

## **Investigating the status of English as a lingua franca in Southeast Asia: Intelligibility and comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes among Filipino college students<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

As the Philippines sustains stronger ties with its neighboring Southeast Asian countries in the age of ASEAN integration, the ability to accommodate to one's variety of English through word and meaning recognition is essential for international understanding. This paper examines the level of intelligibility and comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes and the factors that influence their understanding. To collect data, the study used cloze and comprehension tests from three listening passages and a semi-structured interview conducted among 47 liberal arts students. The findings showed that ASEAN Englishes are 85.32% intelligible and 87.94% comprehensible. The high rates denote that the use of shared nonstandard pronunciation features enhanced understanding. Listener and textual factors also proved to be among the factors of understanding. Hence, this suggests that there is an emerging lingua franca within the ASEAN region. Mutual intelligibility, therefore, may help speakers to establish a common identity as an ASEAN community and to bring effective cross-cultural communication during ELF interaction.

**Keywords:** *ASEAN Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, Intelligibility, Comprehensibility*

### **Introduction**

In international settings where people wish to communicate in English, can the speaker of one variety of English be understood by another who uses a different variety, and vice-versa? With the global spread of English, is the problem of understanding across cultures likely to increase in frequency (Smith, 1992; Dayag, 2007)?

The ever-increasing number of nonnative speakers of English in Southeast Asia (SEA, hereafter) gives English a uniquely privileged position as the international language among speakers of disparate linguistic backgrounds (Okudaira, 1999; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2012). Confronted by the issue about what language to use across multilingual states, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, thereafter) Charter enshrined the position of English as the sole working language in the organization in hopes of cross-cultural communication. The earlier demand of Vietnam to regard French as the working language of ASEAN was

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summarily rejected (Okudaira, 1999). Moreover, there are no dominant languages within the region which a majority can use, as SEA is linguistically and culturally diverse with more than 1,000 languages spoken across the ten countries, and very few government schools teach any Southeast Asian language apart from their respective national language (Kirkpatrick, 2012). If the group were to choose any Southeast Asian language as its working language, it would seem to favor one ethnolinguistic group above the others, and ergo, may be divisive. For this reason, English became the *de facto* language of the ASEAN. The privileging of English in ASEAN may, therefore, have intracultural implications for the status of English as a lingua franca in the region, as argued by Southeast Asian Englishes scholars (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2004, 2007).

Despite the position of English as the common language in the region, ASEAN speakers may still experience difficulties understanding each other. As explained by Kachru's (1985) World Englishes paradigm, English is infused with local linguistic practices and cultural differences subject to a speaker's or speaker group's language use. There are distinctive features that characterize one kind of English from another. In Southeast Asia, there have been four institutionalized varieties of English: Philippine English, Brunei English, Singapore English, and Malaysian English. These varieties belong in the Outer Circle in the Kachruvian Three Circles Model. The Englishes comprise those countries which maintained strong commerce or colonial ties with Great Britain and the USA, and now use English as the official language or as a second language (ESL). This prompted the constant use of English in various domains, i.e., government and the law, education, media, household, and business among Southeast Asians.

### **ASEAN Englishes**

In the present study, I personally coined the term 'ASEAN Englishes' to comprise those varieties in SEA, as one variety of English in the ASEAN region may be assumed to have possible affinities with neighbor varieties of English due to increasing language contact among the SEA countries (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Through the ASEAN integration, this growing socio-cultural ties may have linguistic implications, extending to peoples' exchange of basic characteristics of language such as phonology, morphology, and syntax. However, Brunei English is not included in this study because it was not possible to personally contact an educated Brunei English speaker.

Despite the features that discriminate one variety from another, Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) identified shared 'nonstandard' pronunciation features among Southeast Asian Englishes. The syllable-timed rhythm is the most noticeable feature, that is, avoidance of reduced vowels. Table 1 summarizes pronunciation features in ASEAN Englishes.

Table 1

*Summary of pronunciation features of ASEAN Englishes (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006, p.395)*

Features	Examples
dental fricative /θ/ as [t]	many thing /tɪŋ/
reduced initial aspiration	they will teach [di:tʃ]
monophthongal /eɪ/ and /əʊ/	another place [ple:s]; can go [go:]
bisyllabic triphthongs	in our [aʊwə] time
lack of reduced vowels	officially [ɔfɪʃəli]
stressed pronouns	and HE has been in Singapore
heavy end-stress	the incidental WAY

Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) revealed that the seven features of pronunciation have positive effects on the intelligibility of Southeast Asian Englishes. It was also suggested that there may be an emerging English as a Lingua Franca in Southeast Asia. In a simplistic view, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF, thereafter) is defined as a contact language, i.e., “a vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a native language” (Mauranen, 2003, p. 513). English may thus be used as “a common language of interaction between ASEAN and other non-Anglophone groups, including ASEAN + 3 (China, Japan, Korea) and the BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India, China)” (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p. 131). As ELF is a dynamic term and ELF speakers are constantly negotiating meaning, a new paradigm for the way English can be viewed has emerged (Seidlhofer, 2011).

### Intelligibility Studies

In the past, using native speakers’ voices was a popular instrument and model for studying intelligibility (Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979). Contrastingly, it was later found that from the judgment of listeners from nine different countries, the native-speaker Englishes, i.e., American English and British English, are not the most easily understood varieties of English internationally. Kirkpatrick and Saunders (2005) report that in the Outer Circle, Australian students who have had exposure to Singapore English could understand this variety more easily than those from other parts of Asia who might not have encountered it. Based on Dita and de Leon’s (2017) study on intelligibility of Philippine English, while exposure to the target language could be a potential factor in understanding a certain language variety, a speaker’s pace of speech and syllable-timed rhythm, as well as linguistic context, prove to be among the primary features that may aid intelligibility.

In the ASEAN context, Wilang and Teo (2012) found that Outer Circle Englishes are moderately comprehensible among Expanding Circle listeners, i.e., Laotians, Burmese, Indonesians, Cambodians, Thais, and Vietnamese. The study suggested that the comprehensibility scores are linked to their exposure to English through education, social media, work experience, non-educational settings, travelling, and staying abroad. In a similar vein, Natiladdanon and Thanavisuth (2014) found that beliefs could influence word and meaning recognition of ASEAN Englishes.

However, there are few studies of intelligibility in the Philippines. Dayag (2007), an exception, found that Philippine English is more than 50% intelligible to the expanding circles and more or less 80% intelligible to inner- and outer- circles. He argued that limited exposure to or familiarity with Philippine English may be a barrier to understanding among the listeners.

### Research Objectives

Since there appears to be no study regarding intelligibility and comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes among Filipinos, this study is relevant in view of the enormously diverse intra- and international contexts and the continual movement of NNS of English in Southeast Asia. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the level of intelligibility and comprehensibility of Singapore English, Malaysian English, and Philippine English among Filipino college students, and the factors that contribute to the intelligibility and comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes. The study would also assess if the use of English as a lingua franca in Southeast Asia has raised questions about international intelligibility and ELF interaction. In particular, this study sought answers to the following research questions:

- (1) How intelligible are ASEAN Englishes among Filipino students?
- (2) How comprehensible are ASEAN Englishes among Filipino students?
- (3) What factors contribute to the (un)intelligibility and (in)comprehensibility of these ASEAN Englishes?

