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## CETC Newsletter

The newsletter of TESOL's Christian Educators in TESOL Caucus.

### CETC Newsletter

October 2007 Volume 11 Number 3  
*A periodic newsletter for TESOL members.*

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### [Leadership Updates](#)

#### [From the Editors](#)

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

Greetings from Los Angeles and Atlanta! We are happy to present you with another issue of the *CETC Newsletter* and are confident that you will find it informative reading. As CETC is an international community, it is great for us to be able to connect through the newsletter several times a year, whether or not we are all able to make it to the annual TESOL convention. As usual, we hope to provide you with some helpful information, some interesting food for thought, and articles that include practical ideas and insights.

#### In This Issue

This issue of the newsletter starts with some leadership updates, beginning with a letter from our chair, Gena Bennett, in which she discusses the importance of our call as Christian educators to be positive influences to our students and coworkers. We also have an article from CETC E-list moderator Anne Bruehler, who introduces herself and encourages us to become active contributors to the CETC e-list by providing guidelines and suggestions for postings and discussions. We also include several important announcements from various caucus members in

our "News From CETC" column.

In our articles and information section, we are pleased to highlight a wonderfully diverse range of topics and locales that reflect the research and teaching interests of CETC members. We begin with two articles based on presentations in the CETC colloquium at TESOL 2007 in Seattle, namely Kitty Purgason's research on religion in ESL textbooks and Peggy Hull's reflections on Christian images and the use of film in ESL classes. We are grateful that we are able to share these insights with those who could not attend the convention, and we hope to have another article from that panel for you in our next issue. Next, Nancy Kelly Alvarez reports on her approach to EFL teacher training in the Philippines, and Cherie Rempel describes her experiences working with Iraqi Kurds and developing materials for a program she oversees in Iraq. Leopoldo Balayon then reflects on the topic of native speaker proficiency and how it relates to adult learners, and past chair Eleanor Pease reports briefly on the exciting CELT 2008 conference that she is planning at Nyack College to occur just before TESOL 2008 in New York. Also in this issue, Dana Ferris writes about living out her mission statement in a secular university setting, Suresh Canagarajah shares and then responds to some criticisms of evangelicals within TESOL, and Daniel Zagami reports on his experience using plays and oral culture among immigrant children in Illinois. Finally, Amanda Baker reviews CETC member Don Snow's revised *More Than a Native Speaker* book, and we close with our "Spotlight on CETC Members," which introduces three more CETCers (including Meredith!). If you would like to be "spotlighted" in the future, please let us know!

We are so thankful to each of these contributors for sharing their work with us all through this forum, and we hope that you will consider contributing to the newsletter as well. If you have an idea for an article that you would like us to consider, some news you would like to share with CETCers, or suggestions or comments about the newsletter, please feel free to contact us. We also still need a few people who would be willing to review books and materials for us. Our deadline to receive draft contributions for possible publication in our next issue (hopefully in February) is December 28. Happy reading!

Michael and Meredith

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### [Letter From the Chair: We Are Called to Be Thermostats](#)

Gena Bennett, [genabennett@yahoo.com](mailto:genabennett@yahoo.com)

When I went to visit my mother-in-law in the small community surrounding Lake Tenkiller, Oklahoma, I wasn't expecting much from Keys Baptist Church ([www.keyschurch.org](http://www.keyschurch.org)), where she attends Sunday service. Having a Pentecostal background, I honestly thought the service might be a bit boring. As I listened to Pastor Andy Bowman, though, I realized that his message was far from boring; besides the fine alliteration and parallelism of the points in his sermon, something an English teacher always notices, the message resonated with this English teacher who is also a Christian. I began thinking about how Pastor Andy's message addressed one of the most prevalent issues in our CETC community: How can we distinguish ourselves as Christian teachers in secular institutions? How does one share the Gospel with students without crossing that invisible line present at most institutions? This was even the topic for the September e-list discussion, which came out after I wrote this letter.

Pastor Andy's sermon, "You Are to Be an Influence," was based on Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Most of us recognize this passage, which has been labeled "The Great Commission," the call for Christians to spread the Gospel. Looking at it from a slightly different perspective, Pastor Andy said that in order to spread the Gospel Christians must be an influence.

*Influence* means "capable of making an impact or altering a situation." Billy Graham is a person of influence. As the "Pastor to the President" for 40 years and evangelist to millions of people around the globe, Billy Graham has altered situations. Pastor Andy talked of Lake Shore Baptist Church in Lake Shore, Mississippi, a community blown away during Hurricane Katrina, that has committed to rebuild every house in town. The church is altering the situation and making an impact.

As teachers we have influence. We help students accomplish goals so that many of them can alter their own situations. We impact students' lives. But our influence as teachers is only for a short time; as Christians, we can have an eternal influence. Pastor Andy discussed four actions to be an influence, four habits to distinguish oneself as a Christian. I want to take this opportunity to share these practices with you.

1. *Imitate*. Being a Christian means being Christ-like. The Bible says that when we become

Christians, we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Imitate Jesus Christ in work ethic, attitude, and conduct.

2. *Irritate*. When you stir something, you irritate it. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were accused of "turning the world upside down." Irritate the world with the Gospel.

3. *Illuminate*. As regards the old adage, "curse the darkness or light a candle," I fear too many Christians today are simply cursing the darkness, making statements and claims about the poor state of humankind. Some believers have stopped shining the light of the Gospel and left the world in the shape it's in. Illuminate your environment.

4. *Inundate*. Christians are not commissioned only to go, but to go and teach all nations. Many of the same people sit in church services hearing the Gospel over and over and over again, while others have not had one chance to hear the Gospel. Inundate all who surround you with the Gospel.

In closing, Pastor Andy shared the apt analogy of the thermometer versus the thermostat. A thermometer displays the temperature, but a thermostat sets the temperature. There's no question what our role is to be as Christians: altering situations and making a difference by setting the temperature of our world through imitating, irritating, illuminating, and inundating the world for Christ.

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### The Purposes and Protocol of the CETC E-list

Anne Bruehler, [Anne.Bruehler@indwes.edu](mailto:Anne.Bruehler@indwes.edu)

Some of the newer members to CETC may be asking, "What is the purpose for the CETC e-list?" Per our discussions at the 2007 TESOL Convention in Seattle, it was decided that the e-list serves our constituency in several ways: 1) it provides a place to request information pertinent to our professions as English language teachers with the added dimension of our common faith in Christ; 2) it serves as a springboard for discussion to stimulate our thoughts and beliefs as they pertain to how our faith guides our teaching; 3) it offers encouragement to our members who may need the reminder that they are not alone as Christians in this field. Of course, these three aspects feed into the much larger perspective that we are Christians first, and that our teaching is part of our service to the One who directs our paths.

Thus, as we begin fresh this fall, I'd like to try our monthly discussions once again. Our caucus members came up with some great topics, so I will be introducing a new topic each month. With this in mind, I think it would be a good idea to remember these tips:

1. Keep the subject lines as informative and close to the topic as possible. If you want to introduce a new topic, please change the subject line accordingly.
2. If you are replying to another post, consider trimming parts of the email that are not necessary for understanding your reply.
3. If you have a personal message for someone on the list, like a note of encouragement or personal question, email that person directly. You will need to copy and paste their address or simply type it out yourself. If you hit "reply," it will come to the list, and I will send you a friendly reminder to email the person directly.
4. Feel free to post questions about your own teaching/learning/cultural or language issues, but please refer to tip #1.
5. If at any time you have a topic you'd like our list to discuss, please email me directly at [anne.bruehler@indwes.edu](mailto:anne.bruehler@indwes.edu), and I will consider posting it for one of our monthly discussion topics. Again, when you post items to the list, please ensure that they directly relate to teaching, learning, and/or faith issues in your TESOL experience.
6. Consider the feelings of others on this list as you post your thoughts and opinions. Remember that while we have a common faith that brings us together, there may be many differing opinions about certain issues. Please write your messages in such a way that, rather than tearing each other down, we lift each other up so that we may exhibit the love of God to each other.
7. Keep in mind that our e-list is open to any TESOL member, so while our CETC focus is clear, there may be other TESOL members who read the CETC e-list, or other caucus e-lists, for different reasons. Thus, we need to be sensitive in the way we post our messages, keeping the above guidelines in mind.

Thank you for keeping these in mind as you join us in discussion on this list. It is my hope that we will have some interesting and thought-provoking discussions this year. Peace.

*Anne Bruehler coordinates the TESOL undergraduate program at Indiana Wesleyan University. She lived and worked with refugees for six years and also taught ESL for academic purposes at the higher education level. She is married and has two sons, 4 and 2. Her younger son underwent brain surgery in May 2007, and while it hasn't been an easy road, the Lord has been faithful.*

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## News From CETC

### **CETC Member's Work Recognized With a New Award**

We are pleased to report that CETC member Dr. Thomas Scovel, of San Francisco State University, was honored at Cornerstone University (CU) on September 18, 2007, with the inaugural Henry Osborn Award in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. This new award is named in honor of retired CU linguistics Professor Henry Osborn to recognize those in the fields of applied linguistics or TESOL who also demonstrate sacrificial service to the church. Dr. Osborn was a faculty member at CU for 17 years and also worked on dozens of Bible translation projects across the globe. Congratulations to Dr. Scovel!

### **Graduate Student Forum Proposals Welcomed**

Though the deadline for general TESOL 2008 convention proposals has passed, graduate students have until November 20 to submit a proposal for the 8th Annual Graduate Student Forum at TESOL 2008 in New York. See the "Call for Proposals for TESOL's 2008 Graduate Student Forum" at the TESOL Web site ([http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/sec\\_document.asp?CID=1768&DID=9304](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=1768&DID=9304)) for further details, and consider submitting a proposal or encouraging graduate students you know to do so.

### **You Can Still Join a CETC Working Committee!**

CETC working committees were established to help us make lasting contributions to TESOL, and it's not too late to get involved! The Resources and Bibliography Committee is compiling a list of materials that have been written by caucus members, may be of interest to members of CETC, or will help our educational or ministry situations. The committee will also find out what skills Christian educators in TESOL offer so that those in need of a particular type of ability will know where to look. To join this committee, please email Mary Wong at [mwong@apu.edu](mailto:mwong@apu.edu). The Caucus Documents Committee will draft new documents (e.g., job descriptions for the leadership) and revise existing ones (e.g., the caucus mission statement) to help ensure that our literature reflects what CETC does, who is invited to participate, how we contribute to the TESOL profession, and why CETC is important. To join this committee, please contact Michael Pasquale at [michael\\_pasquale@cornerstone.edu](mailto:michael_pasquale@cornerstone.edu). The Affiliate Committee is investigating the possibility of establishing local or regional CETC affiliates to facilitate greater networking and resource sharing opportunities for Christian educators in TESOL. Please email Karen Asenavage at [karenas@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:karenas@sas.upenn.edu) to sign up for this committee.

### **Book Reviewers Needed**

We hope to publish reviews of several books in upcoming issues of the *CETC Newsletter*. If you are willing to write a review for a future issue, please contact one of the editors. We would like to have a review of the *Faith Encounters I and II* Bible studies that have been discussed in articles in recent issues, as well as a review of David Smith and Terry Osborn's (2007) edited collection *Spirituality, Social Justice, and Language Learning*. You are also welcome to suggest materials that you might like to review for us.

### **CETC Colloquium at TESOL 2008**

As you start planning to attend TESOL 2008 in New York City, you might be interested to know that the CETC Colloquium is being planned around the theme of language and faith, following input from caucus members at the open meeting earlier this year.

Title: The Interface of Language and Faith

Abstract: The investigation of salient language features in specific genres has become a prominent and productive area of SLA research. This panel explores the interface of language and faith, including the language of worship and liturgy and the development of a "Christianese" vocabulary.

Participants will include organizer Gena Bennett and presenters William Acton, Dana Ferris, Daniel Gingrich, Michael Lessard-Clouston, Michael Pasquale, and Yukako Yamamoto.

