



# CELEA News

Newsletter of the Christian English Language Educators Association

Biannual

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## Letter from the President: Thank You To Volunteers

Nancy Ackles, [President@celea.net](mailto:President@celea.net)

CELEA is a volunteer organization, and this newsletter has been edited by some rather amazing volunteers, literally working from hospital beds and through major life crises to produce this edition. Thank you is not a big enough phrase for what I want and need to say on behalf of all of us who benefit from your work, dear editors, but thank you. We pray God's peace and strength will be with you.

I do have good news to report. Although TESOL is reducing the time available at the annual conference for the forums such as ours, Michael Lessard-Clouston prepared a proposal on "Harmonizing Faith and TESOL" which is now on the conference schedule. Plans for a CELT conference in Dallas on March 20th are beginning to come into place. Amie Sarker of Dallas Baptist University will provide leadership with Frank Tuzi. The conference will be held on the campus of DBU, and you can expect a call for proposals soon. Save the date, and if you plan on attending TESOL, be sure to come a day early and attend this conference too. Several people have stepped forward to help, but there is, of course, a need for more, so if you're willing to assist, please email Amie ([amie@dbu.edu](mailto:amie@dbu.edu)) or Frank ([ftuzi@gmail.com](mailto:ftuzi@gmail.com)).

CELEA is a fledgling organization in many ways. We've come a good way, but there is still much to be done. In the past few months, we have been working on strengthening our systems and so that we can move forward with clarity and some degree of efficiency into the future. We will soon have formal bylaws and standing rules. We are working to expand the core group of people who lead. We are establishing good systems for maintaining records. And like all volunteer organizations, we need more volunteers. It is almost guaranteed that anyone reading this newsletter has more than enough to do all ready, but let God guide you in thinking about the possibility of giving a little time to CELEA. Karen Asenavage has retired from being secretary because she needs to do dissertation research this year. Perhaps you could take minutes for board meetings. Frank Tuzi is currently serving as web master, treasurer, past-president, and conference co-chair, and that's too much to ask of anyone. If you have accounting experience, perhaps you could take on the treasurer role. If you have wisdom and experience in the organizing of non-profits, perhaps you'd be willing to share some with the board. Then there's the conference to organize, with all its many tasks. The potential for CELEA to bring good resources and good research to the support of the many Christian organizations that include language teaching in their work is large. We need the ideas and energy that you can contribute in order to reach that potential.

My favorite teaching prayer is "Lord, let my teaching today in some way help these students to achieve your purposes for their lives." My prayer here is "Lord, let CELEA be a help to us all in achieving your purposes for our teaching and our relationships."

In His adventure, Nancy Ackles

*Nancy Ackles spent most of her career teaching in the English language programs of the University of Washington. In retirement she enjoys short-term teaching specialist opportunities and also developed and teaches TESOL's online grammar courses.*

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## The Editor's Note: Building Faith--A Personal Journey

Jan E. Dormer, [jdormer@messiah.edu](mailto:jdormer@messiah.edu)

In mid-December, 2011, my husband and I had just returned from our first year in Kenya to spend Christmas with my family in Indiana. We looked back on 2011 with satisfaction. After having spent many years in ministry in Indonesia and Brazil, Africa was different and challenging, but very rewarding. We looked forward to returning after Christmas, and spending the rest of our missionary careers in Kenya. Then, life threw us a curve. At a meeting with mission leadership, we were abruptly and inexplicably pulled out of that ministry. We were shocked, hurt, and very confused. Our Kenyan brothers and sisters felt the same. Why had this happened? It made no sense to us.

Our search for God's leading in the midst of the confusion led me to a job in TESOL Education at Messiah College, in Pennsylvania. My husband returned to the mission agency we had been with in our previous work, as a US-based consultant and professor for overseas Bible colleges. God had provided new direction, but the subsequent months were frantic with completing former work projects while starting new assignments, buying a home in PA, and finally, moving and settling in.

August arrived, and though we still hurt not to be back in Kenya, where we had felt God wanted us, it seemed as though we had crossed the Jordan, and could finally begin our new ministries. I was thoroughly enjoying getting into my new job at Messiah College, and seeing vast potential for both local and international ministry in TESOL education there. However, on Aug. 16, just a week before the beginning of classes, I awoke in the early morning with unbearable pain. In the ER it was determined that I needed immediate surgery for a twisted colon. Without surgery, I would have died. Ten days after being released from the hospital I had to return due to a serious infection. Drains were put in for abscesses. Without this specialized treatment, the infection also could well have been fatal.

As I write this, I am well on the road to recovery, and contemplating God's hand in our lives. What seemed "inexplicable" in December now looks more like a merciful God engineering a plan. My surgeon says that this was bound to happen at some point. What if we had been overseas, where we have spent most of our lives? What if we had been in Africa, where WE had planned to be? There is a very high likelihood that I could not have gotten the surgery quickly enough, and would not have survived.

I have often puzzled over these verses: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV). How can trials be considered joy? On a purely human level, this makes no sense. But I do believe that the development of my faith and Christian maturity *is* cause for joy, and I know that this development does not happen when life is easy. Only in the darkness do we have the opportunity to hold tight to the hand of the One who sees where we are going.

