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Scientific associations and the conditions of participation in Applied Linguistics: A perspective from ALAB, AIALA, and AILA

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Category of Contribution: Critical Perspective

Scientific associations and the conditions of participation in Applied Linguistics

A perspective from ALAB, AIALA, and AILA

Associações científicas e as condições de participação na Linguística Aplicada

Uma perspectiva a partir da ALAB, da AIALA e da AILA

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Abstract

Scientific associations help establish the conditions under which research becomes visible, scholars encounter one another, and disciplinary priorities acquire authority. Their contribution therefore requires examination beyond institutional chronology or the enumeration of activities. This critical perspective considers these conditions through a situated discussion of the Brazilian Association of Applied Linguistics (ALAB), the AILA Ibero-America (AIALA), and the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA). Written from the position of a former ALAB president, an AIALA co-founder, and the current AILA president, it brings publicly available institutional materials into dialogue with a reflexive account of association leadership. The central argument is that wider representation becomes consequential when it expands scholars' capacity to shape the languages, questions, and relationships through which knowledge circulates. National congresses, regional collaboration, thematic research networks, and recurring editorial communication offer different opportunities for this work. They also expose tensions involving resources, linguistic hierarchies, uneven access to leadership, and the continuity of collective initiatives. The discussion proposes an agenda for evaluating associations through the conditions of participation they sustain, including multilingual access, distributed responsibility, institutional memory, and opportunities to influence disciplinary agendas. The experience considered here suggests that associations can contribute to epistemic justice, but that this contribution should be treated as an ongoing institutional responsibility rather than an automatic consequence of international membership.

Keywords: Scientific associations. Applied linguistics. Multilingualism. Epistemic justice. Internationalization.

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Resumo

As associações científicas ajudam a estabelecer as condições em que as pesquisas ganham visibilidade, pesquisadores se encontram e as prioridades de uma área adquirem legitimidade. Compreender sua contribuição exige, portanto, ir além da cronologia institucional ou da enumeração de atividades. Esta Perspectiva Crítica examina essas condições a partir de uma discussão situada da Associação de Linguística Aplicada do Brasil (ALAB), da AILA Ibero-América (AIALA) e da Associação Internacional de Linguística Aplicada (AILA). Escrito da perspectiva de uma ex-presidenta da ALAB, cofundadora da AIALA e atual presidenta da AILA, o artigo articula documentos institucionais públicos a uma reflexão sobre a experiência de liderança nessas associações. O argumento central é que a ampliação da representação ganha consequência quando aumenta a capacidade dos pesquisadores de influenciar as línguas, as questões e as relações pelas quais o conhecimento circula. Congressos nacionais, colaboração regional, redes temáticas de pesquisa e comunicação editorial periódica oferecem diferentes oportunidades para esse trabalho. Essas práticas também evidenciam tensões relacionadas à distribuição de recursos, às hierarquias linguísticas, ao acesso desigual à liderança e à continuidade das iniciativas coletivas. O artigo propõe uma agenda para avaliar as associações pelas condições de participação que sustentam, entre elas o acesso em diferentes línguas, a distribuição de responsabilidades, a memória institucional e as oportunidades de influenciar as agendas da área. A experiência analisada sugere que as associações podem contribuir para a justiça epistêmica e que essa contribuição exige trabalho institucional contínuo.

Palavras-chave: Associações científicas. Linguística aplicada. Multilinguismo. Justiça epistêmica. Internacionalização.

Lay Summary

Scientific associations organize conferences, publish research, and connect scholars across countries. These activities influence who takes part in discussions about language and whose ideas are heard. Drawing on my experience in three applied linguistics associations and on public records, I examine how their choices about funding, languages, and leadership affect participation. The examples show how conference publications, multilingual events, and research networks can extend the reach of scholarly work. They also show why travel costs and limited support can keep some scholars from attending meetings. I argue that associations should look at whether people can keep taking part and help decide what the organization does next.

Introduction

Scientific associations are part of the organization of knowledge. They help determine where scholars meet, which conversations acquire continuity, and how a field presents itself to new generations and wider publics. A congress programme, an invitation to coordinate a network, or a decision about the language of an institutional communication can affect who participates in disciplinary life. These decisions are frequently described as administration. I approach them here as decisions with intellectual consequences.

