

# The English teaching problems of High Schools at Taunggyi City in Myanmar

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study were to study the English teaching problems of High Schools at Taunggyi city in Myanmar, and to propose the solutions of these problems. The study was a quantitative research, it was conducted by the means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The participants of the study were 100 students, 10 English teachers from five High Schools for questionnaires, and five Headmasters from five High Schools for interviews.

The result findings from teacher questionnaires revealed that English teaching problems involving teachers, students, curricula & textbooks and other factors contributing to successful teaching were agreed as a high level of agreement. However, problems involving assessment was moderately agreed.

In addition, the results findings from student questionnaires to investigate their attitude toward English learning revealed that the top problematic factors were teachers' using translation method, lack of teaching material and having difficulty in listening skill.

The findings from the teachers' interviews revealed that facilities issues including inadequate resources and facilities are the main problem and the

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students were not motivated to study English and they lacked practice on their own. The solutions to overcome these challenges suggested in this study were reforming attitude of students and teachers and improving resources and facilities. On the other hand, applying various teaching methods and techniques, matching students' proficiency level and learning situation, making use of available resources and facilities, providing motivational feedback, looking for appropriate methods or materials, and teachers' self-reflection are the main solutions of the English teaching challenges.

For further research, the main suggestion of this study is that more studies should be conducted to analyze English teaching problems not only High Schools in Taunggyi city but also High Schools around Myanmar using a larger number of teachers and students and using different research tools for collecting data.

**Keywords:** English Teaching Problems, Attitude Toward English Learning, Inadequate Resources.

## Introduction

In the world, as English is international language, most of communication is done in English. The students must learn English because English is a key to open knowledge of the world. Besides, businessmen, tradesmen, engineers, scientists and scholars all over the world must know English because it is the international means of exchange of information and experience. One of the simple facts of life in the present time is that the English language skills of a good proportion of its citizenry are seen as vital if a country is to participate actively in the global economy and to have access to the information and knowledge that provide that basis for both social and economic development. Regard to this, central enterprise are English teaching and English teachers.

There is consequently increasing demand worldwide for competent English teachers and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development, (2009). In addition, it is increasing numbers of people spoken English as Second language or as a foreign language although their first language, culture is not English. And almost all schools from all over the world are teaching English as one important of subjects. But there are many problems faced by English teachers in English as Foreign Language (EFL) countries like a Myanmar.

Since the general election in 2010, Myanmar, which is an Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has only recently opened its door to the outside world. Emerging from decades of international isolation, the country has been experiencing massive reforms in different factors such as politics, economy, and education. As Myanmar is becoming increasingly integrated into the world, the demand for proficient English is very high. English language education has been promoted as an important factor in Myanmar's continued development. It can increase Myanmar people's ability to play in the different roles in the world.

In Myanmar, although English is one of compulsory subjects from the primary school to the university, most of the students are lack of proficiency of English skills. As a result, they consider English as the most difficult subject. On the other hand, to be English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher is a challenge thing. There are many different problems faced by English teachers. It is still urgent to discuss, what to teach and how to teach a foreign language taking into account the objective, social and professional needs of future specialists in Myanmar country.

In this fast growing world, there are abundant changes in teaching approaches along with the learning strategies. Development is enhanced through

problem solving. When teachers recognize problems and works at solving, they can discover new ways to teach and discover more about their as a teachers, (2009). Therefore, investigating problems, finding out solution and searching effective methods is so important in teaching and learning process.

There are common problems English teachers faced in High School at Taunggyi City in Myanmar such as the practice of traditional teaching methodologies, the lack of well-trained teachers, unqualified teachers, both teachers and students' lack of motivation, poor attitude toward language learning, too big class size. To identify the problems faced by English teachers and to suggest solutions are a necessary step to improve the national education system. So this study will help the reform process of Myanmar to build capacity for political, administration and economy, as well as for enhanced delivery of public services, especially education.

Here is an effort to search the problems in teaching English and some suggestions to overcome the same. The results of this study are expected to provide guidelines for English teachers to be effective in teaching English. In addition, this study will be of great help to improve English language education in Myanmar.

English Teaching Problems is defined challenge, difficulty, obstacle, and barrier in teaching English as foreign language.

