

Editorial: It Takes a Village – Community and Language Learning

Michael Pasquale

If one searches “learning communities” online, results range from institutional initiatives, shared academic goals, collaborative work, belonging, needs-fulfillment, emotional connection, shared events, etc. Purposes for learning communities range from academic achievement and student retention to success, skill-building opportunities, and greater access to resources, all of which present great opportunities for students (Otto, Evins, Boyer-Pennington, & Brinthaupt, 2015). While a friendly classroom environment is important, the significance of community in the classroom is more complex.

The church is also a learning community in that Christian discipleship does not happen without interpersonal relationships that involve deep care and concern for each other. Therefore, it seems that Christian educators would have a lot to say about educating in such a context (e.g., Smith, 2018). Learning communities in a Christian context would reflect, therefore, the kind of best-practice found in the church, that is, intentional interaction, trust and vulnerability, and ever-deepening relationships in which each person contributes his or her gifts for the benefit of the whole.

In This Issue

Two feature articles in this issue focus on the influence of community in language learning and teaching. First, Aiel Cunningham, in her article “Envisioning Christian Presence and Practice in Online Teaching Contexts,” investigates the context of online learning and the importance of presence, for both teacher and student. Second, Carolyn Kristjánsson’s article “English Language Teaching: Locating Faith in the Context of Local and Global Dynamics” explores the concept of space and in turn its significant relation to identity and learning. These articles contribute to the conversation on learning communities by delving into these interconnected ideas of place, presence, and identity.

Additionally, several books are reviewed in this issue. R. Michael Medley reviewed the following books related to understanding the refugee crisis:

- *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis*, by Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, and Dr. Issam Smeir.
- *Refugee*, by Alan Gratz.

- *Once We Were Strangers: What Friendship with a Syrian Refugee Taught Me about Loving My Neighbor*, by Shawn Smucker.

I reviewed the book *Thinking Theologically about Language Teaching: Christian Perspectives on an Educational Calling*, edited by Cheri L. Pierson and Will Bankston. Finally, the following books are also reviewed:

- *Spirituality and English Language Teaching: Religious Explorations of Teacher Identity, Pedagogy and Context*, edited by Mary Shepard Wong and Ahmar Mahboob. (Reviewed by Frank Tuzi)
- *Teaching English for Reconciliation: Pursuing Peace Through Transformed Relationships in Language Learning and Teaching*, by Jan Edwards Dormer and Cheryl Woelk. (Reviewed by Michael Westwood)
- *Theological English: An Advanced ESL Text for Students of Theology*, by Pierce Taylor Hibbs with Megan Reiley. (Reviewed by Jan Dormer)
- *Growing Up with God and Empire: A Postcolonial Analysis of 'Missionary Kid' Memoirs*, by Stephanie Vandrick. (Reviewed by Mary Shepard Wong)
- *Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission*, by James E. Plueddemann. (Reviewed by Timothy R. Sisk)

It has been a pleasure working with my co-editor, Bradley Baurain, and I am thankful for the work he has done to help craft this issue. I am also grateful for the work done by the founding editor of the journal, Michael Lessard-Clouston, on his valuable insight and diligent work in formatting the volume for publication. Thanks also to all of the reviewers for their time as they worked to make this edition a solid contribution to scholarly discourse. We continue to welcome input from readers and encourage submissions for the next volume. Soli Deo Gloria.

References

- Otto, S., Evins, M., Boyer-Pennington, M, & Brinthaupt, T. (2015). *Learning Communities in Higher Education: Best Practices*, 2. Retrieved from <http://www.jossr.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Learning-Communities-in-Higher-Education-JoSSR-submission-revised-10-26-2015.pdf>
- Smith, D. I. (2018). *On Christian teaching: Practicing faith in the classroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

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