



**Local Responses to a Regional Policy: Insights from English as a
Working Language in ASEAN Countries**

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Abstract

This article looks into EFL practices in ASEAN countries and examines how local policy-makers and teachers of English have responded to the policy of English as lingua franca and the working language of ASEAN. It discusses how the policy shapes the goal of EFL learning in member countries and how these responses have been shaped and reshaped by the nation's orientation in the past, at present and in the future. The study randomly searched on the internet databases ASEAN EFL studies particularly after the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. Out of the random search, five articles from each member country were purposively selected based on the quality of the publication, the reputation of the authors,

and the credibility of the publishers. With content analysis, the study found that member countries have responded to the policy differently and these responses result in dissimilar goals, materials and methodologies of EFL learning.

Keywords: *resources, learning goal, texts, practices*

Introduction

Reformation in English education has been undertaken across ASEAN countries in answer to global trends and the widespread use of English for international communication. Furthermore, the need of English is no longer limited to the ability to communicate in the language, but the communication skill has also become more specialized. Thus, the goal of learning English has shifted away from the tetra logy of communication (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to more detailed and integrated skills such as presentation skill, probing skill, negotiation skill and the like. This has created the opportunities for the field to expand further but also challenges for the systems of English education in non-English speaking countries to shape up themselves and meet the challenges. This article critically examines what goals there are in English education in ASEAN countries, how they might relate with global skills, and what resources have been used in order to attain the goals. It starts with a discussion on how globalization has impacted on the goals of English language education in general and in ASEAN countries in particular.

The emergence of globalization has brought with it the eminent role of English as a means of communication. The wide spread of English has undeniably created English as one of the most invaluable resources for both national development and regional incorporation. The connection between English, development, and global cooperation is supposed to be one of the motivating factors behind changes in English education policies in most ASEAN countries (Clayton & Tollefson, 2007; Tollefson & Tsui, 2003). Consequently, most governments in ASEAN countries where English is learned as a foreign language (i.e. East Timor, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia) have recently made radical changes in English language education in order to arrive at the basic proficiency and skills required for the global networks (Hamid, 2014; Crystal, 2012) and the length of exposure to English has been the selected solution. In Vietnam, English is compulsorily introduced at Year 3 and lately at Year 1 as in Thailand. In Indonesia, it was planned to be introduced at Year 4 and then Year 1, but the plan was completely abandoned after the political change in 2014 and English returns to its former structure (starting Year 7) with reduced learning time (from 6 to 2 hours per week).

In some ASEAN countries, English has been gradually used more as medium of instruction (EMI) and this has transformed the local systems of English education. This increases opportunities in the profession, but, at the same time, creates huge barriers for the local education system. As Lamb and Coleman (2008) have shown, English language education system in ASEAN countries faces a number of issues including teacher quality and quantity, equality of outcomes, and learning resources and this article expects to shed a light by explicating uniqueness of EFL in ASEAN contexts.

Regional Policy in ASEAN EFL

English has been powerfully associated with modernization and globalization as it is, indeed, the operational language in contemporary life. With the advancement of information technology, English has become the skill for global literacy (see Tollefson & Tsui, 2007) with which efficiency in global workplace is defined as communicative flexibility with it. The spread of English around the world has been motivated by the need for this global literacy skill (Lo-Bianco, 2014) and EFL learners have invested time and money in accumulating it.

In ASEAN countries, spread of English brings with it neo-liberalism and liberal ideas in addition to globalization process (Majhanovich, 2013). To Price (2014), the spread of English is inherent with neo-liberalism and it carries with it freedom of choice, competition, and market. Consequently, wide spread of English entails creation of socio-economic imbalances between individuals and social groups and between developed and developing countries. Due to modernity and globalization, EFL learners in ASEAN countries have struggled to obtain native-like English proficiency even though the contexts of learning are unsupportive to learning. Postgraduate students in Indonesia, for instance, have to obtain a minimum 500 TOEFL score and publish internationally in English before they can graduate from the program. As a result, the content of learning has become very Eurocentric because knowledge, evaluation systems, textbooks, and resources are mediated in English. But, recently, the content is no longer perpetuated by the need for pedagogic knowledge, but driven by particular market skills and values, leaving aside social and cooperative collaboration for inclining to business-like individual and competitive work ethic (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2013).

