

## An Evaluation of the Success of Open-access, Peer-reviewed Journals

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# An Evaluation of the Success of Open-access, Peer-reviewed Journals

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## Abstract

*After establishing a journal, it is important to continue to monitor its progress to ensure that the principles that underpin its existence continue to be a priority. In this article, the authors report on measures that were used to evaluate the success of two journals published at Kanda University of International Studies, Japan. PeerSpectives and Studies in Self-Access Learning (SiSAL) Journal are two open-access, peer-reviewed journals that were established in 2008 and 2010 respectively. Both journals value diversity, accessibility and quality, so the research was designed to investigate these three principles. The results identified some successful factors such as accessibility and favourable perceptions with relation to quality. However, the results also identified areas that could be improved to further increase diversity and to encourage submissions from more authors based outside Japan.*

Keywords: peer-reviewed journal, open-access, evaluation of success, diversity, accessibility

The purpose of this paper is to report on ongoing efforts to monitor the success of two open-access, peer-reviewed journals established and published at Kanda University of International Studies. PeerSpectives was started in 2008 and SiSAL Journal was formed in 2010. The two journals were the subject of a previous

RILS&LE project which investigated the editorial strategies where the authors also proposed an instrument designed to promote professional collaboration and diversity (Murphey, Mynard, & Shanley, 2012).

In this article, we will give a brief overview of the publications before explaining some measures that are often applied to academic journals in order to evaluate a publication's success. We will focus on some of the factors that relate to the principles of the publications in an attempt to show how we currently view the success of the journals and what we might focus on in coming years in order to continue to improve them.

## **1. Overview of the publications**

### **PeerSpectives–<http://peerspectivesonline.org/>**

Established in 2008, PeerSpectives is an open access, quick turn-around publication for all those interested in education in general and cutting-edge or experimental practice in particular. The Journal seeks to encourage more peering (verb: to treat those we work with, teach, and learn from as peers and to value their points of view) and encourages contributions from educators, learning advisors, coaches, mentors and learners; aiming to empower each other to be better members of a global world.

*PeerSpectives* differs from other journals in that we focus on short practical articles from a wide range of contributors. We seek empirical, systematic, reflective, opinionated or even humorous articles including those:

- about learning, educating and living better
- crossing disciplinary, cultural, age and other boundaries to reap the benefits of human diversity (teacher-student collaborations welcome)
- weaving educational endeavors and ecological solutions into the very fabric of life
- book reviews
- et. cetera ... (an important category)

We particularly welcome new or challenging ideas and concepts and reports of innovative practice. PeerSpectives is double blind reviewed and published biannually. The current editors are Carol Begg, Danielle Fischer, and Tim Murphey who work with about twenty readers

**SiSAL Journal (Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal – <http://sisaljournal.org>)**

SiSAL Journal was formed in 2010 to address a practical need. The journal was originally designed to be an in-house publication which provided publishing opportunities for colleagues working at Kanda University of International Studies along with a system to archive and share ongoing work. However, once the idea for establishing a journal was shared with colleagues in other institutions, it became clear that there was need for an international publication dedicated to self-access learning. Since its inception, SiSAL Journal has published quarterly issues containing a range of article types from full research papers, to summaries and book reviews. There have been a number of special issues, many of which have been guest-edited by international colleagues.

## **2. Factors which Typically Measure Success in a Journal**

There are various ways of measuring the success of a journal, some numerical and some descriptive. In terms of numerical measures, a commonly used tool is a citation index. A citation index shows how frequently articles from particular journals are cited. One example is the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) which is an interdisciplinary citation index provided by Thomson Reuters. Closely related to this is the Impact Factor (IF) which is calculated by dividing the number of citations in a two-year period by the number of citable articles published the following year. The figure is usually published the subsequent year, so a journal needs to have existed for three to four years before the IF is available. This measure is particularly useful for scientific and scholarly journals when gauging the impact that a journal has within a field. However, there is the possibility that some editorial policies artificially affect the IF. Another drawback is that this measure is less applicable to journals which have a focus on practical applications as the articles may have a big impact on the field and be of practical rather than scholarly benefit to its readers.

