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## **Language Education**

### Section

## **COMPUTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUBJECT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The use of English as the medium of instruction is expanding in Myanmar, especially in higher education. Generally, the use of English by all the subject teachers at universities will inspire the students to improve their language proficiency skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Moreover, subject teachers can bring together with English teachers in improving the language proficiency of the students. This paper aims to explore the perception of the subject teachers towards the use of English as the medium of instruction. In this research paper, 20 subject teachers at the University of Computer Studies, Meiktila participated by responding to the questionnaire that is adapted from AbebeTilahun (2015). The findings of this research indicated that about 75% of subject teachers agree that they enable and can help the students to improve their students' abilities in using English and to overcome their English usage problems.

**KEYWORDS:** *Subject Teachers' perception, Medium of instruction, language proficiency*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

As the English language is the language of scientific and technological papers, students' proficiency in English is extremely crucial in the age of communication. The number of individuals who utilize English as a language of global correspondence has been expanded than the number of individuals who use it for worldwide correspondence. Further, once a language increases

worldwide status, it is progressively worried about who the speakers are, as opposed to the number of speakers. Researchers, instructors, analysts and educationalists of English subject are endeavoring in their level best to redesign English abilities among the university students. English language instructing additionally has experienced a few changes from Grammar-Translation Method to the Communicative language teaching approach to deal with the requirements of the stakeholders.

In the age of globalization time, English has progressively turned into the medium in each area of communication. For instance, in our country, Myanmar, beginning from kindergarten to in all high schools, colleges, and universities, English is used as a medium of instruction. This describes that teachers in Myanmar should be communicatively competent enough in the English language to teach their subjects effectively in the classroom. In actuality, through educating and learning the process, teachers utilize English as a medium of communication with students in their subjects at primary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities. However, more often than not, teachers focus on students' understanding and obtaining some learning from their subject as opposed to their utilization of English as a specialized apparatus in their subjects. This might be one factor for the students' inability to build up their language ability.

In Myanmar, of course, it cannot be deniable that students learn English as a separate subject. However, it is not adequate for their advancement in their ability of language competence. On the other

hand, they do not get the opportunity to pass on in English in their community. English is not used for regular activities in society. Regardless, students learn English in a roundabout way through different subjects, which are instructed in English.

This research is the field of learning process which includes the perception of the subject teachers who teach computer science and technology. As there is a limited numbers of teachers in this research, the result reflect only the perception of subject teachers who teach computer science and technology from University of Computer Studies, Meiktila.

### **1.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aim of this research is to explore the perception of the subject teachers towards using English as a medium of instruction in their classes to improve their students' English language skills. Moreover, the objectives are:

- (i) to explore the responses of subject teachers who teach computer science and technology on the concerns over the students' English usage problem
- (ii) to investigate the subject teachers' interest who teach computer science and technology in improving the English language skills of their students
- (iii) to maintain the idea of using English as the medium of instruction by facilitating conducive environment to practice English language in other subject classes

To achieve the objectives, the present study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the responses of subject teachers who teach computer science and technology on the concerns over the students' English usage problem?
2. Are the subject teachers who teach computer science and technology trying to improve their students' communication skills by creating conducive environment to help students to practice English language in other subject classes?
3. Are the subject teachers who teach computer science and technology trying to maintain the idea of using English as the medium of instruction by facilitating conducive environment to practice English language in other subject classes?

## **2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

English is considered to be the most widely spoken language in the world. "English is by far the most widely used language of wider communication in the world" [1]. While talking about the spread of English, the first thing that should be mentioned is the extent that English is widespread. Statistics on the use of English as provided in the Cambridge Encyclopedia estimates that English is official or semiofficial language in more than 60 countries [2]. "It is the international language of books, magazines, airports, and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, engineering, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertisement" [2].

There is a lot of research which is done in the area of English language use as the medium of instruction in classrooms by many researchers and language teachers. Teachers' opinions about the use of English / native language in the classroom or the influence of that usage are done in most of this research. There does not have much research that explores the perceptions of teachers towards using English as a medium of instruction to improve the English language skills of the students. Education in Hong Kong is a good example to understand the effects of English medium instruction on education quality. The history of English as the language of education in Hong Kong is informative and interesting while discussing English medium instruction programs [3].

According to [4], he proposes that without adoption of appropriate curricula, teaching in English leads to confusion and despair among students and lecturers. However, some educators state that learning foreign languages (English, in our context) does not lead to forgetting Turkish, and the second language in fact increases competence in mother tongue [5]. [6] considers EMI as an artificial environment where students are required to communicate in English because of the few opportunities outside of school to practice the language in everyday communication and adds that it is an appropriate model as regards the current situation in Turkey where there are no other proposed alternatives.