### Theoretical Framework

The study used Smith and Nelson's (1985) tripartite paradigm of understanding as its framework. To deconstruct the wide scope of intelligibility, there are three general types of understanding varieties of English: (1) intelligibility, the ability of the listener to recognize individual words or utterances; (2) comprehensibility, the listener's ability to understand the meaning of the word or utterance in the given text or speech; and (3) interpretability, the ability of the listener to understand the speaker's intentions behind the word or utterance.

Only the two bottom levels of understanding, i.e., intelligibility and comprehensibility, are accounted in the study as these are relevant concepts to measuring degrees of understanding on a continuum of simple variables, such as phonology (Jenkins, 2007). From the binary framework, two general types of communication breakdown are illustrated among speakers of English: (1) the listener is unable to recognize words and utterances; and (2) the listener can repeat them, i.e., recognizes them, but is unable to understand their respective meanings in the context in which they appear in the text or speech (Smith & Nelson, 1985). As a secondary framework, the study of Kirkpatrick and Deterding (2006) regarding the shared nonstandard pronunciation features would support the claims of the study because a major portion of intelligibility (86%) consists of phonological issues (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

To describe the role of the English language in ASEAN, Graddol (1997) states that language takes two roles: (1) it serves as a bridging language for international communication that requires two aspects: mutual intelligibility and emerging standards; and (2) it becomes a basis for constructing cultural identities. As the English language becomes a common language in the region, its two roles needed to be emphasized for the language users and English linguists. To fulfill these roles, the two concepts—intelligibility and comprehensibility—needed first to be examined to assess as to what extent the understanding is achieved in international communication.

## Methodology

### Representative Speakers

To represent the different varieties of English, one representative acrolectal speaker per variety was selected to record an audio speech from their respective script. Educated speakers of English are said to be exemplars of acceptable speech in a language community (Llamzon, 1969), which in this case is the ASEAN community. The selection of acrolects over other lectal speakers is grounded on the interest to explore if mutual intelligibility is achieved when the Filipino listeners, who are university students and hence are also educated speakers, find affinity with the

representative acrolects from Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. The speakers were selected based on Dayag’s (2007) criteria of representative speakers of English; they must: (1) be at least 18 years old; (2) be graduate-level university students; and (3) have been born and raised in their respective countries of origin. To verify the validity of the audio sample, the three speakers had been assessed in a pilot test so as to confirm if they were identifiable speakers of their corresponding home varieties of English (see Appendix A). More importantly, one World Englishes expert confirmed support and justification of the recording as representative speeches of their respective varieties of English. It is admitted that this may be a main threat since some studies used three or more speakers per speech sample, which best represent speakers of varieties of English (Jindapitak, 2013; Kim, 2007). Using three speakers for each variety seemed unnecessary for the present study. First, the geographical location and exposure of one speaker to a native variety of English hugely constitute a representative accent of a speaker of a nonnative variety of English. Second, the demographics and linguistic background in English are provided, and each speaker had had a long exposure to a given variety. The speakers rated their English language proficiency (ELP) as excellent. Table 2 shows the linguistic profile of the three representative speakers.

Table 2

*Linguistic Profile of Representative Speakers*

<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Length of time studying English</b>	<b>Languages spoken</b>
Philippine English	20	Liberal Arts	14	Filipino, Ilocano, English, Spanish
Malaysian English	24	Law	17	Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin Chinese, English
Singapore English	24	Marketing and Public Relations	20	Chinese, English, Thai

**Listeners**

Forty-seven (47) liberal arts students were engaged in the listening tests. Meanwhile, nine (9) students actively participated in the focus group interview phase. The students in the listening tests belong to an educational institution where English is used as a medium of instruction in subject areas in pedagogy and instructional materials. To determine their English language skills, the listeners were tasked to rate their language skills as either Excellent (4), Good (3), Fair (2), and Poor (1). In summary, they scored ‘good’ in the ELP self-assessment, as shown on table 3.

Table 3

*English Language Proficiency of the Respondents*

	Average Score
<b>Speaking</b>	3.11
<b>Listening</b>	2.85
<b>Reading</b>	2.94
<b>Writing</b>	2.96

**Speech Materials**

Three different scripts (see Appendix B) were used in the study where each script accounts for an ASEAN variety of English. With the use of one script per each variety, the listeners' understanding is measured on their first encounter of the text. If one text is used to achieve uniformity, the repetitive play of one text is assumed to improve the listeners' comprehension on the second or third play of the recording. The listeners may, therefore, be familiarized with the cline of language items during their initial encounter with the text. For this reason, various scripts of equal length in difficulty and readability were utilized to avoid the predictable consequences. Retrieved from Test Preview, the speech samples on general topics were based on the following criteria: they were politically neutral, free from culture-specific words and idioms, encompassing a wide range of English phonemes, equal length in time and words, and must be validated by reading experts. In Singapore English, the expedition of Magellan was the selected passage; the Malaysian English speaker talked about the biography of Marie Curie, a known chemist and physicist; the Philippine English speaker described the discovery of the field of aviation and aeronautics. Table 4 shows the length of the recordings and the number of words contained in the passages used.

Table 4

*Length and difficulty of recordings*

Representative Speaker	Length of recording	Number of words	Readability (Fleish-Kincaid Readability Formula)	Level	Readability Consensus (Grade Level)
1. Singapore English	2 m 32 s	325	Average		Grade 10
2. Malaysian English	3 m 6 s	326	Average		Grade 11
3. Philippine English	3 m 33 s	428	Average		Grade 10

**Research Instruments**

To measure intelligibility, a cloze test (see Appendix C) was employed where the *n*th word was left blank, and the listeners wrote down corresponding words based on their understanding of the audio recording. The missing elements were bi- and polysyllabic content words (i.e., nouns, adjectives, verbs) which elicit semantically anomalous range of English phonemes and

pronunciation features. This instrument has long served to be an intelligibility tool in numerous studies (cf. Dayag, 2007; Dita & de Leon, 2017; Dita, 2013; Smith, 1992; Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979). As for the comprehensibility test, the listeners had to answer five comprehension questions (see Appendix D) based on each script. Only literal questions were integrated.

**Procedure**

The listening tests and questions were pilot-tested among ten ESL college students to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire’s wording and instructions, the quality of speech recordings, and the test procedures’ timing. For the actual listening activity, the respondents accomplished the tests in one sitting. The data gathering procedures, however, were done in two days because a single room could not accommodate a huge number of respondents; the first day was attended by 30 respondents, and the second day was attended by 17.

