

The Investigation of The Challenges in Teaching English Encountered by The Teachers at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar

Ven. Viriya¹, Weerakarn Kanokkamares²,

Faculty of Humanity, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University¹,

Faculty of Humanity, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University²

Corresponding Author Email: napat.sukn@gmail.com

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are 1) to investigate the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar, 2) to analyze the methods to overcome the challenges, and 3) to propose better solutions for the teachers who are teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar. The tools applied for this research, are documentary sources and in-depth interviews. This research was qualitative and documentary method with two parts of data collection; the first is an interview with the teachers, and second is to study from textbooks, thesis, and academic journals. The target group consists of five persons who are teaching English at Sittwe University and a content analysis was applied.

The result of research was that challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching English, were about students, classrooms, lessons, and time. The methods employed by the teachers to overcome the challenges, were the transformations, attempt, roll-call system, prizing system, asking open questions, carefully arrangements, gestures, writing on the board, repeat, communication language teaching method, activities, punishment, extra curriculum activities, cooperation learning method, direct method, and divided among mini-classes.

Introduction

Nowadays, English being more monumental, central, and practical than other languages, is like an aorta for the people who want to improve upon their life in every sector. According to Rajathurai Nishanthi, an estimated 1 billion people worldwide speak English, 67 countries have English as their official language and 27 Countries have English as their second official language. Global companies such as Airbus, Daimler Fast, Nokia, etc.,

have mandated English as their official corporate language. (Rajathurai Nishanthi, 2018: 871–837)

For a person who has good reading skills, likes to read English books, magazines, and newspapers, and desires to get more knowledge than other monolingual people, it is like a gate to enter the global knowledge bank. There are important historical, economic, political, electrical, martial, scientific, and religious books written in English. Most of the websites on which everybody can easily read past and current events and news are written and created in English on the Internet. Even sites that are written in other languages often give us a selection to translate them. English major for the development of a nation or a country, became significant at Arakan province, which was one of the states in Myanmar, to communicate with officers, staff, police, soldiers, businessmen, and teachers who came from England and India, "after the province (Arakan) was ceded to British India under the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo, an event that concluded the First AngloBurmese War (1824–1826)" (Aye Chan, 2005: 397) Having the idea to provide modern education so that they could free the Arakan Province of Myanmar from its delays, the Colonial British India government also needed people who were skillful in English to rule the country, so they started to found Anglo–Vernacular schools In Kyaukphyu and Sittwe like other regions of Myanmar.

Because only people having a good knowledge of English could enter government service and the professions and yet get high fees, positions, and respect from people during the British colonial period in Myanmar and also English was the language of administration and the medium of instruction from kindergarten to university, they mainly studied English and parents also encouraged their children to attend Anglo–Vernacular schools and English schools between three kinds of schools: "in addition to the monastic schools, Burma had, before the outbreak of World War II, three types of schools: (1) Vernacular schools in which the medium of instruction was Burmese, (2) Anglo–Vernacular schools in which the medium of instruction was English, with Burmese as the auxiliary medium of instruction in the lower classes, and (3) English schools in which the medium of instruction was English with Burmese as a second language." (Supdt., Govt. printing and staty, 1956).

Hence, the researcher chose this title, "The investigation of the challenges in teaching English encountered by the teachers at the Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar," to study the challenges in teaching English encountered by the teachers at Sittwe university of Rakhine state, Myanmar and methods used by them to overcome these challenges.

The researcher essentially hopes that this study will be beneficial and advantageous to the teachers who teach English at the Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar. And, they can learn more about what problems they have in teaching English. Then, they can adopt new methods of teaching English given in this study to enhance their teaching skill.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar.
2. To analyze the methods used by the teachers to overcome the challenges at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar.
3. To propose better solutions for the teachers who are teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar.

Literature Review

Disruptive Behavior

One of the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching English is the negative environment of the classroom. The atmosphere of the school is significant for the teachers who are teaching the English language (Madison, J, 2011: 1). Mostly, the teachers encounter environmental problems when teaching the English language. For the teachers, the classroom environment needs to be suitable, comfortable, and flattering because a negative classroom environment destroys teaching procedures. Significantly, the students who have disruptive behavior create a negative classroom environment. (Robert Leitman, and Katherine Binns, 1993: 12–17)

Large or Overcrowded Classroom

One of the challenges frequently encountered by English teachers is large or overcrowded classes. The classroom is very significant for the teaching and learning activities of the teachers and students. If the classroom is large or crowded with students, teachers can't know what their students are doing, control them, and understand what they teach. About the large classes, there are various kinds of norms around the world.

