

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH TO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS USING A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7752511>

Published Date: 20-March-2023

Abstract: Language acquisition is not an easy process. Even though English is a language spoken by everyone, it is challenging to master all four skills. For non-native speakers like Myanmar students, learning English can be difficult and fraught with difficulties. For instance, there are not enough teaching and learning resources available, there are many students enrolled in a class, many of them speak their native language instead of English, they are not in an environment where English is spoken, they are less confident when speaking English, and the syllabus is incorrect. These are but a few illustrations. I sometimes impart English in Myanmar. I ran into a number of obstacles and impediments while learning and teaching English in Myanmar. It inspires me to perform in-depth research on the challenges teachers and students in Myanmar confront.

I used the quantitative research approach to determine the specific issues and impediments experienced in teaching and learning English. I created additional 15 questions for students to answer using Google Forms, and I conducted a poll of 100 students about their challenges learning English. After three months of waiting, I received 96 answers out of 100.

We could plainly observe what challenges and problems Myanmar students had during their learning and how they dealt with all of these concerns, as well as how they followed their professors' teaching approaches and sensible advice, based on the survey responses.

Then I summarized how we should apply the recommended techniques and implementations to overcome all of the challenges that we face when teaching and studying English.

Keywords: Challenges¹, Obstacles², Encounter³, Non-native Speakers⁴, Quantitative Research Methodology⁵.

¹ Challenges something that requires a lot of mental or physical strength to do and hence puts a person's abilities to the test.

² Obstacles are anything that prevents or makes it harder for you to move, act, or move forward.

³ Encounter is to have an experience, particularly a bad one.

⁴ Non-native Speakers: Individuals who learned a language as adults or children rather than as babies.

⁵ Quantitative research methodology is a quantitative study analyzes patterns and trends using data and graphs. It can be applied to verify or test hypotheses. It can establish logical, universal facts about a subject.

1. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

An expanding, intensifying, and accelerating interdependence in all spheres of modern social life is one of the first definitions of globalization. It is a natural progression. Many academics contend that English is no longer regarded as the exclusive property of the English-speaking world and has instead evolved into an international commodity known as the International Language of English. Businesspeople, dealers, engineers, scientists, and academics must also be fluent in English because it is the language used for international information interchange. Because English is the key to accessing the world's free knowledge, students should study it.

A considerable fraction of the population must understand English for a nation to be able to participate in the global economy and access information and knowledge.

Learning a new language isn't exactly simple. Myanmar English speakers, also referred to as "non-native speakers," deal with a variety of difficulties. The secondary, college, and higher education levels of instruction in Myanmar's schools all include instruction in English as a foreign language. Additionally, the language of instruction in Myanmar's classrooms is English.

As a result, students either focus little on improving their English outside of the classroom or only study English in class. The fact that Myanmar students still have difficulty speaking English hinders their jobs and causes them to continue taking English classes even after graduating from university. English proficiency is advantageous in the workplace and can help attract investment and increase career opportunities.

The majority of issues with teaching English as a foreign language in other nations are comparable. English teachers encounter numerous challenges in nations where English is a second language, like Myanmar. English is one of the disciplines that are taught in almost all schools worldwide. Despite the fact that English is a topic that is required from primary school through university, the majority of students in Myanmar lack competency in the language, making it the most challenging subject for them. Teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) face many difficulties. We have a variety of problems that need to be solved. Myanmar students still struggle with the English language even after 11 years of basic education classes. Several Asia-Pacific nations perform poorly on the EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2021, which assesses English language proficiency. Myanmar has an extremely low English proficiency rating (93 out of 112).

All of the high schools were managed by missionaries during the British occupation of Myanmar. During their studies, they had to speak English in class. If students spoke even an one word of Myanmar, they would be subject to a fine. Even people who had dropped out of high school at the time were capable of engaging in efficient and assured English communication. Today's Myanmar students speak only Myanmar and are overly dependent on it, even in English classes. The esteemed Secretary-General of the United Nations at the time, U Thant, was a native of Myanmar. Even Oxford University Press published the writings of Dr. Htin Aung and Daw Khin Myo Chit. English native speakers loved their use of the language. Why do younger generations feel less comfortable speaking English than older generations do? What are the challenges? How do we stop them? That inspires me to conduct research on the actual difficulties and challenges associated with teaching and learning English, as well as strategies for resolving and highlighting these issues in order to make positive changes in English education.

The bulk of researchers wasted the chance to produce beneficial results by utilizing teaching and learning pedagogies.

2. HYPOTHESIS

When teaching and learning English in Myanmar, non-native English speakers face challenges. We are aware that many students find it difficult to learn English and that teachers face various difficulties while attempting to teach the language. We found that for Myanmar students, speaking and writing are the most difficult skills. They can understand the pronunciation and occasionally understand the grammar, but when it comes to speaking, they get frightened. They can speak English, but they frequently make mistakes because they have trouble understanding the language's vocabulary, syntax, structure, and pronunciation.

