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## Chronicles of Hope: Christian English Language Educators in Korea and Abroad

#### GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring 2020 Edition of Chronicles of Hope!

Lindsey Herron, our KOTESOL president, wrote in a recent email that "Necessity is the mother of invention". Our professional turmoil with CoVid 19 has turned into some amazing online support. Educators all over the world are collaborating online in the midst of the virus. KOTESOL has been, in particular, has ground-breaking. Every event at KOTESOL has been online and free of charge. It truly is "Teachers helping teachers".

This issue is also about teachers helping teachers. We all need help with teaching online, and we have two articles that address this. **Being Present in the Online Classroom** is by Dana Saito-Stehberger, and she teaches at UC Irvine School of Education. She has thought carefully about how Paul and others were working under very difficult circumstances. Your truly also wrote about online teaching. **The Corona Virus and Language Teaching** has some of the early day challenges with our current educational situation.

We would like to welcome two people to this edition of Chronicles of Hope. David Toft is back and he is sharing about communicative language teaching. Be sure to check on that interview. Kitty Purgason is a new addition. She is the 2020 Earl Stevick Award winner and she has done an in-depth interview on relating her faith to the classroom.

We want to acknowledge all the changes and hard work that teachers are doing. It is with in mind that we dedicate this issue to you!

Blessings,

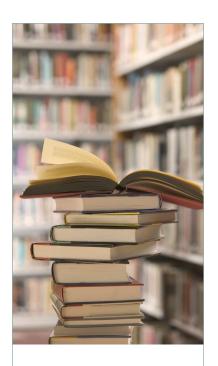
Virginia Hanslien



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# DAVID TOFT AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN KOREA

It is with pleasure that we bring back David Toft and his thesis on communicative language teaching. We began this last year with an interview and questions about communicative language teaching. In this section, we consider context.

## 1) Can you give us a brief history of English Education in South Korea?

While Jeon (2009: 123) states that 'communicative competence' has become "the focus of English language learning and teaching in Korea", this has not always been the case. Korea falls easily into Kachru's (1996:137) 'Expanding Circle' category and the evolution of English education has been slow; although first introduced in 1883, its significance has only been realized in the last few decades (Yook, 2010). A number of unique socio-political factors have accelerated English education in Korea; after the involvement of UN forces in the Korean War, the country experienced rapid economic development and a dramatic increase in wealth. In the light of ever-increasing globalization also, the vitality of English as a 'global language' became undeniable. As the Korean economy relies on manufacturing and trade, many employment positions now require a certain level of English proficiency; "English has become a critical part of high-stakes tests, deciding major opportunities in the lives of Koreans" (Yook, 2010:3). Yook (2010:3) surmises that English is "the most important foreign language in Korea, and it permeates almost every aspect of Korean life".

#### 2) What changed in 1996?

The Korean government, hoping to increase the speaking level of the general population, sought to reform traditional teaching practice. Most significantly, the 6th National Curriculum in 1996 marked a dramatic shift in favor of communicative-orientated approaches (Yoon, 2004; Yook, 2010). Going against years of tradition, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that classrooms "should be learner-centered, positioning teachers as collaborators and monitors in support of student learning instead of their traditional role as knowledge holders and controllers" (Kim, 2008:44). With the stated aim of 'communicative competence', this has been viewed as the official introduction of CLT in Korea (Kim, 2008:43).

Despite the progressive ambitions of educational policy-makers in Korea however, the implementation of CLT has been imperfect. Yoon (2004) argues that the 6th National Curriculum was flawed as its "emphasis on fluency" and "opposition to grammar... does not appropriately reflect the viewpoint of CLT" and instead

proposes that "curriculum developers should consider more essential features of communication rather than simply replacing grammar with functions in syllabus design" (Yoon, 2004:15). Yook (2010:146) also criticizes the inadequacy of 'top-down' reform, pointing to "the urgency of providing a reform-friendly environment and, more importantly, the necessity of 'reality informed' and/or 'bottom-up' reform efforts".

Kim (2008:44) has suggested that initial attempts at reform disregarded "the process of implementation". In summary therefore, initial attempts to implement CLT in Korea seem to have lacked a clear understanding of its principles and failed to appreciate teachers' beliefs and unique teaching contexts.

