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Research Article

Trends and practices in English language assessment in ASEAN countries: A meta-synthesis study (2021-2025)

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ABSTRACT

Across the linguistically diverse ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states, English has been acknowledged as the sole official working language. It serves as a unifying medium in business, diplomacy, and education. This study explores emerging assessment practices and methodologies in English language teaching within the regional context over the last five years, considering Kachru's 3 Concentric Circles Model of the English Language. Using databases and following the PRISMA flow, the selected articles were verified by the three experts in English language teaching. A total of 12 published articles met the eligibility criteria: four from Malaysia, four from the Philippines, and four from Indonesia. With Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis steps, key factors influencing English language assessment were identified from the validated studies: benchmarking, learner autonomy, ICT integration, up-skilling, and preparation for workforce demand. Based on these insights, the meth-synthesis proposes a new framework aimed at addressing the identified challenges. The findings of this study have significant implications for enhancing the quality of English language assessment across ASEAN countries.

Keywords: *Assessment practices, English language assessment, Learner autonomy, ICT integration, Meta-synthesis, PRISMA*

Introduction

English has served as a practical tool for communication among member countries in Southeast Asia, as evidenced by its widespread use to facilitate cooperation. Kirkpatrick (2012) believed that English, as a de facto

lingua franca, affects communication among countries. Given the region's diverse languages and cultures, effective English assessment is crucial to support the attainment of ASEAN's vision. Understanding assessment practices and methodologies ensures that learners achieve

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the desired English proficiency levels required in various personal, professional, and academic settings. Standardization of language assessments can better prepare the future workforce to meet regional and global demands.

While literacy remains a foundational competency, Bacus and Alda (2023) stressed the need for learning institutions to revisit English language curricula, emphasizing quality instruction and authentic assessments. Geographical isolation, political systems, ethnic diversity, and historical backgrounds like colonization cause multilingualism among ASEAN countries. Following Kachru's Three Circles of English model (1985), Kirkpatrick emphasized that countries like Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore belong to the "Outer Circle". Citizens in countries in the outer circle can communicate in English better because of colonial influences. Colonization led to the emergence of specific varieties of English, like Singaporean and Filipino English. In the Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia, English is used as the medium of instruction for teaching mathematics and science. In Singapore, English is the medium of instruction for all subjects, while English is taught as a subject in Myanmar (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

In Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, English is considered a foreign language and is mainly only used in universities, large businesses, and the tourism industry (Todd, 2012). He further pointed out that there is a big difference between the assessment practices of the two groups of ASEAN countries. To make this point, he made Singapore the quintessential colonized country and Thailand the representative for countries that consider English a foreign language. In Singapore, entrance and exit exams include diverse tasks like paragraph writing and spoken conversation, showcasing the test-takers' ability to use the English language. However, all exams are exclusively multiple-choice in Thailand. Unfortunately, skills in speaking and writing are ignored because the focus is solely on reading, grammar, and vocabulary. These differences in the assessment of the English language affect the English proficiency levels of each country (Todd, 2012).

The differences in the way students are assessed as they use the English language are evident in the proficiency levels measured by reputable online English language assessment websites and surveys. Hence, the exploration of assessment practices is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable quality education, emphasizing the importance of developing language competence among the future workforce. In so doing, disparities among ASEAN countries will be addressed.

A Statista survey released in 2023 revealed that there is a disparity among Asian countries in terms of the English proficiency index (Statista, 2023). Singapore ranked first with a score of 631 out of 800, the Philippines came second (578), and Malaysia ranked third with a score of 568. The Asian countries with the lowest scores are official members of the ASEAN: Myanmar (450), Cambodia (421), and Thailand (416). The latest survey by EF English Proficiency Index (2024) identified Singapore as the country with respondents with very high proficiency, and respondents from the Philippines and Malaysia are highly proficient. Again, countries with very low English proficiency are Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia (EF EPI, 2024).

These surveys reflect an attempt by researchers to measure the English proficiency capabilities of ASEAN people in recent years. However, studies on the trends and practices of English language assessments in the last five years have been few and far between. A study conducted in 2018 by Low and Ao focused more on the spread of English in ASEAN in the context of Policies and Issues. The researchers expounded more on English language policies in each of the Outer and Expanded circle varieties of English, models and norms of English, and concerns about spoken English and intelligibility (Low & Ao, 2018). A systematic review of the English Situation in the Implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community was conducted to identify the possible impacts on the increasing use of English in the region. (Fauzanna, 2023). The study identified 5 dominating factors: English for ASEAN regionalism, English skills for working in ASEAN, English as lingua franca in ASEAN, English in the curriculum, and English in the education system. Only

the 4th theme (English in the curriculum) focused on the assessment among other factors. Studies on the use of the English language in the ASEAN context focused more on the policies, issues, and economic repercussions. It is also worth noting that most of these studies were not done in recent years. There has been no study on the topic of English language assessment in the light of English language teaching and learning for the last five years.

