

Difficulties in Learning English Speaking Skills of MYMA Students at Ramannarattha Buddhist University of Mon State in Myanmar

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were (1) To study the difficulties in learning English speaking Skills among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar, (2) To find out the solutions to overcome difficulties in learning English speaking Skills among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar.

The research employed a mixed-method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research tools are questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The population comprised 150 students from the MYMA Education Centre at Ramannarattha Buddhist university, Mon state, Myanmar. The sample was selected from 50 students of level 1 for quantitative method, and five key informants are interviewed as qualitative method. Data was analysed by using Frequency, Percentage, Mean (\bar{X}), and Standard Deviation (S.D.) by statistic.

The findings indicated that the overall level of difficulties in Learning English speaking was moderate (Mean = 48.46, S.D. = 15.914). The results were considered as moderate level for difficulties in learning English speaking. The results showed that students encounter difficulties in pronunciation, psychological factors, and grammatical.

Keywords: Difficulties in learning English; Incorrect Pronunciation; Psychology Factors, Grammatical Error

Introduction

In human society, we, as human beings, must speak every day to communicate with each other. Among communicating languages, English one of the most useful and practical language in the world. Therefore, English is one of the most significant languages that people always speak in any types of social events such as daily conversation, religious performance, political discussion, teaching in various types of academic, and doing business in English language. Therefore, English language is becoming more and more globalization as second language around the world. Michelle Maxom (2009) stated that “these days English is viewed as a language which gives you access to the world. Some want to study at prestigious English-speaking universities; some want a highflying career with international connections. Others just want a better chance in life and move to wherever the money seems to be, and then again, some just love Hollywood,



international rock stars or their English girlfriend. Even the free-spirited backpackers need English to get by in far-flung lands.”

Since English is becoming the most used language, there are many EFL (English as a foreign language) students who are attempting to study English at English centers, schools, colleges or universities. However, learning a second language is not as easy as it seems. In the process of learning English as a second language, students must study many of the language’s components such as grammar, tenses, sentences, vocabulary. Moreover, to become more proficient in the English language, ESL students are required to learn English with these four skills. Among these four skills, one of the hardest skills is to speak. In contrast, writing, reading, and listening skills could be easier when compared to speaking skills. Some people can understand English when they are listening to English; however, they cannot speak English like the way they listen. For instance, in the researcher’s observation of football events, a famous footballer like Messi, could not speak English, but he could understand English by listening. Likewise, many students have studied English for years and still cannot speak English at the MYMA Education Center at Ramannarattha Buddhist University. In addition, some students stutter or cannot speak fluently due to a variety of difficulties when they are learning English. As a result, learning to speak is hard to complete and study. Ven. Pinnyar Thami (2018) confirmed that from researcher’s experience as an English language learner for several years has found many problems and obstacles that most students encounter with is that for communicative speaking, for instance, lacking self-confidence in speaking English for communication, limited vocabularies, and many more.

In conclusion, the goal of ESL learners is to speak English fluently and accurately. However, if learners are unable to speak English fluently, the goal to reach is still strongly requested. Difficulties that ESL learners encountering are required technical solutions to overcome them. To fulfill this goal, the researcher has the responsibility to study these difficulties that hinder learning to speak. Since speaking skills are the hardest skill to fulfill, there could be the best procedure to overcome these difficulties. Inayah, and Lisdawati (2021) mentioned that “So, it is important to study this issue in order to discover if students actually have problems with speaking English, and if they do then we can recognize the kinds of problems and the reason that make it happened.” Therefore, the need for new research is a must. After this research completes, the researcher strongly believes that the best methods or technics gaining from this research could be useful and helpful for MYMA students to learn speaking English more easily and more affectively.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1 To study the difficulties in learning English speaking among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar
2. To find out the solutions to overcome difficulties in learning English speaking among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the quantitative phase, data were collected from 50 level-1 students using a 30-item questionnaire systematically developed by the researcher. An in-depth interview, then, was especially used for data collection as the main tool for the qualitative method to collect qualitative data from 5 key informants who have been teaching English speaking at MYMA Education Center in Ramannarattha Buddhist University. In quantitative data collection, the researcher will collect quantitative data from 50 level 1 students, and the researcher will provide 30-questionnaire item to 50 students, and 50 students are required to fill all questions. For qualitative data collection, the researcher will ask for an in-depth interview with 5 key informants by recording some electronic devices and observing the researcher himself. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software to compute frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Statistics which include percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD) are used for processing data. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Results