At the beginning of my classes I often challenge teachers-in-training with this question: What makes you, a Christian ESOL teacher, different from a teacher who is not a Christian? As students suggest that they care for and love and serve their students, I am quick to point out that many excellent non-Christian ESL teachers also do these things. I press harder, and students are often stumped. "What *good* is it to our students that we are Christians?" I continue to ask. The deeper we get into the question, the fewer answers we all have.

But perhaps one possible answer lies in the verses in James. The ability to have joy amidst trials is not something the world typically offers. But as we live our lives, with their many trials, with students looking on, perhaps this *is* a difference we can offer. We can offer a joy that transcends circumstances; not a Pollyanna-type happiness from looking on the bright side, but an honest and deep joy because God is working for our good in ways that we often can neither see nor understand, and consequently, our faith grows.

### A Collective Application

August is when we typically begin talking about our fall issue. Though we were sorry to see our lead editor, Michael Lessard-Clouston, step down in order to concentrate on the journal (see announcement in this issue), we

felt well-staffed and ready to go. We had been blessed with the addition of another editor in the past months, Laura McMullen. So at the beginning of August I felt confident that our team of four (Jan, Antoinette, Laura, and our layout editor, Daniel) could produce a timely issue of CELEA News.

We had just gotten started on this issue when I had to send out the word that I was in the hospital, and request that the other editors move forward. Much to my amazement, the responses from Laura and Antoinette were that they, too, were facing unbelievable trials. Laura's son Jonathan had been born prematurely, and was undergoing multiple surgeries, his little life hanging in the balance. Antoinette wrote that her brother had passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. She had just returned from Japan to settle his affairs. I was stunned, and humbled. I was suffering, but my life would return to normal, eventually. My co-editors, on the other hand, were in the midst of life-altering crises.

We quickly concluded that CELEA News would simply have to wait until we were able to manage. But I began wondering what was happening. Why all of us, at the same time? Was there a spiritual dimension to this attack? No doubt answers to this question will vary depending on your theological leanings, but one thing is certain: CELEA is undergoing a time of exciting growth and change, as Nancy has outlined in her letter. Another thing is also certain: our enemy cannot be happy about this.

These musings brought me back to the verses in James. Though we typically think of faith and spiritual maturity in individual terms, could there also be a collective aspect to these qualities? Do we or can we *collectively* view our trials with joy, and come together supportively as a *faith*-based community of Christian English Language Educators around the world? What does this look like? Discussion on our website? Mentoring partnerships? Connections between higher education programs and on-the-ground ministries? As Nancy has said in the prayer at the end of her message, we want CELEA to be a community which furthers our collective service to God and others through TESOL. We welcome dialogue and feedback. In our next issue we hope to have a "Letters to the Editor" section. Please share your thoughts with us!

#### **A late but thoughtful Issue**

So finally, here is this issue. I was struck by the fact that our three feature articles all address what it means to live out our faith. Robin Gingerich reminds us of the value of "just being there". I hope her article will spur someone out there to consider going to an under-staffed place of TESOL ministry – to "be there". Andrea Adams shares her experiences as a language learner from the perspective of a language teacher, reminding us of the compassion and understanding that should pervade all of our interactions with our students. Finally, Jane Moore provides an interesting comparison between Second Language Acquisition and spiritual development. All three of these articles in some way relate to the verses in James – trials, testing, perseverance... and the building up of faith and maturity in Christ. Also in this article, we spotlight our very own president, Nancy Ackles, and Christy, a young TESOL professional who is busy "being there" in a remote area of the world.

You will also read about two opportunities to participate in our collective faith-building and professional development. There is a notice about the new *International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching* (IJC&ELT), which will be accepting submissions shortly. In addition, the upcoming CELT conference in Dallas is introduced by the chair, Amie Sarker. Please consider both of these opportunities for writing and presenting! But don't forget, as well, that we are always looking for articles for *CELEA News*! Guidelines for authors can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Happy reading! May your joy abound amidst your trials, and your faith be built up!

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## News & Announcements

Christians in English Language  
Teaching (CELT) Conference 2013  
Dallas Baptist University  
Dallas, Texas  
Wednesday, March 20, 2013



### CELT 2012 Journal Update – IJC&ELT

As noted in the last issue, Michael Lessard-Clouston (Biola U) stepped down as founding co-editor of the newsletter in order to work on creating a journal. He is happy to report that a new International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching (IJC&ELT) is in the works! The journal will be co-sponsored by CELEA and the Applied Linguistics and TESOL department at Biola University, which will provide initial funding and offer a web home for this open access, refereed, and online publication. Joining Michael as co-editor is Andy Xuesong Gao (U of Hong Kong), and they have assembled an editorial board and will be welcoming submissions shortly. For more information, please visit <http://cook.biola.edu/ijc&elt>, where submission guidelines and further details will be available. We hope to publish our first issue in summer 2013, and encourage all presenters from the excellent CELT 2012 conferences in Hong Kong and Philadelphia to consider submitting an article version of their presentation.