This article develops that argument through three connected settings: the Brazilian Assocation of Applied Linguistics (ALAB), the AILA Ibero-America association (AIALA), and the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA). My perspective is shaped by service as ALAB president in 2018–2019, participation in the creation and coordination of AIALA, and the AILA presidency for 2024–2027. These positions provide access to different dimensions of association work. They also require reflexivity about the authority and limits of

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a leadership account. The article is my situated interpretation and does not constitute an official statement on behalf of these organizations.

The central question is how associations can turn expanded representation into greater capacity to shape disciplinary life. Representation matters: the presence of scholars from different regions and institutions changes who can speak within an organization. Yet participation also depends on the languages through which discussion occurs, the resources required to remain involved, and the procedures through which proposals become institutional priorities. An association can become geographically broader while leaving these conditions largely intact.

I argue that associations should therefore be understood and evaluated through the conditions of participation they sustain. This approach links their historical importance to their present responsibilities. It also makes their limitations analytically visible. Rather than treating national, regional, and international organization as successive stages of advancement, I consider their different capacities and the relationships between them. ALAB provides a setting for examining collective disciplinary life in Brazil; AIALA raises questions about the organization of regional and multilingual collaboration; AILA provides an international arena in which these concerns encounter broader structures of representation.

The contribution is a critical perspective rather than a comprehensive institutional history or an evaluation of program effectiveness. It identifies mechanisms, tensions, and questions that can guide further historical and empirical investigation. Its purpose is to show why the apparently ordinary work of associations deserves a place in accounts of how applied linguistics develops.

1 Positioning the account and its evidence

I read public institutional histories, congress publications, a presidential vision statement, selected newsletters, and a published interview alongside my experience in association leadership. The newsletter issues from March 2025 and March, June, and September 2026 illustrate how research networks, affiliates, and language rights were presented to readers. The interview records my recollections of multilingual advocacy in Brazil and regional representation within AILA (Chagas; Finardi, 2024). Public records establish what associations announced, organized, or reported. My recollections help explain how I understood those activities at the time. Assessing who benefited and how their participation changed would require evidence from participants and subsequent activities.

I therefore distinguish institutional facts from analytical interpretation and recommendations. For example, AIALA's public account documents its creation and multilingual orientation. The argument that this orientation offers a way to reconsider the relationship between language and regional organization is an interpretation developed here. Whether it has changed participation patterns or the circulation of scholarship requires evidence beyond a mission statement. Similarly, the existence of a research network establishes an organizational opportunity; it does not establish equal influence among its participants.

The term epistemic justice is used here in a specific operational sense: fairer opportunities to contribute questions, concepts, interpretations, and evaluative criteria to shared knowledge

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production. Under this understanding, being invited to speak is one dimension of participation. Being able to influence what an organization treats as an important problem is another. The distinction helps identify the difference between access to an established conversation and influence over its direction.

This account has further limitations. It gives particular attention to a Brazilian trajectory and to initiatives in which I have participated. It cannot represent the diversity of experiences within Brazil, Latin America, or AILA. Nor does it offer membership statistics, a systematic analysis of congress programs, interviews, or measures of association impact. Published bibliometric studies are discussed as contextual evidence about knowledge circulation; their findings are not treated as an evaluation of ALAB, AIALA, or AILA. These limitations define the scope of the argument. They also point toward a research agenda in which leadership reflection can be tested and complicated by archival work and accounts from other positions.

The discussion is situated in November 2026. Because my AILA presidency is ongoing, observations about current responsibilities should be read as reflections during a term of office, rather than as a retrospective assessment of its completed outcomes.

2 ALAB and the collective organization of a field

ALAB's foundation in 1990 provides an institutional reference point for the development of Applied Linguistics in Brazil. Tílio's (2020) historical discussion connects the association's trajectory with the development of language teaching research while also raising questions about the field's wider responsibilities. This connection matters because association history is simultaneously a history of how researchers assemble, name their concerns, and create continuity between otherwise dispersed activities.

A national association brings scholars into relation across universities and research groups. The significance of that relationship cannot be reduced to a common administrative identity. Collective settings make it possible to debate the scope of a field, expose differences in intellectual commitments, and introduce emerging researchers to conversations extending beyond their own institutions. Such encounters can support agreement, but they also give disagreement a durable setting. The capacity to sustain disagreement is itself a contribution to disciplinary life.

