

THE USE OF ENGLISH IN THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)

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ABSTRACT

English has an important role in communication between countries. English has had a tremendous influence on the use of languages in the world. This can be seen from the number of speakers. In other words, almost a portion of the world's population uses English in certain contexts such as business, marketing, school, or purposes that require English as a communication tool. This type of research is a literature study that is a series of activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and processing research materials. Through language, communication can be developed well. So cooperation in the fields of education, culture, politics, and economics. The use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is by the English language proficiency index in each country. Communication is built using English. English is the official language used in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). This makes an important point for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to be able to speak English. Based on data from the English Proficiency Index results from 2022 and 2023, there was an increase in points. This means that English language skills are very much needed in the academic and professional world. Mastering English does not mean forgetting your mother tongue or the country's official language, however, the ability to speak English can be a mediator in every event, as well as communication between countries both regionally and internationally. English proficiency continues to increase slowly, this shows that people are starting to care about it

Keywords: *AEC ; Ability; English*

INTRODUCTION

Technological advances will be accompanied by the skills a person has. As individuals born in this era of globalization, you must have the competencies and skills to be able to compete in the world of work. Interaction between various countries will create reciprocal interactions in various fields such as language, culture, science,

economics, politics, and social migration. A very closely related field in global communication is language. Language is a communication tool, interaction using the right language will establish communication in various countries. One of the languages used is English. English has an important role in communicating between countries.

English has a tremendous influence on the use of languages in the world. This can be seen from the number of speakers. Alwasih provided notes regarding the number of speakers in 1985 when at that time the number of speakers was 315 million native speakers, 300 million second-language speakers, and 100 million foreign speakers. The University of Sheffield states that in 18 countries the majority of the population are native English speakers. And more than 50 countries use English as an official language.

In some countries, English is the de facto official language, which means the main language in daily life and business. In other words, almost a portion of the world's population uses English in certain contexts such as business, marketing, school, or purposes that require English as a communication tool.

Through language, communication can be developed well. So cooperation in the fields of education, culture, politics, and economics. Rian's¹ research results state that English has quite a big influence on business and marketing. Language plays an important role as a communication tool for business and marketing purposes.

Economics and language always go hand in hand. In 2015 the AEC came into effect. The four pillars serve as guidelines for ASEAN member countries that support regional economic integration. First, a single market and production base. Second, a competitive economic area. Third, equitable economic development. Fourth, integration into the global economy².

With AEC, economic society Indonesia must be able to spread its wings to the international arena to increase family income. Good communication skills, able to expand business relationships. Here language plays an important role. The use of international languages is very necessary, especially English as the language of

¹ Rian Sri Rahayu, Studi Literatur : Peranan Bahasa Inggris Untuk Tujuan Bisnis dan Pemasaran, Jurnal Pemasaran Kompetitif Vol. 1 No. 4 Juli 2018

² Petri, Peter A. and Plummer, Michael G. and Zhai, Fan, The Effects of a China-US Free Trade and Investment Agreement (October 1, 2014).

instruction so that good communication can occur between business actors. AEC acts as a bridge in the economic industry. Selling and purchasing goods or services between Southeast Asian countries will be easier and of course, the level of competition will also increase.

Southeast Asian countries that are members of the AEC do not generally use English full-time. The use of English is used according to needs, it is not a necessity as a means of communication because there is still a mother tongue that is used to communicate. In this pandemic condition, does English play a role in supporting the daily activities of the ASEAN Economic Community or is the use of English by the ability of AEC countries in speaking English?

Language skills are an important point to master. because it is a tool for communication. Speaking English will make someone more confident, get a good, professional job, and get broader information. Language proficiency in Southeast Asia is still at several levels below. Based on this problem, researchers want to know the English language proficiency index in Southeast Asia and the use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English in the ASEAN Economic Community

Wibowo³ language is a system of meaningful and articulating sound symbols (produced by speech organs) that are arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a communication tool for a group of humans to give rise to feelings and thoughts. Meanwhile, Santosa⁴, stated that language is a means of communication between members of society in the form of symbols of speech sounds produced by human speech organs. Language can help humans carry out various tasks and open the gates of knowledge. Language can help humans to socialize and understand each other and unite various backgrounds both regionally and internationally. With the development of

³ Wibowo, Wahyu. (2001). *Manajemen Bahasa*. Jakarta: Gramedia

⁴ Santosa. (2008). *Materi dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia SD*. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka

increasingly sophisticated technology, language plays a role in the development of information through languages, one of which is English.

