

MONTHLY BRIEFING

ISSUE 24

May 2026



2026 GLOBAL ENGLISH EDUCATION CHINA ASSEMBLY CHENGDU SYMPOSIUM



The 2026 Global English Education China Assembly Chengdu Symposium, with the theme “Teaching English Reading in the Digital Era”, was held at Chengdu Tianfu School on April 25.

2026 INTERNATIONAL CHINESE LANGUAGE DAY AND THE “POETRY CONNECTS THE WORLD” GLOBAL CHINESE POETRY GATHERING



The launching ceremony of the 2026 International Chinese Language Day and “Poetry Connects the World” Global Chinese Poetry Gathering was held at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications on April 20.

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“一带一路”语言教育文化组织联盟
BELT AND ROAD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES NETWORK

MONTHLY BRIEFING

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Editorial team

Chief editor: Peng Lun

Executive editor: Han Fang

Layout designer: Guo Ziai

Contact us

Address: Office of BRLCN, 21st Century China Daily, 15 Huixin Dongjie,

Chaoyang, Beijing P.R.China, 100029

Phone: (86) 10-85887518/7503

Email: brlcni@i21st.cn

Newsletter online

The newsletter can be read online at <https://brlcni.com/>

A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

April marks the season of UNESCO World Book and Copyright Day. Reading is meant to be one of humanity's most universal and equal intellectual pursuits. Yet we are being forced to confront an increasingly evident reality: while the digital revolution has dramatically expanded access to information, it has also placed deep reading under unprecedented strain.

According to the National Reading Survey released by the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication, Chinese adults read an average of just 4.81 printed books per person in 2025. In global terms, the figure is neither the lowest nor particularly encouraging. In the United States, a survey by YouGov found that 40 percent of Americans did not read a single book in 2025, while another 27 percent read only one to four books. In South Korea — a country with a long and deeply rooted reading culture — the average number of books read by teenagers aged 13 to 19 dropped to 11.7, the lowest level since 2011. In the United Kingdom, meanwhile, only 32.7 percent of young people aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading in their free time, marking the lowest level recorded in the past 20 years. These figures paint a troubling global picture: in the face of sweeping digitalization, reading habits are weakening, and fewer people are engaging in sustained, in-depth reading.

It is precisely in response to this challenge that the 2026 Global English Education China Assembly Chengdu Symposium adopted “Teaching English Reading in the Digital Era”, as its theme. About 500 English teachers and researchers took apart and discussed topics including: how can teachers improve students' reading fluency while also nurturing critical thinking? How can AI-powered tools make reading education more effective without diminishing genuine engagement with texts?

These discussions also point directly to the theme of 2026 Global English Education China Assembly, to be held in Beijing this July: “Humanistic Renewal and the Civilizational Role of Foreign Language Education in the Age of AI”. At a time when AI can instantly summarize books, translate languages, and even imitate writing styles, what remains the irreplaceable value of foreign-language reading education? If AI can help students “get through” a text, do teachers still need to guide them toward truly understanding the emotions, perspectives, and cultural meanings embedded within it?

We believe the answer is yes. AI should not become a shortcut that weakens independent thinking; rather, it should serve as a catalyst for deeper reflection and richer dialogue. At a time when technology is rapidly flattening differences, foreign-language education has an even greater responsibility to preserve the diversity of thought, values, and cultural perspectives carried through language. It should help younger generations expand their intellectual horizons through intelligent tools while remaining grounded in their own cultural traditions — enabling them to participate in global dialogue with confidence, empathy, and mutual respect.

This July in Beijing, we look forward to joining educators from around the world to explore one of the defining educational questions of our time.

