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Volume 4 (June 2017)

edited by Michael Lessard-Clouston & Michael Pasquale

The editors express their appreciation to all the referees who volunteered their time and expertise in reading, interacting with, and evaluating the manuscripts they received. We are also grateful for grad student editorial assistant Andy Edmondson’s work on Vol. 4.

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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/) and is supported by the Department of Applied Linguistics & TESOL at Biola University (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 the 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 as attached files at IJCELT.Editors@gmail.com. Manuscripts which do not conform to the guidelines in the Publication 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: Journal Editing, In This Issue, and the Future of the *IJC&ELT*

Welcome to Volume 4! In this my final editorial, I will briefly reflect on journal editing, introduce this issue and the new editors, and encourage readers to contribute and support them.

**Journal Editing**

Readers of a refereed journal like this may feel they know more about reading and writing than the journal editing process, and with good reason. Most interaction with this journal and its content comes through readers downloading articles or complete issues, and using the contents in ways that seem helpful: going through articles for background, research, or new ideas for one’s teaching, updating oneself on issues and topics in the field of English language teaching, and perhaps discussing them, or simply learning about the latest books or materials that are important to know about. And that is essentially what a journal like the *IJC&ELT* is all about.

Yet in order to get it into your hands, or onto the screen of your computer, phone, or tablet, there is a lot of work that goes on in producing a journal like this. Most important in terms of content is the research that authors do in order to contribute articles and reviews. This may be primary, data-based, empirical research, as with two of the articles in this issue, or secondary and more theoretical (or theological) research, as in the case with the final article in this Volume. As noted in our editorial for Volume 2 (Lessard-Clouston & Gao, 2015), writing and publishing are hard work, yet thankfully there are thoughtful people who invest the time not only to research and think about our faith and the issues of our day, and how they relate to our work in English language teaching, but who also write up their ideas to submit to a periodical like the *IJC&ELT* so that others can benefit from and interact with them in various ways. As a reader, I am grateful!

In that same editorial we noted that just submitting something to a refereed journal is not enough, however, as not everything is well written, suitable, or will meet the standards of editors and reviewers. As an editor, my thinking has always been that if I don’t believe a submission has promise I will not send it to reviewers and waste their precious time. So we do reject things outright, usually because they have nothing to do with Christianity and/or because they are not appropriate for this journal. But unfortunately even much of what I believe has promise and gets sent out does not meet our reviewers’ expectations, and this means that rejection is normal, and something authors need to become accustomed to, as Mahboob and Paltridge (2017) describe.
Yet ‘revise and resubmit’ is also the norm with a journal like ours, and in reality virtually every article published in the last four years has gone through one or even two sets of revision and review by experts on our editorial board. And I can honestly say that each article we have published has been significantly improved by such feedback. Writing for academic publication really is a group project! This means, as Mahboob and Paltridge (2017) outline, that if you receive a revise and resubmit decision, “reread the feedback from the editors and the reviewers with an open mind” (p. 245), and seriously consider revising and resubmitting your work when you are invited to do so. I am sorry to report that unfortunately many writers choose not to do so.

While the *IJC&ELT* receives a number of manuscripts, there could indeed be more submissions, and I have presented twice at Christians in English Language Teaching conferences in the last year (at CELT 2016 Seoul and CELT 2017 Seattle) to encourage people to ascertain whether their work is suitable for a journal like this, and if so to consider submitting it. In essence, if it passes the editors’ initial screening, a paper is sent to two or more reviewers, who answer questions about whether the manuscript makes an original contribution, offers a strong scholarly and/or practical case, uses and relates to existing, relevant literature in the field, and is clearly written and argued. Reviewers also offer authors feedback on the merits of their work, and note any problems or omissions that require attention in a revised (or published) version.

As you might imagine, this type of work requires lots of communication, reading, and back and forth discussions on content and writing, while persevering and being sensitive to the strengths of a submission and the personality of its author. Usually this is done via email, at conferences, or via phone or Skype. This requires much energy, time, and thought, and I am thankful for the detailed work of authors who submit their work to us, to our reviewers who entrust us with their expertise and time, and to you the readers who make it all worthwhile.

**In This Issue**

In Volume 4 we have three articles addressing diverse issues of interest to Christian English language teachers and trainers, plus five reviews of recent and relevant books.

Joseph Ernest Mambu’s article, Addressing Religious Issues and Power in ELT Classrooms: Voices from English Teachers in Indonesia, first reviews the literature on values, power relations, and interpersonal dialogues on faith in English language teaching. Then it offers us a glimpse into such issues in an undergraduate English language teacher training program at a
Christian university in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim context. Using interview and classroom observation data drawn from a larger dissertation study, Mambu reveals how three Christian teachers enacted dialogues on faith-related issues using critical thinking and respect plus religious reflexivity with their students. He thus concludes that a teacher’s power may be used positively to create the capacity for critical and reflexive thinking and to show humility and respect to students who hold beliefs very different from those of the teacher.

The second article, by Esther Bettney, is entitled Challenges Faced by National and International Christian English Teachers in Honduras and takes us to a different part of the globe. After reviewing literature related to the educational context of Honduras, international teachers’ experiences there, and challenges national and international teachers often face, Bettney synthesizes questionnaire and interview data from her research. Three main themes related to the challenges and strategies teachers faced living in Honduras, those that came to light related to a professional lack of support, and the role of faith in the participants’ lives. Bettney notes both similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers, yet both drew upon their faith to face various challenges and to empathize with and support their students. She calls for additional research into the realities of work by other groups of Christian English teachers.

The third and final article in this Volume, by Pierce Taylor Hibbs, is A Theological Critique of “Learner Autonomy.” Drawing largely on the work of Kenneth Lee Pike, former President of SIL International, Hibbs reviews ways that learner autonomy has been understood in TESOL before noting that in Christian theological circles “autonomy” has been viewed in a negative light. As a result, Hibbs then outlines a critical view of learner autonomy before addressing potential effects of assumed autonomy in language pedagogy. Finally, Hibbs provides a new proposal to replace the concept of learner autonomy in English language teaching by instead using three terms he introduces, namely learner stability, learner dynamism, and learner relationality. Hibbs’ article raises awareness of ELT terminology and challenges our use of it.

Following these interesting articles, our book reviews section presents five important publications. Mary Shepard Wong introduces and evaluates Bill Johnston’s *English Teaching and Evangelical Mission*, the first book-length empirical study I am aware of on Christians teaching English as mission. Given some concerns that Johnston raises in that book, readers will be interested in Cheri Pierson’s overview of and commentary on Kitty Purgason’s *Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers*, a valuable resource for teachers who hold
convictions yet want to respect those of their students (as Purgason’s subtitle indicates). Thor Sawin next summarizes and comments on incoming *IJC&ELT* editor Bradley Baurain’s *Religious Faith and Teacher Knowledge in English Language Teaching*, noting, as does Johnston, that we need to learn to listen charitably to others’ stories. For practising teachers, Matthew Deal’s review of Brian Pickerd’s *Scattering Seed in Teaching* will be of special interest, with its discussion questions and reflections on ways to glorify God as teachers who desire to minister to the needs of those in our classes, communities, and schools. Finally, Emily Burden offers an overview of and some thoughts on former CELEA president Jan Edwards Dormer’s book *What School Leaders Need to Know About English Learners*. Whether you are a classroom teacher, graduate student, researcher, or teacher trainer, I believe that these are five resources you will be pleased to learn more about as you read through these useful reviews.

**The Future of the *IJC&ELT***

After thinking about this journal for 10 years, creating it with Xuesong Andy Gao, and co-editing it for the last five plus years, it’s now time for me to step down as editor. I thank my Department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL at Biola University for support and for the platform to publish our first four volumes online. There would not be an *IJC&ELT* without Andy Gao, and no Volume 4 without the help of my co-editor Michael Pasquale or my graduate student assistant Andy Edmondson. Thanks so much – I have enjoyed working with all of you.

The future of a journal like this requires the hard work of volunteers. I am thankful that when I announced I could not continue as editor Bradley Baurain stepped forward to work with Michael Pasquale on producing Volume 5. Please see information about this great editorial team on the next page. Let me encourage *IJC&ELT* readers to submit articles, offer to review key books, and let them know at *IJCELT.Editors@gmail.com* if you want to assist in some way. Thanks for your submissions and help to make the *IJC&ELT* what it’s become. *Soli Deo gloria!*

**References**


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**IJC&ELT Editors for Volume 5**

**About the New IJC&ELT Editors**

**Bradley Baurain** (Ph.D., U of Nebraska) is an Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies and TESOL at Moody Theological Seminary and Graduate School in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. He has taught ESOL and literature in higher and adult education for 25 years in the U.S., Canada, China, and Vietnam. He is the author of *Religious Faith and Teacher Knowledge in English Language Teaching* (Cambridge Scholars, 2015) and has co-edited *Multilevel and Diverse Classrooms* (TESOL, 2010) and *Voices, Identities, Negotiations, and Conflicts: Writing Academic English Across Cultures* (Emerald, 2011). His articles have appeared in periodicals including *ELT Journal*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *TESL-EJ*, and *TESOL Journal*. His research interests include teacher development, theology and language, narrative forms of qualitative research, and literature in language teaching. Further information: [https://moody.academia.edu/BradleyBaurain](https://moody.academia.edu/BradleyBaurain).

**Michael Pasquale** (Ph.D., Michigan State U) is Professor of Linguistics and M.A. TESOL Program Director at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. He is author of *An ESL Ministry Handbook* (Credo House, 2011) and co-author of *Every Tribe and Tongue: A Biblical Vision for Language in Society* (Pickwick, 2011), and his articles have appeared in journals such as *AILA Review*. His specialization is on the interaction between sociolinguistics and second language acquisition. His current research areas focus on the folk linguistics of second language acquisition, particularly studying the beliefs of teachers and students concerning the language learning process, and language policy in relation to English language teaching. More information: [https://www.cornerstone.edu/staff/michael-pasquale/](https://www.cornerstone.edu/staff/michael-pasquale/).

**From the Editors: With Appreciation & In Recognition**

The individuals recognized below served as consultants and referees at various times over the last year during the preparation of Volume 4 of the *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*. Some of these people completed multiple review of papers submitted for our consideration. By including their names below we note our appreciation for these scholars’ dedicated and knowledgeable service, which we recognize. Authors of both accepted and rejected papers often comment on the usefulness of the feedback they receive from reviewers, which reflects many hours of volunteer service. We record our debt of gratitude to:

- Karen Asenavage
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- Hiromi Takahashi
- Susan Truitt
- Mary Shepard Wong
Addressing Religious Issues and Power in ELT Classrooms: Voices from English Teachers in Indonesia

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Abstract
Drawing on insights from the ELT literature on values, power (relations), and dialogues on faith, this article will explore how EFL teachers reflected on their attempts to communicate their religious views to students. Data was acquired from three Christian English teachers. One was from the USA and the other two were Indonesian nationals. They participated in a larger case study project in an undergraduate English Language Teacher Education program at a university in Indonesia. In interviews teachers demonstrated the enactment of interfaith dialogues, critical thinking, respect, and religious reflexivity. This exploratory study concludes that religious values can be incorporated into ELT in a critical and reflexive manner, with a heightened awareness of religiously associated power relations, particularly between teachers and students.

Key words: critical thinking, interfaith dialogues, power (relations), religious reflexivity, values

Introduction
The incorporation of spirituality into foreign language education has been endorsed by scholars (e.g., Baurain, 2007 [in terms of becoming Christ’s witnesses]; Lee, 2015 [in the writing classroom]; Smith & Osborn, 2007 [in foreign language curriculum]). However, some reservations about, and harsh criticisms against, the integration of religions, especially Christianity, in ELT have been raised in the literature, mainly regarding possible proselytization (Edge, 2003; Foye, 2014; Varghese & Johnston, 2007). Furthermore, concerns have been raised over a lack of dialogue when English teachers bring religion into their classes (Pennycook, 2009). These concerns revolve around the issue of power differentials, especially between Western Christian English teachers and their non-Western, often non-Christian students. Save for Wang-McGrath’s (2013) study of team-teaching involving both Western and local teachers in Taiwan, how power differentials are negotiated in ELT classrooms in non-Western EFL contexts by both Western and local teachers is still not sufficiently documented (Vandrick, 2009; Wong, 2013). Therefore, the current paper responds to the call for more research into the place of religion in a non-Western context like Indonesia. In a recent study in Indonesia,
Lessard-Clouston (2013) investigated how teachers in an Indonesian Christian university integrated faith in their teaching practices. However, the issue of religiously related power relations between EFL teachers and students or colleagues was not discussed.

Indonesia encourages the integration of religious values in (character) education (Qoyyimah, 2016). The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 stipulates: “The government advances science and technology along with holding religious values and national unity in high esteem with a view to promoting civilization as well as the well-being of humanity” (chapter 13 on Education, article 31, subsection 5 [Asian Human Rights Commission, 2002]). Moreover, at the time of data collection, a requirement for students or teacher-trainees (to be modeled by lecturers) in the ELT curriculum at a Christian university where I conducted my study reads: “Being able to reflect Christian values in teaching.” The fact is that not all lecturers and students in the EFL teacher education program at the university are Christian.

Although the current study is based on a case in a university on the island of Java, Indonesia, it will be relevant to many other private and public educational institutions in different parts of the world where ELT stakeholders embrace different faiths. It can be predicted that students from Asia (especially Indonesia) and South America, who are religious (particularly Christian), may continue on their studies to English-speaking countries, especially Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Therefore, Christian English language teachers and/or teacher educators in these countries need to be much more aware of many Asian students’ sense of religious identity. Similarly, it is necessary for Christian English language teachers and/or teacher educators from English-speaking countries who are already or who will be living in religious countries to gain better understanding of power relations associated with the existence of various religious identities in ELT classrooms.

This paper hence aims to explore how EFL teachers reflected on their attempts to communicate their religious views to students. To that end, the current ELT literature on values, power (relations), and personal/interpersonal dialogues on faith will be reviewed in the following section.

**Review of Literature**

*Values and Spirituality*

Following Johnston (2003, p. 10), I use the term “values” interchangeably with
“morality” to mean “beliefs about what is right and good,” as well as what is erroneous and bad. One of the dilemmas in ELT classrooms is whether teachers can foreground their “personal faith” or otherwise. Johnston (2003) fleshed out this dilemma stating “In what ways, and to what extent, should my religious and spiritual beliefs directly or indirectly influence my work in language classrooms?” (p. 146). However, Johnston is an atheist. He does explain how his atheism affects his classroom teaching, but in a way that contrasts what some Christians do. He does not feel a need to convert others to his beliefs. Likewise, Buzzelli and Johnston (2002, p. 4) argue that “our use of the word moral has nothing in common with … [US] right-wing Christian organizations.” Therefore, it is not clear how religious beliefs influence their work in language classrooms. Ferris (2009) as a Christian, furthermore, seems more interested in improving students’ mastery of language skills than in influencing students to embrace her “worldview on any issue, whether it be care for the environment, equality for women or homosexuals, war, poverty, oppression, gun control – or [her Christian] faith” (p. 212), especially in non-religious educational contexts. Similarly, as reported in Wong (2013), commitment to adhering only to learning objectives prevented one Christian English teacher working as a missionary in China from including a discussion about Christmas in the classroom. She stated: “Our finals ended before Christmas, and there was nothing that they needed to know about Christmas for the final so I didn’t try to fit it in” (Wong, 2013, p. 23). Therefore, ELT educator-scholars like the atheistic Johnston and Christian educators like Ferris and the teacher in Wong’s study have not answered the question of how overt discussion of religion affects their (moral) work in ELT classrooms.

In some other settings, religious views have influenced the ways English language teachers shape their pedagogy. For instance, based on interviews with five Christian English teachers living and working in Japan, Wicking (2014) found that they did not endorse overt evangelism. Instead, they put more emphasis on “personal virtues of love and respect,” being highly professional, and “encouraging exploration of deeper life issues in class” (p. 45). The themes of love and professionalism also emerged in Baurain’s (2012, 2015) studies. However, in Varghese and Johnston’s (2007) study some Christian English teachers expressed their evangelical value overtly, though not aiming at overt proselytization. To be more specific, some US-based ESL Christian English teachers in Varghese and Johnston’s (2007) study stated that “the right way was not to attempt conversion of others outright, but rather to plant seeds” (p.
Italics in original) inside or outside of classroom contexts. The idea of planting seeds (or witnessing) has also been a major theme in Dormer’s (2011) work and Baurain’s (2012, 2015) studies. For example, a theme of “God is good” was used as teaching material in a Muslim elementary school in Indonesia (Dormer, 2011). Furthermore, in illustrating a distinction between witnessing and proselytizing, Baurain (2012) reported a response from a participant in his study:

I never tried to convert anyone because I believed (and still believe) that it would be an abuse of the power-distance between teacher and student... However, the Holy Spirit can do a lot with open discussions and student friendships. (p. 325)

While the notions of “power-distance between teacher and student” and “open discussions” came to the fore, more is needed to theorize about power relations, which are associated with one’s spirituality, in ELT contexts, not only from interviews with teachers, but also from their observed classrooms.