Rian Sri Rahayu⁵, English language skills have become a necessity in several fields and professions. English is one of the official languages recognized by the United Nations. Language is a tool for communication. Through good language, good communication will be built. English is one of the languages commonly used by people in the world. A good command of English will certainly be very helpful for this. Moreover, the rapid development of technology means that English will certainly be very helpful in the development of information and communication. The Influence of Language in Economics

Language is a tool for communication. Through language, a person can communicate with certain goals, one of which is doing business. English is studied in higher education so that students are competent in communicating in English. Rizka Hayati stated that English language skills are very much needed in the business world. English is a Germanic language and almost the entire world population uses English.

Annisa Risqi⁶, explains that English language skills are closely related to economic competition as measured by per capita, growth, human development index, and level of prosperity. Having English language skills is increasingly becoming a priority in doing business, such as in multinational and local companies. The results of research from the ASEAN Study Center show that the quality of the Indonesian workforce is still inadequate, especially in terms of English language competency. Improving the quality of human resources is the key to success in facing the free market in the AEC era. English has become the dominant means of communication and a vehicle for winning global competition. Research results from the ASEAN Study Center found that improving the quality of human resources is one way to deal with the free market. Being able to speak

⁵ Rian Sri Rahayu, *Studi Literatur : Peranan Bahasa Inggris Untuk Tujuan Bisnis dan Pemasaran*, Jurnal Pemasaran Kompetitif Vol. 1 No. 4 Juli 2018

⁶ Annisa Risqi, *Peran Bahasa Inggris Terhadap Perkembangan Bahasa Inggris dan Pendidikan di Indonesia.2015*

English will be very supportive in welcoming global business competition.

The Role of English in Facing the AEC

The AEC has been in effect since 2015, which means that this condition is a challenge for Indonesia in various aspects such as economics, politics, education, and culture. Building relationships between member countries is one of the keys to the success of the AEC .

Language plays a very important role in establishing communication. Having good language skills will make it easier to communicate between ASEAN member countries. English can open world communication. Good language skills will support people in seeking unlimited information and will easily understand various people from all over the world.

AEC 2015 is the door for ASEAN countries to come to Indonesia, as a logical consequence there will be many foreign workers (TKA) who will visit Indonesia. In response to this, of course, Indonesia must immediately prepare competent personnel in their fields, not only professionals who are responsible for welcoming the AEC, but this applies to all levels of society, including students. The implementation of the AEC will increase foreign visits which will certainly increase the number of visitors to Indonesia. Indonesians must be able to take opportunities to market the local wisdom that Indonesia has, as well as language is an important component in communicating, one of which is English.

Apart from that, from now on Indonesian people must be able to master the local culture of each region, so that with mature cultural insight and fluent English it will be very easy to market the richness of Indonesian culture and traditions to the world. Students and students in particular, as educated people, must be able to prepare their abilities in terms of insight into local culture and hone their English language skills. So, it will be very easy for academics to develop local tourism and cultural potential, especially for foreign tourists.

However, mastery of English here is not only limited to the tourism sector, meaning that Indonesian students can not only be guides, through English, we can also master all fields, such as developing the economy creatively and introducing Indonesian.

Rachel & Sushy Teko Patanduk said that based on the data shown by EF EPI it can show education policies, the quality of human resources, and the level of a country's economy. This continues to be studied considering that in the current era, English language competency is very crucial to face global competition which includes competition for human resources, education, and the economy.

English Proficiency Index

Based on the EF English Proficiency Index⁷, 2020 EF EPI proficiency levels make it easy to identify countries that have similar skill levels and to make comparisons between and within regions. The tasks listed for each skill group indicate some of the skills that individuals should achieve at each level. The countries listed are the top three countries from each group. EF EPI only conducts surveys in countries and regions where English is not the first language. It is important to remember that a country's proficiency group only indicates the "middle" level of people surveyed in that country. EF EPI attempts to compare countries and regions, thereby ignoring individual strengths and weaknesses.

RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is a literature study. Zed⁸ that the literature study method is a series of activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and processing research materials. Research was carried out by collecting data from books and journals related to the problem being studied.

