



## CETC Newsletter

July 2006 Volume 10 Number 2  
A periodic newsletter for TESOL members.

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### Leadership Updates

#### From the Editors

Meredith Bricker, [meredith.bricker@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.bricker@gmail.com), and Michael Lessard-Clouston, [michael.lessard-clouston@biola.edu](mailto:michael.lessard-clouston@biola.edu)

Following the CETC meeting at TESOL 2006 in Tampa, Florida, we volunteered to work on editing the newsletter, along with Jean Simon, who was instrumental in some of the caucus activities at the convention. Because of the nature of Jean's work, however, she will be helping us with special projects for the newsletter as her schedule allows. As the new coeditors, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew Bowdler, our predecessor, who has served the caucus over the past couple of years by editing the volumes 9.1 and 10.1 of the newsletter. Thank you Andy! We hope to follow in your footsteps and build on your work.

One of our first tasks as coeditors was to draft a CETC Newsletter Mission Statement. We have included it in this issue. Essentially, we hope to continue the tradition of providing a forum for CETC members to exchange ideas and discuss issues relevant to Christian professionals working in ESL and EFL education. Our hope is to produce two or three issues a year, ideally one in late spring or early summer after the yearly conference, another in the autumn, and one during the winter, before the annual TESOL convention. We welcome your ideas for articles, news, and updates, and would be happy to correspond with you if you have suggestions (or offers to assist!).

#### **Getting to Know Us**

As this is our first issue as coeditors, we thought you might like to learn something about us, our experience, and interests.

Meredith: I graduated with a master's degree in applied linguistics from Georgia State University in May 2005 and have been teaching ESL for 2 years. My husband and I live in Atlanta, Georgia, where I've been teaching English language learners in preacademic,

college, and graduate-level settings at two universities in the area. I look forward to beginning work in the fall as a visiting instructor in the Intensive English Program at Georgia State University, teaching ESL students enrolled in a prematriculated, content-based EAP curriculum. My current research interests include second language writing, vocabulary acquisition, intercultural communication, and corpus linguistics.

Michael: I began teaching ESL at a high school in Montreal during the mid-1980s, and then worked in EFL and teacher education at universities in China. Later I did graduate studies and taught in various programs at a private language school and a community college in Toronto, my hometown. Next, until last August, I was a missionary EFL professor for 10½ years at a university in western Japan, where I also helped create a new graduate program and taught courses in linguistics, culture studies, and language education. That was good preparation for my current work at Biola University, where I teach applied linguistics and TESOL. Though it's been an adjustment, my family and I enjoy life in the Los Angeles area, where we appreciate the diversity, weather, and opportunities of southern California. In terms of research, I am interested in vocabulary learning, English for specific purposes, second language acquisition, and other topics.

Jean Simon: Following three decades of homemaking, I am serving the international student population with a motherly approach. For 14 years, as coordinator of homestay for The Language Company, I was blessed by opportunities to introduce international students and visitors to the everyday life and care of exemplary American families. Presently, I am director of The Language Company – Orlando English Institute and the program coordinator of English Days at Walt Disney World, provided by The Language Company. As a newcomer to CETC, I hope to contribute to the development of special projects and event communications.

As coeditors, we hope that with our different backgrounds we can draw on the depth and breadth of experience in the caucus to create a newsletter that addresses a wide range of challenges, possibilities, and resources in TESOL from a Christian perspective.

### **In This Issue**

As usual, the newsletter includes some CETC leadership updates and news. It is an exciting time for the caucus, and we hope you will sense this through the newsletter and the CETC Web site ([www.cetesol.org](http://www.cetesol.org)). In terms of articles in this issue, we have a brief report on the most recent Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) conference held in April in San Francisco, as well as a summary of the recent thread concerning church-based ESL on the CETC e-list. We are delighted to introduce an article by Jeff Stebbins based on his presentation in the caucus colloquium at TESOL in Tampa, and hope to include similar articles from other presenters in future issues. Finally, we are thankful to Mary Wong, whose article draws on a paper presentation she gave at TESOL this year, reporting on her current research.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and look forward to interacting with many of you as you read and contribute to the CETC Newsletter.

Blessings,

Meredith and Michael

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### **[Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus \(CETC\) E-Newsletter Mission Statement](#)**

#### **Purpose**

The CETC Newsletter is the official newsletter of the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus (CETC). The newsletter seeks to provide a forum for Christian educators within TESOL to exchange effective ideas and resources and to discuss issues that are particularly relevant to Christian professionals in the field of English as a second or foreign language education.

