

CULI National Seminar 2008

“Innovations and Implementations in English Language Teaching”

Participant Report

Dr. Donald S. Persons

November 26, 2008

Dr. Donald Persons and Ms. Victoria Belt were the MWIT representatives who recently attended the CULI National Seminar 2008 entitled “Innovations and Implementations in English Language Teaching” held on November 24 – 25, 2008 at the Sasa Patasala Building, Chulalongkorn University located near Maboonkrong Shopping Center in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was organized by the Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, sponsored additionally by leading book publishers such as Macmillan, Cambridge and Oxford Press as well as local educational and business institutions. It was attended by approximately 100 tertiary educators from private and public universities, as well as a handful of secondary and vocational school teachers, a few language institutes and educational support personnel in related industries. This report comes in two parts, the first written by Dr. Persons and the second summarizing specific content written by Anni Belt.

Key Events and Notes Taken

The seminar was opened formally by Prof. Pirom Kamolranakul, President of Chulalongkorn University. The keynote address was delivered by Rom Hiranpruk, recently the Director of the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD). He defined innovation as the creativity that creates economic value. He said that technological advancements continue to lead changes in the economy and in education. Among the innovative technologies now available to educators are “Kindle” an 80,000 Baht Book ripper that can make digital copies of 500-1000 pages of documents per day. , Internet conferencing used in virtual language labs by which rural teacher training could be accomplished, skype long-distance phone calling and IPOD casting. He also mentioned the top 21st Century Skills named by UNESCO: 1. Technology and media literacy, 2. Effective communication in some language 3. Critical thinking, 4. Problem solving, 5. Collaboration. He recommended that the young people we teach are likely the best persons to lead the technological advance of the classroom, alongside the brilliant outside resource persons available to educators. We need therefore to create an educational model where that is one of the assumptions.

Plenary topics discussed in the meeting included interesting presentations by leaders in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language, including Anne Burns of MacQuarrie University (Change, continuity and trends in second language teacher education: A professional

and personal journey), Arthur McNeill of Asia University (Creating a vocabulary curriculum: Balancing objective frequency data and teacher intuitions), Vaughan Jones (Grammar what matters: A new way of approaching grammar), Andy Curtis from Director of the English Language Teaching Unit at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Too busy for professional development: Doing it anyway) and Alan Mackenzie of the British Council (East Asia: Diverse region, many commonalities).

The speakers contributed in diverse ways to enhanced understanding and reflection about the theory, attitudes and practice of teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Each of them brought a combination of insightful expertise, humble inquisitiveness about other teachers' practice, as well as clarity and coherence in the field. As a result the participants showed an elevated sense of inspiration and enjoyment at considering what they do professionally.

In particular, the workshops with Arthur McNeill on "Creating a language curriculum: balancing frequency data and teacher intuition" and on "Developing lexical richness – achieving breadth and depth in vocabulary" were outstanding. We discussed a website www.lextutor.ca. This website has a way to automate the feedback students need on language usage in their writing, grammar, vocabulary level and more. Teachers should explore this in giving feedback to students then instruct students on how to obtain their own feedback on their writing prior to sending it in to the teacher.

Feedback comes in the following form:

To Analyze a student's writing: Word list Tokens Types Families

We also discussed the work of Paul Nation in vocabulary, the CANDODE Corpus of English Texts and methodologies in teaching vocabulary.

Method 1: ethno linguistic classification techniques: finding in a list of items a common classifier or vice versa, finding examples of a category. This is variously called Classification and Super ordination. When we can't find it, we can resort to Metaphors or to the following categories: stuff, problem, issue, thing, material, business, behavior, phenomenon, trend, pattern. This helps students explore the breadth and depth of vocabulary. The practical aspect of this is that when teaching vocabulary in the classroom, we take time in the class to explore words through classification so that we can more effectively use that word in context.

Method 2: Microwriting: in microwriting we write a thematic paragraph or essay based on one word. Students research the word and create a word document on the word then insert a picture of the word.

Method 3: Lexical Usage: Identify in the class reading words students want to know more about. Write them on the board and have them begin to cognitively elaborate on the syntactical forms and their meaning relationships.

