The Language Teacher

The Language Teacher (*TLT*) is the bimonthly publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). It publishes articles and other material related to language teaching, particularly in an Asian context. *TLT* also serves the important role of publicizing information about the organization and its many events.. As a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting excellence in language learning, teaching, and research, JALT has a rich tradition of publishing relevant material in its many publications.

Links

- JALT Publications: http://jalt-publications.org
- *The Language Teacher*: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt
- *JALT Journal*: http://jalt-publications.org/jj
- *Conference Proceedings*: http://jalt-publications.org/proceedings

- JALT National: http://jalt.org
- Membership: http://jalt.org/main/membership

investigate and apply to programs which begin in the fall (or even the following spring).

Some of this reflection and collaboration can be turned into research and publication opportunities, the next set of goals. You could write up one of your more effective lessons as a 'My Share' style article (in *TLT* or another similar journal). Action research on how you teach is a part of reflective teaching, results may even be suitable for publication. If you have noticed a linguistic puzzle in your classroom that warrants further investigation (for example, Why do many of my students say, "What do you like, sports?"), design a study to investigate it. If you have read an interesting book over the break, or attended an engaging conference, why not write a review for *TLT, OnCue* or a SIG-sponsored publication? New memberships may offer additional opportunities for presenting and publishing.

Before trying to implement any of the ideas or goals outlined above, it is important to keep in mind the mnemonic of SMART goals. To ensure success, your career goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (Miller, 2012).

Note: *TLT* is changing and we would like to get feedback from you. If you have any suggestions for how this column could be made more relevant and useful, or if you have an idea for a topic, please contact me at: jic.coordinator@gmail.com.

Reference

Miller, R. (2012). Smart goals and goal setting for career enhancement. *The Language Teacher, 36*(4). Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/job-info-centre/articles/1661-smart-goals-and-goal-setting-career-enhancement>

Introduction to *The Writers' Workshop*!

Paul Beaufait
Prefectural University of Kumamoto

Craig Daly
University of Glasgow

Loran Edwards
Kansai Gaidai University

Charles Moore
Concordia University

David Ockert
Toyo University

Welcome to the first column of *The Writers' Workshop*! The column itself will be managed by a team comprised of members of the *Peer Support Group* (PSG). This column will be written on a collaborative basis by the members of the PSG. All of the members of the PSG are volunteers, most of whom have experience in the writing and publishing process. As a group, the PSG has a wealth of experience which we intend to share even more through this column. Publishing in academic journals is now, more than ever, essential for career advancement among TEFL educators in Japan (Beaufait, Edwards, & Muller, 2013), and one of the most arduous and perplexing periods of an author's writing career is at the outset. We at *The Writers' Workshop* will expound on topics that provide advice and support for novice writers, experienced writers, or nearly anyone who is looking to write for academic purposes (for example, need to publish in Japan, etc.) as well as other types of writing.

The Need to Publish in Japan

While many academic professionals around the world habitually aim to strike the right balance between research and teaching (Hohle & Teichler, 2012), Japanese universities broadly require their teaching faculty to have published academic writing. In the report *Quality assurance framework of higher education* issued by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2009), one of the qualifications for the positions of professor and associate professor is stated as one "who has research achievement" (p. 14-15). Japan is perceived as having a university system

founded upon a German model where professors' roles are research-focused (Huang, 2007), with a lesser focus being given to the function of teaching students, and it may still be that "the great passion of the Japanese professor is to conduct research and publish interesting findings" (Arimoto, Cummings, Huang, & Shin, 2014, p. 22). With this in mind, a TEFL instructor's best path for career advancement in Japan is the course of publishing writing.