Before proceeding to a discussion about power in a bit more depth, it is necessary to be clearer first what is meant by spirituality and how it is related to religious faith. Van Brummelen, Koole, and Franklin (2004) assert that “[t]he scope of spirituality is broader than that of religion” (p. 238). Religion is commonly associated with creeds stipulated by religious organizations associated with faiths like Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. Religious values can be windows through which one’s sense of spirituality is viewed, but a person can claim to be spiritual without adhering to religious creeds (Tisdell, 2007). In this article, English language teachers’ spirituality coalesces with, but is not limited to, their Christian values. It is possible then to say that one’s spirituality is either religiously based or otherwise, with the former being the primary topic of attention here. Apart from religiously based spirituality in which one seeks transcendence through God or a Divine Being, spirituality entails one’s capacity of being self-reflexive and, in view of Astin (2004), being devoted to fostering a sense of community (see Mambu, 2017, for more detail on defining spirituality).

**Power (relations)**

From a Foucauldian perspective, it is erroneous to “see power as an evil that needs to be combated” (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 51). Power (differential) is a given that is not to be removed, but to be negotiated by educational stakeholders including English language teachers and students. As such it is inaccurate to think of teachers as those in a position of power while
regarding students as always powerless. Relations of power entail the likelihood that both students and teachers exert their power to negotiate their values. However, in teacher-student relations of power it is usually the teachers who have a stronger degree of authority in terms of getting students to do things or changing the students according to the teachers’ values or sense of morality (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Scholars have been worried that ELT is used “as a means to convert the unsuspecting English language learner,” which “raise[s] profound and political questions about what is going on in English classrooms around the world” (Pennycook & Makoni 2005, p. 137). Describing English language learners as “unsuspecting,” these scholars portrayed the learners as weaker in their relation of power with (Christian) English teachers.

This concern has been challenged by my findings in the context of an undergraduate English language teacher education program in Indonesia (Mambu, 2016). For instance, being exposed to the Christian literature of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* introduced by a Western Christian missionary, Karno (a pseudonym of a Muslim student), an avid reader who does extensive reading without being told to do so by anyone, was not converted to Christianity. Rather, he was able to make a parallel between the spiritual journey of Christian (the main character in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*) with hajj pilgrimage. This only strengthened his Islamic faith and at the same time Karno “did not challenge Christianity or accentuate the superiority of Islam, at least in my presence” (Mambu, 2016, p. 176). Similarly, Lukas (a pseudonym), a Buddhist student, has remained a Buddhist, although he attended a Communication Across Cultures course in which the instructor, Mr. Gate (a pseudonym), was an evangelical Christian. Lukas told me in an interview – transcribed verbatim:

> Mr. Gate, he always try to see that this is from my point of view, from my religion. But maybe from your religion is different. He never mean to offend other religions. So this is what he got in his religion. And he try to invite us from other religion to express our opinion about the same thing . . . [For example] Mr. Gate said that this is the Ten Commandments. And this is from the point of view of Christian. But he also tried to ask us from other religion whether [we] have the same thing or common thing. (Interview, March 25, 2014) (Mambu, 2016, p. 167)

This suggests, as far as Lukas’ case is concerned, that Mr. Gate is open-minded and Lukas himself is not an “unsuspecting” English language learner who succumbs to the teacher’s (evangelical) power without any hesitation. Mambu’s (2016) study, however, is limited to English language learners’ points of view. Teachers’ own reflections on how they negotiated power differentials associated with their religion(s) in the ELT classroom warrant further
inquiry.

In his reflection, Snow (2009) admits that the English language has been inextricably linked to power for decades, thanks to past British colonialism and the current U.S. hegemony in the world’s political, technological, and scholarship arena. This condition makes it difficult for Christian English teachers, especially missionaries who are also native speakers of English, to “carry out mission from a position of servanthood and humility” (p. 175). As a response to this difficulty, Snow suggests that native English speaking missionaries from Inner Circle countries like the United States become second language learners as an attempt to “‘empty themselves’ of power” (p. 182). However, the question of how a Christian English teacher empties him or herself of power and becomes a humble servant in ELT classrooms apart from being a second language learner still goes unanswered.

Reflecting on her own experience as a missionary kid, Vandrick (2009) implies that English language teachers should interrogate their privileged positions, especially those related to their religious belief. In so doing, teachers can mitigate power differentials between them and their students, which in turn allows the teachers to have dialogues with the students. Mossman (2015) has exemplified being a reflexive researcher. He acknowledges power associated with his “acquired” privileged identities (i.e., “unearned societal placement” as a White Canadian of European descent, a middle-class, evangelical, straight, and married Christian). He is also reflexive of his “ascribed” identities (e.g., his “spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, experiences, and personality”) as an ELT practitioner (p. 23). It is not very clear, however, how his commitment to negotiating his privileged identities is put into practice, especially when interacting with multilingual transnational youth learning English as an additional language (EAL) at the Writing Centre of a university where he worked. Mossman did provide an example of how he encouraged volunteers at the Writing Centre to “create learning spaces with their clients” (or EAL students) “characterized by openness … and hospitality” (p. 32). Nonetheless, Mossman did not report his direct interaction with the EAL students and how he demonstrated reflexivity in relation to these students. Put another way, Mossman did not address head-on how he interrogated his position of power (or privileged identities) when interacting (or dialoguing) with the EAL students himself.

**Faith-Related Dialogues**

By “dialogic” Johnston (2003, p. 127) means not merely “saying things.” Instead, a
dialogue requires “give and take.” That is, participants of a dialogue do not simply exchange ideas but also “respond by building on or challenging each other’s contributions.” The problem is deciding what to give or to take from others or build on each other’s contribution, when religious and secular values are oftentimes not in agreement. For atheist scholars, integrating religious values in class is quite probably of little importance. For religious believers however, religiously based spirituality is an inherent part of their personal dialogues and/or a major value to be communicated with others.

Canagarajah (2009) argues that he has to negotiate his knowledge of critical pedagogical scholarship and his Christian identity in representing himself in academia. Critical pedagogy encourages religious reflexivity (i.e., dialoguing with oneself to inspect power differentials with others due to his or her religious identity). The extent to which such reflexivity is made visible in interpersonal dialogues between English teachers and students is worth investigating. Relevant to the attempts to cultivate interfaith dialogues interpersonally are “guidelines for dealing with controversial issues” in ELT classrooms, which have been offered by Brown (2009, p. 267). First, it is crucial that students are provided with ample opportunities “to learn about important social/moral/ethical issues and to analyze all sides of an issue.” Second, “an atmosphere of respect” to differences in terms of religion, race, and sexual orientation needs to be established by teachers. Third, some discipline measures need to be taken when students “show disrespect” concerning gender, race, and religion (Brown, 2009, p. 267). However, the extent to which teachers and students are able to have personal and interpersonal dialogues on religious and critical values in ELT classrooms is still largely unexplored.

Based on the above review, I raised this more specific research question: How did EFL teachers at an English Language Teacher Education program at an Indonesian university in Java reflect on the enactment of personal/interpersonal dialogues on faith-related issues and power with their students?

The Study

The larger case study (Mambu, 2014) on which the current article is based addresses how EFL teachers and students negotiated their spiritual identities and power relations associated with their spiritual identities.
Context

I conducted my case study in an undergraduate English teacher education program at Jawara Christian University (JCU; a pseudonym) in Java, Indonesia. The head of the program explained that JCU hosted around 700 students from 2009-2013 classes (or around 140 students per admission year on average) and over 20 tenured lecturers, with two of them Muslims. Based on JCU’s student admission database, most of the students were Christian (i.e., approximately 67% for both Protestants and Catholics), with about 32% Muslims and less than 1% Hindus and Buddhists.

The distinction between teacher training (or TESOL) courses and EFL (or ESOL) classes is not clear-cut in EFL contexts. Similar to other programs in Indonesia, the English language education undergraduate program at JCU offers both EFL classes (usually in the first two years) and courses related to teacher training in the third and fourth years.

Participants

In my larger eight-month study (Mambu, 2014), I recruited 17 focal participants (i.e., six students and 11 lecturers) who embraced different faiths. One of the major criteria for recruiting them was their overt religiosity, which was apparent during my preliminary observations in their classes or was based on teachers’ and/or students’ reports. Being a Christian who was raised in a highly evangelical family and who is familiar with a critical Christian perspective to ELT (e.g., Canagarajah, 2009) helped me to notice English language teachers’ performance of religious identity during the preliminary observations.

In this article, I select data from three focal-lecturer participants who are Christian on the grounds that they reported having integrated critical-reflexive values in interfaith encounters in ELT classrooms with much detail. These lecturers taught students who majored in English language teacher education at the undergraduate level (these lecturers are listed below).

1. Angela (a Christian female lecturer; a U.S. citizen affiliated with Mennonites; holding an M.A. in English literature and a certificate in the teaching of writing; in her early 30s);
2. Mustika (a Protestant female lecturer who had grown up in Java, with a bachelor’s degree in EFL education and a master’s degree in cultural studies; in her mid-40s);
3. Dika (a Roman Catholic female lecturer who had grown up in Java, with a bachelor’s degree in EFL education and a master’s degree in cultural studies; in her early 50).
These are their pseudonyms. Participants’ responses are transcribed verbatim.

**Data Elicitation Methods**

*Interview.* Data from Angela, Mustika, and Dika were elicited in semi-structured individual interviews, ranging from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview questions that framed Angela’s and Mustika’s responses reported here are provided in the findings section.

*Classroom Observation.* I audio-recorded Dika’s Intermediate Reading class February 13, 2014) when observing one of her teaching sessions. Prior to attending her class, Dika had told me that she would include a discussion about the JCU logo, which has a religious (i.e., Christian) symbolism to it.

**Data Analysis**

Two major emerging themes are discussed here: enacting dialogues on faith-related issues and the enactment of religious reflexivity. Each of these topics will be discussed in their own respective section. I will specifically analyze the ways these lecturers framed Christian discourse in English language classrooms. On the whole, the three lecturers foregrounded dialogical and critical values when discussing religious issues in their classrooms. The nuances of these lecturers’ dialogical and critical values will be illuminated by Brown’s (2009) perspective (e.g., analyzing multiple perspectives of an issue, and establishing an atmosphere of respect), among others.

Furthermore, in weaving the narratives of the three participants in the findings section, I am engaged in a Bakhtinian Dialogical Narrative Analysis. This analysis is, from Frank’s (2012, pp. 34-37) perspective, committed to recognizing that “any individual voice is actually a dialogue between voices,” “remain[ing] suspicious to… monologue,” and “open[ing] continuing possibilities of listening and of responding to what is heard.”

**Limitations of the Study**

At the time of data collection, the participants reported in the current article did not teach courses related to teacher training, but courses to develop English language skills and awareness of American culture and literature. Findings in the current study are therefore limited on the grounds that they cannot be generalized to teacher training/education courses. The generalizability of negotiating the place of Christianity in EFL classes is also restricted. Data
from Mustika and Angela were not based on my observation in their classes. I relied solely on their recalled narratives, rather than from dialogues that were recorded and transcribed from the teachers’ discourse in class. In addition, from 23 observed class sessions taught by 10 EFL teachers/English language educators (including Dika’s class, but not Mustika’s and Angela’s classes) over a two-month period in my larger study (Mambu, 2014), religious themes did appear in some classes. However, extended discussions about these themes only emerged in five class sessions of the Communication Across Cultures course taught by three different Christian English language teachers/teacher educators. It is hence quite difficult to extrapolate the findings here to EFL teaching in general.

Findings

Enacting Dialogues on Faith-related Issues through Critical Thinking and Respect

Angela. In a narrative, Angela told me how the 9/11 incident and its aftermath had inspired her to discuss issues of culture, which includes Christianity and Islam (e.g., American Islamophobia in her elective American Culture and Literature course). This narrative emerged after I asked the following question: “With some years of experience teaching in this institution [JCU] particularly, what do you think of your interaction with your students who have different religious faiths or religious backgrounds?” As an American, Angela wanted to learn more about Islam, and by “provid[ing] a safe space” for the students and her to talk about religion in the class, she hoped to “build better interfaith relationship with ... students.” Angela was aware her attempt to dig out more about religious views from Indonesian EFL students was “pushing the envelope.” She had observed that Indonesians talked more openly about religion than those in the United States, but “to a point” that did not disrupt harmony. Therefore, she tried not to be too pushy by saying this in an interview with me:

Okay. We’re gonna talk about this. Because I think it’s important that we talk about religion in the classroom ... But we’re gonna talk about it with my context. We can critique American culture. America post 9/11. Because I realize it’s a delicate issue here. And I might make people feel a little bit kurang enak [awkward]. And if you want to compare it [i.e., America post 9/11] with your own culture, and see if this has similarities or differences, and apply this critique to your own culture, silahkan [please]. But they don’t feel terpaksa [obliged]. They don’t feel forced to try to build critical thinking. But not make it too uncomfortable. Cause this is really pushing the envelope, especially in Indonesian context. (Excerpt 1)
Angela’s lessons were enhanced by media (e.g., songs, television shows, and movies) that depicted American cultures. A variety of media produced by “right” and “left” wingers were used so as to show the students many US people’s purposes or motives in presenting their views of the 9/11 incident. A complication arose when one song with a highly Christian overtone was played in class. Angela actually wanted to tell her students that the song was used as an evangelical tool:

I also had shown them ... Allen Jackson [who] wrote “Where were you when the World Stopped Turning?” ... It’s a song ... told from the perspective of God. And he is saying, “I was there, in the building. I was there in the planes. I was there. People wanted to know where I was. But I was there.” ... At the end it’s like God asked the question, “But if you were in that situation, at that moment, would you have turned to me? Think about your life. Think about your death. If you were a victim of 9/11, would you have been calling out to me?” (Excerpt 2)

Angela even expressed a cautionary meta-commentary of the media she brought in class: “I’m not trying to evangelize you guys. I want you to see how people use this tragedy for their own purposes.” However, this was not sufficient. Some Christian students had misunderstood her, saying that Angela was brave to be God’s witness and evangelize in class: “I admire you because even in the class, … there’s a way to like witness or evangelize.” Some other students thought Angela “was trying to convert the Muslims.” Even some of her Muslims students, from Angela’s view, thought that “the very fact the teacher,” or Angela herself, “is playing [the song] means that she [was] trying to evangelize us.” Learning from this, Angela was determined to keep highlighting to her students that when she presented an (audio) clip with a Christian theme she did not want to convert her students to Christianity. Angela stated, “I was trying to ... show [students] how people were using this for their own religious agenda. And how people got terrified at Islamaphobia. I was trying to use it as a critical moment.”

Angela’s Christian students who misinterpreted her might initially think of her as a person who had the courage to “plant seeds” evangelically (Varghese & Johnston, 2007, p. 18). However, this is not the complete picture that Angela would like to depict. As a Mennonite missionary, Angela’s teaching style was not to overtly preach the Gospel in class. Instead, as a Christian, her teaching approaches are much more in line with critical pedagogical values (e.g., commitment to cultivating critical thinking and respect [see Brown, 2009] as well as social
justice). Central to an attempt to nurture critical thinking is framing an evangelical discourse (see Excerpt 2) within a larger perspective of critical (media) discourse analysis.

That some of her students failed to notice Angela’s decision not to be overtly evangelical did not diminish her intention to engage students in using their critical thinking capacity. As such, Angela’s case contradicts Pennycook’s (2009) serious doubt of Christian English teachers. He stated: “What I am profoundly against is arrogance, bigotry, self-righteousness, … anti-intellectualism, and hypocrisy. It is perhaps just my misfortune that [the Christian English teachers] I have had dealings with have had such attitudes in abundance” (p. 63). Angela was in no way an arrogant, self-righteous, or anti-intellectual person. Nor was she a bigot. Had she been a bigot, she would not have allowed her students to be involved in an interfaith dialogue where students, including the Muslims, could question her contribution (i.e., letting students know about the post-9/11 evangelical discourse in the USA) in a discussion about American Islamophobia. In light of Buzzelli and Johnston (2002, p. 53), Angela was aware of “the way power is used and negotiated” by her students, especially the Muslims who challenged her presentation of evangelical discourse in class.

Furthermore, being self-reflexive (or self-critical) of her use of evangelical discourse, which was misinterpreted, she went to a great length to ensure that her students (in subsequent meetings or semesters) did not misunderstand the presentation of an evangelical discourse framed in a critical manner. Foregrounding critical thinking here apparently demonstrates Angela’s commitment to intellectualism.

Angela’s use of Bahasa Indonesia (see Excerpt 1) is also interesting. In light of Snow’s (2009) view of emptying oneself of power through learning (and using) a language other than English, Angela, though in an interview context, seems to have demonstrated her humility, at least before me. That is, she acknowledged the awkwardness (by saying kurang enak) of talking about a religious issue in her class. Moreover, what she said during the interview might also be what she had expressed in her class – the pronoun “you” in “And if you want to compare it…” apparently mimics what she said in class. That is, she requested her students – all of whom were Indonesians – politely (i.e., the use of silahkan [please]) to make a comparison and contrast between America post 9/11 and their own culture.