The workshop on Professional Development was insightful and useful to manage professional development within institutions like Mahidol Wittayanusorn School. In this workshop, professional development was defined as a process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth. We also found that a 90 minute class video tape revealed to reviewers that a teacher made over 900 decisions. The argument for investing in Professional Development is very strong: It inspires teachers, retains them and has a correlation to the results in the improvement of student performance. If the goal for English teaching at MWIT is to improve proficiency as measured by standardized tests (plus!), then improving the quality of teachers and providing a program of continual growth in all three areas is of special importance. In addition to this, other areas of development include continued opportunities for L2 English teachers to increasingly acquire English language, technological “trial-error” process, teacher journaling, peer reflection (including recording of what has been learned) and encouragement and readings in the field. It became apparent that the MWIT English Advance Program needs to expand Professional Development in the above areas, in clear foursomes that meet regularly as a primary support network for teachers. Dr. Persons would like to recommend the development of 8 trainers of teachers through attendance at the Eduquest program in the Philippines (contact: Alessandra L. De Guzman, Chief Administrative Officer) or at the British Council in Thailand of a Training of Trainers program for EFL teaching. A contact with the SEMEO Secretariate might be able to provide the funds for this professional development program for teachers. These will help our teachers to particularly develop a coaching and mentoring role with our students, rather than the traditional lecturer role. [contact: goodsam.edu.ph We also should add Video Recording of class times for teacher discussion and virtual conferencing/coaching with Chulaporn Schools’ English language teachers. An investment of 1 hour per week (a 50-hour course) will thus be introduced into the English Department of MWIT and satellite schools.



CULI National Seminar 2008-Innovations and Implementations in English Language Teaching

November 24-25, 2008

Notes by Annie Belt

Keynote Address

Rom Hiranpruk, Director, Office of Knowledge Management and Development

Mr. Hiranpruk focused his speech on the how advances in technology and development.

Change, continuity and trends in second language teacher education: a professional and personal journey.

Anne Burns

English has become the global language for social, economic, and educational development. As a result, the teaching of English as a foreign language has started to evolve to meet new demands. Changes include:

- Growth of professional development opportunities, namely more emphasis on in-service teacher training
- Professionalization of language teaching (there are more specializations, standards, increased research, etc.)
- Advancements in how teaching takes place (explicit, implicit knowledge, reflective teaching)
- Recognition of the importance of context (socio-cultural, practice/experience, communities of practice)

As a result of these developments, among others, teaching methods and strategies have shifted. More opportunities for teachers to apprentice into teaching have emerged (eg. internships/practicums, mentorships, discourses), an increased emphasis on collaboration, reflection (such as journal writing), more investigative research, project work, and the use of new delivery modes (online, distance learning).

Prof. Burns highlighted five areas that a teacher should know:

- 1) Practical knowledge (techniques, skills, procedures, routines)
- 2) Content knowledge (theories, concepts, discourses)
- 3) Pedagogical reasoning skills (planning, adapting, improvising)
- 4) Personal knowledge (beliefs, values, principles, theories)
- 5) Reflective knowledge (self-assessment, prioritizing, changing)

She then described Burns' 5 stages of teacher development (surviving, secure, analytic, and dynamic).

Surviving teachers are typically new teachers who tend to be teacher-centered, are still gaining skills and techniques to use in the classroom, are developing confidence about being a teacher, are coping with classroom dynamics and discipline, and are trying to gain an understanding of classroom life.

Secure teachers focus more on learners, have an expanded set of skills and techniques, are developing ideas about the kinds of teachers they are/want to be, have gained more security and control in the class, and have developed some ideas about relationships between theory and practice. **Analytic**

teachers understand how learners learn and change their techniques in response. They have "tool-kits" of successful skills/techniques, think creatively about course design, take advantage of classroom dynamics/relationships, and have gained awareness of education policy issues. Finally, **dynamic** teachers have the maturity and experience to focus on the macro-issues. They experiment and critique their practices, refine their skills in curriculum and materials development, typically have moved into an

educational management/teacher educator role, and creatively analyze their beliefs and theories about education policy and practice.

Teachers develop through formal action such as teaching qualifications and professional activities (workshops, in-service training, staff meetings) , joining professional associations, sharing teaching ideas and readings, and volunteering for projects. Some ideas for teacher growth include: sharing a significant teaching moment and asking others what they would do in the same situation, working with a teaching buddy and comparing notes, asking students for feedback and then reflecting on what they say, exploring one's own teaching and being open to changes. It is critical to plan, act, observe, and reflect.

Creating a vocabulary curriculum: Balancing objective frequency data and teacher intuitions

Arthur McNeill

According to research, a person needs to know at least 5,000 words of English to succeed in an English-speaking college. Native English speakers learn about 3,000 words per year in high school. When designing a vocabulary curriculum, the following principles need to be taken into account: the language needs of the learners, frequency (begin with commonly used words), range, economy (can the same word be used in different contexts), regularity, defining power, classroom and teaching needs, and loan words.

