

Comparing English Learning of University Students in Japan and Myanmar

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A Master's thesis submitted to Osaka Jogakuin University Graduate School
of International Collaboration and Coexistence in the 21st Century,
in fulfillment for degree requirements

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January 31, 2017

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to my parents who have been supporting my education until this time. Secondly, I would like to say heartfelt thanks to my advisor, Professor Scott.R.Johnston, for his precious advice, outstanding guidance, and incredible efforts for implementing my research. Thirdly, I would like to say thank you to Professor Mitsuru Kurosawa, Professor Masahiro Nishii, Professor Kozo Kagawa, Professor Hitoshi Mabuchi, Professor Mitsuko Maeda, Professor Steve Cornwell, and other professors who provided me with their precious instructions till the end of my thesis. Fourthly, let me thank all the university teachers and students from Japan and Myanmar who enthusiastically participated in questionnaires and essays. Finally, thank you so much to the staff of Osaka Jogakuin University, all my classmates and friends who encouraged me to write a productive thesis until the end.

Abstract

The reason why I did this research was firstly to compare English learning of university students in Japan and Myanmar, secondly to find out strengths and weaknesses in the context of English learning, and lastly to suggest solutions to make improvements. The main research question is “How is the English learning of university students in Japan and Myanmar similar or different?” There are mainly three parts in this thesis: students’ attitudes towards English learning, teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ English learning, and students’ actual writing abilities. I used a combination of quantitative methods and qualitative methods with questionnaires and essays. The first key result is that Myanmar university students say they have more knowledge of English language learning than Japanese students. The second key result is that while many Myanmar teachers are satisfied with the current English education system of Myanmar, most Japanese teachers are dissatisfied with the current English education system of Japan. The third key result is that although most Myanmar teachers would like to make changes in teaching methods, most Japanese teachers would like the system to change. The final key result is that Myanmar students are better English writers than Japanese students.

Chapter 1 Introduction

English has been widely used by different people all over the world for different purposes. For example, students in non-English speaking countries learn English to take exams, which they need to pass in order to study abroad, such as TOEFL and IELTS. Domestic companies employ English as a way to do cooperation with foreign companies. Technological developers have to read books and articles written in English so that they can be up-to-date with the newest technologies.

Let me include my experience. I graduated from University of Foreign Languages, Mandalay, Myanmar. My specialization was English. After graduation, I realized that my reading, listening, and writing skills had improved. However, I noticed that I was not able to build confidence in speaking English. When I was in second year at university, I started learning Japanese. After graduation, I decided to continue my studies in Japan. When I came to Japan, I found out that Japanese students did not have confidence mainly in English writing skill. From that time, I started wondering that there might be some problems in the English Education of both countries (Myanmar and Japan).

Table 1.1 Average TOEFL ibt scores for Myanmar and Japanese Students in 2015

	Reading scores	Writing scores	Listening scores	Speaking scores	Total scores
Myanmar students	19	20	20	21	80
Japanese students	18	17	17	18	71

I searched the average marks both Myanmar and Japanese students got in TOEFL ibt tests. According to ETS (2015), the average scores Myanmar students got in each section were 19 points in reading, 20 points in listening, 20 points in speaking, 21 points in writing, and totaled in 80 points. According to the same data, the average scores Japanese students got in each section were 18 points in reading, 17 points in listening, 17 points in speaking, 18 points in writing, and totaled in 71 points. This was interesting. Starting from these bases, I began to consider that each country's English education reflects its students' and teachers'

attitudes towards learning English and the students' English abilities.

In this research, I will find similarities and differences between students' attitudes towards learning English from both countries. Next, I will analyze teachers' attitudes towards learning English from both countries. Then, I will make comparisons of the English writing abilities of Myanmar and Japanese students. Finally, I will try to make suggestions for better improvement.

Chapter 2 Contextual Background

English Education System in Myanmar

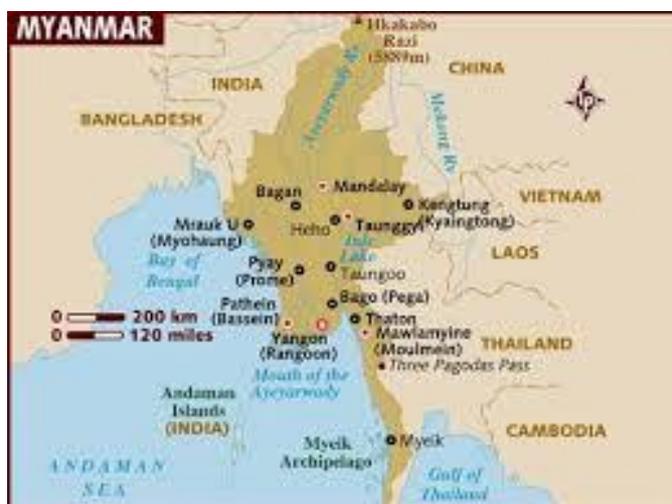


Figure 2.1 Map of Myanmar, (Lonely Planet, n.d.)

Myanmar is a country situated in South-East Asia. In Myanmar, formal English education starts from primary school, (Ministry of Education, Myanmar, n.d). In junior high school, teaching English grammar is emphasized, and ways to write different types of essays and letters are taught from the last year of junior high school. In senior high school, textbooks for all science subjects and mathematics except for Myanmar language are in English. At the tertiary level, for non-English specialization students, they have to take English as a compulsory subject until the second year, (Ministry of Education, Myanmar, n.d).

Below is the school system in Myanmar.

Table 2.1 School system in Myanmar

Primary School	Junior High School	Senior High School	University
5-10 years old (5 years)	10 -14 years old (4 years)	14-16 years old (2 years)	16 to 20 years old (4 years)
			College
			16 to 18 years old (2 years)

(Myanmar Education System)

English Education System in Japan



Figure 2.2 Map of Japan (Lonely Planet, n.d.)

Japan is a country situated in East Asia. In Japan, formal English education starts from junior high school. Teaching grammar is focused on in junior high school. There is little practice for essay and letter writings in junior high school. In senior high school, textbooks for all subjects except English are taught in Japanese. For writing, there are generally two forms: writing a short English paragraph, and translating a paragraph from Japanese to English and vice versa. At the tertiary level, whether English is a compulsory subject or not, and until which year, depends on each university, (MEXT, 2017).

Below is the school system in Japan.

Table 2.2 School system in Japan

Primary School	Junior High School	Senior High School	University
6-12 years old (6 years)	12 - 15years old (3years)	15-18years old (3 years)	18 to 22 years old (4 years)
			College
			18 to 12 years old (2 years)

(Japanese School System, n.d.)

Chapter 3 Literature Review

History of English Education in Myanmar

King Anawratha founded Myanmar (former Burma) in the 11th century, (Canadian friends of Burma, n.d.). At that time, Burma stood as an independent country. However, a series of monarchs attempted to establish their absolute rule, with varying degrees of success. After three Anglo-Burmese wars over a period of 60 years, the British completed their colonization of the country in 1886, Burma was immediately annexed as a province of British India, and the British began to permeate the ancient Burmese culture with foreign elements (Canadian friends of Burma, n.d.). Burmese customs were often weakened by the imposition of British traditions.

Among these foreign elements, introducing English to the curriculum taught in Myanmar schools was included. From that time, the two languages, Myanmar and English, have not received the same attention, due to political and socio-economic changes in the country (Aye, 1993).

In the colonial era, English, which was the language of colonial power, became the most important language in Myanmar, owing to the belief that “an English education brought great social and economic advantages” (Allot, 1985, p.138). However, the situation changed in 1920. A university strike broke out in 1920 due to the reason that since English was used as a medium of instruction at school, students were afraid of losing Myanmar language, culture, and values (Aung-Thwin, 2012). Consequentially, national schools in which Myanmar was used as the medium of instruction were established. Following the country’s independence in 1948, Myanmar absolutely became the official language while the use of English could continue. The name, Burma, was also changed into the Union of Myanmar.

Between the years 1948 and 1965, there were two types of schools in the Union of Myanmar: government schools in which Myanmar was used as a medium of instruction and private schools run by Christian missions in which English was used as the medium of instruction.

In 1964, the New Education System was introduced and all schools became state-run schools under a single uniform system, with Myanmar as the sole medium of instruction at all levels. English was introduced from the first year of middle school. The status of English was nominated as a foreign language (Aye, 1993).

Nevertheless, in the late 1970s, concerns over the declining standards of English in schools and universities resulted in the awareness that it was crucial for a person to have both a mastery of Myanmar and English. This led to high-level seminars held by the Ministry of Education to discuss the role of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Myanmar (Allot, 1985, p. 142).

Thus, starting from the academic year 1985-86, English became the medium of instruction in all schools. Also at universities, English is taught as a compulsory subject and Myanmar as the medium of instruction. In professional institutes such as institutes of Medicine, institute of Technologies and in specialized studies such as English, International Relations and International Administration, English is used as the medium of instruction. All graduate and post-graduate studies are conducted in English (Aye, 1993). Moreover, English has been taught as a compulsory subject from kindergarten and used as a medium of instruction at the upper secondary level for Science subjects and Economics (Fen, 2005). English again plays an important role in the school curriculum. This has had a tremendous impact on ELT and the current English education system in Myanmar.

Current English Education at Higher Education Level in Myanmar

In 2000, an English language task force was established in order to improve English Language Teaching (ELT) in Myanmar (Paw, 2015). From 2002, ELT Conferences were performed at the National Center for English Language on a variety of topics named New Paradigms for Teaching and Learning English in Myanmar, Effective Teaching, Effective Testing, Linguistics Studies for language and Literature Teaching and so on (Paw, 2015). Paw stated that in 2004, the name “The Task Force” was changed to “The national Center for English Language (NCEL). The objective was to meet the necessities of the English language

skills of a lifelong learning society.

Moreover, NCEL has proposed employing new methodology rooted in the concepts of team teaching. Furthermore, it has introduced activities like plays, impromptu talks, debates, and round-table discussions in English to schools and universities. With the aim of powering up English language capacity in Myanmar, NCEL has conducted short- and long-term training plans for training teachers, school principals, and education officers from all educational levels. These training plans also include opportunities to take part in workshops, seminars, and conferences in ASEAN nations and in English speaking countries (Paw, 2015).

According to Paw (2005), in the 2004-2005 academic year, an undergraduate BA degree course (English for Professional Purpose) was proposed. The motive was to fulfill the human resource requirements of the public and private organizations. The course was recommended to students who would like to prepare themselves for their future careers. The modules at that time were Business English, Presentation Skills and Public Speaking Skills, English in the Media, Translation and Interpretation Skills, English for Tourism and Hospitality, as well as English for Meetings and Negotiation Skills.

In 2006, the curricula and syllabuses in the higher education sector were revised. Recognizing the need to do more cooperation with ASEAN nations, the English Department introduced “ASEAN Literature in English” as a subject in the curriculum of the English literature course (Paw, 2015).

In 2012, the higher education sector curricula were reviewed. To make the higher education curricula and syllabus in Myanmar updated to the courses in most ASEAN nations, three-year degree courses were lengthened to four-year courses. Therefore, the syllabus for English specialization was modified. The new module, “Interpretation,” was proposed for English specialization students and teachers were also provided training courses (Upgrading the Quality of Teachers and Students at the Basic and Higher Education Sectors, 2014).

In the sector of international collaborations, since 2010, Myanmar has gained short-term and long-term assistance to enhance ELT. Assistance includes giving scholarships

to students and the English faculty to study in English language speaking countries, and by dispatching English professors and teacher trainers to Myanmar universities (ICEF Monitor, 2013).

In addition, in order to promote ELT in Myanmar, TV lessons are being broadcast targeting at students, faculty, and the general public. The NCEL produces lessons telecast through learning centers located in universities and through public TV channels and local TV station telecast them (Paw, 2015).

Paw (2015) also stated that starting from 1998, the Human Resource Development Program for the Higher Education was introduced. Over the ten years leading up to 2013, over 8,322 civil service personnel graduated from the Post-graduate Diploma Course in English run under this program.

Current Issues of English Learning in Myanmar

There are some issues in English Learning of Myanmar stated by a number of researchers. The first issue is “Curriculum”. According to Sein (2015), in Myanmar, until 1995, students attended university for four years in order to pursue their first degrees and studied English as a compulsory subject for non-English specialization students.

From 1996 to 2012, three-year courses were introduced to English specialization students. Sein (2015) mentioned that until that time, for English course, the same reading texts were employed, reading was mainly focused though speaking and listening were neglected.

The second issue is teachers’ quality. (Sein), 2015, states that it has become crucial to build the capacity of English teachers at all levels, by supporting training on English Language Teaching methodologies in order to be able to build confidence in teaching English via communicative approach. Soe (2015) also mentioned that there was a gap between English proficiency of teachers and students. According to her, there were cases in which some teachers were less proficient and less fluent in speaking than their students.

The third issue is class size. According to Win (1997) and Soe (2015), levels of the

students' English are different, so if the class is too big, it will be difficult to communicate with individual students. So, throughout 20 years, students have still been encountering the same issue. Sein (2015) also mentions that students need opportunities to communicate in English rather than as a subject to be memorized and repeated.