Although ASEAN's Charter formalizes English as the official working language to promote regional integration, it does not provide details on standardized assessment frameworks especially on linguistically diverse member countries. Considerably, the varied educational systems and regard of English as a global language led to challenges in ascertaining effective language assessment practices. Notwithstanding the existing literature that looked into the assessment practices at the national level, there is a dearth of literature providing regional synthesis of assessment trends anchored on Kachru's model. Thus, a meta-synthesis of existing language assessment practices with the view of advancing a holistic assessment framework justifies the purpose of this study.

Research Objective

This study aimed to meta-synthesize English language assessment practices and methodologies from in ASEAN countries from 2021-2025. Central to this inquiry was the exploration and analysis of assessment trends and practices to arrive at the key themes and implications of assessment types: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning, to English language teaching and learning.

Methods

This meta-synthesis focused on the emerging trends and practices in English language assessment among the ten ASEAN countries. It

delved into the assessment practices and methodologies in ELT and identified common challenges and best practices from 2021 - 2025. Meticulous details on the research design and strategy were considered to come up with a thorough research methodology.

Research Design

This meta-synthesis followed a qualitative research design. This design is appropriate to pursue in-depth and process-based studies of assessment practices. The topic required a rigorous and exploratory undertaking. The final list of studies were thoroughly examined by two education experts in the field of English Language Teaching for verification. Their nod on the final list of studies signaled the start of thematic analysis and data extraction.

Search Strategy/PRISMA Flow

This research obtained studies and research from Google Scholar through Harzing's Publish and Perish. Among the disqualified articles were studies that were not qualitative in nature, systematic reviews, conference proceedings, books, citations, not ASEAN related, not conducted in the last 5 years, not English language assessment specific, no clear method, limited scope, etc.

There were 1,100 initial studies generated because 100 search results were considered for these keywords: "*English Language Assessment ASEAN*", "*English Language Assessment Brunei*", "*English Language Assessment Cambodia*", "*English Language Assessment Laos*", "*English Language Assessment Malaysia*", "*English Language Assessment Myanmar*", "*English Language Assessment Philippines*", "*English Language Assessment Thailand*", "*English Language Assessment Vietnam*", "*English Language Assessment Indonesia*", "*English Language Assessment Singapore*".