Being aware of power differentials between herself as an American white Christian English language teacher and her students, Angela also showed respect to her Indonesian
students. She was conscious of her power as a teacher who could more strongly “push the envelope” (see Excerpt 1), if she chose to. Angela could force her students to compare America post-9/11 and Indonesia critically in terms of interfaith relations. However, she was restrained from imposing that critical thinking on her students. Angela limited the scope of critical thinking for her students by asking them only to criticize religious tensions (especially Islamophobia) in the USA post 9/11, not their own (Indonesian religious) “culture.” By not pushing the envelope, Angela created “an atmosphere of respect” for interreligious harmony in the class. That is, in view of Brown (2009, p. 267), Angela’s “personal opinions or beliefs” in critical thinking on interfaith relations in Indonesia “remain sensitively covert.” It could be really tempting for Angela to comment critically on “all sides of an issue” of interfaith relations in Indonesia in the English language classroom. Had she been critically overt about interreligious relations in Indonesia, Angela could have been viewed as either disrespectful to followers of a certain religion being critiqued, or coercive in that some students might resort to, in Brown’s (2009, p. 267) phrasing, “thinking something because the teacher thinks that way.” Overall, a self-critical (or religiously reflexive) value will help English teachers, who decide to incorporate religious issues into ELT classrooms, to balance critical thinking and respect when it comes to initiating interfaith dialogues with students.

In view of Frank (2012), Excerpts 1 and 2 indicate Angela’s voice (i.e., to examine religious issues critically in her class) that was juxtaposed to other voices (e.g., her own discomfort in being pushy to her students; different Americans’ interpretations of the 9/11 tragedy). As such, Angela was not monologic. Instead, she encouraged her students to provide responses, including the one on evangelizing, which was misinterpreted by the students.

Angela is a Westerner, so a question remains as to whether a Christian English teacher who grew up and was educated in a non-Western setting like Indonesia could handle religious issues critically and respectfully in English classrooms. Besides that, Angela’s approach seems to be more confessional and self-critical than engaging students in religious reflexivity.

**Enacting Religious Reflexivity with Students**

**Mustika.** Using Phillis Wheatley’s poem entitled *On Being Brought from Africa to America*, Mustika told me in an interview that in her English literature class she initiated a discussion about a contradiction in Christian history. Mustika’s narrative of discussing the poem
in her class emerged because I heard from a student I interviewed earlier that Mustika brought it up in class. Commenting on the last part of the poem, Mustika stated: “Interestingly, at the end, … she reminded people ‘Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain, may be refin’d, and join, th’angelic train.’” In Mustika’s opinion, these last two lines of Wheatley’s poem “can be one of the reminders for all Christians to see colors as something that should not hinder people from salvation.” Then, as I perused the poem line by line during the interview, I came across “Their color is diabolic dye.” Mustika chimed in: “some view our sable race with scornful eye.” She interpreted it as “kind of admission [or acknowledgment] that there is discrimination. This is … criticism to Christianity itself.” Asked to elaborate on what she meant, Mustika explained:

[Phillis] was thankful that she was introduced to the savior [based on the first line of the poem – ‘twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land’]. So she converted to Christianity … Unfortunately, these Christian people – I got the idea that ‘some few our sable race with scornful eye’ – [are] referring to her color. [Phillis] was introduced to Christ by her mistress, [who] was white, [but] ironically ‘some few our sable race with scornful eye.’ (Excerpt 3)

The religious reflexivity on Mustika’s part was to empathize with Phillis taking side with her fellow African Americans being oppressed by her fellow Christians, who happened to be racially white. The poem is seemingly too far removed from the students’ local context and culture, as Mustika and her students are not “white Americans” themselves. However, the point here is not on the white and non-white distinction, but on what EFL learners can extrapolate from Phillis Wheatley’s portrayal of racial discrimination in the United States. That is, Mustika called for religious “auto-critique” or reflexivity. As she put it: “So I also introduced to the students that this poem is kind of auto-critique to the believers. To the Christian believers.” After that, Mustika explained how she attempted to foster religious auto-critique in her class by raising difficult questions to them, and wrapped up her stance on auto-critique.

“What about you in real life? Will you be able to accept criticism toward your own religion? Or you would be angry when people criticize your religion?” Or, “can you criticize your own religion, in order that you learn more about what you believe?” So that was usually what I asked, when it came to the issues like this poem …

The principle here is the ability to look at someone’s belief more objectively, … to criticize practices of the believers’ attempt to follow the teachings, … to compare the misconduct or mistreatment done by the believers, and to separate the believers from the belief. Because that is what commonly happens in our society: “Because you believe in...”
Christianity, so you are Christian. When you are doing bad, so Christianity is bad.” That is what people usually think. And that’s what I wanted my students to see. (Excerpt 4)

Through reflecting on how she discussed Phillis Wheatley’s poem in her class, Mustika provides an example of today’s Christian English teacher from a non-Western context who can frame a Christian discourse (see Excerpt 3) in a critical-reflexive way. From Buzzelli and Johnston’s (2002) perspective, introducing reflexivity as a desirable value is Mustika’s exercise of power to control classroom discussions.

Making herself (and her religion) vulnerable to criticism, Mustika attempted to mitigate power differentials between herself and her non-Christian students. Thus, Mustika’s case defies Pennycook and Makoni (2005) and Pennycook (2009) who cast doubt on Christian English teachers’ ability to be critical.

In contrast to Angela who was reserved about “pushing the envelope” concerning interfaith relations in the Indonesian context, Mustika challenged her students whether they could accept criticism toward their own religion (see Excerpt 4). Mustika might not analyze “all sides” (Brown, 2009) of discrimination, but she exemplified how dialogues on faith-related issues should start from oneself who, in light of Frank (2012, p. 35), “remain suspicious to … [her or his own] monologue.” It is one thing for students to comment critically (and monologically) on another culture (e.g., Indonesian students examining the post-9/11 USA in Angela’s class). It is another thing to scrutinize unfavorable practices associated with the students’ own religions. Religious auto-criticism necessitates that a dialogue within oneself or an interpersonal dialogue be performed.

Dika. While data from Angela and Mustika was elicited in interviews, data from Dika is based on my classroom observation of her Intermediate Reading class. In a class session of the course, Dika introduced the notion of the logo on the grounds that verbal words are not the only channel of communication that people read.

Examining one’s own religiously affiliated context is a form of religious reflexivity. After explaining different logos in business and political fields in her Intermediate Reading class on February 13, 2014, Dika showed the JCU logo and said:

That is why in the beginning, before we started, then I asked you to write what you think of the university. ... And now look at the logo. Now, do you think you have the meaning of the logo there? In your handout, you can read the meaning of the logo ... (Excerpt 5)
The students were then assigned to work in groups of three and answer Dika’s questions: “Do you think the logo is the face of JCU today? … Do you think the logo fits your idea about JCU or JCU today as you know it?” These questions potentially nurture religious reflexivity.

Dika said that students were not to be afraid of being dismissed if they are honest about any unpleasant thing about the university. She reminded the students of the necessity of interpreting a text, including the JCU logo, critically; that is, students are not simply “to accept what is stated, but to assess it, or examine it.” A follow-up question was raised:

If you think that the logo and your idea about the university as you know is different, then please discuss with your friends whether there are things that need to be changed in the logo, or whether there are things that the university should change, so that the logo will represent the face of JCU today. ... If you think that there is a match between the logo and the university as you know JCU today, then give reasons. If you think both don’t match, then which ones should be changed. ... If there is something needs to be changed, in what ways should it be changed? (Excerpt 6)

Dika’s justification of why the JCU logo is to be examined is as follows: “Because you are all here. You are members of the big family. You must know JCU very well. [JCU is] something you live in, something you partly depend your future on.”

Students’ responses varied. The students either did not want to change the logo because it was already “good,” or they wanted to change it (e.g., “If the symbols use a picture of book more interesting”). One response was quite critical: “We think the reality in the college itself is not showing God to be first priority.”

In view of Frank’s (2012) Dialogical Narrative Analysis, I find it necessary to frame the issue of religious reflexivity in relation to JCU within Dika’s larger narrative, not only within the context of her Intermediate Reading class which I observed. In an interview with Dika on March 26, 2014, when I asked her if there was something that made her uncomfortable in a focus group discussion (FGD) she participated in, she indicated that the presence of her Muslim colleague in the FGD prevented her from sharing her thoughts more fully. In the interview, she more comfortably narrated her experience of living in a Muslim-dominated neighborhood in greater Jakarta during the 1998 massive social riots. This feeling of insecurity led her to decide to move to the city where JCU is located. In her early years living very close to JCU she thought that it “should be strong because it’s a Christian university.” She added: “If JCU is not strong, it would be easier for fanatics of the majority religion in Indonesia to dominate the non-Muslims.” Her hope seemed to fade over the years, nonetheless. As she put it: “the leaders [of the university]
talk about the progress of JCU, but in reality, they give priority to their own interests.” Dika’s subjective opinion seems to resonate with her student’s critical statement: “We think the reality in the college itself is not showing God to be first priority.” Thus, both Dika and her student co-constructed their JCU world or reality in a reflexive and critical manner.

In the same interview, I asked Dika what influenced her decision to use the JCU logo. She said:

I bring JCU logo because I’m thinking of whether JCU is still like a Christian university or not. And so to make the students be aware of that JCU should be a Christian university. Something like that. And I think, not introduction but preliminary activity, when I asked them to write about what they think of JCU, ... many or most of them do not consider it as a Christian university … (Excerpt 7)

What I think is potentially illuminating from Dika’s activity is her instruction in the class: “If you think that the logo and your idea about the university you know is different, then please discuss with your friends whether there are things that need to be changed in the logo.” When I heard this, I remembered Janks’s (2010, p. 25) notion of design. In her view, design “encompasses the idea of productive power – the ability to harness the multiplicity of semiotic systems across diverse cultural locations to challenge and change existing discourses” (p. 25). One such semiotic system is the JCU logo. Students and teachers at JCU were certainly not to change the JCU logo. One might then wonder why Dika in her instruction challenged the students to change the logo when they felt there was a gap between the logo and their thought of the university. Seemingly implied in Dika’s response to me during an interview (see Excerpt 7 above) was actually her deep concern about the fading Christianity at JCU. Her conviction was that “the students should be aware … that JCU should be a Christian university.” Accordingly, it seems that Dika’s instruction in class is a semiotic system in itself which was intentionally used by her to challenge, in a subtle way, an existing discourse of indifference toward the quality of Christianity at JCU. Dika’s challenge is closely linked to her Christian identity: “There was a time when I thought that JCU should be strong … If JCU is not strong [in its Christianity], it will be easier for extreme or fanatics of the majority religion in Indonesia then to dominate the non-Muslims.” Overall, challenging her students to think of a possibility of changing the JCU logo is a powerful tool for Dika to call for her students’ reflexivity toward the quality of Christianity at JCU.
Discussion

Based on the findings reported above, I will explore the interrelatedness of power, reflexivity, and dialogue. Power in Pennycook’s (2001) view, following Foucault, “is not merely repressive but is also productive” (p. 91). Thus, power relations are not simply about relations between “powerful oppressors” and “the powerless oppressed.” Rather, they are likely to be tied to people’s exercise of productive power. Such power allows a person to employ various “semiotic systems” in different locations “to challenge and change existing discourses” (Janks, 2010, p. 25). Some examples of semiotic systems or signs that have been raised so far include (1) notions of critical thinking, respect, and Islamophobia, as well as the use of Bahasa Indonesia as a foreign language (in Angela’s discourse); (2) notions of auto-criticism and salvation (in Mustika’s discourse); and (3) the JCU logo (in Dika’s classroom discourse). These semiotic systems have been utilized in various ways by these instructors to foster interfaith dialogues in their classes, in hopes that existing “unfavorable” perspectives such as Islamophobia, religious close-mindedness, and indifference toward Christian values in JCU will be confronted, if not also altered.

Teachers’ productive power, moreover, means that their power is not to be understood always negatively. For instance, power should not always be connoted with manipulating and coercing students into believing that Christianity is the best religion in the world. Power can also mean the capacity to cast a reflective-critical gaze on individual teachers’ own teaching practices that are influenced by their religious beliefs (e.g., using many biblical expressions that alienate non-Christian EFL students) and to initiate (inter-faith) dialogue with students. To illustrate, Dika raised a series of open-ended questions (see Excerpt 6) that made it possible for her students to productively extend the dialogue on the degree to which the JCU logo reflected students’ lived realities in the university.

In line with Canagarajah (2009), I have positioned myself as both a Christian and a critical pedagogue in this article and my larger study (Mambu, 2014). As a Christian I fully trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and am willing to obey His commands. Though not always successful, I am committed to displaying the spirit of servanthood in my workplace as an English language teacher educator. As a critical pedagogue, I cherish social justice, (inter-faith) dialogue, and critical-reflexive interrogation of my power and privileges associated with Christian interpretations and practices. Similar to Mustika, for instance, I am called to question
discriminations, be they on a racial basis or a religious ground. Admittedly, I might not be considered to be critical pedagogic enough – Canagarajah encounters this difficulty, too. My critical pedagogy is relatively limited in that the yardstick against which its interpretations and applications are measured is my current beliefs that I think are not contrary to biblical principles. As a Christian critical pedagogue, I am eager to stand up for social justice for the economically poor. I endorse countering dominations by a religious majority, without violence but through dialogue. I can learn from Dika who fostered such a dialogue in her class by raising her students’ awareness of the extent to which Christianity was influential at JCU. I also intend to fight discrimination against religious minorities with love. In addition to CP principles that I support, I believe that planting seeds of the Gospel through my words (especially when asked by non-Christians) is important. More broadly, it is possible for Christian English teachers/teacher educators to be critical and reflexive without having to embrace “pure” secularly relativistic CP.

**Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications**

English language teachers working in (and from) a non-Western context (e.g., Indonesia) can, and must even be encouraged to, incorporate religious values into ELT. However, the larger issue of power relations associated with religious beliefs of ELT stakeholders in local contexts remains salient. To address and take into account power differentials in dialogues on faith-related issues, a Christian English language teacher/teacher educator needs to foster and model a critical-reflexive thinking/stance without having to lose his or her Christian identity. This stance emphasizes:

1. interrogating Christian interpretations and practices that damage humanity in the name of religion (like Mustika), as well as those which contradict ELT stakeholders’ sense of Christian identity – recall Dika and her student who were seemingly disillusioned by how Christianity was practiced at JCU;
2. showing respect and humility to students embracing beliefs other than one’s own.

In content EFL-related courses like Cross-Cultural Communication and skill courses like reading and speaking, students need increased awareness of sociocultural norms across communities, particularly religious and academic communities which have different values and dogmas. In these courses, students also need to practice how to frame their spoken and written discourse in ways that are honest or transparent and yet do not impose their religious beliefs on
others.

While the current article discusses English language teachers’ narratives, the principles of interfaith dialogues and religious reflexivity are highly relevant to components of language teacher education curriculum that prepare prospective English language teachers. In terms of vocabulary words, students in a language teacher education program can learn notions such as “left” and “right” wingers, “Islamophobia,” “evangelical Christian,” etc., in order for them to be conscious of global issues related to religious faiths, especially if they plan to move to (or imagine living and doing further studies in) English-speaking countries like the United States. Also crucial is providing opportunities for students to talk about religious issues in local contexts or within their own cultures.

The seed of religious reflexivity has been planted in Mustika’s class; nevertheless, with the exception of my findings in Mambu (2016) of a Muslim student criticizing the presence of a radical Muslim group known as FPI (Front Pembela Islam/Islamic Defenders Front), little is known about how EFL students address local issues critically-reflexively. Future studies that initiate and/or document critical-reflexive discussions about local ethnic and religious tensions in ESL/EFL classrooms and/or online learning spaces are hence necessary.

References


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Challenges Faced by National and International Christian English Teachers in Honduras

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Abstract
This qualitative study explored the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras. There is an identified need for empirical studies which include a broader range of participants outside of North American teachers working in international contexts (Kubanyiova, 2013; Loptes, 2009). Data were gathered from 44 teachers through an online questionnaire and individual and focus group interviews. Three categories emerged through the analysis of the data: 1) social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras, 2) professional challenges and strategies related to lack of support, and 3) the role of faith in teachers’ personal and professional lives. This study is important as it includes the voices of both national and international Christian teachers, in a country with significant educational and societal challenges. More research is required to explore the challenges faced by Christian English teachers worldwide and to address how to support these teachers in both their professional and personal journeys.

Key words: Christianity and ELT, Honduras, national and international teachers, teacher experience

Introduction
In the past decade, Christian English teachers have come under significant scrutiny by many within the TESOL community for a variety of reasons. Varghese and Johnston (2007) discuss the dilemma between the Christian tenets of witnessing and conversion and the view that teachers should not attempt to impose their beliefs on students. Teachers have been criticized for using their role as teachers as a cover for their real purpose of evangelism (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). There is also a great deal of debate around historical and present-day associations between English language teaching and questions of linguistic imperialism (see Canagarajah, 2009, for an overview of these criticisms). Yet, while various criticisms have been laid against Christian English teachers, very little research has documented the experience of Christian English teachers around the world. Both Loptes (2009) and Kubanyiova (2013) argue for more empirical studies about Christian language educators and their practices. Kubanyiova calls for a broader range of participants, as studies have often focused on North American
evangelical Christians who are employed in developing countries and teach English as a platform for missionary work. The focus primarily on North American English teachers working in other countries is especially problematic in light of Snow’s (2007) claim that the majority of English language teachers are non-native speakers who teach in their home country. Additionally, non-native English teachers have often been marginalized within the profession as employers show preference to international native speakers (Dormer, 2011). Research which includes a broader range of participants, especially non-native Christian English teachers, provides a needed opportunity to hear the voices of teachers who have not yet been adequately represented thus far.

