

## **Volume 4, Number 2, 2015**

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# Orality Journal

*The Word Becomes Fresh*

# *The Word Became Fresh*

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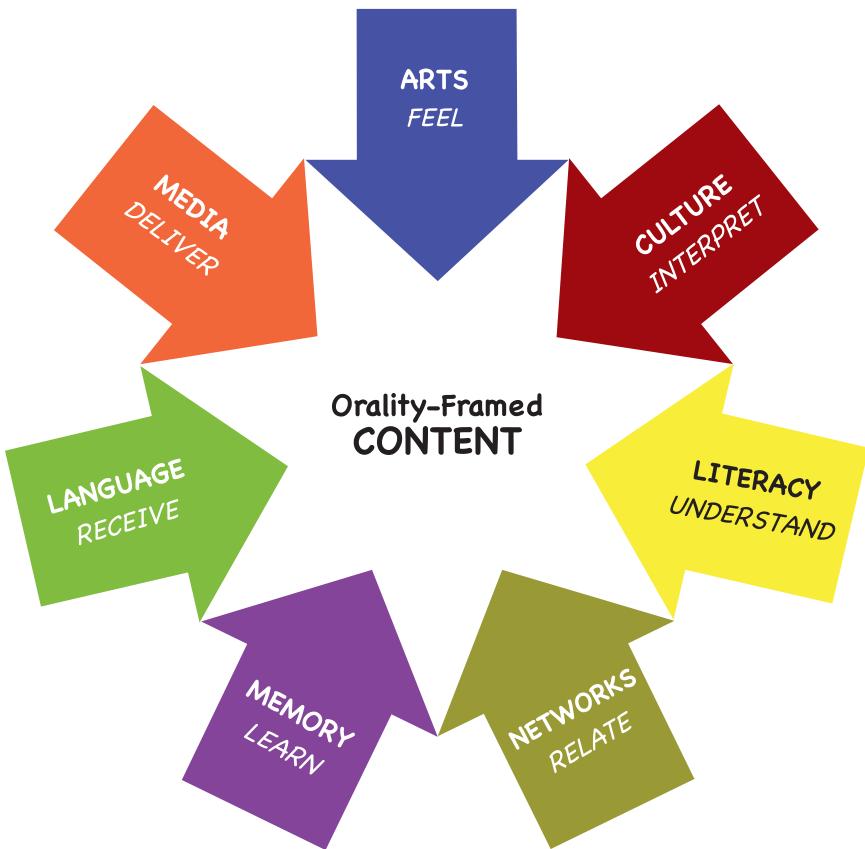
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# Participatory Learning and Networks Revisited

**Keller • Azomo • Lim • Wise • Varghese • Handley  
Chaudhary • Lhomi • Desemone • Wills**

# The Seven Disciplines of Orality



*Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.*

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Volume 4, Number 2, 2015

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## Cover Photo

Participatory Learning in a rodeo! The rider and the horse learns about each other, and the audience (the networks) while entertained is also learning and passing on the learning.

Your statutes have been my songs  
in the house of my sojourning.

Psalm 119:54 ESV

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom  
that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God  
acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,  
for our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:28—29 ESV

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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# Editor's Note

*Samuel E. Chiang*

## Participatory Learning and Networks

Less than two decades ago in small shops in large coastal cities of China, there were banks of computers set up for people to experience the arrival of computing power. By day it looked business-like; by night it was the domain of youths playing video games. I vividly recall how they would shout out across to each other upon the discovery of new strategies to advance to the next level, all with a focus of how to take down a foreign government or power.

Even today in MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Game) the players are tethered to a device connected to a gaming platform, which is, enabled by a network (internet), and together the players interact meaningfully with people across the world. They actually learn from each other, and in turn achieve an individual best, and more often a common agenda, collaboratively. At times one is the master, at other times one is the apprentice, all the while the learning is crafted into the individual through ultra high-definition images presented in a coherent imaginary storyline.

All this sounds very intuitive. It is oral, visual, collaborative, and purposeful. Embedded are assumptions and theories which drive the process, including but not limited to: 1. Adults learn better when knowledge is constructed through participation; 2. Adults are able to pass on “sticky” knowledge through their vast networks; 3. Knowledge gets passed on through personal relationships (networks) when it retains its “stickiness” in the form of how people normally receive, process, remember, and pass on information.