According to the education policy of Myanmar, English is offered as a compulsory subject starting from Kinder Garden. However, at the same time, there was a problem between teaching and learning

in English. In the teaching and learning process, for students' language competency, not only English teachers are responsible but other subject teachers are too. Even though other subject teachers knew about their subjects' insufficiencies, they scarcely demonstrated an impact in advancing their language aptitudes. Further, he prescribed that other subject teachers should be made mindful of the extra responsibilities for increasing students' language ability and, consequently work in participation with language teachers in this regard. Indeed, other subject teachers have a supporting task in building up students' language competence. In this sense, they will have extra responsibilities. The first main task of the teachers is to arouse the motivation of their students. Without motivation, students will lose in their attempt to bridge the gap between the manipulation and the communication of the subject and their hopes of speaking in English fluently will never be realized. As mentioned above, teachers who teach their respective subjects should encourage their students to speak in English as possible as they can. The students are to be promoted to speak in English not only during the classroom interaction but also out- of- the- classroom situations.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, 20 subject teachers who are currently engaged in teaching of computer science and technology to the first year to fourth year computer science and technology students at University of Computer Studies, Meiktila are selected as the participants of this research. Both quantitative method and qualitative method are used in this paper. This survey used the questionnaire as the medium for collecting data from subject teachers. An interview was conducted on some teachers concerning some items in the questionnaire. For this investigation, the survey questionnaire was adapted from [7]. There are 15 items in this questionnaire and the scale of items in this questionnaire is Likert type, each followed by five responses; strongly agree/always, agree/often, undecided/sometimes, disagree/rarely, strongly disagree/ never.

#### 3.1 DATA COLLECTION

In this paper, the questionnaires were contributed to 20 subject teachers who teach computer science and technology at the University of Computer Studies, Meiktila. The data were collected from 20 subject teachers. Before conducting questionnaires to teachers, they are requested to respond the survey exactly and also explained and

clarified any possible doubts on survey questions they have to response.

#### 3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

All data from 20 subject teachers are analysed to investigate the perception of the subject teachers towards using English as a medium of instruction in their classes to improve their students' English language skills. The tables described below have been employed to collect information about the perceptions of subject teachers towards the use of English as the medium of instruction to improve the language proficiency of the students. The questionnaire includes 15 question items which represent the responses of teachers on their attitude towards the use of English as the medium of instruction (items 4,6,7), the responses of teachers on the concerns over the problems of students English usage (items 1,5,9,13), the responses of teachers on their interest in improving English language skills of students (items 2,10,12,14) and the responses of teachers on the role of classroom environment for practicing English language (items 3,8,11,15,) are used in this questionnaire.

#### 3.3 DATA INTERPRETATION

The following table shows the result of teachers' responses to their attitude towards the use of English as the medium of instruction. The questionnaire items are designed on five-point Likert scale; 1=strongly agree/always, 2=agree/often, 3=undecided/sometimes, 4=disagree/rarely and 5=strongly disagree/never.

Table 1. Percentage of teachers' responses on their attitude towards the use of English as the medium of instruction

Item	S.A	Ag	Un deci	Dis Ag	S. D Ag
4. Once the learners are good at English, they'll be good at in all subjects.	0%	30%	45%	25%	

	A	O	S	R	N
6. How frequently do you assume that your students understand the subject that you teach in English?	25%	10%	35%	25%	15%
7. How frequently do you use students' mother tongue (L1) in the teaching of your subject?	50%	25%	25%		

Note: S.A = Strongly Agree

Ag = Agree

Undeci = Undecided

Dis Ag = Disagree

S.D Ag = Strongly Disagree

A = Always

O = Often

S = Sometimes

R = Rarely

N = Never

The following figure shows the responses of teachers on their attitude towards the use of English as the medium of instruction.

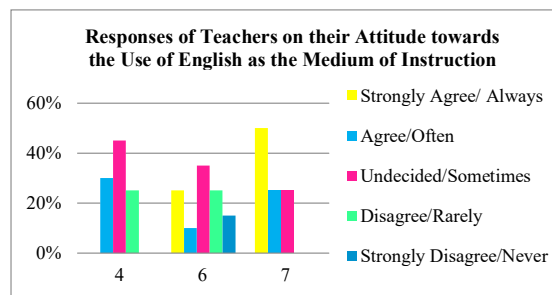


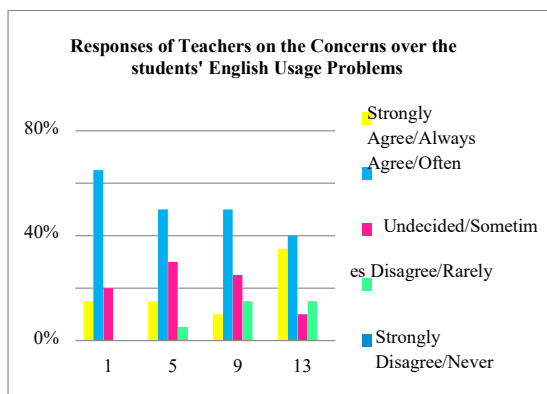
Figure (1): Responses of teachers on their attitude towards the use of English as the medium of instruction

The data in the above chart shows the responses of teachers on their attitude towards the use English as the medium of instruction. According to figure 1, nearly half of the subject teachers could not decide exactly if the students are good at English, they will be good at all subjects. Only 30% of teachers agree with this aspect, whereas 25% do not agree with this aspect. Nearly one- third of teachers sometimes assume that their students understand the subject that they teach in English. Only one-fourth of teachers always assume this aspect, however, 15% of teachers never assume this aspect. Half of the teachers always use the mother tongue (L1) in the teaching of their subject. According to this data, it can be assumed that most of the teachers accept that the students can understand the subject with English as the medium of instruction.

