

AiLA Awardee Report 2017

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I had the privilege of attending and presenting my doctoral project at AILA2017 in Rio de Janeiro thanks to the Solidarity Award. I would like to thank the Solidarity Award committee members for their service, their support and availability throughout the application process and the period preceding the conference. The acknowledgment of my work and the alleviation of the financial burden of travel and accommodation opened up new possibilities for me and boosted my motivation.

AILA2017 was my first experience of the AILA conference in general. At the end of five days of engaging plenaries, symposia and presentations, interesting conversations with fellow doctoral students and established researchers, I leave Rio with fond memories, and new ideas for furthering my research and interpreting my research results. This is especially pertinent as I revise the final draft of my doctoral thesis.

The study I presented at AILA2017, grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, documents classroom practices that draw on and lend support for the suitability of concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development, teacher and peer-mediation and learner agency and intentionality. It was extremely encouraging and rewarding to note a growing interest in the same topic by researchers from different countries and different approaches and foci (e.g., teacher education and development, student literacy development, mathematics education). Attending these paper presentations helped me identify recent references and research I was not aware of- which in turn will help me redraft a more engaging and thorough discussion chapter in my thesis.

During the conference, I noted the dedication of senior members of the applied linguistics community and their commitment to rendering service to the community and mentoring junior researchers and students. Familiar, renowned names we usually see in print were present and approachable. They offered advice and challenging questions. Their passion for the advancing the field and exploring opportunities for collaborations between strands but also between established research agendas in different parts of the world, revealed the shape of the future of the field. In a sense, it was a privilege to witness the emergence of new trends and future directions.