The fourth issue is that most students do not have confidence in speaking English. This may be connected to large class size since students cannot get many chances to speak English or to answer questions (Win, 1997). Win also reveals the problem of using teacher-centered teaching methods. In such kind of teaching method, the teacher rules the class. As a result, the students will be discouraged to participate in class activities.

My previous experience in learning English was focused almost exclusively on reading, writing, and grammar. I was made to listen to what the teachers said rather than to speak myself. This discouraged me to speak English confidently. Win (1997) also mentions that most students do not seem to realize that they attain benefits from speaking or listening to their classmates. Win also connects this issue to Myanmar culture. Win states like this: "Some students, particularly girls in a traditional society like Myanmar, are too shy to speak loudly and to be active participants in front of the whole class".

The fifth issue is the content of English tests. Until 2012, the same reading texts were applied and the main emphasis was on reading, not on speaking and listening. Testing was also a combination of reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing, (Sein, 2015). Win (1997), also states that most English language tests rarely include speaking.

All in all, previous researchers discussed five issues: curriculum, teachers' quality, class size, confidence in speaking, and the content of English tests.

History of English Education in Japan

The origin of English Education in Japan came from the Treaty of Peace and Amity, also called the Treaty of Kanagawa, opening the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to American trade and permitting the establishment of a U.S. consulate in Japan which Japan concluded with the United States in 1854 (Treaty of Kanagawa signed with Japan - Mar 31, 1854). In the same year, the Japanese government began to learn from the West and this also affected its English education system (Adamson, 2006).

According to Adamson (2006), tracking general English education system would make us understand the current complicated challenges of English education system. One can track the history of English education in Japan through four eras, namely Meiji Era, Taisho Era, Showa Era, and Heisei Era.

First of all, the Meiji Era started in 1868 and ended in 1911. The ambition of the Japanese government in this era was to make the whole country modernized (Lofsgaard, 2015). The first part of the Meiji period (approximately 1868 – 1881) can be summarized as being 'English boom' (Adamson, 2006). In 1871, the Ministry of Education was newly founded. The Ministry decided to dispatch Japanese students to Western countries to let them absorb as much technological knowledge as possible. Imura (2003) also mentions the five young girls the Ministry of Education sent to study in USA in 1871. One of them was eight-year-old Tsuda Umeko who later came to establish a women's institute for English studies (Learning to Give, n.d.). This is one of the examples of the Meiji government's efforts to acquire English knowledge and skills.

During the government's endeavors to apply modern methods from the West, the use of English to absorb Western culture and ideas gradually disappeared, and the use of English as a regular school subject and as a means to take university entrance examinations became popular.

Nevertheless, at the end of the era, according to Adamson (2006), the two tracks, the authentic English language education supported by the government, and English language

education to train students for entrance examinations of universities and secondary schools still continued to exist.

The Taisho Era was from 1912 to 1925. The two tracks still continued throughout the era. The objective of English language education moved towards preparation for exams, and so works of grammatical analyses and translations into Japanese were emphasized. The application of English for Westernization continually declined. In fact, according to Imura (2003), the movement to eliminate teaching English became powerful at the end of the era.

The Showa Era started from 1926 and ended in 1988. After World War II, the United States occupied Japan, (Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945–52, n.d.). Since then, interest in English language came back again. In 1947, teaching English was started in junior high schools (Hosoki, 2011). Due to the rise of the economy, employees competent in English became essential to handle international business. The theme of practical English became popular.

In 1963, the nationwide practical English proficiency examination of the four language skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening started (Hosoki, 2011). In the mid-1980s, the Communicative Approach became famous (Hosoki, 2011). In 1987, the Japanese government introduced the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program to hire foreign teachers in junior and senior high schools in Japan with the aim to improve acquisition of foreign languages in Japan (Hosoki, 2011). Promoting internationalization of Japanese local communities through enhancing language education and developing opportunities for international exchange were the main objectives. A great number of nationals from different countries participated in the program.

The Heisei era started from 1989 up until now. In this era, exposure to native English speakers in daily lives of Japanese has become a usual thing (Hosoki, 2011). To meet the needs of society and to cope with international business community, the purpose of English language education in schools and universities jumped from academic English to more practical English. In 1997, the Japanese government made the terms “globalization,” “cultural

diversity,” and “international understanding” official. In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) set out an “Action Plan” to train “Japanese with English Abilities” (Imura, 2003).

It has been more than 150 years since Japan has taken the first step of modernization. On one hand, English was observed as a way to gain Western knowledge. On the other hand, the idea of using English to represent the West was rejected. The two tracks, the authentic English language education supported by the government and English language education to train students for entrance examinations of universities and secondary schools, have remained into the present in Japan.

Current English Education in Japan

According to Tahira (2012), MEXT issued the first Course of Study guidelines for English education in 1947. These guidelines focused on habit formation, developing listening and speaking skills, imitating native pronunciations, and getting used to the sounds of English as a first step without applying textbooks. Moreover, MEXT has fixed these guidelines every ten years starting from 1947 (Tahira, 2012).

Here, the latest guidelines, which were updated in 2011, marked a momentous change in policy since major alternations in how to teach English at primary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools were prescribed in these guidelines (Tahira, 2012). For example, in the case of senior high schools, according to MEXT, performing language activities employing combination of four skills, conducting classes in English to increase chances for students to be exposed to English, increasing the number of words students should study from 1,300 to 1,800, and giving grammatical instructions as a way to facilitate communication were guide-lined.

In addition to updating the guidelines, MEXT also put efforts to persuade senior high school students to study abroad (MEXT). Moreover, many universities in Japan have shared exchange programs with foreign universities. Recently, the number of overseas programs proposed by Japanese university (mostly private) has risen significantly (Cripps, 2016).

Current Issues of English education in Japan

There are various problems in English education of Japan stated by previous researchers. Among them, I would like to infer some issues.

The first issue is low oral communication ability. In Japan, formal English education starts from junior high school. However, Mizuno (2003), stated: in Japan, it is often observed that students cannot communicate in English no matter how hard they study at school.

The second issue is content of university entrance examinations. Cripps (2016) stated that normal types of English tests in university entrance examinations are written tests, and testing knowledge of grammar. These written tests mainly relates to grammar-translation methods between Japanese and English. Therefore, Miller (2014) suggested that if the styles of testing are not changed, making changes in English education might not have any meanings. Mizuno (2013) also commented, students do not benefit much from English language teaching in Japan since their objective is to pass English tests in university entrance examinations.

The third issue is English textbooks. According to Cripps (2016), English textbooks used in public schools lack authentic oral communication. According to him, generally, a chapter in a senior high school English textbook will start the first pages with tasks for reading, grammar and vocabulary. Communicative tasks will be prescribed only at the end of each chapter. Due to time constraint, teachers tend to skip these last pages.

The fourth issue is teaching style. Actually, the pressures from university entrance examinations influence seriously the ways to teach English and the content (Cripps, 2016). Miller, (2014) also stated that teachers neglected use of English in English classrooms. Miller also showed dissatisfaction with teaching grammar in Japanese and checking students' comprehension of grammar by translating English to Japanese by teachers.

Previous researchers stated the above issues; low oral communication ability, university entrance examinations, English textbooks, and teaching style.

Chapter 4 Research Questions and Methodology

Research Questions

Based on my research significance, as you can see in Chapter 1, I drew out the main research question, “How is the English learning of Myanmar and Japanese University students similar or different?” Under the main research question, I decided to make sub-questions hoping that these can help me understand the whole research question. The sub-questions are as follow.

1. How are the attitudes of Myanmar and Japanese university students towards English learning similar or different?
2. How are the attitudes of Myanmar and Japanese university English teachers towards students’ English learning and English education system in each country similar or different?
3. How are the English writing skills of Myanmar and Japanese students similar or different?

Here, I would like to explain the relationships between the main research question and the sub-questions. In every language, reading and listening skills play roles of input skills while writing and speaking skills carry out as roles of output skills. Thus, I believe when students reveal their attitudes towards English learning, we can judge whether their beliefs match their output skills or not by checking their writing skills.

In order to understand the context of students’ English learning, I consider examining only the attitudes and output skills of the students insufficient since the role of teachers play a considerable role in students’ English learning. It is also essential to check whether the attitudes of both students and teachers towards students’ English learning of both students and teachers match or not, and whether both teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ English learning actually match their students’ output skills. In these ways, the main research question and the sub-questions relate to each other.

Research Methodology

Concerning research methodology, I employed a combination of both quantitative methods and qualitative methods. I used quantitative methods for comparing the number of students. For example, in comparing the number of students who think grammatical competence has a lot of impact on English proficiency. Then, I employed qualitative methods for analyzing the reasons given by students and teachers for their respective questionnaires, for example, in comparing Myanmar and Japanese students' reasons why grammatical competence is important for their English proficiency.

For analyzing writing data, I used quantitative methods in comparing the holistic scores from writing websites and scores given by native English teachers to Myanmar and Japanese students' writings. Therefore, for the overall research, I employed both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research Items and Participants

For the sub-question, No.1, I prepared questionnaires consisting of 15 items, which you can see in Appendix 1. 25 university students from each country cooperated in answering the questionnaires.

For the sub-question, No.3, I first prepared two writing prompts and carried out a pilot test. Then, I selected the writing prompt, in which the scores of the participants in the pilot test were well balanced. You can see the writing prompt in Appendix 3. Here, I used writing samples of ten university students from each country. These ten university students also participated in the students' questionnaires.

Finally, for the sub-question, No.2, ten university English teachers from each country cooperated in answering teachers' questionnaires. You can see teachers' questionnaires in Appendix 3.

These students and teachers were selected by convenience, which is called "convenience sampling" (Miles & Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Thus, choosing these participants was not randomized.

For the students' questionnaires towards English learning, in order to get valid data, I also translated them into Myanmar and Japanese, to help the students understand the content.

Research Sites and Privacy

I collected the data for Myanmar students and teachers in February 2016 during my return to my country. I went to several universities where my previous teachers suggested. And in, June, I collected additional data for Myanmar students through emails. For the data of Japanese teachers, and students, the teachers I knew and some Japanese friends helped me collect the participants.

For the privacy of their data, all the participants signed consent forms that I will use their data only in my research and they can withdraw from my research whenever they want.

Chapter 5 Myanmar and Japanese University Students' Beliefs of Learning English

Length of studying English

Table 5.1 Length of studying English

	Highest	Average	Lowest
Myanmar students	17 years	14 years	3 years
Japanese students	15 years	9 years	3 years

In response to Question No. 1, “How long have you been studying English?” the highest numbers of years answered by Myanmar and Japanese university students were 17 years, and 15 years respectively, and the average numbers of years were 14 years and 19 years. Look at Table 5.1. This sounds natural since formal English learning in Myanmar starts from the first year of primary school, and formal English learning in Japan starts from the first year of junior high school.

However, if we look at the lowest numbers of years for both countries, which is three years, this is surprising. These students do not seem to count learning English until senior high schools as a record in length of studying English. From this, it can be concluded that some students from both countries may not consider English teaching methods used until senior high schools as a part of English learning.

Do you like English? Why?

Table 5.2 Data on whether Myanmar and Japanese students like English or not

	Yes	No	Neutral
Myanmar students	24	-	1
Japanese Students	16	6	3

According to Table 5.2, in responding to Question No.2 on whether Myanmar and Japanese students like English or not, 24 Myanmar students responded yes, and 16 Japanese students responded the same. One Myanmar student chose neutral and three Japanese students did the same. However, while none of the Myanmar students responded “No”, six Japanese students answered that they do not like English.

From the Myanmar students' comments about why they like English, it seems that

English is a necessity in their future. They had answers such as “English proficiency is necessary for our future,” “All subjects except Myanmar are taught in English at high schools,” and “I can learn history, culture, and English literature.”

On the other hand, Japanese students like English for communication. Their answers included “We can communicate with different people”, “I can widen my views”, and “I can learn overseas cultures.”

Japanese students do not think English proficiency is useful in their future. Nevertheless, both countries’ students seem to believe that through using English, they can learn history, literature, and culture of other countries.

Japanese students’ answers for not liking English included, “I am not good at writing,” “I am not good at English,” and “Using English is difficult”.

From the above comments, we can see that Japanese students do not have confidence in using English. In other words, their English studying until senior high schools is not sufficient enough to use practically.

Lastly, let’s look at the reasons why Myanmar and Japanese students answered “Neutral”. One Myanmar student wrote, “I want to learn other languages.” The two responses of Japanese students were “I am not good at English,” and “I like communicating with foreigners, but I am not interested in studying English”. Japanese students think English as an interesting hobby or as a method to communicate with foreigners. Their enthusiasm in studying English seems to be low.

Methods of Learning English

Table 5.3. Methods of learning English

Methods	Number of Myanmar Students	Number of Japanese Students
Reading English news	8	9
Reading books	16	7
Speaking with friends	15	16
Learning from teachers in school	17	14
Listening to radio	5	1
Listening to Tapes	7	12
Watching movies	18	14
Watching TV	13	6
Others (playing games)	2	0

In responding to Question No.3 “Which methods of learning are good for you?” the most popular methods for Myanmar students are watching movies, learning from teachers in school, and speaking with friends, while the most common methods of Japanese students are speaking with friends, learning from teachers in school, and watching movies.

