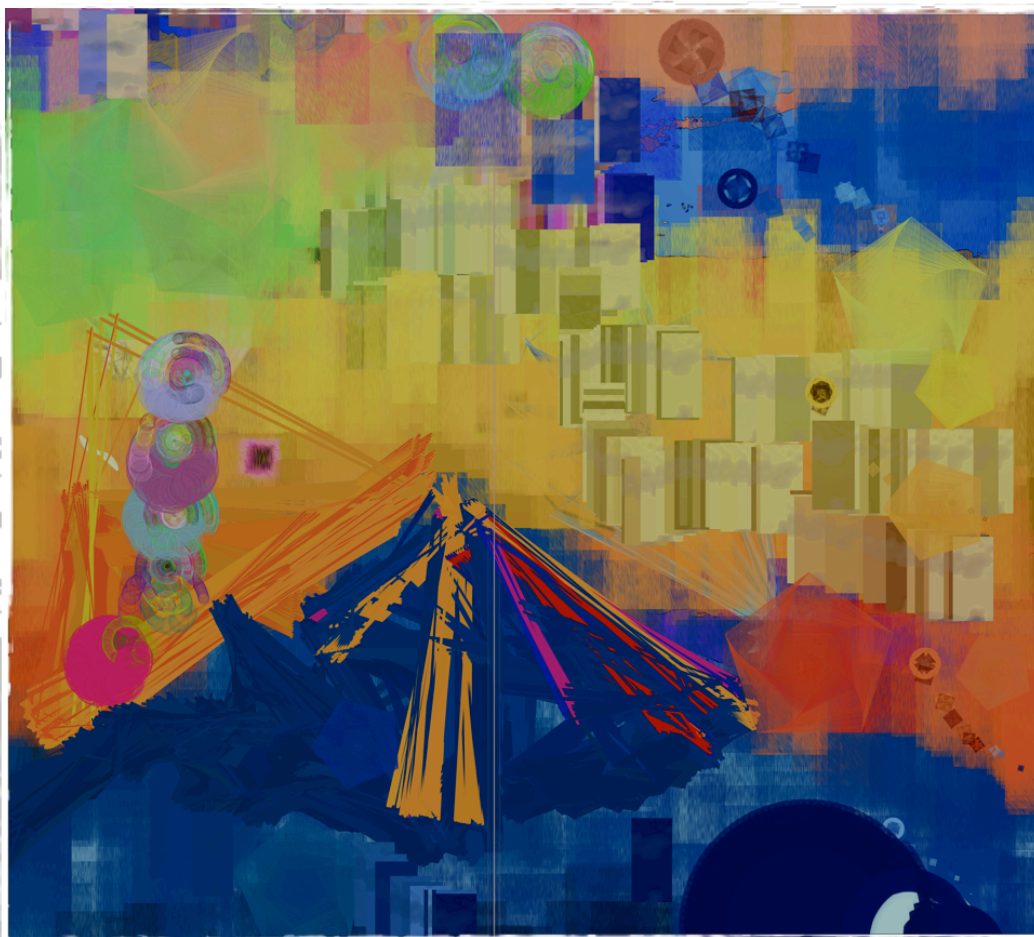


VOLUME
24.2
SUMMER 2016

Between Keys



A publication of the JALT Materials Writers Special Interest Group

The Materials Writers SIG was established for the purpose of helping members to turn fresh teaching ideas into useful classroom materials. We try to be a mutual assistance network, offering information regarding copyright law, sharing practical advice on publishing practices, including self-publication, and suggesting ways to create better language learning materials for general consumption or for individual classroom use.



Table of Contents

Officers

From the Publication Chair (James Essex)	2
From the Coordinator (Adam Murray)	2
Report from the Program Chair (Greg Goodmacher)	3

Feature Articles

Local Notes: Interview with Yukari Kusuda	7
Confessions of a Collaborator – Part 2	
Richard Walker, Reitaku University	9
Be Our Guest: A Midterm Assessment Project	
Kinsella Valies, Nihon University, Junior College	12

From the Publication Chair

Dear Readers,

Allow me to introduce what is likely to be my last issue as Publications Chair of *Between the Keys*.