More recently, there are signs that the Korean government is beginning to recognize the importance of teacher cognition; intensive training courses for Korean teachers of English have been introduced (Yook, 2010:26) and huge investments have been made to recruit native-speakers to teach alongside Korean teachers (Yook, 2010:25). It is hoped that these measures will decrease the antipathy and accelerate CLT in Korea. In support of these initiatives, Choi (2000:25) found that a number of factors contribute to the successful implementation of CLT methods; a positive view of CLT, a high self-evaluation of proficiency and study experience in an English speaking countries. For native English speakers teaching at university, 'a positive view of CLT' may be all that is required.

# 3) So, there have been many challenges with the implementation of CLT?

Evidently, the implementation of CLT in Korea is a work in progress. The initial failure to set out an appropriate version of CLT and take into account teacher beliefs and their unique teaching context led to multiple problems in the application of CLT.

#### 4) What other research has been done on this topic?

In Li's (1998) survey of 18 South Korean secondary teachers four main sources of difficulty are highlighted; the teachers, students, the educational system and CLT itself. Firstly, teachers pointed to their own 'deficiencies in spoken English', 'deficiencies in strategic and communicative competence', 'lack of and few opportunities for CLT training', 'misconceptions about CLT' and a 'lack of time for and expertise in material development'.

Secondly, they believed that they were constrained by students' 'low proficiency', 'little motivation' and 'resistance to class participation'. Thirdly, the educational system's 'large classes', 'grammar-based examinations', 'insufficient funding' and a 'lack of support' contributed to difficulties. Fourthly, they judged that CLT was an 'inadequate account of EFL teaching' and lacked 'effective and efficient assessment instruments'.

Some of these initial problems appear to spring from the teachers' lack of English proficiency and experience with CLT techniques. Brown (2007:46) acknowledges that "some of the characteristics of CLT make it difficult for a nonnative-speaking teacher... to teach effectively". Jeon (2009:124) finds these difficulties unsurprising as many Korean teachers have lacked of experience of learner-centered instruction, did not learn to speak English competently and continue to operate in an examfocused education system. These complaints are likely a factor in the Korean government's decision to recruit native-speakers into public education (Yook, 2010).

Later studies have revealed some change in teacher beliefs about CLT. Choi's (2000) survey showed that 97 middle school teachers held largely positive views of CLT although many continued to value drill activities and remained unconvinced about CLT's approach to grammar teaching. The misconception, first identified by Li (1998:689), that CLT does not teach 'form' and "totally neglects accuracy" appears to have continued. Furthermore, comparing the results of a survey administered in 1996 and 2008, Jeon (2009) found that elementary, middle and high school teachers continue to be concerned with "the number of students in the classroom, opportunities for on-going teacher training, and the availability of supplemental materials". A comparison of Li (1998) and Jeon's (2009) findings also suggests that student motivation and ineffective assessment methods are ongoing issues.

#### BOOKS ON COMMUNI-CATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Brandel, K. (2007). Communicative Language Teaching in Action: Putting Principles to Work. Pearson.

Lee, J. & VanPatten, B. (2003). McGraw-Hill.

Littlewood, W. (1981). Communicative Language Teaching (An Introduction). Cambridge.

Richards, J.C. (2006). Communicative Language Teaching Today. Cambridge.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATIVE LAN-GUAGE TEACHING (CLT)

What impacts participation in vour classroom?

How motivated are you students?

Do your assessments reflect the teaching that you have done?

How are you perceived in your classroom?

Does Confucianist thinking affect your classroom?

It may be helpful to think of the goals in a traditionally Confucian classroom. How are students perceived in Confucianist teachers?

# DAVID TOFT AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) IN KOREA

## 5) What does this mean for university teaching?

DeWaelsche (2015:131) has suggested that "cultural and institutional factors, as well as limitations in English language proficiency, impacts participation in student- centered, critical thinking activities" in the Korean university setting. He implies that underlying Confucian ideals mean there is reluctance to accept teachers as 'facilitators' and students as 'autonomous'. This acknowledges the importance of student beliefs as well as teacher beliefs. Lee et al (2015) agree that socio-culture and institutional factors impact styles of learning; they found that Korean university students perceived themselves as 'receptive' learners and some held negative views about 'critical' or 'creative' learning (142).