My ALAB presidency included the organization of the 12th edition of the ALAB Congress - the *Congresso Brasileiro de Linguística Aplicada* (CBLA), held in Vitória from 9 to 12 July 2019. Its theme *Transitando e transpondo (n)a Linguística Aplicada* describes attention to the applied linguist's role across discursive domains and the dissemination of knowledge (ALAB, [s. d.]). This provides a concrete point of entry into the relationship between organizational choices and the transition and transposition of intellectual agendas.

My published interview with Lucas Araujo Chagas also recalls multilingualism advocacy during my ALAB presidency, including a CLAFPL roundtable in Belém on double-degree teacher education and the protection of linguistic diversity in basic education (Chagas; Finardi, 2024, p. 9). This episode connects association work with educational policy debate; it does not establish that the intervention changed policy.

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Two edited books grew out of the 2019 congress. *Transitando e transpondo n(a) linguística aplicada* brought together selected plenary contributions on contemporary applied linguistics, language in diverse discursive settings, technology and learning, and language teaching and teacher education (Finardi et al., 2019). The second book, *Linguística aplicada na contemporaneidade: temáticas e desafios*, edited by Kyria Rebeca Finardi, Christine Sant'Anna de Almeida, and Gabriel Brito Amorim, collected ten chapters on gender and identity, translation and decolonial studies, language teaching and teacher education, and language policies and internationalization (Finardi; Almeida; Amorim, 2021). The books extended the circulation of conference research. Their different selections also show how editorial decisions shape the record available to later readers.

Congress organization also draws attention to the labor through which disciplinary exchange becomes possible. Academic programs depend on coordination, correspondence, technical support, student involvement, and institutional cooperation. Much of this work disappears from the published record once an event is over. A history attentive only to plenary titles or presidential terms risks missing the collective activity that sustains them. From a leadership perspective, acknowledging this activity changes how achievement should be attributed: a successful meeting is the work of a community with different responsibilities and unequal visibility.

The relationship between a national association and a host university is especially revealing. Hosting a congress can connect local researchers and students with wider disciplinary conversations. At the same time, the resources needed to host, travel, and participate are unevenly distributed. A national event may widen opportunities for one community while remaining difficult to access for another. Claims about inclusion should therefore be connected to evidence about who could attend, under what conditions, and with what opportunities to contribute.

ALAB's importance in this account lies in the collective space it helps sustain for applied linguistics in Brazil. That space should not be understood as a single national voice. Brazilian scholarship contains differences of region, language, institution, and theoretical orientation. National representation is most useful when it makes these differences discussable and connects them with wider conversations, rather than compressing them into a uniform position.

University language policy and the questions brought to association leadership

My work in ALAB developed alongside responsibilities for language policy and internationalization at UFES. I helped establish and coordinate the Language Division in the university's international relations office and worked on virtual exchange and internationalization at home. These experiences informed the questions I brought to association leadership, particularly whose languages and expertise receive recognition in international collaboration.

The connection is analytically important because institutional responsibilities make the language question concrete. A policy encouraging international exchange raises questions about preparation, access, and whose linguistic resources receive recognition. My trajectory

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records a gradual movement from research on language teaching toward language policy, multilingualism, and the production and circulation of knowledge. Association leadership developed within that movement. The account therefore concerns how institutional experience informs the questions a scholar brings to collective scientific work, rather than attributing university programs to an association.

My responsibilities in initial English teacher education, including supervised teaching practice and dialogue with public schools, provide another connection. They bring research questions into contact with educational settings beyond international academic meetings. From this position, the public relevance of an association includes its capacity to keep teacher education and situated language practices within wider disciplinary discussion. The relationship between research, professional formation, and social engagement is an ongoing responsibility that connects university work with the collective life of applied linguistics.

3 AILA and the historical organization of international exchange

AILA's own historical account locates its foundation in Nancy in 1964 and describes an initial constituency concentrated in Europe. It also records a shift in the predominant language of its congresses from French to English, alongside formal French–English bilingualism (AILA, [s. d.]-d). This history makes visible the relationship between international organization and particular institutional and linguistic starting points.

The analytical significance of this history is not that an organization must remain defined by its origins. It is that international scope develops through arrangements that require examination. The languages in which meetings proceed, the institutions with resources to support regular involvement, and established understandings of disciplinary relevance can continue to shape participation even as geographical membership expands. Studying internationalization therefore requires attention both to expansion and to the practices through which that expansion is organized.

