

English Matsuri 2025 Celebrates Language and Culture at UTM MJIIT

Kuala Lumpur, May 17 – English Matsuri 2025 was held at Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIIT), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Kuala Lumpur on 17th May 2025. This programme was organized by the Software Engineering Society (SOFEA) of UTM MJIIT. The event was launched by Assoc. Prof. Ir. Ts. Dr. Nurulakmar binti Abu Husain, Dean of UTM MJIIT in Seminar Room 2 at Level 9, MJIIT building. Also in attendance were Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roshafima binti Rasit Ali, Deputy Dean (Academic and Student Affairs), UTM MJIIT; Vice President of SOFEA & Director of English Matsuri 2025, Wan Zafirzan bin Wan Tarmizan; Programme Advisor, Dr. Ahmad Faiz bin Mohammad; Representative Advisor of SOFEA, Dr. Zatul Alwani binti Shaffie; and several MJIIT lecturers including Dr. Liyana ‘Adilla binti Burhanuddin and Dr. Neo Chin Chea.

English Matsuri, where ‘Matsuri’ is a Japanese word for ‘festival’, celebrates a blend of Japanese elements embedded in Japanese-style engineering education at UTM MJIIT and the power and beauty of the English language, the main medium of communication used at UTM MJIIT. This event consisted of three contests; Public Speaking Contest and Spelling Bee Contest for university students, while the Storytelling Contest was for secondary school students. Total of 34 individuals from UTM, other universities such as Sunway University and Universiti Sains Malaysia, and schools in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, registered as contestants.



Opening of English Matsuri 2025 by Assoc. Prof. Ir. Ts. Dr. Nurulakmar, Dean of UTM MJIIT

The event kicked off with an official opening ceremony graced by Assoc. Prof. Ir. Ts. Dr. Nurulakmar binti Abu Husain, Dean of UTM MJIIT. The ceremony was emceed by Third-Year Chemical Process Engineer Student, Nur Sabrina binti Adam Aiman Ng, who

guided the programme with confidence and poise. It began with the singing of Malaysia's national anthem Negaraku, followed by an inspiring speech by the Dean. To mark the launch of English Matsuri 2025, a symbolic opening gimmick was carried out through the unveiling of a stand-up bunting poster, adding a touch of festivity to the occasion.



Launching of English Matsuri 2025, from left, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roshafima, Assoc. Prof. Ir. Ts. Dr. Nurulakmar, Dr. Ahmad Faiz, Dr. Zatul Alwani, Wan Zafirzan

The theme of the Public Speaking Contest was “Finding Strength in Imperfection”, inspired by Kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold. Through Kintsugi, flaws or imperfections are not hidden but highlighted, reminding us that our perceived flaws are in fact signs of resilience, strength, and growth. A total of 16 individuals participated in this contest, including enthusiastic students from UTM and other institutions. Some even travelled from as far as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang to take part.

Each speaker delivered a brilliant and heartfelt speech, offering personal interpretations of the theme that ranged from overcoming adversity to embracing self-worth. The depth, honesty, and creativity showcased by all participants made the contest a truly inspiring and memorable experience. The judges for this contest were Hesmondjeet Oon Chee Houng (Area P6 Director, Toastmasters International) and Cameron Lee Xiu Yi (Toastmasters International

Speech Contest Area B5 Champion in 2024 and 2025), both of whom brought their expertise and insights to evaluate the contestants.



Public Speaking Contestant during English Matsuri 2025

For the Storytelling Contest, the theme “*Written in the Winds*” was selected. Wind, a natural force known to be soft, mysterious, and unforgettable, signifies stories that are exclusive to an individual yet have not been shared or heard. This contest served as a platform for eight courageous contestants from secondary schools to share their stories and make their voices heard. They were evaluated by Afza Humairah Binti Hazarudin (Finalist, Storytelling Category – Malaysia-Politeknik English Festival 2019 & Champion, Storytelling Category – Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan English Language Festival 2020). After the contest ended, Afza gave her general evaluation and shared her insights with the audience; she applauded all contestants for having the courage to participate and encouraged them to keep writing and sharing their stories.



