Volume 2
March 2015

International Journal of Christianity & English Language Teaching

A refereed, online journal on Christianity and ELT

http://cook.biola.edu/publications/ijcelt/
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About the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*

The *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching (IJC&ELT)* is the official journal of the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA, see [http://www.celea.net/](http://www.celea.net/)) and is supported by the Department of Applied Linguistics & TESOL at Biola University ([http://cook.biola.edu/programs/linguistics-tesol/](http://cook.biola.edu/programs/linguistics-tesol/)). It publishes articles and reviews related to English Language Teaching (ELT), with a perspective of particular interest to Christians, and specifically Christian English language educators.

The mandate of *IJC&ELT* (ISSN 2334-1866, online) includes the following aims:

- to publish articles and reviews related to ELT, using a Christian perspective
- to stimulate the integration of the Christian faith and learning and teaching in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- to encourage and thus promote critical reflection, discussion, engaging theory, excellent research, and inspirational practice in applied linguistics and TESOL
- to provide an international approach to English language teaching and research
- to offer an open access forum that shares knowledge and applies high academic standards, including double blind peer review

As an international publication, the *IJC&ELT* recognizes that there are diverse Christian traditions and perspectives throughout the world and it therefore welcomes articles and reviews that deal with and address different Christian traditions and their connections to English language teaching. The main readership, however, is CELEA members, who themselves come from and bring a range of Christian perspectives to their work in ELT.

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Information for Contributors

Aims and Scope
The International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching (ISSN 2334-1866, online) is an international peer reviewed open access journal that publishes quality empirical, practical, review, and theoretical papers covering a broad range of issues in English language teaching and research. IJC&ELT is thus an interdisciplinary forum, publishing both original research and teaching articles, as well as stimulating reflections and reviews of interest to Christians and others in TESOL. It aims to provide an international forum for established and emerging teachers, researchers, and others committed to ELT from a Christian point of view.

Audience
The International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching is primarily intended for use in the academic community, especially for members of the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA, see http://www.celea.net/ or http://celea.wildapricot.org/), its sponsor. Yet IJC&ELT's interdisciplinary nature also makes it accessible and of interest to educators of various types (including teacher trainers and those working with English language learners), curriculum developers and materials writers, Christian organizations concerned about language issues, and other interested practitioners, researchers, and theorists.

Focus and Format
With the above audience and policies below in mind, the focus of the International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching is primarily on, though not restricted to, the following areas of inquiry, practice, and thinking in English language teaching:

- applied linguistics and language and culture learning and teaching
- classroom and other best practices in TESOL
- design and development of EFL/EIL/ELL/ESL/ESP curricula and materials
- ELT skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and methodologies
- innovations in teaching and learning English as a second/foreign language
- TESOL teacher education, research, and training
- theory and practice in second/foreign language learning and teaching

As an international publication whose primary audience is Christian English language educators and other interested parties, all contributions should approach the focus or topic at hand recognizing a Christian point of view, though readers realize that this may be more detailed or obvious in some cases and yet may appear less so in other instances. Submissions may be drawn from relevant presentations (CELT or other conferences, for example) or reflect classroom practices, research, or reviews of potential interest to IJC&ELT readers.

The journal includes four distinct sections:

Articles – reports of empirical studies, review papers or meta-analyses, theoretical position papers, etc. These should not exceed 7,000 words, including references.

In the Classroom – descriptions of teaching activities or techniques, classroom action research, etc., within a relevant theoretical framework, not to exceed 4,000 words.

Forum – position papers or reactions to articles or reviews, opinion or viewpoint articles, or reports, interviews, or commentary on current topics of interest. These submissions should also not exceed 4,000 words, including references.
Reviews – evaluative book, materials, and software reviews relevant to IJC&ELT readers. These will not usually exceed 1,500 words, including references.

Policies
In order to reach the widest readership possible, the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching* is published online through the IJC&ELT website (http://cook.biola.edu/publications/ijcelt/), where editorials, articles, reviews, and other relevant communications are freely downloadable in the form of PDF files. CELEA members, libraries, or other readers may print out the complete issue file for themselves. If there is interest and demand, in the future we may offer hard copy issues through a print-on-demand publisher.

Given that the focus is English language teaching, the language of the journal is English. Initially the frequency of issues will be one per year, with the hope that this may increase, assuming a sufficient quantity of quality contents that pass blind peer review. Preference will be given to articles and reviews that make clear, helpful, and fresh contributions to the field of ELT within a Christian perspective, broadly conceived. Articles, advertisements, and reviews do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of the editors, editorial review board, or CELEA. Submissions may be made by readers around the world. Accepted papers and reviews will be approved by the editors and at least two additional readers, as appropriate for the IJC&ELT based on their contributions, originality, and relevance.

Articles and reviews shall conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA style, 6th ed.). Authors who publish in the IJC&ELT retain copyright of their work, enabling the unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction of their article or review in any medium, provided that they formally cite the original publication in the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*.

Manuscripts must not have been previously published or currently submitted for review at another journal. Authors should inform the editors if related research or a similar version of their manuscript has been published or is under consideration elsewhere. Authors will not be paid for articles or reviews; neither will they be charged publication fees. Authors, like readers, may freely download and print as many copies of their work in IJC&ELT as desired.

Submissions
Contributions should be in the form of Word documents submitted at IJCandELT@gmail.com. Manuscripts which do not conform to the guidelines in the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition, 2010) may not be sent for external review. The IJC&ELT welcomes articles from both native- and non-native English speakers, yet requests that ideas in submissions be expressed clearly for a broad, international audience. Authors are responsible for fluent language use, as well as for the accuracy of any data, references, or citations they incorporate into their work. Obtaining permission to incorporate any previously copyrighted material is the author’s responsibility. The editors reserve the right to make minor editing changes without prior consultation with authors. Major editing or revisions, however, will only be done in consultation with authors.

Please see IJC&ELT’s website, http://cook.biola.edu/publications/ijcelt/, for the latest information about the journal. We value your contributions, prayers, and readership.
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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Living Out the Christian Faith in the Writing Classroom

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Abstract
This article addresses three questions from the perspective of a Christian writing teacher educator: (1) How can we live out our Christian faith and values in the teaching of writing? (2) How can we help students become more aware of issues of spirituality and develop God-given abilities through writing? (3) How can we encourage students to write in ways that are pleasing to God? To address the first question, I draw mainly upon my own research on feedback and classroom writing assessment in L2 writing, as well as my experience as a writing teacher educator in Hong Kong, and address issues about Christian faith and values as we respond to and assess student writing. To address the second question, I explore a range of writing pedagogies that teachers can adopt to encourage students to attend to issues of spirituality, create meaning and express individuality, and above all, to foster God-given abilities in students. Finally, to address the third question, I examine what teachers can do to encourage students to write in ways that are pleasing to God, for instance, when they are engaged in Internet-based social networking. I conclude by suggesting that teachers can live out their Christian faith through writing and teaching writing, and it is important that they serve as good role models for students by taking on the role of writers themselves.

Key words: Christian faith, ESL/EFL writing, feedback, peer review, teaching writing

Introduction
I have developed a strong conviction about the power of the written language since I was a primary student. I wrote letters to pen pals, and I wrote encouraging words in bookmarks and cards for my friends. But that was decades ago. Recently, I learnt from a friend, a scholar in L2 writing, that my words have made a difference in her life. She has published an article in a well-respected teacher magazine in Japan, sharing her experience about getting to know me through our email exchanges, finding my messages warm and inspiring, and feeling encouraged by my words. I have become even more convinced that through writing, we can make a positive impact on others.

As Christian English language educators, how can we maximize the positive impact of the written language on students so that they can develop through writing and use it in ways that

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1 This article is based on a plenary paper delivered at the Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT 2014 Taipei) conference held at Christ College in Taipei, Taiwan in May 2014.
are pleasing to God? This question provides the point of departure for this article. Wearing the hat of a writing teacher educator, and more specifically a Christian writing teacher educator, I attempt to explore three issues which are central to the writing classroom:

1. How can we live out our Christian faith and values in the teaching of writing?
2. How can we help students become more aware of issues of spirituality and develop God-given abilities through writing?
3. How can we encourage students to write in ways that are pleasing to God?

In attempting to answer these questions, I draw upon my personal, research and teacher education experience, using examples, where possible, to illustrate my points.

Living Out Our Christian Faith and Values in the Teaching of Writing

As I ponder my own research interests like feedback, peer review, and classroom writing assessment, as well as my orientation towards the teaching of writing, I find a strong link between Christianity and writing. I believe that how teachers deal with feedback, peer review and classroom assessment and how teachers teach writing can be informed by their Christian faith.

Feedback in Writing

In the writing feedback literature, teacher feedback is often referred to in negative terms – e.g., ineffective, time-consuming, demotivating, frustrating, taxing, and grueling (see Lee, 2009). Despite the time teachers spend responding to student writing, students do not seem to show marked improvement in their writing. While papers filled with red ink can easily frustrate, confuse and demotivate students, teachers are exhausted and suffer from burnout through never-ending marking that makes them play the role of error hunters (Furneaux, Paran & Fairfax, 2007; Hairston, 1986). This is a no-win situation where neither teacher nor students can benefit.

The concept of “grace” can help us revisit the role of feedback and re-think how feedback can be utilized to benefit student learning. Grace refers to God’s mercy and kindness, given freely even to those who don’t deserve it. In the writing classroom, students do not have to do anything to earn this favor; it is a gift from teachers (Wong & Lee, 2012). Inspired by God’s grace, a question worthy of attention is how teachers can reconceptualize feedback in writing so that they can mark with grace.
Because of sin, God punishes us. Similarly, many writing teachers penalize students for their grammatical mistakes. This often results in students’ loss of confidence and motivation, stifled creativity, and a hindered desire to openly express themselves in writing. The Bible, however, reminds us that, through grace, we are “dead in our transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2: 1-10), and that it is by grace that we are saved. Because of grace, God chooses to see past our sins and accepts us for who we are. Similarly, teachers can choose to see past students’ grammatical mistakes by responding to errors selectively and by commenting on other aspects of writing, like content and organization. Through a more balanced approach to feedback, students will be less afraid of making mistakes and are more ready to take risks to enrich the content of their writing. Marking with grace is, therefore, marking that brings out the best in our students; it is marking writing by a human being rather than by a machine or robot, and it is a means through which teachers interact and establish personal relationships with students.

Peer Review

In conducting peer review with students in the writing classroom, teachers usually remind students to focus on language and rhetorical issues. Much less attention is given to values and attitudes, which are crucial to the success of peer review. Oftentimes peer review does not seem to be effective because students do not approach it with the right attitude – e.g., not taking it seriously or not giving constructive feedback. Through peer review training, teachers can teach love, patience, kindness, acceptance, tolerance, truthfulness, mutual support and interdependence, in addition to language-related techniques. A few Bible verses can serve as peer review guidelines, such as the following:

- *Love is patient and kind.* (I Corinthians 13:4)
- *... speaking the truth in love.* (Ephesians 4:15)
- *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those.* (Ephesians 4:29)

To build a community of learners through peer review, it is important that teachers remind students of the fact that to err is human, and that constructive feedback that “builds others up according to their needs” is essential. In the following excerpt where a group of university English as a foreign language (EFL) students were engaged in peer review (they had read the
draft written by Kevin), one member (student A) was found to dominate the process, and in
general the peer feedback provided was not very constructive:

Figure 1. A Peer Review Example [Source: Yu (2014)]

| A: Go on. A role model must have a dream and a long-term goal, which can . . . [Reading]. |
| B: Is this [Dr. Martin Luther King] a person’s name? |
| A: Yes. In this case, you need to print the word in italics . . . I have a dream [Reading]. |
| Kevin: The current version is okay. I used capitals. |
| A: No, you should have used italics. In English, it should be in italics. |
| B: Yes, italics. |
| A: No explanations here. So italics should be used. |
| Kevin: I think capitals are fine. No need . . . |
| A: That’s handwritten. Different from this [the printed version]. |
| Kevin: No. |
| B: Okay, stop here. |

In this excerpt, while A adopted an authoritative stance, C was completely quiet, and B simply
echoed A. Kevin, the student writer, did not explain himself clearly and there was no real
discussion among the students. I believe there was an absence of love, kindness and patience in
this peer feedback excerpt. Using examples like this one, teachers can remind students of the
importance of kindness and mutual respect when giving peer feedback. To facilitate the
provision of constructive peer feedback, students can be provided with a peer feedback protocol
such as the following:

Figure 2. Sample Peer Feedback Protocol

| Student writer: Solicit feedback from peer reviewer on a specific area (Can you give me feedback on . . . ?). |
| Peer reviewer: |
| (1) Tell the student writer what s/he did well (You did well on . . .). |
| (2) Tell the student writer what s/he did less well and why (These parts need to be changed because . . .). |
| (3) Suggest how the student writer can improve (You can improve by . . .). |
| Student writer: Seek clarification, if needed (Could you explain . . . ?). |
| Peer reviewer: Clarify. |
The peer feedback protocol makes sure that students give comments in an encouraging and constructive manner, and that the feedback is concrete and specific. Through such a protocol, teachers can also inculcate positive values and attitudes like kindness, patience and truthfulness.

**Classroom Writing Assessment**

Traditional classroom writing assessment is primarily concerned with the assessment of learning, which focuses on finding out how well or how badly students perform in writing through teachers awarding scores to single drafts, serving summative purposes. It is referred to as “the dirty thing” teachers have to do (Belanof, 1991, p. 61), also something they do to students rather than with students. Such teachers primarily play the role of judges or assessors and dominate the assessment process, during which many of them in L2 contexts busy themselves with marking errors in student writing. For students, learning is a matter of achieving better grades (Huot, 2002), and they remain essentially passive during the assessment process. Such traditional assessment practices are counter-productive since assessment is not necessarily aligned with teaching and learning, while students easily lose interest and confidence in writing through receiving papers with unsatisfactory scores and filled with red ink. No wonder assessment is often referred to as a “curse.”

From a Christian perspective, God wants to bring blessings to our students and teachers, and hence a paradigm shift is imperative, which entails a stronger focus on assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment as learning (AaL), rather than assessment of learning (AoL). In AoL the primary purpose is to measure student learning outcomes and report judgments of such outcomes. AfL differs substantially from assessment of learning by focusing on the provision of descriptive, diagnostic assessment information to improve learning and teaching. AaL is a subset of AfL (Earl, 2013) but focuses specifically on the learner as the “critical connector” (Earl, 2003, p. 25) between assessment and learning; it serves to foster students’ ability to monitor, reflect on and analyze their own learning. While AoL is associated with the traditional paradigm characterized by summative assessment, the two contiguous objectives of classroom assessment comprising AfL and AaL are referred to as formative assessment (Clark, 2012). Through implementing AfL and AaL, where assessment is used to promote learning and improve teaching (i.e., AfL) and to empower students as critical connectors between assessment and learning (i.e., AaL) (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Chappuis, 2009; Earl, 2003; Wiliam, 2009), teachers can motivate
students, help them understand their strengths and weaknesses in writing, and support student learning.

Simply put, classroom assessment can become a blessing if it is used as an instructional tool, fostering greater alignment between assessment, teaching and learning. In the “assessment paradise,” teachers share responsibility with students, encourage and motivate them, emphasize student achievements, and help students bridge the gaps in their learning. Scores are not the main focus, but instead the quality of learning and student involvement in the assessment process become teachers’ top priorities.

Teaching of Writing that Encourages Self-expression and Risk-taking

In traditional writing classrooms, the focus on grammar and vocabulary can discourage students from taking risks and experimenting with language. God makes each of us unique, and we are all capable of self-expression and creativity. It is important that the teaching of writing encourages students to express their feelings and thoughts, imagination and creativity, instead of making students spell and use grammar correctly without really meaning what they say. The following two story openings illustrate two students’ attempts at writing. In (A), the story begins in an ordinary way. Each sentence starts with Johnny (or the pronoun “he”), describing the character’s feelings and actions in a direct manner. Language use is by and large correct. In (B), the story begins in a more special way, comparing Johnny to Thomas Edison. Though not perfect, (B) reflects the student writer’s attempt to craft a more attention-grabbing story opening. There is also a bolder attempt to use a wider range of vocabulary to explore feelings and thoughts and to describe actions, though the student has made a few grammatical mistakes. Compared with (A), (B) provides stronger evidence for the student writer’s creativity and imagination, which I believe deserves the teacher’s praise and encouragement. Some teachers, however, may mark down (B) because of the grammatical mistakes, hence discouraging the student to take risks in writing. In fact, (A) and (B) are both good attempts by the students in their unique way, and student efforts have to be recognized.

