

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ASSISTING THE YOUTHS TO ENHANCE THEIR ENGLISH IN FACING ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

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## Abstract

Asean Economic Community (AEC) is the realization of the region's end goal of economic integration that envisions ASEAN as a single market and production base, a highly competitive region, with equitable economic development, and fully integrated into the global economy. With those opportunities, youths have more chances to develop their career into the international scale. However, going to the international scale is not an easy process as there are problems that they have to face. One of the most significant problems is the language. It has been a general knowledge that everyone must be capable of speaking English when they want to work abroad. English, as the mostly used international language, makes the communication between foreigners become easier and more understandable. Indonesia, as one of ASEAN members which English is not the first language, faces a problem where the youths lack of knowledge about English. Most of them are not able to speak English in basic level. Thus, it creates inconfidence within them that they cannot go abroad because of the language barrier. Many of them stay to work in Indonesia while they have bigger chance to develop their talent and get more experience. This paper analyzed the effort that educational institutions have made to help Indonesia's youths to improve their English and boost up their confidence and explain how English comprehensions plays an important role for the youths to participate in Asean Economic Community.

**Keywords:** English skill, youths, AEC, educational institutions.

## Introduction

### *Status Quo of Indonesian's Young People and ASEAN Economic Community in Indonesia*

The young are the people who have desire, determination, motivation, and high energy. They also have dreams and hope. They have a full potential to be a good man in the future. Thus, they need to exercise this full potential in the right way. It becomes a universal knowledge that the young represents the future of a country that they can be the leader. They are also the social actor of change and progress. Therefore, the involvement of youth in to develop the nation is a must.

However, young people in Indonesia seem to be declined in terms of quality. There is unemployment rate for 22% between the age of 15 and 24 years old. According to the Chamber of Commerce in Indonesia, this great number of unemployment leads to multiply violence and an erosion of values. This obstacle happens also because the access to youth employment is very limited. The inflexibility of legislation in Indonesia does not entirely facilitate and encourage the hiring of young people.

In 2015, ASEAN established an integrated economic system known as Asean Economic Community (AEC). AEC opens the chance for everyone in South East Asia to broaden their experience into the international level as the access to work abroad or trade goods has become easier. There are many foreigners who may come and work in Indonesia and many Indonesians are able to work abroad. For the young people in Indonesia, AEC is expected to be a good opportunity to broaden their experience and contribute to the national development by expanding their career and making collaboration with the foreign countries.

AEC may seem as a gate for the Indonesian's young people to exercise their potential. However, in the status quo, there is not enough preparation from the young to face AEC. Lacking of awareness becomes one of the main problems because those young people are reluctant to catch up with the development. Entertainment, infotainment, spending money, and other immature behaviors become the main concerns of the young instead of considering what kind of opportunity they have to develop their experience. One of the most influential factor that tends to be ignored by the young people is language skill.

It has been a universal knowledge that professionals have greater ease in moving to other countries. Included in the integrated system of AEC, there is a big competition within the workers because they come from various countries. Some of the countries are probably unable to pay higher than Indonesia but there is probability that those foreign workers come to work in Indonesia that makes the competition even tougher in the home country. Thus, language ability is important, especially English. English is the standard international language that it becomes a condition and guarantee for everyone who wishes good jobs. The young, especially, have to stay competitive by shaping good academic performances and technical skills.

The educational institutions have a significant role toward the development of the young people. It is included in the development of their academic, soft skills, and behaviors. In the AEC era, the educational institutions create several programs in which it is expected to help the young people ready to participate in AEC, especially in assisting them to learn the international languages

This paper will discuss the significant role of the educational institutions to accommodate the youth in developing their language skills. The study case is taken in Universitas Sanata Dharma. There will be explanations of what efforts Universitas Sanata Dharma does to assist its students in developing their English skills in order to prepare them for a better opportunity to advance their career.

### ***ASEAN Economic Community***

ASEAN Economic Community is an integrated economic system that aims for single market in ASEAN nations. It aims for a stable, prosperous, and competitive regions supported by a balanced economic development, poverty reduction, socio-economics dis-parties between the Member States. It includes human resources development, recognition of professional qualification, consulting more closely at macro-economic policy and financial measure trade financially, improvement of infrastructure and communication connectivity, the development of electronic transactions through e-ASEAN, integrating industry in throughout the region to promote regional resources, and increasing involvement of the private sector to build the AEC. It requires the Member States to agree to establish ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in which there is a commitment about lowering tariff in goods zero to five percent. AEC is not only about the single market concept but also single production base will that requires liberalization of capital and skilled labor.

According to Population Division of United States, the populations in ASEAN reach 633.1 millions in 2015 and Indonesia inhabitants reached more than 237 millions in 2010 that made Indonesia as the largest population in ASEAN. Thus, it becomes a challenge and opportunity for Indonesians to face AEC. AEC could be disastrous if national services and products unable to compete.