四月，世界读书日刚刚过去。阅读，本该是人类最平等的精神旅程。然而，放眼全球，我们不得不正视一个现实：数字浪潮在拓宽信息边界的同时，也让深度阅读能力面临前所未有的挑战。

据中国新闻出版研究院发布的国民阅读调查，2025年中国成年国民人均纸质图书阅读量仅为4.81本。这一数字在全球坐标系中，既不是最低，也远谈不上乐观。在美国，YouGov调查显示，40%的人在2025年一本书未读，另有27%的人只读了1至4本。在拥有深厚阅读文化的韩国，13至19岁青少年的人均图书阅读量降至11.7本，创下2011年以来的最低值。而在英国，仅32.7%的8至18岁青少年表示喜欢在空闲时间阅读，这是20年来的最低点。这些数据共同勾勒出一幅全球性的困境：数字化全面冲击之下，阅读量在萎缩，真正完成深度阅读的人越来越少。

正因如此，由联盟参与指导的2026国际英语教育中国大会成都专题研讨会，以“数字时代的英文阅读教学”为主题，汇聚了近五百名一线教师与教研员，共同探讨教育中的真实难题：在英语作为非母语的语境下，如何既提升阅读速度，又培养批判性思维？如何借助AI工具让阅读教学更高效？

这些探讨，也恰恰指向了今年7月即将举行的国际英语教育中国大会的主题——“AI时代外语教育的人文重塑与文明使命”。当生成式人工智能可以瞬间总结一本书、翻译一种语言甚至模仿某种写作风格时，外语阅读教育的不可替代价值究竟何在？如果AI能帮学生“读完”文本，教师是否还需要带领他们“读懂”文本背后的情感、立场与文化密码？

我们坚信，AI不应是削弱思考的拐杖，而应成为激发深度对话的镜子。在技术加速抹平差异的时代，外语教育更应守护语言背后的思维方式和价值多样性，让年轻一代既能利用智能工具拓宽认知边界，又能扎根于本民族文化，以平等的姿态参与全球文明对话。

七月的北京，我们期待与各国教育者并肩而立，共同回答这个时代之问。



2026 GLOBAL ENGLISH EDUCATION CHINA ASSEMBLY CHENGDU SYMPOSIUM

2026 国际英语教育中国大会专题研讨会在成都成功举办



Group photo of participants at the 2026 Global English Education China Assembly Chengdu Symposium

The 2026 Global English Education China Assembly Chengdu Symposium, with the theme “Teaching English Reading in the Digital Era”, was held at Chengdu Tianfu School on April 25. The event attracted about 500 English teachers and researchers from across the province and even the country.

The symposium consisted of two major sessions: keynote speeches and teaching demonstrations. Experts shared views on “Exploring Teaching Strategies and Practical Pathways for Reading Classes and Leveraging AI to Create Engaging and Efficient Reading Lessons. Together with attendees, they jointly explored innovative practices of teaching English reading in advancing cross-cultural understanding, cultivating critical thinking abilities, and fulfilling the educational mission of fostering well-rounded individuals. The symposium was co-hosted by the Organizing Committee of the Global English Education China Assembly and the Sichuan Tianfu New Area Society of Education, and co-organized by Chengdu Tianfu School.

2026 INTERNATIONAL CHINESE LANGUAGE DAY AND THE “POETRY CONNECTS THE WORLD” GLOBAL CHINESE POETRY GATHERING

2026 年“国际中文日”暨“诗约四海”全球中文诗友会启动仪式在北京举行

The launching ceremony of the 2026 International Chinese Language Day and “Poetry Connects the World” Global Chinese Poetry Gathering was held at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications on April 20. More than 700 Chinese and foreign guests attended the event, including foreign diplomats in China, representatives of international language and cultural institutions, as well as delegates from universities and international students in Beijing. Participants used the Chinese language as a bridge and poetry as a bond to convey sincere friendship and promoted exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

International Chinese Language Day was initiated by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation under China’s Ministry of Education and has been successfully held for six consecutive years. With the theme “Chinese: Sparking Colorful Dreams”, this year’s event will see the launch of thousands of Chinese language and cultural activities in more than 100 countries worldwide.

(Source: Chinanews, Xinhua News)



2026 International Chinese Language Day and the “Poetry Connects the World” Global Chinese Poetry Gathering in session.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Apr 26-29

JIANGSU UNIVERSITY 2026 Study in China Dialogue

2026 来华留学对话活动在江苏大学举行

The 2026 Study in China Dialogue, hosted by the China Education Association for International Exchange and supported by the Department of Education of Jiangsu Province, took place at Jiangsu University from April 26 to 29. Representatives from 221 universities and colleges across 28 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities nationwide attended the event.