As we can see, one-third of Myanmar and Japanese students chose “speaking with friends” as a good method to learn English. Judging from this, today’s university students tend to understand that they need help from peers to improve their English proficiency.

The least popular method for Myanmar students is “others (playing games)” and “listening to tapes”. Moreover, it is interesting that the number of Myanmar students who chose “reading books” is greater than that of Japanese students.

Since the output of reading is related to writing, and speaking, it can be guessed that most of the Myanmar students have already realized the necessity to master reading skill. For

most Japanese students, they still need to read as many books written in English as possible and imitate the writing styles written in these books, and try to apply them in writing English materials.

Important Skills

Table 5.3. Important skills responded by Myanmar and Japanese Students

Skills	Myanmar Students	Japanese Students
All skills	13	6
Reading Skill	5	4
Writing Skill	5	2
Listening Skill	3	13
Speaking Skill	5	10

According to Table 5.3, in responding to Question No.4 “Which skills are important for you?” the number of students who responded “All skills” is 13 Myanmar students and six Japanese students respectively. Five Myanmar students and four Japanese students answered “Reading Skill”. Five Myanmar students and two Japanese Students chose “Writing Skill”. While only three and five Myanmar students selected “Listening Skill” and “Speaking Skill”, 13 and 10 Japanese students picked the same options.

This is surprising because although most Myanmar students think all skills are important for them, most Japanese students mainly focus on listening and speaking. Let’s look at the reasons why Myanmar and Japanese students choose the above options.

Myanmar students said that all skills are necessary with different reasons. One student said, “As a student who wants to study abroad, I think that I need to be good at all skills”. Another said, “I believe if you want to be good at something, you have to be good at every aspect of it.” One more student said, “If one skill is lacking, we cannot regard we know English language.”

On the other hand, Japanese students said things like, “The four skills connect each other” and “All skills are necessary to communicate, to learn or use a language.”

As we can see, Myanmar students think integration of all skills is important for them to gain English proficiency while Japanese students think all skills are important to communicate or use a language.

Let's see the reasons why Myanmar and Japanese students chose "reading", "writing", "listening", and "speaking" respectively. For reading skill, Myanmar students said, "I can learn new vocabulary," and "Reading is important for mastering grammar." Japanese students commented, "Reading is used in exams," "Reading is the first step to learn," and "Reading cannot be done with translation applications."

For writing skill, Myanmar students commented, "I need to write skillfully," "Writing can be used in sending emails," "I need to write grammatically," and "I am not good at writing." Japanese students said, "If one just uses English in exams, this is enough," and "If I can write, I can read and communicate."

For listening skill, Myanmar students stated, "I cannot do it well," and "I can learn new usages." Japanese students commented, "Listening skill is essential for communication," "Listening is the starting point to learn a language," "Mutual understanding is more important than reading and writing," "I am not good at listening," and "Although we understand grammar, it is meaningless if we cannot communicate."

For speaking skill, Myanmar students said, "I am not good at speaking," "I want to speak skillfully," and "There are not many people whom I can communicate in English in my environment."

Japanese students stated, "Speaking skill is essential for communication," "Speaking English is necessary in my part-time," "Mutual understanding is more important than reading and writing," and "Though we understand grammar, it is meaningless if we cannot communicate."

From the above comments, it can be stated that while Myanmar students tend to have confidence in reading and writing, they are not so strong at listening and speaking. In contrast, Japanese students tend to suppose reading and writing are used only in exams, though they

tend to prioritize listening and speaking since they think these skills are important for communication. Both Myanmar and Japanese students need to keep in mind that integration of all four skills is crucial to gain English proficiency.

Importance of grammatical competence in English proficiency

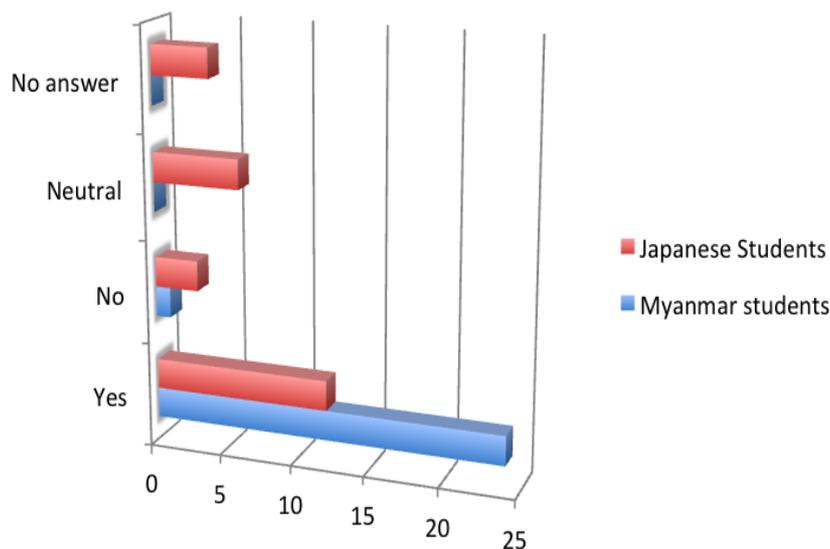


Figure 5.1. Grammatical competence

In responding to Question No.5 “Does grammatical competence have an impact on their English proficiency?” while 24 Myanmar students said, “Yes”, only 12 Japanese students said so. One Myanmar student and three Japanese students said “No”. Six Japanese students said “Neutral” and three Japanese students did not answer anything. Let’s look at their reasons.

Myanmar students who answered, “Yes” stated that they are afraid of using incorrect grammar in reading, writing, and speaking since this can cause misunderstandings. They also stated that “Grammar is important in taking exams,” “We need to write grammatically,” “Grammar is the basic to be proficient in English,” “Grammar is essential to become a good English language user,” “Grammar is the rule of language,” “With grammar, I can construct sentences,” and “Grammar is important in using formal English.”

Moreover, many Myanmar students consider grammar as a bridge to pave improvement of the four skills. All in all, it can be concluded that most Myanmar students think grammatical

competence has an impact on their English proficiency.

Some Japanese students who answered, “Yes” commented that using incorrect grammar can cause misunderstandings, they can understand English sentences by analyzing grammar, and grammar is related to four skills. Therefore, some Japanese students have already realized the necessity of grammatical competence for mastering English.

However, most Japanese students do not think like that. Most Japanese students who answered, “No,” and “Neutral,” consider that basic grammar is enough, correctness of grammar is not so important in communication, and grammar can only be used to get good grades in exams. One Japanese student even stated, “I know some people who have jobs related to English although their English is poor.”

English subjects

Table 5.4 English subjects Myanmar and Japanese students like

Subjects	Myanmar Students	Japanese Students
Communicative English	19	20
English Literature	11	8
Business English	7	6
Phonetics	5	6
Linguistics	7	2

The most popular English subject for Myanmar and Japanese students was “Communicative English”.

Myanmar students like Communicative English for many reasons. They mentioned, “Communicative English is necessary for my future occupation,” “English is an international language,” “It makes me speak in English,” “It is useful than other forms of speaking,” “I can use English in daily lives,” “Communicative English is the key in studying English,” and “I

need to improve the knowledge to communicate.”

For Japanese students who like Communicative English, they stated, “It is useful in communicating with people around the world,” “I can learn English used in daily lives,” “It is needed to get a job using English,” “It is more interesting than other subjects,” “To be able to communicate is my goal,” “I am happy to speak English with others,” “It is better to experience than using English by oneself,” and “Absorbing from various sectors can benefit me more.” All in all, both Myanmar and Japanese students think studying communicative English has a lot of benefits both in their daily lives and their future.

The second most popular subject for both countries’ students is “English Literature”. For Myanmar students, they think they can learn culture, history, ethnic groups, moral lessons, and personalities of people through English Literature. They also think that learning English language is necessary to master English language. For Japanese students, they think they can learn grammar and new words, and improve their reading skills from English Literature. Here we can see that although English literature is the second most popular subject for students of both countries, however, the motives to learn this subject is completely different.

The third most popular subjects for Myanmar students are linguistics and business English, and for Japanese students, phonetics and business English are in the third position. The least popular one for Myanmar students is phonetics and that for Japanese students is linguistics.

Here, it is interesting that while Myanmar students prefer linguistics to phonetics while Japanese students prefer phonetics to linguistics. This point additionally suggests most Japanese students’ favor of listening and speaking skills, and also supports most Myanmar students’ selection of reading books as a method to gain English proficiency.

Differences between mother language and English

Table 5.5. Differences between mother language and English by Myanmar and Japanese Students

Differences	Number of Myanmar Students	Differences	Number of Japanese Students
Sentence Construction	17	Sentence Construction	3
Grammar	4	Grammar	2
Use of pronouns	3	Use of pronouns	1
Use of prepositions	1	Use of prepositions	1
Usage of words	1	Compositional Organization	4
Falling and rising tone	1	Direct translation	1
Active-passive voice	1	Pronunciation	2
Ways to translate	1	Expressions	2
Sanskrit	1	-	-
Vocabulary	2	-	-

According to Table 5.5, in response to Question No.7 “Are there any differences between your mother language and English?” the common differences told by Myanmar and Japanese students were “Sentence Construction”, “Grammar”, “Use of pronouns”, and “Use of prepositions”.

The other differences between Myanmar and English stated by Myanmar students are “Falling and rising tone”, “Active-passive voice”, “Ways to translate”, “Sanskrit”, and

“Vocabulary”.

The other differences between Japanese and English mentioned by Japanese students were “Compositional Organization”, “Direct Translation”, “Pronunciation”, and “Expressions”.

What is surprising is that while 17 Myanmar students stated, “Sentence Construction” is different between their mother language and English”, only three Japanese students stated like that. This is interesting since the sentence orders of Myanmar and Japanese are completely different from that of English. You can see the difference in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Differences in sentence construction among Myanmar, Japanese, and English

Myanmar	Subject	Object	Verb
	Kyuntaw di	ingalatesar ko	lailar di.
Japanese	Subject	Object	Verb
	主語	目的語(補語)	動詞
	私は	英語を	勉強します。
English	Subject	Verb	Object
	I	Study	English.

From the above Table, we can see that Myanmar language and Japanese language have similarities to an extent. While Myanmar students can state the big difference between Myanmar and English, only a few Japanese students can point out the big difference between Japanese and English. This indicates that most Japanese students may not think of their mother language in detail firstly, and as a result, they may not be able to imagine how their mother language and English are different thoroughly.

Difficulties in learning English

Table 5.7 Difficulties in learning English for Myanmar and Japanese Students

Difficulties	Number of Myanmar students	Difficulties	Number of Japanese Students
Listening	7	Listening	5
Speaking	6	Speaking	3
Grammar	3	Grammar	7
Pronunciation	2	Pronunciation	3
Vocabulary	6	Very few chances to communicate in English daily	1
Writing	5	Usage of natural English	1
Old English	1	To be familiar with English is important to learn something new	1
Direct translation	1	Culture	1

According to the above Table, in response to Question No.8, “Are there any difficulties in learning English?” the common difficulties pointed out by Myanmar and Japanese students are “Listening”, “Speaking”, “Grammar”, and “Pronunciation”. The other difficulties in learning English for Myanmar students are “Vocabulary”, “Writing”, “Old English”, and “Direct Translation”. Other difficulties in learning English for Japanese students are “Having very few chances to communicate in English daily”, “Memorizing usage of natural English”,

“To be familiar with English is important to learn something new”, and “To learn Culture”.

As we can see the number of Myanmar students who say that they have difficulties in listening and speaking is greater than that of Japanese students. In contrast, the number of Japanese students who say they have difficulties in grammar is greater than that of Myanmar students. From this, it can be mentioned that although some Myanmar students have confidence in grammar, they do not have confidence to communicate since they are afraid of making incorrect grammatical mistakes. In contrast, although some Japanese students are poor at grammar, they seem to have confidence in communicating. Moreover, while some Myanmar students thought vocabulary as a difficulty, none of the Japanese students thought so.

This suggests that Japanese students do not see vocabulary as a weakness. In addition, while some Myanmar students indicated they have difficulties in writing, none of the Japanese students said so. In my opinion this may relate to the school systems of each country. In Myanmar, different types of essays and letters are taught from junior high school, and so, Myanmar students have already realized the importance of writing in order to master English. In contrast, since there are very few writing tasks in many junior and senior high schools of Japan, Japanese students may not understand the importance of writing in mastering English.