Rejection rate is another commonly used measure and is the percentage of total submissions which are rejected in a year. Some journals boast a high rejection rate as this may indicate high standards. However, this measure might not be an accurate way to show quality as it is possible that a quality journal might have a low rejection rate as it only receives high quality submissions (Egbert, 2007).

Timeliness and time to publication may be further quality indicators. If a journal publishes regularly and on time, this suggests that the editorial board are

dedicated and efficient (Egbert, 2007). It also implies that there are enough submissions to make the publication viable.

Availability and accessibility might also be meaningfully used as success indicators (Polonksy, Jones, & Kearsley, 1999) as the implication is that the journal will be read widely. However, this indicator might be very hard to evaluate if a journal is freely distributed.

There are also non-numerical, descriptive measures that might be used to gauge success of a publication. One example is the inclusion in databases and indexes which not only increases access for readers, but is often evidence that the journal has passed the necessary evaluation procedure for inclusion.

Another measure is the type of article that a journal publishes. A journal which publishes a high proportion of research papers may be an indication of high levels of scholarship, however, if the purpose of the journal is to influence practice, these kinds of articles may not necessarily be an indication of successfully reaching the target readers.

Quality and originality of articles might be another way to evaluate the success of a journal, along with perceived reputation of the publisher, editor, editorial board and authors. These measures may be highly subjective.

To summarise, there may be numerous ways to evaluate a publication but, as Egbert (2007) notes, “a single method, regardless of the number of components

included, could not account for important differences among journals” (p. 157), so editorial boards might adopt a variety of different measures depending on the scope and purpose of the publication.

### **3. Diversity, Accessibility, Quality**

Recently, the field of SLA has been going through a social turn (Block, 2003; Atkinson, 2011) and a narrative turn (Swain et al. 2011). Lourdes Ortega (2011) suggests that we accept, adopt, and appreciate “epistemological diversity.” Her significant contribution is to permit us to see how cognitivists and alternatives overlap and are doing similar things, to discover complementarity where some in both camps could even support each other:

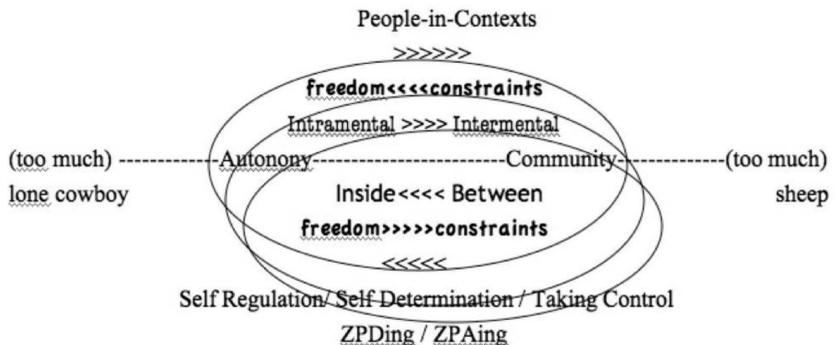
...[W]e have a choice in SLA studies among entrenchment, incommensurability, and epistemological diversity. Entrenchment is likely to be a temperamental reaction that is unsustainable in the long run. Incommensurability is an option that some may find merit in at this juncture in the history of SLA studies. I want to argue that the third option, epistemological diversity, is the best choice.

Ortega ends citing Lugones (2003) at length and concludes that:

From traveling to others’ “worlds” emerges the possibility of not only agentive resistance from within accommodation but also empathic understanding of difference, instead of conflictive and hopeless feelings of entrenchment and incommensurability. If we can experience ourselves as more than one

and others as they experience both themselves and us, then perhaps we can also understand how other people understand and judge their own knowledge and theories and how they understand and judge ours. This, in turn, makes it possible to imagine ourselves and others as less epistemologically unitary and impermeable than we may be otherwise inclined to assume. (p. 177-178)

The two journals described in this article are both seeking to be epistemologically non-unitary and permeable to a wide range of views and ways of working, thus we invite especially first time authors, students, and the unpublished to submit and to join in our professional conversations so that we might learn more from all. Stressing what to some see as opposites, autonomy and community, we realize that we are forever moving along a continuum and dynamically adjusting in order to better harmonize our lives (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Dynamic Dialectical Adjusting Harmonizer (DDAH) From Murphey (2013)**

Diversity depends greatly on accessibility by both contributors and readers and our move to online publishing has opened us up to the world.

