

Report on Paperless: Innovation & Technology in Education Conference, February 1st 2014, at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan

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On February 1st, 2014, Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS), along with Apple Distinguished Educators (ADE), hosted the *Paperless: Innovation and technology in education* Conference (<paperless2014.weebly.com>). 117 delegates from as far afield as the UAE, Turkey, Uruguay, Mexico, Hong Kong, Macau, Australia, Korea and all over Japan attended the conference. Participants talked about how paperless technologies are changing education while digital formats of books and writing continue to evolve.

In education, developments in technology are changing and improving constantly, giving teachers new opportunities to explore new ways to develop and create materials for teaching literature in the language classroom. Specific to literature is a growing interest in the use of digital texts, commonly known as ebooks, and the use of a range of mobile technologies (such as tablets, smartphones) in the learning environment. LiLT SIG members Atsushi Iida and Tara McIlroy presented at the conference on topics linked to literature and language teaching. This short conference report introduces some aspects of the conference of relevance to LiLT members.

Paperless Learning and Talks about Literature

In the digital era of tablet technology, cloud computing and ebooks in education, the role of the literature teacher is evolving. The conference organisers suggested that becoming paperless was more than simply saving trees, and more about a shift in thinking in education. One aspect of this change is a move from paper books to digital readers and greater reliance on technology in the classroom. Another is the variety of ways that materials can be accessed outside the classroom. Some universities are initiating *bring your own device* (BYOD) policies

requiring students to purchase an Apple or Android tablet for educational use. This is an intriguing theme for literature teachers and issues surrounding the uses of blogs, digital media, and paperless technologies are of critical importance. This occurs as reading, accessing literature, and teaching with literature moves into the post-paper age.

Plenary Talks

In the opening plenary Mark King from the University of Melbourne presented on *Interactivity, values, and the affordances of the distributed learning system in a tertiary setting*. His multidisciplinary plenary had relevance for language teachers and content-based learning alike. Next, Adrian Leis, assistant professor in the English education department at Miyagi University of education gave a featured talk entitled *Discussions on paperless lessons in an EFL environment*. At the end of the day, plenary presenter Alice Chik talked about digital practices and learning using international case studies, two things which are sometimes disconnected. In her talk, *It's not the technology: Making technology relevant to learning*, an emphasis on making learning last, and realising the place for technology was a theme that teachers of all disciplines are grappling with as technology changes so quickly.

Literature and Writing Themed Presentations

Atsushi Iida's presentation entitled *Blogging in a second language: Learning beyond the classroom* reported on the theoretical framework and practical guideline for the usage of weblogs in the Japanese EFL classroom. In this presentation, he shared his experience of using weblogs in an ESP course, second-year business English in a four-year Japanese university. Learner's blogs were utilised through which each student created an account and updated blogs on a regular basis. This provided opportunities to work on different writing tasks (e.g., reflection papers, response journals, summary writing, synthesis essays) outside the classroom along with in-class reading. It also helped students to develop the sense of authorship while taking responsibility for their own language learning. Iida concluded his presentation by suggesting that the usage of blogs should be as providing enhanced language learning experiences, not simply as providing a teaching resource.

Brett Milliner also presented on the topic of blogging also in his talk *Using a classroom blog to start your paperless classroom*. In this presentation, Milliner focused on the steps that a

teacher could follow to set up and manage a blog for a writing or reading class. One feature of this presentation was that some of the problematic aspects of blogging were discussed so as to assist teachers who might plan a blog and be unaware of the additional work it can create. One problem, the issue of managing information once students are using individual blogs and writing on them frequently, was discussed in this presentation. It was a refreshingly honest view of the process of teacher-led blogging which did highlight possible problems for teachers.

There were a number of presentations using *iBook Author* to create in-house materials which could be one way for authors and users of literature to make their lesson materials more interactive. In one, Alex Worth, Alex Selman and Chris Kowalchuk from Kanda University of International Studies presented on *Using iBooks Author to produce course material*. Here the speakers described some pilot materials being created for specific use in the language classroom for university students. While *iBook Author* has a range of features suitable for creating language learning materials, one present limitation is the requirement for Apple products to be able to make the most of the iBooks created.

Professional Teacher Development

Tara McIlroy presented with Brian R Morrison and Craig Manning on the topic of online education. The growing use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in education includes student-oriented learning, development of autonomous learning and lifelong learning. MOOCs allow for distance education to be open-access, and many MOOC providers offer the classes for free. A range of topics was the topic of their talk: *MOOCs in education: possibilities and potential*. This presentation was in three parts. First, Manning talking a collaborative project in 2013 in which he participated in a MOOC alongside a group of language learners. Next, Morrison outlined a self-directed language learning module where students chose MOOCs to meet their goals, particularly as preparation for study abroad. McIlroy talked about participating in MOOCs for professional teacher development, particularly with literature courses. She described the style of teaching in two courses from MOOC provider Coursera <coursera.org> and tasks which include forums, online essay submission and peer assessment. Two courses are highly recommended: *The fiction of relationship* with Brown University and *Science fiction and fantasy: The human mind, our modern world* from the University of Michigan.

Overview

Overall we found this to be a useful conference for those teaching writing, using literature and considering the directions that paperless technology may take in the future. While technology in language teaching may be a brave new world for some, it is possible to see paperless technology becoming more the norm for literature teachers in the future.

Notes on the Authors

Tara McIlroy is the co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her interests include literary reading, investigating uses of creative texts and uses of world literature in the language classroom.

Atsushi Iida is Assistant Professor in the University Education Center at Gunma University where he has taught first-year and second-year English courses. He was awarded his Ph.D. at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include L2 poetry writing, voice and identity in L2 writing and literature in L2 education.