15 YEARS OF THE ELT MALTA CONFERENCE

EXCELLENCE IN ELT:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, WELL-BEING AND INNOVATION

23-24 OCTOBER 2026

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON MALTA
QAWRA, ST. PAUL'S BAY

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GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND SPORT

IN COLLABORATION WITH

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TTED Teacher Training and Education

FRIDAY 23RD OCTOBER

EXCELLENCE IN ELT

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, WELL-BEING AND INNOVATION

08:30 - 09:00

REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE

Location: Athena Suite Foyer - Level 1

BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT TALKS

09:00 - 09:45

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND THE SDGS: A ROADMAP FOR TRANSFORMING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING SECTOR

Speaker: Mark C Mifsud
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

This presentation examines the integration of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within the Maltese English Language Teaching (ELT) sector. While global frameworks mandate a "Whole-Institution Approach," niche educational sectors often lag in strategic implementation. Utilizing a mixed-methods "probing study" of 21 institutions, the research reveals a significant "Awareness-Action Gap": high ideological commitment (61.9%) contrasted with low formal policy implementation (14.3%). The session explores how "ad-hoc" governance and "crowded curricula" hinder progress. Ultimately, it proposes a behavioural-policy framework to transform ELT schools into "Living Labs," leveraging Malta's educational tourism to foster global pro-environmental behaviour through transformative pedagogy.

Mark C Mifsud is a Full Professor and prolific researcher with academic and consultancy appointments across Europe, Africa, and the US. His extensive career is defined by bridging the gap between theory and practice, advising government and industry on environmental policy while embedding innovative sustainability frameworks across all levels of education, from primary schools to doctoral programs.

09:45 - 10:15

20 YEARS OF BUILDING, ADAPTING AND LEADING A LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Speaker: Sanja Conjagic
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Over the past 20 years, leading a private language school has meant constant adaptation, strategic marketing shifts, and deep engagement with professional networks and the local community. This talk explores four pillars of sustainable school leadership: the impact of ELTA membership and continuous professional development on team building; the evolution of marketing from flyers to social media; the collaboration with SOL which transformed student experience and elevated the school's reputation; and the power of community-based projects in strengthening brand identity. Through practical insights and reflective leadership lessons, this session offers actionable strategies for school owners seeking resilience and meaningful impact.

Sanja Conjagic is a language school director with over 20 years of experience in English language teaching and teacher development. She is an active member of ELTA Serbia and serves as European Manager for SOL, supporting collaboration with ELT associations across Central and South-East Europe and strengthening long-standing international professional networks.

10:15 - 10:25

SPONSORED TALK

PROSPERITY EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: PLACEMENT TESTING IN PRACTICE, USING AI-BASED ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT LEARNING AND TEACHING

Speaker: Tom O'Reilly
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

A practical demonstration of Prosperity English, the AI-powered assessment and diagnostic platform geared towards Cambridge English examinations. The session focuses on how teachers can use AI-driven placement and diagnostic data to better understand learners' strengths and needs, streamline grouping and course placement, and adapt teaching strategies to support more-effective learning in the classroom.

Tom O'Reilly is Director of Prosperity Education, an independent Cambridge-based publisher specialising in English language assessment and learning.

10:25 - 10:55

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT TEACHER EDUCATION

Speaker: Catarina Pontes
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Be it because of schools' busy routines, lack of time, or interest in professional development, teacher education can often be neglected. Freeman (1989) has previously stated how language teacher education has been fragmented, and this can be easily identified when we look at the multitude of aspects to be considered and the new contexts for English language teaching today. In this talk, we are going to discuss core aspects to be considered when designing and implementing teacher development initiatives, as well as how to measure progress and instill an environment that welcomes and fosters Continuing Professional Development.

Catarina Pontes is an educational manager and teacher educator with over 25 years of experience. She is an international speaker and has co-authored *Getting into Teacher Education: a Handbook*. She is a Cambridge English Qualifications tutor, is the current Vice-President of BRAZ-TESOL, and is the founder of Serendipity Language Services.

10:55 - 11:15

FELTOM ASSOCIATION SPOTLIGHT

FLIGHT: AVIATION ENGLISH FOR THE FUTURE

Speaker: Vanya Katsarska
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

The FLIGHT project is an Erasmus+ initiative bringing together partners from Malta and Bulgaria to develop innovative, practical resources for teachers of Aviation English. The project addresses the specific linguistic and professional needs of aviation personnel while supporting teachers with a dedicated toolkit of adaptable teaching materials and methodologies. The session will introduce the FLIGHT toolkit, highlight the collaboration between FELTOM and BAFA, and explore how the project can contribute to professional learning, innovation and the internationalisation of English language teaching. Speakers will also share insights into the development of the project and its potential to support both ELT professionals and the wider aviation sector.

Vanya Katsarska is an Associate Professor at the Bulgarian Air Force Academy. She is responsible for planning, delivering, and assessing specialized English language courses for BSc cadets and civilian students. She has also been a member of several international groups of ESP and aviation English teachers, contributing to the development and implementation of needs-driven courses across Europe. Her areas of expertise include aviation English, with a particular focus on curriculum design, needs analysis, and the development of effective communication skills for aviation contexts.

11:15 - 11:45

COFFEE BREAK

Location: Athena Suite Foyer - Level 1

11:45 - 12:05

SPONSORED TALK
EAQUALS SPOTLIGHT: A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGER CPD

Speaker: Lou McLaughlin
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

The Eaquals Academic Management Competences Framework addresses the need for support for academic managers in terms of designing a clear path for their own development within an organisation or as they develop in their career and move from one organisation to the next. The framework provides a practical way of addressing this need both for managers and for their team. The framework is not a definitive statement on the competences requirement by the academic manager role, but is intended as a tool to support managers in the awareness raising of their own strengths and possible development paths. With this in mind, the practical implications of the framework will be clearly outlined with examples provided for discussion and reflection.

Lou McLaughlin is the Executive Director of Eaquals (Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality Language Services). She is the Founder Chair of ELT Ireland, the network for ELT professionals in Ireland, and has previously served on the IATEFL Board of Trustees as the Associates Representative as well as being part of the IATEFL LAMSIG Committee until 2025. Lou holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics, Masters in ELT, DELTA, TESOL Cert. in Leadership & Management and Trinity TESOL Cert. Her special interests are Young Learner teacher training, teacher cognition and management in ELT.

12:05 - 12:35

FROM IQ TO EQ: RETHINKING LEADERSHIP IN ELT

Speaker: Panos Argyris
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

This session presents a leadership model for English language teaching based on Emmett C. Murphy's Leadership IQ (1996), as adapted in Christison and Murray (2009). The model highlights key leadership principles and work leader roles for guiding teams, shaping vision, and aligning practice with institutional goals. It also explores the role of emotional intelligence, focusing on personal and social competence, as well as the development of emotional competence. Participants will engage with practical strategies for applying these concepts in their own contexts. The session aims to support teacher growth through empathetic leadership and enhance institutional effectiveness by fostering a positive, collaborative, and resilient professional culture.

Panos Argyris is an ELT academic team leader with 14 years of international experience across the UK, Ireland, Spain, Russia, and Greece. He is the YLEUK Committee Academic Representative, a Cambridge Examiner for the British Council, a conference speaker, a teacher trainer and specialises in syllabi design.

12:35 - 13:05

ALONE TOGETHER: RETHINKING RESILIENCE IN ELT MANAGEMENT

Speaker: Stefanelle Cachia
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

In a post-pandemic landscape, ELT leaders are expected to be both pedagogical guides and business decision-makers, often in isolation. After one year as a Director of Studies, a number of recurring challenges and questions have come into sharper focus. While schools compete to survive, they also face shared challenges. Drawing on a background beyond ELT, this session reflects on how similar pressures are approached differently across industries, particularly in relation to collaboration and support. This session explores how resilience in ELT often remains reactive rather than proactive, and invites participants to reflect on how more networked, collaborative approaches to leadership might strengthen the sector.