Figure 3. True Story Openings

| (A) Johnny was very bored. He was tidying the books on the bookshelf. He did not think that his job was fun. He put his hand inside the shelf and found a paper. He took it out and it was old and yellow. | (B) Johnny was very bored. He was tidying the books on the bookshelf. He did not think that his job was fun. He put his hand inside the shelf and found a paper. He took it out and it was old and yellow. |

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(B) Johnny was not Thomas Edison, of course, but he could compare to him. Both were men of huge curiosity and intelligence, born with natural talent and ability to analyze. One day, Johnny put his hand into the vast, towering, bookshelf and gave another yawn. He supposed to clear out all the volumes from the shelf, and to re-order them. It might’ve been interesting at first, but after working for two hours, this task became extremely dismal. Suddenly his fingers stroked something. When he reached and touched it, he felt a sense of stimulus. The piece of paper was yellow and wrinkle, and anybody would agree that this paper is old.

The Bible reminds us that we are all wonderful creations of God, with potential for imagination and creativity: *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well* (Psalm 139:14).

**Helping Students Develop God-given Abilities to Create Meaning and Express Individuality Through Writing While Becoming Aware of Spiritual Issues**

In the classroom, there are different things teachers can do to help students develop God-given abilities. Even in examination-oriented contexts (like EFL situations in China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong), teachers can design writing activities that tap into students’ imagination and help them explore spiritual issues. Below I share a few examples.

*Writing that is Personal, Creative and Meaningful*

Creative writing activities of different sorts can be implemented in the classroom. For instance, students can write acrostic poems to celebrate friendship, or to show admiration for others. The following acrostic poem was jointly created for me by the students in my teacher education class:

- **I**nspire us to teach better
- **C**ontinue to motivate others
- **Y**ou are an excellent tutor

When assigning topics for creative writing, teachers can use ideas or idioms from the Bible, such as *love, happiness, mercy and justice, go the extra mile, and it’s more blessed to give than to receive*. The following winning entry from a Bible-inspired creative writing contest held in Hong Kong illustrates the creative attempt of a student as he shares his ideas about “love”:
Love is Crystal Clear (Chan, 2013)
I’m sensing insecurity,
The world’s filled with impurity.
I just can’t bear
Intimidating villains flashing glares.

The world’s so dark,
Thunder crashes and dogs angrily bark.
Looking out the window,
Wickedness hides around the shadows.

The slashing of knives, the trigger of a gun,
They steal the life of an innocent one.
Why is the world so dreadful?
Why aren’t any killers regretful?

Love is so unclear,
The world ends with a crude cheer.
But Jesus came and made a difference,
It wasn’t for His ignorance.

He showed unreserved love,
He died for us and suffered bloody cuts.
He changed the world and died for our sins,
Despite the kings’ hateful grins.

They tortured Him, they crucified Him,
They tore His body limb from limb.
Treated as a criminal and condemned,
Yet He prayed to God and forgave them.

In Jesus Christ, His love for us is crystal clear,
Simply for us, He accepted so much jeer.
He died on that cross for the sake of us,
We never think of this as we make a fuss.

Let’s be like Jesus,
Inherit His love and his pureness.
Because in Him, our Lord, my dear,
Love is, simply, crystal clear.
Rewriting Lyrics

Teachers can ask students to rewrite lyrics of songs with which they are familiar, not only tapping their creativity but also inviting them to explore issues of spirituality. For instance, John Denver’s “Perhaps Love” can give students an opportunity to examine the notion of “love” and rewrite the lyrics according to their own understanding of what love is. Alternatively, the focus of the song can be changed – for example, to “joy” (hence “Perhaps Joy”). John Lennon’s “Imagine” can be used to encourage students to share their notion of the utopia. Michael Jackson’s “Earth Song,” as another example, could be used to encourage students to think about what they care about most on earth. They can re-write the lyrics to share their feelings and thoughts about the things that matter most to them.

Digital Stories

Students can make use of technology to create multimodal compositions to explore a wide range of issues. They can produce a creative story, discuss social issues, or share life-changing experiences and insights through digital storytelling. In my teacher education class, I have asked my students to create a 5 to 8-minute digital story on a selected social issue for a special topic on “Teaching English Through Social Issues.” I have also organized digital storytelling competitions for Hong Kong secondary students on themes such as “An Unforgettable Experience” and “Something Special.” To demonstrate the power and impact of a digital story, it is a good idea if the teacher can create one and share it with his or her students. One of the best things about digital stories is that it is easy to produce them; students can download free software such as Microsoft Photo Story 3 and make a digital story without much effort - as long as they have prepared a script and some relevant photos (for the detailed procedure, see Cheung & Lee, 2013).

Blogging

Given that students of the 21st century are technology savvy, teachers can further capitalize on technology to develop personal reflection among students. Since I started teaching a reading and writing course at my current University in 2008, I have created a personal blog and shared it with my students. Not all my students, especially busy in-service teachers, read my blog, but from time to time, for those who have read it and have given me their personal response, I am amazed at how blogging can be used as a powerful tool for personal reflection.
and communication to explore issues beyond the confines of the classroom. A former student responded to my blog sharing, in which she reflected on her own religious journey:

*I was ONCE a Christian. I started going to church in 1987, baptized in 1990, but walking away from God in 1994 after one year I taught in my current school. I lost my faith in God after something unpleasant had happened. Afterwards, I chose to rely totally on myself, placing 100% trust to only my instinct for all the big decisions I had to make.*

On another occasion, my blog sharing struck a chord with another former student who had just gone through a miscarriage:

*Thanks for sharing your blog with us and it means a lot to me especially. Soon after I read the first entry, I couldn’t stop crying because the words you’ve used are exactly the answer I’m looking for these days . . . when I was reading your first entry, I couldn't help thinking it's time for me to learn to be tough too. As you know, I'm always under the protection and family and friends, I’ve never had actually experienced anything too difficult for me to handle alone. There’re always someone to support me and to finish thing up. As you said before, pregnancy is a test and training opportunity for the mother as parenthood is more demanding and challenging. I now believe that I should learn to be braver and tougher from now on and it will give me even better preparation for future family planning.*

By taking on the role of a writer and by sharing my own writing with students, I realize that I can achieve a lot more than what I originally expected. I was most surprised, for example, to learn that one of my former students shared my blog with her father and some of her relatives. She even forwarded her father’s comment to me: *Reading the posts therein not only widens my knowledge but also opens my mind.*

In addition to a personal blog, I run a class blog with my in-service teachers on the Postgraduate Diploma in Education course. At the end of each class, I have some questions based on the class discussion and the readings, and my students are invited to write blog entries and/or to comment on each other’s entries. Although not all students are active participants of the class blog, the 10% assessment score serves as an incentive to encourage students to take part in the online reflection, sharing and discussion. One of my in-service teachers had the following to say about the benefits of the class blog:

*In today’s generation of smartphones, tablet computers and wireless internet, blogging allows for virtual interaction which is not restricted by time and place where we can choose*
to participate at our convenience, which is perfect for the situation of student teachers who already have a heavy workload and may not have the time to sit down and converse professionally.

Another said: The class blog is a great inspirational and motivating source of encouragement, insights and teaching pedagogy.

**Encouraging Students to Write in Ways that are Pleasing to God**

I am aware that not everyone uses writing for good purposes. In this last section, I consider ways in which students can be encouraged to write in ways that are pleasing to God.

**Internet-based Social Networking**

A lot of writing is done on the Internet. However, I know that online social networking is not always used in beneficial ways, especially among teenagers. Hate words and swear words are prevalent, and the Internet can become a platform for teasing and bullying. In a way, it is hard to teach teenagers to write in ways that please God. But teachers can tell them the consequences of using hate words, cyber bullying, and sexual harassment in cyberspace; these could lead to depression, and even suicide on the part of the victims, and when they are caught they have to face the consequence of their wrong acts. Once a group of boys, including my son, was found cyber bullying a girl in the same school. They thought it was fun but when the girl’s emotional disturbance was brought to the attention of the school, the school head intervened. My son wrote an apology letter to the parents:

> I write to you today in a sincere and apologetic manner. I sincerely apologize on behalf of my actions because I have reflected and realized what I have done was arrogant and perverting. I take full ownership for the pain your daughter has endured and am willing to take consequences as a way to avenge for your daughter. I am completely struck with guilt at the realization of what I did. Therefore, I implore you for your utmost and generous forgiveness despite the horrible being that I am and the horrible actions I committed.

It is amazing to know that a boy who has used nasty words to tease a girl is capable of writing such a sincerely worded apology, which is probably pleasing to God. Perhaps the example shared here could be used with teenage students to encourage them to choose their words carefully when they are engaged in online social networking. We have a good reminder from the Bible:
Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29).

Writing as an Invaluable Gift
We write to develop God-given abilities, and our words can be a powerful source of encouragement to others. Our writings can be invaluable gifts for others, too. On my son’s 13th birthday, I sent him a poem to share with him my vision of a good life:

- Gorgeous son, be a big dreamer
- Aspire to become the man you want to be
- Regret not your missteps as a humble seeker
- Excel in qualities of honesty and integrity
- Treasure the gifts from God; be a firm believer
- Hang onto your dreams; live out your faith fully

For teachers, we can write edifying words to our students, and these words can become mottos that serve as their guiding principles. One of my best mottos for my students is: never give up.

Writing as a Source of Encouragement
We can always use our words to encourage others. Once I wrote a piece on “A Hurdle Race” on my blog:

Don’t look at our own problems with a pair of magnifying glasses and think that they are the worst in life.

I learnt that my son’s autism was nothing when I took him to Sandy Bay Hospital in 1994 and saw many kids with much more severe problems, some who couldn’t even raise their heads to look at the sky.

When we put life into perspective, we often find that we are one of the luckiest persons in the world.

A hurdle race need not put us in despair. We jump, we fall, we stand up and jump again. The next time we jump better, but we may fall again. However, it gives us good training, and it develops our strength and resilience.

Next time when there is a hurdle, or when there is a choice to make, don’t be afraid. Practice jumping, and you can jump higher.
A reader told me that she was tremendously encouraged by my blog post:

*I’m touched by what you have shared in your blog and I particularly like the entry about how you have become tougher and tougher throughout the years. I’m not trying to flatter you, but what you have shared is very inspiring and that’s what youngsters and “green” teachers today need. You have set a good role model for them, just like what you did to me.*

Indeed, teachers of writing can become good role models for their students by taking on the role of writers themselves (Casanave, 2004), and by writing in an encouraging way.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I believe Christian teachers can live out their Christian faith through writing and through teaching writing. In many contexts, teachers themselves are either too busy or too uninterested to engage in writing. However, to understand student needs and to help them develop into writers that bring glory to God, teachers of writing need to be writers themselves.

I began this article with a reference to my Japanese friend, who recently published an article in a magazine for Japanese teachers (Sasaki, 2011), where she referred to the written messages I had sent her. I would like to end the article with the following excerpt from my Japanese friend’s published article (translated from Japanese into English):

*Once I wrote about things I worried about in my work in my mail to her, and she sent me a set of PowerPoint slides entitled: “Tips for a better life for 2010.” The set came with beautiful music and pictures of flowers. It contains about 20 tips that can make you cheerful, the very theme of this essay, so I would like to introduce some of them here. “Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn. Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class, but the lesson you learn will last a lifetime.”*

*If you think that life is a school and the difficulty you face is a problem given by God for you to solve, your heart will become lighter.*

Although my Japanese friend is not a Christian, I am glad that she referred to God in her article. We never know – perhaps the seeds we sow in our writing and our teaching of writing will someday bear fruit.

**References**


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Unravelling Power and Privilege in the Academy: A Personal Account

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Abstract
This article explores the author’s privileged identities as a White, male researcher and English language educator in the context of relevant critical literature. I aim to understand how my privileged identities granted by race, gender, societal placement, and language interact with my identity as an evangelical Christian and how these identities impact my research and practice in working with multilingual transnational youth in a Canadian university setting. Highlighting the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research and its potential impact on both researcher and student identities, I probe my acquired identities (unearned societal placement) and ascribed identities (spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, experiences, and personality). I emphasize the asymmetrical nature of relationships and how this asymmetry may potentially contribute to the perpetuation of social hierarchies and dominance in the EAL classroom. To counter this potential dominance, I suggest that educators practice obedience to truth (Palmer, 1993) and adopt an attitude of moral humility (Young, 1997). I conclude with spiritual, pedagogical, and research applications to English language teaching and the Christian faith, showing how these applications derive from my identity negotiations.

Key words: Christianity and scholarship, identity, privilege, reflexivity, reflection

Introduction
During my coursework days as Ph.D. student, I registered in “Critical and Sociocultural Approaches to Educational Research,” a course taught by a First Nations, feminist scholar, who had a profound impact on me as an emerging scholar. Eight of the students in the class were female. One was male – me. In the first class, the professor shared a quote from Chinese-American documentary filmmaker Lee Mun Wah (2003): “Notice when you are asleep and why.” It got my attention. As I engaged with course readings, classroom discussions, and worked on projects with my classmates, I began to see that indeed I had been asleep, unaware of the extent of my power and privilege as a White, English-speaking, male, scholar-in-the-making.

In fact, on one occasion my privileged position was publically pointed out to me by one of my classmates, who came to observe me facilitate an English conversation workshop for a field notes class assignment. In presenting the results to our cohort the following week, her
observations turned into a critical report on me and my power in that classroom. Her critique included, for example, my central position at the front of the classroom; how the all female attendees sat in a semi-circle directly in front of me; how I used my institutional authority to take and retain the initiative in how the session was taking shape; and how I regulated the interactional floor. By confining much of the interaction between each student and myself I had unknowingly created a potentially inhospitable space where opportunities for students to interact with each other were limited. Inspired and humbled by what for me was a critical turn in my Ph.D. journey, I decided to take action. The major paper required that we choose an artefact and relate it to the course content in order to demonstrate our growing capacity to critically engage with multiple forms of literacies. I chose me, represented below in a family portrait from the early sixties. I’m the little White kid in the middle, trying, it seems, to express something profound.

![Family Portrait](image)

Fifty years later, here I am exploring something deeply personal and profound, namely, who I am or who I might become (Hall, 1996). I have chosen this artefact since it represents the cards that I have been dealt in life, the things I had no control over, but which God had “prepared before I’d even lived one day” (Psalm 139:16) – that I would be a White lad of German/British heritage born in the 60’s to a Canadian, middle-class, English-speaking Lutheran family and raised and educated in Vancouver, British Columbia. I refer to this societal placement of mine as

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1 In this paper, I use The Message translation for all bible verses to match the overall style and tone of this article.
my *acquired identities* (my unearned societal placement). Not visible in the photograph are my *ascribed identities* – my spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, experiences, and personality.

In this article, I explore my privileged identities as a White, male researcher and English language educator in the context of relevant critical literature. My purpose is to understand how my privileged identities granted by race, gender, and language interact with my identity as an evangelical Christian and how these identities impact my research and practice in working with multilingual transnational youth in a Canadian university setting. I do this by borrowing from the literature on cultural studies to develop my position on identity, from postcolonial scholarship to address power implications, and from the Bible and theology to consider my spiritual side. In the first section, I describe the critical turn in my Ph.D. journey – the radical realization of my White privilege. Using the family portrait above as the starting point for this exploration, I probe my acquired and ascribed identities. I emphasize the asymmetrical nature of relationships and how this asymmetry may potentially contribute to the perpetuation of social hierarchies and dominance in the classroom. I then refer to the concepts *obedience to truth* (Palmer, 1993) and *moral humility* (Young, 1997), illustrating how these concepts offer educators a practical alternative from the domineering mentality of objectivism towards the communal and relational nature of learning. I conclude with spiritual, pedagogical, and research applications to English language teaching and the Christian faith, showing how these applications derive from my identity negotiations.

