



KITAKYUSHU

JALT2006

Community, Identity, Motivation

The development of a refereed journal for advanced writers of ESL/EFL: Background, theoretical issues, and a call for participation

Ian M. Isemonger

Kochi Women's University (Japan)

Reference Data

Isemonger, I. M. (2007). The development of a refereed journal for advanced writers of ESL/EFL: Background, theoretical issues, and a call for participation. In K. Bradford-Watts (Ed.), *JALT2006 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

This paper outlines experiences in the development of a refereed journal for writers of ESL/EFL at Waseda University in the years 2002 through 2004. Benefits of the project for the writing program are covered. Issues in the use of such a project as an educational tool are discussed in terms of the theoretical notions of goal theory, motivation, and the ecological validity of the writing experience. Finally, plans for taking the project to a national level are reported and a request for participation is made.

本論考は、2002～2004年における早稲田大学での英語学習者を対象とした査読付きジャーナルの発刊に係る経験を概観するものである。この作文プログラム企画の利点が扱われる。そして、このようなプロジェクトを教育上の道具立てとして用いる際の問題点を、目標理論、動機付け、書くという経験の生態学的妥当性という観点から論じる。最後に、本プロジェクトを国レベルにまで広める計画の報告と、プロジェクトへの参加の要請がなされる。

This paper reports on a project designed to provide a refereed forum for students' writing in ESL classes in the form of a journal (*Voices in Writing*) and goes on to call for participants in taking this project to the national level. Originally confined to students at Waseda University, the intention is now to expand the project to a national level. The following paper reports the project's benefits to the program and the problems encountered in running it. Following this, some of the theoretical issues concerning the role of the

journal in student motivation and the ecological validity of the writing process are discussed. Finally, the paper goes on to outline a plan for the expansion of the project to a nationwide level. An appeal is also made to interested parties to become participants in the project. Indeed, the most important reason for the presentation of this short paper is to enlist participants in the running and development of the project.

The past project

The initial reasons for starting the project were the following:

- the journal was envisioned primarily to improve students' writing ability.
- the journal, as a refereed journal, would provide a benchmark for students to aim for in their writing
- the distribution of the journal to various other universities and institutions within and outside Japan would provide a genuine audience for students – enhancing the ecological validity of the writing process. Students would no longer be simulating writing for an imaginary audience stipulated by the lecturer, but would be writing for a real audience
- the journal would give students a voice – hence the name “Voices in Writing”
- the journal would function as a performance motivator for students
- the journal would, if expanded, help in forming a discourse community beyond the University

Overall, the project was very successful. In the second year of the project, we were able to explain the opportunity to publish in the journal to students, and gave each student a copy of the journal. The journal represented some of the best writing from the previous year and this provided the intended high benchmark for students in the following year. The opportunity to publish in the journal was not used as a stick. It was presented as an opportunity to be taken advantage of by students motivated to reach high standards.

Benefits

One benefit was that students gained knowledge in editorial issues leading up to publication. For example, they gained experience in editing and re-editing manuscripts, in responding to requests for changes, and in learning the conventions for in-text citations and references. In this sense, the project was particularly useful in schooling students in the demands of academic writing and publishing in English. Many students were on track to careers where these skills would be of use to them, and we felt we had a positive program in place to prepare students for these demands.

Another benefit was the insertion of students into an academic discourse community, although this was limited by confinement of the program to Waseda University (Starfield, 2001).

Problems

The main problem was the refereeing process. We were accepting papers from different levels of writing classes, including advanced, intermediate, and beginner. In reality

they were all relatively high-level classes because the programs run by the ILT attracted some of the best students at Waseda. Nonetheless, there was a marked difference in ability between classes. Because we wanted to offer the opportunity to publish in the journal to all of these classes, we were presented with the problem that students not making the cut in the advanced class were sometimes better than students making the cut in lower classes. This was not a problem for which we ever found a satisfactory solution. We accommodated the problem by giving higher quotas to the advanced classes, but it would be fair to say that there was a compromise in our application of a single high standard. We justified this to ourselves by focusing on the fact that the main purpose of the journal was as an educational tool.

Other problems included issues of funding, dealing with publishers, and deciding how much editorial intervention was justifiable without suppressing the authenticity of student voices.