### **NACFLA 2008 Conference at Calvin College**

The North American Christian Foreign Language Association's 2008 annual conference will be held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, March 27-29. The theme is "World Languages: Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions" and the keynote speaker is CETC'er Dr. Suresh Canagarajah. For further information, please visit <http://www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/conferen.htm>.

### **CELT 2008 Conference at Nyack College**

Please note that the 2008 Christians in English Language Teaching (CELT) Conference will now take place on Wednesday April 2 and is being hosted by Nyack College at its Manhattan campus, just before TESOL 2008 in New York City. The theme is "Education with Vision." If you would like to volunteer for the conference, please email conference chair Eleanor Pease at [eleanor.pease@nyack.edu](mailto:eleanor.pease@nyack.edu).

### **Visit and Contribute to CETC's Web Site**

Web manager Frank Tuzi continues to welcome submissions for and visitors to the CETC website ([www.cetesol.org](http://www.cetesol.org)). If you would like to contribute to or help with the site, please email Dr. Tuzi at [webmaster@cetesol.org](mailto:webmaster@cetesol.org).

### ESL Ministry Conference at Cornerstone University

Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, will hold its 7th annual ESL Ministry Conference on Saturday, April 19, 2008, offering workshops and sessions for church-based ESL work. Dr. David Livermore, author of *Serving With Eyes Wide Open*, will be the main speaker. For further information and registration, please visit [www.cornerstone.edu/academics/tesl/esl\\_conf](http://www.cornerstone.edu/academics/tesl/esl_conf).

## Articles and Information

### Religion in ESL Textbooks



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

*Editors' note: This article is based on a presentation made during the CETC Colloquium at the 2007 TESOL Convention in Seattle, Washington, on "Images of Christianity in the Media." We are grateful to be able to share it with you here.*

What might students learn about Christianity in their ESL textbook? How do ESL texts treat religion? These questions were asked in preparation for the TESOL 2007 CETC Colloquium, "Images of Christianity in the Media." I set up a wiki, [religioninESLtexts.pbwiki.com](http://religioninESLtexts.pbwiki.com) (password cetc)<sup>1</sup>, and publicized the project through the caucus Web site and e-list. Participants were instructed that the project was "to document the treatment of religion in general and Christianity in particular in currently used ESL textbooks around the world." They were told to "Look for content related to religion in general and to any specific religion. It could be in print (e.g., a reading about the Dalai Lama or a dialogue in which people talk about their beliefs) or in graphic form (e.g., a photo of a mosque)." Between August 2006 and February 2007 a range of core, grammar, and reading texts were described on the wiki (and I'm very grateful to all who contributed). The books were published by a variety of publishers as long ago as 1985 and as recently as 2006. However, only 26 books were covered. For that reason, I decided not to generalize about numbers or percentages, but rather to use the survey, and my personal review of additional texts on my shelf, to create categories of how religion is dealt with in ESL texts.

### Casual References

Some books can be categorized by a casual reference to religion. In some of these, the references are only to Christianity. In one text, a drawing of a city street to elicit sentences with *there is/there are* includes a picture of a church. In another, a reading about a family's activities to illustrate simple present includes "On Sunday morning they go to church together." An example sentence in a section on prepositions of time in a third text is "Many people go to church on Sundays." In a fourth text, a unit on past tense has students doing an information gap with photos of an Asian couple who "got married at a church." In other books, the references are only to religions other than Christianity. For example, a model paragraph for students writing about an interesting place to travel describes and has a photo of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. There were no references to any other religion in this particular text. The examples I've given can be seen as references to cultural practices and places rather than religious beliefs. However, books that contain such casual references only to one religion may be experienced as biased by some students.

### Biblical References

Different from talk of *church* or *mosque*, sometimes books contain indirect references to the Bible, of the type that is usually considered cultural literacy. One text includes an Andy Rooney essay on U.S. changes in neighborliness entitled "Love Thy Neighbor" and another text on court cases versus mediation includes a reading on "King Solomon's Decision."

### Indirect Acknowledgment

A third category would be an indirect acknowledgment that religion is an element in people's lives. For example, a unit in a workplace ESL book includes a letter stating "in my religion we don't drink alcoholic beverages" and asking for advice about attending a party at a coworker's house.

### Touching on Possible Religious Beliefs

Fourth, some books contain elements that touch on what might be included in students' or teachers' religious views without the mention of religion. Prominent among these are readings about superstitions, good-luck charms, palm reading, fortune telling, ghosts, and extrasensory

perception. Also in this category are readings about moral and ethical issues. Examples from our small survey included assisted suicide, the pressure on the poor to survive by selling organs, and parents creating an in vitro embryo to harvest cells to save their daughter's life. Such texts might make either the teacher or students feel very uncomfortable or give them a welcome opportunity to discuss important beliefs.

### Explicit Coverage of Religion

Fifth, some books include explicit information, usually in reading texts, about religion. One book addresses the topic of "being good." It includes photos of Socrates and Buddha, a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson discrediting religion, and an essay by someone who abandoned the Christianity of his childhood to become a Buddhist. Another text has a reading that describes how a young couple had their new apartment smudged, using a Native American ritual, to get rid of bad spirits. Another text talks about how moving to a new country affects our values, including our religious values, with the example of a Palestinian woman in a headscarf. The only examples we found in this category about Christianity featured what some would consider nonmainstream. For example, the main reading in one book is on the Amish and the example essay in the same chapter is about Mormons. Again, such texts might make the teacher or students, particularly Christians, feel uncomfortable. However, an alert teacher might be able to use such texts to present a more balanced picture of Christianity and invite students of all religious faiths to discuss their beliefs.

### No Mention of Religion

A final possibility (quite common among the books surveyed) is that religion is not mentioned at all. Publishers seeking to avoid offense often deliberately choose this option. This kind of blandness might seem desirable in light of the challenges highlighted above. However, although the market forces are powerful in pushing publishers to include or cut certain content, Smith and Carvill (2000) drew attention to the fact that this creates an imbalance in many language-teaching materials. Typical textbooks teach students the language of buying, but not charitable giving. The people students read about are usually drawn from the world of entertainment, not religion of any kind. Smith and Carvill suggested that our materials evaluation should include questions such as "How does the text present the humanity of members of the target culture? Do they fear, doubt, suffer, sin, hope, pray, or celebrate as well as work, shop, play, eat, and drink?" (p. 144).

### Conclusion

It is beyond the scope of this brief article to discuss how Christian teachers can respond to texts of all these types in their ESL/EFL classes. I hope that this initial analysis of how our texts deal with religion will prompt consideration of how to do that well. It can also help us in the process of materials evaluation and choice, as well as materials development.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> This wiki is still open, if anyone would like to add comments on textbooks or take over the analysis.

*Kitty Purgason is chair of the Department of Applied Linguistics and TESOL at Biola University in La Mirada, California. She has taught in Korea, China, Turkey, and Turkmenistan.*

### Reference

Smith, D. I., & Carvill, B. (2000). *The gift of the stranger: Faith, hospitality, and foreign language learning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

## [Facilitating the Interpretation of Christian Images Through the Use of Film in the ESL Classroom](#)



Peggy Hull, [phull@dc3.edu](mailto:phull@dc3.edu)

*Editors' note: This article is based on a presentation made during the CETC Colloquium at the 2007 TESOL Convention in Seattle, Washington, on "Images of Christianity in the Media." We are thankful that we can share it with you here.*

Students of ESL or EFL very often come from countries where religion plays a more central role than it does in the West. Such students often perceive Western culture to be godless and immoral, and in a secular setting, it's difficult to know how to approach the topic. Christian educators often view the separation of church and state as a hindrance to discussing religion in the classroom, but I hope to show here that this need not be the case. Every professor professes his or her worldview; it's unavoidable. Who we are comes through in every

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decision we make in the classroom, whether we articulate our position or not. Christian educators are often singled out (unfairly, I believe), but no religion or worldview should ever use the classroom as a bully pulpit. Education should never be about teaching students *what* to think, but *how* to think.

In this article I hope to show that we can use film as a medium to present students with images of Christianity that are so woven into the culture that they could easily pass unnoticed. Then we can help them identify the influence that Christianity has had on shaping our culture, without manipulating or coercing them. Indeed, there is no need to use religious language or speak of matters of faith. Reality, when portrayed in a fully human way, helps us interpret images of Christianity in any film, and we need only serve as a guide to show our students where to look for these images in film. To the extent that film is a representation of real life, we must look for the divine in the same places we look for God in real life: in relationships and in the unfolding of the human story that we call history. And if our point of view rings true, it will be convincing on its own without any professorial authority behind it. When we don't force our viewpoints, our students can relax and just enjoy discussing because they know that the discussion won't get ugly or one-sided. And research in second language studies tells us that the opportunity for output is a key ingredient in language acquisition, so discussion need never be seen as an inappropriate use of time in a language classroom.

### **Choosing a Film**

The choice of film is crucial. I believe religious films are simply inappropriate. The purpose is not to indoctrinate but to accurately portray the role Christianity has played in shaping secular culture. Furthermore, it's not appropriate to spend an inordinate amount of class time watching films, so one must choose carefully and take into account how the film fits with the rest of the curriculum. As director of a four-level ESL program in a community college, I have integrated one film into each of the reading classes, and three into the high-intermediate Listening and Speaking class. Finally, films should accurately portray life in the culture, with all its depth and diversity, without being "edgy" or marginal in their portrayal.

First, one caveat is in order. The Church has played some very ugly roles at times throughout the world, and to say that films that portray the Church when at her worst do not conform to reality would be tragic. There are, unfortunately, many examples of this throughout history, and although I prefer to show the Church in a better light to those who are just making her acquaintance, I would not shy away from speaking the truth if asked. Many Latin American and European films portray the church in an uncaring, predatory light, and with good reason. The film *La Lingua de la Mariposa* (Butterfly) is set in Spain as the country was choosing sides for civil war. The protagonist in the film, a dear old agnostic schoolteacher, displays many of the characteristics that I and others in North America would attribute to Christians, while the Church helps the government murder its own people in the name of God. Because power corrupts, we should not be too surprised to see a warped parody of Christianity when the Church wields the power of the state. However, even here, if we teach our students to look beyond labels to the real heart of what it means to be human, we will see how images of Christianity can become distorted, both in real life and in film.

It is important to determine the bias of the movie's creators before deciding on a film to show. If a movie appears one-sided—the characters from one group are fully developed and display their full range of humanity, but the characters from the opposite group are flat and caricatured—then we know that the creator of those characters identified him- or herself more closely with the group that appears more believable. That doesn't necessarily mean that the movie is bad; it just gives away the bias of its creator, which should always be taken into account when trying to reason logically rather than allowing our emotions to be manipulated by the screen. A movie can be well-done, entertaining, even rise to the level of art, yet still contain untruths or exaggerations that need to be analyzed before we swallow them as reality. To illustrate this point, I'll mention three movies I've recently seen that form a nice continuum from deliberately manipulative to delightfully balanced.

### **The Continuum and Three Examples**

If you've ever spent much time watching movies on the Lifetime channel, it doesn't take long to figure out that it has an agenda. All the movies were made specifically for that channel, which advertises itself as "the women's channel." All the scenes depict men taking advantage of women in one way or another, and women going to any length, even murder, to regain control of their lives. A lot of that goes on in this world, but when it is used to slander groups that advocate a patriarchal society, we must take note of it and not allow it to cloud our judgment.

In the Lifetime movie *The Plain Truth*, an Amish family is torn apart by the father who rules with an iron fist and refuses to allow gentleness and forgiveness to heal the drowning accident of their youngest daughter. The acting is superb, and the final twist is a real shocker, a tour-de-force of a thriller. Nevertheless, we must realize that we are meant to walk away with a strong prejudice against the Amish for being a patriarchal society that supposedly fosters this kind of iron-willed perversion of family love. Even though it is not logical to deduce that just by being patriarchal

these groups foster the abuse of women, it appears that we are meant to think just that. However, an awareness of the bias of the movies on this channel combined with a real-world knowledge of Amish faith and customs reveals blatant inconsistencies. At one point, they all enter a church, but the Amish don't have church buildings. More to the point, the father's cruel behavior toward his wife would have been censured by the bishop, so the community would have intervened before the situation led to murder.