Moving between national and international responsibilities has made this relationship central to my understanding of association work. A national association can articulate concerns grounded in a particular educational and research setting. An international organization can connect those concerns with others and provide opportunities for wider exchange. The relationship becomes less productive when international relevance is assumed to require leaving behind the questions, languages, or intellectual traditions through which national work has developed.

For scholars working in Brazil, international participation should include opportunities to contribute explanations and concepts. It should also create opportunities to learn from other contexts without requiring that one model become the standard for all. The relevant issue is reciprocity: whether the movement of knowledge can change the conversation in more than one direction. An invitation to present Brazilian experience is valuable, but its epistemic significance depends partly on whether that experience is allowed to reshape shared questions.

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An international association can support this reciprocity through choices about research networks, communication, congress organization, and representation. Its capacity is significant because it can connect activities that would otherwise remain separated. Its authority is also limited. It does not control national funding systems, university workloads, or the distribution of access to publishing. Recognizing these limits helps identify responsibilities that associations can realistically assume without claiming that institutional membership resolves wider inequalities.

A public statement of presidential priorities

My presidential vision, delivered during the 2024 transition in Kuala Lumpur, provides a public source for the agenda accompanying my term (Finardi, [s. d.]). It identifies the succession from Azirah Hashim, the first president from Asia, to myself as the first president from Latin America, and welcomes Rwanda's affiliation. Drawing on Paulo Freire, it connects education with opportunities to create knowledge and identifies stronger collaboration among affiliates and regional networks as continuing work.

The statement helps locate the present argument in an articulated presidential agenda. Its emphasis on collective responsibility connects leadership change with the question of what an association enables others to do. It records priorities and the interpretation of a transition; it does not independently demonstrate their implementation or effects. Reading it alongside subsequent newsletters allows attention to how these concerns enter recurring public communication.

Interacting scales and the limits of a leadership narrative

The relationship between these settings can be clarified through Marginson's (2022) reconsideration of the glonacal agency heuristic. He treats global, national, and local activity as interacting scales without assigning permanent causal priority to any one of them. Applying this perspective to associations is an analytical extension proposed here: a university experience can inform a national discussion, regional collaboration can connect that discussion with others, and an international network can generate questions that return to local research and teaching.

My work across ALAB, AIALA, and AILA illustrates how experience in one setting can inform decisions in another. The international role creates opportunities to bring local and regional concerns into wider discussion. Its consequences can be assessed by tracing how those concerns enter collective practices and how international discussions return to national and local settings.

Leal, Finardi, and Abba (2022) provide a further reason to question an automatic association between internationalization and improvement. Their discussion draws attention to political and ethical tensions and to hierarchies that internationalization may reproduce. For associations, this supports examining who can use international opportunities and who can influence their purposes. It also locates the present argument within a collaborative research agenda that preceded and developed alongside my AILA presidency.

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4 AIALA and the possibilities of multilingual regional collaboration

AIALA offers a specific example of organizing relationships between national and international association life. AILA's public documentation records its creation in 2020 with support from ALAB, the Mexican Association of Applied Linguistics (AMLA), the Spanish Association of Applied Linguistics (AESLA), and the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL). Its stated purposes include multilingual collaboration and wider representation of Ibero-American scholars and languages (AILA, [s. d.]-a).

In the same interview, I recall questioning Latin American and African representation at an AILA meeting in 2019. I connect that experience with subsequent involvement in AIALA and describe meeting Chilean colleagues after assuming the AILA presidency in 2024 (Chagas; Finardi, 2024, p. 9–10). This retrospective account identifies an experience of underrepresentation and an organizing response. It should not be read as a membership census or proof that one intervention caused later institutional changes.

The founding collaboration brings together associations based in countries with different positions in international academic exchange. This makes AIALA useful for examining regionalization without assuming that a region is internally uniform. Shared commitments can support collaboration, while differences in resources and institutional influence remain relevant. Regional organization does not remove these differences; it provides a setting in which they can become part of the discussion.

An early public account of AIALA explicitly framed its regional connection through linguistic relationships extending beyond place of residence. It also identified minoritized languages as part of its concerns (AILA, 2021). The significance of this formulation is that it allows scholarly relationships to cross the boundaries that a strictly territorial understanding of region would establish. Researchers may participate through language, research interests, and affiliation across multiple locations.

