

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

## GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Fall 2021 Edition of Chronicles of Hope!

It is the fourth semester teaching under the current pandemic. Many of us feel older and slightly wiser. The fear and trepidation that existed in March of 2020 with teaching online has given way to a new reality that we deal with daily.

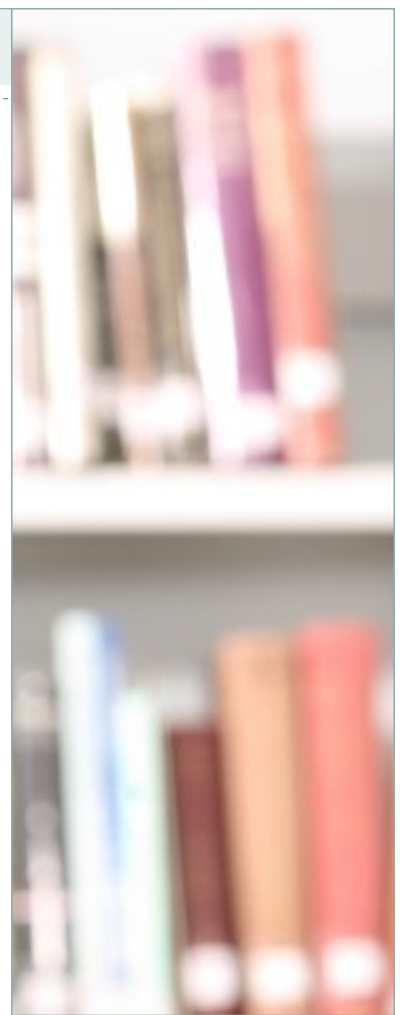
We have some great pieces for this issue. Heidi Nam takes a look at Christian identity and how we as language teachers teach critical thinking. This SIG dialog took place in February of 2021. We are also presenting an interview with Jocelyn Wright about peace linguistics and an interview with Allison Bill about faithfulness in teaching

We have an excellent article by Brad Baurain entitled Out of Control, a post that has been taken from the Master Teaching website. Also of interest for all the writers out there is a review of *Charitable Writing: Cultivating Virtue Through our Words* by yours truly.

This issue is meant to bless those who read it. So, go grab a cup of coffee or tea, sit in your favorite chair, and let God lead you while you read!

Blessings,

Virginia Hanslien



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## CHRISTIAN TEACHERS SIG DIALOG: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

What is critical thinking? Do Christian teachers have an obligation to teach it? These were among the questions that were discussed through Zoom in the Christian Teachers SIG Discussion at the 2021 KOTESOL International Conference.

The first round of questions aimed at reaching a common understanding of critical thinking. We started off by looking at Edward Glaser's definition of critical thinking: "the analysis of facts to form a judgement." This judgement distinguishes critical thinking from thinking in general.

Some subskills commonly associated with critical thinking are analysis and synthesis as well as source criticism. James Rush raised the idea that active listening is a form of critical thinking. Active listening is not the passive intake of information, but requires openness, attentiveness, and analysis of information. A related idea from the field of Christian education is "charitable listening," listening with the kind of care, attention, and assumption of good will that we ourselves would like to receive when others listen to us.

These critical thinking skills could be contrasted with thinking skills that do not necessarily involve critical thinking. Creativity often involves generation of ideas but not necessarily evaluation of those ideas. In language class, students spend a lot of time decoding texts and formulating the utterances that they want to produce. Although these skills require thought, the thought is not necessarily critical because it might not involve evaluation or judgement. Likewise, finding justification for a belief, although it looks like a reasoning skill, might not actually reveal any kind of evaluative thought. In fact, looking for justifications may interfere with objective judgements. Daniel pointed out that members of cults and followers of conspiracy theories use brain power to justify beliefs even though those beliefs may be highly questionable.

Open-mindedness may seem at first like the opposite of critical thinking, but the two skills work in tandem. The psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (2004) present critical thinking and open-mindedness as two ways of describing the same skill. Together they act as a filter for beliefs, keeping out bad beliefs and allowing in justifiable beliefs. If the two skills are separated and taken to extremes, they are no longer healthy. Someone who is too open-minded will be gullible, and someone who pokes holes in every argument may have difficulty believing the truth. We may see the balance between the two poles reflected in the instructions in Matthew 10:16 to "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Cheryl Woelk suggested that the connection between open-mindedness and critical thinking might be curiosity. The questions of a curious mind could be tools for openness or critical reflection.

