# COMPREHENSIBILITY OF ENGLISHES WITHIN ASEAN: A SYNOPSIS OF RESULTS

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to measure the comprehensibility of the Expanding Circle nations' citizens, namely Burmese, Cambodians, Indonesians, Laotians, Thais and Vietnamese towards the Outer Circle Englishes, namely Bruneian English, Malaysian English. Philippine English and Singaporean English. Ten universities in the Expanding Circle that participated in the study, namely Assumption University, Chiang Mai University, Khon Khaen University, King Mongkut University of Technology North Bangkok, Mahapanya Vidayalai University, Mahidol University, Prince of Songkla University Hat Yai Campus, Rajamangala University Srivijaya Songkhla Campus, and Rajamangala University Srivijaya Trang Campus in Thailand, and University of Riau in Indonesia. Participants in the data collection process consist of two hundred and one subjects in undergraduate and graduate level. Eight comprehension tests and a questionnaire were used as main tools in the data collection process. Qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to analyze the results of the comprehension tests and to reveal the questionnaire's results. The following are the results of the study. (1) The Englishes spoken in the Outer Circle were moderately comprehensible to the citizens of the Expanding Circle nations. Based on the standardized comprehensibility scales and levels set in this study, the comprehensibility scores of Bruneian English, Malaysian English, Philippine English and Singaporean English are $M=4.90$, $M=5.57$, $M=5.01$, and $M=4.76$ respectively. All fell under the moderate comprehensibility level set at $3.34$-$6.67$. (2) The Expanding Circle citizens exhibited varying degrees of comprehensibility towards the Outer Circle Englishes. The least comprehensible variety among the Burmese is Malaysian English; among Laotians and Thais is Bruneian English; and among Cambodians, Indonesians and Vietnamese is Singaporean English. The most comprehensible varieties are Malaysian English among Cambodians, Thais and Vietnamese; Philippine English among Indonesians, and Singaporean English among Burmese and Laotians. (3) There are types of exposures related to the Expanding Circle's citizens' comprehension of Outer Circle Englishes. They are exposures to English through education, work experiences, outside the classroom, social media, and travelling and staying abroad. Based on Pearson correlation coefficients, this study established the positive significant correlations between graduate studies and comprehension scores at $p<.01$ level. Positive significant correlations were also found between comprehension scores and several factors, namely exposure through work experiences at $p<.01$ level, the use of social network and watching TV at $p<.05$ level, reading newspapers and watching movies at $p<.01$ level, and studying in Thailand at $p<.01$ level. Based on ANOVA results, there was a significant effect of pre-school education

on comprehension scores at $F$ (3, 198) = 4.94, $p$ = .002; primary education on comprehension scores at $F$ (2, 199) = 6.93, $p$ = .001; and, graduate studies on comprehension scores at $F$ (3, 198) = 7.46, $p$ = .000. However, there is no significant effect of secondary education and undergraduate studies on the subjects' comprehension scores.

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**Keywords:** ASEAN, comprehensibility, education, Englishes

**Introduction**

Preparedness of the Association of South East Asian Nations' (ASEAN) full integration in 2015 and the readiness of her citizens, comprising of Bruneians, Burmese, Cambodians, Filipinos, Indonesians, Laotians, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Thais, and Vietnamese came under scrutiny (Cuyvers, 2002; Feng et al., 2008; Hidekata, 2006; Lloyd & Smith, 2004; Singh, 2010; UN ESCAP, 2007).

Newspaper articles, TV discussions, and online forums explicitly pointed out numerous issues in 2015's ASEAN Single Community directing at each country's diverse foundations. First are the internal factors such as different government ideologies and structures; distinct cultural backgrounds and origins; educational system disparities; demographic data; and human rights issues; conflicts on territories, mistrust, and consensus approach in decision making. Second are the external factors such as globalization, regional imbalances and lack of engagement mechanism (Arshad, 2011; Beng, 2003; Business World, 2011; Deboonme, 2011; Feng et al., 2008; Guangsheng, 2006; Hidekata, 2006; Ramos, 2000). The official languages enshrined in each member country's constitution and laws (De Leon, 1997; Harding, 1996; Suwannathat-Pian, 2003; Tan, 2005) differ from one another not to mention the existence of multiple indigenous communities (Clarke, 2001; Pakir, 2010). Thus, politically, economically, and socially, ASEAN is becoming a single community blended with so many differences in various issues within internal affairs of a member nation as well as between and among member states.