Zou Xiaobo, president of Jiangsu University, said that the dialogue would serve as an opportunity to promote mutual learning and exchanges, and to jointly explore new paths for the development of education for international student in China.

The event featured three thematic forums and two parallel sessions, covering topics including the building and improvement of quality assurance systems for international education in China, the development of English-taught programs for international students, innovation and practice in global promotion strategies for Study in China programs, education on China's national conditions for international students, as well as risk prevention and emergency response in international education.



Zou Xiaobo, President of Jiangsu University, addresses the opening ceremony.

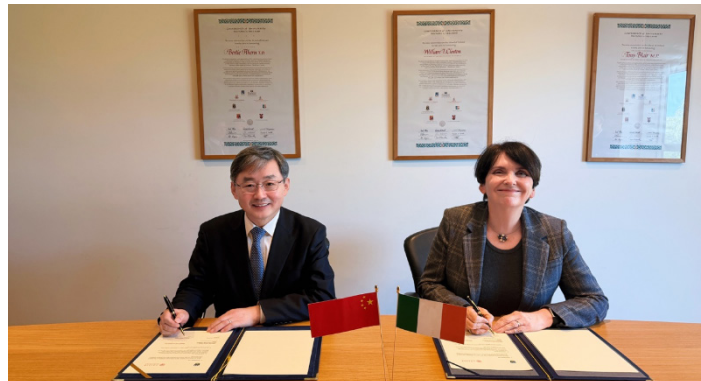
Apr 14

SHANGHAI JIAO TONG UNIVERSITY Agreements signed with University College Dublin and King's College London

上海交通大学与爱尔兰都柏林大学、英国伦敦国王学院签署合作协议

Ding Kuiling, president of Shanghai Jiao Tong University led a delegation on visits to the United Kingdom and Ireland. During the visit, the delegation attended the opening ceremony of the 2026 annual meeting of Universitas 21, as well as its annual working meeting and presidents' closed-door session. At the presidents' closed-door meeting, leaders of member universities discussed the theme of "The Changing World Order: Implications for University Leaders." Ding said that universities should play a stabilizing role during a period of rapid transformation and profound restructuring of the global order. They should uphold multilateral cooperation, maintain an open and inclusive mindset, and take the initiative to create exchange opportunities for faculty and students.

The delegation visited University College Dublin and met with its President Orla Feely on April 23. The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding, officially establishing a cooperative partnership between the two universities. On April 24, the delegation paid a visit to King's College London and held talks with its President Shitij Kapur. The two sides also signed an agreement on talent cultivation cooperation.



Ding Kuiling (left), President of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, signs an agreement with Orla Feely, President of University College Dublin, Ireland.

Apr 22-23

QSINGHUA UNIVERSITY Agreements signed with University of Cambridge and RWTH Aachen University

清华大学与英国剑桥大学、德国亚琛工业大学签署合作协议

Li Luming, president of Tsinghua University, met with a delegation led by Deborah Prentice, vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge on April 22. The two sides exchanged views on further deepening cooperation and renewed the university-level Memorandum of Understanding. On April 23, Li met with Ulrich Rüdiger, rector of RWTH Aachen University, and presented him with a certificate appointing him as an honorary professor of Tsinghua University.

Li and Rüdiger renewed the memorandum of understanding on the strategic partnership between the two institutions and jointly attended the opening ceremony of the Tsinghua University-RWTH Aachen University Forum on the Development of Innovative Talent Cultivation.



Li Luming (right), President of Tsinghua University, and Deborah Prentice, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge after signing the MoU.