### 6) What are the implications of this?

Korea represents a unique social context with unique barriers to CLT implementation. Some of these barriers appear to have decreased in significance over time, for example teachers' low proficiency and lack of exposure to communicative techniques, while some have lingered. Regular evaluation is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of ongoing CLT implementation. In particular, it is useful to consider whether the cultural and institutional barriers identified by Korean teachers in the past, continue to cause difficulties for NES teachers in Korean universities.

From the editor: The context of CLT in Korea has many challenges. Student centered, critical thinking activities may be the cornerstone of how what many teachers do in the classroom, but students are not necessarily set up to respond well to this. The teacher may believe that the student is a rational, thoughtful person who is capable of responding to intelligent conversation in the classroom while the student is more likely to believe that he/she is a receptive learner and may not favor critical or creative learning.

# KITTY PURGASON: EARL STEVICK AWARD WINNER 2020

It's an honor to invite Kitty Purgason to talk to us today. She has been teaching at Biola University in California since 1982, and she is the Earl Stevick award winner for 2020.

## Can you tell us a little about your faith background?

I grew up in a family with a rich Christian heritage. My grandfather was the writer and radio preacher Donald Grey Barnhouse. My father was a missionary surgeon to India. But none of that guaranteed my own faith. That was made personal in high school when I was struggling with my identity as a third culture kid who wasn't fitting in very well to life in the U.S.

Isaiah 43:1 was especially meaningful during that time: "I have summoned you by name; you are mine." Others might not have known my name, my background, or my story, but God did! My faith was further solidified as my own through Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at Oberlin College.

## What other countries have you taught in?

I got my start in English language teaching in **South Korea**. I was awarded a Shansi Fellowship from Oberlin and spent two years after graduation teaching at Yonsei University. It was that very positive experience which made me choose TESOL as a career. I went on for an MA from the University of Pittsburgh. My mentor there, Tom Scovel, a fellow missionary kid from China and India, told me that **China** was opening up to the U.S. and I should consider teaching there.

I did consider **China** and I was awarded a second Shansi Fellowship and went to Asia, this time in Shanxi Province from 1980 to 1982. Since then I have taught in **Turkey**, **Turkmenistan**, and **Tajikistan** as a Fulbright scholar. I have visited former students and taught in **Mauritania**, **Kuwait**, **Vietnam**, and **Indonesia**. I returned to **China** as a visiting professor for the province of Hunan (and was excited to see all the changes since I was originally there 30 years previously).

I am on the roster of English Language Specialists for the U.S. State Department and have been sent

to **Spain** and **Tajikistan** in that capacity. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have learned from friends in each of these places as well as to be the light of Christ in places where it is needed.

## How did you come to teach at Biola University?

I began training ESL/EFL teachers at William Carey International University in Pasadena in 1982 when I finished my term in China. At the same time, through the encouragement of department chair and mentor Herb Purnell, I pursued a PhD in Applied Linguistics at UCLA. I appreciated WCIU's mindset and the globally-focused students; however, accreditation became an issue and in 1991 the entire department moved to Biola University. So, for 29 years that's been my professional home. There I have been blessed to teach a wide variety of TESOL classes at the undergrad and graduate level, to grow to be department chair, to develop our online MA and to create a non-credit online certificate. My students and my colleagues in the department, the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, and the university have encouraged me in my scholarship, my integration of faith and learning, and my joy in teaching.

## Who was Earl Stevick? Why is he important to you?

Earl Stevick was an influential TESOL expert whose books were widely read when I began my training. I particularly appreciate the way he tied his explanation of teaching methods to vivid images. I remember from his 1980 A Way and Ways his image of a language student as a turtle that can be stuck inside its shell by personal anxieties or overly interfering teaching methods. He pictured the interplay between teachers and learners as like two lumberjacks sawing down a tree-each one pushing and pulling in a good rhythm together. In describing lessons that didn't have a good balance between materials from a textbook or the

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# THE CORONA VIRUS AND LANGUAGE TEACH-ING

If you are intrigued by the title of this article, you are among many English language teachers who are struggling to figure out how to teach online in a very uncertain time. Most of us are just hoping this rather large challenge will resolve itself sometime soon. But for now, we are all swimming and trying to keep our heads above water.

