



# ELT Conference

Friday 6 & Saturday 7 March 2026  
Hilton London Canary Wharf



# Welcome to the ELT Conference

The ELT community is a collaborative and generous one, and conferences like this give us valuable time to connect, share expertise and reflect on our work. Stepping away from our daily responsibilities allows us to engage more thoughtfully with the challenges and opportunities shaping English language teaching today.

This year's programme reflects key themes across our sector, including leadership and wellbeing, inclusion and diversity, innovation in teaching practice, the future of English and the responsible use of new technologies. We hope you will find sessions that are both relevant to your own context and stimulating in new and unexpected ways.

Conferences can be rich but demanding. You may find it useful to note ideas you can act on immediately, points to explore further with colleagues, and insights that simply broaden your perspective. Doing so can make returning to work on Monday that little bit easier.

My thanks go to our speakers for sharing their expertise so generously. Plus a special thank you to our exhibitors, and our sponsors Trinity College London and Pearson, for their valued support, which helps make this conference accessible to our community.

I hope you enjoy the conference, and leave with new ideas and new friends.

## Jump to:

Our sponsors . . . . .	3
Timetable - managers . . .	4
Timetable - teachers . . . .	5
Session information - managers . . . . .	6
Session information - teachers . . . . .	13

Contact the team if you  
have any questions:

Siobhan Baccas  
siobhan@englishuk.com

Eleanor Thomas  
eleanor@englishuk.com



**Huan Japes**  
**Membership Director**  
**English UK**

# Thanks to our sponsors



## Trinity College London

Trinity College London is an international exam board and educational charity that has been providing assessments since 1877. Every year over 850,000 people take a Trinity exam in more than 60 countries world-wide.

Trinity's language exams are recognised for their unique approach to assessing communicative competence, and for the positive impact they have on teaching practice, and skills development.

Our qualifications - including, GESE, ISE, Trinity Stars and TESOL are widely recognised around the world.

[www.trinitycollege.com](http://www.trinitycollege.com)



## Pearson

At Pearson we provide English learning solutions to help educators teach English with confidence. From courseware to assessment and certification, we offer a comprehensive educational experience with materials and tools for every stage of the English learning journey. We have also developed the Global Scale of English (GSE) and Global Scale of Languages (GSL) to help learners understand their language abilities accurately. Both scales also help teachers to confidently place students at their level of progress and to create optimal personalised learning pathways.

Learn more about our English teaching solutions here: <https://www.pearson.com/languages/educators.html>

# Timetable

## Friday 6 March - academic management

09:30 – 09:45	Welcome from English UK	Quayside Suite
09:45 – 10:30	The Future of English: from research to relevance with Steve Copeland and Mike Solly	Quayside Suite
10:30 – 10:45	Meet the exhibitors	Quayside Suite
10:50 – 11:20	The future of academic management: what do managers want, what do they need? with George Pickering	Quayside Suite
	Insights from counselling for more effective management with Lewis Richards	Room 3/4/5
11:20 – 11:50	Refreshments and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
11:50 – 12:20	How to develop your entire organisation, with no budget with Hannah Alexander-Wright	Quayside Suite
	Private language centres: when to collaborate and when to compete with Fred Gordon	Room 3/4/5
12:30 – 13:00	Update on British Council inspections with Alison Tudor	Quayside Suite
	Moving beyond ‘student delight’ - the need for today’s academic team to be people pleasers with Steve Derras Tulk	Room 3/4/5
13:00 – 14:10	Lunch break and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
14:10 – 14:40	Heart sink to heart sync - why emotionally intelligent leaders do it better with Hannah Youell	Quayside Suite
	How to write an institutional AI policy for UK ELT with George Pickering and Ryan Hannan	Room 3/4/5
14:50 – 15:20	Using the Inclusive Loop for classrooms and staffrooms with Laura Broadbent	Quayside Suite
	The power of ghost management in ELT with Georgia K. Papamichailidou	Room 3/4/5
15:20 – 15:50	Refreshments and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
15:50 – 17:00	Building inclusive excellence - intersectionality and diversity in ELT with with Laïla El-Métoui	Quayside Suite
17:00 – 18:00	Networking reception	Quayside Lobby