Stefanelle Cachia is the Director of Studies at GV Malta and has worked in the ELT sector since 2017. Her background in language education, the arts, and cultural policy has shaped an interdisciplinary approach to academic leadership. She is particularly interested in how insights from other sectors can inform collaboration, resilience, and leadership in ELT.

13:05 - 13:15

SHORT BREAK

13:15 - 14:00

HUMANISING THE CHANGE PROCESS

Speaker: Andy Hockley
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Whether it's introducing a new coursebook, starting a new timetable structure, or moving to a new campus, change often seems to be a challenge. This session will look at why people seem to resist change, what can be learned from it, and how it can be combatted. In addition various models of change (such as Kotter (1996), and Hockley & Butler (2022)) will be critiqued and "humanised" to more clearly take into account the needs and responses of the various stakeholder groups.

Andy Hockley is an educational management trainer based in deepest Transylvania. He is the academic director and lead trainer of the International Diploma in Language Teaching Management. He is co-author of *Leading Technological Change* (CUP 2022), and *From Teacher to Manager* (CUP, 2008). He is also an IATEFL trustee.

14:00 - 14:30

ONE STEP SIDEWAYS, TWO STEPS FORWARD

Speaker: Robert McLarty
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

The talk will address the topic of career paths for English language teachers. Whether transitioning into a management or leadership position, continuing to develop as a trainer or teacher or moving into a connected world such as publishing, research or marketing, teachers need to be prepared for the move. The talk will look at ways we can prepare ourselves so that we are in a good position to take advantage of the opportunities which come our way and how to set ourselves apart in order to have the best chance of succeeding.

Robert McLarty has worked in England, France and New Zealand as a teacher, teacher-trainer, materials writer and school director. For the last twelve years he has been Editor of *Modern English Teacher*.

13:30 - 14:30

REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE

Location: Oracle Conference Centre Foyer - Level 2

14:30 - 14:45

15TH ELT MALTA CONFERENCE

OFFICIAL 15TH ELT MALTA CONFERENCE OPENING

Opening Address: Prof Daniel Xerri, Chairperson, ELT Council
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

PLENARY 1

14:45 - 15:45

10 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING FOR TEACHER WELL BEING

Speaker: Thomas S.C. Farrell
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Teaching can be a very rewarding experience for most teachers, but it also can be tiring after following the same routines for a number of years and as such we can 'plateau' at various times during our career thus affecting our overall well-being. Such plateauing is marked by feelings of sameness, frustration, disillusionment, and career stagnation. It can happen when we least expect it, after 2 years, 5 years, 10 years and even beyond that resulting in many teachers losing the joy, excitement, and wonder of teaching that makes us so effective in providing opportunities for our students to learn. This plenary will show how language teachers can overcome plateauing by considering ten principles of effective teaching and thus improving their overall well-being.

Thomas S.C. Farrell is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. Professor Farrell's professional interests include Reflective Practice and Language Teacher Education. Professor Farrell has published widely and has presented at major conferences worldwide on these topics. A selection of his work can be found on his webpage: www.reflectiveinquiry.ca

WORKSHOPS 1-5

15:50 - 16:35

WORKSHOP 1: THE BENEFITS OF SETTING ACHIEVABLE PROFESSIONAL GOALS

Speaker: Marjorie Rosenberg / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Goal-setting is a major part of our professional lives and, due to the effect on the brain, the achievement of these goals contributes to our general well-being. Research shows that the realisation of a goal

leads to positive feelings and motivation, whereas the opposite occurs if we cannot achieve what we have planned. This practical workshop will introduce participants to the NLP goal-setting framework for setting realistic goals and the steps needed to achieve them as well as providing the space for them to try it out for themselves.

Marjorie Rosenberg has worked for over four decades in Austria at the tertiary level, in adult education, in corporate training and as a teacher trainer. She is an NLP trainer and neurolanguage coach®. Marjorie has served as the IATEFL BESIG Joint Coordinator and is a past president of IATEFL.

15:50 - 16:35

WORKSHOP 2: MOTIVATING GEN Z AND GEN ALPHA

Speaker: Claudia Darmanin
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

This interactive workshop explores practical strategies for motivating Generation Z and Generation Alpha learners in today's classrooms. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, it focuses on autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of engagement. Participants will experience and adapt techniques such as gamification, retrieval practice, and purpose-driven tasks, transforming traditional activities into meaningful, student-centred learning experiences. Through collaborative tasks and real classroom scenarios, teachers will leave with practical, low-preparation strategies they can implement immediately to boost motivation, participation, and learning outcomes across a range of teaching contexts.

Claudia Darmanin is a Director of Studies with over 10 years of experience in English language teaching across different levels and ages. She has a strong background in teacher development, curriculum design, and academic leadership. Claudia is passionate about supporting teachers and creating engaging, effective learning environments that help students succeed.

15:50 - 16:35

WORKSHOP 3: SPEAK LIKE A PRO, VOICE MISTAKES TO AVOID

Speaker: Natalia Liashko
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Your voice can transform the way your message is heard. This workshop incorporates insights from years of presenting on stage and working with teachers, revealing common voice mistakes that weaken communication such as speaking in a flat tone, rushing through ideas, or skipping pauses. Through practical examples, the workshop demonstrates how small changes in pitch, rhythm, and timing can make speech clearer, more engaging, and easier to follow. Teachers will discover simple strategies to strengthen their own speaking skills and learn how to help their students become more confident and effective communicators.

Natalia Liashko is an experienced English teacher and CELTA tutor with 20 years of classroom experience. Passionate about helping teachers grow, she leads training in Ukraine and abroad and works as an International Speaking Examiner. She combines practical teaching skills with inspiring guidance to empower both educators and their students.

15:50 - 16:35

WORKSHOP 4: SEEN, HEARD, SUPPORTED, RETHINKING OBSERVATIONS TO EMPOWER TEACHERS

Speaker: Aurore Trouvé / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

Observation practices should foster mutual cooperation and support rather than judgement, yet they are often experienced as stressful, top-down processes that can negatively impact teacher wellbeing and limit professional growth. This interactive workshop explores how a more collaborative, teacher-led approach can reshape this experience. Drawing on practical examples, participants will engage in reflective tasks based on real observation practices, including peer observation and co-teaching. They will explore how giving teachers greater agency can make observations more purposeful and supportive, and leave with simple strategies to adapt these practices within their own contexts.

Aurore Trouvé is a teacher and teacher trainer in Malta and holds the Cambridge DELTA. She has worked in diverse contexts, including a coordinator in Peru and an academic manager in Malta. She focuses on teacher wellbeing and observation practices that give teachers a stronger voice in their professional development.

15:50 - 16:35

WORKSHOP 5: CREATIVE TEACHING; CREATIVE THINKING? ENHANCING ENGLISH TEACHING THROUGH CREATIVE THINKING

Speaker: Terry Zammit
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Creative thinking is often considered one of the main skills needed by learners and workers in the 21st century. ELT professionals recognize the significance of this skill; however, a lack of clarity on how to implement this is frequently reported in research. The aim of this workshop is to enhance participants' understanding of what creative thinking entails while providing hands-on opportunities for enhancing typical English lesson stages using creative thinking frameworks. Specific focus will be placed on generating ideas, experimentation, and assessing the quality of ideas.

Terry Zammit holds a B.A. (Hons.) and M.T.L. (Master's in Teaching and Learning) in English, along with a P.G. Cert in Developing the Educator. His main interests are the implementation of thinking skills, creativity, and collaborative learning within ELT. He currently teaches English in a Maltese secondary school.

16:35 - 17:05

COFFEE BREAK

Location: Oracle Conference Centre - Level 2

WORKSHOPS 6-10

17:05 - 17:50

WORKSHOP 6: TEACHING FOR TOMORROW: FUTURE-READY SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Speaker: Alex Warren / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

In a rapidly evolving world, language teachers must do more than teach grammar and vocabulary; we must also prepare learners for their futures. But what does it mean to be "future-ready", what are "future-ready skills" and how can we meaningfully integrate these skills into lessons? In this session we'll answer these questions, showing how we can help shape learners who are not just proficient in English, but prepared for the world of work in a globalized society.