There are also reasons outside of career advancement or job security why it might be smart to begin your publishing career now. You may just want to publicize your research to make it more available to your colleagues in your field or profession. Publishing can also have the result of building an open and accessible public profile, which can lead to receiving more funding for your research (Hundley, Simkhada, & Teijlingen, 2013). One study has shown that "early publication activity is strongly associated with subsequent productivity" (Clemente, 1973, p. 417), drawing a strong correlation between those that begin publishing their work at an earlier point in their careers with their overall productivity measured over the span of their careers. In other words, the earlier that you can start your publishing career, the better!

How "The Writers' Workshop" Can Help

Becoming a better researcher and writer will not only help develop yourself professionally, but will also benefit the institutions in which you work by ensuring that your students receive teaching based on sound, up-to-date pedagogy! That is the mission of this column: to assist you in becoming a better researcher and writer, and in the process help you to progress in your career professionally.

If you have just begun the writing process, you may have a myriad of questions regarding how to start. Should you conduct your own research, or should you co-author with someone else? What are the standards that you need to adhere to while conducting research? What journals are most appropriate for your work? Who is available to approach for help, and what are some publishing "pitfalls" that you should avoid? In each bi-monthly column of "The Writers' Workshop," a distinctive topic related to academic writing and the publishing process will be presented. Potential "Workshop topics" could range from finding appropriate destinations for writing submissions, to the clear advantages the latest "academic reference management" software offers the writers! The June Issue of "The Writers' Workshop" will be the initial column that will offer practical advice on how authors' can

reform their writing and improve their chances of publication, so please don't miss it!

Craig's Story

I am a perfect example of the type of person who will benefit from this column. Before coming to Japan, I achieved a Masters in English Language from the University of Glasgow. This is where my love and fascination with the English language began as I studied in depth courses such as: Phonology and Phonetics, The History of Grammar, Old English, Semantics, Sociolinguistics, and, of course, Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

In 2005, I arrived in Hiroshima to begin working for a large *eikaiwa*. After two years, I decided to return to Scotland to become a teacher in my home country. In the following two years, I completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Secondary Education (English), got married to my girlfriend, and became a fully qualified teacher filling the post of High School English teacher in a school in the Highlands of Scotland.

After 2 years, we decided to return to Hiroshima, and since then, I have worked in various full-time and part-time positions. I have worked in universities, high schools, junior high schools, elementary schools and day care centres. I have taught business English in companies, babies as young as a few months old, and travel English to elderly people.

In my opinion, my resume is well rounded with a lot of experience and relevant qualifications. However, I have never published. I did not need to write a thesis for my Masters or my Post Graduate Diploma. This may seem like a small hole in my resume, but in Japan, this is a huge crater.

As many of you may know, Japanese culture tends to value adhering to regulation and procedure. I have received numerous rejection letters based solely on the fact that I have never published. A few institutions have contacted me after reviewing my resume and have requested publications. I have replied and pleaded my case explaining the nature of my studies and my qualifications. This has always led to the same result. No publications, no interview.

At this current point in my career, it is clear I need to start publishing articles to progress, but the publishing process is a daunting minefield and I have no idea where to start. I have so many questions.

There are probably many teachers in the same boat as me. If you are one of them, and you share most of the questions I have raised in the previous paragraph, this column is here to assist.

Introduction to the Editors

Craig Daly has been teaching English for seven years in Hiroshima. He holds a Master's degree in English Language from the University of Glasgow and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Secondary English) from the University of Strathclyde. His research interests include use of the L1 in the L2 classroom and extensive listening.

Charles Moore is an International English Instructor at Saito Keiai Kindergarten in Osaka. He holds a Master's degree in TESL from Concordia University. His research interests include extensive reading, extensive listening, and vocabulary acquisition strategies.

JALT Writers' Peer Support Group

Another resource available to writers is the *JALT Writers' Peer Support Group*, a team of writers and reviewers that collaboratively assist writers in developing their writing (Beaufait, Edwards, & Muller, 2013). In the first few issues of *The Writers' Workshop*, PSG Coordinator Loran Edwards and ICT Coordinator Paul Beaufait are going to provide a retrospective overview of the JALT PSG group, giving readers a framework for the group's formation, founding principles, and scope in helping writers prepare their writing for publication! This month's piece will be focused on the group's formation and founding principles regarding its mission to collaborate with writers to prepare their writing for publication.

