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24th August, 2018

Reflection: ELF 11 Annual Conference at KCL, London, 2018

After the successful attendance and paper presentation at ELF 11 conference, KCL, London, from July the 4th to the 7th, 2018, I can summarize my trip as inspiring and empowering. I become more confident with my research skills and the future of ELF studies.

The plenary speakers pointed out the critical view of ELF studies and suggested the research gaps for following researchers. Scholars argued that so far most of the ELF studies have engaged participants only from higher education, simply teachers and students in academic fields. They called for future ELF research to invite more real ELF speakers to be researched at real ELF settings, such as taxi driver, doctors and sale assistants. With the recent development of this field, scholars have investigated the attitudes and identities of those at academic settings, but rarely reached for the English language users who are actually using it as a lingua franca. This paves the way for criticisms and explains why ELF studies have suggested numerous identity and attitude insights, yet still not to the heart of practitioners. Therefore, I do agree that the plenary has a strong point and delivered a good message for ELF researchers to consider. We usually say research is to find the gap and fill the gap to bridge between the theory and practice, yet ELF studies have not really served this purpose well. Thus, it is necessary to make the direction explicit and scholars should respond to the potential problems directly with further studies.

Fortunately, the paper presentation I delivered was actually responding to this call from the plenary. I invited Macau Customs to join my study and through the interviews and focus groups I found that at Macau's ELF setting, they have the following identities: useful helpers, confident ELF users with low proficiency and losers at ELF settings. I came to a conclusion that they reached an agreement on the importance of fluency and took it as an essential element for successful ELF communication, rather than accuracy which has been assumed as the ultimate goal in classroom teaching. Furthermore, they specifically argued that given the official status of Portuguese, its practical use- the majority of local citizens did not learn Portuguese at school and this has no impact on their real life either, thus shows a mismatch between policy and practice. Therefore, I strongly suggested that Macau should reconsider the setting of official languages and evaluate the status of English in Macau; Macau Customs also needs to analyse the needs of their officers and develop tailored training and hiring process to shape a better image for both the department and also the area as called by the participants. Furthermore, I also addressed the importance for Macau education bureau to understand its multilingual context and revisit its mediums of instructions applied to schools. Overall, my presentation received high attention from researchers and scholars who teach in the similar contexts such as Japan and Hong Kong. Thus, I benefit very much from the interaction with them.

Hence, this paper presentation experience overall is beneficial to me and it enhances my research presentation skills and support my belief in research and teaching. I will definitely work towards further research in this field.