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International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching

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edited by Michael Lessard-Clouston & Xuesong (Andy) Gao

The editors extend their appreciation to all the referees who volunteered their time and expertise in reading, interacting with, and evaluating the manuscripts they received.

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Editorial: Welcome to the *IJC&ELT*!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*. In this first editorial we would like to summarize the history of this new publication, explain how it has come about, and introduce you to ourselves and to this volume.

Beginnings

For the last decade, I (Michael) have attended Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) conferences (see Wong's article in this issue for more on CELT). There I noticed that the only people who benefitted from the great talks, research, and discussions at those wonderful events were those in attendance. I asked others about potentially creating a periodical where presenters might submit and perhaps publish article versions of their conference contributions, in order to reach a larger audience. Without exception, everyone thought it was a grand idea.

At the American Association for Applied Linguistics conference in Costa Mesa, California (AAAL 2007), I spoke with Tom Scovel and Zoltán Dörnyei about this journal possibility, and they were encouraging but said that they could not take on such a new venture. As I shared this update with my friend Xuesong (Andy) Gao at a small Chinese restaurant during AAAL 2007, over some great noodles he challenged me to start the journal myself. I told Andy I would think and pray about it, but I could not imagine doing so alone. At the time I co-edited the *CETC Newsletter*, published by TESOL, and I responded then that it was my priority.

After TESOL closed all its caucuses in 2008, including the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus (CETC), the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA) was formed and it became clear that a new venue for communication was necessary, so I founded *CELEA News*, another newsletter. It has published two issues a year since 2009¹ and fills an important role for regular communication with CELEA members. Sometimes I invited CELT presenters to write short versions of their presentations for the newsletter, but it really had no space for longer research or theory pieces, and my desire grew to help others to access some of the riches from those conferences. Later I asked Andy if he would co-edit a journal with me for CELEA, and he thankfully agreed. After several volumes of *CELEA News*, I was able to pass the lead on the newsletter to my co-editor Jan Dormer, so that I could focus on founding this journal.

¹ Visit <http://celea.wildapricot.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1636494>.

Yet how does one create a journal with no funds, no release time from work, and no technical expertise? In our case one prays, talks with valued mentors and colleagues, asks for some favours, tries some creative things, and works hard! It is wonderful that two editors on different continents are able to work largely electronically, via email and Skype, in addition to conference meetings. After Michael's dean at Biola agree to help fund initial web pages for the journal, we drafted and got feedback on a proposal for the journal, which we then sent to about two dozen potentially interested folks (including all those Michael had spoken with earlier at conferences over the years). This step proved to be very helpful, since it enabled us to clarify our aims and led to the title we chose. We were then able to use the proposal to prepare information for potential contributors, and put that online. One version of that information is available in the front matter for this issue (pp. ii-iv), which we encourage you to read when you find time.

With such information available online we started to receive manuscripts and invited colleagues, graduate students, and others to read our guidelines and consider submitting something. As our "about" page (p. ii) makes clear, we hope to engender some thoughtful contributions and discussions, especially among Christians working in English language teaching (ELT), but we also want to do so in a robust manner that will withstand the scrutiny usually applied to scholarly academic and professional publications. This means we are grateful to the 17 members of our editorial review board, as well as half a dozen others, who responded to our requests to read and evaluate the various contributions we received. All of those included here have gone through several versions, and in some cases several reviews, before acceptance. To be honest, we had hoped for a larger first issue, but we want to start somewhere and are pleased with Volume 1. We know that there are other potential contributions in the works, as well, since a number of those we considered and responded to received "revise and resubmit" decisions.

A refereed journal like this one means that all of the articles were evaluated by the editors and approved by two or more additional specialists related to the area being addressed. We rejected a number of submissions, some of which were not really appropriate and others that were simply not ready for publication for various reasons. We hope that some submissions we dealt with will be improved, rewritten, resubmitted, and may be accepted in the future. As Jan Dormer notes in her review in this issue, doing research and publishing it is difficult. We thus applaud all the contributors to this issue and express our appreciation for their work in getting the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching* off to a wonderful start.

In This Inaugural Issue

We chose the title for this *journal* because we hope that it will become truly *international*, and publish a range of empirical, practical, review, and theoretical articles related to the learning and *teaching* of *English*, yet with a *Christian* perspective in mind. We are thus delighted that the lead article in this issue comes from a plenary talk by Mary Wong at the CELT 2013 conference in Dallas, Texas. As Wong discusses the history, nature, and possible future of faith-informed research in English language teaching, we believe it is a fitting way to begin this inaugural volume. In answering a number of helpful questions, Wong's survey offers CELEA members insights into the background of the association and challenges *IJC&ELT* readers to sustain Christian ELT research and to nurture and contribute to further areas needing exploration.