British or American English

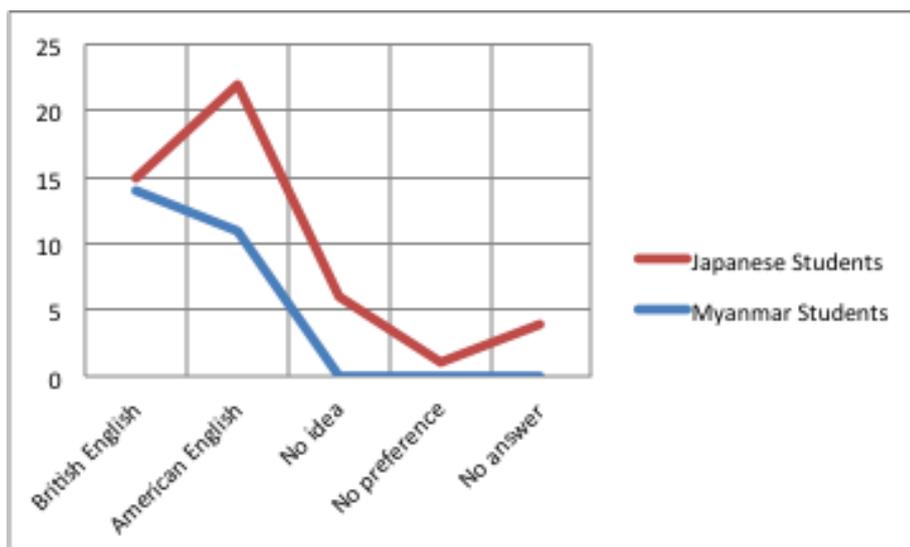


Figure 5.2. Data on whether Myanmar and Japanese students like British or American English

In responding to Question No.9 “Which English do you prefer, British or American?” while 14 Myanmar students said they preferred British English to American English, only one Japanese student responded like that. This may be due to the reason that since British colonials occupied Myanmar for about 100 years English education in the school system has been prescribed in British ways and traditions.

The same number of Myanmar and Japanese students said that they preferred American English to British English. This indicates that today’s youths have become interested in easily usable language. Moreover, it is surprising that some Japanese students had no ideas relating to the differences between British and American English. From this point, it can be guessed that their English Education at schools has been prescribed in American ways and traditions. Let us look at the reasons of both countries’ students.

The reasons why Myanmar students like British English is because British English is being taught in school, being thought as a standard one, and having beautiful accents and pronunciation, while the reason of one Japanese student is that British English is easy to listen to.

Then, the reasons why Myanmar students like American English are that American

English is easy to use, free, simple, used in class, common, and internationally used. For Japanese students, they like American English for the reasons American English is taught at school, is accustomed to listening to, being understood, is thought as a standard one, being easier to listen than British English. For the above reasons, it can be concluded that both countries' students' English learning is influenced by the ways and traditions (i.e., British or American here) they have been taught at schools. Moreover, most of both countries' students seem to think that British English is more difficult than American English.

English speaking countries students want to go

Table 5.8 English speaking countries Myanmar and Japanese Students want to go

English-speaking countries	Number of Myanmar students	Number of Japanese students
England	11	3
America	8	12
Singapore	2	-
Australia	1	2
New Zealand	-	1
Canada	-	1
India	1	-
Fiji	-	1
Sweden	1	-
I do not want to go	1	-
No idea	-	2
No answer	-	3

In responding to Question No.10 “Which English-speaking country do you want to go? Why?” Myanmar and Japanese students selected the above countries respectively. Here, the definition of English-speaking country is necessary. In fact, to define the meaning of an English-speaking country is complicated. Firstly, an English-speaking country can be defined

as a country where a majority of native English speakers reside (McKay & Hinkel, 2016). There are six large English countries according to the first definition: the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Secondly, an English-speaking country can be referred as a country where English is used as an official language or as a co-official language or as a language in a multilingual country (McKay & Hinkel, 2016).

Example countries for the second definition are Botswana, Cameroon, Fiji, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines (Philippine English), Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Here, we can see that the number of Myanmar students who want to go to England is larger than those of Japanese students. In contrast, the number of Japanese students who want to go to America is greater than those of Myanmar students. Both countries' students selected only a few other English-speaking countries. From now, let us compare why both countries' students want to go to English-speaking countries.

Table 5.9. The reasons why Myanmar and Japanese students want to go to English speaking countries.

The reasons why Myanmar students want to go to English-speaking countries	Number of students	The reasons why Japanese students want to go to English-speaking countries	Number of students
For studies	7	For studies	2
To improve English skills	4	To improve English skills	3
For studying literature, culture, ethnics, and history	3	For studying literature, culture, ethnics, and history	2
For traveling	2	For traveling	-
For communication	-	For communication	4

For entertainment	1	For entertainment	2
For economic reasons	1	For economic reasons	2
For having relatives	1	For having relatives	1
For accomplishing dreams	2	For accomplishing dreams	-
For fine weather	-	For fine weather	1
For safety	-	For safety	2

The number of Myanmar students who want to continue their studies abroad is greater than that of Japanese students. Thus, Myanmar students may think they want to study abroad for gaining English proficiency.

In contrast, many Japanese students do not seem to consider studying abroad. This may be due to the reason that many Japanese students do not think they have ability to employ English while studying abroad. Conversely, while there were a certain number of Japanese students who want to go to English-speaking countries for communication, no Myanmar students answered like that.

I agree with these Myanmar students' ideas because I experienced development in my Japanese speaking skills after coming to Japan. From this point, it can be concluded that a well-facilitated surrounding is needed to improve students' language skills.

The other reasons for both countries' students were for traveling, for studying literature, culture, ethnics, and history, for entertainment, for economic reasons, for having relatives, for accomplishing dreams, for fine weather, and for safety respectively.

Influence of the ability to use English on daily lives of the students

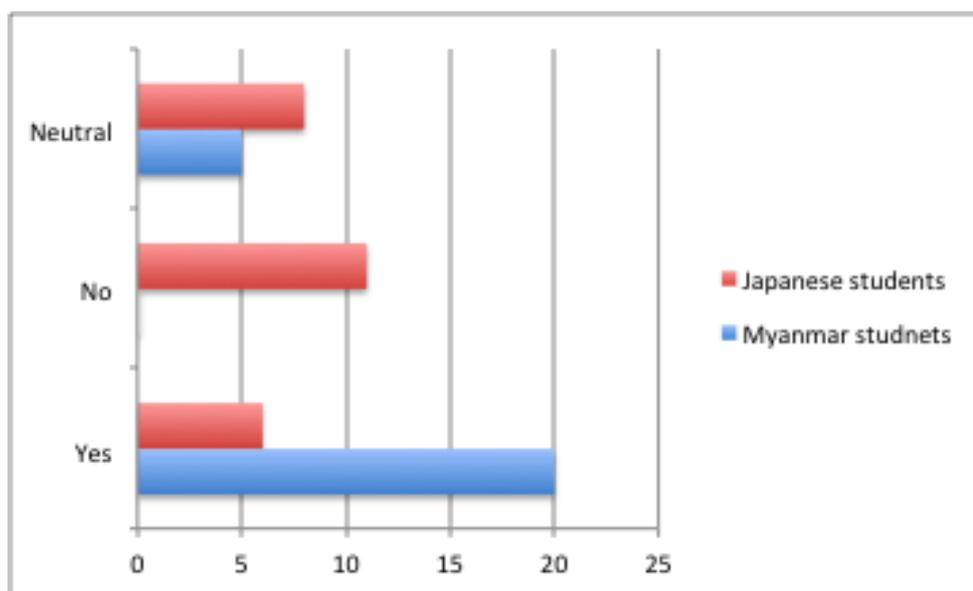


Figure 5.3. Data on whether Myanmar and Japanese students think their English ability have impact on their daily lives or not

According to Figure 3 in responding to Question No.10 “Does the ability to use English have an impact on your daily life?” it is surprising that while even 20 Myanmar students responded “Yes”, only six Japanese students answered, “Yes”. Moreover, 11 Japanese students chose “No”. Five Myanmar students and eight Japanese students responded “Neutral”. Now, let’s look at their reasons.

For Myanmar students who said “Yes”, their fields of using English in their daily lives are related to learning in class, improving English skills, communicating, studying English for future use, reading English books, participating in programs. We can see that their most used field is for their studies, applying English in real lives, playing games, and watching movies. From their comments, it can be concluded that Myanmar students have great satisfaction with their ability to use English in their daily lives.

For Japanese students who answered “Yes”, their fields are various such as in reading, at home, in part-time job, in talking to foreigners, in educational field, and in viewing things,

Next, when we look at the one reason why Japanese students answered unanimously, we see that they say that their ability to use English has no impact on their daily lives “There

are no or very few chances to use English in our daily lives,” From this point, it can be concluded that while most Myanmar students suppose the ability to use English as a thing to pursue first and as a tool to apply later (learn English first, then master it, and try to find opportunities to use it in their daily lives later), Japanese students think the ability to use English as a tool to apply as a priority before studying it (most of them do not seem to think that they should first study English to be able to apply and they do not tend to find opportunities to use English in their real lives). From this, it can be concluded that, most Japanese students do not see that they can employ their ability to use English efficiently.

Myanmar students who chose “Neutral” said, “Sometimes, the ability to use English is helpful in reading,” “I just use English in class, exams, and online,” “Myanmar is not an English-speaking country,” “English is not an efficient language to communicate,” and “I do not think I need to use English if I have plans to work in my mother country.

“ Likewise, when looking at the comments of Japanese students who chose “Neutral”, they said, “I just talk to foreign customers in my part time,” “I cannot communicate using difficult words,” “Before entering university, the ability to use English had great impact on my daily life. But now, I do not know,” and “The ability to use English has no connection to my daily life.” From their comments, it can be seen that some of both Myanmar and Japanese students may not seem to have confidence using English, and they may not be able to find opportunities to use English in their daily lives.

Influence of the ability to use English on the future of the students

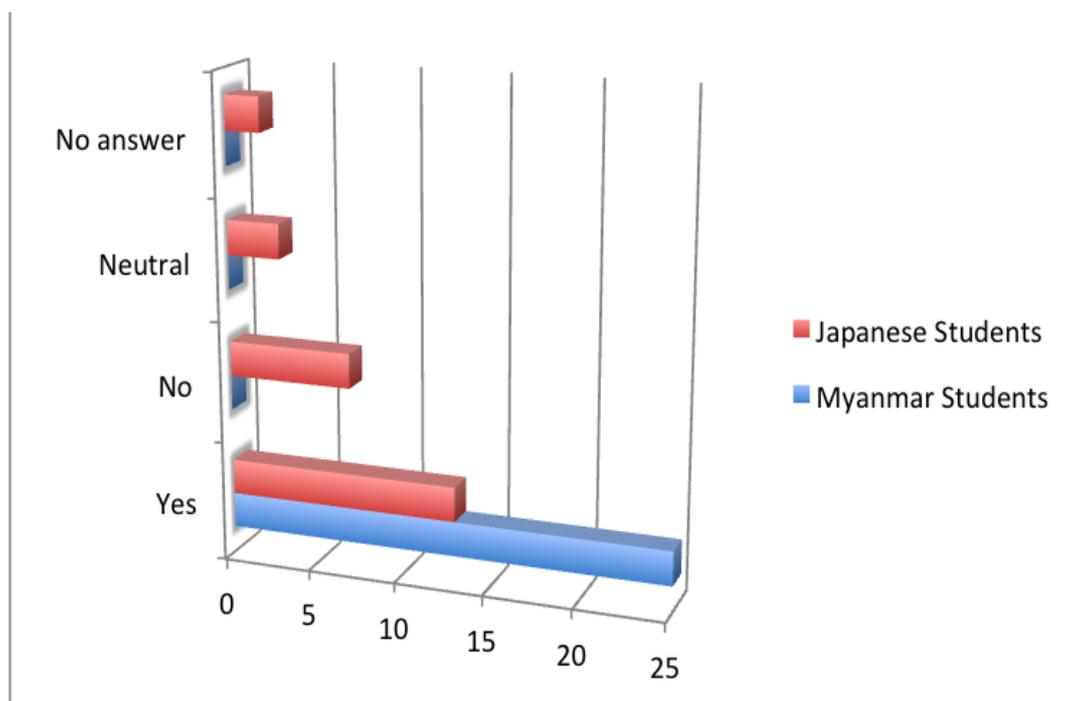


Figure 5.4. Data on whether Myanmar and Japanese students think their ability to use English has impact on their future or not

According to Figure 5.4, in responding to Question No.12, “Does the ability to use English have an impact on your future?” it is interesting that all Myanmar students answered unanimously, “Their ability to use English has impact on their future.”

In contrast, only half of the Japanese students selected “Yes”.

Seven Japanese students answered “No”, and three Japanese students chose “Neutral”. Now, please look at the reasons of Myanmar and Japanese students.

While half of the Myanmar students believe that their ability to use English will be helpful in their future jobs, only a few Japanese students answered like that. Why they think so can be connected to one Japanese student’s comment, which said “No”.

This Japanese student commented, “I cannot see the future where so many foreigners will reside in Japan. Japan is still very strict concerning accepting foreigners.” This comment reveals the student’s knowledge that there are strict policies for residence of foreigners in Japan even though Japan has already reached the position of a developed country. As there are

not so many chances to communicate with foreigners, working in Japan may usually demand using Japanese business manners and using polite words than having high English proficiency.