That brings me to my second example, a movie that falls between manipulative and balanced in its portrayal of Christians. In the made-for-TV movie *Reversible Error*, Tom Selleck portrays a cop who rolls his eyes at the testimony of an ex-con who has "found Jesus" and gone straight. It's a very entertaining film that has as its agenda to give middle-class couch potatoes like myself a glimpse of the more exciting, glamorous world of homicide trials. There is no deliberate manipulation of the plot to pull on our heart-strings, but it's very easy to see the one-sidedness of the portrayal of Christianity. Throughout the film, people are seen jumping into the sack with each other with alarming frequency, lying, murdering, covering up evidence, and getting hooked on heroin, all in the name of love. Then an ex-con tells the truth, gets a guy off death row, and he's portrayed as a holy roller who's been suckered into Christianity by people who are just using him to get what they want. We're seeing life through the eyes of a cynic, which is where postmodern morality has led much of modern society. Everybody is in it for themselves. Sin is still the problem, so this is an accurate portrayal of reality from a Christian perspective, and people are dealing with the sin by giving in to it and calling it love, which is also the reality many modern people live in. However, the movie is clearly one-sided. The screenwriter portrayed a caricatured, ridiculous Christianity, possibly because that's the only kind with which he or she was familiar. The man may truly have given his life to Christ and found the strength to face his past and make a clean break with it, but we will never know because the writer didn't portray him as a fully human person capable of meeting a God who became fully human.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Hallmark film *Harvest of Fire*, which I show as part of a listening unit on the various ethnic groups of America, is wonderfully balanced. Both the Amish and the "English," as the Amish call Americans, are portrayed as real human beings, with a full range of strengths and weaknesses. Both are believable: We come to know both groups intimately and identify with them, and they come to know each other as they realize that, despite the very different ways they deal with reality, they share a common bond of humanity. The Amish aren't always right, but neither are the English seen as perfect, and we come to doubt some of our "modern" wisdom, without necessarily wanting to trade our cars in for buggies.

The women in this film are portrayed as strong, with a high degree of emotional intelligence, without demeaning the men. When the Amish protagonist, Annie, tells the FBI investigator, Sally, that she should "put the one she loves before herself," we know Annie well enough to know she isn't encouraging yielding to a demanding, sadistic relationship. Sally recognizes this and concedes, "We could learn from you—I have," despite her vocal disapproval of the Amish practice of shunning. Both sides recognize that sin destroys, and that confession and reconciliation have the power to heal any wrong. They disagree on the means, but the basics of the reality remain the same regardless of belief or custom.

### **Ways of Integrating Film Into the ESL Classroom**

In teaching the civil rights movement in high-intermediate Listening and Speaking, I use a video of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech after we study the speech in depth. I point out that its persuasive power comes from the fact that King wove into his speech quotes from sources that most Americans in the 1960s revered: the Bible, the Constitution, and Christian hymns from both the White and Black communities of faith. Many people today don't even recognize the passages taken directly from the book of the Jewish prophet Isaiah, whose prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah.

I also show *Driving Miss Daisy* to help students see the changes that took place in society that were mirrored in the relationship between Miss Daisy and Hoke. This story gives flesh and bones to the "I Have a Dream" speech, as the images of Christianity in both are images of reconciliation and healing of past wrongs through building cross-cultural relationships. I particularly like the scene in which the Jewish family attends the African-American funeral service out of respect for the African-American woman who served their family as a maid for most of her life.

Along these same lines, Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* rights the wrongs of the Industrial Revolution in England, not through violence, but through seeing where one went wrong in relationships and making amends. In intermediate Reading and Writing we read the story in simplified English then watch the movie at the end of the fall semester.

In conclusion, the most moving stories show people refusing to throw life away just because it isn't perfect. They depict sacrifice and struggle and conflict ending in healing and restoration and joy. Think of *Seabiscuit*, in which a horse, a trainer, a jockey, and an owner are all given a shot at new life through giving new life to a horse that everyone else had thrown away. Think of



*Sarah Plain and Tall*, who brings healing and new life to a father and his two small children who had lost their wife and mother and their hope. (I link this scene with a chapter in our reading text about overcoming obstacles.) Their theme is God's theme, rendered beautifully in Eugene Peterson's translation of John's gospel, *The Message*:

Jesus said, 'Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don't let go. I came down from heaven not to follow my own whim, but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me. This, in a nutshell, is that will, that everything handed over to me by the Father be completed—not a single detail missed—and at the wrap-up of time I have everything and everyone put together, upright and whole.'

*Peggy Hull serves as professor and program director of ESL at Dodge City Community College in southwest Kansas. Her favorite film is Chariots of Fire starring Ian Charleson and Ben Cross, and her favorite line is, "I believe that God made me for a purpose: for China. . . . But he also made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure."*

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### [EFL Teacher Training in the Philippines Using the M.O.D.E. Approach](#)

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According to Murray (2000), "85% of international organizations in the world make official use of English" (cited in Peever, 2003, p. 67), and therefore the need for effective and qualified English teachers is urgent. In this article I describe my experience in a teacher-training program in the Philippines and share the model that I have used in it.

#### **Background**

In 1997 I was asked to train EFL teachers at a graduate school in the Philippines. As I was new to teacher training, it was quite a challenge, but over the years I have been encouraged with the development of the program and the enthusiasm of the student teachers. The EFL teacher-training course at the International School of Theology-Asia (now called the International Graduate School of Leadership) in Quezon City, Philippines, is designed to help teachers put into practice current theories and principles of language-teaching techniques. We use a hands-on approach that gets students immediately involved in applying what they have studied. Teacher-trainers model various EFL lessons using a designated principle while student teachers observe, participate in, and then discuss their ideas. Other methods include short lectures, demonstrations, team teaching, group dynamics, peer evaluation, curriculum planning, textbook analysis, research, tutoring of individuals needing instruction at the school, and an internship in a real EFL classroom.

The emphasis of the program is on training culturally sensitive teachers who teach English for the purpose of real communication and developing relationships that make communication authentic. One of our goals is to help improve the economic conditions of those being taught by equipping them with more earning potential and thus bringing about an improved environment for those in developing countries. Another goal is to model the love of Christ to our students through kindness, a listening ear, and practical demonstrations of His mercy and compassion.

Our program is committed to training teachers thoroughly to help with their confidence level and credibility as nonnative-English-speaking teachers. According to my experience and that of our graduates, EFL teachers are asked to teach in a variety of settings: to children, teens, college-age students, business professionals, housewives, and other groups. Because of stiff competition, nonnative-English-speaking teachers must be equipped to continue improving their own language abilities as well as finding ways to compensate for any lack through the many media resources available.

Many short-term (2- to 6-week) training programs tend to give a 1-2-3 approach that is not always flexible for all that is required of the serious EFL teacher. Therefore, our program includes 20 graduate credit hours of teacher training and 20 more credit hours of intercultural studies (cross-cultural communication, history of missions, Asian religions, and the like). I agree with Hamilton (1987) who argued that people going overseas can't count on having time to deal with deficiencies after they are in the field, and thus they should be well-prepared before leaving for their work abroad. It takes 9 months to complete our program on a part-time basis. Students are also required to complete two practica: (a) teaching in a real EFL classroom and (b) developing a relationship and doing research with one person from another culture and then writing a paper on their findings.

Of the 90 student teachers who have been trained so far, many have gone to work in such countries as Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, China, East Timor, Thailand, Cambodia, and Afghanistan. On the whole, they have been quite successful in their teaching experiences. Most have stayed at least a year in their teaching assignments and found their jobs to be quite

satisfying. One was even nominated Teacher of the Year several times.

One of the biggest challenges has been making the program available to those in the area without compromising thoroughness and professional standards. Many who apply have full-time jobs and can't make the daytime classes, but teaching in the evenings was difficult for faculty with small children. In the future we also hope to provide classes to help those less proficient in English to develop their language skills. There are also needs for further training in the areas of lesson planning and pronunciation.

In an effort to streamline the program, a simple system was developed so teachers can use it in the field. It has been found that EFL teachers are often asked to train other national teachers, in countries such as China, Indonesia, or Vietnam. I chose the acronym M.O.D.E. to describe our basic teacher-training model.

### **M.O.D.E.**

M.O.D.E. stands for model, observe, demonstrate, and evaluate. The teacher-trainer models various aspects of language teaching; the students observe and participate as English students. Next they work in pairs or groups to develop a similar micro-lesson plan using the appropriate principle or technique. Each group then demonstrates their lesson to the whole class and appropriate evaluation is given. This method is backed up by such research as described by Gebhard, Gaitan, and Oprandy (1994), who stated that student teachers need to be "prepared to assume the responsibilities for what goes on in their classrooms" (p. 16). The educator must therefore avoid a prescriptive style of teaching, as student teachers need "to gain investigative skills . . . to make decisions as responsible language teachers" (p. 16). They suggest four activities teacher educators can use to train student teachers in these skills:

- teaching a class (micro-lessons)
- observing the teaching act
- conducting investigative projects on some aspects of teaching
- discussing teaching in several contexts (Gebhard et al., 1994, p. 16)

### **A M.O.D.E. Example**

Let me give an example for teaching the continuous or progressive present verb tense. The trainer models a simple activity such as interviewing other students. First, realia items or magazine pictures are handed out to each student that demonstrate a certain action (such as cooking, playing a guitar, listening to music, fixing a car, or playing a sport). The trainer then asks the various student teachers (who are playing the role of beginning English students), "What are you doing?" The student teacher answers, "I'm talking on the phone" or whatever it is the item or picture describes. To provide practice on other pronouns such as *they*, *he*, or *we*, the teacher trainer can point to other classmates and ask, "What are they doing?" and the student would give the appropriate answer. The trainer can develop the lesson as much as he or she wants with other appropriate activities, such as having the class interview each other about their activities and then reporting back to the class: "Maria is baking a cake, Sean is listening to music."

Because the student teachers observe and participate in the activity, they will be able to apply it much better than if they merely read a written lesson plan or heard a lecture describing the activity. "Learning takes place through active participation of trainees—not essentially or necessarily through activities of the trainer. The trainer's most foundational influence is in designing an environment to stimulate and encourage learning" (Hoke, 1995, p. 88). The student teachers are given the chance to analyze the lesson for strengths and potential pitfalls. They can make suggestions to improve the lesson or to add to it. They can note all the aspects of the language that are being practiced in the activity (such as using correct vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar structure, listening for the question, and responding appropriately).

Next, student teachers work in pairs or small groups to come up with a similar activity, perhaps with a different grammar focus or an extension of the same topic. The students are given time in class to develop a 10-minute demonstration. After they've had enough time to work on the lesson plan, each group then presents their ideas and mini-lesson to the rest of the class. The teacher and peers can then give either verbal or written feedback. The team can also fill out a self-evaluation form.

This format is repeated for different types of lessons and methods. For a functional type of lesson, the teacher can model lessons such as how to make a phone call, how to prepare for a job interview, or how to ask for directions. This thinking is based on the philosophy that we need, as Hoke (1995) stated, to "Focus on learner learning rather than on the teacher teaching. Activities should be enjoyable to the learner in order for most learning to occur. Discussion is useful but to keep it fresh use it in a variety of ways—after observation, case study, analysis, discovery, mini-lecture or application" (p. 95).

Before using this type of model the trainer must be aware of the learning styles of the student teachers. The trainer must be sensitive to their preferred method of learning, as well as any

cultural issues that could be possible sources of tension. In the Philippines I found that students enjoyed a participatory style and flourished with the hands-on, practical focus. They learned from observing each other and from the pressure of having to teach in front of their peers. They were able to collect many interesting ideas and handouts from their peers as well as from the trainer. This method was especially helpful because TESOL materials were not only limited but also quite expensive.

### Conclusion

This simple M.O.D.E. approach of modeling, observing, demonstrating, and evaluating can be a good framework for a basic teacher-training program, which should be filled out with solid lectures on principles and theories of language learning and teaching and second language acquisition. Students should be required to do research, textbook analysis, and reaction or position papers as well. Standards need to be high, but for those wishing to get started with a practical method I believe the M.O.D.E. model can be a helpful tool.

