Introduction

I had the opportunity to present a paper titled “Preservice teachers’ attitude to use technology to meet the needs of diverse learners: Research paper and hands-on comparison” at EdMedia 2008 in Vienna, Austria. The paper was based on my doctoral dissertation that I defended in March, 2007. I wanted the dissertation topic to be useful for Slippery Rock University’s College of Education so I chose a topic relevant to National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation and National Educational Technology Standard for Teachers (NETS*T). I extracted the diversity element from the two standards, designed classroom activities for diversity, and conducted a study on the instruction.

During the academic year 2007-2008, I had the professional development opportunity to be in charge of the electronic exhibits room for Slippery Rock University’s NCATE accreditation. This process allowed me to develop a working knowledge about NCATE, and gave me the access to diversity-related data for Slippery Rock University, which was not available when I wrote my dissertation. With this new data, I began to formulate new hypotheses and directions for new studies.

Slippery Rock University awarded me $1,000 of the President’s International Professional Development Grant to present this paper in Vienna, Austria at EdMedia conference. The Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE) hosted this conference. After presenting at this conference, the grant required a written report. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to fulfill the grant requirement. The first part will focus on the conference. The second part is intended for foreign language educators: I taught Japanese at Mt. Lebanon High School in Pittsburgh, PA prior to this job, so I cannot help thinking like a language teacher when I’m exposed to a new culture. The third part is a report on my personal enrichment.
Part I: Conference

The conference took place at Vienna University of Technology. As the picture on the left shows, the university is located next to Karlikiche (St. Charles’ Church). I visited the church as soon as I completed registration on June 30. The University is at a great location since Naschmarkt, where lots of tiny restaurants are clustered, was nestled between Freihaus, where the session took place, and Audi Max, where the keynotes were. There were lots of coffee houses such as Opera House Café within a few minutes’ walk. I looked for people with the conference name tags and networked at Naschmarkt during lunch time.

Keynote and Session on July 1, 2008

Alan Amory from University of Johannesburg, South Africa delivered the keynote titled “Playing Games: Hegemony as Enemy.” Dr. Amory stated that educators have to analyze learners first prior to deciding whether to use games or not, because some learners use games to develop strategies or make analysis but some do not utilize games as a learning tool. I liked this “anti-one-size-fits all,” approach even though some of the materials that Dr. Amory shared were not suitable for educational purposes because they included adult content and violence. He also provided some concrete examples for what is deeper understanding versus fun. It made me think if it is possible to take something marketed for entertainment to facilitate higher order thinking.

Sessions on July 1

I am not going to mention disappointing sessions but focus on the good ones that I attended. “Beyond Content: Developing Transferable Learning with Digital Video Archives” by Kevin Burden and Simon Atkinson from the University of Hull, United Kingdom (U.K.) was very interesting. For example, he showed campaign videos from the 1935 British General Election side by side and had the audience discuss which candidate was likely to win. We had to justify our answers. Then we saw a video clip of a student making a justification for his answer. More information about the Hull Digital Videos is available from http://www.hull.ac.uk/dial/Welcome.html.
“Where is the human in Web 3.0” by Gregory, Fleet of University of New Brunswick, Canada was a standing-room-only presentation. There were three dimensions that he suggested including earlier form of web, “find-the-stuff-for-me web/ intelligent web,” and the “cloud web.” The most interesting concept for me was cloud web. It is defined as a web storage space so we do not have to worry about where we save our files. He envisions smart phones with GPS system will locate where a person is, sort information about the location according to that person’s interest, and provide the information that would interest the telephone’s owner.

“Tablet PCs in Applied Communication Classroom: The Shift to Information Design” by Andreas Karatsolis from Albany College of Pharmacy, U. S. A. was also interesting. He used DyKnow, software that allows the changes in highlighting and annotations in writing revisions to ask future pharmacists, “Why did you change the writing as you did?” Effective writing requires reaching to a specific audience and having a distinct purpose. Letting a writer reflect on revisions assists the development of effective written communication. I saw the application of Dr. Karastos’ approach to teacher education, especially after I saw “too wordy” mentioned multiple times in the annotations. For example teachers for English Language Learners need to simplify the language without watering down the content. Dr. Karatsolis and I chatted about his topic after the presentation.

Culture shock (?) after the sessions

Sessions were over at 6:30 PM, but due to the time difference, I was not hungry. I went out to eat at around 8:30 PM thinking, “Surely, there must be plenty of restaurants open in a big city like this.” This was wrong! There were plenty of outdoor bars still open but restaurants were closed. I ended up eating a Vienna style hot dog at a sport bar on Mariahilfer Strasse. I shared this story with a Greek scholar who has lived in Vienna for years when we had lunch together the following day. He said most kitchens in Vienna close by 9 PM and people eat dinner by 6:30 PM.

July 2, 2008

Keynote

The keynote by Geetha Narayanan, the founder and the director of Srishiti School of Art, Design, and Technology, India was just mind-blowing. She uses technology to promote education and humanity to children too poor to go to school. In her area, girls normally work domestically and boys typically
gamble on streets. These students, however, have access to technology education for free at her institution. She shared a multimedia presentation that the children created which demonstrated how they can connect sounds and literature. It is not the specific technology skill that is important, but it is the children’s awareness that there are better options than domestic work or gambling. Therefore, technology education can be a way out of impoverished conditions.