In contrast, almost all Myanmar students believe that their English ability will be of use in their future jobs. This may be due to the situation that Myanmar has just been transformed into a democratic state and it has also been thriving as a developing country. As a result, investments from foreign countries have awakened the motivation of Myanmar students to study English in order to pursue great careers after graduating.

The other reasons for “Yes” stated by Myanmar students are connected to carrying on further studies, traveling, communicating with foreigners, making life successful, and improving English skills. The other Japanese students’ comments for “Yes” are related to communicating with foreigners, traveling, seeking information, widening scopes, applying English ability in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic, and learning.

Again, Japanese students’ reasons for “No” and “Neutral” are related to low potential for English proficiency in the future, using Katakana English, having no connection to future job, and not having enough confidence to use English in the future.

The connection between future jobs and using English

Table 5.10. Future jobs stated by Myanmar and Japanese students

Jobs and Myanmar students	Number	Jobs and Japanese	Number
English Teacher	3	English Teacher	2
Teacher	2	Teacher	4
Ambassador	3	Journalist	1
Official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1	Writer	1
NGO official	1	Taking TOEIC	1
Establishing a travel company	1	Engineer	1
Tour Guide	1	Job related to IT	1
Translator /Writer	1	Marketing	1
Doctor	2	Ground Staff	1
Pilot	2	Working at medical facility	1
Software Engineer	1	Job supporting children	1
Lawyer	1	Job related to financial	4
Judge	5	Job related to production	1
Not decided yet	1	Not decided yet	3

In responding to Question No.13 “Which future occupation do you want to do?” jobs directly related to using English such as “English teacher”, “Working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”, “Tour guide”, and “Translator” are mentioned by only a few Myanmar and

Japanese students. However, if we look back to Figure 5.4, all Myanmar students believe they will be able to use English in the future. Therefore, they still have beliefs to use English indirectly in their future.

In contrast, most Japanese students seem to believe that if they work in Japan in the future, they will not have to communicate in English anymore. For Myanmar students, they have already realized the importance of English proficiency in their life. The only thing they need to do is to master as much as they can.

English proficiency test-taking experience

Table 5.11. Data on whether Myanmar and Japanese students have English proficiency test-taking experience or not

	Yes	No	No answer
Myanmar Students	12	2	1
Japanese Students	12	8	5

In responding to Question No.14 “Have you ever taken an English-proficiency test?” the same number of Myanmar and Japanese students responded “Yes”. Here, the kinds of tests mentioned by them are TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS, G-Tec, placement tests, and grammar tests. It is surprising that some Myanmar and Japanese students answered “No”. Have they ever thought of English tests in high schools or in university entrance examinations or in universities as English proficiency tests? This can refer to the point that English proficiency tests conforming to each country’s education system still need some quality updates such as inputting four-skills-integrated tasks, and inserting up-to-date topics happening in the world.

Overseas living experience

Table 5.12. Data on overseas living experience by Myanmar and Japanese students

	Yes	No	No answer
Myanmar students	0	25	-
Japanese students	5	16	4

In responding to Question No.15 “Have you ever lived in a foreign country?” while all Myanmar students have no experience living abroad, some Japanese students have such kind of experience. Here, it is interesting that most of the Myanmar students are satisfied with using English daily and have hopes to apply English ability in the future despite their lack of overseas staying experience.

In contrast, most of the Japanese students do not think English ability is necessary in their daily lives and do not have hope to employ English in the future. Most of them think that using English is not necessary if they only work and reside in Japan.

Analysis of students’ attitudes towards English learning

First of all, most of both Myanmar and Japanese students consider compulsory English education from primary school and junior high school respectively as a part of English learning process in their lives.

Secondly, the number of Myanmar students who like English was greater than that of Japanese students. Here, Myanmar students like English due to the necessity in the future while Japanese students like English for communication purposes.

Thirdly, the most popular methods to gain English proficiency for both countries’ students were learning from teachers in school and speaking with friends. From this point, we can say that both countries’ students think they need to follow guidance from teachers and building teamwork with friends in order to master their English abilities.

Fourthly, the number of Myanmar students who said integration of all skills is importance to be skillful at English was twice that of Japanese students. Most Japanese

students think that reading and writing skills are only used in exams, and so listening and speaking skills should be brushed up for communication. From both countries' students' comments, most Myanmar students have a little confidence in listening and speaking skills while most Japanese students have a little confidence in reading and writing skills. Therefore, both countries' students need to make efforts in practicing the skills they are weak at and link them to integration of the four skills.

Fifthly, the number of Myanmar students who stated that grammatical competence has a lot of impact on their English proficiency was considerably larger than that of Japanese students. Most Myanmar students think using incorrect grammar can cause misunderstandings and competence of grammar is related to being good at the four skills. In contrast, from comments of most Japanese students, it is clear that they do not understand the importance of grammar in the field of mastering English although they have learnt grammar for about six years in junior and high schools. Therefore, curriculum and methods to learn grammar need to be revised and a new policy of teaching advanced grammar in universities should be prescribed in Japan.

As a sixth point, the most popular subject for Myanmar and Japanese students in learning English was "Communicative English." They think that studying communicative English has a lot of impact in their daily lives and will also have in their future. The second and third most popular subjects for both countries' students were "English Literature." Myanmar students like linguistics the least and Japanese students like phonetics the least.

As a seventh point, in pointing out the differences between mother language and English, while most Myanmar students were able to point out the main difference – sentence construction, very few Japanese students knew this. From this point, most Japanese do not tend to think of similarities and differences between Japanese and English while studying English. Therefore, I think, to have more knowledge of English, Japanese students should have opportunities to make comparisons between Japanese and English.

As an eight factor, the number of Myanmar students who found difficulties in listening

and speaking skills was greater than that of Japanese students. On the other hand, the number of Japanese students who found difficulties in grammar was greater than that of Myanmar students. Thus, inputting more communicative tasks in the curriculum of Myanmar university students, and inserting more basic grammar, advanced grammar, and communicative grammar courses in the curriculum of Japanese university students might be keys to help them.

As a ninth point, the most common reason why Myanmar students prefer British English to American was that they have learned British English at school. Likewise, the most common reason why Japanese students prefer American English to British English was that they have learned American English at school. This indicates that each country's English education system, in which British English or American English is prescribed, influence each country's students' preference respectively. However, American English has also become popular among Myanmar students with the reasons that American English is casual, free, and easy to use.

As a tenth point, the number of Myanmar students who wanted to go to England was greater than that of Japanese students. In contrast, the number of Japanese students who wanted to go to America was greater than that of Myanmar students. Other English-speaking countries were not popular between both countries students. While one-third of Myanmar students' reasons to go to an English-speaking were for studies, those for Japanese students were not like that. Thus, some Myanmar students seem to think that they can gain development in their English proficiency when they study in English-speaking countries while some Japanese students do not tend to have confidence in their English proficiency being enough to study in English-speaking countries.

As an eleventh point, while most Myanmar students think their ability to use English has an impact on their daily lives, only a few Japanese students think like that. From these Myanmar students' comments, we can say that they get great satisfaction with their current English proficiency. On the other hand, from the Japanese students' comments of "No," we can say that they do not think they can use their English proficiency effectively in their daily

lives.

As a twelfth factor, again, the number of Myanmar students who think their ability to use English will have an impact on their future is greater than that of Japanese students. These Myanmar students think that their English proficiency will be of use in their future jobs or studies. However, most of the above Japanese students do not think like that. Why don't they consider situations where their English proficiency will be of use in their future? Here, one Japanese student revealed some strict policies of accepting foreigners in Japan. However, we cannot definitely say that Japan can survive strongly like now in the future without strengthening English learning at schools and universities. We should consider the coming effects of globalization on political, economic, social and educational fields of Japan in this 21st century. All in all, the potential of using English in the future effects directly on Japanese students' current English learning attitudes.

As a thirteenth factor, though most Myanmar students' jobs are not directly related to using English, they still believe that they will be able to use English in their future. However, though most Japanese students encounter the same situation, they do not believe that they will be able to use English in their future. However, they can imagine situations of using English in one's own country such as working in a multinational company, working as an NGO official, communicating with foreigners, reading the latest articles on new technologies with no need to wait for translated versions, and teaching English to future kids after marriage. The idea that English can be used only if one resides overseas is wrong.

As a fourteenth factor, only half of the Myanmar and Japanese students said they had English-proficiency test-taking experience. Didn't they consider English tests in final exams of each academic year as an English -proficiency test? Therefore, in my opinion, English proficiency tests conforming to each country's education system still need some quality updates such as inputting four-skills-integrated tasks, and inserting up-to-date topics happening in the world.

As a fifteenth factor, while most of the Myanmar students are satisfied with using

English daily and have hopes to apply English ability in the future despite their lack of overseas staying experience, most of the Japanese students think that using English is not necessary if they only work and reside in Japan despite the fact that some students had overseas living experience.

Chapter 6 Myanmar and Japanese University Teachers' Beliefs towards Students'

English Learning

Experience of teaching English

Table 6.1. Experience of teaching English by university teachers in Myanmar and Japan

	The highest number of years	The average number of years	The lowest number of years
Myanmar teachers	20 years	10 years	1 year
Japanese teachers	35 years	10 years	6 years

In responding to Question No.1 “How long have you been teaching English?” the average number of years answered by both Myanmar and Japanese teachers were the same – 10 years. However, the highest and the lowest numbers of years of teaching English said by Japanese teachers were higher than those said by Myanmar teachers.

The purposes students are learning English nowadays

Table 6.2. The purposes students are learning English answered by Myanmar and Japanese teachers

Purposes said by Myanmar teachers	Number of Myanmar teachers	Purposes said by Japanese Teachers	Number of Japanese Teacher
For job opportunities	7	For job opportunities	8
For further studies	6	To get credits in universities	2
For English being an international language	5	To communicate with people from different cultures	2
To increase standards of	1	To broaden their world	1

living			
To be English teachers at university	1	To improve their English skills	1
To communicate	1	To find out better choices in the future	1
To get high position	1	To gain the basic knowledge of English as a second language	1
To get personal development	1	To get better TOEIC scores	1
To learn their own subjects	1	-	-
English being a compulsory language	1	-	-

In responding to Question No.2 “What are the purposes that students are learning English nowadays?” the most common purpose answered by Myanmar and Japanese teachers is for job opportunities. From this point, it can be concluded that teachers of both countries consider having English proficiency as a tool for finding jobs.

It is surprising that Japanese teachers did not answer any purposes related to further studies and the status of English as an international language. In contrast, most of the Myanmar teachers stated these purposes. This might suggest that most Japanese students tend to work after graduating than studying abroad or going to graduate school.

On the other hand, Myanmar teachers seem to have confidence that their students’

English proficiency can be applied for their further studies and this can help them get higher positions in their future. The fact that none of the Japanese teachers chose the students' purpose of learning English for being an international language implies that Japanese teachers think that having English proficiency does not really benefit Japanese society. This is possible since all foreign books and movies are translated into Japanese, school textbooks except English subject are also available in Japanese, and even Katakana English is being used in Japan.

From comments given by both countries' teachers, having English proficiency benefits Myanmar students more than Japanese students.

The best methods to gain English proficiency

Table 6.3. The best methods to gain English proficiency

Myanmar teachers	Number	Methods	Number
Communicative language teaching methods	9	Communicative language teaching methods	2
Task-based language teaching methods	3	Interactive methods	2
Audio-lingual methods	2	Reading books in English	1
Interactive methods	2	Introducing cultural differences	1
Student-centered teaching methods	2	Conscious and balanced learning of four skills	1
Audio-lingual methods	2	Task-based language teaching methods	1

Direct Methods	1	Translation methods	1
-	-	Audio-lingual methods	1
-	-	Combination of several methods	1
-	-	Repetitive methods	1
-	-	Matching students' interests to topics, which are universal	1

In responding to Question No.3 “For students, which methods are the best to gain English proficiency?” the common methods suggested by teachers of both countries are “Communicative language teaching methods”, “Task-based language teaching methods”, “Audio-lingual methods”, and “Interactive methods”. The other methods suggested by Myanmar teachers are “Student-centered teaching methods” and “Direct methods”. The other methods suggested by Japanese teachers are “Reading books in English”, “Introducing cultural differences”, “Conscious and balanced learning of four skills”, “Translation methods”, “Combination of several methods”, “Repetitive methods”, and “Matching students’ interests to topics, which are universal”.

It can be seen that “Communicative language teaching methods” are popular among Myanmar teachers. Regardless of being in the age of globalization, teachers of both countries do not seem to have practiced “Student-centered teaching methods”.

Since the teaching experience of Japanese teachers is longer than that of Myanmar teachers, Japanese teachers have suggested a variety of methods.

Important skills for students

Table 6.4. Important skills for the students

	Number of Myanmar Teachers	Number of Japanese Teachers
All skills	10	9
Reading	0	1
Writing	0	0
Listening	0	0
Speaking	0	0

In responding to the Question No.4, “For the students, which skill is the most important for mastering English?” it is interesting that almost all Myanmar and Japanese teachers answered “All skills”.

