

English Proficiency Level, Internet Speed and Economic Improvement in Indonesia (2015-2018)

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English proficiency is rarely discussed among the general public as it only impacts upon a small group of people who use English in their occupation. In Indonesia, graduates commonly lack English communicative competence. This research identifies several factors that should be contributing to, or triggering an, elevation of English proficiency but they are not. These factors are partially divided into the elements of internet speed and economic growth in Indonesia. The research was conducted by withdrawing a conclusion and making assumptions as to the conditional factors that related to the levelling of English proficiency among students and the general society in Indonesia from 2015 to 2018. The data was taken from several resources that provided statistical information and the results shown in this research are graphic, chart, and description analysis. The level of English proficiency in Indonesia from 2015 to 2018 has significantly fluctuated, yet the final result was the degradation. Based on the EPI index, it can be concluded that from 2015 to 2018, the level of English proficiency slightly decreased 1.16 points from 52.74 to 51.58 in 2018, or it was about 2.2% decline. This condition was inversely proportional to the internet speed improvement that increased by approximately 63% and economic development which reached 0.29% from 2015 to 2018. It can be inferred that internet speed and economic growth in Indonesia does not affect English proficiency. English is the global language and is commonly used in communication through integrated media and in global business transactions.

Key words: *English proficiency, internet speed, economic growth.*

Introduction

English is becoming one of the most used languages in Indonesia; not only as a compulsory subject in schools, but also in daily, business, and social life. Along with the globalization and industrial era 4.0 in Indonesia, the necessity of English proficiency is increasing for every

individual. Indonesian people have a particular ability to adapting to an accent, especially English. This adaption is assisted by both Bahasa Indonesia and English being Latin based. There would be more difficulty for an individual to absorb English when having a non-Latin based language such as Mandarin, Cantonese or Arabic.

Recent research has recognized some aspects of second language acquisition that might be affected by age ^[13]. The workplace or even the schools in Indonesia develop quite rapidly into requiring international communication and curriculum. In Indonesia, many schools applied an international curriculum and utilised English as the first language. Indonesia placed 39th out of 80 countries in 2017 based on the English Proficiency Index (EPI) that was conducted by EF ^[12]. The level of English ability, especially among students in Indonesia has not improved. However, the second learning acquisition on English that they are subject to in both primary and high school should have resulted in increase in their ability. The facilities in recent educational institutions have developed along with the modern requirement in learning. The ability to acquire second language, such as English, gives more confidence to students to explore the world. Everything students learn has a reciprocal effect in developing a multicultural nature. Simply, learning second language (or third language) at older ages also may lead to a near-native condition of proficiency. However, such an assertion is dependent on environmental situation, educational background and economic factors ^[2]. Indonesian people are commonly born and at early ages only learn their mother language proficiency, or in other words, their local language. When they step into formal education, they start to learn Bahasa Indonesia as the formal language. At this stage, they have already demonstrated themselves as bilingual. Since English is commonly used in every aspect of commerce, this language then come as the third language that needs to be learned.

There are several factors which can trigger an increase in English proficiency; two of those factors are internet speed and economic development in Indonesia. The increasing internet speed in Indonesia allows people access to a vast array of information that they may need or desire. Naturally, people have a need for social interaction in their cultural life with a variety of forms of communication. As a result, information technology plays a role in realizing social communication and interaction that takes place without any space restrictions to meet the interests and needs of individuals and groups. Technology appears to create an enjoyable atmosphere for the people (when it is used effectively and correctly), especially in assisting with the language learning process. Some researchers note that learners may improve their ability and proficiency in using English by applying technology in different cultural contexts ^[15]. Appropriate internet speed should not be denied as it is increasingly a primary necessity for the people in this modern age. A problem emerges when internet users have a lower ability of English proficiency, since the majority of information and systems that are online are in English. As such, to effectively use the internet users are effectively obliged to learn English in order to obtain information.

It is not only internet speed that affects English abilities, but also the economic development. Economic development is assumed to be a part in determining proficiency in English, especially in Indonesia. The development of a country's economy has a holistic effect on its citizens. On this language learning should not be seen as an obstacle, since the process of learning requires facility and financial stability [14]. Upon developing their English abilities, people may seek subsequently specialized knowledge and experience which is now accessible through their proficiency. Proficiency in English may also decrease errors when using the internet, or when conversing with others in global commerce as it will lead to an increasing use of appropriate terminology and avoidance of semantic error. This proficiency may then lead to higher levels of productivity in their economic life.