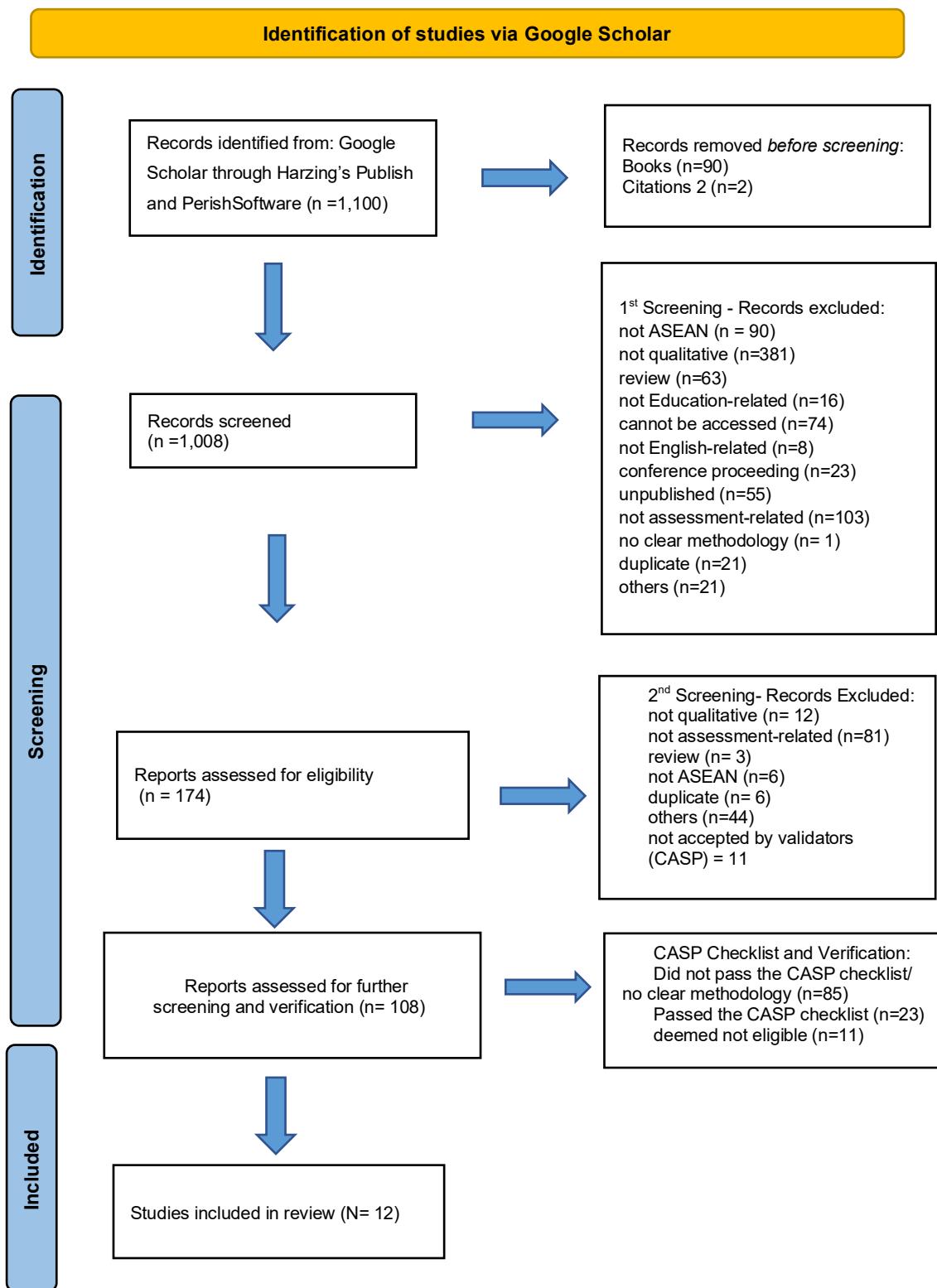


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram 2020 for the study: Trends and Practices in English Language Assessment in ASEAN Countries: A Meta-Synthesis Study (2021-2025)

The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 showcases the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Out of all 1,100 search results, 12 verified studies were included in the final list. The PRISMA

flow showed how rigorous and meticulous this meta-synthesis was.

Selection Criteria

The articles used in this meta-synthesis were further refined through the CASP Checklist. Each study was assessed in terms of three areas: study design and method, key findings, and clarity and applicability. Sample questions in study design and method include "Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?", "Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?" and "Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?" The researcher chose from among these three answers: YES, NO and Can't Tell. The answers to the questions helped the researcher determine if the article lives up to the inclusion criteria of the proposed meta-synthesis. If there are more NO answers/ Can't Tell answers than YES answers, the researcher will reconsider the inclusion of that particular article. The article that did not live up to the criteria were disqualified for the following reasons: not clear method and design, no clear findings and no clear application. A total of 23 articles passed the researcher's screening using the CASP Checklist. The list was further screened by two education experts, resulting in 12 studies deemed eligible for this meta-synthesis.

Verification Process

With the Ethics Committee's approval, the education experts were requested to verify the final list of studies to be included in the research. The committee was composed of professors with expertise in the field of education, particularly in English language teaching assessment in the researcher's university. The committee was provided with copies of the articles, together with the CASP Checklist for each article. To further help the committee, an Excel

sheet was shared with them containing specific details like the article title, location, study objective, number of respondents, the specific design used, area of study, link of the article, DOI, Journal Name, Publication Date, and Journal Indexing. The file contained the necessary information and the remarks of the experts for each recommended article.

Data- Gathering Procedure

After the final studies were selected, relevant data using a coding framework were extracted. Assessment methods, tools, challenges, innovations, and policy influences were all considered. Emerging themes were framed through the categorization and organization of data. Thematic analysis through content and frequency analysis was applied. The content and frequent analysis delved into the specific assessment practices, tools, and strategies mentioned in the final list of studies. The practices were compared and contrasted to identify commonalities and differences.

Ethical Considerations

This meta-synthesis did not include any respondents or participants. Since this is primarily data mining research, there was no need for ethical considerations like voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, the potential for harm, and results communication. The researcher was committed to upholding the integrity of the study by minimizing the risk of bias and upholding trustworthiness and academic honesty.

Brief Description of the 12 Articles

The 12 articles, presented in Table 1, were judged eligible for this meta-synthesis on the trends and practices in English Language Assessment in ASEAN Countries by three experts, other than the researchers.

Table 1 Summary of the 12 Articles

Article Titles	Author and Journal	Description of the Article
Article 1: Authentic Assessments in English Language Teaching: A Case in SMP Negeri 6 Semarang	Rini Maulidhawati, Entika Fani Prastikawati, Theresia Cicik Sophia Budiman	This study, conducted in Indonesia, investigated authentic assessments and their washback effects. Two English teachers and ten students participated in this research.

