

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2026

SUBJECT: CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
C1	The patterns of transliteration-to-semantic translation shifts in Chinese loanwords	<p>This research will focus on "loanwords from English in Chinese," with the timeframe limited to the period from 1920 to the present. A significant portion of words in Mandarin are narrow-sense loanwords (transliterations, or 音译词) borrowed from other languages, with English and other Indo-European languages being some of the primary sources. Some English loanwords in Chinese have retained their transliterated forms for a long time, such as "高尔夫" (golf) and "奥林匹克" (Olympics). Others have been replaced by semantic translations (意译词), like "开麦拉" (camera) → "相机" and "德莫克拉西" (democracy → "民主"). There are also loanwords that coexist in both transliterated and semantically translated forms in Mandarin, such as "盘尼西林" (penicillin) vs. "青霉素", and "email" vs. "电子邮件". What determines the shift from transliteration to semantic translation? There is currently no clear answer, but it is undoubtedly a topic worthy of exploration.</p>
C2	唐传奇《虬髯客傳》研究 A Study of the "Qiuran Ke Zhuan" (The Tale of the Curly-Bearded Guest)	<p>晚唐传奇《虬髯客传》讲述了隋末唐初乱世之中，李靖、红拂女与虬髯客三位英雄相识相知，并共同成就一番事业的故事。这部作品表面上颇似古代武侠小说，但其内容又融入了道教人物和动荡时代背景，展现出丰富而多元的内涵，使其在传奇小说中独具特色。</p> <p>The late Tang dynasty tale, "The Story of the Bearded Guest", recounts how, amid the chaos at the end of the Sui and the beginning of the Tang dynasty, three heroes — Li Jing, Lady Hongfu, and the Bearded Guest — meet, become acquainted, and accomplish great deeds together. On the surface, this work resembles an ancient martial arts novel, but its narrative also weaves in Daoist figures and the turbulent backdrop of dynastic change, endowing the story with a rich and multifaceted character that sets it apart among classical tales.</p>

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SUBJECT: ECONOMICS		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
E1	Game theory and its applications to real-life examples	<p>Game theory is a mathematical toolbox to analyse strategic interaction among multiple decision makers. It provides a common language for seemingly different economic models such as oligopoly, public goods and externalities, price discrimination, moral hazard and adverse selection.</p> <p>Student will first self-study a standard textbook (such as Martin J. Osborne, <i>An Introduction to Game Theory</i>). He/she will then choose a real-life example of his/her interest, represent it as a formal game, and characterise Nash equilibrium (or its appropriate refinements) thoroughly. The essay should focus on the second component; student does not need to explain general game theoretic concepts in detail.</p> <p>Preclusion: This HSSR project may not be offered together with the SMU Game Theory module or with Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Higher 3 (2026) Economics (Syllabus 9809).</p>
E2	Social Preferences, Work, and Economic Decision-Making	<p>This area examines how economic decisions — such as choices related to work, education, or consumption — are shaped not only by financial incentives but also by social norms, identity, and aspirations. Students may explore questions like: How do perceptions of job prestige influence occupational choices? What trade-offs do individuals make between income, flexibility, and job meaning?</p> <p>Projects may use real-world examples from Southeast Asia, and draw on either behavioural economics, labour economics, or development economics frameworks.</p>
E3	Digital Payments and Cash Usage	<p>This research aims to investigate rising e-payment transactions (PayNow, NETS) as a possible demand factor affecting declining ATM cash withdrawals. By estimate correlations and simple regressions controlling for income and price level, students will explore the relative strength of such factors.</p>

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E4-1	Digital Markets Act and Competition	This research reviews economics literature on digital market acts, focusing on their regulation and impact on competition, in both digital and brick-and-mortar economies. It examines how these acts might affect competition, consumers, and innovation. The study then explores the potential implications for Singapore, given its status as a digital hub in Asia. The goal is to provide insights into how the digital market acts might influence Singapore's economy and its digital landscape, as well as to help policymakers effectively adapt these regulations.
E4-2	Understanding Housing Demand	This research aims to provide insights into factors of housing demand to aid policy-making and urban planning. It reviews literature in real estate, focusing on factors contributing to housing demand. It examines the relative strength of various demand factors, considering factors unique to the market of housing, before identifying the factors with the largest impact on housing demand.

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SUBJECT: GEOGRAPHY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G1-1	Singapore's green plans and urban green spaces	<p>These themes extend to different parks, nature reserves and park connectors, and different conceptions of what green spaces incorporate. It may also include preservation of Pulau Ubin and the various outer islands for eco-tourism and conservation purposes.</p> <p>Students can consider the following questions for their research: What sorts of green and greenery are prioritised within urban planning? What are the different types of green spaces we have in Singapore? Are there green spaces within housing estates? Would golf courses be considered green spaces? What about other forms of recreational space? Are there urban planning conflicts, e.g. transportation needs (Cross Island Line, MRT extensions), housing needs, and industrial needs that contradict or undermine notions of Singapore as a City in Nature?</p>
G1-2	The protection of wild nature versus manicured nature	<p>There is a distinction between the conservation of wild nature compared to the creation of carefully maintained and micro-managed park areas. Themes can include looking at the place of wild living creatures in Singapore (from otters to wild boars to macaque monkeys, birds, and other animals).</p> <p>Students can consider the following questions for their research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What place do wild living creatures have in a global city space? Are there animal-human conflicts? How is wild nature perceived in a fast-developing cityscape? Are there areas of Singapore designated for the protection of wild nature? • How does urban planning incorporate nonhuman natures? Which organisations care for wild nature other than government agencies? • Do human-animal relations have a role to play in Singapore's notion of a City in Nature?