Apr 18

FUDAN UNIVERSITY Memorandum of Understanding signed with University of Cambridge

复旦大学与剑桥大学续签合作备忘录

Jin Li, president of Fudan University, met with Lord Chris Smith, chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and Deborah Prentice, vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge along with their delegation on April 20. The two sides exchanged views on further expanding academic and educational exchanges between the universities and renewed the inter-university Memorandum of Understanding. On the same day, Center for Advancing Global Collaboration of Fudan

COUNCIL MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

University signed an agreement with Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge. Prentice said that the two universities have already established sound cooperation in fields including the humanities, life sciences, medicine and health, and neuroscience, and the future collaboration could be further extended to more frontier disciplines.



Jin Li (right), President of Fudan University, and Deborah Prentice, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge after signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

Apr 16

BELJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY

The Islam-Confucianism Civilizational Dialogue 2026 and China-Malaysia University Presidents' Roundtable

北京师范大学承办 2026 儒伊文明对话会并举办中马大学校长圆桌会议

The Islam-Confucianism Civilizational Dialogue 2026, co-hosted by the International Confucian Association and International Islamic University Malaysia, was held in Beijing on April 16. With the theme "A Global Vision of Civilizations: Perspectives from Confucian Culture and Islamic Civilization", the dialogue was co-organized by Beijing Normal University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing Language and Culture University, Minzu University of China, and the China Confucius Research Institute. About 300 experts and scholars from 24 countries worldwide attended the event. During the roundtable session, a Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony was held. Beijing Normal University signed agreements with International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah, and Universiti Utara Malaysia.



Group Photo of the participants attending China-Malaysia University Presidents' Roundtable

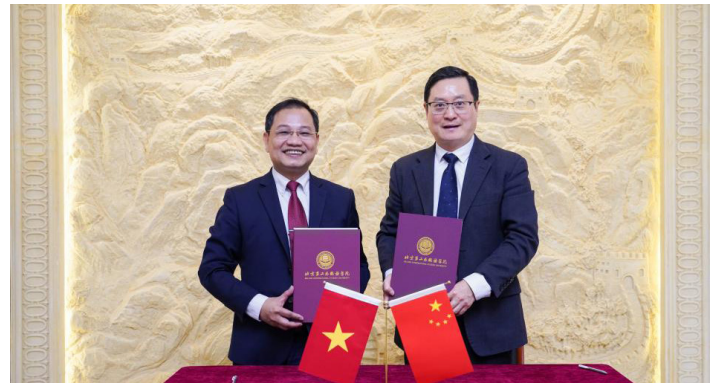
Apr 14

BELJING INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with Vietnam National University, Hanoi

北京第二外国语学院与越南河内国家大学签署合作协议

Hoa Ngoc Son, vice president of the University of Foreign Languages under Vietnam National University, Hanoi, paid a visit to Beijing International Studies University on April 13. Hoa said they would learn from the successful experience of Beijing International Studies University in developing its "Foreign Language Plus" education model and hoped the two universities could jointly establish a Vietnam Cultural Research Center, advance scientific research cooperation, and promote cultural exchanges between China and Vietnam. The two sides signed an agreement on student exchange programs.



Zheng Chengjun (right), Vice President of Beijing International Studies University, and Hoa Ngoc Son, Vice President of Vietnam National University, Hanoi after signing the agreement.

Apr 14

BELJING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with Van Lang University, Vietnam

北京语言大学与越南文朗大学签署合作备忘录



Duan Peng (right), President of Beijing Language and Culture University, and Tran Thi My Dieu, President of Van Lang University, Vietnam after signing the agreement.

Duan Peng, president of Beijing Language and Culture University, together with presidents from 34 Chinese and Vietnamese universities, attended the China-Vietnam Forum on Higher Education Cooperation and Scientific and Technological Innovation on April 14. On the same day, Duan met with a delegation led by Tran Thi My Dieu, president of Van Lang University, and signed a memorandum of understanding on academic cooperation.

The two sides reached broad consensus on talent cultivation, academic research, and the establishment of a regularized cooperation mechanism. Both universities agreed to take the signing of the memorandum as a new starting point to expand areas of cooperation, elevate the level of collaboration, and contribute to the coordinated development of higher education and the continuation of youth friendship between China and Vietnam.

