



# CELEA News

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## Letter from the President: Honoring Freedom

*Frank Tuzi, [President@celea.net](mailto:President@celea.net)*

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., and as I remember the innocent ones and the brave who gave their lives, I am struck with profound respect for those who gave their lives so that others might be free. Indeed, we should remember those who risked their lives to bring freedom to others. And we should follow in their steps to provide others with such blessings.

I want to thank the many volunteers who bring blessings to and through CELEA. Thank you for your dedication to the newsletter, the conferences, and the leadership of the organization. Thank you Michael Lessard-Clouston, Jan Dormer, Antoinette Jones, and Daniel McClary for your work in preparing and getting out these issues of *CELEA News*. They are beautiful and informative.

*He is no fool  
who gives what  
he cannot keep  
to gain what he  
cannot lose.*

- Jim Elliot

Other blessings this coming year for CELEA include two CELT conferences, one in Hong Kong and one in Philadelphia. The CELT Hong Kong theme is "Exploring the Vocation of English Language Teaching and Scholarship." It will be held from January 27-29, 2012. The CELT Philadelphia theme is "Declaration of Freedom" and it will be held in Philadelphia on March 28th, the day before TESOL 2012. More information about these conferences is available on the CELEA website.

We hope you will also be blessed by the CELEA events at TESOL 2012 where we will gather to meet each other, share our passions and concerns and to encourage one another. Additionally, CELEA will host a five paper symposium that focuses on developing ethical

and respectful minds in research and practice. CELEA will also have its annual meeting and an information booth to meet, share, and recruit new members. If any of you are presenting at TESOL 2012, please post your presentation information on the CELEA website.

As we work to make CELEA more of a blessing, please continue to pray for the organization and its leadership. We are always in need of writers, managers, and volunteers. We are also looking for someone with accounting skills to take a leadership role as the treasurer for CELEA. Get involved and be a blessing.

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## Holding Firm, Moving On: An Editor's Note

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*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*  
Ps. 20:7

The fall semester at work is now well under way. There is an excitement of working with new students each year, yet also joy as I to start to get to know them as we settle into a routine in my classes. I am grateful for these patterns in my life as an educator, especially as events and the news on the radio, TV, online, and in the print media around me so often tend toward doom and gloom. As the psalmist reminds us, however, Christians are not to trust in our technology or resources, but instead in our God. We are so blessed that God is faithful and good!

This morning in my reading I was struck by the following verse about deacons: "They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). Like those servants in the church, teachers often need to care for the needs of our students beyond those which are directly related to their learning in our classes. So it is a fitting reminder for us to know and hold firm to the deep truths of the Christian faith as we serve our students wherever God has placed us. Doing so with a clear conscience is also key, as we remain in the vine and yet reach out to serve those we teach, mentor, and encourage.

After co-editing the *CETC Newsletter* for almost three years (2006-2008) with Meredith Bricker, I felt it was important for CELEA to have a channel for communication with members and thus founded *CELEA News*, which first appeared in February 2009. I was then delighted that Jan Dormer joined me as co-editor and Daniel McClary began to assist with layout for the October 2009 issue. This last while we've been joined by Antoinette Jones and appreciate her assistance, producing two issues a year, one in the fall and one in the winter/spring before the TESOL convention. However, after more than six years as a co-editor, I will be moving on from this role following our next issue, which will be my last. In part I want to allow others to use their connections and creativity to serve CELEA, but at the same time I hope to work on new things, and would like to potentially create an international Christian journal in TESOL. As a result, I hope that transitioning out of this *CELEA News* role will allow me time to think about and focus on that possible venture. Yet my stepping down after the next issue also means that we will have a gap to fill next year, so if you have some editorial/writing experience and would like to consider stepping up to help out, please contact me or Jan Dormer. And please pray that God's will be done in these things.

### In This Issue...

In addition to President Frank Tuzi's letter, this issue is packed with news, information, and thoughtful articles and reviews on a variety of subjects. David Schmitz writes about working in an Intensive English Program and how that connects with Christianity in the United States. Next Yin Lam Lee, a Chinese graduate student in the U.S., shares some of her reflections on teaching ESL and Biblical Studies at a college here. In our third article, CELEA President-elect Nancy Ackles discusses using Total Physical Response in a number of her short term experiences abroad, including in Ethiopia, Albania, and Ukraine. I'm grateful to these educators for taking the time both to learn from and share about their teaching in these contributions.

Since I have done some research in the area of English for theological purposes, I am especially pleased that we also have two reviews of recent resources for this important field. Laura Woodruff introduces and comments on Kitty Purgason's *English Language Teaching in Theological Contexts*, and then Jan Dormer reviews Cheri Pierson,

Lonna Dickerson and Florence Scott's new student text with teacher's guide, *Exploring Theological English*. It's wonderful to have these colleagues who work in this area bringing these recent CELEA member publications to our attention. In our Spotlight feature this time we introduce you to Karen Schwenke, in California. Finally, as usual we have information about contributing to *CELEA News*, and we welcome submissions for consideration for our next issue. The deadline is January 6, 2012, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Our goal is to encourage and support Christian English teachers around the world. Please help us in this endeavor by passing this issue on to those you know who might benefit from it, even as you hold firm and carry on where you are. Thanks for reading!

## News & Announcements

### CELT 2012 in Hong Kong Update

The 9<sup>th</sup> Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) Conference will be held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from January 27-29, 2012, featuring three plenary speeches (by Suresh Canagarajah, Zoltan Dornyei, and Agnes Lam) and over 90 presentations. The theme for the conference is "Exploring the Vocation of English Language Teaching and Scholarship". Please see the preliminary schedule and other relevant details on the conference website: [www.celtconference.org/](http://www.celtconference.org/). Early bird registration (before October 30, 2011) is US\$55 / HKD 450, full registration US\$70 / HKD 550, and one day registration US\$15 / HKD 200. Conference organizers are seeking donations and sponsorships for the conference. If you can contribute, please see 'Donations and sponsorships' on the conference website. We hope to see as many people as possible at CELT 2012 Hong Kong!

### CELT 2012 in Philadelphia

Can't make it to Hong Kong in January? Good news – there's another option, as the 10<sup>th</sup> Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) Conference will be held March 28, 2012, 9 am – 3 pm at Greater Exodus Baptist Church, 800 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, only minutes away from the Convention Center where TESOL 2012 will begin at 5 pm that day. So if you're going to TESOL 2012, please plan to arrive a day early in order to attend CELT 2012 Philadelphia. The invited speaker is Dr. Michael Pasquale (of Cornerstone U), and the conference theme is "Declaration of Freedom". For further information on presenting, please see the Call for Proposals online at <http://www.celea.net/CELT-2012-Phila-Call> (deadline is November 15, 2011). As details become available, they will be posted on the website: <http://www.celea.net/CELT-2012-Phila>.

