

**Call for Papers**

**Special Issue Title**

Ecologies of English in Southeast Asia: Rethinking Where and How Language Learning Happens

**Guest Editor(s) Information**

Daron Benjamin Loo\*1 and Chang Siew Lee2

Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

\*Corresponding guest editor: daronloo@ums.edu.my

1Daron Benjamin Loo received his PhD in Applied Linguistics from King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand. He has taught English, applied linguistics, and TESOL in Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. At his current affiliation, Daron teaches English for academic communication to undergraduate students. He also supervises doctoral research examining the intersection of society and language, which aligns closely with his own research projects. Over the last few years, Daron had conducted research on the needs and potential impact of English academic literacy and communication courses in a few Southeast Asian contexts. His findings had led to the publication of research and think-pieces calling for an evaluation of how EAP is conceived in the educational realm, especially in settings where English does not hold a dominant position.

2Chang Siew Lee is a language instructor at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. She teaches various English courses for undergraduate students, including English for academic and occupational purposes, oral communication, and reading and writing skills. She began her career as a secondary school English teacher from 2008 to 2011 before moving into the higher education sector. She holds a Master of Education (TESOL) from Universiti Sains Malaysia and is currently completing her Ph.D. in the same institution, researching the impact of e-portfolios on students’ oral communication skills. Her doctoral research has led to the publication of a literature analysis paper in *Journal of Computing for Higher Education* (Scopus Q1) and an upcoming edited volume, in which she also authored three chapters. Her current work focuses on English language teaching, applied linguistics, and educational technology.

**Rationale and Significance**

In some Southeast Asian contexts where English is taught as a foreign or academic language, opportunities for use and practice may be confined only to English lessons. For instance, in Thailand, many public secondary schools have about five English lessons a week, with each lasting about 50 minutes (Lee et al., 2023). Meanwhile, at the university, Thai students may need to complete a few general academic English courses that focus on specific language knowledge or skills such as grammar (Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021) or speaking and listening (Samaranayake, 2023). In the region, there are also other settings where English holds a dominant position, such as in Singapore and arguably, in Malaysia. In these countries, the teaching of English is not focused on form or accurate language use per se; rather, it is taught as an academic literacy tool to support students in their wider academic and professional pursuits (Bai et al., 2022; Oh et al., 2022).

Depending on the context of schooling and the wider sociolinguistic environment, the learning of English may be distinct and varied. This situation becomes more complex when English does not hold a dominant or practical status. In this environment, students may not see the value in developing their English language proficiency. This would pose as a challenge for teachers and practitioners who would need to attend to the peculiar language needs of their students and at the same time, meet the expectations of the institutions and reckon with the language realities of the broader context.

Against this backdrop, this special issue aims to examine the environment beyond the institution as an ecology for English language learning, with a focus on the Southeast Asian region. Taking on an ecological perspective can reveal teaching and learning affordances made available to both students and teachers. The ecological perspective also assumes that students encounter various serendipitous and informal opportunities for language learning. Moreover, this may help students view learning as a socialization process, where they become familiar and adapt novel strategies to be effective language users for academic or even social purposes. Language learning in an ecological sense is thus no longer seen as a possibility that takes place in a formal setting; instead, it can be initiated and sustained in informal spaces and the wider environment, including students’ day-to-day routine. Social entities and materials that students encounter would also have the propensity to initiate and shape learning. With these considerations, teachers and practitioners would need to reconfigure their approach to their students, especially in terms of supporting what students learn on their own beyond the classroom (Hawley, 2022).

This special issue seeks to unpack a growing movement in English language education that acknowledges the significance of localized, situated, and emergent meaning-making within the ecology of K-12 and university students in the Southeast Asian context. Contributions that highlight how learning is supported or how it takes place from an ecological point of view are welcome. Papers should identify and examine the structures found within students’ broader environment that shape their learning, with ample consideration of the status of the English language. This calls for learning to be made visible, so as to highlight hidden or even imbalanced structures that shape the use, teaching practice, and dispositions towards the English language (Atkinson et al., 2018). Investigating how students respond to these structures would shed light on sociocultural perspectives on learning (and teaching) of English, as well as provide insights into students’ engagement with informal learning (Darvin, 2023). Contributions should also detail the complexity of teaching and learning that takes place in and beyond the classroom. This would lend as evidence and support for English language teachers’ and practitioners’ pedagogical decisions, especially those made in light of contextual factors.

Interested contributors should submit a 500-word proposal that contains the significance of the study, the research aims / questions, the methodology and analytical approach, as well as potential implications. When preparing the proposal, please observe these requirements:

1. A title not exceeding 15 words
2. Authors’ names, their affiliation, and email addresses
3. The proposal should use 12-point Times New Roman and is single-spaced.
4. Proposals may include some key references. Please use the APA 7th edition format.
5. A short biographical note about each author (no longer than 100 words)

Proposals should be emailed to daronloo@ums.edu.my before or by 15 September 2025. Other important dates may be referred to in the timeline provided below.