Table.2 Percentage of teachers' responses on the concern over the students English usage problems

Item	S.A	Ag	Un deci	Dis Ag	S. D Ag
1. Subject teachers also have English teaching potential to some extent.	15%	65%	20%		
	A	O	S	R	N
5. How frequently do you think about your students' English language when you teach your subject?		15%	50%	30%	5%
9. How frequently do you correct your students' errors of pronunciation / grammar / spelling?	10%	50%	25%	15%	
13. My students can speak correct English but fear of what others would say / think about them.	35%	40%	10%	15%	

The following figure shows the responses of teachers on the concern over the students' English usage problems.



Figure(2): Responses of teachers on the concerns over the students' English usage problems

The above chart of the data describes the responses of teachers on the concerns over the problem of students' English usage. 80% of subject teachers agree that they are responsible for teaching English potentially to some extent. 15% and 50% of subject teachers often and sometimes think their students' English language when they are teaching their subject. It is also expressed that about 70% of subject teachers make the correction of their students' errors of pronunciation, grammar and spelling while they are teaching their subject. 85% of subject teachers expressed that their students can speak correct English but fear of what others would say/ think about them. According to these facts and data, it can be said that subject teachers are enable and can help the students to overcome their English usage problems.

Table.3 Percentage of teachers' responses on their interest in improving English language skills of their students

Item	S.A	Ag	Un deci	Di s Ag	S. D Ag
2.Cooperation between subject teachers and English teachers helps the language development of the students	35%	45%	20%		

	A	O	S	R	N
10.How frequently do you encourage your students to improve their English skills?	35%	25%	25%	15%	
12.My students can write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences in classes / assignments / exams		15%	50%	35%	10%
14.My students can speak well to convey their subject	15%	25%	45%	15%	

The following figure shows the responses of teachers on their interest in improving English language skills of their students.

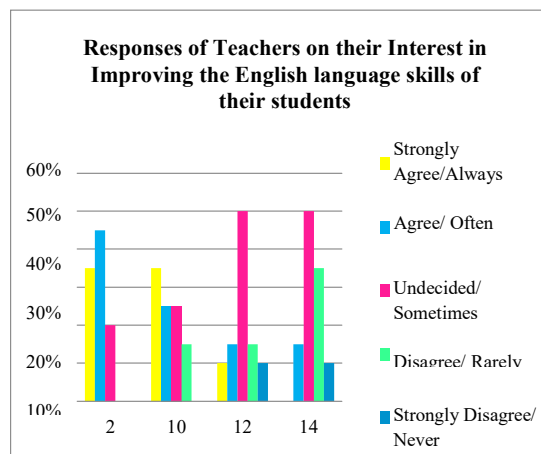


Figure (3): Responses of teachers on their interest in improving the English language skills of their students

According to the figure (3), 80% of the subject teachers agree and accept that cooperation between English teachers and them helps the students to develop their language. 85% of teachers encourage the students to improve their language proficiencies. About 75% of teachers sometimes thought that their students can write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences in classes, assignments and exams. However, 25% of teachers described that

their students cannot write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences well in classes, assignments and exams. About 65% of teachers mentioned that their students are able to speak well to convey their subject in English, whereas, 35% of teachers expressed that their students are not able to speak well to convey their subject in English. As mentioned in the above information, it can be known that subject teachers are trying to improve their students' abilities in using English for giving the information of subjects in the classroom assignments, and exams.

Table. 4 Responses of teachers on the role of classroom environment for participating English language

Item	S.A	Ag	Un deci	Dis Ag	S. D Ag
3. Subject teachers are also responsible for the language development of their students	30%	65%	15%		
	A	O	S	R	N
8. How frequently do you help your students to improve their English skills?	15%	40%	35%	10%	
11. My students can interpret information given in English and take running notes from lectures	10%	50%	25%	15%	
15. My students can learn / use English words as per their communicative needs	10%	35%	35%	15%	5%

The following figure shows the responses of teachers on the role of classroom environment for participating in the English language.

