



OPTIMA's conference and exhibition - 7th June 2025 Conference Programme

9.00-9.30 – registration

9.30-9.50 – **opening** – welcoming addresses;

09.50-10.30 – **Empathy and Communication in Education** – Prof. Sofronieva, Sofia University

10.30-11.10 – **Sponsored talk** – Macmillan Education, **Smart assessment – how to you get your teenage learners really involved in their learning**, Grzegorz Śpiewak

11.10-11.30 - coffee break

11.30-12.00 - **Using learners' (other) languages to enhance English teaching and learning**– Charlotte Smith – British Council – Sofia

12.00-12.20 – **The Bulgarian Foreign Language Suggestopedia: theoretical and practical highlights** – Galya Mateva – OPTIMA

12.20-13.20 – **A suggestopedic lesson for beginner learners of Italian** – Krum Georgiev

13.20-14.00 – lunch break

14.00-14.30 – **Nurturing Curious Minds and Empathic Souls** - Marija Pejatovic – **YALS** – Serbia

14.35-15.05 – **Microlearning: Benefits & Practises** – Niki Koutalianou – **QLS** – Greece

15.05-15.45 – **Sponsored talk** – Express Publishing – **Music and Rhythm Make All the Difference: How music can make learning more effective** – Konstantinos Soursos

15.50-16.30 – **Sponsored talk** – MM Publications – **Exploring the Transformative Role of English Teaching** – Christopher Vasiliou

16.30-17.00 – **How can Cambridge Teaching Qualifications impact both teaching and learning in the classroom** - Alben Vitanova – **AVO School**

17.00-17.30 – **Sponsored talk and live demonstration** – Education Without Borders – **Time to Stop Marking Like It's 1995** – Michael Anetopoulos

17.30-17.45 – Competition winners' awarding ceremony

17.45-18.15 – closing and a glass of wine for everyone!

Empathy and Communication in Education, Prof. Sofronieva - Sofia University

The presentation will focus on different modes of behavior and our ability to exercise empathy. It will discuss how teaching methods like Suggestopedia (Prof. Lozanov) and the Narrative Format (Prof. Taeschner), based on love and empathy, support and facilitates second language acquisition in addition to establishing a positive emotional environment for communication. A smile matters: results of contemporary research on how language teachers' empathy levels affect their students' achievements will be shared.

Smart assessment – how to you get your teenage learners really involved in their learning, Grzegorz Śpiewak
No modern language course – particularly in a public institution - can do without assessment. This does not change the fact that, in light of what we now know about the nature of learning, not every type of assessment is equally sensible and helpful. So, which strategies, forms, and types of assessment should be focus on, and how to integrate them in our daily teaching?

This is where this very practical session comes in. I'll offer a range of ideas for how to enrich your repertoire of assessment techniques, task types and tools. I'll show you how – if used smartly – they can help your learners get a lot more information about the progress they've made already and the areas that they still need to work on. And, above all, on how you as a great language teacher will help your teenage learners get a lot more involved in making the most of this in their learning.

Using learners' (other) languages to enhance English teaching and learning, Charlotte Smith

This talk will be an expansion of one of the themes in the British Council 'Future of English' report, around the topic of plurilingualism.

The Bulgarian Foreign Language Suggestopedia: TRADITIONAL AND ONLINE ASPECTS, Galya Mateva

The recently published book by the author titled "The Bulgarian Foreign Language Suggestopedia" further develops the theoretical background of the Lozanov's method applying it in the context of English language teacher training, materials design and methods of teaching to adults and children.

The current talk will have the purpose of briefly introducing key theoretical and practical issues of F-2-F and online suggestopedia. Thus, it will provide the background to a following workshop session demonstrating some of the most important phases of the suggestopedic language acquisition cycle when teaching basic Italian to foreigners aged 16+.

Nurturing Curious Minds and Empathic Souls, Marija Pejatovic

Although children are naturally curious, it is our task to actively engage this curiosity. Creating a nurturing and collaborative classroom atmosphere that encourages learners to think critically, listen to each other, recognize emotions, and communicate effectively is essential. And what could be more enchanting than gamifying our teaching approach? In my workshop, we will explore several popular classroom activities and discover ways to integrate them into curricula to boost communication, strengthen empathy, and foster critical thinking—some of the key 21st-century skills. The workshop will serve as a starting point for reshaping and rethinking all-time favourite games and activities to meet the needs of present-day language learners.

Microlearning: Benefits & Practises, Niki Koutalianou

This talk explores the key benefits of microlearning, including improved knowledge retention, greater learner engagement, and flexibility in various learning environments. We will also discuss practical applications highlighting how bite-sized, accessible content can transform learning experiences and outcomes.

Music and Rhythm Make All the Difference: How music can make learning more effective, Konstantinos Soursos

Over the years, research has shown that music has various psychological and physical benefits like mental relaxation, feeling energized and even helping with physical issues, such as chronic pain, reducing blood pressure and boosting the immune system. Once the cognitive results of music were looked into, it became apparent that music could affect a student's learning process, as well as how they retain information, in a positive way. So, let's dive in and have a look at how music can be used with the student's in our classroom!

Exploring the Transformative Role of English Teaching, Christopher Vasiliou

This session invites reflection on language as a bridge to holistic growth. Beyond grammar and vocabulary, it becomes a medium for connection, awareness, and deeper ways of knowing and becoming.

How can Cambridge Teaching Qualifications impact both teaching and learning in the classroom, Albena Vitanova

Cambridge CELTA is the most reputable and widely recognised teaching qualification, which ensures you are qualified to teach around the world. The CELTA course will benefit both inexperienced and experienced teachers of English who are eager to adopt high international standards in the profession.

AVO Language and Examination Centre offers the unique opportunity to English teachers in Bulgaria and from abroad to obtain Cambridge CELTA intensively for a month in the summer or extensively throughout the school year. It is available in both online and blended formats (a combination of online and face-to-face classes).

The talk will present a brief overview of the course programme and structure, and provide you with some practical tips. You will also be able to ask any questions you have.

Time to Stop Marking Like It's 1995, Michael Anetopoulos

Introducing Eddie, a game-changing tool, that has transformed the way teachers assess students' writings! The EdWiBo AI-powered Writing Assistant, has been specifically designed to grade essays in a fraction of the time a teacher would need, and to offer a more efficient way of dealing with individual learning needs, while saving time for the teachers. See the benefits!

It's a Time Saver: An average B2 Writing may take up to 15 minutes to grade. Eddie will do it in 15 to 20 seconds!

Provides Consistency: Can a teacher guarantee that the first essay they mark is done with the same patience, care, calmness and the same criteria as the 15th one? Doubtful! Our Eddie Maintains Consistency throughout, though!

Gives Targeted Feedback: Do teachers have the time to prepare detailed feedback to address the individual student needs? Certainly not! Our EdWiBo AI tool does precisely that!

Creates Tailor-made Tasks: Are there any books that provide practice tasks aiming to help the particular needs of individual students? Hardly any! However, Eddie does just that for teachers!