

*40th Thailand TESOL & PAC (Pan Asian Consortium) International Conference
General Report to KOTESOL International Outreach Committee
Submitted by Vanessa Virgiel*

[NOTE: This report was written in February 2020, before COVID-19 had reached current crisis levels]

CONFERENCE INFORMATION:

Conference Name: 40th Thailand TESOL & PAC International Conference 2020
Conference Theme: Harmony in Diversity: ELT in Transcultural Society
Conference Date & Location: 30 Jan - 1 Feb 2020
The Ambassador Hotel Bangkok

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION:

Name: Vanessa Virgiel
Phone: 010-2458-6884
Current KOTESOL Position: 2020 National Conference Program Chair

CONFERENCE REPRESENTATION DETAILS

1. Who was your main contact person in the hosting organization prior to departure? List his/her e-mail and/or phone contact information and position in the host organization.

*Mintra Puripanyavanich
Thailand TESOL Secretary
secretary.thaitesol@gmail.com*

2. Main contact person at the conference, if different.

*Mintra Puripanyavanich
Thailand TESOL Secretary
secretary.thaitesol@gmail.com
and
Chawisa Aussawapoom*

Thailand TESOL Secretary
secretary.thaitesol.@gmail.com

PAC COUNCIL MEETING

PAC Representatives at Conference:

- Supong Tangkiengsirisin, Thai TESOL President and Conference Chair
- Richmond Stroupe, JALT
- Sterling Plata, PALT
- Yiu Nam Leung, ETA-ROC
- (FEELTA representative absent)

Main Topics of Meeting

- **Conference App.** The PAC representatives discussed the possibility of a shared conference app to be used by each organization. The JALT rep noted that they are working with a developer in Canada to revamp the JALT website and then their conference app; JALT is willing to lead the development of a shared conference app if others are willing to share the cost. JALT also noted that CamTESOL hired a consultant to teach their staff who made their own app. Further discussion on this will occur in the PAC messenger group.
- **PAC ETA's Leadership and Contacts.** The next issue discussed was how to update each PAC organization about each ETA's leadership (e.g., president, secretariat, etc. and their contact details).
- **Green Conferences.** JALT suggested changing the publisher paper insert that typically goes into conference tote bags to a thumb drive with uploaded content. THAI TESOL noted their use of doing only paperless certificates, and having attendees write in their names in the nametags to avoid mistakes and reprints. JALT suggested recycling nametags. General consensus on the idea to upload to the PAC website a "green policy". The PALT rep (who is the 2020 PALT-PAC Conference Chair) will lead the charge in further developing a green conference.
- **Unvetted Proposals of PAC Organizations.** Confirmation that each PAC ETA will have one official rep who will receive complimentary hotel lodging, a conference fee waiver, and an unvetted presentation slot. The next issue discussed was that each PAC could have an additional two unvetted presentation slots for other members from that PAC ETA. After general back and forth about the possibility of a deep conference fee discount for those two unvetted presenters (I and the ETA-ROC shot that down, as our respective conferences' fees are both less than US\$100 for international presenters already), the agreed consensus was that the two unvetted presenters would be entitled to a 20% discount on registration fees at each PAC conference.
- **Order of which ETA hosts the next PAC conferences.** PALT is hosting the 2020 PAC conference. The ETA-ROC rep noted that as the FEELTA representative was not in attendance at the meeting, he would like to have the opportunity to host the 2021 PAC

conference before he retired, if FEELTA accepted this. A final decision on the 2021 conference was not made.

- **Asian Youth Forum.** Absent at this conference was the Asian Youth Forum. The Thai TESOL hosts noted that they had reached out to the AYF organizers, but they had said no primarily due to a scheduling conflict.

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATE MEETING

Affiliate Representatives at the Meeting

- Bo Kyung Lee, KATE
- Eunsook Shim, Asia TEFL
- Khoon Ee Loke, PELLTA
- Richmond Stroupe, JALT
- Shigeo Uematsu, JACET
- Soo-Ok Kweon, ALAK
- Sterling Plata, PALT
- Yiu Nam Leung, ETA-ROC
- Ngyuen Hanh Dao, VietTESOL
- (Absent were the CamTESOL, FEELTA, MELTA, and TEFLIN representatives)

Main Topics of the Meeting

Each representative listed their main conference event for the year. Of particular note:

- VietTESOL's international convention is in October. The work with the US State Department RELO to offer teacher trainer workshops for public school teachers to increase participation. They also work with their Ministry of Education to publicize their convention to public school teachers in each province. Up to now they have focused on institutional memberships rather than personal memberships in their organization and for convention registration.
- ALAK is hosting their 1 day conference at Sogang University on September 27.
- KATE is hosting their conference on July 4th at Seongnam University.