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### [Working With Iraqi Kurds: Teaching, Writing EFL Materials, and More](#)



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#### Background

After the first Gulf War I began working among Kurds, who are primarily from Iraq. In 1992 I lived with a Kurdish family in Iraq, where I learned to speak, read, and write the Behdini Kurdish language and taught a couple of EFL classes for women. My students were teachers from a girls' secondary school, and our classes focused on English conversation. My team of two married couples and I lived there for 15 months. Next I immersed myself in a Kurdish community in Germany for a year, and then in 1997 I moved to Virginia, where I have continued to work with Iraqi Kurdish immigrants. During my first 2 years in Virginia I taught some ESL conversation to my Kurdish friends,

but my main "practical" work has been writing Kurdish language-learning curricula and teaching crash courses in Kurdish language to others who want to teach or work with these students.

Four years ago the United States went to war with Iraq. This time Saddam Hussein was removed, and the doors to Iraq opened for Westerners to be involved in that part of the world again. A few months before the second Gulf War, I got the idea of directing an English program in northern Iraq. I wanted to create a program that would enable like-minded Westerners to go to northern Iraq to make a difference in the lives of the people and in their English education system. Thankfully, the English program seems to be meeting the felt needs (or rather, the *demands*) of the Kurds who live in northern Iraq, and it is providing a practical way for teachers to serve others there. I have been primarily interested in having teachers go as summer short-termers, especially if they have the potential of returning later as longer term (1 to 2 years or more) workers. You can read more about our program online at [www.go2melik.org](http://www.go2melik.org). If you would like to consider joining us for a summer, a year, or longer, please feel free to e-mail me for more information.

### The Need for EFL Materials

As the director of this English program in northern Iraq, I am responsible for providing teacher-friendly EFL materials for our teachers. There is no postal service to northern Iraq, which limits our choices in terms of practicality to whatever is locally available. Good-quality American English EFL materials in six levels with meaningful content that is culturally appropriate (my ideal) are not available locally. For this reason, we are having materials written for us by a team of EFL professionals, which we then print in the field and use in our classes. These materials are meeting our needs, and students appreciate them. Because we own the copyright, we are able to print our own books, and others who choose to use them overseas can buy a license and print them where they work as well.

### An Overview of New Bridges

Our texts are called *New Bridges: Connecting People Through Language and Culture*. The target audience is adult EFL students who want to improve their conversation skills by building on the grammar and vocabulary knowledge that they acquired in secondary school. This five-book series of American English language instruction for adults can be used in both ESL and EFL contexts. The books are divided into eight topical units with three lessons in each unit, so that each book is estimated to provide enough material for at least 48 hours of instruction. Teacher's editions are also available. The books are designed for beginning to advanced levels of learners who have studied English in school with traditional methods and who want to learn to use their English to communicate. New Bridges distinctives are as follows:

- *New Bridges* takes a lexical approach to language learning. Each lesson is rich in words and contexts, and each book contains over 2,000 different words. The series is designed to empower learners by expanding their active and passive vocabulary, thus providing them with the building blocks they need to communicate. By presenting vocabulary topically, *New Bridges* increases the student's ability to retain new information and to start thinking in English.
- The series is organized around topics relevant to the adult learner. Though the series is not grammar-based, structure is included in each lesson. The four macro skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are also practiced.
- The syllabus employs a modular shape, which allows teachers to choose the order in which they present the units. Though the grammar sections are somewhat sequenced, they can also be used in any order with teacher support.
- Illustrations reinforce the topic visually and can be used as teaching aids.
- The Teacher's Resource Pack (card games, whole-page sized illustrations, and other teaching resources) helps teachers easily present the topics, vocabulary, and exercises to the students.
- The expressions in the callouts give students additional language related to the topic.
- A crossword puzzle at the end of each unit can be used for vocabulary, grammar, and content review; the answers to the puzzles are in an appendix.

### Lesson Sections

Each lesson includes a number of sections. *Expressing Opinions* launches the topic by introducing learners to what others have had to say about it and by engaging the class in discussion at the start of each lesson. A variety of proverbs, sayings, and quotations are used to present the topic and evoke a personal response from the students. *Expanding Vocabulary* introduces the core vocabulary for each lesson with words organized according to parts of speech, and collocations are often given to set the lexical units in context. After the presentation of vocabulary, students have listening exercises that focus on the new words in context. The listening scripts and answers for these exercises are in the teacher's edition. *Exploring Culture* focuses on an aspect of American culture through a reading passage that is related to the topic and is designed to provide students with additional vocabulary as well as cultural information. *Explaining Language* highlights different aspects of English grammar from the lesson. There are clear explanations of how English words are put together to form structures. Students then practice writing structures using topic-related vocabulary, with the focus on effective communication. In *Exchanging Information*, students communicate with one another using what they have learned in the lesson. The dialogues are guided and students are given sample expressions to assist them as they strengthen their oral communication skills. The focus is on how language is used in real-world communication. Each lesson in *Enjoying English* closes by encouraging students to use English both inside and outside the classroom. Students are advised to take control of their language development and are given suggestions for conversation starters.

Our students love the topics and are pleased with the focus on conversation. These materials are particularly suitable for use in conservative cultures like the Middle East. I especially appreciate the sections on American history and culture because the readings are informative and act as a springboard for discussion sessions in the classroom. If you are interested in more information about *New Bridges*, you can read more about the books online and download sample lessons from our Web site: [www.go2melik.org/NewBridgesTextbooks.lsp](http://www.go2melik.org/NewBridgesTextbooks.lsp). (Ordering information is in the lower middle column of the web page. Complete, professionally printed books can be purchased, too.)

Our goal is for the five levels of the *New Bridges* series to become a complete EFL series ranging from false beginner to advanced. It is targeted at those who have not had previous instruction

from native English speakers. So far we have published level 2, 3, and 4 student books and teacher's editions. The audio recordings are in the process of being made for those books. Books for levels 1 and 5 are in the process of being written, and the audio recordings for those books will follow shortly thereafter. If we are financially able, in 2008 we would like to have an additional two books (levels 6 and 7) written that would take the learner to a precollegiate level of English.

### **An English Literacy Book**

I have also been working on a literacy book (i.e., level 0) that could be adapted to other languages. The goal of the literacy book is to teach early reading and writing skills and simple English conversation to high schoolers or adults who are literate in their mother tongue but who are not literate in English. Although the materials are not yet complete, we used them with good success in our summer 2007 class. The materials are a greatly simplified version of *New Bridges Book 2*, and the vocabulary and many of the conversation sentences and phrases are translated into the mother tongue of the students in a Roman script. The goal of the literacy book is to teach the students to read and write in a Roman script of their own language and then to transfer those skills to reading, writing, and speaking English. We use "experience stories" in the mother tongue and in English as the heart of the lesson and then transition into the English conversation lesson. The literacy book is not being published as a regular part of the *New Bridges* curriculum because it must be adapted to the mother tongue of the target students. If you are interested in using the literacy book with your students, please write me for more information.

### **Conclusion**

Living and working in the Middle East is a challenge I really enjoy. I love doing a job that involves getting to know people from another culture, problem solving (such as for our English program), and working with Westerners who have the same heart that I have, or who are just in the process of discovering what it means to be involved in the development of another country and people. The society and cities of Northern Iraq are rapidly changing, thanks to the measures of safety brought on by the American and Kurdish military forces, and it's exciting to be a part of the change during a time when people are interested in having our influence.

*Cherie Rempel is the senior editor of New Bridges and the director of an English program in Northern Iraq. She lives in Springfield, Virginia, and works in Northern Iraq during the summer months. In her spare time she enjoys reading, hiking, baking, sewing, and traveling.*

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## Adult Learners and the Issue of Native Speaker Proficiency



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### **Introduction**

In the relatively young field of second language acquisition (SLA), age-related studies have made the topic of adult second language (L2) learning a major discussion as well as a source of disagreement between researchers. Debates centered on the critical period hypothesis (CPH) have always called on an examination of whether a high linguistic proficiency level is ever attainable for adult learners. Many argue, owing to a supposed critical period specific to language learning, that adult L2 learners will never be able to gain mastery of an L2. In this article I aim to expose an overlooked premise of the frequent CPH-based argument of whether or not an adult L2 learner can reach native-speaker proficiency. I also discuss some factors that affect adult SLA. As the focus here is on adult learners, I do not place emphasis on the usual comparison between adult and child learners.

### **Can an Adult L2 Learner Ever Reach Native-Speaker Status?**

Although there is a lack of definite clarity as to what a native speaker of a language is, Richards and Schmidt (2002) provided a plausible description, saying a native speaker is one who knows the grammar rules of his or her first language (L1) intuitively (p. 351). Because this definition pertains to L1 acquisition through intuitive means, it disqualifies adult L2 learners from ever being considered as native speakers of their L2. This situation is partly because L1 and L2 acquisition usually occur in different contexts. L1 learners acquire the language "naturally," as part of their growth and development, whereas L2 learners usually learn through a more conscious process, often under "structured" circumstances. Intuitive learning therefore is more innate to L1 acquisition while L2 learners handle language input differently from L1 learners because an L1 already exists in their system and their cognitive capacity has been developed (Hawkins, 2001). Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2006) stated that adult L2 learners are cognitively mature and have metalinguistic awareness unlike that of children who are in the process of acquiring their L1. The implication is that older L2 learners make use of a more analytic means of learning a language. Paradis (2004) also stated that adults "rely on explicit learning which results in the use of a cognitive system different from that which supports the native language" (p. 59). Because these technicalities prevent adult L2 learners from qualifying as native speakers of their L2, I redirect the question toward language proficiency.

### **Can an Adult L2 Learner Attain Native-Speaker Proficiency?**

Proponents of the critical period hypothesis (e.g., Lenneberg, 1967) argue that adult SLA is qualitatively different from native-speaker proficiency. Despite the fact that research such as that by Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, and Schils (1997) and Ioup, Boustagui, El Tigi, and Moselle (1994) records instances of native-like adult SLA, many researchers are still skeptical that adult L2 learners can acquire native-speaker proficiency. Hyltenstam and Abrahamson (2000), for example, hold a critical view of the idea of adult learner success in SLA. They state that late starters or older learners who have been identified by studies as being indistinguishable from native speakers can be detected through detailed and systematic linguistic analyses to still have nonnative features in their command of the L2. Cook (2003) even goes further by boldly suggesting that all L1 acquisition is complete whereas all L2 acquisition is incomplete. These researchers imply that it is impossible for adult L2 learners to become as proficient in the L2 as native speakers, as if there were prescriptions pertaining to native-speaker proficiency levels. Yet I believe that the conclusions about L2 learners derived from these points of view are misguided and baseless as we have yet to establish any descriptive standards for native-speaker proficiency in every linguistic domain.

Davies (2005) acknowledged the lack of a definite criterion for the level of proficiency one must attain in order to be considered a native speaker of a language. Marinova-Todd, Marshal, and Snow (2000) even suggested that

successful adult L2 learners may go undetected due to problematic testing conditions. For example, many adults have been evaluated as having "poor" or nonnative accents. Rarely, however, have researchers clearly established either the exact margins of what is considered a standard accent in the target language or the degree of variability among native speakers. Most of the studies designed to examine the foreign accent of L2 learners have used judges who are adult native speakers of the language in question. Yet these studies have often ignored the fact that native speakers themselves may have accents that vary from the standard. (p. 19)

In the same light, Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978) stated that native speakers have individual differences in patterns of ability similar to those of L2 learners, which further renders the idea of a criterion for native-speaker proficiency as questionable and even nonexistent. In fact, studies such as that of Abu-Rabia and Kehat (2004) have revealed that native speakers can even be misidentified as nonnatives.