We can apply the tried-and-true solutions given below to resolve all of our problems after running into difficulties while learning or teaching English. Using stories, scenarios, and other materials that students are already familiar with. If we

engage in a supportive English environment while developing English classroom procedures. Students should be encouraged to participate in English-speaking environments so they can interact with native speakers and practice their English. If we teach students how to fix and improve their mistakes, and if they share their knowledge with one another. Finally, because today's youth are technologically sophisticated, we may add multimedia English language labs into our teaching and learning so that Myanmar students can overcome their English-language challenges and enjoy learning the language without any complaints.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Nowadays, one of people's fundamental needs is to learn English. Additionally, English is frequently utilized in a worldwide environment as a tool to access new opportunities and knowledge. Every continent uses a significant amount of English for daily necessities, so English teachers have a difficult job. What difficulties do non-native English speakers encounter when learning and teaching English? The difficulties are being overcome through efforts, right? What strategies are employed to combat them? The primary goal is to look into the obstacles and problems faced by foreign students in Myanmar. The second goal is to offer solutions to the difficulties and issues so that Myanmar students can easily and painlessly learn and teach English. Turning your hand's palm is easier than learning a second language. Although Myanmar students now speak their native tongue at home or in their country, this does not exclude them from learning a second language, with English being far more challenging to learn. Understanding learning within each competence (linguistic skills), which is composed of four micro-skills, involves additional factors as well. The only time that students are taught English is in the classroom, or they give little thought to honing their English skills outside of it.

Numerous problems might occur when learning a foreign language. There are many levels of difficulty and variance for each skill (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). As a result, teaching foreign languages to Myanmar students in the classroom might be challenging. There is a continuing need to find a way to get around, or at least decrease, the obstacles that students confront when trying to establish language patterns, from technological problems to the motivations of both students and teachers. The instructor must adopt a methodology to solve the current challenges in a foreign language class because the language skill, in particular, has its own impediments and challenges for students.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the difficulties in teaching English and to provide solutions. It is anticipated that the study's findings will give English teachers direction on how to effectively teach English. Additionally, it is anticipated that this study would improve the standard of English instruction in Myanmar. English teaching problems are obstacles, challenges, and barriers that arise when teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, identifying issues, identifying solutions, and assessing effective approaches are crucial elements in the teaching and learning process.

4. CRITICAL ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH

A survey was performed in the USA about acquiring English grammatical morphemes by **Dulay and Burt (1974)**. They looked into different Spanish speakers in the US. 151 students between the ages of five and eight made up the sample. Three groups made up the sample, and each group had different levels of exposure to English. The results of the Bilingual Syntax Measure analysis of the data revealed that those pupils made grammatical morpheme errors. They came to the conclusion that in order to reduce these errors, students should practice this component more outside of the classroom and learn more about it. They concluded their study by pointing out the dearth of instructional materials for this area of the language, and they recommended that textbook publishers put more effort into incorporating morphology into their courses.

Spolsky (1989) identified sets of standards that were different in these two learning environments. The learner is under pressure to employ all of his linguistic resources because effective communication is the goal of natural language acquisition. This kind of exercise is crucial. It is a highly useful type of practice when non-native speakers and native speakers negotiate meaning.

The tasks provided to the learner are smaller because the formal setting's primary goal is learning; this makes it easier for the learner to assess, synthesize, and match information, leaving time for memory and plenty of practice. Particularly in terms of the amount of exposure it provides for language learners to conduct out the tasks connected with learning a second language, learning a second language through formal teaching is more constrained and limited.

Littlewood (1984) continues by saying that this is particularly true while learning a foreign language because the objective is to communicate with those who have already learned the language as a foreign language rather than to interact with the community that speaks the language natively.

According to **Khan (2007)**, Students were influenced by things including shyness, pronunciation issues, a lack of linguistic knowledge, and inappropriate word usage when studying English.

In the paragraph that follows, different issues that Bangladeshi students had when speaking English are discussed. He focused his research on phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic (grammar and sentence) difficulties. Phonological issues are brought on by differences between L1 and L2 pronunciation patterns. The usage of stress diphthongs and intonation depends on the first language. This was brought on by a decline in face-to-face communication with English speakers. As a result, they are not familiar with intonation or stress patterns.

The misuse of speech components results in morphological problems. Sometimes, learners will use noun words instead of verbs, like (choice for choose and loss for lose). The reason why students made this error was because they did not comprehend the guidelines for changing verbs into nouns.

Negative language transfer resulted in students having issues with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. **Alam and Uddin (2013)** highlighted that English language learners experience various syntactic challenges when speaking and correctly structuring spoken sentences. These problems were caused by teachers who only used grammatical approaches rather than communicative ones. The way that students consistently employed subjective pronouns like "my" and "I" in their sentences was improper. They also made mistakes in their spoken phrases while using the relative pronouns "who," "which," "whose," and "that." Learners did not make these errors when practicing writing skills because they had time to consider their sentences before putting them on paper.

Many problems that second- and foreign-language learners face were revealed by **Al-khresheh (2013)**. These problems, which are linguistic in nature, impede all language abilities. Even when they already speak their mother tongue, learning a second language—whether it's English or another language—which is much more challenging to master, is still a possibility. Understanding learning within each competency (linguistic skills), which is composed of four abilities, involves additional factors as well. Therefore, the majority of non-native English speakers are likely to misuse the formal requirements of all four microskills, particularly in the writing's structure and style.