Storytelling Contestant during English Matsuri 2025

Lastly, the Spelling Bee Contest was held following the end of the Storytelling Contest in the same venue. A total of 10 participants competed to spell numerous words in up to 11 rounds. The objective of the contest was to see who could spell the most words correctly with limited preparation time. Moderated by a Third-Year of Mechanical Precision Engineering and Vice Director of English Matsuri 2025, Ahmad Affif bin Mohd Haizam, this contest aimed to test the vocabulary and pronunciation of this generation's university students, encourage reading and healthy competition, all the while uplifting the awareness that English can be learned at any moment. Each contestant was given a different word to spell and an opportunity to ask for a definition and example to use in a sentence. They could also choose to have a prep time of 10 seconds before spelling a given word. The contest ended climactically with two players reaching the same number of points. The two resolved the tie through an intense deathmatch where the first person to misspell would end up as the runner up and the other as the new champion.



Spelling Bee contestant (left), Ahmad Afif, and the Spelling Bee volunteers (right) during English Matsuri 2025.

After the contests ended, the judges for the Public Speaking Contest, Hesmondjeet and Cameron, were invited to the stage to give their overall evaluation. Both judges praised the bravery of each public speaking contestant and the authenticity of their delivery. They gave a few general tips for improvement and encouraged all contestants to continue speaking and improving themselves.



Judges Evaluation. From Left to Right, Afza Humairah, Hesmondjeet Oon Chee Houng, Cameron Lee Xiu Yi

The programme proceeded to the closing ceremony where Wan Zafirzan gave his closing speech, thanking all participants and all attendees for their willingness to come to UTM KL for this event. He expressed his utmost gratitude to the organizing committee and volunteers for their unwavering support, time, and dedication in making this event successful. Lastly, the winners for the three contests were announced to receive their prizes presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roshafima. The list of the winners is as follows:



Public Speaking Contest

The Public Speaking Contest concluded with powerful and thought-provoking speeches that impressed both the audience and judges. After careful deliberation, the winners were announced as follows:

- **1st Place (RM 200 + Medal + Certificate):**
Abdullah Saud Fatmi – Perfect Imperfection
- **2nd Place (RM 150 + Medal + Certificate):**
Manuel Jelian Anak Masam – Penang Old Town
- **3rd Place (RM 100 + Medal + Certificate):**
Tushar – Fractured in Gold
- **Consolation Prize (RM 50 + Certificate):**
Goo Zi Keane – The Smile That Will Be Missed
- **Consolation Prize (RM 50 + Certificate):**
Tanjim Shadman Saad – Cracks in the Gold



Storytelling Contest

The Storytelling Contest featured captivating performances by talented secondary school students, each bringing their story to life with creativity and confidence. The winners are as follows:

- **1st Place (RM 200 + Medal + Certificate):**
Wan Nur Zafirazan
- **2nd Place (RM 150 + Medal + Certificate):**
Mukatdeep Singh
- **3rd Place (RM 100 + Medal + Certificate):**
Sidharth a/l Prabagaran
- **Consolation Prize (RM 50 + Certificate):**
Dhia Rania Fatini
- **Consolation Prize (RM 50 + Certificate):**
Iman Nur Aisyah

Gifts of Appreciation were also presented to:

- **Nur Keisha Khayla**
- **Hannan Fayha Iman**



Spelling Bee Contest

The Spelling Bee Contest saw intense competition, quick thinking, and impressive vocabulary mastery from all participants. After several challenging rounds, the winners were announced as follows:

- **1st Place (RM 60 + Medal + Winner's Certificate):**
Muhammad Abdullah
- **2nd Place (RM 50 + Medal + First Runner Up Certificate):**
Muhammad Nabil Danish
- **3rd Place (RM 40 + Medal + Second Runner Up Certificate):**
Tushar
- **Consolation Prizes (Hamper + Certificate):**
Muhammad Afif

- Consolation Prizes (Hamper + Certificate):
Faiyaz Ahmad



Closing Ceremony marking the end of English Matsuri 2025

As English Matsuri 2025 came to a close, the energy in the room remained vibrant during the Closing and Prize-Giving Ceremony. Special thanks were extended to the organizing team

from the Software Engineering Society (SOFEA), whose dedication and teamwork made the event possible, as well as to the volunteers from across UTMKU.

The event proudly welcomed secondary school students from across the Klang Valley and university participants from institutions beyond UTM. Their enthusiastic participation brought diversity and depth to the contests, making the event a true celebration of language and connection.

English Matsuri 2025 successfully blended the spirit of cultural appreciation with the power of self-expression. It served as a meaningful platform for youth to share their voices, challenge their fears, and connect through the beauty of the English language. With such an inspiring turnout and support, we look forward to future editions that continue to celebrate learning, diversity, and unity.

Written by Wan Zafirzan Wan Tarmizan, Ahmad Afif Mohd Haizam and Ahmad Faiz Mohammad