### CELEF Forum at TESOL 2012

At the annual TESOL convention, the Christian English Language Educators Forum (CELEF) is given a slot for an academic session, put on by CELEA. This coming year the focus is *Developing Ethical and Respectful Minds: Research and Practice*, and the session will be moderated by CELEA President-elect Nancy Ackles. Participants will include Nancy McEachran and Kathryn Bartholomew (both of Seattle Pacific U), John Liang (Biola U), and Mark Van Ness (Portland Community College). Further details will be provided in our next issue, but if you're attending TESOL 2012 in Philadelphia, please plan to attend!



## Recent Books Of Interest

The following books have recently appeared and are by CELEA members (in addition to the two volumes reviewed elsewhere in this issue). If you have published something that you'd like to share information about with others in the organization, please let the editors know, so that we can possibly include those details in potential future lists like this.

Dormer, J. E. (2011). *Teaching English in missions: Effectiveness and integrity*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Gao, X. (2010). *Strategic language learning: The roles of agency and context*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Pasquale, M., & Bierma, N. L. K. (2011). *Every tribe and tongue: A biblical vision for language in society*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.

Pasquale, M. D. (2011). *An ESL ministry handbook: Contexts and principles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Credo House Publishers.

Wong, M. S., & Canagarajah, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Christian and critical English language educators in dialogue*. London: Routledge. [Now in paperback, 2011]

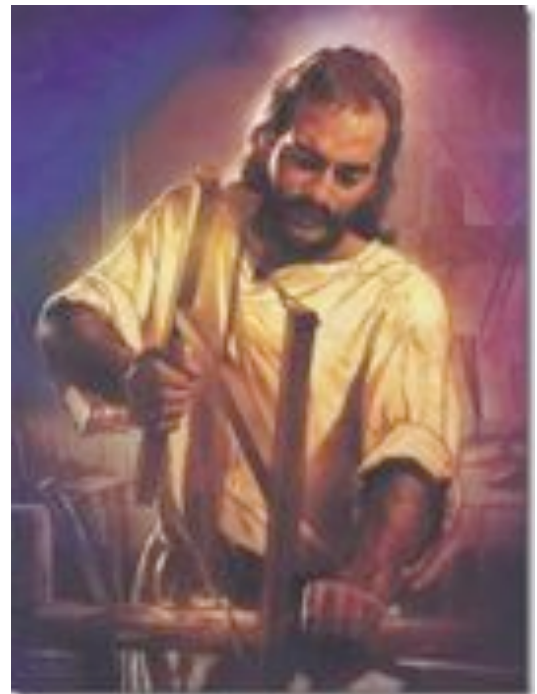
## Remodeling IEP Classes to Include the Carpenter from Nazareth

David P. Schmitz, [schmitzdavid11@gmail.com](mailto:schmitzdavid11@gmail.com)

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

"Oh, teacher, your class is so boring!" complained Jane<sup>2</sup>, an Intensive English Program (IEP) student in my high-intermediate reading course. It was the second week of the spring semester, and already such grumbling from this Taiwanese woman about how painfully mind-numbing my class was had morphed into a daily ritual. In fact, most reading exercises were prefaced with Jane's disdainful comments about the inherent dullness of the textbook and the class in general. One day, Jane apparently decided to offer a solution to ameliorate her boredom. At the beginning of class she raised her hand and suggested, "Teacher, why don't you teach us the Bible?"

"Oh, that would be very interesting and controversial, wouldn't it?" I sputtered nervously. With a room full of Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, and Christians, the last thing I needed as an instructor was a religious war erupting. I promptly switched topics, hoping that Jane would drop the subject, which she graciously did. However, several months after the culmination of that particular reading course, I found myself repeatedly mulling over Jane's question in my mind. *Should IEP instructors, in fact, teach international students the Bible?* Surely such an endeavor would be highly impractical, for any adequate introduction or overview of the Bible would far exceed the time constraints of a typical IEP course. But what if Jane's request was narrowed down to the central character of the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth? My subsequent pedagogical and cultural analysis of this idea indicated that perhaps Jane's original suggestion, if slightly modified, in fact has some merit to it.



<sup>1</sup> This is a shortened version of a longer paper. To request the unabridged version, please e-mail the author.

<sup>2</sup> A pseudonym.

## Language and Culture Studies

Few educators would advocate teaching a particular language devoid of any references to or instruction about its associated culture(s). Although the precise relationship between human language and culture is difficult to delineate, clearly there is an intricate interplay between the two. They mutually influence each other's development and are interdependent phenomena (Brown, 2007). With the exception of a few highly specific purposes, arguably second language acquisition includes second culture acquisition as well. This fact demands that overt attention must be given to cultural instruction in the language classroom.

Those who endorse the inclusion of culture studies in ESL/EFL contexts, such as Tomalin (2008), maintain that such cultural instruction should include at least four components. It should attempt to provide a rudimentary explanation of a culture's institutions (i.e., political, social, artistic, educational, etc. establishments). Such instruction should also mention the moral, social, and political values of the culture. Daily routines, common behavioral tendencies, and social mores should be covered, too. Finally, the fostering of sensitivity and intercultural awareness should be encouraged by teachers as well.

## Christ in American Culture

It would be difficult to deny the historical and contemporary influence that Jesus Christ exerts upon American society. A cursory reflection upon both the direct and indirect impact of Jesus on American culture reveals that he has a significant role in all four of the components of culture noted by Tomalin. Most religious-based institutions in America have Christian affiliations, which is unsurprising given the percentage of Americans who profess some sort of Christian religious belief. According to the findings of a recent survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2008), 78.4% of American adults identify themselves broadly as "Christian" (p. 5). Even political institutions in a nation with "separation of church and state" are indirectly affected by Christ's enduring legacy. The so-called "Religious Right" is a political block comprised mostly of Christians (in the broad sense) that political strategists from both parties must deal with in every major election.

It is easy to find traces of Jesus Christ among America's art and entertainment institutions. Apparently many artists still routinely choose to incorporate Jesus in their work in order to maximize shock and controversy. In October 2010, the National Portrait Gallery featured a four-minute video created by the late David Wojnarowicz. This video included a scene of a small crucifix covered in ants (Trescott, 2010). American pop culture is even more replete with references to Christ. Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*, occasional episodes of *South Park* featuring Jesus, Carrie Underwood's hit song "Jesus Take the Wheel," and Notre Dame's memorable "Touchdown Jesus" mural are some randomly selected examples that attest to this cultural situation.

The moral values of Christ are still highly esteemed in many segments of American society. The 1990s witnessed the popular W.W.J.D. (What Would Jesus Do?) movement among American religious youth. Not only is Jesus' character often touted as an exemplary model of behavior, but is regularly appealed to in public debates and discourse. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) launched a public relations media campaign declaring, "Jesus was a vegetarian" (Green, 2000). Bumper stickers decrying capital punishment rhetorically ask, "Who would Jesus execute?" Debates and discussion on national television regularly include references to Christ/Christianity. During an episode of "Fox News Sunday" in January of 2010, for example, broadcaster Brit Hume controversially called upon Tiger Woods to turn to the Christian faith to find redemption in light of the golfer's moral lapse.