One of the problems with this is there are just too many options and too many things available. You have to sift through it all and make decisions rather quickly. Here is South Korea, my own decision making was to use Zoom, Blackboard, PowerPoint, Email (old-fashioned but it works well), and text-messaging.

This was our first week teaching online. What did I do?

I had two online classes yesterday and I used Zoom. It was so much simpler than using the Blackboard program the university recommended for live teaching. I have colleagues at Hongik University who spent their weekend trying to figure out their university's live teaching system (something like nine hours!). I fear this was the case for many English teachers all over the country. I hope you are not in the same situation!

To begin, I did what I could to take attendance once everyone was in zoom. I asked students to say hello or to write hello in the chat. It worked quite well. After that, I used PowerPoint to explain how classes would work. Zoom easily switches between the camera on you to your screen. There were no glitches. Third, I used PowerPoint to introduce some conversation question sets. I then had the students post their answers to the questions in the chat. The last thing I did was to introduce a self-introduction activity on Blackboard. They were to write a self introduction that included the some of the information asked in the conversation sets. At this point, Zoom decided it was finished (meetings on the unpaid version last for 40 minutes). I invited them back 20 minutes later. This worked quite well.

First, the only caveat was the 40 minutes time limit. What I used to do in 50 minutes I will now do in 40 minutes. It looks like things online are going to be a little condensed. More things for them to do and a little less time to do it. I think I'll be able to deal with that! Hopefully you can too!

Second, Blackboard is not as bad as some students and teachers think! Students just need to be shown where things are on Blackboard and that is possible with Zoom. I used the discussion boards and posted some class materials for this first day. The share screen option allows them to see anything you have open on your computer.

Third, I am keeping the 'teacher talk' to a minimum. I explained the question sets briefly and then had them answer the questions. I explained the self introduction activity and then gave them lots of time to actually post it on blackboard. (Most of them did not need the extra time!)

Fourth, I am having students say hello and goodbye. At the beginning of class, I asked the students to say hello on video or in the chat and at the end of the class I asked for the same thing. That begins and ends things nicely.

Now we are going to talk briefly about the Corona Virus and the isolation many of us are feeling. Social distancing and isolation are buzz words people are using. They make it sounds like you should never go outside.

First, I do believe you should get out of the house. At least once a day, put on the mask and possibly a pair of gloves and take a short walk outside. 20 Minutes of regular exercise will do you a world of good.

Second, have a routine in place. My husband and three children who are all at home and we have a bit of a routine. I get up, have a shower, do laundry, and have breakfast before most of the house wakes up. The boys wake up a little later, eat breakfast, get dressed, and do workbooks in the mornings. In the afternoons, the boys are allowed to play games and spend some time on screens. I have also added exercise (in my living room) to my regular routine because I am spending quite a bit of time looking at a computer and my lower back hurts a bit. I'm also baking on days when I am not teaching. (Yes, I am as stress-baker!)

Third, take heart in the fact that this won't last forever. We will get past the Corona Virus. God has this like He has everything else. I do believe that some time in June we will be back in our classrooms and for that we should all be thankful!

#### THE CORONA VI-RUS AND LAN-GUAGE TEACH-ING (CONTINUED)

Fourth, if you are feeling the isolated and you are reading this, I strongly suggest you join a support group on Facebook or some other social media platform. We can support each other online.

Fifth, I just want to say 'Well done!' to all out there. It's not easy to transition from 'in the classroom' to online. Feel good about what you accomplished and keep going!

Virginia Hanslien teaches at Korea University's Sejong Campus. She has been there since 2006. She is the editor for the Christian Teachers SIG blog, Chronicles of Hope and this newsletter

#### KITTY PURGASON: EARL STEVICK AWARD WINNER 2020

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the teacher and materials generated by students themselves, he said it was like trying to throw a paper airplane with one wing larger than the other.