Our second breakout room discussion explored social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of critical thinking as we discussed the relationship between critical thinking and identity, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding.

The effect of identity on our critical thinking could be positive or negative. If our identity is associated with allegiance to a particular cause, it could be more difficult for us to evaluate that cause objectively. On the other hand, if we make critical practices a part of our self concept through statements like "I'm the kind of person who double checks sources" it's possible that our identity could nudge us toward better critical thinking. Several participants in the discussion pointed out that Christian identity could have a positive effect on critical thinking if it leads to charitable listening or empathy, which could in turn bring about cross-cultural understanding.

The relationship between cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking is addressed in Smith and Carvill's book *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (2000). The book describes how a language learner can be a blessing to a host largely by causing the host to reflect critically on his or her own culture. When the guest notices things about the host culture, the host begins to notice these things, too. Contact with another culture can make someone painfully aware of the shortcomings of their own culture and can spark a desire to repair aspects of that culture.

(Continued on page 4)

### Questions to Think About:

*How would you define critical thinking?*

*Is charitable listening a part of critical thinking?*

*How is open-mindedness a part of critical thinking?*

*Do you require critical thinking of yourself?*

*How can you approach critical thinking as a language educator?*

*What are some ways to ensure students understand the other side of an argument before they criticize it?*

*How is critical thinking a discipline of the heart?*

## CHRISTIAN TEACHERS SIG DIALOG: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING



Heidi Vande Voort Nam (MA TESL/TEFL University of Birmingham) teaches in the Department of English Education at Chongshin University in Seoul. She is co-facilitator of the KOTESOL Christian Teachers SIG .

The third part of our discussion turned to practical issues: whether Christian English teachers ought to teach critical thinking, and how they might improve their own critical thinking as well as the critical thinking of their students.

Most participants in the discussion agreed that critical thinking skills should be a part of language education whether or not the teacher is Christian, because critical thinking skills are integral to language learning. Although not all Christians may agree about the value of critical thinking, most of us agreed that we would desire critical thinking skill for ourselves, and if we apply the golden rule, we should also desire that our students cultivate critical thinking.

A few participants qualified the obligation to teach critical thinking by pointing out that the teaching of western-style critical thinking could be considered an imposition. Furthermore, teachers should not assume that they have higher critical thinking skills than their students.

If teachers do want to improve their critical thinking skill, learning a language can be a way of broadening perspective and understanding students' experiences better. It can also be helpful to deliberately learn new critical thinking skills.

Several approaches to teaching critical thinking in English classes were suggested. Cheryl Woelk proposed pairing students with opposing views on an issue. Instead of crafting rebuttals, the students would only be permitted to ask questions to their interlocutors. Heidi Nam suggested having students select their opponent's best argument, which would encourage students to focus on the strengths rather than the weaknesses of the argument.

A Christian pedagogy of critical thinking may certainly include elements of general pedagogy: practicing logical skills as well as analysis, synthesis, source evaluation. To take a more markedly Christian approach, a teacher may choose to emphasize the virtue of humility or charitable listening. It was clear from the discussion that critical thinking is not only a skill of the mind but also a discipline of the heart.

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Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. American Psychological Association; Oxford University Press.

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## PEACE LINGUISTICS: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOCELYN WRIGHT

**Hi Jocelyn! Can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to Korea?**

Sure! I started teaching for private schools in the Dominican Republic and Quebec after completing a **TESOL** Certificate some years ago. Those experiences strengthened my interest in **ELT** and led me to study **TESL** and linguistics at university. After graduating, I continued to work in Quebec, but I was drawn to Korea in 2007 after a positive review by a former classmate. If you would like to know more about me, I was recently featured in a **KOTESOL** Membership Spotlight in *The English Connection* magazine (Shaffer, 2020).

**You are also on the administration team for the KOTESOL Social Justice SIG on Facebook. How did you become involved in that?**

Well, I actually founded that special interest group in 2015 because I felt more awareness and dialogue over social justice issues in ELT were needed within KOTESOL.