Myanmar students still lack proficiency in the English language after eleven years of study in basic education schools. According to the EF English Proficiency Index 2017, which measures English language skills in 116 countries, several Asia-Pacific countries ranks are low or very low.

Except for Indonesia, all ASEAN countries have compulsory classes in English at the primary level. Yet Myanmar students still face challenges when it comes to speaking English, which may hinder their careers and force them

to take English classes even after university. Indeed, English skills are an advantage in the labor market, which can contribute to attracting investment and enhancing job opportunities. Furthermore, speaking English allows participation in the world economy, sciences, trade and so on.

In country teaching and learning English as foreign language, English teaching problems are generally similar to each other.

First mention research in Myanmar, Thandar Soe (2015) conducted research on “A Study of Contemporary Trends and Challenges of English Language Teaching in Myanmar”. The Results of her research mentioned that English language teaching in Myanmar mirrors other Asian contexts in terms of the rising influence of globalization for English teaching, a concern for teachers' English proficiency, and the disconnect between policy and practice. Teacher confidence, disconnect between curriculum and preparation of students; low salary, overreliance on the transmission model, and large class size were also reported as challenges. Recommendations call for steps toward a foundation of reflective practice using action research as a starting point and secondly to encourage English language educators representative of the creative class, defined by Florida (2002) to align as a public group of professionals. Future research should examine the elements that make English an important language in the Myanmar context and based on this, consider what concept of English, what variety of English, and what methodologies of English language teaching are most productive for Myanmar as a nation in transition (2015).

As noted, the creative use of English in Myanmar should be based on the generation of norms within English speakers in Myanmar communities. Yet English language educators worldwide face common obstacles that follow specific patterns and challenges. Lambon (2009), for instance, reports challenges of English language instruction in the Chad Republic. The

overarching challenges were the limited ability of educators to teach English language skills, especially in the areas of speaking, listening, and reading. The second challenge was lack of a unified and context driven Ministry of Education curriculum. English language educators typically relied on English textbooks that were abstract and more importantly, were not aligned with the Chadian Context (2009).

In addition, Canagarajah has proposed an alternate description of English language use in South Asia. He pointed out that the concept of World English “deals with a highly systematized and stable variety of English in postcolonial communities.” In contrast to this view, Canagarajah positions English language use in South Asia as part of a multilingual tradition in the region. In a multilingual perspective a speaker’s proficiency is not viewed in terms of competence in individual discrete languages, but is seen as an integrated competence embracing a number of languages. Typically, different languages will be used for different purposes, and language use emerges as a function of the interlocutors’ individual repertoires, (2009). Canagarajah’s account of multilingualism has implications for English language teaching. He suggested that, “What we need is a paradigm shift in language teaching. Pedagogy should be refashioned to accommodate the modes of communication and acquisition seen outside the classroom”. Such a focus entails a refocusing of the goals of language learning. Rather than aiming for native-speaker-like competence in a single target language, the learner must develop strategies for coping with a repertoire of different codes in various multilingual settings. Proficiency is not defined by the learner’s knowledge of second-language form, but by one’s ability to accomplish communicative goals. Canagarajah pointed out, however, that defining competence as the ability to shift between codes does not preclude the ability to produce

standard language when the situation requires it. He also noted that this focus on practice still leaves a place for classroom language learning. He recommended that pedagogy focus on language awareness and learner strategy training, (2007).

Moreover, Lwin's recommendations for language pedagogy echo Canagarajah's, without specifically referring to multilingualism as Canagarajah has described it. For Lwin, the issue of language education in Myanmar is related to culture, national identity, and politics. In his consideration of the various ethnic/linguistic groups in Myanmar, Lwin suggested that "ethnic educators and political leaders promote their languages for use as a medium of instruction. Students whose mother-tongue is not Myanmar would learn Myanmar and English as second languages. Students whose mother tongue is Myanmar would learn English and another ethnic language as second languages, (2007).