Alex Warren is a DELTA qualified teacher trainer with over 20 years' experience of working in ELT as a teacher, trainer and academic director. He has presented in over 50 countries throughout Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Alex is currently the Regional Academic Services Manager at National Geographic Learning.

17:05 - 17:50

WORKSHOP 7: NON-STANDARD GRAMMAR, OR JUST PLAIN WRONG?

Speaker: Jon Hird
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Non-standard grammar is a loose but very useful term for those forms and usages that are considered technically incorrect, but which are so commonplace that we perhaps need to consider them as an acceptable alternative, or not. This session explores a few such examples and considers how describing a form or usage as non-standard can be a tidy and concise way of explaining something that otherwise might be messy, vague and incomplete. It is a notion that learners tend to be happy to embrace.

Jon Hird is an ELT materials writer, trainer and tutor at the University of Oxford. He frequently gives talks and workshops in the UK and overseas and has written and contributed to a range of ELT publications. His latest book, *Spoken Grammar*, was published by Pavilion ELT in 2025.

17:05 - 17:50

WORKSHOP 8: WONDER, WARMTH AND COLOUR IN OUR HUMANISTIC CLASSROOMS

Speaker: Stefania Ballotto / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Wonder, warmth and colour are not extras: they are essential conditions for language learning to flourish. We shall look at what the three stand for in our classroom through practical examples to take away and use. We shall also explore, through a humanistic lens, how teaching from the heart, dancing in rhythm with the brain, can remain more profoundly human than a machine.

Stefania Ballotto is a South African-born Italian ELT professional with a degree in Applied Linguistics from Cambridge University and fifty years' experience in the field. She has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer, researcher, and Pilgrims trainer for twenty-five years. Stefania delivers training and workshops internationally, with a particular focus on positive psychology, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and teacher well-being.

17:05 - 17:50

WORKSHOP 9: COMPASSES, KEYS AND FLAMES: THE ADVENTURE OF TEACHING

Speaker: Eva Bogdanovic & Ivana Buric Kurtovic
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

What if professional development felt like an adventure? In this immersive, story-based workshop the Storyteller and the Teacher lead participants through a symbolic journey of growth. Through interactive, game-wrapped challenges, participants reflect, reinvent, and reignite teaching passion by exploring three powerful metaphors: compasses, keys, and flames. Each stage offers practical strategies to support professional learning, boost well-being, and inspire innovation in the classroom. With each task, teachers unlock ideas they can immediately apply to their own contexts. This engaging experience blends storytelling, collaboration, and pedagogy, leaving participants reenergised, reflective, and equipped with a renewed sense of purpose.

Ivana Buric Kurtovic, M.A. and Eva Bogdanovic, M.A. are educators with years of experience in teaching, teacher training and materials development. Both own language schools in Zagreb. They are members of HUPE and IATEFL. They founded the EVIVA Learning Mobility Association to promote global skills, and run CPD courses.

17:05 - 17:50

WORKSHOP 10: EMPOWERING TEACHERS: A SKILLS-BASED RESILIENCE WORKSHOP

Speaker: Agnieszka Dudzik & Agnieszka Dzieciol-Pedich
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Teaching is a demanding profession that requires immense dedication, emotional resilience, and adaptability to manage diverse student needs, administrative burdens and constant curriculum changes. Without the right strategies and skills, teachers can experience high levels of stress and career burnout. The aim of this practical, skills-based workshop is to help educators build their awareness of the skills and practices that will facilitate resilience in their teaching career. It will provide a number of tools teachers can apply both in their classrooms and personal lives.

Agnieszka Dudzik, PhD, is an EFL lecturer at the Medical University of Bialystok, Poland. Her main fields of interest include ESP and communicative language teaching. Agnieszka Dzieciol-Pedich, PhD, is a lecturer at the University of Bialystok. She is interested in the communicative approach and intercultural competence in foreign language teaching.

TALKS 1-5

17:55 - 18:25

TALK 1A: BRINGING THE WILD INTO THE CLASSROOM

Speaker: Darja Brotzmann
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Various studies on informal foreign language learning underline the need to consider how students consume and engage with English in their free time. Critical reflection on formal as well as informal learning processes and the re-evaluation of what learner-centeredness actually means in the 21st century are therefore part of the future literacy required of every aspiring teacher and novice teacher. This talk therefore focuses on professional challenges facing future language teachers on the basis of existing research findings and sketches out experiences and attitudes of current English students of Heidelberg University of Education towards informal language learning.

Darja Brotzmann is part of the academic staff at Heidelberg University of Education. Her previous positions at the University of Giessen and Goettingen have allowed her to deepen and broaden her perspectives on teacher education. Her main research interests are informal language learning and controversial issues in the EFLC..

18:25 - 18:55

TALK 1B: USING TEACHORAMAS TO MOBILISE PEDAGOGIES OF POSSIBILITY

Speaker: Dario Luis Banegas / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

The aim of this talk is to introduce teachoramas as a way of promoting student-teachers' identities and knowledges as powerful sources of professional learning. A teachorama is a miniature model or visual scene (physical or digital) that depicts a classroom/teaching moment, used as a prompt for student-teachers to reflect on their identity and how they construct knowledge. Framed in post-critical teacher education, the talk will describe a pedagogical experience in which teachoramas were used to capture student-teachers' reflections on their professional identities and knowledge construction. The experience enabled them to imagine pedagogies grounded in empathy, presence, possibility, affirmation, and care.

Dario Luis Banegas is Senior Lecturer in Language Education at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh. He teaches a course on second language curriculum development. His main areas of interest are: language teacher education, action research, CLIL, and curriculum design.

17:55 -18:25

TALK 2A: CARING FOR THE CARERS: TEACHER WELL-BEING MATTERS IN ELT

Speaker: **Maria Makra**
Room: **Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2**

This talk foregrounds teacher well-being as a foundation for good practice, innovation, and sustainable professional growth in ELT. Drawing on practitioner experience and reflective inquiry, it explores how emotional labour, workload, and institutional cultures shape teacher motivation, professional identity, and classroom decision-making. The session shares practical, low-threshold strategies for fostering supportive environments, peer connection, and manageable innovation. Participants will leave with concrete ideas for embedding well-being into everyday pedagogy and professional learning, and for advocating for cultures of care at classroom, departmental, and institutional levels.

Maria Makra (BA in English Language & Literature, MEd in TESOL, PgCert in Professional and Higher Education) is Head of ELT at Metropolitan College, Greece, with over 35 years' teaching experience. She is an active conference presenter and her research interests focus on CPD, assessment, and inclusive, human-centred pedagogies.

18:25 - 18:55

TALK 2B: EMBODYING PROFESSIONAL COACHING AND NEUROSCIENCE IN PEDAGOGY

Speaker: **Rachel Marie Paling / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL**
Room: **Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2**

This talk will explore how professional coaching and neuroscientific principles can be implemented to enhance pedagogy. From creating inclusive practice to fostering student resilience, to transforming teacher communication patterns, we will look at the science of coaching and how to embody neuroscientific research. Both these aspects can cultivate a positive learning culture, improve teacher-student relationships as well as provide teachers with the necessary tools to address challenges, promote resilience, and ultimately shape a more dynamic and inclusive educational landscape.

Rachel Marie Paling is a qualified UK lawyer, educator, coach, and creator of Neurolanguage Coaching and the Neuroheart Education Foundation. She holds a BA (Hons) in Law and Spanish, an MA in Human Rights, an MA in Applied Neuroscience, and an MA in Neuroeducation and Neuropsychology. With over forty years' teaching experience, she is also an International Coaching Federation credentialed MCC Coach, Coach Supervisor, and ICF Coach Mentor.

17:55 -18:25

TALK 3A: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND AI: REVITALIZING THE HUMAN HEARTBEAT IN ELT

Speaker: **Julia Aliverti & Vicky Chionopoulou**
Room: **Athena Suite - Level 1**

In the evolving landscape of AI, the role of ELT educators is often misrepresented as either technically proficient or at risk of obsolescence. This proposal challenges these views by applying Paulo Freire's insights from *Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*. Instead of diminishing the educator's role, AI underscores the need for critical pedagogy. By recognizing AI as an active participant in education, teachers can position themselves as vital mediators fostering critical awareness. This session will explore how Freirean virtues, humility, courage, and "armed love", can guide educators in navigating AI, ensuring that human connection remains central to language learning and social justice.