## Just Be There

Robin Gingerich, [rgingerich@lcc.lt](mailto:rgingerich@lcc.lt)

“Why are you here?” I was interviewing teenagers during a school’s English language Olympiad in Klaipeda, Lithuania, the town where I work and live. These eleventh graders had spent the morning with me taking a battery of tests to see who would have the privilege of representing their school in the city wide Olympiad. Following the written test, I interviewed each student in order to rate their English speaking skills, but it was me who learned a powerful lesson.

Over the course of the morning, I learned to know a few of their hopes and dreams. Juoana wanted to be a dentist. Jana loved her science classes. Aleksandr played drums for sheer enjoyment. Andrej shyly admitted that he spent much of his time playing computer games.

During the interviews, I asked each one why they had chosen to participate in the Olympiad. They all were very clear in their responses. They knew that good English skills will give them more opportunities to study and work in international settings as well as in Lithuania.

A few students actually told me personal stories during the interview. Viktoria told me how the other students bullied her, locking her in the bathroom stalls and ignoring her pleas for mercy. Another student revealed that he was bullied on the way to and from school so he simply stayed home and read books. I had only met these young people that day and they were already revealing their stories. I felt honored that they chose to tell me but much more so, I also felt great sadness to hear of their trials. I know that these are “normal” realities of the teenage years but still, their stories touched me. I still have no idea why they told me these stories; I certainly had not tried to elicit stories of their lives. My first lesson was that I was there to see past their zits, unruly haircuts, and high fashion hand bags to hear what these precious children had to say.

However, I was surprised at another thing. At the end of the interview, I asked if they had questions for me. Seven times I heard the same question: “Why are you here in Lithuania?” I had introduced myself earlier to the group as an American who has lived in Lithuania for 14 years and that I teach at LCC International University. This intrigued them so much that they

needed to know more. I had the perfect opportunity to tell them why I was living and working in Lithuania. They stared at me as if I was not from Iowa but from planet X. It seemed to shock and surprise them that a foreigner would spend an entire morning, let alone 14 years, teaching and working with young people in Lithuania. I had to ask myself: Had they met no other foreigners with whom they could talk?



Please don't get the wrong idea. Lithuania is a very well developed country and a proud member of the European Union, with hundreds of economic and cultural ties to the world. It is not an isolated country by any stretch of the imagination; many Lithuanians are well traveled and well educated in politics and world affairs. And yet I got the clear sense that these young people had a very different, somewhat stilted impression of foreigners. They had rarely talked with a foreigner before and yet they were learning the most widely recognized international language in the world. Several very shyly asked, "Is it difficult for you to live in Lithuania since you are foreigner?" To which I smiled and reassured them that I love my work, my friends and my life in Lithuania very much.



That day I realized that the hours that I had spent designing, writing and proofing the English tests was well worth the 4 minutes of one to one conversation with each of these young persons. The personal connection with young people is the reason that I'm here teaching in Lithuania. That day, being available to listen to a few young people was chance to reach across cultures. That day, just being there was my witness.

*Robin Gingerich has taught at LCC International University, in Klaipeda, Lithuania, for 14 years.*



Created 10/25/2012 at <http://www.wordle.net> from most common acronyms in TESOL, adding CELEA and CELT for emphasis.

# Leaving and Finding Home: One Teacher's Journey as a Spanish Language Learner

Andrea Adams, [andreaadams@dejazzd.com](mailto:andreaadams@dejazzd.com)



Image from <http://aldezbok.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/leaving-home.jpg>

Editor and reviewer Hazel Rochman writes, “Reading makes immigrants of us all. It takes us away from home, but most importantly, it finds homes for us everywhere” (1995). If reading has this power, how much more could actual experiences transform a person? Although I could not become a literal immigrant to another country, I decided to step beyond the comforts of my linguistic and cultural home as both subject and researcher. As a teacher of English, I put myself in the role of language learner, believing that doing so would make me a wiser and more compassionate educator.

## Leaving Home: My Route

In recent years, I have begun learning Spanish. My late grandmother was born (to American parents) in Cuba, and the language makes me feel connected to her. Knowing that Spanish is the first language of a number of my students, I wanted to practice and develop my limited Spanish and to enter the local Spanish speaking culture. To do so, I sought out conversations with Spanish speakers, including a one-on-one meeting and small group dinners, and I visited a Spanish church, capturing my experiences in a journal.

## A Look at My Suitcase

What do I bring to this journey? As I consider the principles of language learning set forth by H. Douglas Brown (2007), I find that several of them apply to me. I am intrinsically motivated by a desire to connect with Spanish speakers and look forward to the reward of being able to do so with increased competence. Although I am risk averse in some areas of life, I am willing to risk the uncertainty that is part of language learning (Brown, 2007). Moving between languages, although occasionally ego bruising, does not threaten my identity. According to Watkins-Goffman (2011), this also is positively correlated with success. Additionally, I have always loved words, and I am blessed with access to welcoming Spanish speakers at school and in my community. In these ways, my suitcase seems well packed for the journey of second language learning.

## Rough Places Along the Road

Even with these positive factors, my “immigrant” experience is not without difficulties. The rest of life’s challenges cannot be put on hold to make space for language learning, and this project happens to coincide with an upsetting situation at school. I am especially aware of this on my first visit to Spanish Assembly of God.