With the demographic spread of ethnicities within the ten member nations, ASEAN is shifting to multilingual education policy (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Thus, the adoption of English as the lingua franca among ASEAN citizens (Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2010; McArthur, 1998) was unquestionable and undeniably suitable. Inscribed in ASEAN Charter (2008: Article 34), "the working language of ASEAN shall be English." The approval of English as a 'working language' will practically keep ASEAN from further conundrum on language issues.

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In the use of English within ASEAN, peoples will be bombarded with their own phonological upbringings, notably stress, rhythm, pitch, tone, assimilation and intonation (Jenkins, 2000; Kenworthy, 1987; Munro et al., 2006; Pennington, 1996). Numerous accents are inevitable as a by-product of historical development, nationalism and cultural baggage of each nation in the ten-member regional bloc.

Wilang and Teo (2012a) illustrated the NNS-NNS interaction by 2015. Figure 1, ASEAN's communication model, captivated the dynamic written and/or spoken communication happening between and among member states. Core in the model are the rods that connect all ten-member

states within the bloc including those members-in-waiting nations, namely Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea currently negotiating their prospective membership. Permanent member nations are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The use of English as the 'working language' is evident. The numerous rods represent the bilateral and multilateral interaction between and among ASEAN member nations.
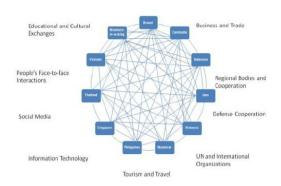


Figure 1 ASEAN's communication model



Figure 2 World Englishes speaker-listener intelligibility matrix
(Levis, 2005, p.373)

In relation to the complexities bracing ASEAN these days brought about by diversity of her foundation, the need for continuing research on many different areas, especially English as an ASEAN's lingua franca, must be boosted. As Pakir (2010) described, "Southeast Asia can be likened to a vast laboratory…huge platform for understanding how languages are learnt, taught and used in communication" (p. 330).

This study on the comprehensibility of English varieties spoken by the four Outer Circle nations to the six Expanding Circle countries will fill in the research gaps on people's interaction within the regional bloc. Levis's (2005) WE speaker-listener matrix was used as the main framework of the study. Figure 2, World Englishes speaker-listener intelligibility matrix, illustrates the Outer Circle–Expanding Circle paradigm. The speakers are from Outer Circle countries such as Brunei,

Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore. The listeners are from the Expanding Circle countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Thus, this study is timely and suitable as the upcoming full integration of ASEAN in 2015 is fast approaching.

## Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the following: (1) to investigate the intelligibility and/or comprehensibility of the spoken varieties in the Outer Circle within ASEAN; (2) to look at the factors related to the comprehension of the ASEAN Expanding Circle citizens by considering exposures to English through education, social media, work experiences, outside the classroom, and travelling and staying abroad. Based on the statements above, three questions were addressed:

     1. Are the Englishes in the Outer Circle comprehensible to the citizens of the Expanding Circle nations?

     2. Which Outer Circle's Englishes are the most and least comprehensible among the Expanding Circle's citizens?

     3. What are the factors related to the Expanding Circle's citizens' comprehension of Outer Circle's Englishes?

## Methodology

In search of a contextualized testing for the comprehensibility of Englishes within ASEAN, eight video clip samples spoken by citizens of the Outer Circle within ASEAN were presented to the citizens of the Expanding Circle citizens. With no standard testing methodology to measure comprehensibility of Englishes, this research charted the use of multiple-choice in the form of literal and inferential questions while maintaining the use of audio-visual clips as a more authentic communication sample against voice listening activity. Literal comprehension dealt with the straightforward understanding of the text while inferential comprehension focused on meaning not explicitly stated in the text.

