

# CELEA News

Newsletter of the Christian English Language Educators Association

## Letter from the President

Michael Pasquale, Cornerstone University, [president@celea.net](mailto:president@celea.net)

I would like to thank everyone again who has aided in the transition process from caucus to organization. As of July 31<sup>st</sup> we ceased to be known as the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus (CETC) and are in the process of transitioning into an independent organization known as the **Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA)**. One of the primary functions of CELEA is to prepare for the annual TESOL convention. We have been approved by TESOL to be a forum at the 2009 convention in Denver. We will be in the program book as the **Christian English Language Educators Forum (CELEF)**. So for clarification, the organization itself will be the "association" and our functions at the convention will be as a "forum." At the convention we will have a booth, space and time for a social gathering, and also an academic session. We are looking forward to our academic session entitled "Identity, Faith, and Practice in ELT." (For more info. on these and related TESOL 2009 news, please see page 3.)

We are so thankful for how this group has grown since its humble beginnings at the Houston TESOL convention in 1984. We have transitioned from an informal group in 1984 to a caucus in 1996 and now to an independent association in 2008. Please join us in Denver as we celebrate 25 years as a professional association of Christian TESOL educators! We will spend part of our time during our social gathering and annual meeting on Thursday evening remembering the past 25 years. We are looking for anyone who may have pictures or items of interest from the last 25 years of our group gatherings. If so, could you please send digital copies of photos (with info. on date, people in picture, place, etc.) to me by way of e-mail? I am looking forward to seeing you at the Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT 2009) conference and at TESOL 2009 in Denver in March!

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*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, ...because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. James 3:1*

## Editor's Welcome *Michael Lessard-Clouston, Biola University, [editor@celea.net](mailto:editor@celea.net)*

Welcome to the first issue of CELEA News! Building on the history we have from the CETC Newsletter, we aim and hope to continue to support Christians in English Language Teaching (ELT). We welcome your

input and contributions. Please see the submission guidelines and join the conversation! In this issue, we have announcements and updates, as well as two great articles by David Smith and Helen Avila. Enjoy!

## CELEA Website: A Vision for the Future

Frank Tuzi, Tokyo Christian University, [webmaster@celea.net](mailto:webmaster@celea.net)

“It’s a dangerous business going out of your door. You step into the Road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.” Bilbo Baggins

Now that the final chapter of CETC has been written, we embark onto a new path, a new adventure. And as we venture out and begin this new non-profit organization (NPO), we will, no doubt, make some wrong turns, take some extra time to decide issues, and encounter problems. But we need not fear the path we tread; we know who lights the way. I am excited about the opportunity to participate in the development and management of the Christian English Language Education Association (CELEA), and in particular its website (<http://www.celea.net>).

One important element of this new organization is the ability to communicate with our members, prospective members, and the educational and research communities in English language education. The most effective tools we have exist on the Internet. My primary role in CELEA is the development and maintenance of the website.

The CELEA site currently has the basic parts, such as the ability to post news, articles, and blogs and communicate on discussion boards. But I hope to see the site grow into a powerful tool for our members. Before allowing members access to the site, the steering committee needs to

finalize the paperwork and by-laws of the NPO. We hope to have that completed in a few weeks. In the mean time, please take a look at the existing site and send your comments about it and how to make it better.

Although basic functions exist, I envision more – much more. The future of CELEA should be integrated into the site, including a listserv and a newsletter. Additionally, I anticipate discussion boards and blogging capabilities for members. Most attractive for me is the opportunity to advertise and manage CELEA and related conferences. The site can handle much of the paperwork, such as registering users, managing fees, posting conference information, and notes, presentations or audio.

Stepping further down the road, I see the website becoming a repository filled with research by our members and Christians in the language and linguistics community. CELEA has the opportunity to encourage young teachers and researchers to participate in the discovery process and to contribute. CELEA could even begin its own journal focusing on language and education research from a Christian worldview.

In addition, CELEA has the tools to assist members who need training by offering courses to people who do not need credit bearing courses. A CELEA training center or online school could satisfy their needs by

providing professional courses online. Such a mentoring system would be capable of managing classes, registering students, and collecting tuition. Courses can incorporate blogs, forums, pre-recorded lectures, and live class sessions. I envision a school that emerges from our members who work in undergraduate and graduate TESOL programs. These professionals can develop and/or approve courses and programs taught at the CELEA site to ensure that courses are educationally sound, robust, and produce excellent teachers.

CELEA can provide much more than in the past. The technology exists to enable us to build upon the foundation laid down by the Christian educators gathered once a year to share ideas and encourage one another into an association offering services, training, and opportunities and contributing even more to the ELT community. The question is: will you take part in this endeavor? We need volunteers, editors, writers, reviewers; the vision needs feet on the ground.

We have stepped out of our door and begun moving along the road. Looking back, we remember and thank those who initially nurtured this group. But now we look to the future. Where this digital superhighway will take us and what adventures await us, God only knows. CELEA can use technology and members’ skills to achieve our goals and expand our services.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

**March 25, 2009** Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT 2009) Conference; Denver, CO

**March 25-28, 2009** TESOL 2009 Convention; Denver CO

**April 4, 2009** 8<sup>th</sup> Annual ESL Ministry Conference at Cornerstone University; Main workshop speaker is **Dr. Cheri Pierson** (of Wheaton College); for more information visit [www.cornerstone.edu/academics/tesl/esl\\_conf](http://www.cornerstone.edu/academics/tesl/esl_conf).

**April 21, 2009** Lecture by **Dr. Carmen Fought** (of Pitzer College) co-sponsored by the Cornerstone University TESOL Program and the Calvin College Center for Christian Scholarship; 3:30 lecture free and open to the public; For more information – contact [michael.pasquale@cornerstone.edu](mailto:michael.pasquale@cornerstone.edu).

**October 5, 2009** Fall TESOL Lecture at Cornerstone University with **Dr. Suresh Canagarajah** (of Penn State University); Lecture is free and open to the public; more info.: [michael.pasquale@cornerstone.edu](mailto:michael.pasquale@cornerstone.edu).

## CELEA Update

CELEA has been organized since July 2008 when TESOL caucuses were disbanded. We are launching our “new” organization at TESOL in Denver. Please join us on Thursday **March 26** from 6:30-8:30 in Room 505 of the Convention Center for our Social Event. We will share updates and cast a vision for what an organization like CELEA can accomplish. Our new website ([www.celea.net](http://www.celea.net)) is nearly ready to launch, too. It will be the communication center and place to network.