First, the participants were asked to fill in a personal sheet which involved a self-assessment of their English language proficiency. Then, the participants listened twice to Script 1 with a Singapore English speaker. First, they listened to the recording; second, as they were provided with the cloze test copy, the listeners answered the test while the recording was playing. After collecting the accomplished cloze test, the participants were provided with a copy of the comprehension test to answer the questions. After both tests were collected, the listeners were again instructed to listen to the recordings of Script 2 and Script 3 (Malaysian English and Philippine English, respectively), and to answer the cloze and comprehension tests. After the three listening tests each of which accounts for a cloze test and a comprehension test, nine listeners participated in the focus group discussion.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Relative frequency distribution was employed in measuring the cloze test and the comprehension test. To describe and analyze the intelligibility and comprehensibility scores of the respondents, the scores were averaged and put in a percentile marking. For the verbal categories, this study drew from the framework of Yoshikawa (2008) where three categories for verbal interpretations were utilized: low, moderate, and high percentages of intelligibility and comprehensibility. For clarity, table 5 shows the corresponding numbers subject to the verbal categories.

Table 5

*Verbal Categories for Mean of Intelligibility and Comprehensibility Scores*

	<b>Low rate</b>	<b>Moderate Rate</b>	<b>High rate</b>
1. Intelligibility	<33.33%	<66.66%	<99.99%
2. Comprehensibility	<33.33%	<66.66%	<99.99%

**Findings and Discussion**

**The Level of Intelligibility of ASEAN Englishes**

To address the quantitative results of the study, Table 6 summarizes the intelligibility scores of the three varieties of English:

Table 6

*Mean of Intelligibility Scores of the Participants and the Intelligibility Remark*

ASEAN Englishes	Mean	Remarks: Level of Intelligibility
Singapore English	79.15%	High
Malaysian English	95.32%	High
Philippine English	81.49%	High
OVERALL	85.32%	High

Table 6 shows that ASEAN Englishes have high rates of intelligibility among Filipino college students. High intelligibility may be influenced by how the speakers pronounce the words as this is “possibly the greatest single barrier to successful communication” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 83). The use of common pronunciation features shared among Singapore English, Philippine English, and Malaysian English, particularly the syllable-timed rhythm, is the most salient speaker factor (Kirkpatrick & Deterding, 2006). Its use enhanced intelligibility of the Englishes where there are greater tokens of understanding compared with the minor instances of communication breakdowns. Although the features are pejoratively termed as ‘nonstandard,’ there are minimal to zero communication problems to listeners. This may prove that pronunciation features are being known and developed amongst NNS in SEA due to external factors.

However, there are also minor instances that disrupted communication. To explore these, the next sections will explain the instances of successful utterance decoding and communication lapses by outlining the pronunciation features of ASEAN Englishes.

**Dental Fricatives.** The recurring use of /t/ instead of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ defines the local flavor of Englishes in the SEA, but this does not cause misunderstandings in ELF interaction in the region (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Dental fricatives caused zero misunderstandings from Malaysian and Philippine Englishes scripts. However, the term ‘authority’ pronounced as /əˈtɔrəti/ in the Singaporean English script obtained one (1) wrong answer, as only 46 listeners answered the item correctly. In this regard, the findings may prove that the participants are already accustomed to the use of /t/ in place of the dental fricatives because this feature is already present in their L1, which could be any Austronesian language. However, one respondent answered ‘apparity’ which may appear as a different range of sound, as /f, v/ are also used by speakers from Hong Kong (Hung, 2000). In this regard, this minor issue calls for ASEAN speakers to consider the context of the use of /t/ as a replacement for /θ/ in distant parts of Asia outside of ASEAN.

**Aspirations on Voiceless Plosives.** This did not disrupt communication except that minor communication breakdowns occurred between the Singapore English and the Philippine English speakers. This demonstrated that the feature might cause confusion between the initial plosives and the bilabials /p/ and /b/ and alveolars /t/ and /d/. In the speech of Singapore English, 15 of the respondents missed the correct term, ‘battle’. In the recording, ‘battle’ was pronounced as /ˈpætəl/, which might have confused them. In the case of Philippine English, the term ‘designed’ was mispronounced as /tiˈzaɪnd/ with silent interplay between /t/ and /d/, which led to incorrect answers from eight listeners. Three answered ‘assigned’ due to the silent modulation of /t/.

**Monophthongals.** Monophthongals /eɪ/ and /əʊ/, represented as /e:/ and /o:/ in the three speeches, may be semantically anomalous to some listeners due to the minimal number of incorrect terms. For example, the term ‘collaboration’ was controversial in Malaysian English. As the monophthongal /eɪ/ was absent in ‘collaboration’ and was pronounced as [kəˌlæbrɪfən], this might have led some listeners to write ‘relation’ and ‘cooperation’ because the terms seemed more



familiar and had fewer syllables. The incorrect inputs in place of ‘collaboration’ may also be aided by linguistic context (Dita, 2013). In Philippine English, ‘aviation’ pronounced as [avi'eɪʃən] replaces the monophthongal /eɪ/ with an open central /a/. However, shifts in monophthongals are not a major intelligibility problem. Its use is not limited among Southeast Asian Englishes, but is widespread in other varieties of English such as those of Wales, Scotland, and Africa.

**Lack of Reduced Vowels.** Southeast Asian Englishes, especially that of Singapore, are identified by a relative lack of reduced vowels (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006), and hence tend to have a full vowel rather than a schwa sound. In the study, the open syllable /ə/ in accomplished [ə'kʌmplɪʃt], and close syllable /ɪk'/ in exuberance [ɪk'zʊbərəns] only caused minor issues of utterance recognition for the part of the listeners. Three participants did not get the correct term for ‘accomplished,’ where, in fact, one wrote ‘uncomplished.’ The problem lay on the full vowel pronunciation of the first syllable, which indicates that the lack of reduced vowels might appear vague and unclear to few Filipino listeners. On another note, in emphasizing each syllable of the term, there were more instances where the use of full vowels garnered high ratings of intelligibility. This shows that the use of full vowels in polysyllabic words avoids weakened sounds, and contributes to the syllable-timed pattern of ASEAN Englishes (Deterding, 2001).

**Deletion of Final Consonants.** The deletion of final consonants /t/ and /d/ is evident in all the speakers’ scripts, and most listeners did not find it somewhat problematic in the decoding process. In the analysis of the scripts, reduction of the final clusters in the pronunciation of the terms *greatest*, *increased*, *published*, and *aircraft* in Malaysian English and Philippine English did not cause misunderstandings because all the participants obtained the correct term. This sound change characterized by glottal stop and deletion is a substrate feature from the L1 (Austronesian and Chinese languages) of the users, i.e., speakers and listeners. As Blevins (2004) argue, “oral stops may be neutralized by glottal stop, and then lost, as in the history of many Chinese languages” (pp. 208-209).

**Heavy End Stress.** As a suprasegmental variable, heavy end stress in Southeast Asian Englishes performs a special communicative function in ending an utterance or a clause within an utterance (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The present study supports the claim that heavy end stress does not cause problems in NNS-NNS interaction, as deduced from the Singapore English and Malaysian English extracts. *Exploration* and *laboratory* were heavily emphasized by the speakers, and no single participant inserted incorrect words. The falling intonation amplified by loudly heavy stress to mark the end of an utterance might be a contributing factor to intelligibility (Low, 2000). However, this is a different case in the Philippine English speaker where the final stressed words ‘disbelief’ and ‘aviation’ caused minor miscommunication among the participants. This instance might be affected by unusual stress placement and lack of deaccenting, which struck Filipino listeners themselves as rather odd.