Article Titles	Author and Journal	Description of the Article
	Journal of English Education and Linguistics	The types of identified authentic assessments are oral interview, storytelling, writing sample, and experiments or demonstrations (Maulidhawati et al., 2021).
Article 2: From an international English language assessment framework to a teacher-based assessment: A study of primary English teachers' agentive perspectives and projections.	Santi Farmasari REiD (Research and Evaluation in Education)	This study was conducted in Indonesia in 2021. The study examined the teacher's agentive perspective on assessment. Four teachers were the focus of this instrumental case study. They gave their insights on the effects of the abolition of the International Standard School and the exclusion of the English language in the 2012 National Education Curriculum (Farmasari, 2021).
Article 3: Type Analysis of Speaking Performance Assessment Task in English for Nusantara Textbook	Kadek Andre Karisma Dewantara Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Undiksha	This research gave importance to the analysis of the task of assessing the speaking skills in Nusantara English textbooks. The data was collected through document analysis of the textbook "English for Nusantara SMP/MTs Class VIII". The study revealed that intensive assessment tasks were the most prominent in the textbook (Dewantara, 2023).
Article 4: Portfolio-Based Assessment in English Language Learning: Highlighting the Students' Perceptions.	Ahmad Syamsul Ma'arif, Fuad Abdullah, Asri Siti Fatimah, Arini Nurul Hidayati J-SHMIC: Journal of English for Academic Vol 8	This study, conducted in 2021 in Indonesia, deciphered the perceptions of learners on portfolio-based assessment in their English classes. Two female students gave their insights through semi-structured interviews. The research identified three overarching themes on the use of portfolio-based assessments (Ma'arif et al. 2021).
Article 5: Washback of an English Language Assessment System in a Malaysian University Foundation Programme	Umed Bokiev, Arshad Abd Samad The Qualitative Report	The journal The Qualitative Report published this study on the washback effects of an English Language Assessment System (ELAS) in a foundation programme, a year of study taken before an undergraduate degree course. Data triangulation includes an in-depth analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews with the respondents. The study concluded that the ELAS exerted a positive washback effect (Bokiev & Samad, 2021).
Article 6: Formative Assessment: The Malaysian English Language Primary	Stephanie Albert Jonglai, Mark Pike, Martin Lamb	This research on formative assessment investigated the beliefs and practices of primary school teachers on School-based Assessment (SBA). The study conducted in

Article Titles	Author and Journal	Description of the Article
School Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Values	International Journal of English Language Studies (IJELS)	2021 revealed that the three teachers implemented the SBA according to their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs (Jonglai et al., 2021)
Article 7: Formative Assessment Practices in the Malaysian English Language Primary Classroom	Sumati Muniandy Jasmine Jain Journal of Tianjin University Science and Technology	This qualitative study by Muniandy and Jain encapsulated the formative assessment practices of three teachers from different schools in Malaysia. Since the new Malaysian English curriculum prioritized the use of formative assessment, the teachers were able to identify the inadequacies of the new curriculum implementation (Muniandy et al., 2024).
Article 8: Challenges and Needs of ESL Teachers in Implementing Portfolio Assessment as Alternative Assessment in Teaching English	Charanjit Kaur Swaran Singh ¹ , Mazura Mastura Muhammad, Nor Azmi Mostafa, Nooreen Noordin, Ramiaida Darmi, Melor Md Yunus, Tee Tze Kiong & TarSame Singh Masa Singh	The portfolio as an alternative assessment was the focus of this study in Malaysia. This particular study identified the challenges and needs encountered by teachers in implementing alternative assessments. The teachers revealed that they need proper guidance and rubrics in implementing non-traditional assessments (Singh et al., 2022)
	Asian Journal of University Education	
Article 9: Emerging Assessment Practices Cooperating Teachers Shared with Preservice English Teachers in the Philippines	Cailvin D. Reyes International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research	The need to establish a good relationship between the cooperating teachers and pre-service English teachers was amply described in this study from the Philippines. The cooperating teachers shared the assessment practices and the principles behind these practices so that the preservice teachers will be equipped for the world of teaching (Reyes, 2023).
Article 10: English Language Assessment Tools in The Modular Distance Learning: Maintaining Academic Integrity and Validating Student Outcomes	James Visto, Zocorro Anne R. Zaluaga, Jimmy D. Bucar International Journal of Multipdisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research	This study, conducted in Bohol, Philippines, centered on the experiences teachers encountered in the distance learning modality. The research followed a narrative design to understand the experiences of the teachers in assessing students. Various assessment tools were identified in the study (Visto et al., 2024).
Article 11: Higher-Order Thinking Skills-Based Assessment in English for Academic	Roselle Aniceto Journal of International Education	This research aimed to determine the incorporation of HOTS in the assessment activities in English classes. Eleven activities and 2,423 outputs were thoroughly examined in

Article Titles	Author and Journal	Description of the Article
and Professional Purposes		the study. The study revealed that the teachers honed their students' HOTS through the activities they gave (Aniceto, 2023).
Article 12: Practices of English Language Teachers in Assessing Junior High School Students' Writing Performance	Karl Angelo R. Tabernero International Journal of Language and Literary Studies	This study conducted in 2024 revealed the writing assessment practices of Filipino teachers. The research employed a qualitative design through semi-structured interviews to point out the relevant challenges these teachers encountered. There were a few useful recommendations put forth by this study on the improvement of the assessment of the students' writing performance (Tabernero, 2024).

The Coding Matrix

The above-mentioned articles were organized in a coding matrix. In an excel sheet, the data was analyzed and grouped according to themes. Following Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis procedure, the possible codes were identified, and then themes were generated

from the codes. The themes were further collated to establish the recurring themes. The themes were the basis of the results and discussion presented in the research and the generation of the new framework. Table 2 below showcases a partial summary of the codes generated in this meta-synthesis.

