



“We’re drifting into strange territory here”: What think-aloud protocols reveal about convenience editing

Ian Willey^{a,*}, Kimie Tanimoto^b

^a Center for Research and Educational Development in Higher Education, Kagawa University, 1-1 Saiwai-cho, Takamatsu, Kagawa 760-8521, Japan

^b School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University, 1750-1 Ikenobe, Miki-cho, Kita-gun, Kagawa 761-0793, Japan

Abstract

English as an additional language (EAL) researchers in scientific fields, anxious about the language quality of their English-language manuscripts, may consult English-teaching colleagues without scientific backgrounds or training in editing (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003). However, the editing of scientific texts can involve much stress and uncertainty to English teachers (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012, 2013). This study examined English teachers’ concerns in the act of editing, and the strategies they employed when grappling with uncertainty. Five English teachers at Japanese universities with regular editing experience edited two English abstracts, written by Japanese researchers in scientific fields, while audio-recording their thoughts. Post-task interviews were conducted to clarify findings. The three most common concerns identified in think-aloud transcripts were, in order of frequency, non-technical word usage, content/meaning issues, and technical term usage. Participants’ strategies for dealing with uncertainty were to indicate a need to consult the author, make a tentative revision, take no action at all, conduct a search for information, and to delay revision. These results suggest that authors’ involvement in the editing process is essential when English teachers edit scientific manuscripts. Implications for theory development and pedagogy in the field of second language writing are presented and discussed.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Correctors; Interview; Proofreading; Revision; Scientific editing; Think-aloud protocol

Introduction

“Convenience editing”—the pros and cons

Many academic journals recommend or require that English as an additional language (EAL) authors have a native English speaker check their manuscripts before or after submission (Cargill & O’Connor, 2006). A variety of *literacy brokers* (Lillis & Curry, 2006) and *shapers* (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003), including translation and editing services, are available to authors confronted by these language requirements. However, these services can be expensive (Salager-Meyer, 2008), and authors may be unsure of the quality or accuracy of the finished products (Huang, 2010). Authors in

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +81 87 832 1578; fax: +81 87 882 0684.

E-mail addresses: ianwill@cc.kagawa-u.ac.jp, iwilley@hotmail.com (I. Willey), kimie@med.kagawa-u.ac.jp (K. Tanimoto).

English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts can also take a more convenient and perhaps inexpensive route and consult an English-teaching colleague, who may be the only native English speaker “for miles around” (van Naerssen & Eastwood, 2001).

Burrough-Boenisch (2003) noted various labels used in the scholarly literature to describe such non-professional editors, including *correctors*, *revisers*, *local editors*, *language professionals*, *language service providers*, and *authors’ editors*. According to Burrough-Boenisch, these correctors include the spouses or acquaintances of authors. In this study we focused on English teachers, who may be the most accessible English speakers to many EAL authors. In referring to these English teachers we use our term *convenience editors*, which we define as English teachers, often but not always native English speakers, without training in editing or scientific fields, who correct manuscripts mainly as an unpaid favor to EAL colleagues. We note here that the authors of this paper are a native-English-speaking English teacher and an EAL nursing researcher who became acquainted through convenience editing.

Although research has identified constraints to convenience editors’ work, we believe that, in addition to convenience, consulting an English teacher can be an attractive option for EAL authors for several reasons. English teachers’ unfamiliarity with scientific genres may cause them to make inappropriate revisions (Tsao, 2011), but this unfamiliarity may also enable teachers to tell whether or not ideas in a manuscript are expressed clearly and would be intelligible to general readers (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012). It has been asserted that language attrition suffered by long-term expatriates may hinder their ability to identify errors in EAL authors’ texts (Burrough-Boenisch, 2006; Porte, 1999). However, this issue has not been critically examined; it could also be argued that expatriate English teachers’ awareness of the culture, language, and common problems in English usage among people in their host countries would enable them to grasp authors’ intentions and edit effectively (He & Gan, 2008; McNab, 1988). In addition, English teachers, unlike peers, are not potential rivals; authors need not worry that their research will be criticized or plagiarized, or that teachers would demand co-authorship credit for their feedback (Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Wei, 2008).

The Council of Science Editors has recognized the role that TESOL professionals play in the language development of scientists in EFL settings (van Naerssen & Eastwood, 2001). Considering the assistance that English teachers can provide to struggling EAL authors (Burrough-Boenisch, 2013; Koyalan & Mumford, 2011), an understanding of issues relevant to scientific editing done by English teachers is necessary.

Relevant research

Traditionally, studies in the applied linguistics literature have focused mainly on revisions made by students to self-written texts (e.g., Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2001) and by teachers to students’ texts (e.g., Porte, 1999). Although attention has been increasingly paid to how people working in the role of corrector respond to texts written by others (e.g., Benfield & Howard, 2000), these studies involve participants in various roles which often differ from those of English-teaching convenience editors. However, findings from several studies indicate issues of relevance to convenience editing.

First, several studies have employed text-based methodology to examine feedback from native English speakers to EAL authors’ texts. Ventola and Mauranen (1991), in an analysis of manuscripts written by Finnish scientists and edited by native English speakers, found that these manuscripts were often not adequately improved; obvious errors were corrected but cohesive problems remained. Benfield and Howard (2000) compared feedback from reviewers on manuscripts written by EAL authors to an error analysis by a language teacher and found that incorrect article usage constituted the largest number of errors for the teacher, while the reviewers focused on word choice and cohesion. Benfield and Feak (2006) found differences between revisions made by a language teacher and a medical professional to EAL authors’ manuscripts and concluded that teachers tend to focus on *form* and subject experts on *content*. Each of these studies, however, involved feedback made by only one language teacher and was exclusively text-based, potentially undermining reliability of findings.

Several studies have utilized introspective methodology to show how language correctors approach their craft. Harwood, Austin, and Macaulay (2009) conducted an interview study of student proofreaders at a UK university and found that some revisions were considered inappropriate by proofreaders, such as revision at organizational and content levels, and most proofreaders focused instead on grammar, syntax, and spelling errors. However, these proofreaders were inclined to write comments about perceived higher-level problems, putting responsibility for revision on the author (Harwood, Austin, & Macaulay, 2010). Harwood et al. (2009) acknowledged the limitations of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/364048>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/364048>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)