In sum, while many criticisms have been laid against Christian English teachers, scarce research documents the challenges they face in their specific contexts. The present study addressed this research gap within the Honduran context by documenting the challenges experienced by national and international Christian teachers in their personal and professional lives. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the primary personal and professional challenges experienced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras?
2. Do national and international teachers experience and address these challenges differently and if so, in what ways?

By exploring the personal and professional challenges faced by national and international Christian teachers in Honduras, this study brings new perspectives to the current debates on the intersection of Christianity and English language teaching.

**Literature Review**

The focus of this study was the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras. This study drew from literature focused in three main areas: 1) the educational context of Honduras, 2) international teachers’ experiences in Honduras, and 3) challenges related to adjustment for international and national workers and teachers.

Within the context of Honduras, very little research has focused on English teachers, though the teaching of English is rapidly growing both within the public and private sectors. There are over 800 elementary and secondary English-Spanish bilingual schools in Honduras (Secretaria de Educación de Honduras, 2016). As well, there are hundreds of teachers providing private lessons or teaching English within public and private universities. The Honduran Ministry of Education recently mandated English classes for all public schools, which
substantially increased the number of English language teachers. This desire for increased English at all educational levels is important to note in a country which suffers from low student achievement despite movements for educational reforms throughout the region (Di Gropello, 2005). Forty-seven and a half percent of Grade 1 to 9 students are considered at risk of dropping out (UNICEF, 2013). Dormer (2011) describes a potential challenge in contexts where a country’s desire for English instruction outpaces their supply of effective teachers, and some people might say this is the case in the context of Honduras.

While Honduras has significant educational challenges and a rapidly increasing role of English language within this sector, unfortunately no published research has been found which documents the experience of national and international Christian English teachers in this geographical context. However, through an extensive search, two articles were found that consider the experience of international teachers in Honduras. In a historical overview of bilingual education in Honduras, Alley (1996) describes the experience of international teachers in large bilingual schools. Though not an empirical study, Alley (1996) outlines three main areas of concern: 1) exploitative school practices contributing to high turn-over rate, 2) a high degree of variability and lack of accountability in programs, resources and facilities, and 3) unqualified teachers and lack of teacher training. While Alley presents a fairly dire picture of the state of bilingual education in Honduras, the article is limited in scope as it focuses solely on the experience of international teachers within large bilingual schools. Hooley (2005) describes his personal experience teaching for one year at a large Christian bilingual school in Honduras. While Hooley describes some challenges, such as frequent electrical outages and the impact of different cultural norms in the classroom, his article does not provide a critical reflection of his experience. While Alley (1996) and Hooley (2005) provide some insight into the Honduran context, both authors focus primarily on the experience of foreign teachers in large bilingual schools, a very narrow sector of English teachers in Honduras.

While scarce research exists on the experience of teachers in Honduras, other researchers have identified specific challenges commonly faced by international and national workers adjusting to novel situations. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) developed a Framework of International Adjustment which outlines a process by which international workers adjust to their new work and living environments and the potential challenges they face in this process. While Black et al. (1991) originally designed their framework for persons travelling overseas for
employment, the authors drew from both domestic and international adjustment literature to create their framework and therefore it can be applied to this study regarding the challenges faced by both national and international teachers. The original framework includes two major areas of adjustment: anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment. This study focused on the in-country adjustment factors of the framework, which include three Degrees of Adjustment: 1) work adjustment, 2) interaction adjustment and 3) general adjustment. Work adjustment includes both one’s role within their professional role, as well as the organizational culture of their place of employment. Interaction adjustment refers to interactions with others within a work setting, while general adjustment includes all factors outside of the work environment, such as living conditions and family life. According to the authors, while all three factors apply to international workers, they also apply to domestic work changes, though work adjustment would likely be the most significant factor.

Black et al.’s (1991) framework has been adapted by other researchers to explore the experience of international teachers. Roskell (2013) uses the framework to explore the experience of 12 international teachers working at a school in South East Asia. In her study, Roskell (2013) identifies the challenges of the teachers according to 1) host culture characteristics, 2) relationships, and 3) work characteristics. While Roskell’s (2013) study focuses solely on international teachers, participants identify similar personal and professional challenges to those outlined in Black et al.’s (1991) framework.

While Black et al. (1991) and Roskell (2013) identify a number of categories of challenges, neither explores participants’ faith in response to the challenges. While not within the Latin America context, recent studies exist which explore the experience of Christian teachers in other parts of the world. In a study spanning a decade, Wong (2013) explores factors which influenced the identity formation of three western English teachers in China. Many of the factors Wong identifies match with the categories identified by Black et al. (1991). For example, Wong’s category “Hand Dealt” refers to many aspects of “Work Characteristics,” while “Support Network” aligns closely with “Interaction Adjustment.” Yet Wong’s research also provides important insight into the role of teachers’ personal faith in addressing these challenges, an aspect not explored by either Black et al. (1991) or Roskell (2013). Unfortunately, none of these studies includes participants from Latin America and therefore they represent very different educational and cultural contexts than Honduras. As well, the almost exclusive focus of the
articles reflects the problem noted by Kubanyiova (2013), as the articles primarily include the voices of North American teachers teaching internationally. Scarce research explores the personal and professional challenges faced by both national and international teachers within the same setting, and none considers these participant groups within Honduras. This represents an important area for research as Honduras represents a country with both significant educational challenges and a growing role of English in society.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was suitable for this study based on the exploratory nature of the research questions. Data were gathered for this study through two different sources: focus group and individual interviews and an online questionnaire (see Appendix A – Questionnaire Questions and Interview Topics). The interviews were part of a larger study conducted at The Pines Bilingual School. This study was granted ethical clearance by Queen’s University’s General and Education Research Ethics Boards (Canada) and The Pines Bilingual School’s Board of Directors. All English teachers at The Pines Bilingual School were invited to participate in the interviews and were provided a Letter of Information and Consent. Nine teachers participated in the interviews and all signed the Letter of Information and Consent. Teachers chose to participate in individual or focus group interviews based on their preference for interview type and their availability. Of the nine teachers, four participated in the individual interviews and five participated in the focus group interviews. For the individual teacher interviews, the interviews were split into two sessions, with each session lasting approximately 1 hour. The focus group interviews were also split into two sessions, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The online questionnaires were sent out through a social media group for English teachers in Honduras and 35 teachers completed the questionnaire. The questionnaires included a short description of the study, as well as an informal Letter of Information and Consent as part of the introduction. All questionnaires were anonymous. In total, 44 teachers participated in this study, 9 interview participants and 35 online questionnaire respondents.

In both the interviews and online questionnaire, respondents were asked to identity their faith affiliation. All interview participants self-identified as Evangelical Christians. For the online questionnaire, respondents self-identified as Evangelical Christian (80%), Catholic (3%)
or Other (17%), which included the following responses: “only Christian,” “raised Catholic now Evangelical Christian,” “an Evangelical believer,” and “a believer in God and his son”. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to participants under the umbrella term of “Christian,” acknowledging while each participant self-identified with this term, they may define this term in different ways.

All participants were also asked to identify as either a national or international teacher. International teachers indicated they were from Canada, the United States, and Trinidad and Tobago. A summary of participants by nationality and data source is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants by Nationality and Data Source (n=44)

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<th>Questionnaire</th>
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<td>Honduran</td>
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While the participants taught in a variety of contexts throughout the country, the majority of teachers worked in religious and non-religious private educational settings, such as schools, universities, or language centers. Most teachers lived and worked in urban contexts.

In regards to teaching experience, 24% of teachers had taught for less than 1 year, 21% had taught for 1-2 years, 24% had taught for 3-5 years, and 31% had taught for more than 5 years. All national teachers indicated Spanish was their first language, while all international teachers indicated English was their first language.

After the data was collected, organized, and transcribed, an inductive analysis of the data was conducted. This analysis drew from aspects of the Constant Comparative Method (Boeije, 2002). This method calls for a multitude of comparisons of data which in the case of this study included the comparisons of the two groups of teachers to each other. The in-depth process of comparison allowed for the identification of instances when perspectives were similar or divergent regarding a specific finding.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, it was important to practice reflexivity by acknowledging my role as the researcher. Through a detailed research log, I reflected on my own experiences as a teacher in Honduras, and identified how my experiences could influence this study. While my long-term involvement in bilingual schools in Honduras influenced my perspective on this study, I applied principles of trustworthiness, as outlined by Guba and
Lincoln (1982), such as credibility and dependability throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Results

Through the analysis of the data, three themes emerged as central to the experience of both national and international teachers: 1) social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras, 2) professional challenges and strategies related to lack of support, and 3) the role of faith in teachers’ personal and professional lives. For each area, converging results for both groups will first be reported, followed by any results unique to each group. At the end of this section, Table 2 provides a summary of the findings.

1. Social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras

International Teachers

In regards to host culture challenges, international teachers focused on four main areas: communication, cultural differences, security, and personal relationships. International teachers emphasized communication as one of the primary barriers they faced in both their professional and their personal lives. They expressed difficulties in communicating with students, parents and other school personnel. One teacher said, “The most challenging part for me was the feeling of isolation that the language barrier brought to all aspects of life.” Others mentioned more subtle aspects of communication, such as, “yes does not always mean yes in Honduras.” Teachers also noted strategies to address this language barrier, such as taking Spanish classes, immersing themselves in Spanish-only situations and being willing to make mistakes.

In their discussions of cultural differences, international teachers discussed a number of difficulties, including culture shock, and adjusting to different cultural values. In terms of addressing these cultural barriers, teachers employed two primary approaches. First, they actively learned more about the culture by asking other international teachers who had more experience. Secondly, they tried to adapt to certain cultural norms. One teacher explained how she was adapting to Honduras by learning when plans changed to “just roll with it and not worry about it,” a reflection of the cultural norm of less rigid planning in Honduras.

International teachers also emphasized security concerns. They stated they had learned to deal with these concerns by not leaving their homes at night and being with trustworthy people.
One experienced teacher said, “Security will be an ongoing issue, so choosing not to allow fear to paralyze me and at the same time trying to use common sense to keep as safe as possible. And of course, lots of prayer.” While some teachers noted safety as a primary challenge, others noted it in regards to its potential impact on their social life. Many teachers felt their social lives were limited compared to their home countries, as there were more restrictions on their personal freedoms. When asked the greatest challenge she faced living in Honduras, one teacher said, “Not having a car or the freedom to do whatever I want when I want.”

While some international teachers focused on the challenges of their new social environment, others focused on missing relationships in their home countries. One teacher noted, “The most challenging part has been doing life without the people I am closest to.” While teachers struggled with adapting to a new social environment, many had identified coping strategies. In many cases, teachers took a two-prong approach by establishing a new community, and staying connected to close relationships in their home countries. Teachers intentionally developed relationships with Honduran families and embraced opportunities to enjoy the country and people. Many teachers saw their new church as playing a key role, and believed getting involved in a local church had helped them find a new community of friends. Teachers also prioritized communicating with family and friends at home through various forms of technology, such as social media and video calling.

While teachers identified strategies to deal with their new social environment, some still experienced a sense of isolation. One commented:

Something that I’m really struggling with is the fact that no matter how culturally aware I become and how well I can speak Spanish, I will never be fully accepted as part of the general Honduran society outside of the school, but I think that comes with living in a different culture.

While international teachers outlined a number of key challenges related to living in Honduras, they also identified effective strategies to deal with many of these challenges, such as learning Spanish, adapting to Honduran culture and establishing a new community. Some challenges though, like being fully accepted within Honduran society, seemed insurmountable.

National Teachers

Compared to international teachers, national teachers focused much less on challenges related to living in Honduras and only discussed their concerns with crime. National teachers
discussed their concern with high crime rates as whole in Honduras, but also focused on the issue of corruption within the government. Only one teacher identified a possible strategy for addressing these concerns, stating their solution simply as: “Report cases of corruption.”

In sum, in regards to challenges within Honduras, international teachers noted communication as a primary challenge. They also focused on security and cultural barriers, especially in regards to the impact of these barriers on their personal relationships. While many had developed key strategies to address these challenges, such as learning more Spanish, adapting to Honduran culture and following safety precautions, the challenges were still heavily emphasized. On the other hand, national teachers only noted crime as a concern, with a specific focus on corruption.

2. Professional Challenges and Strategies Related to Lack of Support

Both national and international teachers identified a lack of professional support as a major challenge. One aspect which both groups identified as problematic was inadequate teacher training. While some national teachers focused on the lack of opportunities to advance in their careers, most teachers emphasized how the lack of training limited their effectiveness in the classroom. Some teachers had no professional training as teachers and most teachers who were certified did not have any specific training as second-language teachers. Teachers commented that they had little feedback from the school administration on their teaching. One international teacher noted, “I think it is so hard to come in without any teaching background and without any real support.” Both national and international teachers indicated this lack of training as one of the major obstacles they faced.

While teachers acknowledged the lack of formal training provided by their schools, they also described strategies which they used to address this professional need. Many teachers mentioned the importance of asking other more experienced teachers for help. Some attended workshops, such as the TESOL Honduras national congress, which they felt was another important aspect of their professional development. One national teacher remarked, “I want to go back to school and just be prepared because sometimes I feel limited here, like something I cannot reach because there’s something that I don’t know. Maybe I could do it if I had the training.” While teachers clearly noted a lack of formal training, they addressed this need through their own personal initiatives to seek out formal and informal opportunities for training.
International Teachers

While both groups discussed a lack of training, they differed in the other concerns they shared related to inadequate professional support. International teachers discussed concerns regarding the administration of their schools but these were not discussed by national teachers. International teachers emphasized communication issues with their administrators, caused both by language barriers and by a lack of interest by administrators to clearly communicate with teachers. Some international teachers also believed that their schools did not value the English program compared to the Spanish program. One teacher explained: “When you look at the school’s mission statement, it says nothing about English.” Teachers also addressed concerns with some school policies, such as the “nivelación” system which allowed students who had failed a semester to write make-up exams. While teachers disagreed with these policies, they also recognized in many cases the policies were made at a national level and their school administrators were responsible only for their implementation. In regards to strategies, teachers did not describe any strategies to deal with issues related to administration.

National Teachers

While national teachers did not discuss concerns regarding their school administration, they did reflect on a perceived undervaluing of education as a whole within Honduras. Teachers stated insufficient financial resources were invested in education in both the private and public sector. As an example, teachers stated they were often not provided with adequate resources for their classes. They addressed this challenge through buying the materials themselves or if they were not available for purchase or too costly, they would create the materials themselves. Teachers also believed their work was undervalued, as demonstrated by their salary. While teachers expressed concerns regarding their low salaries, they did not discuss any practical means to resolve this issue. Some teachers acknowledged their low salary but also indicated money was not a primary motivator for teaching. One teacher simply stated: “I teach for love, not for money.” National teachers believed education as a whole was not respected within Honduras, as demonstrated by the lack of monetary investment in teachers or resources.

In sum, national and international teachers indicated a lack of support in their roles as teachers. While both groups noted a serious lack of training from their schools, they also identified key strategies they employed to support their professional growth, such as attending conferences. International teachers also indicated concerns with the leadership of their schools,
while national teachers focused on the undervaluing of education as a whole in Honduras.

3. Role of Faith in Personal and Professional Lives

Many national and international teachers discussed the role their faith played both in their teaching and in their personal lives. Teachers from both groups expressed a high level of freedom to talk about their faith and pray with students in both public and private school settings. While most teachers saw their faith playing an important role in their lives, specific aspects of faith differed between the two groups.

International Teachers

International teachers discussed the role of faith in their personal lives and in their English classes. Many international teachers linked their faith with their decision to come to Honduras to teach and some stated it was the only reason why they continued to teach in Honduras. One teacher noted: “I have come here to serve … if it wasn’t for this spiritual mission, I likely would have buckled under the culture shock and hightailed it back to Canada.” Another new teacher echoed a similar sentiment, explaining, “God is the only reason I do not pack my bags and go home.” While many indicated a sense of calling kept them in Honduras, they also recognized that through teaching in Honduras, their faith had grown as they had learned to depend on God through daily challenges. Others indicated their relationship with God provided the needed strength for each day. One teacher said, “Most days feel like they may never end and the obstacles never end but having my hope and faith in the Lord, I don’t have to focus on the difficulties I face.” Many international teachers indicated their faith both brought them to Honduras and provided strength for their daily trials, and in fact grew them through the challenges they faced.

International teachers expressed contrasting opinions on the relationship of their faith to their English classes. Many teachers viewed teaching as an opportunity to serve others. One teacher wrote, “I see every day as an opportunity to serve the Lord and show these children a little bit of Christ’s love while teaching them a practical life skill, like English.” Teachers described the opportunity to help students better their lives through English which they hoped would have a positive impact on their communities. While many teachers emphasized the teaching of English as an outpouring of their desire to serve others, a few teachers viewed English classes solely as a means to share Christ. One teacher explained, “The English classes
were just a way to build relationships with Hondurans in order to share the love of Jesus.” While this teacher does not state whether proselytizing occurred during English classes, this viewpoint approaches a breach of ethical conduct, especially if the teacher was prioritizing evangelism over a professional commitment as a teacher.

**National Teachers**

In their descriptions of the role of faith, national teachers focused on the impact of faith on their personal lives, their relationships with students and sharing Christian values within the classroom. Like their international counterparts, national teachers noted the importance of faith in providing strength for their position as teachers. Teachers believed their faith helped them to persevere when they felt like giving up. One Honduran teacher stated that she asked “God for strength and patience to overcome all the challenges that we have as teachers each week.”