*It’s Sunday morning, and the weight of this thing at school sits on my chest like a rock. I don’t want to go to church – not even my usual one. I’m stressed, sad, and tired, and putting myself in a stretching situation feels too hard. But after one wrong turn, I’m here. I watch the beautiful dark-haired people file in. I take a deep breath, and tell myself it’s time to bring my strawberry blonde head inside, too.*

Language learning happens in the context of the rest of life’s struggles, and being in the early acquisition stages brings frustration. Even small things present a challenge. For example, the church has no web site, so to find out the service time, I must call. Although I know the words for times and days of the week, the recorded voice speaks too fast for me to translate. (Fortunately, the information is repeated in English.)

During the church services, I seek to stay engaged, but my mind becomes tired, and my thoughts wander. Second language fatigue sets in, impeding my ability to remain attentive. I long to be on the inside, yet my language deficit keeps me at the periphery. The pastor congratulates a couple on fifty-three years of marriage, saying something that makes the congregation laugh – but I fail to understand the joke. I am left out. By this point, the service has gone on for two and a half long hours, and my body and mind are tired. I want to go home – home to English, and home to my bed.

As a Spanish speaker, I feel limited, as though I am trying to create meaningful sentences out of refrigerator poetry magnets. In English, I have sandals, slippers, clogs, flip flops, sneakers, heels – but in Spanish, I have only *zapatos*. I lack the words to communicate nuances. I get tripped up by *el* and *la* and find myself mentally going through every conjugation of a verb to choose the simple past tense (or, I tell the story of a past happening in the present tense, knowing it probably sounds ridiculous). In English, I am an animated storyteller, but in Spanish, I reach for the words that rattle around in my brain and try to wrestle them into semi-coherent, stumbling sentences.

Speaking and listening present challenges, but generally (other than a recorded message), as Rosina Lippi-Green (1997) points out, these modes of communication allow for immediate clearing up of confusion. At our Spanish supper, I say that someone told me that a mutual acquaintance is pregnant. I feel pleased with my crafting of this Spanish sentence. Jenna confirms this and tells the story of how she learned the news. Although I grasp key snippets, my comprehension eventually breaks down. I ask her to back up, explaining what I understood thus far, and she retells the rest, more slowly, using tone and gestures for clarity but still completely in Spanish.

With reading and writing, however, I lack the opportunity for immediate help with meaning making. I can slow my reading rate and re-read, but my limited vocabulary and grammar still create rough places in this linguistic journey.

*I decide that as an SLL (Spanish Language Learner), I need to add some reading to my speaking and listening. Excitedly I search for Spanish books on my Kindle. 99 cents for El Mago de Oz seems like a bargain, so with a click, it’s mine. I figure that the familiarity of the story will make up for my limited vocabulary. When I see the first electronic page, though, my heart sinks. It’s a sea of unfamiliar words. My head hurts just looking at it. I can’t even read a children’s book.*

I return to the text later, when I'm less tired, and realize that I can read short bits at a time, if I'm not fixated on understanding every word or even every sentence. Slowly, haltingly, I enter the world of Dorothy and Toto, but the reading remains difficult.

Writing is less a part of my Spanish journey, but when the opportunity arises, I hesitate to take it. I realize that language learning means risk taking, but somehow written errors feel worse than spoken ones, more permanent. Interestingly, my passion for writing – for words that are clear, well chosen, beautiful – becomes an obstacle. In Spanish, my sentences are clunky and full of errors, even when I edit, so I still struggle to type Spanish sentences and send them to a reader (even though my “readers” are supportive friends).

I understand Maria's emails when she uses Spanish, but my inclination is to reply in English. When we're making plans together, I write in Spanish that I bought our tickets, using 'boletas' even though I suspect that is the word for bus tickets, not show tickets. Emailing Doug to make plans for Spanish practice at Starbucks, I alternate between Spanish and English. Constructing Spanish sentences makes me feel exposed and incompetent. My constipated attempts at writing – and reluctance to write – in my second language give me new empathy for students who struggle to write for a variety of reasons.

### Running Back Home

On my “immigrant” journey, there are times I need to revisit my first linguistic home of English. In *The Psychology of Language*, Timothy Jay states, “The deep emotional work in communication must be expressed in the primary language” (2003, p. 477). Although the greater issue for me is simply the lack of vocabulary needed to discuss complex matters, I also find that for things that I feel deeply, I revert to English in order to communicate from my heart, rather than from my verb-conjugating head. I use Spanish (with some help with words) to begin to tell the facts of the story of my upsetting situation at school to both Doug and my Spanish supper group.

In Spanish I say, “On our team we have a new student named Tony. Every day he looks sad and tired. He wants to put his head on the desk. He has no friends. It's the same in every class. He is failing. We had a meeting with his mother and a translator. His mother doesn't speak English. Nothing changes. Every week when we meet with the counselor, we say, 'What about Tony?' Nothing changes.”

In English I share details about my frustrations and some interpersonal conflict that has arisen at school over how best to help Tony. I work hard to tell this story in Spanish, but when I get to the part about how this has affected me, I need my first language, where my words can flow from the deep emotions and be easily understood. The understanding of these *amigas* soothes my soul.