## See You in Denver at TESOL 2009!

Please join us in Denver, Colorado in March for some great events! A Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT 2009) conference is being planned for Wednesday evening, March 25<sup>th</sup> at a church venue near the convention center. More information may be found on page 4. During TESOL 2009, please join us for:

Christian English Language Educators Academic Session: Thursday March 26, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in Room 605 of the Colorado Convention Center. The theme of the panel will be *Identity, Faith, and Practice in ELT*. This panel will explore how the nexus of faith and identity can inform the practice of English language teaching. Panelists will build on existing research in language teacher and student identity. They will explore how the practice of faith may shape teacher and student identities. The paper presenters and titles are:

Paper #1: *Virtual Worlds and Identity Formation in the ESOL Classroom* Michael Pasquale (Cornerstone University)

Paper #2: *Identity, Language Learning, & Social Capital in Community-Based ESL* Carolyn Kristjansson (Trinity Western University)

Paper #3: *Faith & Professional Identity Formation* Richard Robison & Mary Wong (Azusa Pacific University)

Paper #4: *A Call to Teach* Jan Dormer (Ball State University)

Christian English Language Educators Social Event: Thursday March 26, 2009 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in Room 505 of the Colorado Convention Center. This will be a time for fellowship, networking, and learning more about the “new” Christian English Language Educators Association.

## Research Project on Christian ESL Teachers' Beliefs: An Update

Brad Baurain, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
PhD student, [bbaurain@wheatonalumni.org](mailto:bbaurain@wheatonalumni.org)

Last summer, members of the Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus were invited to participate in a research project entitled, "The Impacts of Christian ESL Teachers' Religious Beliefs." Volunteer participants responded to an open-ended questionnaire to share their thoughts and experiences concerning the possible impacts of religious beliefs and values on teaching philosophies, pedagogical commitments, curricular choices, cultivation of student relationships, and general classroom behaviors. The invitation was circulated by means of the *CETC Newsletter*, caucus e-list, and website (<http://www.cetesol.org>). The Caucus in that form no longer exists, but it has continued as an independent organization, the Christian English Language Educators Association (<http://www.celea.net>). The original project announcement remains accessible in the latter site's archives.

I promised to keep CETC/CELEA members updated, so here's what's been happening. A total of 23 participants responded to the questionnaire, and generally the quality of their responses was quite high in terms of the careful and articulate ways they answered the questions. Data has been analyzed, a draft article has been written, and two outside (non-Christian) readers have now given me detailed, tough, thoughtful and very helpful critiques. Following revisions, I plan to submit it somewhere for potential publication. If anything comes of that, I may post an additional update here. At this time, I am not making the existing draft article generally available. Thanks for your interest.

## CELT 2009 Conference, Denver, CO

Kitty Purgason, Biola University,  
[kitty.purgason@biola.edu](mailto:kitty.purgason@biola.edu)

**Location:** Central Presbyterian Church (very close to the Convention Center)

**Time:** Wednesday, March 25 from 5 to 9 pm

### Schedule:

5-6 pm - informal dinner together (Baja Fresh, Panda Express, or some kind of low cost dinner we'll bring in to the church)

6-6:50 pm - session 1

7-7:50 pm - session 2

8-8:45 pm - session 3

**Program:** The program is still being developed. Please let Kitty Purgason know if you have ideas. Currently we are planning on having:

- A panel presenting recently developed or revised Christian ESL/EFL materials
- A panel discussing how to adapt and develop new materials for ESL/EFL teaching that are values based and that can influence world view
- A panel on how to be a Christian in a secular ESL teaching context
- Other presentations that speak to the issues Christian professionals in TESOL face

**Cost:** To be determined – probably around \$20

For updated info. visit

<http://christiansineltconferences.pbwiki.com/>  
password = celt

## On Viewing Learners as Spiritual Beings: Implications for Language Educators

David I. Smith, Calvin College, [dsmith@calvin.edu](mailto:dsmith@calvin.edu)

*This article, first presented as a plenary address at the CELT 2007 conference at Seattle Pacific University, explores the implications of challenging reductive understandings of learners in language classrooms and working instead with a conception of the learner as a spiritual being. Some reasons why it has been difficult to frame a place for spirituality in accounts of the language learner are described, and an example is examined of an attempt to design a sequence of classroom learning in the light of a concern for students' spiritual growth.*

The theme of this paper is the relationship between the often reductive ways in which the field of language education envisages students and the ways in which we design our ways of teaching and learning. What, if anything, would follow for the activities of the language classroom if we could articulate a robust account of how learners' spiritual growth might be part of what is going on?

I propose to do three things in what follows. First, I am going to relate a story that raises a pointed question about how we see students. Then I am going to suggest some ways in which our intellectual and professional practices keep us from answering the question well. And finally, I am going to describe a teaching sequence from one of my own courses as a sample, provisional effort to answer the question in my own teaching.

### A Story About How We See Students

The story comes from a math classroom. I'm going to narrate the start and the end of the story and then return to the middle. I got the story first hand from a colleague, Jim Bradley; here is the first part in his words.

My students were leaving after the first introductory statistics class of the spring semester, but one young man stayed behind to talk. Brian was a Social Work major and told me with some conviction that he did not want to be enrolled in statistics. He did not like mathematics. He was only taking this course because it was required and every effort on his part to get the requirement waived had failed. Furthermore, he was a second semester senior and he could not graduate without completing this course. ...

His manner intrigued me – he seemed to be challenging me but he also had warmth, openness, and an obvious intelligence I found appealing. Thinking that this would relieve his anxieties, I explained to him that basic arithmetic plus some of the skills students normally gain in a year and a half of high school algebra would suffice. He replied, 'I'm not sure I can do those things'. I invited Brian to stop at my office the next day – I had a diagnostic test that would help the two of us identify more specifically which (if any) ...mathematics skills...he might lack.

The test began with addition of whole numbers – problems like '6 + 8 = ?'. That was the only section of the test on which Brian was consistently able to give correct answers. For example, one question asked '4 - 7 = ?'. Brian wrote zero as his answer. His explanation to me was that if someone has four things and tries to take away seven, he certainly wouldn't have any left! (Smith, Shortt, & Bradley, 2006, pp. 3-4)

Like all good stories, this one starts with a problem – in this case a student in a math class who not only openly does not want to be there but has serious difficulties with the material – there is lack of both motivation and prerequisite skill. Like all good American stories this story also has a happy ending. Here it is, again in Jim's words, picking up the tale about a week later:

He earned a 69 on his first statistics test. It was barely a C, but it was a passing grade. He earned a 95 on the second test and a 99, the highest grade in the class on the third test. ...by the end of the term, he demonstrated mastery of the entire elementary school arithmetic curriculum plus a year and a half of algebra. ...he finished with a B+ in the course and graduated as an Honor's student in the Social Work program. (Smith, Shortt, & Bradley, 2006, p. 4)