The practitioners who contributed articles to this volume are all experts in their own domain. They have gone through both the school of hard-knocks and the school of discoveries. While the case studies speak of how “orality—learning—participation” works in the field, the theories along with the nomenclature are both grounded and well established.

In assembling this volume, William Coppedge and myself encountered several sensitivities concerning case studies, field of service, and names.

Thus, where necessary we have used pseudonyms, or left out names entirely. The cases are all true. In this volume, we also attempted something new: we have endeavored to capture several threaded discussions from within a forum context. Theory and praxis often intersect in a community of practice supported through a public forum, and so we worked with one of the writers to distill material contributed within one of those forum contexts and craft it into an article. In this sense, we have tried to capture what was timely and casted it as what can become timeless.

Finally, in this issue there was so much good information—along with detailed discussions and concrete examples—that the submissions were much longer than the allotted space. Thus, while editing has been necessary, we have tried to ensure as smooth a reading as possible.

We continue in the exploration of how orality works within communities, both in the oral and digitoral generations. We desire to discover how vital information permeates networks as well as how participatory learning enables the delivery of that information and makes “it stick” in the individual and the community. We are certain you will find this issue interesting, and we invite your feedback.

On the journey together,



Samuel E. Chiang

From Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

# A Participatory Approach to Song-crafting

*Anonymous*

*The author has served in Bible translation and literacy projects for over 35 years with a faith-based NGO. She was trained in facilitating participatory discussions in 2013 and has since facilitated discussions with colleagues, song writers, translation workers, and family members.*

Twenty-four women, representing eight languages, from very rural communities gathered earlier this year for a double-training event in a small town in South Asia. It was their third time to meet and craft Bible stories in their languages. This time, the training included song-crafting because the women wanted to make songs to go with the Bible stories they have been learning.

The training was given in the majority language of the region, but the women crafted stories into their own local languages. These women are nearly all first-generation followers of Christ, and all have family members and neighbors who adhere to the majority religion of their land. They are all involved in local evangelical churches and were selected in part for their leadership roles in their churches. Most can read, but not all can write.

The first week of the workshop was focused on learning and

crafting new Bible stories, but the women also spent time studying and discussing what the Bible says about singing and songs. The second week of the workshop was a focus on song-crafting, preceded by participatory activities and facilitation of one participatory tool. The focus of this short article is the participatory aspect of the training.

## Categories

Other colleagues with experience in ethnomusicology have suggested it can be helpful for people to first consider how we categorize things in general before discussing categories of songs. So the first step we took involved a mixed collection of markers (felt-tipped pens) dumped on the floor. A volunteer demonstrated how she would categorize them, while the participants watched. They took turns describing the categories she created, and she verified or explained her reasons for the groups she made. Then, the markers were stirred into a random mix, and

a second person demonstrated how she would organize them into different categories. So everyone saw that the same items could be categorized differently, depending on the perspective of the categorizer.

That evening, the women worked in their language teams to write or draw with colored markers on slips of paper all the kinds of flowers and birds they could think of in their communities. The purpose of this exercise was that:

- 1) It gave the women a chance to share from their knowledge of their world.
- 2) It provided an initial categorizing experience.
- 3) It let them see that there are many ways to organize the same items.
- 4) It was fun; they really enjoyed the activity.

The next day, the language teams brought their many slips of paper and arranged them on the floor in separate areas for the others to enjoy (or to compare and feel jealous about or superior about, as the case might be).

Then, each team was invited to group the pieces of paper

in whatever kinds of groups/categories they wanted to make. The most common categories were “flowers for religious events,” “flowers for decoration,” “flowers for medicine,” and “flowers for food.”

For birds, the common categories were “birds that eat dead things,” “birds that fly at night,” “birds that sing,” and “birds that are pretty.” Everyone walked around and looked at each others' words or drawings. Each team had their turn to explain their categories. Everyone observed that each language community chose some similar and some different ways of categorizing their flowers and birds.

After the language teams had organized their birds and flowers by categories and explained them to the other groups, they were asked to think about the circle of life: from babyhood to old age. They discussed, from their experience and knowledge, the characteristics of songs for babies, children, youth, adults, and old people. Their follow-up homework that evening was to prepare a poster showing the seasons of the year according to their language communities.