#### **4. Monitoring Success: Research Questions and Data Collection**

For the purposes of this project, our success measurements were closely aligned with the values and principles of the two journals. Three of the main values of the publications are diversity, accessibility and quality, so research questions for this project were formulated based on evaluating these values.

##### *4.1 Diversity*

The research questions related to diversity were:

1. How diverse are the contributors in terms of location?
2. How diverse are the readers of the journals in terms of location?
3. How diverse are the reviewers and editorial team members in terms of location?

Other information such as nationality, context and experience would also be useful measures of diversity, but was not investigated in this study.

These questions could be answered by examining the records related to submissions and reviewers and simply tallied. The aims of these questions would help us to answer the overarching question of whether we could claim to promote diversity and whether the contexts of our readers mirrored the locations of our contributors and editorial teams.

#### *4.2 Accessibility*

Both publications are open access, but it is important to be aware of how widely the journals are accessed in order to ensure that we are reaching worldwide audiences.

The research questions related to accessibility were:

4. How many views are the online articles receiving?
5. How many people subscribe to the online journals or follow them on Facebook?
6. Which databases and links bring the most readers to the online journals?

These questions could be answered by accessing the journal statistics automatically logged by the website provider “Wordpress” and recording the data.

#### *4.3 Quality*

In addition to aiming to provide easy access to the journals and to promote diversity, we also strive to publish quality content and provide a positive experience to contributors. The research questions related to quality were:

7. How widely are the articles cited in other work?
8. How do authors view the publication process?
9. How do readers view the quality of the journal?

A measurement of the first question could be attempted with some assistance from online sources, for example citation reports and universal impact factor evaluators. In 2013, SiSAL Journal was evaluated by Universal Impact Factor and included in its Master List. However, although SiSAL Journal submitted an application to be included in the more widely recognised SSCI in 2012, it does not yet feature on its

list.

The second and third questions related to quality were investigated for SiSAL Journal by administering an optional online survey to a targeted population of participants. The survey (Appendix A) contained nine multiple-choice questions (each with an optional open-ended follow up question), and one open-ended question. The survey was administered using the online tool SurveyMonkey to potential respondents as follows:

- By email to reviewers, members of the editorial team and authors (contact person only) who had submitted a paper for consideration since 2010 (n=147)
- Via a Facebook post to Facebook subscribers (n=53)
- Via an RSS post to SiSAL Journal website subscribers (n=212)
- Via a link on SiSAL Journal front page

Some of the potential respondents may have been contacted in two or more of these ways over the two-week data collection period, but were limited to one response each. A total of 85 respondents began the survey, 71 (84%) of whom completed it. In order to analyse the data, the multiple choice responses were simply tallied and the open ended responses were grouped thematically.

## *5. Results*

For practical purposes (and space considerations), most of the results published in this paper will mainly be related to SiSAL Journal. However, the findings have

implications for both of the journals.

### 5.1 Diversity

Research Question 1 was concerned with how diverse the contributors are in terms of location. Since the first issue, both publications featured more diverse authors. For example, Issue one of SiSAL Journal (June, 2010) contained contributions from authors based in just two locations: Japan and the UK. In the most recent issue of SiSAL Journal, the six articles come from contributors based in five different countries: Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and Turkey. This snapshot report appears to indicate that contributors are based in diverse locations. However, when we counted the number of authors (not the number of articles) based in each country over all 14 issues of SiSAL Journal, we noticed a disproportionately high number of contributors based in Japan. Table 1 shows a summary of the location of the authors. Perhaps this is not surprising given that the journal is published in Japan and almost all of the editorial team members are based there.

**Table 1. Summary of where SiSAL Journal contributors are based**

Japan	59	Australia	1
USA	14	Bahrain	1
Mexico	9	Canada	1
UK	6	Cyprus	1
Hong Kong	5	Egypt	1
Iran	5	Estonia	1
New Zealand	5	Greece	1
Ireland	3	Jamaica	1
Germany	2	Taiwan	1
Malaysia	2	Thailand	1
Turkey	2		

Research Question 2 asked how diverse the readers of the journals were in terms of location. Readers of SiSAL Journal over the past year were based in 169 different countries. The 20 countries who accessed the journal most often in the past year are listed in Figure 2.