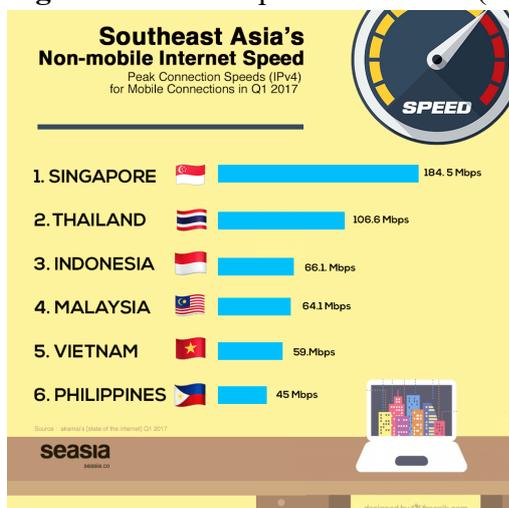
When Indonesia focuses on increasing the overall level of English proficiency through education, it means that economic and education gaps should decrease. Even in a developing country, the assumption is that higher education is only provided or accessible to wealthy citizens. However, all citizens should have equal rights to obtain an education, especially in increasing their language proficiency [3]. Ultimately, levels of English proficiency, internet speed and economic growth should all be positively related to each other, but in this research, all of these factors are inversely proportional.

Factors Contributing English Proficiency

Internet Speed

Internet speed in Indonesia has increasingly developed, however, it is still in an average position compared to global internet speed access, with an average recorded speed of 42.71 Mbps in 2018. When compared to the other ASEAN countries, Indonesia ranks third (see Figure 1.).

Figure 1. Internet speed in ASEAN (2017)



The internet is global and is interactively integrated to all media. Accordingly, all properties have consequences for the kind of language applied and used. The most intriguing and basic consequence emerges out of the electronic character of the lines and obviously, a communication option for a user will be constrained by the nature of the hardware needed in order to gain access ^[6]. The language collaboration with media when users tend to use a variety of communicative preferences. Today's *gadgets* are commonly supported by friendly user interfaces which utilise images, yet, language still has a dominant part in operating those *gadgets*.

The internet and integrated things (*gadget*) are owned by almost every person in Indonesia, and the benefit of ownership is seen on many levels. Internet-based activity creates positive effects in the areas of work, socialisation and entertainment, and it further extends to the teaching and learning process, especially language learning ^[4]. For some experts, appropriate technological materials may be beneficial for learners in improving their language proficiency. English language ability is required to properly do many of the above mentioned activities ^[5]. Some activities always revert back to English explain the solution to problems, especially for developed countries, such as Indonesia this prevents great limitations.

Fortunately, Bahasa Indonesia has close similarity in grammatical thing and syntactic part. Short linguistic distance leads to better English proficiency. The people in Indonesia have their own local language as their first language (mother tongue), but is not really impactful to their third language acquisition, English. This is especially true for the digital natives who have been raised in the computer era.

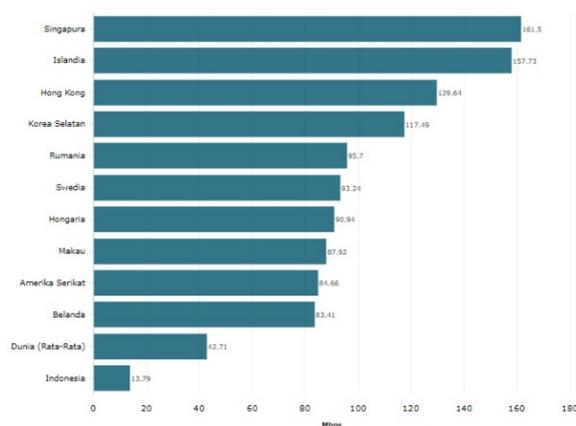
Research conducted by *Babel* and *Alis Technologies* is an initial study of language distribution on the internet ^[18]. Here is the figure that shows the English language as the internet language:

Figure 2. Language distribution on the internet

Ranking	Language	Number of pages	Corrected percentage
1	English	2,722	82.3
2	German	147	4.0
3	Japanese	101	1.6
4	French	59	1.5
5	Spanish	38	1.1
6	Swedish	35	0.6
7	Italian	31	0.8
8	Portuguese	21	0.7
9	Dutch	20	0.4
10	Norwegian	19	0.3
11	Finnish	14	0.3
12	Czech	11	0.3
13	Danish	9	0.3
14	Russian	8	0.1
15	Malay	4	0.1
	none or unknown (correction)		5.6
Total		3,239	100

Based on the figure above, English is overwhelmingly the main language of the internet. As such, people who seek to obtain the vast array of benefits available on the internet are effectively required to learn English. There is an exception for countries such as China, who may have their own local internet system/speed, so they don't need to learn English. Regardless, Indonesia still depends on the global internet system. This requirement obviously leads to increasing English proficiency for internet users, since the pleasure point of using internet has increased massively, especially for millennials.

Figure 3. Index of internet speed in the world

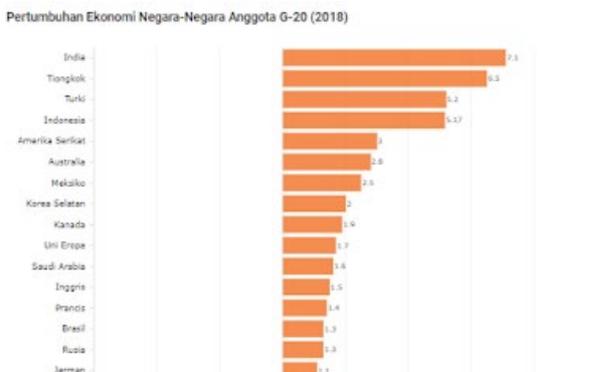


The figure above shows that the penetration of internet usage in Indonesia increases year by year until the latest data in 2018. This fact may have helped to determine the proficiency of English for users [10].

Economic Growth

While the internet seizes the language ability from the virtual side, the economy has also become another indicator of English efficiency in a particular country. The impact of literacy and education on the economy is a source of a great deal of attention in economics, as the development of civilization was always influenced by an economic aspect [1]. Rubinstein stated in his book titled “*Economics and Language*” in 2000 that communication can cause problems between economic agents in the world when they were conducting economic activities, such as trading [16]. Language affects economic aspects when both parties involved in an affair have less proficiency in an exact language, in this matter is English. With increasing economic development, people, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia, will have increasing access to a proper education. This leads to increasingly appropriate education levels which are further supported by the ability of students (people) to engage in global communication using English. Higher incomes are evidently connected to English abilities. International corporations might seek the benefit of higher English proficiency in Indonesia, because it can lead to a boost in investment and ultimately even increases migration abroad which produces higher remittances albeit over human capital loss from their native country [9]. Compared to other ASEAN country, Indonesia moves slowly yet stably. The development index of economic conditions in Indonesia is supported by budgeting growth, infrastructure and human development. This refers to citizens ability to grow and to be adaptive to global progress in various sectors, especially in education. In 2018, the global economy is expected to grow higher than in 2017 which reached 3.9 percent (YoY). This is largely driven by commodity prices which are still on an upward trend that supports the growth of commodity exporting countries. The economies of developed and developing countries are expected to continue to increase [11].

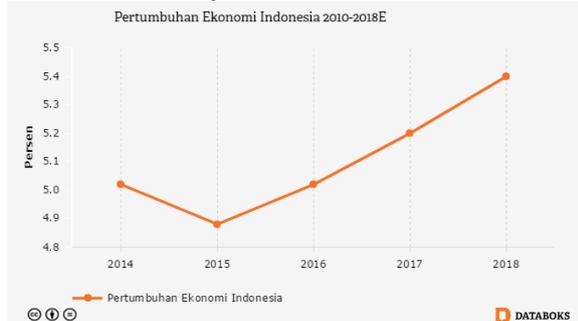
Figure 4. ASEAN economic growth



Economic growth in Indonesia will affect education, especially in achieving appropriate portions of education. Millennials have better opportunities to compete in the global

economy. Competition should be supported by proper proficiency in terms of a global language, in this occasion, English. Economic growth in Indonesia helps people to have equal rights in education and it shows that English proficiency should be increasing. Annual reports shows that Indonesia has a chance to increase every aspect of human resources capability.

