
STRUGGLE IN USING ENGLISH TO COMMUNICATE FOR MYANMAR PEOPLE

By

Rita Hartati¹, Carolina Silitonga², Dhea Mutiana³

^{1,2,3} State University Of Medan

Email: ¹ritahartati@unimed.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to determine the Struggle in using English to communicate for Myanmar people. By analyzing more deeply about the struggle and find some solution to the problem, we can easily understand how important English and how the struggle of the Asian country in using English. The research method is descriptive qualitative method. In collecting data, the researcher has done reading and observe the article and some news about the topic. Our data for this Mini Research assignment will be collected by reading some references from Asian Studies journals and news, selected journal for Critical Journal Review (CJR) and also from selected book from Critical Book Review (CBR).

After collecting the data, the researcher will analyze them with resources review. The findings of the research related to the aspects of language that make Myanmar students get difficulties to communicate English, namely: It is different alphabetical order (script, letter, tone), different word order and grammatical structure.

The solution to solve the difficulties is, Myanmar Government has been conducting seminar, workshop for English language programs, training and developing English Language for government officials, using English when discussing, negotiating during forums, seminars and workshop and most extensively used English for diplomacy and International affairs.

Key words: English language, Myanmar people, struggle in communication.

INTRODUCTION

In this time of globalization, bilingual to multilingual abilities are very calculated abilities in various fields of work. Therefore if a person is able to speak two or more languages it is more likely to be chosen to cooperate over those who do not have the ability to speak a foreign language. According to Kompas.com, in the world, the most widely spoken language of the world community is English with 1,13 Billion speakers, it is influenced by the number of peoples and countries that use this language as the official language of the country. As the result various business sectors ranging from economics, health, science to technology are most often use English. English has even been recognized as an international language, which it is used to communicate across countries.

In the use of this language in everyday life, in a number of southeast Asian countries, English is still difficult to learn and master. According to data from <http://asiatenggarasean.blogspot.com/> in the ASEAN region latin characters are officially used by a large number of ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Timor Leste, Brunei, and Vietnam, are countries in Southeast Asia that use Latin characters. Countries in Southeast Asia that do not use a non-Latin writing system are Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Latin script is a script used in English. Therefore, countries that do not use Latin characters are more difficult to learn English because it is different alphabets, which automatically differ as well as the system of sentence arrangement and writing.

In this world some country not use English as their communication in daily and not as mother tongue in communication. But the English as the second language or the third language to be used. One of country that make English as the second language is Myanmar. Myanmar was a former British colony where Britain was the country that started the presence of English in this country. But the English language did not grow properly in the former colony. This colonialism took place in the 18th and 19th centuries which is considered a time of democratic revival, democracy originated in the British empire with its social movements taking place quickly, because England was a developed country in terms of journalism. The colonialization carried out by the British should have indirectly had an impact on its colonies in terms of the transformation of science and language, but even though Myanmar was an English colony, it was not necessarily the good values of the British in the people of Myanmar.

Myanmar is in the process of transformation. From the previous research, Myanmar has opened up to international diplomatic relationships economically and politically, and is inviting international investments. Myanmar government officials are relating and communicating with visitors from international government agencies, companies and investors every day (Cho Mar, 2020). This is a major issue in Myanmar as many Myanmar government officials and citizen are not well versed in terms of English communicative skills. Good mastery in English language leads to personal career development. However, it is crucial that government officials realize that proficiency in the English language is important not only for their career development but also in executing their responsibilities effectively. English has been taught in Myanmar as a foreign language throughout different education systems under the Myanmar government since its independence from the British rule. However,

recently, it is well observed that the English skills of people in Myanmar seem to decline while Burmese has become the official language used in communication. of course it will be difficult for Myanmar people in using English as their communication language in daily. Because they already made Burma as their mother language their national language.

Previous studies of this topic such Myanmar Youth and Impact of English Language. Proficiency Towards Job Grabbing by Chao Mar.