This means that teachers of both countries think students need integration of four skills in order to master English. However, it is also surprising that most of the Japanese students do not think like that. From Table 5.3, we can see that most Japanese students think that only listening and speaking skills are important to be proficient in English. Here, attitudes of Japanese teachers and those of Japanese students concerning skills do not match. This means that Japanese teachers need to integrate the four skills to help Japanese students.

Importance of grammar for English proficiency of students

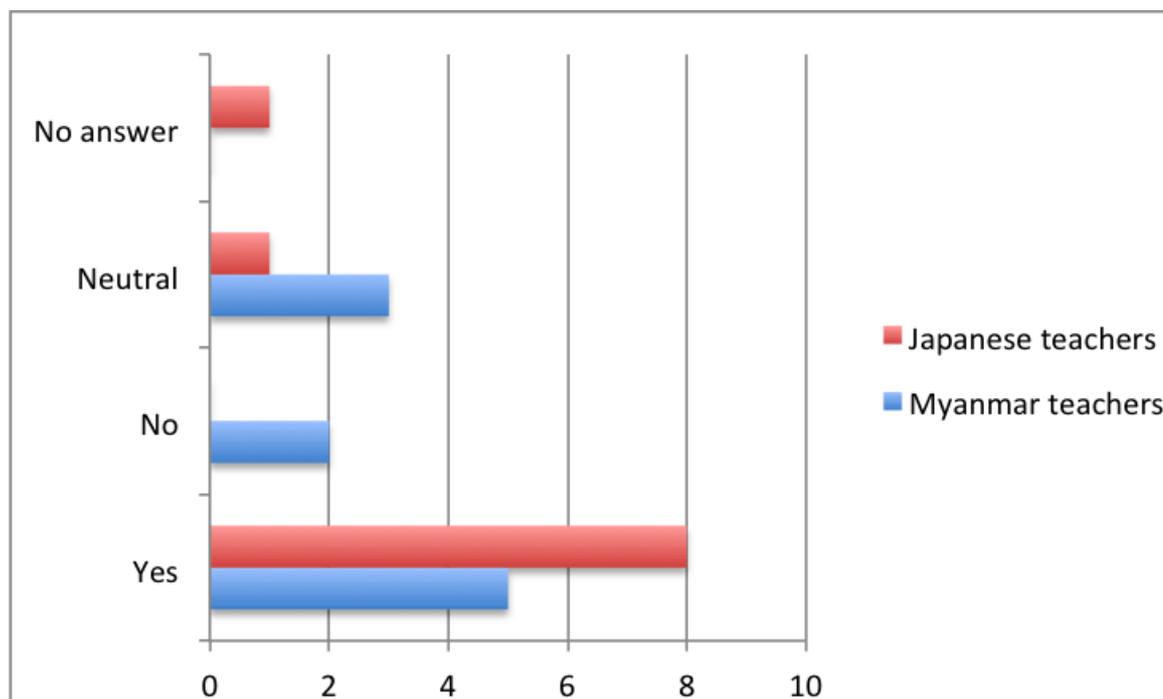


Figure 5.5. Importance of grammar for English proficiency of students

In responding to the Question No. 5 “Does grammatical competence have impact on English proficiency of students?” It is surprising that the attitudes between teachers and students of both countries do not agree. While Myanmar students said that grammatical competence is crucial to gain English proficiency, only half of the Myanmar teachers answered like that.

In this place, both of the Myanmar teachers and students reasons are almost the same, with answers such as “Without background knowledge of grammar, it is impossible for students to learn advanced skills,” “If students do not have enough grammatical competence, they cannot produce accurately and fluently as a graduate one,” “Since students are learning academic English, they need accurate English for their jobs, too,” and “If they cannot form correct sentences, there may be some misunderstandings in particular situations.”

However, the other half of Myanmar teachers said that in addition to grammatical competence, the ideas and the knowledge of how to use the language in every context are also important. Likewise, while almost all Japanese teachers said grammatical competence is

important for English proficiency, only half of the Japanese students answered like that. Thus, the comments given by Japanese teachers do not match those of Japanese students in a way that grammar is the starting point to gain reading and writing skills, and incorrect grammar can cause misunderstandings.

Japanese teachers also commented “Students can't memorize every sentence necessary in their lives. That's why grammar is the key. It's a kind of framework,” “Grammatical competence can affect output skills of students positively,” and “Since our language (Japanese) environment is not those of natural language acquisition, students need to acquire grammatical knowledge.”

The other half of the Japanese students think only basic grammar is enough to gain English proficiency. Therefore, in every university, Japanese teachers should teacher grammar to students but also create ways students can use practically.

Impact of knowing mother language on English proficiency of students

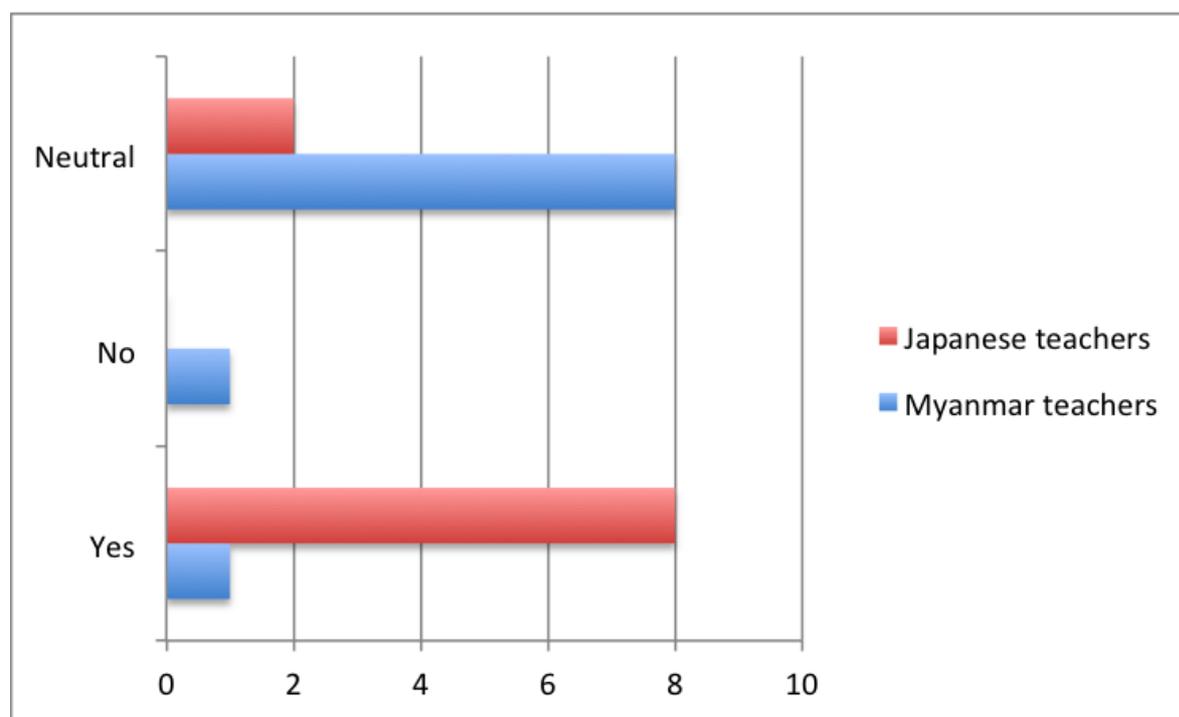


Figure 6.1. Impact of knowing mother language on English proficiency of students

In responding to Question No.6 “Do you think knowing about their mother language has a lot of impact on English proficiency of the students?” it is surprising that while almost

all Japanese teachers chose “Yes”, only one Myanmar teacher thought so. Let’s look at their reasons. Reasons given by Japanese teachers are mostly connected to the point that strong mother language competence helps students a lot in understanding English sentences. This is possible because if students cannot describe their mother language thoroughly, it will be difficult for them to convey sentences they want to translate from mother language to English.

One Myanmar teacher who said, “Yes” commented the same as above. On the other hand, one Myanmar teacher who said “No” commented “Even if students do not know the nature of mother language, if they have a lot of exposure to English (if they hear or read a lot), they can acquire English proficiency. That teacher said, for students, to gain English proficiency, not only knowing the nature of mother language, but also increasing exposure to English language is necessary.”

Degrees of satisfaction with the current English education systems

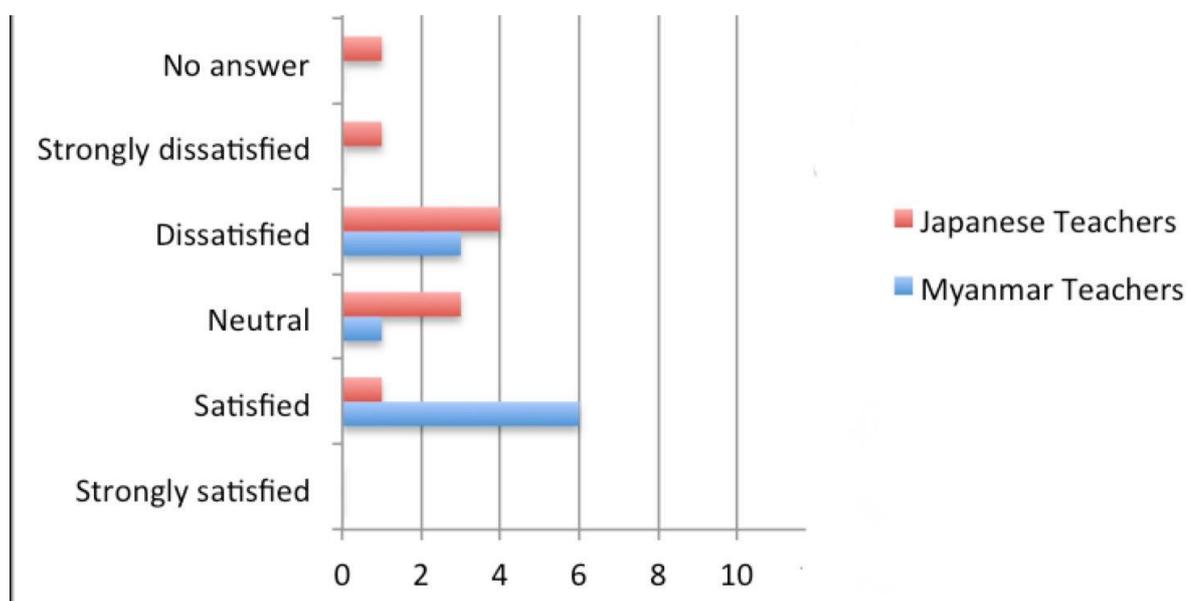


Figure 6.2. Degrees of satisfaction on the current English education system

In responding to Question No.7 “To what degree are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the current English education system of your country?” while half of the Myanmar teachers are satisfied with the current Education system, only one Japanese answered like that.

The reasons given by Myanmar teachers who are satisfied with the current education system are “Student-centered approach is being practiced in cities,” “The system is quite

effective,” and “Due to globalization, the number of young people who are studying English has increased.”

The reason given by one Japanese teacher who chose satisfied is “The system has improved.”

Now let’s look at the reasons why some Myanmar and Japanese teachers are dissatisfied with the current English education system. As for Myanmar teachers, they said, “Student-centered approach is not widely used,” “Teacher training is needed,” and “Students do not have enough exposure to various parts of English learning.”

From their reasons, it can be concluded that practicing student-centered approach in every university of Myanmar, training teachers in order to improve the quality of teachings, and providing students with various English learning materials and methods need to be considered to improve the current English education system of Myanmar.

As for Japanese teachers, they said, “Imagination and grammatical skills of students are not enough,” “Teachers put emphasis on speaking without teaching grammar to students,” “Students’ needs and goals of their English learning should be taken into account,” and “There is time constraint.”

From their comments, it can be suggested that focusing on teaching grammar to students, motivating students’ imaginative skills, teaching suitable English curriculum and methods which match the students’ goals and needs why they learn English, and starting formal English education from primary level grade-1 need to be considered in order to improve the current English education system of Japan.

Opinions on the current English education systems

In responding to Question No.8, “Please tell me your opinions on the current English education system of your country.” both Myanmar teachers and Japanese teachers gave a lot of opinions

For Myanmar teachers, they stated the good points, “Current English language teaching and learning is focused on student-centered approach,” “The system is quite effective,” “In

the 21st century, the English education system of our country has improved especially at the higher education level,” “Almost all young students prefer to study English as a foreign language and find ways to improve their language skills,” and they also stated the weak points, “In some universities of our country, communicative approach is not practiced,” “Although the number of people who can speak English increases dramatically in these days, students should improve learning English more,” “We put emphasis only on rote learning in rural areas whereas student-centered approach plays a vital role in cities,” “Training should be given not only to students but also to teachers,” and “English is learnt as a foreign language and so, students don't have enough exposure for them.”

The same with reasons for Question No.7, Myanmar teachers think they need more training for improvement of their teaching quality, and they want student-centered approach to be practiced as widely as possible. Moreover, in Question No.8, they suggested practicing communicative approach not only in the cities but also in the rural areas, encouraging students to improve English learning, and teaching English both from the point of a foreign language and from other points such as teaching English literature, history, and culture, academic writing, and Business English.