We, the Material Writers team, after our individual blurbs, bring you a host of articles in our new-look publication. We kick off with what is going to be a regular column – *Local Notes* where we interview Japan-based material writers. Our first interview is with Yukari Kasuda who has recently published not just one but two books!

You may remember from a previous issue part one of Richard Walker’s *Confessions of a Collaborator*. Well worry not; in this edition we bring you the second and concluding part of his account of writing an in-house textbook for use at Reitaku University.

Moving on from that, we finish with a ‘My Share’ from Kinsella Valies in which she explains how to assess student ability to apply listening, speaking and writing strategies studies by having them listen to an English language presentation by a guest speaker.

Finally, allow me to reiterate what Adam has already said; the team are always looking for people who want to get involved with the creation of *BtK*, either in a chair role or something less demanding. Interested? Contact our coordinator, Adam Murray, without delay!

Thank you for your support over the last eighteen months or so.

James Essex
Publications Chair

From the Coordinator

Dear MW SIG Members,

As you may have noticed, BtK has a new look! The image of Mt. Fuji is not only artistic, but there is a story behind it. This image was created by Marcus Grandon, a SIG member-at-large, while demonstrating how to use the photo editing software *Studio Artist* with his students. So, the cover art is a practical result of the use of authentic materials in a content-based class. Although BtK now has a sleek modern look, we have not forgotten our roots and have retained the masthead from previous issues.

At the recent JALT Executive Board Meetings (EBM), there was a lot of discussion about the revision of the guidelines for chapters and SIGs. An important possible change is the number of required officers. Currently, there are five “core” SIG officers: Coordinator, Membership, Program, Publications, and Treasurer. However, the more successful SIGs have additional positions to better serve their memberships. In fact, one SIG has 20 people fulfilling 10 different roles! Currently,

the MW SIG has 10 officers but there are still plenty of opportunities for YOU to become involved in YOUR SIG.

How can I get involved you ask? Excellent question! We currently have two positions that are unfilled: (a) Publicity Chair, and (b) Japanese Language Coordinator. Here are descriptions of what these officers do:

PUBLICITY CHAIR: The Publicity Chair shall be responsible for keeping up-to-date flyers, brochures, and press releases for the JALT MW SIG and the various SIG activities. S/he will keep a list of pertinent media contacts for announcement purposes.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE COORDINATOR: The Japanese Language Coordinator shall work with the Publicity Chair to make sure that all publicity materials are also available in Japanese. S/he shall coordinate with the Publications Chair to ensure that sections of the JALT MW SIG website are translated into Japanese as appropriate. S/he shall coordinate with the Program Chair to make sure that the JALT MW SIG program includes events in the Japanese language. S/he shall collaborate with the Publications Chair to ensure that the Japanese-language sections of JALT MW SIG publications are accurate.

Of course, there are other ways that you can become involved! One way is to become involved with the production of *Between the Keys*. For example, helping with the proofreading is a useful yet a relatively low level of commitment. Another way is to become a Member-at-Large. If you are interested in helping your SIG become better, please don't hesitate to contact me.

It is amazing how quickly the year has been flying by! I'm looking forward to seeing you at JALT2016!

In your service,
Adam Murray

From the Program Chair

What sort of workshops, forums, presentations, exhibitions or conferences do you want the MW special interest group to prepare for you? Think about this question. Then take the steps necessary to facilitate those events. The group is only as active as its membership.

As a member, you have the power to influence the directions that our group moves. Speak up. Contact the current officers and other members. Let your desires and opinions be known. The officers, as you know, are volunteers with full-time jobs. We need and welcome your ideas and energy.

If you want to learn something about MW, for example, how to write a book proposal or how to use a software program more efficiently, contact us and contact your local JALT chapter with a request for events that fulfill your needs. We can work together to help each other and our profession flourish.

We are currently planning a very informative forum (details below) at the

national JALT Conference to be held in November in Nagoya. However, we—including you—can prepare other events in other locations and at other times.

As program chair, I have recently asked two different local JALT chapters if they are interested in jointly developing new programs with our MW group. We will be happy to help plan events around Japan. Please contact your local group and see if the membership is interested. Hopefully, next year, we will have more events, but those events won't happen without you!

