

Modern Language Teachers Association of NSW 2026 Conference: Clarity, Communication and Connection

#MLTANSW26

**Friday 29 May 2026 8:30-3:30pm
Rydges Sydney Central
28 Albion Street Surry Hills**

WIFI username: **Rydges Event** Password: **conference**

Registration	8:30-9:00	Level 1 Pre-function area: Tea, Coffee and pastries				
		Oxford 1 (Level 1)				
Opening	9:00-9:15	<p>Welcome Janelle Byrne, President MLTA NSW</p> <p>Conference Opening and Acknowledgement of Country</p> <p>Sana Zreika, Director Multicultural Education, Teaching Learning and Student Wellbeing, NSW Department of Education</p>				
Keynote address	9:15-10:10	<p>Language Teaching at a Crossroads: Engagement, Evidence, and the AI Disruption</p> <p>Dr Gianfranco Conti</p>				
Morning Tea	10:15-10:45	Level 1 Pre-function area				
Workshop 1 sessions		Oxford 1	Oxford 2	Taylor	Crown	Riley (Ground)
Session 1	10:50-11:40	Meaningful Fun Gianfranco Conti	Practical strategies to enhance student engagement in the language classroom Shanelle Ingram and Miyako Matsui	One resource, many uses Coreena Allen	Creating Language Classrooms that Students Don't Want to Leave Emily Liccioni	High School Exchange Programs Sandeep Agarwal







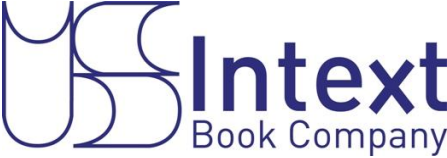
Workshop 2 sessions		Oxford 1	Oxford 2	Taylor	Crown	Riley (Ground)
Session 2	11:50-12:40	Leadership perspectives for supporting language faculties in schools Gianfranco Conti	Navigating AI and Technology Use: An Ethics and Wellbeing Perspective Catherine Rodriguez	From Retrieval activities to Retrieval Routines: Using AI to build Language Learning Habits Chloe Ye Student engagement, Diversity & Inclusivity Dr. Kavita Sood	No Screens, No Problem: Interactive Language Games for Clarity, Communication and Connection Shuyi Wu	Working with students with specific learning differences Margarita Diaz and Marina Anokhina
		Oxford 1				
MLTA NSW AGM	12:45 - 1:30	Presentation of Awards MLTA NSW Annual General Meeting				
Lunch	1:30 - 2:15	Manna Loft (Level 1)				
Workshop 3 sessions		Oxford 1	Oxford 2	Taylor	Crown	Riley (Ground)
Session 3	2:15 - 3:05		A Chicken's Guide to Story Listening: Trying TPRS When You're Not Sure It Will Work Gemma McWhirter	Retrieval Practice and Vocabulary Development Marnie Foster and Argyris Giantsis	Step by Step: Constructing Units of Work with AI Alison Dean	Transforming Primary Language Learning: Innovative Strategies for Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Reflection Penelope Johnstone and Silvana Cardillo
		Oxford 1				
Closing	3:10 - 3:30	Closing, Corporate sponsors Lucky prize draw, Evaluation, AFMLTA 2027				

Participating in the MLTA NSW Conference will contribute six hours of Elective PD addressing Standards 6.2.2 and 7.4.2 from the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers towards maintaining Proficient Teacher Accreditation in NSW.

6.2.2 Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.

7.4.2 Participate in professional and community networks and forums to broaden knowledge and improve practice.

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We are a member of the Professional Teachers Association NSW.



Keynote address

Dr Gianfranco Conti

An applied linguistics MA and PhD graduate **Gianfranco Conti** has taught MFL for over 25 years both at primary, secondary and university levels. He has researched the impact of metacognitive strategies training and error correction on essay writing under the supervision of Oxford University Ernesto Macaro both during his PhD and a large-scale project in English comprehensive schools documented in Professor Macaro (2001)'s book. He currently has lexicogrammar acquisition, listening instruction, metacognition, error correction and learner autonomy as main research interests.