1. The information of the respondents

The respondents have shown that most of the students at MYMA education center were female with the quantity of 38 persons or 76.0%, and flowing by male students with the quantity of 12 persons or 24.0%. For the age of students, most of the students at MYMA education center were between 15-20 with the amount of 34 persons or 68.0%. Then flowing by the amount of 13 persons or 26.0% with the age between 20-25, and the age between 25-up is with the quantity 3 persons or 6.0%. Ethnicity of students is pointed out that most of the students were Mon with the quantity of 42 persons or 84.0%, Burmese with the quantity of 5 persons or 10.0%, and other ethnicity with 3 persons or 6.0%. For the class which is shown class-level, 25 persons with 50.0% were learning in level 1, and the other 25 persons with 50.0% were studying in level 2. For the duration of studying English, 36 students with 72.0% have been studying English between 1-3 years, 11 students with 22.0% have been studying English more than 6 years, and 3 students with 6.0% have been studying English between 3-6 years. For frequency of speaking English, 42 students 84.0% sometimes speak English, the following 5 students always speak English 10.0%, and 3 students 6.0% never speak English.

2. Analysis of difficulties in learning English Speaking

These questionnaires were used to examine the difficulties in learning English of MYMA students at Ramannarattha Buddhist University of Mon State in Myanmar. These questionnaires consist of 15 items for difficulties in learning English speaking with 15 questions. These question items are classified into five sections and all items have five choices: (5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree (3) moderate (2) Disagree and (1) Strongly disagree.



items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Interpretation
English words are hard to pronounce.	3.16	.791	Moderate
I feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in class.	2.96	1.194	Moderate
I can't pronounce the final sound of words when speaking English.	3.08	1.006	Moderate
My English pronunciation is so poor.	3.04	.946	Moderate
I can't have conversations properly due to having a limited vocabulary.	3.38	1.027	Moderate
English vocabularies are unable to be memorized easily.	3.04	1.087	Moderate
I can't learn English speaking easily in a non-native speaker environment.	3.22	1.183	Moderate
I can't improve in learning to speak without participants.	3.48	1.199	Moderate
I translate English into my first language when I speak English.	3.42	.927	Moderate
I can't continue talking when I make a mistake in speaking.	2.84	.976	Moderate
I worry about grammatical errors when speaking English.	3.44	1.163	Moderate
English grammar rules trigger difficulties in speaking.	3.26	1.396	Moderate
Stress, rhythm, and intonation make it difficult for learners to speak.	3.24	1.041	Moderate
I don't know how to speak with stress, rhythm, and intonation.	3.54	.973	High
I lose confidence when I give a speech.	3.36	1.005	Moderate
Total	48.46	15.914	Moderate

As show in table 1, the results shown that all items expressed as the results of difficulties in learning English among MYMA students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University of Mon State in Myanmar. In total, descriptive statistic results show that the Mean Value of difficulties in learning English speaking is equal to 48.46 at a high level, Standard Deviation is equal to 15.914.

2. Analysis of the solutions to difficulties in learning English speaking

items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Interpretation
I listen to various English conversations every day.	3.70	1.054	High
I practice sounding my pronunciation like a native speaker by listening.	3.74	.985	High
I practice English conversation with my friends every day.	2.96	1.211	Moderate
I try to use the English language in the classroom every day.	3.92	1.157	High
I try to speak new words aloud severally.	3.84	1.166	High
I try not to forget new vocabulary by using them in speaking.	3.52	.994	High

items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Interpretation
I surround myself in an English environment such as listening to music, watching movies, and news in English.	3.46	1.373	Moderate
I always speak to my friends in English.	2.30	.909	Low
I think in English while speaking.	2.78	1.233	Moderate
I build my confidence to speak English smoothly.	3.74	1.139	High
I am not afraid of making mistakes in speaking.	3.26	1.225	Moderate
I practice stress, rhythm, and intonation for better pronunciation in speaking.	3.50	1.035	High
I listen to English pronunciation courses on social media like YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok.	4.20	.903	High
I don't hesitate hesitation give a speech.	3.00	1.069	Moderate
I practice speaking English slowly and clearly.	3.86	.989	High
Total	51.78	16.442	High

Research objective 2. The result shown that all items are expressed as the results of solutions for difficulties in learning English of MYMA students at Ramannarattha Buddhist University of Mon State in Myanmar. In total, descriptive statistical results show that the Mean value of solutions for difficulties in learning English speaking is equal to 51.78 a high level, Standard Deviation is equal to 16.442.