Next mention research in Thailand, Miss Jiani Zhou conducted research on "English Teaching and Learning Problems in the General Program of Potisarnpittayakorn School" in 2017. The results obtained from the student questionnaire revealed that the students moderately agreed with the problems involving themselves. The main factors that affecting their learning were: (1) students want to study with native speakers of English more than Thai teachers, (2) students lack knowledge in grammar and structure, and (3) students think in Thai first before they translate it into English.

On the other hand, the results obtained from the teachers revealed that the teachers very much agreed that students were a problematic factor in English language teaching and learning. In contrast, problems involving teachers and assessment were rated at a low level of agreement. Moreover, they moderately agreed there were problems with curricula and textbooks as

well as other factors contributing to English teaching success. Likewise, the findings from the teachers' interviews revealed that the students were not motivated to study English and they lacked practice on their own. Furthermore, the teachers suggested that a smaller class size based on students' level was needed to improve the teaching quality (2017).

Moreover, Mr. Worakorn Klinkerd conducted research on "Professional Development of Primary English Teaching Teachers: Needs and problems". In this study, the purpose was to investigate the needs of primary school English teachers in developing their profession and to find out the problems that primary English teachers encountered when they do professional development. The data was collected from 40 English teachers in private and public schools in the Don Muang District of Bangkok and the research tool was a questionnaire. The data was analyzed by using an SPSS program. The results revealed that primary school English teachers needed to improve their listening and speaking skills most. It was also found that teachers needed to develop themselves by employing information technology (IT) or Internet to improve their profession; besides, this outcome was associated with the topic of professional development activities that teachers needed to participate in. Concerning problems of their professional development, primary English teachers believed that the training programs held by various organizations lacked ongoing feedback or did not have a follow-up action. In addition, teachers faced problems about time constraints because of their workload, so they could not develop their profession, (2015).

Aisyah Mumary Songbatumis carried out the study on "Challenges in Teaching English Faced by English Teachers at MTsN Taliwang, Indonesia". The study attempted to investigate English teaching challenges as well as the solutions taken by the English teachers at MTSN Taliwang. The study captured the English teachers' point of view in facing English teaching challenges in the

classroom and the solutions they implemented to solve them through interview. A number of challenges emerged, partly coming from students, partly from teachers, and partly from the school's facility. Students are challenged by their lack of vocabulary mastery, low concentration, lacks of discipline, boredom, and speaking problem. Meanwhile, teachers' challenges are shortage of teachers' training, language proficiency issue, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity to IT, and lack of professional development. In addition, facilities issues including inadequate resources and facilities, and time constraint. The solutions to overcome these challenges were also suggested in this study. The efforts taken are divided into two; efforts done by the school and by the English teachers. Reforming attitude and improving resources and facilities are the solutions taken by MTSN Taliwang. On the other hand, applying various teaching methods and techniques, matching students' proficiency level and learning situation, making use of available resources and facilities, providing motivational feedback, looking for appropriate methods or materials, and teachers' self-reflection are the English teachers' efforts in tackling English teaching challenges, (2017).

### **Objectives of Research**

1. To study the English teaching problems of High School at Taunggyi city in Myanmar.
2. To propose the solutions of the English teaching problems of High School at Taunggyi city in Myanmar.

### **Research Methodology**

This research focused on the English teaching problems of High Schools at Taunggyi City in Myanmar so the study was conducted at Taunggyi City in Myanmar. This research is quantitative research that made up of questionnaires and opened-end interviews. So participants are High School English teachers and students to complete the questionnaire. 100 students and 10 English

teachers were selected from five different High Schools at Taunggyi city in Myanmar. Concerning the interview, 5 headmasters from five High Schools were selected for the opened-end interviews based on their English teaching experience and attitudes of English teaching in order to investigate the English teaching problems and solutions.

There were three different instruments in the study: (1) a questionnaire for 100 students, (2) a questionnaire for 10 English teachers and (3) an open-ended interview with 5 headmasters. The questionnaire for teachers was mostly constructed as closed-ended questions. It was made up of five categories which are involving English teaching problems. They are: 1) problem involving teacher, 2) problem involving student, 3) problem involving curricula & textbooks, 4) problem involving assessment and problem involving other factors contributing to successful teaching and learning.