Following my story, Jenna also shares a story about a troubling meeting, and she also chooses English even though her Spanish is fluent. “I have to leave soon – I'll say it in English 'cause it's faster,” she says. Is it faster for her, because the words flow more naturally, or faster because we will not keep stopping her for clarification? Perhaps both. In any case, we both come back to our linguistic home to express what is deep and important. I realize that this “running home” is a luxury that English language learners may not have during the school day, if no one understands their “heart language.”

## Joys in the Journey: Finding a Second Home

Even with the slow progress and many challenges, my journey into Spanish language and cultures is a joyous one. I sense my soul expanding and being stretched in fruitful ways, and I take delight in finding a second linguistic home.

*It's Thursday evening when I take my sniffling, sinus-infected self to Maria's house for our gathering. Jenna and I arrive at the same time, and Maria greets us with a kiss and warm "Bienvenidos." I feel instantly at home in her kitchen, where she hands us each a glass of sangria. She jokes in Spanish that the best part of making sangria is that you have to keep trying it to see if it needs more wine. Jenna shows us pictures of her newly purchased wedding dress, and we look up Spanish words for lace. . . We move to the dining room for paella, a comforting dish on this rainy winter night. We switch from Spanish to English and back again, and I'm grateful for the sense of home I feel in these friendships.*

I find a sense of home, too, in one of the Spanish church services. Unlike at Maria's house, I am a stranger here, though people have warmly welcomed me. I know no one, and I must work to understand the language. Still, there are moments when my heart finds a deeper home, aware of something beyond translating words. Somehow as I look around the sanctuary and see people kneeling to pray and raising their hands in worship, I begin to enter into worship as well. During the second song, something in me shifts from trying to translate each word on the screen to letting the words and music wash over me as I sing. I realize that the song is about asking God to shelter me, cover me, be strong in my weakness. A couple of lines I still do not fully comprehend, but my spirit connects with the essence of the song. I experience a level of understanding that transcends translation, and my heart finds a home in this community of Spanish speaking worshippers.

Although communicating in Spanish is hard work for me, I am reminded that language is a way of connecting. When I can connect with another – when we share an understanding – I feel at home. Humor is one of the ways I connect with friends, and I take joy in unexpected humorous moments in Spanish. As I finish (in English) sharing my school story at our supper gathering, I express frustration about the actions of a coworker in dealing with the issue. Her behavior strikes me as childish. I say, "Estamos adultos" [we're adults]. Maria nods and agrees, "Sí, somos adultos." Although she does not correct me directly, I realize from her response that I have used the incorrect "to be" verb. I used "estar," the verb for temporary conditions and locations, rather than "ser," the verb for permanent conditions. I reply, "Oh, right, somos adultos siempre" [we're adults forever]. She smiles and says, "Well, posiblemente estamos adultos aveces" [possibly we're adults sometimes]. We laugh together at the implied meaning: some people do not always act like adults. Laughing together at a mutually understood joke in Spanish gives me a sense of comfort in this new linguistic home.

## Looking Back: Closing Thoughts and Reflections

Although I sought to be a linguistic "immigrant," I am aware that my experiences were much less difficult than those of an actual immigrant who leaves her country for a new one. While I challenged myself to learn and use a second language, I had the luxury of reverting to my first language when I needed or wanted to do so. My daily survival was not dependent on my use of Spanish. Also, I have good friends who encourage me, supply words for me and let me practice with them. Although I dealt with other stresses as I took this journey, my life situation remained stable. I did not need to seek a new job or secure housing or navigate complicated government processes at the time I was language learning.

As I consider the challenges of language learning and how it would be to have those challenges heaped upon life upheaval, I feel fresh compassion for immigrants in the United States and English language learners. My own

language learning would not have happened without Spanish speakers who generously helped me to make (slow) progress. I hope to find opportunities to extend this same grace to English language learners.

In addition to growing my compassion, my experiential research has stretched me interiorly. The risk taking and effort invested in language learning have strengthened me. My concept of myself has expanded as I have found ways (even in the early stages of language learning) to navigate Spanish speaking situations with my inner self intact. I see more flexibility in myself, more capacity to integrate new ways of speaking, thinking, and being. My appreciation for the beauty of the language and the warmth of those who speak it has grown.

Although my Spanish skills are still limited, I have truly found a sense of home as the language has grown in me and I have grown in my experiences with its speakers. English is no longer my only linguistic home; there is a part of me that feels at home in the Latino culture, as different as it is from my upbringing. And perhaps “home” has more to do with an interior reality than a geographic location or a set of cultural norms. Linda Watkins-Goffman states, “Becoming at home with oneself is a lifetime goal; it does not belong only to immigrants from other countries” (2001, p. 120). For me as a follower of Christ, becoming at home in my own heart is really a journey of finding my home in God. Perhaps the stretching of new cultural and linguistic experiences – stepping away from home – is a way of feeling more fully the sense in which this world was not intended to be my permanent home. Still, as I hold the awareness that my heart’s true home is not tied to an earthly place, I want to live out my days with freedom to embrace more than one cultural and linguistic home and to welcome those who seek a new home here.