Table 2 Partial Coding Matrix of the Themes

Article No.	Trends	Practices
1	social situatedness, washback of authentic assessment - can improve the student's English learning achievement.	alignment with curriculum (Educational Assessment Standards), authentic assessment, oral interview, storytelling, writing sample
2	teacher-agency theory	alignment with new curriculum, abolition of International Standard School (ISS), the changed status of the school, and the exclusion of English from the 2013 National Education Curriculum (NEC), authentic assessment, teacher-based assessment, teachers' experiences
3	analyzing books applying a theory	alignment with curriculum - Merdeka curriculum, identify the types of assessment included in the speaking tasks, application of theory - Brown 2003
4	paradigmatic shift from scoring-oriented language learning to a goal-oriented one.	learning autonomy, multi-modal- modal texts, portfolio-based assessment
5	washback effect, (teaching to the test, teaching the test)	exit test, portfolio assessment, student-centred learning (SCL) tasks, (learning autonomy), holistic, degree of compatibility between the assessment system and the curriculum in terms of content (alignment of curriculum)

Article No.	Trends	Practices
6	valuable directions of research on educational reform	comprehend the degree to which the new curriculum is implemented (alignment of curriculum), and study on the beliefs of teachers
7	Identification of drawbacks and difficulties in assessment	identification of challenges, new curriculum assessment 2018 implemented (alignment of curriculum)
8	washback effect - examination-oriented teaching, shift from assessment of learning and for learning to assessment as learning, fulfilling workplace demands (future preparation)	future preparation, time constraint in implementing assessment - UPSKILLING
9	adjusting objectives, setting feedback sessions after every lesson presented.	effective feedback - UPSKILLING, authentic assessments - skit videos, promotional videos and talent shows, standards and competencies (alignment of curriculum), asynchronous activities
10	Google Classroom and video conferencing to - real-time feedback, prioritize developmental feedback cloud-computing technology safeguard academic integrity.	modular distance learning, video lectures, interactive activities, and digital assessments, align assessment tools with competencies alignment of curriculum
11	document analysis	modular distance learning, writing a thesis statement, focus on the learner writing a movie review writing a critique of the movie's theme answering the exit slip (formative evaluation) writing an argument writing a literature review,
12	ICT integration	writing performance assessment, adherence to scoring rubrics, learning autonomy

Results and Discussion

This meta-synthesis aimed to determine the trends and practices in English Language Assessment in ASEAN Countries for the last five years. From Harzing's Publish and Perish software, 1,100 initial studies were retrieved after applying the appropriate keywords and filter. After a few rounds of screening and validation, only 12 studies emerged as appropriate and eligible for this meta-synthesis. These studies came from ASEAN countries: the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Republic of the Philippines. The retrieved studies from Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Union of

Myanmar, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam did not pass the inclusion criteria of this review. These are some of the standards set in the inclusion criteria: should come from an ASEAN country, should be pure qualitative research, should not be a book, should not be another systematic review, should be education-related, should be English-related, should come from a reliable journal, should not be a conference proceeding, should not be an undergraduate thesis, should not be a book review, should be assessment-related, should have clear methodology and should pass the CASP checklist and verification process.

Sources of the 12 Eligible Studies

The result of the selection for the final studies aligns with Kachru's Three Circle Model of World Englishes (WE). In the context of Asian Englishes, Kachru's model of Concentric Circles postulates that Philippines and Malaysia belong to the Outer Circle since these two countries were once colonized by predominantly English-speaking countries, the United States of America and Britain (Bautista & Gonzales, 2006). Because of colonialism, English is used as a second language in Malaysia and in the Philippines, as English-taught education became prevalent. According to the Handbook of World Englishes by Kachru, the Education Act of 1996 in Malaysia emphasized the use of English as a medium of instruction, while English has been considered an official language in the Philippines since 1941. Zein's comparative study for the British Council on English as a subject in Basic Education in ASEAN also confirmed that Malaysia and the Philippines allocate a considerable amount of time to teaching English compared to ASEAN countries that belong to the Expanding Circle, like Cambodia and Laos. In Malaysia, English as a subject is taught for 30- 40 minutes, 6 to 7 times a week, for Grades 11-12. In the Philippine context, English is taught for about 50-60 minutes, 4 to 6 times a week from Primary to Upper Secondary (Zein, 2022). English is not even taught as a subject in Laos and Cambodia for Grades 1 and 2. Singapore, as part of the Outer Circle of World Englishes considers English as an official language; however, none of the 100 studies generated from Singapore passed the inclusion criteria of this meta-synthesis. Though Singapore ranks first in English proficiency levels in Asia, most of the research studies in English language assessment were quantitative nature or used a mixed method. Metasyntheses only focus on qualitative studies. Also, most studies from Singapore focused on linguistics rather than on English language teaching.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis Procedure

No.	Phase	Description of the Process
1	Familiarization	Reading and rereading the 12 articles to get the initial codes
2	Generating Initial Codes	Coding of initial codes in Google Sheets for initial findings

It is worth noting that four out of the 12 eligible studies came from Indonesia, a country that belongs to the Expanding Circle of Kachru's World Englishes. However, the research landscape in Indonesia changed in 2021 when the President of Indonesia dissolved the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education and established the administration of higher education under the Ministry of Education and Culture and placed research under the responsibility of the National Research and Innovation Agency (Burhani et al., 2021). This government policy resulted in the creation of an across-the-board comprehensive plan, the National Research Master Plan (RIRN) 2017-2045. This plan prioritized research in aspects like science, technology, health, and the humanities. By the same token, Indonesia produced massive numbers of open-access publishing journals, thereby making the country a leading producer of articles in Asia (Fry et al., 2023).