There is a question, therefore, as to what extent imperfections in any linguistic domain disqualify an L2 learner from being a native speaker, if indeed we are basing this judgment on imperfections. In the same vein, if we use imperfections as a basis, there would be a need to determine how many imperfections in L1 mastery an indigenous member of the L1 community can have before he or she is disqualified from being a native speaker. These are two questions that need to be addressed before any absolutist judgments can be made regarding the idea that achieving native-speaker proficiency is impossible for adult L2 learners. If the opinion is that a native speaker never loses that status regardless of imperfections, then it can be said that the distinction between native and nonnative speakers is mostly based on the accident of birth or birthplace, as the case may be.

The view that L2 speakers cannot achieve the same level of proficiency as L1 speakers is a generalization that needs to be studied carefully and defined more clearly. So far, the perceptions regarding native-speaker and nonnative-speaker differences are clearly not based on established guidelines for language proficiency, but rather on subjective opinion. There is a need to distinguish between being a native speaker and having native-speaker proficiency. On one hand, being a native speaker, as the etymology of the word *native* implies, is dependent on geography of birth and L1 acquisition, something that is simply not replicable for the nonnative. Native-speaker proficiency, on the other hand, can be outlined in terms of standards in accent, grammar, vocabulary, use of idioms, and tone, among other things. An added consideration should be the qualitative judgment that somehow impinges on the term *native-speaker proficiency* which, when applied to L2 learners, would identify whether or not they are as proficient as persons "born into" the language.

For now, one can safely refer to documented instances of adult L2 learner success as evidence of the possibility of successful adult learner SLA. Furthermore, perhaps one can look more closely at the term *native-speaker proficiency* and emphasize proficiency rather than *nativeness*, given the daily reality that many native speakers, if subjected to systematic analyses, may not be revealed to be proficient at all.

### **The CPH and Factors That Affect Adult SLA**

When it comes to discussions about factors that influence adult SLA outcomes, the CPH has always proven to be a focal point. In fact, the CPH has practically become synonymous with the subject of adult L2 learners. This is despite the fact that, as Singleton (2003) concluded, diverse and competing versions of the hypothesis undermine its plausibility.

Lenneberg (1967) coined the phrase *critical period hypothesis*. According to the CPH, there is an existing neurobiological period ending around age 12 (puberty), beyond which a complete mastery of language is no longer possible because of changes in cerebral plasticity. This means that acquisition of a language must occur early in life for native-like mastery to be achieved. After the critical period has passed, native-like performance is no longer supposed to be achievable (Birdsong, 2005). One of the strongest implications of the CPH is that any language acquisition that takes place after the age of puberty will be qualitatively different from L1 acquisition.

Though discussions regarding a specific critical period for language learning have gathered much attention in recent decades, it is important to remember that this statement on age does not have adequate objective foundations because an absolute criterion for native-speaker linguistic proficiency has yet to be formulated. In fact, Singleton (2003) dismissed the foundations of the CPH as anecdotal in nature. However, age is a factor in all aspects of human life, including language learning, and therefore cannot be dismissed as a factor in adult SLA. It is one of the numerous factors that determine adult L2 learning. Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) stated that age does influence SLA but mostly because of its association with other factors. Singleton (1989) even suggested that observed attainment differences between child and adult L2 learners that are often attributed to age may in fact result from an interaction of multiple factors.

One such factor is culture. The cultural background of a person influences all facets of his or her life, including language learning. Hofstede (1986) suggested that learning styles are culturally influenced. Although this proposition may pose the danger of ignoring individuality as a major determinant of learning styles, more than one researcher espouses it. For instance, Oxford and Anderson (1995) suggested that culture plays a considerable role in the learning styles unconsciously adopted by several members of a culture. As learning styles are influenced by culture, more so will orientations toward language learning be reflective of that culture. For example, if the culture of the learner mandates that a teacher is the source of all wisdom in the classroom, in all probability there will be a tendency for that learner to be more accustomed to teacher-centered instruction. If such a student is suddenly thrust into a student-centered classroom, such as those common in Western settings, Jin and Cortazzi (1998) suggested that conflicting expectations about the roles of teachers and students will result from differences in cultural orientations. These conflicting expectations can then become barriers to SLA.

The way learners see their culture in relation to the cultures of others can also either aid or hinder SLA. For instance, Nikolov and Djigunovic (2006) observed that some adult L2 learners actually did not want to pass for native speakers of the L2 because they regarded their accent to be an integral part of their identities. Furthermore, they thought of their culture as having higher prestige than the culture of the L2. At other times, an adult L2 learner may perceive the culture of the L2 as one that is to be admired, which, in turn, can generate integrative orientations to motivation that will drive the learner to achieve greater proficiency in the L2.

Singleton (2003) suggested that differences in SLA outcomes are influenced by the level and type of motivation of the learner. Brown (2007) talked about two kinds of orientations to motivation, namely instrumental and integrative. The instrumental side of the dichotomy refers to acquiring a language as a means for attaining goals such as furthering a career or being able to read needed materials or follow technical manuals. The integrative orientation pertains to a learner's desire to be accepted as a member of the culture of the L2. It has been observed that adult learners who had very strong integrative motivation to be bona fide members of the host culture were successful in their SLA (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006, p. 239).

The integrative orientation undoubtedly leads to a desire to interact in the L2. Learners need to interact using the target language in order to actualize the goal of becoming members of that culture. Bongaerts et al. (1997) observed that adult learners who were frequently mistaken for native speakers worked on their language proficiency actively through finding opportunities for communicating with L2 speakers and reading and listening extensively. On the other hand, a lack of exposure to the L2 would mean a lack of opportunity to participate in L2 interaction, which in turn can lead to failure in SLA. Sometimes there can be a tendency for adult L2 learners to choose to be in frequent contact with fellow native speakers of their L1 as a means of avoiding isolation or a way of expressing a desire to maintain a particular linguistico-cultural identity (Singleton, 2003, p. 17). Although understandable, such a practice restricts their contact with the target language and thus may contribute to unsuccessful L2 outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Aside from the fact that native speakers vary in language proficiency, the absence of a clear prescriptive criterion for native-speaker proficiency can be explained by looking into the reality of human learning. The capacity of a person to learn is simply limited. There is no time in an individual's life in which an absolute attainment of knowledge can ever happen. Language learning in particular illustrates this fact in the clearest way through the nature of vocabulary learning. As mentioned by Diller (1971), the acquisition of vocabulary, an important component of language learning, goes on for as long a person is alive. This can be attributed to the fact that

language learning, whether it is L1 or L2, is a lifelong process that never reaches completion. How then can a criterion for native-speaker proficiency be established? Although the reality of the age factor must be acknowledged, it cannot at this time support the CPH because the prerequisite of native-speaker measures, which are the basis of its arguments, is nonexistent.

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### CELT 2008 in New York: Education With Vision



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I am excited to report that Nyack College will host the 2008 CELT (Christians in English Language Teaching) Conference on Wednesday, April 2, at its New York City location near the corner of Broadway and Worth/Broadway and Franklin in lower Manhattan, just blocks from Ground Zero. This conference offers English and foreign language teachers dynamic plenary sessions, workshops, networking, and informative exhibits. I hope that you will consider not only attending, but also adding your voice by proposing to present at the conference. Adjournment at the end of the day will allow time to attend the opening plenary session of the 2008 TESOL Convention to be held at the Hilton Hotel.

The CELT 2008 conference theme of "Education with Vision" will be addressed by the first plenary speaker Dr. Zoltan Dornyei, who is known for his work in psycholinguistics. His publications include *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2001, *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing*, and, most recently, *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies*, published by Oxford University Press in 2007. Some of his works have also been translated into Japanese and Chinese. Among several awards, Dr. Dornyei received the Distinguished Research Award from TESOL in 1998 and the Kenneth W. Mildener Prize of the Modern Language Association of America in 1999.

Updates on the conference will be available on the CETC e-list as well as the Christians in English Language Teaching Wiki at <http://christiansineltconferences.pbwiki.com>; the password is celt. Watch for the call for proposals and other information as the time for the conference nears.

For further information please contact Eleanor Pease at 845-675-4549 or [eleanor.pease@nyack.edu](mailto:eleanor.pease@nyack.edu). Please note that Christians in English Language Teaching, while international, has no connection with the international TESOL organization.

*Dr. Eleanor J. Pease is chair of the TESOL Department of Nyack College in Nyack, New York. She spent many years in Japan, served as chair of CETC last year, and continues on the leadership team as past chair of the caucus for 2007-08.*

### Living Out Your Life Mission Statement in a Secular Classroom



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About 6 years ago I was in a perpetual state of confusion—too much to do, too many directions to go, wanting to please God in all areas of my life and fulfill His unique purposes for me and calling upon my life—but not sure how to focus myself. Through some intensive Bible study, prayer, journaling, and discussion with my husband and others, I found myself able to articulate a "personal mission statement": *To be an encourager and an equipper*. At the time I wrote it, I thought it applied primarily to my church ministry and to my parenting. A couple of years later, though, I realized that my personal mission statement could and did also apply to my teaching. When asked by my university to write a "personal teaching philosophy," I found myself casting it in terms of several core values derived directly from the "encourager and equipper" life mission statement.

So now that I have a clearer sense of what my mission statement and core values are—as a person and as a teacher—I can try to flesh out how a Christian professor lives out her core values in the real world. I have recast three of these core values as dichotomies or tensions.

### Justice and Mercy

The first core value is respect for my students. For me, part of respecting students is holding them responsible for doing their best work and for making good choices as they go along. However, the tension this value creates for me is between *justice* and *mercy*. As Christians we know that God is both just and merciful, and that in fact is why we need and have the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But what does this mean in our relationships with our students? *Justice* might say, "I told you really clearly what the due date was and what the consequences would be for late papers." *Mercy* might say, "I can see that you've been struggling (with illness, with time management, with a difficult marriage or a child in trouble), so I'm going to give you some extra time to get things together." *Justice* might say, "Part of my job is teaching you how to accept responsibility for your choices. If you chose to take too many classes or work too many hours or have too much fun on the weekend to get your work done on time and with quality, well, that doesn't make you a bad person, but it also doesn't make you an 'A' student." *Mercy* might say, "We all make bad choices and life happens to all of us. Don't we all need a second chance, a 'do-over' sometimes?"

Though the idea of building personal responsibility in young students through setting and enforcing clear standards is a compelling one to me, as I think about this more and more, I am coming to the conclusion that compassion and mercy are very high values for a Christian teacher. Scripture tells us that God's mercies are "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23)<sup>1</sup>. God gives us chance after chance to make things right, to do things better, to change. In his letter to Christians, James said "judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. *Mercy triumphs over judgment*" (James 2:13, emphasis added). So I have to ask myself: When I go to work, when I am in my classroom or in my office or responding to student e-mails, are *my* mercies "new every morning"? Do I look on each student with compassion—or do I respond to them with irritation or judgment?

### Fairness and Favoritism

The second core value is fairness, and the tension it creates is between *fairness* and *favoritism*. I have a reputation with students of treating everyone fairly, and I usually get high marks on this on my student evaluations. Everyone plays by the same rules, has the same expectations, and is judged by the same standards. I was pretty confident that I don't play favorites.

Recently, though, I was listening to a sermon series on the book of James (Appel, Beach, Breaux, & Frazee, 2007). The first part of James 2 pointedly mentioned how Christians should not show favoritism, talking specifically about honoring the rich over the poor. James said this:

Suppose someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor person in filthy old clothes also comes in. *If you show special attention to the one wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the one who is poor, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"*-James 2:2-4 (emphasis added)

As I said, I didn't think I was a person who showed favoritism. But then I started thinking about my relationships with students and how this text might apply to them. I realized that for me, the "rich" students would be the ones I enjoyed or connected with the most—the ones I click with personality-wise, who are interested and engaged, who are conscientious and responsible, and whose talents and abilities I respect. I realized that I *do* show special attention to those students. They are the ones who get extra time and energy and personal attention from me. Then there are the "poor" students—the ones who don't manage their lives well, who are not quite as bright or as capable, who may have emotional or social problems, and who suck time and energy from me and may be frustrating and irritating to deal with. Though I am not unkind or rude to them, I definitely relegate them to "sitting on the floor by my feet." I don't show much interest in them because, if I am brutally honest about it, I don't want to encourage them in any way to seek out *more* of my time and energy.