⁷ EF English Proficiency Index tahun 2022

⁸ Mestika Zed, Metodologi Penelitian Kepustakaan Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 1 Jan 2008

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

Asmara Sudomo stated that AEC is a bridge in the economic industry. Making it easier to sell or provide services to other countries in Southeast Asia which makes competition tighter. The ASEAN Economic Community started in 2015. A meeting of ASEAN countries in Singapore agreed that English would be the language used for communication. It can be concluded that English is the language used to communicate internationally. This means that English is important to learn academically or self-taught. Good English language skills will open up good business and job opportunities. Being able to speak English means being ready to compete regionally and internationally.

In Indonesian, an entrepreneur or self-employed person means a person who is skilled in business. Meanwhile, in English, it is known as entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. Zimmer and Scarborough (1998) stated that an entrepreneur is someone who starts a business by taking risks to gain profits by taking advantage of existing opportunities. A strong entrepreneur must be able to read opportunities, turn something into something of value, and have high levels of creativity and innovation in his life. In today's era, doing business must be able to face competition and read opportunities. Entrepreneurs must be astute in knowing their weaknesses and abilities and able to detect the weaknesses and strengths of competitors. Sri Handayani's (2016), research results show that mastery of English is one of the basic assets to be able to compete in the global era, especially in the ASEAN Community. Language skills, especially English, can open up opportunities to expand the scope of relations between countries. People who have foreign language skills can take this opportunity to support their careers. Because the world of work gives high appreciation to people who have good English skills.

Irta Fitriana's research⁹ shows that the use of English is increasingly needed in the field of entrepreneurship. A lot of inspiring and innovative information and references

⁹ Irta Fitriana, *Menguasai Bahasa Inggris : Bekal Potensial Dalam Pengembangan Wirausaha*. Prosiding Seminar Competitive Advantage Vol. 1 No. 2 2012

related to entrepreneurship are published by well-known authors in English. Apart from that, English is used as a means of communication with business partners, which makes English a potential tool for entrepreneurs to be able to see that the business they are building not only survives but also develops and competes in the era of globalization.

In entrepreneurship, good communication is needed. The ability to use a variety of languages will be more supportive in communicating with business relations. English is one of the languages that can be used to communicate—knowledge of English for the development of a businessman.

Based on the results of the 2015 Education First Proficiency Index research on English language tests in 70 countries, shows that Indonesia is in 32nd place below Malaysia and India with a level of ability where the average level of ability for women is higher than for men¹⁰. Steve Crooks said that the data shows that EF EPI can provide an overview and analyze the relationship between English language skills and a country's economic competitiveness. Education policies, the quality of human resources, and the level of a country's economy require skills, one of which is English language competency which is an important point in facing global competition.

Dino Martin (2015) stated that proficiency in English is needed because English is closely related to economic competition. The need for English is increasing, not only in multinational companies but also in local companies. The results of research by the ASEAN Study Center show that the quality of the Indonesian workforce is still inadequate, especially in terms of English language competency. Improving the quality of human resources is the key to success in facing the free market in the AEC era. English has become the dominant means of communication and a vehicle for winning global competition.

Paul Lewis (2009), states that English is ranked third as the language most widely used in communication out of 172 languages. Languages are widely used in the world, and this is the reason why Indonesian citizens must be able to master English. Technological advances and language are very helpful in functioning existing

¹⁰ Hendro D Situmorang, *Pentingnya Kompetisi Bahasa Inggris di Era ME*, 2015

technologies.

Being able to speak good English means being able to compete with Southeast Asian countries in using increasingly developing technologies. The lack of English language skills will be left behind or the opportunities that exist will be taken by more qualified people.

Nanik Shobikah¹¹ stated in the results of his research that the role of higher education in terms of English language education is vital and is needed by society to communicate actively in English, both written and spoken and to be able to communicate well regionally and internationally regarding the needs in their lives. Readiness to communicate in English is one of the priorities in facing the challenges of the ASEAN Economic Community or AEC .

Rahman concluded that English has an especially important role in Indonesia as a member of the MEA. With your English language skills, you will be able to play a major role in running the AEC . Halim (2016), said that English language skills provide more value to a person's competitiveness. This is a motivation for Indonesian people to learn English so that their English language skills also improve.

According to Hartanto¹² ASEAN has agreed on economic recovery called the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) to carry out economic recovery due to the impact of Covid-19. ACRF involves all economic pillars, with a focus on handling the impact of COVID-19 quickly and flexibly, and has several phases, namely reopening, recovery, and resilience. One of the policy responses taken by the Indonesian government is through the COVID-19 Handling and National Economic Recovery Program (PC-PEN). The importance of utilizing digital technology in implementing economic recovery, both for Indonesia and ASEAN countries. This utilization will encourage inclusivity and promote innovation.

