

# SEA-NEWSLETTER

The Department for Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia

JANUARY 2024

Happy  
New Year!  
2024

Image by klpangate\_freepik.com and Canva.com

## International Conference on Thai Studies and Thai Language Education

On 12 June 2023, Professor Dr. Volker Grabowsky, delivered a keynote address entitled “Manuscript Cultures in the Tai World Revisited: New Avenues into Studying the Diversity of Writing in Thailand, Laos and Beyond,” at the International Conference “Diversities and Voices in Language Education and Thai Studies” (LETS 2023) at ICONSIAM, which is one of the largest shopping and communication centres in Bangkok and a prominent venue for cultural and scientific events. The conference which was running over two days was organised by Thammasat University (Bangkok), in collaboration with partner universities in China, Japan, and South Korea. It provided a platform to both Thai and foreign researchers and scholars to present their concepts, theories, and methods of language teaching and Thai Studies to celebrate the centenary birthday of H.R.H. Princess Galyani Vadhana (1923–2008), the elder sister of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who played a vital role in the promotion of Thai Studies at a global level.

Apart from the three keynote addresses, the almost 70 lectures were held in four parallel sessions. It was amazing to see that, even though English was the official language of the conference, many of the scholars from Asian countries were able to deliver their talks in fluent and refined Thai. The topics were as varied as the disciplinary and national background of the participants. They covered a wide spectrum ranging from the teaching of Thai as a foreign language in various Asian and Western countries to the studies of Thai classical literature. Cultural performances such as Thai dance and music offered an inspiring accompanying programme. The conference showed impressively that the centre of gravity of Thai Studies is moving eastwards – back to Asia. Professor Grabowsky felt very much at home. ●

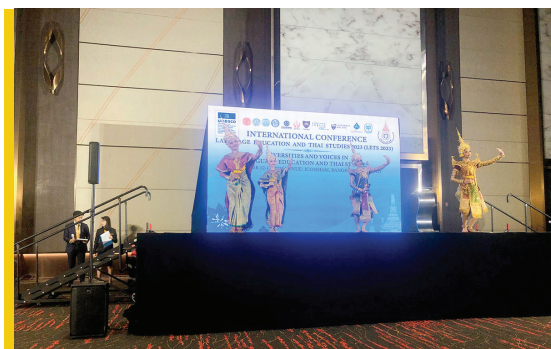
Photo credits: Volker Grabowsky



Lecture (in Thai) in one of the panel rooms



Cultural performance, main lecture room



Cultural performance, main lecture room

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## "Mata Hati (Eye of The Heart)" Film Screening

A very touching documentary film "Mata Hati (Eye of The Heart)" was screened at the Asien-Afrika-Institut on November 30, 2023, hosted by the Austronesian Studies Department, University of Hamburg. The film features the every-day life of a number of visually impaired youngsters in Yapentra (Blind Education Foundation) which is located in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The film wants to show how these young blind people live, as it is rarely covered by mainstream media. The film is aimed to sensitize society to the ordinariness of the disability..

The film is the result of solid teamwork between three Indonesian students, Andrian Janita Putra (as director), Luna Tahita Pujianto (as scriptwriter), and Amelia Riska Arnold (as cinematographer). They were present at the venue and enthusiastically disclosed to the audience the film-making background, its challenging process, and the plans for future projects.

About 60 people attended the film. During the question-and-answer session, some of them inquired about the social reception of blind people in a real social setting, commented on certain impressive scenes, expressed their appreciative assessment, and offered constructive feedback. Among the invited guests were representatives of the Hildesheimer BlindenMission (the main benefactor of the Yapentra), the Indonesian General Consulate in Hamburg, the Association of Indonesian Specialists and Academicians in Germany (IASI), Pasar Hamburg, and the Indonesian-German Community (DIG). The other attendees were members of the Indonesian diaspora and University of Hamburg's students from various disciplines. ●

## Jasper and Clara Winners of the *Lomba Vlog Kolaborasi*

Jasper Totschnig, a bachelor student of our department majoring in Indonesian and Malay Studies, together with Clara B. Talasari, a high school student from Bandung (Indonesia), were announced as the winners of the competition "*Lomba Vlog Kolaborasi*" (Competition Collaborative Vlog). The event was organized and sponsored by the Goethe-Institut Jakarta, Partner der Zukunft (PASCH-Initiative), the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Berlin, and the German section of the association *Afiliasi Pengajar dan Pegiat BIPA* "Teacher and Activist Affiliates of the BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asli, "Indonesian as Foreign Language").