Through this research, we conducted a case study on the difficulties of the community, especially the young people of Myanmar, to learn and use English. Whereas in the country, there are many foreign investors who provide jobs for the community but with the condition that they are able to speak English. The per Researchers are interested in doing this research do to several reason: a) researchers want to know what are the aspects which make it difficult for Myanmar people in communicating using English language? b) How is Myanmar people solve the difficulties in communicating using English language?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. English Language

Language is our significant source of communication. It's the way through which we share our ideas, feelings, views, and thoughts with others. There are thousands of languages in this world. Each Country has their peculiar nationwide language in addition to a multiplicity of local languages spoken and understood by their people in different regions. Some languages are spoken by millions of people, others by only a few thousand.

According Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd (2014) announced that in the 21st century, to be able to communicate properly is required to expand collaboration and to connect the world outside. To having a communication with people around the world, we need to use one language that can connect us with people with

different language. The language is called as international language. One of the common language as the international language that used by people in this world is English language

In today's world, multilingualism is becoming more and more important. In addition to opening up employment opportunities, being able to speak a foreign language helps to make a real connection with people and to know more about diverse cultures, places and lifestyles. The more proficient you are, the better you can express yourself. English as the international language that can be used for communicating with people that has different background such as different language, country, and culture.

Nowadays, many films, TV shows, books and music are published and produced in English. By understanding English, you won't need to rely on translations and subtitles anymore. By accessing these media, you will also continuously improve your English listening and reading skills. English is currently the language of the internet. An estimated of 565 million people use the internet every day and about 52% of the world's most visited websites are displayed in English. Therefore, learning this language gives access to over half the content of the internet, which might not be available otherwise. Whether it is for fun or for work, if you understand English, you will be able to exchange information with more people online and use many more materials.

2. Myanmar People

Myanmar, also called Burma, country, located in the western portion of mainland Southeast Asia. In 1989 the country's official English name, which it had held since 1885, was changed from the Union of Burma to the Union of Myanmar. The official language is Burmese, spoken by the people of the plains and, by most people of the hills. There are over 100 languages and dialects used in Myanmar. Burmese is the official and most widely-spoken language, being native to the

largest ethnic group (the Bamar); it is the primary language in many areas accessible to foreigners and is understood by the majority of the population. Because of Myanmar's diversity and its colonial past, most places have two or more names that you might find used in newspapers, on the internet, on maps and in literature – the most prominent being the name of the country itself, which is referred to as both Myanmar and Burma. In writing, Myanmar has differences with other languages such as English. In Myanmar use Burma alphabetic. The Burmese script (Burmese: MLCTS: mranma akkha. ra; pronounced [mjəmà kʰəjà]) is the abugida used to write Burmese, which is the official script of Myanmar. The Burmese script has been in use since around the 60's. Uniquely, this character has a shape like a variant of a circle. The writing is also not kidding, because the way to write the letters must be in a clockwise direction. However, now its use is not as much as it used to be; because the letters used in everyday life are Hindi and Latin.

In fact, the Burmese script is written from left to right and does not require spaces between words. But now, many have written the Burmese script with spaces, to make it easier to read, especially for the illiterate; remember that some of the letters of this script have the same shape in different directions.

Consonants

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa
[ka]	[kʰa]	[ga]	[ga]	[ŋa]
စ	ဆ	ဇ	ည	ဉ
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
[sa]	[sʰa]	[za]	[za]	[na]
တ	ထ	ဒ	ဗ	ဏ
ta	tha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
[ta]	[tʰa]	[da]	[da]	[na]
တ	ထ	ဒ	ဗ	ဏ
ta	tha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
[ta]	[tʰa]	[da]	[da]	[na]
ပ	ဖ	ဗ	ဘ	မ
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
[pa]	[pʰa]	[ba]	[ba]	[ma]
ယ	ရ	လ	ဝ	သ
[ja]	[ja]	[la]	[wa]	[ða]
	ဟ	ဇ	အ	
	[ha]	[la]	[ʔa]	

Struggle in Communication

Communication is the way in giving and getting information in relation with human life. In this world, every people has different background such as different nation, language, and culture. So, we need one language to connect us with different country. English is the language which connects people from different regions, cultures and nations. English proficiency is crucial for the young generation to gain employment in the emerging tourist market. Apart from careers in tourism, English is also seen as an important educational qualification. According Dr. Thein Lwin (2011, p. 12) explains, recent years have seen an unprecedented popularity of English in this former British colony where English proficiencies “lead to economic advantages, help in dealing with the outside world, and improve prospects of study abroad and employment.” Struggle that people feel when communicating such as different language, different alphabetic, different tone of alphabet, and different system in learning the language.

