

2013 FAAPI Conference: Roots & routes in language education: Bi-multi-plurilingualism, interculturality and identity. A.P.I.B.A, C.A.B.A., 2013.

# Conference Report: The Fabulous Feeling of Faaping.

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Cita:

Florencia Viale (2013). *Conference Report: The Fabulous Feeling of Faaping. 2013 FAAPI Conference: Roots & routes in language education: Bi-multi-plurilingualism, interculturality and identity. A.P.I.B.A, C.A.B.A..*

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/asociacion.profesores.ingles.rosario/13>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/p6Pz/Ufq>



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## Conference Report

### **2013 FAAPI Conference: Roots & routes in language education: Bi-multi-plurilingualism, interculturality and identity.**

Organised by A.P.I.B.A.

Official Conference website <http://www.apiba.org.ar/faapi-apiba/faapi13>

### **The Fabulous Feeling of *Faaping***

by Florencia Viale

One cannot possibly talk about conferencing without quoting David Lodge and his accurate depiction of attitudes and behaviours of teachers worldwide under these circumstances:

The modern conference resembles the pilgrimage of medieval Christendom in that it allows the participants to indulge themselves in all the pleasures and diversions of travel while appearing to be austerily bent on self-improvement. [...] But with this excuse you journey to new and interesting places, meet new and interesting people, and form new and interesting relationships with them [...] and yet, at the end of it all, return home with an enhanced reputation for seriousness of mind. Today's conferees have an additional advantage over the pilgrims of old in that their expenses are paid, or at least subsidised, by the institution to which they belong... (Lodge, *Small World*, 1984)

This year the "pilgrimage" proved much more convenient for those EFL teachers who eagerly and readily get on the road in their quest for professional development and - why not - the opportunity to strengthen bonds. Puerto Madero glowed over the three days during which the conference took place, and the inspiring view that we could all get from the rooms where the different presentations were held did nothing but inspire us in turn to grasp other colleagues' experiences with all our senses as well as revisit our own through different spectacles.

It was a matter of choosing routes that would invariably lead to the very roots of our teaching practices and lives.

I had the opportunity to hear several presenters praising the role of cultural awareness as "an eye-opening experience." The Independent<sup>1</sup> referred to London as the "new European melting pot" arguing that it "has always been a cosmopolitan city, home to wave after wave of immigrants who in time have become Londoners, providing the mix that arguably makes London the most cosmopolitan city in the world." Borrowing the metaphor, so was FAAPI during the three days that it lasted,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/london-europes-new-ethnic-melting-pot-1525506.html> [retrieved on October 15 2013]

there was a mix of the most varied presentations and perspectives, catering for all tastes:

- ❖ From the most dreamy spotlights that have made Britain great<sup>2</sup> over the centuries (Robin Walker, OUP, “So what’s so great about Britain, Friday 27th September) to the most remote corners of the globe where the language is equally spoken but seldom conveying the same (Cecilia Acquarone “British Postcolonial literature, a gender perspective.” Thursday 26th September).
- ❖ From traditional EFL storytelling for all ages (Fabiana Parano, “Stories in a Bag” Friday 26th September, workshop) to the roots of Ancient Kamishibai (Matías Ansando and the Art of Japanese storytelling, Friday 26th September)
- ❖ Cristina Banfi – opening the conference with a highly thought-provoking presentation - and Claudia Ferradas – as emotive as she was in 2012 - made us reflect upon the significance of revisiting our roots to tread more steadily along new routes...
- ❖ There was room for thumbing pages over paper stories that have constituted pillars to our personal and professional development (the analysis of “Little Women” by Adriana Lanzi)...and there were e-books, I-Poes<sup>3</sup>, and more of the digital world (A Room Of One’s Own, Discussion group)
- ❖ There were papers, panels, workshops, academic presentations, keynote presentations, professional development and the added value of the chance to “meet and greet” beyond the walls of a canonical environment.
- ❖ From commercials parodying the American Cowboy (see “Cat herder”) to the fun of Benjamin Zephaniah’s Talking Turkeys or the laughable insanity of listening and watching Rasta-mice speaking in sonnets (check BBC Rastamouse)<sup>4</sup>

Most presentations agreed upon the shift from the design of a framework that could help us understand SLA in a more theoretically eclectic perspective (See Ellis, 1995) to a framework for understanding others...

Before a garden of forking paths (Cristina Banfi quoting Borges) the XXI century teacher must once again take sides, choosing the stance that will offer the clearest perspective to achieve THE goal that has remained forever immutable in spite of the roaring chances around: helping our students LEARN. Myriam Met (US Embassy) reflected upon the XXI century student’s toolkit, and the importance of defining

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<sup>2</sup> Check this site for further details and illustrations:  
<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/britain-great>

<sup>3</sup> For further details on this interactive literary application, check this review  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7uBZUvM\\_0I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7uBZUvM_0I)

<sup>4</sup> For further details check <http://rastamouse.com/wp/> or  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/rastamouse/>

ourselves as teachers but above all the need to acknowledge that this role inevitably calls for the need to continue being learners.

I embrace this event as a golden opportunity to feed and breed on the profession we have chosen. I celebrate FAAPI conferences as a meeting point most – if not all – teachers should jot down in their calendars. Next venue, Santiago del Estero 2014: I wholeheartedly wish to encourage you readers to take active part in it. It will enrich your practices, but – above all – it will enrich your souls.