

Linguistics

A Systematic Review of the English Situation in the Implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

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A B S T R A C T

The implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (ACE) in the ASEAN countries also has several possible impacts on the increasing use of English in the ASEAN countries especially on teaching and learning English in the education system. In addition, to identify the skills to fulfill the requirement to work across ASEAN. There is a need to identify the need for the current study on the situation of English in ASEAN during the AEC implementation with the systematic review analysis. This systematic review was guided by the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) in its systematic online database searching involving keyword searching, inclusion, and exclusion criteria. The results show the methods that have been used include qualitative, quantitative, and also mixed methods. In addition, five main themes are identified; English for ASEAN regionalism, English skills for working in ASEAN, English as a lingua franca in ASEAN, English in the curriculum, and English in the education system. Based on this analysis the review identified the recommendation for English teaching. Keywords: direct speech act, indirect speech act, purpose of speech.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) started in 2015 and opened the competition for employment in certain fields of work. The Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) facilitates the mobility of specific professions to work across ASEAN. Including engineers, accountants, doctors, dentists, and nurses.

Universities in the ASEAN countries face several challenges in preparing students to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community. There is a need to improve the English language teaching in all sections.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is one of the pillars of the ASEAN Vision 2020. The main aim was to expand the economy of member countries and establish new initiatives within a certain period by opening a single market and

facilitating the mobility of professional business people and skilled laborers (Secretariat, 2008). The ASEAN Vision 2020 is to create a single market and production base through the free flow of labor, services, goods, investment, and capital (Secretariat, 2008a).

This is a challenge for those in the labor market. Economic integration impacts the working population of 500 million covering several professions and unskilled workers (Ofreneo, 2008). One aim of the AEC is to reduce educational and economic gaps (Yue, 2014). AEC will better utilize skills surplus and shortages among ASEAN. Yue (2011) reported that the free flow of skilled laborers is a visible result of the visa and employment pass entitlement for citizens of the ASEAN member countries. The movement of the natural persons (MNP) scheme facilitates the mobility

of skilled labors, immigration, quality assurance, and transregional acceptance of educational professional qualifications. Priority fields for the mobility of skilled workers under the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs), include doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and IT professionals. Surani & Kusumawati (2018) provide examples of the skills needed by students from accountancy programs to fulfill the requirements to work in multinational companies.

The AEC recognizes developing core competencies and the required qualifications to work in the region as a priority (Secretariat, 2008c) including; Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) and analytical thinking (Abdul Kadir, 2003; Raja Malik, 2003). In addition, English communication skills are also considered important (Jitpaisanwattana, Pathumcharoenwattana, & Tamtawutho, 2015).

English is the shared language of ASEAN and part of the ASEAN identity. H.E. LE Luang Minh, the secretary general of ASEAN emphasized in his speech that English is the language for integration. Through English, the development gap can be reduced, and professionals prepared to work in member states (ASEAN, 2015). The mobility of staff and students in the region will help integrate academia throughout the ASEAN (Hashim, Kaur, & Kuang, 2016). HEI plays a major role in the development of human capacity building in ASEAN. Low and Ao (2018) reported recently that the spread of English means, improving global competitiveness using ELF while maintaining the indigenous languages in balance.

This study aims to analyze the existing literature on English in the AEC, conduct a thematic analysis by reviewing previous studies on the required skills for working in the ASEAN Economic Community, and identify the gaps and justification for further studies.

The questions will be elaborated on in this study, including;

1. What are the previous studies of English used in the AEC?
2. What is the thematic analysis of the previous studies on the required skills for working in the AEC?
3. What is the recommendation for improvement of English teaching in the AEC?

II. METHODS

This study employs two methods in collecting

the review. First, PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for a systematic review) which focused on the thematic analysis. The aims are to comprehensively locate and synthesize related research, using organized, transparent, and replicable procedures at each step in the process (Samah, et al (2021); Shaffril, 2018). Secondly, recognizes online Databases for academic sources, including, Wiley online library, Taylor and Francis, Google Scholars, and ResearchGate.

