EASE-Forum Digest: March to June 2013

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Definition of editor

Aleksandra Golebiowska asked how she should interpret a statement that somebody edits manuscripts but does not copyedit them. From the long discussion that followed, it was clear that a copyeditor corrects language errors, ranging from only minor errors, eg commas in the wrong place, to substantive editing, which can involve rewriting the text. How much copyediting is done will depend on the terms of the copyeditor's assignment. Joy Bourrough thought a continuum of editing was a useful concept for language editing and gave examples from her own research, but for editing of non-native English texts, the editorial approaches and actions required must be drawn from the entire editing continuum and also from translation practice. Elisabeth Heseltine highlighted the WHO guidelines, which define levels of editing by native English editors of documents written by non-native English speakers but are perhaps not so wide ranging as Joy had meant.

What an editor does was not clear. Paul Neate pointed out there are considerable differences in individual perceptions of what constitutes editing and copyediting. For him, 'an editor' can describe a person who only deals with substantive editing delivering a manuscript that then needed to be cleaned up by a copyeditor. Most of the forum, however, thought an editor makes management decisions about the journal and which papers to accept. Angela Turner believed that what an editor as opposed to a copyeditor does depends on the journal's requirements: some editors do little more than make the decisions while others comment extensively on various aspects of the manuscript including grammar. Kersti Wagstaff commented that selecting papers is not editing, but it is something done by an editor. The noun 'editor' has moved away from the verb 'edit' in a way that the noun 'copyeditor' has not.

Perhaps, Valerie Matarese observed, trying to make a clear distinction between activities that, by their nature, overlap is unreasonable as you are comparing copyediting with an otherwise not specified 'editing'. For Chris Sterken, the difference between the two types of editor was that copyediting can be done by someone who does not necessarily understand the scientific meaning of the text, but an editor needs to know the science. A copyeditor could not understand his discipline of (astro)physics where the concepts are so specific that even editors have to rely on reviewers. Mary Ellen Kerans, who is a linguist, did not entirely agree as she would need to be able to understand something about the content before she could edit it. Marge Berer had experienced with her own work's distortion by a copyeditor who didn't know her subject and thought they were only changing the commas. This was why Springer

preferred linguists, whom you can train to become (fairly) fluent in the language of science, whereas it is hard to train someone into sensitivity to commas if they are not sensitive to language in the first place.

Valerie Matarese also believed the copyeditor's role might be different between a journal based in the US with an American author base and an English language journal produced in Italy where the editorial board, reviewers and authors are entirely non-anglophone, as discussed in the book *Supporting Research Writing: Roles and challenges in multilingual settings*, edited by Valerie. Liz Wager added that she was currently working on a multi-author book where her main function was project management involving chasing authors, highlighting overlap in topics and ensuring that the writing style followed an agreed template, but ultimately a copyeditor would correct language errors. Yateen Joshi posted a link to a post he had put on a blog titled "Substantive editing and copyediting compared" http://blog.editage.com/substantive-editing-and-copyediting-compared.

Another confusion, raised by Liz Wager, is what is meant by 'proofreading'. This is commonly used on the continent for what for her is copyediting. Kersti thought English speakers unfamiliar with the publishing process use 'proofread' in the same way, and Joy gave an example of its use by translators to mean revising (see http://www.trans-k.co.uk/glossary.html).

'Elaborate' and establishing word usage

Poles love the word 'elaborate'. Aleksandra tries to make them use 'develop' instead but she wondered if 'developed' would be correct in "A harmonised standard is a European standard elaborated on the basis of a request from the European Commission to a recognised European Standards Organisation to develop a European standard that provides solutions for compliance with a legal provision."

Discussion revealed that 'elaborate' is a false cognate for speakers of all Latinate languages and tends to be is transferred into English where 'develop' would be used by an English native speaker. In a manuscript Angela had received, the Indian authors referred to 'elaborated tusks of elephants'. Probably they had meant 'well-developed' or 'long tusks'. Carol Norris confirmed that speakers of Finnish, a non-IndoEuropean language, would never use 'elaborate' as a verb.

