

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the individual learner factors, the available learning resources, teaching and learning context and the economy and political factors that affected the learners' achievement in learning English. According to the interviews, it is true that learners had very limited learning resources and had little opportunity to learn the language due to the political and economic system. However, these limited resources or opportunities never discouraged them nor stopped them from wanting to achieve their goal. Although they admitted that they did not have the latest resources like learners have these days, they never complained about the situation they had gone through, instead, they revealed their positive attitudes towards the language.

Throughout the interviews, the two main reasons that lead them to succeed in learning English were shown. The first reason found in them was their main interest in the language (intrinsic motivation). It all started with their interest in the language itself and the books they read. Their interest was started with the books they read and the language and the music they heard. They were also attracted by the stories written in English and lyrics from the music that lead them to learn more and focus on English. Thus, it was this interest that aroused them to learn more and more and it was this interest that helped them become successful in this area.

As mentioned above, the second reason is through reading. Most of them clearly stated that reading was the main source that supplied them with the ample knowledge about English. While the change to nationalization of schools may have, in some cases, led to more sectors of society being exposed to formal education, the changes in curriculum content and the setting of lower standards led to a decline in the quality of English education. Learners, such as participant D, who were exposed to English in a mission school prior to nationalization, found the new curriculum less challenging as the material covered was at such a basic level. In participant D's case, she had to look for outside sources, such as reading copies of *Time Magazine*, to continue her interest and challenge herself to learn more. In addition, the lack of investment in education and de-emphasis on English in learning led to an overall decline in English learning in the country. Only exceptional learners with ample outside reading input, such as these participants, could supplement their English studies beyond those students exposed to English only in the basic curriculum that began at grade 5.

They further claimed that reading provided them the usage of language, new words and phrases that they could later apply in their writing and speaking skills. That time, there was no access to the broad cast media and other resources, thus, newspapers and books were the only suppliers that offered them the opportunity to develop their

language. Therefore, reading is the undeniable element that played a significant role in the participants learning achievement.

According to the interviews, participants from this study asserted that they were not extroverted but have strong will to learn that they all did well on English subject. Some of the participants might not be good at other subjects but they all were outstanding in English subject.

Another factor found here was the parental factor. Coincidentally, all of the participants' parents are highly educated people and some were good supporters through creating the language environment and providing them with the resources like books and music. Thus, the importance of the parental factor is also shown in this study that helped the participants to develop their language learning.

Self study also plays a very important role in participants' success. No one had to force the participants to try hard or learn the language. Although, their parents provided them with the learned environment, it was they themselves who were eager to learn by themselves. They knew nothing about strategies but some characteristics and strategies used by good language learners were found in them.

Last but not least, one of the factors that is hardly ever found in SLA research is religious belief. All of the participants from this study grew up in a religious, Christian family background. One of them insistently believes that her religious faith plays an important role in her learning as well as her life. On the other hand, she confesses that her success was due to her religious faith. She claims that she was not among the smart students but she believed that she could do it through God's blessings. This is nothing to do with psychological or emotional things but this is to do with the inner power of complete confidence that a person holds to her faith. The factor of religious belief is not so common to be seen in SLA studies. Therefore, this factor can be expanded to find out how the religious faith affects a person's life and to what extent it plays an important role in the learner's life. Various kinds of motivation were also found in these participants. First, it was like external motivation such as parents support but later it changed to intrinsic motivation. Then, depending on the country's economic situation, some of them had their motivation changed to instrumental motivation as getting good job and earning good salary become important for their living. On the other hand, it was likely that the reason they mainly focused on learning English in their later life is that they fundamentally believed that English is beneficial for them. To conclude, this study clearly points out that not only one factor but several reasons and factors work together to affect the learners' success.

5.1 Pedagogical implications

The study shows that all the participants learned English through formal and informal learning. However, they all showed that reading played a vital role in their language learning experiences. They did not have much literature or up to date books but used books from their parents or grandparents yet it served to increase their knowledge in English. It is through reading that they increased vocabulary, understanding of grammar rules, the language usage and writing style. Therefore, it is likely that,

reading is a good resource that can serve as a good tool in a place where teaching and learning recourses are limited.