The keywords and searching strategy for systematic review has four main phrases; first, English in the ASEAN, second, English in South East Asia. Third, English in the ASEAN Economic Community, and fourth, English skills in the ASEAN Workplace in the ASEAN Economic Community

The Inclusion and exclusion criteria in searching for literature involve five main criteria; literature types, language, timelines, area coverage, and keywords. The sources have eligibility and exclusion. The eligibility criteria and the exclusion is presented in Table 1.

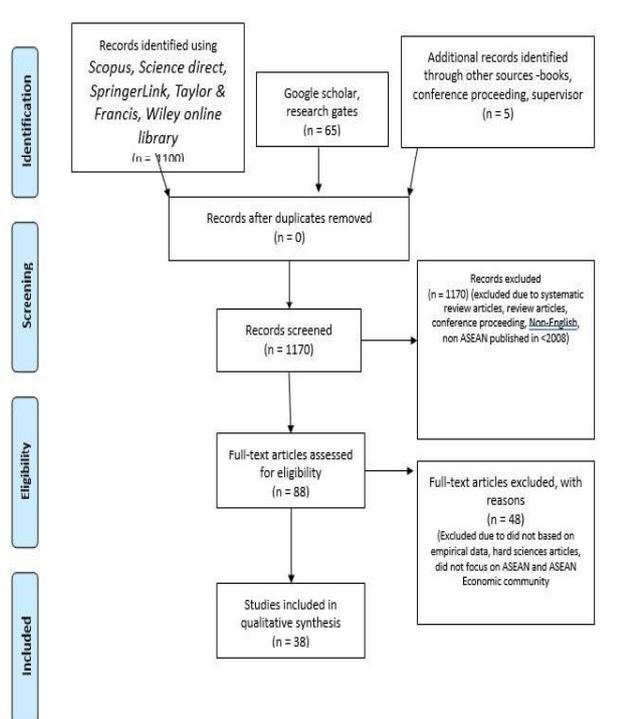
Table 1 The criteria of the source

Criterion	Eligibility	Exclusion
Literature types	Journal, reports, conference proceedings, books	Report, thesis
Language	English	Non_English
Timeline	2008-2018	< 2008
Area	ASEAN	Non-ASEAN
Keywords	ASEAN, ESP, Curriculum design, ELF	Not related to English or linguistics

Flow diagram

In Figure 1. The process of the systematic review is presented. The process involves the identification, and screening of the resources and then followed by setting up the criteria for eligibility and identifying the factors that are included and not included in the review.

Figure 1 Diagram of the systematic review



III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results show that there are 5 themes and 24 sub-themes that are identified based on the set criteria in the review. The location of study of English in the AEC has been conducted in almost all countries in ASEAN, including; ASEAN (13 studies), Thailand (8 studies), Malaysia (8 studies), Indonesia (5 studies), Philippines (3 studies), Singapore (1 study).

The selection from the years of study 2008-2018 resulted that there is more publications in 2014, 2012, 2015, and 2018 that appeared approximately 5-7 per year than in other years that only 1 or 2 publications.

Themes and sub-themes

There are 5 main themes and 24 sub-themes that are found. As the following.

- Theme 1: English for ASEAN Regionalism
Sub-theme: regionalism, identity
- Theme 2: English skills for working in ASEAN
Sub-theme: Speaking, Reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, content, grammar
- Theme 3: English as lingua franca in ASEAN
Sub-theme: Culture, teachers, The use of L1, “E” Variety, Environment, intelligibility
- Theme 4: English in the curriculum
Sub-theme: Methods, materials, syllabus, assessment, learning preference

- Theme 5: English in the education system
Sub-theme: ICT, Critical thinking, MOI, mobility

The study found that the methods that have been used to analyze the English situation in the AEC involve Qualitative analysis (24 studies), Quantitative analysis (7 studies), and mixed methods (7 studies).