Our Forum at the National JALT Conference

Our Materials Writers SIG will host a forum that will be full of invaluable advice, tips, and insights into the writing and publishing process. A summary of this incredible educational and practical event is below.

Materials Writers Forum: Writing & Publishing

Two publishers and eight materials writers will share ideas and experiences in the field of materials design, writing, and publishing. Some writers publish and present internationally. Others concentrate on writing for niche markets or their own classes. Cengage and ABAX editors will explain how to work with them. Presenters will sit at separate tables. Attendees will listen to a brief explanation of their topics and then join whomever they wish for short focused conversations.

Cengage Learning and ABAX ELT Publishing have each graciously agreed to have an editor speak with interested members of our group. Tsuyoshi Yoshida is the editor for the former, and Hugh Graham-Marr is an editor for the latter.

The eight materials writers all reside in Japan; although, some of their teaching materials are being sold internationally. Each writer will touch on a different aspect of materials design. The writers in attendance and descriptions of their talks are listed below in alphabetical order by first name.

1. Adam Murray: In this presentation, I will talk about selecting, creating and adapting listening materials for classroom use. Not only is it important to use materials of an appropriate level of difficulty, but to use these materials with a variety of activities that focus on the process of listening rather than the product. If these two things are done, students can not only develop a range of listening skills and strategies but also gain confidence in their listening abilities.
2. Barbara Hoskins Sakamoto: "Designing EFL Materials for Young Learners." *Let's Go* has the distinction of being the first EFL course book series for children, and of remaining one of the world's best-selling course books through four editions over 25+ years. As co-author, Barbara has seen trends come and go in materials design for young learners, but some fundamentals have withstood the test of time. She will talk about these in terms of guidelines that can help teachers create effective EFL materials, whether for children in their own classes or for children in classrooms around the world.
3. Gregg McNabb: Gregg writes, "In this brief presentation I will show would-be EFL authors how to get their materials ready to the electronic pre-printing stage for

proper self-publishing or for publishing with a smaller publisher. Alternatively, this presentation could also be useful when submitting several units to a large publisher, hoping for a potential deal. Authors should have a current Mac with Pages 5.6.1. and or Scribus. It is assumed that authors who are using InDesign will not need tips.”

4. Gregory Hadley: Making the Most of Student-Generated Vocabulary Materials

This short talk will show some tools and procedures for creating student-generated materials that can be utilized in various language learning activities.

The tools discussed will be a vocabulary log worksheet inspired by Schmitt and Schmitt (1995), but contextualized for Japanese concerns. Other tools needed are AntConc concordancing software (Anthony, 2014), which is freely available from Dr. Lawrence Anthony at Waseda University, and a scanner or digital camera.

Within an extensive reading course, students keep track of new words that they encounter by writing down the word in their vocabulary log. This entails finding its definition, making an example sentence (on their own, not copied from a dictionary), and then they draw a picture that represents in their minds the meaning of the word.

These vocabulary logs are collected weekly, and all of the words are entered into a Word file. At regular intervals, this word file can then be saved as a text file, and analyzed using the AntConc function that creates word lists. With this word list, the most frequently unknown words can be generated. One only needs to go back to the vocabulary logs to find the visual representations created by students for these most commonly unknown words. These are scanned and placed in a folder as JPEG files.

Once this has been done, the knowledge of the word frequencies and their corresponding visual representations can be used in a number of vocabulary games and recycling activities within the class. While this technique is admittedly work intensive, it yields dividends later on as the database continues to grow.

References

Anthony, L. (2014). AntConc (Version 3.4.3m [Macintosh OS X]). Tokyo, Japan: Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University.

Schmitt, N., & Schmitt, D. (1995). Vocabulary notebooks: Theoretical underpinnings and practical suggestions. *ELT Journal*, 49(2), 133-143.