3. Analysis of Interviews

The interview results with informants presented difficulties that students face in learning English. Mainly, difficulties are such as poor pronunciation, incompetent methods of teaching in government schools, psychological factors, limited vocabulary, and grammatical errors in speaking. To overcome these difficulties, the answers suggested that students should listen to international English podcasts and learn English phonetics for better pronunciation. And the method of teaching has to change into a suitable method for students to speak confidently. To store vocabulary and correct grammatical errors, every teacher gives opinions that students have to practice speaking English and surround themselves with an English environment such as reading books, watching English movies, and listening to English songs.

3.1 Difficulties in learning English speaking

The difficulty in learning English is mainly pronunciation which is pronouncing incorrectly. Ashin Khemarsara stated, "the first difficulty for students is the local sound or accent due to the effect of public schools or government schools; therefore, students are most likely to sound in a Burmese accent when they speak English." And Nai Ong Sar also mentioned, "difficulty is about the sound in speaking. Because of influencing state schools, students' sounds are like local sounds, not like international ones. Therefore, students could not pronounce correctly most of the words with bad pronunciation."

3.2 Solutions to difficulties in learning English speaking

In finding solutions, for students whose pronunciation is influenced by local sound should listen to various English conversation and practice alike English sound. Ven. Khemarsara suggested, “those students who are influenced by local sounds or accents must study the basics of English phonetics. Students also must listen to international sounds such as American English, British English, and Indian English on social media like YouTube.” Likewise, Jamon Sorn stated “for better pronunciation, students have to listen to English conversation consistently. After listening, students have to repeat the conversations.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, In conclusion, this research entitled “Difficulties in learning English speaking among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar”. Objectives of study are (1) to study difficulties in learning English speaking among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar and (2) To find out the solutions to overcome difficulties in learning English speaking among MYMA Students of Ramannarattha Buddhist University at Mon State in Myanmar. The results of research are as the following:

50 respondents who are currently studying English at MYMA education centre in batch-37 of class course on September 2024 have answered all the questions of which result indicated a total rate at moderate level with the mean value that is equal to 48.46 and Standard Deviation that is equal to 15.914 or (\bar{X} = 48.46, S.D = 15.914).

On the other hand, the result of solutions of difficulties in learning English speaking in chapter IV with 15 questionnaires, 50 students who are currently studying English at MYMA education centre in batch-37 of class course on September 2024 have answered all the questions of which outcome indicated a total rate at high level with the mean value that is equal to 51.78 and Standard Deviation that is equal to 16.442 or (\bar{X} = 51.78, S.D = 16.442).

The results from questionnaires and interviews have shown that students encounter difficulties such as poor pronunciation, psychological problem, and grammatical error in learning English speaking. The results of the solutions were that students have to practice listening, speaking in pair or group, reading to storing vocabularies, and reading English books as much as possible.

Discussion

After asking students by questionnaires and doing interviewing teachers by in-dept interview, information to discuss here is as follows:

1. The most significant difficulty in learning to speak English is bad pronunciation. Level 1 students cannot pronounce the words of English correctly due to the way of teaching sounds in state schools: consequently, they have poor pronunciation. Students also have difficulty in speaking like reading a book when they are speaking. Thereby, students do not know how to put stress, rhythm, and intonation in sentences. Ven. Arsing Na (2019) said the difficulty of

pronunciation. The most important problems of the respondents were faced difficulties speaking English, as the students forgot to say the final sound of the words, had problems of pronunciation, very poor pronunciation, could not speak English for a long period, and English seems to be difficulties for them to speak correctly.