**Reflexivity in Qualitative Inquiry**

The qualitative researcher is the principal research instrument – there is “no escape from the self” (Roulston, 2010, p. 127). Finlay and Gough (2003) make the point that reflexivity involves “critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers’ social background, assumptions, positioning, and behaviour impact on the research process” (p. ix). Although reflecting on one’s subjectivities may be perceived by some as academic “navel-gazing” (Finlay, 2002, p. 215), I believe it is important to be transparent about my identities since they are the lens by which I not only see the world and my place in it, but how I engage in scholarship. I am the key instrument in my research. I make the decisions about what and who to study, what research questions to ask, the theoretical frameworks on which to hang my study, what methods I use to collect data, and how I will analyze, interpret, and publish that data. These decisions are
all filtered though *me*. However, I am also aware that reflexivity is not just about me. It also involves other people gazing at my navel. How my socially situated identities as a White male university employee and researcher (and their association with English language education, colonialism, Whiteness, privilege, and power) get read as, to borrow a term from Morgan (2004) via Simon (1995), “image text” potentially impacts my identities as an emerging scholar.

Like all scholars, I am influenced by certain beliefs that motivate me to teach, research, and engage in dialogue with other scholars. Influencing this construction of knowledge is my background beliefs and faith convictions. According to Christian scholar Edlin (2009), “All knowledge is based upon faith convictions. A person believes and therefore they know – not the other way around” (p. 217). My faith convictions are based on the transforming power of truth as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is, I seek to affirm a “transcendent center of truth, a center that lies beyond our contriving, that enters history through lives of those who profess it and brings us into community with each other and the world” (Palmer, 1993, p. 113). These convictions motivate me to embrace the virtues of humility and faith in my scholarship and practice and create spaces where *obedience to truth* – “careful listening and responding in a conversation of free selves” (Palmer, 1993, p. 65) – can be practiced as a way to challenge and overcome behaviours and attitudes that work against the ethical treatment of others. By adopting the practice of obedience to truth, I aim to create learning spaces where knowledge is not objectified, but communally constructed within a setting of respect, non-judgement, hospitality, and openness. Thus, I see myself as both an evangelical Christian English language educator and a critical practitioner. Having invoked these identities, I realize that I bear the inconvenient burden of having to deal with much historical “baggage” directed towards evangelical Christian English teachers that has made dialogue with critical practitioners difficult (see Canagarajah, 2009). But despite these obstacles, I am hopeful that through my faith, scholarship, and commitment to *obedience to truth* my research can dismantle these barriers to interchange and open up dialogue.

**Acquired Identities**

As I engage in this analysis of me, I am reminded that difference is a key determiner of identity, and that “identity can be understood in a meaningful way only by understanding others and by recognizing and highlighting one’s differences in relation to others” (Kumaravadivelu,
2008, p. 145). To put it another way, I am who I am because of who I am not: I am not an immigrant. I am from here. I am not ESL. I speak English. I am not homeless. I have a home and a job. I am not working class. I am middle-class. I am not a person of colour. I am White. I am an evangelical Christian. I am not gay. I am straight. I am not a single parent. I am married. I am not an aboriginal. I am of European descent. Thus, my privileged identities (in italics) come into focus when viewed through this type of binary lens. To put it another way, as a White middle-class male, my “societal placement, . . . experiences and . . . opportunities are fully understandable only in relation to the social conditions and oppressions of those located outside that locus of privilege” (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2007, p. 83).

(A)symmetrical Reciprocity

Yale professor Seyla Benhabib’s (1992) book argues that moral respect involves a symmetrical relation of reversibility. That is, Benhabib claims that in order to understand the perspective of others we must reverse positions with them, imagining ourselves in their place. Clearly, this attempt to imagine “walking a mile in another’s shoes” can sometimes be a useful way to foster understanding and respect. However, given my White, privileged identity, a symmetrical relation of reversibility is problematic. I don’t know what it’s like to be called ESL. Or what it feels like to be exoticized for being Eurasian and having to put up with people constantly comparing you to Keanu Reeves (i heard he was half asian. is that true or not?). Or how it feels to have people tell you that you never should have been born. Or how frustrated and angry it makes you feel when the bad guys in the cartoons on TV always speak in an accent like yours. Or to how it feels to be made fun of for having a “strange” (read: foreign and not from here) name. Or what it feels like to be called a credit to your race because you are an accomplished person of color. Or how it must feel when your rich linguistic repertoires are devalued by a well-intentioned (White) ESL teacher who asks you to write an essay on “my hometown” or “a holiday in your country,” even though you’ve spent more than half of your life in North America (Harklau, 1999).

I can’t relate to you when you tell me that you have no choice but to essentialize yourself as a cultural other when assigned an “inspirational” personal narrative in your college

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composition class in order to appease the teacher and get a good grade (Harklau, 1999). Or how it makes you constantly wonder if your classmates in your English class think you’re a jihadist because you wear a hijab. Or the shame and frustration of being followed around by sales people in a store or stopped by the police simply because of the color of your skin. Or how it feels to give up most of your feathers? (King, 2003). To have White people tell you that you have no value, that you don’t matter. Or how it feels to know that you and your people will no longer exist as “status Indians” in Canada in 50-70 years from now (King, 2003). I could go on. But I’ll stop. I will never be able to understand. I will never be able to know what it is like to be you. What makes it impossible for me to see you through your eyes is that we have very different life histories and social positions, a notion feminist scholar Young (1997) refers to in her critique of Benhabib’s (1992) position as asymmetrical reciprocity. What this means is that I cannot adopt your point of view because I don’t share your history, your experiences, or your beliefs: we are “strange to one another” (Young, 1997, p. 45). This idea that good things might come of reversing positions with someone is made more complicated (read: impossible) when the relationship involves unequal relations of power. According to Young (1997),

…when people obey the injunction to put themselves in the position of others, they too often put themselves, with their own particular experiences and privileges, in the positions they see the others. When privileged people put themselves in the position of those who are less privileged, the assumptions derived from their privilege often allow them unknowingly to misrepresent the other’s situation. (p. 48)

The potential for the imposition of social hierarchies and dominance on the less powerful – a notion Young (1997) refers to as “falsifying projection” (p. 45) – can be especially problematic in the schools, where linguistic practices are controlled and legitimatized (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001). English as an additional language (EAL) students tend to lack the economic and cultural capital that is controlled by (Western trained) teachers, as agents of the dominant culture. When English language teachers unconsciously make knowledge of the dominant culture a prerequisite for school success, they may inadvertently exercise symbolic violence (see Jones, 1991, for an in-depth ethnographic account of inequality in a New Zealand secondary school).

4 King (2003) tells the First Nations story of Coyote and the Ducks. In it, the white colonizers (Coyote) force the native people (the Ducks) to give up their best feathers (their best land via treaties) in order to keep some of their feathers.
Harklau (1999) argues that eliminating such practices is impossible since they are grounded in “cultural discourses regarding immigration, collegiate socialization, and diversity and in the inevitable human tendency to construct world relational categories and representations in order to make sense of the world” (p. 276). Similarly, Glass (2004) states, “it is impossible for anyone born into and raised within our society not to in some degree inhabit, and be inhabited by, the dominant ideologies” (p. 21). As a result, like Harklau (1999), Glass argues that “each of us is inextricably implicated in both what we struggle against and what we struggle for” by virtue of the fact that we are born and raised in a society where “[R]acism, sexism, classism, linguicism, and ability-ism mark our habits of the mind and body” (p. 21). Further, deCastell (2004), in situating the argument both Harklau and Glass make in a historical context, argues that it is impossible for classrooms to be reorganized as places where education is conducted as a practice of freedom, since historically they are spaces of oppression:

How can we forget that the uniqueness of classrooms, historically, is that they have effectively accomplished and authorized social relations of hierarchy and subordination, that they have provided a public space for the exercise of power and the legitimatizing of racism and oppression in the name of truth, rationality and justice? (p. 53)

However, rather than accept the pessimistic position that schools are only about reproducing relations of power and teachers are somehow to blame, it’s important to remember that people “rarely act out of bad faith” and “do what makes sense to [them]” (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, p. 11). We (myself included) were taught, supported, required – sometimes demanded – by the institutions we work for to do the kind of work we do. But rather than letting critical theories paralyze us, or playing it safe and accepting the status quo, our students would be better served if we looked for “gaps, interstices, to invent ‘new ways of doing things’” (Stroud & Wee, 2007, p. 34) using the power we have been institutionally invested with, which can potentially lead to change through the contestations of established conventions.

In terms of how a Christian educator might reorganize classrooms as places where education is conducted as a practice of freedom rather than oppression, I return to Palmer’s (1993) practice of obedience to truth and introduce a similar concept advanced by Young (1997) – moral humility. Palmer (1993) states that the spiritual practice of obedience to truth involves “careful listening and responding in a conversation of free selves” (p. 65). This practice requires an epistemological and ontological shift in how we view knowledge and our roles as researchers.
and practitioners in the generation and dissemination of knowledge. Rather than assuming the truth is “out there” to be objectified, categorized, codified, and generalized to provide explanations about the social world, *obedience to truth* treats learning as communal and co-constructed, taking place within a context of respect, non-judgement, hospitality, and openness. Young’s (1997) concept of *moral humility* closely resonates with the practice of *obedience to truth*. Moral humility involves adopting an attitude in which we lay aside of our judgements, prejudices, and egos and embrace compassion and openness in relating to others. Moral humility, Young argues, acknowledges that all of our relationships are best seen as *asymmetrical* because of the different ways we are historically and socially constructed. I would suggest that given the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in our classrooms, nurturing an attitude of moral humility, in which we wait to learn from others by listening, is compelling. According to Young (1997):

> In moral humility one starts with the assumption that one cannot see things from the other person’s perspective and waits to learn by listening to the other person to what extent they have had similar experiences. If I assume that there are aspects of where the other person is coming from that I do not understand, I will be more likely to be open to listening to the specific expression of their experience, interests, and claims. Indeed, one might say that this is what listening to a person means. (p. 49)

The practice of obedience to truth and moral humility offers educators alternatives to learning that emphasizes freedom. By taking up these practices, educators can build *communities of truth*, which “bridge[s] the gap between learning and living by attending to the living reality of the learning situation” (Palmer, 1993, pp. 88-89). This is certainly a hopeful proposition. In the following section, I return to my analysis of me with a focus on my acquired identities and illustrate how I attempt to create *communities of truth* in my workplace and research.

**Ascribed Identities**

“It’s not about you.” These words, which begin Chapter One of pastor Rick Warren’s (2002) *Purpose Driven Life*, profoundly sum up how we as believers ought to live – serving others. The bible has much to say about how to serve others. The Apostle Peter instructs us to be “generous with the different things God gave [us], passing them around so all get in on it” (1 Peter 4:10). Likewise, in his letter to the church at Ephesus the Apostle Paul commands us to
join “Christ Jesus . . . in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.” The Lord Himself commands us to invest His resources wisely to serve others (Matthew 25:14-30). God has given me many gifts. A few things that come to mind include: the gift of teaching. When I am in the classroom, I am in my element. I am university educated. I am fluent in Japanese. I lead worship at my Japanese-speaking church. I like to think I’m good at writing. I love to design and create new things. I enjoy mentoring students. I have a sense of humour. A critical mind. A passion to help those less fortunate. I have thirty-three (and counting) years of teaching experience. I am a verbal hygienist (Cameron, 1995). (Aren’t we all?). I am passionate about social justice.

**Spiritual, Pedagogical, and Research Applications**

Given what I have outlined thus far, I would now like to illustrate how my identity negotiations and faith convictions inform my research and teaching practices. My Ph.D. research focuses on multilingual transnational youth referred to in the literature as *Generation 1.5* (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). Although variously defined, Generation 1.5 typically refers to students whose education has been interrupted (in some cases more than once) during their formal K-12 schooling. Despite the fact that Generation 1.5 has become a permanent part of the professional lexicon of TESOL, an organization that claims “widespread sensitivity to cultural diversity” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 53), the term remains under-theorized and deployed in ways that mask the diversity of students it represents. This failure to recognize and appreciate the linguistic diversity transnational multilingual students bring to the classroom can have tangible consequences on students’ classroom behaviour and/or may limit their opportunities for English language learning (Harklau, 1999).

Much of the literature in College and Composition Studies, where Generation 1.5 found a home between 1999-2009, paid more attention to finding fault than appreciating their strengths as multilingual learners. Generation 1.5 have been discursively constructed as, for example, “stuck in a sort of interlanguage” (Blanton, 1999, p. 124); in need of special pedagogies to help them “sort[ing] out their languages as cultures . . .” (Johns, 1999, p. 159); “caught in the middle – between languages, cultures, and classrooms” (Oudenhoven, 2006, p. 243); having fossilized language errors” (Blumenthal, 2002, p. 49); “not even know[ing] the [English] language” (Hinkle, 2006, p. 40); and even compared to “a version of software, not quite version 2, but
almost there, still in the process of being upgraded, stuck awkwardly in the middle” (Ferris, Kennedy, & Senna, 2004, p. 2). The problem with these representations is that they are based on an institutionalized objectivist understanding of knowing that “assumes a sharp distinction between the knower and the known” (Palmer, 1993, p. 27). As such, these representations may contribute to the marginalization of Generation 1.5 students by silencing their voices:

The oppression of cultural minorities by a white, middle-class, male version of “truth” comes in part from the domineering mentality of objectivism. Once the objectivist has “the facts”, no listening is required, no other points of view are needed. The facts, after all, are the facts. All that remains is to bring others into conformity with objective “truth.” (Palmer, 1993, p. 68)

I aim to problematize this concept of in-between-ness in educational discourses around the term Generation 1.5 and illustrate how this deficit-type representation might be transformed. Unlike research carried out in the positivist tradition, which seeks to reveal or discover “truth” about the social world by remaining distant from its subjects, I wish to contribute new forms of knowledge that do not originate “in curiosity and control but in compassion, or love – a source celebrated not in our intellectual tradition but in our spiritual heritage” (Palmer, 1993, p. 8). One of the practical ways I attempt to create communities of truth in my research is by theorizing my research interviews through a social constructionist lens, adopting a research interview as social practice orientation (Talmy, 2010) that recognizes data as situated representations co-constructed through interaction with the interviewer (Holstein, & Gubrium, 2004). In contrast to the research interview as research instrument (Talmy, 2010), an approach motivated by curiosity and control common among neo-positivists, constructionists treat the interview as social practice, in which interviewer and interviewee draw on their “stock of knowledge” (Schutz, 1967) to orient to research topics and make sense of one another’s utterances and actions in the local and occasioned accomplishment of the interview. This mutually created knowledge is not simply a representation of the world “out there” but is “part of the world they describe” (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1998, p. 107). Data are treated not as reality reports but as accounts, which involve participants “in the generation of versions of social reality” and the “local production […] of versions of a moral order” (Baker, 2004, p. 163). Using the unique time and place God has appointed for me (Acts 17: 26), I wish to advocate for Generation 1.5 students and understand my own role as the key research instrument in the communal construction of this knowledge (see Mossman, 2012).
My desire to study multilingual transnational youth and advocate for the EAL students in my workplace is motivated in part by my own liminality in identity positioning in social life, which derives from the fact that I am married to a Japanese landed immigrant and a father of two interracial bilingual sons. I live in what could also be understood as a third space (Bhabha, 1994) somewhere between Japan and the West. At home, my wife and I use a mixture of Japanese and English, choosing the best word for the context from our bilingual repertoires. Our spiritual lives are also embedded in-between translations of English and Japanese. We have been members of a Japanese Baptist church for more than twenty years, where I have served as an English-Japanese interpreter and worship leader. Our children, who have bicultural names, are also a constant witness to the linguistic and cultural in-between-ness in my life. By giving our children binomial names (Japanese first, English second) our intention was to give our boys a bi-cultural grounding as a way “to carry our attitudes and desires regarding their languages, cultures, and identities” (Marshall & Mossman, 2010, p. 3). Thus, being/becoming in the middle is a constant but continually shifting reality in my life.