Country	Views
 United States	8,145
 Japan	4,248
 United Kingdom	3,548
 Indonesia	2,555
 Malaysia	1,901
 Mexico	1,714
 Philippines	1,561
 Australia	1,503
 Canada	1,451
 India	1,347
 Thailand	1,337
 Viet Nam	973
 Hong Kong	966
 Turkey	957
 Taiwan	782
 Colombia	758
 New Zealand	689
 Brazil	629
 Germany	593
 Egypt	575

Figure 2. Number of Views in One Year by the Top 20 Countries (SiSAL Journal)

Research Question 3 was concerned with how diverse the reviewers and editorial team members of the journals were. The statistics for SiSAL Journal showed a high number members in Japan (Table 2). We also noticed that there were more than twice as many males as females on the editorial and review boards (Table 3). In terms of the reviewers, they were based in 24 different locations which seems reasonably diverse. However, the majority (29 out of 73, which is 40%) were based in Japan (see Table 4).

**Table 2.**  
**Advisory and Editorial Boards**  
**(SiSAL Journal)**

Countries
Japan (11)
Australia (4)
Greece (1)
Hong Kong (1)
Ireland (1)
New Zealand (1)
UAE (1)
UK (1)
USA (1)

**Table 3.**  
**Gender of Advisory and Editorial**  
**Boards (SiSAL Journal)**

Male	15
Female	7

**Table 4. Location of Reviewers (SiSAL Journal)**

Japan	29	Brazil	1
UAE	6	China	1
USA	6	Germany	1
Mexico	3	Greece	1
UK	3	India	1
Thailand	3	Macau	1
Canada	2	Oman	1
Egypt	2	Pakistan	1
Finland	2	Singapore	1
Hong Kong	2	Sudan	1
Spain	2	Taiwan	1
Australia	1	Turkey	1

Other measures of diversity could include whether the articles are single-authored or co-authored, whether the authors are male or female, whether the authors are based at our institution, in another institution in Japan, and whether the authors are students. Table 5.1 and 5.2 show some of the relevant information related to these diversity measures for PeerSpectives.

**Table 5.1 Diversity as a Snapshot (PeerSpectives) First 3 Years 2008-2011**

Issue #	Total articles	Single authored	Co-authored	Male authors	Female authors	Authors based at KUIS	Other authors in Japan	International authors	Student author
1	9	6	3	9	2	9	0	0	1
2	8	6	2	8	9	8	0	0	4
3	8	7	1	3	5	7	1	0	1
4	12	10	2	11	4	7	3	2	9
5	6	4	2	9	3	4	5	0	1
6	10	10	0	7	3	4	3	3	0
7	6	5	1	9	4	5	7	1	0
Totals 7 issues	59	47	11	56	30	44	19	6	16

**Table 5.2 Diversity as a Snapshot (PeerSpectives) Last two years 2011-2013**

Issue #	Total articles	Single authors	Co-authored	Male authors	Femal authors	Author s based at KUIS	Other authors in Japan	Intern-ational authors	Student authors
8	7	6	1	6	2	5	3	1	0
9	6	4	2	4	5	4	0	2	1
10	7	6	1	5	3	4	2	1	1
11	6	4	2	5	4	2	0	4	1
Totals 4 issues	26	20	6	20	14	15	5	8	3

As Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show PeerSpectives has increased it non-KUIS authors from 36% in the first 7 issues to 46% in the last 4 issues, particularly due to the increase in international authors. Obviously we also want to continue to serve our own university but we also think that a great way of serving them is allowing them to see a diverse group of writers from around Japan and internationally. We still have a way to go to achieve gender equity and we of course would like to encourage more students to get involved.

## 5.2 Accessibility

One of the principles of both publications is that they are open access, free, and widely accessible. Research Question 4 asked how many views the online articles are receiving.

The all time views from 1st March 2010 to 1st November 2013 for SiSAL Journal was 118,585. The statistics for a one year period are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. SiSAL Journal Access Figures in One Year  
(from November 1 2012 to October 31 2013)**

Total page views in one year	47,5583
Average page views per month	3,965
Average page views per week	915
Average page views per day	130

In terms of the most accessed articles in the past year, Table 7 gives a summary of the articles that have received the most views in the past year and the number of views. The least frequently accessed articles are the editorials, some receiving just one or two views - or no views at all.

