

# IATEFL - Report

**Dr. Joycilin Shermila**

Principal, Annammal College of Education, Thuthukudi

IATEFL is the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language whose mission is to link, develop and support English Language Teaching Professionals worldwide. The 50<sup>th</sup> annual conference and exhibition of IATEFL was held in Birmingham, UK from April 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, with over two thousand delegates in attendance. The venue was the ICC which is a truly world-class venue and one of Europe's most high profile conference centres. It was an excellent venue and I was privileged to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> IATEFL conference as a winner of the **Gillian Porter Ladousse scholarship**.

## **PRE CONFERENCE EVENT**

The conference began with the pre-conference event on 12<sup>th</sup> April and I was registered to attend the TTEd SIG by my sponsors. **Professor Donald Freeman of University of Michigan** organized a workshop on the topic ***Using a Design Theory to Explore how Teacher Learning works***. In this session, we explored a 'design theory' for teacher training and development with a set of simple principles that describe how language teacher education activities and programs work and what makes them more impactful for teacher learning. There are two aims in using this design theory: To *'describe'* what goes on as we do training and development and to *'organize'* those efforts more productively so that learners

realize our intended goals. The session introduces the elements of design theory - the parallel notions of *'communities of activity'* and *'of explanation'*, how they define and use certain *'social facts'* to *'articulate'* what they do, and how *'tensions'* in doing so can create opportunities for teachers to learn. There was presentation, discussion, and hands-on activity to meet and explore these ideas both conceptually and concretely.

## **INTERESTING SESSIONS IN THE CONFERENCE**

The conference began on 13<sup>th</sup> April with the plenary of David Crystal on the topic ***Who would of thought it? The English language 1966-2066***. David Crystal is an honorary Professor of Linguistics at the University of Bangor, and works from his home in Holyhead, North Wales, as a writer, editor, lecturer, and broadcaster. His presentation illustrates the main changes in pronunciation, orthography, grammar, and vocabulary and he discusses the chief factors involved - social mobility, globalization, and the Internet and compares the changes that have taken place in the past fifty years with those that are likely to take place in the next fifty.

Followed by the plenary there were parallel sessions in ten halls and ten executive rooms. Though I would have loved to attend

all of them, I only managed to attend the following two presentations –

***Developing thinking from story with young learners by Marion Williams***

Story is a powerful medium for teaching language to young learners. She has presented activities that develop thinking skills. She has also discussed the importance of teaching thinking and how to develop this from stories. More activities were given to the participants to illustrate this.

***Getting reluctant learners to speak by Oya Karabetca, UK***

Everyone of us wants our students to use the language for communication effectively but it is very difficult to get them to speak. This maybe because they are too shy, they find the activities pointless or boring, or they just don't want to. She promised to give us a few examples and demonstrate how it was possible to motivate our teens or even our adult learners, to speak.

On the same day I had my presentation on the topic ***Radical Transformation: Instruction through Classroom Flipping for B.Ed Trainees***. As I was sponsored by the TTEd SIG the President and Vice-President of IATEFL TTEd SIG were present in the hall and introduced me to the delegates. The room had 100 seats and the hall was full for my presentation. With the help of some examples, I managed to demonstrate how the flipped approach could be successfully implemented by prospective teachers. After the presentation I had a

question answer session based on my presentation. The TTEd SIG presented me with books and diaries and congratulated me on my successful presentation.

In the evening a meeting for the scholarship winners was held in the foyer. The highlight of the conference was that all 52 of us from 30 countries had a meeting with the IATEFL president, Secretary and the conference coordinators. It was a small party to introduce us to one another. The past and present president of the scholarship working party addressed the winners for a few minutes. We were then given the scholarship money and IATEFL cup as a souvenir. Photographs were taken during this occasion.

On 14th April, Silvana Richardson from Bell Foundation in her plenary talk on ***The Native Factor – The Haves and the Have-Nots...And Why We Still Need to Talk About this in 2016*** spoke on various research studies with anecdotal evidence and personal experiences. She examined the state of equality and social justice in ELT with reference to the so-called 'non-native speaker teacher'. She talked about the impact of the native-speaker bias and its dominance on developments in English Language teaching methodology.

I also participated in the ELTJ Signature Event – a debate on the topic ***Does training really help-or is it just a waste of time and money?***. The debaters were Peter Grundy and Penny Ur. There was voting after the presentation of the debaters and half of the house believed that teacher training was a waste of time. Some felt that

it was not so as what we required was an experienced pilot and not just an educated pilot to operate the air craft.