The common linguistic habits of Americans themselves bear testimony to Jesus of Nazareth's iconic status in the United States. There is certainly a reason why Americans mutter "Jesus Christ!" in jest or anger rather than "Sweet Mohammed!" or "Gautama Buddha!" Why do so many Americans from a wide diversity of backgrounds commonly use the name of Jesus Christ as a curse word? Typically, whenever humans utter a curse or taboo word, it is because they want to profane something holy. The widespread usage of "Jesus Christ" as a term of profanity indirectly indicates that historically and presently he has been and still is esteemed as a figure of holiness within America's cultural consciousness.

Understanding this phenomenon could certainly enhance an international student's cultural awareness and sensitivity in the U.S. Often L2 learners inadvertently assimilate profanity into their vocabulary without realizing the full impact that such words and phrases could possibly exert on a native speaker. Noting that using Jesus' name in this manner could potentially offend American Christians would be a valuable piece of cultural knowledge for international students.

Due to their closely interconnected relationship, language studies should not be divorced from the study of the culture(s) shaped by that target language. Even if it were possible to do so for various myopic purposes, an Intensive English Program would not be the context to attempt such a bifurcation. One of the primary reasons for an international student to pursue English studies at an American IEP in the first place rather than at an institution in their home country is for the cultural immersion. Stripping all cultural components from language instruction at an IEP would seriously undermine the program's reason for existence. However, it can reasonably be argued that Jesus Christ is an integral part of American culture on multiple levels in subtle and explicit ways. Therefore, it follows that at a minimum the curriculum of an IEP should at some point introduce portions of the basic teachings and biographical accounts of Jesus of Nazareth.

### **The Purpose of Intensive English Programs**

This conclusion can also be arrived at by considering another pedagogical issue. One of the primary goals of higher education Intensive English Programs in the United States is to prepare international students for matriculation into an American university or college. In light of this objective, IEP administrators and faculty should design courses and their curriculum with this purpose in mind. Ideally, IEPs would equip international students with the requisite language skills and knowledge that would enable them to succeed academically in U.S. higher education.

It would certainly be difficult to achieve universal consensus amongst educators as to what precisely would constitute the "enabling body of knowledge" that would allow an IEP student to matriculate into a college or university with a reasonable chance of success. The personal bias of an educator, a student's area of study, and the particularities of an institution are all factors that prevent a standard "one size fits all" formulation of what every international student should know upon graduating from an IEP. Fundamentally, however, educators can probably all agree that the task of an IEP is to confer upon students a reasonable degree of what Hirsch (1987) famously dubbed "cultural literacy." This refers to an individual's ability to utilize background knowledge in order to understand and participate in American academic written or oral discourse. Thus cultural literacy is sometimes described as "what every educated American should know," reflecting the subtitle of Hirsch's (1987) well-known book.

### **Jesus and Cultural Literacy**

In order to be adequately prepared for the rigors of university studies, or in the words of Hirsch, to be culturally literate, international students must possess (among other things) sufficient background knowledge of major figures of Western civilization and their respective contributions to history. Such individuals would undoubtedly include Martin Luther King, Jr., Galileo, Newton, Jefferson, etc. Many historians have noted that Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most, if not in fact the most, influential figures of Western civilization. To illustrate this, Pelikan (1985, p. 1) raises an interesting thought:

Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. If it were possible, with some sort of super magnet, to pull up out of that history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left?

Kennedy and Newcombe (1994) attempt to answer this very question in their book, surmising what the past two thousand years of human history viewed from a Western perspective would have been like with a "Christ-less" world. Presumably, if Jesus had never existed, he obviously would not have exerted a direct/indirect influence upon

the subsequent followers of his teaching. The contributions of his followers, at least specifically the ones that were caused and inspired by a commitment to Jesus, would never have come to fruition in the manner and timing that they did. The impact of Jesus down through the centuries extends far beyond that of mere impractical “religious” activity. Christ’s enduring ethical contributions are unparalleled, affecting human patterns of feeling, thinking, and acting. In his seminal work regarding Western ethical thought, Lecky (1903, p. 8) observed:

The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive in its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may truly be said that the simple record of three years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.

Kennedy and Newcombe (1994) examine how Jesus’ legacy affected societies’ placement of value on human life, efforts to alleviate poverty, promotion of education, establishment of liberal democracy, recognition of civil liberties, the spawning of scientific inquiry, the elevation of the value of family, the establishment of hospitals, and the creation of art and music among many other things. Human progress in these fields is deeply indebted to the leadership and ingenuity of individuals who took Jesus’ principles seriously. Historian Schaff (1913, p. 33) summarized the legacy of Jesus this way:

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander the Great, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of school, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

Of course, investigating Jesus’ impact upon human history along this conceptual trajectory shows that much evil has occurred in his name as well. Many wars, forms of oppression, and social injustices have been implemented in the past two millennia by those professing to follow Christ. One could articulate, along the lines of Hitchens’ (2007) book, a compelling account of all the atrocities that have resulted from those claiming adherence to Jesus’ teachings. Regardless, one’s preference to focus upon the positive or negative impact of Christ is irrelevant to the original assertion. Whether for good or ill, it is certainly undeniable that Jesus Christ is one of the most influential figures of Western civilization.

Given the scope and magnitude of his historical impact, it is unsurprising that “Jesus” is featured in Hirsch’s (2002) *New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*. Arguably, one simply cannot be considered an educated American while remaining completely ignorant of this man’s life and claims. When this fact is considered in conjunction with the fundamental goals of an IEP, it logically follows that IEP students should at least be given a minimal exposure to Jesus of Nazareth in the classroom.

### **A Revised IEP Curriculum**

Although there are some compelling reasons as to why Jesus should be included in an IEP curriculum, such an endeavor still raises pedagogical concerns for some educators<sup>3</sup>. IEP instructors/ administrators may balk at the idea of incorporating Jesus Christ into the IEP classroom for fear of inadvertent proselytism. Such a possibility, however, could easily be circumnavigated if instructors would simply follow the guidelines stated in the helpful publication *A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* (1999) published by the First Amendment Center.

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<sup>3</sup> Space prohibits a response to these concerns. See my “Cultural Literacy and Christianity: Curricular Considerations for Intensive English Programs” paper for a more extensive treatment of pedagogical challenges.



Since most ESL textbooks typically omit any traces of content about Christianity, IEP instructors will need to provide their own supplementary materials if they deem it desirable to integrate content about Jesus Christ into an IEP class. Fortunately, the curricular possibilities are plentiful once one opens up to this idea. For a reading class one could have students read the Sermon on the Mount or one of Jesus' lengthier discourses from the Gospel of John. In a writing class the instructor could assign the students one of Jesus' famous parables, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son, and have them recast the story by rewriting it in a 21<sup>st</sup> century setting. For a listening/speaking class, students could listen to an audio recording of the Beatitudes contained in the Sermon on the Mount and then discuss their meaning. They could also memorize the Beatitudes as homework or for a quiz. Traditional Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter can provide a natural opportunity in the classroom to discuss Christian beliefs/ views about Jesus' life and death. Since my incident with Jane, I have experimented with some of these aforementioned ideas in my own IEP courses. In almost all instances my students seemed to respond positively. Some even expressed appreciation for learning about Jesus in their course evaluations!

