

CONFERENCE

TESOL TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT DAY 2026

Contemporary Issues in Language Teaching and Learning

Saturday, 5 December 2026
09:00–14:00

UNESCO Amphitheatre
University of Nicosia

UNIVERSITY of NICOSIA | DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

PROGRAMME

08:30-09:00 **REGISTRATION**

09:00-09:20 **WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESSES**
Prof. Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis
MA TESOL Programme Coordinator, University of Nicosia
Dr Chrysanthi Nicodemou-Pasiardi
Coordinating Inspector of English Language (Secondary Education), Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

09:20-10:10 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: BEYOND THE AI HYPE: RECLAIMING TEACHER AGENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION**
Dr Christine Savvidou
Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia
Chair: Prof. Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis

10:10-10:40 **AI AND PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN EFL LEARNING**
Dr Georgios Georgiou
Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia
Chair: Dr Antroulla Papakyriakou

10:40-11:10 **COFFEE BREAK**

11:10-11:30 **EMPOWERING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: THE CASE OF CANVA**
Dr Antroulla Papakyriakou
Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia
Chair: Dr Kasia Alexander

11:30-12:10 **THE POWER OF MUSIC IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: YESTERDAY'S PRACTICES, TODAY'S TECHNOLOGIES, TOMORROW'S POSSIBILITIES**
Dr Maria Diakou
Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth / University of Limassol
Chair: Dr Georgios Georgiou

12:10-12:30 **TEACHING IN THE AGE OF SHORT ATTENTION SPANS**
Ms Yiota Kontoloucas
English Learning Centre
Chair: Dr Anna Karapanou

12:30-13:00 **COFFEE BREAK**

13:00-13:20 **MOVING BEYOND SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL LEARNING: THE LANGUAGE OF THE EDUCATOR'S NERVOUS SYSTEM**
Ms Maria Nicolaou
English Learning Centre; University of Nicosia alumna
Chair: Dr Christine Savvidou

13:20-13:50 **EMPOWERING 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATORS: REFLECT, GROW, INSPIRE**
Dr Anna Karapanou
Secondary Education Teacher, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; University of Nicosia alumna
Chair: Dr Antroulla Papakyriakou

13:50-14:00 **CLOSING REMARKS**



KEYNOTE ADDRESS: BEYOND THE AI HYPE: RECLAIMING TEACHER AGENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Dr Christine Savvidou, *University of Nicosia*

Abstract:
As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly capable of generating language, providing feedback and supporting learning, what does this mean for the future of language teachers? Will we still be needed, and if so, what might our role look like? And is AI genuinely enhancing learning, or simply changing how we teach?
Drawing on critical perspectives and findings from an international study of TESOL educators, in this talk I explore the opportunities and challenges of generative AI, focusing on ethics, equity and the changing role of teachers. Moving beyond both technological hype and fears, I argue for a human-centred approach that places teacher agency and professional judgement at the heart of educational innovation. I also present a research-informed framework for ethical and equitable AI integration, considering its implications for classroom practice, professional development and institutional decision-making. Ultimately, the talk invites us to reflect on how we can shape, rather than simply adapt to, the future of language education.

Biography:
Christine Savvidou is Associate Professor in the Department of Languages and Literature at the University of Nicosia, where she coordinates the PhD programme in TESOL. Her research interests include language teacher education, professional development, educational technologies and artificial intelligence in language teaching. She regularly presents at international conferences and publishes in peer-reviewed journals on these topics. She is the author of “AI-Powered Language Teaching: Transforming the Future of TESOL” published by Macmillan Palgrave in 2026. Her recent research explores the ethical and equitable integration of generative AI, focusing on critical AI literacy, teacher agency and pedagogical innovation. Her work seeks to bridge theory and practice and promote reflective, informed and inclusive approaches to language teaching and teacher development.



AI AND PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN EFL LEARNING

Dr Georgios Georgiou, *University of Nicosia*

Abstract:
This presentation explores the intersection of AI, pronunciation teaching, and EFL learning, with particular attention to how AI can support learners, teachers, and classroom practice in developing more effective and intelligible spoken communication. It starts with examining common pronunciation difficulties faced by learners of English, including both segmental features, such as individual sounds, and suprasegmental features, such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. The lecture introduces AI-based tools that can support pronunciation practice through automatic feedback, speech recognition, repetition activities, and personalized learning pathways. It also explores the broader role of AI in pronunciation teaching and considers how such technologies can complement classroom instruction rather than replace the teacher. Particular attention is given to how AI can provide learners with additional opportunities for practice beyond the classroom. Finally, the lecture discusses key limitations and risks, including accuracy, bias, overreliance on technology, privacy concerns, and the continued need for teacher guidance and pedagogical judgment.

