnector but to begin sentences of contrast, but rather use appropriate transition words, such as However, On the other hand ( )

• Do not use the compound sentence connector so to begin sentences of cause/effect, but rather use appropriate transition words, such as Therefore, As a result, Consequently ( )

• Do not use conversational language, such as let's, nice, OK, stuff, thing, bad, horrible ( )

• Do not use contractions of verb forms like can't, doesn't, won't, shouldn't, but rather use the full forms like can not, does not, will not, should not ( )

*

NOTE: Ask your instructor if you need help in making improvements.

Appendix Two: Example Handout for Avoiding Personalization

Avoiding Personalization

You should avoid using the personalized subject, object, or possessive pronouns *I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, we, us, our, ours*. To do this, you need to be more objective and specific about who you are referring to.

1. For example, you might use specific subjects like *Students, People, Society, The government, The local community, The Japanese population*.

2. The second way is to make good use of passive grammatical structures in your writing.

3. You can also use the lead-in phrases *It is necessary to* or *It is important to*

Examples

Here are two examples of each of the above.

1 = specific subjects; 2 = passive structures; 3 = lead-in phrases

1. **The local community** should organize special garbage collections.

2. Special garbage collections **should be organized**.

3. **It is important to** organize special garbage collections.

1. **Students** need to use various sources when writing an academic essay.

2. Various sources **need to be used** when writing an academic essay.

3. **It is necessary to** use various sources when writing an academic essay.

Appendix Three: Example Handout for Avoiding the Use of Phrasal Verbs

Avoiding the Use of Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are generally used in English in speech and informal writing. However, in academic writing more formal verbs are used. Below there are some examples given. As you develop your writing make sure you are using a range of academic-sounding verbs.

Examples:

1. As a result of the present economic situation prices **are going up** dramatically.

As a result of the present economic situation prices **are increasing** dramatically.

2. The government should **give up** their plans to change the pension system.

The government should **abandon** their plans to change the pension system.

3. Researchers **looked at** all possibilities for explaining the survey results.

Researchers **considered** all possibilities for explaining the survey results

4. The committee **put forward** various solutions to the problem.

The committee **proposed** various solutions to the problem.

5. Three well-qualified candidates were **picked out** following the first set of interviews.

Three well-qualified candidates were **selected** following the first set of interviews.

Appendix Four: Example Handout for Avoiding the Use of Simple Word Forms

Avoiding the Use of Simple Word Forms

Your vocabulary use needs to involve using words that maintain an academic tone. Here are a few examples of this. Depending on the meaning required, the simple adjective good can be replaced by more academic-sounding, precise adjectives such as appropriate, positive or significant. The simple adjectives bad or poor can be replaced, again depending on the meaning required, by adjectives such as disappointing, inappropriate, insignificant or negative. Similarly, depending on the nouns they precede big can be replaced by major and small by minor, such as before words like cause, change, consideration, difference, influence, problem, role. Before using these words, make good use of your dictionary to see how they are used.

Examples:

In providing role models, parents need to have a **good** influence on their children.

In providing role models, parents need to have a **positive** influence on their children.

There have been some **big** changes in the tax system during the last few years.

There have been some **major** changes in the tax system during the last few years.

There are only **small** differences between the two countries' educational systems.

There are only **minor** differences between the two countries' educational systems.

How to keep successful games for a long time

David Chapman

"Successful" games are a valuable resource for teachers. Games take time to develop, make materials for, organize, and store. Game materials can be broken into two main groups: single use and reusable. For single use game materials copies can be made for the students to use and either take with them or recycle after use. Other games can involve materials that need to be cut into pieces and kept together. Keeping pieces together and keeping materials viable for reuse can prove to be a challenge for busy teachers. This article will discuss methods used to keep materials organized and viable for reuse in the future. While it may take a longer to get materials ready initially these steps will save teachers time in the long term.

Laminating

Whether to laminate materials or not is up to the individual teachers needs and resources. A teacher might want to laminate things that he or she wants to reuse for many years. In addition laminating materials can send a signal to students that the material is different than a normal handout and can help students understand that it may be something that the teacher does not want students to take with them. There are three main reasons why a teacher might not want to laminate materials. First, students tend to be tougher on laminated things and sometimes pick at the edges of the lamination and ruin the cards much more quickly. Second, if the teacher wants to edit and update materials it is much easier to recycle/reuse plain card stock or paper than laminated cards. Third, laminating takes time that the teacher might rather spend being creative or developing more materials.