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SUBJECT: GEOGRAPHY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G2	Ecosystem Services of Wetlands	<p>Students can work on topics related to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. importance of ecosystem services of wetlands,2. use of novel technology to monitor variations of wetland restoration over time and space, and/or3. anthropogenic effects on wetland ecosystem service. <p>Students will have the opportunity to gain field skills monitoring wetland restoration success on our long-term research project at the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG). We monitor wildlife habitat annually at eight long-term plots (5m x 5m) across 2 study sites. Also, we monitor wildlife habitat use daily with 8 wildlife cameras and 3 real-time Reconyx wildlife cameras at SBG study and reference sites.</p>

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SUBJECT: HISTORY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
H1-1	Southeast Asian History	<p>I am willing to supervise a student with research topics related to Southeast Asia during the 19th and 20th centuries. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectuals • Ideas • Political Culture • Language • Sport • Cultural Practices • Museums/Heritage Spaces
H1-2	Malay History	<p>I am willing to supervise a student with research topics related to Malay History/History of the Malay World during the 19th and 20th centuries. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectuals • Ideas • Political Culture • Language • Sport • Cultural Practices • Museums/Heritage Spaces

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SUBJECT: HISTORY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
H1-3	Singapore Studies/ History	<p>I am willing to supervise a student with research topics related to Singapore Studies/History during the 19th and 20th centuries. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectuals • Ideas • Political Culture • Language • Sport • Cultural Practices • Museums/Heritage Spaces
H2-1	Early Industrialisation of Singapore 1960s–1980s	<p>This topic is an opportunity to explore the business and social histories of the early industrialisation efforts in post-1965 Singapore. Students may propose to focus on either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developments in a specific industry (e.g. shipping); or 2. A factor shaping changes in the industrial sector (e.g. the role of technical education).
H2-2	Japanese models of economic development as an inspiration in Singapore 1970s–1980s	<p>This topic provides opportunity for students to examine Japanese economic and industrial successes (post-1945) and to draw on case studies to trace how this was adapted in Singapore.</p> <p>Students can draw on case studies from the 1970s–1980s. This might include the ‘Learn from Japan’ campaign of the early 1980s or another case study of choice.</p>

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2026

SUBJECT: LITERATURE IN ENGLISH		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
L1-1	Twentieth Century Literature	Students can explore any significant author, topic or critical issue in Anglophone literature of the twentieth century. Literary works can be drawn from the modernist period in the early decades of the twentieth century or from the postmodern period after WW2. Students may also work on contemporary writing that has emerged in our current era of globalisation. Possible authors for study include Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, J. M. Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro and Toni Morrison.
L1-2	The fiction of J. M. Coetzee	J. M. Coetzee's writing is intensely political as it is profoundly ethical and captivatingly aesthetic. Students are welcome to explore any aspect of Coetzee's writing and can draw on works in any phase of his <i>oeuvre</i> (early, middle or late; South African, "Australian", or global). Possible novels for study include <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> , <i>Foe</i> , <i>Disgrace</i> , <i>Elizabeth Costello</i> and <i>Slow Man</i> .

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2026

SUBJECT: MALAY LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
M1-1	Malay writers: Social thought and contributions	<p>The focus of this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the role and contribution of leading Malay writers (in Singapore/Malaysia/Brunei) with the aim of highlighting the significance of their ideas in the context of contending ideas in Malay discourses. Critical analysis of their ideas will be the main emphasis for the research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>
M1-2	Leading figures in Malay Language studies and research	<p>The focus of this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the role and contribution of leading figures in Malay Language studies and research (in Singapore/Malaysia/Brunei) with the aim of highlighting the significance of their ideas in the context of language planning and politics of language in contemporary Malay society. Critical analysis of their ideas will be the main emphasis for the research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>
M1-3	Cultural arts and heritage of Singapore Malays	<p>The focus of this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the Malay cultural arts and heritage that have evolved and developed in Singapore. These can include the performative, visual and musical art forms. The aim is not only to look at the contents and aims of the selected cultural arts but also to delineate how it has been supported and sustained. An appreciative survey and discussion should be the main thrust of this research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>

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SUBJECT: MALAY LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
M2	Malay cultural practices: Promotion and preservation	<p>The focus of this research is on any tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Malays (e.g. food, fashion, dance, music etc.), and looks at experiences, whether individually and/or as a group in societies or associations, to promote and preserve these cultural practices.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>