Julia Aliverti and Vicky Chionopoulou are ELT practitioners from Greece, who have worked in multiple Greek and international educational contexts. They both have more than 25 years of experience, which they like to share with colleagues at international conferences.

18:25 - 18:55

TALK 3B: MASTERING MOTIVATION MECHANISMS

Speaker: **George Kokolas**
Room: **Athena Suite - Level 1**

For years, we have been trying to identify how to motivate students. Could it be that we need to, firstly, think about how to motivate "people"? This session aims to offer a fresh perspective on motivation, beginning with the fundamentals. The speaker will analyse the "dark side of motivation" as a pitfall we may all fall into. Recent views on motivation and how we could apply them in ELT will also be discussed.

George Kokolas has been the Academic Director and Teacher Trainer at Express Publishing for 25 years. He holds a Level 5 Diploma in Positive Psychology, is a certified LEVEL 7 TEFL teacher, and an Advanced Neurolanguage Coach. He co-hosts the *Teachers' Coffee* podcast and served as Vice Chair of TESOL Greece.

17:55 -18:25

TALK 4A: TRANSFORMING TEACHING PRACTICE THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

Speaker: **Simona Macenaite**
Room: **Dodona Syndicate - Level 2**

In order to tackle issues with learner engagement during speaking activities, a teacher engaged in a month-long action research project accompanied by two scholars. Four action interventions took place, followed by extensive reflection. As a result, the teacher has gained a set of new strategies to apply in her lessons, and, most importantly, has come to face and challenge deeply ingrained beliefs about teaching. Drawing on the data collected and the reflection diaries by the teacher, this talk outlines the learning process that the teacher went through and the long-lasting effects it had on her practice.

Simona Macenaite is a DELTA-certified English teacher, with a background in General Linguistics (Vilnius University), and Language Education (University of Edinburgh). Since 2020, she has been engaged in classroom-based research. Simona has presented her research at various conferences and published on her experiences as both a teacher-researcher and a teacher-research mentor.

18:25 - 18:55

TALK 4B: MORE THAN WORDS: STRATEGIC TRANSLANGUAGING FOR THE GLOBAL BUSINESS LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Speaker: Maria Kitsiou / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

This talk examines translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy for teenagers learning Business English alongside other languages. Integrating IES frameworks and European plurilingual models, it posits that languages function as a shared cognitive resource rather than isolated compartments. For these students, "intercomprehension" leverages linguistic similarities between their L1 and another L2 to decode complex English professional terms. This approach facilitates engagement with sophisticated texts while validating multilingual identities. By replacing "English-only" immersion with strategic linguistic deployment, educators foster cognitive growth and better prepare students for the nuanced communication demands of the global business environment.

Maria Kitsiou is a Naples-based EFL/ESL teacher with 15 years' experience. Holding a DELTA and an MA in Gender Studies, she specializes in Business English and Cambridge exams. An IATEFL and BESIG member, she uses innovative, global methods to foster a passion for language and communication, transforming the classroom into a dynamic hub.

17:55 -18:25

TALK 5A: TEACHING GRAMMAR: THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN TEACHER DECISION MAKING

Speaker: Antonella Valeo
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Despite shifting priorities and perspectives in language teaching and learning, teaching grammar remains an important feature of the adult language classroom and a challenge for many teachers. Yet, little is known about how teachers make decisions about teaching grammar. This study examined how ESL teachers working in a range of classroom contexts made pedagogical decisions, responding to the demands and affordances of their personal and professional contexts. The study highlights the highly individualized and idiosyncratic nature of teachers' pedagogical decisions and the potential for a more personalized and self-directed approach to teacher education and development throughout the career cycle.

Antonella Valeo is Associate Professor at York University where she teaches TESOL and graduate courses in applied linguistics. Her research examines language teacher education, form-focussed instruction and the role of feedback in the language classroom.

18:25 - 18:55

TALK 5B: COMICS IN THE CLASSROOM: REDUCING ANXIETY AND INDUCING CREATIVE WRITING

Speaker: Amira Derbel
Room: Zeus - Level 2

This session explores the use of comics as a tool for developing writing skills in English language teaching. Through visual storytelling, learners create short, theme-based narratives using comic panels, dialogue, and a sequential structure. This approach fosters creativity while reducing the anxiety often associated with writing tasks and allows students to express their ideas in meaningful ways. Drawing on classroom practice, the presentation demonstrates practical strategies for integrating comics into writing activities. It examines how comics can support the development of writing skills in ELT classrooms, while highlighting the potential of visual storytelling to enhance learner motivation and promote overall well-being.

Amira Derbel works at Malta University Language School and is a frequent presenter at international ELT conferences across Europe, Asia, and the MENA region. Her research explores comics, art, and discourse in English Language Teaching. She authored a number of articles and a book titled *Iranian Women in the Memoir*.

19:00 - 21:00

NETWORKING RECEPTION
15-YEAR CELEBRATION
AT KORA, DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

Open exclusively to delegates attending Conference Day 1.

SATURDAY 24TH OCTOBER

EXCELLENCE IN ELT

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, WELL-BEING AND INNOVATION

08:00 - 09:00

REGISTRATION AND WELCOME COFFEE

Location: Oracle Conference Centre Foyer - Level 2

09:00 - 09:30

ELT COUNCIL AWARDS CEREMONY

Awards Presenter: Prof Odette Vassallo, Awards Subcommittee Chair
Location: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

PLENARY 2

09:30 - 10:30

USING METAPHOR FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Speaker: Dorothy Zemach
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

In their groundbreaking *Metaphors We Live By*, philosopher Mark Johnson and linguist George Lakoff call metaphor "unavoidable, ubiquitous, and mostly unconscious," claiming that we "live our lives on the basis of inferences we derive via metaphor." The presenter will share insights from years of musical study and performance and show how examining and understanding this experience has carried knowledge over to her linguistic and teaching career. A music student, after all, like a language student, must listen, repeat, practice patterns and drills, learn theory, rehearse alone and with others, and perform with meaning and passion in order to communicate. Audience members will finish by identifying a metaphor through which to better understand their own career.

Dorothy Zemach taught ESL and other languages for over 20 years, in Asia, Africa, and the US. With an MA in TESL from SIT in Vermont, USA, she now concentrates on writing, editing, and publishing ELT materials and conducting teacher training workshops. Her areas of specialty include teaching writing, teaching reading, academic English, testing, and humor.

WORKSHOPS 11-15

10:35 - 11:20

WORKSHOP 11: SLOW TEACHING, DEEP LEARNING: RETHINKING ELT THE FINNISH WAY

Speaker: Anna Nowotka & Monika Beszczyńska-Rusak
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

This is a practical and inspiring workshop exploring how Finnish educational principles can transform English language teaching. Participants will discover how to build trust, foster learner autonomy, and create calm, low-stress environments that support deep learning. Through interactive activities and real classroom examples, teachers will experience simple strategies to increase student engagement and motivation. The session highlights the power of minimalism, meaningful tasks, and student-centered approaches in ELT. By rethinking traditional methods, participants will gain fresh ideas to make their lessons more effective, balanced, and aligned with the needs of today's learners.

Monika Beszczyńska-Rusak is an owner, director, and language coach passionate about modern education. Anna Nowotka is a Smart School manager and has been working as a teacher at BELS Malta during summer for six years. Together, they create innovative, engaging learning environments.

10:35 - 11:20

WORKSHOP 12: PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST: THEME-CENTERED INTERACTION FOR WELL-BEING

Speaker: Silke Riegler & Andreas Hövener / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

"Put your oxygen mask on first" is a vital lesson for Business English teachers. In high-pressure corporate environments, we often prioritize the tasks and language over the individual. This workshop introduces Ruth Cohn's Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) as a framework for linking well-being, communication, and professional learning. We explore the "Chairperson" principle, showing how self-care is a prerequisite for effective facilitation. Through practical activities, we'll demonstrate how balancing individual needs with group dynamics and business goals creates a resilient classroom. Participants will leave with ideas to protect their energy while delivering high-impact corporate training.