#### **Audience**

As the primary audience of the newsletter is members of the caucus, the CETC Newsletter is oriented to Christian educators who are involved in TESOL. Though readers of the newsletter are united by a common belief in Jesus Christ, their interests and experiences demonstrate a

multifaceted diversity and depth of knowledge in the field. Readers are teachers, researchers, administrators, and students in TESOL and related disciplines who work or study in a variety of educational, geographical, and institutional contexts. The audience also includes those who wish to learn about the caucus and its activities, such as potential CETC members, Christian educators in TESOL who belong to other caucuses, and TESOL staff and leadership.

### **Vision**

The CETC Newsletter contributes significantly to TESOL by addressing issues that affect a large number of TESOL members—Christian educators. The newsletter contributes to the overall mission of TESOL by providing CETC members with

1. a forum in which to share their professional experiences with and information about teaching English to speakers of other languages around the world
2. coverage of a range of topics and issues of concern to various audiences within the caucus, related to teaching context, level, and area of interest or expertise
3. articles, brief reports, and announcements about current issues of interest to Christian educators working in TESOL both in the United States and elsewhere

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### **Letter From the Chair: TESOL 2006 Reflections**

*Eleanor Pease, 2006–07 Chair, [eleanor.pease@nyack.edu](mailto:eleanor.pease@nyack.edu)*

#### **Thank You to Our Volunteers**

Your leadership committee appreciates the work of all the volunteers. You are important to the ongoing success of CETC. We want to thank those of you who volunteered at the CETC booth in Tampa: Sharry Andrews, Peg Bowen, Anne Bruehler, Michael Lessard-Clouston, Sky Coon, Darla Cupery, Claire Monroe, and Terri Mosgrove.

Gena Bennett will be in charge of the booth next year. Please consider volunteering. It's a great way to renew old acquaintances, make new friends, and network.

#### **Goals for this year:**

1. Continue collaboration with a sister caucus, Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL (NNEST)
2. Build leadership
3. Develop CETC archives and review the leadership handbook and make revisions if necessary
4. Encourage research and publishing in the area of Christians in education
5. Develop more areas of service to the members

#### **2006 CETC Colloquium**

It was standing room only as we gathered to be challenged by the panelists who spoke on the topic "Professional Integrity and the Christian English Language Teacher." The participants were Karen Asenavage, Darla Cupperly, Rich Robison, Tom Scovel, and Jeff Stebbins.

#### **2006 All-Caucus Colloquium**

The theme for the All-Caucus Colloquium was "Caucus Strategies for Leading TESOL Internationally." Using my teacher-training experience on both sides of Pacific, I represented CETC by focusing on working with international Christian English language teaching professionals.

#### **Thursday Evening CETC Events**

If you were not at the CETC meeting on Thursday evening you missed a good time. Members were deluged with door prizes straight from Disney World. We listened to your suggestions last year and added the United States to our world area small groups. Gena put everyone to work with some tasks and walked out with an abundant supply of good ideas in three areas: (a) topics for the e-list, (b) topics for the 2007 CETC colloquium and the CELT pre-convention conference, and (c) ways that the CETC leadership team can serve the caucus.

Following the meeting a number of us attended the All-Caucus Social Event. We mixed and chatted with members of other caucuses and had a good time.

After this, a large group of CETC members walked across the bridge to Jackson's Bistro for a delicious meal, a wonderful time of getting better acquainted, and more prizes. Thank you Jean Simon for organizing this special event and providing the prizes at the meeting and at the restaurant.

### **Changes**

We welcome Karen Asenavage back to the States. Karen is leaving her position at the Higher Colleges of Technology in the United Arab Emirates, and will be in a doctoral program. She continues to serve on the CETC leadership committee.

We welcome Chair-Elect Gena Bennett who is preparing for the position of Caucus Chair 2007-2008. Gena has kept us all interested and active in the CETC e-list. Gena's position was announced in the last newsletter, but I wanted to spotlight her again.

Also, the leadership change in March 2006 is a reminder that we want to continue working on developing caucus leadership, so please keep active as a member and let us know if you would like to serve in some capacity in the coming year.

### **Looking Ahead**

As Gena Bennett prepares to take on responsibilities as caucus chair next year, we are looking for an e-list moderator. If you are interested in this important and enjoyable job, please contact Gena ([genabennett@yahoo.com](mailto:genabennett@yahoo.com)) by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

At the caucus meeting, Wes Eby explained our plan to propose a special award with the purpose of encouraging members to present at TESOL conventions. You will be hearing more about this award as the plans develop.