Storage

Reusable materials for games take storage space and need to be organized. There are some simple steps teachers can take to make storage and organization of materials more systematic and thus easier. First when making cards the teacher should decide a size to work with consistently. There are many advantages to this. The consistency will save time in setting up paper cutters and calculating measurements. Also once the teacher decides on a specific size the teacher can purchase storage boxes and bags that will hold those cards. Depending on the size the teacher chooses there are a number of commercially available boxes made to hold cards without wasting a lot of extra space. Also plastic baggies or envelopes can be purchased at a 100 yen shop, or similar shop, and a teacher can save time by purchasing bags for that set of cards. The 100 yen shops sometimes have things and other times don't the teacher so if the teacher buys a supply of things all at once there will be a consistent supply ready.

Envelopes of baggies can be used to collect and hold game pieces and then the baggies or envelops can be put into larger storage boxes so that they can be labeled

and stacked on top of each other. This is where a consistent size really helps out.

Label everything

Simple labeling can save teachers countless hours of sorting pieces into their respective groups. If the pieces are going to be reused the author recommends that the teacher label everything. Labeling can be very simple ranging from assigning the materials a group letter A, B, C or number 1, 2, 3, etc. or more complex. Labels also help when replacing lost or damaged cards. The teacher can label the materials on the computer when he or she is designing them or students can help label the materials the first time they use the materials. It might be helpful for the teacher to the following information on the container holding the game pieces: the number of pieces or cards for the game and the group number or letter on the packaging. Knowing the number of pieces in the game or activity can help students take responsibility for managing the pieces and make sure that they have a complete set of materials before the start the activity so that the activity doesn't need to be stopped or interrupted because the students don't have enough materials to do the activity. Also after finish the activity they can check that they have returned all of the pieces. Students are one of the best resources to help keep materials together and organized.

What information to put on the label

Depending on the activity and teacher needs the information on the label will be different. The author recommends including at least the following information:

1. The game or activity the materials belong to.

2. The group or set the materials belong to.

3. The number of pieces in that group or set.

Some additional information that might be helpful include: the chapter and or textbook that the materials refer to or come from, the topic that the materials cover etc. The teacher might also find it helpful to label the materials with his or her name (and or department) so if materials are left behind in the classroom he or she might get them back.

An example of a label in use

Figure 1 is a sample hint card from a school club karuta activity designed to improve student listening and comprehension skills. Karuta is a game where students have two sets of cards. The first set of cards are cards with the answer on them. The second set of cards are cards with hints and an answer on them. To play the game the students spread the answer cards out on a table or the floor face up. One student, or the teacher, reads the hint off the hint cards. Students listen to the hint and compete to find, touch, grab or slide the answer card away before other students can do so. If two students get the card at the same time they can play "rocks, scissors, paper" to decide who gets the card. After the round is finished the hint card is placed in a discard pile. A new hint card is drawn and read until all of the answer cards have been taken. The student with the most answer cards at the end of the game is the winner.
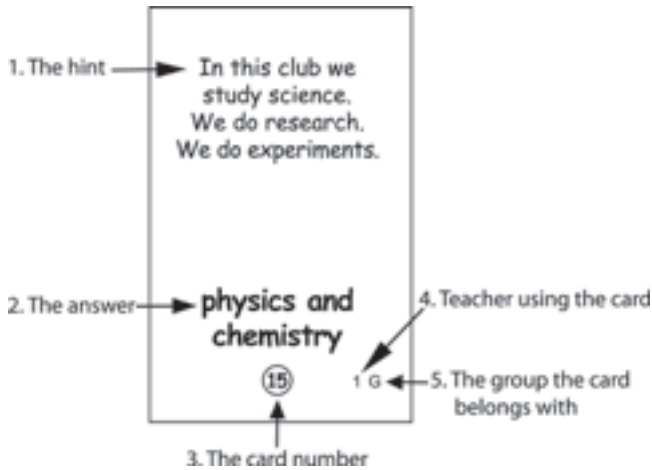
The text in the top part of the card is the hint that the reader reads. The bold physics and chemistry is the answer to the hint. The card number shows which card it is so if it needs to be replaced it is only a matter of printing off the card on a specific page. Currently there are two teachers who are using these cards and this is teacher 1's set of cards. Finally the G indicates the group of cards that within the set that the card belongs to so that the card can be returned to the group within that set very easily. This is just one labeling system that has been developed.