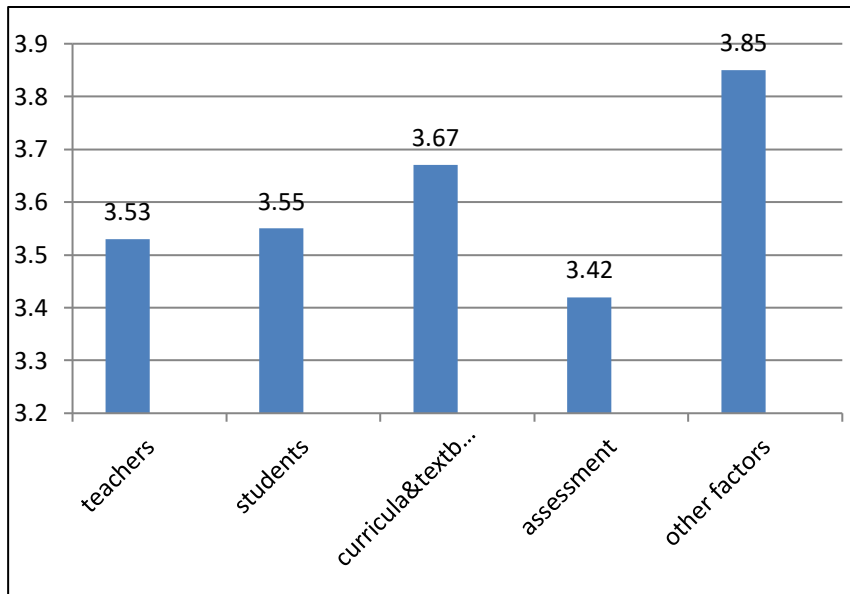
Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentage, mean score and standard deviation were used to measure the levels of agreement. The calculation of weighted mean score was the major method. Scores out of 5 on the rating scale were interpreted to show levels of agreement to each item in the questionnaire as the following:

Mean score	Level of agreement
4.51-5.00	Very high
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Very low

## Results of Research

According to teachers' responses to questionnaires contributed to them, To survey English teaching problems involving teachers, students, curricula and textbooks, assessment and other factors affecting English language teaching, the following figure is presented to show the findings.

Figure 1: English teaching problems in mean score



Concerning English teaching problem involving teachers, the top five problematic items among 16, according to mean score, were: 1) teachers use translation method for teaching English, 2) teachers need to improve their English skills, 3) teachers have difficulties in using English for teaching in the classroom, 4) teachers need more opportunities and experience in using English for teaching, and 5) teachers have difficulties in applying technology in English teaching.

Concerning English teaching problem involving students, the top five problematic items among 20, according to mean score, were: 1) students are lack of opportunities of using English outside a class, 2) students are lack of confidence in speaking English, 3) students do NOT dare to express themselves, 4) students think their mother language first before they translate it into English, and 5) students are lack of extra practicing English by themselves.

Regarding English teaching problem involving curricula & textbooks, the top five problematic items of 10, according to mean score, were: 1) there is s

lack of opportunity to select the textbooks, 2) the exercise of the textbook does NOT cover all skills of English, 3) the content of curricula is not up-to-date, 4) the content does NOT match with the local conditions and society, and 5) It is NOT practical to manage the activities with the guidelines in the curricula.

Regarding English teaching problem involving assessment, the top five problematic items of 9, according to mean score, were: 1) teachers have difficulties in constructing the tests of speaking, 2) teachers have difficulties in constructing the tests of reading, 3) teachers have difficulties in constructing the tests of listening, 4) teachers have difficulties in constructing the tests of English for communication, and 5) teachers need more knowledge and understanding about the category of language testing.

Regarding English teaching problem involving other factors contributing to successful teaching and learning, the top five problematic items of 9, according to mean score, were: 1) there is a lack of native English-speaking teachers, 2) the teaching media are NOT sufficient, 3) the budget for supporting teachers to organize extra-curricular activities is not enough, 4) the budget for constructing or supplying teaching media is little, and 5) the supply of computers to aid teaching is NOT sufficient.