Challenges in the context of learning science might be regarded as difficulties. This is in line with **Dimiyati and Mudjiono's** theory that teaching English as a foreign language in schools at the secondary, college, and higher education levels is the main hindrance to learning. As a result, students either pay little attention to honing their English outside of the classroom or only study it when they are in class.

According to **Wright (2015)**, when learning and using a new language in practical contexts, learners encounter phonological and syntactic difficulties. Due to a lack of in-depth linguistic comprehension, these issues grew. The four language skills are understood by learners, but they struggle with speaking and writing the language.

Ali (2016) concentrates on phonological errors made by Sudanese students learning English as a second language. A group of adult university students seeking a Bachelor's in English made up his sample. According to his findings, the kids had trouble pronouncing the middle and back region vowels of the English language. Such errors were linguistically caused by mother-tongue influence and a lack of target language understanding.

English Teaching and Learning Problems in the General Program of Potisarnpittayakorn School was a study that **Miss Jiani Zhou** conducted in Thailand in **2017**. On the other hand, the data she collected from the instructors showed that the teachers firmly agreed that students posed a challenge to English language teaching and learning.

On the other side, issues with instructors and evaluation were rated as having a lesser level of understanding. Additionally, they largely concurred that textbooks, courses, and other elements helped make English instruction successful. The same is true of the findings from teachers.

Interviews revealed that the students lacked autonomous practice and were reluctant to study English.

Huthaily (2008), claimed that adult language learners have gained communicative proficiency in their mother tongue. When they engaged in real conversation, they tried to learn the language well enough to communicate with native speakers.

They were anxious to pronounce the phonetics as accurately as possible. It is sad that their mother tongue causes pronunciation problems in their native tongue, which has a negative impact and is referred to as negative language transfer.

It is essential to make reference to the types of mistakes that learners make when learning any target language when discussing negative language transfer. Applied linguistics, according to **Bardovi-Harling & Sprouse (2017)**, focuses on the negative aspects of language transmission because it is well known that these aspects can affect teaching and learning. Most linguistic categories, including phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphology, and semantics, show evidence of this language transmission. The authors made an effort to pinpoint the underlying factor behind language learning issues brought on by poor language learning transfer.

Students cannot acquire a language alone in the classroom, claims **Harmer (2001)**. They ought to broaden their education beyond the classroom as well. He continued by saying that language learners should be encouraged and educated to be autonomous learners, also known as self-directed learners.

Hidayati (2018) asserts that both internal and external variables contributed to the challenge of teaching writing to **ELT (English Language Teaching)** students. Language proficiency, native language interference, reading habits, and learner motivation are examples of internal elements. On the other hand, the nature of the class, the writing instruction materials, and time management are examples of external factors.

With a focus on creating learning materials based on the needs of the students, **Simanjuntak (2018) and Kurniarini (2018)** produced instructional tools to assist learners in improving their speaking abilities. If we make an effort to overcome each of these hurdles, we will finally succeed in learning and teaching English and get past the difficulties.

5. METHODOLOGY

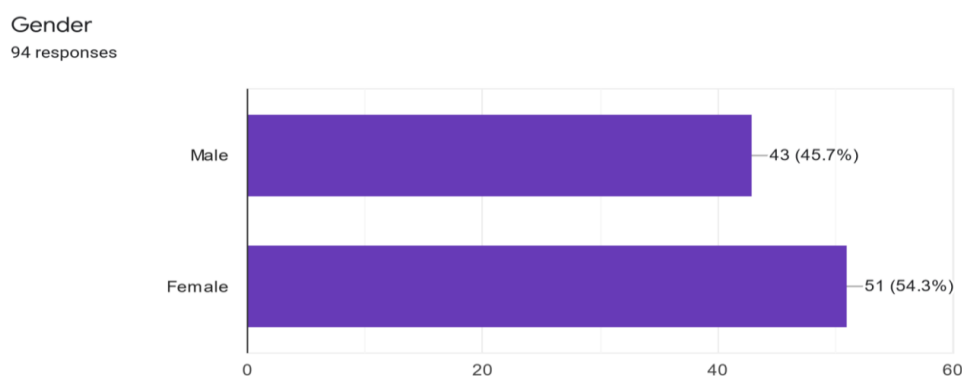
The quantitative method was employed in this research study to determine the problems and hurdles in learning and teaching English to non-native speakers.