Formerly head of languages at various schools in England and abroad where he has developed and implemented his instructional approach (Extensive Processing Instruction), he is currently an independent educational consultant and researcher at the University of Reading in his capacity of Visiting Fellow.

He is also a renowned conference speaker and CPD provider mostly active in the UK, South-East Asia, Middle East and Australia. This is what CEO of researchED and educational influencer Tom Bennet has written about one of his workshops:

He is well-known internationally for his teaching resources that have won him the TES Best contributor award and have been downloaded over 6,000,000 times by over 100,000 teachers around the world. His blog on MFL pedagogy, The Language Gym, is one of the most influential in the world in our field and has won him several international awards. The Facebook professional development group he founded, 'Global Innovative Language Teachers' is one of the fastest-growing communities of its genre.

Dr Conti is also the founder of the interactive language learning website www.language-gym.com and the co-author of the best-selling handbooks for MFL professionals, 'The Language Teacher Toolkit', 'Breaking the Sound Barrier' and 'Memory: what every language teacher should know'.

Gianfranco Conti, PhD (Applied linguistics), MA (TEFL), PGCE (Mod Langs)
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Founder and CEO: www.language-gym.com
Co-founder: www.sentencebuilders.com

Author: ["Breaking the language barrier: teaching learners how to listen"](#)
["Memory: what every language teacher should know"](#)
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["The Language teacher toolkit"](#)
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["Spanish sentence builders - Listening"](#)
["Italian Sentence builders"](#)
["German Sentence builders"](#)
["Spanish GCSE revision"](#) ,
["French GCSE revision"](#)
["Spanish Sentence Builders" \(Book 2\)](#)

Blog: www.gianfrancoconti.com

Keynote address: Language Teaching at a Crossroads: Engagement, Evidence, and the AI Disruption

Language education is facing a period of significant change. Across many systems, we are seeing declining uptake, variable motivation, widening attainment gaps, and increasing behavioural and cognitive pressures in classrooms. At the same time, the rapid rise of AI is reshaping what it means to “know” a language and, consequently, what it means to teach one.

In response, professional discourse often emphasises the need to make lessons more engaging. This keynote takes a more critical—but balanced view: engagement does matter, but it is too often treated as a starting point rather than an outcome. A substantial body of research suggests that perceptions of success are a key driver of motivation and persistence (Bandura, 1997; Dörnyei, 2001). In other words, students are more likely to engage when they feel they are learning, improving, and experiencing success—not simply when lessons are designed to be superficially engaging.

Drawing on cognitive science and second language acquisition research, the session will argue for an evidence-informed approach that prioritises clarity of input, systematic retrieval, and the gradual development of fluency (Sweller, 1988; Rosenshine, 2012; DeKeyser, 2007). It will suggest that what is often perceived as an “engagement problem” is, in many cases, a consequence of weak curriculum design, insufficient recycling, and limited opportunities for students to experience success. When learning is well-structured and cumulative, engagement tends to follow.

The keynote will also consider the implications of AI. While it challenges traditional notions of language learning and assessment, it also offers significant opportunities: personalising practice, generating rich input, supporting retrieval, and providing immediate feedback (Luckin et al., 2016). AI has the potential to enhance interaction and sustain learner engagement beyond the classroom. Used judiciously, it can strengthen—rather than replace—the teacher’s role.

Ultimately, this session will offer a practical, research-informed framework to help educators and leaders navigate these challenges with confidence. It will argue that many of the current difficulties in language education are not simply the result of insufficient effort, but of a misalignment between curriculum, pedagogy, and how languages are learned—and that by focusing on successful learning as the driver of engagement, there is real scope to improve both outcomes and classroom experience.

Workshop 1 sessions

Meaningful Fun

Dr Gianfranco Conti

Fun becomes powerful only when it is pedagogically meaningful. This session demonstrates how to make language learning interactive and motivating while still strengthening grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and listening skills. Participants experience a rich repertoire of games and gamified routines, each grounded in cognitive and pedagogical principles. The result: enjoyment that drives progress, not noise.