### Participatory Song-crafting

The focus on categories and considering how people may categorize things differently in their communities was a preparation for song-crafting. The song-crafting component of the workshop had two goals:

1. Learn and apply the steps for three kinds of songs (translated songs, story songs, and Bible verse songs)
2. Become more aware of their own musical knowledge and ability, and draw on that to support their crafting of songs in their languages

For the former, the steps were taught and modeled in the majority language, and the participants worked in mixed groups (not according to their home languages) to make songs in the majority language. Then, after learning the steps and practicing them together, the women worked in their own language teams and crafted songs in their languages together. In the next four days, 53 songs were crafted in a total of eight languages.

Becoming aware of their own musical knowledge and ability, a participatory tool called Domains and Kinds of Music Use was used.

This tool was developed several years ago by colleagues and ethnomusicologists working in another NGO. They had shared their tool at a Participatory Methods community of practice gathering. For use in this workshop, we added two more steps, in part because the participants brought cultural knowledge about music from eight language communities, rather than one.

In this participatory tool the women sat in a large circle and were asked to think of song styles, or kinds of songs (this was a similar exercise to discussing categories and naming groups of things the week before with flowers and birds of their communities). Two women volunteered to be scribes and write the song styles on slips of paper.

The entire group could only come up with a few names of kinds of songs. Recordings of samples of two well-known song styles were played. Participants recognized and named those styles immediately. Still, they only came up with two more song styles. So the large group was divided into two groups to “help them think better” (with two scribes per group), and in two groups they suddenly became competitive to see whose group could come up with the most

song styles. In about 15 minutes one group had 25 song styles and the other 17 song styles.

Various women put all the slips on the floor. When the two sets were compared, they found only a few of the names overlapped—these the women chose to lay in an overlapping way to indicate one style (they did not want to put one slip on top of the other even though they were the same).

The next step was to sort the slips of paper into three columns by how often they hear the music/song styles: every day, every month, and every year. Then, for each column they sorted them into two groups: local music style or foreign/outside music style. Each of the first three categories indicating "how often" had two columns underneath.

Finally, they did two more things:

1. Each language team used a differed colored marker to put a spot on every slip of paper which represented a kind of music they have in their community.
2. As a whole group, they placed pink markers on each slip of paper whose music style did not include dancing (the assumption was that only a few would not include dancing and that was

proven to be the case—very few pink markers were needed).

Afterwards, in a time of reflection, discussion, and observations, the women said they learned the following:

1. When we make new songs, we can think of which category we can use.
2. This was the first time we realized that not all the songs are sung every day.
3. We learned about the music situations in other language communities.
4. We became aware of music styles that others have that we don't (e.g., a planting song from one community.)

## Conclusion

The women expressed various times how much they appreciated the song-crafting experience and the work of thinking about their categories for birds, flowers, and songs. They told the facilitator: "You are giving us brain exercises!"

From the facilitator's viewpoint, the participatory activities and tool served as an important first step in the process leading into actual song-crafting. When crafting songs, the participants could readily think about the

categories and kinds of song styles, depending on their topic and audience.

This information was fresh in their minds and they had been affirmed as people who knew about music in their communities. The women crafted several lullabies and songs for children, as well as action songs and story songs to go with their Bible stories. They also translated songs from the majority language which are non-local styles, but well known in their communities.

At the end of the workshop, we asked the women an open question and scribed their answers in order to encourage them to think about how they would use what they had done. “What will you do with your songs?” we asked. They responded:

- Share them with others (i.e. husbands, fathers, brothers, children, neighbors)
- One woman said she was already singing her new songs to her husband while riding home on the motorbike together
- Sing them while working in the field
- Sing them in the church
- Teach them to children in Sunday School, especially the songs with actions
- Teach them in their small groups with the Bible stories

It is clear to me, as the facilitator, that the participatory approach and tool used in this capacity building event was just what was needed to get the women engaged and confident. It opened the way to clearly connect the actual making of songs with their own life experience and love of music.

When they seemed stuck and unable to think of song styles at the beginning of the participatory tool, it was after lunch and everyone was full and sleepy. I found it funny that my idea to break them into two groups brought out their competitive nature, even though I divided them randomly, not by language teams. It worked much better than I expected.