**My presentation**

There were approximately 30 people that attended my presentation at 9:45 AM. Prior to the presentation, I surveyed where they were from. They came from U.K., Japan, Austria, Australia, Canada, China, and several other countries. Since no one was from the United States, I spent about five minutes explaining NCATE and NETS*T to the audience in the beginning. This was necessary to convey why technology education intertwined with diversity education and is important for teacher candidates in the United States. The audience was warm and gave me positive feedback after my presentation.

(Click here for my PowerPoint)

**Poster Presentation**

After dinner, I attended a poster presentation starting at 6:45 PM. The poster presentation allowed me to freely inject questions as the presenters talked. Therefore, the audience participated much more actively compared to the regular sessions. I made it a point to visit the booth with a poster of Satoru Fujitani, Mejiro University, Japan, and Tadashi Inagaki, Tohoku Gakuin University, Japan. I had previously learned that Dr. Inagaki loves creating educational media for elementary school students. This made me look forward to this poster presentation. Dr. Fujitani and Dr. Inagaki acquired a corporate grant to create online video casting of teachers' workshops so other teachers can see them at home. There is a blog for each presenter. Teachers who interact online have the option to meet face-to-face as well. A tiny teddy bear and a Japanese tea ceremony set at their booth added a nice personal touch. It was nice to speak Japanese, my native language.
Part II: For Foreign Language Educators

In order to prepare for the visit to Vienna I studied German with audio CDs. Since I did not have much time to prepare, my German was just on the survival level. Studying a new language and going to a country where the language is spoken made me reflect on language learning and teaching. This experience can be tied to my profession because my advisees are foreign language education majors and I also teach English Language Learners teaching methodology. Since my teaching certificate is in foreign language education and taught Japanese at a high school, meta-analysis on language learning naturally surfaced as I used German, a newly studied language, in Austria.

Notes on language acquisition and a context-rich environment

I experienced firsthand that a novice can pick up a new vocabulary from the context. It happened at this whole-grain bakery where I stopped for lunch. Vienna has plenty of excellent bakeries.

Me: Entschuldigen Sie, bitte. (Excuse me.)

Sales lady: Ja. (Yes?)

Me: Ich möchte einen Apfelstrudel und das. (I would like an applestrudel and this.)

I pointed to a sandwich that looked good.

She put the pastry into a paper bag.

Me: Haben Sie Kaffee? (Do you have coffee?)

Sales lady: Ja. Da trinken? (Yes. Are you going to drink it here?)

Me: Da trinken. (I will drink it here.)

The sales lady pointed to the pastry.
Sales lady: Da essen? (Are you going to eat it here?)

Me: Ja, Da essen. (I will eat it here.)

The sales lady took the pastry out of the bag and put it on a plate. She handed me a napkin as she said, “Serviette.” I did not know the word for napkin but I was able to pick the word up from the context.

Here’s the lunch. The whole thing cost about 7 Euros. After I had the lunch, I was going to take the plate and the coffee cup over to the counter. The lady said something that I could not understand, but I figured that she was telling me to leave them on the table.

Setting up an authentic environment for language learners instead of depending heavily on the grammar-translation method is a big topic for both foreign language education and English Language Learner (ELL) education.

It takes a lot of hands-on practice for teacher candidates to facilitate authentic tasks for language learners. For this reason, I moved the Curriculum and Assessment for English as a Second Language (ESL) class in summer session II to the second floor of the library, where the students will have easy access to puppets, picture books, etc. The students in the class have come up with ways to use the library resources to create a context-rich assessment.

**Teaching Culture: Research Questions for a Foreign Language Classroom**

The culture standards for foreign language learners require them to connect cultural products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture. Mentioning cultural products or practices in isolated manners does not contribute to deep understanding of the culture. Therefore I give the candidates for French or Spanish Education a hard time when they mention cultural products or practices without mentioning perspectives. It appears that it is initially difficult for teacher candidates to facilitate a lesson that ties all 3Ps (products, practices, and perspectives) together. Concrete examples help them create a project to teach culture. Therefore, I formulated some research questions based on my observation of the culture in Vienna, wishing these questions will be useful to future language teachers.
• Why are there so many Catholic Cathedrals in Vienna? What is the historical background and how does it impact the society today?

• Why do most restaurants close by 9 PM? Compare it with a similar-size city in the United States.

• How do Austrians and Americans view public display of nudity? There seems to be a different concept about human bodies between Americans and Austrians. In Vienna, there was a painting of a naked pregnant woman peacefully smiling with her arms around her belly in front of a maternity clothing store. Also, there was a huge painting of a naked man in front of a museum. I have not observed a public display of naked bodies in the United States.

• Why do supermarkets sell beer and wine in Vienna? Are there any supermarkets in the United States that do the same thing? What is the conceptual difference about drinking between Austrians and Americans?