So going forward in my teaching, I'm going to ask myself if I "play favorites" by lavishing my energy and attention on those students I find most appealing and withholding it from students I am less drawn to.

### Excellence and Balance

The third core value or tension I struggle with is *excellence versus modeling balanced priorities*. I feel very strongly about excellence as a core value for a Christian teacher (or worker in any setting). I am guided in this by Paul's words in the letter to the Colossians: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. . . . *It is the Lord Christ you are serving*" (Colossians 3:23-24, emphasis added). If my students know that I am a Christian, and I come to class poorly prepared, waste their time, do not return papers promptly, or do not respond carefully to their questions and their work, how does that example reflect on me as a follower of Jesus Christ?

However, my diligence and my work ethic are not the only things I am modeling. As I have

already mentioned, I also want to model mercy, compassion, and care for them as individuals. I also want to model that I am a healthy, whole person, not a workaholic, a person with important personal relationships, a person who finds time for community service, and a person who relaxes and has fun. So sometimes I show them pictures of my dog, mention my church involvement, or tell a story about one of my kids or talk about the latest episode of *American Idol* or *24*.

So while I am committed to excellence, I also recognize that it can lead to workaholicism and become a false idol. We do not honor Christ in our own lives and we are not good ambassadors for him if we model stress, exhaustion, and living on the edge. In my own career, I have also noticed that sometimes a commitment to an abstract notion of "excellence"—say, the perfectly crafted lesson or the most amazing PowerPoint presentation—can cause me to miss what *true* excellence really is: For Jesus, it was all about people—taking time for them, listening to them, asking them questions, meeting their individual needs. So for me, the tension between excellence and balance includes asking myself the question of whether at that particular moment I am about *public persona* or about *valuing people* made in God's image and whom Jesus died for.

In my life, the journey toward integrating my personal mission statement—to be an encourager and an equipper—and my core values as a teacher has led to me to recast and rethink what those teaching values mean for me as a follower and ambassador of Jesus Christ in my sphere of influence. I would not at all say that I have resolved the tensions, and as time goes on, I realize more and more that I need to react to students, issues, and opportunities on a daily, case-by-case basis rather than having a rigid, static set of answers that can be easily applied to every person or situation. When I go to work each day, I need to ask the Holy Spirit to guide my thoughts and words in the classroom and out of it, and I need especially to ask God to keep my eyes, ears, and heart open to the people He treasures.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture texts are from *Today's New International Version of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: International Bible Society/Zondervan, 2001/2005).

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### "There is something furtive about the behavior of evangelicals in TESOL"

Suresh Canagarajah, [canax@aol.com](mailto:canax@aol.com)



My title is taken from the observations of Bill Johnston (forthcoming), who went on to give his well-intentioned advice for evangelical teachers in the profession: "Stop hiding." The evidence for this supposed furtiveness is overwhelming: having our own specialist publishers for our books, our own journals, our own university training programs, and our own strand in the convention (in addition to CELT conferences and the caucus itself). Other critics have observed that we take to English language teaching only to convert students under the professional cover, and that we keep our identity hidden in classroom and schools in order to manipulate the curriculum and discussions for conversion purposes. They have labeled our *modus operandi* "stealth evangelism" (see Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). Johnston employed other terms to describe our mission: "off the radar screen," "separate," "secret," "concealment," "an element of hesitancy or even embarrassment," and an "unwillingness to show their face publicly" (Johnston, forthcoming, pp. 5-6). "All this produces," for our critics, "a sense that there is something systematic about the concealment of an alternative discourse" (Johnston, forthcoming, p. 6).

Let us first disentangle the less confusing aspects of this charge. That there are some misguided organizations that might exploit ELT for conversion purposes is well known and readily cited by our critics. Christian professionals oppose anyone who uses teaching for evangelization without any professional expertise or concern for students and local communities. Another misunderstanding to get out of the way is our production of books and journals with Christian publishers. Academic publishers are simply not interested in publishing work related to

evangelical Christianity, especially if it doesn't display a good measure of scholarly cynicism toward the subject. They have to worry about making a profit in the scholarly market. Our critics are aware of such practical considerations even when they offer less flattering explanations for our use of specialist publishers: Pennycook (forthcoming) attributed this practice to "the anti-intellectualism of the movement. . . . They [evangelicals] publish in these presses not only to hide but because other presses would not publish their work" (p. 2).

But it is the other manifestations of our supposed furtiveness that I find difficult to reject. It is not difficult to argue that operating stealthily is morally and spiritually unacceptable for Christians. However, I can't also concede that all that my witness constitutes is wearing a label that says "Praise the Lord! I am an evangelical!" everywhere I go. For important scriptural reasons, our witness is more holistic, immanent, all pervading, and embedded than mere outward displays and pronouncements would allow. But, then, do our critics misunderstand this holistic witness for covert evangelization?

I understand the scriptural command to be the salt of the earth as a call to lose my identity, enter deeply into all social domains, and transform everything around me to be in line with Christian values. The fact that I don't want to draw attention to myself or to my evangelical identity is not because I want to work furtively. In fact, my mission is not fulfilled with a few well-chosen public acts or verbal pronouncements. It is often nonverbal, indirect, and ongoing. Witness of such kind goes beyond wearing a nametag everywhere that identifies my card-carrying evangelical status. Furthermore, in my immediate contexts of professional, social, and institutional life, observing the operative regulations and conventions as a good citizen is part of my Christian witness. I remember the advice by Paul and Peter to serve our masters as we serve God Himself (Eph 6:1-8; Col 3:22-25; 1 Pet 2:19-20). When I follow the institutional expectations that don't conflict with my spirituality, it is not because I want to keep my faith hidden. My faith is expressed in the way I perform my teaching effectively. Therefore, my professional activity is one form of my witness. This is not a front for the ulterior purpose of converting my students. Moreover, we should always think and act in a Christian way; witness is not treated as a separate activity that requires a distinct label. I remember Paul's encouragement to "let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of mind" (Rom 12:2). When this happens, we are not conscious of doing anything distinctively "Christian" in our everyday life. Everything we do is Christian—it's a way of thinking, a way of life; labels become irrelevant. All this follows from Christ's model of incarnation. We lose ourselves completely in the environment and society to regenerate everything from the inside. Rather than letting our values or identities stand out, we let them color and shape everything around us. Is this incarnational ministry something our critics confuse for stealth evangelism, a ploy to conduct covert conversion?

From a pragmatic consideration, bringing up my faith in any and every conversation is just a violation of basic sociolinguistic rules. In many communicative contexts, declaring my faith or flashing my evangelical label is intrusive. When my colleagues are engrossed in Vygotskian theories of learning in a roundtable discussion, I don't intervene periodically to remind them of some basic evangelical tenets. That is simply a bad interactional move, proscribed by any model of conversational maxims, Gricean or others. If the previous utterances or turn-taking procedures do not warrant a move of such nature, I end up looking like a social misfit. Such an interjection can also violate the register and discourse norms at work in a conversation. So, when I am teaching postcolonial literature in the classroom, I don't stop the discussion periodically with "The evangelical point of view on this is. . . ." There is an academic and, more specifically, literary discourse operative in that setting. If necessary, I have to negotiate the place of other discourses, mindful of the dominant discourse in that communicative context. This is not to deny that everything I utter in those conversations is informed by an evangelical perspective. And, of course, there have been sublime moments in classrooms and scholarly gatherings when we have collectively traversed spiritual heights. However, in such moments, "God talk" was contextually relevant. It didn't violate any conversational maxims or discourse constraints because there was a question, topic shift, or turn that invited a spiritual contribution. Does openness mean, for our critics, making explicit our evangelical identity in every conversation and interaction? Does failing to do so constitute a stratagem for stealth evangelism?

As for the need to meet with like-minded people and enjoy times of in-group bonding, this is also both a scriptural and social need. We find Jesus withdrawing with His disciples to review their teaching and work periodically. We find them praying together and preparing themselves for service at other times. To be a close-knit body, connected to our divine roots and, thus, exemplifying a model community life is a scriptural injunction (Jn 15). Paradoxically, it is these moments of temporary withdrawal that energize us for radical and effective engagement with the world outside. Is this importance we give for fellowship mistaken for separation and secretiveness?

Even secular movements understand the need to meet together to build their vision and solidarity. It is widely known that the cell groups of Marxist and other revolutionary organizations

are modeled after the house gatherings that constituted the early church. Despite suppression (or because of that), Christians found ways of gathering together to keep their faith alive. Such a need is always there, not only for minority movements in oppressive contexts. Even in a more democratic and pluralistic society, where all kinds of differences are freely accepted, the need for community isn't lost. Because engaging with diverse identities and values is stressful, people yearn to temporarily bond with like-minded others for sustenance. This need is articulated well by Mary Louise Pratt in her theorization of the contact zones in postmodern life where people from diverse ideologies and cultures must always interact. For Pratt, all of society is a contact zone. In such contexts, she sees the need for temporary withdrawal. Calling these sites "safe houses," she defines them as "social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, and temporary protection from legacies of oppression" (Pratt, 1991, p. 40). Such safe houses, paradoxically, ensure social cohesion and invigorate diversity in the public contact zones.

We also mustn't underestimate the need for individuals to temporarily withdraw from public engagement to find their own identity and bearings. Establishing private spaces for reflection and clarity in order to develop one's difference is not antisocial behavior. In his brilliant study of institutional and organizational underlife, Goffman (1961) argued that this process is essential for the development of identity: "The practice of reserving something of oneself from the clutch of an institution. . . . [T]his recalcitrance is not an incidental mechanism of defence but rather an essential constitution of the self" (p. 319). Identities are formed, developed, and maintained in contrapuntal relationship with wider social groups and institutions.

My argument shouldn't be taken as a defense of caucuses in TESOL. Whether or not there is formal institutional recognition for caucuses, special interest groups in the profession will continue to meet—if necessary, informally, in coffee rooms and corridors—to develop their identity and vision. Nor should this practice be treated as dysfunctional for our health of the profession. From both scholarly discourses and scriptural precedent, we see that temporary withdrawal and spaces for in-group solidarity impel deeper social engagement. And there should be no confusion that evangelicals are shy of displaying their identity. My professional introduction on the department Web site at CUNY always stated that I was a voluntary staff worker and faculty advisor for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Perhaps we should propose a semantic shift and ask that our critics change their pejorative terms for a positive experience. Evangelical teachers are not being furtive, stealthy, deceptive, and separatist. They periodically bond together and recharge themselves in safe houses for a very social/public mission that is holistic, integrated, embedded, all pervading, deeply ingrained, transformative—in short, incarnational.

*Having recently moved, Suresh Canagarajah is Kirby Professor in Language Learning in the Departments of Applied Linguistics and English at Pennsylvania State University at University Park. He edits the TESOL Quarterly and is a Bruce Cockburn fan.*

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## [Using Plays and Oral Culture to Teach Immigrant Children](#)

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### Introduction

Storytelling and folktales are valuable tools in the ESL classroom, especially for students who

come from cultures where the oral tradition is prized. This article describes how a literacy program developed and performed dramas based on Latin American and West African folktales to effectively teach grammar and Christian values to children from traditionally oral cultures.

### **Program**

The literacy program of the Glen Ellyn Community Resource Center is located in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Its purpose is to provide homework assistance and a supplemental English curriculum for refugee and immigrant students who attend area public schools. Our program is housed in the library of Abraham Lincoln Elementary School and meets for 3 hours each day after school. We have 90 students from grades K through 12 representing 13 countries. We created our own literacy skills assessment exam (similar to the BEST for adults) to measure the literacy levels of our students. They are divided into 10 groups based on the results of this assessment, and improvements are measured by administering this test three times throughout the school year.

We created our own basic education curriculum intended to supplement student learning in school. The curriculum focuses on areas such as telling time, recognizing and counting money, number and letter recognition, measurements, personal information, basic math operations, and reading and writing skills. We have three paid staff and 40 volunteers consisting mainly of retired teachers, college interns, and high school students who lead each of the 10 groups. In addition to our 3-month play project, we run a music and fine arts program focusing on literacy.