METHOD

The method applied in this research is using a qualitative method. Qualitative methods emphasize the observation of phenomena and focus more on the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. The analysis and document of qualitative research are strongly influenced by the strength of the words and sentences used. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researchers making interpretations of meaning the data (Creswell, 2014).

In collecting data, the researcher has done reading and observe the article and some news about the topic. Our data for this Mini Research assignment will be collected by reading some references from Asian Studies journals and news, selected journal for CJR and also from Selected book from CBR. After

collecting the data, the researcher will analyze them with resources review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

what are the aspects which make it difficult for Myanmar people in communicating using English language?

• Different Script

Myanmar is a country in Southeast Asia that still uses traditional or original scripts typical of the People of Myanmar. The script of this country is called Burmese Script. This script is very different from the Latin script used for English. The difference in scripts alone is enough to explain the outline of why it is difficult for Burmese people to learn English, because they have to know different scripts. The Burmese or Myanmar script developed from the Mon script, which was adapted from a southern Indian script during the 8th century. The earliest known inscriptions in the Burmese script date from the 11th century. The type of Burmese writing system is Abugida / Syllabic Alphabet, which means each letter has an inherent vowel, which is pronounced [a] or [ə] [a]. Other vowels sounds are indicated using separate letters or diacritics which appear above, below, in front of, after or around the consonant. The writing direction of this script is from left to right in horizontal lines. The script family are Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Brāhmī, Tamil-Brahmi, Pallava, Burmese. Actually, the Burmese script is written from left to right and does not require spaces between words. But now, many have written burmese characters with spaces, so that they are easy to read, especially for illiterate people; given that some letters of this script have the same shape in different directions. The earliest evidence of the Burmese script is taken from a 1035 script, while a foundry was made in the 18th century from a stone inscription towards 984.

• Different Letter

Of course, if the characters are different, eating alphabets or letters in Myanmar is different from alphabets in English. In English there is an alphabet system with 26 letters, namely: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z. While in Myanmar / Burmese the alphabet system is:

Consonant:

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င
ka	kha	ga	gha	nga
[ka]	[k ^h a]	[ga]	[ga]	[ŋa]
စ	ဆ	ဇ	ည	ဉ
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
[sa]	[s ^h a]	[za]	[za]	[na]
တ	ထ	ဒ	ဗ	ဏ
ta	tha	da	dha	na
[ta]	[t ^h a]	[da]	[da]	[na]
ပ	ဖ	တ	ဓ	န
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
[pa]	[p ^h a]	[ba]	[ba]	[ma]
ယ	ရ	လ	ဝ	သ
ya	ra	la	wa	sa
[ja]	[ra]	[la]	[wa]	[sa]
ဟ	ဇာ	ဇာ	ဇာ	ဇာ
ha	[ha]	[ha]	[ha]	[ha]

Stacked Consonant:

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င	စ	ဆ	ဇ	ည
kk	kkh	gg	ggh	cc	cch	jj	jjh	
န	န	န	န	န	န	န	န	န
nyc	nyc	nyj	nyjh	tt	tth	dd	ddh	
က	က	က	က	က	က	က	က	က
nt	nd	tt	tth	dd	ddh	nt	nth	
န	န	န	န	န	န	န	န	န
nd	ndh	nn	pp	pph	bb	bbh	mp	
မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ
mb	mbh	mm	ss	ll	ll			

Independent vowels and vowel diacritics

ိ	ီ	ု	ူ	ေ	ေ	ေ
i	ī	u	ū	e	o	ō
[ʔi]	[ʔi]	[ʔu]	[ʔū]	[ʔe]	[ʔo]	[ʔō]
ဲ	ိ	ု	ူ			
[é]	[ð/ai]	[wa]	[à]			

Medial consonant diacritics with ဝ

(m)

မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ	မ
my	hmy	mw	hmyw	mr	hmr	mrw
[mj]	[mj]	[mw]	[mjw]	[mj]	[mj]	[mw]
မ	မ	မ	မ			
hmrw	mw	hmrw	hm			
[mjw]	[mw]	[mjw]	[mj]			

• Burmese is a Tonal Language

In English, there is no rule to pronounce a word in tone. In contrast to Burmese, it uses tone rules for spoken words, in this case the same as mandarin. Burmese is a tonal language with three main tones (high, low and creaky) and two other tones (stopped and reduced). The tones are indicated in writing using diacritics or special letters.