My participation in AIALA's creation and coordination informs the interpretation developed here: regional collaboration can become a means of intervening in international knowledge circulation. It can connect scholars who share concerns but encounter one another only intermittently. It can also help bring questions developed in Portuguese and Spanish into discussion without treating their translation into English as the only intellectually consequential event.

At the fourteenth Brazilian Congress of Applied Linguistics in 2025, I organized an AIALA symposium with Doris Matos, then president of ALAB. The session brought colleagues from eight countries into a national congress program (Guerrettaz, 2026). At the AAAL Virtual Day on 24 April 2026, AIALA organized a symposium featuring research presented in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Yucatec Maya (AAAL, 2026). These episodes show how national affiliates can host regional collaboration and how program design can give several languages a place in scholarly exchange. The public accounts document the languages used and the range of participants. Assessing how discussion unfolded across languages would require evidence from the sessions and their participants.

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These possibilities should not be confused with demonstrated effects. Assessing AIALA's contribution requires examining activities, participants, outputs, and changes over time. A founding statement establishes an intention to widen access. Evidence of change would include sustained collaboration, broader opportunities to shape programs, and the circulation of research that previously received limited attention. Such evidence would also need to identify whose participation has remained difficult.

There is a further tension within the multilingual ambition. Portuguese and Spanish can occupy less influential positions than English in some international academic settings while retaining considerable authority in relation to Indigenous and other minoritized languages. A commitment to multilingualism cannot therefore be assessed only by counting the use of these two languages. The category "Ibero-American" also requires historical reflection because the relationships it names are inseparable from colonial histories.

This tension does not invalidate regional collaboration. It makes its responsibilities more specific. An initiative seeking wider representation should ask who can define its priorities and how its language practices relate to the communities whose knowledge it invokes. Indigenous participation, for example, should involve opportunities to influence questions and terms of engagement. Inclusion cannot be inferred from references to Indigenous languages in an institutional purpose statement.

The rationale for this regional work also connects with research developed with Claudio França and Felipe Furtado Guimarães. Our study of Latin American academic production examined publication languages and collaboration patterns and questioned whether these reflected an ecology of knowledges and languages (Finardi; França; Guimarães, 2022). A subsequent study focused on research about higher education internationalization and identified a tension between growth in publication and the influence of that production (Finardi; França; Guimarães, 2023). These studies concern specific bibliometric corpora and do not establish a comprehensive picture of Latin American scholarship though Claudio França's later work, in his doctoral dissertation, was able to expand on that (França, 2025).

Their relevance to associations lies in the question they raise: what kinds of circulation make research available as a source of concepts and explanation? An association's regional activities can be examined for the relationships they create between scholarship, audiences, and disciplinary agendas. The bibliometric findings do not demonstrate AIALA's impact. They explain why its commitments warrant investigation and why increasing publication or membership alone provides an incomplete measure of epistemic participation.

The broader lesson is that regionalization can work as a space for negotiation. It can connect national associations and international structures while exposing inequalities within the region itself. Its value depends on the relationships and procedures it sustains, rather than on a regional label alone.

5 Research networks and the continuity of scholarly exchange

Thematic research networks provide another form of association activity. They organize collaboration around shared questions that may cut across national and regional affiliations.

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I co-founded the research network (ReN) EMEVEDI with Marina Orsini-Jones and Azirah Hashim in 2021 to connect work on English as a medium of education, multilingualism, and virtual exchange with equity, diversity, and inclusion (AILA, [s. d.]-c). My involvement in its co-founding this ReN and producing a special issue during my term as convenor (Finardi; Orsini-Jones; Hashim, 2025).

The special issue brought together studies on the circulation of scholarship in languages other than English, English-medium education, language teacher education, heritage languages, and virtual exchange. By placing work from different educational and linguistic settings in dialogue, the collection created a space to examine how questions of equity take different forms across contexts. It also illustrates how a research network can carry a shared agenda beyond its meetings and make the resulting scholarship available to a wider disciplinary audience.

The relevance of such a network lies partly in continuity. Congresses concentrate attention in a limited period. A network can support relationships between meetings and offer a setting in which a common research concern develops over time. This matters especially when a question crosses established disciplinary or institutional boundaries. The association provides recognition and connections; participants supply the intellectual and organizational work that gives the network substance.