Many of our students are from traditionally oral cultures. Often, it is the old grandmothers who, sitting around the cooking fire at night, give the children these life lessons. Children then repeat what they have learned. As a result, they are capable of memorizing vast amounts of information. The ability to memorize great blocks of verbal information is written into their cultural code, and their learning strengths lie in verbal communication. They have an innate cognitive ability to process grammar through memorization.

For the play, we choose specific students and focus on their particularly stubborn language errors. Using our assessments and with periodic classroom teacher evaluations, I am able to recognize and choose students who are not showing improvement through written activities. I then write these students into the play. Teachers typically use a play to focus on phonetic problems, but in our play we place an equal emphasis on grammatical errors. I believe that by using a student's oral culture, grammatical rules can be induced through memorization. Patterns learned through a set script can be replicated later in student-generated language.

In addition, it was very important to me that this play contain core Christian values as well as be linguistically useful and relevant to my students' specific needs. Memorization in this play project can lead to internalized grammar and valuable morals for refugee and immigrant children. One of the many values of scripture memorization is that it allows one to dwell on and digest the author's intention (Foster, 1998). When we dwell on Bible verses and passages in small parts, we begin to internalize the meaning and can soon apply them to our lives. Likewise, through the play, students have the opportunity to digest grammar rules and scriptural values implicitly through the memorization of a set oral text. This is a starting point for the necessary internalization of difficult grammar and important values.

### **Storytelling**

The earliest forms of storytelling were oral. Traditionally, oral stories were passed from generation to generation, and survived solely by memory. Before many African cultures had a written language, they preserved their traditions and history by word of mouth, through stories. They were used as a teaching tool to convey ideals and morals and cultural values from one generation to another (Abrahamson, 1998). Storytelling develops as a means of communication in an oral culture because for some people it is easier to recall information learned as a series of events rather than as a set of facts. Oral culture gives more emphasis to rhythm, using repetition and short phrases to make the stories easier to understand and recall from memory. It encourages students to think critically and understand factual content in a personalized way, while providing very meaningful learning (Abrahamson, 1998).

In many cultures and societies there have been keepers of oral tradition, whose duty it was to memorize and recite historical and other relevant information about people, their culture, and their tribe. *Griots*, or bards, are a significant part of the oral tradition in West African culture (Hale, 1998; Hoffman, 2001). These storytellers are revered orators who memorize important events. In many West African cultures, speech is believed to have power because it can reshape history and the relationships of people. Most villages had their own griot who told tales of births, deaths, marriages, battles, hunts, and folktales. They were and still are the history books and libraries of people who do not read and write (Salmons, 2001). I have tried to build on this oral tradition, which I have observed in my work in Africa, by using plays with immigrant students here in America.

### **The Play**

In our curriculum, we have a separate track for students involved in the play project. Each

spring, we perform the play at an area church. The community is invited to enjoy the free event. To fill out the evening, we have an "undercard" performance. In the past we have brought in international groups such as the Muntu Dance Company and the Sudanese Men's Choir to perform before beginning the play. This allows the students to engage the community and increase the number of attendees viewing the play. Last year we had nearly 500 in attendance, and the students were invited by the local library and another church to perform the play later in the year.

While writing the play, my first challenge was to identify students who were making repeated pronunciation and grammatical mistakes and not correcting them through traditional lessons. Students were chosen based on linguistic needs, not because they had any particular acting talent.

My second challenge was to isolate particular language functions that were disruptive for the selected students. I then had to create a script that focused on those deficiencies while at the same time basing the play on a traditional folktale that was meaningful to the students. I write the script based on a culturally relevant folktale, but the lines of the script are written to specifically address the linguistic needs of certain students. I identified those students with the help of written classroom teacher evaluations and our own assessment exams.

I created a chart containing the selected students and their areas of linguistic need. I then wrote some sample lines that could be used in the script, focusing on the problem areas for each student.

| Student Name | Problem Area        | Error Sample   | Play Correction Sample   |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| Nania        | Intonation/Rhythm   | "Can you help" | <b>Who is the most beautiful in the world?</b>                       |
| Alonga       | Demonstratives      | "these pencil" | Look, <b>there</b> is a cave/Someone is buried <b>here</b> .         |
| Catherine    | Possessive Pronouns | "you books"    | <b>Your</b> daughter and <b>your</b> daughter alone, <b>my</b> queen |
| Andrea       | Negatives           | "I no have"    | You <b>don't</b> have to, Juan                                       |
| Peyo         | Adjectives          | No Usage       | A very <b>nice</b> , very <b>expensive golden</b> necklace!          |
| Ladu         | Negatives           | "We no like"   | <b>Don't</b> be afraid girl, we <b>won't</b> hurt you.               |

After the students were chosen, I gave them a script. This was the only time they were allowed to see the written dialogue. The students were excited about the written dialogue because they wanted to see and feel the play, but they struggled tremendously with reading and remembering their lines. Our students clearly remembered their lines best through verbal clues, not with written words. They discovered and induced rules and generalizations on their own.

### Time Table

After the first day, scripts are removed, and students are told their lines and asked to repeat them. We do a run-through of the play without correcting any errors. Just as griots would sometimes paraphrase the "script," students are allowed to paraphrase the lines that they read on the first day just to get the gist of what they are supposed to say.

In total, we practice 3 days each week for 30 to 40 minutes for about 3 months. After 3 weeks of rehearsal, students have memorized their lines, but there are many grammar and pronunciation errors. We now begin to verbally repair the errors without grammatical rules and explanations. Students are given examples of the correct structure with communicative input.

During our play practices, students partner with a volunteer understudy. The volunteers are aware of the specific language errors we are focusing on for each student. They keep a daily competency log to monitor student progress. In this way, they can encourage students with verbal input and give one-on-one attention, focusing solely on student lines.

Progress is also evaluated through periodic video footage. The video clearly shows how students initially struggle with their lines. When students view the video, they are able to see their mistakes and correct them. We can pause, rewind, and fast-forward to focus on language errors. In this way, students receive focused verbal attention rather than written input.

In addition, one day each week we have a student talent show; those involved in the play are encouraged to write and perform their own original plays with the help of their volunteer understudies. These plays range from several lines to several pages in length. We have used this

as a way to critique and assess student progress and recognize other errors. It gives the students an opportunity to create new language and dialogue, using what they learned from the play process.

Students rehearse in a classroom 3 days each week for 8 weeks. They practice alone with their tutors before coming together for a videotaped group rehearsal. The following day we review the videotape with the student and verbally repair errors.

Costumes are added after 6 weeks, and students begin practicing on a stage with props and a mock audience after 2 months. To follow up our verbal correction of the students' grammatical errors, we use written activities that focus on the grammar points made through the play. This helps students apply what they have learned in written form. After about 3 months the students are ready for their performance.

### **Grammar**

Our first play was based on a West African folktale called "The Tale of Rabbit and the Well." It is a traditional West African folktale that describes a severe drought and how different animals finally find a way to bring water to the parched land. But the underlying theme is driven by the character of the Rabbit who tries to take advantage of the hard work done by the other animals to find water. The animals try several different tactics to get the clouds to let go of their rain. For the part of the rainless cloud, I selected two students who were struggling with negatives. Both would often say, "Me no want to go outside today." Written lessons were not helping, so we wrote three lines into the script specifically for them.

- 1) Brother elephant why do you trumpet? I have no water to give.
- 2) Again I ask, what are you doing? I don't have any water.
- 3) Giraffe, why do you strike? I have no water to give.

Over 3 months of play practice, the students not only showed improvement in the targeted areas, but after the play was completed, they self-corrected the selected grammar and pronunciation errors. For example, "Me no have homework" became "I don't have any homework." It was fascinating to notice that the students had internalized what they had learned verbally through the play.

### **Christian Values**

We are an after-school program affiliated with the public school system, so the Christian message cannot be propagated or written directly into our curriculum. In our secular setting, we do not overtly incorporate the Bible into our teaching. But core scriptural truths can be implicitly passed on in the text of the play. Our most recent play was called "Blanca Flor." "Blanca Flor" is a Mexican folktale similar to "Snow White." I wrote the play based on the folktale specifically for students who were not responding to traditional written exercises. The lines of the play address specific student needs.

In the play, the beautiful princess says, "Juan, if I had one wish, I'd wish the world was free from pain and that peace would be the new king, and that food would fill us all day and that people would never be thirsty again!" This line is a lead-in for the central theme that runs through the play: A princess' sacrifice leads to redemption and peace in a land where people thirst and hunger for something more. As the students work each day to memorize their lines, they are not only internalizing necessary grammar rules, but are also meditating on related biblical truth.

### **Conclusion**

I choose folktales that students may be familiar with. For example, many of our Mexican students and their families are familiar with "Blanca Flor." Our West African students were familiar with "The Tale of Rabbit and the Well," or a similar form of it. These folktales were meant to be shared and passed down orally to teach a lesson to children and preserve culture. A clear and definite moral is embedded in the tales. Many of the themes have a correlation with scriptural values. When I write the play, I expound upon these themes. Often, our volunteer understudies find wonderful opportunities to talk to the students about the theme and reinforce the message.

Through this activity, students not only improve stubborn grammatical errors, but are exposed to core elements of the Christian message as well. Choosing a play that is based on a folktale relevant to the students' cultural background makes this technique communicative, real, and meaningful. It also utilizes the oral tradition that many of our students know so well. These tales provide teachers with a model that they can use to develop similar oral-culture-based presentations in their classrooms.

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## Book Review: *More Than a Native Speaker*



Amanda Baker, [eslambx@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:eslambx@langate.gsu.edu)

Snow, D. (2006). *More than a native speaker: An introduction to teaching English abroad* (Rev. ed.). Alexandria, VA: TESOL. xi + 363 pp. US\$36.95 (TESOL member \$27.95).

Context, meaning, and authenticity are three words frequently associated with foreign language learning and teaching today. Numerous resources have been developed to provide broad overviews of teaching methodologies and approaches to a variety of contexts, and these types of resources advocate the application of these concepts to the language classroom (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2001, Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Although these resources are invaluable, they are unable to fully contextualize specialized areas of teacher education. *More Than a Native Speaker* fills one of these gaps by intertwining

teaching methodology, techniques, and lesson plans with some of the realities of living and teaching in a foreign country. As this book is based, at least in part, on Snow's own extensive experience teaching in Asia, it is a tremendous asset to English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers who seek to teach abroad for the first time or for both English as a second language (ESL) and EFL teachers with limited or no training in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

*More Than a Native Speaker* is specifically targeted toward volunteer teachers or otherwise explorer-minded individuals with a thirst for meeting new people and learning about new cultures in the home countries of these people. Snow goes beyond a treatment of different approaches and methods in language education to bring in issues pertaining to culture and living abroad. User-friendly, avoiding unnecessary jargon or technical terms, and stylistically engaging, this book provides teachers with the tools necessary for surviving overseas. Part 1 of this book outlines the preparations required to successfully teach in a foreign classroom; Part 2 narrows this focus to particular areas of language teaching; and Part 3 provides tips on living abroad. The appendices also include a panoply of ideas for activities for use in the oral communication classroom.

The first part of the book comprises six chapters, all related to planning courses. Chapter 1 reviews the basic theories of language learning and the responsibility of the teacher in the classroom. Chapter 2 provides advice on preparing for the culture and teaching context prior to departure. Chapter 3 starts with the overall development of course planning from goal setting to measures of assessment. Chapter 4 furthers this discussion, looking at evaluation methods, backwash, and types of grading systems. Chapter 5 departs from broader, coursewide issues to the day-to-day handling of lesson planning and skills for survival in the classroom. The final chapter of this section presents typical sample lesson plans for seven different types of courses a teacher may be asked to instruct, ranging from beginning general English to TOEFL preparation to The English Club. As with many chapters throughout this book, each ends with a short section on valuable suggestions for the teacher to further think about, discuss, and act upon, including, but not limited to, predeparture questionnaire tasks, portfolio assignments, sample language-learning projects, student feedback, grade curves, and more. For beginning teachers dealing with unexpected course changes or uncertainty on how to build a course, these chapters and tips are especially useful.

