



20
23

31ST MELTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OUTCOME REPORT

**26-27 August 2023
with Online Competitions
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur**



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(MELTA)**

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Background



The **Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA)** has been organising an annual international conference for over 30 years.

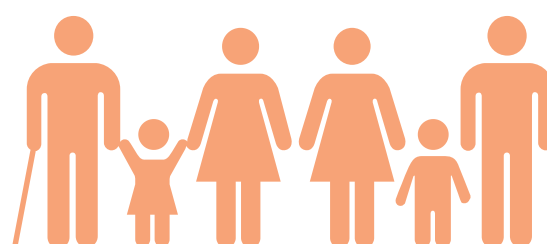
The conference has a strong following across the globe, and this has been possible because of the association's partnership with other English Language Teaching associations in countries such as Thailand, Japan, Korea, Bangladesh, India, Taiwan, and Indonesia.

The 31st MELTA International Conference was held on **26-27 August 2023**.

The main conference was preceded by online pre-conference competitions on 19 August 2023.

Conference Theme

**From the Ground-up:
Dreams and Realities
of English Language
Education**



Conference Objectives



To provide researchers and classroom practitioners with a platform to engage in critical roundtable discussions on a series of issues related to ELT in Malaysia, leading to the submission of recommendations to the Ministry of Education Malaysia

To provide opportunities for researchers and classroom practitioners in the field of English language education to share their work and encourage greater engagement with peers.

To provide students with a platform to showcase their projects in STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading & Writing, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) through oral presentations using the English language.

To provide a platform for English language teachers and student teachers to showcase their creative solutions to challenges in English language teaching

To document issues and proposals from forums and roundtable discussions to be submitted to the Ministry of Education Malaysia

Conference Partners

- **Pearson PTE**
- **University Book Store Malaysia**
- **Test Center Malaysia**
- **Edpuzzle**
- **Gerakbudaya**
- **Oxford**

Online Competitions and Showcase 19 August 2023

Pre-conference Events



Malachi Edwin Vethamani Creative Teacher Showcase

Winners

- Asshadwi Paneerselvam, SK Seri Suria, Kuala Lumpur
- Teo Woon Chun, SJKC Peay Min, Johor
- Aida Hartini Binti Abdullah, SK Ampang Pecah, Selangor



Creative Student Teacher Showcase

Winner

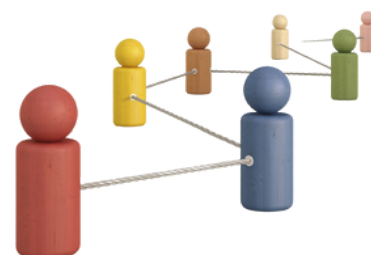
- Becky Lau Chung Xin, Institute of Teacher Education Kent Campus, Sabah



Higher Education Teaching Innovation

Winners

- Dr Yueh Yea Lo, Universiti Malaya
- Dr Tan Wee Chun, Universiti Putra Malaysia
- Mr Eric Buck, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan



Ganakumaran Subramaniam Project Based Learning Competition



Winners, Upper Primary Category



GOLD

SJKC New Kopisan, Perak

- Angel Yong Kai Qing, Au Qiao Qi, Nur Aimi Fathihah Binti Mohd Soffa
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Shee Yuen Ling



SILVER

SJKT Somasundram, Kedah

- Puvanaan A/L Vijayan, Tamil Selvan A/L Siva, Roshini A/P Thanabalan
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Prithibaa A/P Gnanasekaren



BRONZE

SK Changkat Lada 3, Perak

- Hawa Insyirah Binti Mohd Hairi, Muhammad Ammar Ridhwan Bin Norazni, Walin Wahaada Binti Wan Mustaffa
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Nadiah Binti Abdul Kadir

Winners, Secondary Category



GOLD

SMK St Michael, Perak

- Elijah Benedict A/L Lawrence Dominic, Jai Prasad Kumar A/L Shivakumar, Mel Jensson James Paul
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Ng Kit Wan



SILVER

Sekolah Sri UCSI, Selangor

- Venussha Saravanan, Leong Xin Mei, Yeoh Joo Lynn
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Jennifer Grace John



BRONZE

SMK Lok Yuk, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

- Ashton Au Jin Wei, Gerald Davis Banico, Wong Yik Hui
- Teacher Advisor: Ms. Roseline David