The next article, by Hiromi Takahashi, presents research on nonnative English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) self-perceived language proficiency levels, anxieties, and learning strategies. Drawing on data from an online survey, Takahashi considers some of the challenges NNESTs face in their work, as well as some possibilities. Of particular interest to us was how she brings potential Christian perspectives, including her own, to these topics. The following article by Paul Wicking considers faith and pedagogy, reporting on an interview study conducted with five Christian teachers in Japan. Wicking shows how individual teachers approached their work, and how they created meaning of their faith and pedagogy, yet largely without overt evangelism in their classes. Our final main article by Kitty Purgason also reports on a survey, but this time concerning student and teacher views of English, and whether it is a force for good or ill. Purgason connects her results to the literature on this topic and indicates how positive effects of English and ELT might be encouraged while potentially negative ones may be countered.

We include one shorter article in our "Forum" section, by Michael Westwood on reconciliation in the ESL classroom. Westwood discusses why this topic is of interest both to teachers and students who are Christian and those who are not, and then briefly considers some ways that this issue might be addressed in ESL/EFL classes. Although we do not have any short "In the Classroom" contributions to include in this initiatory volume, we do want to draw your attention to this category of potential submissions, which focus on teaching activities, techniques, or classroom action research (see our Information for Contributors if you would like to send us something for that section). We hope to receive some of these submissions and to mentor authors so that their work in this area may appear in future volumes of *IJC&ELT*.

This volume ends with three reviews of books that we believe will be of interest to CELEA members and *IJC&ELT* readers. Jan Dormer's review is actually much longer than we normally expect, but since it discusses the very first collection of empirical research on Christian faith and ELT we are delighted to include it and bring the contents of this important work edited by Mary Wong, Carolyn Kristjánsson, and Zoltán Dörnyei to readers' attention. (Full disclosure: Michael has a chapter in that book under review.) Next Bill Acton evaluates Michael Pasquale and Nathan Bierma's *Every Tribe and Tongue*, which discusses a biblical vision for language in society. Lastly, Marilyn Lewis discusses Jan Dormer's *Teaching English in Missions*. These key books being reviewed touch on various topics relevant to Christian professionals in ELT.

Acknowledgements and Appreciations

A publication like this takes a global village. We thank each person who submitted something for inclusion here, and acknowledge our important reviewers who offered their time and expertise gratis. We appreciate their mentoring not only the authors whose work appears here, but also those whose submissions did not make the cut (yet). We are grateful to Biola University's Department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL for providing support to Michael, as well as for the funds and platform to provide online information about the journal and to publish the first volume on the web. For this we must recognize Michael's Dean in the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Dr. Douglas Pennoyer. Thank you for believing in this work! We also thank all the mentors and scholars who listened to our ideas and later gave us feedback on the journal proposal which eventually led to this *IJC&ELT*. We hope you enjoy the results. A final note of gratitude must be expressed to Daniel McClary, who volunteered his time and talents to work with us to design the *IJC&ELT* logo and cover page. Thank you for your efforts, Daniel!

An Invitation

We invite you to read, reflect on, and potentially respond to the contributions in this initial volume of the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*. Please feel free to contact either us or the article authors and book reviewers by email. We hope to start some good dialogue and discussion, as well as to encourage you in your work. Please feel free to email us your reactions to this issue and to suggest potential topics or materials that you would like to see included in future volumes. If you have written something relevant that you

received good feedback on, you might read the Information for Contributors (pp. iii-iv) and then consider revising it to submit for possible future publication. We value your interest and support!

Moving forward, the *IJC&ELT* needs to develop a more sophisticated submission and reviewing platform, and we covet your prayers for this to happen (as well as for the funds to enable it). If you would like to volunteer to help proofread manuscripts, or offer some computer or other service we might require, please contact us. This inaugural issue is really just a start, but we are grateful for what God seems to be doing. Please help us as we build on this humble beginning, through your prayer support, submissions to the journal, and by reading and sharing it with colleagues, students, and others you know who might find it useful. To God be the glory!

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About the *IJC&ELT* Editors

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Xuesong (Andy) Gao (Ph.D., Hong Kong) is an Associate Professor in the Division of English Language Education within the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. He has lived and worked in Belgium, China, Hong Kong, and the U.K., and his articles have appeared in many publications, including *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, *ELT Journal*, *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Modern Language Journal*, and *TESOL Quarterly*, among others. He is author of *Strategic Language Learning: The Roles of Agency and Context* (2010), co-editor of *Identity, Motivation and Autonomy in Language Learning* (2011, both Multilingual Matters), and co-author of *Language Teacher Education in a Multilingual Context: Experiences from Hong Kong* (2014, Springer). He is co-editor of the journal *System* (Elsevier), and his research interests include higher education, language learning strategies, learner autonomy, sociolinguistics, and teacher development. For more on Andy and his work, visit http://web.edu.hku.hk/academic_staff.php?staffId=xsgao.