### Afterword

My Kindle now reveals that I have read seventeen percent of *El Mago de Oz*. Dorothy’s journey to the Emerald City continues, and so does my journey as a second language learner. Looking at her surroundings, Dorothy finds that she is no longer in Kansas, and I too have observed a change in my (inner) landscape. Unlike Dorothy’s companions, though, I do not put my hope in a wizard or a man behind a curtain. As I think of what it takes to grow as a second language learner and a compassionate teacher, I trust in the work of the One who has given me a brain, courage, and a heart.

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# Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) Conference



Dallas Baptist University \* Dallas, Texas

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**DEADLINE: December 10, 2012**



The Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA) invites proposals for papers, workshops, panel discussions, poster and tech talk sessions of original work or research that focuses on cultural, educational, or linguistic issues considering a Christian worldview. The central theme of the conference is harmonizing language, heritages, and cultures, in association with the 2013 TESOL Convention.

## Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Christianity and Culture
- Training missionaries to be language educators
- Teacher training
- Materials development in non-Christian settings
- Professional development and integrity
- Teaching with technology
- ELT that affirms and builds upon students' heritage / funds of knowledge
- Connecting teachers and students across the globe with technology
- Social justice, responsibility and the Christian ELT
- Christian Leadership in ELT

## Types of proposals include:

- **Workshop:** 45 minutes (practical demonstration and or application)
- **Panel:** 45 minutes (central theme with individual perspectives not to exceed four (4) presenters)
- **Paper:** 20 minutes (research, philosophical approaches, essay)
- **Poster:** 15 minutes (visual representation of topic with brief explanation)
- **Talk:** 15 minutes (brief explanation of type, purpose and use of technology)

## All proposals must include:

### Section One

- Presenters' name (not to exceed (4) four), affiliation, mail address, e-mail address, and phone number with country and area code
- Brief bio for each presenter (50 words maximum for each)

### Section Two

- The **type** of presentation (workshop, panel, paper, poster, tech talk)
- The proposal **title** (15 words maximum)

Email all proposals by 11:59 PM December 10, 2012 to [amie@dbu.edu](mailto:amie@dbu.edu)

Please write the proposal information in the e-mail itself. No attachments please.

**Thank you for taking the time to submit a proposal. Notifications of acceptance will be sent via e-mail by January 15, 2012.**



## Second Language Acquisition in the Temporal and Spiritual Realms

*Jane Moore, janemoore93@gmail.com*

There are some interesting parallels between second language acquisition (SLA) and a Christian's growth in Christ, which I refer to in this article as the Christian's SLA. The references to SLA are those that are commonly understood in TESOL. The type of spiritual SLA that takes place when an individual experiences new birth as a Christ-follower is referred to as both an analogy to the development of a Christian's life, in addition to the literal language that a new Christian learns.

Certain constructs in the temporal understanding of SLA have amazing parallels in the spiritual SLA. This article explores the significance of three constructs that influence SLA in both the temporal and spiritual realms: culture, identity, and affective filter.

### Approaches

To explore the connection between the spiritual and temporal realms of SLA, it is helpful to understand some approaches in SLA. Theoretical perspectives are frequently categorized within three models: Innatist (Nativism), Cognitive, and Constructivist (Brown, 2007, p. 306). The theories I will be addressing in relationship to a Christian's SLA are those concerning the affective filter from the Innatist Model and culture and identity from the Constructivist model.

The theories in SLA that fall under the Innate or Nativist model adhere to the belief that the knowledge of language is inborn in "some initial form at least, independent from experience" (Ortega, 2006, p.228). There are some theorists who go so far as to say that we acquire a second language subconsciously and learning the language through explicit instruction will not lead to fluency (Krashen, 1982). Others (see e.g., Buczowska & Weist, 2006; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 1989; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; and Swain 1998) claim that cognitive processes drive SLA, and that applied study, as well as instruction, are needed for fluency. In spiritual SLA, there is a blending of both of these models. Innate aspects (see John 10:27) are born out of the new birth of our spirits, but to acquire "fluency," it is necessary to expend time and effort.

The subjects of culture and identity in temporal SLA are associated with the constructivist school of thought, in particular social constructivism. Brown (2007) cites Bakhtin (1986, 1990) as maintaining that language is "immersed in a social and cultural context, and its central function is to serve as a medium of communication" (see Brown, 2007, p. 14). This approach also has spiritual parallels. The apostle Paul uses the illustration of the body as the Christian community with Jesus Christ as the head (see Romans 12). Spiritual SLA takes place as Christians relate their knowledge of God in practical ways to the people around them.

### **Culture in Temporal and Spiritual SLA**

Culture influences SLA in a variety of ways. As Brown states so well, “A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (2007, p. 189).

An individual’s culture often drives the process and the strategies that person will use in SLA (see Lustig & Koester, 2006). The beliefs one holds about the culture of the target language may also have a profound effect on their language attainment. When one is learning a second language, as Jin and Cortazzi (1998) explain, it is necessary to learn the cultural ways in which the speakers of this second language communicate. As individuals interact with others they often form judgments based on that person’s appearance, actions, and language. The frame of reference to formulate these opinions comes from their own cultural core.