Hyacinth Gaudart Outstanding English Language Teacher Award



**Zanurin bin Mohamad Safar
SMK Sultan Badlishah, Kulim, Kedah**

Invited Speaker Presentations Paper Presentations Workshops

Main Conference Events



NUMBER OF DELEGATES

117

**PRE-
CONFERENCE
EVENTS**

194

CONFERENCE

311

TOTAL

Countries Represented

- MALAYSIA
- UNITED KINGDOM
- CHINA
- JAPAN
- KOREA
- BANGLADESH

- NEPAL
- THAILAND
- INDONESIA
- SINGAPORE
- BRUNEI
- MONGOLIA

Presentations



01 KEYNOTE

03 PLENARY FORUM PRESENTATIONS

05 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

05 WORKSHOPS

65 PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Issues Discussed

- Professional development of English language teachers
- Pre-service education for English language teachers
- Assessing proficiency of English language teachers
- Use of internationally-distributed English language textbooks
- Deemphasising high-stakes testing
- English-medium instruction
- Teacher well-being
- Others



Basil Wijasuriya

Best Teacher Presenter

Award

**Patrick Duffy Anak Bayuong,
SK Long Busang, Belaga,
Sarawak**



Feedback

PRE-CONFERENCE COMPETITIONS

Creating Winning Moments

The students' happiness radiated through the room. It was a moment etched in their memories, a testament to their hard work, collaboration and determination.



Feedback

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Comment 1

- Content and coverage is very suitable to the Malaysian participants. But foreign delegates may struggle to relate with the more localised topics and themes.

Comment 2

- This is a Disneyland for me. First time participating in MELTA, and it MELTs my heart. With its content, engaging sharing session, critical issues tackled and discussed, I learn a lot and I love sharing my research interest with many others.

Comment 3

- Overall, I had fun! But... The plenary forums and round tables were interesting ideas, but they were quite specific to areas that didn't interest me; would have been better as parallel sessions. Also, the exact location information was not anywhere on the website or in the program book.

Comment 4

- We've enjoyed the conference.

Comment 5

- Teacher well-being should've been in roundtable discussion form as many have a say on the topic.

Comment 6

- Content overall for the conference was insightful and thought provoking which are ingredients for a successful conference. However, there were a number of technical challenges particularly at the parallel session venues and those could be improved.

Comment 7

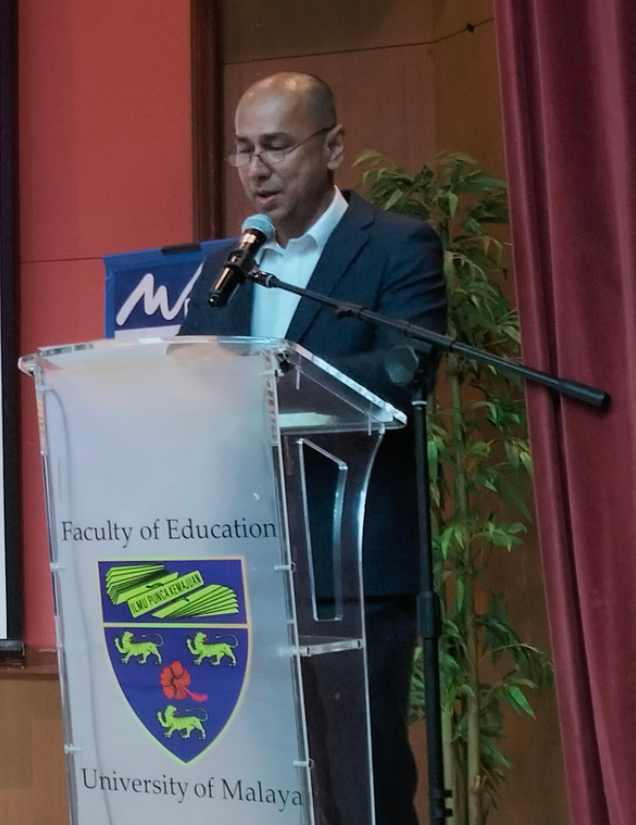
- Helpful for teachers in their teaching journey.

Comment 8

- I hope there is some gaps between each presentation so that I can take some time to get to the next room.

Comment 9

- Congratulations on organising yet another MELTA conference and looking forward to the next!



SESSION REPORTS

Comments and Suggestions from Delegates



Introduction

The plenary and roundtable discussions at the 31st MELTA International Conference 2023 held at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur from 26 until 27 August 2023 raised many salient ideas and suggestions that we have compiled in this outcome-based report. MELTA is optimistic that the Ministry would consider these points as it charts the way forward for English language education in Malaysia in the following areas/themes:



Professional Development for English Language Educators: Finding the Right Balance



Enhancing Pre-Service Education for English Language Teachers: Challenges and Solutions



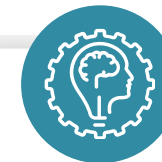
Proficiency Testing for English Language Teachers: Necessity or Redundancy?



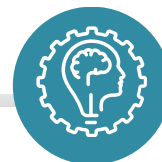
English in Vernacular Schools: An Examination of Position and Impact



Deemphasizing High-Stakes Testing – A Boon or Bane for ELT?



