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Editorial: TESOL in the Time of COVID-19

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Editorial: TESOL in the Time of COVID-19

Bradley Baurain

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| Asymptomatic | Contact tracing |
| Coronavirus | Curbside |
| Essential services | Face mask |
| Flatten the curve | Herd immunity |
| Pandemic | Personal protective equipment/gear (PPE/PPG) |
| Risk factor | Self-quarantine |
| Social distancing | Zoom |

As is no doubt true for many of you, this is my current vocabulary bank. In the last five months, I have used these words or phrases in different ways and exponentially more times than in my previous life.

TESOL in the time of COVID-19 has been different. I finished the spring semester teaching not in a classroom, but on a computer. My students' smiling faces remained in front of me, but in a Brady Bunch grid onscreen. My commute vanished as I worked from home. So did my personal space, as my four children attended school from home and my wife worked from home as well. Suddenly there seemed to be no boundaries to my office hours, and almost no flesh-and-blood people to interact with outside my family. At first, these changes were a fun experiment. That gave way to bemusement, amusement, boredom, puzzlement, and frustration, sometimes all in the same day. I attended technological help sessions just to see other people I knew.

Yet TESOL in the time of COVID-19 has also highlighted for me what has not changed. My job looks and feels different, but it's still focused on the faith-engaged work of teaching and learning and language. My students are not tiny boxes on a screen, but remain people created in God's image and loved by Him. We carried on. They completed and turned in assignments. I graded them. Even our institution's committee meetings marched on relentlessly. In the midst of circumstances we could not control, we were reminded that control is an illusion. Only our sovereign God rules, though we often act as if it is or should be ourselves at the wheel. "Normal" is being redefined as I write, but daily faithfulness is still what matters most.

In This Issue

Volume 7 of this *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching* is proof that the show has indeed gone on. Here you will find two main articles. First, David

Catterick has written on “Kingdom Culture as a Plumb Line in Cross-Cultural Engagement.” This piece reflects one of his long-term professional interests—the interrelationships among human cultures and biblical or Kingdom culture. As we know, we are in but not of the world (John 17:14-18) and our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), but how do these truths affect our work as language teachers? How might “Kingdom culture” transform the language-culture nexus, especially as we interact with learners? Catterick fruitfully considers these questions and more.

Second, Michael Lessard-Clouston has contributed an article entitled, “Using Appreciative Inquiry for a Positive Approach to English Language Teaching and Teacher Education.” I first enjoyed his work on “appreciative inquiry” when he presented this topic at the 2018 Christian English Language Teachers (CELT) Conference in Chicago. I couldn’t be more pleased that he’s written it up for a wider audience! I believe you’ll find this framework and the accompanying case studies quite helpful in your own pursuit of edifying and encouraging language (Ephesians 4:29), especially teacher language.

In addition to these two excellent articles, there are two books reviewed in this issue:

- *Exploring Doctrine: A Theological English Curriculum*, by Will Bankston and Cheri Pierson.
- *On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom*, by David I. Smith.

In addition, in a brief companion essay one of my graduate students reflects on a study-abroad experience in light of Smith’s suggestion that we view teaching and learning not as a set of “methods” but as a “home” place.

This volume of the journal has taken a bit longer to put in your hands, and for that I apologize. It might never have happened save for the efforts of my peerless co-editor, Michael Pasquale, and our dedicated founding editor, Michael Lessard-Clouston. I am very grateful to both of them, as well as to all the readers and reviewers involved this past year. We look forward to receiving submissions from *you* in the year to come. Read and enjoy—and please pass on this free and open-access resource to other faith-engaged professionals. Through your efforts, perhaps we will even “go viral.” 😊

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