QUANTATIVE METHOD

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

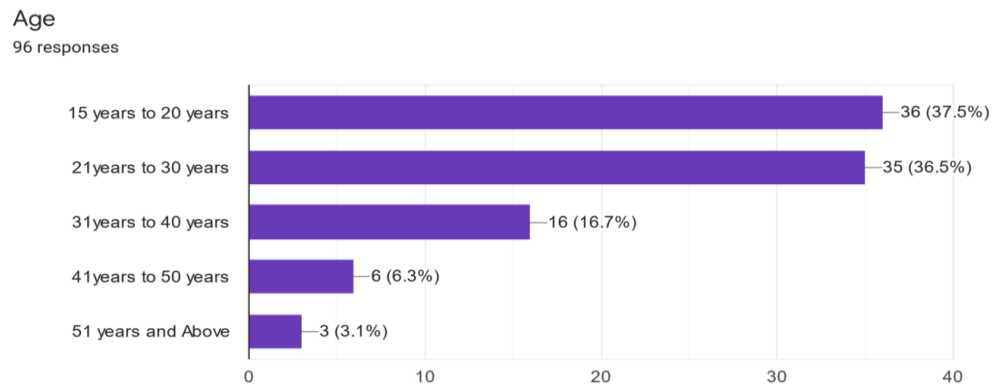
Participants in the Data Survey are both male and female, between the ages of 15 and 50 and above, of Myanmar, Chinese, and Indian ethnicity who primarily live there, and either a high school or college student or the majority of students with graduates ranging from high school diplomas to Master levels. Part 2 of the survey is addressed at students in high schools, colleges, both private and public, and universities. (Histogram 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)

Among the 94 students that took part in the poll on the difficulties of learning English, 51 were female and 43 were male. Females vote more enthusiastically than males. Figure (2.1) Histogram



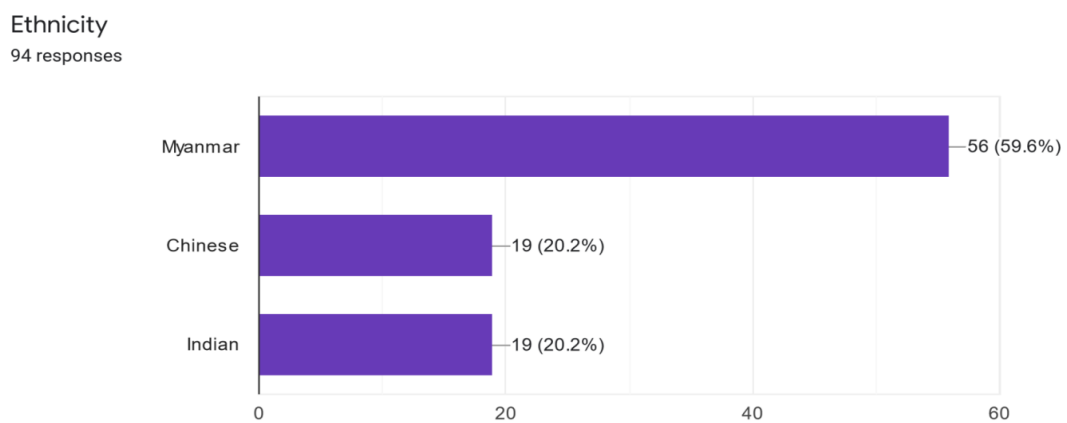
Histogram (2.1)

Students between the ages of 15-20 years are 36, 21-30 years are 35, 31-40 years are 16, 41-50 years are 6 and 51 years and older are 3. The survey's youngest age groups are actively participating. Figure (2.2) Histogram



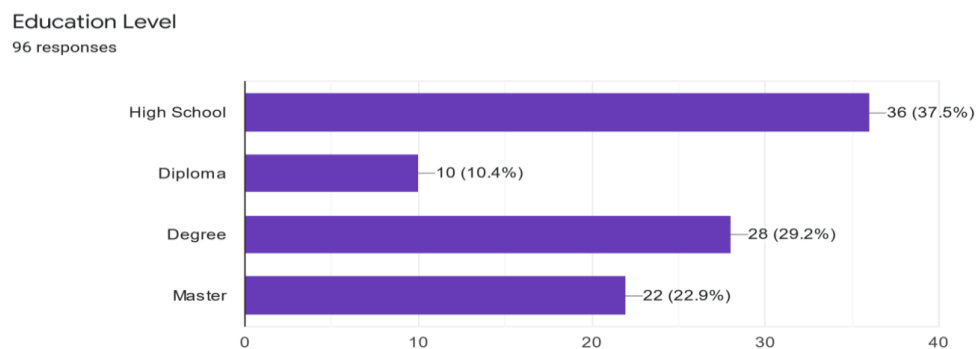
Histogram (2.2)

Myanmar has three major ethnic groups: Myanmar, Chinese, and Indian. Myanmar had the most participants, with 56 in total. There were 19 Chinese and 19 Indian participants. Figure (2.3) Histogram



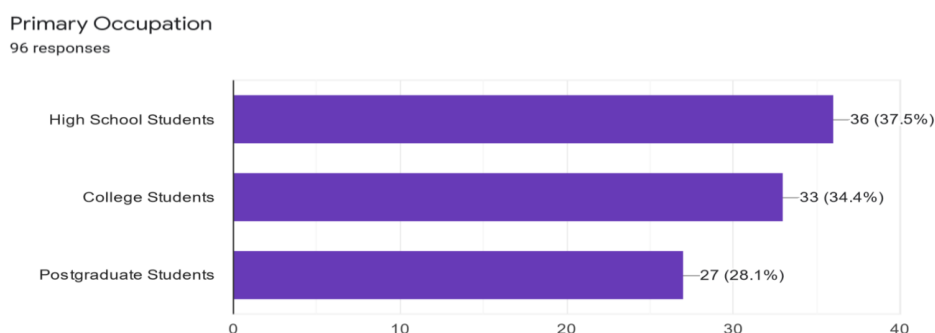
Histogram (2.3)

The majority of the poll participants are high school students, with 36 in total. There are 28 bachelor degree holders. There are 22 postgraduates and at least 10 diploma holders. This indicates that high school students are willing to disclose their difficulties in learning English. Figure (2.4) Histogram



Histogram (2.4)

The principal occupations of the participants are all students: 36 from high school, 33 from college, and 27 from postgraduate school. Figure (2.5) Histogram



Histogram (2.5)

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION (TREATMENT) AND/OR DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Students were questioned about the most common difficulties and problems they encountered when studying English.

