

Column: Conference Reflections

ExcitELT

by Matthew Turner

Have you attended any conferences that were especially inspiring? Would you like to recommend a conference to our members? In this column, contributors can share information about specific conferences, presentations they attended, or helpful logistical information for those of us who have not stepped out of our comfort zones yet. Please contact the editor if you would like to contribute an installment or if you just have an idea you would like to run by her. We look forward to the next installment of “Conference Reflections.”



On Sunday June 4, 2017, the independent ExcitELT conference was held at Rikkyo University, Tokyo. This conference followed on from the inaugural edition that took place in Seoul the following year. The conference is an independent venture started by a teacher based in Beijing. Unlike many larger academic conferences, ExcitELT is not sponsored or affiliated with any organisations, but is devised and carried out by a small group of volunteers. Last year’s event generated over 40,000 yen, with this sum going to iTDi (International Teacher Development Institute) scholarships and the Educating Girls of Rural China charity.

The day saw a variety of talks and workshops around the conference’s theme of ‘Uncharted Territories.’ Invited speaker Chia Suan Chong started the day by exploring things that teachers should not be afraid to say to students, with Michael Griffin challenging the audience to think about what it means to attend and participate in conferences. Katy Simpson got people thinking about pronunciation for global communicators, with other speakers focussing on the use of technology for teaching

and learning, such as social media safety, and podcasting for professional development. Additional topics of the the day included creativity, reflection, and emotion. Invited speakers included Mike Hogan, Ted O’Neill, and Barbara Hoskins Sakamoto.

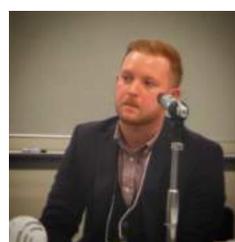
Features of the event very much reflected the ethos of the conference theme, as well as the organiser’s intention to create a friendly, inclusive, and participant-driven day. Plenary sessions were limited to brief, but punchy 10-minute slots, meaning speakers delivered simple and salient points to engaged audiences. And, aside from invited speakers, anyone could also apply to give a plenary presentation, allowing the chance for an emerging group of professionals to get their ideas across. There were also ‘hangout’ sessions, where the emphasis was on facilitating informal discussions amongst participants. Demo classes were also held too, in which participants would get the chance to experience teaching approaches from the perspective of being learners. There were lots of chances to interact with and get to know everyone, with the day





culminating in all attendees and speakers coming together to discuss and share their thoughts on the day. A number of speakers and attendees brought along their children and family members, with volunteers on hand to offer support.

ExcitELT will return again this year on Sunday, May 8, with the theme being ‘Things Nobody Tells You about English Language Teaching.’ In similar fashion to last year, the event will be taking place at Rikkyo University. There will be sessions from locally invited educators including Atsuko Watanabe and John F. Fanselow, with Scott Thornbury delivering an online session. Proposals for sessions are being accepted online at <https://www.excitelt.tokyo/call/> from now until March 4th. This year’s event promises to be another exciting day of professional development, interaction, and new insights.



Bio: Matthew Turner is a lecturer in the faculty of International Tourism Management at Toyo University. He holds an MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, as well as a DipTESOL. His professional interests include Teacher Development, Reflective Practice, support for SEN learners, Continuing Professional Development, and Cooperative Development. His personal interests include comedy, craft beer, and live music. He is co-founder and co-presenter of the TEFLology Podcast, and occasional blogger for iTDi.