Thus, students should be encouraged to read as it offers improvement in learning the language. The common thing that all the participants suggested to improve reading was based on their learning experiences. They suggested that learners should started reading according to their level. They should pick up books that they are interested in. For teachers, in order to make students better readers, Scrivener (2005) suggests that teachers should raise the awareness that it is not always essential for the students to understand every word and help them practice reading by doing different reading techniques. Many reading activates have been offered by CLT or EFL/ESL that teachers can apply in their teaching.

Offering authentic material according to their level and encouraging them to do extensive reading will be useful for them. According to Scrivener (2005) when we do the extensive reading we tend to fluent, faster reading, often of longer texts, for pleasure, entertainment and general understanding, but without such careful attention to the detail. Even if here are words that we do not understand, we just kept going and may be only coming back when a major breakdown occur to our understanding. Most participants from this study also do extensive reading in their daily life and it clearly shows the powerful impact on their language learning. Therefore, students should be encouraged or trained to be extensive readers as well. Above all, reading should be enjoyable so that learners will be motivated to read more and this may contribute to competence in language learning to all four skills.

Another contribution which cannot be excluded from this study is acquiring the language through music. Most of the participants claimed that listening to English songs also help them acquire the language naturally. Some of them had the strong statement about how listening helped them in their learning English. Therefore, language teacher also should count this factor as a significant contributor for language learning. According to Farrug (2008), listening to song lyrics improves comprehension skills , singing songs develops good pronunciation, singing songs increases vocabulary and speech patterns and music also aids memory. Above all music is fun. Music, singing and dancing liven up learning. Then, teachers can bring English songs and music to the classroom to make the language learning alive. Teachers can carry out the activities such as asking students to listen to music and do the gap filling, or sing along the songs to help them build up good pronunciation to mention a few. However, it is all about learning language in a fun way for Farrug (2008) stresses that when students are having fun, they are more motivated to learn. If music also has its best to contribute language learning, teachers should motivate their foreign language students with music to enhance their language skill.

As English language learners, they should also be encouraged to use English with each other as much as possible inside or outside the classroom. Most of the participants claimed that Burmese language was used in teaching English with no classroom activity or communicative way that students were obviously learning English with no fun. The teacher centered method occurred in the classroom and as a result students could not produce the language verbally. Moreover, language and culture are always related but students were learning without knowing the native

speakers' culture or context. Therefore, the teachers can make the classroom to be more active by creating the real life activities and introducing English culture. Teachers can make the classroom to become more active by creating the real life activities and introducing English culture. Dornyei (2001) has suggested some of the activities that can be used in the EFL classes, but some of these activities could not be done according to Myanmar's political and economic situation. However, we can try to integrate with our available resources. Dornyei suggestions are as follow with suggestions on how to make it more possible for some of the impossible, given Myanmar's context.

1. Use English cultural products such as magazines, music, and movies as course material. (This is possible nowadays as the technologies are used and available widely)
2. Invite some English guest speakers to the class. (This cannot be possible for some of the areas but the teachers or the classroom should not be discouraged if they cannot have English guest speakers. There are many people who are native like speakers and qualified English speakers who can use English fluently. Thus, we can make it possible for the class by inviting those speakers to provide the class with the opportunity to practice listening as well as speaking)
3. Encourage students to have some English speaking pen-friends. (This is a good suggestion and also possible for Myanmar learners as there are some English magazines that provide the pen-friends program. By having pen-friends learners can improve their reading and writing skill).
4. Arrange some school trips or an exchange program to an English speaking Country. (Although the idea is good, it is also the most expensive one. As more and more tourists visit Myanmar, it is possible to take the learners to the local tourists' attraction places and encourage them to use the language with the tourists. Thus, this is less expensive and learners can have real communication in the real world).