Of course, it should be clarified that what I'm advocating is an *introduction*, not an exhaustive study of Jesus. Obviously a secular IEP class does not need to nor should it morph into a full-blown "Jesus 101" course. One or two class sessions per semester devoted to the teachings/life of Jesus of Nazareth should provide an adequate introduction. If approached with the same intellectual integrity that other controversial issues or figures can and should be dealt with in a university context, then there seems to be no compelling reason for Jesus Christ's omission from IEP course curriculum.

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## Students' and Teachers' Appropriation of Faith and Biblical Teaching: A Reflection

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During the 09-10 academic year, I taught an ESL for Biblical Studies course at a four-year Christian liberal arts college in the Midwest, in the United States. I had a good mixture of Christians, atheists, and believers of other religions in the class. Some of my students had no exposure to Christianity and were worried that I would have a hidden agenda of instilling Christian faith in them. Therefore, I was aware of their need to focus more on language. At the same time, I was advised and encouraged by the college to connect my teaching with my faith. As a Christian, I fully embraced the idea of connecting teaching with faith, but I also realized that it was hard to juggle the two goals. I made a decision to teach the language by referring to the scriptures and to let the students have freedom to choose what to believe.

That decision was informed by my personal journey with God. I initially responded like my students during my first year of one-on-one Bible study in China. As I grew up in an atheist family and believed in science more than anything else, I was rebellious towards my Bible teacher's teaching (she was then a senior at my university). Though I accepted her invitation to the Bible study, I tortured her by asking questions which I knew were very hard to answer. Also, I would not miss any chance to contest her ideas by referring to current affairs and real life examples. I was secretly hoping for her to quit and let me go. However, my teacher did not forsake me. She showered me with patience and kindness, so that I could have the personal space to take it one step at a time. During the process, I established "critical faith" (Kuipers, 2002) by contesting my old self with new insights that I co-constructed with my mentor in the Bible study sessions.

My Bible teacher showed me sacrificial love by giving me space to grow. When having my own dialogic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) with the dilemma about what to teach in my ESL course, I combined my understanding of teaching with my personal experience and made a decision to give as much freedom as the students needed. Learning is a deconstruction and reconstruction process. I believe that having a critical discourse with one's past is a crucial step in the learning process. So I hoped that my students would personally appropriate biblical knowledge and take ownership of it in their lives (Bakhtin, 1981). No matter if their decision was to keep their original stance or to accept Christ, in the process they would learn to become critical learners (Canagarajah, 2004).

During the first week of class, my Chinese students were the most disinterested in the biblical stories. Two of them, Frank and Pam, were in their early 20s and both grew up in atheist homes. Frank used silence to show that he was not interested in class, which was unusual because he was a chatterbox in other classes; Pam, on the other hand, attended for a couple of weeks and then dropped out of the course. At that time I was disappointed by their rejection, but my Bible teacher's perseverance kept popping up in my mind. I reflected upon what it meant to be a student and how I might apply the notion of personhood in my teaching (c.f., Smith, 2009). I then used Old and New Testament examples to connect my teaching to my students' lives. For example, I asked them the names of their friends and told them the biblical stories about those names. I explained to them that each name was



attached to a meaning. Frank started to open up and compared his friend, David, with the descriptions of King David in the Bible and made fun of his friend. He started to show interest by raising lots of questions to challenge my teaching. Those questions helped him flush out his presumptions and doubts. They also showed that he was becoming a critical learner at his own pace. Later on, I asked my students to think of similar events in their lives to connect to the biblical stories. Frank referred to Peter's denial of Jesus when talking about his frustration in life. He also used first-person voice to write a paper about Peter's feelings when Peter denied Jesus three times. By making intercontextual links (Kristeva's (1980) intertextuality) between the text and his own life, Frank started to take ownership in his learning and became more engaged in class.

I noticed that helping students make personal connections worked well in my class. As the students made personal connections with the biblical stories, they became more invested in the learning process, so they talked to friends and raised questions, and they read the Bible on their own after class, which provided much more learning opportunity both content-wise and language-wise. I have come to the conclusion that there is no need to make a watershed between language-focused and missionary-focused teaching because they are dialogically intertwined and mutually reinforcing each other (Bruner, 1996; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005). Having said so, I am aware that my conclusion is drawn from a class which was situated in a particular set of contexts and thus might not be applicable to other cases.

After Pam dropped out of the class, she continued to talk to me during my office hours. Pam shared many of her frustrations in life with me. I would pray for her and refer her to biblical stories to encourage her. At that time, I found that Pam read the Bible on her own even after dropping out of the class. She would use her memory of the biblical stories to challenge my ideas from time to time. I was surprised by her growth of interest in the Bible and was glad to know that her critical learning had begun. At Easter, Pam and I were invited to attend a special service in a neighboring state. The pastor at the service referred to other people's life stories to testify to the rejuvenating power of Jesus Christ. Pam was moved by the stories as she connected herself to those stories. She responded to the pastor's summons and accepted Jesus as her personal savior that day.

After about a year's time, Frank told me that he started to attend a church service. Pam testified that the Easter service changed her life and gave her hope. I witnessed their transformations with joy, reflecting on my own. However, I knew their journeys had just begun and there would always be bumpy roads ahead. Nevertheless, I hoped that they would remember the critical discourse they had with their past and transfer these skills to other areas of life.

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# TPR, Special Needs, and Special Adventures

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Image available October 11, 2011 at [http://www.abbaymedia.com/Image/Ethiopian\\_Student\\_Protest\\_2001\\_02.gif](http://www.abbaymedia.com/Image/Ethiopian_Student_Protest_2001_02.gif).

Surely some of you have had experiences similar to many of mine. When I visit friends internationally, someone is almost sure to say, "You're an English teacher, why don't you teach some English while you're here?" If I'm willing to offer a bit of enrichment or some introductory classes, the facilities I have to work with tend to be quite basic, as in "minimal."

One of my favorite examples is the time I accompanied my husband to a small Bible school. He taught lessons on the parables to ten very dedicated students in a classroom with desks, a whiteboard, a power point projector, and an interpreter. At break time, the cooks brought in tea, coffee and freshly baked rolls. I gave English lessons to fifteen students at a time in a small church lounge equipped with chairs and nothing else. I didn't even get a key to the building, and on the first day of class, the only person I knew who had a key was in another town because he "figured you could find someone to let you in." It's days like those that can make one feel that as English teachers we are like the comedian Rodney Dangerfield; we get no respect. Certainly we will be happier and of greater service if we keep a sense of humor about it.