Figure 5. Annual economic growth progress Economic growth as a process increase in output over time an important indicator to measure the success of a country's development ^[17].



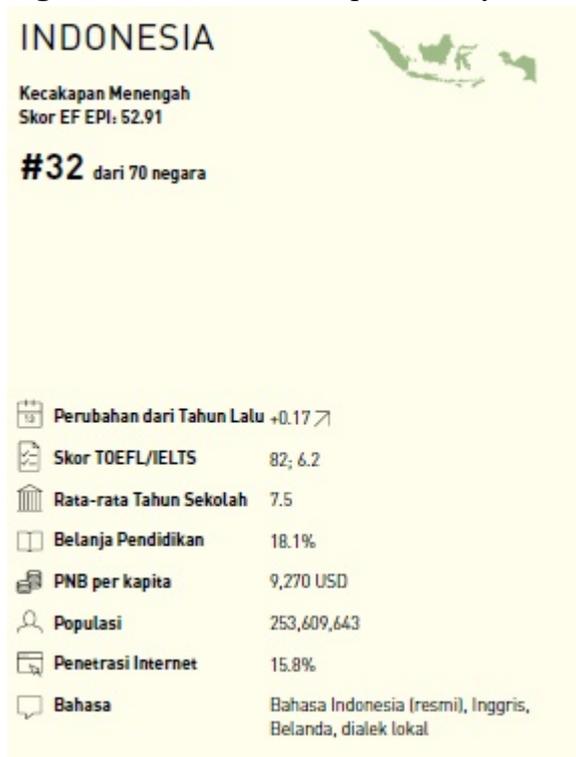
Analysis

English proficiency should ultimately be affected by many factors, but this paper only focuses on economic growth and internet speed. When it comes to the correlation between English proficiency and other factors triggering changes the data will help provide answers.

The analysis is based on the data provided by several sources. The figure below is taken from EF (*English First*) research in English proficiency index (EPI). The English Proficiency Index (EPI) is increasingly cited as an authoritative source by journalists, educators, officials, and business leaders.

There are several tasks that can be assigned by the participants in particular countries to consider the EPI index. Indonesia is involved in EPI indexing activity, and as a result, Indonesia is recorded as the 32nd position in EPI list from around 70 countries. And the level of proficiency is medium, by the EPI score of 52.91 in 2015.

Figure 6. Indonesia index proficiency [7]



English proficiency level can be drawn from the TOEFL score. It represents the overall levels of English proficiency including: listening, writing and speaking. The data also shows that the GDP of Indonesia is \$9,270 USD and internet penetration is around 15.8%. This score is still average, especially in ASEAN, and Indonesia stays in a similar position to that of previous years (2014).

The English Proficiency Index calculates the average English proficiency level of adults using data from a test that is accessible for free on the internet. The test covers grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening. This index only considers data from countries that have at least 400 test participants. Test results from countries with fewer than 100 participants on one of the two tests were also excluded, regardless of the number of overall test takers. The results from the test shows that 52.74% of Indonesian people have an average level of English ability. While the top position of proficiency level based on average ability in ASEAN is Singapore. Singapore's economic condition and internet speed are also quite high in comparison to other countries in the same region in ASEAN. The table below shows the average ability of Indonesians in different English skills.

Figure 7. TOEFL i B T Total and Section Score Means¹ — All Examinees, Classified by Native Language^[8]