Global neo-liberal orientation and skills have adverse impact on English education in ASEAN countries. In Indonesia, for example, the spread of English education deepens the imbalances in the distribution of human capital (cultural, social, and economic capital) among young Indonesian learners of English (Lamb & Coleman, 2008), between western and eastern parts of the country (Yusra, 2015), and between rural and urban areas (Lestari, 2019). In Brunei

Darussalam, the regions, the cities, the villages, the schools, and the individuals are required to contend with each other for a level playing field even though resources are not allocated evenly between rural and urban public schools (Martin, 2005). The use of EMI in Vietnam and Indonesia as well as in formerly British or American colonies such as Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines contribute no guarantee maximum output on English competency (Majhanovich, 2014). Instead, local languages are preferred because inequities, contradictions and complexities at micro-levels can only be evaded with local languages and not with the global language (see also Kosonen, 2013; Brock-Utne, 2013). In fact, in every constitution of ASEAN countries, the role of minority languages is acknowledged and they are encouraged to be used as medium of instruction because through them students can easily absorb knowledge and, through such uses, the languages can be empowered and preserved.

The political, economic and social development in the region has also contributed to its language environment. In Vietnam, according to Lo Bianco (2001) and Wright (2002), languages like French, Russian Chinese and English have arrived in Vietnam through wars, colonialization, foreign investment, economic advancement and global incorporation. In Thailand, the language environment changed over time in relation to the democratic development in the country (Sukamolson, 1998). Such influences, political, economic or social in nature, will lead the governments at macro, meso, or micro levels to create policies about which languages to be taught at schools and what changes they might bring to people's attitudes (Pham & Bui, 2019).

Although English is the most important language in ASEAN countries (Kirkpatrick, 2012a) for socio-economic and political reasons, linguistically-speaking the area has a multilingual complexity. In the Big-Five ASEAN countries (i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines), English has played different key roles, and each has their own official languages. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, different varieties of Malay languages have been used as official languages and when Brunei Darussalam was introduced to the union in 1985 and Timor Leste in 1999, the number of Malay-speaking countries has been added to the list and, yet, English remains the official language of the community (Kirkpatrick, 2012a). In Thailand, despite playing leading role in AEC since 2015, the people operate in the Thai language as well as numerous local varieties of languages, and only those involving in tourism business understand English. Yet, English is the preferred choice of language for the ASEAN free trade market. In the Philippines, the Tagalog language is spoken as an official language. Nonetheless, English is used as the official language. This situation being shared by the former colonies of the British Empire in the union (i.e. Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam)

increases the vitality of English in the region and the inclusion of Myanmar (in 1997) intensifies the English strength. In the former French colonies (i.e. Laos, Viet Nam, and Cambodia), French is used as an official language additional to each national language (Goh & Nguyen, 2004). Other colonial languages (i.e. Chinese and Russian) are also still used, but lay people are usually unable to communicate in these languages and they, instead, use local languages (Crocco & Bunwirat, 2014; Elliot, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2012a; Zapp & Dahmen 2017).