National teachers also emphasized the impact of their faith on their relationships with students. Teachers drew from their Christian values when students shared personal issues with them. One teacher noted faith “helped me not to judge and to understand my students’ backgrounds.”

Finally, national teachers discussed the integration of their faith in their English classes through teaching about Christian values. One national teacher said, “I try to use any opportunity I have to share the good news of what a life in Christ is all about, promoting honesty, love, compassion and respect.”

National teachers drew from their faith to face the challenges in their professional lives, to support and empathize with their students and to promote Christian values within their classrooms. International teachers also discussed the strength their faith provided to face daily challenges, but they also focused on what they defined as a calling to teach in Honduras. While most international teachers saw teaching English as an opportunity to serve others, a few problematically viewed it as only a means to share about Christianity.

In sum, teachers discussed challenges related to living in Honduras and the lack of professional support within their schools. In some cases, national and international teachers identified a number of specific strategies for dealing with these challenges. In other cases, teachers had been able to identify challenges, but had not developed effective strategies to address them. Teachers also discussed the role of their faith in facing some of these challenges. Table 2 outlines these and other important findings in an ‘at a glance’ summary.
Table 2. Summary of Important Findings

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<td><strong>International Teachers</strong></td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>• increase their Spanish proficiency</td>
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<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>• learn more about Honduran culture</td>
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<td>Limited personal relationships</td>
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<td>Security</td>
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<td><strong>National Teachers</strong></td>
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<td>Corruption</td>
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<td>School administration</td>
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<td>Inadequate teacher training</td>
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<td>Undervaluing of education in Honduras</td>
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<td><strong>National Teachers</strong></td>
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<td><strong>International and National Teachers</strong></td>
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<td><strong>National Teachers</strong></td>
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<td>• faith provides strength for challenges of teaching</td>
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<td>• enjoy freedom to talk about their faith and pray with students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• faith informs their interactions with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

As Table 2 indicates above, national and international teachers shared many similarities in the challenges they faced in Honduras, as well as demonstrating some contrasting opinions. Three main discussion points will now be explored in relationship to the literature: 1) the value of English education in Honduras, 2) faith not informing social injustice, and 3) faith informing classroom practices.

**The Value of Education**

While national and international teachers shared a concern over the lack of professional support, they focused on two different aspects. International teachers emphasized key concerns in regards to school administration, while national teachers did not discuss their specific
administrators. This finding echoes Roskell’s (2013) results, as she indicates the primary reason international teachers terminated their contract was difficulties with the administration which limited their ability to teach effectively. While international teachers’ criticisms in this study do not go as far as Alley (1996), who states Honduran bilingual schools take advantage of their teachers through unfair school practices, they did feel unsupported and isolated within their schools. This sense of disconnect between the Spanish and English programs has been identified as problematic at other bilingual schools in Latin America. Both Hamel (2008) and de Mejia and Hélot (2008) argue that often Spanish and English programs in Latin America operate as two separate schools, with little integration between the programs. Yet national English teachers did not describe the same disconnect between the Spanish and English programs at their schools, though they did believe education as a whole, and their work specifically, was undervalued.

It may be that both groups’ concerns are based on the undervaluing of education but from different viewpoints. International teachers described it on a small scale, as they believed their administrators did not prioritize communication with them nor was the English program valued within their schools. National teachers, on the other hand, considered the bigger picture, believing education was undervalued within Honduran society as whole, not just within their specific school settings. While at first the international and national teachers appear to have conflicting views, upon deeper reflection it seems likely the views are complementary, with international teachers looking through a microscope and national teachers through a wide angle lens. This finding seems to echo the challenges identified in the UNICEF (2013) report in regards to the state of education in Honduras. While teachers identified clear challenges and a concern over the value of education by Honduran society, both international and national teachers in this study shared a clear desire and commitment to work toward positive change. In looking forward, the question is likely not whether or not challenges exist, especially in the area of English language teaching, but instead to focus on how to support teachers in order to empower them to improve the educational situation in Honduras. The work of the recently established TESOL International affiliate, Honduran English Language Teachers’ Association (HELTA), is evidence of important steps forward in providing teachers with the resources and professional development required to address the pressing educational challenges they currently face.
Faith Not Informing Social Injustice

In this study, both national and international teachers mentioned crime as a key challenge of living in Honduras. In their discussions, both groups focused primarily on how crime impacted them personally. Yet, neither group discussed the effects that crime or other devastating social issues, such as illegal emigration to the United States, has on their students, their colleagues or society as a whole. Wong (2013) notes a similar tendency for international English teachers to, at times, ignore the realities of their host country’s social and political situation, based on her research in China. She states that international teachers must reflect more deeply on these issues within their local context. Yet in the present study national teachers also did not talk about the impact of these major societal issues on their teaching. This exclusion by both national and international Christian teachers may reflect a view described by Canagarajah (2009), in which some Christians see the Good News as simply a means to personal salvation. In contrast, in many parts of the developing world, evangelicals see the Gospel as the regeneration of all aspects of life, and evangelicals play an active role in criticizing injustices in their countries (Canagarajah, 2009). Yet, in this study, neither national nor international Christian teachers made a connection between their faith and the injustices of Honduran society. This perspective may reflect a personal faith which focuses primarily on salvation over a renewal of society. On the other hand, teachers’ lack of discussion may be related to a lack of awareness, in which case teachers could be educated about issues of social justice and how to incorporate these topics into their classrooms. Schools could also provide opportunities for students, families and staff to share and pray about some of the personal concerns and challenges they face living in Honduras. While conclusions cannot be drawn based on participants not discussing a certain topic, further engagement of national and international English teachers in issues of social justice is likely needed in Honduras and in other contexts.

Faith Informing Classroom Practices

While participants in this study generally did not talk about how their faith informed their views of societal problems on a large scale, they did talk about how their faith informed their practices within the English classroom, though some clear differences were noted. National teachers presented a more congruent description of their practices, emphasizing how their faith helped them in their relationship with their students and how they incorporated Christian values
through their teaching. Many international teachers saw teaching English as an opportunity to serve their students and in turn help the communities where they lived.

These practices of national and international teachers are in line with other studies, such as Wicking’s (2014) research on Christian English teachers in Japan, where teachers had a clear sense of the line between their role as a professional and their faith as a Christian. In contrast, a small group of international teachers here described their English classes only as a means to share Christ with their students. While they did not state whether or not they proselytized in their classrooms, a primary emphasis on evangelism is problematic. Within the field of TESOL, many have criticized Christian English teachers for using English language teaching as a cover for their real purpose of evangelism (e.g., Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). Wong (2009) criticizes this approach, stating those teaching English as only a means to evangelize, “devalue the profession, their students, and their primary calling as Christ followers” (p. 93).

Robison (2009) states Christian teachers should be as transparent as possible with stakeholders about any religious content in their classes. Robison argues this transparency is required of all teachers, not just Christian teachers, as every teacher brings personal philosophies and beliefs to the classroom which will impact their practices and potentially influence their students. In order to ensure this type of transparency, Christian schools should clearly outline the type of religious content which is included in both classes and special events to all parents and students. While teachers in this study indicated their schools were generally open to classroom discussions about faith regardless of religious affiliation, teachers should still be aware of expressing their personal opinions and beliefs in a way that reflects professional ethical codes. The majority of teachers in this study indicated a clear awareness of appropriate guidelines for sharing their faith and demonstrated how their faith supported their work as a professional English teacher. Schools could promote this culture of reflexivity by providing opportunities for all staff and students to regularly reflect on their personal beliefs and consider how these beliefs may impact their personal relationships and school interactions.

While national teachers emphasized how their faith influenced their relationships with students and how they incorporated Christian values in their teaching, international teachers were divided into two contrasting approaches. Many international teachers described teaching English through the lens of service while a minority viewed it as a method to open a door to evangelism. Neither group discussed the intersection of their faith and the social issues of Honduras, such as
family disintegration tied to extremely high rates of emigration. Discussions of justice or advocacy for students were notably absent from their consideration of the challenges they faced.

It is important to note that while certain patterns emerged in regards to discussions about teachers’ faith, their individual beliefs likely vary widely. When asked to describe their faith background, 83% of questionnaire respondents selected one of the two options provided, Evangelical Christian or Catholic. These participants did not provide additional information on their faith background, though a section was available to add further information. An in-depth exploration of individual teachers’ beliefs, convictions and religious practices was outside of the scope of this study, but is a key area for ongoing research.

In sum, while findings from this study aligned with other similar studies in certain areas, other findings indicated discrepancies and areas for ongoing research. This study demonstrated both areas of convergence and divergence between national and international teachers. Further investigation is required to explore more deeply these differences and to understand possible factors which have led to these differences between the groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras and the role of their faith in facing those challenges. While the findings from this study could help inform research in other contexts, the experiences of these international and national Christian teachers in Honduras will be unique in many ways. While there is a growing field of research into the role faith plays in the experience of English teachers, very little research has looked at the challenges faced by both international and national teachers. As well, research on the experiences of either type of teacher in Honduras is virtually non-existent. While this study begins to address this gap, more research is required to explore the challenges faced by all types of Christian English teachers around the world.

References


Appendix A

Questionnaire Questions and Interview Topics

A. Selected Questionnaire Questions

- Which country are you originally from?
- Please describe your faith background.
- What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your role as a teacher?
- How have you responded to these teaching-related challenges?
- What has been the most challenging part of living in Honduras?
- What strategies have you found helpful in dealing with these personal challenges?
- What role does your faith play in your experience as an English teacher in Honduras?

B. Selected Interview Topics

- educational and teaching background
- faith background and involvement in faith community
- areas of personal and professional growth
- teaching responsibilities and school environment
- relationships with other staff and administrators
- adaptation of teachers without an educational background in teaching
- schools’ religious background and openness to faith discussions
- support available inside and outside of school
- expectations of living in Honduras versus actual experience
- cultural adjustment for international teachers

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A Theological Critique of “Learner Autonomy”

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Abstract
Because words reflect the world of a person, Christian teachers of English are called to consider how the linguistic terminology they use intersects with their Christian values. In this article, I present theological issues with the phrase “learner autonomy” (LA). Drawing largely on the work of Kenneth L. Pike, I discuss an alternative to LA that I believe more clearly reflects a Christian teacher’s theological commitments.

Key words: dynamism, grammar, Kenneth L. Pike, learner autonomy, phonology, reference, relationality, stability

Introduction
Words reflect the world of a person – assumptions, experience, sentiment. They also shape the thoughts and impressions of others through hearing and reading. This is simply a fact of language. As Kenneth L. Pike (1912-2000) once wrote, “Language bends us, moves us, drives us – or blocks us, holds us, binds us in a word-made mold” (Pike, 1981, p. 4). Language teachers, however, may forget this when it comes to the technical terminology that is embraced in their field. They might tend to think that technical terms are somehow neutral and that they can use such terms without having them infringe upon their own values and assumptions. Such a tendency, I argue, may not serve Christian language teachers well, for assuming the neutrality of a term in one context may mean tacitly accepting its negative connotations in another. While connotations can be tangential to a word’s meaning in a separate context, this is not always the case. In what follows, I aim to establish this by examining the concept of “learner autonomy” (LA) from a theological perspective. Then I will suggest some next steps Christian educators can take to glean what is useful from the concept of LA while reforming it from a distinctly Christian perspective.¹

¹ This article is not meant to censure Christian missionaries and language teachers who have used “learner autonomy” and related concepts throughout the last several decades. Rather, I take this as an opportunity to reassess this terminology from an explicitly Christian perspective.
Learner Autonomy

“Learner autonomy” (LA) refers to a learner’s self-determination and independence in acquiring and using the target language (Brown, 2007, pp. 92-93). As Brown notes, LA is linked to a student’s intrinsic motivation. This definition, taken broadly, is widely accepted in the field of English language teaching (Benson, 2007, p. 22). In Harmer’s (2007) popular textbook introducing the practice of TESOL, he writes, “To compensate for the limits of classroom time and to boost the chances for successful language learning and acquisition, students need to be encouraged to develop their own learning strategies so that as far as possible, they become autonomous learners” (p. 394). Such a comment conveys the general approval of LA within the field, as does Brown’s (2007) treatment of LA as a “pedagogical foundation stone” (p. 70; see also Benson, 2007, pp. 21-22).

LA can be more readily grasped when one witnesses its manifestations in the classroom. Cotterall (2000) notes that fostering autonomy should include the following aspects:

• Students should be made aware of their own goals and objectives, and enabled to identify resources that will help them achieve such goals.

• Students should develop a simple awareness of language learning theory so that they can use this theory to identify strategies and tasks that will move them towards their goals.

• Students should reflect on their own learning experience. (pp. 111-112)

All of these aspects are meant to cultivate self-directed learners (Harmer, 2007; but note also Benson & Voller, 1997; Al-Busaidi & Al-Maamari, 2014; Benson, 2007).

Understanding what LA is can help us to see its practical effect in the classroom, along with its pedagogical purpose. As Al-Busaidi and Al-Maamari (2014) put it concisely, “[learner autonomy] is seen as a way to empower students and to make them responsible for their own learning” (p. 2051). Now, it is difficult to take issue with such a concept at first glance. What teacher would not want students to be intrinsically motivated to achieve their own language goals? And self-conscious, reflective learning is hardly a vice. Much of what is associated with LA appears to have only positive repercussions for the learner, and so it is not difficult to see why so many language instructors and researchers have embraced the concept of LA over the years.

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2 See Benson (2007, p. 22) for a summary of definitions and developments of LA in the last several decades.

3 There are, of course, variations and nuances across the field (Benson, 2007, p. 22; see pp. 23-24 on “levels” of autonomy that have been proposed over the years).
last several decades and have sought to foster it in both conventional and creative ways (e.g., Yu, 2013; Hu & He, 2013).

But the appeal of LA does not mean that the terminology and its associated values should be embraced without critical reflection. As stated at the outset, words reflect the world of a person, and we must be careful to examine the world behind this term, especially when we consider the theological connotations for the word “autonomy” and how these connotations are related to the meaning of this term in language teaching. While LA has been used positively over the years and pairs well with a learner-centered approach, I will argue from the perspective of theology that the concept itself runs counter to linguistic assumptions that can and should be derived from sound theology and a biblically rooted understanding of language. A few of these assumptions include the view that language is by nature a relational behavior (inseparable from a network of persons), and that the bits and pieces within language are interdependent, so that language as a medium eschews the notion of autonomy altogether. To make my argument, I rely heavily on the somewhat dated but still highly relevant language theory of Kenneth L. Pike. While I will engage with a few other contemporary views in my critique, I will largely be drawing on his insights.

At the outset, TESOL instructors should note that the uncritical use of LA may have repercussions for both pedagogy and student development. In light of this, it is necessary to offer a theologically sensitive critique of LA that addresses both components (pedagogy and student development). However, before doing this, and because of the complicated nature of teachers’ and researchers’ interpretations of LA, we would do well to accept a particular definition before going much further. From this point on, LA will be understood more broadly as a learner’s self-directed growth in and independent use of the target language. “Use” here would represent the micro- and macro-skills commonly attributed to each of the four skill areas – listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Brown, 2007).

To start, I will outline the background of the word “autonomy” in theology. This will bring out some of the connotations of this word and suggest conceptual relations between its use in theology and its distinct but related use in language teaching.
Theological Background for “Autonomy”

In orthodox theological circles, “autonomy” is somewhat of a dirty word. As is the case with the term in linguistic circles, the semantic range of this word in theology is fairly broad, but there are certainly core definitions that are worth noting. Here are a few definitions and uses of the term that clarify its theological meaning.

• Intellectual autonomy is the view that human beings have the right to seek knowledge of God’s world without being subject to God’s revelation. It first appears in the history of human thought in Genesis 3’s narrative of the fall, in which Adam and Eve make their decision to disobey God’s personal word to them. In their decision, they affirm their right to think autonomously, even to the point of contradicting God himself. (Frame, 2010, pp. 15-16)

• In a word, the unbeliever lives as if he were autonomous, subject only to his own law. Nobody can really be autonomous, because we are all subject to God’s control, authority, and presence. (Frame, 2015, p. 22)

• The sinner seeks to be autonomous. He will, therefore, seek to set himself up as a judge over that which presents itself to him as revelation. (Van Til, 2007, pp. 225-226)

• The revelation of a self-sufficient God can have no meaning for a mind that thinks of itself as ultimately autonomous. (Van Til, 2008, p. 112)

• If we do not serve God, we will end up serving something, whether that is one of the false gods in ancient Israel, or the god of material success, or human pride, or simply autonomy. (Poythress, 2009, p. 107)

In these examples, autonomy is tantamount to independence, if a severely negative meaning is attached to that noun. Autonomy is willful rebellion against a sovereign God; to act autonomously is to act as if God does not exist, or he has not revealed himself, or if he has revealed himself, people are not required to submit to the authority of that revelation. But because Christians believe that God does exist and has revealed himself, both in the world around us and in Scripture, such independence would ultimately be illusory. The only being who is truly independent (autonomous) is the Trinitarian God himself. All else is dependent on him, and so any creature claiming autonomy is living in a fantasy. Likewise, because all things depend on God for their purposeful existence, nothing in created reality can be described as autonomous either. As Frame (2015) noted, “Nobody [and no thing] can really be autonomous” (p. 22). Given this truth and in light of the examples above, theological autonomy (TA) can be
understood as *a person’s self-directed functioning and feigned independence from the Trinitarian God of Scripture*.