For further comparison, the three countries also differ in English Proficiency Indexes according to the 2024 EF English Proficiency Index (EPI). The Philippines ranks 22nd out of 116 participating countries. It ranks second among 23 Asian countries. Malaysia falls slightly behind in 23rd position and ranks third among Asian countries. Both countries exhibit high English proficiency levels. Again, Indonesia indicates a lower proficiency level at the 80th place among countries of the world, ranking 12th in Asia.

Thematic Analysis of the 12 Articles

The data from the 12 eligible studies were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Six-Phase thematic analysis procedure. This type of thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes and patterns embedded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Table 3 presents the six phases and the description of the process for each phase of the analysis.

No.	Phase	Description of the Process
3	Searching for Themes	Generated codes are organized into possible themes
4	Reviewing Themes	Creating a thematic map
5	Defining and Naming Themes	Establishing the themes for the meta-synthesis
6	Producing the Report	Writing the summary of the themes

Findings

This discussion on the findings generated from the codes was divided into three approaches of assessment, practices, trends and challenges faced by students and teachers in the assessment processes.

Approaches of Assessment

Various types of tests and examinations can be identified into Assessment for learning (AfL), Assessment as Learning (AaL) and Assessment of Learning (Aof). It was observed that the studies from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines indicated that the different types of assessments projected different approaches of assessment. Most assessments like authentic assessment, portfolio-based assessment, English language assessment systems,

formative assessment and modular distance learning can project all three approaches, Assessment for/of/as learning (Maulidhawati et al., 2021; Ma'arif et al. 2021; Bokiev & Samad, 2021; Jonglai et al., 2021; Muniandy et al., 2024; Reyes, 2023; Visto et al., 2024; Tabernero, 2024). The study on a teacher-based assessment emphasized that authentic assessment can focus on Assessment for Learning too (Farmasari, 2021). Assessment of Learning was noted in the textbook assessment and the document analysis (Dewantara, 2023; Aniceto, 2023). It is interesting to note that there was a shift from Assessment for/of Learning to Assessment as Learning on the study of implementing portfolio as an alternative assessment (Singh, et al., 2022). Table 4 summarizes the findings on Assessment for/ of/ as Learning.

Table 4. Comparison of Types of Assessment with Assessment Approaches

Type of Assessment	Assessment for/of/as Learning	Assessment for Learning	Assessment of Learning	Assessment as Learning
Authentic Assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Portfolio-based Assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
English-Language assessment system	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Formative Assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Modular Distance Learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Textbook Assessment			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Document Analysis			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Practices in English Language Assessments

Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the meticulous screening and validation process, notable assessment practices were recognized in this meta-synthesis. Practices in English language assessment refer to the traditional assessment methods applied in ASEAN schools. These are the well-established techniques that are constantly applied in English Language Learning.

Competency Alignment/ Benchmarking

Most articles centered on the alignment of competencies with the set standard or curriculum. A study on authentic assessment discussed the importance of aligning the assessment to Indonesia's Educational Assessment Standard. (Maulidhawati et al., 2021). Another study on an international English language assessment framework illustrated what happens when an old curriculum (ISS) is abolished and

thereby changing the school's status and assessment practices. In 2013, it was promulgated in Indonesia that English would be excluded from the National Education Curriculum, so teachers had to make appropriate changes in their teaching and testing methods (Farmasari, 2021). In the textbook assessment, it was underlined that the types of assessments should abide by the Merdeka curriculum (Dewantara, 2023). It was also noted in a study on washback of an English Language Assessment System that, in terms of the content, there should be compatibility between the assessment system and the curriculum (Bokiev & Samad, 2021). Some articles also highlighted the need to make sure that the assessment reflects the new curriculum (Muniandy et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2022; Visto et al., 2024). Benchmarking is an appropriate term that could be applied when teachers and curriculum developers stress the need to follow the curriculum in assessment (Visto et al., 2024).

Change of focus from didactics to learner autonomy in assessment

Another common practice is the focus from didactics to learner autonomy in assessment. Tests and examinations should be designed in a way that learners practice self-monitoring and independence. A study from Indonesia discussed learner autonomy in the context of multi-modal texts in portfolio assessments (Ma'arif et al. 2021). Increasing self-reliance was noted in the assessment of an English Language assessment for a foundation programme in Malaysia (Bokie & Samad, 2021). A study conducted in the Philippines on assessing students' performance affirmed that self-assessment and peer assessment are very vital. (Tabernero, 2024).