ASIA					
Afghanistan	15	17	21	19	71
Azerbaijan	20	21	22	21	83
Bangladesh	21	22	22	23	87
Bhutan	*	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	*	*	*	*	*
Cambodia	16	17	19	19	72
China	21	19	19	20	79
Christmas Island	*	*	*	*	*
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	*	*	*	*	*
Hong Kong	21	22	22	23	88
India	23	24	24	24	94
Indonesia	21	22	21	22	85
Japan	18	18	17	18	71
Kazakhstan	20	21	22	21	84
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	21	21	20	21	83
Korea, Republic of	22	21	20	21	83
Kyrgyzstan	18	19	21	19	77
Lao, People's Democratic Republic	11	14	18	16	59
Macao	18	19	19	20	76
Malaysia	22	23	22	24	91
Maldives	*	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	18	20	20	20	77
Myanmar	19	20	20	21	80
Nepal	19	20	21	21	81
Pakistan	22	23	24	23	92
Philippines	21	22	23	23	89
Singapore	24	25	24	25	97
Sri Lanka	20	22	22	22	85
Taiwan	21	21	20	20	82
Tajikistan	14	16	19	17	66
Thailand	19	20	19	20	78
Timor-Leste	*	*	*	*	*
Turkmenistan	18	20	21	19	78
Uzbekistan	18	20	22	20	79
Viet Nam	20	20	20	22	82

The details of score based on the data above:

- Reading : 21
- Listening : 22
- Speaking : 21
- Writing : 22
- Total : 85

In term of proficiency, Indonesian's have at least reached a standard level, especially for communication purposes. With the enrichment of internet facilities and supported by sophisticated media (*gadget*), people are increasingly benefit from the internet. This beneficial effect will be in accordance with the level of income from their working area, especially for millennials who have differing occupational mindsets; who generally require English proficiency above the level of their parents. Average level of Indonesian ability in English is scored 85 (based on the data from table above).

Figure 8. Scoring level for English proficiency

IELTS Score	TOEFL Score	IELTS Description
9	118-120	Expert User
8.5	115-117	Very Good User
8	110-114	
7.5	102-109	Good User
7	94-101	
6.5	79-93	Competent User
6	60-78	
5.5	42-59	Modest User
5	35-41	
4.5	32-34	Limited User
0-4	0-31	Extremely Limited/Intermittent/Non User

By the score of 85 (in total), Indonesia is still at the level of *competent user*. It does not indicate an improvement, while the economic condition and internet speeds in Indonesia are improving. The table below shows details EPI index, economic growth and internet speed from 2015 to 2018.

Table 1. Index EPI to GDP and Internet Speed

No.	Year	EPI Index	GDP	Internet Speed
1	2015	52.91	4.88	3.9
2	2016	52.15	5.03	6.7
3	2017	51.58	5.07	13.38
4	2018	51.58	5.17	13.79

Based on the table above, it can be observed that from 2015 to 2018, EPI index decreased several points and Indonesia's GDP and internet speed increased. From this it can be surmised that English proficiency is not triggered by improvements of GDP or internet speed access. The EPI index decreases by 2.2% while across the same time period the GDP increases by 0.29%, and the internet speed improvement is 63%. Subsequently it appears that English proficiency in Indonesia is not related to those factors.

English proficiency has relevance to economic competitiveness, social development, and innovation. Countries with a high level of English language proficiency tend to have higher average incomes, better quality of life, and greater investment in research and development.

Conclusion

A country's low level of English proficiency are reflective of that nation's place in the global economy and demonstrate that the country is still in the stage of consuming and has not been able to negotiate, mediate or lobby, even compete with other countries globally. The 0.29% increase in GDP and the 63% increase in internet speed are matched by a English proficiency level (EPI) still in the average level, with slight decreases over the previous years. English proficiency is also an important ability in the current industrial revolution 4.0, where everyone from various parts of the world are connected and competing in various industrial sectors.

Even though the internet speed increases in Indonesia every year, people still lack the proper capability to use English for effective communication throughout internet media. English proficiency cannot be measured or indicated by the high penetration of internet usage in one country, but from the activities that involve English skill in proper portion. Gaming activity in virtual area can be an element of improving English skill, yet only several users (gamers) exploit that chance to enhance English proficiency, while the rest assume that gaming activity is entertainment only. Economic growth in Indonesia should involve more parties in order to enhance English proficiency, especially in working area or business. English proficiency is a basic need in trading, transactions, and other economic activities that involve communication. The transition from agriculture or manufacturing to a knowledge-based economic model requires not only technological infrastructure, but also human resources who are able to sell their services internationally and this requires English proficiency.

The evolution of the economic and internet access era should encourage Indonesian people to improve their English language skills.

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