Perceptions of Students and Teachers towards Relationship between University Environment and English Language Learning

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Abstract

Academic success of language learners is not only determined by their level of intelligence, but it is also associated with the learning environment provided to them. The current study is an attempt to investigate the factors which affect learning environment of English language learners at government universities. In this context a questionnaire survey-based research design was used by following interviews. The statistics revealed that English curriculum meets students' needs in practical ways (Mean=4.18). The teachers also favour the statement that they always facilitate students with the material they need (Mean=4.15). The data also revealed that most teachers are fairly qualified to train them in student centred classroom; the mean score shows 4.00. The teachers always encourage their students to take part in university activities according to

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their interests as the average mean score was 3.90. It is evident that teachers probably facilitate dynamic and active teaching strategies and lesson planning for all the students as the mean score was 4.05. Regarding teachers and learners' perspective about availability of resources at university, students strongly agreed with the statements that language labs are available at their university. Findings of the study revealed that the role of environment is rated central and important in creating skill-based student-centred classrooms. Myanmar students are also satisfied regarding their learning environment. The paper recommends that the existing facilities should be upgraded and significantly improved by the government; urgent attention should be given to the development of the internet facilities of the University.

Keywords: English language learning, Relationship, University
                     environment,

Introduction

Education is the continuous process of learning from experience while removing unwanted experiments and continuing with the wanted experiments. Moreover, it is the developmental process of such characteristics among the students which enable them to control their environment (LeClair, 2002). The role of environment becomes more crucial in case of learning second or foreign languages. English proficiency skills can be acquired and utilized well in a learning friendly environment. Overall, it can be concluded that university environment plays a significant role in the performance of the students and their language achievement.

Literature Review

Facilities related to infrastructure mean those facilities which were provided to the students in the vicinities of university building. A study conducted by Fisher (2001) shows that there is positive correlation between the university infrastructure and students learning outcomes along with their behavior changes. It is mostly observed that students learn more when a suitable social environment is provided to them in university. The university is the

place of incredible importance in education. The learning environment is directly proportional to the language achievements of learners. Better university environment not only improves their learning but also helps in lessening the drop-out of the students (Battin, et al, 2000). Poor indoor environment of the classroom affects students' performance badly. Teachers use different strategies which are useful for the transfer of information. Therefore, it is necessary that classroom should be professionally designed with proper air and lighting conditions. Rooms should be airy and spacious enough to accommodate all students. Furthermore, classrooms must be equipped with audio visual aids, learning kits, and language related stuff. A good language classroom must be looked like a language laboratory like computer, biology, chemistry and physics laboratories at university.

Digital literacy and computer mediated technology have made university environment learner friendly. However, the university reforming and revolution plan is much slower than the need and expectations. English enjoys the status of foreign language in Myanmar for many decades. This study investigated the role and need of university environment on the healthy and productive learning of ELLs.

Research Objectives

To investigate the impact of university environmental factors on the performance of English language learners (ELL)

Methodology

The current study was descriptive in nature and survey-based research framework was adopted to collect data.

1. Research Design

Research design is given much importance in methodological framework of any study as it works as the blueprint for the study (Blaxter, 2010). Research design helps the researcher to follow a proper road map in order to achieve research objectives.

2. Population and Samples

The population parameter was the students from the government universities of Myanmar. The accessible population was taken from selected universities including English specialization students (n=211) at these universities were selected by using convenient sampling technique.

Table 1

Demographic Data of English Specialization Students (n=211)

SN	Variables		Number	Total	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	38	211	18.01%
		Female	173		81.99%
2.	Years of study	Second Year	62		29.38%
		Third Year	70	211	33.18%
		Fourth Year	79		37.44%

Table 2

Demographic Data of English Teachers (n=33)

SN	Variables		Number	Total	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	13	33	39.39%
		Female	20		60.61%
2.	Teaching experience	1 to 5 years	10		30.30%
		6 to 10 years	12	33	36.36%
		11+ years	11		33.34%

Table 3

Demographic Data of University Administrative Officials (n=17)

SN	Variables		Number	Total	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	5	17	29.41%
		Female	12		70.59%
2.	Length of service	1 to 5 years	3		17.65%
		6 to 10 years	7	17	41.17%
		11+ years	7		41.18%

3. Instrument(s) and Procedures

A questionnaire was used to collect data from students about the effect of university environment on the academic performance of the students. This questionnaire consisted of different components. Each component consisted of different statements and five-point Likert like scale was given to the participants to scale their responses. Interview survey was also done with university authorities.