### The Level of Comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes

A high rate of intelligibility does not necessarily equate to a high rate of comprehensibility (Smith, 1992). To address this issue, this section considers the level of comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes based on the results of the comprehension questions. It is also investigated if there is a link between comprehensibility and intelligibility of ASEAN Englishes. Table 7 summarizes the mean of each variety:

Table 7

#### *Mean of Comprehensibility Scores and Comprehensibility Remarks*

ASEAN Englishes	Mean	Remarks – Level of Comprehensibility
Singapore English	79.57%	High
Malaysian English	95.74%	High
Philippine English	88.51%	High
OVERALL	87.94%	High

With an 87.94% overall comprehensibility, the findings show that the ASEAN Englishes are highly comprehensible. Successful meaning recognition may be influenced by the linguistic similarities of the speakers' native languages, the geographical proximity of the three countries (Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippines), and familiarity of speech toward the spoken variety. That the three countries are geographically adjacent, being less than 1,500 miles apart from each other, may illustrate that the lesser the language distance between and among countries, the greater likelihood that the speakers of English with disparate language backgrounds would understand each other (Beardmore, 1991) at the meaning level. However, this assumption may be weak because there might be no genetic link between geographical proximity and mutual comprehensibility. Following the concept of geographical proximity, the classification of language families may also influence comprehensibility. Malaysian English is heavily influenced by the features of the Malay language (and British English) in lexis and accent; as Malay is closely related to the Filipino language, the two being under the Austronesian family of languages, the participants in this study may find the speaker's phonology (accent, to be exact) as somewhat identical. On the other hand, Singapore English is deemed the least comprehensible variety in the study although this is the most researched variety in Southeast Asia (Wilang & Teo, 2012). Due to the influence of the many languages belonging to different families, Singapore English may be problematic for nonnative listeners, especially from other parts of Asia (Kirkpatrick & Saunders, 2005). Furthermore, Smith and Bisazza (1982) linked these two notions: language exposure and familiarity, and comprehensibility, as "one's English is more comprehensible to those people who have had active exposure to it" (p. 269). Through storing phonological forms of other ELF speakers (Pickering, 2006), listeners may familiarize themselves with and improve their understanding toward the speech of a foreign or related speaker in their next language contact.

Apart from the features of ASEAN Englishes, the presence of literal questions may have also assisted comprehensibility. Literal questions in the form of *what*, *who*, and *when*, and yes-or-no questions appeared to be manageable among the listeners. Their active exposure towards different learning activities that require literal and higher order thinking skills might have accustomed them in answering the test. Listeners can easily recall characters, the setting, the time, note important events, discern comparisons, and recall main ideas. The participants obtained correct answers in the literal-level questions; some literal questions ask, "Who was the brothers'

model in aviation?”, “What was the cause of her husband’s death”, “How is the meridian called today?”.

Whilst appraising the positive results of the comprehensibility rates, it is also noteworthy to consider the common mistakes of students in this test, which might impede their understanding of the speech. First, there was inaccuracy in providing the exact number, which appeared to be the most recurring item error in questions that asked *how much* and *how many*. Some listeners may not be good at remembering and memorizing long lists of numbers and figures like years, dates, or numbers of ships. Since there were more important concepts in the story (e.g., characters, places, sequences), story details like statistics and numbers are commonly neglected as they make the understanding process complex and cause anxiety to listeners (Walton, 2016). Moreover, the errors were also quite apparent in *why* and *what* questions although these higher-level questions were obtained from the text itself and were therefore purely objective. Some participants might feel anxious about high-order questions (Walton, 2016), which were in this case, *why* and *what*. Two reasons may explain this comprehension failure. First, listeners did not give attention to the subject matter or the story itself. Second, they might have experienced difficulty in decoding the utterances and the meaning of the concepts behind the text. The latter leads to the concept of interrelation between intelligibility and comprehensibility discussed below.

**The Relationship of Comprehensibility and Intelligibility of ASEAN Englishes.** The study highlights the role of the formal decoding of utterances (intelligibility) in understanding the text (comprehensibility). Following this idea, the results demonstrated a link between comprehensibility and intelligibility derived from the scores of the listeners. Figure 1 shows the connection between comprehensibility and intelligibility:

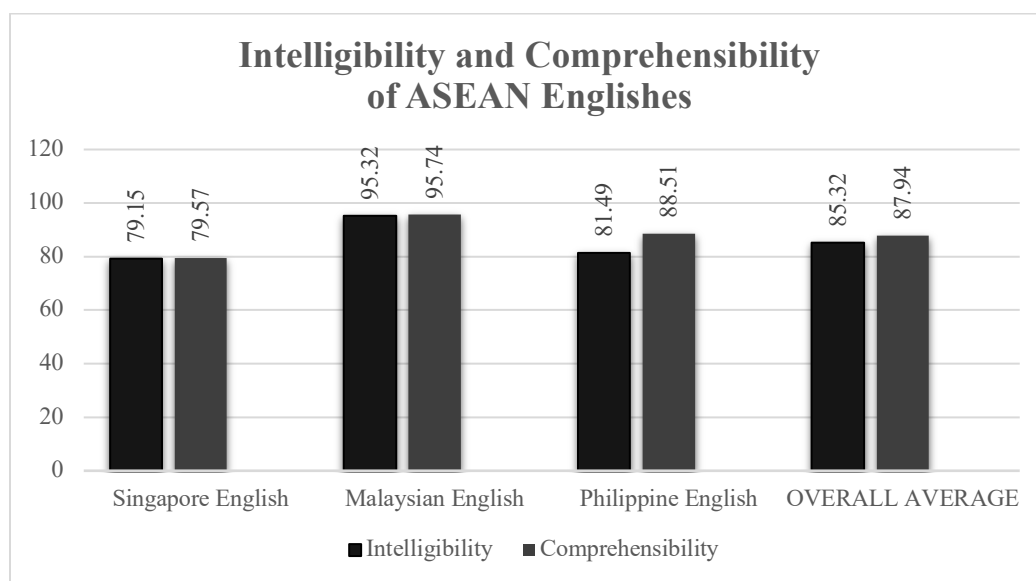


Figure 1. *The Relationship of Intelligibility and Comprehensibility Scores of ASEAN Englishes*

Figure 1 collates the mean scores of the intelligibility and comprehensibility of the individual Englishes, and shows the summative average of all ASEAN Englishes. Singapore and Malaysian Englishes had proximate scores in intelligibility and comprehensibility rates with only a tiny 0.46 difference, whilst in Philippine English, there was a relatively larger difference of 7.02% between the two variables. Having been both influenced by the Malay and Chinese

languages, Singapore and Malaysian Englishes gained the same increase where the degree of decoding utterances may have a significant bearing on meaning recognition. The features of these Englishes (e.g., non-rhoticity, unreduced vowels, pragmatic particle *lah*) comprise the pronunciation model of Singapore and Malaysian English (SME, hereafter), which may have contributed to the tiny difference in rate between utterance and meaning. However, the moderate increase from 81.49% intelligibility to 88.51% comprehensibility of Philippine English is different when compared to the results of the former Englishes. This phenomenon may be explained in two ways. First, the listeners' exposure to Philippine English may provide contextual clues to help the participants supply meaning in undeciphered utterances. This skill is associated with 'let-it-pass strategy' (Firth, 1996), a listening strategy of relying on the context, in this case, the Philippine English speaker, to understand how the utterances are said during communication breakdowns in *lingua franca* conversation. Secondly, the large difference may be drawn from listeners' attention towards the script's story told by the speaker of Philippine English, as revealed from the interview. In this fashion, participants might have concentrated on language content and meaning (comprehensibility), rather than on the language form (intelligibility) of the story in Philippine English.