Attitude of students in learning English impacts too much on learning English. According to students' responses to the questionnaire contributed to them, the top five problematic items of 32 were: 1) teachers teach the lesson entirely in Myanmar, 2) materials (computer, projector, sound system, etc.) are not enough in our school, 3) students have difficulties in listening English, 4) teachers do not use technological tools (computers, projectors, smart boards, etc.) in English instruction, and 5) students think that English exams are above their levels.

Five headmasters from five High schools were interviewed to understand more the English teaching problems and solutions of High schools in Taunggyi city, Myanmar. All of them are between 35 and 50 years old and have experience more than eight years in English language teaching.

Regards to interview with Daw Thin Thin, the main English teaching problems are a lack of resource and skill, low investment in education factor, very low salary of teachers which leading to a lack of motivation, poor quality of teaching stuff. The main solution of this is that the government should increase investment in education factor. In addition, the curricula and textbooks are out of date and teachers do not have opportunities to choose a textbook. Assessment does not cover all English skills. Teachers use memorizing system. So the curricula and textbooks need to be changed to be up to date. Teachers need to be allowed to choose appropriate textbooks. Assessment method and teaching method have to be changed.

In conclusion of interview with U Myo Min Kyaw, most of teachers lack of proficiency of English and they are not qualified in English They have difficulty in using English in class room so they teach English in Myanmar all the time using translation method. English teachers have to attend academic training, program and seminars to be perfect and expert in the teaching method. English teachers should make self-study, practice English again and again.

In conclusion of interview with Daw Kay Thi Aung, corruption and bad education system is the main problem in Myanmar education. Corruption in education system need to be gotten rid of and curricula and learning material have to modify. Corruption may also affect human resource management in schools through teachers' recruitment, promotion and management. Some schools lack of teachers and some schools have crowded students or too large class size. Myanmar education sector need good management system.

In conclusion of interview with Daw Nan Yi Zaw, because of being addicted with their smart mobile phone, students have poor attention in learning. Students lack of motivation and they are not interested in study. So teachers needed to provide strategies and activities that would inspire and motivate the students to love English more.

In conclusion of interview with U Khun Moe, while students have different abilities and ages, teachers have difficulties in giving appropriate topic to their students. Students lack of motivation and confidence. To raise students' awareness about English and motivate them to study, friendship was regarded by as the most effective measure.

Finally, researcher have presented general background information of participants, results from questionnaires and results from interview to understand deeply the English teaching problems and solutions of High Schools at Taunggyi city in Myanmar.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study attempted to investigate English teaching problems and solutions of High School at Taunggyi city in Myanmar. The study mentioned not only many different kinds of problems from questionnaires provided to teachers and students but also solutions from interview. The solutions to overcome these challenges problems were also suggested in this study. The efforts that have to be taken were divided into five: 1) some efforts have to be done by government such as supporting the budget for constructing or supplying teaching media, increasing salary of teachers, changing up-to-date effective education system and textbooks, 2) some efforts have to be done by schools such as supporting teaching materials, improving resources and facilities, giving teachers opportunity to choose appropriate textbooks, 3) some

efforts need to be done by teachers such as improving their English efficiency, creating effective innovative teaching methods, providing positive motivational feedback to students, 4) some efforts have to be done by students such as self-study, practicing, and 5) some efforts have to be done by parents such as providing physical and mental supports, making understanding the value of education, creating good environment to their students.

### Suggestion for Research

Concerning this study, the following suggestions are made for further research.

1. More studies should be conducted to analyze English teaching problems not only High Schools in Taunggyi city but also High Schools around Myanmar using a larger number of teachers and students and using different research tools for collecting data.

2. To understand deeply teaching problems in Myanmar, researcher should be aware of current trend of politic of Myanmar which is affecting Education policy tremendously.

3. For more studies, researcher should study history of Myanmar education and current education policy in Myanmar.

4. In depth interviews, students may be needed to get a better understanding of the students' learning problems.

5. More studies concerning system of teacher training in Education University or Education College should be conducted.

6. Researcher should study teachers' and students' attitude toward English.

7. Researcher should study international standard effective English teaching method or teaching technique along with current English teaching method or teaching technique in Myanmar.

8. What kind of renovations can be done in English teacher education programs should be put forward.

9. Studies related to parents, school administrators, academics and policy makers should be done about the problems encountered in English learning and teaching.

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