In addition, the selection also found that from the themes have been stated above, the most studied topics, are related to the study of oral communication, skills, English for ASEAN regionalism, the need for written skills for working, and materials for English teaching. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 The most and the least studied topics

The most studied topics	The least studied topics
1. The oral communication skills	1. Syllabus
2. English for ASEAN regionalism	2. Critical thinking
3. Written skills for working	3. Grammar
4. Teaching the cultures of the ASEAN countries	4. Vocabulary
5. Using the authentic and semi-authentic materials and ASEAN literature	

From the results, 5 themes are identified. The first is English for ASEAN regionalism. This theme has 2 sub-themes. The regionalism that involves the topic of English as an official and working language in ASEAN, English is a lingua franca in ASEAN. English functions to compete internationally and to develop the economy, and English for integration. The second sub-theme is on identity which involves studies on local languages that function to preserve local language to express identity. Thus, English is a way to identify the ASEAN speaker and preserve the identity. English for ASEAN regionalism is provided in table.4.

Table 4 Theme 1 English for ASEAN Regionalism

Theme 1: English for ASEAN Regionalism
Regionalism (17 studies)
» English is the official and working language of ASEAN.
» English is a lingua franca in ASEAN
» English must be acquired by the ASEAN citizens to compete internationally and to develop economically
» English is for the integration of ASEAN member countries in specific professions
» The ASEAN corpus of English (ACE) aims to understand the natural communication among the ASEAN speakers

Identity (5 studies)

- » Local languages are used in the education system to preserve local and national languages, such as in Thailand and Indonesia.
- » Singapore English represents Singapore's identity
- » English is the language of identification of ASEAN speakers
- » Promoting ASEAN identity by raising awareness toward ASEAN in the curriculum and the exchanges of arts, linguists, sports, and tourism

Theme 2 is English skills for working in ASEAN. With the MRA agreement, citizens from countries in ASEAN can work in other ASEAN countries. English is the working language in ASEAN. The improvement of English skills is needed, including; speaking in formal and non-formal communication, reading report, emails, and letters. Besides, writing reports and business letters. Listening skills and vocabulary improvement also need improvement.

Table 5 English skills for working in ASEAN

Theme 2: English skills for working in ASEAN
Speaking (22 studies) » The jobs in ASEAN required a high level of proficiency » English is used in talking about jobs in Formal and informal communication
Reading (6 studies) » Reports, emails, formal letters, textbooks, and signs on machines.
Writing (13 studies) » Writing daily reports, and proposals, preparing presentations, and emails. » Writing with an emphasis on grammar » Using an authentic business sample
Listening (5 studies) » Understanding main ideas, active listening, listening to instruction
Vocabulary (3 studies) » Mastering vocabularies and terminologies
Content (9 studies) » Understanding rules, case studies related to accounting, technical competence, and authenticity.
Grammar (3 studies) » Understanding grammar rules, studying the English forms of the ASEAN speakers, such as articles, tenses, prepositions, syntax, modality

Theme 3 is on English as lingua franca in

ASEAN. The study involves the teaching of the culture of ASEAN, using the local teachers in teaching English, and also using L1 to assist students understanding. There is also some publication on intelligibility and raising awareness on NNS variety of English.

Table 6 English as a lingua franca in ASEAN

Theme 3: English as lingua franca in ASEAN
Culture (12 studies) » NS culture is not the target cultures » English represents the cultures of the ASEAN speakers
Teachers (8 studies) » Multilingual teachers are the most appropriate language teachers. they can be a model for the students » Teachers will be confident to teach the model that they are not familiar with
Using L1 in teaching and learning (8 studies) » Using L1 to learn L2 » L1 is used in the education system » Adopting local features influenced by the local cultures » Using local cultures in teaching. For Malaysian, it can express their cultures and religions.
'E' variety (8 studies) » A different variety of English is developed when English is used as a lingua franca. » ASEAN variety is a code-mixing variety » The curriculum must teach the varieties of English spoken in ASEAN. » The endonormative norm will be a model. It is students' own nativized varieties. » Studying corpora allows researchers to identify non-standard English among speakers
Environment (8 studies) » Local languages must be acquired before children start learning other languages. » Bilingual society.
Intelligibility (5 studies) » Mutual intelligibility is the goal » Raising awareness of the comprehensibility of NNS speeches and practicing listening to NS and NNS variety.

Theme 4 is the study of English needs in a curriculum that involves material, syllabus, methods, and assessment.