The use of multiple-choice exam was to measure the comprehensibility of Englishes and not a language test to gauge students' English proficiency and/or achievement test. The endorsement of such instrument in testing new Englishes helps in changing pedagogical assessment paradigms "away from a reliance on discrete-item tests on formal grammatical competence and instead develops instruments that are sensitive to performance and pragmatics" (Canagarajah, 2006: 1).

In the use of audio-visual instruments, although it was a one-way communication by the speaker to the listener, the visual clues expressed by the former may help the comprehension of the latter visibly seen in an actual communication process. Canagarajah (2006) pointed out that assessment must emphasize on "the strategies of negotiation, situated performance, communicative repertoire, and language awareness" (p. 1).
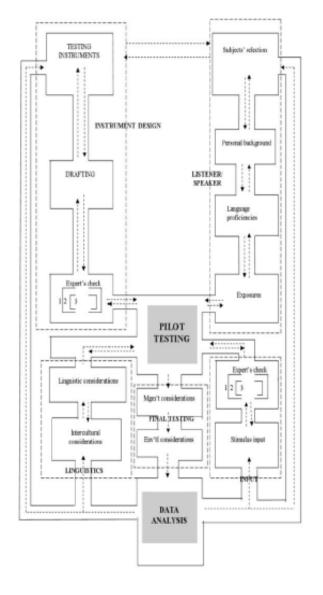
The subjects of this study were composed of 201 university students randomly selected from six Expanding Circle's nations, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The subjects were enrolled in ten universities within Expanding Circle ASEAN nations such as Assumption University, Chiang Mai University, Khon Khaen University, King Mongkut University of Technology North Bangkok, Mahapanya Vidayalai University, Mahidol University, Prince of Songkla University Hat Yai Campus, Rajamangala University of Srivijaya Songkhla Campus and Rajamangala University of Srivijaya Trang Campus in Thailand, and University of Riau in Indonesia.

The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire, audio-visual instruments and a comprehension test. The questionnaire was administered before the comprehension test. It explored the various factors related to the comprehension level of the Expanding Circle's citizens towards the Outer Circle Englishes. Sample population's personal background, and exposures to languages, education, work, social media, socialization, and travelling and staying abroad are looked at. Sample population's perceived language proficiencies and exposures to various factors were correlated with their scores in the comprehension test.

The audio-visual instruments were authentic materials selected and downloaded from www.youtube.com. Excerpts had exhibited the following characteristics: not a rehearsed speech, speaker's fluency, topics spoken had to be very general in nature, not too long, and not too short. Variety of the topics but within the realm of everyday life was considered and the length of each spoken variety was within 54-64 seconds. All audio-visual instruments were checked for voice clarity and illumination. Native speakers of each variety and experts confirmed support and justification for the choice of audio-visual instruments as representatives of the mentioned Englishes by not selecting on too standard and extreme varieties of Englishes.

The comprehension test was administered after each variety of English from the Outer Circle was played once. There were eight booklets each containing five multiple-choice questions based on each of the eight audio-visual excerpts. Each question contained four choices to limit the chance of guessing. In each booklet, three literal questions and two inferential questions were asked. The inclusion of literal questions tested the sample population's ability to comprehend spoken text while the inferential questions aimed to look at their ability to interpret the meaning beyond the spoken text.

A more comprehensive discussion on the methodology was illustrated in Figure 4. In the figure, Wilang and Teo (2012c) considered pilot testing and data analysis as the central foci of the testing flowchart. The analysis starts from any of the following: instrument design, listener/speaker, linguistics, and input (see also Wilang & Teo, 2012b).

The statistical formula used to gauge the comprehensibility levels – low comprehensibility, moderate comprehensibility, and high comprehensibility were based on the number of questions in each spoken variety.

Where 5 was the highest score in each comprehension test and 0 was the lowest score, the range was calculated divided by three intervals, which was *1.66*. The same formula was used in the calculation of interval *3.33* within 10, the summation of combined questions in two spoken texts of each variety. The above descriptions are reflected in Table 3.