The needs for the communication skill in English as the lingua franca in the global world has shaped and reshaped ELT curricula in the ASEAN countries. In Viet Nam, for example, English language education starting at grade 1 adds more English learning time, expects more possibility to gain L2-like English competency, and boosts the country's economic growth (Goh & Nguyen, 2004). A 10-year English program has been put in place, ensuring communicative English skill of Vietnamese people. Additionally, English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and bilingual education have also been applied at schools in order to increase the students' proficiency in English. The English curricula at senior and higher education levels have been refurbished to ensure continuity of English learning. At higher education level, CEFR-like curriculum (Ngo, 2017; Nguyen & Chaisawat, 2011; Nguyen & Hamid, 2020) and EMI programs (Dang, Nguyen & Le, 2013; Duong & Chua, 2016) have steadily increased in numbers. Yet, several studies (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2014. Nguyen & Burns, 2017; Phuong & Nhu, 2015; Vu & Burns, 2014) have shown that English language education in Vietnam as well as other ASEAN countries has been met with 'relative failure' (Sekhan, 1996; Sekhan, 2009).

A number of factors have been found responsible for such failure. Firstly, there is a problem with teacher proficiency in English (Gobel, et al., 2013; Vu & Burns, 2014; Yoshida, 2013) and the proficiency is pre-intermediate in average (Yusra, 2015). For proficiency, Nation (2014) proposes four learning situations: an emphasis on meaning, accessible materials, time-pressure games, and lots of interactive practices. Low motivation, low ability and low self-confidence resulting from lack of interactive practices in classroom (Wu et al, 2011) leads to a resilient dislike of English (Yoshida, 2009) and a stereotypically negative view of Asian English (Muller, Adamson & Brown, 2014). There are also problems with students' intelligence, competence and learning styles, but these difficulties can be overcome if learning resources are made available to teachers and students. Several studies in Asian contexts including ASEAN countries have shown that resources are unavailable for general (Yusra & Lestari, 2019) and vocational levels (Lam, Cheng & Kong, 2014) of English courses. If this is the case, let us now examine how teachers in ASEAN contexts have exercised agency in creating these learning resources.

Locally-Made Resources as Local Responses to a Regional Policy

Resources for learning have been used to cover a wide range of texts, contexts and tools that teachers use to facilitate student learning (Atkinson, 1987). These might refer to things closely available in classrooms and schools such as whiteboards (Hughes & Madrid, 2020; Ting, 2014) to online materials (Fu, 2018). Some studies have focused on materials created for learning by teachers (Yusra & Lestari, 2019) and by students (Martín-Monje, Vázquez-Cano, & Fernández, 2014), while some others have focused on published materials (Ørevik, 2019).

With respect to teacher-made or commercial materials, Bragger (1985) and Omaggio (1986) believe that they should include activities that endorse the growth of language skill. Birckbichler (1987) suggested several criteria for effective materials: they should encourage meaningful communication in the target language, encourage cross-cultural awareness, integrate other subjects, facilitate teachers and students with real-life language use, and combine linguistic and cultural proficiency with communication potential. When using these materials, Moore and Lorenzo (2015) suggest that teachers should structurally plan them in pedagogic stages: pre-stage (scene-setting, encouraging curiosity, clarifying processes, and outlining assessment criteria), on-stage (grading and scaffolding input, guiding group practice, and prompting individual), and post-stage (assessing the materials and evaluating learning). To a great extent, this is similar to Cunningsworth's (1995), Ellis' (1997) and Sheldon's (1988) depiction of evaluative use of learning materials into pre-use, in-use, and post-use.

With regard to digital materials, Martín-Monje, Vázquez-Cano & Fernández (2014) introduced pedagogic, technical and functional criteria. With pedagogic criteria, they contend that the resources should be appropriate with the students' conditions in terms of contents, level of complexity, level of difficulty, types of task, varieties of texts, and roles of learners. The materials should also fulfill technical criteria in which the materials are technically practical to students without any possible complication and confusion in use. They are also easily manageable that the students can have access to varied materials and use them in different modes. The materials are functional as they might allow them to record and to listen to their own voices and the voices of others, correct their own writing, and provide feed backs to their own and others' language production. Martín-Monje, Vázquez-Cano & Fernández (2014) also found that the students are more often interested in the content, design, and visual presentation of the materials than the textual organization and technical complication therein and, thus, materials should be designed in such a way that they attract students' attention.