This is teacher-of-the-year material. In a matter of about four or five weeks, my colleague brought this student from inability to handle very basic mathematical concepts to the top of a college level statistics class. What happened in between? I have been asking that question to number of Christian teacher audiences over the past year. Suggestions

have included tutoring, remedial instruction to fill in missing concepts, making connections with the student's interests, giving him a better self-image as a math learner, reassuring him of his ability to succeed, and so on. Almost all have focused on building cognitive capacity or helping the student to feel better about learning. Here's Jim's account of what actually happened:

I replied, 'Brian ...How did you ever get through elementary school and high school with this many gaps in your understanding?' He thought for a long moment and replied, 'When I was in first grade, one day my teacher held my arithmetic homework up in front of the class as an example to the rest of the class of how not to do the assignment. I was so angry at her that I vowed that I would never learn mathematics for the rest of my life.' I was stunned. I said, 'But you had to complete arithmetic and at last some algebra to graduate from elementary and high school'. He replied, 'I just memorized skills long enough to get through the tests, then I forgot them'. I said, 'Brian, what your first grade teacher did to you was a terrible thing. This may sound strange to you, but you need to forgive that teacher.' He looked at me like I was a creature from another planet. 'I'm serious', I said.

'Your hurt feelings and your anger toward your first grade teacher are an obstacle to your learning. If you want to get through statistics, you'll need to forgive her.' 'Well', he replied, obviously unconvinced, 'I'll think about it'.

I ran into Brian at a campus social event on Saturday. I asked him, 'So have you taken any steps toward forgiving your teacher?' 'Nah', he replied, 'I haven't thought about it'. I was irritated and said probably too forcefully, 'I wasn't kidding. ... I'm going to be blunt with you. If you don't forgive that teacher, you won't be able to pass statistics. And if you don't pass statistics, you won't graduate. If you won't believe me, at least pray about it. See if God thinks this is important.' Brian's face looked very pale. 'OK', he said, 'I'll do that'.

Brian was at my office door when I arrived on Monday morning. He said 'I did pray about what you said and I think you're right. But I also think I'm going to need a tutor to help me get all that arithmetic and algebra I didn't learn.' 'Of course', I replied, 'I'll arrange one for you today.' (Smith, Shortt, & Bradley, 2006, pp. 3-4)

I find myself wondering how many math teachers would have thought of forgiveness as a possible prerequisite for learning statistics – and therefore how many would have failed Brian. I also find myself curious about the fact that of the several hundred Christian teachers with whom I have discussed this story, only one suggested, and humorously at that, that prayer might be a possible response; cognitive and affective categories were by and large the only categories deployed to deal with the puzzle. And I find myself asking again a question that provides the thread of this presentation – what might it mean to view our students as spiritual beings?

### **What Might It Mean to View Our Students as Spiritual Beings?**

This is the question I want to explore here, and while my colleague's story raises it in vivid manner, I want to push the question a little further than his tale takes it. Rarely does a semester go by when I do not receive a salutary reminder that students are more complex in their needs and experiences than the impressions of them that I form. It is healthy for me to remember regularly that a student is, as Comenius put it long ago, "not a block of wood from which you can carve a statue," but rather "a living image, shaping, misshaping and reshaping itself" (Comenius, 1953, p. 24). What I have in mind here, however, goes beyond attitude. What I want to know is, if I insist that my students are inspired creatures, does that starting point only affect my quota of kindness, or does it reach deeper into the processes of my classroom and change my actual approaches to teaching language? (see Smith, 2001, 2002, 2006)

I think there are at least three major factors that make this a difficult question to ask and answer well. These are the images of personhood embedded in the disciplinary discourse of language education, in the pages of the average language teaching text, and in our own theological accounts of spirituality. I suggest that all three of these areas make it difficult for us to think well about the language classroom. Let me look all too briefly at each in turn.

First, the last hundred years of scholarly inquiry into language learning have offered us a string of reductive ways of seeing learners. We find in the early part of the century visions of learners as essentially logic circuits exercising their rational capacities on grammatical puzzles. A little later, learners are complex biological machines responding with programmable behaviors to stimuli from the environment. This mind-body dichotomy gives rise to rebellions in the name of the learner as an autonomous center of self-esteem whose positive feelings are the key to authentic learning. More recently we have added the learner as a social agent, who needs to negotiate meanings and services in a

predictable range of social and cultural settings, and the learner as a cluster of identity traces—gender, race, social class—that together take shape as a site of struggle within the circulation of power. Each of these shifts has taught us things, and certainly none are irrelevant—our statistics student in the story with which I started does indeed need rational abilities, effective habits and motor skills, emotional stability, and some social skills in order to succeed, and he has clearly been deeply affected by an abuse of power. I suggest, however, that even taken together they do not provide what from a Christian perspective might amount to an adequate account of what happened, or of what a person is. As I have argued elsewhere (Smith & Osborn, 2007), categories such as the spiritual and moral are consistently either ignored, marginalized or reduced to some other category, such as the affective or the political. I am over-simplifying for the sake of speed, but I suggest that it is broadly true that the discourse of our discipline has not given us a cogent language for talking about these matters.

If we turn to typical teaching texts we find parallel reductions at work. Any language teaching text teaches a doctrine of personhood in at least two complementary ways. On the one hand it offers a representation of people who speak the target language and sketches parameters of normality within which they are assumed to operate. *This*, each text suggests, is what people who speak this language are like. On the other hand, any teaching text also projects certain behaviors, interests and attitudes for learners of the language, through the things it asks them to do, to say, to see, to hear and to think about. It encourages learners to talk about this and not that, to see this and not that as important, to picture themselves engaged in this future action and not that. *This*, each text suggests, is what people who are learning to speak this language are like.

The texts most readily available for the languages that I teach are usually populated by stock photos or cartoon depictions of anodyne individuals with what are taken to be average interests and qualities. Their lives consist largely of shopping and engaging in other minor economic transactions, taking vacations and engaging in leisure pursuits, eating, drinking and visiting the doctor. These are all valid activities, but when they form the whole they fall short. By and large, the people depicted do not suffer, do not die, do not face difficult moral choices, do not mourn or lament, do not experience or protest injustice, do not pray or worship, do not believe anything particularly significant, do not sacrifice, do not hope or doubt. They represent a consumer culture to which we have become all too inured, and from which many central human experiences have been quietly marginalized in such a way that to introduce, say, the language of prayer feels awkward and clumsy, like bringing in a character who does not fit the genre of the story one is telling, like having Little Red Riding Hood suddenly appear on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise.

