Editorial: Publishing in Applied Linguistics and TESOL

We are thankful to be back with another *IJC&ELT* issue, and to continue the conversation here by first writing briefly about publishing in the field and then introducing this second volume.

Writing and Publishing are Hard – Why Bother?

As we noted in our first editorial, one reason we started the *IJC&ELT* was to enable readers around the world to freely access insights, reflections, and research from Christians in applied linguistics, and more specifically English language teaching. But we need to be frank: writing and publishing are hard. So why should one bother? This is a question we have asked ourselves and shared with others about as we presented workshops on publishing in applied linguistics and TESOL periodicals at the CELT 2014 Portland (Michael) and CELT 2014 Taipei (Andy) conferences. In these pages we would like to share some of our thoughts on these issues.

Nowadays it is usual not only for long-term faculty but also contingent educators to be required to present and publish (Graham, 2015), whether book or technology reviews, empirical research, lesson plans, literature surveys, or personal reflections. This expectation can lead to significant stress, but may also be rewarding, as Lee (2014) makes clear. The simple fact is that academic and professional publishing is evolving (Byrnes, 2010), and this adds to the stress not only teachers and researchers experience, but also journal editors and publishers. For potential authors, there is a definite need for discernment, to avoid bogus journals that simply want your money (Renandya, 2014a) and to find just the right outlet for your work (Renandya, 2014b).

We are grateful that Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA) members have various options, both secular and Christian, for sharing our thoughts and research. Michael maintains a list of periodicals in applied linguistics and TESOL¹ and updates it once or twice and year, and the current version includes just over 900 relevant newsletters and journals. In English language teaching (ELT), language is key to our task, so that list includes many linguistic and applied linguistic periodicals as well as educational ones that deal more with second and foreign language teaching. *CELEA News* publishes two issues a year (see [http://www.celea.net/page-1636494](http://www.celea.net/page-1636494)), of short articles, reviews, and reflection pieces, with the most recent issues sent to members before wider online access (usually after a year). The

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¹ Available at [https://www.academia.edu/1743072/Periodicals_of_Interest_in_Applied_Linguistics_and_TESOL](https://www.academia.edu/1743072/Periodicals_of_Interest_in_Applied_Linguistics_and_TESOL).
IJC&ELT is an open access, online refereed journal, and readers with Internet may therefore download complete issues, individual articles, or sections (like the front matter and reviews).

Yet writing is hard work, and publishing is even more difficult. One needs to think carefully about how to communicate something in writing, for a diverse audience that can independently pick up or download a journal or newsletter article where they cannot pose follow up clarification questions to the author, as people do in a conference presentation. And if one is able to write something considered helpful, there is no guarantee it will be accepted, or even be received as one expects or hopes. This journal, for example, is focused on Christians in ELT and perspectives of interest to them, so a general lesson plan or reflection would not be accepted. Even things we editors think have promise do not always make the reviewers’ cut. The IJC&ELT, for example, doesn’t send everything we receive out for review (some submissions are simply not appropriate), but of those that make our initial cut, we are able to accept about only 25% of papers submitted, as they must be approved by at least two reviewers. And in most cases even accepted articles go through several versions before something is published here.

So why even try? As we noted, an occasional presentation or publication may be required to keep or improve your job, apply for a promotion, or even to make the final list for a TESOL job interview. Publish or perish? Maybe not, but for many teachers and researchers, publishing is becoming more common. Presenting at a conference (like CELT, TESOL, or your local teacher’s conference) is great, but it limits one’s audience. As we noted in our first editorial (Lessard-Clouston & Gao, 2014), putting one’s ideas into print or online enables graduate students, teachers, and researchers to share their ideas and research more widely, over a more indefinite period of time. Wong (2014) noted in our first volume that Christians need to contribute to the field and offer faith perspectives in order both to grow personally and professionally, but also if Christians as a group are going to earn people’s respect and thus have a place at the table in our field where we can pose questions, report our empirical research, and also offer our own insights and worldview. We hope the IJC&ELT is, and will be, an outlet for Christians in our field to share their innovations, reflections, and research results. We believe that we have perspectives to offer, and we know writing is valued, as God is a writer (Exodus 31:18, 32:16; Daniel 5:5-6), and Jesus wrote (John 8:1-11). Writing influences people, and sharing one’s well-written work, whether an article or review, in a journal can challenge and inspire others, as Lee’s lead article in this issue on living out our Christian faith in the writing classroom reveals so nicely!
Why You Should Not Try To Publish

So while we encourage readers to contribute professionally to our field by writing and publishing as they have opportunity, we also remind you to count the cost. Writing and publishing articles, particularly empirical research, is difficult, hard work, and if your ego is weak, please recognize rejection is the norm! This is true for everyone – the famous people whose articles and textbooks you’ve read, as well as the obscure person whose one published piece made such a difference in your thinking and teaching. Honestly, perhaps one shouldn’t try to publish unless they feel called to do so. Another reason not to try to publish is because you think you will make money. Very few academic authors, researchers, writers, etc., ever make anything from writing and publishing, but instead often end up buying copies of our own works to be able to share them with people we meet and want to help! Finally, in this politically correct era, if you are interested in controversial topics, it may be best to present your thoughts and research in person, and not publish them. When you publish an article or review nowadays, you leave an electronic paper trail where things can easily be taken out of context and used against you. Just ask someone who has been criticized in print or suffered more seriously because of their views. We are to be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Some Simple Suggestions for Starting to Publish

Obviously, as academics who not only do the hard work to publish ourselves but also volunteer by editing this journal as a service to others, we firmly believe that writing and publishing are valuable, and worth all the effort. So, if you get good feedback on a class activity, conference poster presentation, paper, talk, etc., then please consider sharing it more widely by investing the time to consider where it might be well received, write it up, get feedback on the written version, revise it accordingly, and then submit it to an appropriate newsletter or journal.