In terms of content and sources of content, materials can be associated with new philosophies of learning: episodic, continuous, lifelong, informal, and strategic. Attwell (2007) mentions

that learning occurs at a particular period of time but it never stops at the end of the period. When one episode of learning ends another episode begins. This continuously takes place throughout the course of learning and, indeed, life. Thus, teachers need to organize the classes and the courses for the students to improve their own education. They also need to provide them with access to learning resources and enable them to participate in social activities where learning is activated and automated. Whilst the provision of the resources and the practices might aim at developing job-related skills and knowledge, it is usually directed by the ideology of emancipating the students in learning and, then, in life. Given the short life cycle of knowledge and competency, the speed of technological development increases the instability of competencies and it is reasoned that students need to continuously learn throughout their life for new knowledge and skills. Teachers are challenged to provide resources for these modes of learning and these challenges are financially and practically hard to come to term with.

McGrath (2002) and Tomlinson (2012) classify learning resources in two categories. The general or universal materials are derived from wider contexts of learning for more varied nature of students and developed with commonly acceptable principles of language learning (e.g. *How are languages most effectively acquired and learned?*) and essential features of any good learning materials (e.g. *Are the materials likely to achieve affective engagement?*). The contextually specific and locally-made materials are developed based on a particular profile of learners where the materials are going to be used. Lestari (2019) has shown that locally specific knowledge can be in the forms of local facts, concepts, and procedures while skills can be developed based on personal potentials, acquired knowledge, social experience, and cultural involvement. Her study shows that contextually local content of learning materials are motivating to the students because it simplifies the burden of learning. When locally-made materials are used, the students have already known the cultural content and when used in English class they just see it in a new language. As Kirkpatrick (2014) writes, if students do not understand English and, at the same time, learn English cultures, there is no way that they can learn from them. With locally-made materials, the students have background knowledge on the content and with it they can venture into learning the language within which it is explicated. In this way, learning has been reconstructed as a doable endeavor and with the use of locally-made materials the students can experience a sense of success.

Cheng and Lee (2018) have also shown that a sense of success or failure in learning can be affected by several factors. Study pressures, lack of learning time, demanding courses, poor learning environment, and difficult materials can be demotivating to students and lead to learning drop-out. However, emotionally motivating roles, good rapports, and cohesion among

students can re-motivate them and this leads to better learning growth. With progress, the students will be keener on learning the language. Such situations cannot be made with globally-made materials which the students have not learned and whose language for obtaining them has not yet been acquired. Ho and Man (2007) have shown that students perform better when taught and assessed in the language with which they can communicate. With the use of locally-made materials, Kirkpatrick (2014) argues, the students can proceed in learning by processing L2 tasks in L1 before producing them in L2. Thus, the use of locally-made materials in learning processes and language production will be emancipating to the students.

As Tomlison (2012) has rightly claimed, literature on resource development has shifted away from materials selection or development into, firstly, theorizing materials application to practice and, secondly, theorizing practices into learning theories. What is left unattended in such endeavor, in our view, are the voices of the nations, the students and their cultures which should be rightfully integrated into learning and not to be overwhelmed by the inner-circle languages, cultures, and ideologies of the English speakers. The effect of such agenda on students' communicative competence in the short or in the long run, according to Tomlison (2012), deserves scientific attention. Not many, if any, such studies have been conducted and this current study is expected to fill this gap.

Methods

Research Design: The goal of the study is to describe how English as a working language has been taught in ASEAN countries. This study is library research by examining EFL studies in the region.

Population: The study covers unidentifiable numbers of English studies and non-probability sampling techniques were used to represent the population.

Sample: Sample was selected by using purposive, proportional, and dimensional techniques. The status of English could be a second language (L2) in some member countries (i.e. Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Myanmar) and a foreign language (EFL) in others (i.e. Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos FDR, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam). The study purposively selected five research articles about EFL practices in each of these countries based on the following criteria: (a) published in 2015 onwards, (b) published in internationally indexed-journals, (c) written by local researchers or English-speaking

researcher(s) working in the area for at least one year, and (d) having impact factors and citation indices at least .5.