At the university where I work and study, the number of students for whom English is a second or an additional language has been steadily increasing, especially over the past decade. It has been estimated that more than 40% of students on campus grew up speaking a language other than English. This linguistic diversity has created opportunities and challenges. As coordinator of EAL Services in the Writing Centre, I have implemented several new services designed to help students connect with the university community and feel more confident in their spoken English. One of these services is the tremendously popular Conversation Partners Program. The program is designed to give students whose first language is not English an opportunity to practice their conversational English with other local English-speaking student volunteers in a friendly, supportive environment. The goals are to help students improve their command of English, strengthen discussion skills, broaden their level of verbal self-expression, and build friendships across the university community. In looking for ways to expand our services beyond writing and learning support to address the economic and social conditions of learning English, I initiated the Conversation Partners Program in 2010. I began with nine student volunteers. I now have 47 student volunteers meeting with 72 student clients every week. Each semester the demand for this service exceeds supply, as the spots fill up very quickly. When registering on-line, students are
asked why they would like to be involved in this program. I include one student’s response here, which highlights Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of legitimate versus grammatical competence:

Hello, This is my first year in Vancouver and also Canada, I feel very bad when I discuss with my classmates in the class due to my boring English, sometimes I have a lot of good ideas but I cannot speak them out. And I also face some kinds of social problem, nobody want to make friend with bad English. So, I really wanna practice my English as soon as possible, it’s so important to my study, living, or working in the future. Please help me ;-)

This student’s predicament is not unusual at the university. Many EAL students struggle to be relevant, to fit in, and be listened to. In this student’s account, a lack of good ideas doesn’t seem to be the issue, but rather, the student highlights the social conditions he faces that seem to prevent him from speaking out and being taken seriously. Bourdieu’s (1991) comments below puts this student’s dilemma into perspective:

The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to be listened to, likely to be recognized as acceptable in all situations in which there is occasion to speak. Here again, social acceptability is not reducible to mere grammaticality. Students lacking the legitimate competence are de facto excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence. (p. 57)

It appears that this student is denied the right to impose reception, not because he is grammatically deficient or because he lacks good ideas, but because his classmates do not consider him as what Bourdieu refers to as a “legitimate” speaker of English, something this student seems to have painfully realized: “nobody want to make friend with bad English.” The result is that he feels excluded from “social domains” (“I also face some kinds of social problem . . .”) because he lacks the competence “to produce sentences is that are likely to be listened to” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 57). That as many as 80 plus students are on the waitlist each semester for a Conversation Partner speaks powerfully to the role social conditions play in their ability, or lack thereof, to acquire linguistic competence at school, and most likely in the community.

I encourage the peers to create learning spaces with their clients characterized by openness, boundaries, and hospitality (Palmer, 1993). By committing to meet once a week for an hour of conversation, both peer and client are forced (in a good way) to unclutter, unpack, unwind, and talk openly and vulnerably without fear of judgement. Like any new relationship,
especially where a power imbalance exists (e.g., language, status, age) fear and anxiety of the unknown is not uncommon. Although some of the peers I recruit are linguistics majors and/or have their TESOL certification, the peers are from diverse linguistic, cultural, and discipline-specific backgrounds. Most do not have experience working with EAL students. Although they receive on-going training, many feel a sense of fear and anxiety (at least initially) when working with their clients, who may expect them to be experts in pronunciation or grammar. However, I encourage the peers to embrace this anxiety as “an adventure into the unknown” (Palmer, 1993, p. 72). Many peers have reported on awkward moments of silence during their meetings. I encourage them not to fill this silence with clutter – with more words – but help embrace the silence, allowing it to untie knots of confusion and provide new clarity (Palmer, 1993). In these ways, as a professor of the truth, I hope I am helping the peers and their clients understand the key role relationships play in unlocking the knowledge of reality.

In terms of the practical ways the student volunteers are helping their clients, some discuss local issues from local newspapers; others incorporate speaking tasks which highlight “global cultural consciousness” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008), a concept I teach the volunteers in our training sessions (see Kumaravadivelu’s, 2008, chapter 10 for some practical suggestions for raising EAL students’ global cultural awareness via reflective tasks and exploratory projects). Others use episodes from TV sitcoms to help their clients develop cultural literacy skills, such as learning about North American customs and expanding their repertoire of vocabulary, idioms, and slang. Other peers have taken their clients to the art gallery on campus to talk about art, or to the supermarket for a lesson on fruit and vegetables. Some clients just want to maximize their time to talk, and so the volunteers do a lot of “careful listening and responding in a conversation of free selves” (Palmer, 1993, p. 65). However, the clients are not the only ones who benefit from this service. The student volunteers also benefit immensely; they learn about, for example, their clients’ experiences, customs, and traditions in their countries of birth, their hobbies, and their research (many graduate students are in the program, whereas the student volunteers are mostly undergraduates). In this way, the Conversation Partners Program is like a community of truth, which “bridge[s] the gap between learning and living by attending to the living reality of the learning situation” (Palmer, 1993, pp. 88-89).
Conclusion

It is useful for Christian English language educators to understand how to negotiate their identities for effective teaching and scholarship. To this end, in this article I have turned the critical lens on me, examining who I am becoming as an evangelical Christian English language educator and researcher. Highlighting my faith conviction, acquired and ascribed identities, I have been bold and honest in arguing how my privileged identities can be negotiated effectively for constructive teaching and research work. Through this process, I realized how my Whiteness affords me membership in number of privileged social identity groups, while denying the same resources and privileges to those who are not like me. Having been born into White cultural discourses and dominant ideologies, and trained and supported by the Western institutions that came before me, I must be vigilant not to remain silent and comfortable with existing structures, but work to create spaces where obedience to truth is practiced to empower those whose voices are often silenced. Through my scholarship and practice, I wish to contribute to truthful knowing, that is, knowledge that is communal and relational, dynamically co-created between knower and known, “whose primary bond is not of logic, but of love” (Palmer, 1993, p. 32).

Acknowledgements
I would thank my colleague, Mari Ng Mizobe, who helped me to realize my position of privilege, and Dr. Dolores van der Wey, who awakened me from my slumber. I also thank the reviewers and Michael Lessard-Clouston for helping me revise this article. A version of this paper was originally presented January 2012 at CELT 2012: Exploring the Vocation of English Language Teaching and Scholarship, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, SAR.

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ELT and Empowerment: Questions, Observations, and Reflections for Christian Educators

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Abstract
As a field, English language teaching (ELT) has come under attack from a number of critical practitioners. In the classroom, English language teachers aim to empower our students by helping them improve their English abilities and skills. Yet there are discrepancies in terms of who learns and uses English for various purposes. Are English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) teachers helping, or are we part of the ‘problem’ in ELT, as critics suggest? This article poses four questions in order for readers to consider issues in ELT and empowerment. In doing so, it summarizes observations from both the author’s experience and potential resources in the ELT literature, and closes with some reflections to help Christians in ELT consider their understanding of and response to some important current topics in our field.

Key words: critical pedagogy, ELT, empowerment, imperialism, world Englishes

Introduction: Questions
I have worked to assist my students in learning and using English for over twenty-five years in order to help them reach their academic, personal, professional, and/or vocational goals. Yet a number of critical practitioners have challenged such everyday work at a number of ELT conferences I have attended. In reflecting here on such views, I would like to begin this essay by asking readers to consider the four following questions:

1) Is the English language teaching industry a problem? And if so, how? If not, why not?
2) In what ways might English language teachers be part of the above problem? And what about Christian English language teachers in particular?
3) In light of one’s answers to these questions, what principles and practices should guide Christians in ELT, in English as a second or foreign language contexts?
4) And finally, what Scriptures might guide us as Christians if we aim towards English language teaching and empowerment?

This article will contextualize and introduce a number of topics that these questions touch upon. In doing so I will share some observations that come out of my ELT experience in Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, and the United States. Frankly, I do not claim to have all the answers or
solutions to the issues I am going to raise. Instead, I may raise more questions than I can answer. Yet through this essay I hope to help Christian English language educators engender some thoughtful Christian reflection, and thus develop our worldview and professionalism so that we might respond and work with integrity.

**Background**

The field of ELT is a growing one. It is also the subject of continued criticism, dealing largely with colonialism (Pennycook, 1998) and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 2009). Connected to Britain, the United States, and other countries with histories and ties to the United Kingdom, English is often viewed as a colonial language. Yet particularly due to on-going activities by the British Council¹ and the United States Department of State², English language teachers, and especially native English speakers from these and other English-speaking countries, are also often viewed as agents of linguistic imperialism.

Christian English language teachers, in particular, are targets of scrutiny (e.g., Pennycook & Makoni, 2005; Wong & Canagarajah, 2009) within ELT, also known as the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages³ (TESOL). In just one example, researchers Varghese and Johnston (2007) interviewed teacher training students at two Christian colleges, one in the Pacific Northwest and another in the South of the United States. While they did not seem to fault the universities for their educational programs per se, they nonetheless concluded that, in their opinion, “the values of evangelical Christianity stand in opposition to the values of the field of TESOL” (p. 27). As a Christian educator, I do not necessarily view these criticisms positively, but I do see critique as healthy for Christian ELT professionals. Such concerns are thus important for educators in Christian university teacher training programs, especially those where teachers are studying TESOL, whether for English-speaking countries (ESL) or abroad (EFL).

In short, key issues related to some of the criticisms of Christians in ELT are power and economics, which often inter-relate. Research commissioned by the British Council (Ramaswami, Sarraf, & Haydon, 2012), for example, affirms the value of English language

¹ “The United Kingdom’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities” – see [http://www.britishcouncil.org/](http://www.britishcouncil.org/).
³ ELT is most common in Europe and Asia, while TESOL is frequently used in North America, mainly due to the professional organization with the same name (see [http://www.tesol.org/](http://www.tesol.org/)).
knowledge and use for both individuals and societies in North Africa and the Middle East, and there are similar reports on other contexts (e.g., Pinon & Haydon, 2010). Cautious readers may wonder if the British Council’s funding of that research leads to the results it desires. Put another way, do people around the world value English because it is important and helpful, or simply because it is the language of international business and the only major foreign language of education in many contexts? I honestly don’t know, but I believe that these are valid questions on which those working in ELT should be reflecting.

People of various faiths (e.g., Hussain, Ahmed, & Zafar, 2009, whose work mainly reflects Muslims) believe English can be useful in empowerment in the developing world. Some, like Yagnik (2012), see “English as [an] empowered tool for empowerment” (p. 43). Others, however, such as Appleby (2010) and various authors in the Coleman (2011) and Erling and Seargeant (2013) collections, seem to offer both positive and challenging portrayals of English as a language of development, especially in education with English as the medium of instruction in societies where other languages are dominant. Still others argue that empowerment comes through language, and power is connected to English (Pütz, Fishmann, & Neff-van Aertselaer, 2006). So what are the issues and realities? And what might be some of the consequences?

Observations

With this background, let me turn to several observations about the TESOL landscape in which Christian educators work with either ESL or EFL students around the globe.

First, ELT has taken on the vocabulary of “empowerment” in recent years, with this concept and term being central to many recent TESOL-related conference themes, such as “Facilitating Learning Through Student Empowerment” (TESOL in Puerto Rico, November 2012), “Language and Empowerment” (CamTESOL, February 2013, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia), “Harmonizing ELT by Empowering Teachers” (VenTESOL, June 2013, in Valencia, Venezuela), and “Empowering ELLs: Equity, Engagement, Enrichment” (New York State TESOL, November 2014, in the U.S.A.). At the Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT 2013) conference at Dallas Baptist University, one of the advertisements in the program asked attendees: “Are you looking for a career that will let you empower the lives of others?” It then went on to argue that its M.A. TESOL program is “designed to equip you with the insight and experience you need to make a difference as an ESL instructor.” So the vocabulary of
‘empowerment’ is current both in the broader field and in some Christian TESOL programs, at least in the U.S. And if Christians are to work for students’ empowerment to make a difference, then they need to understand what this means in ELT, as well as the broader thinking in the field.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary online, to “empower” has two main meanings: 1) “To invest with power, especially legal power or official authority,” and 2) “To equip or supply with an ability; enable.” ESL/EFL teachers certainly hope to enable our students to learn and use English effectively, for their specific purposes. As such we can help them develop their English ability. We may also wish to invest students with power, but this is not necessarily something we can usually do, legally or officially, especially if we work with children. On its TeachingEnglish website, the British Council also noted that “Empowerment refers to giving learners the power to make their own decisions about learning rather than the teacher having all the control.” So in ELT it seems that developing learner autonomy is also part and parcel of empowering ESL/EFL students, and is reflected in Liu’s (2010) brief reflection.

Second, in the ELT literature, English itself has been the focus of three main approaches to global ELT issues. One is linguistic imperialism, associated with Phillipson (2012), who argues that such linguistic imperialism is “alive and kicking,” and connected with five tenets: that 1) “English is best taught monolingually,” 2) “The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker,” 3) “The earlier English is taught, the better the results,” 4) “The more English is taught, the better the results,” and 5) “If other languages are used much, standards of English will drop” (Phillipson, 2009, p. 12). A whole article could be written about Phillipson’s linguistic imperialism and these five tenets, but here I simply want to point out that in this view, English is a problem. A second, perhaps more positive, approach is that English is a means of mobility, largely socially and economically, and this view is associated with Brutt-Griffler (2002) and others, including some of the students whose views are included in Purgason’s (2014) survey. This second approach seems to reflect both the economic value of English knowledge and the thinking behind the advertisement at the CELT 2013 conference: through teaching English, ESL/EFL instructors can help empower their students. Finally, the third approach by academics like Prodromou (2008) is to view English as a global lingua franca, for both native and non-native English speakers. This final view is perhaps the most controversial, overall, since people in this approach argue that English no longer belongs just to native English speakers, and thus

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we should accept varying English standards (see, e.g., Sewell, 2013). In this view native English speakers need to share the power they have held over the years as guardians of the language.

**Revisiting the Questions**

Given the writings and views mentioned thus far, we should return to the first two questions asked at the start of this article. First, is the ELT *industry* a problem, as Mahboob (2011) suggests? Over the years I have talked with many in TESOL who argue cogently for each side. There are indeed many good ESL/EFL programs where students are learning English and are thus able to meet their needs, whether for academic, leisure, religious, or other purposes. We must also, however, admit that there are nonetheless problems in the ELT industry, especially where teachers are exploited and under resourced, and where students are promised unrealistic gains in their English language proficiency in a short period of time by unscrupulous schools that do not provide the input, support, and time frame required for most ESL/EFL students to be able to make effective progress. So the answer is mixed – there are aspects of the ELT field that are problematic, but there are also reputable programs where students are learning English!

Second, in what ways might English language *teachers* be part of the above problems? And what about *Christians* in particular? Teachers may be part of the problem if we similarly encourage our students to have unrealistic hopes and expectations, or do not provide the quality instruction, resources, and support necessary for our students to succeed in learning English. One major issue pointed out by critics Pennycook and Coutand-Marin (2003) is that one way that Christian teachers may be part of the problem is that a number of Christian organizations have been quick to send untrained and thus unqualified individuals as ESL/EFL ‘teachers’, robbing students of the ability to learn from appropriate and qualified English instructors (see also McCarthy, 2000). This unfortunately seems to especially be the case if the individuals such organizations are recruiting and sending are native English speakers.

If Christians are going to ask and thoughtfully answer such questions, we need some basis on which to formulate our responses. For example, we need to determine what a “problem” is, and how someone may or may not be addressing or contributing to it. We also need a framework to help us determine appropriate principles or practices, as well as resources, for an ELT that empowers both students and teachers. The remainder of this essay aims to help to start developing such a framework for Christian educators in ELT.
Reflections Towards Some Answers

Responses to the three prominent views of English above vary significantly, but some insights and reflections here might help move us towards a deeper understanding which can inform our principles and practices as Christian educators in ELT.

