



A STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING SKILLS OF GOVERNMENT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

At AYE LAR TOWN IN MYANMAR

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: 1) To study the problems in English essay writing skills of the Government High School Students at Aye Lar Town in Myanmar, and 2) To find out the solutions to the problems in English essay writing skills of the Government High School Students at Aye Lar Town in Myanmar. This study successfully achieved both these objectives. The study involved 152 students and 5 teachers from the government high school at Aye Lar Town in Myanmar. The two methods of research instrumentation: a questionnaire and in-depth interviews were utilized by researcher. The selection process employed quota sampling methods. Statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were utilized to examine the results of the surveys. The researcher first examined and then categorized the data obtained from primary sources, including published books and theses, as well as secondary sources, such as articles, journals, and internet sites.

The research results were found as follows:

1) According to the data, students at Aye Lar Government High School experience a wide variety of substantial difficulties when it comes to their ability to write essays in the English language. Deficiencies in vocabulary, problems with syntax and sentence construction, difficulties with essay forms and structure, and a lack of practice and involvement are some of the general categories that can be used to describe these concerns.

2) Both student self-assessment and teacher recommendations strongly supported the study's identification of several key solutions. These solutions include the following: enhancing foundational skills, promoting consistent writing practice and feedback, developing strategic learning approaches, utilizing support resources and workshops, and cultivating a positive attitude. In addition, the investigation helped clarify the difficulties that high school students have in their day-to-day lives. Therefore, doing a study on these issues is extremely pertinent to the current situation of the academic environment in government high schools in Myanmar, due to the fact that it is highly relevant.



Keywords: English essay writing skills problems; solutions, government high school students; Aye Lar City; Myanmar.

Introduction

Numerous prestigious universities and colleges around instruct in English. Students aspiring to pursue higher education in critical disciplines such as science, technology, medicine, and the humanities must possess proficient English communication skills, both verbal and written. It also provides access to a vast array of English-language educational resources, research articles, and books. Moreover, English provides individuals with access to information and technology. English is the predominant language utilized on the internet, with a significant portion of online content composed in it. Individuals can acquire valuable knowledge, participate in online discussions, and engage in global communities if they can comprehend and navigate this vast digital landscape. It also assists them in being informed about the latest advancements in science, technology, and innovative concepts. Moreover, English is essential for facilitating cultural exchange and for enjoyment. Numerous significant books, songs, films, and television series are in English. Individuals proficient in English can engage with diverse backgrounds, appreciate various forms of art, and partake in an extensive array of cultural activities. It enables individuals to appreciate films, music, and literature from various nations in their authentic forms, without the need for translations or subtitles. Moreover, studying English can facilitate personal development and enhance communication skills. Acquiring proficiency in English can facilitate personal development by enhancing communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. It enables individuals to perceive matters from diverse perspectives and gain insights into various cultures, viewpoints, and beliefs. Individuals proficient in English can articulate their perspectives and concepts eloquently, engage in substantive dialogues, and interact with a global audience. Many persons believe that writing is a crucial skill employed daily, both personally (such as authoring application letters, correspondence, and research papers) and socially (for instance, addressing workplace issues). (Ena, Iftanti. 2016)

The four basic skills are divided into two groups in the English language: receptive skills and productive skills. Speaking and writing are examples of productive skills, whereas reading and listening are examples of receptive skills. One of the four core competencies, writing is essential to communication. Students start learning how to express themselves in



writing as they interact with others in the classroom. It's important to remember that writing is frequently regarded as more complex than the other language skills. (Juan Javed & Nazli, 2013)

According to Heaton, writing abilities are intricate and challenging to teach since they call for mastery of conceptual and judgmental components in addition to grammatical and rhetorical devices. Writing is a vital component of interpersonal communication. In written communications, spelling, grammar, and punctuation correction are crucial. The student will assess the author's viewpoint by taking into account elements like presentation, content, and mistakes that could give the wrong impression. A mechanical skill is the comprehension of proper spelling and punctuation. Additionally, the writer must be creative and skilled at modifying sentences and paragraphs. (Mr. Sovanda Lun, 2019)

The three language skills of speaking, listening, and reading are becoming less significant these days than writing. Kee Lili asserts that the best approach for someone looking to improve their writing abilities is to focus on capitalization, grammar, and punctuation. Students must use proper punctuation, grammar, and capitalization in this manner. (Kee Lili, 2017)