A few other points should be noted here with regards to TA. First of all, autonomy is understood in reference to God’s revelation. Do special revelation (Scripture) and general revelation (the natural world, the human conscience) have any bearing on our ability to understand and function in reality – to act, reason, speak, and carry out a host of other human behaviors? The answer for most Christians is, “Of course it does!” But when pressed about *the way in which* it has a bearing on human behavior, responders are more hesitant. For a moment, just consider the bearing special revelation has on language theory and language acquisition. While this is not the place for a detailed investigation of such major issues, we might ask ourselves initial questions that are drawn from Scripture. How does the fact that God speaks, to himself in the Trinity and to his creatures, affect our understanding of what language is meant to do? If our answer is that language is ultimately a behavior that aims to unite persons, to bring them to commune with one another (Hibbs, 2016, pp. 5-8), then the notion of autonomy in language learning seems odd, at least from a biblical perspective. Autonomy stresses individual competence, not communal engagement. Or, in terms of language acquisition, if our communication is meant to be guided and shaped not only by the greater purpose of language (communion with others), but also by the redemptive work of Christ, who has called us into his one body, then how might we re-envision the way in which we expect others to learn a language such as English? If our ultimate pragmatic goal is to help people clearly speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and if love is a patently interpersonal behavior, is the concept of learner autonomy – *independent* growth and use of the target language – a biblical tenet of language acquisition? These are the questions that lie in back of this article.

Second of all, in addition to autonomy being considered with regards to God’s revelation, autonomy is also closely related to epistemology: the study of how we know what we know. So, one might argue that the theological use of “autonomy” cannot be fairly associated with its linguistic usage. One cannot compare apples (autonomy in epistemology) to oranges (autonomy in language pedagogy and acquisition). However, this would be the case only if we insist on a narrow, compartmentalized view of human behaviors. But being is tied to thought, and thought is tied to language (Hibbs, 2015, pp. 37-39). What we assume and say about one has implications for the others. If we think autonomously (as if we were self-existent and independent creatures),
we are bound to view learner autonomy as a positive goal in language acquisition. And while there are redeeming qualities in the concept of learner autonomy, in this article I am arguing that, given its theological underpinnings, autonomy should not be a communicative goal for language learners. This brings us to the critique of LA itself.

**A Critical View of Learner Autonomy**

At this point, the issue is apparent: many teachers and scholars within the TESOL field claim that the concept of autonomy is a key part of intrinsic motivation and a necessary component of learner development. At the same time, orthodox, biblical theology avows that any notion of autonomy should be barred from use unless we are talking about God himself. In this vein, Van Til (2008) once asked, “When autonomy is over and over regarded as the root of all evil in theology, why then should it be welcomed in apologetics?” (p. 364). We might add, why should it be welcomed in English language teaching?

Yet, on a more concrete level, is there anything more than a theological commitment that encourages us to exchange the language of autonomy for terminology that better reflects Christian values and assumptions about God and language? After all, it would seem superficial for Christian teachers merely to say, “We do not like what the term connotes.” While that may be true, the rejection of autonomy in linguistics must be more substantive than that. And that substance seems to come from the nature of humans as image-bearing communicators and the nature of language itself. If the people who use language and the structure of language itself eschew any notion of autonomy, then it would be strange indeed to continue using and promoting the concept of LA in English language teaching (Little, 2009, p. 223).

At this point, I would like to reintroduce a seminal article by Pike (1985), entitled “The Need for the Rejection of Autonomy in Linguistics.” Pike (1985) was adamantly opposed to the notion of autonomy in language itself, not simply because he thought the term was vaguely at odds with his Christian beliefs. He used his theory of language, tagmemics, to draw this out.\footnote{Tagmemic theory, or tagmemics, is a linguistic theory developed by Pike in the context of 20th century American descriptive linguistics. It began with the principle of observer perspectives (particle, wave, and field) through which the interlocking hierarchies of phonology, grammar, and reference could be viewed. Within these hierarchies were tagmemes, contextual units comprised of four components: class (a group of items structurally replaceable by one another), slot (a unique position in a larger structure), role (a particular function within a construction), and cohesion (systemic relations that bind units together; for example, a plural subject requires a plural verb) (Pike, 1995, pp. 533-536).}
feel that we must bring Pike’s understanding of autonomy within language to bear on the notion of learner autonomy in the field of TESOL.⁵

**The Observer and the Observed**

To start, Pike’s tagmemic theory rejected the bifurcation between people and language. In other words, there is no such thing as “pure” language – language apart from the people who use it (on this point, also see Benson, 2007, p. 31; Frame, 2015, p. 253; Van Til, 2007, pp. 37-38). He writes,

> A crucial characteristic of tagmemic linguistic theory . . . is its insistence upon a relation between observer and observed; between knower and the item known. Knowledge of autonomous items is denied. Knowledge is seen as a “composite” of an observer component and a component of item as observed.

Tagmemics bridges the gap between person and thing by the concept of emic units [units of human behavior with socially-significant contrasts to other units based on their use] . . . The emic approach . . . leads to a rejection of observer autonomy and a rejection of thing autonomy. (Pike, 1985, pp. 42-43)

This is a bit abstract for those not versed in the rhetoric of Pike’s theory or in Kantian philosophy, but essentially what Pike is saying is this: language can never be separated from the people who use it. Language is not autonomous because it is always tied to, and dependent on, the people who use it.

Now, when people use language, they choose what Pike called *observer perspectives* through which to see the world, including language (Pike, 1982, pp. 19-38; 1993, pp. 43-54). There were three perspectives that he developed throughout the course of his career: *particle*, *wave*, and *field* (Pike, 1972, p. 129; Poythress, 2009, pp. 56-57). He applied these perspectives to the areas of grammar, phonology, and reference. This is important to note because Pike’s rejection of autonomy in linguistics was built on these foundations. For Pike (1985), autonomy manifested itself in linguistics as the assumption that “some area is sufficiently separable to be accessible for study in independence of other parts of the language system” (p. 35). Grammar,

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⁵ As a reviewer of this article helpfully pointed out, Pike was not alone in his rejection of autonomy in linguistics. It is well known that he was reacting to the approach pioneered by Noam Chomsky, whose language theory separated language from its real life contexts. Others in the field of cognitive linguistics, such John R. Taylor, have similar critiques of Chomsky and would, it seems, side with Pike on certain points. See Taylor (2007, pp. 572-579) for a helpful summary of the features of Chomskyan linguistic theory and the reaction of cognitive linguistics to it. Taylor also suggests enquiries that might be made concerning autonomy in linguistics (pp. 579-581).
for example, could be considered independently from phonology, or phonology from reference, or reference from grammar, and so on.

Certainly, we can study a linguistic unit in relative independence from a larger context. For example, in the sentence, “Words reflect the people who use them,” we can isolate the initial clause, “Words reflect the people,” and analyze it semantically (what does it mean for “words” to “reflect”?), phonologically (is “words” stressed in this clause, or “reflect,” or “people,” or all three?), or referentially (are we talking only about content words, or also about function words?). This would be a particle perspective of that linguistic unit; we fix the boundaries of our inquiry and choose to see a linguistic unit as if it had neatly defined borders.

But at some point our neat borders of analysis are going to break down and become fuzzy. For example, a semantic analysis of the initial clause would quickly lead us to the conclusion that we must examine what comes immediately before and after that clause in order to better understand what the author means by “reflect.” Potential stress patterns in this clause would be indicated by the focus of the surrounding context. But the addition of the relative clause, “who use them,” would affect this pattern. The precise reference of the term “words” would, we hope, also be clarified by the immediate context. But because we are now drawing on information from outside of the initial clause, we would be using the wave perspective: examining a nucleus (the initial clause) while being informed by the margins (both before and after the nucleus).

And yet we could not stop here. The field perspective would have us examine the larger patterns and relations of the discourse as a whole. Where does this declarative sentence, “Words reflect the people who use them,” fit in relation to other units of the discourse, and to the discourse as a whole? Where, across discourse units, does the author tend to place a declarative statement, and what sentiment, in particular contexts, lies behind the declaration? Chastisement? Exhortation? Argumentation? The field perspective reminds us that we often must “focus on the network or ‘field’ of relations between various parts of language. This focus offers a relational perspective on language” (Poythress, 2009, p. 55). We have in mind here not only discourse relations, but also lexical relations within a semantic field (e.g., the relation of reflect to indicate, mirror, and point to), as well as grammatical relations (e.g., the relation of reflect to reflected, reflecting, and reflection), and phonological relations (e.g., the accent patterns for refléct vs.
people; the lowering of intonation at the end of the words reflect and them, signaling the completion of a clause).

There are two critical points to consider here, one theoretical and the other theological. (1) No observer perspective (particle, wave, or field) is adequate by itself. In Pike’s (1985) words, “We need . . . to reject the autonomy of any single perspective of particle, wave, or field (or autonomous static, dynamic, or relational views. . . . Instead we seek a set of complementary approaches” (p. 38). While we can temporarily focus on one perspective, we cannot do so to the exclusion of the others. This leads to the second point: (2) these perspectives are overlapping and interlocking (Poythress, 2009, p. 57), and they are such ultimately because they are rooted in the Trinitarian God of the Bible. The particle, wave, and field observer perspectives interlock and presuppose one another because each of the persons of the Trinity has intimate communion and interpenetration with the others without threatening or eclipsing the personal distinctions. The persons of the Godhead are not considered in isolation from one another. They are distinct, certainly, as the creeds of orthodoxy have always maintained, but they are also one God. We will discuss this theological concept later in the article (for background on this, consider Frame, 2013, pp. 479-481; Hodge, 2013, p. 462; Bavinck, 2004, p. 302; Kelly, 2008, pp. 489-493).

**Grammatical, Phonological, and Referential Hierarchies**

Pike paired his rejection of the autonomy of any observer perspective with the rejection of the autonomy of the three major “hierarchies”: grammar, phonology, and reference. Our comments here can be brief, since we have already introduced an example and seen how elements of a triad interconnect and overlap.

For the sentence, “Words reflect the people who use them,” there are obviously grammatical constituents: nouns and pronouns (words, people, who, and them), verbs (reflect and use), and a definite article (the). These constituents are part of a larger grammatical hierarchy that includes phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and larger discourse units. Each element within the hierarchy is dependent upon those around it for meaning and significance (Pike, 1985, p. 41). So, within grammar, no unit in the hierarchy is autonomous.

There are also phonological features of our example sentence: phonemes (the s in words, indicating plurality), consonant clusters (rds in words; ct in reflect), long and short vowels (the oo in who; the short e in them), stressed syllables, stressed words, and patterns of intonation.
across a clause. As with words in the grammatical hierarchy, “sounds do not exist, as relevant to speech communication, except as components of larger groupings of sounds” (Pike, 1985, p. 41). Within phonology, there is no autonomy of units.

Lastly, in our example sentence there are referential features: objects or phenomena in reality to which the words of the sentence point. *Words* in this sentence likely points to units of oral or written discourse; *reflects* points to a physical meaning (e.g., *water reflects the sky*) that has been adapted metaphorically, and thus points to the phenomenon of “indicating” or “suggesting.” *Use* refers to the array of pragmatic ends to which the words can be put. As with grammar and phonology, referential units of language are intelligible only in relationship to the rest of the referential world. References form a web of relations, not independent objects. So, within the referential hierarchy, there is no autonomy of units.

Now, in addition to these hierarchies having no internal autonomy, they also have no external autonomy. By this we mean that no hierarchy stands by itself; each is integrated with and presupposes the other hierarchies. Take away the grammatical units, and there is no phonological or referential data. Take away the phonological units, and there is no grammatical or referential data, and so on and so forth. These hierarchies are mutually dependent upon one another (Pike, 1985).

In short, for Pike (1985), “Things are not autonomous. Ideas are not autonomous. The universe is not autonomous. Linguistics is not autonomous. We are hooked – together” (p. 49). Language is not autonomous because the observer perspectives people use to view language are interdependent and reject the notion of autonomy, as do the grammatical, phonological, and referential components of language itself. Pike’s (1985) approach, then, “leads to a rejection of observer-autonomy and a rejection of thing-autonomy” (p. 43).

Pike, we should note, is not alone in his critique of autonomy in linguistics. Even proponents of LA in the TESOL field have begun to question its validity and usefulness. For example, Nunan (1996) has warned others that autonomy cannot be considered absolute.

Autonomy is not an absolute concept. There are degrees of autonomy, and the extent to which it is feasible or desirable for learners to embrace autonomy will depend on a range of factors to do with the personality of the learner, their goals in undertaking the study of another language, the philosophy of the institution (if any) providing the instruction, and the cultural context within which the learning takes place. (p. 13)
What Nunan has said about LA in terms of its desirability and the cultural context applies to Christians in the TESOL field, especially those who, like myself, work for a Christian institution. I would add here that the “personality” of all learners is relational because every learner, from a Christian perspective, is a creation made in the image of a relational God – a God who relates to himself in three persons.

Others, such as Benson (1996), have noted that evaluations of autonomy, even by its adherents, “are by no means universally positive” (p. 27). He also suggests that, “Autonomy is a multifaceted concept with political, psychological and philosophical ramifications. Its application in the field of language learning is highly problematic . . .” (Benson, 1996, p. 27). We could add here that it also has significant theological ramifications. Yet, perhaps even more relevant to us is a third point that Benson (1996) makes: “Nobody has yet succeeded in developing a version of autonomy that specifically takes into account of the nature of language and language learning” (p. 27). This article is aiming to do precisely that: to take into account (from a Christian perspective) the nature of language and language learning as primarily relational. Language learners are dependent on one another to build communicative skills, and language itself is comprised of interdependent hierarchies.

With regards to this final point on the nature of language, if neither persons nor the language they use is autonomous, what is the pedagogical impetus behind using the terminology “learner autonomy,” and how might this negatively affect our own teaching as Christian educators?

Potential Effects of Assumed Autonomy in Language Pedagogy

The goal behind LA is functional independence at a certain level of proficiency in the target language. Couched in this vocabulary, LA seems harmless, at worst; virtuous, at best. But, based on the truth that words reflect the worlds of a person, we should be puzzled as to how Christians and one of the most critical human faculties (language) could be pushed toward a concept that is utterly opposed to their nature as interdependent and relational. In light of this, it is not inappropriate to consider potential problems Christian language teachers might face with regards to pedagogy and student development if this terminology remains in use. What follow are initial thoughts about these problems based on my own observations as a language teacher.
My hope is that these problem areas might lead to further research in the field of Christian English language teaching.

Learner Isolation and Anxiety

Because autonomy suggests independence and self-sufficiency, one of the potential negative effects of LA is that learners may experience an increased level of isolation and attendant anxiety. The more LA is pushed, the more teachers might encourage their students to think of themselves as isolated, separate communicators who receive little to no help in the expression and negotiation of meaning. This can ultimately lead to increased anxiety in the learner, because he or she is pressured to develop a certain proficiency level apart from other students. In my own teaching, I have seen instances in which students at a lower proficiency level were marginalized from the group and expressed increased anxiety due to such marginalization. They became more anxious test takers, more doubtful of their communicative abilities, and less aware of their communicative strengths. LA is related to such a phenomenon. Students who cannot “go it alone” are left alone, and this may be linked with an emphasis on, or at least a refusal to challenge, the assumptions espoused by LA.

There is, of course, truth to the standards that LA is driving towards. Students, for example, will not have their peers with them at a job interview. They need to be somewhat stable in their ability to communicate accurately and effectively with other speakers of the target language. But in this example, the interviewer is there to receive and negotiate meaning with the speaker. The context of communication is relational. In other words, there is no such thing as autonomous pragmatics; language use always occurs in relationships, and that means that someone else is always with the non-native speaker, trying to understand and communicate. “Communicative autonomy” is a contradiction in terms.

Compartmentalization of Grammar, Phonology, and Reference

Another potentially negative effect of LA is the encouraged compartmentalization of the grammatical, phonological, and referential hierarchies. If we drive learners toward autonomy, there would be nothing to keep them from expressing their so-called “self-sufficiency” in an attempt to compartmentalize and control such hierarchies. This may result in various communicative errors for the student.
If elements within the grammatical hierarchy were treated as autonomous, then errors such as the following would be likely: “Since the fall of Adam and Eve, the effects of sin are all around us.” The tense of the linking verb seems correct to a student who has compartmentalized the hierarchical component of verb tense. The effects of sin can be seen all around us in the present, so “are” seems correct. But the verb tense in this sentence is dependent on the word “since,” which establishes that action in the past has a bearing on the present. So, we would write “the effects of sin have been all around us.” Compartmentalization of elements within hierarchies can often lead to inaccuracy or lack of clarity.

Similar problems would occur in reference and phonology as well. Word stress in the previous example depends on the referential context (what the words are meant to “point to”). Different stress and intonation patterns would be used depending on whether this sentence occurred in discourse on (a) how long sin has been corroding creation; (b) how obvious it is that sin is a real problem for us; or (c) how extensive the effects of sin are. Constituents within these stress and intonation patterns would be dependent on the stress and intonation of other elements in the sentence, paragraphs, etc.

With regards to phonology, a question often has rising intonation at the end, but this intonation must be matched by the grammatical form of a question: we need to say, “How is life affected by the fall?” not “How life is affected by the fall?”