Silke Riegler is a lecturer for intercultural communication and business English at a university in Germany. Her interests include investigating the effectiveness of virtual exchange programs and cross-cultural teamwork. Andreas Hövener is a lecturer at a university in Germany, teaching Business English and social sciences. His work explores intercultural communication, sustainability, and innovative learning approaches.

10:35 - 11:20

WORKSHOP 13: TRANSLATION: LETTING THE MONSTER OUT OF THE CAGE

Speaker: Alan Marsh
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

In last year's conference, Giulia Sulis in her inspiring plenary proposed that we draw on students' linguistic repertoires in their English language classroom. For decades, translation and the use of learners' own language(s) have been banned from many ELT classrooms. We will consider the reasons why, and then offer some practical techniques for integrating the use of learners' own language(s) into their English language classes.

Alan Marsh has taught English for several decades. For several decades, too, he has been a Cambridge CELTA and DELTA Teacher Trainer. He is a NILE Associate Trainer, an international conference speaker and is a co-author of *The Creative Teacher's Compendium* (Pavilion ELT). He is also the Honorary President of MATEFL.

10:35 - 11:20

WORKSHOP 14: PUTTING POLITENESS INTO PRACTICE IN THE CLASSROOM

Speaker: Aidan Aquilina
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Memorizing a set of polite expressions does not always seem to be enough to help learners use the language in a socially and culturally appropriate way. Grounded on knowledge gained from the presenter's current studies, this session invites you to come up with ways on how to deepen the learner's understanding of politeness in English. We will explore how to use an online video to help learners not only practice using politeness, but also to raise awareness on different cultural perceptions of politeness, and identify various strategies depending on the context and relationship of the speakers from the video material.

Aidan Aquilina has been an EFL teacher since 2018, and is currently reading for an M.A. in Applied Linguistics and TESOL at the University of Malta. He is interested in pragmatic competence, and looks to experiment on how to bridge the gap between theory and practice by employing knowledge in the classroom.

10:35 - 11:20

WORKSHOP 15: REGULATING EMOTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING, LEARNING AND WELL-BEING IN THE ELT CLASSROOM

Speaker: Erika Galea
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

This practical workshop explores the significance of regulating students' emotions within English language teaching, highlighting its role in strengthening academic, social, and behavioural skills. By adopting targeted neuroscientific strategies, this workshop aims to equip participants with a deep understanding of the vital role emotions play in learners' overall development and language learning, while providing practical tools to promote emotional regulation effectively. These strategies also assist educators in managing their own emotions, helping to create calm, supportive environments where both learners and educators can thrive.

Erika Galea holds a Ph.D. in Psychology and Human Development from University College London, where she also serves as an Honorary Research Fellow. She is the founder and director of the Educational Neuroscience Hub Europe (Malta) and a lecturer at the University of Malta. She is co-author of *Teaching Generation Alpha in the Classroom* (Oxford University Press, 2025).

11:20 - 12:00

COFFEE BREAK

Location: Oracle Conference Centre Foyer - Level 2

TALKS 6-10

12:00 - 12:30

TALK 6A: FROM SILENCE TO PARTICIPATION: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE INTENTIONALLY INVITING CLASSROOM

Speaker: Ann Gaillard / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

Why do students stay silent even when they are capable of responding? This session explores the connection between learner well-being and English language acquisition. Drawing on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Purkey's Invitational Theory, it shows how moving from being "accidentally nice" to "intentionally inviting" can reduce anxiety and support learning. Through the lens of the 5 P's (people, places, policies, programs, and processes), teachers will examine how to lower learners' affective filters and create classrooms where students feel safer, more confident, and more willing to participate.

Ann Gaillard holds a Doctor of Education and has twenty-five years' experience in ELT across Asia and the Middle East. She is an International Baccalaureate educator and teacher trainer specialising in multilingual pedagogy and learner well-being. Bringing together research and classroom practice, she supports teachers in creating inclusive, confidence-building learning environments in which diverse learners can participate and thrive.

12:30 - 13:00

TALK 6B: BREAK OUT OF BORING LESSONS: UNLOCK LEARNING WITH ESCAPE GAMES

Speaker: Rhona Snelling
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

Would you like to enrich your teen and young adult classes with fun, motivating content? Escape games are the perfect addition to your teacher toolkit, however experienced you are, and allow your learners to naturally apply language skills whilst solving enigmas. This talk will show the benefits of using escape games as well as provide practical ideas on how and when to use them with your learners. Examples will be taken from *Break Out!* and *A Message from Manchester* published by DELTA.

Rhona Snelling qualified with International House and has extensive experience teaching in Europe and New Zealand. She worked as an in-house editor at two international ELT publishers, and holds an MSc in Applied Linguistics from the University of Oxford. She has authored numerous coursebooks, including the *Break Out!* series.

12:00 - 12:30

TALK 7A: EXPLOITING EVERY OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING

Speaker: Chris Richards
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

We know what's necessary for our lesson to work. But is what's necessary also sufficient for effective learning? Students spend limited time in lessons and so we need to take advantage of every minute. This session looks at how we can establish routines that exploit every possible learning moment and suggests how we can extend activities to maximise their impact.

Chris Richards started teaching in the UK in 2010 and has been working in Spain since 2016. He holds an MEd in Applied Linguistics and a Diploma in Academic Management. He is particularly interested in inclusive pedagogies and teacher/action research, teacher identity and agency, and edits for IATEFL's ReSIG *ELT Research*.

12:30 - 13:00

TALK 7B: JOB INTERVIEWS: REFRAMING CANDIDATES' RESPONSES THROUGH LINGUISTIC AGENCY

Speaker: Alex Lojo / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

As demand for interview preparation grows, Business English educators face a unique challenge: GenAI. While optimized scripts are readily available, learners often lack the confidence to deliver them authentically. To bridge this gap, this session shares a framework enabling professionals to move beyond mere recitation and foster linguistic agency. We will explore how semantics and positive framing empower applicants to transform perceived weaknesses into assets. Participants will gain practical guiding techniques for helping individuals make more intentional, confident and human-centric communication choices that project tangible value.

Alex Lojo is a Spain-based Business English specialist and language school manager with fourteen years' cross-disciplinary experience in linguistic application. He holds a BEd in TEFL and a Master's in Talent Management, combining pedagogical theory with academic leadership to develop communication strategies that unlock human potential and enhance professional expertise.

12:00 - 12:30

TALK 8A: FLUENT OUTPUT, FRAGILE LEARNING: WHAT GENAI CHANGES IN ELT

Speaker: Christopher Fenech
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

This talk explores what happens when learners can produce fluent English with generative AI before they can do so independently and why this matters for ELT professionals. Focusing on the gap between apparent fluency and underlying competence, it examines three classroom concerns: agency, authorship, and false mastery. Drawing on research and classroom-informed examples, this session will show how AI-generated language can support learning while also masking weak comprehension and reducing productive struggle. Attendees will leave with practical guidance and strategies for building verification, reflection, and transparent authorship into AI-mediated language tasks without displacing genuine learner development.

Christopher Fenech is a CELTA-qualified English teacher and lecturer in Malta. His work focuses on language education, technology, and society, particularly the impact of AI on learning. He holds an MA in Contemporary Western Philosophy and teaches Business English at MQF Level 5 within Malta's higher education sector.

12:30 - 13:00

TALK 8B: TOOLS FOR LASTING IMPACT: WHEN CPD STICKS BEYOND THE SCREEN

Speaker: Patricia Ibiapina
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

This session explores how continuing professional development can achieve lasting impact beyond the event or platform. Drawing on experience mentoring teachers in India and Brazil, it examines how sustainable CPD depends on structured progression from engagement to implementation, adaptation, and sharing. Two practical tools are introduced to support this process, enabling teachers to track, reflect on, and sustain pedagogical change over time. While digital tools may enhance access and continuity, the session highlights how low-tech and no-tech practices such as reflection, repetition, and peer accountability ensure durability. Sustainability is reframed as the extent to which teachers continue to transfer learning into everyday practice.