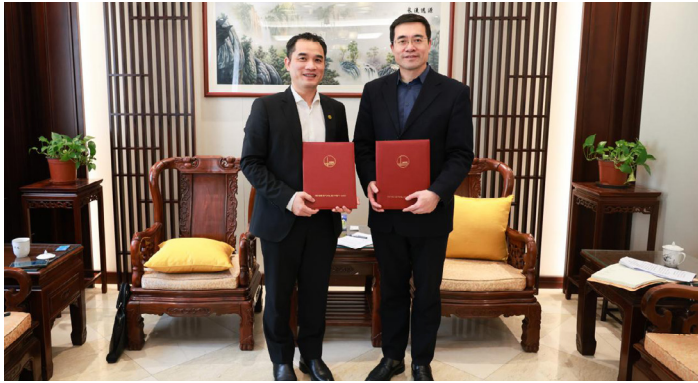
COUNCIL MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Apr 13

CHINA FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with Vietnam National University

外交学院与越南河内国家大学签署合作协议



Gao Fei (right), President of China Foreign Affairs University and Pham Bao Son, Vice President of Vietnam National University, Hanoi after signing the agreement.

Gao Fei, president of China Foreign Affairs University, met with a delegation led by Pham Bao Son, vice president of Vietnam National University, Hanoi on April 13. The two sides exchanged views and discussed prospects for future cooperation, including promoting faculty and student exchanges, launching joint research projects, and co-hosting academic seminars. Following the meeting, the two universities signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation.

Apr 11

SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Memorandum of Understanding signed with Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

山东师范大学与哈萨克国立师范大学签署合作谅解备忘录



Zhang Maocong (right), Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Shandong Normal University, Kobenova Gulzat Izbasarovna, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan and Nalbekova Banu (left), Vice Rector of Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University after signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

The China-Kazakhstan Higher Education Exchange Conference was held at the China National Convention Center in Beijing on April 11. Zhang Maocong, deputy secretary of the Party Committee of Shandong Normal University, attended the event and signed a memorandum of understanding on Sino-foreign cooperative education with Nalbekova

Banu, vice rector of Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University.

Zhang said that the University attaches great importance to educational cooperation with higher education institutions in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. He said the signing would serve as an opportunity for the two sides to carry out practical cooperation in areas including Sino-foreign cooperative education, joint talent cultivation, and teacher education and training, so as to jointly elevate higher education exchanges between China and Kazakhstan to a new level.

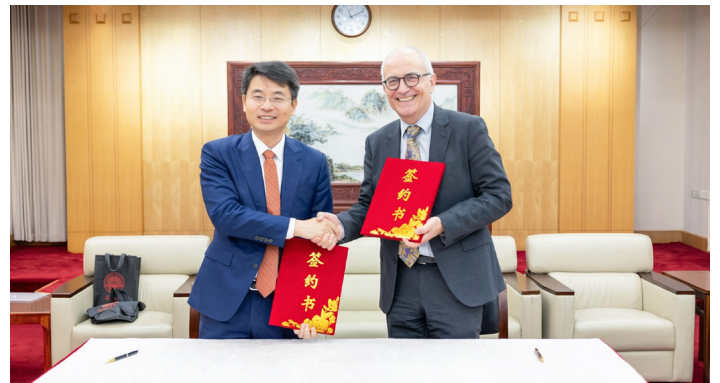
Apr 8

SOOCHOW UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with University of York, UK

苏州大学与英国约克大学签署合作意向书

Charlie Jeffery, vice-chancellor of the University of York, UK, led a delegation to visit Soochow University. The two sides jointly signed a letter of intent on the establishment of a Sino-foreign cooperative education institution between Soochow University and University of York on April 8. Zhang Qiao, president of Soochow University, said that the signing of the letter of intent to jointly build a Sino-foreign cooperative school, which takes the lead in launching applications for joint school-running programs in chemistry and business, marks a new leap in bilateral cooperation from project-level collaboration to institutional co-construction. He said both sides would further expand cooperation in faculty exchanges, joint scientific research, summer schools programs, and industry-university-research collaboration, and work together to build the joint school into a model of China-UK higher education cooperation.



