Editorial Strategies for Stimulating Professional Collaboration with Peer Reviewed Publications

Tim Murphey

Jo Mynard

Michael Shanley

Abstract

In this paper the authors describe the editorial strategies of two peer-reviewed, open access publications created at Kanda University of International Studies. The first publication is PeerSpectives which aims to publish short reflective pieces by and for busy teachers and learners. The second publication is SiSAL (Studies in Self-Access Learning) Journal which is a quarterly scholarly publication featuring research articles, summaries and work-in-progress pieces. In the final part of the paper the authors comment on the benefits of professional collaboration and introduce an instrument which is designed for educators to critically reflect on their own levels of collaboration and to consider collaborating with more diversity.

I. Background

Most academic publications start out with a small group of people who want to learn more about their field, preserve the developmental history, and generate more cultural and social capital (aka, knowledge and networking; cf: Bourdieu) created by the group. While one person may have the initial idea, the actual running of such publications usually involves a small group of willing collaborative practitioners; as Margaret Mead famously proclaimed, "Never doubt that a small

group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Murphey, Connoly, Churchill, McLaughlin, Schwartz, and Krajka (2003) describe creating a variety of publishing communities for professional development in the field of TESOL, saying, "While all of these publications stimulate professional development in their contributors and readers, they also activate the professional development of those of us who have created and edited them" (p. 105) …"potentially bringing [participants] together in imagined communities (Norton 2001) to enhance the practices of the profession. Such publications serve to unite groups small and large with their special interests and to encourage teacher development by inviting identification and continual learning" (p. 113). This need to belong and affiliate is a strong one (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) running through our phylogensis and ontogenesis which transdisciplinary researchers (Lee et al. 2009) say are partially responsible for caring, communication, and culture (cf. Murphey 2011).

"Open access" means making unrestricted access to scholarly content available via the Internet. An open access journal article is often more likely to be read and cited than one published in a restricted journal simply due to its accessibility. Additionally, the possibility of open access makes the world more "flat" (Friedman, 2007), i.e. creating a level playing field for the developing world which previously did not have the same accessibility to cultural and social capital as they now can have with the internet and the growing altruistic open access publishing. Thus, our own social capital becomes that much richer through open access publishing due not only to the increase in numbers but of diversity.

II. Two open access, peer review publications

PeerSpectives

Origins

PeerSpectives is a bi-annual, peer reviewed publication published at Kanda University of International Studies with issues released at the end of each academic semester (July and December). Established in 2008, PeerSpectives is now anticipating the publication of its eighth issue. While PeerSpectives seeks submissions from Kanda faculty, staff and students, it also encourages contributions from members of other universities and institutions throughout Japan and internationally. PeerSpectives remains focused on ensuring the free and open exchange of ideas and the continued expansion of discourse related to teaching, research, professional and personal development and the overall improvement of the human condition.

PeerSpectives currently welcomes a wide variety of submission types ranging from empirical articles to reflective, humorous and opinionated pieces. These may include, but are certainly not limited to articles about: teaching, coursework or classroom related issues; research matters; cultural or community issues; reflections, reviews and opinions; and even book and article reviews. Thus far, the journal has included an exceptionally colorful collection of works from an examination of creativity in the Japanese language, to interviews with various campus related clubs, to using online dating services to teach conversation in the classroom. Submissions have primarily come from faculty at KUIS (see Figure 1), but have also included several pieces from members of other universities across Japan and internationally.

Figure 1: PeerSpectives article writers: Collaboration with Diversity

Collaboration Types of PeerSpectives 59 main articles in 7 editions	NUMBER
ELI teachers SINGLE	24
ELI collaborating with outside ELI	3 with teachers, 2 with students
ELI collaborating with outside KUIS	0
KUIS (non-ELI) Professors	4 collab / 2 alone
KUIS Students	9
Other Univ. in Japan	6
Japanese School Elementary JHS HS teachers -	3
Others Outside of Japan (Intern'l) – 5 (3 Korea, 2 England)	5
Male authors 56 / Female authors 30	

Aims

One of the main goals of PeerSpectives is to provide a collection of quick and relatively easy reads for busy teachers, staff and students. It also aims to provide authors with a relatively fast submission, reviewing, and publishing time line that takes only a few months at most. While we hope to scaffold first time authors into publishing, it is also a way of time-stamping concepts quickly in a publication that one can then cite in later publications. As such, the journal currently seeks short pieces, generally two to four pages or around 2000 words, although we have accepted shorter and longer pieces. Basically, we are open to a wide range of perspectives, presented in a concise and easily consumable format, that provide busy teachers with quick reads with catchy titles.