Theoretical issues

The section above discussing the past project makes clear that we intended the journal to function as an educational tool through enhancing the ecological validity of the writing process and schooling students in the basic practices involved in writing for academic publication. Another way in which the project influenced the educational process was, as briefly stated above, by providing a performance goal. Two important theoretical domains from within applied linguistics are relevant in understanding this. These are goal orientation and motivation. This paper deals with these two domains separately but it is important to note that they

converge significantly and should be considered interrelated. Heggstad and Kanfer (2000) argue that goal theory is one of the main impetuses for a resurgent interest over the past 15 years in personality factors and their relationship to motivation. Previously, situational factors enjoyed a period of primary research interest.

Goal orientation comprises two broad types of goal, task-oriented goals and performance oriented goals (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Lemos, 1999; Nicholls, 1984; Pajares & Cheong, 2003; Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich, Conley, & Kempler, 2003). While labels may differ slightly (e.g. learning-oriented goal or mastery goal for task-oriented goal), the analytical substance of the distinction is relatively clear. The task-oriented-goal construct represents mastery of, or competence in, the task for its own sake. The goal, in other words, is intrinsic to the task itself. The performance oriented goal construct represents mastery of the task to demonstrate competence. As such it includes a normative (and ego) component where the individual is striving to demonstrate good performance relative to others (Pintrich et al., 2003). Within this construct framework, the project reported in this paper incorporates the performance goal orientation category, particularly since the journal was refereed.

Much of the existing research favors task oriented goals over performance oriented goals. Some research indicates that performance goals may not always be adaptive (Urdu, 1997; Urdu & Maehr, 1995). However, the separation of this construct into performance-approach and performance-avoidance sub-constructs (A. Elliot, 1997, 1999; A. Elliot & Church, 1997; A. Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; A.

Elliot & McGregor, 2001; A. Elliot & Thrash, 2002; A. J. Elliot & Moller, 2003; Elliott, 1995) has facilitated a more positive approach to how performance oriented goals can work positively. Performance approach refers to striving to succeed in a performance goal, and performance avoidance refers to striving to avoid failure in a performance goal. This distinction represents a positive or negative individual response to a performance goal scenario. Quite obviously, the performance approach response is desirable while the performance avoidance response is not because it produces maladaptive behavior.

In terms of motivation, it is important to note that much of the research structures itself around how motivation influences the types of goals set by an individual rather than the other way around. In the case of the project reported in this presentation, the goal of publishing in the refereed journal was not set by students, but by their teachers. Students adopted the goal for themselves. It is also important to note that publication in the journal was voluntary and attracted performance approach-type students. Students opting out may fall into the performance avoidance category, but the avoidance occurred only once when they opted out. Publication as a goal wasn't forced on the students.

The above analysis shows that teachers who view performance goals as potentially positive motivators will want to participate in this project.

Expanding the project to a national level

The reason for this presentation at the 2006 JALT conference is not only to report experience from the past but also to

outline plans for the future. The three people who were involved with the project have since left Waseda (although one has returned in a new capacity) and the project has dissociated itself from the university. I would like to take the project to the national level and dissociate it from any particular institution or university. In this regard, we are looking for motivated partners who are interested in joining at ground level in what is essentially the re-launching of the project—possibly under a new name. The rest of this paper outlines the issues for this re-launching and the kind of participation we are seeking. I am outlining the issues and not stipulating the solutions. It is hoped that all initial participants in the re-launch can work together to address the issues raised here.

Name and copyright issues

The original journal under the name *Voices in Writing* was published through Waseda University. Since we want to launch this journal nationally and cut institutional affiliations, there are issues concerning copyright of the name “*Voices in Writing*”. We are dealing with this at the moment. However, if this proves problematic we will change the name.

Content issues

One difficult issue to deal with concerns the content area of the journal. Academic journals within the normal public sphere usually have a very narrow focus. A journal dedicated to the writing of NNSs cannot afford a narrow charter. Many students in advanced classes come from a variety of different

academic backgrounds and the journal should afford all students the opportunity to publish without prejudice toward their area of academic interest. In this regard, the journal would have to offer a range of content areas supporting a range of discourse types.

Formatting issues

The issue of formatting is connected to the wider content focus. Many students within the social sciences will be used to APA format. However, if we open the journal to technical writing from engineering students, the formatting with which they are familiar will differ. The journal will have to accommodate different formatting styles. There are also some technical demands if the journal is to be online (see below).

