



St Andrews Journal of International and Language Education Forum:

Our Voices

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Abstract

This editorial forum piece celebrates the inauguration of the St Andrews Journal of International and Language Education (SAJILE), an open access online journal hosted by the International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI), University of St Andrews, co-run by students and academic staff. Five key figures in the genesis of SAJILE explore their hopes for the journal, and celebrate its supportive, inclusive, and developmental mission of promoting research for, of, and as teaching by teachers, teacher educators, and early career researchers.

Keywords

1. SAJILE launch editorial
2. Early career researchers
3. Staff-student scholarly collaboration



Planting the Seed: Thoughts from a Student Editor

Writing is a deceptively simple act of exponential complexity. Our mere 26 letter alphabet fosters boundless scholarly expression. Similarly, deepening a lifelong writing practice entangles us with matters of form, function, content, audience, organisation, argumentation, and multi-level discourse. Mastery is not easily or quickly accomplished.

Teaching practitioners and novice academics alike may contend with the dilemma of, on the one hand, attempting to teach this skill, while also quietly struggling with their own practice. I know I still do. Growth and change are disruptive processes, and my publication experiences have all been challenging in their own way. The mocking blinking of the cursor against the stubbornly blank page, lingering self-doubt over my standing to challenge reviewer comments, and awkward wrangling of disparate ideas have all accompanied me intermittently on my journey. This is to say nothing of the production of actually readable, rather than simply functional, prose. Anybody who publishes research in a language other than their first has my endless respect.

There have, however, been compounding, compensatory payoffs from each engagement with academic writing. Crafting and sustaining clear lines of well-supported thought that hang together has proven immensely satisfying — each word, phrase, paragraph, and section neatly building on the preceding one. Next, learning to habitually ask, ‘What am I really trying to say here?’ has (I hope) imparted the surgical skill of excising extraneous and repetitive detail to underline the essential. Last, producing work of sufficient value to others — work that is read, cited, or even built upon — has occasionally offered a real sense of a contribution well made.

These benefits represent some of my aspirations for the journal, as its inaugural student co-editor-in-chief. At the St Andrews Journal of International and Language Education (SAJILE), I want to hold open a space for those benefits to accrue to the determined authors willing to invest the hard, focused hours. Likewise, I recognise the value of occupying the other side of the desk to those of us learning the academic trade. Reviewing and editing the writing of others can be a mirror onto your own process as much as it is an act of service. Last, I believe today and tomorrow’s students and staff at the International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI) deserve a reliable place to showcase the fruits of their enthusiasm, passion, and dedication. I hope they will be proud to say they published in SAJILE, and that the journal becomes a trusty lynchpin of our practice-focused community.

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An academic home: A scholarly space of belonging and community of practice

I am thrilled to see the fruition of over two years of planning, brainstorming, learning, and all-round hard work come together in the inaugural issue of SAJILE. The initial conversations around the creation of the IELLI journal, SAJILE, coincided with my arrival at the University of St Andrews after two decades of living and working abroad: Tokyo, Vancouver, and Abu Dhabi. Fresh to the institute, it was wonderful to see a buzz around the prospect of starting this new journal which was to involve staff and postgraduate students working together to create a home for practice-based publications in the field of international and language education.

As issues of diversity, inclusion, identity, and belonging lie at the heart of my research, it was easy for me to become excited about the values of the new journal which closely align with my own. SAJILE's logo, artfully designed by IELLI doctoral student, Elizabeth Hashimura, shows the Tree of Life, as one of the most recognized symbols for growth and transformation across many global contexts. Accompanying the tree, is the University of St Andrews's shield, which is also rich in symbolism, with its crescent moon, lion rampant, gold diamonds, open book, and Scotland's blue and silver cross. Especially the penultimate symbol of the open book represents the journal's central focus on learning. When visiting SAJILE's website, readers are provided with a glimpse into to the stunning setting of St Andrews with the cover image of the remains of Scotland's largest and most magnificent medieval cathedral on a foggy day against the backdrop of the North Sea. While Kinnessburn, Kennedy Gardens, St Andrews is SAJILE's hub, the journal's outlook is very much global with editors, authors, reviewers, and publishing staff coming from and working in all corners of the world from the UK to Japan, to China and Mexico, to mention only a few.