Zhang Qiao (left), President of Soochow University and Charlie Jeffery, Vice-Chancellor of the University of York, UK after signing the agreement.

Apr 8

BEIHANG UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea

北京航空航天大学与韩国延世大学签署合作协议

Hong Jong-il, vice president of Yonsei University, Korea, visited Beihang University. Zhao Weisheng, Vice President of Beihang University, met with the guest on April 8. Following the talks, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation. Under the agreement, both parties will carry out cooperation in faculty and student exchanges, academic exchanges, and joint research programs.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES



Representatives from Beihang University and Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea after signing the agreement.

Apr 7

SOUTH CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Memorandum of Understanding signed with University of Western Australia

华南师范大学与西澳大学签署谅解备忘录

Jennifer Howell, vice chancellor of the University of Western Australia, led a delegation to visit South China Normal University on April 7. The two sides discussed the application for a Sino-foreign cooperative education institution and reached important consensus. Wang Chunchao, vice president of South China Normal University, and Jennifer Howell signed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of their respective universities, marking a new milestone in the cooperation between the two institutions.



The meeting on collaboration in session.

Apr 2

BEIJING INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Memorandum of Cooperation signed with University of Strathclyde, UK

北京理工大学与英国思克莱德大学签署合作备忘录

Beijing Institute of Technology and University of Strathclyde held an online meeting and signed an inter-university memorandum of understanding on April 2. Stephen McArthur, principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Strathclyde, said that the two universities share highly compatible educational philosophies. Facing rapid changes in the international landscape, the two universities have formally established a cooperative partnership on the basis of long-term exchanges, with the aim of jointly cultivating talents equipped with global vision and capable of meeting the needs of social development.

Apr 1

TIANJIN FOREIGN STUDIES UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with Pushkin State Russian Language Institute

天津外国语大学与俄罗斯国立普希金俄语学院签署合作协议

A delegation led by Elena Nikolayevna Pavlicheva, first vice-rector of the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, visited Tianjin Foreign Studies University recently. Li Yingying, secretary of the Party Committee and president of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, met with the guests. The two sides held talks on deepening cooperation and signed an inter-university cooperation agreement. The signing marks an important milestone in the development of cooperation between the two universities, laying a solid foundation for furthering China-Russia people-to-people and cultural exchanges and expanding educational cooperation between the two countries.



Representatives of Tianjin Foreign Studies University and the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute after signing the agreement.

Mar 26

SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY

Agreement signed with University of Reading, UK

上海外国语大学与英国雷丁大学签署合作备忘录

Caroline Baylon, vice president for global affairs of the University of Reading, UK, visited Shanghai International Studies University on March 26. Wu Lirui, deputy secretary of the Party Committee of Shanghai International Studies University, met with the delegation at the university's Hongkou Campus. The two sides discussed the foundation of cooperation, future areas for expansion, and the advancement of Sino-foreign cooperative education programs, reaching broad consensus on multiple issues. Following the talks, the two universities jointly signed a Memorandum of Understanding, officially opening a new chapter of inter-university cooperation.



Wu Lirui (right), Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Shanghai International Studies University, and Dr. Caroline Baylon, Vice President for Global Affairs of the University of Reading, UK after signing the agreement.

COMING EVENTS

May 18-21, 2026

NATE Russia conference, Samara, Russia

May 22-24, 2026

6th Psychology of Language Learning Conference, Shantou,
Guangdong, China

May 29-31, 2026

Africa ELTA 10th International Conference, Nairobi, Kenya

July 14-17, 2026

22nd BRAZ-TESOL International Conference, Vitória, Espírito
Santo, Brazil

July 23-26, 2026

9th Global English Education China Assembly, Beijing, China

August 24-25, 2026

16th AzETA International Conference, Baku, Azerbaijan

September 12-13, 2026

34th MELTA International Conference 2026, Ipoh, Malaysia

October 1-3, 2026

61st National and 7th International ASOCOPI Annual
Conference, Bucaramanga, Colombia

October 28 - November 8, 2026

China Annual Conference & Expo for International Education,
Beijing