Future Directions

As PeerSpectives approaches the release of its eighth issue, a growing focus of the publication is to stimulate professional collaboration among submitters. Writers are encouraged to seek out other contributors who may share their research, teaching or other professional or personal interests and to utilize this opportunity to enrich their submissions through collaboration. This can be done both intra and inter-institutionally and contributors are encouraged to explore the potential for enhancing their contributions through connecting with fellow teachers, staff and students. Both pair and group submissions are welcome and these collaborative efforts have proven to be quite successful in past issues. From Figure 1 above, we think it might be good to encourage more collaboration with people outside of KUIS and to involve more women in our publications, as well as students.

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

Origins

The original idea for SiSAL Journal emerged from a practical need. The team working in the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) were concerned that much of the work that was being done was not being shared. Some of the research was being published, but it was not easily accessible nor easy to share with colleagues in the field. Some work was not being published or even shared beyond the small team of learning advisors at KUIS. In addition, there were no journals that we were aware of dedicated to self-access learning. Some general journals related to learner autonomy and distance learning occasionally featured articles related to self-access learning, but the field was essentially being sidelined. In the 1980s and

1990s there was a flurry of published articles on self-access learning. Many new centres were being created and there was much professional interest in those early years. After 2000, as there were fewer articles published on self-access learning, it appeared that interest in self-access had began to diminish as centres were already established and functioning. However, professionals working in the field of self-access knew how much was really occurring in centres around the world and the time was definitely right to share that through the creation of a specialist journal.

Aims

SiSAL Journal is a quarterly, peer-reviewed international scholarly journal published by Kanda University of International Studies Press. The articles in the journal showcase ongoing contributions to the field of self-access and are aimed at international researchers and practitioners. The scope of the journal incorporates self-access learning and skills support centres which aim to promote learner autonomy. From the very first issue, the journal sought to position itself as a quality open-access publication. It has an international advisory board including some well-known academics and an international board of reviewers. It has an ISSN number and the editorial team immediately began the application process to be indexed in well-known databases. It is now included in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), EBSCO, Wilson web and four other databases. This means that most university library databases worldwide include SiSAL Journal in their collections. It is also produced as an e-book available on Amazon. The intention behind this was not to make a profit from the journal, but to ensure that it appeared whenever users searched for the keywords and thus further increase the

exposure.

Special issues

The first seven issues have been special issues on particular areas of self-access. The intention behind this was to bring together similar research and practice around the world within a coherent theme and also to highlight the rich and multi-faceted nature of the field. There is often a misconception that a self-access centre is a library for language learning materials, but those of us working in the field know how that this is only one of the functions. The special issues have been on: principles and practices (June, 2010), materials and methods (September, 2010), motivation and beliefs (December, 2010), skills development and practice (March, 2011), learner involvement (June, 2011) CALL, e-learning and m-learning (September, 2011) and success stories (December, 2011) co-edited by Diego Navarro and Jo Mynard. The March 2012 issue will feature selected papers from the conference on Advising for Language Learner Autonomy held at Kanda University of International Studies in November, 2011. This special issue will be edited by Jo Mynard and Katherine Thornton.

Contributions

Each issue features full length articles and shorter pieces which are categorized as perspectives, summaries or works in progress. There is also space for reports and reviews. This range of contribution types means that even inexperienced authors can contribute, but we are proud that the journal has featured the work of some well-known and well-respected academics such as Lucy Cooker, David Gardner, Regine Hampel, Paul Kei Matsuda, Lindsay Miller, Tim Murphey, Richard

Pemberton, Hayo Reinders, Brian Tomlinson and Mark Warschauer. We reject poorly-written articles, submissions that are unrelated to self-access and those that have not followed the submission guidelines. Feedback is given to authors where the article is not quite publishable and the editors work with potential authors in order to help them to reach the required standard rather than rejecting them. Sometimes this process has taken over a year, but it is possible for a suitable submission to be published within a few months because of our efficient review process. Reviewers are typically given just two weeks to provide feedback. This does seem a short amount of time, but we have found that even busy academics can manage this and even welcome the fast turnover. Most authors have had negative experiences with waiting years until their work gets published and this is a chance to show that it does not have to be that way. It also means that the articles published in SiSAL Journal are very current and topical.