Figure 3: Comprehensibility testing flowchart
*Adopted from Wilang & Teo (2012c)*

Table 1 Comprehensibility scales and levels

| Scales | | Set of comprehensibility levels |
|---|---|---|
| 0 – 5 | 0 – 10 | |
| 0 – 1.66 | 0 – 3.33 | Low comprehensibility |
| 1.67 – 3.33 | 3.34 – 6.67 | Moderate comprehensibility |
| 3.34 – 5.00 | 6.68 – 10.0 | High comprehensibility |

**Results and Discussion**

Three papers were drawn upon and discussed in this chapter to answer the three research questions. They are Measuring the comprehensibility of Englishes within ASEAN among Aseans (Wilang & Teo, 2012b), Enhancing comprehensibility among ELF users (Wilang & Teo, 2012c), and Exploring the relationship between intelligibility and education, (Wilang & Teo, 2012d).

*Comprehensibility of the Outer Circle Englishes*
The first question addressed in this study was "Are the Englishes in the Outer Circle comprehensible to the citizens of the Expanding Circle nations? The findings for the above question were detailed in the paper titled "Measuring the Comprehensibility of Englishes within ASEAN among Aseans" (Wilang & Teo, 2012b). The major contribution of the results of this study described in this paper towards intelligibility research within ASEAN is specifically the quantitative findings, which is the level of moderate comprehensibility attained by the Expanding Circle's citizens toward the Outer Circle's spoken English varieties.
Previous research on intelligibility and/or comprehensibility has not set an absolute statistical formula to measure the understanding of word utterances between and among non-native speakers of English. Thus, the basis of statistical formula used for the treatment of the gathered data follows the standard calculation of range, the difference between the highest and lowest values.

Table 2 Comprehensibility of outer circle speakers' utterances

| Speakers | Comprehensibility of literal questions | | Comprehensibility inferential questions | | Overall comprehensibility scores | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | Remark | M | Remark | M | Remark |
| Bruneian 1 | 1.46 | Moderate | .87 | Moderate | 2.33 | Moderate |
| Bruneian 2 | 1.41 | Moderate | 1.15 | Moderate | 2.56 | Moderate |
| Malaysian 1 | 1.23 | Moderate | .93 | Moderate | 2.16 | Moderate |
| Malaysian 2 | 2.17 | High | 1.23 | Moderate | 3.40 | High |
| Philippine 1 | 1.54 | Moderate | 1.15 | Moderate | 2.69 | Moderate |
| Philippine 2 | 1.47 | Moderate | .86 | Moderate | 2.51 | Moderate |
| Singaporean 1 | 1.66 | Moderate | 1.04 | Moderate | 2.70 | Moderate |
| Singaporean 2 | 1.50 | Moderate | .56 | Low | 2.06 | Moderate |

Adopted from Wiland and Teo (2012b)

In doing so, Table 2 instantly captures the moderate comprehensibility of the Outer Circle speakers to the point of dissecting the comprehensibility test results of each spoken text and segregating literal and inferential outcomes. Results show that Malaysian speaker 2 got the highest comprehensibility remark while Singaporean speaker 2 received the lowest comprehensibility rank. Also, Malaysian speaker 2 received the highest comprehensibility rank of all the literal and inferential questions asked. These results predict the comprehensibility outlined in Table 3 wherein Malaysian English is the most comprehensible English while Sinagporean English is the least comprehensible variety.

Table 3 Summation of comprehensibility scores and levels

| | Overall Comprehensibility scores M | Overall Comprehensibility levels Remark |
|---|---|---|
| Bruneian English | 4.90 | Moderate |
| Malaysian English | 5.57 | Moderate |
| Philippine English | 5.01 | Moderate |
| Singaporean English | 4.76 | Moderate |

Adopted from Wiland and Teo (2012b)

Table 3 collates the total mean scores of the two spoken text in each variety. Singaporean English, although the most researched variety in Southeast Asia, received the lowest moderate comprehensibility mark when all mean scores of the respondents are combined. While this paper cannot exactly identify the possible reasons, Date (2005) and Kirkpatrick and Saunders (2005) implied that Singaporean English may be problematic for listeners from others parts of Asia, namely China and Japan. While we can assume that it is the linguistic effect of the spoken text, we cannot also discount the listener's limitations discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