Data Collection: Data were collected by searching potential articles from online databases (Google Scholar, DOAJ, EBSCO, ProQuest, ERIC, JSTOR, and MLA), using country names, *AEC*, *materials*, *texts*, *contexts*, and *method* as key words. When an article was found to fit in the criteria above, it was then downloaded and saved in the document data profile. The search and the download continued with other articles. This procedure resulted in more data that we have anticipated but it enabled us to accumulate the most reliable samples for analysis.

Data Analysis: Data were analysed using content and thematic analyses with ethnography of document in procedure where the sampled texts were read and coded for information concerning the research foci, that is, on the goals of EFL learning, socio-cultural settings of the school, socio-cultural background of teachers and students, the sources and the types of classroom texts, the sources and types of classroom activities, and the impact of such texts and activities as well as the challenges and the opportunities in the use of such texts and practices. The analyses were made by identifying, classifying, describing, and explaining the generalizable trends and counter trends in the data or with findings from other studies.

Findings and Discussion

The main concern of the article is on the goal of EFL learning, macro socio-political and micro socio-cultural of schools, socio-cultural background of teachers and students, the sources and types of learning materials and activities, and challenges and opportunities facing EFL learning in ASEAN countries.

National Settings: Shifting Goals of EFL Learning

Literature on ASEAN EFL practices report multilayer goals of language learning. Studies by Clayton (2002) and Man and Chan (2002), for example, have shown that the purpose of EFL learning is initially affected by the status of English as an international language, that is, the medium of interaction involving people of different national background. This generalized goal is common everywhere and communicative competence in English has been the main target of EFL learning. However, the role of English as an international language might be in conflict with other languages which have already been used in the area as a means of inter-nation communication. In the former colonies of China, French and Russia (i.e. Cambodia, Vietnam,

and Laos), Chinese, French, and Russian languages are still used among the elite groups in the countries. The huge number of Malay speakers in the member countries (i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore) might also challenge the status of English. However, being spoken only by a limited area, Chinese, French and Russian languages cannot replace English as it is the most preferred means of international communication in the region and elsewhere. Being associated with particular country members in the union, the Malay language risks favoritism and non-speakers of the language prefer a neutral one. Being an international language, English is preferred. Additionally, English has been associated with more country members through colonization, UN operations, American supremacy, or international agencies. Through colonialization, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, and Myanmar have become the Outer Circle countries of English speakers (Kachru, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2012b). Through UN peace-keeping operations (UNTAC and UNTAET) in local post-colonial conflicts, English has become the most important foreign language in Cambodia and East Timor). Through post-war supremacy of America, English, rather than French or German, is the most important language in the world (Bennett & Barros, 2017). The dominant role of English-speaking international agencies in the region since 1980s has created massive economic development and improved the status of English (Zapp, 2019). These situations lead to the selection of English as the *de facto* lingua franca in ASEAN (Krasnick 1995) even before it was decided as AEC working language.

Contemporarily, the goal of EFL learning has now shifted from being communicative to being more instrumental. This has been the trend in the postmodern time where English is a means of acquiring knowledge and science. Siguan (2001) and Ammon (2011) argue that the use of English as language of science has something to do the simplistic nature of the language, compared to French and Latin, enabling it to shape and reshape knowledge and then to produce and communicate it in scientific exchanges. The prestigious role has also been supported by English-speaking international development agencies through their publications and libraries (Kaess, 2017; Zapp, 2019). In OECD library with 219,700 collections, for example, the majority of the publications are in English while other world languages are used only in translated summaries of key titles. In this sense, the English status as a language of science results from the world marking processes in which English is predominantly used in the production of knowledge and science, exercising the symbolic power of English speakers.

