Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

TLT *Interviews brings you direct insights from leaders in the field of language learning, teaching, and education—and you are invited to be an interviewer! If you have a pertinent issue you would like to explore and have access to an expert or specialist, please make a submission of 2,000 words or less.*

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Colleagues! Welcome to the July/August edition of TLT Interviews. For this issue we bring you a delightful discussion with author, editor, and teacher trainer, Dorothy Zemach. Dorothy has eighteen years of experience teaching ESL and is the founder of Wayzgoose Press (http://wayzgoosepress.com). She has extensive knowledge in the publishing field and has also written around two dozen books for large ESL publishers such as Macmillan. After her plenary talk for JALT 2017, she sat down and talked to Adam Murray, Ed.D., an experienced educator in his own right. Adam has been teaching English as a Foreign Language to Japanese university students for almost a decade and is currently teaching at Miyazaki International College. His research interests are listening instruction, materials development, and assessment. He is currently the coordinator of the JALT Materials Writers Special Interest Group. He can be reached at <amurray@edu.miyazaki-mic.ac.jp>. So without further ado, to the interview!

An Interview with Dorothy Zemach

Adam Murray

Miyazaki International College

Adam Murray: *How did you get started in textbook writing?*

Dorothy Zemach: I was teaching classes at Sumitomo Electric in Osaka using a good introductory-level textbook, the first edition of *Business Venture* (Oxford University Press). While I was using it, I kept a variety of notes on a few typographical errors and general observations. During a meeting with my OUP representative, I mentioned my notes. This led to Robert Habbick setting up a meeting with the commissioning editor of the series, Cristina Whitecross who offered a small sum of money for my list of typos. She told me that the authors were hard at work writing the second edition of the student's book as well as a workbook and were too busy to write the teacher's guide. She asked if I was interested in writing the teacher's guide. I accepted, and this how I became involved in commercial publishing.

Can you tell us a little about your writing career?

In 1997, I returned to the United States to teach ESL classes first at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, and then at the American English Institute at the University of Oregon. As you may know, working as an ESL language teacher in the United States does not pay well. For this reason, I became more involved with both textbook writing and editing. At first, I did part-time editing for Cambridge University Press, and in 2003, I accepted a full-time job there as a Senior Development Editor, though I telecommuted from Eugene. Then in 2006, I left to go freelance and began writing books again as well as editing.

What was your first textbook project?

Lewis Lansford, a former colleague from Sumitomo Electric who moved first to Longman and then went freelance, was managing a project for Macmillan and contacted me to see if I'd be interested. This led to writing *College Writing: From Paragraph to Essay* in 2003. This was the starting point for a series of four textbooks; that book in fact changed its title in the second edition and is now called *Writing Essays: From Paragraph to Essay*.

Could a similar approach to getting started in textbook writing be taken today?

Ah, that's an interesting question, particularly now. Sometimes, a similar approach can still be used. Because a publisher assumes a great deal of financial risk when committing to a textbook, they prefer to work with someone that they have developed a working relationship with. In other words, they "like to deal with the known." Publishers want to deal with reliable writers who can consistently meet deadlines. So for those who want to get started, establishing a reputation as being dependable is the first step. Approaching an editor from one of the publishers at an international conference such as JALT or TESOL and asking about contributing to an ongoing project is one way. You can prove your reliability and ability by working on supporting

materials (e.g., tests, workbooks, teacher's manuals, and videos). After you've become known, opportunities to write textbooks will arise. However, in recent years, large publishers have moved away from having writers at any stage make significant contributions to a book's syllabus and general approach. Increasingly, authors are given tight briefs and asked to carry out directions. That comes with a corresponding move away from royalties for authors to flat fees for writers.

What are the major forms of publishing these days?

The three major forms of publishing are: (a) traditional publishing; (b) micropress and small press publishing; and (c) self-publishing. As the name suggests, traditional publishing involves working with large publishing companies such as Macmillan and Cambridge University Press. A micropress or small press could be considered an independent press and could be as small as a couple of authors working together. My company, Wayzgoose Press, would be considered a micropress. BTB Press and Atama-ii are Japan-based micropresses. The third and final form of publishing is self-publishing.

Could you share with us your predictions about the future of textbook publishing?

I think alternatives to traditional publishing will continue to grow in popularity. For various reasons, an author could approach a micropress or even self-publish. A good example of this is niche printing. An author may have a concept for an audience that is too narrow to be attractive to a traditional publisher, but with lower overheads and higher royalties, a self-publisher could make money on a title that a large publisher could not.

Your workshop on self-publishing at JALT2016 was well-attended. There seems to be a lot of interest in self-publishing.

Self-publishing can be attractive to authors for several reasons:

- niche materials (that will not sell to a large number of people),
- more control over content,
- higher profit margins per book, to
- unable to print with a publisher

There have been a number of advances in print-on-demand technology (and in the number of services). It is now possible for an individual author to use this technology to provide reasonably-priced textbooks for even a handful of students. Of course, self-publishing is self-*publishing*, not just printing.