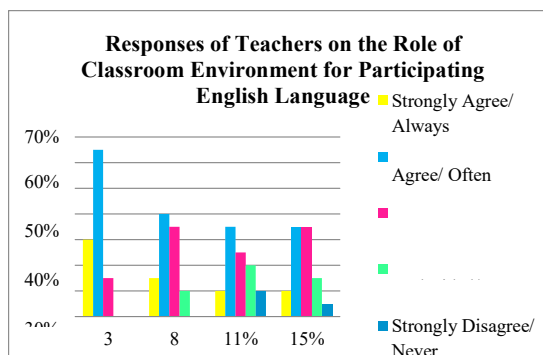


Figure (4): Responses of teachers on the role of classroom environment for participating English language

As mentioned the data from the above chart, above 80% of subject teachers are taking responsibility for the language development of their students. Moreover, over 75% of teachers help the students to improve their language skills not only in the classroom but also out of the classroom. Over 75% of the teachers described that the students can interpret the subject information given in English and take running notes from the lectures. Above 75% of teachers expressed that the students can learn or use English words as per their communicative needs. According to this data, it can be mentioned that about 75% of subject teachers are participating in a positive environment to practice English for their students in the classrooms.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to explore the perception of the subject teachers towards using English as a medium of instruction in their classes to improve their students' English language skills. The first objective of this research is to explore the responses of subject teachers who teach computer science and technology on the concerns over the students' English usage problem. The findings show that subject teachers who teach computer science and technology from University of Computer Studies (Meiktila) are enable to help the students to overcome their English usage problems.

The second objective of this research is to investigate the computer science and technology subject teachers' interest in improving the English language skills of their students. The findings express that computer science and technology subject teachers are trying to improve their students'



abilities in using English for giving the information of subject in the classroom assignments, and exams.

The final objective of this research is to maintain the idea of using English as the medium of instruction by facilitating an environment conducive to practice English language in other subject classes. The findings of this research indicate that most of the computer science and technology subject teachers are taking responsibility for the language development of their subjects. Moreover, they also help the students to improve their language skills not only in the classroom but also out of the classroom. As shown in figure (4), about 75% of subject teachers are participating in a positive environment to practice English for their students in the classroom.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of subject teachers towards the use of English as the medium of instruction. According to the results of the questionnaire, it is found that subject teachers who are currently teaching at the University of Computer Studies, Meiktila are favorable to the idea of the use of English as the medium of instruction in their respective subject classes. Most of the subject teachers agree that using English as the medium of instruction can improve the students to be more successful not only in their academic environment but also in the out-of-the-classroom environment.

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## **THE USE OF GROUP DYNAMICS TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

English is a language of central medium for instruction of the most universities in all over the world. Language learning is, by its very nature, a collective endeavour, and that learning takes place most effectively when language classes pull together as unified groups. This paper is an attempt to improve students' language learning through group dynamics. To help students have a deep understanding of group dynamic "The Importance of Group Dynamics" is presented. "Need Analysis" will show the investigation of the actual needs and wants of the students. "Strategies for Improving Group Dynamics" will help not only teachers but also students in improving group dynamic. Moreover, to get effective learning and teaching "The Classroom Environment's Contribution to Group Dynamic" will accomplish teaching and learning situation. "Suggested Activities" will fulfil the students' needs in some way so as to develop language learning from group dynamics.

**KEYWORDS:** *English, Language learning, an attempt, group dynamic, strategies, suggested activities*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learning a language is an intense experience, requiring a lot of concentration. There will inevitably be times when students lack energy, feel pressurized, or have reached saturation point; when they need warming up, cooling down, small class size in which students are more or less homogeneous in terms of proficiency. Except for a lucky few, however, most teachers find themselves working with a class of fifty students or more. Luckily, modern language education has raised awareness about group issues. Groups, teams and communities have their potential for greater learning and their increased creativity.

Ehrman and Dornyei[1] identified the following characteristic features of a 'group':

- There is some interaction among group members.
- Group members perceive themselves as a distinct unit and demonstrate a level of commitment to it.
- Group members share some purpose or goal for being together.
- The group endures for a reasonable period of time.
- The group has developed some sort of a salient 'internal structure' which includes:

Rules and standards of behaviour for members;

Relatively stable interpersonal relationship patterns and established status hierarchy;

- Finally, as a direct consequence of the above points, the group is held accountable for its members' actions.

Cooperation between members for common goals, for example, to accomplish small group tasks, helps them settle into cohesive group. Cooperation is, in fact, a type of interaction in which students are positively independent, which will result, according to Johnson and Johnson, 'in an emotional bonding with collaborators linking each other, wanting to help each other succeed, and being committed to each other's well-being.'

### **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF GROUP DYNAMICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Group dynamics may sound like one of those very scientific terms that are impressive but which can't understand easily. It is the relationship between the students in a group and the impact that this has

on the way they work. Groups have been found to have a 'life of their own'. Although groups vary in size, purpose, composition and character, even the most different kinds of groups appear to share some fundamental common features, making it possible to study 'the group' in general. In groups, where students act as a pool of resources for each other. Teaching and learning can and should be a joyful experience for both teachers and learners. In the days of rote-learning and teachers dominated classroom the relationship between teacher and group was paramount and the question of interrelationships within the groups was not vital, in present-day classroom, where pair work and group work have become the norm, relationships within the group become more important: it is fundamental to the success of language learning to have support and co-operation from the group and a harmonious relationship between its members. According to Michal Argyle "Perhaps most importantly, research in social psychology confirms what teachers know instinctively: a cohesive group works more efficiently and productively". A positive group atmosphere can have a beneficial effect on the morale, motivation, and self-image of its members, and thus significantly affect their learning, by developing in them a positive attitude to the language being learned, to the learning process, and to themselves as learners.