In ASEAN countries, more and more scientific articles are published in English. However, as Prescott (2007) and the writings therein have shown, the English variety being used is “the Asian Englishes” (Butler, 1998; Kachru, 2005) or the Outer-Circle “Southeast Asian

Englishes” (Bautista, & Gonzalez, 2006), rather than the Inner-circle variety. The recurrent needs for internationally indexed publications with impact factors and citations indices have forced ASEAN scholars in the Expanding and Foreign circles to publish in English. More and more articles and journals in these countries are now authored in English. Around 140,000 journals indexed in the ASEAN Citation Index (ACI) are not only in English but they should also be titled, abstracted, key-worded, and cite-referenced in English. These will also increase the chance for the new ASEAN variety of English to be used as local linguistic resources for knowledge and science production.

The goal of EFL learning in ASEAN countries have also been influenced by the status of English as the language of technology and economy. In most cases, EFL learning is associated with acquisition of work-related competencies, for instance, in using technology and performing works in economic enterprises, giving rise to technologically and economically instrumental use of English. In numerous EFL studies in ASEAN contexts reviewed here, English has been constructed as an instrument for personal investment. In Vietnam, Stroupe and Kimura (2015) describe, EFL learning is instrumental to self-invested long-life education, capacity building, and trainings so that Vietnamese young generations have more comparative advantages to work and introduce Vietnamese technologies to industrialized and modernized ASEAN countries and the world. In Singapore, Tan *et al* (2017) reports, English is the core of the 21st century competencies --- creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, positive attitude, adaptability, and resilience. In Thailand, EFL curriculum reform sounded a similar concern where Thai students’ TOEFL-based scores are below its regional competitors and if this continues they might lose in local professional and economic competition (Hayes, 2010). Like Thailand, Indonesia has re-trained English teachers in order to maintain its superiority in English among the Expanding circle in ASEAN region (Widiati & Hayati, 2015). International development agencies have also recognized this instrumental essence when they recommend English as the core of vocational competencies, lifelong learning, digital literacy and digital economy (OECD, 2020).

Currently, however, the goal of learning English in ASEAN context has become more symbolically cultural and English is portrayed as the language of the ASEAN Economic community (AEC). Rather than being linguistically competitive, AEC has constructed itself as an English-speaking community. Acknowledging linguistic and cultural differences (Article 2 of the AEC Charter), AEC has decided that the ‘working language’ of the community is English (Article 34) (Kirkpatrick, 2010). As Okudaira (1999) shows, the use of English in AEC contributes to the advent of the unequally AEC variety of English. Kachru (2005) and Prescott

(2007) and studies therein have elaborated the nature of this variety and how it has been used in local literacy and literary discourses. Butler (1997) reported eight dictionaries of ASEAN English words that are accountable for Australasian dictionary of English. Although this dream is still a long way, recommendations towards the use of ASEAN variety of English as a medium of local instruction has been resounded by international thinkers (Kirkpatrick, 2012b; Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Caffery, Coronado, & Hodge, 2016) and local experts (Lim, 2002; Musa, Lie & Azman, 2012; Choomthong, 2014).

School Settings: Curriculum and Learning Culture

Let us now examine the curricular and socio-cultural contexts of the schools in ASEAN countries as described in various ASEAN EFL studies. By the social-cultural settings we mean to refer to the social, cultural, economic, and educational conditions of the society where the studies were conducted. In order to draw descriptive conclusion about the schools, we need to examine how curriculum structure, social structures, cultural practices and economic resources have been put into EFL learning practices. We found that the socio-cultural settings of the schools are dominated by multilingualism and multi-culturalism in nature resulting from the colonial history of the nations in the past, the trace of development, and the future socio-economic and socio-political agenda in ASEAN regions.