Responding to Linguistic Imperialism

There can be no doubt that Phillipson’s (1992, 2009) linguistic imperialism approach has generated the most discussion in the literature. In a recent book review of Phillipson (2009), Waters (2013), for example, rightly states, “in a nutshell . . . Phillipson’s thesis is that English as a world language is a largely negative force and that ELT, in aiding and abetting it, is likewise a morally questionable activity” (p. 127). In yet another review of that book, King (2011) similarly observes, “for Phillipson the English language is like a nasty virus, a plague bacillus, a lackey of just about everything he hates: globalization, multinational corporations, Western values, America, McDonalds, capitalism… The list of things Phillipson hates is very long” (p. 284). These reviews reflect the very ideological tone of the arguments and criticisms surrounding linguistic imperialism, but they can also help Christians reflect on our views of English and ELT.

The truth is that many ESL/EFL teachers, especially from Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, do not see any problem with English as a world language. For native English speakers, it is our language, and since it is useful for us we are happy to help others learn to use it for their personal or professional purposes. But we must also be aware that pedagogy and research recognize that the facts on English language learning are more complex than linguistic imperialism’s proponents argue. There is a role for our students’ mother tongues in their ESL/EFL learning, as well as our teaching (Deller & Rinvolucri, 2002), the “ideal” teacher is someone who is trained and skilled in helping others learn, whether or not he or she is a native English speaker (Mahboob, 2010), students can learn English at various ages (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2012), and drawing on students’ first language knowledge can be a help, not just a hindrance, as they learn ESL/EFL (Ringbom & Jarvis, 2009). Even if there is some truth to aspects of some of Phillipson’s five tenets of linguistic imperialism, we need not discard valuable aspects of ELT when we reject other problematic ones.

English as an Economic ‘Good’

Whether or not one agrees with Phillipson and his take on linguistic imperialism, I
believe Christian ESL/EFL teachers need to understand better the connections between
economics and language. As Wright (2002) observed, “Language is an economic entity – what
the economists call an economic ‘good’ – as much as any other social phenomenon. We do not
have the option of ignoring its economic dimensions” (p. 3). A recent report by the British
Council (2013) specifically lays out how “learning English” is a cultural activity that can result
in both direct (“improved skills and knowledge”) and indirect (“increased access to and
exchange of information”) impact for individual participants, which may then result in
“increased interest in business opportunities with UK” and thus offer potential long-term
economic impact to the United Kingdom (Chart 14, p. 23). This is just one direct example of
how the English language may be viewed as an economic ‘good’, for both the ESL/EFL learner
and for societies like the United Kingdom where English is dominant.

I believe Christians have generally downplayed the economic aspects of English and
ELT. While I don’t necessarily always agree with them, I also think that we might learn from
critical studies by Coluzzi (2012) in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, Kobayashi (2013) in
Japan, and others, especially if we hope to offer English as a resource for multicultural
understanding, like Toh (2012), and enrich our students’ English knowledge and use, as in
Mok’s (1997) study in Hong Kong. In short, it seems to me that Christians need to be aware of
both the challenges and the possibilities for English and ELT these and other authors discuss.

A final point about English as an economic ‘good’ connects to the earlier critical views.
As Christians who want to think seriously about and interact with critical perspectives in ELT,
we must acknowledge that many of our critics also recognize the potential benefits of English
language learning and teaching. For example, in writing about the market realities of ELT in
China, Guo and Beckett (2012) declare,

We acknowledge the empowerment that English language acquisition may confer, as is
the case with the acquisition of any knowledge. However, we argue that the increasing
dominance of the English language is contributing to neo-colonialism through linguicism
by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged and powerless
further behind . . . (pp. 58-59)

As this quote indicates, Guo and Beckett see ELT as empowering, yet they are also concerned
about how English itself perhaps contributes to what they call neo-colonialism and linguicism.
Christian Teachers on English and TESOL

Several years ago, I conducted a survey of 30 Christian teachers working in TESOL to determine how they viewed the influence of Christianity on English (Lessard-Clouston, 2009). While all respondents viewed English as an important language, only 57% felt there was a strong influence of Christianity on English, and 61% viewed such influence mostly positively (Lessard-Clouston, 2009, pp. 32-33). These are opinions, and we are all entitled to our own. However, I wonder if perhaps Christians have not thought very deeply, nor very often, about English and its role in education, business, or even the ELT industry. Nor is there much academic evidence that we have really thought very much about Christian views of language more generally.\(^5\)

Recent research has nonetheless begun to shed some light on how Christian ESL/EFL teachers view the interaction of their personal beliefs and their professional lives. In a questionnaire study of 23 teachers in the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus shortly before it was closed, Baurain (2012) reported the following findings:

- One of the primary perceptions of the questionnaire respondents was that Christian ESOL teachers should be loving, in a traditional sense of *charity* or acting for the holistic good of others. (p. 321, original emphasis)
- Another key perception . . . was that Christian ESOL teachers should respect students as intrinsically valuable human beings. (p. 322)
- “student-centeredness” . . . Christian teachers should do all they can to discover and serve students’ goals, both in and out of class. (p. 324)
- witness . . . respondents prioritized living out their Christian faith both in and out of the classroom, with the goal of persuading others to believe . . . . (p. 325)

In short, Baurain (2012) noted that Christian ESL/EFL teachers believe they should be loving, respectful, student-centred, and live their lives both in and out of the classroom in such a way that they might witness to their faith, but Baurain also rightly stated that these practices are “non-exclusive” to Christianity (p. 328).

In more recent research (Lessard-Clouston, 2013), I also used a questionnaire among eight volunteer ESL/EFL teachers at two Christian universities, in America and in Indonesia (four each), in order to conduct preliminary research on the integration of faith and learning in ESL/EFL instruction in these contexts. Results revealed that “faith and learning integration is indeed reported to be taking place in ESL/EFL classes . . . yet its practice seems to vary widely and is reportedly carried out to varied extents” (p. 129). Some teachers used self-developed

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\(^5\) Though see Lessard-Clouston (2012), Pasquale and Bierma (2011), Poythress (2009), and Robison (2011) for recent and promising work towards a more robust Christian view of language.
materials, for example, while others simply used commercial textbooks. In the end, I concluded that participants “believe there are clear challenges in carrying out faith-learning integration in ESL/EFL, yet they also perceive significant benefits for themselves and their students” (Lessard-Clouston, 2013, p. 133).

These initial studies reveal that Christian ESL/EFL teachers see their beliefs as part and parcel of themselves and their teaching, and suggest that more research in these areas could be beneficial to Christian ESL/EFL teachers in the field. Both authors affirm we need more such studies: “Future research in this area is called for” (Baurain, 2012, p. 329).

**Principles and Practices for ELT**

The section above has begun to answer our third question, on what principles or practices should guide Christians in English language teaching. Baurain’s (2012) participants believe Christian ESL/EFL teachers should be loving, respectful, student-centred, and yet true to themselves and their beliefs. The Lessard-Clouston (2013) study also gave examples of how such teachers at explicitly Christian universities go about integrating their faith and students’ learning in their various ESL/EFL classes.

**Six Principles: CREATE**

Turning to a more general but useful TESOL ‘white paper’, Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012) offered the acronym CREATE for six principles they believe should be present in ELT: “collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency, and empowerment” (p. 13). They argue, for example, that collaboration should be among policymakers, teachers, and other stakeholders, while relevance addresses language policies, practices, and materials. Analysis and best practices can provide evidence for those involved, and alignment should exist between students and teachers’ goals and the curriculum and materials. According to Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012), transparency deals with objectives and outcomes, hopefully disseminated to appropriate outlets, and “empowerment means that the ultimate objective of any ELT project should be the empowerment of local communities, teachers, and students through collaborative, relevant, evidence-based, and transparent practices” (p. 16, emphasis mine). While short on specifics, Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012) argue that their principles have implications for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in TESOL. I would assert that these principles can also help Christians in ELT consider issues in empowerment in our field, because I believe
empowerment requires good pedagogy. In essence, good teachers and professionals need to know ourselves, our students, our contexts, our teaching methods, and the various resources at our disposal. When we do, we can teach English effectively and help our students learn, no matter what approach we take to English.

Christian Views of Empowering Pedagogy

In order to empower our students, Christian educators may also draw on the work of a number of thoughtful Christians who have recently begun to record and publish their views on issues relevant to good ESL/EFL pedagogy. Purgason (2009), for example, offers four biblically-based “classroom guidelines for teachers with convictions,” namely being honest and transparent about one’s identity, knowing one’s context and students, living in humility and gentleness, and being “committed to excellence in teaching” and curricular choices (p. 189). These guidelines seem to both reflect and complement Mahboob and Tilakaratna’s (2012) CREATE principles, while supporting effectiveness and integrity (Dormer, 2011).

Tokudome (2009) also offers four principles for Christian teachers who aim to respond to criticism but promote further dialogue with those who challenge us: “Be a true Christ-follower, Only hold to moral absolutes, Love each student unconditionally, and Do everything with excellence” (p. 10, original emphasis). Tokudome suggests that if we work in ELT in this manner, we will “be BOLD,” and this view seems to go along with the reported perspectives of Christian teachers in the Baurain and Lessard-Clouston studies.

In responding to linguistic imperialism criticisms surrounding inequality in ELT, Stover (2010) argues against the “Marxist mistake” and for a more Classical Liberalism “emphasis on individual empowerment” (p. 2). Many Christians in ELT may be sympathetic towards this take, particularly in response to Phillipson (2012). Winslow (2012) also discusses critical pedagogy and some areas where it might offer common ground for Christians in ELT, noting three main principles: “recognizing that worldviews matter,” “transparency regarding our Christian beliefs and mission,” and (following Baurain, 2007) “respect for persons” (Winslow, 2012, pp. 9-10). All these ESL/EFL practices and teaching principles challenge us as Christians, but they can also help us set realistic expectations in ELT.

In a short reflection, EFL lecturer Wicking (2012) discusses the dilemma facing Christian educators in Japan, where teaching religion in public schools is banned, but many still desire to
share their faith. Like Baurain (2007), Wicking (2012) rightly notes that 1) “a teacher’s personal belief system cannot be separated from his or her teaching practice” (see also Johnston, 2003) and 2) “all teaching aims to change people” (p. 37, original emphasis). Drawing on work by Snow (2001) and others, Wicking (2012) concludes:

And so it seems that one acceptable solution to the Christian teacher’s dilemma is: Be a good teacher. Do an excellent job. Work hard to encourage and motivate students and cooperate with colleagues. This is perhaps the best way that one’s faith in God can be expressed inside and outside the classroom. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” (Colossians 3:23) (p. 38)

Here Wicking echoes many others who have argued that sharing one’s Christian faith through one’s profession is something that needs to be done after we have a record of excellence and professionalism. I agree. In a similar vein, Dörnyei (2009) writes:

Unfortunately, Paul never wrote a “Letter to TESOL” and therefore Christian language teachers need to decide for themselves on the best strategy to follow the Great Commission. I myself really like the advice attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” (p. 156)

As Dörnyei states, individual ESL/EFL teachers need to discern how to live empowering lives, as well as how to practise empowering pedagogy in our classes.

Research on Christians in SLA and ELT

Thankfully second language acquisition (SLA) research has recently begun to address Christian learners and teachers, concluding that sacred texts can and do enhance motivation in SLA (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013), “learners’ empowerment arising from their faith in God” is possible (Ding, 2013, p. 202), and Christian teachers can experience an integration of their Christianity and their profession as English language professionals (Chan, 2013). In her interview case study of four “Christian language professionals,” Chan (2013) concluded that even successful, “committed” Christian educators display unique patterns and degrees of stability in their vision and practice as professionals in ESL/EFL. So empowerment on both a personal and professional level is possible and appears to be central to English language learning and teaching. It seems, however, that we still need much more research in this area, including some

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6 Readers might be interested in Henderson’s (2014) article on the topic of God in the classroom, which does not specifically address teachers’ religious views but argues instead for principled discussions of religion in ESL/EFL, using sacred texts. Penner (2013) offers another helpful perspective on religion in class, and additional examples.
on learner autonomy in TESOL, if indeed that is an important part of empowerment in ELT, as the British Council has suggested.

**Scriptures That Might Guide Us**

We have begun to address the fourth question, on Scriptures that might guide us as Christians aiming toward empowerment in ELT. I believe that most Christians would agree that the Bible can guide our actions, thinking, and practices in our ESL/EFL teaching (as seen, too, in the quotes from authors above, and from participants in Baurain, 2012). Indeed, our principles and practices can and ideally should be based on Scripture. For most Christian educators, Jesus is the model teacher, and in our relationships with students and colleagues we are to have His mindset of servanthood, humility, and obedience to God (Philippians 2:6-8). As we face criticism in ELT, then, we do well to follow Jesus’ command to be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Whether or not we see ourselves as sheep among wolves in our contexts for life and work, we need to understand our situation and know the broader issues and approaches to Christians in our field. But, as Wicking (2012) suggested, we also need to be professional and teach well, so that others will see the fruit of our work (Matthew 6:43-45).

For Christian educators, James 3:1 is a sobering verse7, which tells us, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” Whether we work in public, private, or home schools, or a language institute, college, or university, we should take our role as ESL/EFL educators and teacher trainers seriously, since we who teach will be judged more strictly. Our subject matter and our relationships are from God. As a result, it behooves us as we work with students, staff, and colleagues to “act justly and . . . love mercy and . . . walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8c).

In teaching in various contexts, I have tried to practise Romans 12:14: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” What does this mean for Christians in ELT? Can I bless difficult students or colleagues? My personal experience and response has been that no, in and of myself I cannot. But thankfully, Philippians 3:13 reminds me, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” By and through faith in Jesus Christ, who strengthens me emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually, I can not only bless but also serve and teach difficult students and colleagues. For as Romans 8:28 reminds us, “we know that in all things God works

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7 All quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).
for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” If we are called to serve in and teach ESL/EFL, God is at work in us, in our students and colleagues, and God will work all things for good.

A final point worth emphasizing here is that “empowerment” for Christian educators can and should be very different than in secular or other religious approaches, because our empowerment comes from and is all about Jesus Christ. As Colossians 3 makes clear, Christ is the source of our being and because of our relationship with Him our “life is now hidden with Christ in God” (verse 3). In short, whatever other divisions that might exist for us here in this world, for Christians “Christ is all, and is in all” (Colossians 3:10). Accordingly, Christian educators working in ELT should strive to empower our students and colleagues not in our own strength, but through Christ: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17). Scripture is a great source of strength and encouragement to us as we aim to relate our personal beliefs, our teaching, and our obedience to Christ.

Conclusion

Christians have a lot to contribute in English language teaching and research (see, e.g., Wong, Kristjánsson, & Dörnyei, 2013), but to do so we need to understand the broader issues, and reflect prayerfully on what to do, how to live, and how to teach. In ESL/EFL, using a textbook called English for Empowerment (Damodar, Venkateshwarlu, Narendra, Babu, & Sundaravalli, 2009) may be helpful in some situations, but that alone is insufficient in my view if Christians want to contribute to the field and to our students’ empowerment.

In this article, I posed a number of difficult but important questions concerning the ELT industry, Christian English language teachers, and principles and practices that should guide Christian educators in this challenging, exciting, and growing field. I also drew on the ELT literature in order to highlight both challenges and opportunities Christian educators face as we teach and aim to empower both our students and colleagues. Finally, I noted some Scriptures that might help guide us in this process, and reminded Christians in ELT that our empowerment ultimately comes through Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgements

An early version of this article was presented at the CELT 2013 conference at Dallas Baptist
University. Later, my Coalition of the Willing for Faith and Learning Integration at Biola University discussed yet another version, which I then presented at the International Christian Higher Education Conference at Universitas Pelita Harapan in Karawaci, Indonesia in November 2013. I am grateful for the feedback from and interaction with the audiences in each of these contexts, as well as for the insightful comments of the IJC&ELT reviewers and Dr. Xuesong Andy Gao, who helped improve that work into this current, much expanded version.

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Exploring the Role of Spirituality in the Ecology of Language Learning

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Abstract
With the presence of many Christian missionaries in the field of TESOL, numerous educators have raised concerns about the ethical issues surrounding evangelistic outreach via English language teaching (ELT). Christian English Teachers (CETs) in the field of TESOL have faced criticism for manipulation of student-teacher relationships, unethical religious coercion, and cultural insensitivity. Current positivist views render religious discussions in the classroom as detrimental to ELT. While proselytizing via ELT is a serious ethical issue, the backlash against religion and spiritual beliefs is also quite alarming. Disregard for the spiritual underpinnings motivating and influencing the way students learn limits how complex we perceive second language learning to be. This article examines how spirituality can positively benefit learning in the second language classroom. It also seeks to raise awareness and highlight the need for more research on how faith and spirituality influence the second language classroom.