### **3. NEED ANALYSIS**

In order to identify the actual needs, lacks and wants of the students, questionnaires are provided to the students. To investigate actual needs of students' language learning, the questionnaires are given to (40) students from different level at West Yangon Technological University.

#### **3.1 Questionnaires for Students**

1.How many years have you been taught English?

.....

.....

2.Do you find some difficulties in learning English ?  
If so ,which area ? Four skills or others?

.....

.....

3.Do you satisfy your current teaching- learning situation?

.....

4.Would you prefer formal learning style or informal learning style?

.....

5.Do you think group dynamic can improve your teaching-learning situation?

.....

6.How do you feel doing cooperative learning in your language classroom?

.....

7.Specify any other information you feel is relevant to the aims of this questionnaire?

.....

### **3.2 Findings and Discussion**

According to the result of the students, most of them state that they find many difficulties in learning a language. There is an uncomfortable, tense or negative atmosphere. They express that English in different parts of the world where it is not a native language may have the status of either a 'second' or a 'foreign' language. It is a language that is widely used in society and they need to acquire English in order to survive in society. Generally, they are satisfied with their teaching learning situation. However, they want to improve these situations more efficiently. Students think that group dynamic can definitely improve their learning situation. They feel that doing cooperative learning make them more enjoyable. Cooperative learning gives students both collaboration and social skills to be able to work together more effectively. So, this learning will improve the students' group dynamics in language learning. The following strategies and activities will fulfil the students' needs and wants in some ways.

### **4. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING GROUP DYNAMICS**

#### **4.1 Staying motivated**

The students may find themselves that they lose motivation along the term goes on . This is natural because students are generally more motivated at the very start and at the end of the term. Therefore, if they find a slight dip in their middle of the term, it should not be too much concerned. They need to set new goal to get back on track. If they think their loss

of motivation is a problem, this will reflect on the source of their lack of motivation. Sometimes students will become unmotivated because of poor grades in a particular course and other outside influences (for example, social situations, health concerns, family or friends).

These all situations may cause students to lose their motivation in their learning. If they feel they lose their motivation, the following strategies will promote their motivation in some way.

- To take break at that current situation.
- To change topics every hour.
- To cooperate with groups. Collaborating with others is main point to get motivation.
- To find somewhere to study where students can be free from distractions
- To focus on the positive image which will help students find their motivation.

Any method can be used to improve students' motivation. Moreover, there are some questionnaires to check students' motivation which can help them.

1. Why do you need to learn?

.....

2. What sources do you need to use (discussion, lecture, text, labs, etc.)?

.....

3. What is the level of your motivation at the beginning of the course (low, medium, high)?

.....

4. What is the level of your motivation at the middle of the course (low, medium, high)?

.....

5. Describe your goals for completing this task?

.....

#### **4.2 Organizing a well-performed group**

The students in the group may be strange to each other; they may also be nervous, worried, lacking in confidence, unsure of their capabilities, and wondering what they have let themselves in for. In

forming the group, therefore, it is important to relax the students and relieve the tension they may be feeling, to get to know each other. But it is also important to begin to help the students to become aware of what is involved both in learning a language and working together in a group, to begin to develop both a sense of direction and a feeling of cooperation.

Let's look more closely at the positive features of a well-performed group. Students need to pay attention to the following lists.

- Welcome and provide active support to each other.
- Stay in the group and persuade others to join.
- Examine group norms and resist group disruption.
- Participate in group-activities willingly and cooperate with each other.
- Actively participate in conversation and are ready to share personal details.
- Use pronoun and a special jargon more frequently
- Create competitive relations with outsiders.
- Express more satisfaction with the group experience.

Language learning is, by its very nature, a collective endeavour, and that learning takes place most effectively when language classes pull together as unified groups.

#### **4.3 Implementing cooperative learning**

In the last decade there has been a growing interest among language teachers in using cooperative learning activities. With cooperative learning, students work together in groups. Cooperative learning principles and techniques are tools which teachers use to encourage mutual helpfulness in the groups and the active participation of all members. When students help their groupmates, they help themselves and their whole group, because the response given belongs to the whole group, not just to the group member giving it. A good deal of research exists in other areas of education suggesting that cooperative learning is associated with benefits in such key areas as learning, self-esteem, liking for school, and interethnic relations [6]. In second language learning, theorists propose several advantages for cooperative learning: increased students talk, more varied talk, a more relaxed atmosphere, greater motivation, more negotiation of

meaning, and increased amount of comprehensible input. In fact, in planning and executing cooperative learning, teachers have many decisions to make. According to Dornyei, this may involve using the following facts:

- Allow students, their choices about as many aspects of the learning process as possible, for example about activities, teaching material, topics, assignments, due dates, the format and the pace of their learning and the peers they want to work with. Choice is the essence of responsibility as it permits students to see that they are in charge of the learning experience.
- Encourage students' contribution and peer teaching. They also learn more when they teach each other.
- Encourage project work. When students are given complete projects to carry out, they will function in an autonomous way by definition: the teacher is not part of the immediate communication network.

