

A Report on the Conference in Wuhan

By Nana

With the theme of *Navigating the Journey of Becoming Educational Researchers*, the *5th International Conference on Foreign Language Teacher Education Innovation and Development* was held at Central China Normal University, Wuhan from October 26th to 28th, 2018. Up to around 200 participants coming from different places across China and abroad attended the Conference. I really enjoyed the Conference which turned out to be inspiring, invigorating, fulfilling and rewarding.

At the Conference, I gave a paper presentation named *An Action Research on the Application of Schema Theory in Teaching Listening Comprehension to Non-English Major Postgraduates*. In fact, it was the second time that I had carried out a study on applying schema theory to listening teaching. The first study was conducted one year ago. According to the data collected, I found schema theory could help my students with their listening comprehension to some extent. However, after communicating with some colleagues and friends and with a better understanding of action research later on, I found there were some problems or mistakes in this study, for example, each action research should focus on only one problem; but the first time I undertook the action research, there was more than one “problem” in my study. Considering the

mistakes and limitations in the first study as well as the fact that action research is a continuing and iterative process, I had decided to carry out the study once again, which was the one I shared at this Conference in Wuhan. Grounded in schema theory, listening comprehension is an active process of interaction between prior knowledge and new information. Based on the data collected from questionnaires, interviews, listening tests, and classroom observations, the new listening teaching mode based on schema theory can enrich non-English major postgraduates' linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, improve their ability of using listening strategies, and improve their performance in listening to some extent. On October 27th, around 30 people came to my presentation, among whom a teacher from Zunyi is also interested in action research. As a result, we had dinner together and had a chat about some research we had done. Surprisingly, we found we were at the same age and shared something in common. She is highly motivated in doing research, which is what I should learn from her. Maybe someday we can see each other again at some conference. I hope when we see each other again, both of us will have made some progress.

For me, attending such a conference and giving a presentation is a great and valuable opportunity of academic communication. More importantly, it provided me with a precious chance to learn from others, thus improving my teaching and research. Among all the sessions I attended, the keynote

speech delivered by Simon Borg and a workshop given by Lauryn Gallo impressed me most.

Prof. Simon Borg delivered the keynote speech named *Characteristics of High Quality Educational Research*, in which a set of generic criteria related to four dimensions are covered, i.e. purpose, conduct, impact and communication. In fact, what impressed me was not the content of the speech but the way he made the speech. The content might be a little boring, but the speaker managed to make it in an interesting way, which made it more acceptable to the audience. In the beginning, he asked us to discuss a question “What are some criteria of good chocolate?”, which sounded unrelated to the topic, but it could help us to understand the topic better. I think this can be a good way to begin a lesson when I teach my own students—beginning the topic with something that is familiar to the audience. Another point that I learnt from Prof. Borg’s speech was that it is important to help or remind students to review what they have learnt. In the middle of the speech, the speaker gave the audience a blank-filling exercise which was about the key points related to what he had just covered. To be honest, without that exercise, I might have forgotten what I had heard. Therefore, a summary is necessary, but this is what I did not do well in my teaching. I must pay attention to this.

Besides this keynote speech, the workshop titled *More Strategies, More Success: How to Improve Vocabulary Learning* was also inspiring, interesting and impressive. In this speech, I got several practical strategies that target different learning styles (visual, linguistic, kinesthetic, etc.) and can be taught directly to students and used both inside and outside of class for vocabulary learning. As the students who has a relatively low level of proficiency in the four skills, the postgraduates I teach also have a pile of problems with vocabulary learning, e.g. always just memorizing the Chinese translations instead of understanding the English definitions, failing to use the vocabulary newly learnt, etc. And I also find that the ways I have used to teach and review vocabulary might be monotonous. Therefore, I have decided to adapt some strategies to my students' level and use them in my class.

As far as I am concerned, attending a conference is not only a good of academic communication but also a good chance for me to reflect on my own teaching. By learning from others and reflecting on my own teaching and research, I hope I can make further progress.