People seem to have a very high opinion of what we English teachers can do with the minimal equipment we are provided. In another example, I once found that my American hosts had recruited a group of about fifty eager students ranging from teens who studied English at school through adults who didn't know one word. I understood the request that I assess their English skills and divide them into three classes. I was a little startled to learn, as I stood in the midst of the group, I that I was expected to simultaneously give each of the classes a first lesson so that the students wouldn't feel disappointed with their first day. Then my American friend, realizing that there could be a problem said, "I know. Just tell me what to do, and I'll teach the beginners." Great. Not only was I expected to assess, place and teach three classes at once, I was to run a teacher training program at the same time! We all depend on God's grace. One can do a quick and dirty assessment by asking each person, "What is your name? How do you spell that?" The two intermediate groups crowded into one room and the beginners met next door. I moved from room to room offering activities, and we made it through the day. Things improved after that.

## TPR Experiences

It is experiences such as these that have taught me to value the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Because it requires no equipment, TPR is a great technique to keep in your bag of tricks. Here are a few of my experiences that show why.

Once at a new hospital in rural Ethiopia, part of a wonderful development project run by Ethiopian Christians, I got the request. Knowing that the local people who had been hired as hospital aids and community health educators would need to interact with visiting Western professionals from time to time, the staff asked me to give them some English lessons while they waited for the hospital's opening, coming in a few weeks. In the group were a few people who knew some words of English, but most new none. I knew no Amharic, not even "hello" or "thank you." We



were assigned a large room with nothing but a concrete floor and some benches. Even in that minimalist setting, TPR made teaching relatively easy. I began with classic TPR commands (Stand up. Turn around. Sit down.). Soon we were learning body parts (Touch your nose. Touch your ear.). At one point, I went outside and got pieces of gravel from the road so that we could learn prepositions. (Put the rock on your head. Behind your head. Above your head.) I remember thinking, "Nancy, you're teaching with rocks. That's about as basic as it gets." While it was wonderful to get a small whiteboard and a marker so that I could draw pictures of objects, we mostly relied on pantomime to practice routines for sweeping a floor, washing a window, and other activities of hospital life.

The aids felt quite successful as they began to realize that they were capable of understanding English, something that many in the community thought only really smart people could do.

At that same project I had an opportunity to assist a very capable Ethiopian English teacher at the project school. It was fairly late in the school year, and one of the classes had finished all the lessons in their English textbook. Classes had about sixty students who sat three to a desk at heavy, immovable units that I assumed had been built for two. In those circumstances, we couldn't use much classic TPR as the student in the middle couldn't stand up, but we were able to do "hand TPR" quite well. Seated, students could act out routines for washing hands, lighting a candle, and preparing vegetables. (Turn on the water. Pick up the soap. Wash your hands. Put down the soap. Rinse your hands, etc.) I began to believe that TPR could be used anywhere with any group. TPR was definitely my go-to technique for short term classes.



Then I faced some unexpected challenges. My husband was asked to do some Bible teaching in a small town in Albania, and I prepared to offer some English classes as part of the outreach of the church there. I planned to do TPR with the lower-level class and conversational activities with the intermediates, most of whom would be teens who had a good English teacher at their high school. When I arrived, I realized I had not thought at all about the possibility of students with special needs. Joining our group were three young men with disabilities – one who was blind, one with cerebral palsy, and one who had suffered serious head injuries in an accident. Also in the group were two teenage sisters whose Roma background meant that they had missed out on all formal schooling. In the previous year, the church had hired one of their members, a trained teacher, to tutor these girls and teach them to read, but they certainly did not have the educational background of the other teens in town. Here are some things I learned from the experience.

### Lessons Learned

***TPR isn't right for everyone.*** Although I had worked with an occasional blind student in the past, they had been advanced students working on formal grammar and improved pronunciation. I had never stopped to think that TPR is pretty much useless when you are teaching a blind student. There was no way this young man could see my actions and pantomimes and associate my words with the actions. I was relieved when I learned that he already spoke a fair amount of English and could participate in the intermediate class.

***TPR can allow students to experience in imagination things that they cannot experience in ordinary life.*** I was concerned that the young man with cerebral palsy would feel uncomfortable when I gave commands to the group that he couldn't follow, but he of course was used to adjusting to his limitations. When I said, "Stand up," he watched and learned. Very quickly we had enough vocabulary that I could ask a student to give him three pencils and then ask him to give back one green pencil, etc. The most fun came, however, when we began pantomiming action series. For example, we climbed the mountain behind the town. (Walk, walk, walk. Stop! You are thirsty. Drink some water. Walk, walk, walk. Stop! You are hungry. Eat an apple. Walk, walk. Stop! You are at the top. Look down. Ah, beautiful! Now let's go back down. Walk, walk. Stop! You are thirsty.) We cared for a baby. We drove a car around town. (Open the door. Get in. Turn the key. Drive, drive, drive. There's Marcus. Stop! He wants to go to the market. Open the door. Let Marcus in. Drive, drive, drive. There's the market. Stop!) No one in the class had ever driven a car, and most families didn't own one, so all of the students had a grand time motoring around town

while seated in our chairs, doing things in English they'd only dreamed of doing in life. The two young men with physical disabilities seemed to have an especially good time, grinning and laughing as they "drove" for the first time in their lives. At the end of my time in town, the young man with cerebral palsy made a special effort to find me and let me know that he really liked my teaching method.

***Aural input alone really can lead to spontaneous speech, just as the proponents of TPR argue.*** According to James Asher, who first developed TPR, students should be allowed a silent period as they begin learning a language and many students will actually begin to speak spontaneously when the time is right for them. The second young man in my class had been hurt when at about ten years old he had been caught in the rope of a runaway cow and dragged along the ground for quite a distance, resulting in head injuries. I was told that he was not at class to learn English; he was there only as a guide and helper to the blind man. When I explained that languages seem to be learned by different parts of the brain than some other kinds of skills and asked if his Albanian language skills had been damaged, people weren't quite sure. They said that most of the time, he didn't speak much at all. He came faithfully to class, listening and pantomiming along with the others, but didn't speak. He also guided the blind man to Bible classes and meals, where he heard lots of interaction between others in English. Then one morning at breakfast while an American, Bob, who had lived in the community for years, was playfully teasing this guy, a remarkable thing happened. Bob had charge of the honey pot and was putting honey on this young man's piece of toast. Smiling away, Bob just kept putting honey on the toast, even though he was clearly putting on far too much honey. It was all friendly and fun, but the honey didn't stop. Suddenly the young man said in beautifully clear English, "Stop, Bob!" Bob was so startled that he nearly dropped the honey knife. Just as the TPR theorists had argued, oral English had emerged spontaneously. All those times I'd called out, "Stop!" as we climbed mountains and drove around town in our imaginations had clearly had their impact. The best result of all was that the community now knew that this quiet young man was capable of learning, and they could interact in that expectation.