Here are two figures of regular classroom and forming group classroom.



Fig 1. Regular Classroom



Fig 2. Forming Group Classroom

## **5. THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO GROUP DYNAMIC**

While the physical characteristic of the environment do not completely determine how effective teaching is, they can be major inhibiting or contributing factors. Many teachers teach as if the physical environment were either unimportant or simply beyond their control and thus ignore the possibilities for change. The perception that major physical alteration is impossible in most school settings may actually be true, but if over-generalised it keeps teachers from at least changing what they actually can change. There are three other reasons why teachers so often fail to grasp the possibility of changing the physical environment:

- The most traditional way of teaching involves the teachers facing the students who are sitting in columns and rows, dependent on the authoritative teacher at the centre of the communication network; they naturally feel that this is the right way a class should be organized with no need for any change.

· When one teaches in this traditional way, it is so restrictive in itself that variables such as room size, the distance between rows do not appear to change the interaction pattern significantly.

· Teachers often do not realized that they have a privileged spatial position in the class: they can see everybody and they may also move around to face whoever they want to talk to and this leads them to assume similar comfort on the part of the students.

So, if the teachers who wish to create a friendly and positive environment in classes, they should avoid the points which can prohibit student's group dynamics.

## **6. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DYNAMIC**

If the teachers have a tightly packed programme, or a rigid syllabus, or are teaching toward an examination, they may be wondering how they can afford the apparent luxury of group dynamics exercises. Most of the activities this chapter, therefore, will not need a special 'group dynamics' slot on the timetable, and can form part of the normal language syllabus as grammar, speaking, or writing practice.

### **6.1 Group work**

The most important activity in forming group dynamic is group work. It offers students of mixed abilities a natural context for working together; shy students get a chance to talk informally; confident students get a chance to shine and develop their skill by acting as reporters and group secretaries; and initially, it helps students get to know each other. So, this activity will literally improve students' group dynamic. When setting up group work, the teacher should always give clear instructions and set a time limit for each task. For students, they have to work together in small groups and rank all the suggestions in order of preference. They then discuss what consequences and five most popular suggestions will have. Finally, the rank orders and consequences of individual group are compared. Mistakes can be noted and pointed out when the activity finished, or a later date. Any possible group work activities can be used.

#### **6.1.1 Group Holiday**

The aim of this simple activity is to train students to choose from a set of alternatives in informal groups.

The usages of language in this activity are asking for and giving reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, making suggestion, giving in.

The procedure can be seen below.

1. The class is divided into groups. Each student receives a handout containing either suggestions for a two-week holiday. Each group now has to find the one holiday that they would like to have together. A decision should be reached by discussion and finding good arguments and not by a majority vote. If the group really cannot agree on a type of they would all to share, they may present their case to the class for further discussion. Groups may also suggest a kind of holiday not mentioned in the handout.

2. Each group describes the holiday they have chosen and outlines the reason for this choice.

### **6.2 Role play**

The other way of getting students to be stick as a group is role playing. Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. It definitely helps them not just to acquire set phrases, but to learn how interaction might take place in a variety of situations. Getting students to role play dialogues has various advantages. Firstly, it is enjoyable so it is likely to motivate students. Secondly, and more importantly, it should help students realize how discrete bits of language 'fit together' in real use; since some classroom practice may involve using less realistic methods, where language is practiced out of context, this is an extremely important point. Thirdly, role-play gives the students an opportunity to develop fluency and confidence. Finally, the students' awareness of cultural differences in the environment should increase inappropriate behaviour of specific situations. So, role-play is one of a whole scope of communicative activities which develops fluency in language, promote interaction in the classroom and also increase students' motivation. In conclusion, since role-play involves simulated real-life language use, it should be the mainstay of classroom practice.

### **6.3 Pyramid discussions**

This activity will carry a discussion in gradual stages from pair work to a whole-class format. It has the theme of transforming the pair to the whole group. It also lets the students know what went on in the pair or small group activity and present it in a more concrete or permanent form to the whole class. Here is the procedure of pyramid discussions.

1. The teachers have to begin the discussion with the students in pair, then group the pairs into fours or fives, and then fours or fives into eights or tens.

2. All students have to transmit to each other what was said at each stage and then continue the discussion which should become deeper and more complex because new facet is added. Each stage must have a shortage of time-limit, so that the students will not feel tired to the topic by the time the discussion reaches the whole-class stage.

3. In this stage, one student from each group will be asking to report on what was said, before throwing the discussion open to the whole class.

By applying these activities in group work, as a team work or as a whole class, students will get many opportunities to cooperative with each other, to participate in classroom activities and to promote their interest in language learning.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Classroom Dynamics can help teachers to overcome one of their most difficult problems how to establish a good working relationship with incohesive and uncooperative classes. In the present day EFL classroom, where pair work and group work are increasingly the norm, harmonious relationships within the classroom have become fundamental to the success of courses.