I chose and prepared 15 appropriate questions for the 100 students using Google Form and provided the link to each student through email.

Again, we employed a 5-point psychometric answer Likert scale for the survey, with respondents indicating their level of agreement with the following statement: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neutral; (4) Agree; (5) Agree strongly.

(Appendix. II)

DETAILED AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Students did not react soon after the Questionnaire survey was sent out due to time constraints.

I gave them some more time. Over the course of a month, I received just 35 answers.

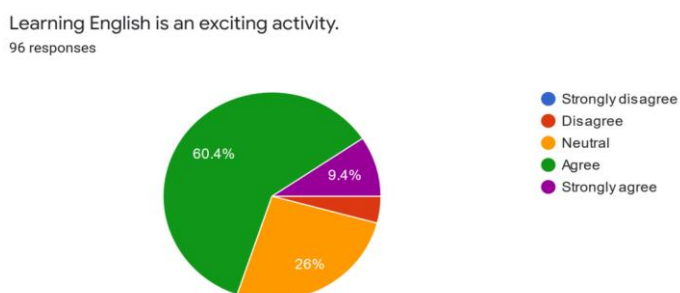
Then I booked another month, telling them that they needed to receive enough answers.

In the second month, I received another 60 answers. It took nearly three months to finish the survey, and I eventually received 96 out of 100 replies.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The quantitative research was carried out using Google Forms, and the analytical data findings are as follows:

Question 1: Some of them fall somewhere between Disagree and Neutral. The majority agrees 60.40% Agree + Strongly Agree 9.40% = 69.80%. (Pie Chart 2.1). Almost 70% of Myanmar students think studying English is fascinating, however some may be unsure what to say, and less than 10% are completely opposed to learning English.

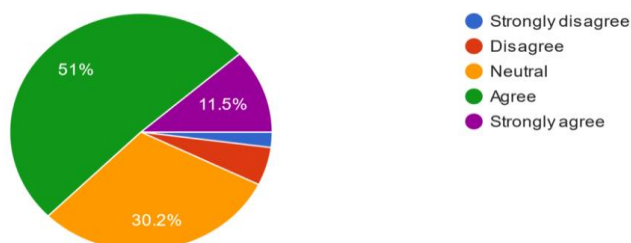


Pie Chart (2.1)

Question 2: 30.20% Neutral, some Disagree and Strongly Disagree. 51% Agree + 11.50% Strongly Agree= 62.50% (Pie Chart 2.2). As a result, more than 62.50 % of Myanmar students are excited to study English. Somehow, 30.20 % are at a loss for words. The majority of students are not enthusiastic in learning English.

Learning English makes you happy.

96 responses

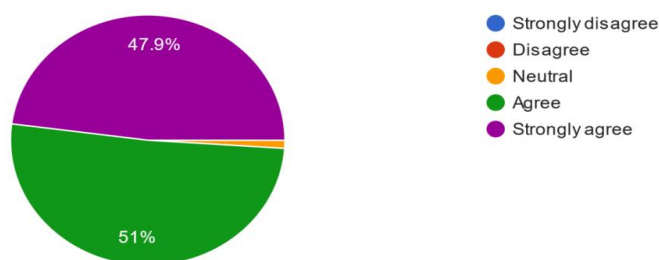


Pie Chart (2.2)

Question 3: Slightly Neutral. But most of them are 51% Agree + Strongly Agree 47.90%= 98.90% (Pie Chart 2.3). Apart from being somewhat impartial, the majority of students encouraged listening to English news following listening activities.

As part of the listening skills exercises, students should listen to news broadcast in English.

96 responses

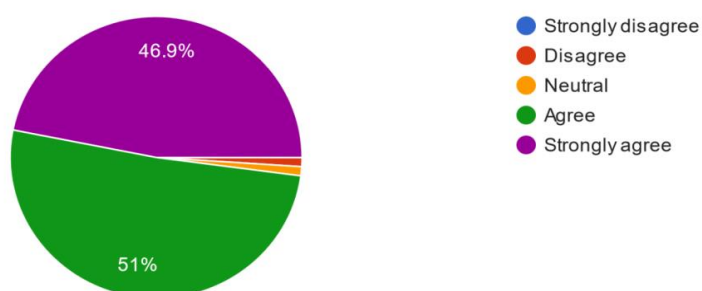


Pie Chart (2.3)

Question 4: A little bit Disagree and Neutral. Mostly accepts 51% Agree + 46.90% Strongly Agree =97.90% (Pie Chart 2.4). Students were encouraged to listen to English music and songs since they were less disagreeable and neutral.

