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First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the AILA 2017 World Congress organizers for having evaluated and accepted my proposal for presentation and the AILA Solidarity Awards Committee, Claire Kramersch, Daniel Perrin, Paula Szundy, and Hisako Yamauchi, for having provided me with the financial support to be able to attend this prestigious international congress, and Dr. Christina Gitsaki for having helped me out in the process of application for the Solidary Awards.

Without a doubt, taking part in this event, where more than 1500 participants from all over the world have made their research contributions, has been one of the most rewarding experiences for both my academic and professional development and my personal growth. I have gained significant insight from the new research into the field of Applied Linguistics. Not only have I been able to exchange knowledge and experience with fellow delegates but also I have raised my professional profile as a session presenter.

In a session devoted to the discussion of current teaching practices concerning Spanish at educational levels, I discussed the paper entitled “Trazando un camino hacia la enseñanza de la pronunciación del español rioplatense”, which aimed to introduce a state-of-the-art approach to the teaching of *rioplatense* Spanish to foreigners studying in an immersion program, with the pronunciation component as its core, as a response to the urgent need of producing learning materials which cater for learner needs in an intercultural globalised world. Honestly, what I valued the most about having participated in the individual-paper presentations was the richness of the post-presentation exchanges, where all of us felt extremely enthusiastic about asking thought-provoking questions that nurtured our willingness to share experiences and discuss current issues related to the teaching practices in the region. I am strongly grateful for having been part of the AILA World Congress, as this event has undoubtedly been a landmark in my career by reason of the opportunity for the horizontal exchange of information which has given me the chance to share this work, to which I have devoted a considerable amount of time, effort, and, above all, passion.

In addition, listening to the different plenaries, symposia and individual-paper presentations has been extremely valuable, but cultivating hallway and lunchtime discussions has been even more fruitful in granting me the possibility of interacting with international and regional colleagues in more relaxed contexts. It was at one of these social gatherings that I unexpectedly ran into an old partner of mine, who is now living and working for a prestigious university in England, institution that is looking for partnership with a regional university to start doing joint research work. We produced agreement on taking our talk to the next level once we arrive back home. From this point of view, this conference represents a solid achievement for my professional development, as it has actually yielded the results I was originally expecting to obtain besides making an academic contribution: trying to pull for new professional research networks.

AILA’s commitment to promoting the crucial role that research into the distinct academic areas of Applied Linguistics is, undeniably, a stronghold in the creation of a tight-knit community built on the foundations of collaboration and understanding.

I would like to thank once again everyone who has organized the 2017 AILA World Congress and all those people who have contributed to making my visit to Río de Janeiro possible.