5. Gregory Strong: This presentation will look at five principles in writing graded readers, from casting the story to making the sales pitch. The author’s first graded reader, *Battle for Big Tree Country*, Cengage, was nominated for a 2016 Language Learner Literature award. To begin with, a good story should start in *media res* (In the middle of things). Screen writer William Golding (best known for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, rated the best 49th among the best films of all time by the American Film Institute) among many others, has written of this: “Always

start writing as late in a story as you possibly can.” You fill in the backstory and character description gradually, revealing it through dialogue and description. The best-known historical example is probably Homer’s *Iliad* (900 B.C.) about the 10-year siege of Troy, a story which starts in the 10th year, after which the Greeks sack the city. Homer’s *The Odyssey*, starts 10 years after the fall of Troy when Odysseus, shipwrecked, has still not returned home to Ithaca. The presenter will describe other steps such as maintaining conflict, charting a story’s plot, exploring the genre of graded readers, and making a book proposal.

6. Jim Smiley: Although Jim does not have a background in the field of medicine, he has written several successful English for Medical Purposes (EMP) textbooks. The title of his talk is "How a non-medic can write medical texts: A methodology."
7. Junko Yamanaka: Well respected for her work on the *Impact Series*, Junko will speak about “creating materials that promote critical thinking.” Her talk will include: selecting topics, taking stance, providing linguistic support and fostering communication.
8. Tim Frandsen: Tim, who has written and published his own book with Amazon in both English and Japanese, will explain the process for anyone else considering self-publishing. He will also discuss the advantages of self-publishing as an alternative to attempting to be published in Journals as a means for career advancement.

Materials Writers Forum: Writing & Publishing
Sunday, November 27th
1:05 PM - 2:35 PM (90 minutes)
Room 1208



Local Notes: Interview with Yukari Kusuda

Welcome to *Between the Keys'* latest column *Local Notes*. In this column, we will interview Japan-based authors of English language learning materials and in doing so, hope to provide our MW SIG members with perspectives on current trends and needs in materials for the local market. For our first installment, we interview Yukari Kusuda, a Kyoto-based teacher, translator, interpreter and new author who has recently published her first two books.

The following are excerpts from the interview:

MW SIG: You've recently written a successful e-book titled *Communication beyond Japanese Omotenashi*. Could you share with us why you decided to write this book?

Kusuda: Over the years, I've noticed cultural differences in how Japanese and non-Japanese communicate. I know of many cases of foreign people in Japan struggling with Japanese communication patterns and vice versa. I wanted to document some of these communication gaps. I think, however, my focus was on getting Japanese people to realize that there are certain questions and attitudes that might inadvertently annoy foreign people.

Q: Sounds like you made some important findings. Could you share an example of a communication gap with us?

A: When I invite a non-Japanese friend to a party at my home, they often ask if they should bring something. Out of habit, I tell them not to worry about it so they end up not bringing anything even though they really should. Japanese people always bring some kind of food, usually sweets, fruit, or alcohol, and do this without asking if they should. It's just assumed, or shared cultural knowledge, that you never visit someone's home for dinner without a gift.

Q: So a kind of cultural misunderstanding that manifests itself in the spoken language. Interesting. Speaking of culture, do you feel that there are enough cultural items in English language learning materials here in Japan?

A: No. I don't think there are enough materials that allow Japanese students to learn language and culture at the same time. Most of the English learning materials are dry and rather bland, only focusing on English learning, not on providing much meaningful content in them.

Q: What particular aspects of culture do you think Japanese learners would appreciate most, for example, in a high school or university level text?

A: Things that are appropriate and inappropriate to talk about. For example, is it OK to talk about height and weight, age, family planning, or personal abilities? One interesting example that I mention in my book is a question like "Can you use chopsticks?" I've found that this may offend non-Japanese, which is something

that Japanese learners of English generally would not assume to be offensive.

Q: In your view, what do you think the next generation of English language learning materials will look like? Specifically, what is the typical Japanese learner of English interested in seeing in a book?

A: Well, this is related to culture but Japanese people are, in general, not very good at having small talk. I think they would like to know how to approach people and what to talk about when they meet a person, say, at a party for the first time. Japanese people are quiet at parties not only because they cannot speak English but also because they don't know what to say. I think that Japanese people would like learning about appropriate topics that could be selected from when meeting people for the first time. Also, communication differences would be important to include.

Q: So a more hands on type of approach?