Following are the other presentations which I managed to attend on that day –

***Leading the change: changing approaches of teacher education in Nepal by Laxmi Prasad Ojha Tribhuvan University, Nepal***

He focused on a pre-service teacher education programme in Nepal, which has gone through a complete overhaul by introducing a semester-based system replacing an age-old year long system. He spoke on how the pre-service teachers have benefitted because of the use of different ICT tools and internet based platforms to access resources which help develop their understanding and skills.

***Rethinking reflection on the intensive TEFL course by Daniel Baines (British Council, Prague)***

The presenter spoke on how post-lesson reflection has become an integral part of the initial teacher training courses all around the world. This session presented a case for the end of compulsory reflection on four-week initial teacher training courses and gave practical recommendations for course designers to maximize their trainees' potential.

Diane Larsen-Freeman gave a plenary on ***Shifting metaphors from computer input to ecological affordances*** on 15<sup>th</sup> April,

2016. Our students are not computers. We know that how we talk influences our speech and is reflected in the way we think. One problem with “input” is that it ascribes passivity to learners, robbing them of their ability to think and create. Another problem is that it suggests that there is a medium between input and output. It overlooks the meaning-making nature of language use. A third problem is that the use of “input” necessitates all sorts of terminological profusion, such as “intake” and “uptake.” At this point, there is a need to move beyond input-output metaphors to embrace a new way of understanding. Affordances are two-way relationships between the learner and the environment. Affordances afford opportunities for action on the part of learners, The presenter elaborated on affordances and discussed the implications of affordances for English language learning and teaching.

16<sup>th</sup> April was the final day of the conference. On that day there were some excellent sessions on ***How to submit a speaker proposal*** by Madeleine du Vivier, ***How to move into language school management*** by Andy Hockley and ***How to write successfully for IATEFL Conference Selections*** by Tania Pattison. There was also a plenary by Jan Blake the leading story teller on the topic ***Man, woman, life, love: stories from Africa, the Caribbean, and beyond***. Specializing in stories from Africa, the Caribbean, and Arabia, she has a well-earned reputation for dynamic and generous storytelling. Her session was awesome with stories and songs.

### **My impressions about the conference**

I was delighted to attend the presentations, talks, symposia and panel discussions of the English teaching professionals around the world. Many presenters spoke about the paradigm shift from teacher centred to learner and learning centred education. Many of them were worried how to engage their learners all the time in the classroom. I found that all were interested in technology enhanced language teaching. The conference has provided a chance to meet teachers from all the corners to discuss the various classroom practices. I have also understood that teachers have stopped taking notes and instead they use their mobile devices to capture the presentations and when it is more interesting they video record the whole event.

### **Exhibition**

A large resources exhibition involving around 70 ELT-related exhibitors was arranged in the conference venue. It gave us a chance to see the latest ELT publications and services in one place

### **Places I visited in the UK**

I spent three days in London and visited Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, London Bridge, London Eye, Buckingham Palace, St. James Park, Cavalry museum, Hyde park, Windsor castle, Stonehenge, the Oxford University and the change of guard before the Buckingham Palace and even managed a Cruise on River Thames.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April after the plenary the

conference organizers arranged for a coach trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. 50 delegates were taken to the birth place of Shakespeare with a guide. It was a great opportunity given to me by IATEFL. Stratford-upon-Avon is a market town with more than 800 years of history. I visited the house where the world's most famous playwright was born and grew up. I saw Hall's Croft (home of Shakespeare's daughter), Nash's House and New Place (the last chapter in his life), Anne Hathaway's (His wife's) cottage in a romantic setting and his mother Mary Arden's Farm. I managed to see the Royal Shakespeare's theatre and his grave which is inside the campus of the Holy Trinity Church. We spent nearly 5 hours in this town and I walked around the streets with a sense of awe in the place where my favourite bard spent his life.

The famous city centre, Victoria square, war memorial, library of Birmingham, Centenary Square, Cadbury world and National Sea life centre are some of the places I managed to see in Birmingham.

The IATEFL Conference is a massive event with a multitude of sessions from 8am until 6pm. Even the coffee breaks are moments for further discussion and exploration of ideas among the English teaching professionals around the globe. I thank the Almighty God for giving me such an opportunity to enjoy the conference and visit UK for the first time. ELT@I has given me a platform to know about IATEFL and I thank the patron of ELT@I Dr.S.Rajagopalan for his constant motivation.