We are all excited about the Christian English Language Teachers preconference to be held in Seattle just before the convention. In committee discussions a year ago, it was decided to hold these conferences when the convention site was near Christian colleges or universities. With Seattle Pacific University nearby we will have the resources for making this a good conference.

As you think about next year, be sure to keep this special CELT conference in mind and make travel plans accordingly. It will be held on Tuesday of the convention week. We are happy that Kathryn Bartholomew has agreed to serve as chair of the CELT conference committee.

### **See You in Seattle**

Karen, Gena, and I hope that you will

1. Continue to be actively involved in the e-list
2. Feel free to contact us with questions and ideas
3. Support us in prayer as we try to serve you effectively this year.

We also look forward to meeting more of you at the CETC booth in Seattle.

*In Christ there is no East or West, in Him no South or North, but one great fellowship of love thru-out the whole wide earth.* J. Oxenham, 1908

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### **[News From CETC](#)**

#### **CELT Scholarships Available**

Please make nonnative English-speaking teacher professionals aware of the CELT Scholarships for presenters at the CELT 2007 conference or the TESOL 2007 convention. Further details are available on the CETC Web site, at [www.cetesol.org/scholarship.html](http://www.cetesol.org/scholarship.html).

#### **CETC Is Seeking a New E-list Moderator!**

Would you like to be more involved in CETC? Add to your professional growth? CETC needs a new e-list moderator who can oversee the list, suggest topics for discussion, and so on. Serving as the e-list moderator is the perfect way to begin or to continue contributing to CETC, TESOL, and your own professional development. If you're interested in this position, please contact Gena Bennett at [genabennett@yahoo.com](mailto:genabennett@yahoo.com).

### North American Christian Foreign Language Association

For those not yet aware, NACFLA is the North American Christian Foreign Language Association, a group whose activities and scholarship will be of interest to many CETC members. Their Web site is at [www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/index.htm](http://www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/index.htm) if you would like to learn more. For example, readers of David Smith and Barbara Carvill's (2000) book *The Gift of the Stranger* might be interested in Smith's (2006) editorial in the current issue of NACFLA's *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages*, which laments the lack of mention of the importance of being or becoming "a particular kind of stranger" in various discussions or citations of the book. Those who are interested can read the editorial (and check out abstracts for the journal) online: [www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/index.htm](http://www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/index.htm).

### Web Site Updated

Thanks to Frank Tuzi, the caucus web manager, the CETC Web site at [www.cetesol.org](http://www.cetesol.org) has recently been updated. Please check out what is on the site, such as the Earl Stevick collection, and consider contributing a notice or article, or adding to the bulletin board discussion. Enjoy!

### Articles and Information

#### [Intellectual Discourse: The E-list Discussion on Church-Based ESL](#)

Meredith Bricker, [meredith.bricker@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.bricker@gmail.com)

During the past several months, the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus (CETC) e-list has provided members with numerous interesting discussions regarding a diverse collection of topics. As a new member of the CETC e-list, I have been pleased to have the opportunity to "listen in" on the intellectual discourse of fellow Christian professionals as they discuss ESL classroom issues and other professional topics from a Christian perspective. One particularly useful discussion recently provided an updated summary of some easily accessible and highly recommended church-based ESL course materials. A list of resources recommended by CETC members during this discussion is reproduced below.

#### **English Lessons Based on the Bible**

- Cirafesi, W. (1995). *English in action: A Fast and fun way to learn English*. Colorado Springs: Dawson Media.
- Edwards, D. (2006). *A window to the world: Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Pasadena, CA: Open Door Publishers.  
([www.jesusfilm.org/resources/window/index.html](http://www.jesusfilm.org/resources/window/index.html))
- Reece, G. (1997). *English lessons from the Bible: Book of Mark*. Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board.

#### **English Materials With Companion Bible Lessons**

- International Network's *Adventures in English* curriculum. A sample lesson is

available at <http://efca.org/international/media/adventuresinenglish.pdf>.

- Corley, D. (n.d.). *Speak English: Open the door to the world*. Michael Gott International.
- Burkhart, D. (2006). *Helping internationals succeed with English*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House. ([www.hisenglish.com](http://www.hisenglish.com))

### Resources for Designing a Church-Based Curriculum

- Brummelen, H. V. (1994). *Steppingstones to curriculum: A Biblical approach*. Seattle, WA: Alta Vista College Press.
- Burke, S. E. (1998). *ESL: Creating a quality English as a second language program*. Pasadena, CA: Open Door Publishers.
- Pazmino, R. W. (1997). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

A comprehensive resource for finding additional church-based ESL materials is the “Resource List of Bible-based ESOL Materials” compiled by J. Wesley Eby and originally published as a supplement to the *CETESOL Newsletter* (Vol. 8, No. 3) in 1996. For a reprint of the article, visit [www.cetesol.org/news/EsI-bible-based-list-96.pdf](http://www.cetesol.org/news/EsI-bible-based-list-96.pdf).