A: Yeah, I think showing some examples of simple small talk at bars, parties, or even on streets would be great. I was often spoken to while walking down streets in New York City or India. These were amazing experiences for me since I was often feeling a little lonely on my longer trips. These chats were unforgettable for me and more fun than merely seeing the sights so I think that very casual conversations with strangers on the train or bus would be fun to read in a textbook and helpful to students. I think many learners are bored with English conversation textbooks teaching how to ask or give directions or order at restaurants.

Q: We understand that your second book has recently come out. What's it called?

A: *Kyoto's Sea: Love Letters from Kyotango*. It uses junior high school level English to introduce local legends from my hometown. I hope it helps inspire readers to host foreign guests, and especially that it will also help them go beyond relying solely on their hospitality by giving them the skills they need to start using spoken English to entertain those guests. I especially hope it will lead to a greater number of foreign visitors to my hometown.

Materials Writers SIG Annual General Meeting
Sunday, November 27th
11:35 AM - 12:20 PM (45 minutes)
Room 1208

Confessions of a Collaborator – Part 2

(Notes on the pedagogical realisation and physical production of our textbook)

Richard Walker, Reitaku University

Last year¹ I wrote a short piece about the initial stages of creating what was initially an in-house textbook for a once-weekly university course, *Speaking for Academic Purposes* (SAP). The textbook, *Academically Speaking*, co-written by five authors, has since been published. We completed the editing and proofing stage by March 2016 and the following month it received an ISBN number and was published by Perceptia Press. Because of the publisher's swift, efficient work, it was available for our opening classes in April 2016.

Weeks after publication, at the PanSIG Conference at Meio University, I spoke to a well-known academic in the EFL world. Mentioning the book, he reflected on his own experience of textbook writing, saying: "I would never want to go back to textbook writing. I experienced it a decade or so back. Having to compromise and deal with the needs of a publisher and the whims of co-writers. I didn't like it. I wasn't free. It wasn't for me." Leaving Okinawa that day, I contemplated on his words and felt empathy with him. For sure, the process of getting our textbook published was harder than anticipated.

Two months on though, and that empathy has gone. Instead there is gratitude felt toward my co-writers and the publisher. Perhaps seeing it in print after investing so many hours pushed the complaints out of my mind. But it is true: I am much obliged to all involved. Grateful for the (almost all) agreeable and (very few) disagreeable meetings we had. Yet it would be untrue to say it was plain sailing. There were definite areas of friction that I will expound upon below. Areas which, in retrospect, energised and sped up the project. Without them we would not have reached completion.

Table 1: Jolly and Bolitho's 6-step framework in materials design (2005)

1. Identification of need
 2. Exploration of language
 3. Contextual realisation
 4. Pedagogical realization
 5. Physical production
 6. Use/Evaluation
-

¹ Walker, R. (2015). *Between the Keys*, 22(2), 16-18.

The previous article ended with us reaching the third step of Jolly and Bolitho's six-step framework in materials writing (Table 1), i.e. contextual realisation. We had identified our needs, and explored ideas about what type of language to use. For readings in our eighteen units we agreed to write passages of between 350-450 words. We agreed to control the amount of academic words in them by using Lextutor and also to check them with the first 3000 words of the new JACET 8000.

For the fourth step (pedagogical realisation) we strove to create appropriate exercises, activities, and instructions for students to use. This occupied most of our time in the fourteen meetings we held between April 2015 and March 2016. The vast majority of meetings were filled with goodwill and harmonious banter but, as mentioned above, differences of opinion occasionally arose. Quite possibly they are what you started reading the article for – so I shall waste no more time and start confessing below. But, dear reader, please understand that although some confessions might be personal, I write in the third person to protect myself and those I collaborated with!

Friction point # 1: Accuracy

From the start of the project there were some who paid more attention to accuracy than to ideas, and others for whom the opposite applied. Quite naturally, those with more experience in material writing insisted on the creation of a style guide. Guides were created for both reading and non-reading sections, and included font, line spacing, indentation, tone, punctuation, and sundry other matters. Initially, some submitted work that ignored this. Friction caused by this though soon dissipated. As the project went on, the quality of drafts submitted greatly improved.