Hayes says there is no quantitative definition of what constitutes a large class, as people's perception of this varies from context to context. In some private language schools, a class with 20 students may be perceived as large; in the Lancaster University project, the average number of large classes is around 50 (Hayes, U, 1997: 31–38). Coleman said that while in China, the large class generally refers to holding 50–100 students or more, which to some foreign teachers may be super large. It can be seen that people have different degrees of tolerance of class size in different contexts or cultures (Coleman, H, 1989: 22). Smith and Warburton defined large classes in the UK as 25–30 learners; (Smith, P, & Warburton, M, 1997: 253–266) O'Sullivan stated that extensive courses in the USA consist of more than 35 learners (O'Sullivan, M.C, 2006: 24–37). Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani, and Byamugisha defined Uganda's situation as more than 70 learners (Nakabugo, M.G., Opolot-Okurut, C., Ssebbunga, C.M., Maani, J.S. & Byamugisha, A, 2008: 85–102).

Shortage of Teachers' Training

Insufficient training begets problems for the teachers when teaching English to learners and dealing with challenges, and also teaching training is vital for all teachers, especially for junior teachers. According to Emery, some issues that occur because of insufficient preparation for teaching: teachers' inability to deal with challenges that take place in the teaching context because of the lack of training, teachers' low language ability, and teachers whose English is not their subject area are hired to teach it (Emery, H, 2012: 1–32). Mishra outlined that such challenges occur in rural areas because rural areas lack proper and good teaching and learning tools (Mishra, B, 2015: 38–44). Littlewood reminded that teachers whose teaching training is not enough might strive to embody teaching methods effectively (Littlewood, W, (2007: 243–259). S'lungile Thwala mentioned that teachers' lack of movement made it impossible for them to supervise teaching and learning in inclusive classrooms. They also agreed with one another that the government was not committed to the reforms of inclusive education. One overlooked aspect of inclusion was that it is successful when the teacher received the necessary training. Too often, inclusive education in Swaziland had meant dumping a child with a disability into a regular education classroom with little support from teachers as they lacked training and development (S'lungile Thwala, 2015: 499).

Research Methodology

the researcher mentioned collecting and analyzing data and the method used in this research. This study was entitled "The investigation of the challenges in teaching English encountered by the teachers at the Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar." The researcher applied the qualitative and documentary methodology in this research. The researcher applied qualitative and documentary research and gathered the data from primary, secondary, other published and unpublished sources of books, theses, documents, magazines, research journals, and newspapers related to this study from many academic institutes such as MCU library, Sittwe University library, Mahidol University Library, Yangon University Library, etc. The researcher also conducted an in-depth interview to collect data from five teachers teaching English at Sittwe University. The content analysis method was used for analyzing collected details.

Results of Research

1. The main objectives of this study were to investigate the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar, analyze the methods used by the teachers to overcome the challenges at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar, and propose the better solutions for the teachers who are teaching English at Sittwe University of Rakhine State, Myanmar. In this research, the researcher applied the qualitative and documentary research. Five key informants from Sittwe University

were conducted an in-depth interview to apprehend their challenges and solutions in teaching English. After analyzing the data collection, the finding reveals that three of five teachers are females, two of them are males, all of them are between 29 and 35 years old, have experienced more than five years of teaching English, hold M.A. degrees. Their favorite skills are speaking, reading, and writing in teaching English.

2. As regards the results of the teachers' challenges in teaching English, respondents provided answers. They were students' lack of interest, their poor performance, disruptive behavior, being afraid of the teachers, students' different tone and accent, overcrowded and big classroom, not being familiar with the student-centered approach of students, many lessons specified for a semester, lessons being a little bit easy for students, time management process, students' lack of motivation, language proficiency, students' mixed level, and classroom management.

3. In the section on methods used by the teachers for overcoming the challenges, the key informants gave suggestions. They were the creation of some changes, providing more effort than before, setting up roll call system, practicing the rewarding technique for students' effort, asking more open questions, designing carefully arrangements based on the numbers of the students, using gestures to communicate with Rakhine students, writing down on the board, repeating, again and again, using communication language teaching method (CLT), conducting some activities such as asking any questions to the disruptive students, changing positions and sometimes giving the punishment, usually taking extra curriculum activities, using cooperation learning method, and direct approach, and dividing mini-classes in the classroom for a large classroom.