Following the theme of the competition, "Food and Culinarian Traditions in Indonesia and Germany", Jasper and Clara realised a short bilingual video describing and comparing the traditional *Mahlzeit/Waktu Makan* of the two countries and the typical food consumed during each mealtime. In the engaging and informative vlog, >>>

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Finalis

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CLARA B. TARASARI  
SMA SANTA URSULA BSD  
&  
JASPER TOTSCHNIG



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>>> Clara explained in German how rice is regarded as the main Indonesian staple food, consumed as *bubur* for the traditional Indonesian breakfast, or as a main dish accompanied by stirred vegetables, boiled eggs and meat for lunch and dinner. On the other hand, Jasper, speaking in Indonesian, highlighted the predominance of bread in the German diet, consumed at *Frühstück* with cheese and *Wurst*, and for dinner, which in German is often called *Abendbrot* "the evening bread." To present a special German lunch, Jasper provided the audience with a "behind the scenes" of a plate of *hausgemacht spaetzle*, the traditional Bavarian pasta, normally served with a lot of cheese. In response, Clara gave her recipe for a perfect *gado-gado*, the traditional Indonesian salad, spiced up with peanut sauce.

*Herzliche Glückwünsche  
Jasper and Clara!*



A Snapshot into the Life of a Student-Influencer:

## In Conversation with Jesica Wijaya

With over 6,900 followers and one video surpassing 2.5 million views, Jesica Wijaya, a Master's student of the Austronesian Department, has gained quite a lot of attention on her TikTok account. Her contents revolve around her life and studies in Germany, encompassing topics like culture shock, personal experiences, and travel diaries.

Reflecting on her unexpected journey into content creation, Jesica shared, "I started making videos after I moved to Hamburg in March 2022. It wasn't planned, I just enjoyed watching videos and spend time on social media. Eventually, I felt the urge to share my perspective and daily life." Jesica expressed genuine surprise about her TikTok video going viral, saying she did not anticipate it but that she was unquestionably delighted.

As the interview with her continued, Jesica recognised potential collaborations and opportunities, leading her to express optimism about the future. "Since starting my account, I've gained followers and engagements. I see a future for my content in the social media world," she remarked. Beyond the number of followers, Jesica has a bigger goal in mind. She wants her videos to inspire people, especially those from Indonesia, to think about studying or working in Germany. Her content is not just a snapshot of her daily life; it is an open door showcasing the diverse opportunities that Germany may offer for international students.

Looking ahead, Jesica plans to expand to longer-form content on platforms like YouTube. "Definitely! I plan to make YouTube videos too, hopefully soon enough," she shared with a smile. The interview provided a glimpse into Jesica Wijaya's evolving journey as a content creator, offering a unique perspective on life in Germany and an invitation for others to explore similar opportunities.

If you are curious to explore more of Jesica's content and show your support, you can find her on TikTok at [@jesicawijayaa](https://www.tiktok.com/@jesicawijayaa).

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## Review: Indo-Pacific Strategies and the South China Sea: Views from the Region (editor: Thomas Engelbert)

“Indo-Pacific Strategies and the South China Sea: Views from the Region” is the title of an anthology that was recently published in the series *Publikationen der Hamburger Vietnamistik*. The book is a collection of contributions to a colloquium that took place on November 18, 2022. In addition to the Editor’s Preface, Summaries, and information about the contributors, this book comprises seven contributions, written by six authors.

Thomas Engelbert begins with an introduction to the topic, after which Gerhard Will provides a number of preliminary conclusions for the issues discussed in this book. Engelbert then emphasizes that the strong rise of China in recent times has led to different perceptions of it, which can be found in the Indo-Pacific strategies of the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia. China’s attitude is also the main cause of conflicts in the South China Sea (SCS). Similarly, Will has concluded China’s hegemonistic foreign policies in the SCS. He also expresses concerns about the future of the conflicts in the face of China’s “wolf warrior diplomacy”, which is a new style of coercive diplomacy adopted by Chinese diplomats during the Xi Jinping administration.

The “hub and spokes system”, with the U.S. as the hub and regional partners as spokes, is a traditional security structure in the Asia-Pacific region. Felix Heidux argues that significant changes are taking place, with the SCS issue being a key factor in these shifts. In a more optimistic analysis, Carlyle Thayer acknowledges the “long journey” of the negotiations on a SCS Code of Conduct. However, he believes it would be beneficial if ASEAN can engage China in negotiations under international observation.

In the three following contributions, Takashi Hosoda, Bill Hayton, and Thomas Engelbert all explain the ongoing changes in the international order and resulting global security instabilities. Hosoda stresses, that China is attempting to change the existing international order through force and economic coercion, and provides recommendations for ASEAN on how to cope, particularly



Photo credit: Quang Minh To

in comparison with Taiwan and Japan. Hayton emphasizes Britain’s current shift toward the Indo-Pacific region after leaving the EU. He expresses concerns about the UK’s engagement following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Finally, in his second contribution, Engelbert presents ASEAN’s reactions to the Russia-Ukraine war and offers explanations, of why these reactions appear “special” and “complicated”.