**Table 7. The Top Ten Most Accessed Articles in a One-year Period (SiSAL Journal)**

	Views
“Learning to Foster Autonomy: The Role of Teacher Education Materials” by Hayo Reinders and Cem Balcikanli. Issue 2(1)	3,377
“English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Modules” by Kevin Knight, Issue 1(2)	2,761
“Principles and Procedures for Self-Access Materials” by Brian Tomlinson. Issue 1(2)	1,880
Review of the Open Culture Website by Anna Taylor (Gorevanova). Issue 1(2)	1,343
“Internet-Based Resources for Developing Listening” by Ene Peterson. Issue 1(2)	1,225
“Fostering Self-directed Learning through Guided Tasks and Learner Reflection” by Chris King. Issue 2(4)	1,218
“EFL Students’ Writing Strategies in Saudi Arabian ESP Writing Classes” by Mohammad Alnufaie and Michael Grenfell. Issue 3(4)	1,039
“Evaluating Learner Autonomy: A Dynamic Model with Descriptors” by Maria Giovanna Tassinari. Issue 3(1)	1,024
“The Importance of Affective Factors in Self-Access Language Learning Courses” by Sergio Valdivia, David McLoughlin, and Jo Mynard. Issue 2(2)	1,011
“Language Learning Strategy Research: Where do we go from Here?” by Heath Rose. Issue 3(2)	932

Question 5 asked how many people subscribed to the online journals or followed them on Facebook. A summary is given in Table 8.

**Table 8. Subscribers to SiSAL Journal**

	Subscribers
Subscribers to the RSS feed	212
Facebook followers	53

Question 6 was concerned with which databases and links bring the most readers to the online journals. The statistics were calculated for the same one-year period as above for SiSAL Journal and are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Top Referrers in a One-year Period (SiSAL Journal)**

Google search engine	23,773
Google images	1,633
Other search engines (combined)	1,279
Facebook	461
DOAJ (Directory of Open-Access Journals)	418
Kanda University websites (combined)	99
Yahoo Mail	98
Twitter	97
Academia.edu	85

#### 5.4 Quality

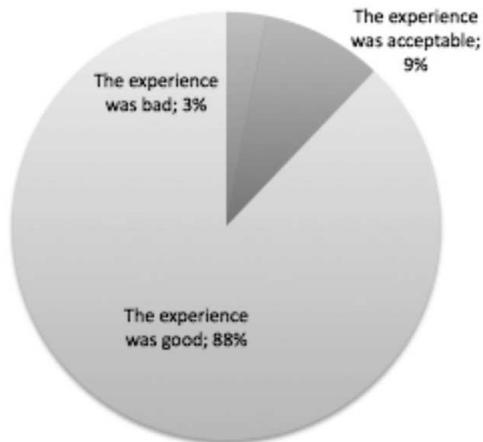
Research Question 7, concerning how widely the articles are cited, was evaluated through inclusion on the Universal Impact Factor Master List and was calculated to be as follows (according to the website <http://www.uifactor.org/JournalMasterList.aspx>):

SiSAL Journal Impact Factor for year 2012 = 1.0052

By way of comparison, *Language Learning and Technology Journal*, a highly respected and well-established, online, open-access journal had an impact factor of 1.38 in 2012.

Questions 8 and 9 were investigated through the survey (Appendix A). Appendix B summarizes how the respondents answered the questions by indicating the number of respondents and, where relevant, the associated open-ended comments.

Research Question 8 was concerned with how authors view the publication process and this was found to be generally positive. Out of the 33 respondents who had published in SiSAL Journal, 29 had had a good experience, three an acceptable experience and one a bad experience. The percentages are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. How Authors Viewed the Publication Process (SiSAL Journal)**

The respondents who had published an article in SiSAL Journal and had had a bad experience unfortunately did not give details. In fact, those who responded to the open-ended question (n=11) were those who had all had a good experience. The raw data is given in Appendix B, but the main reasons cited were:

- reviewer/editor suggestions were helpful (n=6)
- fast turnaround (n=3)
- the reviewers/editors were very supportive (n=2)
- the editorial team were very professional (n=1)
- non-native speakers appreciated the help (n=1)

Out of the respondents who had submitted papers that had been rejected, two reported that the experience was “acceptable” and one reported that the experience was “poor”. Unfortunately, the open-ended follow-up question was not completed so we are unable to pinpoint the reason for the responses.

