



Remembering Antonieta

Mike Scott

I first met Antonieta Celani in 1971 or 1972. I was a locally-employed teacher at the Cultura Inglesa in São Paulo, and as a young British person was asked to speak to PUC students whose syllabus included items on Britain, about the National Health Service in Britain. Antonieta Celani was there to greet me and make me feel welcome. It was also my first contact with PUC-SP, in a building in the Rua Maria Antonia, in the city centre.

Fast forward to 1979. The British Council sponsored a conference about ESP in Cocoyóc, near Puebla in Mexico. Keynote speakers were John Sinclair, Chris Candlin, Dick Allwright. I was designing materials and teaching ESP at two universities in northern Mexico; Janet McAlpin and I offered a paper on exercise typology at the conference. The largest and to me most impressive contingent of speakers at that conference was the Brazilian group, headed by Antonieta Celani. The news we got there was that a major ESP initiative had just started up in Brazil, involving 23 Federal Universities and with support from the British Council and the UK's Ministry for Overseas Development. The idea was to boost the learning of English at Universities in Brazil, whose students in most disciplines were likely to need the ability to read the literature of their subject specialism in English. At that time ESP was very much the flavour of the times; it was obvious that standard *Mary-gave-the-elephant-a-bun* EFL was not meeting the needs of a technological globalising world and accordingly the more far-sighted had taken steps to devise an alternative. Maurice Broughton of the



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British Council, and Antonieta Celani of PUC-SP had done all the spade-work involving preparing bids to both governments, extensive documentation, lobbying in Brasilia and London, and now promoting the initiative in the world of ESP.

Within a year my contract in Mexico had run out, and I had the enormous fortune to be admitted as one of three British lecturers to work with Antonieta in the Brazilian National ESP Project. This was a posting which with successors kept me busy for the whole decade of the 1980s. I was attached to the Federal University of Santa Catarina, John Holmes and Tony Deyes to the Catholic University of São Paulo, but the three of us were to travel to various points in Brazil running local, regional or national workshops intended to further the teaching and learning of ESP with a concentration on academic reading. This project has been extremely influential and has been widely described.

Here, my aim is to describe the leadership, as I saw it, of Antonieta Celani. Antonieta was immediately impressive in her influence over any meeting or group. A tiny bundle of energy held under enormous self-control, Antonieta was obviously held in the very greatest of respect by those who surrounded her. It was straight away obvious that she was not only respected as the leading authority in Brazil on language teaching, but also liked: those were the first impressions I gained in the first National Seminar I attended on arrival in October 1980. A gentle leadership lightly exercised, but on a few occasions it would become clear that if a sharp corrective was needed, one would be issued. In private discussions over innumerable meals in restaurants anywhere from Fortaleza to Santa Maria, Brasília to Vitória, and including her stays at our home in Liverpool we got to know each other well and to learn about each other's views and preferences.

Antonieta was ever discreet. But very occasionally one saw a sign that she was running low on patience: someone had rung her early in the morning, or had planned an unnecessarily pompous intervention (such as inviting a State Governor to open a workshop, causing about half of the time to be wasted in speeches). On such occasions, the phrase I began to notice was "a trôco de quê?". Her work required her to be in touch with government authorities and that phrase would emerge in

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her reports of requirements and demands, so that it established itself in my lexicon as a result.

The last time we met was in 2016, when I was briefly in São Paulo and we dined at an Italian restaurant where she had her customary chicken breast meal and a Campari soda as if time hadn't passed. Still as bright as a bird, still working in her 90s. Still appearing in conferences, right to near the end of her life. An enormous influence.

Antonieta, our "Chefa", far and away the best boss I ever had, we will all miss you.