In exchange for higher royalties—typically, 70% of the cover price for self-publishing versus 6-10% of net-to-publisher profits for traditional press publishing—the individual author must pay out of his or her pocket for editing, proofreading, cover design, layout, and formatting, and they must handle sales and marketing.

Ebooks continue to grow in popularity. In fact, some professional development books are only available as ebooks. Some of the popular services for publishing and selling ebooks are Amazon, Apple, Kobo, and Google Play. "One-stop shopping" services such as Draft2Digital and Smashwords distribute to most of these outlets.

Amazon's Createspace is, in my opinion, the cheapest and easiest-to-use option for creating print-on-demand paperbacks, which will then be available through Amazon Japan, distributors such as Book Depository, and they can also be ordered by any bookstore, institution, or individual.

Could you share an example of something that is more appropriate for self-publishing than for traditional publishing?

Well, an ELT example is *English for Scammers*, which I wrote with Chuck Sandy. It's actually a genuine, full-length textbook on writing business emails, complete with exercises and a final exam, but all the examples are from our spam folders. So these are examples of what not to do, from which we extract the rules and give advice for good correspondence. But a traditional publisher wouldn't touch something with that much humor or that sort of approach. That's not necessarily because publishers don't appreciate humor or different approaches, but they need to be reasonably sure they'll sell a certain number of books in order to cover their production expenses. So they go for the safe bets. For me, though, the investment was only time. And while it's not my best-selling book, it remains one of my favorite ones I've written, and I'm very pleased with the content.

What are some of your concerns about the industry?

There are several disturbing trends, particularly with some of the large traditional publishers. In the past, management, editorial, and even sales and marketing consisted almost entirely of former educators. However, in recent years, management positions (and others) have been filled with business people who have no experience in the field of education or language. Naturally, this lack of experience can lead to misconceptions.

Additionally, I'd like to see publishers fight back against the pressure to be giving away so much for free and charging only for the student book. That was possible in the past when the only ancillary was an answer key, an audioscript, and a few teaching suggestions. But these days, publishers also give out teachers' books with midterms, finals, and unit tests, placement tests and exit tests, workbooks, student websites, teacher websites, CD-ROMS, and more. These materials are certainly not free for the publisher to create, though. So the cost gets passed on to the student book, the one piece it's figured that everyone will buy.

But as student book prices climb, students stop buying new books—they might share books, buy used books, or simply pirate copies. If teachers suspect their students aren't buying the text, they move to open source materials or create their own. The publishers make less money, and in a panic, they raise their prices, and at the same time, lower author royalties. In the time I've been authoring books, I've seen royalties move from 10-12% to 8% to 6% to 2.5% to 0%.

I can't speak for every author, but I can speak for myself and for those authors I network with. When a project no longer pays what we consider to be a fair amount for the work we put in, we don't write that book. There's almost always someone who will take on a project, but those projects that don't pay well attract less experienced authors. Since I've also been working for the past decade as an editor, I can see a decline in the quality of drafts that come to me. And sometimes there isn't time or money in the budget for editors to fix everything.

I worry too about the push to digital. One of the large publishers, in fact, announced a few years ago, that they were dropping print for ELT titles entirely. They've since back-pedaled on that, but there's still a concerted push to get teachers and students ensconced in a learning management system. I write, publish, and read ebooks; I'm certainly not anti-digital. But for teaching, I think a great number of students and teachers alike prefer print. They might like digital enhancements or ancillaries, but ones that support a core print product. Might that change in ten years? It might. It might not. But the first questions should be *"What's the easiest to teach from?" "What's the easiest to learn from?"* The pedagogy should drive the technology not the other way around.

But with digital products, as with other ancillaries, I'd like to see publishers charge users what they cost—at least to the point where authors can still be paid fairly. If keeping a 10% royalty for authors means a product costs so much that no teacher will buy it, then I'd say, don't make that product. The solution is not to make something affordable by underpaying the people responsible for creating it.

[JALT PRAXIS] MY SHARE

Steven Asquith & Nicole Gallagher

We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 600 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used that can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see the guidelines on our website below).
Email: my-share@jalt-publications.org • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Hello, and welcome to the July/August edition of My Share, the column devoted to introducing innovative and stimulating classroom ideas to TLT readers. In the previous issue, Steven kindly introduced me as the new co-editor. I am excited to be a part of My Share as reading the ideas of other educators always reminds me of the immense creative potential of teaching in the language classroom. It's a pleasure to be able to work with the many authors of this column alongside Steven.

In this edition, we bring you three ideas that can be adapted to a variety of different contexts and are sure to stir the imaginations of your students. First, Casey Bean offers a lesson on writing English haiku in the classroom to encourage individual expression. As many students are familiar with Japanese haiku, writing their own English haikus would be an interesting challenge. Second, Chris Nicklin imparts a novel idea of using edited movie trailers found on YouTube to examine movie genres with students. This fun illustration of genre could be used to inspire discussion, research projects, or many other class activities. Finally, in Mikiko Sudo's classroom task, learners scan English websites on their smartphones in order to research interesting facts about sports. By setting time limits, the activity offers opportunities for students to practice reading information quickly. Enjoy reading!

- Nicole Gallagher