Biography:
Georgios P. Georgiou is a tenured Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Associate Head of the Department of Languages and Literature, and Director of the Phonetic Lab at the University of Nicosia. He was awarded the Cyprus Research Award – Young Researcher 2023 in Social Sciences and Humanities. In 2024, he was unanimously elected Fellow of the Young Academy of Europe. His research focuses on speech and language acquisition, speech-language disorders, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. Since 2018, he has published more than 100 scholarly contributions, primarily peer-reviewed articles in leading international journals. He has presented his research at more than 110 conferences worldwide and has secured several competitive national and international research grants as Principal Investigator.



EMPOWERING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: THE CASE OF CANVA

Dr Antroulla Papakyriakou, *University of Nicosia*

Abstract:
The presentation focuses on the use of technology in foreign language teaching, with particular emphasis on recent developments in the field, such as artificial intelligence (AI). The goal is to highlight the contribution of advanced technology to the educational process. Through specific case studies and examples of the use of specific tools, we will examine how technology can make a pedagogically meaningful contribution to the development of language skills, as well as to the cultivation of metacognitive skills and the promotion of collaborative learning.
Particular emphasis will be placed on the use of Canva, in its most recent version, which can help create multimodal texts and foster collaboration among learners and between the learners and the lecturer. As is widely accepted, the use of multimodal texts and the development of collaboration can enhance deep learning.

Biography:
Antroulla Papakyriakou is currently an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Languages and Literature/UNIC. She previously taught at the Department of English and General Linguistics of the University of Technology (Berlin) and she also worked at the Centre for General Linguistics, Typology and Universals (ZAS, Berlin, now Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics). She acted as the President of the Cyprus Linguistics Society (June 2017 - Sept. 2019) and she is a member in various professional associations. Her research interests include CLIL, educational technology in language teaching and language policy for promoting plurilingualism. Dr Papakyriakou participated in the following European projects: European Curricula in New Technologies and Language Teaching (Socrates programme, Comenius 2.1), Language Network for Quality Assurance (Lifelong Learning Programme), Advancing Effective Institutional Models towards Cohesive Teaching, Learning, Research and Writing Development (COST). She currently participates in the European project An Inclusive Bilingual Education Quality Assurance Framework: Ensuring Quality CLIL for all (European Commission). She is a member of the NEOLAiA European University Alliance UNIC team. She is one of the representatives of the NEOLAiA Alliance in FOREU4ALL, participating in the Topical Group Multilingualism and Multiculturalism.



THE POWER OF MUSIC IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: YESTERDAY'S PRACTICES, TODAY'S TECHNOLOGIES, TOMORROW'S POSSIBILITIES

Dr Maria Diakou, *Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; University of Limassol*

Abstract:
Music has long played a significant role in language education, offering learners meaningful opportunities to develop linguistic competence through rhythm, repetition, melody, and emotional engagement. From traditional classroom singing and action songs to contemporary digital platforms and AI-enhanced activities, songs have remained a powerful pedagogical resource. This presentation explores music's evolving role in the young learners' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, highlighting how songs can support vocabulary acquisition, reinforce grammatical structures, enhance pronunciation, and create a motivating, low-anxiety learning environment. As teaching practices and technologies evolve, music's fundamental pedagogical value remains timeless.
Building on traditional approaches, the presentation shows how interactive digital activities, multimedia resources, digital storytelling, and emerging AI-powered tools can enrich songs. Through practical examples and classroom-ready activities, participants will explore creative ways to integrate music and technology to encourage active participation, personalised learning, and meaningful language use. Looking ahead, the session emphasises that technological innovation should complement, not replace, effective pedagogical practices, highlighting the teacher's essential role in creating engaging and inclusive learning experiences. Ultimately, music's power lies not simply in the technologies we use, but in the meaningful learning experiences we create.

Biography:
Maria Diakou is Deputy Head at the Cyprus Ministry of Education and a faculty member at the University of Limassol. She holds a Master's in Applied Linguistics and a Doctorate in Education. She is the stepping-down Coordinator of IATEFL LTSIG (Learning Technologies Special Interest Group). She is a Consulting Member of the MA in CALL committee of the Cyprus University of Technology, giving suggestions, support, and feedback to evaluate and adapt MA programme to meet the needs of language instructors in schools. Her research interests are in technology and sustainability in language teaching and multicultural education.