Friction point # 2: Conservatism

Japanese institutions are well known for their conservatism, and foreign teachers who wish to strengthen their position quite naturally do not rock the boat. With this in mind, and also in the knowledge that target students were of a low level, some believed it best to keep to tried and trusted topics. It was also decided that readings should be as objective as possible. This led to one participant feeling obliged to drop a unit (on Security and Privacy) because, although the subject was worthy, it was felt that the writing was too partisan. In addition, it was felt that students would not have the knowledge to grapple with quotes from the likes of Noam Chomsky or references to recent history. While there were disagreements here, everyone agreed that topics should be as student-centred as possible.

Friction point # 3: Corrupt Files! Dropbox and Word Online

Most writers used Apple laptops but one used an Asus and another a Dell. This should not have made a difference but for some unknown reason the non-Apple users had problems when working on Word Online through Dropbox. Dropbox was very successful for us all but the number of corrupted files (i.e. where the formatting goes awry) greatly annoyed those in charge of editing the manuscript. It had to be

said that Apple users didn't experience as many problems as non-Apple users.

Friction point # 4: Gentleman's Agreement?

Most EFL texts don't become big sellers and perhaps because of this many writers do not think too much about copyright—whether economic rights, or moral rights. For many agreements, it even seems to be that written contracts are not used. Many textbooks are published in small number and authors might be more interested in getting something published rather than making money out of it. Because of our work schedules, we focused on getting the manuscript completed over spending time focused on the minutiae of the contract. Some fretted about this, but fortunately, our publisher offered a standard publishing arrangement.

Friction point # 5: Ownership

We knew that after a manuscript is handed over to a publisher the established practice is for economic rights (for distribution, sales and licensing) to stay with the publisher. We did not know about the publisher's role in design and other creative elements. Because we lacked knowledge of the publisher's role in designing and editing the text, and choosing the cover design, there were times when we queried decisions. Fortunately, agreements were reached and all parties did what had to be done to get the book published. (In our case, the publisher worked quickly and took the financial risk & responsibility to get the First Edition published – we are all grateful for this.)

Friction point # 6: Rejected Work

In addition to the eighteen units in the text, three other units were offered but had to be withdrawn. They were *Security versus Privacy*, *Cram Schools*, and *Distance Learning*. To replace them, three other units had to be written at short notice. The rejections were down to the topics being unsuitable for discussion and for the submitted expository readings being inappropriate for our students' level.

Friction point # 7: I Quit!

From the start of the project, there were some participants who worked harder than others. There were some with hectic schedules and others with family problems. The lack of work by some enraged others and on one occasion, early on, a participant mailed the others to register dissatisfaction—and a willingness to quit – because of what he perceived as poor professional practices. Another claimed to be a weak link and offered to drop out of the project. Fortunately, both stayed and contributed greatly to the project. Both events galvanised us to work harder. In many ways their displeasure was the friction we needed to work the book into a better state.

All seven points of friction were invaluable and helped us discover previously unacknowledged—or unforeseen—strengths and weaknesses in our personalities, in our professional conduct, and in our ability to complete tasks. We could have

worked at a slower pace, piloting the book for a year, rather than work at the speed we did, but I think it would have been a mistake for our textbook is working better than the previous one. Still, we are already planning for a Second Edition: we have a file up on Dropbox for improvements, changes, and corrections. Everything written on it will be discussed in our next meeting, scheduled for August 2016.

References

Jolly, D. & Bolitho R. (1998). A framework for materials writing. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. (pp. 90-115). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Be Our Guest: A Midterm Assessment Project

Kinsella Valies, *Nihon University*, College of International Relations,
(Mishima Campus) Junior College, Business and Management Department

Valies.kinsella@nihon-u.ac.jp

Keywords: task-based assessment, motivation, collaboration

Learner level: Junior college students, TOEIC level 200-350.

Length of the activity: 3 sessions, 90 minutes each

Preparation time: 3-5 hours

Resources used: Handout, 15-minute Power Point presentation by guest speaker.

Goals: To assess student ability to apply listening, speaking and writing strategies studied by having them listen to an English language presentation by a guest speaker, ask questions, take notes, process key ideas, then write summary and opinion paragraphs.