ိ	ိ	ေ	ေ
creaky tone	high tone	low tone	

• Different Word Order

In linguistic typology, a subject-object-verb (SOV) language is one in which the subject, object, and verb of a sentence always or usually appear in that order. If English were SOV, "Sam oranges ate" would be an ordinary sentence, as opposed to the actual Standard English "Sam ate oranges" which is subject-verb-object (SVO). Among natural languages with a word order preference, SOV is the most common type (followed by subject-verb-object; the two types account for

more than 75% of natural languages with a preferred order).

Languages that have SOV structure include all Indo-Iranian languages (Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, and Burmese).

Sentence Structure in English

All sentences structure consists of one or more clauses. A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. Some clauses are independent, and others are dependent. For a sentence to be complete, it must contain at least one independent clause.

Independent and Dependent Clauses

1. Independent Clause

An independent clause expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.

Example:

Example:

1.	<u>The storm</u>	<u>started</u>	that night.
	S	V	

2.	<u>The storm</u>	<u>ended</u>	at last.
	S	V	

3.	<u>We</u>	<u>went</u>	to the beach.
	S	V	

2. Dependent Clauses

A dependent clause is not a complete sentence. It must be connected to an independent clause.

Example:

1.	S	V	S	V
	When <u>we</u> <u>were</u> in Bangkok,	<u>we</u> <u>went</u> to the beach.		
	[Dependent clauses]	[Independent clause]		

2.	S	V	S	V
	When <u>spring</u> <u>arrives</u> ,	the <u>flowers</u> <u>bloom</u> .		

[Dependent clauses]	[Independent clause]
---------------------	----------------------

3.	S	V	S	V
	<u>He</u> <u>answered</u> the question	as if <u>he</u> <u>knew</u> the subject quite well.		
	[Independent clause]	[Dependent clauses]		

Types of Sentence Structure

There are four sentence patterns:

1. Simple Sentence
2. Compound Sentence
3. Complex Sentence
4. Compound-Complex Sentence

The type of sentence structure is determined by how many clauses and what kinds of conjunctions or subject verb groups are included in the sentence. The different patterns are categorized according to various combinations of independent and dependent clauses.

The Sentence Structure in Myanmar

In Burmese language, there are two kinds of sentence structure. They are simple sentence (SS) and complex sentence (CS). In simple sentence, other phrases such as object, time, and place can be added between subject and verb. There are two kinds of clause in a complex sentence called independent clause (IC) and dependent clause (OC). There must be at least one independent clause in a sentence. But there can be more than one dependent clause in it. Independent clause (IC) contains sentence final particle (SFP) at the end of a sentence. In this section, the researcher focused on studying syntactic structure that will be portrayed in tables and tree diagrams. Therefore, characteristics of Burmese words in sentences can be operated by using the types of syntactic structures in Burmese language.

Sentence

Simple Sentence Complex Sentence

Simple Sentence structure in Myanmar Language

Simple sentence in Burmese language contains only one clause which is called independent clause.

Pattern (1) : S + S-PPM + V + V-PM

S	S-PPM	V	V-PM	Eng-Meaning
Emily	thi	lann shout	thi	David walks

One of explanation in above example, sentences in Burmese begins witha main sentence such as / 'Emily thi lann shout thi ' / David walks.

Pattern (2) : S + S-PPM + S-Compl + V + V-PM

S	S-PPM	S-Compl	V	V-PM	Eng-Meaning
Candy	ka	Kyaung thu ta yout	Phyit	tae.	Candy is a student.

This above example sentences also similar to pattern 1. Subject complement is just added in this pattern. However, this sentence is simple sentence.

Pattern (3): S + S-PPM + O + O-PPM + V + V-PM

S	S-PPM	Obj	Obj-PPM	V	V-PM	Eng-Meaning
Jimmy	thi	Ngat myar	ko	Ahsar kyway	thi	Jimmy feeds birds.

