



MALAYSIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING ASSOCIATION
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PRESS RELEASE

Published in The Star, 8 August 2021

MELTA reignites international conference

FOR years, English language teachers from across the country have taken part in an annual international conference to share and discuss pedagogical practices, insights and experiences.

The Covid-19 pandemic, however, threw a spanner in the works for them last year.

Determined to bounce back from the disruption, the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) jumped on the virtual event bandwagon to bring the 29th MELTA International Conference to fruition recently.

Drawing over 600 delegates from 13 countries including Japan, Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States, the three-day online event saw a number of topics presented, starting with a keynote address by Dr Heath Rose, an associate professor of applied linguistics at the University of Oxford in the UK.

In his presentation titled “Be Future Ready: Teaching English to 21st Century Learners”, Rose discussed the impact of globalisation on English language teaching before inviting the delegates to consider ways to better prepare learners for future usage of the language.

In one of the four subsequent plenary presentations, Dr Azlin Zaiti Zainal from Universiti Malaya’s Faculty of Languages and Linguistics addressed the evolution of teacher professional development during the pandemic, particularly how teachers have had to revisit and question the competencies required to teach online.

Apart from holding discussions, MELTA gave away best teacher presenter awards.

In collaboration with Pearson Education, it also presented the Hyacinth Gaudart Outstanding English Language Teacher Award to Samuel Isaiah (pic) for his contributions to advancing English language education in Malaysia.

A Top 10 finalist for the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize 2020, Samuel has since been working on initiatives to encourage teachers to design and implement unique solutions that meet the localised needs of students.

At the conference, MELTA also engaged its participants through an innovation competition, with the aim of providing a platform for teacher professional development.

In addition, the conference hosted a project-based learning competition involving 89 teams of upper primary and secondary school students from Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Sponsored by Oxford Fajar, the competition challenged students to present reports on the projects they had carried out during the pandemic.

By maintaining the awards and special events, it is hoped that the delegates had an experience similar to that at a regular international conference, the organiser said in a press release.

MELTA president Dr Ramesh Nair said the virtual conference offered unique flexibility to its participants.

“It gave delegates the option of attending theme-based tracks based on their interests,” he said.

Gladys Koshy, a school improvement specialist coach, described the conference as having the same kind of engagement as previous editions, despite it being an online event.

Farid Romadlon, a participant from Indonesia, appreciated the comfort of presenting a paper at an international conference from home.

According to Dr Teh Pei Ling, who headed the conference presenter and participant management team, a survey revealed that the delegates saw the conference as an opportunity to reflect critically on issues related to English language teaching and to share ideas about ways to improve classroom practices.

In a special address at the opening ceremony, British High Commissioner to Malaysia Charles Hay congratulated MELTA on its formalisation of a memorandum of agreement with the UK-based Nisai Group, which offers online education programmes.


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ENGLISH**

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