EMEVEDI is particularly relevant to the argument because its thematic concerns raise questions about participation within education. A network addressing inclusion can also examine its own practices: who coordinates activities, which languages are used, and how emerging scholars contribute. This is a recommendation for reflexive organizational practice, rather than a claim that these questions have already been resolved.

Virtual exchange illustrates both an opportunity and a limit. Online collaboration may reduce some travel costs and make repeated contact more feasible. It still requires connectivity, time, accessible scheduling, and forms of interaction that participants can use. The availability of a digital meeting therefore should not be treated as evidence of equal participation. A useful evaluation would ask who can sustain involvement and whether participants can affect the network's questions and outputs.

During the pandemic, I used virtual exchange to sustain international collaboration in teacher education when physical mobility was restricted. The experience reinforced my interest in what makes digital exchange accessible and sustainable. This question also informs my reading of research networks that bring colleagues together between congresses.

The collaborative study by Wimpenny et al. (2022) develops this question through COIL experiences connecting Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. It considers the possibilities of a Third Space for different ways of knowing, relating, and expressing, while recognizing barriers within digital environments. For the present article, the connection with research networks is an interpretation: sustained exchange requires attention to relationships and to the conditions of access. This published collaboration illustrates an intellectual concern shared with network activity, without establishing that the publication was itself an official EMEVEDI output though two of the authors were members of this ReN.

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Networks also make succession visible as an intellectual issue. When responsibilities pass between colleagues, continuity depends on more than the transfer of a title. It requires access to records, relationships, and knowledge of how work is organized. Distributed responsibility can help preserve an initiative while creating room for new directions. The relevant achievement is a structure through which collaboration can continue beyond the availability of its founders.

The newsletter as a recurring space for scholarly visibility

Publishing the AILA newsletter is another part of my association work. The March 2026 issue explicitly identifies quarterly publication as a presidential responsibility, invites contributions through affiliates and wider networks, and describes an audience of approximately 10,000 recipients (AILA, 2026b). This figure is an institutional estimate of distribution, not an independently verified measure of readership, engagement, or influence. The newsletter nonetheless provides a public documentary source through which the association's communication practices can be examined.

The March 2025 issue offers a concrete example. A report attributed to Research Networks Coordinator Grégory Miras describes a strategy combining webinars, newsletter reports, journal contributions, and social media to make network activity more visible (AILA, 2025). This establishes a stated communication strategy and credits the officer responsible for the report. It also illustrates how presidential editorial work depends on contributions from colleagues with other responsibilities. Selecting and circulating such material connects dispersed research activity with a recurring international publication.

The March 2026 issue provides a subsequent published record. Its account of the ReN promotion cycle includes the June 2025 webinar featuring EMEVEDI and the Inclusive Foreign Language Education ReN, alongside an interview about Open Applied Linguistics (AILA, 2026b). These items make the connection between research networks and communication more concrete. They document the circulation of activities and resources; they do not by themselves show who accessed them or how participation changed. Analytically, they suggest how a newsletter can maintain links between individual events and longer conversations.

The June 2026 issue places a report on the University of Sarajevo's English Department and its relationship with the Bosnian and Herzegovinian affiliate alongside material on Portuguese, cultural diversity, and educational concerns (AILA, 2026a). Such editorial juxtaposition places a particular institutional history within a wider disciplinary setting. It makes an affiliate's account available beyond its immediate community while connecting the newsletter with linguistic and educational themes. Whether readers establish new collaborations through this exposure remains an empirical question.

The September 2026 issue brings language rights and AI into presidential communication and includes an invited contribution by Kendall A. King on revisiting the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (AILA, 2026c). This offers a public connection with the concerns developed in my PQ trajectory. It also provides evidence of an editorial format that brings another scholar's contribution into discussion of a shared issue. Here, the newsletter is a site where a disciplinary agenda is publicly articulated and opened to further contributions.

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The December 2026 issue of the *AILA Newsletter* will introduce colleagues joining or returning to the Association. Following their approval at the October Executive Board and International Committee (EBIC) meetings, the issue will welcome affiliates from Chile (ALACHI), Paraguay (APLA), Croatia (CALS), and South Africa (LSSA and SAALT). It will also celebrate the renewed membership of colleagues in Serbia (ALAS) and Türkiye (TASAL) and welcome the Académie de Langue Madhesi from Martinique as an associate member.