Key words: Christian English Teachers, ecology, faith, language learning, spirituality

The Current Dilemma: Defining A Place for Spirituality Within TESOL
As expressed through thirty-one TESOL professionals in an edited book by Wong and Canagarajah (2009), there are a number of discussions emerging on the nature and role of spirituality in English language classrooms. Recent criticism directed against Christian missionaries utilizing English language teaching (ELT) as a cover for evangelism has opened up larger discussions aimed at defining the political, ethical, and moral issues surrounding the field of TESOL (Edge, 2003; Pennycook, 2009; Ramanathan, 2009). In many of these discussions, Christian English Teachers (CETs), as a whole, are seen in an unfavorable light; they are characterized negatively as “arrogant” or described as “bigots” and fundamentalists who use “stealth conversion” and “covert proselytizing” (Phillipson, 2009, p. 66). In addition, CETs are criticized for working in the classroom with minimal professional training, manipulating power in student-teacher relationships (Chamberlain, 2009; Kubota, 2009; Mahboob, 2009), showing a lack of cultural sensitivity (Kubota, 2009), perpetuating English language dominance (Edge, 2003), and infusing Christianity and “American Civil Religion” in the classroom (Edge 2003; Stabler-Havener, 2009).
This stigmatized view of Christians within TESOL not only undermines the hard work of many dedicated Christians who are not “deceptive,” “manipulative,” or covertly evangelizing via ELT (Edge, 2003), it also has larger ramifications of how religion and spirituality are treated in relation to second language learning. There now pervades a common sentiment amongst educators that religious values hamper pedagogical decisions and well-informed instruction. Religious people are described as narrow-minded, “hopelessly blind” (Ramanathan, 2009, p. 74) and “handicapped” by their certainty of faith (Edge, 2003, p. 720). Their belief in an almighty being is seen as a “desperate regression” (Pennycook, 2009, p. 60). In addition, religion is linked with language dominance, colonization, and imperialism (Varghese & Johnston, 2007, p. 8). Such unsympathetic presentations of religion, especially Christianity, amongst the scholarly perpetuate an ill-conception that religious faith is problematic and debilitating for conscientious and responsible teaching. Yet religion cannot be cut out and separated from the ELT classroom since it is central to the lives of many students and their cultures. Religious and moral beliefs will continue to exist in both learner and teacher identities, and to ignore the implications on learning and teaching is neglecting a major factor that influences the learning process.

The Ecology of Second Language Classrooms and How Spirituality Fits In

An ecological perspective of language learning considers the event of language acquisition occurring within an intricate web of relationships where “the learner is immersed in an environment full of potential meanings” (van Lier, 2000, p. 246). Language learning, in the ecological perspective, is far greater than cognition; it develops in the inner and outer world of the learner, in observable and unobservable things. An ecological view opposes positivist perspectives, which sees all experiences as “an incidental by-product of information processing” (Brooke, 2013, p. 430) and draws attention to the multitude of factors influencing language development. Further, an ecological view considers language as it is embedded within symbolic, natural, sociocultural, and cognitive parameters (Steffenson & Fill, 2014), and it places it on a multidimensional “dynamic,” “complex,” and “nonlinear” scale (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 147).

In an ecological perspective of language, minute details have the potential to become prominent stimuli for language development. Spirituality may often be pushed aside and treated as irrelevant to learning, yet it is one of those minute details that potentially play a large role in learning. While a person’s spiritual identity does not always play a visible role in language
acquisition, it can be an unseen driving force for learning. Religious beliefs and values influence a student’s approach to learning. They are also inseparable from each individual’s identity. In addition, students are often curious and intrigued by discussions on faith and religion. In learning about other people’s beliefs and values, students become more informed on why people make the choices they do, and they learn to articulate abstract notions greater than themselves, like the meaning of life, death, the universe, who we are, and how we have come to be the way we are. Those who are spiritually intelligent are also eloquent and expressive with language, compassionate, forgiving, mindful, reflective, and kind. In TESOL we work with a global community, and it is important that we are also teaching our students language that will help them build relationships and connect with people unlike themselves. As teachers, we strive to empower our students to fully express their “whole” selves in relation to a larger world of ideas and beliefs. If we are to do so, we need to not only consider how the mind and body function to produce language, but also how the spirit is active in linguistic expression.

**Spirituality and Its Role in Second Language Acquisition**

Not much research has been conducted on the direct impact of faith and religious beliefs on second language learning. Yet it is evident that identity development serves as a major source of motivation in language learning. An individual’s “vision” of his or her second language (L2) self may dictate his or her goals (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Spiritual beliefs can be central to this vision of oneself. In addition, students are eager to communicate their beliefs via writing and conversations in the classroom. Oftentimes teachers will find that religious practices, personal beliefs, and values are one of the first things students reveal about themselves in class.

Spirituality is also another domain of intelligence which aids linguistic development. While the application of spiritual beliefs is often discouraged and dismissed, they can actually be relevant to learning (DeBlasio, 2011). Azizi and Zamanian (2013) note that “spiritual intelligence” can positively influence the strategies individuals use to acquire new vocabulary in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. Spirituality can positively affect the executive function in cognition, which is the brain’s command center for managing tasks and solving problems, and “it integrates the qualities of flexibility and emotional resilience” (Azizi & Zamanian, 2013, p. 853). Spirituality is not something we consider at all stages of life development, but it is something that emerges into the foreground depending on the experiences
and conditions in which we find ourselves. Spiritual identity is like currents of water constantly moving under a bed of ice. It is constantly there and continually moving; its movements are subtle until a visible crack has formed through the ice. Spiritual beliefs, such as the Christian faith, are an underlying energy contributing to the development of language within individual learners.

Spirituality can also positively affect the nature of relationships in the classroom since it shapes perceptions and understanding of the environment. Bradley (2011) defines spirituality as “humanity’s search for connections beyond the ego” and places relationships at the center of spiritual pursuits, which is also true of the Christian faith (pp. 6-7). He also notes that the spiritual beliefs of educators influence their level of care and desire to nurture students’ growth and development (Bradley, 2011, p. 4). For instance, within the Christian faith there is a notion of hospitality towards strangers, a sense of welcoming those who are unlike ourselves (Burwell & Huyser, 2013; Smith, 2009a, 2009c). Christians are called to “love one another as [Christ] has loved [us]” (John 13:34), and we are beckoned to treat all with an attitude of respect, openness, non-judgement, and genuine care. Faith, such as Christianity, can influence the level of care and responsibility we feel towards each other in the classroom. In classrooms where students feel cared for and nurtured, there is notably a higher quality of learning and increased motivation.

Smith (2009b) states that we need to “invite consideration of how belief and spirituality affect the ecology of the language classroom” (p. 242). When viewing things via an ecological perspective, we realize that we cannot dismiss faith and religious beliefs from learning because it is a core part of many of our students’ identities and our own identities. Educators should be more reflective on how faith influences student learning. In every language exchange, we have the opportunity to connect with and encounter the spirit of another individual. As Smith (2009a) puts it, learning a new language teaches us how to “hear the voices” of the people who embody the language, who they are, and what they are like (pp. 8-9). In learning a new language, learners are also developing new L2 identities, adapting to new cultures, connecting their sense of self to their new language surroundings (van Lier, 2004, pp. 96-97). The process of discovering speakers of a new language and encountering our own self can be enriching towards the spiritual development of those involved and lead towards more interactive and engaging language classrooms (Smith, 2009a).
Smith (2009b) envisions a type of language classroom that accounts for the “spiritual preoccupations” of students who “do not leave their spirits at the doors” (p. 242). Such a classroom is characterized by “attentiveness to a wide and unpredictable range of human factors” (Smith, 2006, p. 89). In the ESL/EFL classroom, learners are striving for self-actualization through the acquisition of a second language. An ecological approach to learning can “awaken in students (and teachers) a spirit of inquiry and reflection, and a philosophy of seeing and hearing yourself, thinking for yourself, speaking with your own voice, and acting jointly within your community” (van Lier, 2004, p. 99). TESOL is a field centered on human relationships via the medium of the English language. It connects a vast world of learners and forges intercultural relationships. In essence, the intricate webs of relationships in our classrooms are spiritual experiences, if we allow ourselves to see them that way.

**Possible Areas for Further Research and Study**

Since there is so much variation in what spirituality means to each individual, it is difficult to pinpoint how religious beliefs and values manifest themselves in the classroom. Perhaps one way to deepen our understanding of the topic is to expand the volume of localized studies and action research on the subject of faith and learning. This may help us define the topic with more clarity. Furthermore, we can examine how spiritual topics emerge in the language learning classroom. The following is a list of possible questions to probe in future research:

1. What direct impact does a learner’s spiritual beliefs have on the choices made when learning a second language?
2. In what ways and at what frequency do students voluntarily bring up topics of faith, religion, spiritual beliefs, and core values in the second language classroom?
3. What language functions are used to describe religious experiences and spiritual beliefs?
4. How do students perceive and relate to other people’s spiritual stories? Does the exposure to spiritual literature affect the way a diverse population of students converse and interact with each other?
5. Is there any correlation between text materials that discuss religion and spirituality and the level of motivation in learning?
6. How does a teacher’s religious identity influence his or her pedagogy (i.e., instruction, lesson planning, classroom management, curriculum selection, etc.)?
7. How does encouraging transparency of religious identity influence learning?

By undertaking more studies on the subject of spirituality and language learning, perhaps we can observe if there are any patterns and trends that may elucidate spirituality’s role in the classroom. We can record ways students communicate their religious and moral beliefs in the classroom and the effect it may have on the quality of conversations and instruction. There is a wealth of learning that may come from exploring spirituality’s role in language learning.

Conclusion: Shifts in Our Pedagogical Perspectives

An ecological perspective of language learning shifts educators away from the traditional notions of language classrooms being places for only linguistic transactions and communicative exchanges. Instead, learners are seen as complex and existing in unfinalized timescales; they are “social actors” engaging in “symbolic competence” who have potential for “creating multiple meanings and identities” (Kramsch, 2008, pp. 400-402). Moreover, as Smith (2009b) suggests, an ecological perspective invites “consideration of how belief and spirituality affect the ecology of the language classroom” (p. 242). Such a shift in pedagogical approach is welcomed since it preserves a holistic conception of the learner that is inclusive of the intricate dimensions of being part of humanity. The second language classroom should be an interactive environment that engages the dimensions human experience including issues of spirituality, ethics, and morality.

In addition to developing a conception of the learner, an ecological perspective further develops the notion of what the role of the teacher is in the language learning environment. Many educators, especially a number of CETs, hold to the idea that teachers are “agents of change” (Brown, 2007, p. 513) and that “all teaching aims to change people” (Wicking, 2012, p. 37). Yet upon considering all the dimensions and facets of the language learning environment, who can really claim to be the instigator of change? Doesn’t an inclination for change already exist within the learner? How much change is really caused by the teacher? The perceived role of the teacher as the “agent of change” represents an unequal perception in power relationships (Ferris, 2009, pp. 211-212). While change is constantly occurring in classrooms, perhaps the notion of “agents of change” is unreasonably attributed to one party, especially since so many factors are at play during the learning process. After all, in an ecological system, every organism is interwoven and affecting each other. Perhaps a continued exploration of an ecological
perspective of what language teaching and learning really means will benefit future discussions of the role of spirituality in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Acknowledgements
This paper would not have been possible without the dialogue amongst the professors and students on issues such as these throughout my graduate studies at Azusa Pacific University. Thank you to Dr. Mary Shepherd Wong, Dr. Richard Robison, and Dr. Tasha Bleistein for your insight, guidance, and support. In addition, thanks to Dr. Andy Gao and Dr. Michael Lessard-Clouston for seeing me through several revisions.

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DOI:10.1080/1364436X.2011.580724


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Earl W. Stevick: Keeping the Faith in Theory and Practice

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When God said, ‘Let us make man’ there was no technician with a clipboard standing at the Divine Elbow to murmur, ‘Will that be with or without brain?’” (Stevick, 2006a)

The excerpt above is taken from the foundational section of a short paper by Earl W. Stevick for MA TESOL students, a paper intended to facilitate reflection on the teaching and learning of languages from theistic and non-theistic perspectives. Written near the end of a long illustrious career, it reflects Earl’s interest in the interrelation of Christian worldview and the profession he loved and to which he made pivotal contributions (cf., Arnold & Murphey, 2013). It also emerges from his personal journey, chronicled in and out of print1.

In 1948 Earl graduated from college as the Methodist Church in America was preparing to send short-term missionaries overseas to teach English. Drawn to the cause, he was soon in an intensive language teacher training program alongside other candidates, expecting before long to be attending to people’s spiritual as well as linguistic needs. When overseas plans crumbled, he redirected his efforts to an MA TEFL while at the same time volunteering in a church-based language program on New York’s East Side. Concurrent involvement in these two settings drew his attention to differences between his theological beliefs and motivation and key assumptions underlying the emphases of his MA program. As he described it in a speech,

In ‘scientific’ language teaching…there was no mind, no soul, no spirit, nothing non-material. ‘Scientific’ language teachers acknowledged that the brain probably did something important, but the way it came packaged, we just had to treat it as an impenetrable ‘black box’. What we would now call a ‘person’ was just another ‘organism’ . . . (Stevick, 2006b)

Grounded in this foundation, teaching practices focused on mechanistic shaping of language behaviours. It was an approach considered “superior to all predecessors because of avoidance of concepts such as ‘mind’ and ‘meaning’.” For his part, Earl “had always had a pedagogical

1 In what follows, unattributed comments in quotation marks are taken from personal communication with Earl (cf., Kristjánsson, 2014).
attitude toward language study” and regardless of divergent assumptions, he turned his talents to developing learning materials and enhanced teaching techniques within the dominant paradigm.

These efforts characterized his involvement in both secular and Christian environments for the next decade, although Earl’s primary interest was the latter. This led him to involvement in part-time language training for missionaries after MA completion and during PhD studies. It also led to fulltime post-doctoral employment at a Christian college, including two years of linguistic fieldwork in Central Africa along with preparation of language materials for missionaries. Then, in 1961, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. Following program closure at the Christian college, Earl accepted a position with the American government’s Foreign Service Institute and was soon designing and teaching courses for the State Department.

Over time, Earl’s growing unease with the limited results of language teaching based on prevailing scholarly wisdom, combined with his exposure to unconventional methodologies, led him to more closely examine the underlying assumptions as well as practices of learning and teaching. Before long, the first edition of his ground-breaking book, Memory, Meaning, and Method (Stevick, 1976) appeared, a record of his quest to better understand the human experience of language learning. The reaction was enthusiastic. It also brought Earl face-to-face with the divide between anti-theistic assumptions and his own when three unconventional methodologies he described came to be called “humanistic” and he himself a proponent of “humanism” in language teaching. While associations with efforts to exploit human potential did not trouble him, something else did, namely “the position that there is no ‘god’ of any consequence and that we humans are entirely responsible for our own salvation . . .” (Stevick, 2009, p. 293).

This marked a turning point. Not content to overlook theoretical differences of principal significance, Earl began to incorporate evidence of his Christian perspectives in published work, including use of Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor (Stevick, 1980; 1998), and a book-length discussion of “humanism” in language teaching that encompassed a dissection of related “faiths” (Stevick, 1990). The latter provided context for his reinterpretation of one of the unconventional methodologies from a Christian perspective, and the presentation of his own understanding of teaching as sacramental, an understanding rooted in the Incarnation. These and other expressions of outlook (cf., Stevick, 2000; Stevick, 2013) represented Earl’s ongoing examination and disclosure of the interface between his Christian faith and his professional practice.
Following retirement and the publication of his last print book, Earl continued the process in talks and short written pieces “of an overtly spiritual nature,” now freely available as *Afterwords* (online at [http://www.celea.net/page-1736597](http://www.celea.net/page-1736597)). These emerged through interaction with Christians as well as those who did not share his persuasions, sometimes in public forums and sometimes in private exchanges. In fact, Earl’s personal correspondence indicates that throughout his career, he engaged friends and critics – not mutually exclusive groups – in dialogue about matters of faith whenever opportunity arose. An example is seen in the explanation included in a letter to one TESOL colleague:

> As you doubtless picked up from the Dostoyevsky chapter, I am a serious Christian… On p. 286 of AAWA, I conceded that it’s not a matter of *whether* “miracle, mystery and authority,” but of *which*. For me, the miracle and the mystery and the authority in my life are Christian ones, so that p. 295 of AAWA is deliberately based on New Testament ideas. In a nutshell, we are to imitate Christ by loving one another in a self-giving way.