# Timetable

## Saturday 7 March - teaching and classroom practice

09:45 – 10:00	Welcome from English UK	Quayside Suite
10:00 – 10:40	World Café: connecting and collaborating with Hannah Alexander-Wright	Quayside Suite
10:45 – 11:15	Experiences: creativity and innovation in ELT	Quayside Suite
11:15 – 11:40	Refreshments and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
11:40 – 12:20	From fluency to agency: empowering learners through values-based tasks with Fannie Daou	Quayside Suite
	Everything's gone green - using songs in the classroom with Chris Walklett	Room 3/4/5
12:30 – 13:10	Letting go to let them grow: empowering student-centred classrooms with Guizzela Matienzo Aguilar	Quayside Suite
	Teaching grammar lexically with Alex Walls	Room 3/4/5
13:10 – 14:10	Lunch break and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
14:10 – 14:50	Teaching for tomorrow: future-ready skills in the English classroom with Alex Warren	Quayside Suite
	Igniting creativity in the ELT classroom: practical strategies for engaging learners with David Squirrel	Room 3/4/5
15:00 – 15:40	Navigating language anxiety: causes, effects and solutions with Aigiun Azimova	Quayside Suite
	EAP insights for ELT classrooms: practical ideas with Marianne Arake and Paulina Poplawska	Room 3/4/5
15:40 – 16:00	Refreshments and exhibition	Quayside Lobby
16:00 – 17:00	Shakespeare's playful innovation - how the Bard can bolster the TEFL classroom with Ben Crystal	Quayside Suite

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March

Quayside Suite

## The Future of English: from research to relevance

09:45 - 10:30

As English continues to evolve as a global language, the role of English language education in the UK, particularly for international learners, faces new challenges and opportunities. This presentation explores how current research into the future of English can inform and enhance practice in English language schools. Drawing on insights from sociolinguistics, digital communication and global learner trends, we examine how English is being used, learned and valued in diverse contexts.

The session highlights how research can move beyond theory to shape real-world decisions - whether in curriculum design, teacher development or learner engagement. By connecting global trends to local classroom realities, this talk will consider how school leaders can stay ahead of change and ensure their institutions remain relevant, inclusive, and future-ready.

*Steve Copeland, British Council and Mike Solly*

## Meet the exhibitors

10:30 - 10:45

A huge thank you to our exhibitors for supporting this event. Be sure to stop by their exhibition spaces, say hello and discover what they have to offer.

This session features quick one-minute introductions to find out who our exhibitors are, what they do and how they can help you.

- Avallain
- Bournemouth English Book Centre (BEBC)
- Cambridge University Press and Assessment
- Hamilton House
- Kaplan Test of English
- Macmillan Education
- National Geographic
- Oxford University Press
- Pearson Education
- Trinity College London

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March | 10:50 - 11:20

## Quayside Suite

The future of academic management: what do managers want, what do they need?

Academic management has always been a multi-faceted role combining planning, people management, administration, teacher training and guiding the professional development of both teachers and managers. In recent years, the role has grown in both scope and complexity. Academic managers now must also consider staff well-being, integrate AI tools into everyday processes and meet the needs of both long-term and short-term staff.

This session shares insights from a survey of 250+ academic managers, which explored how they have grown in their roles, the skills they have sought to develop and the key challenges they face. The session will outline professional development pathways, from high-cost programmes to free, accessible options. Participants will gain a clearer view of evolving academic management in ELT and discover tailored routes to support their career aspirations.

George Pickering

## Room 3/4/5

Insights from counselling for more effective management

This session will take ideas and insights from counselling theory and practice and apply them to EFL management. It will look at how to be more effective in working with staff, students and clients, and how to self-manage better. It will take from a range of counselling theorists and apply them to practical management situations, using a series of real-life case studies and examples.

Lewis Richards, International House  
Portsmouth

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March | 11:50 - 12:20

## Quayside Suite

### How to develop your entire organisation, with no budget

So, you got into this industry because you believe in learning, but you can't develop your people because of the lack of budget? There is an answer! By creating peer learning and a coaching network, you can increase the knowledge, wellbeing and relatedness of your staff. Come to this session to learn how.