A New Proposal

More can be said, but I believe the critique is clear at this point: the notion of LA introduces problematic assumptions about the nature of people and language. What Christian English language teachers need is a set of terms that can describe learners in a way that is (a) theologically sound, (b) pedagogically useful, and (c) pragmatically accurate (reflecting the way in which language actually functions). Rather than using the term “learner autonomy,” I propose that Christian teachers use a triad of terms to develop learner growth in a target language: learner stability, learner dynamism, and learner relationality (Pike, 1993, pp. 47-54; Poythress, 2009, pp. 51-56). These terms are felicitous with Christian assumptions about people and language, help teachers better guide and direct their students, and reflect the way language is used in reality.

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6 This example, along with the others in this section, are based on actual student errors.
Learner stability (LS) is related to some of the positive insights of LA, such as students taking initiative in the classroom, tracking their progress towards focused learning goals, and looking for opportunities to use the target language outside of the classroom (Brown, 2007, pp. 70-71). All of these elements presuppose the student being “stable” at appropriate depths within the grammatical, phonological, and referential hierarchies. “Appropriate” here depends on the student’s communicative context. For example, a learner without a clear understanding of modal verbs in English can be misunderstood as rude or demanding by a native English speaker. “You give me your phone” sends a very different message from “May I use your phone?” In this sense, the learner might be considered “unstable” in that he or she cannot stand on his or her own feet in conversation. So, students need to be taught goals for stability in various contexts. Below is a brief list (by no means comprehensive) of what LS might involve (Brown, 2007, p. 259).

- Throughout the class, learners work with the teacher to discover their areas of greater and lesser stability in grammar, phonology, and vocabulary. This might include noting a weakness in question formation or phrase structure, but a strength in lexical breadth; capitalizing on a student’s strong sense of body language while setting specific goals for syllable and word stress; or targeting vocabulary acquisition and collocations.

- Learners practice noticing grammatical, phonological, and referential features of language in new contexts. Students may listen to a lecture and record questions about intonation patterns. Or, they might try to use a certain number of vocabulary words in the next course paper they write, or underline new vocabulary they encounter in another article or book. The important thing is that such practice take place outside of the classroom and that there is follow-up, which leads to the next item on the list.

- Learners reflect on their practice in a “Learning Journal” (Harmer, 2007, p. 400). This will also help them to learn from their errors, or, in Brown’s words, to let their errors work for them (Brown, 2007, p. 268). Students can also write down when they feel that they are unstable, i.e., at a loss for how to communicate. Such situations will lead them, once more, to work with the teacher in identifying an area of strength or weakness.

- In conjunction with the teacher, learners end a course by developing a “Stability Strategies List.” The purpose of such a list is to provide strategies to help the student regain stability in the event that he or she encounters a “de-stabilizing” communicative event. For example, if a student is unable to understand a course reading, the student might go through several steps to build active and passive vocabulary, thus working towards comprehensibility.

The benefit of LS is that it presupposes community and engagement with others, not autonomous functionality. Learners can be stable without being autonomous. In fact, since
learners can never truly be autonomous, stability is the highest goal attainable. While we must affirm that learners should “be fully aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and styles, and be able to capitalize on that metacognition through the use of appropriate action in the form of strategic options” (Brown, 2007, p. 261), we cannot treat such “awareness” and ensuing action as autonomous. Others must help us to become aware of strengths and weaknesses, of preferences and strategies.

*Learner dynamism* (LD) reflects the student’s growth and progress. Learner stability will turn to learner stagnation if there is not growth in targeted areas. Setting goals is perhaps the obvious way to address LD. These goals, again, can be categorized as grammatical, phonological, or referential (lexical). A student struggling with the correct use of prepositions might set a goal of memorizing twenty verbs and twenty nouns followed by prepositions, along with a list of ten transitive verbs followed immediately by a direct object. A student struggling with pronunciation might select several key words (chosen based on the student’s context and in relation to frequency in that context) to practice pronouncing throughout the class.

Similar goal-setting can be done with grammar. In the past, I have given students a chart of the thirteen most common sentence structures in English, along with examples and a list of verbs they can use for each structure (Biber, Conrad, & Leech, 1999, pp. 141-152). Students then fill in their own sentences based on the examples. They can set goals to use certain of these sentence structures in an actual course paper.

*Learner relationality* (LR) refers to (a) a learner’s ability to see relational components within the grammatical, phonological, and referential hierarchies; (b) a learner’s ability to use grammar, phonology, and reference in a way that reflects their interdependent and interlocking relationship; and (c) the ability of the learner to relate to other speakers in the target language. The following list illustrates potential goals for LR. (Each goal is marked with “a,” “b,” or “c” to indicate which component of LR it references.)

- The learner can use various forms of a word grammatically (LRa). Here, students practice their ability to be conscious of the relation of word forms to a grammatical “slot” (Pike, 1982, p. 75). For example, the student can use redeem, redeeming, and redemptive appropriately in a given sentence.
- The learner’s word stress clearly conveys the intended meaning (LRa). Word stress is understood in a relational context, within a pattern of intonation. The learner can select a few intonation patterns to practice using in order to express nuanced meaning.
The learner can write and speak questions grammatically (LRb). Here, the interlocking relationship between grammar and phonology is brought to the fore. “Can I do this?” requires not only the placement of the helping verb before the subject, but also rising intonation on the phrase “do this.”

The learner can use selected words with appropriate collocations (LRb). Here we see the interlocking relationship between reference (vocabulary) and grammar. While collocations can be considered a lexical issue, the “use” of the vocabulary words and their appropriate collocations requires a stable understanding of grammar.

The learner can appropriately engage in discussion on a theological topic (LRc). This goal involves turn taking, recovery strategies (self-correcting), appropriate pausing, etc. Each of these skills requires “relational competence,” i.e., knowing when and how to exchange discourse with others.

LS, LD, and LR are – like the grammatical, phonological, and referential hierarchies – interlocking and interdependent. They must all be present in a learner in order for that learner to function in the target language. When one is in focus, the other two are in the background.

Recalling the beginning of our discussion for this section, we can say that, first, these terms – learner stability, learner dynamism, and learner relationality – are theologically sound because they are rooted in the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout Scripture, God the Father is described as changeless and immovable. He is the unbegotten I am (Exodus 3:14). The world is a burning wick in the wind, but God is light eternal. He is utterly stable, the one “with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17). Stability in learners presupposes the stability of the Father.

The Son is eternally and necessarily begotten or “generated” from the Father. He is the speech or word of God (Bavinck, 2004, p. 273). The Word, as Son, is the dynamism of God, who is renewing all things (Revelation 21:5). Dynamism in learners presupposes the dynamic Word of the Father.

The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. He associates the Father and the Son in eternal fellowship. The deep association between the Father and the Son, a “mutual fellowship and indwelling,” is what “reflects the character of God the Holy Spirit, who indwells us” (Poythress, 1995, p. 192; Bavinck, 2004, p. 278). This association and fellowship is what grounds the relational (interconnected) nature of language. So, learner relationality presupposes the Holy Spirit, who relates the Father and Son.
Ultimately, LS, LD, and LR are interconnected because the persons of the Godhead have such intimate communion that “each is in each, and all are in each, and all are one” (Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6.10, quoted in Collins, 2001, p. 211). In the Trinity, there is a perfect concinnity of stability, dynamism, and relationality. We have, in other words, theological grounds for the concepts of LS, LD, and LR.

Second, in addition to being theologically sound, these terms are pedagogically useful because they better reflect the multifaceted nature of the learner. Human observers (i.e., language users) and language itself both eschew autonomy. People are more complex than a balance of dependence and independence. They are creatures who make choices. Language, as well, is more complex than a tool for communicative control; it is an unfathomably deep faculty rooted in the Trinity, and each component within it is dependent on others for its meaning and significance. Knowing this as Christian teachers, we can guide learners towards stability in their most relevant communicative contexts (LS), help them identify areas for growth (LD), and teach them to see the interconnectedness of the grammatical, phonological, and referential elements of language as they strive to relate with other creatures made in God’s image (LR).

Third, these terms are pragmatically accurate. Language in use presupposes the grammatical, phonological, and referential hierarchies. Every instance of language offers an opportunity to see how components within these hierarchies are interdependent and how each hierarchy contributes to form, meaning, and use.

**Conclusion**

In this article, I have argued that learner autonomy (LA) provides an opportunity for Christian teachers to reform the use of terms within the field so as to reflect their theological commitments. This is an exercise for Christian teachers in striving to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). In addition to leading to other areas of further research, this article, I hope, encourages Christian teachers to begin exchanging “learner autonomy” with terminology that better reflects their theological stance with regards to the nature of creatures made in God’s image and the nature of language itself.

**References**


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Reviews

*English Teaching and Evangelical Mission: The Case of Lighthouse School*

Reviewed by Mary Shepard Wong, Azusa Pacific University

Bill Johnston’s well-written account of his insightful one-year ethnography in a church-based school in Poland is not to be missed. Be forewarned that you might find it hard to put it down. I had just completed chapter one when a power outage left our home pitch dark. But I read it through to the end, first by the light from my phone, and when that failed, by candlelight. I found the book a fine example of ethnographic fieldwork with numerous insights and challenges for Christian English language teachers.

It’s not often you find an in-depth study of evangelical teachers written by an atheist, so the question arises as to why. A study of evangelicals is justified, Johnston states, as this group makes up a significant portion of humanity. And a study of evangelicals involved in teaching English even more so, because in spite of the of recent discussions and publications about the negative aspects of evangelical English teachers in missions, actual evidenced-based studies of what teachers of faith do in the classroom are not as common. And it is “evidence,” Johnston contends, that is needed “to justify (or allay) our concerns” (p. 162). I might add, research on classroom practices focusing on the interaction and intersections of faith and the learning and teaching of languages is needed not just to respond to concerns, but also to gain more nuanced understandings of language teacher identity, a growing area of interest in English language teaching. It is studies like this, which includes an impressive 44 classroom recordings and 45 interviews conducted over a full school year, that can shed light on the impact of faith and teaching.

Johnston introduces himself as an outsider with many questions, the major one being, how is evangelical Christianity related to the global spread of the English language? His earlier work with Varghese left him wanting to know more about evangelicals, who he found fascinating because he found them so different from himself. Thus he positions himself as an outsider seeking to understand the Other, as he sates, remaining “firm in [his] own beliefs,” while allowing “other people [to] be firm in theirs” (p. 39). This outsider’s stance is of interest
to those of us on the inside, for he is able to accomplish what qualitative researchers long for, namely, to make the familiar strange.

Summary

Johnston makes it clear that his study is ethnographic and thus he focuses on the particular. As such, Johnston makes no attempt to try to generalize his findings to all church-based programs with bible-based curriculum either in Poland or elsewhere. Readers must judge the extent to which what he finds at Lighthouse School (a pseudonym) may be similar to what they may experience in their own or other contexts to see if there are points of application.

The book has nine assessable chapters, with the first three serving as introductions to the book (chapter 1), the context of Poland (chapter 2), and the related literature (chapter 3). The next three chapters describe the details of the “school with a soul” and its missionary teachers (p. 40, chapter 4), the Bible-based curriculum and materials (chapter 5), and specific exchanges that took place in the classroom (chapter 6). The final three chapters describe some of Johnston’s more significant findings at Lighthouse, namely “false-bottomed friendships” in relationships (p. 99, chapter 7), “empty meeting grounds” in cross-cultural relations (p. 126, chapter 8), and a lack of awareness of imperialism and neocolonialism found in the thinking of the teachers (chapter 9).

As to whether he found evidence of covertness, coercion, and conversions, Johnston says not really. In fact conversion, to his surprise, was not the teachers’ goal at all, nor was it accomplished during his year there. What the teachers were seeking, he states, was ministering to their students’ spiritual needs (p. 154). That said, Johnston did find evidence of thinking that he felt was in alignment with Western capitalistic values and he believed the missionary teachers were not aware of the naivety of some of their efforts (p. 156). Also disturbing to him was the lack of the missionaries’ proficiency in Polish, for as Johnston notes such unequal language use is typical of hegemonic and colonial relations (p. 155).

Commentary

This book-length study yields much for Christians to consider. It was validating to see Johnston expose and problematize the “condescension and scorn” (p. 3) that evangelicals are subject to in our field. He describes an anecdote of academics rolling their eyes and making deprecating comments when a new Christian student spoke of his faith at an orientation session.
for his MA TESOL program. Johnston remarks that this may not have happened if the student were Buddhist or Muslim. He warns that all evangelicals should not be tarred with the same brush, and states, “no other religious group is treated with such cavalier contempt by supposedly open-minded liberals” (p. 3).

Yet unfortunately the diversity of evangelicals is not rendered in much detail in this book. An academic colleague sent me his thoughts on this very issue, after skimming Johnston’s book. This colleague wrote:

The indisputable fact is that intelligent, sincere, fair-minded adherents to evangelical faith can’t begin to agree on what the Bible actually says. To illustrate, self-identified “evangelicals” in North America hold beliefs across the continua listed below:

- **View of the Bible** (legal constitution ↔ community library)
- **Inerrancy** (error-free ↔ inspired and authoritative)
- **Genesis** (literal (young-earth creationism) ↔ metaphorical)
- **Relation to non-Christians** (exclusivist ↔ inclusivist)
- **Gender difference** (men in authority over women in church/home ↔ gender equality)
- **American nationalism** (divine destiny/“Christian nation” ↔ ideological idol)
- **Military service** (“just war” ↔ pacifism and nonviolence)
- **Economic inequality** (natural ↔ unjust)
- **Wealth** (a blessing from God ↔ the result of unjust social relations)
- **Climate change** (“hoax” ↔ priority #1)
- **Homosexuality** (perverted choice ↔ unchosen orientation [Goshen, Eastern Mennonite])

Personal communication (February 16, 2017)

The diversity my colleague outlined is not found in Johnston’s study, analysis, or discussion, which might have implications for future research, which is where we now turn.

Johnston states that future research needs to be conducted on other continents, among other populations, and across other religious divides. This research needs to include not just data from teacher interviews and surveys (as most of the current studies do), but also data from students and other stakeholders and observations of classrooms. I would add that studies of evangelicals from the wide continuum of believers need to be considered. Moreover, researchers need to be not just insiders (i.e., evangelicals), but also outsiders (like Johnston). Finally, Johnston states that the “insidious trend” of people with the same beliefs isolating themselves from those who think differently needs to end, as it encourages intolerance. He concludes with the following:
It is my deepest belief that understanding and dialogue are the only valid ways to engage with those different from ourselves. The alternative is disrespect, dismissal, scorn, fear – and, eventually, conflict and violence. This book has been my small attempt to listen and understand. (p. 164)

Thanks for listening, Bill. I hear you. And thanks to those at Lighthouse School, who opened their lives and work to this thoughtful investigation.

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**Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers: How to Be a Teacher with Convictions While Respecting Those of Your Students**

Reviewed by Cheri Pierson, Wheaton College Graduate School

This book is for committed Christ followers teaching English to speakers of other languages. The author intends to fill a gap in the professional literature by providing a practical handbook for those Christian English teachers (CETs) “who want more ideas at the level of methodology and classroom techniques” (p. 8).

**Summary**

The book has three sections. Part 1 establishes the biblical foundation of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:27-39). Purgason states, “CETs who choose to be guided by their Master, Jesus, and by the Bible’s Great Commission and Great Commandment will engage in good deeds and gentle conversations. They will speak plainly, listen carefully and serve humbly” (p. 17). Also addressed in this section are goals and models that may influence both content and methodology at the program level. The author suggests that CETs can be more effective if they have a clear understanding of educational goals and effective models for their work and ministry (p. 37).

Part 2 focuses on a series of ongoing issues in education, such as transparency in the role of a teacher, respectful relationships with students and peers, and engaging in sound teaching practice both inside and outside the classroom. For example, in chapter 4, “This Is
Who I Am,” Purgason provides multiple examples illustrating how CETs can be respectful, appropriate and clear about their identities (p. 48). In chapter 5, “Going Deep: Questions About What’s Important,” she provides meaningful question frameworks for students at different proficiency levels in a range of English language learning environments.

Part 3 provides more teaching ideas, with specific suggestions using lesson plans for songs, a video, a short story, and poetry, as well as additional classroom techniques. One such suggestion is lesson planning and classroom activities that are based on sayings, proverbs or quotations, and another is for adding more as one uses their published textbook.

Commentary
Purgason’s extensive international experience makes her a well-qualified author for just such a text. Her background growing up in a missionary family in India provided a foundation for her career and ministry. Extensive international teaching in a range of contexts revealed her calling to language teaching. Currently her position in TESOL training at Biola University allows her to contribute knowledge and experience to English language teachers worldwide.

I highly recommend this book to anyone involved with both EFL and ESL learners. The examples focus on young adult and adult learners but the guidelines may also be applied to teachers working with younger students. Purgason does not hesitate to confront challenging issues, but presents these with clarity and respect in a manner easily applied in most any educational environment. In conclusion, this book provides meaningful guidelines for instructors concerned with excellence and integrity in both their personal identities and public service as CETs who honor their Lord wherever they serve.

