

Reflection on the LTANT Conference 2023

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The Language Teachers' Association of the Northern Territory Conference, which took place on November 10, 2023, proved to be an insightful and enriching experience, particularly with the keynote address by Andrew Scrimgeour on achieving success in language education. Mr. Scrimgeour highlighted the concerning drop in language students at the year 12 level, emphasizing the need for students to connect their learning to their language and community rather than solely focusing on travel to the target language country. His emphasis on engagement and knowing what to teach struck a chord with the educators present.

A notable highlight was the introduction of the AI language learning product, ImmerseMe, by Mr. Scott Cardwell. This innovative tool, designed to immerse students in authentic language conversations, promised to be a valuable asset for language teachers seeking effective ways to engage their students in speaking and practicing the target language.

The subsequent keynote by Ms. Marisa Schiavi delved into strategies for assisting all students in achieving success through differentiation. Her exploration of strength-based and equity-driven approaches provided valuable insights for educators aiming to cater to the diverse needs of learners.

The workshops added practical dimensions to the conference, particularly Mr. Ken Rowley's presentation on the flexible senior language program. His discussion of alternative programs, such as community connections, industry connections, and Integrated learning, along with the possibility of starting stage 1 language from year 9, opened up new perspectives on language education.

The presentation by Mr. Luke Carter and Ms. Tammy from Sanderson Middle School about the Indigenous language program in the Northern Territory was enlightening. Their insights into engaging students in learning Indigenous languages and connecting these languages with the broader LOTE curriculum showcased innovative and culturally sensitive approaches.

The member-sharing sessions, notably Candice Slingerland and Jordan's presentation on learner perspectives, were a standout. Jordan's emphasis and suggestions on connecting language learning to culture and real-life situations, the importance of making language education enjoyable and relevant, and her expressed dislike for learning grammar, led to reflections on how to make learning grammar interesting enough for students and engage them in learning grammar parts. Without learning grammar, students will not be able to speak or write the target language in the correct way. Also, learning LOTE grammar can lead students to reflect on their English or first language grammar learning too.

In conclusion, the conference provided a comprehensive overview of current trends, challenges, and innovative solutions in language education. The diverse topics covered, from AI integration to Indigenous language programs, showcased the dynamism of language teaching in the Northern Territory. This experience undoubtedly shaped the pedagogical approaches of attendees, fostering a more engaging and effective language learning environment for students.