Results

The data collected from questionnaire revealed opinions of students related to different factors which affect learning mechanism of EFL learners at Myanmar universities. The results obtained from questionnaires are discussed based on research questions: What type of factors can play significant role in developing good English language learning environment at university?

Table 4 reflects teachers' perceptions on curriculum and educational materials about university environment.

Table 4

Teachers' Perceptions on Curriculum and Educational Materials (n=33)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
1	The English curriculum meets students' needs in practical ways.	4.18	0.79	Often
2	Students have acquaintance with enrichment material and other resources.	4.15	0.80	Often
3	The institution is helpful in providing resource material for teaching.	3.73	0.78	Often
4	Teachers are facilitated with computer assisted language teaching in university.	3.75	0.78	Often

Table 4 (continued)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
5	English teachers and students' achievements are acknowledged properly.	3.86	0.83	Often
	Average	3.93	0.80	Often

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Note. 1.00-1.80=Never, 1.81-2.60=Seldom, 2.61-3.40=Sometimes, 3.41-4.20=Often, 4.21-5.00=Always.

The statistics in Table 4 revealed that English curriculum meets students' needs in practical ways (Mean=4.18). The teachers also favor the statement that they always facilitate students with the material they need (Mean=4.15). Furthermore, English teachers and students' achievements are acknowledged properly as the calculated mean score of teachers was 3.86. Moreover, average mean score 3.93 shows that university often facilitate them with the satisfactory supply of curriculum and educational materials.

English teachers' teaching capacity has been investigated and analyzed in Table 5. Accordingly, the role of teaching capacity is the most important factor of university environment and improvement plan, and it determines language learning performance of English language learners.

Table 5

Students' Perspective on English Teachers' Teaching Capacity (n=211)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
1	English teachers devise and revise lesson plans regularly.	3.85	0.80	Fairly qualified
2	Teachers use student-centered approach in language classroom.	4.00	0.80	Fairly qualified
3	Teachers encourage cooperative and collaborative learning in class.	3.79	0.80	Fairly qualified
4	English teachers are flexible in using different teaching techniques.	3.74	0.77	Fairly qualified

Table 5 (continued)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
5	Students are encouraged to develop decision making habits in university.	3.93	0.79	Fairly qualified
6	Student's classroom participation is encouraged by their teachers.	3.84	0.81	Fairly qualified
	Average	3.86	0.79	Fairly qualified

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.
Note. 1.00-1.80=Very unqualified, 1.81-2.60= Somewhat unqualified, 2.61-3.40=Don't know, 3.41-4.20= Fairly qualified, 4.21-5.00= Very qualified.

The data collected from the questionnaires revealed that most teachers trained them in student centered classroom; the mean score shows 4.00. Moreover, they also stated that teachers often use methodologies which were suitable for their age as their mean score was calculated as 3.74. Students also stated that teachers always encourage their students to think and make decisions independently as the mean score was 3.93. Data shows that teachers regularly prepare lesson plans and encourage students' participation adequately (Mean=3.85).

Table 6 shows statistics collected from the questionnaires and revealed the students' participation in university activities according to their interests.

Table 6
Teachers' Perspective on Students' Participation (n=33)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
1	Students focus to acquire language and life skills in university.	3.81	0.83	Often
2	ELLs participate in art and co-curricular activities at university.	3.91	0.82	Often
3	Students participate in curricular and extracurricular activities with interest.	3.99	0.86	Often
	Average	3.90	0.84	Often

The data revealed that teachers often encourage their students to take part in university activities according to their interests as the average mean score was 3.90. Students stated that teachers often encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings through art and other activities as the mean score was 3.91. Students, according to their abilities, learn the basics skills for writing, reading and necessary life skills as the mean score was 3.81.