Patricia Ibiapina is an English language teacher and teacher educator based in Brazil. She has mentored teachers in India and Brazil, supporting sustainable professional development. Her work focuses on teacher agency, reflective practice, and the pedagogically sound use of technology to enhance continuing professional development and long-term impact.

12:00 - 12:30

TALK 9A: CREATING VALUE IN A MULTICULTURAL ELT CLASSROOM

Speaker: Danilo Carciolo
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Teaching in a multicultural environment requires more than subject knowledge. Learners bring diverse backgrounds, habits, and expectations that can both enrich and challenge the classroom. This talk explores how such diversity can affect communication, participation, and atmosphere, and how teachers can respond effectively. Drawing on classroom experience, it highlights common barriers to inclusion and the role of teacher self-awareness. Participants will reflect on their own practice and consider how potential obstacles can become opportunities for connection. The session offers practical, adaptable strategies to build rapport, encourage interaction, and support learners from different cultural backgrounds, fostering a more engaging and inclusive learning environment.

Danilo Carciolo is an Italian ESL teacher based in Malta, with teaching experience in New York and Belgium. He holds a Master's degree in Specialised Translation and Interpreting and has a background in theatre, having studied acting and worked as a performer. His interests include multilingual education, classroom dynamics, and intercultural communication.

12:30 - 13:00

TALK 9B: TRANSITIONING FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TO TEACHER EDUCATOR IN MALTA

Speaker: Savannah Davis / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

This talk shares findings from research conducted in Malta on the experiences of educators who moved from teaching English to becoming teacher educators. Based on interviews, the study explores how participants adapted to new roles that involved guiding, mentoring, and supporting other teachers. It looks at how they managed changes in professional identity, responsibility, and confidence. The findings show the importance of classroom experience, the challenges of being seen as an expert by peers, and the need to build skills in mentoring, facilitation, and reflective practice. The talk will consider how future teacher educators can be better prepared and supported.

Savannah Davis is an educator, international conference speaker, and published writer with a passion for psycholinguistics and second language acquisition. She is interested in research on the relationship between language and cognition as well as the effective use of technology in language teaching and learning.

12:00 - 12:30

TALK 10A: TOO TIRED TO LEARN: TEACHER BURNOUT AND WELL-BEING IN ELT

Speaker: Aysegul Salli
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Professional development is central to teacher growth and institutional quality in ELT, yet experienced teachers' reduced participation is often interpreted as resistance or lack of motivation. This talk offers a more nuanced perspective by examining how burnout, emotional exhaustion, workload pressure, and reduced professional agency may shape teachers' capacity to engage with PD. Drawing on an exploratory study with experienced ELT teachers, it investigates what makes professional development feel meaningful, supportive, or burdensome. The session highlights the need for PD cultures that recognise teacher well-being as essential to sustainable professional growth.

Aysegul Salli is an Assistant Professor in the Foreign Languages Education Department and coordinator of the Professional Development Unit at the School of Foreign Languages, Eastern Mediterranean University. She also serves as the joint coordinator of TESOL Turkiye METASIG. Her work focuses on professional development, assessment, mediation, and teacher identity.

12:30 - 13:00

TALK 10B: STAY SANE IN THE PRESENCE OF WOKE GEN ZS WHO ARE ASLEEP

Speaker: Sharon Joseph
Room: Zeus - Level 2

Born into a hyperconnected, fast-moving digital world, Gen Zs arrive with distinct cognitive molds that traditional language teaching methodologies are unequipped to tackle. This talk examines what Gen Zs really need in the classroom, how their brains actually learn, and how to evoke emotions for memorable lessons. Participants will be equipped with techniques grounded in neuroscience, that

embody competition and kinaesthesia and that trigger emotions for long-term retention. They will also leave with a new perspective and ways to motivate a disengaged Gen Zer, so that teachers no longer have to compete with anti-social and artificially intelligent media.

Sharon Joseph combines over 10 years of language teaching experience with her Medical Science background to bring innovative evidence-based methodologies to every class. She is obsessed with developing learner-centred techniques that empower educators to connect deeply with their students, leave a lasting impact, and foster meaningful real-world communication.

WORKSHOPS 16-19 & TALK 11

13:05 - 13:50

WORKSHOP 16: BEYOND CORRECTNESS: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

Speaker: Andrea Conti
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

Communicative language competence extends far beyond correct language use. Central to effective communication is pragmatic competence: the ability to structure discourse, perform communicative functions, and navigate turn-taking in conversation. Despite its vital importance to L2 ability, it has systematically been neglected in formal education. Bridging this gap, this workshop explores pragmatic descriptors within the CEFR, providing practical strategies and engaging activities to incorporate pragmatic features into classroom teaching. Participants will walk away with a better understanding of how to foster pragmatic competence in their classrooms.

Andrea Conti teaches at the Centre for Academic Literacies and English Communication Skills of the University of Malta. With six years of experience in ELT, his research interests revolve around the intersection of Corpus Linguistics and Pragmatics, focusing on practical applications of phraseology in the classroom.

13:05 - 13:50

WORKSHOP 17: THRIVING, NOT JUST SURVIVING: ELT IN 2026

Speaker: Marielou Mifsud & Jelena Spasic
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

If you have ever felt depleted and unable to cope with daily demands or have developed a negative attitude towards your job, students or colleagues, you have probably suffered from burnout. In Europe, around half of teachers report high stress levels, with many being concerned about their mental wellbeing. This workshop explores teacher burnout in contemporary ELT, combining research with practical classroom insights. Rather than focusing solely on theory, it offers adaptable strategies that can be applied immediately to support both teacher and student wellbeing. By reframing wellbeing as an integral part of professional development, the session encourages teachers to adopt small, sustainable changes that help maintain motivation, improve classroom dynamics and create more balanced teaching practices.

Marielou Mifsud has been a passionate EFL teacher for 17 years and received the Inspiring ELT Professional Award in 2017 in recognition of her outstanding contributions to education. Jelena Spasic is an English language teacher with over 25 years of experience. Her areas of interest include teaching English to teenagers and adults, creative writing, educational technologies and wellbeing. She is a Fulbright alumna, a mentor and a teacher trainer.

13:05 - 13:50

WORKSHOP 18: STORYBOARD YOUR LESSON PLAN

Speaker: Aleksandra Popovski
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Teachers often rely on linear lesson plans that do not fully reflect how learners process information. This interactive workshop introduces storyboarding as a visual planning tool to enhance learner engagement, clarity, and retention in the English language classroom. Drawing on principles of visual metaphors and multimodal learning, participants will explore how structuring lessons as narrative sequences, similar to comics and graphic novels, can support comprehension and emotional connection. Participants will analyse sample lesson storyboards, identify key visual strategies, and collaboratively design their own storyboarded lesson segment.

Aleksandra Popovski is a teacher, teacher educator and consultant with over 25 years of experience. She holds an MA in Professional Development for Language Education from the University of Chichester, UK and is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Ss.Cyril and Methodius, Skopje. She is Past President of IATEFL and sits on the Board of Trustees of SOL.

13:05 - 13:50

WORKSHOP 19: TEACHING IN SENSITIVE TIMES

Speaker: Farnaz Memari / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Zeus - Level 2

In this workshop, we will describe teaching in unstable situations such as war, social unrest, natural disasters, domestic violence, and financial difficulties. The focus will be on both hard and soft skills, as well as suggested approaches for different learner groups, from young learners to Business English and ESP students. We will also share our own experiences, whether as learners or teachers, in such challenging contexts and discuss learners' concerns and how teachers can support them in learning with less stress while boosting their motivation.

Farnaz Memari is an international speaker, CELTA- and DELTA-qualified teacher, and Cambridge Speaking Examiner with twenty-seven years' teaching experience and more than fifteen years' experience in global teacher training. She specialises in Business English and ESP, teaches diverse groups of learners, and actively contributes to IATEFL BESIG and EVE as a volunteer and mentor.

