

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS
IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS OF
ENGLISH SPECIALIZATION STUDENTS**

PhD DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In Myanmar, English is the only foreign language taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of formal education. Myanmar learners need the English language skills for academic pursuit, for better job prospect and for international communication. One of the modules that English specialization students at the tertiary level have to take is 'Communicative Skills' which aims at the development of students' all four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. For Communicative Skills classes, the language teaching materials written by native speakers of English which incorporate sociocultural contents to facilitate language learning are generally used. Indeed, due to the differences between the two cultures, English and Myanmar, these contents inhibit the students' comprehension and their language development. Thus, it is necessary to profile the significant sociocultural factors to discover how much these contents affect the students' language learning and to find out ways and means to help students understand the language input in the coursebooks. In this study, the sociocultural contents in the prescribed text for Communicative Skills classes of the first and second year students – Cutting Edge Pre-intermediate – are analyzed and they are categorized into 20 sociocultural factors. Mainly based on these contents, a questionnaire is set for a survey on the sociocultural awareness. The questionnaire is given to two groups of subjects: English specialization students and teachers of English at the tertiary level institutions. According to the data collected, the students' sociocultural awareness is not satisfactory and the most confusing factors are geographical features, different measuring units, places in the world and free time activities. The results of the survey on the teachers' sociocultural awareness also suggest that in order to raise the students' sociocultural awareness, the teachers' awareness on sociocultural factors should be improved first. Based on the findings of this study, pedagogic implications are drawn, and suggestions are made in order to raise the students' sociocultural awareness for their communicative skills development.