**Bibliography**

Atkinson, D., Churchill, E., Nishino, T., & Okada, H. (2018). Language learning great and small: Environmental support structures and learning opportunities in a sociocognitive approach to second language acquisition/teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, *102*(3), 471–493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12496>

Bai, B., Nie, Y., & Lee, A. N. (2022). Academic self-efficacy, task importance and interest: relations with English language learning in an Asian context. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *43*(5), 438–451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1746317>

Boonraksa, T., & Naisena, S. (2022). A study on English collocation errors of Thai EFL students. *English Language Teaching*, *15*(1), 164–177. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n1p164>

Darvin, R. (2023). Sociotechnical structures, materialist semiotics, and online language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, *27*(2), 28–45. <https://www.lltjournal.org/item/1054/>

Hawley, S. (2022). Doing sociomaterial studies: The circuit of agency. *Learning, Media and Technology*, *47*(4), 413–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2021.1986064>

Hofstadler, N., Babic, S., Lämmerer, A., Mercer, S., & Oberdorfer, P. (2021). The ecology of CLIL teachers in Austria – an ecological perspective on CLIL teachers’ wellbeing. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *15*(3), 218–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2020.1739050>

Lee, T. Y., Ho, Y. C., & Chen, C. H. (2023). Integrating intercultural communicative competence into an online EFL classroom: An empirical study of a secondary school in Thailand. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00174-1>

Oh, C. M., Krish, P., & Hamat, A. (2022). Reading on smartphones: Students’ habits and implications for reading skills. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning Electronic Journal*, *23*(1), 259–277. <https://callej.org/index.php/journal/article/view/380>

Samaranayake, S. (2023). Can TED talks help improve undergraduate non-English major Thai EFL students’ listening and speaking competencies? *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Asia*, 35–53. <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/psujssh/article/view/258617>

Zheng, Y., Ortega, L., Pekarek Doehler, S., Sasaki, M., Eskildsen, S. W., & Gao, X. (2025). Praxeology, humanism, equity, and mixed methods: Four pillars for advancing second language acquisition and teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, *109*(S1), 64–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12977>

**Objectives and Focus**

The key objectives of this special issue are:

1. To examine educational environments as ecologies for English language learning
2. To illuminate the localized nature of English language learning among K-12 and university students
3. To inform pedagogical decisions in light of contextual realities

**Potential Topics**

1. Student affordances for learning in an ecological sense
2. Incidental learning of the English language
3. Teacher or practitioner support for incidental learning or learning through the broader environment
4. Sociocultural influences on informal learning

**Target Audience**

This special issue would benefit English language teachers and practitioners in K-12 and higher education settings. The papers would provide an avenue to them to highlight the complexity of teaching English. Pre-service teachers and teacher educators would also find value in the articles, as they would offer contextualized accounts of how the English language is being positioned, taught, and learned, especially in contexts where the language may not hold a dominant status.

**Expected Contributions (Check** [**here**](https://www.tesolcommunications.com/call_for_papers/) **for description of contribution types)**

* Research articles
* Voices from the classroom
* Teacher-expert dialogues

**Timeline**

A proposed schedule for the special issue, including:

* Call for papers announcement: August 11, 2025
* Submission of proposal deadline: September 15, 2025
* Announcement of acceptance for proposals: By October 15, 2025
* Submission of manuscript deadline: Until March 31, 2026
* Peer review and revision timeline: April to July 2026
* Final editing and checking: August 2026
* Final decision and publication schedule: September 2026

**Peer Review and Editorial Process**

The guest editor will carry out a double-blind review process, as per the guidelines of TESOL Communications. Manuscripts will be de-identified and reviewers would be kept anonymous from the author(s). Manuscripts will be assigned to two reviewers based on their areas of expertise. Reviewers’ feedback will then be shared anonymously with authors for revision. A third reviewer may be engaged should there be a need.

The review process may be repeated until the manuscript is revised to an acceptable form. Once the review and revision process have been completed, the guest editors will do a final check and make minor-edits. Proofs will then be shared with the author(s) before publication.

Submissions that address the scope and objectives of the special issue will be sent for peer review. Submissions that do not fall within the scope of the theme of the special issue will be rejected. Manuscripts that are not formatted accordingly, or are weak in terms of argument, methodology, and analysis will also be rejected. Manuscripts that are peer reviewed but not revised accordingly will also rejected.

To ensure relevant work is submitted, the Call for Papers clearly articulates the scope and objectives so that authors interested to submit would align their research work accordingly. The bibliography included in the Call will also provide the authors with an idea as to how their papers should be conceptualized. Moreover, for manuscripts that are reviewed, explicit feedback will be provided to indicate how improvements can be made.