Furthermore, most nations have poor English proficiency. The four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are then typically used to teach and evaluate certain languages. Reading and listening are referred to as productive skills, whereas speaking and writing are referred to as accessible skills. For this reason, they use English to make their countries better. (Ven Ingdasara, 2023)

Myanmar's education system is based on the United Kingdom's system because the British had ruled over it for nearly a hundred years. By the time Myanmar gained independence in 1984, its government aimed to become the best Asian Tiger in the region. Moreover, all of the schools were changed to nationalization. At that time, Myanmar's educational standards were inadequate for students to pass their exams. (Ven. Ganawonsa, 2023) Although Myanmar students have been studying the English language for many years, they continue to struggle with acquiring proficiency in English until the university. Furthermore, when the teacher gives homework to write the essay writing skills, the students study and memorize by heart the whole essay. They cannot know systematically how to write an essay. That is why this research is intended to develop the students' abilities in writing skills.



Most of the students in Myanmar study many essay books that other authors have been writing. However, they do not understand the usual inclusion of paragraphs, structures, phrases, clauses, and sentences to be known deeply by the students to write essays in English. They study essays that authors have written by heart. This research is to investigate essay writing of the Government High School at Aye Lar City in Myanmar and to find out the solution for students' problems with English essay writing of the Government High School at Aye Lar City in Myanmar. This research will assist students who are learning English by improving their essay writing skills.

Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To study the problems in English essay writing skills of the Government High School Students at Aye Lar City in Myanmar
2. To find out the solutions to the problems in English essay writing skills of the Government High School Students at Aye Lar City in Myanmar

Research Methodology

Step 1 Research Design

This study used a mixed-method research design, which means it uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative section examines student data, while the qualitative section provides in-depth insights from highly experienced teachers.

Step 2 Population and Key Informants

1) Population: The population for the quantitative research comprises 353 Grade 10-12 students studying English essay writing skills as a required subject in the year of 2024-2025 at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar. For the qualitative research method, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with five teachers at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar.

2) Sample: A sample of 152 students out of 353 students studying at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar was selected by a random sampling technique.

3) Key Informants: For the qualitative research, five teachers with at least five years of experience teaching grades 10-12 in government high schools in Aye Lar Town, Myanmar, were interviewed by the researcher.

Step 3 Research Tools



1) Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was administered to the students to gather quantitative data on their English essay writing skills. The research questionnaire is prepared by the researcher with 37 important questions to explore how, why, and what the students have problems or difficulties with for English writing skills and to know the students' feelings or opinions about what they need to solve writing skills problems at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar. The research questions are provided with space to complete their general background information and to note comments and suggestions from the teachers, who are experts in English.

Part 1: General Background Information

The participants were asked about their general background information: gender, age, educational background, English learning experience of the respondents, and educational level. The respondents of status are the students who are studying grades 10-12 at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar.

Part 2: Students' opinions and problems of English writing skills

This part consists of 26 statements as Appendix A to investigate the students' opinions and problems for English writing skills. These statements investigate how the students' attitudes affect their English writing skills. The respondents, who are students, will indicate their opinions by marking the boxes.

The data-gathering instrument was structured as a scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. The meaning of the rating scale was shown as the following table:

Rating Score	Interpretation Score	Mean Range
5	Strongly disagree	4.50-5.00
4	Disagree	3.50-4.49
3	Uncertain	2.50-3.49
2	Agree	1.50-2.49
1	Strongly agree	1.00-1.49

Part 3: The ways to solve the problems of writing skills

This part consists of 10 statements in Appendix B to solve the problem of writing skills. Respondents indicated their opinions by marking the boxes. Five-point-like scales, with a mean range from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree,' were applied for the study.



In-depth Interview Questions: The In-depth interview questions were used as a supplemental instrument in the study to find more information on the problems and ways to solve the problems in English Writing Skills of the students from the interviewees. The question items in this section were written based on the purposes of study and were related to items in the questionnaire. The draft in-depth interview questions were designed for teachers. The questions consisted of four questions which were (1) Please share your thoughts on the student's challenges with English writing skills. (2) What suggestions do you have for addressing the student's problems with English writing skills? (3) What strategies do you propose to enhance the English writing skills of students at Aye Lar Government High School? (4) Please provide some comments or suggestions for this research.