Working, learning and living in groups is a central feature of human behaviour and the study of groups - called group dynamics - is a vibrant academic field. It overlaps such diverse areas as psychology, sociology, business studies and political science. It is also highly relevant to language education because the success of classroom learning is very much dependent on how students relate to each other and how well student can cooperate and communicate with each other. The strategies and activities, in this paper are simple and effective. By using these strategies and activities, student can improve their language learning through group dynamics.

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## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY: A STUDY OF MYANMAR POSTGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the scale of foreign language classroom anxiety witnessed by Postgraduate students learning English language at the Mandalay University of Foreign Languages. The survey was administered to 164 students. The data were collected by using the survey instrument named Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al (1986). The findings of this study indicate that a moderate level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety has been found with test anxiety as its main type. This study concludes with the implications and plausible means to lessen the students' anxiety.

**KEYWORDS:** *Classroom Anxiety, Postgraduate students*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learning a foreign language is very challenging for some students. Anxiety, a main source of difficulty, has long been recognized as an obstacle in foreign language learning by researchers, teachers and students for many years. A lot of research has been done in this area and reports that the role of anxiety is important in second/ foreign language acquisition [1]. Little attention has been paid to classroom anxiety of postgraduate students in the context of Mandalay University of Foreign Languages. Therefore, the present study is conducted to fill the gap and investigate the level and type of anxiety of postgraduate students studying English as a Foreign Language. This study provides teachers and educators some insights into coping with their students' foreign language learning anxiety in the

classroom. Moreover, teachers can apply the suggestions given in this study in their classrooms for successful teaching learning process.

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Anxiety, a feeling of unease, nervousness, being apprehensive, or worried, plays an important affective role in language learning [2]. Language anxiety is a type of anxiety specifically associated with second/foreign language learning contexts [3]. According to [4], there are three types of language anxiety which the students usually experience when they learn a foreign language. They are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

People with communication apprehension feel shy when they communicate with others and have uncomfortable feelings in speaking in public and listening to spoken messages. In the classrooms, students are required to communicate with each other and the teachers sometimes make them speak individually before the class. At that time, students feel communication apprehension and can develop language anxiety.

Text anxiety known as performance anxiety occurs when the students are afraid of failing a text. They worry about poor performance on tests and their subjects. They also fear for not attaining good grades. These factors make the learners feel anxiety when taking the formal tests or being evaluated by the teachers in the classroom.

Students' fear of negative evaluations is similar to test anxiety but more extensive. In language



classes, evaluation is not limited to a test-taking situation. Fear of negative evaluation is experienced by the students when the teachers make them speak in front of the classroom, do the activities, and discuss the topics related to the subjects. They worry about others' negative comments if they make some mistakes while speaking.

[5] explored Saudi EFL learners' anxiety and its causes. This study was conducted on randomly selected 216 freshmen students from Taif University and the FLCAS survey questionnaire [4] was used for data collection. It is found that the students have medium level of language learning anxiety. The communication apprehension anxiety is assigned at the top position followed by English class room anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation is in third place and the last is text anxiety.

## **2.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

In response to the research gap mentioned in the introduction section, the present research investigates the level of classroom anxiety (CA). It aims at examining foreign language classroom anxiety scale in order to measure the level of anxiety experienced by Postgraduate students. Moreover, the objectives of this research are:

- i. To investigate the level of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) experienced by Post-Graduate students
- ii. To explore the common type of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) among students

## **2.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To achieve the objectives, the present study seeks answers for the following research questions.

1. What is the level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) experienced by postgraduate students?
2. Which anxiety factor is the most common type among postgraduate students?

## **3. MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS**

Over One hundred and sixty four students studying English as postgraduate students at Mandalay University of Foreign Languages participated in the current study. The participants

ranged in age from over 20 to over 50 years, and the most common age is over 20 (67%).

### **3.2 INSTRUMENTS**

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and the participants' personal information questionnaire were collected. For personal information, the participants were asked to respond to three items on their age, gender, and current level of class attending at the university. The former one was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) survey questionnaire designed by [4]. It consists of 33 items measuring language anxiety related to foreign language learning. The distribution of items across three factors is as follows: Communication Apprehension (1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32), Test Anxiety (3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33).

The FLCAS questionnaires followed a Likert-type 5-choice response format: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The questionnaires were distributed to the students after a regular class period. The full descriptive instructions concerning the procedures of administration were explained. Their confidentiality was secured and their response would be used for research purposes only.

Data Analysis includes the calculation of descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) to compile information about demographics of the participants and to determine the levels of foreign language classroom anxiety and the main types of foreign language classroom anxiety. The frequency of the items related to each subscale of the FLCAS (Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation) is also calculated.

Table 1. Level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

N o	Class Level	SA + A	N	D+S D	N/A
1	Basic	45%	21%	29%	5%
2	Intermediate	50%	15%	32%	3%
3	Upper Intermediate	43%	22%	31%	4%
4	Advanced I	44%	18%	34%	4%
Total		182 %	76%	126%	15 %
Average		46%	19 %	31%	4%

Note: SA = Strongly Agree  
A = Agree  
N = Neither Agree or Disagree  
D = Disagree  
SD = Strongly Disagree

The above table shows the level of students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) in terms of their proficiency class (Basic, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, and Advanced I). As can be seen, there is a moderate level of foreign language classroom anxiety among PGDE students. A total score of 46% indicates a moderate level of classroom anxiety.