Becoming a Christian places one into a new culture, in fact a supernatural culture. For SLA to be successful in this culture, it is necessary to learn about God’s kingdom. As Christians grow in their understanding of this supernatural culture and their relationship with God, they discover that he intends to use their spiritual SLA to impact the people around them.

Jesus’ instructions in interacting with others seem radical to those of the natural culture. To abide in him and become proficient in spiritual SLA, Christians must do the things he tells them to do.

A new Christian learning to communicate with God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit may frequently find interference from the language (both literally and analogously) of his/her first culture. Habits of sarcasm or profanity, along with patterns of selfishness, pride and unbelief may draw Christians away from practicing their spiritual SLA. Acquiescing to the desires of their natural culture may cause Christians to rationalize their behavior and thus produce errors in their communication with God and with others.

Many times in temporal SLA the L2 learner develops a hybrid culture. Cervatiuc’s (2009) research examines this phenomenon and references Ricento, (2005, p. 896): “Modern societies are increasingly characterized by the prevalence of cultural hybridity and multilingualism, rather than ethnic homogeneity.” But the Christian’s SLA is to remain free from this hybridity, as is expressed in I John 2:15-17 (NIV): “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

Culture is certainly reflected in language with idioms, proverbs, and other expressions. Many patterns of speech have been over-used and have become clichés.

### **Identity in Temporal and Spiritual SLA**

One’s culture is interwoven with one’s identity, but that identity may change as an individual acquires a second language and is immersed in a second culture. Griffiths (2008) informs us that identity and the importance of its role in SLA has been acknowledged in recent years and that there are a host of variables concerning it. Researchers have approached identity from different perspectives and different methodologies. Several theories about L2 learners’ identity in SLA concern the idea of an evolving or shifting identity. Some like Park (2007) contend L2 learners’ identity changes are dependent upon the context, and in fact may change more than once within a conversation.

A Christian also experiences a shifting in identity after being adopted into the kingdom of God. This happens in the initial born-again experience and also as a Christian works on his/her spiritual SLA.

In a recent study of identity and good language learning concerning adult immigrants, Cervatiuc (2009) contends, “a learner’s identity cannot be separated from power” (p. 257) and proposes that power should be understood as coming in two forms: external and internal. The external power is seen as social status and the possession of education and

material goods; internal power is thought of as similar to self-confidence, believing in one's abilities, and a determination to communicate with others in spite of a negative response. The participants in Cervatiuc's study knowing very little English had immigrated to Canada from a variety of countries. They succeeded in their English acquisition to the point of attaining high paying professions and being considered by their colleagues to have exceptional English skills. Cervatiuc suggested they achieved this expert level of English by "focusing on their internal power" (p. 268) to increase their confidence and motivate them to seek out social participation to practice to practice and improve their English.

The parallel here is the importance of choice. Just as L2 learners in the temporal realm who want to achieve a high level of competency must make a conscious decision to pursue acquisition in spite of negative interactions, so L2 learners in the spiritual realm who desire to reflect the life and glory of Christ (to become spiritually transformed) must set their minds to know God, despite negative interactions.

Willard (2002), author and professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, discusses spiritual transformation taking place when Christians begin to retrain their minds through Biblical truth. However, "the condition of our mind is very much a matter of the direction in which our will is set" (p. 142). A Christian may encounter ridicule for his/her beliefs and lifestyle as well as distractions and temptations to abandon Christ. He/She must make a willful decision to continue to pursue God or simply coast through life. Once a Christian determines to seek God, he/she is enabled with God's power to accomplish His purposes and nothing can thwart His will (see Psalm 33).

### **Affect in Temporal and Spiritual SLA**

The final construct in SLA I would like to address is the affective filter. The affective factors in SLA that Brown (2007) highlights include L2 learners' self-esteem, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety and other personality factors. Krashen's (1977) Affective Filter Hypothesis claims that the optimum acquisition will happen when the L2 learners' experience low anxiety and a lack of defensiveness. When the L2 learner is in what they perceive to be a hostile environment or when they are nervous about their language production, they will have difficulty learning their second language. For both spiritual and temporal realms, the L2 learner's perception about their situation is key.

### **Conclusion**

We need to continually consider and evaluate current research in SLA. But even more critical, "as Christian teachers we have an additional responsibility 'to think deeply about the ways in which spiritual identities affect pedagogy'" (Wong, 2006, para.1).

As a Christian ESL teacher, co-owner of a small adult ESL school, having just completed a MA TESOL, I want to understand all that I learn and all that I teach through God's perspective. Meditating on the spiritual elements of life as we live out the temporal gives us a richer context in which to grow in all areas of our lives. We, like our students, are always learning and in everything we do as Christians we are mindful of the One who gives us life eternal. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31 NIV).