Additionally, it is noteworthy to include the ranks of the three varieties based on the scores from the two tests. Among the three ASEAN varieties of English, the quantitative results show that Malaysian English received the highest score, and was considered the most intelligible and comprehensible ASEAN English variety; Philippine English followed with 81.49% intelligibility and 88.51% comprehensibility, followed by the least intelligible among the three, Singapore English. Malaysian English was appraised in terms of moderate pace of speech, heavy accentedness, and clear pronunciation. The speaker's commended features of speech might have stemmed from his heightened ability to lay forth information effectively as evidenced by his linguistic profile, which reveals his active participation in debating tournaments and school journalism. Singapore English, however, received the lowest mark in intelligibility (79.15%) and comprehensibility (79.57%). It is notable, too, that Philippine English has a close intelligibility rate (81.49%) with Singapore English (79.15%). The listeners reported that some speech parts were unclear and that the pace of speech of the two speakers affected how they recognized the words, and later on how they understood the text as a whole.

The most pressing issue here is the rank of Philippine English in the ASEAN Englishes continuum. It is noteworthy to consider that the participants, who are the most exposed and familiar with Philippine English, recognized utterances from the speech of Malaysian English better than their home variety. There is a 13.93% margin between the intelligibility ratings of Philippine English and Malaysian English. As most studies (e.g., Smith & Nelson, 2006; Jenkins, 2007) support that familiarity and exposure to a variety play an important role in intelligibility, it is surprising to note that Philippine English ranked second next to Malaysian English given the listeners' familiarity with the pronunciation, pace of speech, and accent of the variety. This may be influenced by Philippine English(es) from the emerging subvarieties of Philippine English (Gonzales, 2017). It should be noted that the L1 (first languages) of the Philippine English speaker included Ilocano and Filipino, which were later influenced by Manila-Tagalog after staying in Manila for four years. Her English might be heavily influenced by Ilocano, which differs from the Manila-Tagalog-based Philippine English. Since the culture in the country varies regionally and geographically—and there are 183 documented languages in the country—linguistic differences in terms of phonology may be evident in how Filipinos speak English.

On the overall average, there was a 2.62% difference in favor of comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes. The test scores have a predicted value, that is, intelligibility rates are directly proportional to comprehensibility rates. Supported by the study of Munro, Derwing, and Morton

(2006), the findings reveal that there is a relationship between intelligibility and comprehensibility which is influenced by the speakers' phonology. As phonology is a significant area in comprehending the meaning of the relatively new text, listeners rely more greatly on decoding phonological forms. In this manner, utterances and meanings are interrelated, that is, the prerequisite to understanding the meaning is to properly decode the utterances. Listeners might have used bottom-up processing, an operation of integrating inferences from higher contextual knowledge, to digest a new text with the aid of intelligible utterances of the speaker. Proper decoding of segmental and suprasegmental forms, therefore, may aid listeners in achieving comprehension.

### **Factors of Intelligibility and Comprehensibility of ASEAN Englishes**

To explain the reasons of the high rates of comprehensibility and intelligibility, a semi-structured interview was employed to explore the listeners' experiences and views towards the test. In summary, their views revolved around (1) how the speaker sounded, (2) how they listened and provided strategies in listening, and (3) how the passage affected their understanding.

**Speaker Factors.** The phonology of ASEAN Englishes, with emphasis on the syllable-based speech, was the most salient speaker factor, according to the listeners. Since the phonology of speakers as a language output is crucial for intelligible pronunciation in ELF communication, the syllable-timed feature may have positively influenced the intelligibility of ASEAN Englishes. The use of shared pronunciation features is also a significant factor to gain correct, intelligible utterances because this is the "biggest source of loss of intelligibility" (Jenkins, 2000, as cited in Pickering, 2006, p. 4).

Aside from the vocalic components of the speaker, pace of speech was also one of the issues raised by the listeners. Pace of speech, defined as the fastness or slowness of utterances, is crucial to the perception of the intent, meaning, and impact of the words among the listeners. The participants indicated that ASEAN Englishes have generally moderate pacing, neither too fast nor too slow. Specifically, the listeners during the interview touched on the difficulty in processing the words in the rapid speeches of Singapore and Philippine Englishes speakers. The audio sample of the Singapore English speaker, which is 2 minutes and 32 seconds, may be too fast for a 325-word text. This may reflect the low rates of both intelligibility and comprehensibility as compared to that of the Malaysian English. In a similar vein, the pace of speech of the Philippine English speaker was deemed swift, which posed difficulty for the listeners in absorbing the information contained in the speech. This shows that fast pace negatively interferes with the mental processing of language form. The use of pauses, therefore, is a significant suprasegmental strategy to positively yield higher intelligibility (Dita & de Leon, 2017). This feature is especially crucial during the cloze-test procedure (to measure intelligibility) because the listeners needed to catch up as they wrote the correct word left blank while listening to the rest of the recording. The act of listening to the recording while writing answers, probably a multitasking activity, might have been a heavy task for the listeners.

The use of heavy accent is also a contributing speaker factor of intelligibility and comprehensibility. As listeners rely on strongly spoken utterances, which influence memory, proper decoding, and grasping process, heavily accented utterances result in heightened intelligibility and comprehensibility (Munro & Derwing, 1999), such as that of the Malaysian English.

**Listener Factors.** Pickering (2006) mainly emphasizes the role of the listener familiarity subject to different variables. Exposure through travel and media, e.g., Asianovela, contributed to

familiarity with the phonology of the varieties. This supports Nelson's (1995) and Chambers and Trudgill's (1998) claim that listeners' exposure to the variety of a particular language may contribute to mutual intelligibility between different varieties of English.

To relate to ELF, Bent and Bradlow (2003) coined the term *interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit* to refer to the familiarity of phonological forms among nonnative listeners. In this concept, mutual intelligibility is achieved when nonnative listeners from one ASEAN nation (Filipinos) find affinity with nonnative speakers from two other ASEAN nations with whom they share English as a common language. "NNS' knowledge of developmental characteristics in ILT (interlanguage talk) phonology" (Pickering, 2006, p. 7) may cause the positive scores in both tests. Following the study of Bent and Bradlow (2012), the present study proved that nonnative listeners are now beginning to recognize certain acoustic-phonetic features of the speech of a matched nonnative talker and other nonnative speakers in ASEAN. Deviation from the target language norm (Standard English) can contribute to establishing their common identity as an ASEAN Community. Interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit, therefore, has a positive influence on intelligibility and comprehensibility, as well as in international understanding.