13:05 - 14:05

TALK 11

13:05 - 13:35

TALK 11A: AWARENESS OF EMOTIONS: THEIR IMPACT ON TEACHER IDENTITY AND PRACTICE

Speaker: Vanessa McDonagh / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

Learning, practice and the emotions associated with becoming a teacher are often challenging and varied. This talk will focus on the emotions experienced by the participants in this study as they journeyed through their TESOL master's and microteaching and how these emotions seemed to take on an almost cyclical nature. It will also reflect on the importance of being aware of the emotional transitions that student-teachers and teachers can experience in their practice.

Vanessa McDonagh is a lecturer in EAP and co-programme lead of the MSc TESOL at the University of Glasgow. She holds a doctorate from Queen's University Belfast and is interested in identity, teacher beliefs, wellbeing and motivation for teachers and students.

13:35 - 14:05

TALK 11B: ASSESSMENT IN THE AI ERA: PRODUCT OR PROCESS?

Speaker: **Sandy Topalidou**
Room: **Athena Suite - Level 1**

In a completely transitional period in the field of foreign language learning the method of assessing students remains an issue, in most countries, mainly because it disrupts our educational routine. Nevertheless, we must question ourselves as educators what is best for our learners and what type of assessment will motivate, engage and equip them with lifelong skills.

Sandy Topalidou holds an MA in TESOL and has worked as an English teacher for over twenty-five years, primarily in the private sector, including at the British Council in Athens. Her research interests focus on EFL assessment, particularly alternative assessment and learners' attitudes. She has also served TESOL Greece as Vice-Chair for 2025–2026.

13:50 - 15:00

LUNCH

Location: **Olimpia Suite - Level 1**

PLENARY 3

15:00 - 16:00

TEACHER WELL-BEING AS A FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN ELT

Speaker: **Luis Javier Penton Herrera**
Room: **Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2**

This plenary invites participants to reconsider well-being as a central pillar of excellence in English language teaching rather than an added extra. Drawing on current conversations in teacher well-being and language education, the session explores how professional learning, support, and advocacy can help educators thrive personally and professionally. Practical reflections will be offered on creating more sustainable, humane, and effective ELT environments for teachers and learners alike.

Luis Javier Penton Herrera is an award-winning Spanish and English educator and a best-selling author. In 2024, he was selected as the TESOL Teacher of the Year, awarded by the TESOL International Association and National Geographic Learning. He is a Professor at Uniwersytet VIZJA, Poland.

WORKSHOPS 20-23

16:05 - 16:50

WORKSHOP 20: BEYOND THE LYRICS: SONGS AS STORIES

Speaker: Anna Pires
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

Songs are more than words set to music. They carry voices, emotions, characters, conflicts and meanings through sound, image, movement and language. This practical session explores how songs and music videos can be used as multimodal stories in the English classroom, creating bridges to literature, poetry and students' lived experience. We will look at creative and mindful ways to move from sound and image to narrative, empathy, interpretation, discussion and personal response. Participants will leave with ideas for using music as a rich storytelling tool that makes language learning more meaningful, memorable and human for learners.

Anna Pires is a teacher trainer, author and materials writer based in Portugal. She coordinates the APPI Mindful EFL SIG and is a Pilgrims trainer. She has written educational materials for Portugal, Africa and Timor-Leste, and explores music, mindfulness and multimodality through a humanistic approach to language learning and teacher development.

16:05 - 16:50

WORKSHOP 21: BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE? HOW SUSTAINABLE IS AI IN ELT?

Speaker: Peter Holly
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Is AI in ELT the best thing since sliced bread? The elephant in the room? Or the emperor's new clothes? Is using it ethical? Is it pedagogically sound? If we use it, what questions should we ask ourselves beforehand? Can we future-proof ourselves professionally? Can we future-proof our learners academically and developmentally in an age of LLMs? This workshop will hopefully provide some answers. It will definitely include plenty of observations, opinions, and food for thought.

Peter Holly has over 40 years of ELT experience around the world with the British Council, Ministries of Education, and several publishers. Now working as a freelance trainer based in Hungary, he is passionate about including environmental issues in ELT, and has delivered workshops and plenaries in over 20 countries.

16:05 - 16:50

WORKSHOP 22: BEYOND GRAMMAR: INTEGRATING CULTURE AS A CORE COMPONENT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Speaker: Ridha Mejri / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

The workshop addresses the gap between linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness. It positions culture as central to successful communication. Through classroom examples, participants identify misunderstandings rooted in norms of politeness, hierarchy and behaviour. Using the Cultural Iceberg Model and the 3Ps framework, the session demonstrates how teachers embed deeper cultural perspectives into everyday tasks. It emphasizes teacher agency, viewing educators as facilitators of inquiry and reflection. The workshop links intercultural competence to employability and global citizenship and provides practical, adaptable strategies for immediate classroom application.

Ridha Mejri grew up bilingual in Arabic and French and has lived, studied and worked in several countries. Based in Germany for over 20 years, he specializes in Arab-German intercultural business contexts. He holds a master's in Applied Linguistics and lectures in Business Communication and Intercultural Management while training executives and expats.

16:05 - 16:50

WORKSHOP 23: TEACHER WELL-BEING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL TRANSITION

Speaker: Hannah Tucker-Bloom & Ruth Hughes / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Zeus - Level 2

This workshop will give teachers a brief taste of a course for international teachers to thrive in a new or different context. They will explore strategies that will equip them with an optimistic vision of personal and professional success, together with insight, understanding, and evidence-based psychological tools needed to better navigate culture shock, adapt effectively to new contexts, and reframe challenges constructively, recalibrate professional identity, build supportive peer relationships, and sustain resilience and wellbeing through present and future international transitions.

Ruth Hughes (MSc Applied Positive Psychology & Coaching Psychology) is a trainer, educator, coach and professional speaker in positive change and wellbeing. Hannah Tucker-Bloom holds a PGCE/MA Primary Education, DELTA, and MA Creative Writing.

WORKSHOPS 24-28

16:55 - 17:40

WORKSHOP 24: PRONUNCIATION HUB: CLASSROOM APPLICATION OF HIGH VARIABILITY PHONETIC TRAINING

Speaker: Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

High Variability Phonetic Training (HVPT) is a pronunciation technique that employs numerous audio stimuli produced by multiple talkers (different age, gender, origin) in varied phonetic contexts. HVPT activities enhance learners' perceptual discrimination skills, which further facilitate and promote more intelligible L2 speech. This workshop aims to present HVPT activities that vary in format and degree of difficulty, that are easily adjustable for practising different speech phenomena, and for which a minimum materials preparation time is needed. They are suitable as warm-ups, lead-ins, or for whole-class focus practice. The workshop participants will receive a sample handout with ready-made exercises.

Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova is a Professor in English phonology and morphology at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. Her research focuses on pronunciation instruction. She co-edited English pronunciation instruction: Research-based insights (John Benjamins, 2021), and Achievements in second language pronunciation: Good practices for teaching and learning (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

16:55 - 17:40

WORKSHOP 25: TEACHING VALUE IN AN AI WORLD: A BUSINESS ENGLISH FRAMEWORK

Speaker: Birte Horn / BESIG Strand - IATEFL
Room: Athena Suite - Level 1

In this practical workshop, participants explore a transferable framework that helps learners position themselves professionally in an AI-driven world. Professional tasks are deconstructed and evaluated in terms of their susceptibility to automation, highlighting the shift from routine execution to human judgment and responsibility. Participants are guided to identify human-centered skills and redesign learner roles accordingly. The session combines hands-on experience with pedagogical reflection and introduces adaptable tools and activities that can be implemented across corporate, academic, and professional teaching contexts.

Birte Horn has 20+ years of experience teaching English as a Foreign Language. She has primarily worked at STEM-focused universities, teaching business English, English for Specific and Academic Purposes, Intercultural Communication, and Academic Writing. Her current research interests are Future Skills and AI literacy.