Table 7 describes learners' perspective about university environment.

Table 7

Students' Perspective on Learning Environment (n=211)

SN	Statement	M	SD	Measurement
1	Learning environment is stable, dynamic and pleasant in university.	4.03	0.76	Good
2	University has established library and learning corners.	4.01	0.75	Good
3	Teaching strategies and lesson planning are conducive to learning English.	4.05	0.75	Good
4	Students are made aware of the outcomes of English teaching strategies.	3.90	0.80	Good
	Average	4.00	0.77	Good

It is evident that teachers probably facilitate dynamic and active teaching strategies and lesson planning for all the students as the mean score was 4.05. However, only some of the students stated that they are made aware of the outcomes of English teaching strategies (Mean=3.90).

The following table shows the extent of usage of resources at university. The statistics revealed that English literature books, grammar books, world atlas/ maps or geography charts. Monolingual dictionaries are available at maximum level for the students at university library. Whereas some of the

teachers stated that language labs and English movies for language teaching are available at minimum level. It is evident from the results that students and teachers randomly use resources for their learning and teaching purposes.

Table 8

Students' perspective on availability of resources

SN	Statement	Mean	SD	Measurement
1	English literature books are available at university library.	3.85	0.82	Agree
2	Language labs is are available at my university.	4.23	0.66	Strongly agree
3	English movies are available for language teaching.	3.51	0.69	Agree
4	English grammar books are available at university library.	3.31	0.52	Not sure
5	CDs of spoken language are available at my university.	3.70	0.71	Agree
6	World atlas / Maps or geography charts are available at university library.	3.56	0.77	Agree
7	Dictionaries are available for language teaching at my university.	4.17	0.73	Agree
	Average	3.76	0.70	Agree

Note. 1.00-1.80= Strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60= Disagree, 2.61-3.40=Not sure, 3.41-4.20= Agree, 4.21-5.00=Strongly agree.

Table 8 compares head teachers, teachers and learners' perspective about availability of resources at university. The data revealed that students strongly agreed with the statements that Language labs are available at their university (Mean=4.23). English dictionaries are available at university library as the mean scores was 4.17. Whereas some of the teachers were just agreed with the statement that university has English literature books, English movies, CDs of spoken language and World atlas / Maps or geography charts are shown for language teaching purpose; the mean scores were 3.85, 3.51, 3.70 and 3.56 respectively.

Discussion

According to Byoung-suk (2012), students need safe, healthy and stimulating environment to grow and to learn where they can get better nourishment. It is a general observation that students spend 6 to 8 hours at university. Furthermore, students spend some of the time in the grounds, corridors or yards of the university. Therefore, it is necessary that they should be provided such environment which can groom their hidden skills. This condition needs careful planning and its designing make it possible to achieve objectives like education, health and stewardship. Thus, university environment occupies a paramount status in shaping and reshaping the intellectual abilities. Moreover, favourable university environment, having enough learning/teaching facilities makes students more comfortable to learn in comfortable environment, where they can concentrate on their academic, physical and mental growth. Thus, university environment plays a significant role in the development of the students. The education process occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment of the university. Therefore, it is necessary that university provide a favourable environment where students get enough stimuli for learning English language.

Recommendations

Present study suggests that university environment plays a significant role on the academic achievements of the students. Findings obtained from the respondents indicate that university environment influences the achievements of the learners. The data also highlighted that university curriculum and educational materials, teachers' teaching capacity, students' participation learning environment and availability of resources at universities have positive impact on the academic achievements of EFL students and enhance their language learning performance. It is remarked that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the academic performance of university students. However, the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic has not affected only university students, but also higher education teaching institution staff, whose job performance may consequently affect their sustainability. Therefore, for further research, different analyses can be

carried out on the variables mentioned in this study and include other variables that could affect learning, in addition to combining both the perceptions of university students and teachers. In conclusion, the factors which influence students' performance and their achievements include appropriate teaching methodology, smart and skilled teachers and favourable learning atmosphere facilitate language learning opportunities at universities.

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