**How did you become interested in peace linguistics?**

It has been a winding journey to reach here through linguistics, ELT, graduate studies in education, communication, and law, an interest in reflective practice, critical pedagogy, social justice education, applied linguistics, and since 2017, nonviolent communication (NVC). The leap from NVC was the most direct, as it led me to discover the pioneering work of Francisco Gomes de Matos. (If you would like to know more about this peacelinguactivist, feel free to check out the biographical article I wrote ---for *Humanising Language Teaching* in 2019.) Astounded that I had not heard about peace linguistics (PL) sooner and very excited as well, I have been trying to absorb everything I can since then.

**Peace linguistics has a rather large following for a Facebook group. Why are so many teachers interested in this topic?**

Thanks! I guess the group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/peacelinguistics>) is a good size considering it is only six months old! I personally feel

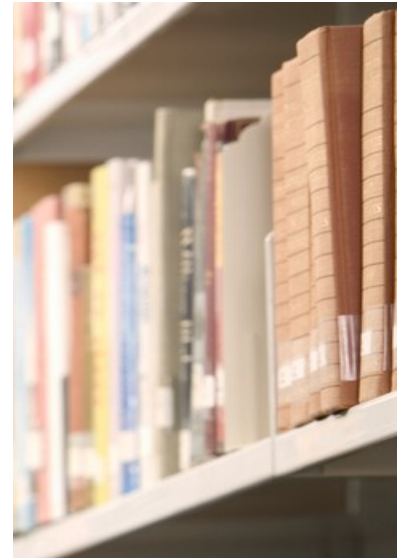
that it is still quite small, though, considering the transformative potential of PL. In fact, this field is still unfamiliar to many teachers and researchers although the term has been used at least since it was first formally defined by David Crystal (1999). Nevertheless, I expect that more educators and scholars will take interest as they learn about the field and figure out how to contribute, a major reason I created the group, of course!

**How do you incorporate peace linguistics while teaching online?**

Before answering this question, I think that readers need to understand that PL, as I view it, is quite broad. Basically, it is a discipline at the intersection of applied linguistics and peace studies. I recently defined it on *Willy's ELT Corner* as "an interdisciplinary field guided by the goal of promoting peace and peacebuilding through systematic study, deliberate teaching, and conscious use of languages spoken, written, and signed" (2021, para. 3). Thus, PL, like applied linguistics generally, is not limited to language teaching and learning. Rather, it is open to explore real language-related problems in different contexts (education, law, journalism, translation, etc.), and the work can be theoretical, empirical, and/or practical.

As for my own applications to teaching, I incorporate it in different ways. Since I usually teach content through English and have a certain amount of liberty, I have chosen to open courses that align with PL (e.g. Nonviolent Communication and Intercultural Leadership for undergraduate students and Critical Pedagogy, Global Englishes, and Topics in Applied Peace Linguistics at the graduate level). In other subjects, I have chosen to focus on social and ecological issues that are related to peace. As for my own applications to teaching, I incorporate it in different ways. Since I usually teach content through English and have a certain amount of liberty, I have chosen to open courses that align with PL (e.g. Nonviolent Communication and Intercultural Leadership for undergraduate students and Critical Pedagogy, Global Englishes, and a topical course in Applied Peace Linguistics (at the graduate level). In other subjects, I have chosen to focus on social and ecological issues that are related to peace in discussions, activities, and projects.

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## PEACE LINGUISTICS: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOCELYN WRIGHT



Jocelyn Wright is an associate professor at Mokpo National University and has taught in Korea for more than eleven years. Her educational background is in linguistics and education. In addition to being a local facilitator of the Reflective Practice SIG, she provides leadership support for the Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) SIG.

Regardless of the topic, it is possible to sensitively draw students' attention to language use in input texts and student productions. In lessons, I have questioned sexist language use, examined stereotypes and assumptions (including my own!), looked at the consequences of hate speech, discussed the harmfulness of static language and totalizing speech, underscored the value of positive vocabulary, emphasized the power of language of choice, celebrated the linguistic variation inherent in Global Englishes, and practiced politeness strategies for avoiding communication breakdowns and overcoming them. I have also looked at aspects of nonverbal cross-cultural communication with students. Whenever possible, I focus on skills students may not ordinarily develop in class such as expressing feelings and needs or skills for cultivating empathic listening like paraphrasing and reflections.