One of the AEC's agenda is to eliminate, minimize barrier in economic activity across the regions by the single market concepts in which trades and services will be unified and integrated. Therefore, it allows foreign workers to come to Indonesia and it could threaten the local workers. Jobs hunting will be more competitive and it obliges the local workers to also improve their skills.

Indonesians' readiness to face AEC should be reinforced with internal reinforcement. Improvement of the quality of human resources that have global competitiveness is a must. The establishment of AEC creates free flow of skilled labor between countries. However, Indonesia's status quo show that Indonesia workers are unskilled or being used as nominee figures in companies run by foreigners in management or owner level.

The responsibility to improve the skills does not only lie on the government and institutions but the people. The people, especially the young, have to be aware that AEC is a great opportunity for them to develop their career and improve their well-being. This awareness also follows the realization to improve their skills, included language skills. However, most of them are not aware. A research by Amiti et. al. shows that only 10% workers have high school education with limited language skills.

### ***The Importance of English in AEC***

The establishment of AEC gives a good opportunity for the young people in Indonesia to work abroad in countries that have more stable economic and more developed such as Singapore and Malaysia. However, there is also a possibility in which foreign workers from less developed countries such as Laos or Cambodia come and work in Indonesia. Those workers who are able to come to Indonesia are mostly skilled that they seek better payment in Indonesia. Both conditions create a more competitive environment for the young people as it requires them to enhance their skill.

Dealing in a foreign environment needs the language ability to be able to communicate with the foreigners. English is a universal language that it becomes a must to understand it for anyone who want to work in international level. The foreign workers that come to Indonesia are capable to communicate in standard English since Indonesian is not their mother tongue and most companies in Indonesia now require English fluency to have high position in the office. Working abroad also requires English ability as it is the tool to communicate, mostly in the developed country like Singapore or other countries like Malaysia or Thailand that have similar situation to Indonesia. Moreover, those who can speak English are prioritized to have better chance to be successful since their communication skill reaches into international level. It is included being an entrepreneur or working in foreign companies.

### ***Profile of Universitas Sanata Dharma***

Universitas Sanata Dharma was firstly established under the name of Sanata Dharma Teacher Training Institute on 1955 by The Order of Society of Jesus. Its first purpose was to find teacher-training institution with four majors: Education, English, History, and Exact Science. Sanata Dharma was renamed Sanata Dharma Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and was a member of the Association of Catholic Universities in Indonesia in 1958. In 1993, its name changed to be Universitas Sanata Dharma with

twenty four undergraduate study programs, three graduate programs, two professional education programs, and language courses.

With the motto excellent and humanist, Sanata Dharma aims to educate the youths by integrating academic excellence and humanistic values rooted in the universal Christian values and humanity as stated in Pancasila (the ideology of five principles) so that the youth would obtain academic abilities in accordance with their major and integrity.

In assisting its students regarding to language ability, Sanata Dharma establishes a language institute and several international programs. Language Institute of Sanata Dharma was established on 1992, aiming to achieve excellence in language development of a full, whole human person which empowers the person to participate in the protection and promotion of human dignity. As a support and complement for any unit to the University's language study programs, the institute offers language training to non-language-major students, academic and administrative staff members of the University and the public; besides, it is also to facilitate language development and studies in general.

These are several programs in the Language Institute:

a. Center of English for International Communication (CEIC)

The programs of CEIC is designed for individuals who wish to develop their English skills, both spoken and written.

b. Center of English for Specific Purposes (CESP)

Two types of programs offered by CESP are English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

c. Language Testing Center

It conducts ITP TOEFL training courses.

d. Translation Center

It provides translation from Indonesian to English and vice-versa for individuals and institutions both within and outside the University.

Besides the Language Institute, Universitas Sanata Dharma also provides several international programs, such as the exchange programs. The University's students have the chance to study abroad and exercise their ability in speaking and adapting to the foreign environment. More, the foreign students also have the chance to study in Sanata Dharma so the local students also have the experience to communicate with the foreigners in order to practice their language skills and develop their knowledge about foreign cultures.

***The Contribution of Sanata Dharma as the Educational Institution to Assist the Youth in Improving Their Language Skills***

Educating the students to gain more knowledge inside the class is not the only way to develop students' true potential. The educational institutions need to promote the development through different levels by providing number of ways. As an example, in terms of level, it can be international, national, or individual level. In terms of ways, it can be economy, social, political, or individual development. As Indonesia is in the era of AEC, it is also important for the educational institutions to provide a way for the students to improve their communication skill, especially the English language that is primarily used as the communication tool among the Member State.