This kind of activity provides opportunity for students to engage with the four skills and offers the students to apply the language they have learned in the real world. Some of the participants openly comments on their teachers for lacking the ability and not so qualified to teach with no teachers' knowledge and teachers' education. Thus, the study also shows that it is necessary for the English teaching teachers from Myanmar to access themselves with the outside world to explore the up to date teaching methodology and materials. Therefore, teachers should be trained for the classroom management, teaching- learning interactions in the classroom. Teacher education and Teacher knowledge should also be given to the teachers so that they may be able to manage the classroom effectively with the variety of classroom activities to help the students interested in their language learning.

Teachers should also be aware of the students' motivation as it is one of the key factors in this study. The participants in this study were highly motivated in their learning. When participant E was in his high school, he was extrinsically motivated by his teacher who promised the award if the students could get the distinction in English. This highly motivated him that he tried his best to win the award. Finally, he was the only one who won the prize in his class. According to his case, motivation derived from his teacher vividly played an important role in his achievement in high

school. Hence, teachers should be aware that they can also be the source of providing motivation that they should do whatever they can to motivate the learners. For example, teachers can motivate students by providing awards and praising instead of giving punishment. Teachers can also try many ways to gain students' intrinsic interest by using communicative language activates as well. For example, in doing academic tasks, teachers can use authentic literature and choose activities that might be fun for students, and focusing on content that has cultural relevance. Helping students set their language learning goal can also increase their motivation. Training them to set goal can help the learners see what/how they are doing clearly. By doing so, the learners' motivation will be increased and it will help them in pursuing their learning goal.

This study also proves that learner autonomy is also essential to successful language learning as the participants from this study were more independent in their language learning. However, according to the interviews from this study, it also shows that it is a tradition or belief that students rely too much on their teachers. Thus, teachers can help learners to understand their learning goal in order to be successful in reaching their goals. Learners also have to be aware of their learning style to be more autonomous in their learning. Teachers also need to make themselves aware of the different learning styles to help the students become more autonomous. The study also shows that the text books from the schools were dry and boring. Thus, teachers can help the students by creating interesting tasks as tasks or activities will enable the students to be more proactive and to participate in the learning process. Tasks such as creating authentic materials by asking students to write journals and diaries (Carroll, 1994) and giving assignments or projects which require the students to work in pairs and groups that the dry and boring class can become more interactive and promote the learner autonomy.

Therefore, teachers also need to be aware of students' motivations, interests, learning strategies and learning styles to create tasks that will meet the students' needs. This kind of knowledge should be introduced to the teachers. Hence, last but not least, government educators and researchers should try to provide for the learners and teachers' needs in the neglected areas by giving training to teachers to be affective in their teaching so that they can again train their students to be affective learners.

5.2 Recommendations for future studies

Researchers have studied the factors that affect the individual learners' success but still the result left unclear of which factor has the most impact on the learners' achievement as learning is a complex concept. However, according to this study, there are more than one factor which play the key roles in learners' achievement. This study was carried out only from the learners' perspective. For further study, the valuable studies should be done on the individual teachers' factors that affect the language teaching and learning in the limited or neglected area as the teacher can cause either positive or negative impacts on students.

This current study was to investigate the successful learners and factor affecting their success. However, it could only focus on the small size of the participants such that it cannot assure to get the same result if the similar study is carried out with different

participants from different backgrounds and different ethnic groups. The participants from this study were brought up in a city, their parents were well educated and they are from the same ethnic group and the same religious background. Thus, recommendations can be made for those who might want to conduct further studies in the same setting with this generation including those from other areas and participants with different professions and different backgrounds. Further studying can be carried out in smaller district areas or other neglected rural areas.

This study focuses more on the individual learning factors that affect the learners' achievement. Thus, it can be fruitful if further research can study more on the individuals who fail to achieve their goals so that different factors and different stories can be explored. In the meantime, other qualitative research could be conducted to study the other factors which have been found to differentiate successful and unsuccessful learners in Myanmar contexts such as aptitude, gender, religious belief and socioeconomic status.

The result of this study is hoped to shed the light on focusing for the future research into this important but neglected context. The findings of the study also show that most of the factors found in this study play major roles in the learners' achievement. It is all the factors that work together to form success for these individuals. However, it is hard to predict which factor work better and which is not. Therefore, more studies should be carried out in this individual factor to contribute to the individual learner's need.