

Note from the Editor

The Editorial Committee of the *Journal of Studies in the English Language* (JSEL) is pleased to present the second issue of Volume 18 (July–December 2023). This issue is comprised of six papers from distinguished scholars working in China, Thailand, the UK, and Singapore. The papers cover a range of topics and paper types, including discussions about the role of humanistic approaches to English language teaching, the challenges of being an international student in Thailand, strategies for dealing with post-truthism in the classroom, the representation of environmental news discourse, and the affordances of technology in language learning.

Our first paper is an invited discussion piece from Michael Byram, Professor Emeritus, University of Durham, United Kingdom. An esteemed scholar in the realm of intercultural communication, Professor Byram makes a thought-provoking argument in this article, where he advocates for a change in thinking concerning the purpose of language teaching, one that considers the importance of humanistic goals alongside instrumental ones. Drawing from international policy documents, he highlights the growing recognition of such a perspective, and illustrates how this can be achieved through a tangible example of a teaching project developed amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Professor Byram's discussion illustrates how humanistic purposes can be brought into the fold by utilizing three pedagogies: discomfort, arts-based, and intercultural competence. Overall, the article raises crucial questions about universal values, suggesting that cultivating "critical cultural awareness" might be a key stance for language teachers to assume. As Professor Byram claims, if embraced, this argument could reshape pedagogy, redefine professional identity, and inspire further educational experimentation.

Our second paper in this issue is authored by Tanrada Lertlaksanaporn of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. By delving into the heart of the modern American wedding industry, and drawing on a feminist perspective, the author critically examines the cultural phenomenon of American weddings in Celia Laskey's poignant work, *So Happy for You*. Building upon previous studies, the author scrutinizes the wedding industrial complex's influence on American beliefs, exposing its role in perpetuating capitalist, heterosexist, and racist narratives. From familial pressures to internet matching, the paper unveils factors entrenching traditional roles and societal fantasies, leading to adverse effects on mental and physical health, intimacy, and marital compatibility. The findings underscore the urgent need for a critical reevaluation of the complex's values, urging society to confront the far-reaching consequences of unabated wedding celebrations.

The third paper is authored by a team of scholars consisting of Xinrui Wang, an international PhD student at Thammasat University, Fei Zhao from Dhurakij Pundit University, and Chuanchi Chang from Dhurakij Pundit University. In their research article, the authors explore how the globalization of higher education continues to reshape academic landscapes, with a focus on the influx of Chinese students into Thai universities. In this enlightening mixed-methods study, which highlights challenges related to intercultural communication, the researchers delve into the intricacies of Chinese undergraduates' intercultural sensitivity while studying in a prominent Thai university. Following an analysis of data from online questionnaires and reflective writings, their findings revealed how their sampled students exhibited open-mindedness and empathy, but also displayed a notable gap in confidence and a tendency for quick judgments. The implications of this paper extend beyond the academic realm and offer valuable insights for educators and administrators seeking to enhance the international student experience.

Our fourth paper is authored by Yi Sang, a recently graduated postgraduate from University College London. In this qualitative-based interview paper, Yi Sang delves into the relatively uncharted territory of language education and post-truthism as it relates to higher education in the UK. Focusing on the often-overlooked intersection of free expression and critical thinking in language teaching, the study sets forth the perspectives of two in-service English language teachers in UK universities. The findings highlight the crucial role of educators in guiding students through the complexities of truths and perspectives. The findings also underscore the significance of fostering critical thinking skills while navigating a delicate balance between evaluating information and respecting diverse viewpoints. Overall, this valuable piece of research not only sheds light on practical strategies employed by UK university English language teachers, but also further highlights the need to explore the evolving landscape of English language education in a post-truth era.

The fifth paper in this issue is from Lishi Zhang, Graduate School of the Human Sciences at Assumption University, Thailand and College of Foreign Languages at Yunnan Agricultural University, P. R. China, and Andy Jocuns, MA TESL Program of Wenzhou-Kean University. This important study employs multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to unravel the nuanced ways English-language news agencies shape perceptions of environmental issues. The authors explore how Western and Asian-targeted media outlets can influence their readers' views on environmental responsibility and awareness through nuanced choices in lexis, grammar, and image composition. Drawing on eight news items from *China Daily*, *Thai PBS*, *the Guardian*, and *NBC*, the authors highlight a shared tendency to suppress agents responsible for environmental issues, which mitigates human responsibility. Overall, the study underscores the potential for language and imagery to craft ideological narratives, which has far-reaching implications for corporate media's impact on environmental discourse and public perceptions.

Our final paper is authored by Willy Renandaya, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Francisca Maria Ivone, State University of Malang, and Maria Hidayati, State University of Malang, this insightful and practical paper puts the spotlight on the transformative role of technology in advancing second language (L2) learning, with a focus on propelling L2 proficiency. Drawing on educational research and English Language Teaching (ELT) practices, the authors explore the multifaceted ways technology has reshaped (and is reshaping) language education. While acknowledging the advantages of tech-enhanced learning, it also raises a crucial question for ELT professionals: can reliance on these benefits alone truly enhance language proficiency? Concluding with a call to engage students actively in their English language learning process, the article contributes valuable insights to the evolving landscape of technology-driven education.

Neil Bowen
Editor-in-Chief