Step 4 Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases:

Phase 1: The questionnaire was distributed to the randomly selected 152 students during regular class hours, ensuring adequate time for responses.

Phase 2: Individual interviews were conducted with the selected teachers at their schools or preferred locations. Each interview session lasted approximately 30—45 minutes.

Step 5 Data Analysis

1) Quantitative Analysis: Data from the student questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine patterns and correlations in English essay writing performance.

2) Qualitative Analysis: The interview recordings were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and insights related to teaching practices and challenges. The integration of both methods ensured comprehensive findings.

Research Results

Objective 1. The survey revealed several major issues with Aye Lar City Government High School Students' English essay writing. Problems were basically classified as the students lack of vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary was a major issue. Many students (80.9%) struggled to use novel English words, felt their vocabulary was too limited (66.4%), and struggled to absorb new vocabulary without sounding odd (66.5%). Use of synonyms to prevent repetition (52% agreement) and context-appropriate word choice (48% agreement) were also found. Teachers' interviews confirmed similar findings, citing vocabulary shortages.

On top of that, they struggle with sentence structure and grammar. Teachers found a lack of basic grammar awareness, including understanding word forms, verb forms, collocations, phrasal verbs, and idioms, although students usually had less trouble with basic



tenses. A large number of students had difficulty forming even basic words, let alone more complicated ones. It seemed like there was a disconnect between how easy it was to understand and use fundamental grammar and how difficult it was to use it in more advanced writing assignments. Similarly, with essay kinds and structure, it is difficult to challenge: While students had trouble with all kinds of writing, argumentative essays (65.8% of students) and explanatory essays (55.3% of students) were particularly hard. Additionally, process essays, narrative essays, and cause-and-effect essays all posed challenges. The majority of students (57.3%) did not find introductory writing challenging; yet, almost half (51.3%) of students believed that thesis statements and supporting ideas were moderately tough.

Table 1: Major Issues in English Essay Writing Among Aye Lar Government High School Students

Category	Specific Issues	Percentage of Students Affected
Vocabulary Deficiencies	Struggle to use novel English words.	80.9%
	Feel vocabulary is too limited.	66.4%
	Difficulty absorbing new vocabulary naturally	66.5%
	Use of synonyms to avoid repetition	52% (agreement)
	Choosing context-appropriate words	48% (agreement)
Grammar & Sentence Structure	Lack of basic grammar awareness	Reported by teachers (no%)
	Difficulty forming basic/complex words	Reported by teachers (no%)
	Disconnect between understanding & applying grammar	Reported by teachers (no %)
Essay Types & Structure	Difficulty with argumentative essays	65.8%
	Difficulty with explanatory essays	55.3%
	Challenges with process/narrative/cause-effect essays	Reported (no specific %)
	Introductory writing not challenging	57.3%



Category	Specific Issues	Percentage of Students Affected
	Thesis statements & supporting ideas moderately tough	51.3%

Objective 2. Quantitative Results: students agreed on several writing strategies, according to the findings. First, the students stressed building core abilities. Most students (91.5%) acknowledged their vocabulary, grammar, and sentence construction weaknesses. Students (94.1%) believed that regular writing and helpful criticisms were important, and teachers promoted peer review and collaborative learning to improve these skills. Strategic learning through reading was also supported—93.4% of students believed it would improve their writing. 90.8% suggested using outlines, brainstorming, or mind maps to arrange their thoughts, while 86.8% stressed essay structure. 89% of students found dictionaries, grammar apps, and writing platforms useful. However, 71.1% said writing seminars or classes would help them grow. Finally, 63% said an optimistic outlook helps overcome reluctance and keep writing routines.

