

Editorial



<https://doi.org/10.52696/TNZC8871>

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The Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

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Contemporary Insights into English Language Learning and Teaching

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The articles featured in this issue of *The English Teacher* collectively reflect the evolving landscape of English language education in Asia, where technological advancement, learner psychology, classroom interaction and communication skills increasingly intersect. Spanning contexts from Malaysian primary and tertiary education to Japanese university classrooms, the studies provide valuable insights into how learners develop confidence, competence, and communicative effectiveness in contemporary educational environments.

A common thread running through this issue is the recognition that language learning extends beyond linguistic knowledge alone. Effective communication depends on a range of cognitive, social, emotional, technological and interpersonal factors. Whether the focus is speaking self-efficacy, technology-enhanced learning, artificial intelligence or nonverbal communication, the studies collectively emphasize the importance of creating supportive learning environments that empower learners to communicate confidently and meaningfully.

The opening article, *Determinants of Speaking Self-Efficacy Among Independent English Users in Japan*, investigates the relationships among reflective instructor feedback, classroom community, evaluation-related fears, and speaking self-efficacy among Japanese university learners of English. Using structural equation modelling, the study demonstrates the significant role of classroom community in fostering learners' speaking confidence. The findings suggest that instructor-supported reflections contribute to stronger classroom communities, which in turn positively influence learners' self-efficacy. Importantly, the research highlights that language learning is not merely an individual cognitive activity, but also a deeply social process shaped by relationships, support systems and classroom interactions.

The second article, *Primary Students and English Learning: Issues, Obstacles, and Innovative Solutions*, examines challenges faced by primary school learners in Malaysia from the perspectives of 252 English language teachers from a district in Perak. Their findings reveal

persistent concerns related to limited language exposure, low motivation, and unequal access to technological resources. While teachers generally view technology as a valuable tool for increasing learner engagement, the study underscores the continuing challenges associated with infrastructure and digital readiness. By proposing innovative approaches such as gamification and AI-assisted learning tools, the authors offer practical recommendations for strengthening English language learning at the foundational stages of education.

The third article, *University Students' Perception of AI Usage for the Development of English Writing Skills*, addresses one of the most pressing issues in higher education today - the growing presence of artificial intelligence in academic writing. Surveying 208 university students, the study reveals generally positive attitudes toward AI tools for improving grammar, vocabulary, idea generation and writing confidence. At the same time, students expressed concerns regarding overreliance, originality, plagiarism, and the possible erosion of critical thinking skills. The article makes a timely contribution to ongoing discussions surrounding the responsible use of AI in education and highlights the need to balance technological innovation with the development of independent writing abilities and ethical academic practices.

The fourth article, *Students' Perceptions of Nonverbal Communication in Oral Presentations: Kinesics and Vocalics*, broadens our understanding of communicative competence by exploring the role of nonverbal communication in oral presentations. Focusing on undergraduate engineering students in Malaysia, the study investigates students' perceptions of kinesics and vocalics, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, tone, pitch, and volume. The findings indicate that students are generally aware of the importance of nonverbal communication and frequently use gestures and vocal variation to enhance message delivery. At the same time, challenges such as limited eye contact, nervousness, and insufficient awareness of effective nonverbal strategies remain evident. This study serves as a useful reminder that successful communication relies not only on what learners say but also on how they say it.

The issue concludes with a timely book review of *AI in Language Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Pan, 2024). The reviewers provide a thoughtful examination of this edited volume, which explores the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating artificial intelligence into language education. Covering topics ranging from AI-assisted lesson planning and assessment design to ethical considerations and academic integrity, the book presents practical classroom applications alongside broader pedagogical and institutional perspectives. Particularly valuable is its emphasis on responsible AI use, personalised learning, and the development of critical digital literacy. While acknowledging concerns related to learner dependence and motivation, the review concludes that the volume offers a comprehensive and accessible guide for educators seeking to navigate the rapidly evolving role of artificial intelligence in language teaching, learning and assessment.

Taken together, the five contributions in this issue reveal several significant developments shaping contemporary English language education. First, learner confidence and communicative competence remain fundamental to successful language learning, whether in speaking, writing or oral presentation contexts. Second, technological innovation, particularly artificial intelligence, is increasingly influencing classroom practice, creating both opportunities and challenges for teaching and assessment. Third, the studies reinforce the continuing importance of supportive learning environments, classroom communities and

meaningful human interaction in fostering language development. Finally, the issue highlights the need to prepare learners not only with language proficiency but also with the critical thinking, ethical awareness, digital literacy and communication skills necessary for the twenty-first century.

As educators and researchers navigate an era marked by rapid technological advancement and changing educational demands, the contributions in this issue remind us that effective language learning remains rooted in meaningful human engagement. Technology may facilitate learning, but learner success ultimately depends on confidence, community, communication and critical thinking. We hope that the studies presented in this issue will inspire further research, generate productive discussion, and inform innovative classroom practices across diverse educational settings.

On behalf of the editorial team, I extend our sincere gratitude to the authors, reviewers and readers, whose commitment continues to advance scholarship and practice in English language education. We are pleased to present this issue and trust that it will provide valuable insights for researchers, educators and practitioners alike.

Happy reading!

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