16:55 - 17:40

WORKSHOP 26: G4: GROWTH IN FOUR DIMENSIONS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Speaker: Timothy Graf & Zsófia Németh-Dene
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

Participants will explore how the G4 framework integrates growth mindset, resilience, innovation, and sustainability into ELT practice to address modern educational challenges. Through interactive tasks, attendees will map their own teaching contexts against the four dimensions, engage in collaborative problem-solving scenarios, and design practical classroom and leadership strategies that promote learner well-being and adaptive learning. Activities include reflective diagnostics, group case analysis, and rapid lesson redesign aligned to G4 principles. By the end, participants will leave with actionable tools to enhance professional learning, support student resilience, and embed innovation sustainably within their ELT environments.

Timothy Graf is an educator and leadership practitioner based in Budapest, specializing in growth mindset, resilience, innovation, and sustainability through his G4 model. At last year's ELT Malta Conference, he presented "Growth Mindset and Resilience for a Sustainable Future," engaging educators in practical strategies for teacher development, student well-being, and adaptive learning systems. Zsófia Németh-Dene is a clinical psychologist, special education teacher, and psychodrama practitioner. For over twenty years, she has worked with families, children, and educators, focusing on mental health, human connection, and learning in changing environments. Zsofia is also co-founder of Nexut, a company focused on AI governance and strategy for business.governance and strategy for business. And her picture

16:55 - 17:40

WORKSHOP 27: REWRITING WRITING: GENRE, PROCESS AND AI IN THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM

Speaker: Adrian Webb
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

Writing in the 21st century has changed, not just how and what we write but also the amount of time we spend writing. This workshop examines the evolving landscape of writing instruction as established pedagogies intersect with contemporary AI-supported practices. Participants will explore how traditional frameworks

can be adapted to address the demands of digital communication and the increasing integration of generative AI in learners' writing habits. The session will consider the pedagogical implications of AI-mediated drafting, feedback, and revision. Attendees will gain strategies for incorporating AI responsibly while preserving the educational value of human-centred writing processes.

Adrian Webb has been working in the TEFL industry for almost 20 years as a teacher, teacher trainer and academic manager. He has worked in the UK, Malta and the MENA and is currently Director of Studies at Easy School of Languages in Valletta. He has spoken at international conferences in both Malta and the UK.

16:55 - 17:40

WORKSHOP 28: FROM BURNOUT TO BALANCE

Speaker: **Lejla Saric & Dijana Markovic-Hajdarhodzic / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL**
Room: **Zeus - Level 2**

Teacher burnout has become a growing challenge that impacts well-being, teaching quality, and student outcomes. This interactive workshop reframes burnout as a response to prolonged stress rather than personal failure. Through engaging activities such as Burnout Bingo (based on Maslach Teacher Burnout Test), control-mapping, and guided reflection, participants explore key dimensions of burnout and identify practical ways to restore balance. The session focuses on small, sustainable strategies that increase teachers' sense of control, reduce emotional exhaustion, and rebuild professional confidence. Participants will leave with ready-to-use classroom ideas, simple stress-management techniques, and a renewed sense of purpose, helping them reconnect with the reasons they chose teaching. Being in a group with the same worries, stress, anxieties, and hopes shows us that we are not alone and that we can do it!

Lejla Saric obtained the BACS English/European History, Southampton University and wrote for *Cosmopolitan*. In her 29 years of experience she has contributed to various conferences and devised workshops for teachers and students. Dijana Markovic-Hajdarhodzic, who has been a teacher for 25 years, holds a Master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Their passion is developing students' skills through non-formal education means.

WORKSHOPS 29-32

17:45 - 18:30

WORKSHOP 29: SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT ON LEARNING, COMMUNICATION AND WELL-BEING

Speaker: **Sanja Raskovic**
Room: **Athena Suite - Level 1**

This workshop presents practical, classroom-ready strategies for integrating well-being, communication, and creative thinking into English language teaching. Drawing on communicative approaches and selected NLP-informed techniques, it demonstrates how small shifts in classroom language and interaction can enhance student confidence, engagement, and learning outcomes. Participants will engage in hands-on activities including language reframing, structured listening, question-based interaction, and collaborative problem-solving. Each activity is directly linked to language development and designed for immediate use across proficiency levels. The session offers simple, adaptable tools to help learners communicate more effectively, think more flexibly, and take greater ownership of their learning.

Sanja Raskovic, MA, is an experienced English teacher and teacher trainer with thirty years' experience in ELT. She holds a range of professional certifications, including CELTA, NLP Trainer, Neurolanguage Coach, CertIBET, and Teaching Excellence. Sanja has delivered workshops at more than thirty international conferences and provided teacher training for Pearson and the Goethe-Institut.

17:45 - 18:30

WORKSHOP 30: SIMPLE STEPS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN CLASSROOM THROUGH TEACHER RESEARCH

Speaker: Josianne Block / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

How do we move from a classroom hunch to evidence-based practice? This hands-on workshop demystifies practitioner inquiry by demonstrating that research is not an inaccessible academic feat but a systematic way of refining our daily teaching. Moving through the research cycle, participants will learn how to formulate answerable research questions and utilise low-burden data collection tools. The workshop frames research not as an added burden but as an opportunity for sustainable professional growth. By the end of the session, participants will be equipped to embark on their first inquiry, turning their own classrooms into sites of discovery and enhanced learning.

Josianne Block is an educator, writer, and conference speaker who has been active in English Language Teaching since 2013. Her interests bridge classroom practice with research and educational justice, advocating for a culture where the voices of both educators and learners are truly valued. She currently works at the University of Malta and also serves as an editor for IATEFL ReSIG.

17:45 - 18:30

WORKSHOP 31: THE AI-KEA EFFECT: CONFIDENCE, COMPETENCE, AND SOCRATIC WISDOM

Speaker: Eftychis Kantarakis & Ruby Panagiotis Polygenis
Room: Dodona Syndicate - Level 2

This workshop explores the "AI-KEA Effect," where learners overvalue work created with AI, gaining confidence without necessarily developing competence. Drawing on the work of Michael I. Norton and the insights of Socrates on externalised thinking, it examines the tension between performance and mastery in language learning. Through practical classroom tasks, participants analyse how AI can both support and hinder development, focusing on confidence and perseverance. The session offers concrete strategies to ensure AI use leads to retention, transfer, and independent language use rather than an illusion of understanding.

Eftychis Kantarakis is International Academic Manager at Express Publishing with over 25 years' experience in ELT. He holds a DELTA and an MBA, has worked with National Geographic Learning, and is an active member of TESOL Greece and IATEFL. His interests include educational technology, teacher development, and learner-centred pedagogy. Ruby Panagiotis Polygenis is an ELT educator and materials designer with a strong interest in integrating technology into language learning. He focuses on creative, student-centred approaches that foster critical thinking and engagement. His work explores how AI can support meaningful learning while maintaining cognitive challenge and learner autonomy.

17:45 - 18:30

WORKSHOP 32: BALANCE NOT BURNOUT: EXPLORING LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY, GROWTH, AND WELL-BEING

Speaker: Mary Shepard Wong / TTEdSig Strand - IATEFL
Room: Pythia Syndicate 4 - Level 2

This workshop draws from the presenter's article "50 ways to develop professionally: What language educators need to succeed" (Wong, 2011). The presenter will lead participants through the process of exploring key aspects of their identity (personal, spiritual, intellectual, social), helping them reflect upon their professional journey thus far, identifying their strengths and weaknesses as educators and

key times of growth and stagnation. With that in mind, participants will identify a professional growth goal that focuses on fostering and sustaining teacher well-being. Using a template, participants will map out how their goal can be accomplished considering potential obstacles and available resources.

Mary Shepard Wong is a three-time Fulbright Scholar, two-time Erasmus+ recipient, and author/editor of five books. She is Professor Emeritus at Azusa Pacific University (USA), where she directed their MA TESOL Program and currently is Professor / Director of graduate TESOL at LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania.

18:30 - 18:45

CONFERENCE CLOSING CEREMONY PRIZE DRAW

Room: Oracle Inner Circle - Level 2

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