¹¹ Nanik Shobikah , (2017) The Importance of English Language in Facing Asean Economic Community (AEC) DOI:10.24260/AT-TURATS.V11I1.873Corpus ID: 149018741

¹² Hartanto, A., & Yang, H. (2020). The role of bilingual interactional contexts in predicting interindividual variability in executive functions: A latent variable analysis. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 149(4), 609–633. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000672>

From the data above, it can be concluded that the use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community is in line with the English language proficiency index in each country. Communication is built using English. English is the official language used in the ASEAN Economic Community. This makes an important point for the ASEAN Economic Community to be able to speak English. English language skills are a requirement. Having English language skills is a plus because professionals are required to have good English language skills. Not only in the Southeast Asia region, the world has recognized and used English as a language for communicating internationally.

ASEAN Economic Community's English language skills based on the English Language Proficiency Index

According to Fajar¹³ with technological developments, the ASEAN economy in the future will be based on innovation. The future of the economy will be based on innovation and more contact. Investments from ASEAN's strategic economic partners can be utilized to support reindustrialization, connectivity, and innovation for regional countries. So that the opportunities that exist in post-pandemic economic recovery can be optimized. Currently, the sectors that are investment priorities for ASEAN partners, such as the US, Japan, and Canada, are financial and insurance activities. Meanwhile, for European Union investors, the highest investment is in the retail sector.

From the results of the 2022 English Proficiency Index (EPI), English language proficiency in Southeast Asia is still led by Singapore with 611 points out of 800 points. This puts Singapore in 10th position in the world out of 100 countries in the very high category. Followed by the Philippines with 562 points followed by Malaysia with 547 points. Indonesia was able to collect 453 points and was ranked fifth in Southeast Asia or 74th in the world.

English language skills play a very important role in building communication. The use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community is by the results of English language proficiency, namely Singapore is a country that has very good English language skills, in

¹³ Fajar Usman, Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA) dan Daya Saing Investasi Indonesia, Jurnal Lingkar Widyaiswara Edisi 3 No. 1 Jan-Mar 2016

second place is the Philippines with 562 points, followed Malaysia with 547 points, followed by Vietnam with 473 points, Indonesia with 453 points, Cambodia with 435 points, Thailand with 419 points and finally Myanmar with 411 points.

The results of the 2023¹⁴ English Proficiency Index (EPI) in Southeast Asia have increased based on the data above, Singapore occupies the top spot with 635 points, followed by the Philippines in second place with 592 points, Malaysia in third place with 562 points, then Vietnam with 486 in fourth place, Indonesia is in fifth position with 466 points, followed by Myanmar with 429 points, Cambodia with 423 points, and Thailand with 419 points.

Based on data from the English Proficiency Index results from 2022 and 2023, there was an increase in points. This means that English language skills are very much needed in the academic and professional world. Mastering English does not mean forgetting your mother tongue or the country's official language, however, the ability to speak English can be a mediator in every event, as well as communication between countries both regionally and internationally.

English proficiency continues to increase slowly, this shows that people are starting to care about their English language skills. Any sector needs workers who are skilled in English because English can increase economic competitiveness through the exchange of information across countries that can access knowledge and expertise. The ability to collaborate internationally with work relations and workplaces.

CONCLUSION

The use of English in the ASEAN Economic Community is by the English language proficiency index in each country. Communication is built using English. English is the official language used in the ASEAN Economic Community. This makes an important point for the ASEAN Economic Community to be able to speak English. English language skills are a requirement. Having English language skills is a plus because professionals

¹⁴ EF English Proficiency Index tahun 2023

are required to have good English language skills. Not only in the Southeast Asia region, the world has recognized and used English as a language for communicating internationally. Based on data from the English Proficiency Index results from 2022 and 2023, there was an increase in points. This means that English language skills are very much needed in the academic and professional world. Mastering English does not mean forgetting your mother tongue or the country's official language, however, the ability to speak English can be a mediator in every event, as well as communication between countries both regionally and internationally.

English proficiency continues to improve slowly, this shows that People are starting to care about the language skills English they have. Any sector needs workers who are skilled in English because English can increase economic competitiveness through the exchange of information across countries that can access knowledge and expertise. The ability to collaborate internationally with work relations and workplaces.

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