David FitzSimons advised against 'develop' because it is an overused word. Even so, Kersti considered 'develop' had the advantage of being international plain English. Peter Thorpe favoured 'elaborate' for Aleksandra's sentence. He had googled 'elaborate on the basis of' and got 1.9 million hits. Kersti got 24 million for 'developed on the basis' but cautioned that in such comparative testing account should be taken of the context and the authors' origins. Sylwia Ufnalska pointed out that in reality Google found less than 500 pages for Peter's search and suggested Google Ngram Viewer as a better tool for comparing word usage.

Neither 'developed' nor 'elaborate' could make such a

convoluted sentence comprehensible in Ed Hull's view. The authors needed to explain, for example, what was meant by "a solution for compliance with a legal provision". Mary Ellen agreed but was surprised at editors' reluctance to use 'elaborate' as a verb. From her searches of American (COCA) and British (BNC) corpora, this use is well established. In answer to David's comment that although the number of hits on Google or different corpora indicates usage it is not a measure of quality, she gave the advantages of a concordance: the provenance of each hit could be seen at a glance and unlike Google, duplicates are not shown.

This discussion led Karen Shashok to contemplate the less than perfect quality of documents written for big international institutions. They are often written by non-native users of English who do their best, but the text is not edited for language and tends to be tainted with bureaucratese, which is anyway preferred by the powers that be in the organisations. The text may be more understandable for the end users in the particular country but due to globalization such incorrect text is quickly propagated, leaving language editors and translators helpless. David added that 'negotiated text', which language experts are not allowed to change, could be ambiguous and meaningless, and was another problem.

Explanation of 'Temporary Removal' and definitive versions of an article

Karen asked if articles labelled as 'Temporary Removal' by Elsevier should be cited. She was confused because the 'note to users' on such papers appeared to encourage their citation. Angela explained that the publishing editor at Elsevier for her journal had told her that normally a problematic paper would be withdrawn and should not be cited. The 'Temporary Removal' label was used if the paper had unresolved legal issues and likewise should not be cited as it may not be reinstated. The 'note to users' appeared on all papers still at the online publication stage. It gives information on the stage of publication and points out the lack of volume and page numbers. It was not intended to imply that it is appropriate to cite the paper. Karen suggested that Elsevier modified the 'note to users' on temporarily removed articles to avoid giving the impression that they could be cited, and changed 'Temporary Removal' to 'Temporarily Withdrawn', which would be clearer. Angela could envisage that 'withdrawn' would raise objections from lawyers for the authors as an implication that the authors had done something wrong.

Karen also pointed to the confusion that might arise if a reader downloaded the in-press version, and the publisher subsequently temporarily removed or withdrew the article. The reader would not be aware of the change in status. Angela accepted Karen's point about which is the definitive version of an article and whether an article published online could be altered. She wrote "This problem doesn't just arise with withdrawals and temporary removals. Some papers have errata or corrections printed at a later date too. On Elsevier's ScienceDirect these would be linked with the original article so anyone looking at the main article will see a link to the erratum, but many readers may see and download the article before the erratum is published. Many researchers will have email alerts from publishers, so may hear of an erratum about a particular paper, but not all will. I have been told by Elsevier editors before that the article published online is the definitive version and they would not change it. The only way for an author to change anything is by writing an erratum, even if the author realizes there is an error during the period that the article is only available online (ie before publication in the printed journal). That would presumably apply to a temporarily removed article that was reinstated; it would be reinstated in its original form but with an erratum if appropriate."

Elise Langdon-Neuner (compiler)
a.a.neuner@gmail.com

Discussion initiators
Aleksandra Golebiowska: algol@ciop.pl
Karan Shashok: kshashok@kshashok.com

Updated edition of EASE Guidelines

The 2013 edition of *EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles to be Published in English* is freely available in 21 languages on our website (http://www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines). It contains a completely revised version of the Appendix: Ethics (page 10), which is a standardised publication ethics checklist, presented at the 3rd World Conference on Research Integrity in Montreal in May 2013. This one-page checklist can be downloaded from the website as a separate file and if used routinely as part of the submission procedure, it might help to prevent scientific misconduct. It informs or reminds authors about major ethical issues relevant to scientific publications.

The updated *EASE Guidelines* have been changed only slightly and changes have been made in accordance with the recent San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), signed by EASE, which recommends the citation of primary literature in favour of reviews, in order to give credit to the group(s) who first reported a finding (see http://am.ascb.org/dora/).