Through its monthly topics as well as discussion of other issues relevant to Christian educators in TESOL, the CETC e-list provides a unique forum in which CETC members’ spiritual and professional development may be cultivated. It’s the perfect place to ask a question and to receive helpful responses from fellow CETC members. To join the e-list, CETC members should log in to the TESOL Web site ([www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)), click My Profile, and then click View Profile. To add the CETC e-list, scroll to the bottom of the page and click Edit. In the Communications Options and Professional Information link, scroll to the Preferences area, and check Join Caucus e-list(s).

*Meredith Bricker teaches at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia.*

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### [Professionalism and Integrity: CELT at CATESOL 2006 in San Francisco](#)

Michael Lessard-Clouston, [michael.lessard-clouston@biola.edu](mailto:michael.lessard-clouston@biola.edu)



Over the past several years there has been a series of informative Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) conferences. The first, a full-day event held in Long Beach, California, was planned by Kitty Purgason and coincided with TESOL 2004. The following year, a CELT evening conference was held again in Long Beach, at the same time as CATESOL 2005, the California TESOL statewide conference, and was planned by Greg Bock. This past January a 3-day CELT conference chaired by Brad Baurain was held at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, just after the Thai TESOL 2006 conference (see [www.payap.ac.th/english/celt](http://www.payap.ac.th/english/celt)). Most recently, another CELT evening conference was held during the CATESOL 2006 conference on April 7, 2006. This

article reports briefly on this most recent CELT evening conference.

Many participants met up at the CATESOL conference and enjoyed an optional, informal group meal on the way to San Francisco Lighthouse Church. Following registration, the evening offered three sessions, under the theme "Serving our Students With Professionalism and Integrity." Approximately 40 attendees had a choice of hearing Susan O'Reilly speak about a successful church-based ESL program in Portland, Oregon, or a panel presentation on being a Christian teacher in a secular setting. I attended this latter session, where Don Harootian (Defense Language Institute), Jee-Eun Oh (University of California Irvine), and Christine Anketell (Los Angeles Valley College) each shared eloquently about their experiences as Christians who teach ESL in a variety of contexts, including an intensive English program, an adult school, and a community college. The question period at the end became a time of thanksgiving for the presenters' reflections.

The second and third sessions were delivered in the church sanctuary. Rich Robison (Azusa Pacific University) spoke on truthfulness in English teaching by presenting an expanded version of his talk from the CETC colloquium at the TESOL 2006 convention in Tampa. Although I heard both versions I especially appreciated this fuller discussion of a range of ethical and professional questions that Christians face in ELT. Kitty Purgason (Biola University) ended the evening with an overview of popular songs and spiritual issues in the classroom. This presentation incorporated a clear rationale and many creative ways to use songs in ESL and EFL classes; the audience received new ideas and was impressed by Kitty's use of a range of media for this final session.

As one of the last people to leave this wonderful evening gathering, I can report that participants appeared to appreciate the fellowship and networking that this CELT conference at CATESOL 2006 provided. Special thanks go to each of the presenters and to conference manager Vivian Wang and program planner Kitty Purgason, each of whom modeled the conference theme by serving attendees with professionalism and integrity. If you would like to learn about or plan a similar event in your area, Kitty Purgason has set up an online Wiki for CELT conferences with further information, at <http://christiansineltconferences.pbwiki.com>. Also, this conference series will continue next March in Seattle, where a CELT conference will be held the day before the TESOL 2007 convention. If possible, please plan to attend. Although a call for participation has not yet been sent out, you may contact conference chair Kathryn Bartholomew, of Seattle Pacific University, at [kbarthol@spu.edu](mailto:kbarthol@spu.edu) with suggestions or offers to assist with this upcoming full-day event.

*Michael Lessard-Clouston has taught in Canada, China, and Japan, and now works in the department of applied linguistics and TESOL at Biola University in La Mirada, California.*

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### [Christian ELT Leaders, Professionalism, and the Community](#)

Jeff Stebbins, [Jeff.Stebbins@colorado.edu](mailto:Jeff.Stebbins@colorado.edu)



*Editors' note: This article is adapted from Jeff's presentation during the CETC colloquium entitled "Professional Integrity and the Christian ELT Leader" at TESOL 2006 in Tampa,*



*Florida. The oral nature of the talk has been retained.*

In reflecting on professional integrity in community, I'd like to share six observations from my experience as a Christian English teacher overseas.