Research Question 9 was concerned with how readers viewed the quality of the journal. One question which sheds light on reader perceptions is Question 3 on the survey (see Appendix B). Out of 68 respondents, 26 (38%) judged the journal to be of an “acceptable standard” and 42 (62%) viewed it to be “good standard”. Nobody viewed the journal as “poor standard”. Question 10 was an open-ended question which asked the respondents to make suggestions for improvement. The raw data has been included in Appendix C, but a few general observations were made (unless indicated, these suggestions were made by only one respondent):

- Request for services that already exist (email alerts, downloadable articles, indexing) (n=5)
- Suggestions to broaden the geographical scope (n=2)
- Suggestion for the inclusion of practical ideas (n=2)
- Suggestion to pay attention to quality of scholarship (n=2)
- Request for a printed version
- Suggestion for better classification of articles
- Request for translations
- Suggestion to commission more articles by qualified colleagues
- Request for materials reviews
- Request for articles on technology

### *5.5 Limitations*

There are certainly many limitations associated with this research. As Egbert (2007) pointed out, it is likely that journals be evaluated using different measures and establishing the appropriate measures might be the first step. Whereas the measures described in the article are helpful, it would have been useful to further expand them to investigate some of the factors in more detail. For example, the notion of diversity was almost exclusively restricted to location for the purposes of this research whereas we know that diversity may encompass many different factors. There were few cases where authors did not have a positive experience, nevertheless, it would be useful for the editorial teams to know what the reasons were in order to prevent negative experiences for prospective authors in the future.

## 6. Conclusions and implications

The editorial team members intend to use the results to set goals to increase the quality, diversity and accessibility over the next two years. Some specific goals are as follows:

- Increase diversity on the editorial and advisory boards and also among authors
- Increase awareness of our journals' availability and accessibility
- Develop ecological routines among our editors and readers to assure quality service

In addition to attention to these areas, it is worth noting that there were some very positive aspects of the journals. For example, one of the greatest services we have found that we are giving is the “quick turnaround” of innovative information for teachers and researchers. Whereas many journals take may take a year or more to get creative ideas out to their readers, we are doing it in a matter of months.

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## Appendix A

Survey designed to shed light on general perceptions related to quality that authors and readers have of SiSAL Journal

1. We aim to gather input that will help us to improve SiSAL Journal. This anonymous survey is designed to gather views from readers on the quality of SiSAL Journal. We are also gathering feedback from authors on the publication process. The whole survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation. The results will be published in a future issue of SiSAL Journal.

### *The Editorial Team*

- *I agree to participate* in the research and I am happy for my responses to be used in associated publications
- I would prefer not to take the survey

2. How often do you read articles in SiSAL Journal?

- I never read articles in SiSAL Journal (SKIP TO 6)
- Less than once per year
- Around 1-6 times per year
- 12 times per year
- More than 12 times per year

3. In general, how would you rate the quality of the journal?

- Poor standard
- Acceptable standard
- Good standard

Optional comments

4. How likely are you to cite or refer to SiSAL Journal articles in your work?

- Not likely
- Reasonably likely
- Very likely

Optional comments:

5. Why do you read articles from SiSAL Journal? (check all that apply)

- I am new to the field and I need to learn as much as I can about self-access
- I am interested in keeping current in the field
- I am looking for practical ideas
- I need to cite research in my own work

Other (please specify)