Table 2. Type analysis of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Types of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)				
N o.	Class Level	Communicative Apprehension	Test Anxiety	Fear of Negative Evaluation
1.	Basic	35%	43%	22%
2.	Intermediate	35%	45%	20%
3.	Upper Intermediate	37%	43%	20%
4.	Advanced I	33%	43%	24%
Total		140%	174%	86%
Average		35%	44%	21%

Table 2 indicates type analysis of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Communicative Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation). It is significantly found that Test Anxiety (44%) is the most common type of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among students. Communicative Apprehension (35%) is common type and Fear of Negative Evaluation (21%) is the low anxiety type for students.

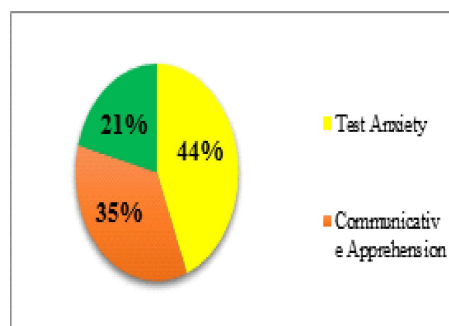


Fig 1. Distribution of the three types of Foreign Language Classroom anxiety

The above pie chart reveals that Test Anxiety is nearly fifty percent in Foreign Language Classroom anxiety among Myanmar EFL learners, meanwhile Fear of Negative Evaluation is about half of its portion. Communicative Apprehension is slightly

over one-third of the chart. Overall, test anxiety is the most prominent type in Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety of Myanmar EFL learners.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the research findings, it can be noticed that the level of students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety is moderate. The causes of being moderate anxiety among students are that they do not worry about making mistakes in the language class, and their feelings on language class is very sure and relaxed. Though the finding of the foreign language classroom anxiety level is moderate, it should not be satisfied. Even students with good command of language skills often express some degree of anxiety in the classroom.

The result of factor analysis of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Communicative Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation) revealed that Test Anxiety (44%) is the most common type of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among students. Communicative Apprehension (35%) is the common type and Fear of Negative Evaluation (21%) is the low anxious factor for students. In responding the questionnaire (FLCAS), most of the students agree with the statement "I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class." which represents anxiety of tests. This result obtained from FLCAS can be concluded that they feel worried about bad outcomes and getting low marks. As a result, they easily forget things they have already known and this leads them to a nervous situation in language class. Moreover, correcting every mistake they have made by language teachers make them feel embarrassed.

Depending on the findings, there are some plausible suggestions for the effective learning atmosphere in the EFL classroom: encouraging students by using positive feedback instead of negative comments, creating a relaxed and cooperative learning environment and avoiding fierce competitive evaluation and assessment. To reduce anxiety, it will be advantageous to establish a learner-centered and less-threatening classroom context.

Among six types of language learning strategies by [6], Affective strategies could be useful to reduce classroom and language skills anxieties because those strategies include identifying one's feelings, anxiety or contentment, and becoming aware of the learning circumstances or tasks that evoke them, which helps learners deal with anxiety successfully. [7] offers

affective strategies to reduce anxiety which are using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, encouraging oneself by making positive statements or self-rewarding, taking one's emotional temperature by writing a language learning diary, using a checklist of their own emotional state, and discussing one's feelings with someone else. All these strategies can be applied flexibly in coping with classroom and language skills anxiety. In long run, teachers can help students by reducing negativity of learning English, raising students' self-belief and assisting them in alleviating the anxiety caused by expectations of failure.

Moreover, to reduce students' foreign language classroom anxiety, teachers should employ appropriate teaching methodologies to be able to create anxiety-free language learning atmosphere. Teachers should consider their students' level and interest while choosing the classroom activities and topics so that they can stimulate their students' motivation. In making evaluation, group evaluation can reduce learners' anxiety rather than giving negative comments to individual. In the language classroom, teachers should be facilitators rather than instructors or teachers to provide the learners' needs positively.

In contrast with other researches by [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], since this current research only focuses on anxiety field (classroom), the findings are not mostly in line with those of them. In the above aforementioned researches, high anxiety level of respective anxiety field (classroom) was found. For further research, the upcoming researchers should study the relation between language anxiety and the more specific process involved in language acquisition and communication.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

The present research examines foreign language classroom anxiety experienced by Postgraduate students. The findings show that a moderate level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, with test anxiety as its main type. The results of this study can be summarized by pointing out the situations in which students' anxieties arouse and it is very crucial for students to become low anxious in the process of language learning context. These findings lead to the suggestion that teachers should raise students' awareness of how to optimize anxiety provoking factors by means of process-oriented teaching and affective language learning strategies. Anxiety and its role in language learning process need to be

understood and deserve attention from researchers, teachers and learners in order to create effective and efficient learning and teaching process.

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