First, Christian professionals in TESOL generally cross cultures as unpredictable foreign guests. We're hired or sponsored by some entity in the host country, such as the Ministry of Education, a university, institute, or organization. That entity is always part of a community, and inviting us is a risk, for which we owe a great debt of gratitude and cooperation. Our professional and interpersonal credibility—and our sponsor's esteem within their community—are easy to damage, but difficult to rebuild. As teachers we therefore

- Do not abuse our sponsors' trust. We strive to give them face by acknowledging their authority over us, by asking permission (even when we don't think we have to), and by seeking their advice. We don't endanger ourselves, because they will be held responsible for what happens to us. And by showing dependence, we strengthen our relationship with them.
- Work closely, communicate, and let them see our serving hearts. If we are close, they can see that we *want* to do right, and that we love and respect our students and their countries. Then, when we make mistakes we will hopefully be quickly forgiven, for they will know our intent is good.
- Do not worry or fear; instead, we pray for wisdom and sensitivity. Again, if our heart is right, and if we ask God to guide us, He will. God loves the people we serve and wants us to serve them well, too.

Second, without professional credibility on campus and interpersonal credibility in community, Christian ELT professionals cannot expect to serve effectively. Credentials are something, but not enough. Such credibility is usually earned through excellence (not perfection), by being what we claim to be, and by doing exactly what we are hired to do. Abusing professional or interpersonal trust is inexcusable. Inevitably, some foreign teachers do not succeed. But as many people likely fail (e.g., they have to go home early) because of events off campus in the community as fail because of what happens in the classroom. Crucially, we foreign English language teachers are *not*

- *Culture critics*: in the ups and downs of culture stress, teachers abroad usually alternate between loving and hating their host culture. Either everything they do seems stupid or is "just so wonderful," better than how we do it back home.
- *Political activists*: signing a contract to work in a country doesn't mean that you support its government, but it does imply that you agree to abide by its laws. And the easiest way to get your sponsor in big trouble is to criticize the government. Nor will you gain credibility by criticizing your own government, as few people respect lack of national loyalty. It's safest to keep political opinions to ourselves.
- *Evangelists*: find out what your host country's religious laws are, and then what its practices are, as these may not be the same. Many countries are very sensitive about foreigners influencing their young students. Does your visa say "English teacher" or "missionary"? Isn't it deceptive to say one thing and do another? What would Jesus do? In most countries, personal one-on-one conversations can go anywhere, but public speaking is entirely different. Remember: your sponsor will be endangered if you break the law; you can go home, but he or she stays to bear the consequences of your actions.
- *Adventurers/tourists*: I've known teachers who spent every weekend traveling away from town, hiking, biking. They also missed more classes than anyone: they were sick, missed the bus, or broke a leg. "Oh, bummer—sorry, man!" There is nothing wrong with climbing Kilimanjaro or the Great Wall—but not if your students lose out! The university looks bad in the community if they pay for an English teacher but end up with a mountain climber! My wife and I made this mistake: we hitchhiked around Tibet in 1987 and got very sick, which unfortunately affected our work.
- *Opportunity researchers*: I've also known teachers who arrive in a country looking for their next job. The big foreigner's hotel downtown will probably pay you better than your sponsoring university can. But, again, is it not deceptive to use a university to get your foot in the door? I suggest you arrive with your mind made up: "I am not job-hunting; I have one for the next two years".

Teachers have been criticized for going to other countries with mixed, hidden motives. But, obviously, people do all sorts of things with multiple motives. Teachers go places looking for



adventure, money, more exciting resumé's, a husband or wife, even for children to adopt. I've never met anyone motivated *only* by a desire to increase students' TOEFL scores. And if you don't share someone else's motives, that person's motives may look rather mercenary. It therefore seems disingenuous to criticize only those whose motives include faith or culture.

Third, this doesn't mean that we must be "English-teaching machines"! But without our normal support structures (family, conveniences), our time, energy, and attention will be stretched. Be eager to serve, but slow to make commitments! Enthusiasm can incline us to say things we don't mean, such as "call me any time" or "let me know if there's anything I can do to help". Yet campus or community friends may not understand how empty such expressions can be. They might actually ask for and expect some very costly help!