6. Have you ever submitted a paper for publication in SiSAL Journal?

- No (SKIP TO 9)
- Yes, it was published

- Yes, it was rejected (SKIP TO 8)
7. How would you rate your experience of publishing your paper in SiSAL Journal?
- The experience was bad
  - The experience was acceptable
  - The experience was good
- Please give details
8. How was your experience with submitting a paper that was subsequently rejected?
- The experience was bad
  - The experience was acceptable
  - The experience was good
- Please explain
9. How likely are you to submit a paper for publication in SiSAL Journal in the future?
- Unlikely
  - Reasonably likely
  - Very likely
- Please explain
10. How could SiSAL Journal be improved?
11. Which statement best describes you?
- I have no contact with self\_-access
  - I have some contact with self\_-access
  - One of my main activities is connected with self\_-access
- Other (please specify)
12. Are you involved in SiSAL Journal in any capacity? (check all that apply)
- I am not involved in the running of the journal
  - I am a regular reviewer (reviewing more than one paper per year)
  - I am an occasional reviewer (reviewing less than one paper per year)
  - I am a member of the advisory board
  - I am a member of the editorial team
  - I have edited or co\_edited an issue
  - I was previously a member of the editorial team
- Other (please specify)

Thank you. The results will be published in a future issue of SiSAL Journal.

## Appendix B

Survey designed to shed light on general perceptions related to quality that authors and readers have of SiSAL Journal

1. We aim to gather input that will help us to improve SiSAL Journal. This anonymous survey is designed to gather views from readers on the quality of SiSAL Journal. We are also gathering feedback from authors on the publication process. The whole survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation. The results will be published in a future issue of SiSAL Journal.

*The Editorial Team*

- I agree to participate in the research and I am happy for my responses to be used in associated publications (n=83)
- I would prefer not to take the survey (n=1)

Skipped question: 1

2. How often do you read articles in SiSAL Journal? (n=77)
- I never read articles in SiSAL Journal (SKIP TO 6) (n=5)
  - Less than once per year (n=11)
  - Around 1-6 times per year (n=41)
  - 12 times per year (n=15)
  - More than 12 times per year (n=5)

3. In general, how would you rate the quality of the journal?

- Poor standard (n=0)
- Acceptable standard (n=26)
- Good standard (n=42)

Optional comments (n=3)

*“Good standard, but I think that lots of the research themes are a bit superfluous, and not always so independent learning-specific”*

*“Very relevant and high quality”*

*“contributors need to collect and report data in their papers”*

4. How likely are you to cite or refer to SiSAL Journal articles in your work? (n=68)

- Not likely (n=5)
- Reasonably likely (n=43)
- Very likely (n=20)

Optional comments (n=4)

(Not likely) *“Not working on independent learning so much right now”*

(Reasonably likely) *“if such articles come up in search results”*

(Very likely) *“they are directly related to my area of interest”*

(Not likely) *“I will make comments to other teachers at work.”*

5. Why do you read articles from SiSAL Journal? (check all that apply) (n=65)
- I am new to the field and I need to learn as much as I can about self-access (n=10)
  - I am interested in keeping current in the field (n=50)
  - I am looking for practical ideas (n=37)
  - I need to cite research in my own work (n=37)

Other (please specify)

“Interested and looking for practical ideas”

“I am looking for other research related to mine”

“I have a different reason each time”

“I’m an ILC coordinator and this information is very relevant to me”

“I have contributed”

“I am an author of a few articles”

6. Have you ever submitted a paper for publication in SiSAL Journal? (n=73)
- No (SKIP TO 9) (n=37)
  - Yes, it was published (n=33)
  - Yes, it was rejected (SKIP TO 8) (n=3)
7. How would you rate your experience of publishing your paper in SiSAL Journal? (n=33)
- The experience was bad (n=1)
  - The experience was acceptable (n=3)
  - The experience was good (n=29)

Please give details (n=11)

(the experience was good)

*Some suggestions were made which helped add to the clarity of the article, so that it was improved.*

*Really supportive - 3 reviewers and editors really going out of their way.*

*Fast turnaround*

*Fantastic turn-around, great editorial team, very professional*

*Great to get constructive feedback and work on the article until it is published*

*The editorial team is very helpful in giving ideas to improve the article.*

*the feedback from editors was extremely helpful*

*The reviewers were thorough and tough, but ultimately helped us re-shape our paper to meet SiSAL’s needs and standards.*

*Great system for non native speakers. Appreciation.*

*Supportive reviews which improved my work. Quick turnaround also good.*

*Helpful comments from the reviewers to improve my article further.*

8. How was your experience with submitting a paper that was subsequently rejected? (n=3)
- The experience was bad (n=2)
  - The experience was acceptable (n=1)
  - The experience was good (n=0)