Discussion

This part is relevant to discussing the findings' results and presents how these findings are related to previous studies and the literature review. The qualitative documentary method was used in this study, and the content analysis is applied to analyze the data in this research. As the researcher mentioned, the first challenge is the disruptive behavior of some students. Key informants also answered about this challenge at the in-depth interview. This finding result is similar to the theory mentioned in the literature review. According to theory, disruptive classroom behavior can negatively affect the classroom environment and the educational experience for students enrolled in the course and hampers instructors' ability to teach or students to learn. Dr. Arun K. Mishra (1992) stated why it happens. Irritating behaviors can, in general, be categorized as behaviors due to lack of maturity. During the discussions, it was felt that these behaviors indicate a general lack of respect. It was mentioned that this disrespect might be due to the generational differences between teachers and students and a lack of interest in a required course. (Dr. Arun K. Mishra, 1992: 1)

Concerning the solution to overcome this challenge, Daw Khin Me Than answered that I conduct some activities such as asking disruptive students questions, changing positions, and sometimes punishing them.

This in-depth interview result is appropriate to the documentary result finding mentioned in chapter 4. Teachers make a personal approach, displace sitting in front, warn the students making disrupting in the class, admonish the students making disrupting, and give punishment as the school's regulation.

The second one is the challenge of a large or overcrowded classroom. The teachers from Sittwe University also answered that they have the challenge of overcrowded and big classrooms. This finding result is related to the theory stated in the literature review. According to theory, large or crowded classrooms bring difficulties to both teachers and students and the process of teaching and learning. Abu Talib S (1996: 16) referred to the overcrowded classrooms' challenges that both teachers and students feel uncomfortable in crowded classrooms. They became hopeless and feel unhappy with the overall hostile situation. It becomes difficult for the teacher to keep proper eye contact with the students. It disturbs the teaching-learning process badly.

Regarding the solution to overcome this challenge, Daw Thammar said that arrangements were carefully designed based on students' numbers. This in-depth interview result is pertinent to documentary result finding. Teachers were using a teacher's notebook to mark students' name, creating energetic and engaging lessons, tutoring struggling students requiring more time after school, assigning seats and rotating when necessary, managing the noise, relaxing students, paying attention to individuals, and using a microphone so that all students could hear.

The third one is the challenge of differentiation of students. The respondents said that students' mixed level (differentiation) is one of their challenges in the in-depth interview section. This result is relevant to the theory stated in the literature review. As a theory, learners' English proficiency, age, and individual needs are different due to different family backgrounds and study experiences. According to Fiona Copland, Sue Garton, And Anne Burns (2014: PP, 747), the fourth-largest category is differentiation, meaning that many teachers are dealing with students who are at different stages of learning and have different individual needs.³ And also, this is pertinent to the research finding of Ven. Pannasami (2019: p, 76) who found that while students have different abilities and age, teachers have difficulties in giving an appropriate topic to their students.

The fourth one is the challenge of classroom management. Interviewees also answered during the in-depth interview part that classroom management is one of their challenges. This effect is pertinent to the theory revealed in the literature review. Teaching methods, lesson planning, and students' motivation were significant sources of classroom management challenges. Raizen (2010), Oliver, Wehby & Reschly (2011) declared that classroom management is a cardinal element defining a flourishing teaching career. Generally, classroom management encircles a wide range of steps and activities to establish a welcoming atmosphere of learning, ensure the smooth running of lessons, and minimize misbehaviors and disruptions.

Suggestions

This research's findings proffered the first step into a broad diversity of the study in the teachers' challenges in teaching English, so the following suggestions are created for further investigation.

1. The teacher–participants and student–participants from Sittwe University should be enhanced.
2. More studies should be made to analyze the teachers' challenges in teaching English and solutions used by them at Sittwe University and other Universities in Rakhine State.
3. Further researchers should apply questionnaires to know more challenges faced by teachers and solutions used by them.
4. Further researchers should focus on the challenges students from Sittwe University, and other universities encounter in learning English.
5. Further researchers should study Sittwe University's budget, curricula, textbooks, students' different tones and accents, student–centered approach, time management process, and students' language proficiency.

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