The issue will also reflect on the thirtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights and examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping higher education and the circulation of multilingual knowledge. Research Network updates, new publications, and calls for papers will round out the issue as the AILA community looks ahead to the 2027 World Congress in Vancouver.

These examples support treating communication as part of an association's intellectual work. Editorial choices affect which initiatives members can encounter and which connections become visible. They also raise questions about whose news is submitted, which contributions are selected, and which languages readers need to engage with them. The English-language issues examined here communicate commitments to linguistic diversity; they do not establish multilingual accessibility in practice. That distinction is central to a critical account of association communication.

The newsletters also constitute an archive for future research. Comparing invitations, reports, and subsequent activities could help trace how institutional priorities develop. Such research would need a defined corpus, transparent selection criteria, and perspectives beyond the editor's own account. The issues discussed here are illustrative primary sources selected for their relevance to the argument, rather than the basis of a systematic content analysis of the full archive.

6 Challenges in translating representation into influence

The settings considered here point toward several tensions that should inform the study and practice of associations. The first concerns resources. Fees, travel, accommodation, connectivity, and time influence the ability to remain involved. A formal opportunity can be difficult to use when participation depends on resources that a scholar's institution cannot provide. Associations should therefore distinguish eligibility from practical access when evaluating their reach.

A second tension concerns language. An organization's policy may support multilingualism while everyday working practices rely on a narrower repertoire. The consequences extend beyond the ability to follow a presentation. Preparing a proposal, responding quickly in a meeting, or interpreting administrative information requires different kinds of linguistic labor. When this labor falls unevenly, apparently common procedures can produce different opportunities to influence decisions.

Addressing the issue involves choices about communication and resources. Multilingual summaries, time for written responses, and clearer explanations of procedures are possible measures, but their suitability must be examined in each setting. Translation itself requires

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labor and judgement. An association's multilingual ambition is more credible when the work it requires is recognized, planned, and supported.

The epistemic dimension of multilingualism gives this responsibility additional weight. The volume edited by Gajo and Berthoud (2026), whose framing is set out in the publisher's presentation, questions the assumption that scientific work can be reduced to one language without epistemological loss. It foregrounds languages as resources in the construction of knowledge. This orientation supports a question for associations: how might multilingual working practices affect the interpretations and distinctions available in collective discussion? In this article, it serves as a conceptual connection rather than as evidence of any association's outcomes.

A third tension concerns the relationship between leadership visibility and collective influence. The election of scholars from historically underrepresented contexts can carry considerable significance. It does not establish that institutional priorities have changed. A more demanding assessment would examine opportunities to propose initiatives, participate in decisions, and shape the distribution of organizational attention. My own leadership should be subject to this distinction rather than treated as evidence that it has already been overcome.

A fourth tension concerns continuity. Association work often depends on colleagues who combine it with teaching, research, and other responsibilities. When procedures and relationships remain concentrated in a few people, an organization becomes vulnerable to changes in availability. Maintaining records and preparing successors are therefore part of sustaining participation. They also allow members to understand how decisions were made and how they might propose alternatives.

AILA's leadership succession supports continuity across presidential terms. The elected Vice-President serves three years in that role, followed by three as President and three as Past President. The overlapping terms allow officers to share responsibilities and institutional knowledge across transitions. Annual EBIC reports provide an internal record of decisions. Representation in governance meetings still depends on resources. Board officers and affiliate delegates serve voluntarily, and smaller affiliates may struggle to cover their delegates' travel costs to attend EBIC meetings (Finardi, 2025, p. 257–258). A formal place on the International Committee therefore offers a route to representation whose practical use can vary with available support.

I founded AILA's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee to review the association's practices and propose changes and ways to assess their effects. An Executive Board member chairs it, and its membership includes the Congress and Events Coordinator and at least two additional EBIC members. Each region may be represented (AILA, [s. d.]-b). The Solidarity Awards illustrate a related challenge at World Congresses. They assist financially disadvantaged members with accepted presentations who receive no financial support from other organizations (AILA, [s. d.]-e). The awards can make attendance possible for recipients. Their eligibility criteria leave some needs outside the program's scope, including those of scholars whose existing support covers only part of their costs. Assessing unmet need would help establish whose perspectives may be missing from congress discussions.