As with other aspects of life, you should ideally write about what you know and topics with which you have some useful experience and expertise. Pray and talk to God about it. Due to the long term work involved (and very real potential for rejection) it’s always helpful to write about that which you are passionate. We encourage you to think about how you can contribute by adding positive insights, observations, and well analyzed and presented data. Expect to write multiple drafts, get detailed feedback from good writers, edit, revise, and update your written work accordingly prior to then submitting it somewhere.
If writing for an academic audience, follow the advice of experts in the field, such as Curry and Lillis (2013) and editors like Coleman (2014) and Smith (2010). The right outlet may be in print or online, a newsletter or journal, local or (inter)national. TESOL International Association (2014) publishes an annual document on how to get published, and Renandya’s (2014b) article on choosing the right journal offers lots of wisdom for those who might like to make the effort. Some additional suggestions: be sure to follow the publication’s Instructions for Contributors (like ours on pp. iii-iv), use the correct formatting style (APA in our case), and if you are considering the *IJC&ELT* feel free to shoot us an email on your ideas before you spend a lot of time working on a submission. We can then let you know if it is of interest to us. Finally, if you do submit an article somewhere and it is rejected, or a ‘revise and resubmit’ is suggested (often the case!), Schneiderhan and Seifert (2013) offer good suggestions for moving forward.

The Current Issue

We are again pleased that the lead article in the current issue comes from a plenary talk, by Icy Lee at the CELT 2014 Taipei conference in Taiwan. In a very accessible and personal fashion, using various examples from her experience, Lee challenges Christians to live out our faith in the writing classroom, but also to be models to our students and colleagues. Both of us and our reviewers felt encouraged by reading this piece, and we hope you will be, too.

The next article, by Timothy Mossman, focuses on privilege in academia, a topic of particular interest to those with a critical perspective in ELT. By recounting his experience in coming to terms with his own power and privilege, Mossman reminds us in this reflective piece that all teachers have both acquired and ascribed identities as people made in the image of God. He goes on to share how his own doctoral research and work have changed as a result.

The review process for next article, by Michael Lessard-Clouston, was handled by Dr. Andy Gao. Like the first two papers, this one originated in a Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) conference presentation, and reflects on four questions about ELT and empowerment. Clearly aimed at Christians in TESOL, Lessard-Clouston’s article considers some criticism and issues in the field that have sometimes impacted Christians negatively. Drawing on the literature and Scripture, he offers principles and practices that might help guide us.

We have one shorter article in our “Forum” section, by Teresa Lin, who explores the role of spirituality in the ecology of language learning. Lin argues for how spirituality can fit into the
language classroom, and outlines both potential areas for future research and ways to shift our pedagogical perspectives. Since Dr. Earl Stevick was a model and encouragement to so many in TESOL, and worked hard to encourage Christians in particular, we are grateful that we can next share brief remembrances of him by Carolyn Kristjánsson and Herbert Purnell in this section. Once again, we unfortunately do not have any short “In the Classroom” contributions to include here, but we want to draw your attention to this option for potential articles which focus on teaching activities, techniques, or classroom action research. We welcome such submissions!

Volume 2 ends with three reviews of books that we believe will interest CELEA members and IJC&ELT readers. Michael Medley’s longer review discusses an edited book which was a Festschrift for Dr. Earl Stevick and considers his influence on language teaching. Next Eleanor Pease outlines and evaluates Zoltán Dörnyei and Magdalena Kubanyiova’s tome on motivating both learners and teachers. Finally, Kazue Suzuki reviews a book on academic faithfulness and learning for the love of God, topics relevant to Christian professionals in ELT.

Acknowledgements and Appreciations

A journal like this requires many helpers. We are grateful to each person who submitted something for inclusion here, even if your submission was not published, and we acknowledge our many reviewers who volunteered their time and expertise. We thank Biola University’s Department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL for offering support to Michael, as well as for the platform to provide information about the journal and to publish our first volumes on the web. We recognize Michael’s new Dean in the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Dr. Bulus Galadima, for encouraging this work and for offering funds to provide a graduate student editorial assistant. Sheila Ewert has ably filled that role, and we thank her for her detailed touch reflected throughout this issue. Finally, thank you to our readers, for whom the IJC&ELT exists!

An On-going Invitation

We invite you to consider, read, and respond to the contributions in this second volume of the International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching. You may contact either us or the article authors and book reviewers by email. We hope these essays and reviews will engender good discussion and encourage you in your ELT work. We value your interest!

The IJC&ELT still needs to develop an improved submission and reviewing platform. We welcome your prayers for this to happen (as well as for the funds for that). If you would like
to volunteer to help or offer some computer or other service we might require, please contact us. And please help us as we try to continue to build on what God seems to be doing, by your prayer support, through future submissions to the journal, and by reading and sharing it with students, teachers, and others in your circle of influence who may find it useful. Happy reading!

References

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