The third problem is theological, though it stems from some of the same causes. To put it bluntly, popular theology has also fallen short in the task of giving us a conception of spirituality that might be robust enough to join the educational conversation. We commonly, in defiance of biblical theology but in obedience to post-Enlightenment norms, think of spirituality as the opposite of the material and the mundane, or as synonymous with the devotional or sacred. “Spiritual” activities are then understood to be activities such as prayer, Bible study and religious meetings. If we think thus of the spiritual as one side of a split between the sacred and the secular, between the immaterial and the mundane, then we are likely to think of the spiritual moments in class as the moments when prayers are offered, or when Bible verses are included in learning materials, leaving the rest of the processes of the classroom to be assigned to the “secular” category. This model is clearly visible in many attempts at Christian curriculum, including many examples of what is termed Bible-based ESL. In such instances most of the everyday processes of teaching and learning remain essentially unconnected with the brief moments of escape that are designated as spiritual, and the spiritual remains essentially unconnected with the daily stuff of life. This and the other tendencies mentioned become mutually reinforcing in modern Western contexts: a view of learning that marginalizes the spiritual and a view of spirituality that see itself at the fringes of the mundane conspire together to prevent fruitful interaction between faith and pedagogy.

I have no time to elaborate a theology here, but let me at least sketch some necessary considerations. Pointing to the dignity accorded to simple bread and wine from the earliest days of the church, Zizioulas (1986) states that “unlike ancient Greek and especially Neoplatonic attitudes to spirituality, the patristic mentality, based on a eucharistic approach to life, stressed that being ‘spiritual’ meant accepting and sanctifying the material world and not undermining its importance in any way” (p. 35). The apostle Paul is comfortable speaking of “spiritual bodies” (1 Corinthians 15:44), a phrase which can only be deeply puzzling if the spiritual and the material are held to be opposites, and he further urges us: “offer your *bodies* as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual* worship” (Romans 12:1-3, emphasis added; see similarly Romans 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 15, 19). Taylor (1989) thus argues that the Christian spirituality of the Reformation lies at the roots of the modern affirmation of ordinary life as a locus of personal significance. By denying a hierarchy of callings in which sacred clerical vocations brought an automatically closer proximity to God, the Reformers were “denying the very distinction between sacred and profane and hence affirming

their interpenetration” (p. 217). Taylor (1989) goes on to argue that

As a result, certain of the original potentialities of Christian faith ... were allowed to develop. The crucial potentiality here was that of conceiving the hallowing of life not as something which takes place only at the limits, as it were, but as a change which can penetrate the full extent of mundane life. (p. 221)

This view, which, by the way, I have just drawn from an Orthodox theologian discussing the early church and a Roman Catholic philosopher discussing the Reformation, understands spirituality neither as an escape nor as that which is left over or inserted when our everyday human tasks have been given their due. If spirituality is seen as a residue, the result is seeing such everyday tasks as in themselves spiritless, and perhaps longing to be released from them so that we can pursue what we call “ministry” instead. A more biblical and theologically adequate view of Christian spirituality sees it rather as expressed in a growing patterning and orientation of the whole of life (heart, soul, mind and strength) after Christ, who is the image of God (Mark 12:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4) and who came to reconcile, in Paul’s words, “all things, in heaven or on earth” (Colossians 1:15-20). Other spiritualities orient and pattern life around other spiritual sources. I grant that there is much more to discuss here, but for now I simply want to suggest that when the spiritless view of the self that has tended to shape our disciplinary discourse and teaching materials goes alongside a theology that can only imagine the spiritual in terms of adding prayer and Bible verses to whatever educational practices are current, we are in deep trouble.

Caught between these various secular and Christian reductions of the self, I find myself as a teacher encountering experiences such as the day very early in my teaching career when a 12-year-old student raised her hand mid-way through a French grammar less to ask a question. Expecting a question about verb endings, I wandered over, secure in my professional competence, only to hear her ask: “Sir, are you afraid of dying?”, and to hear her friend follow up with the comment: “We are, we talk about it all the time.” More recently, I find myself opening the daily newspaper and reading about medical studies that have identified gratitude and forgiveness as factors contributing to the physical healing of heart disease. So, back from the theoretical digression to my question: how would I *teach* differently if I believed that my students were spiritual beings?

This remains a live question for me, not one that I have neatly answered and am ready to roll out as a 5-step program with mailings and franchises. Part of what I want to do is recommend living with the question. I do, however, hope to avoid the frustrating speaker’s habit of gesturing dramatically over the horizon but making few suggestions as to how to get there. In the space that remains, I would like to describe a two week segment from my intermediate German class, not as a model of perfection, but as a fallible but concrete sample of where the question could lead.

### **A Two Week Unit Using Adaline Kelbert’s Story**

The class syllabus includes an early review of the present perfect tense. There are scores of ways of going about this. If I’m looking for an easy life, the easiest option is to go with a current textbook such as *A Practical Review of German Grammar* (Dippmann & Watzinger-Tharp, 1999). This offers a brief description of tense formation (kicking off with the example sentence “I paid the bill yesterday”) and then proceeds to a series of exercises. These start out rather abstract (students are urged to “form the past participles” of 32 verbs) but soon show some attempts to engage “real life” situations — we learn that Herr Roth has sold his shares, that Herr Zimmer collected his check yesterday, that Herr Lenk may have ignored Frau Kern’s advice (about what we are not told), that the Baumans have gone on vacation and paid a lot for their hotel, and that Kurt has always driven his car too fast. Finally, students are to “write a paragraph [describing] events chronologically from the current year.” The chapter has a certain businesslike efficiency, and the examples are valid as far as they go, but as usual I am faced with a remarkably narrow slice of life, and little to excite significant reflection.

I still use the grammar book for now, in the background, but have added the life story of Adaline Kelbert, an unknown Hamburg housewife who was a friend of a friend. I have transcripts and audio recordings of interviews with her and a collection of family photos (from Baker et. al., 1996, from which the quotations from Adaline Kelbert below are drawn and translated from the German; I discuss this teaching unit in more detail in Smith, et al., 2007). Here is a brief summary of her story. Born into a German speaking family in Wolynien, near Kiev in 1903, Adaline grew up on the family farm until in 1916 the family had to leave because of the First World War. Travelling a vast distance eastward, they eventually found hospitality in a Tartar village near Omsk. Their hosts had a two-room log house, and gave up one room to the refugee family. As Adaline later recalled:

*They gave what they had. Each person could break off a piece of the bread and a spoonful of milk was poured into the tea...*



After a while the family moved on to a German-speaking Mennonite village nearby in search of work. Here things took a turn for the better:

*There was also a German church. ...we got...an old house there...and we had work there, and it was an old house, we lived well there. And there we went to church. We could buy milk there, and there was bread everywhere. And we went to church there.*

In 1918 the family returned home, finding their house empty but intact. Adaline married a young man from a neighboring village in 1923. In the ensuing years they faced increasing demands for crops from the new communist authorities, until finally in 1930 they were told that they must forfeit their possessions. One evening, men came and took everything, including the livestock. Adaline's husband was imprisoned for 5 years for unapproved trading, and then the house was demanded.