Higher educational institution like universities is a place where there is not only higher education but also the empowerment and raising the quality of life where

people can continue to develop their knowledge and skills. Universities facilitate their students in various ways so the students are able to channel their interest and upgrade their skills. Each university absolutely has variant student organizations that becomes the place for the students to explore their interest and practice it. It is because universities and other educational institution realize that those students have the chance to develop what they have outside the classroom.

Development is not only about the macro-economic growth but also the improvement of the individual and collective human condition. It is a constant process of improvement that the institutions play an important role in creating the positive change to self that supports us. This is the reason that higher educational institutions are established. Improvement is not a one-step process but constant that also needs a place that can accommodate this constant improvement, which is the educational institutions.

As a higher educational institution, Sanata Dharma, has a crucial role to enhance its development as an agent of development. It needs to be proactive to guide the students for a better development as it acknowledges the development of the students, links this to local and national development goal through its mission, educational content, research, and services (Thomson:2008). It is also recognized as playing a central in human, social, and economic development. Thus, the development is beneficial not only for the students but also for the society and the nation.

One of the efforts that is done by Sanata Dharma is by establishing the Language Institute and making exchange programs for local and foreign students. The programs in the Language Institute are for public thus, it enables everyone to have the opportunities to develop their English, not only in spoken but also written skills. This is one of the contributions from Sanata Dharma for being proactive to guide the students to enhance their development.

For the University's students, Sanata Dharma also provides them the with foreign languages. The non-English-major students are given English subjects related to their study program like if a student is from Economics Department, he or she learns English that is usually used in economy. It is to enable to master English not only in the conversational skill but also in the specific field.

The non-English-major students also have to take the written and oral English Competence Test as a requirement for the graduation so when the students graduate, they have not only the academic skills related to their major but also English comprehension. In this globalization era, English skill becomes a must of skill. Companies and government's offices require English ability for certain position. Thus, the English Competence Test becomes one of requirement to graduate so when the students graduate, they will be someone who is excellent in the communication level too.

Indonesia's citizens put a lot of hopes on the young generation. They hope for a better country as they believe the young people may bring good changes for the country. They expect the young to be more competitive and manage to cope up with the development in the globalization era. Being competitive needs an upgrade for their skills too, including the communication skill in which the young are able to speak in front of the global citizens and have a bigger circle in which they are not active inside the nation but also overseas.

AEAN Economic Community is the real challenge for the young people as it really demands the commitment from the young to really devote themselves into the process of development. Those who cannot commit to involve in the process of developing themselves will not be able to survive in the competition of acquiring a

better career. AEC allows a lot of foreign businesses and workers to come and work in Indonesia. This means the chance to look for a job becomes more competitive as the local ones have more competitors. Many offices would be more selective in choosing their workers and those who have great skills and personality will be prioritized.

This concern is what pushes Sanata Dharma to proactively develop the students' skills. This era demands a capability to speak English to have a good job. The English skill is not only in written but also spoken. Therefore, the Language Institute of Universitas Sanata Dharma facilitates the students to improve their communication in English. Divided into several division, Language Institute focuses the students in what kind of English skills they want to improve. By focusing on certain purpose, the students are expected to understand thoroughly and manage to apply it in the real life.

Through those programs provided by Language Institute, students are prepared to be more ready and confident in facing the AEC. The good English communication skill helps them to make better connection with the foreign owner businesses in Indonesia that may give them guarantee of better job opportunity. The good English communication skill also guarantees the students who want to go abroad. They adapt easier in the foreign countries because they can communicate well in English as the international language. Those who can speak English well also have bigger chances to get better job opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

AEC for Indonesia is a big opportunity to improve the nation in terms of economic and human resources. However, Indonesian's youths, as the future generation of the nation, still stumble on the communication. Many of them are not competitive enough as they cannot communicate well the foreigners. It is because they do not have enough experience to develop their English.

Educational institutions as the place where the young people pursue their knowledge are expected to also help the young people to not only develop their knowledge about their major but also other significant skill like English comprehension. Being able to speak English guarantee the young people to have better competitiveness and it enables them to compete with other foreigners in a higher level.

Acknowledging this importance, Sanata Dharma as one of the higher educational institutions provides an assistance for the young people to develop their English skills. The University establishes the Language Institute that provides English courses for different proposes. Not only the courses, the Language Institute also provides courses for English tests such as TOEFL ITP and IELTS. The University's non-English-major students also have English Competence Test before they graduate to make sure that they have appropriate English skill that can be a beneficial modal for their career. Those programs are not only give the young people an improvement for their English but also enhance their competitive value so they can compete in AEC in the higher level, not just the nominee figures in the companies. Eventually, by having the English skill improved, students can maximize their potential in a bigger scope by participating in AEC that also contributes toward the national development.

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