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Editor's Note

Around the world today, the *lingua franca* of business and communication is mostly English. In countries where English is not the mother tongue and thereby recognized it as the second language, the majority of the people is not bilingual. In many instances, however, English words and phrases are transcribed and merged with the mother tongue and used colloquially. Teaching English in Thai schools is often found to lag far behind other areas of instruction without meaningful educational outcomes. In the globalization era with easternization looms the horizon, educators and researchers need to address this predicament and reinforce English teaching and learning at a more rapid pace as today's technology allows people from different cultures to be linked together much more than ever before.

Founded in 1967 in Bangkok, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) seeks peace, freedom and prosperity through regional cooperation. Evolving from the spirit of shared concerned and joint deliberations, ASEAN is now on the move towards the ultimate goal of "One Vision, "One Identity, One Community" with the ambitious target to create "Asean Community" by 2015, with three areas of cooperation namely: political-security, economic, and socio-cultural which essentially encompasses cooperation in education.

The ASEAN University Network (AUN) is an initiative which seeks to create close partnership to improve education and human resource development. Issues of harmonization include curriculum development, regional research and development in education among ASEAN scholars, development of mutually accepted credit transfers and quality assurance systems across ASEAN educational institutions. To facilitate movement of labor and manpower of different professions ASEAN is working toward common professional qualifications to harness and maximize the great talent and potential of the people of ASEAN for mutual interest in as much as to enhance the competitive power of ASEAN ONE. To ensure success in international cooperation, an indispensable goal of the ASEAN Community is to encourage the development and widespread use of English as an international working (business) language.

When considering language acquisition two simple empirical observations can be made. Among human beings as a whole - with few exceptions - all people are able to pick up and acquire one language or "mother tongue" after birth. Also, until children reach their early teen most can attain working fluency in a second language quite easily, certainly with less effort than is often the case later in life. We know the maturation processes of the teen years are a time of profound physical and psychological development, but why should the facile nature of the young mind toward language harden with age to where the seeds of a new tongue find barren ground?

English language teaching and learning must be further innovated and enhanced to meet with new challenges to be faced by learners and future workforce, recognizing the importance of English in the lives of people today. To ensure the learners' proficiency, teachers need to question the foundations of language acquisition and the techniques of teaching. Is traditional rote memorization passé, recognizing that simple repetition is not the key to meaningful language proficiency? Could a different emphasis between instruction in listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation and vocabulary generate earlier and deeper language use?

Computer technology would seem to hold great promise for language education. Innovations such as interactive websites, audio-books, podcasts, mobile applications, even computer games are quite promising when carefully applied. E-learning offers a different platform in providing education, but without employing an innovative narrative electronic, education is the proverbial "old wine in a new bottle".

Possibly one perspective on language teaching is that it is not simply a vehicle for the retention of small blocks of information, but as a source of inspiration, to spark a love of learning, engaging students toward useful understanding.

Rangsit University Journal of Arts and Sciences fully recognizes that English language teaching must be innovative and meet with new challenges in the borderless world, recognizing the importance of language in the lives of people today. We thus encourage researchers and educators to explore the deficiency of current teaching and learning and promote research and development for new approaches in efficient and effective language teaching and learning to enhance English proficiency.

Beyond language, a broader topic of human resource development which is a central focus in the ONE ASEAN endeavor essentially encompasses creating jobs and raising productivity. These issues are of great concern for policymakers, educators and researchers and are particularly shared among the large populations of youth in the ASEAN economies. The challenge for higher education is to equip graduates with practical, behavioral, and critical thinking skills to the extent that they can meaningfully participate in the technologically driven economies of today. The wider imperative is to empower citizens with the means to help them live productively and attain rewarding lives.