***Variations of comprehensibility among Expanding Circle citizens***
The second question addressed in this study was "Which Outer Circle's Englishes are the most and least comprehensible among the Expanding Circle's citizens?" By using descriptive statistics of means of scores, this study revealed the following (see Table 6): (1) Singaporean English is the most comprehensible English among the Burmese and Laotians. (2) Malaysian English is the most comprehensible variety of English among the Cambodians, Thais and Vietnamese. (3) Philippine English is the most comprehensible English among Indonesians. (4) The least comprehensible variety for Laotians and Thais is Bruneian English. (5) Burmese's most difficult variety is Malaysian English. (6) Singaporean English is the least comprehensible variety among Cambodians, Indonesians, and Vietnamese. Table 4 adopted from Wilang and Teo (2012b), reflects the results discussed above.

Table 4 Comprehensibility levels based on nationalities

| Nationalities/Englishes | | Bruneian English | Malaysian English | Philippine English | Singaporean English |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burmese | M | 6.50 | 6.08 (Least) | 6.50 | 7.08 (Most) |
| | SD | 2.09 | 1.88 | 2.03 | 1.92 |
| Cambodians | M | 4.29 | 5.29 (Most) | 5.10 | 3.76 (Least) |
| | SD | 2.51 | 2.15 | 2.28 | 1.73 |
| Indonesians | M | 5.42 | 5.54 | 5.58 (Most) | 4.84 (Least) |
| | SD | 1.64 | 1.86 | 1.52 | 1.86 |
| Laotians | M | 4.42 (Least) | 4.92 | 4.83 | 5.17 (Most) |
| | SD | 2.54 | 1.56 | 2.21 | 1.75 |
| Thais | M | 4.12 (Least) | 5.72 (Most) | 4.24 | 4.40 |
| | SD | 1.97 | 1.79 | 1.98 | 1.74 |
| Vietnamese | M | 4.90 | 5.57 (Most) | 5.01 | 4.76 (Least) |
| | SD | 2.15 | 1.73 | 1.51 | 1.97 |

Adopted from Wiland and Teo (2012b)

In Wilang and Teo's (2012b) paper, possible explanations were uncovered to elaborate the comprehension scores' disparities among the Expanding Circle citizens. Among the given justifications are the geographical proximity of Thailand and Malaysia, listeners' attitudes to Malaysian speakers, familiarity toward the spoken variety, the linguistic typology of Malay and Tagalog under Austronesian language families, listeners' language proficiency and backgrounds. While we could control the stimulus input to a certain degree in terms of speed, sound and illumination, it was impossible to quantify the listeners' ability to perceive the listening input. This could be attributed to the listeners' unfamiliarity and exposure to the variety, and their English language proficiency. However, it could also be the individual speaker's problem rather than the spoken variety. Although parameters were set in the methodology, the difficulty of finding a truly representative speaker of a variety and quantifying the listeners' perception is a very challenging task (Van der Walt, 2000). For example, the familiarity and exposure to Bruneian English and Philippine English affected the results of the test. When the test results of Thai respondents in southernmost part of Thailand were analyzed, Malaysian English was the most comprehensible while Philippine English was the least comprehensible. However, when the data from central and northern part of Thailand was merged, Philippine English was replaced by Bruneian English while Malaysian English remained in its spot. Although it was not explicitly asked in the questionnaire if the subjects were familiar with the spoken varieties, it is possible to explain it by quantifying the data and look at outside circumstances – the influx of Malaysian tourists and Filipino teachers. In effect, familiarity and exposure to the spoken variety partly explains the differing comprehensibility scores of the subjects.