Diversity and inclusion relate not only to geographical contexts but also to a range of career stages and expertise. SAJILE is a place where experienced scholars, novice scholars, and practitioner-researchers all belong. It is a welcoming and supportive space with an emphasis on growth, development, and sharing within a constructive scholarly community of practice. While giving a workshop at a recent event in Leeds, organised by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), named 'The Early Career Researcher (ECR) Journey: Beyond Publish or Perish', the emotional side of publishing was a central theme. Many ECR delegates spoke of emotions related to impostor syndrome, 'wobbles' surrounding fear of rejection, and doubts about levels of belonging and value in academic publishing. ECRs also spoke of their desire to have a concrete impact on teaching and learning in classrooms rather than succumbing to the pressure of chasing metrics in today's 'epidemic of the quantified self' (Watermeyer et al., 2024). SAJILE aims to recognise such concerns by centring the focus on what really matters: the creation of an academic home as a scholarly space of belonging and community of practice for impact.

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**A “Laboratory” for Equitable Research Culture and Research-Practice Integration:****Reflections from SAJILE’s Founding Editor**

Two years ago, SAJILE was just a personal aspiration, an idea to make a difference in educational research. Today, its inaugural issue is published. Being involved in every step of the journal’s development has been an incredible journey. Starting a journal takes considerable time and effort. Building a team and putting in place the support needed to run and sustain the journal was another major challenge. But throughout this process, I never felt alone, thanks to the support from staff and students at IELLI.

What sets SAJILE apart from other academic journals in education? As of 2020, there were about 46,736 active academic journals worldwide (Curcic, 2023). In educational research alone, the Web of Science has indexed over 93,000 articles published across 116 journals over the past 50 years (Tosun, 2022). So why found SAJILE? It all began in spring 2023 when I was thinking of ways to foster a culture of scholarship and research within IELLI. Given my leadership role at the institute and my interest in connecting research with practice, I began thinking about what “research” means in a teaching-focused unit like IELLI. This led to the concept of Edu-X research, which is about interprofessional and interdisciplinary scholarly activities in education that is collaborative and closely tied to practice. In this approach, research is not only academic publications, but a mindset, a process of discovery, and outputs that have real-world impact. Edu-X research advocates that research is an integral part of those who are involved in education policies and practices; in the context of IELLI, they include academic staff, professional services staff, and students.

Another motivation came from the increasing interest among staff in getting involved in scholarly work, but also frustration about not knowing how to begin. At the same time, the growth of our DProf in TESOL programme, a by-publication degree that requires students to gain experience in academic publishing, confirms the need for our own journal. As an editor of several international journals, I understand the challenges of academic publishing and peer review, especially for those new to the process. It can feel overwhelming, with uncertainty about where to start or what to expect. I realised what our staff and students needed was both guidance and opportunities to build confidence. That was when I began thinking seriously about creating an in-house, “sandpit” journal that is rigorous but also innovative and supportive, especially for ECRs and practitioners who may not see themselves as researchers.

In July 2023, I led a working group comprising staff and DProf students at IELLI. Together, we developed the journal’s name, logo, scope, submission categories, peer review policy, and templates. We also set up an initial editorial board that included IELLI staff and students, as well as academics from outside St Andrews. SAJILE is a safe space where staff and students can gain first-hand experience with academic publishing in a supportive environment, and where they can experiment with new ideas like having original submission categories and running special issues on relevant educational topics. The journal also aims to promote collaboration in research among academic staff, professional services staff, and postgraduate students, making it a key part of IELLI’s [Research and Impact Strategy](#) and a flagship scholarly activity of our new [Centre for International, Language and Teacher Education Research \(CILTERR\)](#).