From the comments of Myanmar teachers, it can be said that although teachers are already satisfied with some improvements of the system, they would like to make more improvements for upgrading English proficiency of the students.

As for Japanese teachers, they stated the weak points, “The current English education system is not enough,” “Formal English education is not being practiced before junior high school,” “The current English education system is getting better but it still needs to be improved,” “Although people (teachers) had given up to develop English level of learners, they are hoping to improve English level of learners at present,” “Teachers work in ELT context but students tend to lack motivation for learning English,” “Too much emphasis on teaching communicative skills is not good. Teaching grammar and vocabulary should be emphasized more,” and “The current English education system should be changed to the way

that students can enjoy and make use of English skills.”

From the comments of the Japanese teachers, it can be seen that since they are not fully satisfied with the system, they would like to improve various parts and context of English teaching.

Reforms

In responding to Question No.9, “Which reforms would you like to see in order to improve the current English education system?” Myanmar teachers suggested creating teaching-learning process that leads to student's critical thinking skills, and continuous assessment, reforming exam systems, using more teaching aids, and teaching methods, doing cooperation with other visiting educators from foreign universities, eliminating additional tuition system, reducing class size, and changing assessment and teaching methods in basic education system (e.g. inputting listening and speaking tasks).

For Japanese teachers, they recommended reducing class size, inputting more reading tasks, teaching grammar, starting teaching English from primary school, giving students more opportunities to gain exposure with native speakers, and creating a system in which students can decide which foreign language to learn at university level. As we can see from comments of both countries' teachers, it can be concluded that while most Myanmar teachers are willing to carry out reforms in teaching, most Japanese teachers would like the MEXT to carry out reforms to improve the system.

Advice given to students who are learning English

In responding to Question No.10 “What advice would you like to give to the students who are learning English?” both Myanmar and Japanese teachers gave a lot of precious advice. We can see their advice in the table below.

Table 6.5. Advice given to students who are learning English

Advice given by Myanmar teachers	Advice given by Japanese Teachers
To practice learner autonomy	To have strong motivation to learn and use English
To ask students to do self-study,	To not hesitate, To get more interest in various things in the world, even a small thing
To master four skills	To increase vocabulary
To enjoy English literature, To know the best of English language	To study abroad
To learn different aspects of English language	To make Japanese realize that they do not have any good medicine for acquiring English.
To read, listen, and write and speak a lot	To gain grammatical knowledge
To pursue more opportunities to practice their language skills in the real world	To try to listen and read a lot in English
To read extensively	To read many books in Japanese and in English
To keep on learning because language is a life-long process	To try to realize English as a tool and as something to pursue
To try to get language exposure	To try to make more opportunities to use English in daily lives
To apply what they have learned in class in their real life contexts	To enjoy

From the above comments, we can see that Myanmar teachers' advice given to students is mainly related to mastering four skills, applying English proficiency in daily lives, doing self-study, and carrying on learning English.

We can say that Japanese teachers' comments are mainly connected to studying grammar and vocabulary, enjoying learning English, seeking opportunities to use English in daily lives, and reading and listening to English materials a lot. Both of their advice is really valuable for both countries' students, pointing to the necessity of students learning English.

Analysis of university teachers' attitudes of students' English learning in Japan and Myanmar

Firstly, teachers of both countries considered students are learning English to use as a tool for finding jobs. However, while some Myanmar teachers answered their students were learning English because English is an international language and fused for further studies, none of the Japanese teachers answered like that. Thus, Myanmar teachers seem to have confidence that their students' English proficiency can be applied for their further studies and this can help them get higher positions in their future. However, most Japanese teachers do not think like that. All in all, after judging all the purposes of students' learning English stated by both countries' teachers, having English proficiency benefits for Myanmar students more than Japanese students.

Secondly, concerning the best methods to gain English proficiency, the common methods stated by teachers of both countries were "Communicative language teaching methods", "Task-based language teaching methods", "Audio-lingual methods", and "Interactive methods." They have suggested effective methods. However, it is surprising that many teachers of both countries did not suggest "Student-centered teaching approach." These methods are really effective since they can help students increase their motivation to gain English proficiency. Six steps while learning something: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, is explained by Bloom Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Student-centered teaching methods can also be effectively applied in Bloom Taxonomy.

Therefore, teachers of both countries should practice “Student-centered teaching methods” in teaching English in a wide scale.

Thirdly, almost all teachers of both countries stated integration of four skills being necessary for gaining English proficiency. In this sense, the attitudes of Myanmar teachers and students match each other. However, the attitudes of Japanese teachers and students do not match each other since most Japanese students think reading and writing skills are just used in exam, and only listening and speaking skills are required for English proficiency. Thus, I think Japanese teachers should try to persuade Japanese students to help them realize the importance of combination of four skills for gaining English proficiency.

Fourthly, it is interesting that while half of the Myanmar teachers consider grammatical competence necessary for English proficiency, almost all Myanmar students consider like that. Likewise, while almost all Japanese teachers think grammatical competence crucial to gain English competence, only half of the Japanese students think like that. This means that ideas concerning grammatical competence by both countries teachers do not match those by both countries’ students. That’s why I think Japanese teachers need to explain the importance of grammatical competence in mastering English to their students and Myanmar teachers need to adjust their ideas with those of their students.

Fifthly, it is surprising while most Japanese teachers think students need to know mother language to have impact on their English learning, only one Myanmar teacher thinks so. While Japanese teachers think students need to think of content in their mother language and convey it in English, Myanmar teachers think students should have a lot of exposure to English language to have impact on their English learning. In my opinion, if students of both countries practice combination of comments given by both countries would have a great impact on their English learning. This is because if students only know about their mother language, they can compare similarities and differences between their mother language and English and they can move to step two - exposing materials in English by analyzing the language differences.

As a sixth point, most Myanmar teachers are satisfied with Myanmar's current English education system with the reasons that student-centered approach is being practiced in cities and a significant number of youths are learning English nowadays. However, a few Myanmar teachers are not satisfied with the system because student-centered approach is not widely used. Therefore, I think student-centered approach should be employed in every academic university of Myanmar.

On the other hand, most Japanese teachers are not satisfied with Japan's current English education system with the reasons that teaching grammar is not being emphasized, and time students can absorb English is being constrained. As for Japanese context, in my opinion, teaching English should be started as early as possible, and even when students are in universities, teaching grammar should not be abandoned.

As a seventh point, judging from opinions of current English education system given by teachers of both countries, though Myanmar people are already satisfied with the current English education system, they still want to make further improvements. As for Japanese teachers, as they are not satisfied with the current system, they want to make so many changes in various parts and context of teaching English.

As an eighth point, in order to reform current English education system, while Myanmar teachers want to emphasize changes on methods of teaching English like inputting more communicative tasks in curriculum, Japanese teachers want to focus changes on the context of the system like starting formal English as early as possible.

As a ninth factor, Myanmar teachers' advice to students is connected to mastering four skills, applying English proficiency in daily lives, doing self-study, and carrying on learning English. Japanese teachers' comments are related to studying grammar and vocabulary, enjoying learning English, seeking opportunities to use English in daily lives, and reading and listening to English materials a lot. Both of their advice is really valuable for both countries' students, pointing the necessity of students in learning English.

Chapter 7 Comparing Writing Abilities of University Students in Japan and Myanmar

From the above data so far, we have seen that Myanmar students are more motivated to learn English with the reason that their ability to use English will be of use in their future. They also seem to know more about English language and grammar. For example, most of the Myanmar students pointed out the main difference between Myanmar language and English language, which is sentence construction. Moreover, most of the Myanmar students pointed out the importance of the integration of four skills and grammar for English proficiency. On the other hand, most Japanese students seem to suppose English as a thing to communicate, and learn happily. In addition, they also think that only listening and speaking skills are crucial and just elementary grammar is enough to gain English proficiency.

Thus, there arose one question “Can they actually perform well using English?” I thought of giving writing tasks to both countries’ students to check their output skills. Therefore, I did collect writing samples from 10 Myanmar students and 10 Japanese students. Hoping that students who major in English would be good samples to find the strengths and weaknesses in writing English, I asked for these 20 students whose specialization is English. Moreover, these students also participated in the questionnaires for students.

Also, these students were selected by convenience, which is called “convenience sampling (Miles & Huberman & Saldana, 2014). The students were selected in Myanmar through some teachers the author was acquainted with. In Japan the students were also found through some teachers the author acquainted. Thus, this is not a random sample of students and the data cannot be generalized to any groups in Japan or Myanmar. However, the results do indicate the ability to write English by these two groups of Myanmar and Japanese students.

Writing Prompt

The writing prompt is as follow.

“Which do you prefer, living in the countryside or living in the city?” Write an essay on the given topic in five paragraphs. Give three reasons to support your choice and also include examples. You are given 30 minutes to brainstorm and write.

I decided their essays should not be written on computers as in Myanmar, computers are not widely used, and so, I prepared some papers to ask them to write the essays.

Data Analysis of Written Essays

For analysis, I typed the essays into computers, including all mistakes, so that the writing could be analyzed correctly and more easily. Here, three ways of analyzing written materials were employed;

- Criterion Scores
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level
- Checking by Two Native English Teachers.

Criterion Scores

Criterion scores are judged by the Criterion Online Writing Evaluation Service, which is known as a web-based instructor-led writing tool that helps students plan, write and revise their essays (ETS Criterion writing evaluation service, n.d.). This service offers users a comprehensive writing solution to develop students' writings by freeing up valuable classroom time to concentrate on higher level writing skills and areas of improvement. One feedback of this service is overall Criterion score. This score is calculated based on grammar, organization, and development style, use of vocabulary, and other mechanical items such as punctuation. Overall criterion score ranges from 0 to 6. 0 is the less proficient score and 6 is the most advanced one. The essays of the students were put into Criterion Online Writing Page. Later, the service gave feedback of their writings and also provides the criterion scores they got.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

When you finish writing something on your Microsoft Word page, you can check the level of your writing by using Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (n.d.). After a spell check, the Microsoft word page will give you a short report card, which includes the number of words, the number of sentences, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, and Flesch Kincaid Reading ease. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level equals to the term “The Flesch Grade Level readability formula” (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, n.d.). This formula is calculated based on (1) the total number of words, (2) the number of syllables, and (3) the total number of sentences. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is employed in business, government, industry, and education, in order to draw out scores for writing materials from the tertiary level through the secondary grade and far beyond. That’s why students’ essays in this thesis were used to be scored by this formula.

The specific mathematical formula is as below.

$$FKRA = (0.39 \times ASL) + (11.8 \times ASW) - 15.59$$

FKRA refers to Flesch-Kincaid Reading Age, ASL refers to Average Sentence Length, and ASW refers to Average number of Syllables per word, which is the number of syllables divided by the number of words. For example, if a person’s writing gets Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 10.3, it can be concluded that his grade level in U.S school is tenth grade, and the age of his readers ranges from 14 to 15 years old. By using this formula in adjusting students’ essays, I believe students’ writing levels can be guessed.

Writing criteria for Native Check

I asked two native English university teachers to check the 20 essays of students. For criteria, I focused on the content of the essays because Criteria Scores and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level mainly relates to usage of words, grammar, number of sentences, and style of development. Therefore, I requested two native teachers to focus the relevancy of content and compositional organization. The marking scales for these two items were constructed based on the marking scales described in the book “Understanding & Developing Language Tests” (Weir, 1993).

Criterion Scores

Table 7.1 Criterion scores got by Myanmar and Japanese students

Criterion scores by Myanmar students	Criterion scores by Japanese students
6	6
6	4
6	3
5	3
5	3
5	3
4	3
4	2
4	2
4	2

Criterion scores provide a holistic number for writing. In adjusting Criterion scores, the highest score is six while the lowest is zero (ETS Criterion writing evaluation service, n.d.). As we can see in Table 7.1, four Myanmar students out of 10 received the highest score of 6, whereas only one Japanese received a six. Moreover, while the lowest score for Myanmar students was four, the lowest score for Japanese students was two. The average score for Myanmar students was five and for the Japanese was three. From these facts, it can be suggested that Myanmar students have more knowledge related to English grammar, organization, and development style, use of vocabulary, and other mechanical items such as punctuation comparing to Japanese students.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

Table 7.2 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level got by Myanmar and Japanese students

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level by Myanmar students	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level by Japanese students
11.4	7.7
9	7.4
7.8	6.2
7.4	5.9
6.3	5.7
6	5.3
5.9	5.1
5.4	5
5.1	4.2
4.7	3.4

Similarly, the Flesch-Kincaid provides a holistic number for writing. According to Table 7.2, the highest level for among Myanmar students was 11.4 and the highest among Japanese students was 7.7. In addition, the lowest level among Myanmar student was 5.4 and the lowest among Japanese students was 3.4. To add, the average level for Myanmar students was 6.3 and the average for Japanese students was 5.1. Therefore, looking at Flesch-Kincaid Grade levels calculated by Flesch-Kincaid Grade readability formula, we can see that the writing levels of Myanmar students are greater than those of Japanese students.

