

A Study of English Communication Skills of Students at Government High School in Meiktila Township of Myanmar

¹Tejobhasa, Veerakarn Kanokkamalade

¹Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

¹Corresponding Author's Email: tejobhasaburma@gmail.com

Abstract

The study, "A Study of English Communication Skills of Students at Government High School in Meiktila Township of Myanmar," aims to investigate the effects of English communication skills on government high school students in Meiktila, Myanmar, and propose solutions to the communication challenges faced by grade 12 students. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research collected data from 90 grade 12 students through questionnaires and conducted in-depth interviews with five key informants to gather their opinions and suggestions.

The findings revealed a range of proficiency levels, with notable gaps in speaking and writing skills. Key results indicated that 56.7% of students were neutral in their confidence to speak English fluently, while 70% identified writing as the area needing the most improvement. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to enhance communication skills. Recommendations include creating a supportive learning environment, using interactive teaching methods, and encouraging peer learning. The research also emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers and active parental involvement in supporting language learning at home.

For future research, the study recommends conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these interventions and broader demographic studies to understand communication skills across different regions. This research underscores the critical role of comprehensive strategies in enhancing English communication skills, which are essential for students' academic and professional success in a globalized world.

Keywords: English Communication Skills, EFL challenge, High School Students, Meiktila.

Introduction

This research explores the application of English communication skills among government high school students in Meiktila, Mandalay Region, Myanmar. Meiktila, a rapidly developing town in central Myanmar, boasts a promising economic future. In Myanmar, English is a core subject in almost every high school aimed at securing a better future for students

(Nunan, 2003). Meiktila has sixteen Basic Education High Schools, which attract students from the surrounding countryside to study at both government and private high schools.

English language proficiency is crucial in today's globalized world, facilitating access to higher education, career opportunities, and intercultural communication (Crystal, 2003). In Myanmar, English is recognized as an essential second language, and government high schools play a pivotal role in equipping both teachers and students with these vital skills. Despite the significant focus on English language learning, research highlights ongoing challenges faced by government high school students in Meiktila in mastering English communication skills. This study aims to delve into the background and significance of these issues, laying the groundwork for further investigation into their impacts and potential solutions.

Globally, English is the lingua franca, making its speakers global citizens (Jenkins, 2015). In nations where English is an official language, it serves as a key medium of communication. Statistics show that around 670 million people speak English fluently, a number that has been steadily increasing since 1990 (Graddol, 2006). English holds a prominent position in all spheres of human activity, significantly influencing global events and making global communication more accessible. Proficiency in English is recognized as essential in various fields, including business, medicine, transportation, technology, trade, and marketing (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Communication is a critical aspect of human behaviour, influenced by a myriad of factors (Mesthrie et al., 2009). It reflects the intricate interplay of internal cognitive processes, emotional states, external cultural dynamics, and situational contexts. Understanding this profound interconnection is essential for unraveling the complexities of interpersonal interactions and societal exchanges. This recognition highlights the nuanced nature of communication and its role as a mirror reflecting the diverse influences on human behaviour.

A strong teacher-student relationship is fundamental for effective teaching. This research examines the interaction between teachers and students and the impact of English learning on middle school students through both quantitative and qualitative methods. It investigates the factors influencing teacher-student interaction in English teaching at the secondary school level. The findings indicate that many current English teachers focus primarily on classroom instruction, often neglecting after-class communication and the spiritual connection with students (Erling & Seargeant, 2013).

English has become increasingly important in the modern world, largely due to its spread by the British Empire (Pennycook, 2017). As a result, many people around the globe speak English, even if it is not their primary language. English is the language of science, commerce, global politics, aviation, popular music, and the internet. In Europe, 85% of people learn English as a second language, making it the default language of the EU and a common



medium for international leaders. English unites people worldwide and plays a crucial role in numerous fields, from literature and music to politics and science (Seidlhofer, 2011).