SAJILE is now in the capable hands of its two editors-in-chief, section editors, copyeditors, editorial board members, and peer reviewers. I congratulate the editors-in-chief for bringing my vision for the journal to life and expanding on it. I look forward to reading future publications that reflect the spirit of Edu-X research and support IELLI's mission to develop outstanding educators, promote student success, and build diverse learning communities.

Professor Sin-Wang Chong PhD, PFHEA, FRSA

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**More Than a Sandpit: Reflections from a Special Issue Editor**

As someone who has published in and reviewed for established academic journals, I have found serving as the first special issue editor of SAJILE a humbling and eye-opening experience.

It has been especially rewarding to work directly with authors, most of whom are experienced practitioners with fresh, original ideas but are new to academic publishing. Their questions and approaches reminded me of how easily I had taken publishing conventions for granted. In the nurturing spirit of SAJILE, we took the time to explain foundational elements such as abstracts, keywords, and ethics statements. In doing so, we hope to have made it easier for practitioners to share their ideas with a wider community of educators and researchers.

Engaging with reviewers has been equally enlightening. In traditional publishing, reviewers are often seasoned academics. For this special issue, where possible, I intentionally paired an experienced researcher with a doctoral student, allowing authors to benefit from both scholarly and practice-oriented perspectives. We also tried to offer learning opportunities for our reviewers by sharing anonymous review reports after each review round.

Editing SAJILE's inaugural special issue was not without its challenges. Many of our contributors, as early-career authors, required support, whether in responding to reviewer comments, managing deadlines, or requesting extensions. SAJILE's commitment to quality means that authors were often requested to undertake multiple rounds of revision, which not all contributors could follow through on due to their various work and life commitments. For reviewers, another challenge was aligning expectations. Many are accustomed to reviewing for top-tier journals and thus recommended rejection. Hence, I often found myself writing to reviewers, explaining SAJILE's mission to balance rigour with developmental support. This was not about lowering standards but about recognising and nurturing potential.

Serving as SAJILE's inaugural special issue editor has taught me that research should be a conversation, not a gatekeeping exercise. As an editor, I am not just a gatekeeper but also a partner working alongside reviewers to help authors translate pedagogical innovations into publishable scholarship. Journals like SAJILE are vital: They prioritise practitioner-researcher development and foster a community where constructive feedback and generosity are central to the editorial process.

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**Both a scholarly publication and an educational experience**

I am delighted to see SAJILE move from being an idea discussed enthusiastically by students and colleagues within IELLI at University of St Andrews, to being a reality. The launch of this new publication is the result of a great deal of planning and hard work by both IELLI students and staff, initially under the leadership of Professor Sin-Wang Chong as Founding Editor-in-Chief and then led by Dr Sarah Hopkyns and Thomas (Tom) Stringer as current Editor-in-Chiefs. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has been involved in the work it has taken to bring the journal to its current state.

SAJILE is strongly rooted in successful collaboration between staff and students, and it is my hope that it will become a supportive place for students from St Andrews and beyond to share their scholarly outputs with a wider audience. In addition to providing an avenue for dissemination, it also offers students from St Andrews (and elsewhere) the opportunity to gain valuable experience in supporting the academic publication and dissemination process through a variety of administrative roles. In this sense, I view the journal as being an educational experience, as well as being a scholarly publication. The format of SAJILE is intentionally different from a “traditional” academic journal, hosting a variety of different article types, broadly divided into practice, research and review strands. This variety is intended to meet the needs of a diverse range of contributors, while also speaking to different audiences who are working in the fields of international, language or teacher education.

One final strength of SAJILE that I would like to mention is its alignment and interconnection with areas of teaching and research within IELLI. We offer postgraduate programmes in the areas of international, language and teacher education, and it is my hope that this journal will form a positive synergetic relationship with these programmes, providing a potential scholarly outlet for the research of staff and students, but also in turn feeding new ideas and content into programmes. I will look forward to seeing SAJILE grow and flourish over the coming years!

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