No less significant than the explicit content of some exchanges was the manner in which Earl engaged with others. His behind-the-scenes practice was itself representative of the kind of self-giving he espoused in other contexts. This is well demonstrated in his response to another colleague whose work he could not endorse:

> I hope you will be patient with my withholding of an endorsement. It would have been easier to have said, as you report that others did, that I “find nothing to disagree with.” Please accept this letter as a token that I take you seriously.

Earl was a friend to many, including those of us in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University (TWU). He kindly made himself available as program advisor and his last international trip was to TWU in June 2004 for the final two-day resident phase of a course titled “Faith-Informed Language Teaching” of which he was lead instructor. Shortly after he returned home from that trip, deteriorating health compelled him to relocate to an assisted living facility and with this move he began the process of donating his personal library to the MA TESOL program at TWU.

Now, years later, Earl’s library collection continues to advise and inspire me. Various book dedications and numerous fly-leaf inscriptions addressed to him from well-known authors in our field speak eloquently to the influence of his conceptual insights and personal practice on

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2 Included in Earl Stevick’s personal papers donated to Trinity Western University.
3 *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways* (Stevick, 1980).
theirs and that of their students. Earl’s own meticulous notes in many volumes also speak eloquently of the careful attention he afforded to their ideas and those of many others beyond the borders of applied linguistics.

The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship (Marsden, 1997) is one book that provides a record of this sort of interaction. Neat arrows and single checkmarks in the margins draw attention to statements of particular interest along with brief notes and acronyms such as HILT and MMM24 where Earl identified points represented in his work. Among the annotations, two stand out due to emphatic force. The first: “religious perspectives ought to be recognized as legitimate in the mainstream academy so long as their proponents are willing to support the rules necessary for constructive exchange of ideas in a pluralistic setting” (Marsden, 1997, p. 45). The underlining is Earl’s and in the margin, the word crucial stands in stark relief. The second: ✓✓✓! “Christians should be models of what it means to love and respect those with whom one differs, even as they may debate their difference” (Marsden, 1997, p. 54). This comment is the only one in the book distinguished by triple checkmarks and an exclamation point. As I review these annotations, I’m not surprised – they truly encapsulate the way Earl endeavoured to represent himself and his allegiance to Christ in the academy.

Earl would be the first to admit that he wasn’t perfect. However, the respect he earned from people in all walks of life gives testimony to the authenticity and impact of his faith-informed stance. This is exemplified by the appraisal of a colleague in a published open-letter exchange: “Among a great deal of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, your own writing has always been distinguished by that quality that the old translations rendered ‘charity,’ and the newer ones give as ‘love’” (Edge, 1996-1997, p. 6). That exchange was called Keeping the Faith.

It seems fitting that the last award listed on Earl’s CV was an Honorary Doctorate of Christian Ministries (by TWU in 2006). It also seems fitting that his faith-informed perspective was acknowledged by TESOL colleagues in the slim compendium of curated selections of his work posthumously published to honour his memory and commemorate his lifetime achievement (Freeman, 2015, p. 66). Earl fought the good fight. He finished the race. He kept the faith. My thoughts echo the message of a personal letter sent to Earl some years ago, and here I end:

Dear Earl . . . thanks not only for . . . the time you’ve spent with us, but for the Spirit with which you have imbued your books, your teaching, and your life.

References


Carolyn Kristjánsson (kristjan@twu.ca) teaches in the MA TESOL program at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. She first met Earl when she was a doctoral student and was greatly privileged to have regular contact with him until his passing. She is co-editor (with Mary Wong and Zoltán Dörnyei) of *Christian Faith and English Language Teaching and Learning* (Routledge, 2013).
Remembrances of Earl Stevick: 
An Appreciation From the Periphery

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My contacts with Earl Stevick were modest and occasional. I thus consider my remarks to be from the periphery. Others, far more qualified to provide remembrances of Earl than I am, have written from much nearer to the center because they had closer personal and professional relationships with Earl Stevick, the man and the professional teacher1.

The first time I met Earl Stevick was in June 1965. I had just finished my MA in linguistics after spending four years in Thailand with OMF International and went to spend the summer at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) as one of ten young linguists and language teachers who had been accepted into FSI’s first summer intern program. This was basically a type of work-study experience in which we worked in one of the FSI language departments in the mornings and were together in the afternoons to learn about language teaching and testing as it was done at FSI. Earl Stevick was our mentor each afternoon, and we all benefitted from his type of Socratic interaction with us.

My work assignment was to help write drills and practice materials in the Thai department where I could observe a type of modified audiolingualism. Earl made sure that we observed and discussed other types of teaching as well. In a Russian class the teacher used a large plywood board painted with streets, stores, houses, trees, and the like to have students push toy cars as they learned to talk about directions, parking, etc. For Spanish, Earl had us experience a taped programmed course, an early form of machine-based learning. We also had to be tested by the FSI Oral Interview method. As Earl guided us through the various types of instruction programs that summer, he helped us to see that with dedicated teachers and active and involved students a language could be successfully learned through various teaching methods.

1 See collections in a) the February 2014 issue of Humanising Language Teaching, 16(1), available at http://www.hltmag.co.uk/feb14/mart01.htm, as well as in b) the Appendix (pp. 312-321) of Jane Arnold and Tim Murphey’s edited collection, Meaningful Action: Earl Stevick’s Influence on Language Teaching (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
Later, in the summer of 1981, I attended the TESOL Summer Institute that was held at Columbia University in New York. Earl was teaching a class using material that would appear the following year as his book *Teaching and Learning Languages* (TALL). In class and in personal interaction Earl could respond (as William Acton put it in his *HLT* remembrance) “in his own often enigmatic and metaphorical texture.” I enjoyed the class and gained much from the TALL material.

Over the years, whether during my doctoral program, or when I happened to be back from Thailand, or at TESOL conventions, I sometimes would have an opportunity to meet Earl again. On almost every occasion, as we renewed our slight relationship, Earl would tell me of a book I really had to read. The first was W. Timothy Gallwey’s *The Inner Game of Tennis* (New York: Random House, 1974). I protested that I had tried tennis once but had no talent and was not interested in the sport. His reply was, “Just read it; you’ll see it’s about language learning.” So I did. And it was relevant to learners I had worked with in Thailand and here in the U.S. On another occasion he told me I needed to read Betty Edward’s *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (New York: Tarcher, 1979). Despite my saying that I could not draw and was not interested in reading books about drawing, he again replied, “Read it anyway; you’ll understand its relationship to language learning.” I did read it and was challenged to look at language learning from a new perspective. The third book Earl recommended was John Bransford’s *Human Cognition* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1979). The subtitle, “Learning, understanding and remembering,” immediately showed that this book was relevant. I was grateful for Earl’s interest in my developing a broader understanding of language learning and language teaching. All three of these books found their way into my teaching of second language acquisition (SLA) so that teachers in training would learn to get understanding and insights from a variety of books, even those that on the surface might seem to have little to do with SLA.

During the summer course at Columbia University, Earl discussed various techniques for aiding memory and for gaining language proficiency. One of his remarks was, “Never throw anything away,” by which he meant that one can always recycle techniques, such as flash cards, dialogs, or whatever, despite their being out of fashion. Tweaked or used in a different way that incorporated some of the newer findings on memory and learning, they could still be beneficial for learners.
I very much appreciated Earl’s mentorship at FSI and his interest in my continued development through books he recommended. And I read and used material from all but his latest books in my teaching at Biola University and elsewhere. I especially appreciated Earl’s *Success with Foreign Languages* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1989) in that I could see through the learners that Earl interviewed a diversity of learning situations, methods, and personalities which different learners can use to be successful language learners.

Finally, reading through his later short articles that he called *Afterwords* (2002, available online at [http://celea.net/page-1736597](http://celea.net/page-1736597)), I was also impressed by how Earl’s Christian faith informed his views of learners and ways of learning. His life and his contributions to the field of language learning continue to challenge me to be open to different types of learners and to find ways to help them reach levels of success with second or foreign languages.

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Reviews

Meaningful Action: Earl Stevick’s Influence on Language Teaching

Reviewed by R. Michael Medley, Eastern Mennonite University

In an article celebrating the career and contributions of Earl W. Stevick (1923-2013), Kristjánsson (2014) remarked that “Earl…left his mark on the profession, not only because of his public contributions and seminal publications, but because of who he was and the way he connected with people on a personal level” (p. 6). Stevick’s personal and scholarly mark on the language teaching profession can be nowhere better measured than in this collection of essays edited by Jane Arnold and Tim Murphey. In this volume nineteen contributors, many among the most eminent voices in TESOL, have presented eighteen essays – including chapters by each of the editors – that explore important themes in Stevick’s work that have directly inspired or coincide with fruitful scholarly and pedagogical work in the field.

The title of the volume comes from a quotation that Stevick borrowed from the cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker’s 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning book The Denial of Death (New York: Free Press, 1973). Stevick (1998) wrote, “each of us has an ultimate need to feel that he or she is ‘an object of primary value in a world of meaningful action’” (p. 20, italics added to highlight the quote from Becker). For Stevick, “meaningful action” is a multi-layered concept that cannot be explored in the space of this review. The closest summation of the concept in Stevick’s (1998) words that I can find is this: “Our ‘world of meaningful action,’ then, draws on the power figures in our life, and on our peer groups, and on more or less tightly integrated sets of goals we have adopted for ourselves” (p. 22). Many of the chapters in this volume under review expound aspects of “meaningful action.”

The collection is divided into three parts: “Meaning-making inside and between the people in the classroom” (seven chapters), “Meaningful classroom activity” (six articles), and “Frameworks for meaningful language learning” (five chapters). Some chapters fit a bit artificially in their assigned category, but overall the organization is helpful. Carolyn Kristjánsson composed an epilogue to the volume that includes a biographical sketch of Stevick’s professional career; in addition, her chapter, “Inside, between, and beyond: Agency and identity in language learning,” leads off the entire collection.
A grand finale of tributes completes the volume in an Appendix, with encomiums from scholars and teachers who have been luminaries in the field of TESOL, many of whom knew Stevick personally, including some of the book’s contributors, as well as Doug Brown, Julian Edge, and Tom Scovel. Since Stevick was still living when the book was published in Spring 2013, he was able to enjoy these words of appreciation for his life’s work.

Summary

It is always a challenge to review a collection of essays, but an obvious organizing question for this review, given the subtitle of the book, is this: Which of Stevick’s ideas do the contributors lift up as enduring and influential? Accordingly, in the paragraphs that follow, key themes from Stevick’s work are set in **bold italics**.

Anyone familiar with Stevick’s work would not be surprised by the multiple mentions of his pithy distillation of what language learning is all about, namely, “*what goes on inside and between people in the classroom.*” Before the ‘social turn’ in second language acquisition became prominent, Stevick’s formulation recognized that language learning is both a social and a cognitive process. In his essay “The Learning Body,” Scott Thornbury discusses the social turn in SLA theory and highlights by implication how clearly Stevick anticipated this trend with his way of describing language learning. Thornbury’s emphasis on the fully embodied language learner stands squarely in the tradition of Stevick, who saw language learning as “a *total human experience*” (p. 307). As illustrated in David Nunan’s chapter and the contributions of others, language teaching is more than teaching language: it is teaching the whole person, one who has “needs for security, predictability, group membership, and the feeling that what one is doing makes sense in terms of some overall and deeply satisfying life pattern” (Stevick, 1998, p. 50).

Both Murphey and Kristjánsson connect this most famous among Stevick’s aphorisms with another important Stevick idea: “*the presence or absence of harmony*” as a key part of what goes on in the classroom (Kristjánsson, 2014, p. 7). Murphey (p. 184) depicts the harmonizing of learner independence and learners in community in a diagram in which he illustrates his idea of a zone of proximal adjusting (ZPA). A zone of proximal adapting suggests that teachers need to work on adjusting how they assess language learners’ needs and tailor the help that they offer. Thus, the teacher’s focus is on the learner, a value that is central to the work of Earl Stevick.
The first section of the book ends with three chapters, by Christopher Candlin and Jonathan Crichton, Rebecca Oxford, and David Nunan, which collectively provide an exclamation point for the section: *Focus on the learner!* These authors emphasize the importance of affording opportunities for and attending carefully to the stories that learners share. A similar emphasis can be seen in a chapter later in the collection by Madeline Erhman, one of Stevick’s colleagues at the Foreign Service Institute. She invites readers to interact with a case study of a “typical student in trouble” (pp. 260-262). Candlin and Crichton develop the theme of “focus on the learner” by pointing out how Stevick emphasized “the language classroom as a context in which the interactional and intersubjective conditions for building and sustaining Trust are constantly in play and at stake” (p. 81). In their chapter, Candlin and Crichton explore what the centrality of Trust means for the classroom as a discursive community and for curricular design.

Crichton and Candlin connect their discussion of Trust with Stevick’s emphasis on depth of meaning in relation to the individual learner, which he developed in both *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1980) and *Memory, Meaning and Method* (Stevick, 1996). Kristjánsson also draws on this concept, connecting it with a systemic functional analysis of how learners use language to make several different kinds of meaning. Penny Ur, exploring depth of processing in relation to vocabulary learning in her chapter, recommends teachers should directly explain the meaning of new vocabulary items to learners and “*then* proceed to tasks which involve deep processing” (p. 140, original emphasis).

Stevick’s focus on emotional factors, closely connected with depth of meaning, becomes the main subject of Jane Arnold’s chapter on issues of self and motivation. Herbert Puchta also deals with emotional factors in the context of his larger concern with Stevick’s sophisticated understanding of the way that memory works, its current relevance, and confirmation of Stevick’s understandings by more recent studies. Using Stevick’s workbench metaphor for working memory, in his chapter Adrian Underhill gives practical suggestions for teachers to help learners explore how their memory works.

Today when learner investment is discussed, applied linguists generally think first of Bonny Norton’s (2000) important contributions to our understanding of identity and power in relation to language learning. In her chapter Kristjánsson, however, mentions that Stevick also uses the investment metaphor (e.g., Stevick, 1998, pp. 50-51). Stevick’s concern with learner
investment relates directly to the opportunities that learners have to share control and initiative with the teacher as part of meaningful action in the classroom (p. 25). Enriching Stevick’s paradoxical claim that a teacher “may keep nearly 100 percent of the ‘control’ while at the same time the learner is exercising nearly 100 percent of the ‘initiative’” (Stevick, 1998, pp. 31-32), in his chapter Leo van Lier adds to the discussion the related distinctions between “constraints and resources” and “structures and processes” (p. 241). He concludes that teacher expertise, material resources, and curricular design must all conspire to stimulate learner autonomy, lesson design, and interactional dynamics (p. 248).

Since some themes mentioned are treated in multiple essays, one might expect to become bored reading yet another chapter on a related topic. But the last third of the book keeps stimulating and surprising the reader. One of the surprises is provided by Diane Larson-Freeman in her discussion of Stevick’s concept technemic (pp. 190-191), drawn from one of Stevick’s (1959) very early papers. Larsen-Freeman explains that a techneme involves slight alterations of teaching techniques in ways that make a meaningful (emic) difference in the way they affect learners; she cites examples from Stevick’s article and then goes on to provide a theoretical grounding for the concept. A footnote connecting Murphey’s discussion of adaptation (ZPA, chapter 11) with techneme is one of the few places where contributors’ ideas are explicitly cross-linked, something the editors could have worked at more consistently.