The JALT Writers' Peer Support Group: A Celebration of Collaboration—15 Years on

Paul A. Beaufait, with Andy Barfield, Wayne Johnson, Torkil Christensen, Wilma Luth, & Loran Edwards

The Writers' Peer Support Group (PSG) has been helping writers and teachers in Japan since 1999, and in its current form, manifests an evolving process model of multi-faceted collaboration.

Helping writers is always a tricky proposition, but with the PSG, the "helpees" (if I may) coming forward have a wish to step outside the confines of grammar and embrace meaning and more gener-

ally current ways of writing. With the PSG there is a dialogue between peers that is stimulating and, certainly for me, thought provoking. It is good to see the PSG is still alive, and one could wish it was used more, and more readily by those in need. (T. Christensen, personal correspondence, 28 February 2015).

What the PSG has endeavoured to avoid, even in recent collaborative endeavours with conference reviewing committees, is giving thumbs-down-or-up feedback on articles or proposals—as *peer-reviewers* might. Instead PSG *peer-readers* work <u>with</u> writers, not to grammar-check or proof-read for publication, but rather to improve the overall clarity, focus, and organization of their writing, and strive to encourage writers throughout the process to revise their papers to the point where they submit or resubmit them, or decide on new venues for publication.

A Group with a Mission: Collaboration Through Reflection

In 1999, an informal network of writers took on the challenge of responding to others' writing for publication in *The Language Teacher* (*TLT*), named itself the PSG, and embraced "a set of [four] working principles" that the group had developed "in collaboration with the first [aspiring] writers" to work through the process with the PSG (Barfield, 2000).

The Peer Support Group . . . [evolved] in response to an institutional turn in the way TLT *interacted with writers. With the introduction of an editorial advisory board and a blind peer review system for main articles, a different, more academically oriented register of writing had started to become the new norm . . . From this perspective, the creation of the PSG can be seen as a counter-balance where we aimed to create a collaborative, rather than evaluative, space in which writers might find peer support for developing their writing. . . .*

The explosive growth of computer-mediated communication in the 1990s was a further important factor in enabling members of the Peer Support Group to communicate with each other, be directly accessible for would-be writers, and create portable online teacher development support. . . .

[I]t is interesting to find that the four principles still hold for collaborative peer writer-reader responding: (a) enhance the writer's confidence, (b) make specific comments in relation to the development of the whole text, (c) focus on content and organisation, and (d) invite the writer to [let us] know which comments have or have not worked for them, and why. Clear as these principles are, a reader responder still faces the challenge of negotiating

them afresh each time they interact with a writer— and with themselves in a reader—responding role. (A. Barfield, personal correspondence, 01 March 2015)

To put those collaborative practices into perspective, it might suffice to say that they were similar to, yet less structured than schemes for "cooperative development" advocated by Edge (1992 & 2002), and yet more structured than "co-mentoring" in reflective writing praxis à la Bolton (2005, p. 71). As Luth and early collaborators put it, "The PSG is a group of teachers who understand the challenges of writing well and have experienced the benefits of collaborative work with sympathetic readers" (Luth, 2001, *Who is the PSG*).

Barfield, the very first PSG coordinator, recalled group inspiration drawn from Nelson's publications (1990, 1996a, 1996b) and JALT appearances promoting "the power of a non-evaluative approach to writing development" (A. Barfield, personal correspondence, 01 March 2015). In the three years prior to conception of the PSG, a series of articles in the Teacher Education SIG newsletter had illuminated practices of teaching writing for fluency (Barfield, 1996; Nelson, 1996a, 1996b), for instance postponing focus on "surface level features" (Nelson, 1996b, p. 6), and provided reflections on emergent practices in collaborative writing for professional development (Barfield, 1997; Beaufait, 1998a, 1998b; Kotori, 1997).

