

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

In today's interconnected world, the concept of communicative competence has become essential in language education. This term refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately across different social contexts, going beyond grammatical knowledge. Canale and Swain (1980) identified four key components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. This comprehensive view enables learners to engage in meaningful conversations, handle social situations, express complex ideas, and follow cultural norms. Effective communication demands not only a strong grasp of linguistic skills but also an understanding of how to apply these skills in real-life scenarios (Widdowson, 1978). Teachers must be equipped with strategies to foster these competencies, creating a dynamic learning environment that promotes practice and interaction. However, challenges remain in implementing these strategies, particularly in grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic aspects. Approaches and methodologies also differ between countries, especially Myanmar and Indonesia, due to factors such as educational policies, teacher training, curriculum design, and access to resources. Differences in medium of instruction, pedagogical practices, and cultural contexts further shape English teaching and learning, leading to varied student outcomes.

Indonesia's educational landscape has transformed with the introduction of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Freedom Curriculum), which focuses on student-centered learning and enhancing communicative skills. This curriculum offers both teachers and students the flexibility and independence needed to create a more personalized educational experience (Sari & Sari, 2021). Specifically, Kurikulum Merdeka prioritizes communicative competence by encouraging teachers to create interactive learning environments. In these settings, students engage in activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and projects to practice English in meaningful contexts (Yulia, 2014). This method not only helps students in grasping grammatical rules but also equips them with the ability to use their language

skills in practical situations (Hockly, 2023). Furthermore, the curriculum encourages the incorporation of technology into language teaching, allowing educators to leverage digital tools and online resources to boost student engagement. However, challenges persist in its execution, particularly concerning teacher training and the availability of resources, especially in rural areas where access to educational materials can be scarce (Peláez, 2008). Despite these challenges, Kurikulum Merdeka marks a significant advancement in enhancing English language instruction in Indonesia by promoting essential communication competence needed in today's interconnected world. (Falah et al, 2023)

Learning English is essential in Myanmar as well. It also shares English as a foreign language with Indonesia. Although English language instruction begins at the primary school level in Myanmar, the nation faces significant challenges in achieving widespread English fluency, particularly in rural areas where teaching resources are inadequate (Lwin & Richards, 2019). Despite these limitations, there has been growing enthusiasm for English learning among youth and working adults, who recognize English proficiency as essential for connecting with the global community (Mar, 2020). While English is gaining popularity and became a necessity in Myanmar, significant gaps remain between urban and rural areas with overall fluency rates remaining relatively low compared to Myanmar's neighbouring countries. Therefore, strengthening both policies and resources for English language education could provide major economic benefits (Lwin & Richards, 2019).

This research is driven by the challenges faced by English teachers in fostering communicative competence in Myanmar and Indonesia. Differences in terms of policies, teacher training, resources and cultural aspects as well as the issues faced further influence teaching practices and students' outcomes. Therefore, this research adopts a qualitative approach paired with semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis guided by the Communicative Competence Framework by Canale and Swain (1980), aiming to have an in-depth understanding of the key challenges, differences and to improve English language education in both contexts.

Understanding the challenges of teaching communicative competence in Myanmar and Indonesia requires sensitivity to both context and classroom realities. As a researcher

with personal experience in Myanmar's educational system, I acknowledge that my interpretations were shaped by both an insider's understanding and an academic distance, and I worked continuously to let participants' perspectives emerge without distortion.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions of this study are as follows,

1. What are the challenges faced by English teachers in Myanmar and Indonesia in teaching English communication competence?
2. What are the key differences in teaching perspectives and practices between Myanmar and Indonesia in fostering communicative competence?
3. What factors contribute to the challenges and differences in teaching practices and perspectives between the two countries?

1.3. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions above, this research aims to

1. To identify the challenges faced by English teachers in Myanmar and Indonesia in teaching English communication skills.
2. To compare the teaching perspectives and practices of English teachers in fostering communicative competence between the two countries.
3. To analyze the factors contributing to the challenges and differences in teaching practices and perspectives.
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1.4 Research Significance

In addition to identifying the challenges and effective practices in promoting communicative competence among English teachers in Myanmar and Indonesia, this research has significant implications for educational policy and practice in both countries. The insights gathered from teachers' perspectives can inform curriculum reforms that prioritize interactive and student-centered approaches, which enhances students' real-world

communication skills. Furthermore, these findings show the necessity for specialized teacher training programs that equip educators with effective strategies to promote communicative competence, addressing both language proficiency and cultural awareness.

Improving English language education not only helps individual learners but also fosters societal advancement by boosting employability and facilitating international collaboration. As countries continue to interact in a globalized world, proficient English speakers will be crucial for driving economic growth and enhancing diplomatic ties. Moreover, this research sets the stage for future research into the lasting impact of enhanced communication skills on students' academic success and their participation in global situations.

By examining the distinct educational environments of Myanmar and Indonesia, this research also offers valuable insights that could serve as a model for other nations facing similar challenges in English language education. The implications of this study reach beyond immediate educational settings, potentially influencing broader societal changes associated with enhanced communication competence.

1.5 Limitations of the Research

The research focused on the teaching methods of a small group of English teachers in Myanmar and Indonesia, specifically from areas like Yangon (Myanmar) and Jambi (Indonesia). This sample may not accurately reflect the wider population of English teachers in these two diverse countries. Factors such as geography, socio-economic status, and culture likely shape teaching practices and viewpoints, and these variations may not be fully represented in this study. By focusing on urban teachers, the selection criteria inherently limit the applicability of the findings to rural settings, where resources, challenges, and teaching conditions can differ greatly. Although efforts were made to include a diverse array of participants with different levels of experience and educational backgrounds, the findings still represent a narrow range of perspectives. To assess whether the proposed strategies and effective methods can be applied in various regions, further research involving a wider selection of locations and schools would be advantageous. While this study offers valuable

initial insights, more research is necessary to confirm and broaden the findings to encompass a wider array of teaching contexts.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This section consists of the key words that will be used in this thesis. The aim is to make it simpler for the reader to understand while reading throughout the thesis. The key terms related to this thesis are challenges, methodology and communicative competence:

- “Challenges” according to the Cambridge Dictionary is a circumstance where one requires a great deal of mental and physical effort in order to complete something successfully, testing one's competence and ability. This research will investigate the challenges faced by English teachers in Myanmar and Indonesia.
- English teaching practices refers to the various methods, strategies, and techniques that educators employ to assist students in learning the English language. These practices can differ based on educational objectives, cultural backgrounds, available resources, and the specific needs of students. Typically, they focus on enhancing students' proficiency in the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Communicative competence refers to a student's ability to comprehend and use the English language correctly for interpersonal communication in everyday contexts. It includes not just grammatical knowledge but also the capacity to utilize language in a variety of situations while accounting for pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors. This covers the use of communication techniques, appropriateness, cohesiveness, coherence, and general communication proficiency. Learners' communicative competency is frequently developed through the use of communicative language teaching methodologies. (Tarvin, 2014)