This research focuses on enhancing English communication skills among government high school teachers and students in Meiktila, Myanmar. The researcher believes that further investigation is crucial for improving these skills, which have not been extensively explored before. Enhancing English communication skills is vital for the academic and professional growth of both teachers and students in Meiktila. The researcher is enthusiastic about conducting this study to foster creativity and improve English proficiency in this context.

Objectives of the Study

The proficiency levels in English among high school students in Myanmar, specifically in Meiktila Township, show significant variability. This research aims to identify the specific challenges faced by students and propose effective strategies to enhance their communication skills.

1. To investigate the effects of English communication skills on government high school students in Meiktila, Myanmar.
2. To propose solutions to the problems of English communication skills for grade 12 students.

Research Methodology

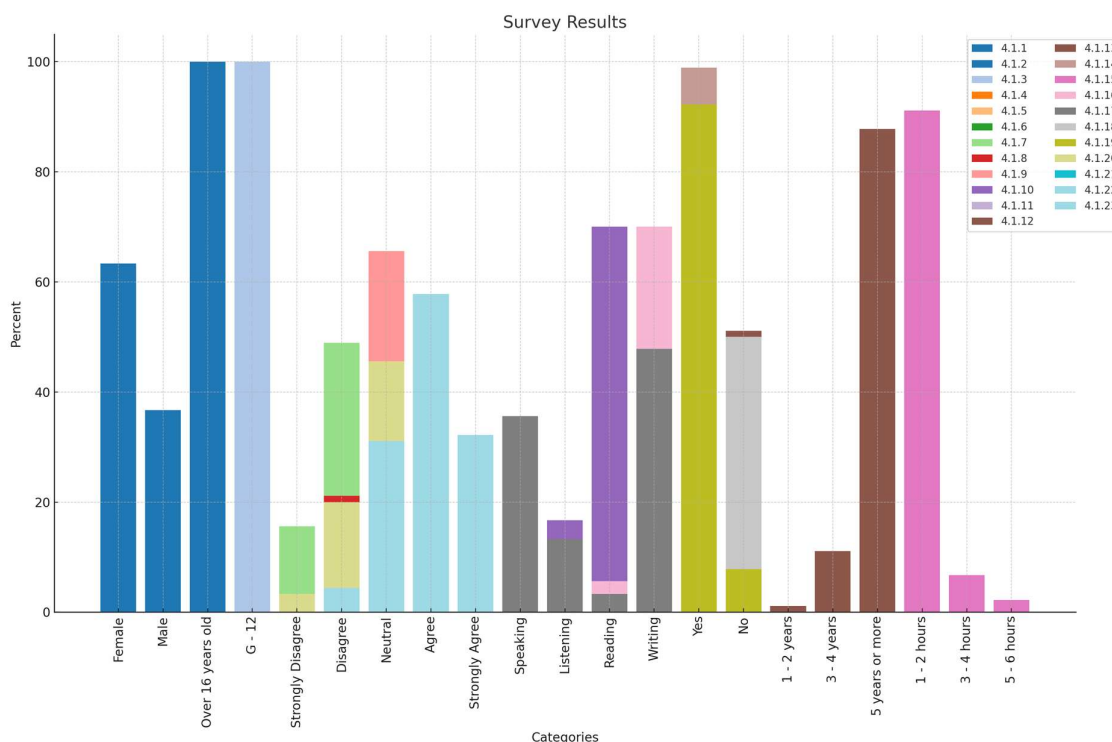
The study used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The current research uses both qualitative and quantitative research procedures. Thus, the way of data collection mainly emphasized the result of making a survey by designing a questionnaire, interviewing people, and participating. Every stage of data collection is performed step by step to make things easier and useful to value the study. Quantitative data was used to provide the participants' attitudes towards the reading aloud. The information obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed by the percentages, and then it was interpreted. The data obtained from the questionnaire was tallied for frequency and calculated for the mean.