Future directions

SiSAL Journal will continue to operate as long as there is interest in the field and submissions come in. The editorial team decided that the series of special issues was an appropriate way to launch the journal, but have chosen to publish regular issues from June 2012 due to the time required for the preparation of a special issue. There will be occasional (possibly guest edited) special issues from time to time, but more time will be allocated for the review and preparation processes for the special issues. The editorial team will review this decision after one year.

III. Professional collaboration through peer review publications

Kesar and Lester (2009) write of the bountiful advantages of collaboration, citing Kanter (1996) and Senge (1990) who themselves argued that successful organizations were ones that fostered collaborative activities among their ranks. Kesar and Lester contend that "These collaborative advantages are reasons that business and government have supported and will continue to support collaborations" (p. 9), especially with funds for research and development that stipulate wide ranging and diverse collaborative teams. Thus, many universities are advising their staff to work with diversity and small groups more and more. For example, Murphey and several other international researchers were recently invited to consult on a team of researchers based in Finland, several working on their PhDs on interrelated topics, who were also submitting a request to the Finnish government for funding to do experiments, go to conferences, and publish findings.

The literature on collaboration says the most important outcome is more innovation and learning (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; Hooker, Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Murphey, Farrell, & Inada, 2010). Many studies show that

> bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations reinforce the routine following of policies and procedures . . . If people are focused on routine and follow policy exclusively they will not question ineffective practices and policies or work to innovate. However, organizations that are set up in a matrix fashion … encourage more interaction, information sharing, communication, and collective problem solving [and] result in innovation and learning (Kesar & Lester, 2009, p. 10).

Advantages in education include increased communication, cognitive complexity (i.e. multiple perspectives on a single problem leading to enhanced solutions), and better service to students. "Service offered through siloed organizations typically involves more time to resolve a problem, sending the client to multiple locations, and often leads to incomplete or inaccurate information" (ibid. p. 12). The literature also holds that collaboration is more cost effective and efficient, and it increases employee motivation, commitment and job satisfaction (ibid. p. 13). A great amount of research shows wonderful advantages of shared responsibility and collaborative learning for students and that when teachers collaborate in front of students they become a model for students (ibid. p. 15-16). Finally, it is very clear that people do better research when collaborating and this also happens with governance and management, and operations and service in higher education (ibid. pp. 17-19). These advantages are also referred to as social capital (Bourdieu, 1972), the rewards stemming from being well connected in resourceful social networks.
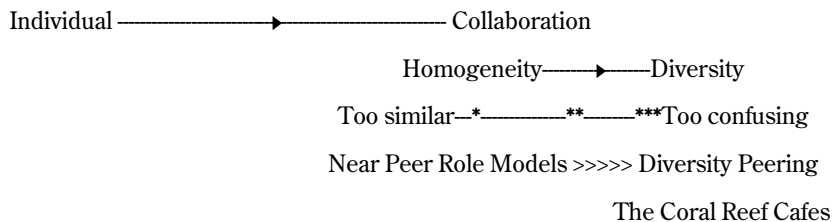
While Kesar & Lester (2009) repeatedly note that one should not over-generalize the benefits of collaboration, i.e. there are tasks that are better done alone, we still tend to err on the side of evaluating individuals divorced from their networks and contexts, rather than integrated into them. Thus, in education in particularly, we do over-generalize on individual work and could improve what we do through developing a healthy degree of collaboration.

Collaborating with similarity and diversity
When we do collaborate, we tend to collaborate more easily and naturally with

people who are like us, our near peer role models (Murphey & Arao, 2001). This is a fundamental way of learning and should be encouraged (see the single asterisk in Figure 2). However the research in the fields of business especially is telling us that the more productive and innovative ideas actually come from teams with the most diversity (the double asterisk in Figure 2). This we might call diversity modeling (Murphey, in progress) in which we purposefully seek out others who are relatively different from us in some or many ways. Most people naturally do near peer role modeling, but it may take more conscious effort to engage in diversity modeling in collaborative groups. At the extremes of homogeneity it can be rather boring to always be with the same type of people, and at the other extreme of diversity it may at times be very confusing if we do not understand others' behaviors. Again, the usual propensity is to seek those who are like us and seek comfort in similarity. Pushing us out of our comfort zones, however, will usually get us to have more diverse ideas and think differently in the service of innovation. Mixing Johnson's (2010) metaphors, Murphey calls this going to the coral reef cafes.