Qualitative Results: Teacher interviews revealed that children struggle with English writing. Most teachers reported children lack vocabulary and fundamental grammar. This ignorance makes it difficult to understand word and verb forms, compose simple and complex phrases, and use idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations correctly. Because they don't write much or try to produce complicated pieces, many pupils struggle with sentence construction. Teachers said that children prioritized speaking and listening above writing. Because of this, they neglect key things like recognizing their audience and writing guidelines that clarify ideas. Students who don't compose essays or letters regularly have more problems writing. Teachers recommend comprehensive grammar and vocabulary education to address these issues. They recommend pupils perform grammar exercises and read a lot to see good writing. Creative writing begins with basic sentences and progresses to essays and formal letters. Students should feel more confident during observation, imitation, and composition. Collaboration strategies like peer feedback and group writing helped pupils think critically and gain confidence. To provide kids regular practice, teachers stressed giving them lots of writing assignments including essays, emails, and letters. Teachers review these assignments and provide feedback to help students improve. All teachers felt that researching student writing



problems is helpful. It enhances teacher and student awareness and fosters new teaching and learning methods. Teachers feel this research should continue since it improves English writing education.

Table 2. Principal Solutions in English Essay Composition Among students of Aye Lar City Government High School

Writing Strategies	Student Agreement (%)	Teacher Emphasis
Building core abilities (vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure)	91.5%	Systematic grammar courses, vocabulary building, language mechanics
Regular writing & constructive feedback	94.1%	Promoted peer review and collaborative learning
Strategic learning through reading	93.4%	Supported as a method to improve writing
Using outlines, brainstorming, or mind maps	90.8%	Encouraged for organizing thoughts
Importance of essay structure	86.8%	Stressed as a key component of writing
Use of digital tools (dictionaries, grammar apps, writing platforms)	89.0%	Acknowledged as useful resources
Attending writing workshops/classes	71.1%	Seen as beneficial for growth
Maintaining an optimistic mindset	63.0%	Considered helpful for overcoming reluctance and sustaining writing routines

New Knowledge from the researcher

This study gave us useful information about the specific problems that high school students in Aye Lar City, Myanmar, have when writing English essays. It took a lot of work to learn all the details of essay writing, such as vocabulary, syntax, sentence structure, and how to keep everything organized. This is more than just being good at English. The study showed that these problems get worse when people don't practice often enough and don't get enough feedback. It also showed that students need more interesting and useful places to learn that use modern technology and group learning methods. The results showed how important



teachers are, not just for teaching students' new things, but also for helping them develop a good attitude and a desire to learn a language on their own.

Discussion of research results

This section aims to discuss the research findings in relation to the stated research questions and objectives. It will explore the identified problems in English essay writing skills among students at Aye Lar Government High School in Myanmar, as well as the proposed solutions, integrating insights from both student questionnaires and teacher interviews. The discussion will also consider how these findings align with or differ from previous research in the field.

1. Discussion of Findings related to Research Question one

The study's findings, derived from both quantitative data from student questionnaires and qualitative insights from teacher interviews, highlight several significant challenges faced by students in their English essay writing skills. These problems can be broadly categorized into difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, understanding essay types and parts, and a general lack of practice and confidence.

Grammar and Sentence Structure: Students also struggle with grammar and sentence structure. Present, past, and future tenses were simpler for pupils, but present continuous and present perfect were harder. More broadly, teachers reported a lack of basic grammar awareness and trouble with verb forms, compound nouns/adjectives, adverbial phrases, and their right usage, which caused sentence constructing confusion. A majority of poll respondents found it challenging to grasp and use different tenses. 43.4% and 44.1% of respondents opposed utilizing the present and past simple tenses, respectively. A high mean score for "I find it difficult to understand when I write the body paragraph" suggests that many students struggle with sentence construction. This is consistent with research that show second language learners struggle with grammar and sentence structure in English writing.

Essay kinds and Parts: The research found that students struggle with essay kinds and parts. Many students struggled with narrative (55.3%), cause-and-effect (40.1%), process (34.2%), argumentative (48.7%), and expository essays. Students had trouble with thesis statements (36.8% agreement), supporting arguments (40.1% agreement), and conclusions (40.8% disagreement), but 57.3% considered introductions easy to follow. This suggests a core deficit in comprehending essay structure and reasoning, which is supported by the literature review's emphasis on organization and logic in essay writing.

Lack of Practice and Confidence: Teacher interviews pointed to a lack of regular writing practice and a reluctance to write independently as contributing factors to poor writing



skills. Teachers noted that students don't write often and rarely attempt more complex pieces, leading to a decline in their skills. This suggests that limited exposure and practice hinder skill development. Furthermore, the finding that students need to have a positive attitude towards writing in English implies that a lack of confidence or a negative mindset might also play a role in their performance.