Preparation

1. Invite a Japanese professional to speak on how they use English for work on a daily basis.
2. Get permission to bring the speaker on school grounds, 1 or 2 months in advance.
3. Create a 3-session handout that includes a grading grid, instructions, a task timeline, self-assessment forms, note-taking and peer discussion sheet, and paragraph writing worksheets.
4. Make classroom arrangements: projector and screen, a PC with Internet connection.
5. Schedule 1 to 2 meetings with the speaker to discuss learning outcomes, discuss presentation content parameters, student tasks, word use, repetition and register.

Procedure

Session 1: What to say on Speaker Day

1. Distribute project handout and quickly talk students through it. Stress content and time requirements. Make sure to refer students back to key words and strategies studied previously in class. Explain that they will need these to successfully accomplish the tasks. Mention page numbers and have students write them on the handout. Use the grading grid to explain the learning outcomes.
2. Ask students to individually fill out a simple pre-task self-assessment form to gauge their level of confidence in their ability to speak to and understand a guest in English. Optional: allow group discussion of the final question to ensure that students don't skip this question. Collect the forms.
3. Put students in small groups (3-4). Give them 5-10 minutes to fill out the example interview questions form; they match 9 examples to 9 categories. Check their answers.
4. Break groups up into pairs. Have pairs choose one of the sample questions and compose one original question in a different category. Pairs must check with others to make sure they don't end up with similar questions. Monitor and assist for 30 minutes, then stop the activity.
5. Have the pairs write their names and questions on a separate sheet. Make sure they indicate who gets to ask the (original) question on Speaker Day. Collect these sheets at the end of class. Check pair submissions for mistakes.
6. Discuss answers to these submissions with the guest speaker by *Session 3*, focusing on clarity and level appropriateness.

Session 2: What to do on Speaker Day

1. Take students through the 'Instructions for Speaker Day' page. Discuss rules of conduct. Review useful phrases to politely address the speaker. Then explain the 'Note-taking page.' For suggestions see Appendix 1.
2. Practice all interview questions. Tell students that the same question cannot be asked twice on Speaker Day, so they must listen carefully and choose accordingly.
3. Go back to the textbook or materials studied during the semester (if applicable) and remind students to review the rules, vocabulary and strategies needed to complete assignments.
4. Introduce the 'Peer Discussion and Comprehension Check' section. (A list of example questions can be found in Appendix 2). Stress the collaboration aspect. Remind the students that they have to produce an opinion and a self-reflection paragraph.
5. Discuss the post-talk assignments. Remind students to be on time on Speaker Day.

Session 3: Speaker Day

1. Have students greet guest in English. Introduce the speaker and remind students of the rules of conduct. You could do this by adding slides to the presentation.
2. Have speaker present at natural speed, while students listen and fill out the 'Note-Taking' sheet.
3. Have the speaker take prepared name strips from a box and call a student. Have the student ask their prepared question, while others write down answers in the 'Extra Notes' section.
4. Have students thank the presenter. Then have them make groups, compare notes and answer the questions on the 'Peer Discussion and Comprehension check' sheet. Remind them that they must take notes as every student has to compose their own original paragraph after class. Remain available for questions during this activity. Have the speaker monitor as well.
5. Fifteen minutes before the end of class tell students to fill out and hand-in the 'Post-talk Self-assessment' form.
6. Have students email their paragraphs and 'Guest Speaker Rating' form 1 week after the presentation.

Rationale

The above is an outline of how to plan and organize a fair, classroom-based assessment project for mandatory, communicative, academic English courses at junior college. My reason for replacing the paper midterm is in line with Robinson and Ross' idea on *authentic measurement*: "traditional skills-focused tests of EAP ability relate only weakly to learners' ability to act on such skills in authentic task conditions (1996)."

I have found the project structure to be especially helpful in assessing students' grasp of communication strategies as it provides them with the chance to show their ability to apply them in authentic, real life situations.

Although the contents of the presentation featured in this project might not qualify as authentic due to instructor intervention at the preparation stage, it is important to remember that as a rule good presentations are highly structured and include both repetition and summarization. Therefore, speakers preparing answers to student questions in advance is acceptable. It leads to more register appropriate language. In this way, low-level students don't get frustrated during the listening stage. Combining all four skills in a real life situation turns out to be enough of a challenge for students unused to a task-based format.