SYNOPSIS OF 2020 THAILAND TESOL-PAC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Venue & Logistics:

- The conference was held at a hotel, where many of the conference participants opted to stay. (The location was in a "touristy" area of Bangkok, with ample other lodging options also conveniently located nearby.)
- Buffet-style lunches were held each conference day, as well as two coffee breaks. (Costs were included in the conference registration fees.) As well, affiliate representatives were provided with complimentary hotel breakfast as part of the accommodation.
- The plenaries, and other highlighted programming, were done in the main conference hall on the first floor. The registration tables and the majority of OP vendors were located just outside this hall. The other presentation rooms, including those for the featured and

invited speakers, were on the second and third floors. The hotel's naming of these rooms (e.g., "Lavender Room", "Peony Room 1" "Garden Room 2", and so forth), the hotel's existing signage of these rooms, and the well-designed layout of the conference schedule made it so that the layout of the venue was very easy to navigate.

- Three tables were provided for the PAC and other affiliate representatives on the second floor, next to two OP vendors who were for whatever reason. This space only saw traffic as participants were moving from one room to the other between sessions. JALT and KOTESOL were the only reps to set up tables. (JALT had a banner, but did not have any literature on their table.) At the KOTESOL table were brochures, "About the SIGs" bookmarks, past issues of *The English Connection*, copies of the *Korea TESOL Journal*, one copy of the 2014 KOTESOL-KAFLE International Conference Proceedings, and several dozen flyers for the 2020 International Conference Call for Proposals. All of the literature were graciously taken by participants at the conference end.
- Each presentation room was outfitted with a computer, a projector, and a microphone. Two student volunteers were always posted in each room to assist presenters as needed, and to hold up the time warning sign cards.
- The program schedule was e-mailed to participants about three days before the conference.
- A detailed document, with photos included, of popular family-friendly tourist attractions in Bangkok was also emailed to participants a few days before the start of the conference.
- A program book and a separate print-out of the program schedule was put in the conference tote bag. These were provided to each registered participant and were included as part of the general conference registration cost.
- Each participant was given a conference name tag, with different colors assigned to those who were attendees versus speakers versus invited speakers. On the name tags were two QR codes. One QR code could be scanned to complete an evaluation of the conference, which then enabled participants digital access to their conference certificates of attendance/presentation. The other QR code could be scanned for participants to access the program book and conference schedule.
- Attendees and presenters were not given physical certificates, but instead could access them digitally per the process described above. This was done to "be green", and minimize the chances of spelling errors, etc. that would result in harried re-printing at the conference site itself.

Plenaries & Other Programming:

- Plenary 1: Anne Burns, *Research and practice in transcultures: Researchers and teachers crossing the divide*.
- Plenary 2: Harry Kuchah Kuchah, *Building opportunities for language learning through a pedagogy of partnership*.
- Plenary 3: Joseph Bianco, *Social Cohesion and TESOL: Unexplored Themes and Unresolved Dilemmas*.
- Plenary 4: Vance Stevens, *The what, why, and how of flipped learning: Harmonizing diversity by developing skills in podcasting, webcasting, and digital storytelling*.

- Based on my personal observation, and from speaking with a number of attendees, the plenary speakers were very well-received and garnered much praise for the content of their presentations as well as their ability to engage the audience. Drs. Bianco and Kuchah were particularly popular, and I would recommend to future international conference chairs and the invited speakers director that both be seriously considered for the position of plenary speakers at KOTESOL's international conference.
- Excluding the plenaries and poster presentations, there were a total of 277 sessions offered (some of which were unfortunately canceled last minute, as the conference was held during the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak in Asia)
- Poster presentations received their own dedicated half hour time slots on the first and second days of the conference. These poster sessions were held immediately after the mid-day coffee break, with no other competing programming. This helped to drive a lot of traffic to the posters, and ensured attendees could also take an extended break if they preferred.