As professionals living in a new community, we also need to learn how to get everyday tasks done in a very different context: going to market, taking a bus, getting an appliance repaired. All of these may take much more time, or cost much more, or much less. But we should hesitate to make commitments until we have learned how to get things done in our new community.

In a way, our sponsoring entities do "own" us, so we will need to use great care when, outside of class, we also want to devote time and attention to

- Extracurricular activities with students: some students learn more English during informal conversations outside of class than they do in class. Be careful, though, about spending too much time with some students and not others; it is very easy to spend time with those who are most fluent or friendly. Going out for coffee or visiting their families on a holiday can be wonderful-but use caution. The appearance of favoritism can be very messy! Also, though neighbors and community friends can be delightful, they may consume too much of our time and attention-especially in cultures where it is normal to just drop by at any time without calling ahead. Don't hide, but be careful.
- Other foreigners in town: in 1989, the only other foreigners in our little Chinese town were a group of five Soviets. As the Soviet Union collapsed, these five people became dear friends—perhaps too dear. We devoted so much time and attention to these guys that our students lost out. We should be careful that we don't cheat our students out of what they deserve from us.
- Communication with home: after a while, we miss our family and friends, so we write letters and e-mails. But it's easy to spend too many hours writing detailed accounts of everything. For some, it's an escape, to avoid the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. It is wise to set some limits.

What we do with our free time can speak volumes about who we are and how we love and serve people. If we offer to help our school by teaching English to people in the administration, or to some local government officials, we will improve our sponsor's standing in the community.

Fourth, teachers live in community—on campus, in a neighborhood—where we represent our home countries and cultures. Cultural anthropology and current emphases on multicultural diversity often tell us there are no "bad" cultures or customs. "Not wrong—just different". Avoid saying that they drive on the "wrong" side of the street, or do anything "wrong". Let's assume that any place we live can teach us something and make us a better, more interesting person.

Sometimes we may be asked to explain, though not necessarily defend, our home country's policies or behaviors. Even if we don't agree with our government, we should be able to explain its reasons for doing what it does. Even if we disagree with how our people often behave, it is useful to be able to explain why people do what they do.

- Do our home cultures have things we'd best not take with us when we live in other cultures? Freedoms, expectations, food or drink, apparel, behaviors? Carefully inquire about taboos. Be observant: watch body language and gestures. Host countries usually accept us with grace, in spite of our mistakes! In Asia, after initial handshakes, I never touched any female. And we never, ever touched anyone on the head. To show respect for others, and for education, my wife and I dress more formally and modestly. We have different expectations about time and punctuality. We are not so hung up on privacy. We talk more freely about how old we are, even how much we weigh! We give less attention to youth and beauty, and show more respect for age and experience.
- Do other cultures have customs or laws to which we'd best not submit? Does ours? In

words and actions, Jesus and Paul were countercultural, but only if a principle was at stake. We need to pray for wisdom. If God leads us not to submit, then we should act quietly and humbly, making our guiding principle clear to our sponsors. Local religious customs may be touchy, so read ahead, and prepare, if you can.

Fifth, Christians are taught to live exemplary lives (e.g., I Peter 2:11-25 & 3:15-6, Titus 2), so that people are *attracted* to their faith, not pushed or deceived. Cross-cultural living can make this hard. But every culture has some values that are consistent with our faith: joy, peace, family faithfulness, reputation, relational harmony, wisdom, and so on. In community, teachers can therefore live exemplary lives without living strangely or "religiously". We believe God enables us to live righteously, and if we strive to live and work excellently, those around us will be attracted to God-especially if we give God credit for our lives. Isaiah 26:12 says that "all we have accomplished, [God] has done for us".

Sixth, and finally, recall that Jesus was criticized for not being religious enough! Still, He did humbly learn, participate in, and submit to the laws and customs of His community. Christians believe He put aside His power in order to serve people, as a *teacher*! He fit into a culture, but He made people the highest priority. Can we follow His example? One way to do so is to study how Jesus dealt with customs and laws in His community, as recorded in the gospels, and to see what principles we can draw from His example. I believe that in doing so we will find priorities and guidelines for how to live and work as Christian ELT professionals in any community, at home or abroad.