*Then I went to the authority: where should I stay? I said: "I have four children." I said: "Where am I supposed to go?" A dog was better off than I was. "There's a tree over there, you can settle under it," he said. At the end of November. ...I said: "But I'm afraid. They keep coming to look for everything."*

Adaline and her four children moved in with her sister-in-law. Her husband was sent to work in Dnepropetrovsk, but ran away and returned to Wolynien, living nearby in hiding for some time. In 1933 and 1934 failed crops drove the family to migrate to Odessa and back. Late in the Second World War the German army arrived in town, and deported the German speakers to Germany. In January 1945 the Kelbert family thus found themselves in Thuringen, but the husband and two sons were conscripted into the German army, while Adaline was put on a train that deposited her in Hamburg. She lived in a local school, writing letters to try to trace her family. Her husband and older son returned in the summer of 1945 — a younger son was lost. They settled permanently near Hamburg. Reflecting back on her story, Adaline is remarkably positive about her experiences, commenting:

*We always had this, when we were fleeing, this trust, there is One there who cares for all our cares ... and when things were still so dark, some spark was always there, that gave one comfort and new courage again.*

As I have adapted this story, which originated in the Charis curriculum project, for my own classroom use, I have chosen to begin with the photographs. They provide extended oral practice and vocabulary building as students describe and speculate about each image both in pairs and as a class — what do you see? What is going on? How do you know? What will happen next? Beyond this linguistic value, the photos also give me pictures of real people with complex histories. The combination of faces and narrative is intended to evoke empathy, a response not invited by many of the images in regular textbooks. And using real faces and concretely historical narrative makes the language of faith seem much less like an alien intrusion.

I have been learning the unit's rhythms — the first time I used it I showed too many photos too early, and the momentum sagged as we got into several days of reading activities; now I drip-feed fresh images and fresh episodes of the story over several days. Reading, listening and oral renarration activities allow us to move beyond initial impressions to a more detailed grasp of Adaline's experiences. This becomes an explicit rationale for focus on form. I remind students periodically that the reason we need to step aside and work on specific language points, including the formation of the past tense, is that if we do not, we risk misunderstanding and thus disrespecting what she has to tell us. Grammar can serve respect, and not merely grades, and learning a new language is as much about acquiring the humility needed to *hear* voices well that were previously marginal to us as it is about enhancing our abilities to *speak* in our own voices.

### **Opportunities for Spiritual and Moral Engagement**

As the story unfolds, it offers hooks, affordances for spiritual and moral engagement. I will describe four.

First, there is the occasion when Adaline's family was taken in by a Tartar family living in a two-room log cabin near Omsk. This is clearly a vivid memory for Adaline - eight decades later she describes in detail how mealtimes worked and what was eaten and drunk. We also hear in her comments an undertone of disapproval of the lack of farming competence of her semi-nomadic hosts, alongside gratitude that they provided a temporary refuge after her family had been turned out of previous villages. The underlying themes of displacement, vulnerability, cultural unfamiliarity, prejudice and hospitality all continue today to characterize cross-cultural encounters the world over, encounters that all too often do not take place in the comfortable transactional contexts implied or portrayed by textbooks. When we reach this part of the story, I ask students how many rooms their parents' house has. Answers vary, but all are many times

higher than two. Now imagine this, I continue. You are at home with your parents and there is a knock at the door. On the doorstep you find a family who are from a different ethnic group and have very limited English. It appears that they need a place to stay for a while. How many of you think that the visitors would be invited in? The result is the uncomfortable realization that few of our relatively prosperous families would open up their capacious homes — positive responses have never passed 20% of the class. Since I teach Christian students, I point to the disparity between the Christian ethics that we claim to espouse and our behaviors — Jesus listed welcoming the stranger as one of the differences between the sheep and the goats, heaven and hell, so what is it about our cultural location that keeps us from taking his words seriously? I carefully frame this as a challenge from Adaline Kelbert's experience to "us" — myself explicitly included. I sometimes briefly narrate some of my own halting attempts to practice hospitality in the face of need. My aim is not to moralize, but to model an openness to receiving ethical and spiritual challenges from the lives of members of other cultures, a spirit of teachability in the face of the other and a willingness to acknowledge my own falling short.

These exchanges, with or without direct reference to Christian concerns, are linguistically simple but have potential to be ethically and spiritually substantial — it does not require a long and complicated discussion of abstract ethical principles to provide an opportunity, entirely within the target language, for students to face such issues. Narrative and images make the issues concrete, and offer chances for students to compare themselves with Adaline Kelbert's summary of her experience at the hands of her Tartar hosts: "Sie haben gegeben, was sie hatten" (They gave what they had).

A second opening is created by Adaline's relish as she narrates the luxuries that became available upon the move the Mennonite village: work, milk, bread, an old house, and—repeated three times — the chance to worship at a German-speaking church. "Da haben wir gut gewohnt!", she declares, "we lived well there!" Discuss with a partner, I suggest, the five things that you would need to have in your life to be able to look back fondly on how well things were going. We can then compare lists. There is no correct answer, merely another opportunity for self-examination and learning from another. These discussions are brief - a matter of minutes. The students' language level does not make turning the class into a lengthy discussion of materialism and spiritual values a promising strategy. Each brief encounter, however, is a cumulative element in the overall experience of working through the narrative material.

Third, late in the story we consider a recent photograph of Adaline's living room showing shelves loaded with family photos, along with various other objects. We begin by talking about how the age of the person living here could be deduced from the picture. Then I ask what is most important to Adaline, aged 93 at this point? The inevitable answer is: people. There are many photos, but none show cars or other possessions, scenery or tourist destinations. This invites a further question. If people are likely to be the most important thing to you if you live to be 93, does that affect what you value now? Does it suggest any grounds for reflection on the choices you will make and the priorities you will set between now and then?

Fourth, after we have viewed the photographs, read sections of the narrative, listened to recordings, and practiced past tense verb forms, students are asked to find a local elderly person whom they can interview in English. Armed with questions about life history, trials endured and the presence or absence of faith based on Adaline Kelbert's narrative, students are to conduct an interview in English and bring the results to class. This is turned into both oral and written German narrative as students share what they have learned with one another and draft a piece of biographical writing based on their interview. Again, it is not only the linguistic gains and cultural comparisons that are of interest; my aims are complex, and include giving to some elderly people a chance to retell cherished stories to a fresh audience, and to some younger people a new chance to discover the benefits of listening to the elderly. Some students have learned of important episodes in the lives of their own relatives of which they had been ignorant.

