

Hong Kong: Inaugural Conference on Language Teaching and Learning June 28-29, 2019 Yanwei/Solar Nie



The Education University of Hong Kong held the Inaugural Conference on Language Teaching and Learning: Cognition and Identity on June 28-29, 2019, which attracted hundreds of scholars, educators and practitioners to explore the various aspects of language teaching and learning and how they relate to the overall cultural, social and political discourses, in the era of neoliberalism and globalization. As the theme of the conference was “transforming language education and research, empowering teachers and learners”, most talks were about making a change or making a difference.

On June 28, the keynote speaker Professor Karen Johnson from the Pennsylvania State University delivered a talk entitled “Informing and Transforming Language Teacher Education Pedagogy: Responsive Mediation in Learning-to-Teach”. The focal point of her talk was the method of responsive mediation in teacher education. The student teachers in her study had authentic participation in the activities of teaching and multiple opportunities for responsive meditation. They were instructed to “teach off their students, not at them,” and use “instructional paraphrasing”. At the very beginning, when the student teacher interacted with the students, she tended to focus on herself and failed to make use of the student responses. The researcher gave timely feedback in the stimulated recall session in order to lead the student teacher to paraphrase what the students said and connect it to the next point. Professor Johnson believes that “responsive mediation emerges inside the practices of teacher education, is emergent, dynamic, and contingent on immediate need, is aimed at teachers’ emerging capabilities, creates ‘safe spaces’ where teachers can function ahead of themselves, and projects an imagined future on, with and sometimes for teachers”. I came to learn that in actual teaching I should adopt instructional paraphrasing to engage my students better and I could invite some of my colleagues to help me with responsive mediation for better teaching practice. Another talk was given by Professor Gary Barkhuizen from University of Auckland. As an expert in narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research, he talked about narrative knowledging in language teacher identity research. He began by defining what story is and why narrative methods are effective to collect and analyze data to investigate issues in teacher identity. He asserted that “narrative knowledging is the meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports”. He gave an example of analyzing the narrative of a teacher explaining why she would like to do a PhD. Analysis were conducted from persons, tenses, professional terms, etc. to demonstrate how her identity was shaped by the academic circle’s expectation towards her.

On July 29, I gave a talk about learning autonomy. Having served as consultant at “How Do I Improve My English”, I was curious about why many students gave up halfway in independent language learning and what motivational methods they used. In this particular study, I investigated the affective and social aspects of motivation strategies in independent language learning. The research findings reveal that independent language learners in China apply diverse motivation strategies. While strategies concerning affect are widely used, the most frequently used strategies deal with the social

aspects. To be specific, independent language learners in China are favorable of listening to consultants' and peers' language learning experiences, studying in pairs or groups, and seeking competition from their peers. These have lots of pedagogical implications for guiding students to be sustainable independent language learners.

During the two-day conference I listened to many other illuminating reports as well, such as Angel Lin's "Translanguaging Pedagogies: The Multimodalities—Entextualization Cycle (MEC) as a Curriculum Genre to Plan CLIL Lessons", Simon Borg's "Taking Stock: An Analysis of the Contemporary Status of Language Teacher Cognition Research", and Icy Lee's "A diagnostic approach to focused written corrective feedback". They provoked new research topics in my mind and encouraged me to do research with best endeavors. I am very grateful that the ELC always provides us with lots of support for professional development.