Setting up label templates

Depending on the activity and the demands of the activity the author has developed a number of different templates to use. One program the author uses is Adobe InDesign, and while some of the information here is specific to that program the fundamentals can be adapted for use in other programs. If the program has layers that can be turned on and off, then the teacher can make one master label set and just modify the information and paste it onto another layer and that layer can be turned on or off when printing so that the appropriate information is printed on the game materials with a touch of a button.

Figure 2 displays the school club karuta card and a screen shot of how the layers are arranged. The eyeball icon means that the layer is visible and the
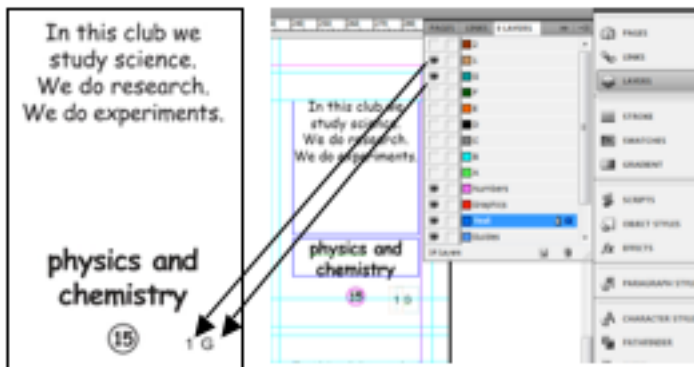
Figure 2: Sample school club karuta card with layers shown.

information on that layer will print when the card is printed. Each layer has different information and can be turned on or off as necessary. For example, layer 1 shows these cards belong to Teacher 1. Second the letter G shows that these cards belong in the pile. Because the teacher's number and the group are saved on different layers they can be turned on or off as needed and the teacher doesn't need to replace the letter on each card by hand. Cards can be printed and replaced as necessary.

Another way labeling can be used is when students do a lyric line up activity, i.e., the teacher types up the lyrics for a song and cuts them into pieces for the students to put in order while listening to the song. To keep the pieces organized the pieces are labeled with the following bits of information: an abbreviation of the song title, the number of pieces for the activity and the group letter. As one song has multiple pieces and each one is important to complete the song it is very important to keep pieces organized and together. Both the strips of paper for the song and the envelopes are labeled so students know before they start and after they complete the activity how many pieces they should have.
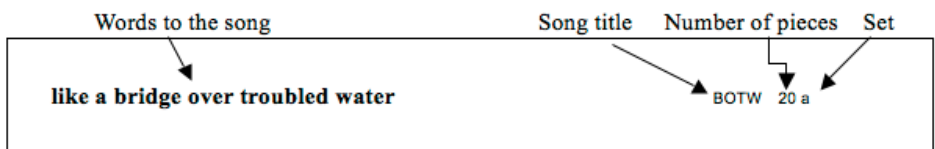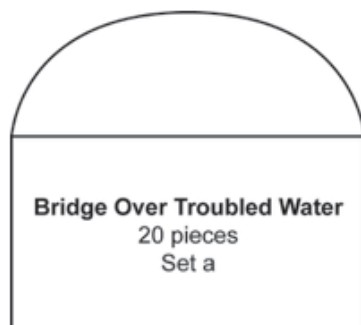

Figure 3: Sample lyric stript

Figure 4: Sample envelope label

Since implementing this labeling system it is much easier to return pieces into the proper groups and make sure that the proper strips are with the proper song. This small investment of time in the design has saved considerable time over the years. This also allows students to know from the beginning whether they have all of the pieces, so the activity doesn't need to be stopped or delayed because one group is missing key pieces to the puzzle.

Using labeling to help students keep pieces together

The label information on the strips and on the envelope help the students get organized before the listening game. Before starting the teacher can:

1. Have the students check how many pieces they "should" have.

2. Count how many pieces they do have.

3.Find the missing pieces or give the extra pieces to the proper group.

