

Solidarity Award AILA 2017 Report

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The AILA Congress 2017 was a great opportunity for me to enhance my understandings and knowledge of the diverse areas of Applied Linguistics. I point out some of these achievements below:

- having a platform to present my PhD research project, and engage in constructive discussions with other scholars in the same field;
- enjoying the thought provocative and eye-opening plenary talks;
- attending many interesting and informative presentations related to my field of expertise which is researching and working with young learners and intercultural communication in ELT;
- broadening my understanding of and interest in other aspects of applied linguistics such as language patterns and cultural challenges in counseling; critical analysis of language policies, new approaches to material development, autonomy, and reflexivity in interviews;
- I was completely unfamiliar with some of the topics, such as raciolingstic perspectives; challenging the neoliberal aspects of internationalization, and found the discussions very informative and interesting;
- Meeting key figures in Applied Linguistics (e.g. C. Kramsch, D. Larsen-freeman, L. Dam, etc.), and talking with them during the breaks. This has been a great honor, and has motivated me to continue my passion more enthusiastically;
- Meeting scholars from all over the world and exchanging our research interests. I hope for potential future collaborations with some of these scholars. For instance, after meeting Malina Porto, another AILA Solidarity awardee, I learnt about her research project and the similarities of our research interests which could lead to future collaboration and exchange of ideas;
- I also saw the paper copy of my contribution to Multilingual Matters recent publication, 'Learning Foreign Languages in Primary School: Research Insights' for the first time after it was published in June 2017. I co-authored with Dr Annamaria Pinter in the chapter 'A questionnaire study of Iranian children's understanding of intercultural issues'. This was a very joyful moment.
- Recently, I have been approached by the Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal to review a paper. I believe this is because of my attendance at AILA, where I got the opportunity to present my work and become more visible amongst Applied Linguists in Latin America.

- Having learnt that one of the objectives of AILA is to establish and support regional research network, I contacted a few Iranian academics in the field about the possibility of establishing the Iranian Association of Applied Linguistics.
- Finally, Rio is such a beautiful and culturally rich city with amazingly kind people. I truly enjoyed visiting this gorgeous part of the world.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this generous award which made it possible for me to attend and present in AILA2017.