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Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh



**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.

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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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Editorial Email: oralityjournal@gmail.com

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National Christian Foundation
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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 digital 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samuel E. Chiang', written in a cursive style.

Samuel E. Chiang
From Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

Growing in Awareness about Oral Communicators

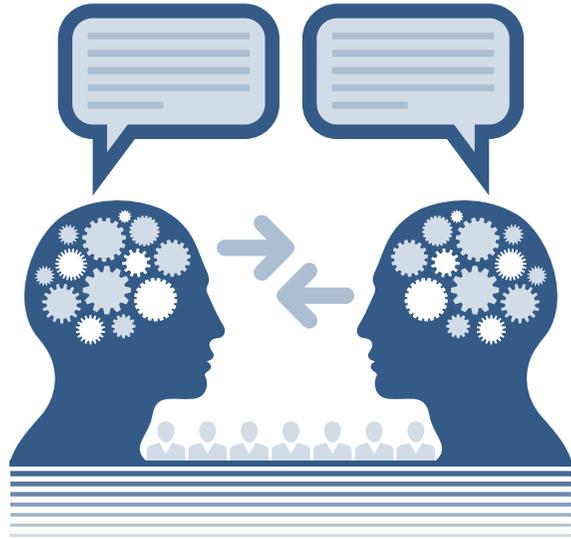
B. P. Varghese

B. P. Varghese, a Regional Manager with Indigenous Bible Translation Organization, has a Masters in Rural Development. He did language survey for six years. Then, with his wife, he spent seven years setting up a team for Cedar translation program. Varghese has taught Sociolinguistics, Discourse Grammar and Project Management in the training program for translators.

This particular facilitation was going to happen as part of a normal visit for myself and the director of my organization to the Othang project. I was to visit that project after two years, and it happened to be right after the Participatory Methods Community of Practice Gathering (CoP), which I had attended in Bangalore,

India. I have been using participatory methods since 2008, and was glad to attend that event. There was a presentation and discussion during the event about facilitating a discussion with oral communicators, so that was the first time I started thinking about this particular process.

Before the CoP, I was thinking of doing some kind of participatory



discussion during the visit to the Othang project, but I was not sure about how I was going to lead it. The oral approach presentation from the Participatory CoP changed my thinking about understanding my audience. I clearly knew that this was an oral group, but the presentation really helped me in understanding how to approach the group with whom I would be facilitating the discussion.

The discussions that happened at the CoP about oral learners were very practical. I realized that before this I had not thought about many communities as oral learners; however, as we talked about the details of who an oral learner was, I had a revelation about many of the groups with whom we were working.

One thing which really helped me was this question:

“What happens when we do a facilitation with oral learners?” Lee, the facilitator of the oral approach presentation at CoP, invited us to list the many things which happen when we do a facilitation among oral learners. Having this list in mind really helped me. These things were in my mind as I prepared for the facilitation and as I was doing the facilitation.

What Oral Participants May Do When They Communicate Well

Share Ideas
 Ask questions
 Speak clearly in simple terms
 Tell a story
 Show good recall
 Repeat things
 Demonstrate good listening
 Use cultural art forms
 Talk expressively
 Use gestures
 Have simultaneous discussions
 Demonstrate ideas
 Have ground realities
 Nod /use words of agreement
 Use facial expressions
 Have creative thinking
 Assure that sub-groups (women, older folks) understand
 Interpret ideas, not just words
 Wait
 Share experiences
 Watch what others do—learn by observing
 Ask what others experience—cross-checking
 Give attention
 Follow cultural rules for order in which to speak
 Reach consensus

Figure 1: List of things oral-preference communicators may do during facilitated discussions.¹

Things that can cause an oral-preference participant to communicate poorly	Things a facilitator can do to help non-literate participants participate well
Poorly facilitated discussion	Ask “What will help the group remember?” Use creative facilitation Show a sense of humor Show respect Understand community background Include a co-facilitator if age is an issue
Being asked to write or being asked to read	Ask participants to repeat Have participants make a song or drama about what is said Have participants make skits about discussion. Ask participants to make a rhyme about what they shared Use graphics, not words Don’t use paper at all
Too abstract	Use simple, concrete, clear explanations
Disruptive noise	Identify and use a quiet location
Oral participants may feel inferior	Have participants discuss in small groups
Lack of information	
Language Barrier between participants, facilitator and/or interpreter	
Low confidence	
Information overload	
Caste Hierarchy	
Passive Mood	
Some may not speak because of cultural expectations	
Not interested in topic	
Interruptions	

Figure 2: A listing of things that might hinder oral-preference communicators from engaging well in discussions; ideas about what facilitators can do to address some of these.