Additionally, although I do not speak the majority language since I have only recently begun to serve here, and had to work through interpreters, the participatory approach helped the participants engage quickly and have a voice in discussions and decisions. However, I felt deep frustration at not being able to readily understand what was written on the slips of paper being arranged and rearranged on the floor. I dealt with this by having someone read the phrases or words aloud for everyone, and on the side someone told me the English

equivalent. This was perhaps helpful for the other women in the circle who are not skilled readers as well.

I came away from this training event more motivated than ever

to learn to speak the majority language of this area. I felt I missed out on so much because I could not understand what was being said in the discussions, and my interpreter could not possibly tell me everything.

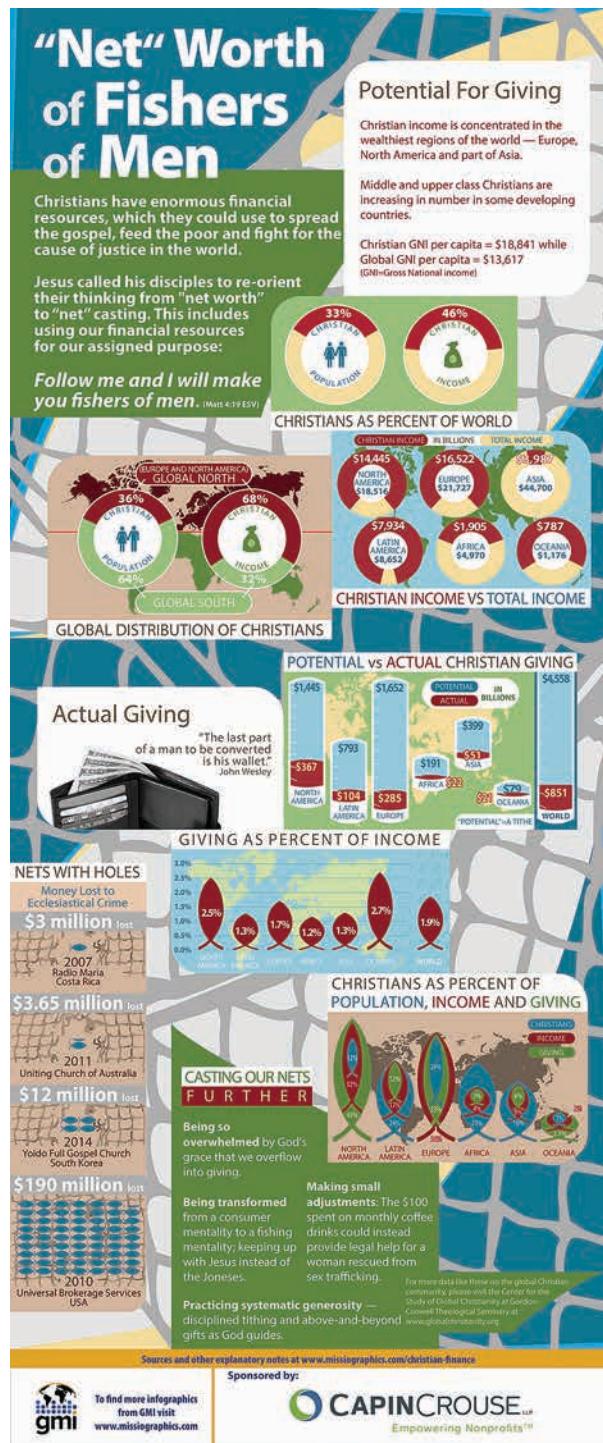






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<b>November 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup></b>	International Orality Network Manila Conference Grace Christian Church Manila, Philippines
<b>December 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup></b>	Finish The Task Conference Saddleback Church, CA, USA <a href="http://www.finishingthetask.com/events.html">http://www.finishingthetask.com/events.html</a>
<b>2016</b>	
<b>March 30<sup>th</sup> - April 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	Pre-EMDC Training Chiang Mai, Thailand
<b>April 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup></b>	EMDC 2016 Chiang Mai, Thailand
<b>June 15<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Global Proclamation Congress for Trainers of Pastors Bangkok, Thailand
<b>June 27<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup></b>	Call2All Seoul, Korea
<b>August 3<sup>rd</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup></b>	Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering By Invitation Only Jakarta, Indonesia



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