Stevick was also a Christian. In 1996-97 he responded to a piece by Julian Edge in the TESOL Matters newsletter where Edge had written that he was "utterly repelled" by Christian teachers who were teaching "under false pretenses." Stevick's reply included a wonderful image. He said that there's an important distinction between exporting in the sense of "force or pressure other people to accept" and exporting in the sense of "make attractive and available on the free market." This led to Edge to graciously acknowledge the "difference between people living to embody the values they cherish and people living to manipulate others into the acceptance of their doctrines." Yes, Stevick was someone who embodied the values he cherished. In this, he was a great role model for me and others.

## Is there a Christian way to teach English?

Yes, if we "embody the values we cherish;" yes, in the sense that there is a Christian way to do everything we do. Whether we are teaching English, parenting a child, working in a bank, lying ill on a bed, or doing anything else, we follow the commands Jesus gave us: to "love the Lord...", to "love our neighbors...", and to "go into all the world..."

# What are some of the ways that you connect your faith to your teaching?

I've written a book with several chapters about this in <u>Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers</u>. Here is a summary. Check out the book for more details...

- 1. Be transparent about your identity as a follower of Jesus
- 2. Ask students questions about what's important
- 3. Be alert to opportunities to talk about what's spiritually significant but also be balanced and even-handed

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#### BEING PRESENT IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

Paul the Apostle was a master teacher. He was aware of his audience, whether he was speaking to Jews or Gentiles. He activated prior knowledge and connected it seamlessly to his message, for instance, when he referenced the Athenian's concept of "The Unknown God" as he described our God, who has made Himself known, in Acts 17. Paul also was the ultimate distance education teacher. He was simultaneously instructing, guiding, and encouraging churches that were hundreds of miles apart. He was able to provide his churches a strong sense of his presence, his awareness, his concern, and his connectedness, as he communicated through his Epistles.

As Christian educators, we not only gain rich and invaluable theological understanding from Paul, but also an understanding of effective teaching techniques. In this article, I'd like to focus on the teaching technique of creating a strong presence as a teacher, particularly in our contemporary version of distance education: online learning.

The timing is appropriate. COVID-19 has confronted millions of teachers with the challenge of converting their face-to-face classrooms to virtual learning environments. Many of these teachers are English language teachers who are faced with teaching listening skills, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary online. They somehow need to lower affective filters, provide interaction, model target language, do role plays, practice pronunciation, and create a community, to name some of the ingredients to successful language learning. Although these things are extremely important to the English language classroom, the concept of instructor presence, as modeled by Paul, is essential to building the community and motivating the audience, which in turn result in the success of online students [1].

"Instructor presence" has been defined as "the specific actions and behaviors taken by the instructor to project him/herself as a real person" [2]. When a class has a strong instructor presence, students view the teacher as caring and helpful, responsive to their needs, timely in their responses and feedback, and intent on developing a sense of community among the students. As Paul's audience may have felt isolated and alone as they were confronted with new and foreign ideas, Paul's encouragement, words of appreciation, understanding of their circumstances, and specific feedback motivated the audience to press on towards the goal of following Christ. Similarly, when students in our classrooms sense that their

online instructor is a real person who cares about them, students will be more engaged and satisfied with the class and will have higher learning outcomes.

What can instructors do specifically to create a stronger instructor presence? Here are seven tips that can help you connect better with your online students and create a stronger classroom community.

Introduce yourself. Send out an email before the first day of class to share something about yourself and to set the tone and the expectations for the class. Create a 2-3 minute video or write a short narrative to welcome students once the class begins. Share your personality, establish your credibility for the content, and the aims, expectations, and course schedule for the class, as well as the best way for students to contact you. Be sure to participate in the class ice breaker!

**24-Hour Response Policy.** Show your students that their questions and comments are valued and are important to you by setting an expectation that you will respond to emails and phone calls within 24 hours.

**Profile Pictures.** Have students upload profile pictures of themselves so that you can associate a name to a face and their work. Challenge yourself to learn at least one fact about each student in the first week, such as a favorite hobby or interest.