From a former learner to an ELT teacher who always uses the cutting-edge technology: Implications and effectiveness

Thiraboon Somboontakerng

Success using technology comes from self-awareness and use. Mr. Somboontakerng reviewed several websites/online tools he uses in his classroom. Specifically, he likes to incorporate streaming video, teleconferencing tools, interactive internet exercises, interactive web boards, podcasts, blogs, and social networks in his lessons. He recommended the following websites:

www.thiraboon.com

www.toefl-expert.no-ip.org

www.unbindtv.com

www.youtube.com/terry099

He also recommended doing a web search for Mister Duncan's lessons (British teacher who has a number of youtube videos related to English lessons)

Grammar what matters: A new way of approaching grammar

Vaughan Jones

The purpose of language is to make meaning. Grammar is a set of devices for expressing meaning that cannot be explained with vocabulary alone. Grammar helps establish distance. The more complex a sentence/statement is, the more formal it is.

Not all grammar rules are equally important. Emphasis should be placed on rules that affect meaning.

Grammar exercises should be as practical as possible. Do not use examples/create exercises that are unrealistic.

Clearly speaking: Pronunciation in action in the classroom

Anne Burns and Stephanie Claire

Today non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers and there is an increasing number people, neither of whose first language is English, who are communicating in English. That said, pronunciation teaching, in general, still encourages learners to approximate their speech as closely as possible to a native speaker model.

Some researchers believe that the way pronunciation is taught should change to pay more attention to the needs/abilities of non-native speakers. Attention should be spent on aspects of pronunciation that affect intelligibility and acceptability to the target international English speaking community.

Common problems in Thailand are consonant sounds, tonic stress, vowels, syllable stress, vowel length, and consonant substitution.

Professional Development

Andy Curtis (www.andycurtis.org)

Professional development is a process of continual, intellectual, experiential learning experienced through one's career. It includes awareness, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and self-reflection. Professional development means learning from successes, failures, and one another.

There is frequently a gap between attitude/beliefs and behavior.

English lessons are living things. We exist in an equilibrium.

Improving English Proficiency through Progressive Assessment

Good Samaritan College (Philippines)

Good Samaritan College used a consulting firm called Eduquest, Inc. to design a progressive assessment tool for the school. Good Samaritan has found it empowering to know what the skill level is of their students. They are better equipped to match the needs of their students and the resources that are available. It has also helped students gain perspective and see learning as a form of self-improvement.

The software includes a reading assessment which produces a diagnostic report. Other programs include Accelerated Reader and Fluent Reader which are tools to help improve reading comprehension.

In addition to the software, Good Samaritan has developed other initiatives to encourage their students to complement traditional English classes. These include DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time, English lab, and a Mentoring the Mentor program (summer program for teachers).

East Asia-Diverse Region, Many Commonalities

Alan Mackenzie

In his presentation, Alan Mackenzie presented the findings of recent studies conducted in Asia by the British Council. The studies focused on in-service teacher education in primary ELT (Korea, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia) , primary ELT and ICT (Korea, Malaysia) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL-Korea, Thailand, Malaysia). These studies concluded that teachers' language and language teaching skills are lacking, additional resources are needed for training, ICT is seen as an effective way to transmit information, among others.

British Council provides technical assistance for teachers of English. They bring world class ELT experts to East Asia, use international networks to create mutual understanding and share experiences across borders, they build local partnerships, and work together with Ministries of Education to achieve ongoing development goals.

Online Professional Development

Andy Curtis

Professional development is knowing what you know, knowing what you don't know, knowing what you need to know, and bridging the gap. Obstacles to professional development include time and money, hierarchy, integrated training versus creating an additional burden, loss of face, and performance-related pay.

There is no such thing as time management. Time manages us. Try to schedule 1 hour per week for professional development. A useful exercise is writing a teaching journal. It does not have to cover the entire day; it can be a critical moment (pick 1 incident in a day).

In order for an event to be considered professional development, you need a record of it and reflection.

Useful websites:

www.thailandtesol.org

www.tesol.org

www.asiatefl.org

www.culi.chula.ac.th

Recommendations

Based on the event, discussion and planning needs to occur in the Department to implement the recommendations in this report into the design of the English Advance 2009 Project.

Professional development and information/communication technology in the classroom and shared by students and teachers needs further thought and enhancement in the project.

Furthermore, attendance at this and similar events by each of the teachers in the department should be departmental priority.

Summary

In summary, the seminar's speakers and workshops promoted reflection on our practice of teaching English and there are many steps we at MWIT can make to improve ourselves in the field. Both Dr. Persons and Ms. Belt are deeply grateful for the opportunity provided by MWIT to participate at this esteemed national seminar.