***Even a very short series of classes can have a positive impact.*** I've always been a little unsure of the value of my contributions in these short-term situations and have had to take comfort in some words from my husband. At a Bible camp in Ukraine I was called on to give English lessons as one of the afternoon activity options, while others played soccer and organized dramas. When I told my husband that I was glad to do it but was having a little trouble believing that my efforts would do much to bring about world peace or usher in the kingdom of God, he said, "Well, it's more useful than archery." That much I can believe. My Albanian experience gave me some larger hopes, too. Most of the teens who came to the classes studied English at school. I knew that what I gave them was simply enrichment, a chance to interact with my American accent and to try out some new activities in English. For the two Roma girls, however, the little I gave was their only formal English instruction. How much could they get? A local friend said that the class would be helpful. If they got only a little, they could use it to interact when an American team came in the summer and not be as isolated as before. He was right. One of the sisters was determined to learn all that she could, trying everything, asking me for words and spellings, and creating a notebook for herself. The second sister felt a little shy and unsure of her capacity to learn English, but grew in confidence over the two weeks. When I left, these girls didn't know much English, but they knew that they were capable of learning it. And they did. I know because when I returned the following year, I attended worship. At the coffee hour, a lovely young Roma girl came up to me with a carefully arranged tray and said in beautiful English, "Do you want a cookie?"

I know very well that it is the long-term and local teachers who have the greatest impact on learners. It takes time to learn a language, and it takes time to build positive, life-changing relationships. I have had many opportunities to travel in recent years and have loved every one of them, but I know that what I give is very, very small. The joy is that though my contributions may be small, they are positive. Thankfully, with God special situations and special needs lead to very special adventures.

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## Book Review

Purgason, K. B. (Ed.). (2010). *English language teaching in theological contexts*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Designed as a support for teachers and theological institutions serving students who are non-native English speakers, this small (208 + xiii pages) paperback is a valuable handbook for those struggling to provide programs and materials that simultaneously teach English and support theological instruction. The first twelve chapters (Part A) describe contexts and programs in the United States and other locations, including India, Slovenia, Russia, the Ukraine, the Philippines, Brazil, Indonesia, and Korea. Each of these chapters is written by the director of the program, who describes existing challenges, adaptations and the success (or sometimes failure) of the emerging curriculums. The second section (Part B) covers materials and gives concrete suggestions about planning and developing sequential units using authentic publications or, as is sometimes necessary, adapting or creating texts and other matter to scaffold English language growth while extending religious competencies and knowledge.



### Summary

Karen Schwenke, of Biola University in California, author of Chapter 1 [*Editors' note: See this issue's Spotlight feature*], describes how their English Language Studies Program (ELSP) prepares more than a hundred international (largely Korean) students in listening, reading, grammar, speaking, and writing. Depending upon their entering TOEFL scores, students may complete up to three semesters of English before entering seminary, or they may take seminary classes concurrently with English classes. The ELSP is able to customize readings and oral communication exercises to familiarize students with the kind of work and participation they will need to succeed and graduate. Some difficulties involving the range of ages and backgrounds, as well as Asian cultural expectations, are addressed during ELSP studies, so that students may be better prepared to integrate with the larger campus.

In Chapter 4, Leslie Altena, director of the Center for Theological Writing at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, describes several challenges she faced in dealing with the common problem of plagiarism. One semester nine of her eleven students plagiarized their theological papers on a regular basis. As a result of her efforts to correct them, students petitioned the faculty complaining about her approach, as well as the "unreasonably high" TOEFL requirement for exemption from the course. The committee formed to handle the complaints became divided into two positions: requirements were too high, keeping qualified students out; requirements should be high to prevent unqualified students from taking on studies they could not handle. After a pilot study, TOEFL requirements were maintained with course exemption minimums slightly lowered. In the process, faculty and administration were forced into a dialog about literacy goals and their place within the seminary's institutional goals. The end result was a sharing of decision making and better working relationships between administrators and faculty members.

In Chapter 8, Geraldine Ryan, who headed the English program at Moscow Evangelical Christian Seminary (MECS), describes the challenges of serving an interdenominational Russian-speaking student body when most materials are in English. Because the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association stipulates that students must be able to read in English or German, MECS requires three years of English study concurrently with theology courses. It is necessary to raise the students' reading in English to an advanced level within a program of only 540 total hours, a daunting task. However, in the process, future Russian pastors and church leaders are better equipped to gain access to the larger church community and materials available in English.



Other contributors to *Part A: Contexts and Programs* include Carole Poleski (describing a Polish seminary program), Amy Spencer (on individual support for ESL students in theological studies), Jennifer Mawhorter (on peer writing tutor programs), Iris Devadason (on English for theology), Urska Sesek (on EFL for theological purposes), Lois Thorpe (on reading theology in English), Nancy Alvarez (discussing English for academic and communicative purposes), Jan Dormer (on EFL for seminary and community students), and Susan Truitt (reporting on an English program for Korean missionaries).

*Part B: Materials* begins with “Theme-based ESL Course Design: Theological and Missiological English” by Jeannie Chan Yee of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where she taught and directed the ESL Program and Writing Center from 1998-2004. Using five content-based concepts, high-level students develop English proficiency in a non-credit English course. Beginning with doctrinal themes, specific language and content goals are identified and supported with user-friendly materials. Some textbooks and authentic readings are discussed.

Chapter 23, by Michael Lessard-Clouston, a former Presbyterian missionary with a background in ESL/EFL education and applied linguistics, examines theological vocabulary, a necessary acquisition, and describes his development of an assessment instrument. In the twenty-minute test, students are asked to identify sixty theological terms included along with forty terms from other academic areas. Students also give their knowledge on a vocabulary scale ranging from “never seen before” to “I can use it in a sentence” for select words or phrases. Since vocabulary is of extreme importance for all second-language learners, it is valuable to accurately understand students’ starting point in theological terminology.

Other contributors to this section are Ethel Azariah (discussing content-based theological ESL materials), Jan Dormer (on integrating skills in a communicative EFL textbook for Christians), Nancy Schoenfeld (describing extensive reading materials), Peggy Burke (describing both academic listening using video and cross-cultural apologetics), Lois



Photo courtesy of Jan Dormer

Thorpe (on theological reading materials with audio), and Cheri Pierson (introducing both a textbook and a dictionary of theological terms for English language learners).

### Commentary

Beyond the obvious benefits of learning about ESL/EFL teaching in diverse environments and gleaning practical information concerning programs and materials, readers of this new book can also enjoy the satisfaction of knowing they are not alone. Those of us struggling in sometimes isolated circumstances may be inclined to believe that no one knows the troubles we've seen. *English Language Teaching in Theological Contexts* shows that others have traveled our way, survived, flourished, and can show us how. The first book of its kind, this volume should be one of a series. World politics and the information age involve such rapid change that new challenges, requiring adaptations that we can hardly anticipate, are even now upon us. We need our community of peers, as this book reveals.