*Jeff Stebbins and his wife, Beth (also an ESL teacher), have lived and worked in several Asian countries for about two-thirds of their lives. Their two children go with them. Jeff and Beth are in grad school again (for a PhD in linguistics and an MA in TESOL) at the University of Colorado, preparing for more. . . .*

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### Reconstruction Toward a "Global Christian Professional Language Teacher" Identity

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*Editors' note: Because of space limitations, this article focuses on the second part of Mary's paper presentation, entitled "Deconstructing/Reconstructing the Missionary English Teacher Identity", at TESOL 2006 in Tampa, Florida. A full version may appear elsewhere.*

Not long after a few publications (e.g., Snow, 2001) discussed teachers' spiritual identities and the positive effects they can have on language teaching, a series of articles surfaced (e.g., Edge, 2003, 2004; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005) that critiqued Christian English teachers, highlighting the negative effects of teachers' "faith agendas" and the links between missions, colonialism, language teaching, and cultural imperialism. This situation has encouraged Christian English teachers to think deeply about the ways in which their spiritual identities affect their pedagogy both positively and negatively. In this article I will suggest an alternative identity to "tentmaker"/missionary by discussing the concept of the "global Christian professional language teacher." I believe that this identity reconstruction has the potential to decrease some of the negative effects and increase the positive effects of the integration of teachers' spiritual identities and pedagogy.

#### **Global Christian Professional Language Teacher**

I use the term *global Christian professional language teacher* in the following sense: *global* to emphasize our understanding of and need for diverse perspectives; *Christian* to mark our primary identity, which encompasses all that we are, say, and do; *professional* to stress the importance of being qualified, skilled, and knowledgeable; *language* to convey sensitivity to English's domination and the importance of other languages; and *teacher* to note our role, responsibility, and vocation.

#### **Global**

One might argue that the term *global* is redundant in this identity reconstruction, as it is surely a necessary component of the concept of Christian. For how can one claim to be a Christian and not value the diversity God has created? How can one self-identify as a Christian, yet maintain assumptions of national and cultural superiority? The Christian gospel requires openness and compassion that reaches beyond the clan or the tribe to the stranger, as Hughes (2005) noted. For us to engage in a disciplined search for truth, truth cannot have already been defined or else there can be no serious discussions with people who represent a diversity of perspectives, because we “know” in advance that these people with different perspectives have nothing to contribute to our conversation. The term *global* represents an openness and understanding of our need for a diversity of perspectives in order to see ourselves and God with greater depth; however, it is not an endorsement of religious pluralism.<sup>1</sup>

### **Christian**

In his article “What is a Christian English Teacher?” Scovel (2004) asserted that a Christian teacher is defined by what one says and does and who one is. Guinness (1998) affirmed this and in a discussion of vocation and calling stated, “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service” (p. 29). A Christian teacher, Scovel (2004) continued, has loving words, pedagogical compassion, and spiritual scholarship. She or he is a coherent, reflective, and faithful teacher. Scovel added, “our faith gives us confidence . . . infuses joy into our daily work . . . allows for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and gives us the spiritual gifts of building up, encouraging, and consoling. And always, in whatever we say, or do, or are, we know we are not alone” (p. 6).

Smith and Carvill (2000) emphasized that “loving attention to the other in a context of mutual giving should be at the heart of a Christian approach to foreign language education” (p. 142). They present hospitality as an overarching metaphor for Christian teaching and quote Johnson who wrote, “Hospitality in its deepest sense is a willingness not only to receive the stranger, but also to be changed and affected by the presence of the other, not only personally, but also institutionally, curricularly, and politically” (as cited in Smith & Carvill, 2000, p. 88).

To what extent should Christian teachers proclaim their identity? Teachers who are Christians should neither hide their allegiance to Christ nor exploit the power they hold in the classroom to promote their faith. They should “openly acknowledge this faith in class when it is relevant to issues under discussion” yet resist “shoehorn[ing] mention of Christianity into any and all class discussions” (Snow, 2001, p. 82). Proclaiming one’s religious identity may not be appropriate or professional in the classroom setting, but neither is it expected that teachers conceal their identity and beliefs.

### **Professional**

What is a professional? Professionals possess the theoretical background, mentored experience, professional affiliations, and certifications for meeting the standards of excellence in their field. Nunan (1999) added that professionals act as advocates for their field. Thus, professionals have the knowledge, know-how, qualifications, connections, and accountability to engage in their professions as advocates. Those who are considered “professional” represent what is best in their fields and are endorsed and respected by colleagues. Professional language teachers, therefore, are expected to have the appropriate education, qualifications, and experience for the specific tasks they perform, and work in ways that reflect positively upon TESOL. This definition would not apply to those who use English teaching simply as access and as a means to an end.

