

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Journal of Studies in the English Language | Volume 21, Issue 2 (2026)

Welcome to Volume 21, Issue 2 of the Journal of Studies in the English Language. These are busy times at *jSEL*. Since our inclusion in Scopus, the number of submissions we receive has increased exponentially. This growing interest is encouraging, but it also brings a greater responsibility to select work that makes a clear contribution to English language studies. The five articles in this issue approach that task from different directions, addressing listening, specialised vocabulary, doctoral assessment, academic writing, and literary reading. What connects them is an interest in questions that matter beyond the immediate study: how learners respond to unfamiliar Englishes, what professional texts require of readers, what counts as doctoral quality, and how we recognise and support meaningful language learning. I am grateful to the authors, reviewers, and editorial team for the time and care they have given to this issue. Their work allows us to maintain the standards on which the journal's growing reputation depends.

The issue opens with “‘I Decided to Be a BRAVE English Speaker’: A Case Study of Learner Responses to a Global Englishes-informed Listening Curriculum Intervention,” by Calum To of Nara Women's University, Japan, and Heath Rose of the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. Their contribution lies in showing why the value of a listening intervention cannot be understood through test scores alone. Following two Chinese professionals through four weeks of instruction, they document reported gains in confidence and changes in listening strategies despite limited measurable improvement. Particularly useful is the attention to contradictions: greater acceptance of one's own English did not necessarily bring greater acceptance of accent diversity in teaching materials. The study therefore adds nuance to discussions of Global Englishes pedagogy. Exposure is not a straightforward route to changed attitudes. For teachers, the implication is to connect accent work with learners' communicative needs and explicit reflection on language beliefs, while taking their accounts of classroom learning seriously.

Tharin Pitakpong of Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University under the Royal Patronage, Supakorn Phoocharoensil of Thammasat University, and Piyapong Laosrirattanachai of Kasetsart University, Thailand, contribute “Developing a Corpus-Based Immigration Keyword and Key Cluster List for ESP Settings.” Drawing on 1,670 official immigration forms, they develop a resource of 589 words and two-word clusters for a professional domain that has received limited attention in specialised vocabulary research. Its value extends beyond identifying unfamiliar terminology. The analysis shows how apparently familiar words acquire

narrower institutional meanings, and how combinations such as “residence permit” carry knowledge that isolated vocabulary items cannot adequately capture. The study also offers a methodological example by combining statistical selection with glossary checks and expert judgement, then testing coverage on forms excluded from list development. For ESP teachers and materials writers, it provides a grounded starting point for instruction using authentic documents. Importantly, the list is presented as part of a broader approach to reading immigration forms, not a substitute for it.

The third article, “Examiners’ Perspectives on Assessment Criteria for Doctoral Dissertations and Oral Examinations in English Language Education in Thailand,” addresses expectations that doctoral candidates are too often left to infer. Dumrong Adunyarittigun, Michael Byram, Kamonrat Sriharuksa, Kriangkrai Vathanalaoha, and Jiraporn Phornprapha, representing Thammasat University, Thailand, and Durham University, United Kingdom, compare examiners’ accounts with institutional assessment documents. Survey responses from 71 academics, interviews with 19 examiners, and documents from eight institutions reveal a gap between formal criteria and the judgements through which doctoral quality is recognised. The contribution is to make that gap visible, particularly the expectation that a defensible argument should run throughout a dissertation rather than appear only in its discussion. The attention to originality as a contribution with practical relevance also clarifies how disciplinary expectations take shape. For supervisors and programme leaders, the paper offers a basis for explaining standards earlier and more explicitly, so candidates can prepare for assessment without having to guess what matters.

In “Lexical Richness and Academic Writing Performance in a Thai University Academic English Test,” Zixuan Hu, Chawin Srisawat, and Kornwipa Poonpon of Khon Kaen University, Thailand, offer a useful corrective to simple equations between sophisticated vocabulary and strong writing. Their analysis of 103 argumentative essays separates the contribution of lexical features from that of text length. Longer essays received higher scores, but lexical diversity retained a small independent association after length was controlled. Other indicators, including academic word proportion and lexical density, did not. The methodological contribution matters here: conclusions about vocabulary and writing quality can change according to the measures selected and whether researchers account for how much candidates write. For teachers, the findings support attention to vocabulary variety alongside the development of ideas, rather than treating academic word use as an end in itself. For assessment, they encourage a proportionate place for vocabulary within a broader judgement of writing, without mistaking either longer texts or more elaborate wording for quality in themselves.

The issue closes with Yasir Hazim Qasim of the Directorate of Education of Basrah Governorate, Ministry of Education, Iraq, and his conceptual article, “Toward AI-Scaffolded Pedagogical Stylistics: A Conceptual Framework for Bridging the Language–Literature Divide in L2 English.” Qasim redirects the discussion of generative AI from the interpretations it can produce to the reading it might help learners do for themselves. His framework positions AI as a source of questions about linguistic choices and literary effects, with support gradually withdrawn as learners become more independent. The central distinction is between scaffolding interpretation and supplying it. This gives the article both a pedagogical purpose and a researchable claim: the value of assistance should be judged partly by what learners can subsequently notice and explain without the tool. The proposed coding framework and testable propositions offer ways to investigate that claim. This is a proposal awaiting empirical evaluation, but it provides a clear starting point for work that keeps learners’ interpretive agency, rather than AI output, at its centre.

Neil Bowen
Editor-in-Chief