Should language learners be allowed to use the dictionary during assessment?

I am writing this report during the same week I am teaching ESL Curriculum and Assessment in Summer Session II. After the class read two journal articles about authentic assessment, a teacher candidate raised a question about allowing students to use the dictionary during assessment. If the intent of the assessment is vocabulary knowledge, a teacher should not allow it. Word memorization encourages students to develop automaticity. In other words, if language learners practice words until they memorize them completely, recall of these words would be automatic: in such assessment the dictionary use should not be permitted.

However, classroom activities should mimic the real world. I shared two examples of how I used the dictionary to complete tasks in Vienna.

First, I saw this juice machine at a whole-grain bakery and it made me thirsty for carrot juice. However, I could not remember the German word for juice. I looked it up in the dictionary and found out it is “Saft.” Then, I went up to the counter and said, “Entschuldigen Sie, bitte. Ich möchte Karotten Saft, bitte.” If I could not use the dictionary in the real world, I would have to give up this
wonderful addition to my breakfast.

The second occasion for which I depended on the dictionary occurred at this restaurant by the Am Hof Church. The Wiener Schnitzel was heavenly, and eating on the patio on the sunny day was a delight. Nonetheless, since I was in Vienna for the conference, I had a very limited time to explore the city. Therefore, I wanted to get going instead of sitting at the patio until the waiter decided to bring me the bill. I looked up the word for “pay” and said, “Herr Ober! Ich möchte bezahlen.” This further demonstrates how a dictionary can be used in an authentic situation. If a language teacher is to set up contexts to complete tasks, it makes sense that language learners use a dictionary.

In summation, the objective of the assessment determines whether or not the dictionary is used. It is also necessary that a teacher communicates when it is allowed and when it is not so learners are not confused.
Part III: Personal Enrichment

For personal enrichment I visited churches in Vienna starting with Karlkirche (St. Charles Church).

Stephansdom (St. Stephen’s Cathedral) is the Archdiocese of Vienna. The cathedral was packed with people and there was a youth group singing in English at the entrance. There was Josef Janauschek, a church supply store near Stephansdom. It was closing time when I found the store, but the store owner spent about half an hour telling stories about saints as he showed me the statues of the saints in the store. He also told me how the bell in the North Tower in Stephansdom was made of the ammunitions that the Turks left. I purchased an icon of St. Cecilia, my patron.
Unlike Stephansdom packed with tourists, I was the only ‘earthly’ visitor there. The House of Music is on the same street and I was able to hear gorgeous female vocalist as I gazed upon the ceiling.

Mariahilf

It was very exciting to see “Lobe Den Herren” from Bach Cantata BWV137 in a worship book because I used to sing for a church choir that performed one Bach Cantata every year and “Lobe Den Herren” was one of them. The worship schedule for the week said, “Masse zur Gottesmutter in Mariahilf,” for the next day at 8 AM and I decided that it would be nice to attend the mass for the God’s Mother at Mary’s church. The mass was rather quiet attended by 10 people or so. It was nice that even though I did not understand the language I was able to follow
the mass because its structure stays the same everywhere in the world.

I wondered if Josef Haydn had anything to do with the church since his statue was in front of Mariahilf.

In Votivkirche (People’s Church) there were little notes in multiple languages titled, “Take and read.” In it there was a prayer that one can use while lighting a candle. The prayer includes phrases such as “Through this candle flame may You (God) burn away the evil in me, that from it the new and good can arise.” It enticed me to light a candle and pray.
Mozart’s House

I also visited Mozart’s house nearby Stephansdom. I love Mozart so much that I even sing “Ave Verum Corpus” while I’m driving. It was very exciting to see the original score of “Dies Irae” from “Requiem”. I could not help singing it: very softly though. Now I can claim that I sang “Dies Irae” at Mozart’s house.
Conclusion

Overall, the trip not only contributed to my professional growth but also to my personal enrichment. There were lots of networking opportunities and the sessions gave me ideas about different applications of instructional technology. The field of instructional technology evolves quickly so there is always the need to stay current with the emerging trends. Attending this international conference will enable me to do so. My presentation about preparing our teacher candidates to teach diverse learners with technology was well-received. As I explained that diversity is a big issue in the United States because it is an NCATE requirement, I happily reported that Slippery Rock University passed NCATE accreditation this April, and other institutions are making inquiries to us because we are a good model.

Additionally, since I studied German (just a bit) prior to visiting Austria I monitored my language use while I was there. The self-analysis came naturally because my K-12 teaching certificate in Japanese required the study of foreign/second language acquisition theories. The experience for having very little proficiency in the target language and depending heavily on the context to communicate was immediately applicable for an English Language Learner class that I started to teach two days after I returned from Austria. All of my advisees in the Department of Secondary Education / Foundations of Education are foreign language education majors. I look forward to sharing my thoughts as a foreign language teacher when my advisees return for the fall semester.

Finally, visiting churches, praying with candles, and attending a mass in Vienna gave me opportunities to reflect on things that I have done wrong and good things that I have left to do. Hopefully I will be a better person because of it.