Native teachers' check

Two native English teachers checked the contents of the students' essays. They mainly focused on relevancy and adequacy of content and compositional organization. The marking scale is as follow.

Relevancy and adequacy of content

(Must include reasons why the student prefer living in the city or living in the countryside and also supporting ideas for each reason)

0. The answer has almost no relation to the task asked. Totally unsuitable answer.
1. Answer of limited relevance to the task asked. Probably there are major gaps in treatment topic and/or pointless repetition.
2. For the most part answers what the task asked, though there may be some gaps or unnecessary information.
3. Relevant and adequate answer to the task set.

Compositional Organization

(5 or more paragraphs are needed. Appropriate transition words are also necessary.)

(If there is one less paragraph, take off one point.)

Introduction

The first reason why you chose living in the city or living in the countryside and supporting ideas

The second reason why you chose living in the city or living in the countryside and supporting ideas

The third reason why you chose living in the city or living in the countryside and supporting ideas

Conclusion

0. No clear organization of content and structure.
1. There is very little organization of content. Underlying structure is not sufficiently clear.
2. Some organizational skills are visible, but not fully handled.
3. Overall content and structure are clear. Organizational skills are fully handled.

Firstly, let's look at the scores the students got for relevancy and adequacy of content.

Table 7.3. Scores students got for relevancy and adequacy of content

Scores got by Myanmar students	Scores got by Japanese students
3	3
3	2.5
3	2.5
3	2.5
3	1.5
2.5	1.5
2	1.5
2	1
2	1
1	0

If we look at Table 7, we can see that while five Myanmar students got the highest score of three, only one Japanese student got the highest. In addition, the lowest score among Myanmar students is one while the lowest among Japanese students is zero. So, in relating to relevancy and adequacy of content, Myanmar students' scores are higher than those of Japanese students.

Table 7.4. Scores students got for compositional organization

Scores by Myanmar students	Scores by Japanese students
3	3
3	3
2.5	3
2.5	2.5
2.5	2
2.5	0.5
2	0.5
2	0.5
2	0
2	0

According to Table 7.4, two Myanmar students and three Japanese students got the highest score of 3. This difference is a bit. However, the lowest score among Myanmar students was 2 while the lowest score among Japanese students was 0. Thus, it can be predicted that Myanmar students have higher compositional organization skills than Japanese students do.

From the above two points of view, relevancy and adequacy of content and compositional organization, checked by two native English teachers, it can be concluded that Myanmar students got higher scores related to written content than Japanese students did.

Analysis of comparing writing skills of Myanmar and Japanese university students

From the above data, judging from three criteria, which are Criterion Scores, Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level, and Native Check, we can see that the scores received by Myanmar students are always higher than those Japanese students got. All in all, we can conclude that the writing skills of Myanmar students are higher than those of Japanese students.

Moreover, as we saw in examining students' attitudes of English learning section, most Myanmar students pointed out the importance of grammar and the integration of four skills to gain English proficiency while most Japanese students revealed that only basic grammar, listening skills, and speaking skills are needed for gaining English proficiency. Thus, from evaluating the students' actual output skills (writing), we can say that each country' students' attitudes of English learning agree with their output English abilities.

Here, some Myanmar teachers' ideas that grammatical competence does not have a lot of impact on English proficiency of students do not match with Myanmar students' output abilities. Likewise, most Japanese teachers' idea that grammatical competence has a lot of impact on English proficiency of students does not match with Japanese students' output abilities.

Chapter 8 Discussion

Firstly, relating to Myanmar and Japanese students' attitudes towards English learning, while most Myanmar students consider the integration of four skills and grammatical competence essential for their English proficiency, most Japanese students believe just listening and speaking skills, and basic grammar enough for English proficiency.

Relating to learning methods, students of both countries favor speaking English with friends and learning from teachers in school in a relatively high degree. They believe that they can improve their English learning with the help of teachers and their friends. One third of Myanmar students are also fond of learning English through reading books. Communicative English was the most popular subject between students of both countries.

Concerning differences between mother language and English, most Myanmar students were able to point out the main difference "sentence construction", while most Japanese students did not manage to. So, most Japanese students may not usually compare Japanese and English in the case of English learning.

Relating to difficulties in learning English, one third of Myanmar students do not have confidence in listening and speaking skills, one third of Japanese students do not have confidence in grammar. While most Myanmar students believe their English abilities have merits both in their daily lives and their future, Japanese students do not.

Secondly, relating to Myanmar and Japanese university English teachers' attitudes towards their students' English learning, teachers of both countries think that their students are learning English to use English ability as a tool in the future. Similar to their students' ideas, both countries' teachers like to apply "Communicative language teaching methods".

They also suggested other effective methods, such as, "Task-based language teaching methods", "Audio-lingual methods", and "Interactive methods".

Moreover, both countries' teachers also think that integration of four skills is necessary for English proficiency of students. While some Myanmar teachers and most Japanese teachers believe grammatical competence crucial for English abilities of students, some

Myanmar teachers consider students also need exposure to English.

While most Japanese teachers think knowing the nature of mother language has an impact on English proficiency of students, most Myanmar teachers again point out the necessity of exposure to English.

Relating to degree of satisfaction with the current English education system, while most Myanmar teachers are satisfied, most Japanese teachers are not. Here, while Myanmar teachers want to make reforms in teaching English such as practicing student-centered approach widely, Japanese teachers hope the better improvements of the system such as starting formal English education earlier.

Finally, judging from writing data of ten Myanmar and Japanese university students, based on the Criterion score, Flesch-Kincaid Grade level, and American teachers' check, Myanmar students got better scores than Japanese students. In this scope, Myanmar students' writing skills are ahead of Japanese students'. Myanmar students had to practice different kinds of essays and letter writings starting from the last year of junior high school. If Japanese students have to practice such compulsory task, they can improve their writing skills. All in all, students' attitudes towards English learning, teachers' attitudes towards English learning, and writing data were discussed here.

Limitations

I cannot generalize English abilities of the overall Myanmar and Japanese students since the data for questionnaires of students and teachers, and data for writing were collected under the title of convenience sampling. Moreover, the number of students and teachers used for my thesis are too low to make conclusions of English learning in the scale of a country. However, I believe that the data of my thesis will help show some problems found in English learning of small societies and then figure out a number of suggestions, and take actions for better improvements of English learning in these societies.

Suggestions

More communicative tasks should be inserted in the curriculum of Myanmar university students so that they will have confidence in listening and speaking skills. Moreover, English-speaking communities should be opened in every university so that Myanmar students will become enthusiastic in speaking English.

In addition, more advanced grammar classes should be combined in the university English curriculum so that Myanmar students will continue to keep their belief that grammatical competence has a lot of impact on their English proficiency. Moreover, since Myanmar students have already realized that integration of four skills is needed for their English proficiency, and they have beliefs to use that in their future, more academic reading and writing tasks should be offered to them since these can support their future studies and career a lot.

Concerning the English educational system, inserting practical listening and speaking tasks in junior and senior high school levels would be a good idea to eliminate Myanmar students' fear to communicate. Lastly, student-centered approach should be widely used in the context of English learning so that students can develop their English abilities in a fast speed since language learning is connected to self-realization.

For the Japanese students, first of all, restudying basic grammar in the first and second year of university lives, and polishing it by stepping on to the stage of advanced grammar and communicative in the third and fourth years of university would be a good remedy to eliminate their ideas that basic grammar only is enough for English proficiency. Here, Japanese students need to understand that grammar is not only useful for reading and writing but also for listening and speaking. Secondly, balancing the four skills in English curriculum might be a solution to persuade the students to realize the necessity of integration of four skills for English competence. Thirdly, writing different types of essays and letter writings should be prescribed in the curriculum too in order to apply grammar they have learnt. Moreover, their writing practices can help them when they have to write in English in their

future jobs or studies.

Next, teachers should find ways to seek the real reasons why their students are learning English and facilitate their needs by applying necessary teaching methods. In addition, teachers need to guide their students that upgrading their English abilities will be useful in their future even if their jobs might not be related to using English. For example, students can imagine reading English books, reading books for the latest software or technology in English, watching foreign movies and listening to English songs, communicating with foreigners, working abroad, studying overseas, and teaching English to kids after marriage. The nearest possibility might be using English in Tokyo Olympics. Students need to have confidence that they can employ their English abilities in their daily lives and their future.

The above are the suggestions for making improvements in Myanmar and Japanese students' English learning.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

To conclude, answering my main research question, most Myanmar university students know so many aspects of English language such as grammatical competence and integration of four skills being essential for their English proficiency, and Myanmar and English being different in sentence construction while most Japanese students have not thought of these aspects. Also, while most Myanmar students believe that their English proficiency will be of use in the future, most Japanese students do not consider the same. This means that English learning in Japan still needs to make changes to guide importance of English mastery to students and to fulfill their weaknesses in learning English. For Myanmar students, they need to believe they can have benefits from English learning and try and try harder to brush their abilities up.

Next, I found some disagreements between ideas of teachers and students of both countries. Therefore, there should be some consistency between purposes and needs of English learning between teachers and students. To do this, evaluations of English classes should be made at the end of every semester. In addition, Japanese teachers need to seek the actual reasons why their students are learning English and their difficulties in English learning in order to create better English learning environments and qualities. In addition, training should be given not only to students but also to teachers, as constant quality updating is needed for catching up the current students' demands in the age of globalization.

In addition, Myanmar students' writing abilities were better than those of Japanese students. Therefore, more writing tasks based on different themes should be given to Japanese university students to enhance their writing skills. For Myanmar students, since they have already developed their writing skills, they should be given more academic writing tasks since these can help them in their future jobs and further studies.

Again, I must state that these results cannot be over-generalized in a country's scale as the number of research sites and participants were not sufficient enough to do so. However, I do believe that this thesis is my first step to enter the fields of English learning through

examining English learning in Japan and Myanmar. Later, I would like to continue my data analysis on speaking data of both countries' students. In my further research, I would like to widen my scope of research to Southeast Asian countries and find out the common problems in context of English learning and find out ways to solve them.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Survey on Students' Attitudes towards English Learning

Age -----

Area of specialization -----

(1) When did you start learning English?

.....
.....

(2) What occupation do you want to do after graduation?

.....
.....

(3) Do you like English? Why?

.....

(4) Which types of learning are the best for you? You can choose more than one answer.

- Listening to radio
- Watching TV
- Reading books
- Listening to tapes
- Speaking with friends
- Learning from teachers in school
- Watching movies
- Reading English news
- Others _____

(5) Which skill is the most important for you?

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening

_____Speaking

_____All Skills

Why?

.....
.....

(6) Do you think grammatical competence has a lot of impact on your English competence?

Why?

.....
.....

(7) What kind of subject do you like? You can choose more than one answer.

_____English Literature

_____Communicative English

_____Linguistics

_____Phonetics

_____Business English

_____Communication

_____Others

Why?

.....
.....

(8) Are there any differences in your mother language and English language? (for example, sentence construction). What are they?

.....
.....

(9) Which English do you prefer, British English or American English?

Why?

.....

.....
(10) Do you have any difficulties in mastering English? If so, what are they?
.....
.....

(11) If you have a chance to study in an English-speaking country, which country do you want to go? Why?
.....
.....

(12) Do you think the ability to use English has a great impact on your daily life?

- a. _____Yes b. _____No c. ____Neutral

Why?
.....

(13) Do you think the ability to use English will have a great impact in your future?

- a. _____Yes b. _____No c. ____Neutral

Why?
.....

(14) Have you ever sat for an English Language Proficiency Test?
.....
.....

(15) Have you ever lived and studied English overseas? If so, how many years and at what age?
.....

Appendix 2

Survey on Teachers' Attitudes towards Students' English Learning

Age _____years old

Name of University _____

Location _____

(1) How long have you been working as a university teacher? (experience)

.....
.....

(2) What are some purposes that students are learning English nowadays?

.....
.....

(3) For the students, which methods are the best to gain English proficiency?

.....
.....

(4) For the students, which skill is the most important for mastering English?

- a. ____Reading
- b. ____Writing
- c. ____Listening
- d. ____Speaking
- e. ____All Skills

Why do you think so?

.....
.....

(5) Do you think grammatical competence has a lot of impact on English proficiency of the students?

- a. ____Yes
- b. ____ No
- c. ____ Neutral

For the answers "Yes" and "No", please explain the reason.

.....
.....

(6) Do you think language competence has a lot of impact on English proficiency of the students?

- a. ____ Yes
- b. ____ No
- c. ____ Neutral

For the answers “Yes” and “No”, please explain the reason.

.....
.....

(7) Please tell me your opinion concerning the current English education system of your country?

.....

Why?

.....

(8) To what degree are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the current English education system of your country?

- a. ____ Fully satisfied
- b. ____ Satisfied
- c. ____ Neutral
- d. ____ Dissatisfied
- e. ____ Strongly Dissatisfied

Why do you think so?

.....

(9) Which reforms would you like to see in order to improve the current English education system?

.....

(10) What advice would you like to give to the students who are studying English?

.....