Part 2 examines the specifics of teaching the diverse skills needed for English language learning.

Chapters 7 through 13, respectively, concern the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and decoding, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. For each skill or content area, Snow describes its importance, analyzes problems and goals relevant to it, and imparts a large assortment of time-tested tasks and techniques for successful learning and development both inside and outside the classroom. In terms of listening skills, one example of an activity described that students might find entertaining is recording your own stories of adventures you have had in the host country and making them available for students to listen to in the language laboratory for extracurricular listening practice. The final chapter of Part 2 contextualizes the foreign teaching situation even further by outlining some of the common challenges teachers encounter, such as managing large classes and dealing with students who participate too little or too much, and suggesting possible ways to handle them. These chapters are quite literally a treasure trove of useful activities for enhancing your teaching and making language learning an enjoyable experience for students.

Part 3, consisting of two chapters, departs from language teaching and concentrates instead on other aspects of living abroad. Chapter 15 provides a variety of helpful recommendations for how to adapt to and learn the host culture and language as well as how to deal with unrealistic expectations and to manage culture shock. The remaining chapter discusses the next steps for those teachers who have discovered a meaningful career in teaching EFL and wish to pursue professional training in this area. Many teachers, myself included, having discovered a passion for intercultural communication, language learning, and teaching, have returned home or gone online to obtain a degree in teaching EFL/ESL.

One of the most useful aspects of the book is its comprehensive appendices, especially Appendix B, which offers a substantial collection of "culture-topic activity ideas for oral skills classes." As a teacher who several years ago transferred from teaching kids in Japan to teaching college students in a Teachers College in China and discovered, only 2 days before classes started, that I would be teaching oral English to first-, second-, and third-year English majors (no textbooks provided!), I can certainly attest to the fact that these appendices would have saved me a fair amount of time and frustration. Appendix A suggests numerous general goals for each of the skill areas in addition to level-specific (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) goals. In fact, for those teachers who are without a textbook, *More Than a Native Speaker* may even form the foundation of an entire course.

As Snow hopes to cover a variety of topics relevant to foreign language teaching, depth of coverage is necessarily limited. One area in particular that is surprisingly deficient is the teaching of pronunciation. Although a part of the chapter on the teaching of speaking addresses pronunciation, an entire chapter devoted to this aspect of the English language would be beneficial. Further discussion of the various elements of pronunciation and activities for teaching them would improve this part of the book.

For the teacher with restricted luggage capacity, a book with extensive descriptions of foreign language contexts and language-teaching rationales, goals, methodology, tasks, activities, and techniques would be prohibitively bulky. Instead, as Snow suggests, the outward-bound teacher could target a few other resources to supplement this book such as a book on the host culture and one or two books on specific skills he or she expects to teach; however, even without these resources, *More Than a Native Speaker* is an indispensable guide to English teaching as a foreign language and living abroad—a must for all teachers embarking on new adventures or surviving existing ones.

*Amanda Baker is a doctoral student in the Applied Linguistics program at Georgia State University. Her research interests include pronunciation instruction, discourse prosody, oral communication, and teacher education. She received her MA in TESOL at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, and has taught EFL/ESL in Japan, China, Canada, and the United States.*

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[Spotlight on CETC Members](#)



**Tarun Kumari Bamon, [lils09@yahoo.com](mailto:lils09@yahoo.com), Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

*1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. How are you connected with the world of TESOL?*

Friends call me Lily. I am from Shillong, Meghalaya, a hill station in North East India, and I have been teaching English for the past 28 years at different levels: undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate. For 12 years I have also been involved in teacher development, training, and research at the Teaching English and Foreign Language University (TEFLU) in India. Presently I have been deputed by the government of India under the ASEAN Initiative for Integration to teach and coordinate the Cambodia-India Centre for English Language Training (CICELT), in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

*2. What do you especially appreciate about TESOL and/or CETC?*

I have been a member of TESOL for a long time, and it is a platform for practitioners in the field to interact and exchange ideas relating to learning, teaching, and research in ELT. I have personally benefited from reading *Essential Teacher* and from participating at the annual TESOL convention in Seattle this year. The opportunity has immensely enriched my knowledge of ELT.

*3. Is there a relevant joy or challenge you experience which you could share with CETC Newsletter readers?*

Attending the CELT conference in Chiang Mai and then again just before TESOL 2008 in Seattle was a joy and blessing, for which I am grateful. Listening to experts in the field at conferences has exposed me to my own limitations but also inspired me to learn and research so I can be of service to people within my own tribe and especially to the Cambodians who are now my immediate responsibility. These experiences have also helped to make me aware of my role and responsibilities, especially as a Christian teacher.

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

Psalm 121 is my favorite Bible passage. I claim its promises in every walk of my life and in whatever situation I find myself. In the darkest moments of my life, it is this psalm that has inspired me to move ahead—to carry on despite the odds.

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

Don Snow's book *English Teaching As Christian Mission: An Applied Theology* has influenced me and my teaching. Before reading this book I had never really linked ELT with Christian mission. But the book is an eye-opener. I now look at teaching English not only as a profession but also as a mission. It helped me understand that I can reach out to the world not just through a full-time ministry but even through my teaching in classrooms every day. I am now doing what God has commissioned each one of us to do, to "Go and make disciples of all nations . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." I now teach the same lessons but I do it with an added joy because through them I can also testify of my love and humble service to my Lord and Savior.



**Andrew Bowdler, [bowdlerfamily@xalt.co.uk](mailto:bowdlerfamily@xalt.co.uk), Dinas Powys, Nr Cardiff, South Wales, United Kingdom**

*1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. How are you connected with the world of TESOL?*

I qualified as an English teacher (BEd) in 1978 and taught English in the United Kingdom and India between then and 1984. In 1988-89, I did a Diploma in TEFL course at Cardiff University, and then taught English and ESL at a school in Newport, South Wales, for 3 years. Between 1992 and 1999, I worked for the International Nepal Fellowship (INF) in Nepal where I was involved in teaching English to nursing students, teacher trainees, and INF's own Nepalese staff.

During this period, I also started an MA in Applied Linguistics from a UK university—by distance learning—that I finally completed in 2001. In my last 2 years with INF, I also ran the in-house language school that taught Nepali and Nepalese culture to ex-pats. For the past 7 years, I have had a variety of jobs, some within ESOL, some not. I just started a new job as administrator to a Christian training group, and hope that my ESOL experience will be able to be used within this.

*2. What do you especially appreciate about TESOL and/or CETC?*

I originally joined TESOL back in 1996. At the time, I felt that it would be a useful link as many of the International Nepal Fellowship's senior Nepalese staff went to American-based universities (in the Philippines, especially) to do further study. I joined CETC because I felt that being able to share things with other Christian ESOL teachers would be a useful support mechanism both professionally and spiritually. TESOL, through its Caucus and Interest Section facilities, has allowed me to network, virtually and face-to-face, with other ESOL professionals and share

issues of concern and interest to me and them—something that I would not have had access to otherwise. Other groups are able to give the "trade"-related support, but none with the added spiritual element that is CETC. Being part of TESOL and CETC has also allowed me to take part in, and learn about, the management and development of such a professional organization. Sadly, though, TESOL in itself has not been a great support as much of the material it produces is for the American market—something that I and other members find problematic. However, the groups I belong to are far more valuable anyway.

*3. Is there a relevant joy or challenge you experience which you could share with CETC Newsletter readers?*

While working with INF, we were not allowed to publicly preach the Gospel ("proselytize," as the agreement with the government put it). We could preach within the churches we attended, and we could talk about our faith to our neighbors if they asked. One year, I was asked to help with the English Literature course at the teacher-training college, and the list of set texts included T.S. Eliot's *The Three Magi*. The timing was such that we started to study the poem in early December! Once we had read it through a couple of times, one student said: "Now we've read it, what's it all about?" How does one turn down such an opportunity to tell the Christmas story? I have had a number of comparable experiences with students asking questions that effectively require me to explain my faith in such a way.

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

Not so much a verse—nor even a passage. More a topic. Starting with Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?")—which we did while living in Pokhara and under the shadow of the Annapurnas on a daily basis—my mind then turns to the passages that speak of God bearing us up on his wings—wings like those of eagles (Ex 19:4), or renewing our youth (by which I understand "our strength") like the eagle's (Ps 103:5), or that most wonderful of passages, Isaiah 40:30-31: "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men [and women] stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

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

When I first started teaching, my father (an Anglican clergyman) reminded me about Romans 10. We can't confess "Jesus is Lord" with our mouths without our hearing about Him, and we can't really hear about Him without having the stories about Him in our own language as well as someone being a model of Him to us. That is what I have tried to base my whole teaching career on—being a model of Christ to my students, ESOL or otherwise. Not necessarily talking about Him verbally, but being Christ to them in my attitudes and approach to them.



**Meredith Bricker, [meredith.bricker@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.bricker@gmail.com), Atlanta, Georgia, USA**

*1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. How are you connected with the world of TESOL?*

I am a relatively recent member of TESOL and have been involved in the world of applied linguistics only for the past 4 years, but I often feel that I've been pulled in this direction for my entire life. In college, I developed my love of writing, language, and culture by majoring in English and Spanish, but it was several years of postcollege searching before I found my way to a master's program in applied linguistics at Georgia State University. As a now full-time teacher in the Intensive

English Program at Georgia State and coeditor of the *CETC Newsletter*, I feel blessed to be in a career I love, and I have enjoyed learning about my profession by being involved in TESOL and CETC.

*2. What do you especially appreciate about TESOL and/or CETC?*

For me, one of the most valuable aspects of TESOL and CETC has been the strong sense of community I have gained from both organizations. I believe that the collaborative effort that comes from being united by our passion for language and teaching causes us all to grow, and my own perspective has developed immensely from connection with the efforts of so many professionals in the field. Getting to know other Christian ESL professionals through CETC has added a deeper dimension to this sense of community. This depth of connection strengthens and builds our relationships with God and with each other, and I am truly blessed by the communities and relationships I have gained as a result.

*3. Is there a relevant joy or challenge you experience which you could share with CETC Newsletter readers?*

Some of my most influential challenges have included the endeavor to be bold enough to connect my spiritual life with my professional life and to accept the way others might view me as a Christian. I feel troubled by the history of English language teaching as it has been influenced by colonization, cultural takeovers, and deception in the name of Christianity, and I realize why this

background may affect other ESL professionals' view of my faith. On a personal level, I struggle with my concern that if I identify myself as a Christian in my professional environment, my personal human failures may succeed in promulgating the negative stereotypes of the past and present. However, being in CETC has helped me to see many others who have successfully integrated their faith and profession, moving beyond while not denying the effects of the negative images of Christianity and Christians. I believe that God has strengthened my confidence in His power to overcome my weakness in this issue through the example of others in CETC. I continue to pray that He will work through my actions so that I may truly demonstrate the unending love and mercy that Christ has exemplified for us. By trusting in Christ, I have hope that my failures will not turn others away from His peaceful, merciful love.

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

Although many "favorite" Bible verses have spoken to me at different times in my life, the one I have been referring to recently, especially as I find myself seeking direction for my personal and professional actions, is Micah 6:8: "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." The simplicity and directness of this verse help me keep my life in perspective and remind me that my role in life is to try to do God's will; I am not the One running the show.

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

In addition to enjoying the collaboration with other TESOLers at the international conventions, I especially enjoy the opportunity to see and listen to, in person, the researchers and writers whose articles and body of work most influenced my graduate studies in the field of applied linguistics. Even more influential was the opportunity to see many of these same TESOL scholars discuss their research and faith at the Christian in English Language Teaching (CELT) conference at Seattle Pacific University last March. It was refreshing to hear their personal perspectives on their faith as it related to their professions, and I found myself inspired as much by their spiritual revelations as by their professional scholarship.

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### About the CETC Community

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```
<%if request("rcss")="print" then%>  
<%end if%>
```

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