When planning lessons, I choose to give learners opportunities to discuss meaningful events and issues, solve problems together, work on group projects, etc. Even online (e.g. in Zoom), it is possible to do these if prudently set-up and scaffolded. To this end, clear instructions really help to minimize confusion!

With regard to assessments, when asking students to perform for grades, I try to explain my rationale to get them on board. I aim for transparency by explicitly naming evaluation criteria and providing models as necessary. I give students time to understand, ask questions, and negotiate aspects when needed. Something I have stopped doing altogether is giving summative exams, although I sometimes do still give formative quizzes.

With regard to online teaching specifically, Mother Teresa said, "Peace begins with a smile," so I always try to start that way and encourage students. I do my best to humanize the online environment by requesting students turn on their cameras and mics and getting them to interact. I try to be inclusive by calling on them (as equally as possible). I ask students to share their own examples and experiences and give them time to think before speaking. (Having to unmute before doing so actually gives students more time!) I also try to listen actively to them and relate what they say to others and the lessons. I make use of breakout rooms, so students can cultivate relationships and learn from each other. When they are working in small groups, I try to respect their right to choose which language to use, although I do encourage them to try to use the target language as much as they can. When speaking, I downplay

error correction because I hope students will develop confidence and fluency in this modality, and I feel intelligibility and strategic ability are often more important in the current context given that English is the *lingua franca*.

**What advice would you give to a new teacher who was just starting out with peace linguistics? What could a new teacher easily incorporate into the classroom?**

If I were to offer suggestions, I would say that a new teacher could benefit from first studying and understanding applied linguistics (if their background is not already in this area) and core concepts of peace. After that, they could consider how to integrate this knowledge into their local contexts through their curricula, materials, teaching methods, lessons, and assessments. Let me recommend a couple of resources for further reading below.

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### Further reading

Dormer, J. E., & Woelk, C. (2018). *Teaching English for reconciliation: Pursuing peace through transformed relationships on language learning and teaching*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Friedrich, P. (2019). *Applied linguistics in the real world*. New York: Routledge.

(Further reading is continued on page 10)

## FAITHFULNESS IN TEACHING: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLISON BILL

### **Hi Allison! How did you come to teach in Korea?**

I've wanted to be a teacher since a very young age, and I am also interested in languages (started in French school at 5 years old, and studied German in middle school, Spanish in high school, and Korean in everyday life in Korea). After university, I taught English for a year in France, and went back to Canada to become an elementary school French teacher at a private Christian school, but I burned out quickly – it was not the right job for me. Then I somehow reconnected with my university roommate, who happened to be teaching in Jeonju. She invited me to take a break and come to Korea for a year. That was in 2000, and I'm still here.

### **What is the best aspect of your teaching position?**

There are many things I love about my job in Jeonju University's Department of English Language and Culture. I love meeting students in their first year and teaching them until they graduate. I get to see them blossom from shy first year students who often have had very little experience using English, to confident seniors who are willing to take chances in their second language. I also love that I get to teach English while also helping future teachers learn how to teach. I think I have one of the best jobs going.

### **Can you tell us about your faith journey? How did you become a Christian?**

I grew up in a church-attending family, was confirmed around age 13, and was active in youth activities in the Anglican youth community in Ottawa, Canada. But I'm not sure if I had a full grasp of what it meant to have a relationship with God until I spent a year abroad in France during university, with 32 other Canadian students. There was an American missionary, Charolette, who ran Bible studies in English for foreign students. That year, quite a few of us Canadians made a deeper commitment to God, so I see that as a turning point in my walk with God.

### **Are there other ministries you are involved in?**

In the past 21 years in Jeonju, I've spent time in a few different churches, some English-speaking, and some Korean. For the past 10 years or so, I've been attending Jungbu English Church in downtown Jeonju, where I serve as a deacon.

### **How do you connect your faith to your teaching?**

I think one of my goals as a teacher is to help my students to realize that they can do it – that they can use the English that they've spent at least 10 years analyzing and memorizing. I want them to know that each of them is precious. I am not an evangelist, but I feel that one of my gifts is to be an encourager. I follow the idea attributed to St. Francis of Assisi – to preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words. I want my passion for my students to reflect God's love for them – and my words to guide them in their faith where appropriate in a language classroom.