At about the same time, Johnson and Sower, who also became founding members of the PSG, took over the JALT Job Information Center (JIC) and began a series of co-authoring endeavours culminating in a piece entitled Networking, Employment, and Involvement ... (Sower & Johnson, 1999). In retrospect, it appears as if the JIC and TED professional development wires crossed, sparking a flame difficult to extinguish.

It was soon after this that the Peer Support Group was formed. I remember Jill Robbins asked me if I would be interested in helping out—I said "sure". (W. Johnson, personal correspondence, 03 March 2015).

Barfield explicitly recognized the collaborative nature of PSG work in an introductory article for *TLT*, noting, "This text is the collaborative reading and writing of Andy Barfield, Jim Goddard, Wayne Johnson, Wilma Luth, Jill Robbins, Sandra Smith, Craig Sower, and Malcolm Swanson" (p. 9). Luth, one of the first writers to engage with the PSG in that sort of principled collaboration on writing at a distance, went on to serve as PSG coordinator herself on two occasions.

Even after moving on from Japan and the PSG, she has continued to promote reflective practices as a freelance teacher and teacher trainer in Canada. Currently preparing and editing a beginners' guide to such practices (Luth, n.d.), she has turned to a publishing collaboratoire called The Round (http://the-round.com/) for assistance, and received peer author feedback on a current draft (W. Luth, personal correspondence, 04 March 2015).

Those principles and practices continue to guide the PSG in collaborating with others on their writing for professional development. As the current coordinator observed, "It doesn't matter if you are working on your first paper or your twentieth, ... having someone else read and review your work can always lead to valuable insights, which strengthens the paper in the end" (Edwards, 2013).

More information

To find out more about the PSG and what it does, and learn how to become a peer-reader or how to submit a paper for feedback, please visit the JALT Publications PSG webpage:

<http://jalt-publications.org/psg>

Feel free to choose "Peer Support Group" as the addressee in the contact form accessible from the top bar on any JALT Publications page to volunteer as a peer-reader or send inquiries about writing projects to the PSG Coordinator.

About the author

Paul Beaufait is the ICT Coordinator for the PSG. His career in language education spans three decades. He holds a Master's degree in French and a certificate of accomplishment in TESL from the University of Montana, as well as a certificate in technology-based distributed learning from the University of British Columbia. He now lives and teaches in Kumamoto, Japan.

Acknowledgements

References

Arimoto, A. (2015). Introduction: The changing academic profession in Japan: Its past and present. In Arimoto, A., Cummings, W. K., Huang, F., & Shin, J. C. (Eds.), *The changing academic profession in Japan* (pp. 1-26). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-09468-7

Barfield, A. (1996). Review of *At the point of need* [by Marie Nelson]. *Teacher Talking to Teacher 4*(1), 15-18.

Barfield, A. (1997). A reader's perspective on giving a writer feedback over e-mail. *Explorations in Teacher Education 5*(2), 17-23.

Barfield, A. (2000). Introducing the writer's peer support group. *The Language Teacher, 24*(4), 9-10. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/2000-04_24.4>

Beaufait, P. (1998a). A reader's perspective on giving a writer feedback over e-mail. *Explorations in Teacher Education 6*(1), 3-6.

Beaufait, P. (1998b). 遠距離教師養成についての意見ーネットワーキングとライティング による自己啓発 [A reader's perspective...] (伊藤勝己 [K. Itou] 訳 [Trans.]). *Explorations in Teacher Education 6*(1), 6-9.

Beaufait, P., Edwards, L., & Muller, T. (2014). Writing for academic publication: Participation and collaboration. In R. Chartrand, G. Brooks, M. Porter, and M. Grogan (Eds.), The 2013 Pan-SIG Conference Proceedings, pp. 339-346. Retrieved from <http://www.pansig.org/2013/2013PanSIGProceedings.pdf>

Bolton, G. (2005). *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development, 2nd edition*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Retrieved from <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic872691.files/Bolton2005pp163-179.pdf>

Clemente, F. (1973). Early career determinants of research productivity. *American Journal of Sociology*, *79*(2) 409-419.