English-Medium Instruction: Unpacking Aspirations and Issues



Should Internationally Distributed English Language Textbooks Stay?

REPORT 1

Professional Development for English Language Educators: Finding the Right Balance

Teachers described their professional development experiences as both structured and unstructured. The structured CPD trainings were in the form of workshops, seminars and conferences with certificates provided as evidence of participation. The unstructured professional development experiences were largely in the form of informal conversations with peers in between lessons.

Delegates appreciated the availability of information and easy access to professional development opportunities through online platforms provided by the MOE and other organisations. They agreed that professional development opportunities were vital in helping teachers deliver quality lessons. English language teachers should be provided with opportunities to participate in professional development activities which were directly related to ELT. At the same time, teachers should be able to set professional development goals for themselves at the beginning of the academic year and identify suitable

activities in consultation with the school leadership.

Teachers who are provided with the opportunity to participate in professional development activities organised outside school must be asked to conduct in-house sessions which match the sessions they attended in terms of time and access to materials. Too often, the knowledge and information is diluted in the cascading model of training. To improve on this, MOE may consider offering a set of professional development activities specifically to English language teachers using the cascade model and implement a mechanism to ensure that knowledge/information does not get over-diluted during in-house trainings. Among the other challenges faced by ELT seeking professional development are lack of time and financial resources to participate in high-quality CPDs and lack of support by school heads to allow their teachers to attend CPDs such as conferences.

Based on the discussions above, two suggestions were mooted:

1

MOE develops a one-stop online platform/portal where all professional development opportunities for Malaysian English language teachers could be listed.

2

School leaders are held accountable if teachers failed to meet a predetermined minimum number of hours for professional development activities.

REPORT 2

Enhancing Pre-Service Education for English Language Teachers: Challenges and Solutions

The delegates raised concerns on the current model used by teacher training institutes (IPGs) for the training of pre-service teachers. The main concern was on the absence of any impactful practical teaching experience for the students during the four-year period as a student teacher. They felt that the current practice of having the practicum only after four (4) years of learning is insufficient to develop key teacher competencies.

Also raised was the assessment for student teachers; the delegates believed that both formative and summative assessments to evaluate the student teachers is a good practice. However, TESL trainees should also be assessed for their proficiency in English.

The delegates offered the following recommendations:

1

Exposure to actual classroom settings to begin earlier while students are learning the theories as it is likely to be more effective as the student teachers would be able to make better connections between theory and practice.

2

Theory-driven courses should incorporate activities which promote the application of theories to help pre-service teachers understand and gain better competencies.

3

Assessment of TESL student teachers should also consider the capacity of these future teachers to think critically and apply practical considerations in making decisions that impact students.

4

Feedback from teacher mentors during teaching practicum should be as important, if not more important than that of the supervisor who is assigned to observe the practice of student teachers.

REPORT 3

Proficiency Testing for English Language Teachers: Necessity or Redundancy?

The delegates agreed that there was a need to assess the proficiency of in-service English language teachers through standardised assessments to ensure that these teachers communicate effectively and deliver quality English language lessons. However, some delegates felt that the focus on assessing language proficiency is overshadowing the importance of possessing good teaching/pedagogical skills. Both should be emphasised for effective teaching and learning to occur.

The delegates recommended that:

1

Candidates must have achieved a C1 level before being allowed to join the MOE.

2

It is not necessary to have these teachers tested periodically after proof of their proficiency has been provided when they join the teaching workforce.

3

There should be more quality professional development opportunities for English language teachers to boost their language proficiency.

4

School leaders are required to support teachers who have not attained a C1 proficiency to provide the exposure needed to help them become more proficient in the language.

REPORT 4

English in Vernacular Schools: An Examination of Position and Impact

Delegates argued that English language teachers teaching in vernacular schools require specialized training as the position of English in these schools is different. Thus, different approaches and methodologies such as translanguaging could be needed for effective lessons to take place. They also argued for a need to create more opportunities for children to use English in vernacular schools and stated that an immersive language experience would be most ideal. This is because many children in vernacular schools have little to no exposure to the English language in their home environments.

Other suggestions included:

1

Introducing bilingual education models that integrate English into other subjects, allowing students to learn English while studying other subjects in their vernacular language. This approach could help reinforce the ideas that languages co-exist in Malaysia.

2

Providing in-service training to all English teachers, optionists and non-optionists alike, to ensure they serve as effective models for learners, and that they possess effective teaching strategies.

3

Employing Teacher Assistants to support remedial activities, and individualised learning.

4

Considering set learning where students are grouped based on different levels of mastery and proficiency. A flexible timetable may need to be developed.

