

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Rationale and Statement of the Problem**

Nowadays, speakers of English have increased to an extremely large number in this global world. English is spoken in almost every country and has received the status of an international or global language. Crystal (1997, p. 2) asserts that “the language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country.” Indeed, English builds up a unique role which cannot be ignored by any country. It is a universal language for advanced learning and practical application. English is also used globally for the advancement of humanity through all fields of learning and technology. In addition, most modern technologies applied today even in non-English speaking countries acquire their knowledge from information in English. For TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) professionals, the English language has a global status as it is the language of business, technology, science, the Internet, popular entertainment and even sports (Nunan, 2003).

English has attained a significant role in our society as it benefits people by giving them a promising and brighter future. Knowing this, many people are trying to learn the language or providing their children with English-learning opportunities. Meanwhile, in an effort to be part of this global trend, countries all over the world are giving special attention to teaching and learning this widely used language.

Especially in developing countries, English is seen as a language of success and career advancement. Governments often take initiatives to encourage their citizens to learn English at schools. In some countries such as Myanmar, many students are not competent in either written or spoken English even though most of them have been studying the language since kindergarten.

Two interviews revealed the incompetence of English proficiency in Myanmar. The first interview was with a Myanmar national, who taught English at Yangon University for many years, and was also an English-program television news anchor. He said that the Employment Department of Myanmar Labour and Social Welfare Ministry complained that many jobs requiring proficiency in English had to be re-advertised frequently due to the lack of qualified applicants.

Then, according to another interview with a medical doctor from Yangon who had taught at the medical school for more than ten years, the changing situations in Yangon medical school was mentioned. Previously, at the medical school in Yangon, the lectures, the instructions and textbooks were in English. However, later, it had to be changed to bilingual education because of the inadequacy of the students' comprehension in English. These incidents reflect the current situation of English in Myanmar. Compared to other countries in Asia, English proficiency of Myanmar people cannot be considered low. However, the doctor believed that the quality has obviously declined.

One of the factors that led to the declining and the ineffective teaching and learning of English may be the students' motivation (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1990) because motivation is regarded as a vital factor which is crucial in language learning. Richards and Schmidt (2002) and Niederhauser (1997) state that motivation is one of the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning. Pintrich and

Schunk (1996, p. 5) mention that, “motivation can affect both new learning and the performance of previously learned skills, strategies, and behaviors, which have important implications for schooling.” As motivation is a key issue and a primary cause for language learning, it can affect students’ success or failure. When students are motivated, they will put more effort in their language learning with a positive attitude. While motivated students can be effective and fast learners, unmotivated students are likely to find it difficult to acquire the language.

Therefore, according to the fact stated above, by investigating students’ motivation factors and encouraging and supporting their needs, the teaching and learning will be more meaningful and successful. Such an investigation will also uncover the underlying reasons for the popular of studying English in Myanmar. Although the problem of the ineffective teaching and learning the language is true for the whole population of Myanmar nationals, it is impossible to examine all of them due to many weaknesses such as limited accessibility and funding. For that reason, research was limited to Myanmar Institute of Theology’s BARS (Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies) program, in Yangon, Myanmar. Another reason is that this institute is the only one enrolled by the greatest variety of ethnic groups in Myanmar. It is a four-year bachelor degree program which offers various majors, such as English, Computer Science, Business Management, Religion, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Music, and Political Science.

By examining the motivational factors from this program, it is assumed that the result will be able to reflect the motivational factors among all ethnicities studying EFL in the seminary degree program.

## **Objectives of the Research**

The purpose of the current study is to determine the learning motivation of Myanmar EFL (English as foreign language) students in a Seminary Degree program in Yangon, Myanmar.

## **Research Questions**

The study poses two main research questions:

1. What are the motivation of Myanmar EFL Students in BARS program?

What motivates them the most in learning English?

2. Is there any difference in motivation between the first year students and the fourth year ones? If so, what are they?

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the current study is threefold.

First, a small number of EFL educational research studies have been conducted in Myanmar, and they rarely focused on the learners' motivation even though it is such a crucial part of language education. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap, tries to answer the call for this need.

Secondly, the diverse backgrounds of the participants are very significant. The participants of this study represented all ethnic groups in Myanmar: Kachin, Kayah, Kayin (Karen), Chin, Mon, Burman, Rakhine, and Shan. Thus, the result can basically be applied for all students of a seminary degree program in Myanmar nation.

Thirdly, the finding of the study will directly benefit the teachers of EFL by giving them an analysis on what motivates their students to learn the language. That

way, it will enable them to create a more effective teaching and learning environment.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study investigated Myanmar EFL learners who majored in English at the BARS program, at Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon, Myanmar. It was based on Self-Determination Theory.

### **Definition of Terms**

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| Motivation           | “Motivation is the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitude toward learning the language.” (Gardner 1985, p.10)  |
| Extrinsic motivation | Motivation resulting from pressure of parents, society, academic requirement or other sources of rewards and punishments toward personal gains (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).  |
| Intrinsic motivation | “It refers to motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do.” (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2003, p. 38)   |
| Amotivation          | A situation in which people see no relation between their actions and the consequences of those actions; the consequences are seen as arising as a result of factors beyond their control.” (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000, p. 62) |

- External regulation      It is defined as those activities that are determined by sources external to the person, such as tangible benefits or costs. (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000, p.61)
- Introjected regulation    It refers to the reasons that the learner force himself to perform an activity due to some types of external pressure that individuals have incorporated into the self (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000).
- Identified regulation     For personally relevant reason, learners choose an activity and invest energy in it (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000).

This chapter stated the problem of Myanmar EFL learners who had studied English for over 10 years, but they were still incompetent in the language communicatively. The lack of motivation is regarded as one of the main problems since motivation is crucial in language learning. Therefore, the study triggered two questions in order to find out the motivation factors among Myanmar EFL students in a seminary degree program: 1) What are the motivation of Myanmar EFL Students? What motivates Myanmar EFL learners the most in learning English? 2) Is there any difference in motivation between the first year students and the fourth year ones? If so, what are they? The next chapter reviews theories and concepts about motivation and related studies.