Ninety Grade 12 students from No. 1 Government High School in Meiktila took part in the study. In addition, five key informants were interviewed to gain deeper insights into the issues. Data was gathered through structured questionnaires for students and in-depth interviews with key informants. The questionnaires consisted of 23 items covering various aspects of English communication skills and were targeted at students. The questionnaire included 23 questions, and students were asked to select from the following choices: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly agree. Quantitative data



were analyzed using descriptive statistics by SPSS, while qualitative data from interviews were coded and thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes and insights.

Results of the Research



The study's findings focus on the English communication skills of students at the Government High School in Meiktila Township, Myanmar. The data collected provides insights into various aspects of the students' communication abilities, including their confidence in speaking English, comfort in conversations, understanding of spoken English, and application of English skills outside the classroom.

All 90 respondents, representing 100% of the surveyed population, were above 16 years old and in Grade 12. This uniformity in age and grade level ensures that the data reflects the experiences and abilities of students at a similar educational stage.

The gender distribution among the respondents showed that 63.3% were female, while 36.7% were male. This indicates a higher representation of female students in the sample, which may influence the overall results and interpretations related to communication skills.

Confidence Levels: When asked about their confidence in speaking English fluently, the responses varied. A small proportion of students, 2.2%, strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating a strong lack of confidence. Additionally, 14.4% disagreed, suggesting that these students also felt low confidence but not as strongly. The majority of students, 56.7%, were neutral, implying uncertainty or indifference towards their confidence levels. On the other hand, 26.7% agreed that they were confident in their ability to speak English fluently. The mean score for this aspect was 3.0778, with a standard deviation of 0.70675, indicating that, on average, students leaned slightly towards neutrality with a slight tendency towards disagreement.

Comfort Levels: Regarding their comfort in engaging in conversations in English, 2.2% of students strongly disagreed, showing a very high level of discomfort. A significant portion, 45.6%, disagreed, indicating that nearly half of the respondents were not comfortable engaging in English conversations. A notable 34.4% were neutral, suggesting uncertainty or ambivalence about their comfort levels. Additionally, 14.4% agreed, and 3.3% strongly agreed that they were comfortable conversing in English. The mean score was 2.7111, with a standard deviation of 0.86433, reflecting a general tendency towards discomfort.

Understanding Levels: When assessing their ability to understand English spoken by others, 2.2% of the students strongly disagreed, indicating significant difficulty. Another 12.2% disagreed, showing that a notable portion found it challenging to comprehend spoken English. However, 35.6% were neutral, suggesting moderate comprehension skills. On the positive side, 41.1% agreed, and 8.9% strongly agreed that they found it easy to understand English spoken by others. The mean score for this aspect was 3.4222, with a standard deviation of 0.89916, indicating that students generally leaned towards agreement, reflecting a positive perception of their listening comprehension skills.

Frequency of Application: Regarding the frequency of applying their English communication skills outside the classroom, 15.6% strongly disagreed, and 48.9% disagreed, showing that a significant majority of students did not frequently use English in real-world contexts. Another 21.1% were neutral, indicating inconsistent application of their skills. Only 14.4% agreed that they frequently applied their English communication skills outside the classroom. The mean score was 2.3444, with a standard deviation of 0.91383, reflecting a general trend towards infrequent use of English outside the classroom environment.

The data reveals that while a significant portion of students at Government High School in Meiktila Township possess some level of confidence and ability to understand and speak English, many still struggle with comfort and application in real-world contexts. The findings suggest the need for targeted interventions to boost confidence, improve comfort in conversations, and encourage the practical use of English skills outside the classroom. Enhanced focus on these areas can help students better prepare for academic and professional challenges, ultimately leading to improved overall English proficiency.