Helping learners develop personal competence is an important Stevick theme that Heidi Byrnes develops in her chapter, “Renting language in the ownership society: Reflections on language use and language learning in a multilingual world.” Contributing one of the densest yet most rewarding chapters in the collection, Byrnes links Bakhtin and Halliday with Stevick’s concern for meaning and personal competence (p. 223), substantially deepening Stevick’s ideas.

Like Larsen-Freeman and Byrnes, Donald Freeman selects a unique idea from Stevick’s work and develops a thought-provoking presentation in his chapter: the piping problem in language education. How is it, Stevick ponders, that we have to pay for what is free? If we can acquire languages for free, why must we “pay” by participating in an organized setting (p. 271)? Freeman’s essay considers how teacher education is connected with student opportunities to learn in a relational mode.

Stevick’s anecdote about the “piping problem” is one several riddles that are referenced in Meaningful Action. More than one contributor – among them, Alan Maley, Adrian Underhill,
and Mark Clarke – refers to a riddle of Stevick’s that poses the problem of how two logically contradictory methods of language instruction may both produce stunning results for diverse groups of learners taught by different teachers. It is Clarke, however, who makes the most original use of Stevick’s penchant for posing riddles. The overarching riddle that Clarke addresses is this: “Why do we resist change?” (p. 295). Clarke’s interactive approach – like the one used by Ehrman in chapter 16 and by Stevick in several of his own works – draws the reader in and stimulates new ways of thinking about frameworks for language instruction, including and transcending the individual classroom.

**Evaluation**

There are some essays in the collection which barely give Stevick a mention or cite any specific ideas from his oeuvre (e.g., those by Rebecca Oxford, Zoltán Dömyei, and Ehrman), but what they share – about learner narratives, a principled communicative approach (PCA), and language learning consultants – corresponds with and amplifies what Oxford labels Stevick’s “humanistic, caring, and creative orientation” (p. 96).

The editors might have exercised more direction in working with the contributors to avoid excessive repetition of similar refrains and references to the same concepts and words again and again. As mentioned above, they could also have worked to help the authors create more explicit connections among their chapters. Fortunately, the volume has a very good index in a day when many books like this don’t have one at all: in this respect the editors may have been emulating the master himself, who evidently gave personal attention to the indices of his books (see for example the excellent indices in Stevick’s books). To look at the index of his (1998) *Working with Teaching Methods*, for example, is to find many of the themes mentioned in *Meaningful Action*, indicating clearly that the contributors to this volume are in sync with the values in language teaching that Earl Stevick sought to expound.

Christian readers will note that this collection is silent about Stevick’s Christian convictions, even though Stevick himself was not afraid of demonstrating his careful knowledge of Christian theology, as for example in his (1990) *Humanism and Language Teaching* (see Medley, 2014). Even in *Working with Teaching Methods*, Stevick (1998) did not shy away from addressing ultimate questions about human existence. Both of these books deal in their own way with spiritual issues in language teaching, and yet there is no essay in this
collection that broaches the question of spirituality in language teaching, a topic addressed openly in Smith and Osborn (2007) and many chapters in Wong and Canagarajah (2009).

In their introduction to the volume, the editors quote from Parker Palmer, another prominent educator who has not hidden his Christian convictions; the quote possibly gives a sly nod to Stevick’s faith: “good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher … Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects and their students so that the students can learn to weave a world for themselves” – “a meaningful world,” the editors add (p. 4). Palmer not only characterizes the kind of teaching that Stevick promoted, but he also describes the kind of teacher Stevick was and (through his writings and his disciples) remains. His power to generate connections is instantiated by the scholars whose essays are gathered in this book, who testify to the identity and integrity of this teacher from which good teaching flows. Like the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, Earl Stevick continues speaking to us: his labor in the Lord has not been in vain (I Cor. 15:58). Meaningful Action will provide inspiration and guidance in years to come for those who wish to continue exploring language learning as ‘a total human experience’.

References

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Motivating Learners, Motivating Teachers: Building Vision in the Language Classroom

Reviewed by Eleanor J. Pease, Spring Arbor University

Zoltán Dörnyei and Magdalena Kubanyiova use the well-known Japanese proverb, “Vision without action is daydream; Action without vision is nightmare,” as an epigraph in one of the chapters of this excellent tool book devoted to guidelines for developing motivation in students and teachers alike. In their introduction, Dörnyei and Kubanyiova lay out a plan for vision with action by giving five issues presented in question form. Three of the key questions are: 1) Why write a book about vision in language education? 2) Why focus on both learners and teachers in the same book? and 3) What is the point of mixing the terms vision and motivation? These questions set the tone for the book as they systematically unfold the answers.

Dörnyei and Kubanyiova draw heavily on many scholarly resources in laying a firm foundation for the role of vision in motivating human behavior. There is a foundational thread that goes through the book: Dörnyei’s “L2 Motivational Self System.” The three constituents of this system are the ideal second language (L2) self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. They explain that the L2 Motivational Self System shows three primary sources of the motivation necessary to acquire a second language: 1) an internal desire to become fluent, 2) the learner’s environment and social pressures to master the L2, and 3) the actual language learning experience.

In an effort to emphasize the practical applications for every topic in the text, I will explain the format and basic outline, give two examples of applications, and describe the key “vision-building blocks,” which the authors present as a strategy buffet in the concluding chapter. The authors mark subtopic sections by number; that is, the chapter number followed by the subtopic section number. This is invaluable when using the book as a reference and helpful resource. In addition, there are shaded box inserts that give helps and clarification for major points made in each chapter. Some inserts are titled “Illustration” and marked by a small artist’s brush icon; these give real-life experiences or examples that support or clarify an important topic. The other inserts are titled “Toolbox” and marked by a small wrench icon; these give the
“how-to” for implementing specific points in the chapters and in some cases give step-by-step instructions for specific strategies.

Part I gives the theoretical overview; Part II deals with motivating language learners through vision; and in Part III the authors explain the importance of motivation and vision in the lives of teachers. A brief review does not do justice to a book packed with firmly grounded theories explained in practical and understandable terms, helpful explanations that flesh out key points, and instructions for implementation. Yet two notable and timely recommendations for guiding language learners into developing motivation through vision are: 1) visual and narrative tasks and 2) the power of virtual worlds.

The visual and narrative tasks strategy involves guiding learners into envisioning their L2 ideal selves. A simple prompt is having learners come up with five wishes that start with, “If I could speak English really well, I would . . . .” Following this, the learners look for images that represent those five wishes and cut out or copy and paste the images into a portfolio. Other suggestions for visual and narrative tasks are: 1) writing a vision journal, 2) conducting a ‘creative visual survey’, and 3) telling their stories creatively in a group setting.

The power of virtual worlds incorporates application of creating a virtual world by allowing “mental images of future selves . . . to act as powerful arenas for strengthening language learners’ L2 selves by making the constituent images more vivid, elaborate, and in some sense more ‘real’” (p. 78). This strategy involves interacting with others by creating personal avatars that depict the ideal self, starting as text-based material, and then moving into communication with other participants.

In the chapters focusing on teachers, the authors deal with recalling prior learning experiences, engaging with values, moral purposes, and teaching philosophies, and then using the same strategies that the authors explain in the “motivating language learners through vision” chapters. Values and philosophies deal with how we treat students in and out of the classroom, what we tell our students, decision-making, what is upsetting, what causes us to feel good about what we are doing, what we put into the curriculum, and what we leave out. These guide teachers into re-igniting the flame of their vision and finding their ideal teacher selves. The authors repeat their concept of vision and relate it to teaching: “We have emphasised throughout this book that the idea of vision implies a sensory experience generated through our imagination of what can be, and it is this image that ultimately moves us to action” (p. 136).
In addition to the easy-to-read formatting of the text and the two types of inserts that clarify and explain, the authors’ conclusion includes a four-page outline of the book’s key points in table form. Not surprisingly, the first section is titled “Focus on the Students” and the second section is “Focus on the Teacher.” The authors give the main vision-building blocks that form their text and include a how-to explanation of each building block. Here is an example from the “Focus on the Students” section (reproduced from p. 157):

| Creating the Language Learner’s Vision (Chapter 2): | The logical first step in a visionary motivational programme is to help learners to create desired future selves, that is, construct visions of whom they could become as L2 users and what knowing an L2 could add to their lives. |

Having an idea of goals and where to go in a teaching situation without a plan of action is a *daydream* and according to the old proverb, “Action without vision is nightmare.” Dörnyei and Kubanyiova’s handbook guides ESL/EFL educators into vision with action in a readable and practical style. This book could revolutionize the teaching of teacher educators and ESL/EFL instructors alike. It will prod you into careful reflection on your own vision and motivation as you develop strategies for facilitating imagery, envisioning, and motivation in your students. In this way, you will avoid both actionless daydreams and visionless nightmares.

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*Learning for the Love of God: A Student's Guide to Academic Faithfulness*

Reviewed by Kazue Suzuki, Biola University

What does academic faithfulness look like in the life of a college student? This is a question authors Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby thoroughly tackle in *Learning for the Love of God: A Student’s Guide to Academic Faithfulness*. This is a second edition following their first, titled *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness*. While there are many resources for teachers that explore the intersection of faith and academics, this text is designed to
thoughtfully and practically communicate with graduating high school students or newly enrolled college students of the Christian faith. There are eight chapters centering on academic faithfulness, each ending with a list of questions to help readers to better process the content.

**Summary**

This book begins with a preface and introduction stating Opitz and Melleby’s convictions and intentions for their work. Discipleship is a key term in these sections, and academic faithfulness is described as a significant aspect of it; all disciples of Christ, not a select few, are called to bring glory to Christ through our thinking and learning. Thus faith and learning are not, and should not be, mutually exclusive.

The first chapter titled “Wide-Eyed” presents the reality new college students face: the uncertainty and anticipation of the unknown. The two common expectations described here are 1) beer and circus and 2) grades and accolades. There is also a third category that Christians may fall into: all for one. While the first two expectations involve dissonance with the central purposes of academics or idolization, the third equates devotion to Jesus to a disregard for academics. Instead of falling into these different expectations, the authors present the alternative route of offering the “whole self” and being transformed by Jesus Christ in every area of life, including academics (p. 7).

In chapter two, titled “Babylon U?” (Babylon University), the authors compare the college experience to what Daniel might have experienced in Babylon. Due to the effects of sin, Christians are to be aware of deception even in higher education. To achieve this, believers must be transformed by the gospel instead of conforming to the pervasive culture of college, in the same way that Daniel contended for his faith in the Lord in the midst of Babylonian rule. Yet while resisting the enemy is important, the authors are careful to highlight the importance of being faithful in learning from the cultural context one is in with humility.

In chapter three, “Believing is Seeing,” the authors posit that because believing leads to seeing, it is crucial to become reflective learners. This entails understanding one’s worldview, or the “perceptual framework” through which one views the world (p. 25). In the process of deeply reflecting on one’s beliefs, believers are to hold a biblical worldview and see everything else through it. A framework of the biblical story is also introduced, namely creation, fall, redemption, and consummation (C-F-R-C). Chapter four, “A Story-Framed Life,” expands on how the Bible is a nonfiction story rather than a mere model. Furthermore, as believers, we are
who we are because of the stories we tell and the songs we sing, which connect to the Story. The authors highlight the importance of being nurtured by and living out the biblical story in the midst of other stories, such as modernity and postmodernity.

Chapter five, “Fish-Eyed Learning,” or panoramic learning, explores how to live out the biblical story instead of simply knowing about it. The chapter begins with the authors discussing the intersection of the Christian mind with character and action. Instead of being a completely separate component, the Christian mind is described as relational, and ultimately points to a relationship with the Creator. Christian praxis is explored by revisiting the C-F-R-C framework. For example, in terms of redemption, believers are called to take part in the redemptive work of Christ by taking hold of the good news of the kingdom and the ultimate restoration of creation. Although living out the biblical story does not require being a theologian, the authors challenge readers by suggesting that without an understanding of the major biblical themes, our minds cannot be transformed into Christ’s likeness.

In chapter six, “Four-ied Learning,” the authors discuss four i’s that correspond to the biblical framework: integration (creation), idolatry (fall), investment (redemption), and imagination (consummation). These four i’s are used to help learners connect the biblical story with learning. From making connections to the Creator to practicing living out “what will be in a world that is not yet,” the sense of hope and courage pervades this chapter (p. 66). The chapter ends with an interview with a student named Herbie who explains his journey towards academic faithfulness, where belief transforms into worldview and action.

Chapter seven, “Embodying the Outrageous Idea,” explores practical ways of embodying real change from the inside out. The first way is to connect up, which deals with one’s relationship with Christ. The second way is to connect out to other believers as well as those who are making an impact on society in various areas of discipline. The point about connecting with those whose beliefs and religions may differ from ours acts as a reminder to not simply huddle with other believers. Lastly, the authors explain the manner in which to connect up and out: being good listeners, seeing connections between the world and the Word, and being patient learners.

Chapter eight, “Chutes and Ladders,” begins with the reminder that there are always ups and downs in the Christian life, and academic faithfulness is not an easy task. The authors explore the concept of “double study,” which consists of not only studying the academic
content, but studying Scripture and Christian work as well (p. 86). Additionally, this chapter includes practical ways of living out academic faithfulness that are often discussed in English language teaching, including communicating to different audiences orally and in writing, and intrinsic motivation. This final chapter is followed by a conclusion which reinforces the fact that it is not college as an institution itself, but rather through intentional decisions and efforts that one can attain meaningful learning. Lastly, there are three appendixes. Appendix I, “Deeper,” lists helpful resources for further study in categories such as “The Biblical Story” and “Calling/Vocation.” Appendix II, “Liturgies for Learning,” and Appendix III, “Student Responses,” can be useful for encouraging reflective thinking.

Commentary

In reading each subsequent chapter, my response of “amen” increased. Although a part of me wished that I had read this book back when I was graduating high school, I believe that many of the key ideas concerning academic faithfulness pertain to Christian learners of various fields, including graduate students and teacher educators. The manner in which this book is written is casual in nature, but the core truths are profound and applicable for many. Specifically, I appreciated the discussion on interdisciplinary learning, the biblical perspective, and patience.

Critical thinking is often the pedagogy of many teachers, and I believe that interdisciplinary learning is a large part of it. I could not agree more that, as Christian students, deeply reflecting on the matter at hand should not end there, but lead to seeing things in relation to each other, and ultimately the Creator. This concept can be applicable for Christian educators as well; perhaps shaping lessons and curriculum in a way that encourages students to link different topics and fields together will lead to the wonder of the Creator.

This interdisciplinary approach cannot be separated from having a biblical perspective and worldview. I appreciated the explanation of the biblical framework and importance of knowing biblical truths. Although simply knowing is not the end in itself, “sanctification of our intellects” is a crucial component of whole transformation (Grudem, 2000, p. 756). Christian students and educators alike can benefit and be transformed by grasping the biblical perspective and live as disciples of Christ. I especially agree with the authors’ point about consummation, or ultimate restoration, and how this can and should be applied to academic faithfulness. This not only gives us a grander view of God’s plan for creation but adds depth to our stories and the
stories of others with whom we interact in our learning and teaching. As the authors expressed, learning “ought to be a way to love God and neighbor, a way to care for creation and develop healthy communities.” (p. 58).

Patience in learning, growing, and sharing the gospel was a theme I found sobering and beneficial both as a graduate student and as a teacher. The concept of being faithful in the work we are given and letting that be the main source for sharing the Christian faith is something Snow (2001) holds to as well, as he claims that “Rather than being incidental to witness or even evangelism, the quality of [Christian English teachers’] teaching work is the primary vehicle through which they share the love of God with their students, and also the strongest and clearest statement they make about what a Christian should be like” (p. 65). I believe that this holistic concept could be emphasized just as much as, if not more than, evangelizing with words – for both Christian students and educators in English language teaching.

Ultimately, academic faithfulness is no easy task, as the authors claim in the final chapter. This book is not necessarily a guidebook that will automatically lead readers to successfully achieve academic faithfulness, but an arrow pointing to essential factors that can be studied and applied further. I recommend it to all Christian students and teachers who seek to explore the intersection of faith and learning and encompass holistic change beginning with the mind.

References

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