The participants stated that the use of contextual clues helped in providing the correct answers in the blank. It appeared in the interview that this was the most salient listening strategy in answering the cloze test and the comprehension test. They used it either (1) to confirm a presupposed answer or (2) to substitute a word which may be similar to the missed correct answer. The two possibilities are influenced by linguistic context or 'linguistic environment' (Dita, 2013), which helped them determine and confirm the answer based on what they perceived, not what the speaker exactly uttered. Field (2003) contends that the use of higher-level contextual understanding helps to compensate for undeciphered and unrecognizable utterance and meaning.

Another listener factor is listeners' high proficiency in English language macro skills (i.e., listening, speaking, writing, and reading), which was obtained from the ELP self-assessment test. Field (2003) indicated that proficiency in listening is drawn from the ability of the mind to store multiple representations of phonemes.

Listeners' attitudes toward ASEAN Englishes can also be attributed to the high marks of intelligibility and comprehensibility. During the interview, some participants felt 'happy' and 'interested,' a positive listener attitude, about being engaged and participating in the listening tests. Positive attitudes may influence and induce high rates of intelligibility and comprehensibility because "a listener who expects to understand a speaker will be more likely to find that speaker comprehensible than one who does not" (Smith & Nelson, 1985, as cited in Pickering, 2006, p. 8).

**Textual Factors.** The effects of textual factors on enhancing or impeding understanding are worth investigating because the listeners raised specific issues regarding the passage content and its elements. It was revealed that the quality and topics of the passages, as well as the lexical choices, helped the listeners to establish connection with the texts. Motivation is drawn when listeners see reading as an active and cognitive immersion while carrying information gleaned from the text (Rosenblatt, 1998). Efferent (academic) and aesthetic (appreciation) stances on reading (or even listening, *vis-à-vis*), therefore, may enhance listeners' attention while allowing them to comprehend the text. Listeners do not just see the text as a source of information for providing correct answers in the tests, but as a way of experiencing, thinking, and feeling during the reading and listening process. For instance, the death of Marie Curie's husband may induce emotions in readers, making them feel something of what the character, Marie Curie, is experiencing.

Listeners also explained that the lexical choices from the passage were appropriate for their capacity. As words were ensured to be politically neutral, the use of appropriate words did not disrupt comprehension unlike those texts with lexical variations in terms of a variety of specific

idioms (Jenkins, 2000). In this line, it may be assumed that listeners' familiarity to words have a strong bearing on textual understanding, i.e., intelligibility and comprehensibility. On this account, high intelligibility may be influenced by their lexical proficiency; intelligibility, therefore, is "confounded with vocabulary" (Irvine, 1977, p. 313). One with Dayag's (2007) and Atechi's (2004) critique on Smith and Nelson's (1985) definition of intelligibility, this study challenges its framework as outside factors, such as linguistic context, may interfere in word utterance and meaning recognition.

### **Conclusion**

As English is progressively becoming an important means for international communication, Filipinos are encouraged to develop the ability to accommodate to other varieties of English, most importantly that of their neighbors. The study, in this line, revealed that a chain of mutual intelligibility links the three varieties of English spoken in the ASEAN region. The findings showed that ASEAN Englishes are deemed 85.32% intelligible and 87.94% comprehensible (both with high remarks); it is gleaned that Filipino speakers of one variety (Philippine English) can understand speakers of the same variety (Philippine English) and of other varieties (i.e., Malaysian English and Singapore English), who live in adjacent areas. However, the effects of linguistic differences of each variety may be reflected from the few tokens of communication breakdowns, which are inevitable due to the subjectivities of the perceptions of each listener. It is therefore opined that varieties of English in SEA may take two roles in the regional continuum: for local and international functions.

The study concludes that there is an emerging English as a Lingua Franca within the ASEAN region because the group of Englishes is regarded as mutually intelligible, at least from the judgment of one group of nonnative speakers in the region. This common binding through the English language may have direct implications in establishing a common identity as an ASEAN community and in bringing effective cross-cultural communication during NNS-NNS interaction. The English language, therefore, serves as one of the operative tools to strengthen and sustain the ties of the Philippines to its ASEAN neighbor countries through ASEAN integration. The English language cultivates the speakers' sense of their common ground in using ELF as a means to communicate on international affairs, which are well suited to the needs of the users in foreign settings (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

To prepare the students to become future global citizens in SEA, Southeast Asian Englishes scholars (Kachru, 1992; Pickering, 2016; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Jenkins, 2007) proposed a paradigm shift to change English language teaching for a better reflection of the reality of World Englishes in multilingual settings. Focus on teaching English as a lingua franca will reconsider the traditional models (inner circle varieties) and adopt endonormative models in classroom settings (Bernardo, 2011). Pronunciation teaching, as the core advocacy of this study, is encouraged to inform the students about the relevant phonological features of English as a lingua franca in Southeast Asia, following Jenkins' (2000) Lingua Franca Core (LFC). To achieve this, it is important to design a new language curriculum highlighting the aspects of Southeast Asian Englishes. As Kirkpatrick (2011, p.134) suggested, "English curriculum can become a cross-cultural curriculum with a focus on Asian cultures and include topics of interest and concern to the learners." The growing acceptance and recognition of local varieties of English may also have implications for re-evaluating international language frameworks (e.g., Common European Framework) and 'standardized' exams (e.g., TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS). This calls for language policy makers and test evaluators to recognize the World Englishes phenomenon, because language teaching, learning, and assessment are no longer historically premised on the notion of 'Standard English.' Although this study advances for a

common language in which features are shared among the language varieties in the region, such claims aim for ‘glocalizing’ the English language, most especially in the ASEAN region.

This proposal is grounded by the theory that raising awareness of the ASEAN varieties of English and English as a Lingua Franca will significantly increase listeners’ experience with phonological representations of the target language, and later, contribute to mutual intelligibility with other NNSs. The study supports a lingua-franca approach that aims to develop the ability to communicate successfully in multilingual settings (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Although intelligibility studies on ASEAN Englishes are important to better understand how each interacts with another, it is also important to go beyond the ASEAN region. For instance, further studies may focus on the judgment of NNS of expanding circles including ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and Korea) and BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). They may also play on speaker-listener intelligibility matrix targeting the native speakers and nonnative speakers from international organizations such as United Nations, APEC, European Union, among others. Furthermore, it would be considered pioneering to focus on intelligibility of other language outputs such as syntax, lexis, and pragmatics. Including the lectal varieties (i.e., basilectal and mesolectal varieties) in the speech materials could also lay a groundwork for comparative intelligibility research for the speeches of people from all walks of life.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A. Representative Speaker’s Question Sheet**

Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1: English Language Skills**

Instructions: Rate your language skills (Tick the box.)

