

2017 FAAPI Conference: "Revitalising ELT through Authenticity: Practices, Contents and Materials ". A.P.I.M, Posadas, 2017.

Conference Report: "Revitalising ELT through Authenticity: Practices, Contents and Materials ".

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Conference Report

2017 FAAPI Conference: "Revitalising ELT through Authenticity: Practices, Contents and Materials "

Posadas, August 31st, September 1st and September 2nd

Organised by A.P.I.M.

Official website <http://apim.com.ar/faapi-2017>

By Viviana M. Valenti¹

The fact that I travelled to Posadas to participate at the FAAPI Conference simply confirms that I am a FAAPI addict. The reason for this addiction is not difficult to understand. When I attended the first event, too many years ago by now, I found myself immersed in a world tinted by passion towards the profession I embrace - teaching.

This new FAAPI meeting once more confirmed that it is a social and professional experience worth living from the very first warm welcome to the final greeting when the new host association is announced. Needless to say, I enjoyed the comradeship of colleagues from all over the country, I became enthusiastic about the variety and number of presentations and workshops that left the impression that one would like to be in more than one room at the same time and, why not confess, that I loved spending the breaks flicking through new books at the stands. But, above all, I was pleased with the quality of the presenters (and I would especially like to highlight the performance of our native speakers who gave proof of their professionalism) who succeeded in posing the challenge to revise our concepts, to become critical of our own teaching practices and to implement changes that may revitalize our classrooms.

I do thank APRIR for having made my trip to Posadas possible and I would like to invite you, teachers, to dare bring your views or experiences to the next FAAPI as sharing is the key to professional growth.

¹ APRIR member Viviana Valenti was awarded the APRIR Speaker Scholarship 2017 to present her paper "**Optimizing Navigation in Authenticated Hyperlinked Texts to Guarantee Knowledge Construction**".

On Faapi 2017, faaping, authenticity...y otras yerbas!

by Florencia Viale²

Back in 2012 I submitted a proposal for FAAPI (San Martín de los Andes) – its main theme then being “Views on Motivation and Autonomy in ELT” - which aimed at discussing **teacher motivation** through the invaluable gain of actively participating in conferences by debriefing my own experience at IATEFL that same year. The purpose of this was to use these academic opportunities as empowering tools to counter-fight routine and the well-known and mostly feared burn-out syndrome. As Dörnyei^[1] (2001: 9) states “Humans do a lot of things as a matter of routine, and such relatively automated or habitual actions are often not under direct motivational control.”

A year later I had the possibility to contribute to APRIR’s 5th Newsletter with an article^[2] on my perceptions of FAAPI 2013 (Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires); once again I was urging my audience to embark on this three-day academic pilgrimage that would enrich not only their classroom practices but their very souls.

This year the venue was Posadas, Misiones. A little earlier than usual, true. Much further distance to travel than we were used to (Córdoba, Buenos Aires, even San Juan seemed round the corner), true. Many arrangements to be made if one really wanted to attend FAAPI this time: budget, days off, family, and the list goes on and on.

But then, there were also plenty of favourable variables to consider: the possibility to explore a thorny issue in ELT these days – authenticity; the chance to be immersed in a context where bilingualism **IS** a daily authentic practice since the Guaraní community is imperceptibly woven into the immigrant-descendent Misioneros traditions and lifestyle; the added value of visiting World Heritage monuments, such as San Ignacio and Santa Ana, or natural wonders, such as the breathtaking Iguazú falls.

Posadas gave us a beckoning welcome: the weather was prematurely anticipating the coming of spring, the city offered a magnificent promenade facing the Paraná river which, with the added value of the Asunción bridge, made us, Rosarinos, feel less homesick. The most prominent landmark to be noticed if one took a stroll by the river was the statue of Andresito, their local hero, with Guaraní blood but Argentine dreams...

The venue had been perfectly selected to meet the conference’s theme: “Parque del Conocimiento”, though quite inconvenient in terms of distance, offered a large stretch of green to move to and fro between plenaries and sessions, which inevitable contributed to “revitalise” our energy. The content of the different presentations that

² APRIR member Florencia Viale was the winner of the draw for a Free Pass for this Conference.

took place over the three days definitely managed to revitalise our minds and foster much reflection to bring back home:

- The opening plenary introduced us to Richard Pinner and his “fallacy of the native speaker” followed by the assertion that “the native speaker is dead”, giving the three hundred non-native participants at the auditorium a ray of hope.
- Some presentations focused on pronunciation, as in the case of Martín Villarreal and Geoff Lindsey and their reference to how to encourage phonetic authenticity.
- Several offers referred to the role of technology and 21st century skills in order to foster authentic practices to meet learners’ skills and needs. Such was the case of Steve Taylor Knowles and his discussion on digital literacy; our colleagues Viviana Valenti and Marisa Galimberti and the use of “authenticated hyperlinked texts”; Verónica Giaccaglia *et.al* and the exploitation of TED conferences to create role models for students to produce their own –equally authentic- presentations.
- Many more sessions dealt with literature as an enabling tool to guarantee exposure to authentic – and authenticated- material. Some interesting presentations I could attend were Laura Kuperman’s “Poetry in the EFL classroom”, in which she shared a parallel poetry writing contest done at a secondary school. A truly inspiring workshop was delivered by Eugenia Carrión Cantón *et.al* on the “the Moth effect”, a storytelling-based project aimed at raising confidence among students through different techniques in order to enable them to find their own voice.
- Some local presenters discussed the asset of authenticity in research, thus giving credit to the invaluable hard work and effort invested by non-native speakers to investigate on ELT in order to improve their practices. Among these, I could listen to Paula Rebolledo and “action research”, and the always inspiring and encouraging Dario Banegas reflecting on a crucial issue: “Is research an authentic part of teachers’ practices in Argentina?”

There was a great deal more, but it would take me pages to put down in words. There were plenty of academic experiences to nourish the mind. And many non-academic opportunities to meet colleagues from all over the country with the same goals, the same worries, the same needs and dreams; the possibility to meet “Faapi friends”, those that Faapi allows you to meet and cherish over the years, colleagues eager to share their experiences, studies, findings, expertise, or simply and humbly socialise what worked for them on a simple lesson, the miracle of everyday teaching. That, of all the things I had the chance to observe, has stayed with me as the most enriching experience, because *in times of (academic) joy native Popes are plenty, but in times of woe not one in twenty...* And that is precisely the moment when those

of us who have struggled for years to become competent users of the language in order to prove equally competent EFL teachers breed together to produce self-generated knowledge to share. Because teaching is sharing and FAAPI is the closest opportunity we have to do so, to give and take, to question and answer...but on the whole to THINK, THINK and THINK.

So, are you Faaping next year? Santa Cruz awaits you!

[1] Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (1st ed.). Harlow: Pearson. Chapter 7 "Teacher Motivation," page 158.

[2] "The Fabulous Feeling of Faaping" available at <https://www.aacademica.org/asociacion.profesores.ingles.rosario/13>