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When I was on my second year of PhD candidature in 2014, I had a chance to join a symposium in the 17th AILA World Congress. That occasion benefited me a lot, so I had a big desire for the second chance to attend such a prestigious conference. I am so delighted that my contribution to AILA 2017, as a part of a symposium titled “*New perspectives in EFL/EFL language teacher education*,” was accepted. It was also an honor for me to be an awardee of a Solidarity Award, based on my outstanding work and financial disadvantage.

I was awarded the degree of PhD just a few weeks before the start date of the conference, so I came to Rio with a heart full joy and expectations. My mind was open to new perspectives. My attitude was ready for a lot of sharings with and learnings from ‘Gurus’ in the field of language teacher education. As a young scholar, I am more aware of how this valuable opportunity will mark a milestone in the future career path, especially in my academic development. The symposium was so successful in terms of the academic content and the collaborative atmosphere. We did not expect to see such a big audience. The room was full of interested people, who are eager to learn about new perspectives in language teacher education. They are experienced EFL/ESL teacher educators from different countries, who gave us a lot of complimentaries and useful feedback. Due to time limitation, my presentation aims to inspire researchers and teacher trainers, rather than provide densely academic content. The ideas from my presentation help to call for a consideration/reconsideration of their sociocultural context in adopting any Western-loved concepts or methods. Instead, every educator and researcher can develop a model based on her specific sociocultural and political context. Although the limited time prevented me from giving a detailed picture of how I developed my own model in teaching foreign language in the context of Vietnam, I was able to share the EFL teacher-training model. The model, the impetus of my presentation, was drawn from my teaching experience and PhD thesis. The question from professor Gao after my presentation challenged me to rethink the role of an ESL/EFL teacher as an agent of change. Her feedback gives me hints of how I can develop a full journal article on the topic “Sociocultural perspective on EFL teacher education” when I go back home.

Participating in the congress, I was so amazed by the AILA’s coverage in applied linguistics. There are a diversity of interesting topics, but I felt tempted to engage into presentations on culture teaching, ESL/EFL teacher education, English language education, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence. The feedback I received from the audience and the new inspiring ideas I learnt from keynote speakers and featured presentations were so helpful for the co-authored book chapters and book prosals and other publication plans in the near future. The ideas of my favorite scholars such as Claire Kramsch and Anthony Liddicoat always remain brilliant and provoking. I have found their presentations and some young Chinese scholars’ sessions inspiring. They bring me new perspectives in seeing the world and encourage me to step outside of the box.

It is evident that I have gained a lot in terms of academic contents. As a newly graduated PhD, I value this chance so much because it marks the beginning my academic path, which is tough,

challenging but proud. As an awardee of a Sodarity Award, I value the participation in this congress in such a way that I could create and develop the networks in my field in particular and in applied linguistics in particular. The AILA's social events such as the Sugar Loaf Mountain tour, the congress party at Rio Scenarium, and the special party for Sodarity awardees have brought us closer through our exchanges, sharings, and conversations. Fom my point of view, AILA will be bigger and stronger, not only because AILA attracts increasing numbers of researchers and scholars, but also because this associaton establishes, connectss, maintains, and develops academic and social relationships between individuals. The award brings me an honor and a pleasure, and I will treasure forever this support, which is more than a financial help.

I still believed that I was lucky to be one of the award recipients until the opening ceremony. The strict selection procedures presented by Professor Daniel Perrin let me know that I needed more than good luck to become an awardee. The privilege of receiving this award reminds me of a committment, a willingess and a desire to make contribution to the scholarly field and to develop regional networking on behalf of AILA within my applied linguistics community - University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam National University, Hanoi. After the congress, the President of the university, which is famous for educating and training EFL/ESL teachers, should be informed of AILA and its forthcoming academic activities. The academic network I have created after the congress will be maintained and developed. I do hope that through me and other enthusiastic linguists and educators in Vietnam, regional and international applied linguistics communities will be connected in a big network; new friendships will be created. Together, we are strong and can work towards innovations in applied linguistics.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Solidarity Committee of the AILA Excecutive Board for giving me a chance of becoming an active member in the congress. AILA 2017 was so successful and inspiring thanks to tremendous efforts of many individuals involved. I would like to express my big thanks to people behind the scences, who all contribute to the success of AILA 2017 in Rio. The Samba dance, the beautiful songs and music, the amazing Sugar Loaf Mountain, and new friendships will remain my best memories about Rio and AILA 2017.

Kindest regards,

Thi Thuy Le