*English Language Teaching in Theological Contexts* is valuable as a handbook and guide giving direction in the teaching of specific, rather than general, language skills for students who are soon entering or already immersed in professional studies. Whether reading the Bible and theological texts, writing prayers, sermons or homilies, preaching or speaking in lectures or study groups, students in religious institutes need to achieve an academic level of language proficiency within a short period of time. Here, established practitioners offer models, materials, and suggestions based upon their experiences in widely diverse situations. On the other hand, because the book is a collection, not every chapter will necessarily be of value to any particular reader. Readers will likely find some authors' work more relevant than others, based upon their teaching environments and challenges.

ESL/EFL teachers in theological environments may have lagged behind those in other settings in access to networks of support and materials for students of varying backgrounds and levels of skill. While English for specific purposes has many models in other fields, theological English lacks terminology and patterns of dialogue, though authors in this collection introduce materials to address such gaps. Students in theological contexts require efficient and motivating academic approaches to learning English in preparation for religious pursuits, and recent texts (e.g., Pierson, Dickerson, & Scott, 2010 [Editors' note: See the review in this issue]) and research (e.g., Lessard-Clouston, 2009) are helping those working in this important area. Editor Kitty Purgason's *English Language Teaching in Theological Contexts* adds to this growing knowledge base and is exactly the kind of collaborative and practical advice instructors and program designers can use in their organizations, unique in many respects, but sharing problems common to all ESL/EFL educational endeavors.

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Dr. Laura Woodruff ([lauraw105@aol.com](mailto:lauraw105@aol.com)) teaches at SS. Cyril & Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan – one of the contexts and programs featured in Part A of this book. She has taught all aspects of ESL but is particularly interested in the teaching of writing and grammar.





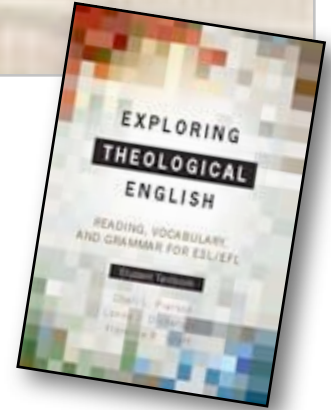
## Book Review

Pierson, C. L., Dickerson, L. J., & Scott, F. R. (2010). *Exploring theological English*. Carlisle, U.K.: Piquant Editions. Student Text: ISBN 978-1-903689-01-1 (396 pages). Teacher's Guide: ISBN 978-903689-41-7 (172 pages).

<http://www.exploringtheologicalenglish.com/index.html>

### Summary

Cheri Pierson, Lonna Dickerson and Florence Scott have provided theological training institutions around the world with a much needed student text in *Exploring Theological English* (ETE). Over the past sixteen years as I have taught English language learners in Bible colleges in Brazil, Indonesia and Kenya, I have longed for a text such as this one. Written for high-intermediate to advanced English learners, the goal of this book is to make theological texts more accessible “by giving learners the kind of instruction they need in order to bridge the gap between their current command of the English language and the very specific language demands placed on them as they seek to comprehend theological articles and books written in English” (Teacher’s Guide, p. xx). The book’s ten chapters are “written from a traditional orthodox, or evangelical, view of Christianity” (back cover), and address these main theological topics: the Bible, theology, God, revelation, anthropology, Christology, the Holy Spirit (pneumatology), salvation (soteriology), the church (ecclesiology), and “Last Things” (eschatology).



The text focuses on three types of learning experiences to “equip learners to become more proficient readers: reading skills, vocabulary skills, and grammar skills” (Teacher’s Guide, p. 1). The emphasis on the development of academic reading strategies is a central selling point of this text. Glosses of difficult words are provided alongside texts so that reading is not derailed by dictionary use. Key reading strategies are not only taught but practiced again and again throughout the text. Vocabulary acquisition activities are focused and meaningful. Students learn higher-frequency words within both the Academic Word List (AWL, Coxhead, 2006) and the specialized field of Bible and Theology. Grammar emphases are carefully selected for their prominence in theological writing. All sample sentences in exercises are contextualized and meaningful.

Each of the ten chapters in the student text is extensive, with a plethora of activities for skill-building, learning and reinforcement of academic and theological vocabulary, and review. For example, chapter three on “God” is 32 pages in length. Part 1 in this chapter develops vocabulary and reading skills with exercises on word recognition, word selection, vocabulary in context, dictionary use, word families, locating the main idea, and scanning for specific information. Part 2, “Focused Reading”, contains two reading selections, each with pre-reading questions, a reading selection with glosses, and reading comprehension activities. Part 3 addresses grammar and vocabulary with sections on adjective clauses, prefixes of number, negative prefixes, and prefix review and application. Part 4 returns to “Focused Reading”, with two more reading selections laid out as in Part 2. Part 5 hones in on “Theological Vocabulary”. A two-part reading selection on the attributes of God is presented, with pre- and post-reading activities which engage the learner in understanding the terminology

presented. Part 6, a review, concludes the chapter with six activities designed to solidify and reinforce the concepts, vocabulary and grammar learned. As this chapter illustrates, the diversity and quantity of activities in each chapter make it easy to adapt to differing student levels and needs.

The accompanying Teacher’s Guide is value-packed. It addresses issues which may be new to those who do not have a great deal of experience in TESOL or English for Academic Purposes (EAP), but also provides valuable resources for the most experienced teacher in using this particular text.

The introduction explains the field of English



Photo courtesy of Jan Dormer



teaching, highlighting basic terms such as ESL and EFL. It then discusses the sub-category of EAP, and finally introduces “English for Bible and Theology” (EBT) as a specific area within EAP. The authors build a case for why “General Purpose English” (GPE) is not sufficient for English learners headed into theological coursework, saying “We believe that intermediate to advanced students will learn more efficiently and maintain higher motivation when at least some of their classroom instruction or individual tutoring is geared to the specialized uses of the language” (pp. xvi-xvii). For those developing programs for English learning in their institutions, several possible sequences are provided for taking students from GPE to EBT and finally to theological training itself.

The next section is entitled “Preparing to Teach”. Here, the authors first address issues of leveling and provide two cloze tests which can be used to assess whether students are at the right level for ETE. I used one of the cloze tests with my African students, and found that it provided me with a good indication of their English levels. Next, the authors offer guidelines for adapting the book in numerous ways, including dealing with multi-level classes and tailoring the book to meet specific needs. Finally, this section helps teachers understand what preparation for reading theology must entail, emphasizing well-developed reading strategies and providing clear guidelines and a rationale for pre, during and post reading exercises. It also discusses vocabulary acquisition, and specifically the AWL. This section would be valuable for any EAP teacher.

The second part of the Teacher’s Guide focuses on teaching the ETE text. This section begins with general guidelines for teaching all chapters, including such foundational principles as having and sharing the lesson objectives, making links to students’ background knowledge, and using visuals such as charts and diagrams. A valuable list of principles of assessment is provided, emphasizing important concepts such as the influence of assessment systems on what students learn, and the need to base assessment on “various types of information (usually formal and informal) [gathered] over a period of time” (p. 25). The remainder of the book provides chapter by chapter guidelines, teaching techniques, and cross-referencing of skills and resources, followed by a complete answer key.