These simple steps can make sure that the students are organized and ready to complete the game without delays. It also communicates to the students that they are part of the learning process and not just recipients of the knowledge.

Conclusion

Games can be an engaging way to engage students in the learning process. Organizing materials and keeping the pieces together can be time consuming if not handled in a systematic way. This article discussed ways the author keeps materials together and organized and outlines ways to label materials to keep them organized easily.

From Research to classroom

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When asking about a person's ability in a foreign language we usually ask the question 'do you speak English/ French/ German etc. That is, we conceive of language proficiency primarily in terms of speaking ability. This pattern is found in other languages. Questions such as 'Sprechen sie Deutch?' 'Parlez vous Francaise? and so on likewise conceive of language as primarily spoken. The illiteracy of prehistoric peoples was complete, and is the default setting for our species. No literate but non-verbal society has ever been attested, at least to the author's knowledge. Wiezrzbicka even went so far as to suggest an alternative binominal classification for our species, stating 'Homo Sapiens is essentially Homo Louquens'. (1987, p.1)

This view of natural human language needs to be born in mind when considering the goals and content of language courses. It is not suggested here that literacy in a foreign language should be ignored, sidelined, postponed or otherwise systematically neglected. It does however suggest that claims by textbook producers and syllabus designers that the course of study revolves around a balance of the fours skills (speaking, listening, reading writing) may be doing learners a disservice in that no such 'balance' exists in natural language use in human society at large.

But to refer to 'speaking' as if it is a single entity is also a disservice to learners. As is the case with writing, there are many genres of speaking and the ability to perform in one genre should not be taken as evidence of the ability to perform in another genre. The ability to write an academic paper does not reveal the creative writing abilities of a writer and likewise, the ability to perform satisfactorily on an oral proficiency interview (OPI) does not necessarily mean that a person will be able to deliver a presentation or speech in the language in question.

In terms of speaking, the most common genre of speaking that people engage in is the genre of conversation, that is, spontaneous turn taking in small groups in which status differentials are partially or wholly suspended and the primary purpose is not exchanging propositional truth statements about the real world, or achieving practical goals (although these may occur in conversation), but rather to maintain and consolidate social bonds. (See Cook, 1989 p. 51 for a categorization of the defining features of conversation.)

So, if we accept that speaking is the

central skill of language and furthermore we grant that within speaking, the central genre is conversation, it then follows that an understanding of the ways in which conversational language differs from the written language is important for learners. After all, spoken language is not written language read out, any more than written language is spoken language written down. It is also necessary to distinguish the features of conversational language from the language used in other genres of speaking in order that learners have the wherewithal to participate in this central human activity.

Historically, the features of spoken language were inaccessible to linguists who had to rely on their intuition and also on written forms of the language to inform their ideas about what language is and how it works. Fortunately, with the advent of reliable recording technologies such as portable audio and video equipment and also the development of computing technology, researchers now have powerful tools at their disposal provide robust quantitative and qualitative data and analyze this in an empirical manner. Following is a summary of some of the findings from fields of discourse and conversational analysis and corpus linguistics that seem to the author to have a bearing on second/foreign language course design and pedagogy.

Discourse Markers

McCarthy (2010) found that common discourse markers such as *Well*, *I mean, you know* and so on are among the most frequently occurring words in spoken English. It turns out that spoken English is suffused through and through with these kinds of words, which are largely absent from the written form of the language.

Hasselgreen (2004) found that these markers, which she terms *smallwords,* are key indicators of fluency. The implication is that the absence or presence of these words is not an optional extra, but a central skill that language learners should possess.

Another term that has been used for these markers is *fillers*, which perhaps suggests something superfluous, and essentially without meaning. However, these words are not meaningless but have a multitude of important interactional functions. For example, Schegloff and Lerner (2009) found that one of the functions of *Well* is to preface responses to *Wh* questions where the response is non-straightforward, in effect signaling to the poser of the question that the answer will not take the expected form.

