

Solidarity Award Report 2017

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I am very grateful to AILA and ALAB for the Solidarity Award I was given to make my trip to AILA 2017 in Rio de Janeiro possible. I had never attended an AILA conference before and the experience has been most rewarding. I am particularly thankful to Claire Kramsh, Paula Szundy, Daniel Perrin, Cristina Gitsaki and Hisako Yamauchi.

I was initially inspired to participate in AILA by Dr. Stephanie Ann Houghton who in 2014 invited me to take part in an AILA ReN proposal she was preparing. The proposal was accepted and now I am a member of a ReN called 'Native-speakerism across languages and contexts'. Last year Dr. Houghton brought the solidarity awards to my attention and that is how I decided to apply.

Professionally, AILA is an exceptional conference. All the prestigious authors I had been reading for years were all gathered in one event and listening to their talks in person as well as interacting with them was illuminating.

My own session addressed the theme of intercultural citizenship education in the foreign language classroom. Meeting the colleagues from Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Japan and the U.S. who approached me after my presentation and expressed interest about the theme of intercultural citizenship was motivating. AILA also gave me the chance to talk to people with whom I feel close academically, like Suresh Canagarajah who took part in a Roundtable I organized in Argentina in 2014 on this same theme.

The topic of my presentation developed during a five year process in which I conducted research under the inspiration and guidance of Mike Byram to bring the theoretical notion of intercultural citizenship into classrooms in different settings including higher education but also primary education. Intercultural citizenship theory proposes that language

education has instrumental purposes (such as developing knowledge of the language, communication skills, linguistic competence in general) but also educational purposes such as contributing to the development of individuals and of democratic societies. Teachers who believe in this framework consider that they have a moral and ethical responsibility to make language teaching educational in this sense. I was glad to learn that intercultural citizenship resonated with the plenary by Mary Bucholtz where the link with the community was also emphasized. This link that we both proposed and illustrated is a challenge for educators to make language education truly educational beyond instrumental purposes, not only in contexts with marginalized populations but in all language education. AILA triggered reflection and discussion on the affordances and challenges ahead in this area. I discovered that I share this view of language education with many educators around the world, even though we sometimes give the theory different names and operationalize it in different ways in the classroom. AILA brought us together.

Interestingly, AILA allowed me to meet in person colleagues with whom I had been working and collaborating with virtually for a number of years. This was the case of Dr. Adriana Díaz, Argentine but living and working in Australia, and all AILA ReN on native-speakerism members like Stephanie Houghton, Peter Roux, Lisa Fairbrother and Martine Derivry-Plard. I also had the pleasure of sharing lunch, engaging in conversation and strengthening bonds with colleagues from Argentina I had never met before in my own country.

Furthermore, AILA 2017 placed deep theoretical themes at the foreground and encouraged participants, including myself, to challenge comfortable theoretical notions like the dichotomy North-South to give just one example. The plenaries by Luiz Paulo Moita-Lopes and Tommaso Milani were illuminating in disclosing hidden paths and understandings, challenging methodologies, stimulating further developments. In my case, these openings were complemented with fruitful discussion in two symposia in particular, one called 'Translating culture in neoliberal times' (organized by Hua Zhu and Claire Kramersch) and another one called 'Encounters in intercultural education: Countering epistemic violence and coloniality' (organized by Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza). I am sure all symposia and

sessions must have been as illuminating and the only reason I comment on some here and not others is that there was so much available simultaneously that I had to choose.

AILA also stimulated a call to teachers, researchers and in fact anyone involved with language education, in all settings but in particular in the 'periphery', to bring their knowledge, experiences, histories, stories, wishes, aspirations and desires to the table, to make applied linguistics raise to the duty it has to contribute to the everyday lives of individuals, the development of democratic societies and the building of a peaceful and fairer world.

I hope to be able to join colleagues and friends in next AILA conference and I will work hard from La Plata university toward the strengthening of local and regional bonds within the association.