

Getting Out of Your Pedagogical Rut

DR. AIDEN YEH

INVITED PLENARY PRESENTATION

In line with the Linguistic Society of the Philippines' 2018 Conference theme on promoting linguistic diversity in teaching, learning, and research, the conference organizers have posed an interesting question to speakers and participants; one that invites us to ruminate and to identify how linguistic diversity is reflected in the way we teach languages, the way we learn them, and the way we conduct research on linguistics and language pedagogy. Before we can actually dive into designing lessons and crafting methods on how to promote linguistic diversity, we first need to question our own assumption: how open are we to (linguistic) diversity; what our attitude is towards other/minority languages or World Englishes - especially the lesser preferred Englishes that fall into what some EFL learners consider undesirable varieties of English; what our view is on English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and its use and current status as an institutional marketing tool to tap the foreign student market; how keen are we to jump on the internationalization in higher education bandwagon; how we react when we see multilingual signs on our campuses or on our streets and how these affect the physical and linguistic landscapes of our environment(s). Furthermore, when we move our train of thought to how we actually teach languages in our classrooms, how much have we changed our syllabi, our instructional style, the assignments and tasks we give, especially if we teach the same classes year after year? Are we not guilty of recycling the same lessons? Do you, like me, suffer from learning/teaching stagnation that is keeping me/us from making the necessary changes - ones that will help reform and transform us into becoming better language teachers by getting out of the rut? If you're familiar with the popular Netflix TV series, *Breaking Bad*, then you may understand the underlying logic behind this presentation. There is no denying that the protagonist, Walter White (Bryan Cranston), albeit infamously recognized as TV's worst role model, has plenty of lessons to offer. The series could provide language teachers like us a gentle nudge (sic) to restore our sense of curiosity, creativity, and passion for learning and innovation. Similar to watching TV or movies or even reading stories, we pick up the good, leave the bad behind, and adopt/adapt a few things that could help us to follow an appropriate path of becoming successful language teachers. Applying the concept of 'The Sigmoid Curve Theory' (Charles Handy's *The Age of the Paradox*, 1995), I will be offering some insights based on my own teaching experiences on how we can recognize the crucial point of stagnation in our teaching career, and recognizing those moments when we felt unsatisfied with ourselves or with our students (or both). The key is realizing that pivotal moment when we are standing at the crossroads, and the action that we choose to take can either inhibit us and thereby lead to a decline in our performance (a kind of pedagogical demise), or propel us in a better (but more challenging) trajectory in order to realize a more fulfilling professional growth. As Vince Gilligan (author of *Breaking Bad*) points out, if there's a major lesson to be derived from '*Breaking Bad*,' "it's that actions have consequences". This concept of transformational change is key to becoming (and continuing to be) effective language practitioners. Strategies and guidelines will be shared. The gist of this session reflects Rakesh Bhanot's exhortation to

all teachers in the haiku below:

PEDAGOGICAIKU
Unless you are a
passionate practitioner
don't be a teacher.
Rakesh Bhanot (2012)

Bio

Dr. Aiden Yeh is an Asst. Professor and Director of Academic Cooperation & Exchange Section of the Office of International & Cross-Strait Cooperation (OICC) at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan. She is also an Academic Advisor for the Southeast Asian Studies Program. Her current research interests focus on World Englishes, linguistic landscapes, student mobility & internship, and internationalization & pedagogical issues in higher education. She has served as Chair of the Non-native English Speakers in TESOL Interest Section, lead coordinator of the TESOL Electronic Village Online, member of the editorial team for Technology in Language Teaching and Learning Journal (Castledown Publishers), and a reviewer for The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher (TAPE) Journal and TESOL International Association Conference proposals. She has published chapters in various book publications (e.g. TESOL, Pearson Longman, Oxford University Press, British Council Publication, and IATEFL Publication), articles in ELT magazines, and papers in refereed journals. She has regularly presented at conferences across Europe, North & South America, and Asia. In the last 3 years, she has authored and co-authored papers on University-Industry Collaboration Projects and was awarded the Faculty Excellence Award. She received her PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK, and her MSc from the University of Surrey, UK.

Schedule

2/27 Depart from Kaohsiung to Manila

2/28 Depart from Manila to Bataan (conference location)

3/1-3/3 Conference proper (meet up with partner universities representatives to discuss academic exchanges i.e. dual degree and faculty exchange and lectures e.g. Ateneo de Manila, UST Manila, De la Salle University- Manila)

3/4 Return Taiwan