Bolstering intrinsic motivation to keep students working towards English fluency is just as important as authenticity. With this in mind, the project allows students to interact in the target language with Japanese professionals. They function as examples of students' *future L2 self* in the work force. Once the guest speakers are made aware of their role, they are more able to provide insights that

will help students feel confident about attaining their learning goals. For example, while sharing their experiences, they could stress how perfect command of a language is not necessary for communication and highlight how mastering a new language did not change their heritage.

The 'Be Our Guest' format provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their language ability and use collective knowledge to fill any remaining knowledge gaps. These outcomes depend heavily on the collaborative aspect of the final production stage. In contrast to a paper test, students can go back and look through class materials to find new uses for them in completing tasks. Working in small groups can defuse their worries surrounding a potential loss of face. In addition, the fact that there is no single correct answer, but rather a variety of valid responses, often lessens the pressure to perform. As Hung (2011) says, drawing on Skehan and others, "meaning is the number one characteristic of a good task; learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate."

The setup allowed me to adjust task times and deadlines to match my students' needs and abilities. Prioritizing learning outcomes and using scaffolded tasks, left me with more time to support and guide individual learners throughout. According to the results from collected post-task self-assessment forms, students felt relatively confident in their ability to complete listening and speaking tasks in real time. (See Appendix 3 for self-assessment statements).

Even though a large number of students complained that the preparation was time-consuming, many were happy with their accomplishments. Surprisingly, some students came to the memorable realization that English was a tool they had to learn to use more effectively. Pre-activity they insisted that they needed *more* English, but post-task they wanted to learn to *use it better*.

Caveats

At the start of Session 1 many students felt extremely anxious about understanding someone new, who is speaking at natural speed. Make students aware that they will be pooling resources later to fill any gaps in information. Ensure that they understand the format by preparing a comprehensive handout that explains what is expected of them and how to complete the tasks step by step. Hung (2011) refers to Moust, Berkel, and Schmidt (2005) and Vardi and Ciccarelli (2008) who also stress "posing key conceptual questions prior to discussions [...], using criterion-referenced grading as an effective way to address [...] anxiety." It is also important that worksheets and assessment forms use *can do* statements to allow students to think about what *they can* do to feel more confident and prepared. This should produce a sense of 'still having time to fix it' as well as a sense of responsibility; '*I have to fix it.*'

References

Hung, W. (2011). Theory to reality: A few issues in implementing problem-based learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 59(4), 529-552.

Moust, J. H., Berkel, H. V., & Schmidt, H. G. (2005). Signs of erosion: Reflections on three decades of problem-based learning at Maastricht University. *Higher education*, 50(4), 665-683.

Robinson, P., & Ross, S. (1996). The development of task-based assessment in English for academic purposes programs. *Applied Linguistics*, 17(4), 455-476.

Notes

When Power Point presentations are overloaded with text, students tend to just copy down the information and stop listening to the speaker. Since students are being assessed on listening skills, slides should feature short, easy to remember summative phrases. For examples, see Appendix 4.

Appendix 1

Note-taking sheet suggestions

Students could be asked to listen for keywords, main ideas, concluding comments and new words. They could also fill out a table of reasons and effects.

Appendix 2

Examples of 'Peer Discussion Comprehension Check' questions.

What does Mr./Ms....mean when he says: "...?"

What example does he/she give to explain this phrase?

What is sometimes difficult about his/her job?

Mention at least four of the eight things Mr./Ms...did to train his English.

What did you think of his presentation? Explain and give an example.

Appendix 3

Post-talk self-assessment: confidence statements	Agree	Agree a little	Don't agree
1. The speaker understood me.	13	15	3
2. I was able to ask questions loudly and clearly.	12	16	3
3. I was able to ask questions without using Japanese.	15	15	1
4. I was able to explain my question.	11	16	4
5. I was able to ask questions without looking at my paper.	11	12	8
6. I can listen for main points.	10	16	5
7. I can listen for keywords.	9	19	3

Appendix 4

Examples from presentation slides by a professional translator.

Slide 1: What you experience and learn comes in handy unexpectedly.

Slide 4: You cannot choose your customer. Customers choose you.