Background on the Othang People Group

I met with around 13-15 people, mostly church pastors and church elders, and community leaders. Maybe five of them were literate in English. Their language is only beginning to be written; none were literate in other languages. There is little interest in literacy in the three larger languages.

During my previous visit a few years back, I met with the community leader and the translation team. The translation team was just forming, so I had only met two of the members in the translation team earlier. They are now a committee and meet together occasionally to review scripture and discuss the language work in that area.

This people group are 100% Christian, mostly from a single denomination which is resistant to translation into local languages. About 80% of them live in a neighboring country and 20% here. My colleague, Deborah², lives in the area and interacts regularly. I am Deborah's supervisor, and visit her and the team there about once a year.

They had drafted the Jesus Film, but because both the production and release had been delayed, the group felt very discouraged. They

had also translated the Gospel of Luke, which was available as an audio recording.

The situation was quite difficult since two governments, several organizations, and their denomination all had considerable power over next steps. One thing we knew that they did have was freedom to create and tell Bible stories in their own languages.

Planning the Discussion for an Oral-preference Group

When we were planning for this particular facilitation, it occurred to me that even their translation is done orally. Their first book, the Gospel of Luke, was done orally. They don't have a printed copy of it. Most of their communication happens orally, and there are not many literate people in the community. For this particular community, scripture will be effective when it is given in an oral form.

The Gospel of Luke is completely in oral form. But they have started asking for a written form, so we are adjusting, fitting our strategy to give a written form as well. Fifteen ethnic groups around them all have a copy of the Bible, each in their own languages. For a Christian community, it is a

mark of prestige to have a book in their language. When you have a scripture, you are identified, even with the government; you have that identification that you are a community.

So as we began to step forward with plans for a Bible translation in this community, we realized the importance of their reason for wanting it. Their desire to be identified as a community with the prestige that scripture brings them is legitimate, but many in the community are not really concerned yet about scriptures being used as a transformative tool in their lives. So we wanted to introduce the concept again of scripture being used to change our lives.

I began to plan how to address this issue in a way that would be meaningful to an oral community. Deborah and I communicated for a while about it, along with Paul, the project leader, who is one of the translators from the community. Paul then invited those that attended the discussion.

As I thought about the things I learned in the CoP meeting about oral learners, I decided to bring up this topic through using the recorded oral stories we have from the Gospel of Luke in

their language. We prepared for the facilitation environment by remembering “what happens in a room with oral learners.”

For example, there is often parallel discussion going on. I could experience that when I went there. I would be talking, and there was parallel discussion happening. Whereas in the past I would probably just stand there and let a group finish their discussion before continuing, I learned to plan to let them continue their parallel discussions while I spoke. I just went ahead, making sure that at least one person in the group understood what I was trying to do. Those who understood continued to explain things to others, and in this way, multiple things were going on at the same time, but everything was advancing. My mindset changed within me, and as a facilitator to an oral community, I knew I should not be worried about the parallel discussion.

During the Participatory Discussion

On the day of the facilitation, several culturally-expected things happened. It is customary for the senior leader in the community to give a formal welcome, so this happened first. In this region, the culturally-accepted welcome is the giving of a shawl. So they

welcomed both the director and I during this event and gave us shawls. After the welcome, Paul gave a status report of what has been happening in Bible translation for these last two years. We then had a time of prayer for the project.

Next, it was appropriate for the director to also address the group. So he gave a formal speech for a few minutes, encouraging the community to move forward and reminding them that just a few years prior the work had not yet been started. He reminded them that because of their involvement, something was now happening.

Then, we moved into our time of discussion. Deborah and I co-facilitated. Our basic plan was to go through the Parable of the Sower with the group. First, we played the audio portion of the Gospel of Luke with this story, and then we asked how they felt about the portion and included a few content questions. Again, we played the recording and asked them to retell the parable, so some people tried retelling it. We went around in the circle asking for different instances in the parable. Finally, we asked one person to retell it to the whole group.

Next, we divided the group into four. We used the Parable of the Sower,

with four types of ground that the seed falls on, as a model. We asked, "Who is willing? We need four people to draw pictures." Someone volunteered and those sitting around that person became a group. Each group received chart paper and markers, and together they came up with a picture: one group did a rocky place, one group did a roadside, etc. Initially, they had some hesitation about drawing it, but once they took up the responsibility, they easily drew it. The group assigned the "good ground" drew a picture of a field which was full of a good crop. In another group's picture, there was the thorny ground, and thorny bush.

While they continued drawing their pictures, we asked them, "What effect was there on the seed when it fell into each of the four places?" Each group explained their thoughts. During this whole time there was talking from us and within the groups.

We wrapped up by discussing the importance of scripture falling onto the right ground. We proposed this question: "How can we make sure that God's word, which is being translated, is getting into the lives of people to change them?" The groups started discussing

the question and we urged them to share God's word among themselves and in their church.

