

### **Conference Report**

The Third International Conference of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University, in Cooperation with the American Embassy's Regional English Language Organization and the Voices in Asia Committee  
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The Third International Conference of the Faculty of Liberal Arts was organized in order for scholars in Asia to present their experience in teaching English in difference contexts and to allow them to collaborate in order to improve English language learning in the Asian context. It was held at the Salaya Pavilion Hotel, Mahidol University International College (MUIC), January 16-17, 2012.

The conference began with addresses by the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Regional Director of English Learning for the U.S. embassies in Southeast Asia. They stated that as English is now a global language and a lingua franca, it is no longer confined to native language geographical territories. It was hoped that presentations and thematic discussions on various ELT issues would also be organized to find areas of collaboration for further projects.

During the two-day conference, the presenters gave the following presentations: The first keynote speaker of the third international conference was Prof. Mats Oscarson (University of Gothenburg), who spoke on the topic "The challenge of student self-assessment in language education". He provided a brief overview of the subject of learner self-assessment (SA) in language education. Then he discussed some practical implications of the approach and considered the challenges in the assessment of language ability. Another speaker, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ken Lau (University of Hong Kong), gave a presentation entitled "New Era, New Opportunities: Developing Academic Literacy through English-in-the-Discipline Courses". His presentation provided an overview of how English in the Discipline Courses are conceptualized and developed, as well as the challenges they have faced along the way. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Somchoen Honsa, Jr. (Mahidol University) was the third speaker, on the topic of "Student's Perceptions on Self-Assessment in Writing: A Study of Intermediate EFL Students at a Thai University". The study investigated the implementation of self-assessment in writing by intermediate EFL students who were divided into two groups: control and experimental. The results collected from interviews, reflective journals and essay scores were triangulated to find out how each participant perceived his/her writing. Then Prof. Dr. Jayakaran Mukundan (University Putra Malaysia), gave a presentation on the topic of "Liberating ESL Learners through Technology". He stated the case for technology and its use in the ESL/EFL classroom. The fifth address was delivered by Prof. Dr. Zahra Mustafa (University of Jordan) on the topic of "Videoconferencing for Improving Fluency in ELT". Then, Asst. Prof. Dr. Marina Dodigovic (Lebanese American University) spoke on the topic of "The Effectiveness of Electronic Word Cards in Second Language Vocabulary Learning". In her view,

useful vocabulary comprises high frequency words which cover a substantial percentage of a typical text, large enough to enable comprehension. The research suggested that students preferred teacher-designed cards which improved their learning. Asst. Prof. Dr. Szu-Yu Ruby Chen (Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages) delivered a presentation on the topic “Adolescents’ Digital Literacy Practices in Online Discussion Forums in Taiwan.” The results of the study described re-regulated spelling codes used to demonstrate students’ own literacy identities. The eighth presenter was by Asst. Prof. Dr. Robert Bianchi (Virginia Commonwealth University of Qatar) who talked about “3arabizi/Arabish: Arab English Online”. The paper explored the communicative functions and unconventional nature of this mixed on-line language, which incorporated numerals as letters, Netspeak forms, and Arabic and English lexis and grammar. The last presentation of the first day was given by Ng Yu Jin, Lee Yi Ling and Noor Hafiza Nor Azmi on the topic of “Harvesting Specialised Word List in ELT.” This research highlighted the most frequently used engineering academic vocabulary and provided an engineering education word list developed using local Malaysian engineering technology textbooks for vocational programs in higher secondary education.

The first keynote speaker for the second day of the conference was Mr. Damon Anderson, who has been serving in the U.S. Foreign Service as a Regional English Language Officer (RELO) for twenty-seven years, on the topic of “Mindsets”. He began the session with a very interesting activity and encouraged the participants to motivate students and to create the right mindsets to help students to move beyond meaningful tasks. Another speaker was Asst. Prof. Ganga Ram Gautam (Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tribhuvan University) who spoke on the topic of “Teacher Education Reform in Nepal: Breaking the Barriers”. He said the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University has recently revised the B. Ed. and M. Ed. English Education courses by adopting a balanced approach to include both language and literature. He then discussed the process involved in the revision and how the recent revision has introduced a change to teacher education in Nepal. The third speaker was Dr. Teoh Swee-Ai (MARA University of Technology) on the topic of “Incorporating Critical Thinking in a Reading Course”. Because students at higher academic levels should be taught how to evaluate the credibility and validity of texts, they need to be able to make judgments about the texts they read. This study described a reading course as an example to illustrate how strategies for reading critically can be taught in a step-by-step manner. Alif Fairus Nor Mohamad and Ng Yu Jin (Universiti Tenaga Nasional and Universiti Putra Malaysia) spoke on the topic of “Identifying the Essential Vocabulary of English for Nursing Purposes (ENP)”. Then, Mr. William Martin (Mahidol University) talked about “Is Business English Cost Effective?” The paper discussed methods that have been developed to determine whether or not learners’ on-the-job performance post-training has had an effect on the employers’ business. The sixth presenters were Dr. Vahid Nimehchisalem and Prof. Dr. Jayakaran Mukundan (Universiti Putra Malaysia) on the topic of “Determining the Organization Descriptors of the Analytic Scale of Argumentative Writing (ASAW)”. The last presentation was by Dr. Kornsi Boonyaprakob (Mahidol University), on the

topic of “A Comparative Analysis of Studies of College Students in Teacher Education”. The research aimed at enlarging the evidence found in the literature on how college students think, learn, know and make judgments about ill-structured problems and how education can help them develop intellectually. The results of the study demonstrated changes in conceptual development among students attending the Deliberative Psychological and Professional Education program (DPPE). Features of the program that foster intellectual development among college undergraduate students were also described.

This third international conference was dedicated to fostering a mutual exchange of ideas among ELT practitioners, enabling them to share best practices and collaborate in many aspects of ELT. The event brought together speakers from 11 different countries. To conclude, the third international conference proved both stimulating and fulfilling. It was a forum for meeting new people, developing new networks of professional contacts and collaborating for the advancement of English language learning in the Asian context.