Another factor associated with comprehensibility is the attitude toward the speakers of the variety. The territorial disputes between Malaysia and Indonesia hampered some Indonesian subjects to purposely leave some Malaysian variety test questions unanswered. Some Indonesians studying in Thailand explicitly expressed their disinterest with the Malaysian
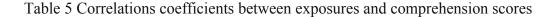
speakers during the data collection. In fact, Malaysian English became the least comprehensible variety among them. However, with the data from University of Riau merged, the overall comprehension score of Indonesians improved, second to the Philippine English, their most comprehensible variety.

*Factors related to comprehensibility*

The third question addressed in this study was "What are the factors related to the Expanding Circle's citizens' comprehension of Outer Circle's Englishes?" In the questionnaire, the authors ventured to find out if there is any significant positive relationship between the listeners' proficiencies of Outer Circle's official languages and the comprehension scores gained from the tests by using Pearson Correlation. Except English, all official languages in the Outer Circle such as Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, Filipino, Malay, Melayu Brunei and Tamil have no relationship at all to the Expanding Circle's comprehensibility (see Wilang & Teo, 2012b). Meanwhile, English as stated above has a positive correlation to the Expanding Circle's citizens' comprehension scores.

To expound further as to why English has a positive correlation (although not significant) to the comprehensibility level of the subjects, Wilang and Teo's (2012c) paper titled "Enhancing comprehensibility among ELF users" presented five areas of exposures that are related to the intelligibility and/or comprehensibility of the listeners. They are exposures to English through education, work experiences, outside the classroom (non-educational settings), social media, and travelling and staying abroad.

On exposures, the findings of this study reveal the correlation coefficients between the subjects' comprehension scores and exposures to English through education, work experiences, outside the classroom, social media, and travelling and staying abroad. All data presented in Table 5 are based on Pearson Correlations statistical analysis.

Table 5 Correlations coefficients between exposures and comprehension scores

| Between exposure to education and comprehension scores | |
| --- | --- |
| Educational levels | Comprehension Scores |
| Pre-school | -.009 |
| Primary | .009 |
| Secondary | .013 |
| Undergraduate | .048 |
| Graduate | .297** |
| **Between work experiences and comprehension scores** | |
| Work experiences | .250** |
| **Between exposure outside the classroom and comprehension scores** | |
| Outside the classroom | .077 |
| **Between exposure to social media and comprehension scores** | |
| 1. Do you use English in social network (Facebook, Twitter, Skype, others)? | .149* |
| 2. Do you watch English in TV channels? | .156* |
| 3. Do you read English newspapers? | .198** |
| 4. Do you watch English movies? | .262** |
| **Between exposure to English through travel and stay abroad and comprehension scores travel and stay abroad** | |
| Thailand | .254** |

To briefly describe the results shown in the Table 5, positive significant correlations were found between the following exposures and comprehension scores. Wilang and Teo (2012c) established the positive significant correlations between graduate studies and comprehension scores at $p<.01$ level. Positive significant correlations were also found between comprehension scores and several factors, namely exposure through work experiences at $p<.01$ level, the use of social network and watching TV at $p<.05$ level, reading newspapers and watching movies at $p<.01$ level, and studying in Thailand at $p<.01$ level. While the significances of all variables were detailed above, this study cannot exactly explain how social media affected the subjects' comprehensibility. Further, this study did not ask the kind of TV programs the subjects subscribed, the newspapers they have read, the movies they have watched, and the people they interact with in the social networks.

Knowing the inadequacy of information gathered using the questionnaire, Wilang and Teo (2012c) concluded the exposures "provide us technical tips on how to enhance our intelligibility and/or comprehensibility in the upcoming 2015 Single Community." Bearing in mind the fact that the subjects of this study were all students registered in the undergraduate and graduate studies levels although studying in different kinds of programs – normal, bilingual and international, Wilang and Teo (2012d) looked at the angle of the subjects' comprehensibility and education in another article entitled, "Exploring the relationship between intelligibility and education." Not to duplicate the results of correlation coefficients between education and comprehension scores in Wilang and Teo's (2012c) discussed above, descriptive statistics of the subjects' comprehension scores based on educational levels and programs were presented. Also, one-way ANOVA was performed to look at the effects of various educational levels to the comprehension scores the subjects obtained. What was surprising in the outcomes of the data is

that bilingual students in all educational levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, undergraduate and graduate studies got the lowest means of comprehension scores compared to normal and international programs.