2. How is Myanmar people solve the difficulties in communicating using English language?

In solving the problem in communication using English language, The Myanmar government has been conducting English language enhancement programs such as workshop, seminar and training through government agencies. Efforts of human resources and financial aspects have been invested for the training and developing English language among government officials. While there have been reforms in government

agencies in improving the English skills of government officials, it is also very important to understand the perspectives of different stakeholders in government works on the opportunities, potentials, challenges and problems in pursuing English language improvement (MOE, 2013; Salmi, 2013). It is indisputable that English is the most extensively used language and has become the language of diplomacy and international relations based on the economic and political status of the country they had in the globe (Gjata, 2017). In Myanmar, although English is only taught as a popular foreign language, the government officials realize the importance of learning English due to the nature of their work which requires them to deal and communicate especially with foreign stakeholders. The language is further needed when discussing or negotiating official matters during forums, seminars, and workshop.

While for the other citizens that not in government employee they can try to take a short course for learning English language and useful the device that they have. Such as using a smartphone and internet for learning the language. And try for having a practice in communication using English language with friends, parents, or family that can make easily in doing a communication using foreign language.

According Mauranen, as the Myanmar official said that having a good command of the English language can prevent them from any kind of misunderstanding be it spoken or written. The misunderstandings, however are more prevalent among speakers who do not share a native language, than between native speakers of the same language. English is learnt in Myanmar as a foreign language yet, the language is presently gaining importance among the officials at the government sector specifically to communicate with foreigners, for internal organizational development and work-related purposes. As such, these officials

see the need of acquiring the spoken and written skills more than reading and listening skills to function competently in their routine works. Although the present investigation does not include all government officials throughout the nation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion of the Struggle In Using English to Communicate for Myanmar People. We can know that, to learn English language with different alphabet is feel difficult not just alphabetic but also from different tonal language, and different script. But you can reach it if you try hard for it. Like Myanmar government do for their citizens such as making English language enhancement programs such as workshop, seminar and training through government agencies. Efforts of human resources and financial aspects have been invested for the training and developing English language among government officials. While for the other citizens that not in government employee they can try to take a short course for learning English language and useful the device that they have. Such as using a smartphone and internet for learning the language. And try for having a practice in communication using English language with friends, parents, or family that can make easily in doing a communication using foreign language. According Mauranen, as the Myanmar official said that having a good command of the English language can prevent them from any kind of misunderstanding be it spoken or written. The misunderstandings, however are more prevalent among speakers who do not share a native language, than between native speakers of the same language.

REFERENCES

[1] Okel, Jhon. (2002). *Burmese by Ear or Essential Myanmar*. England:University of London.

- [2] Nishanthi, Rajathurai. (2018). The Importance of Learning English in Today World, 3 (1). 1-5
- [3] Cho Mar, Ma Tin. (2020). *Myanmar Youth and Impact of English Language Proficiency Towards Job Grabbing*, Atlantis Press: University of Malaya
- [4] Fen Soon, Wong. (2005). *English In Myanmar*. Diakses pada 18 Mei 2022. Dari DOI: 10.1177/0033688205053485
- [5] Kasih, Ayunda Pininta. 2021. "10 Bahasa Paling Banyak Digunakan di Dunia, Indonesia Nomor Berapa?", <https://www.kompas.com/edu/read/2021/08/05/162355371/10-bahasa-paling-banyak-digunakan-di-dunia-indonesia-nomor-berapa?page=all>, diakses pada 26 Mei 2022 pukul 10.27.
- [6] Jagurdermuluk. 2017. "Aksara-Aksara di Asia Tenggara", <http://asiatenggarasean.blogspot.com/2017/07/aksara-aksara-di-asia-tenggara.html>, diakses pada 26 Mei 2022 pukul 10.27.
- [7] Kyaw, Lynn Lynn. (2022). *A Comparative Study of Word Order and Sentence Structure*
- [8] *Between English and Myanmar Language*. (Thesis, Doktoral, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University ,2020) Diakses dari <https://e-thesis.mcu.ac.th/thesis/download/1258>