### **Conclusions**

These are a few of my attempts to teach on the assumption that my students are spiritual beings. This does not mean laying down language acquisition for an occasional prayer or devotional text. It means combining the processes of language learning with matters such as ethics, hospitality, failure, the nature of the good life, questions of value and the source of hope, responses to human need, cross-generational interaction. In the interest of full disclosure I want to openly note at this point that some students find the unit boring. Not all of them — many clearly find it deeply meaningful, and some have written to me afterwards that Adaline Kelbert has become a role model for them. But some appear unimpressed. That's why this is just one of various similar efforts that I am trying to build together over the year; I am finding that the student who lets me know on a survey that Adaline Kelbert left him or her cold may be the very one who is particularly challenged a couple of weeks later by work on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or by Paul Celan's holocaust poetry, or by Xavier Naidoo's socially and spiritually engaged hip hop videos. This is not, I remind myself, a

technology that can guarantee predictable changes in students. I am starting, after all, from the premise that they are not machines, not docile information-processing mechanisms, but living images, shaping, misshaping and reshaping themselves. My dream is to find enough ways over the year of making linguistic and spiritually formative learning interwoven parts of the same experience that each student finds challenge and growth by the time we are done. And then a new group of students comes, and it all works a little differently.

I will close with some words of Bruner (1996):

Any choice of pedagogical practice implies a conception of the learner and may, in time, be adopted by him or her as the appropriate way of thinking about the learning process. For a choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner. Pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message. (p. 63)

Bruner says two things here. You can't teach without assuming some vision of what a person is. And it matters what vision you assume, because your learners learn what they are as learners by the ways that you teach them. That is the mystery and responsibility of being a teacher. I suggest that our responsibility as Christian teachers is to find the courage and the insight needed to live not as those who add devotional decorations to otherwise unmodified teaching processes, but as those who design teaching out of a vision of learners that combines theological depth and spiritual engagement. I am nowhere near there yet, and don't expect to be soon. But it seems to me to be a worthwhile journey.

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## Vocabulary Learning and Teaching Reflections

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### Introduction

Over the last several years I have thought quite a bit about teaching vocabulary in ESL/EFL, and even completed a course on Teaching Vocabulary during my MA TESOL studies. In this article I would like to outline some key points from relevant literature and connect these with my teaching experience, in the hope that my reflections may be useful to other teachers.

### What it Means to Know a Word

According to Zimmerman (2009), there are layers of word knowledge. Knowing a word not only involves being able to know the rough equivalent of that word in the student's first language (L1), it also involves mastering the word's parts, grammatical features, and the appropriate registers and forms with which the word can be used. Knowing a word also means mastering the collocations and idioms which use that word within the language and the different meanings or shades of meaning which the word can have.

Nation (2008) considers the difficulty of fully knowing a word as the word's learning burden, which can be assessed by examining the word and asking questions concerning its meaning, form, and use. Additional questions he says it is useful to ask about a word in order to assess the scope of difficulty which learners will have with mastering it are whether the word fits into an easily recognized pattern in the second language (L2) or is similar to the L1 in form, the difficulty involved for learners in spelling or pronouncing the word, and the extent to which the meanings and uses of the word vary from a similar word in the students' L1. The answers to these questions determine the word's learning burden for the student.

Of course, in most cases it is not desirable to try to teach all of the meanings, forms or uses involved in knowing a word, at least not all at once. It is more helpful to assess which words or forms of a word students need to be most familiar with based on the subject matter they are trying to master, and which language skills they are trying to use the word in conjunction with.

### Which Words are Important to Know?

The English language has a staggering 54,000 word families, not counting proper nouns and specialty jargon only used in certain fields (Schmitt & Marsden 2006). Of these, it is estimated that an educated, native speaker of English knows an average of 20,000 (Schmitt & Marsden 2006). Before beginning the process of teaching ESL/EFL students to acquire these words, there is some pressure for the teacher to organize and break down this daunting task into achievable chunks. What words is it important to teach first? And how should vocabulary learning be prioritized? The two most prominent attempts at doing this on a broad scale are West's (1953) General Service List (GSL) of English words, and Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List, or AWL (Coxhead & Nation, 2001). The GSL lists a foundational 2,000 word families which account for 80% of the words students read in an academic textbook, as well as an even higher percentage of words that students encounter in everyday speech. It is argued that the teaching of high frequency words should be one of the top priorities of the teacher, regardless of whether their main focus is academic or survival English, reading, speaking, or writing (Coxhead & Nation, 2001). Using a list, it is thought, can be one of the most effective ways of deciding which words students need to learn and which they do not. However, some writers criticize the use of word lists as too general to meet specific student needs and as less than beneficial for encouraging learner autonomy.

While maintaining the importance of a corpus-based approach in deciding which vocabulary to teach students, Hyland and Tse (2007) criticize the AWL in particular for failing to take into account the way that academic words are used differently in a variety of academic writing communities in terms of "context, cotext, and use" (p. 250). Instead, they recommend that the best way to organize students' vocabulary learning is to take a more individualized approach by focusing on the specific corpus the student will need to use within the field of their academic study (Hyland & Tse 2007). Likewise, allowing learners to choose words and phrases which interest them can have a positive effect on their level of motivation. It can empower them to choose the words they want to use. And yet, this idea should not be taken to an extreme because if it is, it can serve merely as an excuse for teachers to avoid the task of structuring a curriculum and helping learners to filter through words of varying levels of importance and usefulness to them.

### **How to Teach Words: Four Strands**

Considering the complexity of what it means to know a word, the large volume of words available in the English language, and the difficulties involved in selecting which words to learn, how then should a teacher go about building their students' vocabulary? There are two extreme approaches to avoid. The first involves overloading students with long word lists they need to memorize without giving them specific practice in using the words they are learning productively and seeing them used in a wide variety of contexts. This is a temptation for both teachers and students, who may be intimidated by the sheer number of words to be learned and feel the need to go about acquiring words as quickly as possible, not realizing that rote memorization alone may be an ineffective way to learn words.

The second extreme approach involves ignoring the teaching of vocabulary altogether and leaving students at the mercy of their electronic dictionaries and their assumptions from their L1 concerning ESL/EFL words and pronunciation. This often results in very odd word choice by students and pronunciations of words which render them incomprehensible. These errors can become fossilized and it is then the painful task of the student to untangle and sort through their word errors, one by one. In fact, it is entirely possible (and perhaps, all too common) to combine both bad extremes into an English class, resulting in wasted time and increased frustration for students. What then, should be the priority of the language instructor?