Students should listen to music, songs in English.

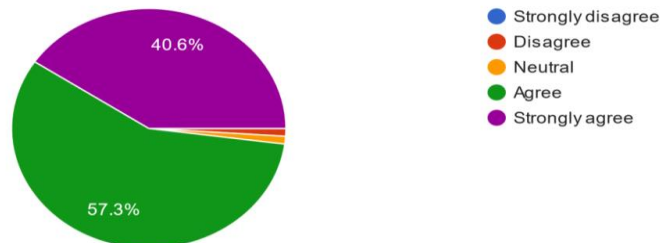
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.4)

Question 5: Slightly Disagree and Neutral. Majority accepts 57.30% Agree + 40.60% Strongly Agree =97.90% (Pie Chart 2.5). Students are eager to listen to fluent English speakers read if we cut away the disagreement and neutral.

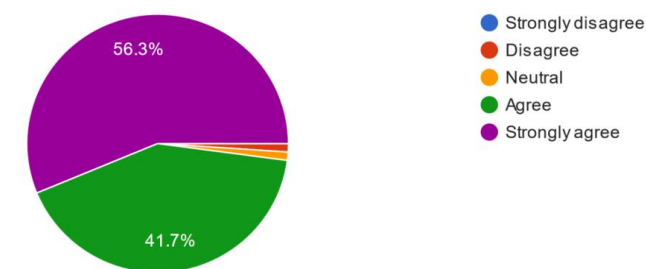
Students should often listen to stories read by Native English speakers.
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.5)

Question 6: There are less Disagree and Neutral. Mostly accepts 41.70% Agree + 56.30% Strongly Agree =98% (Pie Chart 2.6). If we omit the 2% who disagree or are neutral, students virtually unanimously agree on seeing English documentaries and plays.

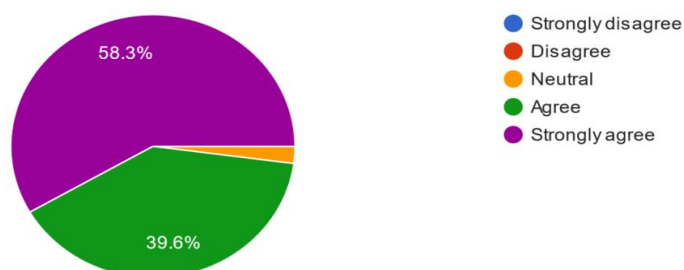
Students should watch documentaries and plays in English.
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.6)

Question 7: Slightly Neutral. Mostly accepts 39.60% Agree + 58.30% Strongly Agree =97.90% (Pie Chart 2.7). Students generally agree to speak English in class in order to improve their communication abilities.

To develop the speaking skills, students should speak English in class.
96 responses

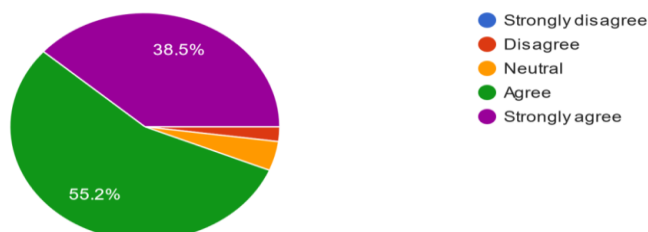


Pie Chart (2.7)

Question 8: Less Disagree and Neutral . Mostly accepts 55.20% Agree + 38.50% Strongly Agree =93.70% (Pie Chart 2.8). The majority of students agree to chat with their senior in order to improve their English conversational abilities.

The students should involve in communicative activities, especially conversation skills, by practicing with senior students.

96 responses

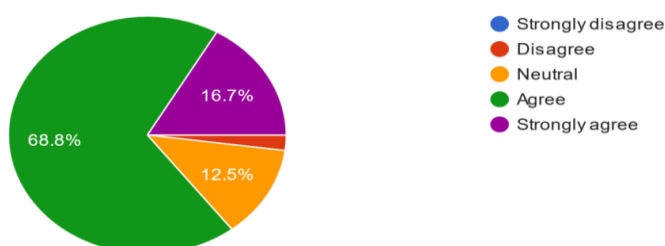


Pie Chart (2.8)

Question 9: Less Disagree and 12.50% Neutral. Mostly accepts 68.80% Agree + 16.70% Strongly Agree =85.50% (Pie Chart 2.9). With the exception of the disagreeable and neutral, the majority of students embrace speaking English at home in addition to Myanmar.

Students should speak English with their parents and siblings who know English, even at home, in addition to their native language.

96 responses

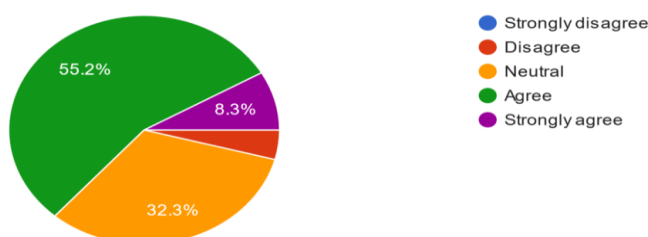


Pie Chart (2.9)

Question 10: Slightly Disagree and 32.30% Neutral. Mostly accepts 55.20% Agree + 8.30% Strongly Agree =63.50% (Pie Chart 2.10). By excluding the 32% who were neutral or slightly disagreed, the students were willing to embrace speaking English with a native with confidence.