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<b>Reading</b>				
<b>Listening</b>				
<b>Speaking</b>				
<b>Writing</b>				

**Part 2: Personal Data**

2 1. How many years have you studied English? \_\_\_\_\_

3 2. How long have you been staying in your country? \_\_\_\_\_

4 3. Did you happen to live outside your country? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many languages can you speak and/or use? Please specify.

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5. Have you been to any of the Southeast Asian nations (i.e., Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei)? If so, please specify the countries visited

\_\_\_\_\_

5. In what situation(s) do you use English?

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6. Rate your general English proficiency level:

\_\_\_\_ Beginner \_\_\_\_ Intermediate \_\_\_\_ Advanced

Please give reason(s) for your rating.

## Appendix B. Speech Materials

### Scripts:

#### 1. Singapore English

##### *Ferdinand Magellan and his Expeditions*

In the 16th century, an age of great marine and terrestrial exploration, Ferdinand Magellan led the first expedition to sail around the world. As a young Portuguese noble, he served the king of Portugal, but he became involved in the quagmire of political intrigue at court and lost the king's favor. After he was dismissed from service by the king of Portugal, he offered to serve the future Emperor Charles V of Spain.

A papal decree of 1493 had assigned all land in the New World west of 50 degrees W longitude to Spain and all the land east of that line to Portugal. Magellan offered to prove that the East Indies fell under Spanish authority. On September 20, 1519, Magellan set sail from Spain with five ships. More than a year later, one of these ships was exploring the topography of South America in search of a water route across the continent. This ship sank, but the remaining four ships searched along the southern peninsula of South America. Finally, they found the passage they sought near 50 degrees S latitude. Magellan named this passage the Strait of All Saints, but today it is known as the Strait of Magellan.

One ship deserted while in this passage and returned to Spain, so fewer sailors were privileged to gaze at that first panorama of the Pacific Ocean. Those who remained crossed the meridian now known as the International Date Line in the early spring of 1521 after 98 days on the Pacific Ocean. During those long days at sea, many of Magellan's men died of starvation and disease.

Later, Magellan became involved in an insular conflict in the Philippines and was killed in a tribal battle. Only one ship and 17 sailors under the command of the Basque navigator Elcano survived to complete the westward journey to Spain and thus prove once and for all that the world is round, with no precipice at the edge.

#### 2. Malaysian English

##### *The Life of Marie Curie*

Marie Curie was one of the most accomplished scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie's amicable collaboration later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a professor of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great exuberance for learning prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher education, she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master's degree and doctorate in physics.

Marie was fortunate to have studied at the Sorbonne with some of the greatest scientists of her day, one of whom was Pierre Curie. Marie and Pierre were married in 1895 and spent many productive years working together in the physics laboratory. A short time after they discovered radium, Pierre was killed by a horse-drawn wagon in 1906. Marie was stunned by this horrible misfortune and endured heartbreaking anguish. Despondently, she recalled their close relationship and the joy that they had shared in scientific research. The fact that she had two young daughters to raise by herself greatly increased her distress.

Curie's feeling of desolation finally began to fade when she was asked to succeed her husband as a physics professor at the Sorbonne. She was the first woman to be given a professorship at the world-famous university. In 1911, she received the Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium. Although Marie Curie eventually suffered a fatal illness from her long exposure to radium, she never became disillusioned about her work. Regardless of the consequences, she had dedicated herself to science and to revealing the mysteries of the physical world.

### **3. Philippine English**

#### *The Discovery of Aviation and Aeronautics*

Many great inventions are initially greeted with ridicule and disbelief. The invention of the airplane was no exception. Although many people who heard about the first powered flight on December 17, 1903 were excited and impressed, others reacted with peals of laughter. The idea of flying an aircraft was repulsive to some people. Such people called Wilbur and Orville Wright, the inventors of the first flying machine, impulsive fools. Negative reactions, however, did not stop the Wrights. Impelled by their desire to succeed, they continued their experiments in aviation.

Orville and Wilbur Wright had always had a compelling interest in aeronautics and mechanics. As young boys, they earned money by making and selling kites and mechanical toys. Later, they designed a newspaper-folding machine, built a printing press, and operated a bicycle-repair shop. In 1896, when they read about the death of Otto Lilienthal, the brothers' interest in flight grew into a compulsion.

Lilienthal, a pioneer in hang-gliding, had controlled his gliders by shifting his body in the desired direction. This idea was repellent to the Wright brothers, however, and they searched for more efficient methods to control the balance of airborne vehicles. In 1900 and 1901, the Wrights tested numerous gliders and developed control techniques. The brothers' inability to obtain enough lift power for the gliders almost led them to abandon their efforts. After further study, the Wright brothers concluded that the published tables of air pressure on curved surfaces must be wrong. They set up a wind tunnel and began a series of experiments with model wings. Because of their efforts, the old tables were repealed in time and replaced by the first reliable figures for air pressure on curved surfaces. This work, in turn, made it possible for the brothers to design a machine that would fly. In 1903 the Wrights built their first airplane, which cost less than \$1,000. They even designed and built their own source of propulsion—a lightweight gasoline engine. When they started the engine on December 17, the airplane pulsated wildly before taking off. The plane managed to stay aloft for 12 seconds, however, and it flew 120 feet.

By 1905, the Wrights had perfected the first airplane that could turn, circle, and remain airborne for half an hour at a time. Others had flown in balloons and hang gliders, but the Wright brothers were the first to build a full-size machine that could fly under its own power. As the contributors of one of the most outstanding engineering achievements in history, the Wright brothers are accurately called the fathers of aviation.

## Appendix C. Cloze Tests

### 1. Singapore English

In the 16th century, an age of great marine and terrestrial 1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (exploration), Ferdinand Magellan led the first expedition to sail around the world. As a young Portuguese noble, he served the king of Portugal, but he became involved in the quagmire of political intrigue at court and lost the king's favor. After he was dismissed from 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (service) by the king of Portugal, he offered to serve the future Emperor Charles V of Spain.

A papal 3.) \_\_\_\_\_ (decree) of 1493 had assigned all land in the New World west of 50 degrees W longitude to Spain and all the land east of that line to Portugal. Magellan offered to prove that the East Indies fell under Spanish 4.) \_\_\_\_\_ (authority). On September 20, 1519, Magellan set sail from Spain with five ships. More than a year later, one of these ships was exploring the 5.) \_\_\_\_\_ (topography) of South America in search of a water route across the continent. This ship sank, but the remaining four ships searched along the southern peninsula of South America. Finally, they found the 6.) \_\_\_\_\_ (passage) they sought near 50 degrees S latitude. Magellan named this passage the Strait of All Saints, but today it is known as the Strait of Magellan.

One ship deserted while in this passage and returned to Spain, so fewer sailors were privileged to gaze at that first 7.) \_\_\_\_\_ (panorama) of the Pacific Ocean. Those who remained crossed the meridian now known as the International Date Line in the early spring of 1521 after 98 days on the Pacific Ocean. During those long days at sea, many of Magellan's men died of 8.) \_\_\_\_\_ (starvation) and disease.