Zimmerman (2009) emphasizes the importance of adequate repetition of vocabulary items, citing that on average it takes ten different encounters with a word for a learner to make some progress in acquiring it permanently (p. 9). The teacher's job in helping students to acquire words is to make the explanations they give of words concise, meaningful, memorable, and relevant to the task at hand. It's also the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the student has repeated encounters with the word in a natural context, as well as opportunities to produce the word in speech and/or writing. Nation (2007, p. 2) recommends that vocabulary teaching be balanced; its effectiveness is assessed by how well it integrates four different strands of learning: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development.

#### *Meaning-focused Input*

Meaning-focused input consists of encountering new words while listening or reading at a level which is conducive to guessing from context. It is calculated that a student needs to know above 90% of the words in a text in order to be able to utilize that text for further word learning (O'Keefe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007). Nation is more stringent in his requirements for effective, meaning-focused input, requiring that students know 98% of the running words in written or spoken English (Nation, 2006). He also estimates that a student would need to read a small reader at least once every two weeks for any real gains to be made in vocabulary learning. This makes this learning strand particularly hard for teachers to control, since it is difficult to find appropriate material for varying levels of learners and to make this material readily available to students on a consistent basis. One way to make this kind of learning more of a reality in a course is to focus on doing reading or listening for a certain amount of time about one topic. Then, even if there are initially too many words for the learner to experience the most efficient form of meaning-focused input for learning, because the words repeat themselves and the context remains largely the same, the learner's percentage of understood vocabulary should increase incrementally (Nation, 2006).

#### *Meaning-focused Output*

This strand of learning is concerned with the student's ability to use a word correctly in speech and in writing. This is more challenging to accomplish, because, unlike in the case of meaning-focused input, a greater command of the word forms in terms of grammar, spelling, collocations, and pronunciation is warranted. This strand builds off of a basic knowledge of a word's meaning and takes the knowledge of a word to a deeper level. Here, there is the most potential for student mistakes, and, consequently, for student growth. The feedback of the teacher on students' word usage is important to this process, since it results in students modifying their language and thus improving their accuracy and understanding of words (Nation, 2007).

#### *Language-focused Learning*

Language-focused learning is perhaps what comes to mind first when one thinks of vocabulary teaching. It is how the teacher handles the learner's questions regarding word use and understanding. It includes the explicit teaching of definitions, word parts, collocations, grammar, and word learning strategies. Definitions, as Zimmerman (2009) writes, are best taught briefly and built upon with time. It is important to teach a word to learners in a meaningful context, even if it is only a sentence. Word parts, though not helpful for very young learners, and capable of confusing learners by causing them to make overgeneralizations, can still be an important part of building students' word consciousness

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(Graves, 2006). Zimmerman recommends being selective about the word parts that one chooses to teach and having students separate and combine parts of words in order to better understand how they interact with each other. This could be done in the context of teaching spelling, since some of the rules used to spell words also involve what happens when one combines prefixes and suffixes with word roots, or even some words with others (Howard, 2007).

The teaching of collocations is an even thornier issue, because the nuances of meaning involved in collocations are not always clear, probably because collocations and idioms carry most of the cultural baggage of the language and are “very hard to predict... Therefore, a target word’s collocates are best learned along with the word itself” (Zimmerman, 2009, p. 40). In addition, teachers should also show students how to notice collocations by becoming aware of them in their own L1 and by noticing which words occur together within selected texts. It is also helpful to make learners aware of how to use dictionaries and concordances which give examples of the ways a word is used concurrently with other words (Zimmerman, 2009).

Since there are often a great deal of demands on the teacher within the classroom to teach a variety of content, it is not realistic to spend much time teaching learners to recognize and use all of the words which they need or want to know. Therefore, perhaps the most meaningful way teachers can help their learners increase in word knowledge is by teaching learners effective strategies with which to cope with new words as they come across them. This can be done incidentally, “on the fly,” or in a more planned, laid out way (Graves, 2006). Useful strategies to teach students are being aware of unknown words, using the context around the word in order to guess the meaning, using familiar word roots or parts to arrive at the word’s meaning, knowing when, how, and where to look a word up, and becoming familiar with their own ways of studying words on their own (Graves, 2006).

Once a learner has decided to deliberately learn a word, the most effective strategy they can use is making word cards. They should first practice the words going from the word in the L2 to the meaning of that same word in English. Then they should flip the cards around and try to recall the word in the L2 using the word in their L1 as a clue. This causes the student to acquire the words not only receptively, but also productively (Nation, 2008, p. 106). If learners can utilize some or all of these strategies for acquiring new words, they will be well on their way to developing fluency in their new language.

#### *Fluency Development*

Fluency is an important but often neglected part of carrying out the implementation of the four strands in vocabulary teaching. Instead of requiring the students to learn new content, fluency activities allow them to practice using words they already know at increasing levels of speed. It is fluency practice that cements learning, makes speech and writing more automatic, and, in the case of fluency activities which involve repetition, even improves student accuracy (Nation, 2007). “Typical activities include speed reading, skimming and scanning, repeated reading, 4/3/2, repeated retelling, ten-minute writing and listening to easy stories” (Nation, 2007, p.7). These kinds of activities have been shown to cause positive language transference to occur.

#### **Vocabulary and L1 to L2 Transference**

A large part of learning a new language is understanding the relationship between the words that one knows in their L1 with the new words they are trying to add as entries into their mental dictionary which come from the L2. This process is called transference, and it is largely affected by the differences and the similarities between the learner’s L1 and their L2.

Since English words mainly come from Old English, French, and Latin, English language learners who speak an L1 related to any of these languages may have an advantage in acquiring words in English (Schmitt & Marsden, 2006). Conversely, languages which are quite different from English but which in their modern form have heavy borrowings from English can also be beneficial to learners. However, there can also be some difficulties learners might experience concerning the similarity between English and their L1. Though it may be helpful for listening and reading, both of which involve passive reception and allow for inference of meaning based on context, it could be troublesome for active production, making it more difficult for students to accurately pronounce and spell the target form of the word because of the extra effort required in distinguishing it from the form of the word in their L1 (Ringbom, 2007).

In the cases of some Spanish learners of English, similarities between the two languages caused L2 speakers to produce incorrect Spanish and English forms of words, forget the forms of words in Spanish and English, and generally struggle with keeping the two languages separate, which impacted their ability to use the languages

accurately (Lengeling, 1996; Ecke, 2008). Likewise, other language learners have had difficulty in recognizing that they did not know the meanings of words, because they were false cognates or written in familiar ways, so students failed to look them up when in reality they needed to (Lutjeharms, 1990).