### **What advice would you give to new teachers just starting out?**

This is a tough question, but a very important one. It's very common for teachers to burn out of the education field, so as new teachers, you need to take the time to ground yourself. Find a community of teachers, where you can ask questions, seek guidance, share your struggles and triumphs. If you're in Korea, KOTESOL is one such community. Also, take time for yourself – time with God, time with family/friends, etc. Find ways to handle the stress that will be inevitable for someone who is new to the classroom. And don't forget to find those moments of joy with your students as you see them grow and improve in your teaching area. Write down and reflect on the successes as much as you do the failures. Let God use you in this wonderful place He is calling you to!



Allison Bill (Bed Elementary French Education University of Ottawa, MA TESL/TEFL St. Michael's College) started her own second language learning at the age of 5. Allison has taught FSL in Canada and EFL in France and South Korea. She is a native of Ottawa, Canada. She has lived in Korea since 2000 and is an associate professor at Jeonju University. She is an active member of KOTESOL, currently serving as president of the Jeonju -North Jeolla chapter.

## OUT OF CONTROL...

### What is Your Perspective?

*How have you felt "out of control" during this pandemic?*

*What lessons has the Master Teacher taught you about His control?*

*In what ways do you deal with the stresses of teaching during a pandemic?*



Bradley Baurain has been teaching for nearly 30 years in China, Vietnam, Canada, and the United States. He now leads the B.A. and M.A. TESOL programs at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

Teaching often tends to be an exercise in control. I don't mean this in a negative sense. Good teachers seek to exercise control for the overall good of the learners and the learning enterprise. We plan lessons carefully. These plans include options if learning doesn't go according to plan, resources if timing doesn't go according to plan, and motivational techniques if learners don't go according to plan. We set goals and objectives to make sure class time is purposeful. We build in formative and summative assessments to check whether goals and objectives are being reached. We practice sound classroom management skills that aim to control the flow of behavior and communication and to motivate students in proper directions. We design courses and curriculum so as to mirror these ways of teaching at a bigger-picture level.

The global COVID-19 pandemic demolished this for me—internally, not externally. Externally, what my students saw (I think) was an experienced teacher coping reasonably well with new technology in a new situation. But internally, I was a child flailing about on new roller skates. Lesson plans had to be scrapped or reinvented overnight. Go-to activities no longer worked as they should. Assessing on Zoom felt downright impossible. For students on smartphones, I was no more than a postage stamp on a screen. Flexibility is one thing. I've often told my novice teachers to hold their lesson plans with loose hands. What was happening now was a whole different beast!

To be a teacher who follows the Master Teacher during a pandemic has thus for me often felt out of control. I'm careening along in a high-speed video game, hoping I haven't yet used all three of my "lives." What made me think I was or even could be in control? What made me think I had ever been in control?!

In the original *Jurassic Park* movie, the main characters criticized the urge to try to control every variable. In building a business to turn cloned dinosaurs into recreation, the park staff believed they had prepared for every contingency and had everything under control. Not unlike teachers. But this belief is both unrealistic and prideful. And we all know how that turned out in the movie. (If you don't, spoiler alert!)

I had thought my faith was central to my teaching. Then the pandemic exposed how weak my faith in this area truly was. What I was really trusting in were my teaching skills, lesson plans, materials, and so on. Not the Master Teacher. I preferred to remain in control. I believe that

He is in control and sovereign over all circumstances. I treasure the reality that He is our Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. But somehow in practice my classrooms were often exempted from these truths. *His* control was exercised through *my* lesson plans—ha!

The life of a follower of the Master Teacher does involve elements of "control"—namely, spiritual habits, disciplines, and self-control. And I'm certainly not throwing teacher skills and best practices out the window as I continue to seek to be an excellent teacher for His glory. But the flip side of following Him is trusting when things spin out of control. Utter trust, complete dependence, committing myself and my students unreservedly to His wisdom and love when there's nothing I can do to "control" much of anything. When my day-to-day teaching resembles Mufasa running before the wildebeests in *The Lion King*, even and especially then I need to affirm: "Surely [the Shepherd's] goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6 ESV).

