

EDITORIAL BOARD SPECIAL SECTION [GUEST EDITORS]

Applied Linguistics for Global Challenges: Sustainability, Inclusion and Innovation

Language is central to the ways societies respond to change. Whether addressing technological disruption, educational transformation, intercultural engagement, or questions of equity and sustainability, applied linguistics continues to offer important perspectives on how language both reflects and shapes contemporary realities. It was against this backdrop that the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics International Conference 2025 (MAALIC 2025), themed Applied Linguistics for Global Challenges: Sustainability, Inclusion and Innovation, brought together researchers and practitioners from across the region and beyond to exchange ideas, present new research, and explore emerging directions in the field.

This Special Section of *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature® The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* presents five peer-reviewed papers selected from MAALIC 2025. Although diverse in their topics, theoretical perspectives, and research contexts, the contributions share a common interest in understanding how language operates within rapidly changing social, educational, and technological environments. Together, they demonstrate the breadth of contemporary applied linguistics and its continuing relevance to issues that extend well beyond language classrooms.

The collection is anchored by three closely connected themes. Sustainability is reflected in work that considers language as a resource for supporting resilient educational practices, preserving linguistic diversity, and promoting socially responsible communication. Inclusion draws attention to multilingualism, intercultural understanding, equitable language practices, and the diverse voices that shape educational and social participation. Innovation highlights the opportunities and challenges associated with artificial intelligence, digital communication, and evolving approaches to language teaching, learning, and research. Rather than existing as separate strands, these themes intersect throughout the articles, illustrating the increasingly interdisciplinary character of applied linguistics.

The papers approach these themes from a range of perspectives. They explore how gender identities are constructed through sports commentary in the Philippine context, examine the emerging relationship between human creativity and artificial intelligence in Malaysian creative writing education, and synthesise current knowledge on the development of Malaysian Standard English borrowed words in social media. The collection also investigates intercultural miscommunication among postgraduate students participating in an academic mobility programme in Indonesia and proposes a comparative typology of avoidance language in policy-driven and culture-driven professional communication. Collectively, the studies show how language mediates identity, communication, technology, and professional practice across different cultural and institutional settings.

Viewed together, these contributions reaffirm that applied linguistics is not confined to the analysis of language itself. Instead, it provides a valuable framework for examining wider social change and for informing educational practice, language policy, intercultural communication, and professional discourse. The studies featured here demonstrate how carefully grounded language research can contribute to more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable communities while opening new avenues for future inquiry.

This Special Section also represents the sustained collaboration between the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL) and 3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature® in supporting high-quality scholarship and fostering regional and international academic exchange. We hope the articles in this collection will encourage further dialogue, inspire new collaborations, and contribute to ongoing conversations about the role of applied linguistics in responding to the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing world.

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