However, with practice and dedication, these barriers to L2 acquisition can be overcome and learners whose L1s are similar to the target language as well as those whose L1s are quite different from the L2 can experience positive transference from one language to another and succeed in making words and expressions in the L2 a part of their mental lexicon (Ringbom, 2007; Koda, 2005).

Once a word in the entirety of its meaning, connotations, grammatical features, and collocations is learned, how then does it affect the L2 learner? There is some indication that the two or more languages which the speaker knows do not stay separate, but become interconnected. Learning an L2 affects the ability to recall vocabulary in the L1 as well as the ability to discern correct idioms and word collocations between the languages (Ecke, 2008; Laufer, 2003). In short, going through the whole word learning process enabled the student to understand and use different words correctly in a new language. But in the process it altered their patterns of language usage by integrating another set of vocabulary and collocations into their existing one. Therefore, acquiring a new vocabulary is not just a process of addition in which the learner merely adds more words into their existing vocabulary; it is a process of mental transformation. As such, it should be approached logically and intentionally, with strategies, skill, and that invaluable human element which language cannot and should not separate itself from.

### **Reflections on My Vocabulary Teaching**

I started my Teaching Vocabulary course last semester with some experience in being asked to untangle meanings of words for students. While teaching in Taiwan I had become accustomed to answering students' penetrating questions concerning the differences in shades of meaning between similar words, the disparities between how a word in English was used in comparison to its Chinese equivalent and common questions, such as, "Is this word important? Do I need to learn this word?" However, the curriculum I taught was poorly designed.

Native speakers of English with no training in TESOL read articles about interesting topics off of the Internet, compiled them to write a new article or a dialogue, and highlighted between 30 or 40 vocabulary words for teachers to teach and students to learn in the context of discussion of the article. Many of the students with more of a scholarly background than the monthly language learning magazine writers used to joke that the articles were "written by monkeys." However they were, for the most part, insistent that I define every word. I became accustomed to explaining an average of 60 words a day over a six month period, 180 words a week (I taught repeat lessons of the same class in different locations, through which I thankfully had the chance to practice re-teaching explanations of words that were originally less than successful). I became very aware of words and word usage.

In order to keep students from falling asleep due to all the teacher talk, I learned to give very brief definitions of most words and really focus on explaining maybe five of the words within the list which I thought were more important. I tried a few times to get students to use the words or to start conversation practice using the words, but I found they had all kinds of problems using the words due to a lack of knowledge concerning the grammar and collocations associated with the word. I soon began writing the parts of speech of words, example sentences, and a few collocations on the board.

I realized that my students fell into different categories. Some were merely there for the chance to hear English spoken and to be part of the discussion practice at the end of the article reading and vocabulary lesson, and others were there with prepared questions about the words in order to understand not just the word meaning, which they had the rough Chinese equivalent of, but its usage in English. These students were there to use me as a human concordance to help them with those words from the gargantuan class lists which they had purposed to learn. Although many of these students had never traveled abroad or been able to afford very good English instruction, they were quite proficient in the language due to their own diligence and language learning strategies. They asked me questions which increased my own word consciousness in English and challenged me to think more comprehensively through the difficulties involved in each of the words which my students would encounter.

Still, I knew that, with the curriculum I was given, which amounted to little more than a barrage of undefined words with no built in repetition, I would not have been able to help these students learn if they had not had their own strategies for acquiring vocabulary. I was in awe of these students because of their success since, to me, who had never

fully learned any other language besides the one I was born speaking, the process of acquiring thousands of new words in a foreign tongue seemed almost hopelessly complex.

### Conclusion

Taking a course in vocabulary teaching helped me to understand how even a flood of divergent, idiosyncratic words can be classified in order of learning importance and taught in a logical, consistent manner involving every learner actively in the process of acquiring words. I now have the GSL and the AWL to help in answering whether or not a word is important for students to learn, online learners concordances and dictionaries as a welcome substitute for mere native speaker intuition, and Nation's (2007) four strands approach to organize and balance the process of vocabulary acquisition which the students must progress through.

I now have a list of orderly, proven learning strategies which I can give to learners in order to help speed their learning, and some resources for texts and materials to use for a vocabulary class. I do not think that, if I had not been previously forced to teach vocabulary without them, I would appreciate these tools as much as I do now. But appreciating knowledge does not always lead to using it properly.

Because of time pressure and other factors, it is hard to include the needed repetition of vocabulary items without careful planning and selection of materials. Realistically, this could mean that, even though I now know about the AWL, the GSL, the need to recycle words in different contexts for students to learn and to balance the four strands, I could fail in doing this and continue to teach vocabulary haphazardly, the way I did in Taiwan before I learned these things. I hope that the memory of my students will keep me from doing this in future classes that I teach with an emphasis on the vocabulary. Hopefully some readers will also benefit from my learning and teaching experiences with vocabulary, too.

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**URGENT:** (Co-)Editor Needed! Do you like *CELEA News* (at least this first issue)? Would you like it to continue (in this or some other form)? Then a (co-)editor is needed right away to work with editor Michael Lessard-Clouston on a summer/fall issue and then take over the newsletter this year. Interested? Please contact Michael at [editor@celea.net](mailto:editor@celea.net) to help make the transition smooth.

### Guidelines for Contributions to *CELEA News*

*CELEA News* is a publication of the Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA, visit our website, <http://www.celea.net/>, for more information). We are particularly interested in receiving relevant announcements, news items, and especially submissions or ideas for our Articles section. We welcome short (about 500-1000 words) or longer (up to about 3500 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. Authors might offer another perspective, raise some questions, or present new practical, philosophical, or theoretical points of view on topics of interest to CELEA members. As you will see in this issue, 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, I would be happy for you to correspond with me about it. If it does not seem appropriate for *CELEA News* I might be able to suggest other options. If you have something for me 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 me to state that you have something for me to consider for publication, and I'll work with you on it from there. I look forward to hearing from you, and possibly to working with you on your submission. Contact: [editor@celea.net](mailto:editor@celea.net).

## **CELEA News** Volume 1, Number 1

Christian English Language Educators Association [<http://www.celea.net>]. CELEA is a non-profit educational association which functions as the Christian English Language Educators Forum (CELEF) in conjunction with the annual TESOL convention, where it holds an academic session, booth, and networking session.

Special thanks are due to Daniel McClary, and Amanda Leyba and the TESOL programs at Biola University in the School of Intercultural Studies, Department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (visit [http://www.biola.edu/sics/academics/programs/ma\\_tesol/](http://www.biola.edu/sics/academics/programs/ma_tesol/) for more information), for assistance and preparation of this first issue of *CELEA News*.