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Religious Faith and Teacher Knowledge in English Language Teaching

Reviewed by Thor Sawin, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey
Introduction

In this unique cultural moment of academic activism, the field of language education is embracing the power of language teachers to inculcate social justice, humility, tolerance of difference, and environmental responsibility. Bradley Baurain (p. 49) quotes Zimmerman (2006, p. 208) saying, “all educators are missionaries.” Given this context, the arrival of a robust academic treatment of religious faith in language teachers is unsurprising – more surprising perhaps is how non-activist the teachers interviewed in this book are. While some critical scholars (i.e., Edge, 2003) describe active faith at odds with teacher professionalism, Baurain’s interviewees see their professionalism as the primary and rather pedestrian way to embody their faith.

Despite the pervasiveness of religious belief among academics (pp. 30-33), Baurain carefully documents both the absence of this belief from research on teacher knowledge, and the open critiques of many scholars regarding Christianity in language teaching. This book-length response to such critics analyzes novice teachers’ intersectionality in their established identity as Christians and their emerging identity as TESOL professionals. Christians who have taught English overseas will recognize these teachers’ struggles both to balance Christian values of humility, mercy and grace with the professional obligations to authority, objectivity, and fairness, and also to not let love of “being learned” crowd out “the love of learning” (p. 108, accent added). While sharing Smith’s (1999) skepticism about potential “Christian” methods for teaching, Baurain compellingly presents teachers’ struggles to teach Christianly (as adverb) in settings where being explicitly Christian (as adjective) is inappropriate.

Summary

After defining the constructs of teacher knowledge and novice teachers, chapter 1 innovatively demarcates the gap in the literature by ringing it with five separate literature reviews: teacher morality and values, teacher spirituality, teacher religious beliefs, educational sociology of language and religion, and Christian educational settings. This treatment is accessible to anyone interested in teacher formation regardless of religious affiliation, and draws on educational philosophy, sociology, and composition studies in addition to applied linguistics. The reminder that all truth is God’s truth underlies the book’s overarching theme that language teaching is in itself a true vocation, not merely a position.
Chapter 2 describes the participants – 11 of Baurain’s former American students in a Christian TESOL certificate program teaching in Southeast Asia – and analysis. Participants underwent two one-hour interviews. The first was more philosophical, connecting faith and profession and also soliciting responses to two hypothetical situations. The second prompted reflection on professional training and critical incidents.

Chapter 3 highlights three main themes – professionality, relationality, witness – and teachers’ different approaches to navigating the tension between actively looking for opportunities to make faith visible, and not wanting to take advantage of the role accorded as a teacher.

Chapter 4 presents four short case studies, of two novice and two more experienced teachers, illustrating a range of discursive metaphors used to integrate faith and professionalism. While refreshing and convicting, these teachers nevertheless engage in some othering when they describe the non-professionalism they perceive in local teaching practices (which usually have a sensible historical genesis), their unique concern for low-achieving learners, and the gift of learning the local language.

Chapter 5 explores witness in greater depth across the data set. Teachers framed witness as being recognizably distinct, as applying theology (such as incarnation) to teaching, and as professionalism – eschewing the low-hanging fruit of Christian holiday lessons in favor of cultivating critical thinking and rejecting consumerist/materialist identities on offer to learners.

Chapter 6 is most explicitly Baurain’s answer to critical language educators, and to the constraints on discussing religious intersectionalities and intersubjectivities in intercultural teaching practice. He encourages those who find confining the exclusion of their faith identities from the considerations of the intercultural encounter of language teaching. Calling the field to abandon dichotomies and choices between religious and non-religious perspectives, he advocates Wolterstorff’s (1999) epistemology of cross-perspectival learning and Canagarajah’s (2009) view of witness as transformative education.

**Commentary**

Baurain admits that, as a construct, knowledge brings the inherent weakness of being internal. The interview questions seem also to privilege internal thought processes and hypothetical actions, with scant anecdotal detail about actual practices and almost none about
uptake among the interviewees’ students. While Christianity, with its emphasis on inward revelation, may uniquely lend itself to internal and intrapersonal sense-making, linguistic anthropology cautions us that narratives rarely pre-exist the occasion for telling, and narrated truths are always co-created in the intersubjective space between speakers and the setting.

More reflexivity on the interviewer’s own role in bringing these sense-making accounts into being would be welcome. Baurain acknowledges Smith’s (1999) caution that fully-formed beliefs rarely precede any practice (pp. 142-143), yet readers are asked to trust Baurain that his participants’ Christian identities are mature and ready-for-the-telling (p. 135), whereas their professional identities are still being developed. A start would be presenting data excerpts in conversational rather than block transcription, not erasing the pauses and fillers which enact the teller’s interpersonal and epistemic stances toward narrated events. While the researcher’s turns are present in a few places (pp. 86, 101) it is difficult to judge how follow-up questions or the researcher’s shifts in tone might have signaled to interviewees which information was particularly sought-after or worth elaborating.

Citing Varghese and Johnston (2007) repeatedly, the book reads almost as an extended response to that article. While these scholars conceded that all teaching pursues transformation in students, they stated that religious witness is “surely of a different hue” (p. 26). Baurain (2015) twice counters that assertion with his own “surely not” (p. 138) and advocates both understanding religious academics in their own words, and teasing witness apart from other constructs like proselytizing or Western triumphalism.

Indeed 2017 is not 2007. Language teaching has never been more political and activist, while events troublingly conflate Christians in America and academia with isolationism, nationalism and corporatism – views which few Christian overseas teachers hold. Teachers feel trained and enjoined to call forth many changes in their learners, evidenced by the new fields of English for peace, social justice in SLA, and even social justice standards for teachers. Many of these movements align with social calls for cross-perspectival learning of the sort Wolterstorff (1999) recommends, when dominant ideologies need to learn from those with marked or marginalized ideologies and charitably and rigorously listen to others’ stories.

While compellingly demonstrating that witness (“living out one’s beliefs in purposeful ways so as to persuade others to accept them as true” – Baurain, 2007, p. 210) is as integral to critically-engaged language teaching as to Christian language teaching, Baurain is less
successful in addressing Western Christians’ unawareness of the sociohistorical and political overtones in their teaching overseas. Baurain feels Varghese and Johnston unfairly held their interviewed pre-service teachers to “account for worldwide Christian missions efforts and history, including political implications and philosophical conflicts” (p. 47). Yet critics deserve to see such factors addressed. It is surprising that the interviews never elicited teachers’ consideration of the complex, multiply-dominant roles they inhabit as native-English-speaking, American, and likely white teachers. While intersectionality is briefly addressed regarding faith and professional identity, it is noticeably absent when it comes to the power differentials in race, class, mobility, nationality, and language between the teachers and their students.

This matters because the participants themselves say that “distinction” is key to their Christian witness, yet how learners might tease Christian faith apart from these other differences when making sense of teachers’ external behaviors and internal commitments is unclear. That may be what critical scholars most want from Christian scholarship – an acknowledgement that no matter what our personal or interpersonal motives are, they resonate chords of colonial history, which constrain how our actions and positions will be interpreted, no matter how they are intended. This is where the lack of any observation or attempt to contact learners is keenly felt, and ethnographic studies of Christian language teaching contexts (Johnston, 2017; Han, 2014) may partly offer the learners’ side of the Christian teaching equation.

Baurain’s attention to certificate holders instead of MA holders is refreshing, given how many TESOL certificates are awarded each year, but little was said of the methods advocated, apart from their being “communicative.” Communicative methods constrain the kinds of teacher knowledge valued in a classroom, and are often awkwardly overlain on local ideologies of language instruction. Perhaps as certificate holders, there was less room in the curriculum to reflect on the political and identity aspects of language teaching than in an MA program, or perhaps Christians regardless of their program are more fluent at describing Christianity in terms of personal conviction than of political and historical trajectories.

While attention to sociohistorical context may be lacking, Baurain’s interviewees are moving in their appreciation of Jesus as a master teacher, and this book is thought-provoking, and even convicting, to those who spend their time training Christians in the language teaching profession.
References

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**Scattering Seed in Teaching: Walking with Christ in the Field of Learning and Education**

Reviewed by Matthew Deal, Chesapeake Public Schools

**Introduction**

If you are seeking to integrate the mission of Jesus Christ with your profession as a teacher, then *Scattering Seed in Teaching* is a rare yet valuable resource for your pursuit. Both teacher trainers in Christian higher education and teachers who realize that their teaching job is their mission field will glean practical insights, wisdom, encouragement, and affirmation from this book. The author, Brian Pickerd, is a foreign language teacher in a public high school and a...
part-time teacher trainer at a Christian University, and he shares his and others’ rich experiences of how God worked through them to be His salt and light in the classroom and in the greater school community. Pickerd relates the analogy of our mission as Christ-following teachers who seek to sow positive seeds in our calling as teachers to his grandparents, who taught Pickard how to work on their farm during his youth. Thus the agrarian motif permeates this book as Pickerd adapts Jesus’ parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23) to our “seed sowing” opportunities with students, their parents, fellow teachers, administrators, and the school community at large. Pickerd’s stories come from the secondary public school setting, though he believes that other teachers, tutors, and homeschoolers can benefit from this book.

Summary

After anchoring Jesus’ parable of the Sower as the key scriptural foundation for this book in the preface, in chapter 1 Pickerd shows how God has been on a mission throughout the Old and New Testaments. This chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the book by demonstrating that teaching is as valid a Christian mission field as more traditional ones, such as foreign church planting and evangelism. Pickerd reminds all teachers that it is time to fully engage in our calling as Christ-following teachers, rather than as teachers who just teach content.

In chapter 2 the author begins to tell stories from his childhood spent working with his grandparents on Saturdays and during the summers on their farm. Pickerd’s grandparents were excellent farmers and model Christ followers who patiently and gently taught their grandchildren how to farm the land while modeling the Christian faith in everyday living. Chapter 2 likens a farmer studying the field to us as teachers enhancing our awareness of the current educational climate and context in which we teach.

The soil of a farm is the metaphor for the students who make up our classes, and this is Pickerd’s focus in chapter 3. In addition to drawing on the different types of soil in Jesus’ parable of the sower, the author discusses how our students progress through Erikson’s (1980) stages of psychological development and what the implications are for teachers. To close out chapter 3, the author takes “soil samples” by giving detailed case study descriptions of a wide variety of students, including their family background, parental support/involvement (or lack thereof), interests, personalities, challenges, giftedness, peer group, self-esteem, etc.
In chapter 4, entitled “The Place of the Farmer,” Pickerd explores the responsibilities of teachers who serve our Lord by interacting with others as Christ did by displaying genuine love, patience, gentleness, compassion, respect, and joy. Pickerd emphasizes that our words, deeds, behaviors, attitudes, and mannerisms will reflect to students what we truly believe about God deep in our heart. Therefore it is important that teachers have a consistent and intimate relationship with Jesus, so that the fruits of the Holy Spirit will come forth from us to encourage and bless our students, and to communicate to them what God is like. Pickerd asks us to consider how we as teachers can be “sons and daughters of encouragement” like Barnabas, whose name means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

In chapter 5, the longest, Pickerd fleshes out the practical application of how to be a “seed scattering” teacher. This chapter addresses the various roles teachers with convictions minister in the classroom. Also, he addresses the integration of teaching our content matter with other disciplines while attempting to open our students’ minds to the greater, eternal purpose of life. To close chapter 5, Pickerd examines the implications of seeing, listening, and speaking for us who recognize that our classroom is our field of ministry and mission.

Cleverly using the metaphor of farming, chapter 6 connects the farmer’s responsibilities after the harvest to a teacher’s work after the school year ends, by calling teachers to lifelong learning in their content area and to the unceasing pursuit of wisdom and truth. Chapter 6 closes with the importance of the teacher’s role as a prayer warrior to intercede for students, their students’ families, and their coworkers while not neglecting to pray for their own families.

The final chapter, 7, describes how our calling as children of God does not stop at our classroom door, but extends to our colleagues, parents of our students, and members of the community surrounding our school. Pickerd challenges us to make ourselves available to God’s work outside of the classroom as we come in contact with our students and their families at church, at the mall, in coffee shops, at sporting events, at entertainment venues, etc.

Commentary

One of the jewels of this seven-chapter book is the 64 discussion questions that can be used in classes, in small peer groups, in a mentorship, or for personal reflection. At only seven chapters long, this book can be read quickly, however the great onus for the reader is to think deeply about the discussion questions, to discuss their answers with others, and to pray about
these areas of our teaching and witness, asking for God’s help with it all. The book is not a “how to guide” addressing every issue that a Christian teacher will face in the classroom, however it is exhaustive in addressing the larger question of how to utilize our platform as a teacher to bring glory to God while ministering his love, healing, peace, and grace to our students, coworkers, and others we encounter in our school’s community.

I believe all teacher-training programs serious about faith integration should consider Scattering Seed in Teaching as required reading for their students. Personally, as a K-12 world language teacher who is too often stuck in survival mode, this insightful book has encouraged me to join God’s work of “scattering seeds” in my own classroom and school community.

Reference

Matthew Deal (deamatt@gmail.com) teaches middle school Latin and Exploratory Language in Virginia, U.S.A. His ELT journey began in 2007 at a summer English camp in southern China, and he completed his M.A. TESOL at Biola University in 2016. Matthew espouses a relational approach to learning second languages, which is how he studied Chinese in Beijing while teaching EFL to college students. He is eager to stay connected to the TESOL community and to find future opportunities in the field.

What School Leaders Need to Know About English Learners

Reviewed by Emily Burden, Cornerstone University

Dormer’s book engages school leaders in thinking critically about issues involving English Language Learners (ELLs) in their schools. The author presents a clear need for more understanding of issues relating to ELLs among school leaders. Dormer offers a brief overview of information to familiarize school leaders with the field of TESOL and shares tools and recommendations that can be used in a variety of educational contexts, including Christian schools and international English programs. She challenges readers to look past the “set programs” of their school and look at each ELL student with new eyes, as someone valuable, unique, and capable. Dormer’s experiences as a language learner herself and as an ELL teacher are keenly visible through these pages. This book offers a wide range of beneficial information in a clear, interesting, and easy-to-read format.
Summary

Chapter 1, “How Can a Good Understanding of English Learning Transform Your School?” (p. 1), offers staggering statistics of the ELL population shift in public education. Dormer proposes ways that school leaders can help their schools be more prepared to take on the task of welcoming ELLs and supporting them effectively, such as “fostering a school culture that values and welcomes multiple languages and cultures” (p. 3) and “creating school schedules and courses conducive to meeting ELL needs” (p. 9).

Chapter 2, “What Do You Need to Know About TESOL?” (p. 15), introduces the various TESOL acronyms, including the differences between them. Dormer contemplates the harms of ineffective English language programs, narrowing down the top three problems as being: unprepared teachers, badly implemented language programs, and the education of undocumented students (pp. 23-24). She calls school leaders to action and to make changes on their campuses.

Chapter 3, “What Does It Mean to ‘Know English’?” (p. 29), challenges the definition of “language” and argues the complications that are associated with defining it. Dormer emphasizes particular areas of difficulty and how language and culture are both required in order for ELLs to be competent in knowing academic English.

Chapter 4, “How Does Someone Learn English?” (p. 43), compares scientific research of first language acquisition and additional language acquisition based on past and current theories. Dormer debunks common myths about ELL language acquisition (e.g., “All people acquire languages in the same way,” p. 57) and offers comprehensive explanations. She stresses the benefit to having positive teacher/student interaction as being a main factor in students’ language learning success.

Chapter 5, “How Does Someone Learn English in School?” (p. 67), narrows down the process to eight principles for successful language acquisition in schools. Dormer addresses how teacher qualities are vitally important in the process and comments on making the learning meaningful as being a key element. She examines how students undergo an identity transition as they learn a new language and explains that teachers can step in and help students by acting as a “safety net for their feelings of discouragement” and modeling positive identities (p. 75).

Chapter 6, “Where Can an ELL Best Acquire Language and Learn Content?” (p. 87), addresses the need for school leaders to be aware of each individual ELL student rather than
lumping all ELLs together during placement. Dormer reminds readers that cultural backgrounds are the unseen “roots,” along with students’ native languages, that compose their identity. This chapter also discusses language levels, issues in assessment, and program models.

The book ends with a “Professional Development Guide” (p. 113) that can help school leaders and teachers create optimal learning environments for ELLs. Two Appendices round out the book, focusing on Acronyms in TESOL and offering a sample Home Language Survey.

**Commentary**

Dormer aspires to educate school leaders that need a refresher course or who are not familiar with TESOL issues. The simple layout of the material is easy to navigate. The ideas presented are well developed but basic, providing practical examples that apply in every school setting. Each chapter ends with a *Grab and Go* section that enunciates the most important points from the chapter, plus References for further reading. For a more thorough look into TESOL issues, a reader might go elsewhere, but to grasp the basics, this is an excellent starter book.

This book accomplishes Dormer’s goal of providing a simple but thorough volume addressing the aspects of ELL programs that school leaders need to know. Dormer creates a concise explanation of the needs, offers helpful illustrations, and provides professional development ideas that can spur school leaders on to successful ELL programs. This book is recommended for all school leaders and teachers that are interested in bettering their campuses, including those who teach at Christian or missionary schools.

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The following index is the result of detailed work started by Hannah Jackson, added to by Andy Edmondson, and completed by Michael Lessard-Clouston. It lists all contributions to the IJC&ELT in Volumes 1 to 4, published in 2014-2017. It first lists all Articles alphabetically by title, and then similarly all Book Reviews alphabetically by book title, followed by contributions by Author last name, and a Topic Index created using key words authors noted for their work.

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