Interactive Activities. Assign tasks that motivate students to share their perspectives and personalities. This will provide an opportunity for the class to make connections with each other and to create a climate of community. It will give you insight into your students as individuals.

Evidence of Engagement. Students know you are active in the course by the evidence of regular weekly messages, discussion board posts, and timely feedback on assignments. It is helpful also to provide summaries of online discussions and general feedback to the group on graded assignments. This is a good way to reinforce the course learning objectives with the students' comments and work and is an opportunity to fill in any gaps.

**Conversational Tone.** When you provide evidence of engagement, either spoken or in video, use a friendly, casual tone that will put students at ease. Your

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#### BEING PRESENT IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

writing can sound more like natural conversation by using: the word "you" and students' names, contractions, shorter sentences, simple words, active (not passive) voice, and humor. Make reference to current events to make students feel they are all breathing the same air, despite not being in the same room. Ask questions and follow-up to communicate general interest. Validate student responses by expressing agreement or appreciation or by referencing it in another thread. Share your personal stories.

**Outreach.** Being present implies being aware of the people around you. Know how each student is doing in class. When a student is falling behind in grades or has not been turning in assignments or has not been active in discussions, proactively reach out through an email/message, text, or phone call. Let them know you notice.

These are things that many of us do naturally in a face-to-face environment. This list nudges us to transfer these important aspects of teaching and learning to the virtual environment. It helps us bring a presence that will encourage students to persevere and succeed in our classes. We learn through Paul's example as he encourages us through his Epistles: "Though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ" (Col. 2:5).

Dana Saito-Stehberger is currently working at UC Irvine School of Education and has taught ESL, TOEFL, and TESL classes for the past 25 years. Teaching Speaking and Listening online has been a particular interest of hers. 61,000 people have accessed her online ESL Coursera courses. Some of her TESOL presentations on technology-related topics can be found at http://tesoltechnology.weebly.com/. She acknowledges that our sovereign God is the ultimate source of hope, forgiveness, and true community, and that it is our responsibility as His followers to reflect that to others in everything we do.

#### KITTY PURGASON: EARL STEVICK AWARD WINNER 2020

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- 4. Teach students how to talk about identity
- 5. Teach students how to talk about potentially charged topics with respect 6. Include critical thinking.
- 7. Be aware of teacher-student power dynamics in the classroom
- 8. Nurture your spiritual life and pray for your students

## What advice would you give new teachers starting out?

I love giving advice because it allows me to use my experience and think creatively. However, I am reluctant to give advice without knowing more particulars. Are you interested in young learners or adults? Are you moving to a new country or staying home? Are you exploring a gap year or entering a vocation? Are you a perfectionistic or happy-go-lucky? But maybe that leads to a word of advice.

How you teach will depend on all kinds of who, what, when, where, how, and why questions. So that means you must get advice from multiple sources. You must sort out the advice you get—whether from a blog, a mentor, a book, or a conference—and see if it applies to you. Finally, you must be willing to follow research-based principles and best practices as well as to experiment to see what works for you and your students.





# THE CHRISTIAN TEACHERS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (CT-SIG) PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this group is to inspire Christian teachers to seek excellence in their teaching, integrity in their lifestyle, and service to others by doing the following:

- •providing role models who integrate their faith with their profession.
- •sharing resources for teaching and personal growth
- •encouraging one another through fellowship and worship

#### ENGLISH AS MY SECOND LANGUAGE

I too have a language

That other people can

Learn as a second language

And I blame my forebears

For their lakadaisical attitude

Towards the relegation

Of my language today.

I am taunted for

For every word of language

That falters in the use of my english

Faulty as english is

I am forced to rules

That utterly and woefully fail

Why should I be taunted

For a language that reneges on rules?

I am told that when making

Plurals from nouns

I should add 's' or 'ies'

But when the noun is child

It shamefully fails

For it is neither childs nor childies

It is Children!

I too have a language

Other people speak

As a second language.

-Tony Adah



For more information about the Christian Teachers SIG or this newsletter contact...

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## Christian English Language Educators Association

International Journal of Christianity & English Language Teaching

A refereed, online journal on Christianity and ELT

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