Figure 2 Dialectics & the Fusion/Union of Opposites

Individual ----------------------►---------------------- Collaboration

Homogeneity------►-----Diversity

Too similar--*-----------**------***Too confusing

Near Peer Role Models >>>>> Diversity Peering

The Coral Reef Cafes

We would like to propose the use of the Professional Personal Collaboration Index (PPCI) as a simple tool to encourage us to diversify our collaborations (Figure 3, Murphey, in progress) and critically reflect on our own degrees of diversity modeling. As it says in the final note, "There are no absolute scores for how collaborative someone is [with diversity]. It is up to you and relative to your context and desires. Research does say however that the more diverse the partners are, the more beneficial the collaboration usually is." Thus questions #3-7 ask the responder how many different collaborators they have had that are different in gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, and fields. This is simply a small attempt to bring the idea of diversity modeling to consciousness.

Figure 3

Professional Personal Collaboration Index (PPCI) Date 1 _____ Date 2 _____
1. How many people in your professional environment have you regularly collaborated with (that you see on a **monthly if not weekly or daily basis) in the last year?** write their names: _____

   _____ total #

2. Occasional collaborators – you collaborated one or **more times this past year** on a project? (paper, presentation, class lessons and study, curriculum, reports, etc.) write their names:

   _____ total#

3. How many of the p**eople above** are of a different **gender?** total# _____
4. How many of the people above are 10 years older or **younger?** total# _____
5. How many of the people above are of a different **nationality?** total# _____
6. How many of the people above are of a different **ethnicity?** total# _____
7. How many of the people above are not in your i**mmediate field?** total# _____
8. What is your total 3 through 7 added up: _____ **How do you feel about this? _____

   _____

9.   **What kind of people** would you like to collaborate more with? _____
10.   Where might you f**ind these people?** _____

** Note: There are no absolute scores for how collaborative someone is. It is up to you and relative to your context and desires. Research does say however that the more diverse the partners are, the more beneficial the collaboration usually is (thus questions #3-7).

Conclusion

Steven Johnson says in the end of his book *Where Good Ideas Come From* (2010) that

> You may not be able to turn your government into a coral reef, but you can create comparable environments on the scale of everyday life: in the workplaces you inhabit; in the way you consume media; in the way you augment your memory. The patterns are simple, but followed together, they make for a whole that is wiser than the sum of its parts. Go for a walk; cultivate hunches; write everything down, but keep your folder messy; embrace serendipity; make generative mistakes; take on multiple hobbies; frequent coffeehouses and other liquid networks; follow the links; let others build on your ideas; borrow, recycle, reinvent. Build a tangled bank. (p. 246)

As publishers looking for ever more strategies for stimulating professional collaborations, we hope to bravely and serendipitously take many a nice walk through the diverse coral reef coffeehouses of our schools.

References

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497-529.

Bourdieu, P. (1972). *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat.* New York: Picador

Hooker, C., Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2003). The group as mentor: Social capital and the systems model of creativity. In P. B. Paulus & B. A.

Nijstad (Eds.), *Group creativity: Innovation through collaboration*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, S. (2010). *Where good ideas come from: The natural history of innovation.* NY: Riverhead –Penguin. (Steven Johnson TED.com *Where Good Ideas Come From*)

Kanter, R. (1996). Collaborative advantage: The art of alliances. *Harvard Business Review,* 96-108.

Kesar, A. & Lester, J. (2009). *Organizing higher education for collaboration: A guide for campus leaders.* San Francisco; Jossey-Bass.

Lee, N., Dina, A. Joaquin, A., Mates, A., & Schumann, J. (2010). *The Interactional Instinct.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Murphey, T. (2011). The L2 Passionate Interactional Imperative (for short "The L2 Pie"): It's hot or it's not! *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal, 2*(2), 87-90.

Murphey, T. (2012 in progress). Diversity modeling. *PeerSpectives* #9

Murphey, T. & Arao, H. (2001). Changing Reported Beliefs through Near Peer Role Modeling. *TESL-EJ. 5*(3)1-15. Accessed at http://tesl-ej.org/ej19/a1.html

Murphey, T., Connolly, M. Churchill, E., McLaughlin, J., Schwartz, & S., Krajka, J. (2003) Creating publishing communities. In T. Murphey, (ed.) pp. 105-118 *Extending Professional Contributions.* Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Murphey, T., Farrell, S. and Inada, T. (2010). Interdepartmental Professional Collaborations: Barriers, Advantages, and Possibilities. *The Journal of Kanda University of International Studies No. 22 pp. 295-320.*

Norton, B. (2001). *Non-participation, imagined communities and the language classroom*. In M. Breen (Ed.), Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research (pp. 159-171). London: Pearson Education

Paulus, P. & Nijstad, B. (2003). *Group creativity: Innovation through collaboration.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.