Later, Magellan became involved in an insular conflict in the Philippines and was killed in a tribal 9.) \_\_\_\_\_ (battle). Only one ship and 17 sailors under the command of the Basque navigator Elcano survived to complete the westward 10.) \_\_\_\_\_ (journey) to Spain and thus prove once and for all that the world is round, with no precipice at the edge.

### 2. Malaysian English

Marie Curie was one of the most 1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (accomplished) scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie's amicable 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (collaboration) later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a 3.) \_\_\_\_\_ (professor) of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great 4.) \_\_\_\_\_ (exuberance) for learning prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher 5.) \_\_\_\_\_ (education), she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master's degree and doctorate in physics.

Marie was fortunate to have studied at the Sorbonne with some of the 6.) \_\_\_\_\_ (greatest) scientists of her day, one of whom was Pierre Curie. Marie and Pierre were married in 1895 and spent many productive years working together in the physics 7.) \_\_\_\_\_ (laboratory). A short time after they discovered radium, Pierre was killed by a horse-drawn wagon in 1906. Marie was stunned by this horrible misfortune and endured heartbreaking anguish. Despondently, she recalled their close relationship and the joy that they had shared in scientific research. The fact that she had two young daughters to raise by herself greatly 8.) \_\_\_\_\_ (increased) her distress.

Curie's feeling of 9.) \_\_\_\_\_ (desolation) finally began to fade when she was asked to succeed her husband as a physics professor at the Sorbonne. She was the first woman to be given a professorship at the world-famous university. In 1911, she received the Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium. Although Marie Curie eventually suffered a fatal illness from her long exposure to radium, she never became 10.) \_\_\_\_\_ (disillusioned) about her work. Regardless of the consequences, she had dedicated herself to science and to revealing the mysteries of the physical world.

### 3. Philippine English

Many great inventions are initially greeted with ridicule and 1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (disbelief). The invention of the airplane was no exception. Although many people who heard about the first powered flight on December 17, 1903 were excited and impressed, others reacted with peals of laughter. The idea of flying an 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (aircraft) was repulsive to some people. Such people called Wilbur and Orville Wright, the inventors of the first flying machine, impulsive fools. Negative reactions, however, did not stop the Wrights. Impelled by their desire to succeed, they continued their experiments in 3.) \_\_\_\_\_ (aviation).

Orville and Wilbur Wright had always had a 4.) \_\_\_\_\_ (compelling) interest in aeronautics and mechanics. As young boys, they earned money by making and selling kites and mechanical toys. Later, they designed a newspaper-folding machine, built a 5.) \_\_\_\_\_ (printing) press, and operated a bicycle-repair shop. In 1896, when they read about the death of Otto Lilienthal, the brothers' interest in flight grew into a compulsion.

Lilienthal, a pioneer in hang-gliding, had controlled his gliders by 6.) \_\_\_\_\_ (shifting) his body in the desired direction. This idea was repellent to the Wright brothers, however, and they searched for more 7.) \_\_\_\_\_ (efficient) methods to control the balance of airborne vehicles. In 1900 and 1901, the Wrights tested numerous gliders and developed control techniques. The brothers' inability to obtain enough lift power for the gliders almost led them to abandon their efforts.

After further study, the Wright brothers concluded that the 8.) \_\_\_\_\_ (published) tables of air pressure on curved surfaces must be wrong. They set up a wind tunnel and began a series of experiments with model wings. Because of their efforts, the old tables were repealed in time and replaced by the first reliable figures for air pressure on curved surfaces. This work, in turn, made it possible for the brothers to design a machine that would fly. In 1903 the Wrights built their first airplane, which cost less than \$1,000. They even 9.) \_\_\_\_\_ (designed) and built their own source of propulsion—a lightweight gasoline engine. When they started the engine on December 17, the airplane pulsed wildly before taking off. The plane managed to stay aloft for 12 seconds, however, and it flew 120 feet.

By 1905, the Wrights had perfected the first airplane that could turn, circle, and remain airborne for half an hour at a time. Others had flown in 10.) \_\_\_\_\_ (balloons) and hang gliders, but the Wright brothers were the first to build a full-size machine that could fly under its own power. As the contributors of one of the most outstanding engineering achievements in history, the Wright brothers are accurately called the fathers of aviation.

## Appendix D. Comprehension Questions

### 1. Singapore English

1. Why did Magellan lose the favor of the King of Portugal?
  - a. He betrayed Portugal.
  - b. He became involved in the political intrigue at court.**
  - c. He wanted to serve another sovereign.
2. What did Magellan offer to prove to the King of Spain after a papal decree stating the territories of Spain and Portugal?
  - a. That Portugal will soon be a territory of Spain
  - b. That the East Indies fell under Spanish authority**
  - c. That the whole Asia belonged to Spain
3. How many ships were set to sail?
  - a. Three
  - b. Eleven
  - c. Five**
4. After one ship returned to Spain, those who pushed through cross this meridian. How is it called today?
  - a. International Date Line**
  - b. Southwestern Idaho
  - c. Magnetic Pole
5. What did the entire journey prove?
  - a. The world is round.**
  - b. The world is flat.
  - c. All parts of the world at that time were all discovered.

### 2. Malaysian English

1. Radium, one of the discoveries of Marie Curie, is widely used for treating this disease. What is this type of disease?
  - a. Epilepsy
  - b. Cancer**
  - c. Lupus
2. Why did Marie Curie fail to enroll in a university in Warsaw?
  - a. The institution was closed to women.**
  - b. She did not have sufficient money to cover her school fees.
  - c. She did not pass the entrance test.
3. What is the cause of Pierre Curie's death?
  - a. Heart attack
  - b. A cold-blooded gun shot
  - c. Hit by a horse-drawn wagon**
4. Her sadness over her husband's sudden death began to fade when:
  - a. She became interested in a field outside physics and chemistry.
  - b. She succeeded her husband as a physics professor in Sorbonne.**
  - c. She met a new partner.
5. After suffering a fatal illness over her long exposure to radium, did she disown her works?
  - a. Yes, and it became the cause of her death.
  - b. No, she never became disillusioned about her work.**
  - c. No, her works reminded her of Pierre.

### 3. Philippine English



1. **What are the interests of Orville and Wilbur Wright?**
  - a. **aeronautics and mechanics**
  - b. astronomy and astrology
  - c. geography and geology
2. **Who was the brothers' model that sparked their interest?**
  - a. **Otto Lilienthal**
  - b. Amelia Earhart
  - c. Bessie Coleman
3. What significantly caused failure of flights of numerous gliders and techniques??
  - a. Insufficient resources for gliders
  - b. People's criticism towards their inventions
  - c. **Inability to obtain enough lift power for gliders**
4. How much did their first airplane cost?
  - a. **Less than \$1,000**
  - b. More than \$1,000
  - c. Less than \$500
5. How are Wright brothers named after they built a machine than can fly on its own?
  - a. Fathers of Aeronautics
  - b. **Fathers of Aviation**
  - c. Fathers of Airplane