It is generally recognized that there is always a need to improve the skills of teachers in assessing their students and for students to master the required skills so they can actively participate in the assessment process. In discussing the challenges and needs of ESL teachers, the teachers communicated their need to train in implementing alternative assessment (Singh et al., 2022). In a study on the emerging assessment practices in the Philippines, it was concluded that cooperating teachers should

help upskill pre-service teachers in various assessment practices (Reyes, 2023). Two studies centered on the teacher's pedagogical beliefs, values, and practices on formative assessment (Jonglai et al., 2021; Muniandy et al., 2024). Set in the landscape of Philippine education during the pandemic, a study on English language assessment tools focused on the modular learning modality assessment, which covers diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments in both traditional and alternative assessment (Visto et al., 2024).

Different Assessment Methods

The twelve articles discussed the practice of different assessment methods. Teachers can maximize the learning feedback students gain from these assessments:

- oral interviews
- storytelling
- writing samples
- multi-modal assessments
- exit test and one-off tests
- skits and promotional, lecture videos
- talent shows
- synchronous activities
- movie and literature reviews
- use of scoring rubrics.

Identified Challenges

The discussion on the practices in English language assessment can't do away with the challenges faced by both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process over the last five years. Teachers are concerned with these challenges:

- big class size and crowded classrooms
- classroom acoustics
- time constraints due to additional activities and an increase in administrative tasks, heavy teaching load
- logistical and communication barriers, and a lack of skill in communicating feedback and results
- maintaining consistency in grading written outputs
- adapting to new types of assessments
- Inadequate assessment training for teachers and minimal guidance from head teachers
- Inconsistent parent involvement
- risk of plagiarism

Teachers may also neglect students' different writing styles when they strictly impose scoring rubrics. Teachers also point out that there is a difficulty in balancing between rigidity and flexibility when applying curriculum standards. Educators complained that students possess low-order thinking skills and have poor skills in expressing themselves. Students also do not perform well in assessments due to too many extracurricular activities. They struggle in writing genre-specific texts like academic essays. The identified challenges illustrated the need for upskilling for teachers, students, and all stakeholders involved.

Trends in English Language Assessments

Another goal of this meta-synthesis is to identify trends in language assessments in ASEAN countries. As defined earlier, trends refer to the current assessment methods practiced by teachers as opposed to the more traditional ones. Some of the types of assessment discussed below may not be entirely new, but they were given remarkably more emphasis among the 12 eligible articles.

Capability to Change Lesson Goals/ Objectives

In the study of alternative assessment, it was reported that portfolio-based assessment allows students to gain a better learning experience so they can change their priority from scoring-centered learning to goal-oriented learning (Ma'arif et al. 2021). A change in students' goals will draw them nearer to their goals for the future. This change in focus will eventually help the students prepare for future workplace demands (Singh et al., 2022).

The study on the practices taught to pre-service teachers by their mentors revealed a noteworthy trend (Reyes, 2023). One of the teachers recommended that pre-service teachers observe the class and gauge their learning level. The student teachers can then adjust their objectives according to the needs and levels of students. This practice will entail mastery on the part of the pre-service teacher to adjust quickly to the situations. Teachers are guided by the objectives set by their lesson plans, so a change in their assessment will require

flexibility on their part. This practice directs away from relying only on lesson plans and curriculum guides.

Textbook Analysis

Another trend worth noting is the application of assessment of learning in text analysis. The types of speaking performance tasks embedded in a textbook were disclosed in a study from Indonesia (Dewantara, 2023). Text analysis was also performed on the activities given by the teachers and the outputs of the students. This type of assessment primarily veers away from making the students the focal object of the assessment. The types of assessments expressed in text analysis emphasized the content of the material itself.

Washback Effects

Four studies shed light on the washback effects of learning among the twelve eligible studies (Maulidhawati et al., 2021; Maulidhawati et al., 2021; Reyes, 2023; Tabernero, 2024). Studies on the washback effects are common in the evaluation of assessment methods. However, the study on the washback effect of a language instruction within a foundation programme in Malaysia is unusual since only Malaysia among the ASEAN countries recommends the foundation programme to students as they prepare for college. This is a good trend to follow, specifically for the implementation of national policies that affect assessment, like the Matatag Curriculum in the Philippines (MATA-TAG Curriculum Phase 1 SY 2024-2025, Department of Education, n.d.) and the less emphasis on the English Language Teaching in Indonesia after the 2013 Curriculum was implemented (Maulidhawati et al., 2021).

ICT Integration

Lastly, the emerging trends in assessment methods among the validated articles include ICT integration through real-time feedback through Google Classroom and Zoom, and other video conferencing software, and the use of cloud computing to ensure fair assessment practices. Bacus et al. (2023) purported that technological capabilities of learning institutions enhances students' competences.

The ASEAN ASSESSMENT NEXUS

The theoretical bases for this meta-synthesis include the approaches of assessment, the use of the English language as the *de jure* language of the ASEAN, and Kachru's 3 Concentric Circles Model of the English Language. Based on these concepts, relevant data findings were extracted through content and frequency analysis by Braun and Clarke. The themes/ key-words that came prominently were benchmarking, learner autonomy, ICT integration, upskilling, and preparation for future workplace demand in the ASEAN context. Figure 2 below summarizes the gist of the meta-synthesis. This graphic organizer presents the connection or nexus of the themes: The ASEAN ASSESSMENT NEXUS.