Online or hardcopy

There is an enduring attraction to hardcopy despite the obvious benefits of electronic access via the Internet. However, hardcopy is more expensive and difficult to implement. A good publisher is required and communication between publisher and editors needs to be efficient. We received funding from Waseda for the original hardcopy version produced, but without such funding an electronic version delivered via the Web may be optimal. Expenses for a virtual domain and provider are minimal. A version of Voices in Writing is “under construction” and available at <http://www.voicesinwriting.org>. If the name of the journal changes, the current site can be migrated to another site.

Varieties of participation

There are a number of different levels at which teachers can participate. At the lowest level of active involvement, the teacher would act as a conduit for student submissions by informing students of the opportunity available, how to submit, and whether their work is within reach of acceptance. In this level of involvement teachers are agents for student submissions.

The next level of involvement would be as a referee. We need people with various backgrounds to referee the diverse content expected. We want to keep this load as low as possible by asking teachers who encourage submissions by students to only encourage those with a realistic chance of having their paper accepted. In some ways teachers who encourage their students to submit are the first line of the referee process.

At the next level of involvement, we need editors. This would probably include the senior editor, associate editors, and editors of particular content areas. Also at this level of involvement we need technical know-how for the web implementation of the journal. I have so far taken responsibility for this and am happy to continue doing so, but it would be helpful to have others involved who have at least a basic knowledge of html and MS FrontPage, a suitable application for running the site. I can manage the site, but we need people to format pages in html and carry some of the burden.

Conclusion

The project outlined, in my view, holds a great deal of promise for augmenting advanced writing education in

English. If the project develops well nationally, there are also prospects to expand it to an international level. However, it would be best to start with small steps and expand after some level of clear success. Interested parties can contact me by email at <ian@cc.kochi-wu.ac.jp>.

Ian Isemonger is currently an Associate Professor at Kochi Women's University in Japan. He has research interests in psychometrics and implicit and explicit knowledge.

References

- Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms Goals structures and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *84*, 261-271.
- Dweck, C., & Leggett, E. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, *95*, 256-273.
- Elliot, A. (1997). Integrating the "classic" and "contemporary" approaches to achievement motivation: A hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation. In M. Maehr & P. Pintrich (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 10, pp. 143-179). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Elliot, A. (1999). Approach and avoidance motivation and achievement goals. *Educational Psychologist*, *34*, 169-189.
- Elliot, A., & Church, M. (1997). A hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*(1), 218-232.
- Elliot, A., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (1996). Approach and avoidance achievement goals and intrinsic motivation: A mediational analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*(3), 461-475.
- Elliot, A., & McGregor, H. (2001). A 2x2 achievement goal framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 501-519.
- Elliot, A., & Thrash, T. (2002). Approach-avoidance motivation in personality: Approach and avoidance temperaments and goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*(5), 804-818.
- Elliot, A. J., & Moller, A. C. (2003). Performance-approach goals: Good or bad forms of regulation? *International Journal of Educational Research*, *39*, 339-356.
- Elliott, A. R. (1995). Field independence/dependence, hemispheric specialization, and attitude in relation to pronunciation accuracy in Spanish as a foreign language. *The Modern Language Journal*, *79*(3), 356-371.
- Heggestad, E. D., & Kanfer, R. (2000). Individual differences in trait motivation: Development of the Motivational Trait Questionnaire. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *33*, 751-776.
- Lemos, M. S. (1999). Students' goals and self-regulation in the classroom. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *31*, 471-485.
- Nicholls, J. (1984). Achievement motivation: Conceptions of ability, subjective experience, task choice, and performance. *Psychological Review*, *91*, 328-346.

- Pajares, F., & Cheong, Y. F. (2003). Achievement goal orientations in writing: A developmental perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research, 39*, 437–455.
- Pintrich, P. R. (2000). An achievement goal theory perspective on issues in motivation terminology, theory, and research. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 92-104.
- Pintrich, P. R., Conley, A. M., & Kempler, T. M. (2003). Current issues in achievement goal theory and research. *International Journal of Educational Research, 39*, 319-337.
- Starfield, S. (2001). 'I'll go with the group': Rethinking 'discourse community' in EAP. In J. Flowerdew & P. Matthew (Eds.), *Research perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*, pp. 132-148. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Urdan, T. C. (1997). Achievement goal theory: Past results, future directions. In M. Maehr & P. Pintrich (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 10, pp. 99-142). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Urdan, T. C., & Maehr, M. (1995). Beyond a two goal theory of motivation: a case for social goals. *Review of Educational Research, 65*, 213-244.