### **Language (not English)**

As English teachers, we are also language educators and thus we should be familiar with second language acquisition theory and practice and ideally have learned a second or foreign language ourselves. For how can we teach others the skill of becoming bi- or multilingual if we have not accomplished this ourselves? Knowledge and competency in the specific language one is teaching is also required, but this alone is not sufficient. Having gone through the experience of learning a foreign language as an adult or being engaged in language learning ourselves as we are teaching a language helps us to have empathy for our students. Snow insists that language learning is a form of ministry as it places teachers in the learner’s position and demonstrates that they value their students’ culture. Snow (2004) noted, “Study of our students’ languages is one of the best ways for English teachers to humble ourselves and empty ourselves of power and take on a humble servant role, and also one of the most powerful ways for us to incarnate our commitment to an ideal of multilingualism” (p. 1).

It is also worth noting that in many cases the teaching of other languages or dialects may be

of greater benefit to students than the teaching of English. For example, in the refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border, becoming literate in native tribal languages, Burmese, or even Thai is the priority for the refugees as it holds more benefits than does learning to speak English. As language educators (and not simply English teachers) our work may be to learn from experienced local teachers how to assist emerging teachers to teach literacy skills in their own languages rather than teach English. Looking at our role as language teacher or educator may help to focus our attention on the benefits of encouraging the acquisition of other languages.

### Teacher

Snow (2001) has noted that "English teaching can and should be Christian vocation in its own right and not simply a means to other ends or a secular task only *incidentally* engaged in by Christians" (p. 19). He argued that teaching *is* witness expressed through the quality with which Christians carry out their teaching and posits the following: "Rather than being incidental to witness or even evangelism, the quality of [Christian English Teachers'] teaching work is the primary vehicle through which they share the love of God with their students" (p. 65). When Christian teachers diligently prepare for class, listen attentively to students, are genuinely concerned for their students' well-being, cooperate with colleagues (especially when wronged), and make an effort to continually learn and grow professionally, they are a witness. Scovel called this type of teaching "pedagogical compassion" and quoted Stevick as saying, "It seems to me that doing all this for the sake of the Gospel . . . becomes almost a sacramental act, and that every classroom is a holy place where such acts can be performed" (as cited in Scovel, 2004).

The Christian literature on vocation might help inform this discussion.<sup>2</sup> In the words of Frederick Buechner (1993), vocation is "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (p. 119). Guinness (1998) described a *primary calling* to God and *secondary callings* to one's profession:

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him and for him. First and foremost we are called to someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But these and other things are always the secondary, never the primary calling. They are "callings" rather than the "calling". (p. 31)

Thus our primary call to God might be realized through our secondary calling of teaching.

Guinness (1998) also noted that "A sense of calling should precede a choice of job and career, and the main way to discover calling is along the line of what we are created and gifted to be. Instead of, 'You are what you do,' calling says: 'Do what you are'" (p. 46). Or in the words of Kierkegaard, "The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wanted me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die" (as cited in Guinness, 1998, p. 3).

### Next Steps?

What might be the next steps to take to encourage this reconstruction? I suggest four courses of action: read, reexamine, research, and reach out. In addition to reading Scripture, I recommend the following authors: Adeney (1995), Bosch (2002), Guinness (1998), Newbigin (1989), Palmer (1998), Smith and Carvill (2000), and Snow (2001). Engaging with these texts will help us reexamine our assumptions and reconstruct or renew a sense of identity as Christians and teachers engaged in TESOL. Researching Christian teachers and mission agencies working in ESL/EFL is also important and may involve analyzing the discourse, dilemmas, motives, practices, and sense of vocation and mission of Christian teachers. Finally, we need to reach out and dialogue, present, and publish, thus continuing and extending our inquiry.

### Conclusion

In recent publications, Christian scholars have discussed the benefits of integrating one's teaching with one's identity in Christ whereas other scholars have raised concerns about the use of English teaching by Christian missionaries. This situation has caused Christians to ask some hard questions about the actual and potential ways in which their identity in Christ impacts their language teaching and the profession of TESOL. I suggest that a reconstructed identity from a "missionary who is teaching to gain access" to a "global Christian professional language teacher" has the potential to readdress the concerns raised while enhancing many of the benefits that can occur when teachers align their spiritual and professional identities and live and work with a newfound wholeness and integrity that respects their faith, profession, colleagues, and students.

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### Notes

1. See Adeney (1995) for an insightful discussion of culture and Christianity, and Newbigin (1989) for a discussion on the gospel and religions in which he critiques the positions of the religious pluralist, exclusivist, and inclusivist.
2. For a discussion on Christian vocation see Guinness (1998), Hughes (2005), Stevens (1999), Placher (2005), and Volf (1991).

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