Hannah Alexander-Wright, *Go Slow to Go Fast*

## Room 3/4/5

### Private language centres: when to collaborate and when to compete

In our relationships with fellow academic managers and leaders, how should we balance the sharing of best practice with the need to retain competitive advantage?

This session will discuss the benefits of industry-wide, national and regional collaboration (e.g. awareness of broader issues, pedagogical development, accreditation advice).

However, it will also suggest that the degree of collaboration within ELT is uncommon and can have negative effects (e.g. groupthink, overreliance on SEO data) that might inhibit innovation and progress.

Fred will use economic theory to suggest that a more discerning mindset might lead to growth and a stimulating professional landscape with increased benefit for students.

Fred Gordon, *Speak Up London*

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March | 12:30 - 13:00

## Quayside Suite

### Update on British Council inspections

Updates and changes to the inspection criteria for the 2024–27 inspection cycle (CRG December 2024, 4th edition January 2026) have now been shared with providers.

This short session will outline these changes in more detail and review inspection results from 2025, highlighting areas of strength as well as areas needing improvement. It will also consider common challenges that arise during inspections and provide practical suggestions to help centres prepare effectively.

[Alison Tudor, British Council](#)

## Room 3/4/5

### Moving beyond ‘student delight’ – the need for today’s academic team to be people pleasers

Academic teams naturally have their focus skewed towards delivering ‘student delight’ through academic excellence. However, in today’s market-led industry, simply delighting our students and ensuring they ‘learn’ isn’t enough.

In this session, we will look at who else the academic team needs to please – delight, even – and discuss why this really is a job for the centre’s academics.

This will be a session with strong take-away value, delivering top tips for how the academic team can deliver ‘stakeholder delight’ in ways that will have a positive impact.

[Steve Derras Tulk, Stafford House](#)

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March | 14:10 - 14:40

## Quayside Suite

### Heart sink to heart sync - why emotionally intelligent leaders do it better

Dreading difficult conversations or tense meetings? Discover how emotionally intelligent leadership can transform those “heart sink” moments into opportunities for understanding and collaboration.

ELT managers juggle many different responsibilities: from supporting teacher wellbeing and navigating team dynamics to addressing student concerns. Whatever the challenge, boosting emotional intelligence can help us to stay grounded, manage conflict and foster a more positive and resilient working environment.

This session will explore practical strategies to recognise and regulate emotions, build trust with colleagues and strengthen team resilience, giving delegates tools they can immediately apply in their academic management roles.

Hannah Youell

## Room 3/4/5

### How to write an institutional AI policy for UK ELT

Many managers, teachers and other staff in ELT use generative AI for a variety of purposes. However, most of them are employing it without sufficient institutional guidance, training, or support, thus increasing the risk of ineffective practice and unintended consequences related to data privacy, copyright, safeguarding and professional accountability. It is essential that ELT providers develop a robust, contextualised institutional AI policy. A well-designed policy protects organisations from compliance, safeguarding, and reputational risks while actively enabling innovation rather than restricting it.

In response to this challenge, a group of English UK managers and ELT consultants have been working together to develop shared principles, practical procedures and tools to support institutions in creating such a policy.

This session offers a strategic roadmap for writing an institutional AI policy, combining principles, examples and practical tools. You will leave with clear starting points, a policy framework and a toolkit to help balance institutional safety with the transformative potential of AI.

George Pickering and Ryan Hannan,  
ES World

# Sessions and speakers

Friday 6 March | 14:50 - 15:20

## Quayside Suite

### Using the Inclusive Loop for classrooms and staffrooms

Inclusion starts in the systems we create to recruit, train and support staff and students. This practical session introduces an Inclusive Loop framework, showing how small changes can make your organisation work for neurodiverse staff and students. We'll explore high-impact strategies in communication, structures, environments and mentoring, and identify simple ways to embed them into your existing processes.

We'll discuss and share realistic actions to trial in your organisation to help you build sustainable inclusion for everyone. You will also take away an Inclusive Loop checklist and staffroom guide to share with your teams.

Laura Broadbent

## Room 3/4/5

### The power of ghost management in ELT

Leadership in ELT often focuses on visibility and communication, but what if true influence comes from what we quietly notice instead?