Everyone was quite positive about this particular approach on sharing stories from the Bible to different people. The discussion part of the meeting lasted almost two hours.

The next day, we shared another story with the translation team. It was the story from Luke where Jesus is coming to Martha's house, and Martha is busy preparing food for Jesus while Mary is peacefully sitting at Jesus' feet. We used drawing, but had some discussion as well. This was part of their normal devotion every day. We wanted to see how they felt about a storying approach and the scripture engagement initiative. That also went well.

The translators had a desire to share God's word, in their story format, to different groups of people. So; that was a positive thing. When they started discussing how they could do this, they began saying, "We don't know how to do that. Tell us some guidelines of how we can do that in our community."

We shared about a training program through which we could equip them. They said they would find some people to share stories. Finding the

right people for God's work is always a challenge, but they said, "We will try and find some people for that." Their follow-up plan was to invite people from the community who could be facilitators for storytelling.

What I Have Learned

Looking back at the list of what oral communicators may do, we saw at least eight things occur:

- Telling a story
- Repeating things
- Having simultaneous discussions
- Nodding/using words of agreement
- Using facial expressions
- Waiting
- Watching what others do/ learning by observing
- Following cultural rules for order in which to speak

We also tried several things to help oral preference communicators engage more:

- Use creative facilitation
- Show respect
- Understand the community background
- Ask participants to repeat
- Use graphics, not words
- Use simple, concrete, clear explanations
- Discuss in small groups whenever possible

I learned to understand and accept that this is an oral group. Perhaps in the past I have thought about an oral group as being a second-class group. I am accepting and understanding that this is an equal group with non-oral learners. They have their own ways of communicating and their own

ways of expressing. As a facilitator, respecting that helped me. Also, whenever there were some delays which seemed unnatural to a non-oral group, we just waited. Most of the discussion happened in their language. As facilitators, we learned to wait and let them have the discussion.

¹The items in these two figures were brainstormed at the Participatory Methods CoP Gathering in February 2015

²All names used in this article are pseudonyms.





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“Net” Worth of Fishers of Men

“Net” Worth of Fishers of Men

Christians have enormous financial resources, which they could use to spread the gospel, feed the poor and fight for the cause of justice in the world.

Jesus called his disciples to re-orient their thinking from “net worth” to “net” casting. This includes using our financial resources for our assigned purpose:

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. (MAT 4:19 ESV)

Potential For Giving

Christian income is concentrated in the wealthiest regions of the world — Europe, North America and part of Asia.

Middle and upper class Christians are increasing in number in some developing countries.

Christian GNI per capita = \$18,841 while Global GNI per capita = \$13,617 (GNI=Gross National Income)



CHRISTIANS AS PERCENT OF WORLD



GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANS

POTENTIAL vs ACTUAL CHRISTIAN GIVING



GIVING AS PERCENT OF INCOME



NETS WITH HOLES

Money Lost to Ecclesiastical Crime

- \$3 million lost (2007 Radio Maria, Costa Rica)
- \$3.65 million lost (2011 Uniting Church of Australia)
- \$12 million lost (2014 Yoido Full Gospel Church, South Korea)
- \$190 million lost (2010 Universal Brokerage Services, USA)

CHRISTIANS AS PERCENT OF POPULATION, INCOME AND GIVING

CASTING OUR NETS FURTHER

Being so overwhelmed by God's grace that we overflow into giving.

Being transformed from a consumer mentality to a fishing mentality, keeping up with Jesus instead of the Joneses.

Practicing systematic generosity — disciplined tithing and above-and-beyond gifts as God guides.

Making small adjustments. The \$100 spent on monthly coffee drinks could instead provide legal help for a woman rescued from sex trafficking.

For more data like these on the global Christian community, please visit the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary at www.gordonconwell.edu

Sources and other explanatory notes at www.missiongraphics.com/christian-finance



**Upcoming 2015 and 2016 International Orality Network
'Linked-In' or Sponsored Events:**

October 12th - 15th	All Africa 'Orality and Theological Education' Consultation Daystar University By Invitation Only Nairobi, Kenya
November 27th - 28th	International Orality Network Manila Conference Grace Christian Church Manila, Philippines
December 2nd - 4th	Finish The Task Conference Saddleback Church, CA, USA http://www.finishingthetask.com/events.html
2016	
March 30th - April 2nd	Pre-EMDC Training Chiang Mai, Thailand
April 4th - 7th	EMDC 2016 Chiang Mai, Thailand
June 15th - 22nd	Global Proclamation Congress for Trainers of Pastors Bangkok, Thailand
June 27th - 30th	Call2All Seoul, Korea
August 3rd - 11th	Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering By Invitation Only Jakarta, Indonesia



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