



**Balsamo Outreach for Learning and Teaching**  
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<http://boltoutreach.org>



**Bill Balsamo**  
1943 - 2008

**"Providing outreach programs, basic nutrition and health education as well as teacher training seminars or workshops that are relevant and practical for educators."**

*From Peter Wanner*  
**Founder BOLT**  
*November 2010*

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## 6th BOLT/UFLS-UD Language Teaching Conference Danang, Vietnam



Ten days before Christmas this year, the sixth annual conference for high school and university student-teachers was held in gorgeous, albeit rainy, Danang City. This year, it was an early Christmas gift to the organizers here at BOLT. We were fortunate enough to welcome a group of Vietnamese participants who have established themselves abroad and have come back to Vietnam to give something back to the communities in which they had been raised. Among our honorable delegates were a prize winning Master's student, a highly regarded lecturer from New Zealand, and a charismatic, wonderfully involving lecturer from within the University of Foreign Language Studies-University of Danang (UFLS-UD) itself.



Our theme this year was *Progressive Approaches to Language Teaching*. Each lecturer had a plethora of knowledge to share on this topic, and we have endeavored to summarize some of the key points as follows. We would like to thank all the contributors for their excellent preparation, wonderful presentation, and warm, friendly interaction without which this conference would not have been such a grand success.

After a warm welcome from the Dean of the UFLS-UD, the conference kicked off with a series of plenary speeches. With Industry 4.0 on the way, one of our opening lectures focused on the needs of a modern society. The lecturer, Mr. Austin Gardiner, currently a PhD student at Tohoku University, Japan, highlighted the fact that there is consensus in the Vietnamese industry, as there is in the rest of Asia, that the next generation will be one of automation and data. Mr. Gardiner quoted actual data from a recent newspaper questionnaire that shows companies want to recruit workers with critical thinking skills, communication ability across cultures, flexible learning attitudes, and motivation toward global integration, and surprisingly, that good reading and writing skills were not in demand. How do we as facilitators and educators go about preparing our students for these changing times? Mr. Gardiner suggested that autonomy would be a good place to start: Learners gearing up for Industry 4.0 will have to be autonomous i.e. able to think independently, creatively, and progressively in order to be useful in a society where systems will be reinvented continuously.





Ms. Le Thi Giao Chi, Dean of UFLS-UD, took the reins next and added that incorporating technology in the classroom, especially social network communication that mimic real corpus data, needs to be given priority when new curriculums are being designed. She showcased a wonderful collection of actual websites, sources, corpora, and methodologies that the student-teachers in attendance could start using immediately. This valuable contribution had everyone hungrily making notes and remembering websites for future reference.

Ms. Yoko Takano, from Japan, emphasized the importance of integrating the four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. She discussed the relevance of focusing on form and of giving students as many opportunities as possible to work on being more communicative i.e. working on dealing with anxiety, becoming motivated to communicate, and to use conversation strategies toward interaction during task-based activities.

Ms. Nguen Thi Thuy Lan built on this concept and expressed how important it is to consider intercultural communicative competence from a global perspective. Of special interest to the audience was her effective illustration of the interaction between beliefs, values, thought patters, and myths during intercultural language teaching.

Ms. Vu Thi Chau Sa lead the congregation in a series of exhilarating activities. Her hands-on, group oriented games and races had the student-teachers up, out of their seats, and moving around in a frenzy of learning and fun. Her charismatic approach to learning and teaching left a memorable impression on presenters and audience members alike, and she successfully combined each illustrative activity with its underlying theory based on principles such as equal participation, individual accountability, and positive interdependence.

Ms. Nguyen Hong Nam Phuong presented the results of her award-winning thesis on the topic of synonym vocabulary knowledge. She enthralled presenters and participants alike with her statistically significant results indicating that although a synonym in the academic word list (AWL) may have many known equivalents, it may not be well understood by L2 learners; a better indication of understanding would be the ability to use the synonym pragmatically, and the more synonyms a learner knows for one concept, the deeper the knowledge of that word.

Ms. Nguyen Tho Phuoc Thao illustrated the effectiveness of using songs and limericks to raise awareness of phonological patterns in English. She showed the audience how using music with minimal pairs can create an activity which targets student pronunciation problems and reduces the affective filter of students who hesitate to speak in front of peers. She also shared many valuable websites and sources, all ready for immediate implementation.



Scheduled to present, but unfortunately unable to attend, was another guest from Japan, Mr. Diego Elisandro Dardon, currently finishing his Master's program at Tohoku University, Japan, and last, but not least, we welcomed the president of BOLT, Dr. Peter John Wanner. His address incorporated strategies for preparatory high school tests with a focus on distractors and how they can be taught effectively to assist test takers in preparing for standardized tests.

Once more, the organizers would like to thank the faculty and staff at UFLS-UD for the incredibly valuable assistance and support that made this sixth annual event a success for both the group of esteemed presenters and the more than one hundred student-teachers in attendance. We are looking forward to next year's event!



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