Generally, at school level, the multilingual and multicultural nature of ASEAN schools has been formed throughout the colonial history of the nations in the past. In the Outer-Circle countries, the co-existent use of the colonial language English and the national and local languages in the school environment has been commonplace. Several studies (e.g Bernardo, 2000; Benson, 2008; Cummins, 2008; Musa, Lie & Azman, 2012) have reported conflicting views on this use. On the one hand, they are associated with interferences, transfer of learning strategies, and erosion of students' communicative competence, but, on the other, they have been used as useful resources (Atkinson, 1987) and media for teaching grammar (Ali, 2008), reading comprehension (Razianna Abdul Rahman, 2005; Nambiar, Ibrahim & Krish, 2008), as well as oral and written skills (Siti Hamin Stapa & Abdul Hameed Abdul Majid, 2006). The moves towards Inner-Circle norms among these countries are now intensified through involvement of native-speaker teachers, consultants, textbooks (Wan Abdul Halim, 2016), and internationally-wired education systems (Tan et al, 2017). Although some teachers at rural areas have been reported to be inconvenient them (Ong & Lin, 2015), such moves are eagerly welcome at urban schools. In these countries, the schools are financially supported towards internationally recognized curricula.

The outward looking of the Outer Circle is not shared in the Expanding Circle (i.e. Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam) where schools and EFL learning systems have been reoriented towards the balance between the global and the local needs. The Language Program 2020 in Vietnam, the Character Education and then Learning Freedom in Indonesia and the New ELT Initiative in Thailand reflect how they position local and national interests in response to global challenges. In Vietnam (see Dudzik & Nguyen, 2015; Nguyen 2014; Van Van, 2010), schools and EFL curriculum has been set to implicitly enhance the locus of students' competence in their own native cultures, inter-cultures, and the English-speaker cultures, although at micro levels teachers of English, to a certain extent, have failed to address them in ELT practices. In Indonesia curriculum, schools should develop student creative and innovative characters (Lestari, 2019; Yusra, 2018; Yusra & Lestari, 2019), facilitate them with freedom, creativity and innovation to choose what to learn and how they learn it (Sesfao, 2020; Wardhana, 2020) and gain comparative competitiveness in global competition. In Thailand, schools have similarly been assigned to prepare for settings enabling the students to develop knowledge about the national culture and knowledge about the culture of other countries (Kosonen, 2013: Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002). In these countries, the schools are permitted to develop their own curriculum based on local languages and cultures.

In the Foreign Circle (i.e. Cambodia, East Timor, and Laos FDR), schools are rather occupied with traditional problems. In these countries, English starts as early as Grade 4 (Tweed & Som, 2015) with 5 hour lessons per week, but due to large class size (40 to 50 students), the class fails to develop students' communicative competence (Moore, 2011). Foreign aids, native-speaker fellows, and native-speaker textbooks were involved in funded teacher trainings, but when the funding is terminated, English language education was rather unattended (Kosonen, 2013). In most cases, due to lack of English teachers, teachers of other subjects were trained to teach English and the real teachers of English were still being trained at local English centers of the countries (Moore, 2011). The students have low motivation and literacy skill and school dropout is also high (Igawa, 2008). As school funding is limited, the learning resources are also limited (Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009). Better resources might be found at urban schools where English for communication is taught. At rural schools where English is taught for reading comprehension and grammar exercises, the buildings and the classrooms do not have descent furniture and electric equipment (Igawa, 2008). Textbooks were dropped from aid-giving countries and they contained materials align to the students life. When the aids terminated, no native speaker specialist were available to assist them creating national textbooks (Tweed & Som, 2015) and they resorted the problems by using the native-speaker

textbooks and used locally dominant languages as a medium of instruction (Appleby, 2002; Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009).

Classroom Settings: Teachers, Students, and Classroom Texts and Activities

The socio-cultural backgrounds of English teachers and students in ASEAN countries have been identifiable in a number of dimensions: multilingual, low English competency and pedagogy, lack of resources, but creative in creating locally-made materials and pedagogy.