Edge, J. (1992). *Cooperative development: Professional self-development through cooperation with colleagues*. Harlow, England: Longman.

Edge, J. (2002). *Continuing cooperative development: A discourse framework for individuals as colleagues*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Goddard, J. (2000). Where technology and language instruction meet. *The Language Teacher, 24*(5), 25-28. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/2000-05_24.5>

Hohle, E. A., & Teichler, U. (2013). The academic profession in the light of comparative surveys. In Kehm, B.M., & Teichler, U. (Eds.), *The academic profession in Europe: New tasks and new challenges* (pp. 23-38). Dordrecht: Springer.

Huang, F. (2007). Challenges of internationalisation of higher education and changes in the academic profession: A perspective from Japan. In Kogan, M., & Teichler, U. (Eds.), *Key challenges to the academic profession* (pp. 81-98). Kassel:University of Kassel. Retrieved from <http://portal.unesco.org/education/es/files/54977/11970234265Key_Challanges_Academic_Profession_REV.pdf/Key_Challanges_Academic_Profession_REV.pdf>

Hundley, V., Simkhada, P. P., & Teijlingen, E. V. (2013). Writing an academic paper for publication. *Health Renaissance, 11*(1), 1-5. Retrieved from <http://www.healthrenaissance.org.np/uploads/Pp_1_5_Guest_Editorial.pdf>

Kano, Y. (2015). Higher education policy and the academic profession. In Arimoto, A., Cummings, W. K., Huang, F., & Shin, J. C. (Eds.), *The changing academic profession in Japan* (pp. 27-40). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-09468-7

Kotori, C. (1997). Teaching and learning: A tug-of-war? *Explorations in Teacher Education 5*(2), 11-16.

Luth, W. (2000). Student interlanguage and classroom practice. *The Language Teacher, 24*(5), 5-7. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/2000-05_24.5>

Luth, W. (2001). The language teacher's peer support group: Motivated by writers wanting to develop their writing. *The Language Teacher, 25*(12), [n.p.]. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/2001-12_25.12>

Luth, W. (n.d.). *A beginner's guide to reflective practice* [sample]. [n.p.]: The round. Retrieved from <http://the-round.com/labs/a-beginners-guide-to-reflective-practice>

Luth, W., & Obermeier, A. (2000). Celebrating collaboration: The writer's peer support group. *The Language Teacher, 24*(12), 28-[n.p.]. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/2000-12_24.12>

McCrostie, J. (2010). The right stuff: Hiring trends for tenured university positions in Japan. *The Language Teacher, 34*(5), 31-35. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/archive>

MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Sciences and Technology). (2009). Quality assurance framework of higher education in Japan. Tokyo: MEXT. Retrieved from <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/highered/1307524.htm>

Nelson, M. (1990). *At the point of need: Teaching basic and ESL writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Nelson, M. (1996a). Excerpt from Marie Nelson of the fluency first seminar on the internet. *Teacher Talking to Teacher 4*(1), 19-21.

Nelson, M. (1996b). Self-assessment and the "new basics" we need to teach. *Teacher Talking to Teacher, 4*(2), 4-6.

Sower, C., & Johnson, W. (1999). Networking, employment, and involvement from a tesol perspective. *The Language Teacher, 23*(3), 26-27. Retrieved from <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/issues/1999-03_23.3>

Nov. 20–23, 2015

Shizuoka Convention & Arts Center "GRANSHIP", Shizuoka City, JAPAN

Watch future TLTs for more conference information

FOCUS ON
JALT 2015
THE LEARNER

ARTICLES

RESOURCES

JALT FOCUS

JALT PRAXIS