2. Another difficulty which is a psychological factor in speaking such as being afraid of making mistakes or shy. For level 1 students, students are unable to speak in front of the class because they fear that they could make mistakes in speaking. Because of that, they lose confidence and hesitate to speak English. Being shy also makes students sluggish to improve their speaking English, they could not develop speaking English due to these psychological factors. Ven. Dhammasara (2017) mentioned about psychology factor in speaking English. The students are afraid to speak due to the feeling of being incapable of English. The feeling of worse, incompetent, and less skilled, all have been built if students could not uncover their shyness with confidence. Those could block the process of students' ability in oral communication.

3. Speaking of difficulties in learning speaking, a grammatical challenge considers as one of difficulties for students which cause them frustrated in speaking. After interviewing 5 key informants, most of lecturers give answers that students at level 1 encounter grammatical error in speaking.

4. In finding the solutions of difficulties in learning speaking English, one of the best solutions for MYMA education centre class is that students must listen to English conversations, English songs, English news, and English podcast to speak. And exposing or surrounding yourself with English environments such as watching English movies, singing alike English songs, and using English with your partners are also an excellent support in learning English speaking. Ms. Thitapa (2017) found the solution of using social media in speaking English. Social media directly and indirectly motivated or stimulated the students to learn the English language both inside and outside the classroom about what they want to know, there were some limitations including speaking through social media. The results may be helpful by revealing CEIC students' needs. This can help them improve their performance in using the English language, enhancing their productivity and ability to communicate effectively.

5. The results also have shown that practice makes perfect. In order to improve speaking English, students must practice speaking English with your peers or groups, practice doing presentation, and practice doing discussion or debate about several topics as much as possible with classmates in Myanmar educational school. Manassara Riensumettharadol and Phmphon Sujarinpong (2023) suggested the solution of practicing of speaking English. The students not only need to learn technical terms, useful phrases, and essential idioms needed at work, but it also takes a lot of practice until they can automatically use English in conversation. Teachers should design lessons that encourage students to speak and use the language in simulated practice in class as well as in real situations outside the classroom.

Difficulties that students face in learning English speaking are difficulties in pronunciation, psychology factors, and grammatical error. In finding solutions to difficulties in learning English

speaking, learners must expose to English environment and practice English speaking to enhance English speaking skill.

Suggestions

1. Suggestion for Applications

1.1 To overcome difficulties in learning English, firstly, students have to change their sound or pronunciation which is taught in government schools and practice listening to international English such as US English, UK English, and Australian English podcasts, music, or conversations on social media. For a better option, learning English phonetics could also help for better pronunciation.

1.2 Speaking learners have to practice speaking slowly and clearly which makes students remember the words and the meaning of sentences. Rushing in speaking can lead to incorrect speech.

1.3 Students do not have to be shy and afraid of making mistakes in speaking. These kinds of psychological factors downgrade in learning to speak. Therefore, having confidence and motivation to speak is a good sign for English learners to keep learning English consistently.

1.4 Building vocabulary is needed for learning to speak English. Having sufficient vocabulary is good for students to speak fluently and effectively. To study English vocabulary, students should not learn the English words by heart; on the other hand, they have to learn through reading books, writing on notes, and using them in speaking.

1.5 One of the best methods is to practice speaking English more often. As the saying goes “practice makes perfect”. Students should not be lazy in practicing speaking. They have to practice speaking with peers or groups.

1.6 First of all, teachers have to be competent in his or her teaching speaking English. Incompetent teachers do not lead to the students’ goal of learning English speaking.

1.7 Teachers have to leave their local sound or accent (Burmese sound) in teaching speaking. To achieve authentic sound, the best way they can do is to learn English phonetics, listen to English conversations, and practice sounding English alike.

1.8. Teachers have to omit traditional teaching methods and change to a new suitable method of teaching which is allowing students to speak or to discuss in class recently. Finally, teachers have to encourage or motivate students to speak freely.

2. Suggestions for further researchs

2.1 Further research is needed to explore difficulties in learning to speak English based on pronunciation.

2.2 Further research is demanded to investigate the effect of psychological problems on learning English speaking.

2.3 Further study should focus on the difficulties of learning to speak English in non-English environmental countries.

2.4 Further research should focus on the suitable method of teaching English in Myanmar government schools.

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