5

Investigating the cognitive load of children in vernacular schools and to consider their capacity in learning three languages when determining the most appropriate teaching methods.

REPORT 5

Deemphasizing High-Stakes Testing – A Boon or Bane for ELT?

The discussion centred on the need to deemphasize the high-stake testing, and its possible effects on teaching and learning. Studies indicate that classroom-based assessments to determine learning is ideal but reporting of students' progress is an equally important process. In addition, it is vital that English language teachers are adequately trained to assess the performance of students across the four skills. There is also a need for more moderation activities in classroom-based assessments to increase reliability. Since there is an inextricable link between assessments and the teaching and learning process, it was proposed that this connectedness (i.e. between assessment and classroom practices) is highlighted and managed to improve teaching. This includes timely intervention and scaffolding activities to support students and to ensure that there is progress in language learning. Equally important is the training of pre-service teachers to equip them with the skills needed to assess language skills purposefully, and to use the information gathered from the assessments for effective teaching. Overall, the delegates opined that doing away with high stakes exams should nurture opportunities for more risk taking in the teaching and learning process, and to curb unnecessary stress and anxiety. So, the removal of high-stake exams should have improved language lessons in the classroom since teachers would no longer teach for the test. However, there is no evidence of whether this has happened.

Delegates made the following recommendations based on the above:

1

The MOE undertakes an investigation of classroom teaching practices in the primary and lower secondary levels.

2

A better mechanism is needed for reporting learning outcomes to address the concern of parents who may argue that they cannot see the progress of their children without exams.

3

Provide comprehensive training in purposeful classroom assessments for student teachers in IPGs.

REPORT 6

English-Medium Instruction: Unpacking Aspirations and Issues

Implementation of EMI, in the context of teaching Science and Mathematics in English, may help to create a purpose for students to master the English language. While the MOE contends that the option to learn Science and Mathematics in English is still there through the Dual Language Programme (DLP), its implementation remains a cause for concern. As school leadership is key to the success of the DLP, there is a need to ensure that every school leader is a curriculum leader. School heads must be trained to appreciate curriculum design and effectively implement language policies. The demand for access to EMI is evident in our education landscape and it appears that the MOE is unable to meet the demands comprehensively. Given the right environment, students can acquire the English language alongside Bahasa Melayu and other languages. The successes of residential schools such as MRSM serves as evidence of this. Delegates also expressed concern over news that Sarawak is working independently to open EMI schools in the state while many Chinese independent schools are looking towards offering the IGCSE. These initiatives may further create a divide in society. The main challenge for the MOE resistance to this policy by certain quarters which has hampered the implementation of the DLP effectively. Hence delegates recommended the following:

1

MOE offer contesting narratives to those who oppose any initiative to advance English language education and prioritises the message that learning additional languages is a benefit and all languages taught in Malaysian schools should be allowed to flourish. It should also actively promote the idea of multilingualism and discourage zero-sum language acquisition view.

2

Organize campaigns through social media and reach out to the Malay press to push the agenda for young Malaysians to have mastery of both Bahasa Melayu and English. Changes in mainstream media narratives, especially in the Malay press, is needed to shape public attitude.

3

Work on a plan to train EMI teachers to teach Science and Mathematics while capitalising on teachers who have already been trained.

4

Narrow the gap between policy and implementation via teacher education, materials development, continuing teacher professional development, etc.

REPORT 7

Should Internationally Distributed English Language Textbooks Stay?

Internationally distributed English language textbooks are instructional materials designed for global use, catering to diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These textbooks often come from Western publishers and are intended to provide a standardized curriculum framework for English language education worldwide. The delegates stated that the way the textbooks are used varies across different practitioners depending on their contexts. Hence, overall, these textbooks offer flexibility and versatility in accommodating different contexts of use. However, there were some complaints – for example, the Year 5 textbook was reported as not so user-friendly. Also highlighted was the disconnect with local cultural contexts and educational expectations. There were also concerns regarding the applicability of certain content to Malaysian students' lived experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds. Another issue that was raised is the indiscriminate adoption of the materials in the textbooks without considering lesson objectives and suitability for the students by teachers who do not adequately prepare their lessons. While acknowledging the concerns and mismatches, the consensus was to retain the use of these textbooks as the effectiveness of using internationally distributed textbooks hinges not on the content itself but on the creativity and adaptability of teachers in translating and contextualizing the material for their students.

Hence it is recommended that:

1

A more nuanced approach is required in assessing the suitability of internationally distributed English language textbooks for Malaysian classrooms.

2

The onus on effective use of these textbooks is on teachers to creatively adapt and localize the content to meet the needs of their learners.

3

Sustain open dialogues and provide ample professional development opportunities, particularly focusing on enhancing teachers' skills in material adoption, adaptation, and use.

We'd love to hear from you!



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