This session introduces the concept of ghost management, a leadership style rooted in awareness, subtle observation and relational intelligence. Participants will explore how to read micro-signals such as tone, body language and energy shifts to better understand team dynamics. Through practical reflective activities, they will learn how to build trust, enhance relationships and lead teams more effectively through intentional presence.

Georgia K. Papamichailidou, Kaplan  
Cambridge

# Closing keynote

Friday 6 March | 15:50 - 17:00

Quayside Suite



## Laïla El-Métoui

Laïla El-Métoui is an inspirational Equity and Wellbeing Consultant with over 40 years in education, spanning ESOL teaching, curriculum leadership and teacher training. A co-founder of NATECLA London, she has championed queering the UK ESOL curriculum.

As a disabled Arab lesbian and Founder/CEO of Pride in Education and Educating Out Racism, she blends lived experience with expertise to advance LGBTIQ+ inclusion. A multilingual award-winner, she delivers practical, empowering sessions for educators.

## Building inclusive excellence: intersectionality and diversity in ELT

English language teaching centres face both an opportunity and a responsibility to build truly diverse and inclusive teams. Yet many managers struggle with where to start, how to communicate the value of diversity to stakeholders and how to challenge persistent myths about “native speaker” advantage.

This highly interactive session moves beyond buzzwords to provide academic managers with evidence-based strategies for creating more inclusive hiring practices and teaching environments. Through personal reflection, peer discussion and practical action planning, participants will explore how intersectionality, the way multiple identity categories like race, gender, nationality and language background, interacts and shapes experiences in ELT contexts.

Whether your centre is already actively working on diversity initiatives, ready to take first steps, or still exploring whether these issues are relevant, this workshop meets you where you are. Grounded in research from business innovation studies, educational outcomes data and applied linguistics, the session makes a compelling case that diverse teaching teams don't just serve social justice, they strengthen learner outcomes, drive innovation, and provide competitive advantage.

Participants will leave with concrete, implementable strategies tailored to their centre's context and a personal commitment to action.

# Sessions and speakers

Saturday 7 March

Quayside Suite

## World Café: connecting and collaborating

10:00 - 10:45

Kick off the day by connecting and collaborating with other teachers in a structured World Café. You'll take part in three short discussions, moving between groups to exchange experience and ideas. Conversations will focus on four questions, linked to some of the sessions of the day, from playfulness in the classroom, to building a supportive teachers' network from today's connections. Expect practical suggestions, lesson ideas, and new connections in a supportive, collaborative setting.

*Hannah Alexander-Wright, Go Slow to Go Fast*

Experiences: creativity and innovation in ELT

10:50 - 11:15

In this session, your fellow delegates will share inspiring case studies, positive developments or unique initiatives in their language centres.

These informal 'fireside chats' will give you the opportunity to learn from each other and get inspired with your own ideas on how to shape the future of ELT.

# Sessions and speakers

Saturday 7 March | 11:40 - 12:20

## Quayside Suite

### From fluency to agency: empowering learners through values-based tasks

This session presents a task-based approach to English Language Teaching that promotes learner agency through meaningful, values-driven activities. Centred on principles such as justice, kindness, and sustainability, the approach encourages students to use English to explore ethical dilemmas, advocate for causes, and design projects with social impact.

Participants will discover how to use engaging, language-rich tasks that foster both fluency and a sense of purpose. By integrating real-world values into classroom practice, educators can inspire students to use language not only to communicate, but also to take informed, compassionate action in their communities and beyond.

Fannie Daou, Express Publishing

## Room 3/4/5

### Everything's gone green – using songs in the classroom

This interactive workshop will explore songs as a way in to discussing and raising awareness on environmental and sustainability issues and how these relate to learner's lives, their communities and the world at large.

As songs have the power to inspire, they provide the ideal framework for classroom discussions on environmental and societal issues as they relate to, for example, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Chris Walklett

# Sessions and speakers

Saturday 7 March | 12:30 - 13:10

## Quayside Suite

### Letting go to let them grow: empowering student-centred classrooms

This session will inspire teachers to integrate more student-centred tasks into their classrooms, fostering greater learner autonomy, engagement and keeping their TTT low. Participants will explore strategies to shift from a teacher-led approach to one where students take centre stage in their own learning. Through practical examples, teachers will gain innovative and adaptable ideas that can be implemented and reused to teach diverse content. By the end of the session, teachers will leave with actionable techniques to empower students, enhance creativity, and create more dynamic, student-centred classes.

