

ALAA / ALANZ / ALTAANZ 2015 Conference

By Dr Fiona O'Neill: The RCLC hosted the fourth combined conference of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA), the Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand (ALANZ) and Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand (ALTAANZ) at UniSA's City West Campus. Taking the theme 'Learning in a multilingual world', the conference re-examined familiar challenges from new perspectives, and explored some of the emerging challenges for language learning, teaching and assessment.

In an increasingly internationalised, diverse, interconnected and multilingual world, communicating across languages and cultures is becoming an everyday reality for many people, and the success or failure of learning how to do this has consequences for how they can participate in their social and professional worlds.

But how do we measure language learning success and how, as educators and applied linguists, can our research contribute to better approaches to language teaching, learning and assessment? These questions were considered by the delegates during the conference and by internationally recognised scholars in the plenaries. Li Wei (University College London) explored language learners' multilingual and multimodal practices as seen in translanguaging, Lourdes Ortega (Georgetown University) interrogated notions of 'competence' and 'success', and Tim McNamara (University of Melbourne) highlighted the impact of social discourses in language learning. Constant Leung (King's College London) considered some theoretical and pedagogic challenges for learner assessment, Jonathan Newton (Victoria University of Wellington) explored how teachers engage with task-based learning and Amy Tsui (Hong Kong University) signalled the need to better understand the impact on learners of immersion or bilingual education.

Participating in this conference was an opportunity to share some of the findings of my doctoral study and to make connections with current interdisciplinary research. Having recently completed a PhD which explored the experience of multilingual professionals moving between their languages and cultures in Australia, and being involved in teaching English as an additional language at UniSA, the conference also provided new ways to consider how my own research interests in applied linguistics and language pedagogy could contribute to preparing learners for living and working in a multilingual world.

By Dr Jonathan Crichton: Last year's conference was jointly convened by the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, the Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand and the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand. I was involved on the organising committee and as a presenter. For me, and I think the other members of the committee, one of the first highlights of the conference came with the news that 99 PhD students had registered. As well as testifying to the current and future relevance of the conference theme 'Learning in a multilingual world', the dynamism and diversity among these students, and the papers many of them gave, created an excitement - an irresistible 'buzz' - throughout conference. It was also terrific that these students included all of those associated with the RCLC. Further highlights included the plenaries from Constant Leung, Lie Wei, Tim McNamara, Jonathan Newton and

Lourdes Ortega. All were inspiring, but if I had to single out one out as the highlight, for me it would be Lourdes Ortega's 'Contesting Language Learning Success in a Multilingual World. Finally, and this is only because of the word limit, this year's conference was marked for me by the joy of meeting such a diversity of new colleagues across cognate disciplines from different parts of the world.