If the students encounter a native speaker tourist or foreigner, they should speak English confidently

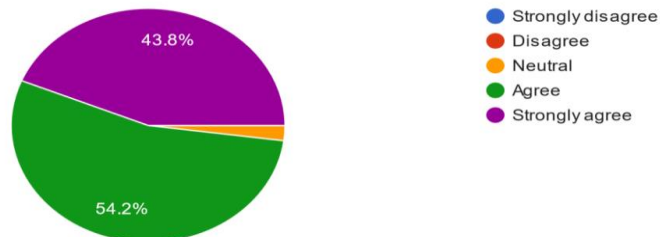
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.10)

Question 11: Rarely Neutral. 54.20% Agree + 43.80 % Strongly Agree =96% (Pie Chart 2.11). Students generally agree to read English newspapers in order to improve their reading abilities.

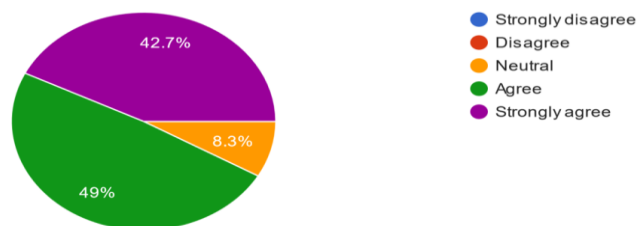
As a way to enhance reading comprehension skills, students should read newspapers in English.
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.11)

Question 12: 8.30% Neutral. Mostly 49% Agree + 42.70 % Strongly Agree =91.70% (Pie Chart 2.12). Students seldom accept neutral, and the majority of them are on the proper track of reading novels, short stories, cartoons, and anime in English alongside Myanmar literature to improve their English comprehension.

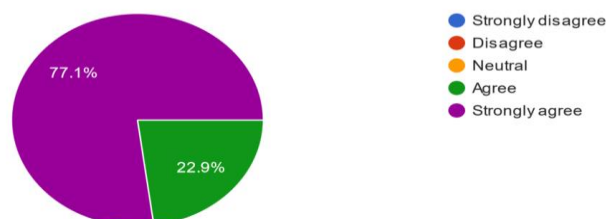
Along with reading books in their native language, students should read any literature such as novels and short stories, as well as anime and cart... help them gain a better understanding of English.
96 responses



Pie Chart (2.12)

Question 13: All accepts 22.90% Agree + 77.10 % Strongly Agree =100% (Pie Chart 2.13). They all agree to put in a lot of practice time writing in English.

The students need lots of practice when it comes to writing.
96 responses

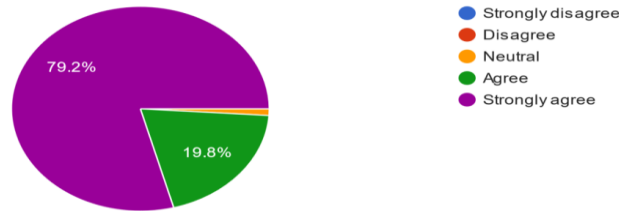


Pie Chart (2.13)

Question 14: Rarely Neutral. Mostly accepts 19.80% Agree + 79.20 % Strongly Agree =99%

(Pie Chart 2.14). With just 1% neutral, practically all students are eager to learn from skilled English writers in order to prevent mistakes in English while also developing ideas in English writing.

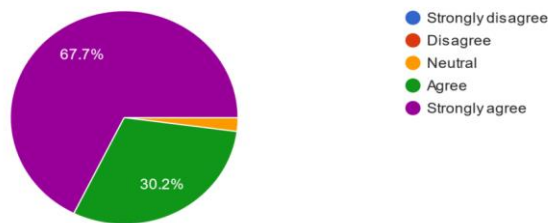
Obviously, students should learn from those who are more proficient in writing so that they can follow how to present their ideas without grammar errors, neatly, and accurately.
 96 responses



Pie Chart (2.14)

Question 15: Less % of Neutral. Mostly accepts 30.20% Agree + 67.70 % Strongly Agree =97.90% (Pie Chart 1.15). With a low number of neutral, nearly 98 percent of students are likely to acknowledge the importance of English exposure at school.