As the status of English in ASEAN countries is a second or a foreign language, teachers of English have already been able to communicate in a language or languages before learning and teaching English. In Outer-Circle countries, teachers speak the national language in daily life but use English, with minimum national language, as a medium of instruction. In Expanding-Circle countries, they speak a local language in daily life and use the national language, with minimum English, as a medium of instruction. In Foreign Circle, they speak a local language and a national language and they interchangeably use both as a medium of instruction.

Teachers in ASEAN countries have always been complained of having poor English competency and pedagogic skills due to local trainings. However, the complaints are related to different expectations across nations. Although local teachers of English in the Outer-Circle countries speak the language as a second language, acquire excellently high TOEFL or IELTS scores, and have native-like exposure to the language community, they have been always complained to have failed in increasing English scores of the students. Lian and Sussex (2018), for example, have shown how the Philippines teachers of English were complained to because English proficiency rank of the nation fell below that of Malaysia and Singapore. In the Expanding circle teachers are complained to because they fail to increase the students' score in the national examinations. In Indonesia, they have been accounted responsible for low English scores (Yusra, 2015), but their success in making the country's English proficiency rank (32 out of 72 Asian countries) equal to that of the Outer-Circle (e.g. India, rank 22 and Hong Kong, rank 30) has been overlooked. In Foreign Circle, ELT practices having just started, teacher education, training, and other innovations are still underway.

ASEAN English teachers are found to have protested against lack of teaching resources, but these resources differ from contexts to contexts. In the Outer-Circle countries, quality textbooks, native-speaker teachers, native-speaker co-teachers, and native-speaker consultants are available in the school and the classroom settings. In fact, as Dat (2010, p. 269) have shown, teachers here have "wide options of choices, comparative perspectives, supplementary materials, appealing topics and the mental challenge" in the resources. But, the weaknesses are

seen in the limited opportunities for the students and the teachers to have wider accesses to the English-speaking communities, for instance, through direct visits to English-speaking countries or through mediated interactions on the internet. In the Expanding circle, on the contrary, lack of resources mean limited numbers of imported textbooks as in the case of Vietnam and Thailand and lack of national and locally written materials as in the case of Indonesia (Yusra, 2018; Yusra & Lestari, 2019). In Foreign Circle, lack of resources is really severe because teachers and students here are dependent upon donated books from Inner-Circle countries.

But, ASEAN teachers and students are taking the challenges head on. A number of studies have documented a number of sterling efforts in the region towards upgrading the quality of English materials. In the Outer-Circle countries, large scale projects are underway where local English teachers in collaboration with language and publication specialist from internationally-reputable universities modify imported textbooks (Dat, 2010; Nguyen et al, 2017; Nguyen & Hamid, 2020)) and locally-made materials textbooks to suit global needs and competencies. The products have also been sold to other ASEAN countries as regional textbooks (Dat, 2010;). In Expanding Circle, the imported textbooks have been re-created into national in-country textbooks (Dat, 2010; Widiati & Hayati, 2015) to accommodate local needs for more learner-centeredness, competencies, and other national interests (Kirkpatrick, 2013; Yusra, 2018; Yusra & Lestari, 2019). In Foreign Circle and in rural areas of the Outer and the Expanding circles, teachers and students have been using their own materials and pedagogy as a way of solving resource problems (Kirkpatrick, 2012a; Kirkpatrick, 2012b; Lestari, 2019).

Conclusion

We have examined EFL studies in ASEAN contexts and explicate how goals and contexts of EFL learning have been constructed by the regional orientations in the past, at present and in the future. The Outer-Circle communities have set the goal of learning English as a means of attaining native-like and professional work-related competencies resulting the use native-speaker textbooks, teacher trainers, and teacher consultants in the classrooms. The Expanding-Circle communities have adopted strategies where native-speaker textbooks and methodologies are modified to accommodate national interests and local contexts. In Foreign Circle, resources being limited, teachers and students rely on locally-made materials and methodologies to address English challenges at local and national levels. Various local settings, text types, and cultural practices have been found to be utilized in order to meet the needs of globalization.

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