

Guest Editorial: *The Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)*

## Current issues in English language education: Perspectives, directions, and innovations

Handoyo Puji Widodo

Michelle Picard

John Macalister

Angel M. Y. Lin

### Rationale behind the themed issue of the *IJAL*

In the past seven years, since the first publication of the *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)*, there has been an upsurge of publications by Indonesian authors on all topics related to English Language Education. The journal has had an impact on ELT in Indonesia and beyond. This is indicated by its extremely high citation rate on *Google Scholar*. It also has a comparatively high *Scopus* citation rate for a Humanities and Social Sciences journal (Lukman, Rianto, Hakim, Nadhiroh, & Hidayat, 2018). Indonesian scholars in ELT have comprehensively described their unique context and challenges and provided solutions relevant to ELT from primary level to high school, higher education and vocational education. There have also been a number of innovations from interesting local ways of using educational technologies to bringing local contexts into the classroom and interacting in effective ways with local communities. However, Indonesian ELT scholarship has not only had a local focus. Instead, as described by sociologist Roland Robertson, there has been a “glocalization” or a “co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies” (1995, p.16).

*IJAL* has also attracted a broader range of Asian scholars with authors from a range of Asian countries regularly contributing to the journal. In order to capture this growing body of literature, this 2018 themed edition of the *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)* aims to capture the current perspectives and innovations in ELT in the Indonesian and broader Asian context as well as to predict future directions. Thus, the articles collected in this themed issue represent a diverse array of language education studies in Indonesian and Asian contexts. These studies reflect an uneven but encouraging response to some of the current trends in international education research. The studies as has become common in *IJAL*, although having a high percentage of Indonesian scholars, represents a broad range of countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Thailand, Japan, and Turkey.

### Trends in innovation in EFL

John Donne famously wrote that “no man is an island.” In today’s connected world, we might perhaps play with Donne’s line a little and suggest that “no island is an island.” In other words, no matter where we live, it is not possible to build walls and keep the world out, to ignore the emergence from elsewhere of new ideas and new trends. The contributions to this themed issue certainly demonstrate that Indonesia, a nation of thousands of islands, is connected in many ways to global innovations in English language education. At times, the connection is through physical mobility (Rasman), but usually it is the mobility of ideas.

The core business of applied linguistics has traditionally been second language acquisition, typically operationalized through language teaching and the associated field of testing and assessment. In the past couple of decades, the ‘social turn’ has influenced applied linguistics research, both in its traditional core and through a new focus on language-related problems in society. While language education has been the traditional heart of applied linguistics, it is not a static field immune from new developments. A major challenge is understanding how language education can benefit from technological innovations in the wider society. It is not a case of simply using the latest technology, but of understanding how it can be incorporated into the classroom so that learning outcomes are achieved more effectively than they are now. In this themed issue, we can find a number of teacher-researchers exploring aspects of this issue (Ferdiansyah; Yanto & Nugraha; Putri; Tungka; Rodliyah). Indeed, the number of articles considering technological innovation in this issue suggests that this is a major trend in EFL today.

Of particular interest is the emergence of innovative assessment studies. For example, the study by Sun Shuguang and Wen Qiufang on teacher-student collaborative assessment in integrated language classrooms and studies featuring the dynamic use of multiple linguistic and multimodal resources in encouraging students to

engage in entextualizing real-life experience using digital storytelling and collaborative project-based language pedagogies demonstrate this type of innovation. Reni Puspitasari Dwi Lestariyana and Handoyo Puji Widodo's study on engaging young learners of English with digital stories; Sandi Ferdiansyah's study on collaborative storytelling using digital photography; Gusti Agung Paramitha Eka Putri's study on critical environmental education in tertiary English language teaching using collaborative digital storytelling are all exemplars of innovation in assessment. These studies are akin to the latest developments in translanguaging (see Li & Ho, 2018) and trans-semiotizing research (see Lin, 2018) in the larger field of language education and applied linguistics.

A related endeavor is understanding and applying the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to English language learning achievement; what began in the European Union at the start of the twenty-first century is now influencing curriculum and coursebook design in many parts of the world, as two reports from Malaysia make clear (Abdul Aziz, Ab Rasid & Zainudin; Sidhu, Kaur & Chi). Another issue that has relatively recently been attracting attention globally is the teaching of young learners (Gunawan). Some governments have adopted policies that support teaching English to young learners, and while this is controversial and not always supported by researchers, the reality is that if teachers are required to do so, they need to do it as well as they can.

The trends in innovation mentioned above are, as stated earlier, the traditional heart of applied linguistics. But innovations resulting from the 'social turn' are also well-represented here. These include questions of identity (Wirza), and of intercultural awareness (Parlindungan, Rifai & Safriani); there is recognition that learners are part of and influenced by factors beyond the classroom (Aditomo & Hasugian), and that they bring multiple linguistic resources to the classroom (Paramesvaran & Lim).

The studies focusing on learner identities, cultural discourse, and (lack of) cultural diversity in textbooks (e.g., Firman Parlindungan, Irfan Rifai, Afida Safriani's study on the representation of Indonesian cultural diversity in middle school English textbooks) also show an emerging inclination towards key trends in contemporary language education studies. This is particularly pertinent in those focusing on culturally responsive pedagogies via dynamic translanguaging processes of learners and teachers rather than on the teaching of static linguistic systems as codified in textbooks (e.g., Infante & Licona, 2018).

### **Future directions**

The studies represented in this themed edition of *IJAL* reflect the diversity and richness of Indonesian and Asian ELT scholarship. They suggest that ELT scholars in Indonesia are not only part of global innovations in the core business of language acquisition, testing and assessment, the 'social turn' of applied linguistics, and the use of instructional technologies, but also a leader in these fields. We hope that language teacher educators, practitioners, and researchers can investigate more language education-related issues using different research approaches, methods, and designs in order to look into what innovations have been made in the field.

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