It is important for students to have exposure to English in school.
 96 responses



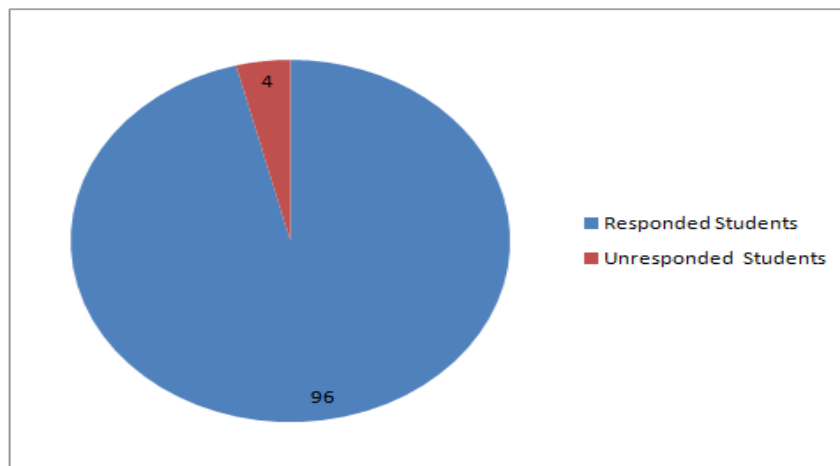
Pie Chart (2.15)

LIMITATIONS

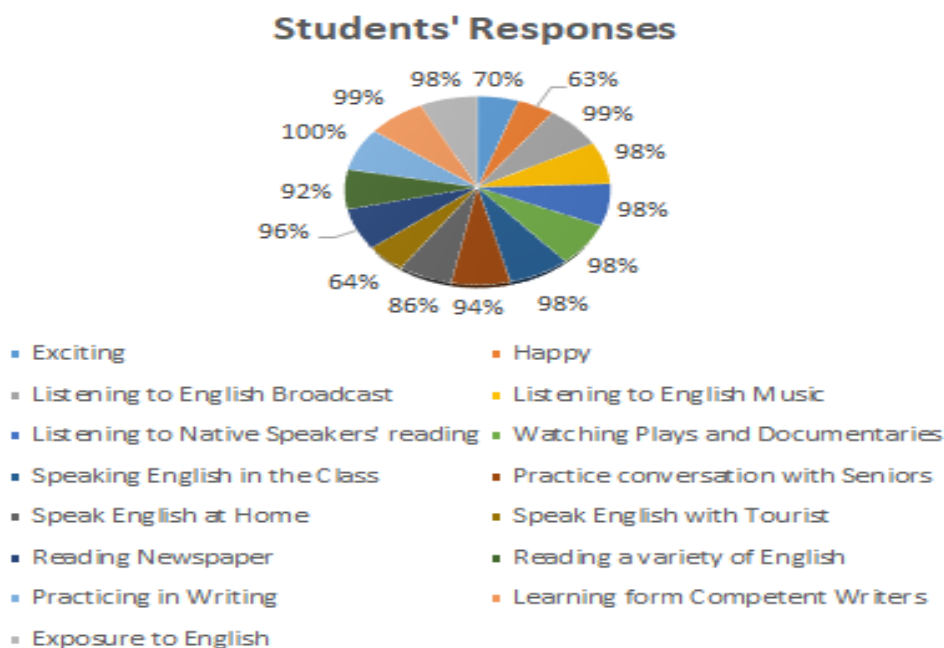
I recently polled 100 students of various levels. And it is only available to Myanmar English learners. (Figure) If we offer more time and students engage in the survey, I may receive more specific and relevant data on the problems and hurdles in learning English to foreign speakers.

Furthermore, expanding the poll to other Asian nations will yield more accurate data on real-world English learning issues.

Assigned Students



Figure



7. RESULT

Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

It is a descriptive quantitative study that seeks quantifiable data from a population sample for statistical analysis. As a result, we precisely and accurately describe our specific quantitative models of sample students. The majority of respondents agree on a percentage between 85 and 100, even the questions 1,2 and 10 are more than 60% and above so we assume and conclude that we must overcome all obstacles in learning English in order to effect good change in Myanmar. (Result)

The majority of students feel that practicing English is enjoyable. It makes them happy to study English. As part of their listening skills tasks, students are willing to listen to English news broadcasts. They enjoy listening to music, particularly English songs. They are encouraged to read aloud frequently by fluent English speakers. Students who are open to the idea of seeing English documentaries and plays. They are pleased to speak English in class to enhance their communication skills.. Students are motivated to practice their communication abilities, particularly conversation skills, with elders. Even at home, students are keen to speak English with their parents and siblings who speak English as well as their native language. Students are prepared to converse comfortably in English if they encounter a guest or foreigner who speaks English as a first language. Students are excited to read newspapers in English in order to enhance their reading comprehension skills. Students are enthusiastic about learning any literature, including novels and short stories, as well as anime and cartoons, in order to strengthen their command of the English language. Students recognize that they need a lot of practice writing in English. They have the experience of learning from those who are better at writing in order to follow how to explain their views without grammatical errors, gracefully, and accurately. It is critical that they have studied English in school.

Learning a second language is usually more difficult than learning your original language. Myanmar students require frequent interaction with English speakers. Students' problems and barriers in learning English will be greatly decreased if we provide them with all of the required measures and resources, particularly Multi-media lab learning accessories. If teachers and parents help students overcome their weaknesses, they will be confident in learning English, and all four competencies will be music to their ears.

Needless to say, there are several obstacles and problems to overcome when learning English.

However, if we learn English on a daily basis, we will be able to conquer the most difficult situations sooner. We will certainly succeed in teaching and studying English if we accomplish all of the checklists. Implementing the recommendations will surely have a significant impact on English language teaching and learning.

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