TEACHING IN THE AGE OF SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

Ms Yiota Kontoloucas, *The English Learning Centre*

Abstract:
You've planned the perfect lesson. Your activities are carefully thought out, your resources are ready. So, what's the challenge?
In an age of TikTok, reels, constant notifications and instant entertainment, how do we capture and sustain students' attention long enough for real learning to take place? Keeping learners focused is one of today's greatest classroom challenges. The question we all ask ourselves is how can we hold their interest without turning every lesson into a performance?
This lively, practical workshop explores creative ways to make learning more engaging. Participants will discover strategies for launching lessons with impact, bringing distracted learners back on track and using variety to maintain interest throughout the lesson. They will leave with a practical toolkit of adaptable, ready-to-use techniques, including effective ways to review learning at the end of a lesson - all without adding significantly to their workload. They will explore fresh perspectives, discover new possibilities and consider how small changes can make a difference to student engagement.

Biography:
Yiota Kontoloucas is the founder and co-owner of The English Learning Centre Cyprus, established in 1992 to provide English Language to local students. She is also the director and co-owner of Bayswater Cyprus, which welcomes students from around the world. She holds a BA in Education, a Higher National Diploma in Business Studies, a Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of other languages (DELTA) and is a CELTS trainer.With decades of experience in language education, Yiota is passionate about teaching, teacher development and creating meaningful learning experiences for students. She is particularly interested in helping teachers adapt their classroom practices to meet the changing needs of today's learners. Through her work with teachers, she promotes practical, engaging approaches that encourage participation, sustain attention and make learning more effective. Her workshop, Teaching in the Age of Short Attention Spans, reflects this commitment.



MOVING BEYOND SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL LEARNING: THE LANGUAGE OF THE EDUCATOR'S NERVOUS SYSTEM

Ms Maria Nicolaou, *The English Learning Centre*

Abstract:
Social-emotional learning (SEL) has given education a shared framework for teaching self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and relationship skills. Yet many educators find these skills hardest to reach in the moments that matter most: when stress is high, a student is dysregulated, or the educator is running on empty. This session asks why teaching about emotions, while valuable, is not sufficient on its own. We will briefly outline what SEL is and what it has achieved, then examine its limits. SEL works largely through cognition: naming feelings, choosing strategies, applying skills. But when the nervous system shifts into a state of threat, the thinking brain becomes less available and those skills can go offline. Moving beyond SEL means attending to the body-based states that shape behaviour, connection, and learning.
At the center of this session is the educator's own nervous system. Learners constantly read the cues of the adults around them and borrow regulation from them before they can build their own. We will explore how to recognise what our bodies communicate, and what changes in the classroom when educators become fluent in this language: a calmer emotional climate, curiosity instead of reactivity, fewer power struggles, and greater well-being.

Biography:
With 26 years of teaching experience, Maria Nicolaou is an ESL teacher at the English Learning Centre in Limassol and holds an MA in TESOL from the University of Nicosia. Throughout her teaching journey, she has developed a strong interest in the connection between Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Brain-friendly approaches to education. She is particularly interested in the educator's brain and body state and in exploring how focused attention practices can strengthen teacher–student connections. She is passionate about rethinking traditional approaches to behaviour and learning, recognising the growing need to create school environments that prioritise safety, meaningful relationships, and conection.



EMPOWERING 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATORS: REFLECT, GROW, INSPIRE

Dr Anna Karapanou, *Secondary Education Teacher, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; University of Nicosia alumna*

Abstract:
It is true that the term 21st-century skills has become a buzzword in education and business circles. One way or another, 21st-century skills have become ubiquitous, with educators either having heard about them, attended relevant training, or encountered the term in teaching materials. But where do we start?
This presentation aims to help teachers reflect on and develop their own 21st-century skills through self-assessment and a growth mindset approach. By recognising their strengths and areas for growth, educators can better support their students in cultivating these essential skills through a modern, student-centred pedagogy that emphasises personalisation, participation and lifelong learning.
Through practical examples, participants will also explore how 21st-century skills can be activated in the language classroom. Most importantly, the workshop encourages educators to turn the focus on themselves: to reflect on the skills they already possess, identify those they would like to strengthen, and consider small steps towards their own professional growth. After all, developing 21st-century learners starts with developing 21st-century educators.

Biography:
Anna Karapanou is an English language teacher, teacher trainer and researcher with a strong interest in teacher professional development and innovative teaching practices. She is the founder of CyTESOL, a virtual community of practice for English language teachers in Cyprus. Her doctoral research at the University of Nicosia focused on 21st-century skills, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Communities of Practice. Throughout her career, Anna has actively participated in ELT conferences and professional development events, delivering presentations on peer-assisted learning, learning difficulties, educational technology, 21st-century skills and collaborative approaches to teacher professional development.