Hasselgreen commented (p. 238) that many textbooks are cleansed of markers and there exists in some quarters a prejudice against these words. This theme is taken up by Watts (1989) who detailed the strange phenomenon of native speakers offering criticism of the discourse marker use, whilst at the same time suffusing their criticisms with discourse markers!

Backchannel/ Aizuchi

Participants who do not currently hold the floor during conversation do not sit silently and wait for their turn. Rather, they participate in various ways by making utterances that show interest, attention, understanding and agreement. This listener behavior is referred to as backchannel in English (see Yngve, 1970) and as *Aizuchi* in Japanese (see Locastro, 1987). Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki, & Tao, (1996) found that the placement, functions and frequency of backchannels vary across languages. In

the author's experience many Japanese speakers of English deploy *Aizuchi* during spoken interactions in English.

Agreements and upgrades

Pomerantz (1984) found that interactants suffuse their talk with evaluations and that the evaluations are constructed and placed in such a way as to elicit agreement from the listener(s). One way in which agreement with assessments is done in Japanese is by repetition of the assessing adjective. McCarthy (2008) noted that direct repetition is unusual in English. Pomerantz (*ibid*) noted that one common way of agreeing with assessments in English is by upgrading the assessment with a limit adjective, e.g., cold= freezing. Research by the author has found that many Japanese learners of English have a very limited knowledge of the limit adjective counterpart to daily adjectives and are therefore unable to perform agreement by upgrade and often rely on a limited repertoire of phrases such as *I think so too* to show agreement with assessments. (Readers may notice that the repeated use of the word *limited in* the previous sentence, and perhaps feel such repetition is sub-optimal in terms of style.)

Reported speech

Bakhtin (1992) asserted that reporting the speech of the self or another is one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human speech. McCarthy (1998) enlarged on this and stated that reported speech must be a central part of any ESL/EFL syllabus. Barbeiri and Eckhardt (2007) found that corpus studies reveal differences in the way reporting is actually done and the way that it is presented in ESL textbooks. McCarthy (ibid) noted that the past continuous tense is a very common structure for reports, and not just the simple past tense of the reporting verb as is often the case in ESL/EFL materials. McCarthy (*ibid*) also found that backshifting of tense is not as canonical as traditional views of grammar would suggest. Romaine and Lange (1991) found that the use of *be like* as a quotative is undergoing a process of grammaticalization in English and can no longer be regarded as a slang term restricted to the casual speech of young people. McCarthy (Touchstone 4, p.81) revealed that *like* is one of the top 15 words in spoken English and that 10% of its uses are as a quotative.

Vague language

Channel (1994) found that vague language use in English is systematic and purposeful. Numbers, amounts, process times and so on are often given in vague rather than precise terms by speakers of English. Evison, McCarthy, & O'Keefe (2007), Overstreet, (2000) found that vague category markers (*something like that, and stuff, or anything)* are deployed systematically to signal shared social space, epistemic convergence and turn structure.

Idiomatic language

Idiomatic language, that is, chunks of language that are fixed or semi-fixed and whose meaning is not readily apparent but is culturally shared, abound in all languages and often cause difficulties for L2 learners. Drew and Holt (1998) found that idioms are often located at the end of a topic sequence and serve the function of signaling that the topic is exhausted and that a new topic sequence will be initiated.

Fluency

Heike (1985) found that the literature on fluency was replete with vacuous definitions. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) found that seamless speaker transition (no gap, no overlap) is a fundamental feature of talk and that violations of this pattern require work by interactants to overcome. Evison & McCarthy (2014) found that turn openers show a preference for linkage with the previous turn with such words as *yeah, oh, well, but* and the like being found at the beginning of a large number of speaking turns. McCarthy (2010) asserted that in addition to speed, chunking and other proposed components of fluency behavior at speaker transition points is a key indicator of fluency and that therefore fluency can best be viewed not as a property of an individual speaker, but rather a jointly constructed phenomenon, for which he used the term *confluency*.

Conclusion

The above reports on some of the empirical findings concerning the nature of spoken English that have emerged during the last 40 years or so. There are also other findings that may be relevant, but lack of space prevents a fuller description here. The focus has been on things that in the author's experience are seldom taught in the EFL context in Japan, and thus may go some way towards explaining the difficulties that many Japanese learners of English have when it comes to engaging in conversation in the language they are studying.

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