The Interview Outcome

The outcome of the interview was that the study found that effective communication skills are essential for students' academic and personal success. Students with strong communication abilities are better equipped to understand instructions, grasp complex concepts, and actively engage in academic activities. Conversely, those with poor communication skills face challenges such as misinterpreting instructions, struggling to understand course material, and lacking motivation. Strategies and interventions to improve communication skills include peer pairing, encouraging reading, writing, and listening activities, creating a supportive classroom environment, teamwork, class discussions, and gestures during teaching. Implemented solutions include a bilingual approach, parental involvement, modern teaching aids, and teaching empathy and effective listening. These strategies not only improved students' communication skills but also positively impacted their academic performance and personal development. The findings emphasize the importance of sustained efforts to improve communication skills in educational situations.

Conclusion

The study highlights significant areas for improvement in English communication skills among teachers and students at No.1 Government High School in Meiktila. There is a clear need for targeted interventions to enhance students' confidence and proficiency in English. Creating a supportive learning environment, utilizing interactive teaching methods, and encouraging peer learning are essential strategies. Continuous professional development for teachers and active parental involvement are also critical. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these interventions and broader demographic studies to understand communication skills across different regions.



In conclusion, the aim of using Communication Skills in English at the No.1 Government High School in Meiktila, Myanmar, is based on the Communication Skills approach. The study at No.1 Government High School in Meiktila, Myanmar, offered analytical insights into the English communication skills of grade-12 students and their teachers. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods ensured strong data collection, involving 90 students who completed 23 detailed questionnaires. All 90 respondents were students above 16 years old in grade 12, with 36.7% male and 63.3% female.

Discussion

Findings Analysis

The study's findings reveal that while most students possess a basic understanding of English, their confidence and practical application of communication skills, particularly in speaking and writing, are limited. These results align with previous research by Ur (2012) and Hyland (2016), which emphasize the need for interactive and engaging teaching methods to enhance language proficiency.

The data suggest a need for a shift towards more communicative and student-centred teaching approaches. Teachers should incorporate role-plays, debates, and multimedia resources to create a more dynamic learning environment. Additionally, continuous professional development for teachers is crucial to keep abreast of the latest educational strategies. Students should be encouraged to engage in regular practice of English outside the classroom, join extracurricular activities like English clubs and debate teams, and utilize online resources for language learning. These activities can provide practical contexts for language use and help build confidence. Parents play a significant role in supporting language learning at home. Encouraging conversations in English, reading English books, and watching English-language media can create a more immersive language environment for students.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and discussions, several suggestions are proposed to enhance English communication skills among students at No.1 Government High School in Meiktila:

For Teachers

To improve students' English communication skills:

- **Create a Supportive Environment:** Foster a classroom that encourages risk-taking, reduces anxiety, and provides positive reinforcement and constructive feedback.

- **Engage in Effective Teaching Methods:** Utilize role-plays, structured debates, and diverse learning resources to make lessons more engaging.
- **Promote Peer Learning:** Pair fluent speakers with less confident ones and encourage group projects to enhance learning through peer interaction.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Participate in workshops, pursue advanced qualifications, and stay updated with educational advancements.

For Students

To enhance their English skills:

- **Practice Regularly:** Engage in reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities outside the classroom.
- **Participate in Extracurricular Activities:** Join English clubs, debate teams, and public speaking events.
- **Apply Online Resources:** Use language learning apps, social platforms, and educational websites.

For No.1 Government High School

To support English learning:

- **Provide Resources:** Ensure access to multimedia tools, language labs, and libraries.
- **Organize Workshops and Seminars:** Conduct events focused on communication skills and teaching methodologies.

For Readers

Readers can support English learning by:

- Encouraging academic engagement and comprehension of thesis material to deepen subject understanding and enhance research skills.

For Further Researchers

Future research should explore:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** To understand the long-term effects of interventions on communication skills.
- **Specific Interventions:** The impact of peer learning and multimedia tools on language learning.
- **Demographic Expansion:** Including students from diverse regions and backgrounds to gain broader insights.

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