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*Jane Moore recently graduated from Biola with a Masters in TESOL, having graduated from Wheaton College 38 years previously. In addition to teaching, she co-owns an adult ESL school in Glendale, AZ and enjoys singing, hiking with her husband of 18 years, working out at the gym with her adult children, hanging out with her 9 grandchildren, and mostly growing in her relationship with Jesus.*



# CELEA



## SPOTLIGHT: Christy

*Christy can be contacted through Jan Dormer ([jdormer@messiah.edu](mailto:jdormer@messiah.edu))*

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

I was born and raised in northern Indiana on a small farm where my parents still live. Language learning is something that I have always enjoyed and am blessed to have the opportunity to now help others learn a new language. My first experience teaching English was during a practicum in college where I worked with a young boy who had just come to the U.S. He didn't know any English when he arrived, but he had a sparkle in his eye that showed me he desperately wanted to learn it. After college, I spent a year teaching in Puerto Rico. When I returned from PR, I spent over 5 years teaching English as a Second Language in an elementary school in Fort Wayne, Indiana. During that time I was able to work with students from various countries including Myanmar(Burma), Mexico, Guatemala, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.

Currently I am the English department director at one of the World Hope International offices in Central Asia. Teaching English in an overseas setting has always been a dream of mine and as a bonus I get to learn the local language. It's great to be able to put myself in my students' shoes as I struggle and grow in my language abilities.

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

One of my greatest joys in teaching English has always been the growth I see in students over the years. During my time in Fort Wayne I was able to see students grow in their language abilities and perform as well as native English speakers, if not better, on their class work. It reminds me that nothing is impossible. Often I found that my students knew the impact that learning English would have on their lives and their families' lives.

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

It's difficult to choose one Bible verse as a favorite, but a set of verses that has always encouraged me is Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." These verses remind me that no matter what the circumstances God is present with me and will provide what I need to overcome each and every situation. Life overseas is not always easy but if I ask the Lord for His peace it always comes.

### **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?**

One book that has been especially helpful is Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners by Keith Folse. The book gives concrete ways for teachers to instruct students in specific grammar points. I keep it at the office as a quick reference when students ask specific grammar questions. Thanks to Dr. Jan Dormer for introducing this book to me.





## SPOTLIGHT: Nancy Ackles

[President@celea.net](mailto:President@celea.net)

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

Well, I started teaching English to speakers of other languages a bit over thirty years ago. It was the year our younger daughter started kindergarten, and I say God did one of his minor miracles in bringing my dream job to me in Lewiston, Idaho. (My husband says there is no such thing as a minor miracle.) I taught at an intensive English program there for five years and became very interested in doing doctoral studies in linguistics. There wasn't a program in the area, but as I explored possibilities, my husband, a Presbyterian pastor, was called to a church near Seattle. I spent the next twenty years teaching in the English language programs of the University of Washington, earning a doctorate in linguistics, raising two daughters, being a pastor's wife, teaching some courses as an adjunct in MATESOL programs at Seattle Pacific and Seattle University, and enjoying the gifts of life. Six years ago my husband retired, we moved to North Carolina to be near grandkids, and we started doing short-term things. We are finding our lives full of really interesting things to do and people to meet.

### **2. Is there a relevant joy or challenge you have experienced which you could share with CELEA Newsletter readers?**

Joy I've got! I've started telling young people that if they want to travel when they are old, they should become English teachers when they're young. Because I can teach English and train English teachers and my husband can teach the Bible and train pastors, we have had many really interesting opportunities to travel, serve and learn in recent years. Six years ago I got a Fulbright to teach at the University of Tirana in Albania, and we return there every year so that I can see old friends and speak at conferences while Will teaches at a small Bible school. Will's skills take us to Mexico and Ireland each year, and through Fulbright and the State Department's English Language Specialist program, I've gone to Viet Nam, Tajikistan and Mauritania for teacher training. I'm a klutz with technology, but I say that my specialty is teaching without electricity, and there are certainly a lot of teachers in this world who need to do that. Really, they are my heroes, the Olympic athletes of our field. I do some online teaching (grammar) for TESOL and have wonderful email contacts each week with teens in Afghanistan. I think we all know that the greatest rewards of being in English language teaching are the opportunities to meet so many really interesting people.

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

Years ago a colleague suggested that I Thessalonians 5:14 is the teacher's verse, and while I won't claim it as my overall favorite verse, it's pretty relevant to our field. "And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Probably my favorite verses are Colossians 3:12-15. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." There are people who say you shouldn't move on in reading the Bible until you've mastered the part you've read. I'd never get out of Colossians if I followed that advice.

### **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?**

Am I allowed to smile and say Chomsky? Clearly, his work isn't on second language acquisition or pedagogy, but the linguistics department of the University of Washington where I studied was very Chomsky, very theoretical, and I think I learned there that work in theoretical linguistics can lead eventually to better teaching in our field. My dissertation was on *a/an* and *the*. Now I produce much better explanations of English article use than you find in traditional texts, if I do say so myself.



Nancy pictured back row, center.

# 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.

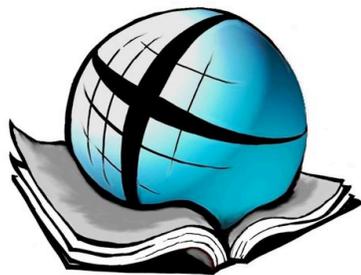
If you have something for us to consider, please first review articles in recent issues of the newsletter for models and examples, observing the style and format (e.g., APA, etc.). Prepare your submission as a Word document, and be careful to quote sources appropriately, include all references you mention, 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).

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**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.

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# CELEA

**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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