

## Conference Report: ETA-ROC 2012

### What is next for the future of English Language Teaching?

ETA-ROC has a much more academic feel to its conferences than KOTESOL. We tend to focus on practical ideas and activities that we can learn on Saturday and use on Monday. ETA-ROC reminded me that conferences are also places for academics to present papers, for companies to launch new methodologies and for everyone to get together and network. The first plenary of Friday was Yukio Tono, who talked about the CEFR (the Common European Frame of Reference) and how it is being implemented and tweaked for the Japanese context. CEFR uses many 'Can Do' descriptors to describe language abilities, but they are too broad for materials developers to work with. What Dr. Tono and his team have done is to refine the CEFR levels, match words and grammar to the appropriate communicative function. This makes materials development easier.

There was more research about an Extensive Reading program that had apparently not improved students' reading ability, but had improved their reading strategies. Another about how pronunciation is taught in Taiwan and the differing importance placed on 'correct' pronunciation by teachers and students.

Along with representatives from our partner associations around Asia, I was invited to be part of a two-hour panel discussion to talk about the conference theme with respect to our individual contexts. Unfortunately, this was decided quite late, and the lack of publicity meant a lack of attendees. However, we talked between us and found quite a few common themes such as a falling population, which is expected to lead to the closure of many colleges and universities around the region. Another future trend is the rise of mobile technology and online teaching, in addition to advances in instant translation.

The Friday banquet was well attended with a great selection of food and wine.

Saturday was a busier day as the public school teachers were able to come. This was also reflected in the program which was opened up to more publishers and practical presentations – though still with a heavy emphasis on the underlying research. I attended a presentation about teaching presentation skills which suggested that we should encourage our students to prepare their slides at least a week in advance and we should also get them to upload a rehearsal. The results of the method were encouraging and the quality of presentations had increased. Philip Benson, a featured speaker, talked about Autonomy in the classroom and tackled the thorny issue of encouraging autonomy in more restrictive classroom settings (as many are across Asia). This was followed by a PAC meeting where we discussed where the next PAC conferences would be held. In December 2013 it will be in Cebu City, Philippines and in January 2015 it will be in Chiang Mai, Thailand. After that it will be KOTESOL's turn again and we can decide whether to host it in 2015 or 2016.

The PAC representatives each delivered presentations in the afternoon. Margarita Ballesteros talked about the effects of Globalisation in the Philippines, Richmond Stroupe talked about how his English-language department had successfully collaborated with other departments to develop content that was linguistically levelled for the learners. Uthaiwan Danvivath talked about problems that learners encounter when working from multiple texts. Finally, I gave a workshop on using course books and was very pleased to have a full house at the end of the day.

Saturday's dinner was held at the Imperial Hotel and consisted of several courses with too much food and wine. However, as your official representative, I felt I had to do my duty.

Sunday was just as busy as Saturday with publishers doing brisk trade in their area. I attended a Scholastic presentation about how they are linking their readers to lexile levels to help target readers to learners' ability. Dr. Michael Nettles talked about the rise of English as a global language and what ETS, a testing company, are doing to support English learning, teaching and testing.

In the afternoon, I went to see Stephen Bax, who spoke about developing reading test items, but in an interactive and engaging way. Tim Collins was also highly entertaining and thought-provoking talking about technology in the classroom. This was followed by dinner, which, once again, was fabulous.

ETA-ROC made me feel very welcome at the conference and I was very pleased to be able to represent KOTESOL for the first time. I highly recommend the experience. I would like to thank KOTESOL for partially funding my flight to Taiwan, and ETA-ROC for putting me up and feeding me for the duration of the conference.

**Tim Dalby** holds an M.A. (with distinction) in English Language Teaching from The University of Reading in the UK. Originally from Portsmouth, England, Tim has been teaching English since the summer of 2000. He has taught in Korea, New Zealand and the Czech Republic in a variety of contexts including business English, general English, EAP, FCE, CAE, IELTS, TOEIC and TOEFL. He has been a head teacher and a teacher trainer and was Korea TESOL's National 1st Vice-President in 2008-9. He currently teaches at Korea University in Seoul. Contact: [professor.tim.dalby@gmail.com](mailto:professor.tim.dalby@gmail.com).