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Finally, there is a tension between speaking for a field and making its internal differences visible. Associations may be called upon to represent disciplinary interests in public. That responsibility does not mean that every member shares the same political or intellectual position. Transparent consultation and an explicit account of who is authorized to speak can help sustain legitimacy. Disagreement should be understood as part of association life, including disagreement about the meanings of inclusion and internationalization.

These tensions suggest that critical institutional reflection should include failures, constraints, and unfinished work. An account limited to achievements offers little basis for understanding why some initiatives persist while others do not. The aim is neither to idealize associations nor to dismiss their contributions, but to identify the conditions under which collective organization becomes consequential.

7 An agenda for association practice and research

The argument developed here supports an agenda organized around participation that can be sustained and can influence decisions. One priority is to connect claims about representation with accessible evidence. Associations can document the composition of leadership, opportunities to propose activities, and the languages of communication. Such documentation should respect privacy and avoid assuming that any individual speaks for an entire social group or region.

Another priority is to connect congress participation with longer relationships. Mentoring, recurring discussions, and opportunities to contribute to networks may help turn an initial encounter into continued involvement. Their value should be assessed through participants' experiences and subsequent opportunities, rather than inferred from the existence of an activity. In particular, emerging scholars should be able to identify how they can contribute intellectually as well as assist organizationally.

Institutional memory deserves comparable attention. Programs, reports, and public communications can support historical analysis, but records need preservation and context. An archive that documents decisions, purposes, and changes gives future members a basis for understanding the organization they inherit. It can also make visible contributions that were not associated with prominent offices.

The relationship between national, regional, and international organization should remain reciprocal. International structures can create visibility and connections, while national and regional settings contribute questions and forms of collaboration developed through particular histories. Maintaining this relationship requires opportunities for feedback in both directions. Representation becomes more meaningful when members can understand how local concerns enter international decisions and how those decisions return to local discussion.

Artificial intelligence and the responsibility for knowledge circulation

The September 2026 newsletter connects linguistic rights with questions about which languages and forms of knowledge become visible as digital systems increasingly mediate access to scholarship (AILA, 2026c). Associations can examine how their own programs,

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publications, and archives represent the field. Preserving the context and languages of those records gives later readers material with which to interpret institutional history.

8 Concluding reflections

ALAB, AIALA, and AILA provide connected settings for considering how applied linguistics is collectively sustained. Their different organizational forms help make scholarly exchange possible while raising questions about access, authority, and continuity. The history of an association matters partly because it reveals how these conditions were established and how they might be changed.

My trajectory across these settings informs a particular responsibility: to examine leadership as participation in collective structures whose value extends beyond a term of office. The relevant question is what relationships, procedures, and opportunities remain available for others to use and reshape. This perspective directs attention toward the everyday work through which disciplinary life continues.

Scientific associations can contribute to epistemic justice when they widen opportunities to influence the questions and practices of a field. That contribution requires evidence and ongoing institutional attention. Expanding membership and geographical representation are significant developments; their longer-term meaning depends on whether scholars can sustain involvement and help determine the direction of shared work.

Author Contribution Statement

Kyria Rebeca Finardi: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, and Writing – review & editing.

Data Availability Statement

The public institutional documents, published interview, newsletters, and scholarship used in this article are identified in the references. No new participant dataset was collected. The prompts used to prepare the manuscript are available at [INSERT PUBLIC LINK TO THE AI PROMPT RECORD].

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AI Use Statement

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used as an editorial, translation, and structural formatting assistant during manuscript preparation. Specifically, the tool was utilized to refine academic English prose, translate metadata (titles, abstracts, and lay summary), format structural headings according to the dossier guidelines, and audit in-text citations and reference list entries against ABNT standards (NBR 10520:2023 and NBR 6023:2025). All conceptual frameworks, historical data, and critical reflections originate from the author's scholarly work and leadership experience. The categorized log of prompts used in this work is publicly available (see Data Availability Statement). The author retains full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretations, and final text of the manuscript.

Competing Interests

I served as president of ALAB in 2018–2019, helped establish and coordinate AIALA, and serve as president of AILA for the 2024–2027 term. These roles inform the standpoint of this article. The interpretations are my own.

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