The appendices in both texts provide a wealth of supporting information. Included is a chart of English levels, a needs analysis survey, lists of both basic English vocabulary (the General Service List of English words) and the AWL, abbreviations, and resources.

### Commentary

The price of the texts is certainly reasonable by North American or European standards: the student book is US \$27.95 and the teacher’s guide \$12.95. However, this pricing would still make the book prohibitive in many parts of the world. A two-volume edition (making it possible to purchase just half of the book) or online access options might increase the use of ETE in lesser developed contexts.

As I planned a course using this text for my students in Kenya, I found myself wishing for a chart outlining the skills and topics addressed in each of the chapters. Though the table of contents provides some of this information, and the teacher’s guide cross-references skills, I felt that a chart would be a valuable resource for course planning. I also found the authors’ use of the terms “native” and “nonnative” unfortunate in a couple of instances, given the effort among TESOL professionals to view individuals in terms of proficiency rather than in terms of nativeness. For example, in a question in the Teacher’s Guide, “Can you pair your students with native English speakers or non-native speakers who have a good command of English?” (p. 17) the term “proficient English speakers” could have been used to refer to all possible candidates, thus not reinforcing the misconception that native speakers are possibly more desirable.

These very minor details aside, ETE is an exceptionally well-written text, which is bound to make its way into English-medium Bible schools and seminaries around the world. When I began using this text with my African students, they were surprised at the use of theological topics to learn English. The meaningfulness of the texts and vocabulary immediately heightened their interest in their English class, and they enthusiastically embraced these new English-learning materials. My expectation is that the theology professors in our seminary might be quite surprised at the students’ level of theological knowledge when they exit my English classes and begin their “real” theological studies!

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## SPOTLIGHT: Karen Schwenke

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### **1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. How are you connected with the world of English language teaching?**

As I was growing up, my family lived in varied parts of the United States, and I enjoyed learning about and adapting to each new environment. The differences between them were both marvelous and shocking (Can so many people really live in such a small space? You eat what?). After college, while working with a Christian campus organization, I found myself interacting with more and more international students, so seeing an interest, I began making plans to live overseas.

Then one day, somewhere, someone (I wish I now knew who) told me about Americans who lived overseas and taught English. I started investigating this option and ended up with an M.A. in TESOL and years of teaching English at the community college and university level. I never did make it overseas as a teacher, but I have enjoyed my years of helping international students adjust to the American academic culture and learn the English language.

### **2. Is there a relevant joy or challenge you experience which you could share with CELEA News readers?**

Cross-cultural communication is a joy and a challenge. I am still awe-struck when I learn a simple thing about my students' cultures and languages. For example, a student recently asked me why English uses "He" to refer to God, because in his language, they use "it". We then had an interesting theological discussion on the differences the pronouns produce in our perception of God. These interactions with my gaps in knowledge challenge me not to get comfortable thinking that I know where my students are coming from. There are still many questions I need to ask my students about their cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Also, still too often, I will sink into my office chair frustrated with a student's attitude or actions. After a few minutes, I hit my forehead with the palm of my hand because I realize that I just had a cross-cultural miscommunication. The student got her or my verb tenses confused, or I did not give the student time to ask her question. Understanding why miscommunication happens has helped me improve my communication and has given me great joy as I facilitate better interaction with my students.

### **3. What is your favorite Bible verse, and why?**

I have recently been thinking about Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." It seems that Paul was assuring Titus that God was with him and that God was teaching him how to be righteous in the times (and place?) that he lived. Now, in our present age, I want God to teach me how to be sensible, righteous, and godly as I teach my students and hold them to a standard. Also, I find it something that I can pray for my students as they pursue their studies in an American university because they not only need instruction in how to please God generally, they also need instruction on how to please God in the American academic culture.

### **4. Is there a book, article, or individual related to ELT that has influenced you and/or your teaching? If so, could you explain how?**

*Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath has influenced my teaching the last few semesters. The book challenged me to find the core or the essence of each of my classes. What is the one thing that I want every student to understand or do by the end of the semester? As a result, I have developed a phrase and designed a logo for each class. The first few weeks of class, I gradually introduce the key idea and try to lead students to a light bulb moment when they are the first to express the idea. I then use the phrase and/or logo each class period in some way: on a handout, on a PowerPoint slide, in a lecture. As the semester progresses, all I have to do is put the logo up on the screen, and the students know what is expected of them. By the end of the semester, I know that that one key concept is their own.

# About CELEA News:

**Guidelines for Contributions:** CELEA News is the newsletter of the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA). We are particularly interested in receiving relevant announcements, news items, and especially submissions or ideas for our Articles section. We welcome short (about 250-500 words) or longer (up to about 2500 words) articles that describe a favorite classroom activity or teaching technique, reflect on experiences or interests you have had or are developing, or report on classroom or other research, etc. We also invite book, software, and other reviews, plus response articles to something published in CELEA News or elsewhere, or to relevant presentations you have attended, talks you have heard, etc. Writers might offer another perspective, raise some questions, or present new practical, philosophical, or theoretical points of view on topics of interest to CELEA members.

Submissions may be drawn from relevant conference presentations or report on readings you are familiar with or research you have carried out. Some articles will include a more obvious or detailed Christian perspective, while others may appear less so. Yet our main audience is clearly Christians, and in particular CELEA members and other people interested in relevant topics and issues from a Christian point of view. If you have an idea and are considering submitting an article, we would be happy for you to correspond with us about it. If it does not seem appropriate for CELEA News we might be able to suggest other options.

If you have something for us to consider, please first review articles in recent issues of the newsletter for models and examples, observing the style and format (e.g., APA, etc.). Prepare your submission as a Word document, and be careful to quote sources appropriately, include all references you mention, and respect the copyright of any authors you cite. Then contact us to state that you have something for us to consider for publication, and we'll work with you on it from there. We look forward to hearing from you, and possibly to working with you on your submission. Contact: [editor@celea.net](mailto:editor@celea.net).

**Letters to the Editor:** We welcome your thoughts! You may want to post your ideas on the CELEA website for discussion (<http://www.celea.net/forum>). If you would like to write us, send your email to Jan Dormer at [jan.dormer@gmail.com](mailto:jan.dormer@gmail.com).

**Subscriptions:** Are you on our mailing list? If you are not but would like to be, email Jan Dormer at [jan.dormer@gmail.com](mailto:jan.dormer@gmail.com). Include your name, email address, where you're from, and a little about the kind of English teaching you do. We want to get to know you!

**PASS IT ON!** CELEA is a new organization for the benefit of Christian English teachers around the globe. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you feel would appreciate receiving it.

**Christian English  
Language Educators  
Association**  
[\[www.celea.net\]](http://www.celea.net)



**CELEA is a non-profit  
educational  
association which  
functions as the  
Christian English Language Educators Forum  
(CELEF) in conjunction with the annual TESOL  
convention, where it holds an academic  
session, booth, and networking session.**

## CELEA News

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