

Review of: "Sustainable Development In Southeast Asia: Lessons, Partnerships, and English"

Romina Fucà¹

¹ University of Verona

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article discusses how the analysis of regional cooperation and sustainable development in Southeast Asia can inform the development of the English as a foreign language curriculum thanks to ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations). It suggests incorporating themes such as communication skills, global issues, academic writing, cultural competence, knowledge of regional institutions, critical thinking, and digital literacy into the curriculum to prepare learners for active participation in regional collaboration and sustainable development efforts.

Proficiency in cross-cultural communication is an essential skill for fostering empathy, tolerance, and solidarity across borders, ultimately contributing to a more just and equitable world. In today's interconnected world, collaboration across borders is essential for addressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and conflict. Proficiency in cross-cultural communication enables individuals and organizations to work together effectively, leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise to find innovative solutions to complex problems. **In addition**, diplomacy and negotiation often involve interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Communicating respectfully and effectively across cultures is essential for building trust, resolving conflicts, and reaching mutually beneficial agreements in international relations.

Last but not least, in the global marketplace, companies that can effectively navigate cultural differences have a competitive advantage. Proficiency in cross-cultural communication enables businesses to expand into new markets, forge successful partnerships, and develop products and services that resonate with diverse consumer preferences.

Definitions are provided by authors for key terms used in the article, such as Southeast Asia Ministerial Forum, regional cooperation, ASEAN, ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), sustainable development, curriculum, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), to aid the reader's understanding. Overall, the article offers insights into the importance of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia and suggests ways to integrate these concepts into English language teaching to prepare learners for active participation in regional development initiatives.

Recommendation:

Understanding ASEAN and Recent Progress in Literacy:

1. **ASEAN Composition and Governance:** ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is a regional

intergovernmental organization comprising ten member states in Southeast Asia. It functions as a community that aims to enhance regional stability, social progress, cultural development, and political and economic cooperation among its members. Recent progress in literacy within ASEAN countries can be observed through various initiatives and programs aimed at improving education access and quality, particularly in English language proficiency, which is crucial for active participation in regional collaboration and sustainable development efforts.

2. **Progress via AEC Forums:** The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) plays a significant role in advancing regional cooperation and sustainable development. While online forums and platforms may facilitate communication and knowledge exchange among AEC member states, progress in literacy for active participation in regional collaboration and sustainable development is not solely developed through AEC forums. It encompasses broader educational initiatives, policies, and partnerships within ASEAN countries and with international organizations.

Developing Culturally Dynamic Partnerships:

1. **Culturally Dynamic Partnership (CDP) Simulation:** Building on the concept of culturally dynamic partnerships proposed by Gopalkrishnan (2019), a simulation-based learning environment can be developed to foster cross-cultural communication skills and cultural competence among English language learners. This simulation, CDP, provides a culturally safe space where learners interact in mutual learning relationships, developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to work effectively in equitable partnerships across diverse cultures.

Implications for ASEAN Stakeholders:

1. **Educational Institutions:** ASEAN stakeholders, including educational institutions, can leverage research findings and recommendations to enhance English language curriculum development. They can integrate themes such as communication skills, global issues, academic writing, cultural competence, critical thinking, and digital literacy into their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs, preparing learners for active participation in regional development initiatives.
2. **Government Agencies:** Government agencies within ASEAN member states can collaborate with educational institutions and international partners to implement policies and programs to improve English language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills. This collaboration can support the region's efforts toward sustainable development and regional cooperation.
3. **Businesses and Organizations:** Businesses operating in ASEAN countries can benefit from employees with cross-cultural solid communication skills. By investing in training and development programs that enhance cultural competence and communication abilities, businesses can effectively navigate cultural differences, expand into new markets, and foster successful partnerships within the region.

References:

- Dauber, D., & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2023). Global communication skills: contextual factors fostering their development at

internationalized higher education institutions. *Studies In Higher Education*, 48(7), 1082–1096.

- Gopalkrishnan, N. (2019). Cultural Competence and Beyond: Working Across Cultures in Culturally Dynamic Partnerships. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*, 1(1), 28–41.
- Jing, H. (2023). Global Awareness, Intercultural Communicative Competence, and Global Citizenship. In: *Developing Global Awareness for Global Citizenship Education. Intercultural Communication and Language Education*. Springer, Singapore.
- Shonfeld, M., Cotnam-Kappel, M., Judge, M., et al. (2021). Learning in digital environments: a model for cross-cultural alignment. *Education Tech Research Dev*, 69, 2151–2170.

By incorporating these recommendations and references, the authors can contribute to the development of English language learners equipped with the necessary skills to actively participate in regional collaboration and sustainable development efforts.