Please explain (n=0)

9. How likely are you to submit a paper for publication in SiSAL Journal in the future? (n=72)

- Unlikely (n=10)
- Reasonably likely (n=30)
- Very likely (n=32)

Please explain

(Unlikely)

*not really my subject area*

*I'm not involved in self-access any more.*

*I do not feel that I have enough to say.*

*I am retired from my previous academic job.*

*Because I quit working in a self-access learning center  
(reasonably likely)*

*My colleagues and I have one under review at present.*

*When time permits ;-)*

*I'd like to submit a paper again if I have a chance*

(Very likely)

*I still have plenty of material from working with Self-access and teaching it as a subject within Applied Linguistics. As a 'specialist journal', it would be the most appropriate place to publish.*

*I've recently become interested in the field*

*As part of my MA studies in Professional Development for Language Education*

*I'm a language advisor/trainer. My practice may interest the journal's readership.*

*I have submitted one but I don't know if it has been accepted or rejected yet*

*Recently presented on a topic related to self access and would like to write it up and be able to share with others in the field.*

10. How could SiSAL Journal be improved? (n=27)

See Appendix B

11. Which statement best describes you? (n=70)

- I have no contact with self\_-access (n=8)
- I have some contact with self\_-access (n=24)
- One of my main activities is connected with self\_-access (n=28)

Other (please specify)

12. Are you involved in SiSAL Journal in any capacity? (check all that apply) (n=70)

- I am not involved in the running of the journal (n=45)
- I am a regular reviewer (reviewing more than one paper per year) (n=4)
- I am an occasional reviewer (reviewing less than one paper per year) (n=16)
- I am a member of the advisory board (n=3)
- I am a member of the editorial team (n=2)
- I have edited or co\_edited an issue (n=6)
- I was previously a member of the editorial team (n=2)

Other (please specify)

Thank you. The results will be published in a future issue of SiSAL Journal.

## Appendix C

Responses to the open-ended survey question "How could SiSAL Journal be improved?"  
(Question 10)

*I'm not sure. I like the current format and presentation. I like the different topics that are covered. It is a source of information for me, so there isn't anything that I can think of that could be improved.*

*make its articles downloadable*

*I think that the journal is good as it is.*

*accept more articles about Latin-America based research*

*More regular and a printed option*

*good*

*Evolve toward higher standards*

*publishing quality work*

*I don't think of anything to improve. It is very good.*

*add more useful articles*

*Contributors need to take more responsibility for the quality of scholarship. Some SiSAL articles seem to be the product of ad hoc analysis, and often the data is not as complete as it ought to be. My fear is that some people take advantage of the fact that a large number of studies in the field of learner autonomy are qualitative and use publications like SiSAL to report anecdotal findings.*

*You can give chances to unknown researchers from developing countries who need self-access learning badly.*

*I think that a few small practical ideas in each issue would be a good idea, or a readers' forum.*

*Set up a subscription system where the journal is sent automatically to subscribers. (Perhaps this already exists.)*

*E-mail me to alert me of articles published in my specific area of interest. (I don't always have time to browse through the whole issue to see whether anything interests me)*

*no ideas!*

*accept new members from Brazil*

*I enjoy it very much. I do not have any comment.*

*It would be nice if the studies published could be classified according to what they are. Most seem to be teacher reflections, some are case studies, some are opinions pieces. Having a guidepost would make reading far quicker.*

*No ideas.*

*I di not care abiut it.*

*Broad indexing in more standard academic indexes (ERIC, Academic Search Complete etc.)*

*By undertaking translation as part of this*

*I like the themed issues. I also like the fact that it's open access. No improvements that I can recommend at this time.*

*I think there probably has to be more 'commissioning' of articles. By that I mean that there are many people qualified to write and publish, but it is not a requirement within their job description, so they don't. I think more reviews of particular apps or computer programs or things like dictionaries could be included so that readers are kept up-to-date and reflections n the use of particular facilities like language cafes, caraoke, tandem conversation schemes, and the like, would be useful.*

*Email alerts wehn the journal is published, like Reading in a Foreign Language is twice a year.*

*I would like to see more articles focusing on technology in autonomy*