Guizzela Matienzo Aguilar, Kaplan Oxford

## Room 3/4/5

### Teaching grammar lexically

Although the lexical approach has had an impact on how coursebooks present new lexis, even the most lexical coursebooks have changed little about the way in which grammar is taught. In this session, we will explore how grammar teaching could look when a lexical approach is fully applied to a particular grammar point.

Alex Walls, Cambridge Centre for Languages

# Sessions and speakers

Saturday 7 March | 14:10 - 14:50

## Quayside Suite

### Teaching for tomorrow: future-ready skills in the English classroom

In a rapidly evolving world, language teachers must do more than teach grammar and vocabulary – we must also prepare learners for the future. But what does it mean to be “future-ready”, and how can we meaningfully integrate these skills into lessons for young adults?

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 beyond the classroom.

Alex Warren, National Geographic

## Room 3/4/5

### Igniting creativity in the ELT classroom: practical strategies for engaging learners

In an increasingly dynamic and diverse educational landscape, fostering creativity in the English Language Teaching classroom is essential for enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. This workshop will provide educators with practical, innovative strategies to expand on course book material and infuse creativity into their teaching practices. Through hands-on exercises and collaborative discussions, teachers will leave with a toolkit of adaptable ideas, ranging from gamified learning experiences to project-based tasks, designed to inspire their students and cultivate a vibrant learning environment.

Join this session to unlock the potential of creative teaching and transform your ELT classroom into a hub of imagination and language exploration.

David Squirrel, Hamilton House

# Sessions and speakers

Saturday 7 March | 15:00 - 15:40

## Quayside Suite

### Navigating language anxiety: causes, effects and solutions

In today's culturally diverse classrooms, non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) play a vital role but often experience language anxiety that affects their confidence and teaching practice.

This workshop explores the sources and impact of language anxiety among educators and offers practical strategies for managing it. Through reflective questionnaires, group discussions and interactive digital tools, participants will identify key triggers, such as self-perceived linguistic inadequacy.

The session concludes with evidence-based coping strategies to enhance confidence, promote peer support, and foster more positive, resilient classroom practices.

Aigiun Azimova, Cambridge University Press and Assessment

## Room 3/4/5

### EAP insights for ELT classrooms: practical ideas

This talk argues that EAP and EFL share a similar pedagogical DNA, even where contexts and goals are different. It highlights transferable mindsets: learner autonomy, needs analysis, contextualised language, authenticity, integrated skills and process orientation, and focuses on tested classroom dynamics and practical tools already a part of EAP that can enhance the EFL classroom. We will also look at how methods of teaching and assessing academic skills can support more general English skills.

This session is research-informed, interactive, and will include practical, ready-to-use activities that you can take straight into your classroom.

Marianne Arake and Paulina Poplawska, University of Birmingham

# Closing keynote

Saturday 7 March | 16:00 - 17:00

Quayside Suite



## Ben Crystal

Ben Crystal is an actor, author and creative producer known for innovative Shakespeare performance. An Associate Artist with Shakespeare North Playhouse, he works internationally as a consultant and leads fast “quick-raise” productions staged in 2–3 days.

He co-authored major works with his father and linguist David Crystal, including *Shakespeare’s Words*, and has pioneered Original Pronunciation (OP) projects worldwide.

Ben regularly speaks on Shakespeare’s language and craft, including at TEDx and for the British Council.

## Shakespeare’s playful innovation - how the Bard can bolster the TEFL classroom

Shakespeare was a powerhouse of playful innovation for the English language.

His universality is contested, and yet, cultures around the world embrace his writing, and artists from across the disciplines resonate and respond to his works.

In this fun and informative keynote, actor, author, producer and educator Ben Crystal will shine a light on the usefulness of Shakespeare in the 21st century TEFL classroom.

As we prepare our next generations for global citizenship, the lessons found in Shakespeare’s words could never be more relevant, nor more urgently needed.

Organised by