2. Discussion of Findings related to Research Question two

In response to the identified problems, students and teachers proposed several strategies and expressed needs for improvement, all aimed at enhancing English essay writing skills.

Enhancing Foundational Skills: A strong consensus emerged regarding the need to bolster fundamental writing components. A significant majority of students (91.5%) agreed that they need to work on their grammar, vocabulary, and understanding of sentence structures. This directly addresses the core issues identified in the previous section. Teachers also emphasized the importance of systematic grammar instruction, vocabulary expansion, and practicing grammar exercises.

Active Engagement and Practice: Students strongly believe in the necessity of active engagement and consistent practice. They expressed a high perceived need to write regularly and seek teacher feedback (94.1% agreement). Moreover, they recognize the value of reading extensively to learn good writing styles, with a substantial majority strongly agreeing or agreeing with the need to read more English articles, essays, and books (97.4% agreement). This aligns with the general principle that consistent practice and exposure to quality writing are crucial for skill development.

Utilizing Resources and Collaborative Learning: Students also indicated a strong desire to utilize available resources and engage in collaborative learning. They believe in the value of dictionaries, grammar apps, and writing platforms for assistance (80.9% agreement) and see participation in writing workshops or online courses as beneficial (71.1% agreement). Furthermore, students recognize the importance of peer learning, with a significant majority believing that exchanging written assignments with classmates can provide fresh perspectives (71.7% agreement). Teachers also highlighted collaborative learning, such as peer feedback and group writing activities, as effective methods for critical thinking and confidence-building.

This section critically examines the findings of the present study in relation to the established literature. It aims to discuss the identified problems in English essay writing skills among Government High School students in Aye Lar Town, Myanmar, by comparing them with the purposes and results of previous research.



Conclusion

In conclusion, our study identified some significant challenges that hinder Government High School students in Aye Lar City, Myanmar, from composing proficient English essays. The issues primarily pertain to insufficient vocabulary, difficulties with grammar and sentence construction, inability to comprehend and employ various essay formats, and a lack of constant practice and engagement. The findings indicate that students require more targeted and comprehensive instruction to overcome these challenges. The study proposed several effective methods, categorized under five overarching themes: enhancing fundamental abilities, promoting consistent writing practice and feedback, developing strategic learning approaches, utilizing support resources, and cultivating a positive mentality. Students and teachers exhibit a strong consensus on these possibilities, indicating a clear method to enhance English essay writing education in the region.

Suggestion

Based on the research results, the researcher has the following suggestions:

Suggestion for Students

The results of the research on Objective 1 showed that students make vocabulary building a top priority and read regularly, use dictionaries, and keep vocabulary notes to actively grow your vocabulary. To use words correctly and avoid repeating them, pay attention to synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms and study terms in context. Study Grammar in a Structured Way: Set aside time to study the basic rules of grammar in a structured way. This includes word forms, verb forms, collocations, phrasal verbs, and idioms. Do grammar exercises carefully to make sure you understand and can use them. Write on a regular basis: Write English essays at least once a week, and make sure to write different kinds of essays. Read a lot: Read a lot of English articles, essays, and books to see how other people write, learn new words, and get a feel for how to put sentences and paragraphs together well.

Suggestion for Teachers

Improve Basic Grammar and Vocabulary: Systematic grammar classes should emphasize practical application of tenses, word forms, verb forms, collocations, phrasal verbs, and idioms. Use context-based vocabulary-building tasks to distinguish similar words. Provide Structured Writing Instruction: Train students in essay writing from sentence formation to



paragraph writing, then through the complete essay structure for numerous essay formats. Emphasize idea organization logic. Write regularly with constructive feedback: Give students regular writing assignments to receive timely and specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Encourage feedback-based self-revision. Offer a variety of English articles, essays, and books to promote reading. Help pupils assess writing styles and terminology in context with reading skills.

Suggestion for the Further Studies

Due to the limitation of time, it was unable to cover all the points. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest the following needed for further study:

- 1) The further study should be conducted on other facts of English writing skill to learn more about other facts of the problems.
- 2) Further study should be conducted on the way to teach English writing skills of Aye lar government high school to apply English writing skills to help the students for learning English writing skills effectively.
- 3) Further study should be conducted with the students from university students in Myanmar to get more information on the problems in English writing skills.

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