Table 7 English needs in the curriculum

Theme 4: English needs in the curriculum
Methods (5 studies) » Business English as lingua franca (BELF) » Integrating 4 skills » Lingua franca approach » Multilingual model

<p>Materials (11 studies)</p> <p>» <i>Authentic, semi-authentic</i>, promoting linguistic competence, promoting ASEAN literature in the curriculum</p>
<p>Syllabus (2 studies)</p> <p>» <i>Fulfilling students needs</i></p> <p>» The syllabus is designed with the <i>collaboration between content teachers and English teachers</i>.</p>
<p>Assessment (6 studies)</p> <p>» Must be <i>relevant to the ASEAN context</i>, match the curricula, and develop the culture of ASEAN.</p> <p>» <i>The format</i>: presentation, project, portfolio, art project, and creative writing</p> <p>» <i>Related to the lingua franca curriculum</i></p>
<p>Learning preference (3 studies)</p> <p>» Individuals, in pairs, in groups</p> <p>» <i>Blended learning</i>, promotes learning autonomy</p>

Theme 5 described English in the education system. Several sub-themes include learning using ICT, the use of critical thinking, ICT, and teaching English as a medium of instruction, and a recent issue is student mobility.

Table 8. English in the education system

<p>Theme 5: English in the education system</p>
<p>ICT (4 studies)</p> <p>➤ <i>Learning using ICT</i></p>
<p>Critical thinking (2 studies)</p> <p>➤ Thinking skills, <i>critical thinking</i>, creative thinking, and analytical thinking.</p>
<p>Medium of instruction (MOI) (9 studies)</p> <p>➤ <i>English as MOI</i> in ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia Thailand, Singapore</p> <p>➤ <i>ASEAN university network</i>, facilitating study abroad program and student mobility</p>
<p>Mobility (5 studies)</p> <p>➤ <i>Mobility</i> of students, including credit earnings, staff doing research in other countries, and graduates working in other ASEAN countries.</p>

Discussion

Finally, from the systematic review conducted, there are recommendations for the study of English in the AEC. The first finding show that English skills are required skill to involve in the AEC. English skills for employment (Chalamwong, et al, 2012) and there is high demand for the development of ESP courses that can prepare students for specific communication needs in the field (Tenedero & Orias, 2016).

1. The skills needed in the AEC

- a) Skill 1: To have awareness of ASEAN

languages and cultures. Teaching English also aims for ASEAN integration and shows regional identity. Students should be taught other languages and cultures.

- b) Skill 2: High proficiency in English for working.
- c) Having competencies in 4 English skills, vocabulary, grammar, and knowledge of the professions are recommended and improvement can be provided.
- d) Skill 3: Knowing the ASEAN variety and awareness of mutual intelligibility. Since, ELF is the medium of communication among the ASEAN member countries, the intelligibility of each speaker needs to be promoted.
- e) Skill 4: To have Familiarity with authentic/ semi-authentic materials, and the assessment relevant to the ASEAN context.
- f) Skill 5: Acquiring ICT skills and critical thinking need to be promoted for success in finding jobs.

2. The implication of curriculum study

The ASEAN Economic Community requires a shift of the curriculum in HEI that reflects the selection of the material using authentic material and real communication (Planken & Nickerson, 2009) and to inform the lesson plan, syllabus, and assessment (Widodo, 2017). The findings of the improvement for curriculum involve several recommendations for the improvement, including:

- a) To understand the languages, and cultures of the ASEAN member countries –syllabus, and teaching materials to promote the languages and cultures of ASEAN.
- b) To use L1 to assist learning- Code Switching and Code mixing To introduce the English variety of the ASEAN speakers –Teaching grammar, and pronunciation.
- c) To promote the awareness of the intelligibility of the ASEAN speakers- Teaching pronunciation To understand how ELF is used in specific professions – Teaching vocabulary, registers in the specific professions.
- d) To promote the exchanges of students and staff- Mobility and MOI.

IV. CONCLUSION

This can be concluded that the review with PRISMA and databases can identify systematically the topics that have been studied in the topic of English in the AEC. With certain criteria, the results show that there are 5 themes in the previous

studies on English in the AEC. From the theme's exploration, there are 2 main recommendations for the improvement of English teaching, including the skills needed and the curriculum improvement.

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