This must be what it was like for the original Twelve to follow the Master Teacher for three years, all the way to the Cross. It was not what they expected. It was not what they wanted. Yet He was in perfect control the entire time. And the results were and are more beautiful and more powerful than they or we could ever have imagined.

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This article was originally published on Master teaching blog on September 1, 2021.



## CHARITABLE WRITING: CULTIVATING VIRTUE THROUGH OUR WORDS (BOOK REVIEW)

*Charitable Writing* is not a typical writing guide. It is about following Jesus' command to love God and one another and to do so through writing. This is a work of applied Christian ethics. It is necessary because many Christian writers can be judgmental in their thoughts. They often lack the grace and humility that should mark followers of Jesus. Christians should be slow to speak or write and quick to listen, but often the opposite happens.

The book covers what makes a good writer, how to argue well, and how to communicate the faith. The writers, Gibson and Beitler focus on three virtues that they believe are central to writing: humility, charity, and hope. "The central claim of this book is that charitable writing listens humbly, argues lovingly, and keeps the time of writing hopefully" (p. 13).

Let us look at each virtue in turn. First, humility is important. Writers are supposed to be humble. Being prayerful and inviting God into the writing process are central. Writers should not consider themselves better than their audience. Listening carefully to a different point of view is important. The authors see the virtues as a middle ground of middle between the extremes of excess and the deficit. Writers stand between the pride on the one hand and self-hatred on the other. With this, the humble writer will speak or write in appropriate way when the timing is right.

The second virtue is to argue lovingly. This is central to the Christian life and it should be the motivation for everything. Is this possible? Can you love someone and argue with them at the same time? The authors believe that a drastic reframing of the practice or argumentation is necessary. The metaphors for this are about attacking the opponent and demolishing or shooting down their arguments (p. 88). Gibson and Beitler suggest dancing, cooking, and raising barns as possible metaphors but they pick feasting. The banqueting practices of early Christians benefitted everyone. "The purpose of a banquet is not to win. Banquets are celebrations; ideally, all participants benefit by joining in" (p. 112). Gifts are exchanged, ideas are shared, and relationships are formed and strengthened at a feast. This should characterize good writing as well.

The last virtue is hope. Writers should be hopeful. This deserves a definition and one is given. "To look critically at

one's present condition, assess what is missing, and then long for and work for a no-yet reality, a future anticipated. It is grounded in imaginative acts and projects, including art and writing, as vehicles for invoking a better future" (p. 162).

Slow writing is intentional writing, meditative writing that includes other people and God. It is liturgical, prayerful. The writers explain that charitable writing starts with God in humility and draws close to God in hope (p. 164-167).

The teacher will appreciate the way this book is organized. The section on humility covers the virtue, listening carefully to an opposing view, and writing in community. The section on charity includes chapters on charitable writing, argumentation and the virtue of love. The section on hope includes chapters on slow writing and writing as a liturgical practice. The book closes with appendices that have discussion questions, writing prompts, and some guest contributions. The book has helpful tips throughout and there are writing prompts that are useful in the classroom.

The virtue of hope is not given the same amount of space as the other two virtues. I almost wish they had written more, but then I realized that they want writing teachers to think about this virtue and write about it. Cleverly done!

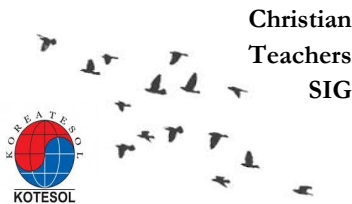


Virginia Hanslien teaches at Korea University Sejong Campus. She holds a Masters of Arts in Intercultural Studies and a Masters of Education in TESOL. She recently had a book published about teaching children entitled *The Giver*. She edits this newsletter and chroniclesofhopekorea.wordpress.com.

**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



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

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**PEACE LINGUISTICS: AN INTERVIEW  
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**SUMMER BOOK CLUB ANNOUNCEMENT**  
**TEACHING ENGLISH FOR RECONCILIATION: PURSUING PEACE THROUGH TRANSFORMED RELATIONSHIPS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

This summer the Peace Linguistics Facebook group posted an online study on the book *Teaching English for Reconciliation*. Heidi Nam shared this information on the CT– SIG Facebook page and offered to hold an alternative session for those who were unable to attend. There were six sessions in total and the book club was a success. We may be doing something similar next summer!

Tony Adah