As illustrated above, assessment should start from benchmarking or measuring the

performance of the students against the learning standards set by the curriculum. In the assessment of the use of the English language among ASEAN countries, this concept of benchmarking can also be applied to the assessment of the performance of educational governing bodies against their educational standard. It is important to know the different curricula, policies, and educational programs set by each country. Each of the ASEAN members' assessments should be based on the benchmark they set for their students. It is of vital importance to bridge the lacuna or gap between the present performance and what is expected in the future. However, an opportunity to benchmark their assessment practices with the other members of the ASEAN will also be beneficial. Unity will be achieved when educational policies are reviewed for ASEAN standardization.

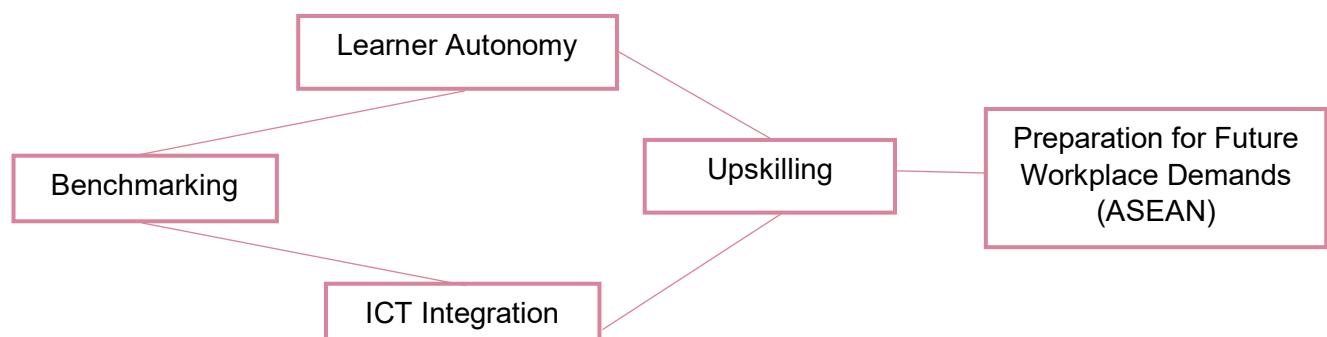


Figure 2. The ASEAN ASSESSMENT NEXUS, a new framework in English language assessment

After benchmarking the performance of the curriculum of ASEAN countries, it can be emphasized that there is a need to consider the learner's autonomy and the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning process. The study on these concepts will diagnose the capacity of the students to cope with the assessment requirements. The trend is moving away from teacher-centered teaching or didactics towards learner autonomy and independence. It will take substantial skill from the teacher to make the students self-reliant in the assessment of their own goals. As the world moves towards AI applications in the educational setting, ICT integration should be a standard practice, not just a trend in the Assessment process.

The need to upskill or upgrade the skills of both teachers and students came as a result of the study of the connection with the skills of

teachers of emphasizing learner autonomy and ICT integration. Foremost among the challenges faced by the teachers is the lack of adequate skills to properly assess the students. However, the study on the trends and practices of the English language assessment should focus not on the lack of skill of the teachers but on the training of students and other stakeholders.

Success in the ASEAN English language assessment comes with the preparedness of the students for future work demands in their own country, employment within the ASEAN and eventually global employment. Everything that should be done to improve the assessment should have this common goal in mind: students should be equipped with the necessary English skills and language proficiency so they can be employed wherever opportunities may open.

The ASEAN Assessment Nexus is a new framework based on the interpretation of the codes generated by this meta-synthesis. The framework also addresses the challenges both students and teachers face in the assessment process. Benchmarking identifies how far the performance of the students and the educational systems is from the standards set by the curricula. Teachers can further improve their skills in promoting learner autonomy and ICT integration. Upskilling for all stakeholders to address problems faced in the assessment process is very important. The identified end goal of the study is the total improvement of the English skills of students so they can be prepared for future employment.

Conclusion

This meta-synthesis generated the trends and practices of English assessments from ASEAN countries like Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia for the last five years. The themes generated from the study focused on benchmarking, learner autonomy, ICT integration, upskilling, and preparation for future workplace demand. These factors should be considered in planning daily English language assessment methods and techniques. The challenges that teachers and students faced in the assessment process were duly identified, so steps toward addressing the challenges and upskilling everyone involved should also be studied. Further studies from all ASEAN countries, like meta-analyses, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research, should be conducted to give a clearer landscape of English language assessment. Policies on the improvement of English language assessment can also advance curriculum development, pedagogy, and classroom management.

Policymakers should leverage this evidence to enhance curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and assessment frameworks that align with ASEAN's educational and economic integration goals. Moreover, given their linguistic and educational similarities within Kachru's Outer Circle, it is critical to extend research collaboration and comparative studies to East Asian countries like Japan and Korea. Including these countries in future research and policy dialogues will enrich understanding and

facilitate the development of regionally coherent, culturally sensitive assessment policies that benefit both Southeast and East Asia. By doing so, ASEAN and its East Asian partners can collectively advance English language education and workforce readiness.

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