Figure 4 captures the differences in the means of comprehension scores based on the subjects' educational backgrounds. The subjects in the international programs in each educational level had the highest means of the comprehension scores. Their exposure to English is unlimited in spoken, listening and written outputs. Most likely, the international programs have foreign students resulting in mixtures of cultures in a classroom setting.



Figure 4: Comparative means of scores based on education backgrounds

Thus, in the case of graduate students who are currently studying in Thailand, Wilang and Teo (2012c) found a positively significant correlation between graduate studies in Thailand and the subjects' comprehension scores. Based on Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Table 6 reveals that pre-school level, primary level and graduate studies (all independent variables) have a significant effect on the Expanding Circle's citizens' comprehension scores. The significant effect of pre-school on comprehension scores is $F$ (3, 198) = 4.94, $p$ = .002. The significant effect of primary education on comprehension scores is $F$ (2, 199) = 6.93, $p$ = .001. The significant effect of graduate studies on comprehension scores is $F$ (3, 198) = 7.46, $p$ = .000. However, there is no significant effect of secondary education and undergraduate studies on the subjects' comprehension scores.

Thus, in this study, the researchers established the moderate comprehensibility level of the Expanding Circle listeners towards the speakers from the Outer Circle. In addition, the listeners' most and least comprehensible varieties of English were measured quantitatively coupled with the use of a questionnaire to explain the comprehensibility results of the tests. Various variables are positively related to the comprehension scores gained by the subjects. Lastly, we can safely state that education is related to the subjects' comprehensibility based on the nonexistence of negative correlations (Wilang & Teo, 2012c) and/or significances (Wilang & Teo, 2012d).

| Pre-school education | | | | | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | |
| Between Groups | 458.04 | 3 | 152.68 | 4.94 | .002 |
| Within Groups | 6080.49 | 198 | 30.86 | | |
| Total | 6538.53 | 201 | | | |

| Primary education | | | | | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | |
| Between Groups | 427.69 | 2 | 213.85 | 6.93 | .001 |
| Within Groups | 6110.83 | 199 | 30.86 | | |
| Total | 6538.53 | 201 | | | |

| Graduate studies | | | | | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | |
| Between Groups | 666.08 | 3 | 222.36 | 7.46 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 5871.54 | 198 | 29.80 | | |
| Total | 6538.53 | 201 | | | |

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA for educational levels

**Conclusions**

Firstly, Aseans can comfortably use their *indigenized* English during NNS-NNS interaction without fear of being incomprehensible. The results of the comprehensibility tests found moderate comprehensibility level using the speaker-listener matrix. Thus, Wilang and Teo (2012b) suggested that Expanding Circle citizens may need to adjust their ears to spoken Englishes in the Outer Circle. By doing so, NNS-NNS interaction may attain its highest form of intelligibility and/or comprehensibility. Secondly, Aseans' comprehensibility varies. While Malaysian English is the most comprehensible Englishes and Singaporean English is the least comprehensible variety, the variations of comprehensibility toward the Outer Circle speakers exist. Wilang and Teo (2012b) found out that Expanding Circle's citizens' attitudes towards Outer Circle speakers brought about by historical territorial disputes affected their comprehensibility. Also, the geographical position of some countries, tourism and employment opportunities led to variations of comprehensibility scores. While language proficiencies of the Expanding Circle citizens to Outer Circle official languages have no significant effect to the comprehensibility, the similarity and/or shared features of languages within the Austronesian language family (Indonesian, Malay, Tagalog) may have led Indonesians to comprehend the Philippine variety the most. Finally, there are five factors related to the comprehensibility of Expanding Circle citizens toward the speakers of the Outer Circle countries. These related factors are: exposure to English through education, work experiences, outside the classroom, social media, travelling and staying abroad. As Wilang and Teo (2012c) concluded, the above factors provide technical tips on how to enhance our intelligibility and/or comprehensibility in the upcoming 2015 Single Community.

## Acknowledgements

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