

**‘How to Teach Myanmar Language more effectively as a Foreign Language’**

**Mon Mon Aung<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

Language teaching has started in Myanmar since the Bagan period. It can be seen on four sides of Rajakumar stone inscription of Pali, Mon, Pyu and Myanmar Language. Among them, Pali language teaching dominated in monasteries at that time. Teachers were monks and most of the pupils were boys. They used Nissaya(Translation) method in Pali language teaching. English language teaching started in Konbaung period. Myanmar language teaching for foreign students formally started in Yangon University in 1960s. Today, Myanmar language teaching has become popular in foreign countries. This paper aims to find out a way to teach Myanmar Language more effectively as a foreign language. It will be focused on comparative method by David Collier (1993). The research questions are (1) which teaching method can improve Myanmar language teaching? (2) How do we effectively train students to be proficient in Myanmar language skills? This paper is based on the researcher's experience of Myanmar Language teaching from 2002 to 2008 at Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Language teaching workshop in November 2006 at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. It was found that combined language teaching method is used more effectively in teaching language skills.

Key words: language teaching, teaching method, language skills, combined language teaching method

**Introduction**

This paper presents how to teach Myanmar Language more effectively as a foreign language. Today is Knowledge age and countries in the world are like a big village. People in a big village can speak at least two languages. Myanmar language teaching has become popular in foreign countries. Thus, language teaching is an important factor in the present day.

**Aim**

To find out a way to teach Myanmar Language more effectively as a foreign language.

**Research Design**

This paper will be focused on comparative method by David Collier (1993). He said that comparison is a fundamental tool of analysis. It sharpens our power of description, and plays a central role in concept-formatting by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases.<sup>2</sup>

The research questions are

- (1) which teaching method can improve Myanmar language teaching?
- (2) How do we effectively train students to be proficient in Myanmar language skills?

**Hypothesis**

Combined language teaching method is used more effectively in language skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Collier, David. 1993. 5.

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## Literature Review

A foreign language is a language indigenous to another country. It is also a language not spoken in the native country of the person referred to i.e., an English speaker living in Guam can say that Chamorro is a foreign language to him or her.<sup>1</sup> A foreign language teaching and learning is popular in present day.

Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers(1986) described language teaching as follows:

Language teaching came into its own as a profession in the twentieth century. The whole foundation of contemporary language teaching was developed during the early part of the twentieth century, as applied linguistics and others sought to develop principles and procedures for the design of teaching methods and materials, drawing on the developing fields of linguistics and psychology to support a succession of proposals for what we were thought to be more effective and theoretically sound teaching methods.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, David Nunan (1991) pointed out

An important task confronting applied linguistics and teachers concerned with second and foreign language learning is to overcome the pendulum effect in language teaching. This effect is most evident in the area of methodology where fads and fashions, like theories of grammar, come and go with monotonous regularity.<sup>3</sup>

In 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Department of Yangon University seminar(2001), U Tin Shwe (Professor and Head of Myanmar Department, Yangon University of Foreign Languages) presented 'Language teaching in Myanmar'. In Thailand, in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on the Dynamics in Second/ Foreign Language Teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2010), Dr. Aung Win Naing presented 'Teaching Myanmar Language as a Foreign Language'. He pointed out 'Teaching Myanmar Language is gradually going forward and we should try to prepare the language teaching materials to meet the global context. Since 'time' becomes the vital factor in language teaching, we still have to find the new methods or new combinations of old method'.

### 1. A Brief History of Language Teaching in Myanmar

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country. Myanmar language is the official language and it is a member of the Lolo-Burmese grouping of the Sino-Tibetan language family.

Language teaching has started in Myanmar since Bagan period. It can be seen on the four sides of Rajakumar (Myazedi) stone inscription of Pali, Mon, Pyu and Myanmar Language. Among them, Pali language teaching dominated in monasteries at that time. Teachers were monks and most of pupils were boys. They used Nissaya (Translation) method in Pali language teaching. English language teaching started in Konbaung period. Myanmar language teaching for foreign students formally started in Yangon University in 1960s.

Yangon University of Foreign Languages was founded as the Institute of Foreign Language (IFL) in January 1964, offering courses in French, German, Japanese and Russian language. IFL added Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_Language](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Language).

<sup>2</sup> Jack C. Richards & Theodore S. Rodgers, 2001, 1.

<sup>3</sup> David Nunan, 1991, 1.

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speaking course in 1965, English course in 1969 and Burmese for foreigners in 1974. It was renamed to its current name in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

Mandalay University of Foreign Languages was established in 1997. Languages that are currently studied at this University are English, Chinese, Japanese, French, Korean, German, Russian and Myanmar for Foreigners.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, Myanmar language teaching has become popular in foreign countries.

### 2. The Role of Language Teachers and Classroom Management

A language teacher is like a model person of the classroom. The language teacher should be dynamic, creative and interested in language and should know the way of approach. His or Her pronunciation must be correct and clear enough to hear.

Besides, they are expert in classroom management. Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior by students. According to Moskowitz & Hayman (1976), once a teacher loses control of their classroom, it becomes increasingly more difficult for them to regain that control. Classroom management is closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. Methodologies remain a matter of passionate debate amongst teachers; approaches vary depending on the beliefs a teacher holds regarding educational psychology.<sup>3</sup>

So, a language teacher must know classroom management and a model of learners in language teaching.

### 3. Language Teaching Method in Myanmar language Teaching

In the late 1800s and most of the 1900s, language teaching was usually conceived in terms of method. In seeking to improve teaching practices, teachers and researchers would typically try to find out which method was the most effective. In 1963, University of Michigan Linguistics Professor Edward Mason Anthony Jr. formulated a framework to describe various language teaching methods, which consisted of three levels: approach, method and technique.

There are many methods of teaching languages. Some have fallen into relative obscurity and others are widely used; still others have a small following, but offer useful insights. There are three principal views:

1. **The structural view** treats languages as a system of structurally related elements to code meaning (e.g. grammar)
2. **The functional view** sees language as a vehicle to express or accomplish a certain function, such as requesting something.
3. **The interactive view** sees language as a vehicle for the certain and maintenance of social relations, focusing on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction found in conversational exchanges. This view has been fairly dominant since the 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

**Structural method** consists of (1) grammar-translation method and (2) audio-lingual method. **Functional method** includes (1) the oral approach and situational language teaching and (2) directed practice. **Interactive method** is composed of (1) Direct method (2) The series method (3) Communicative language teaching (4) Language immersion (5) Silent Way (6) Community language

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/YUFL>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUFL>.

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classroom\\_management](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classroom_management).

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language\\_Teaching\\_Method](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_Teaching_Method).

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learning (7) Suggestopedia (8) Natural approach (9) Total Physical Response (10) Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling and (11) Dogme language teaching.

Among the methods, Most of the teachers use audio-lingual method in Myanmar language teaching. Besides, they use Orton-Gillingham method of language teaching.

### 3.1 Analysis of Audio-lingual Method and Orton-Gillingham Method

The Audio-lingual method is the product of three historical circumstances. For its views on language, audiolingualism drew on work of American linguistics such as Leonard Bloomfield. The prime concern of American linguistics in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been to document all the indigenous languages spoken in the USA. At the same time, behaviorist psychologists such as B.F. Skinner were forming the belief that all behavior (including language) was learnt through repetition and positive and negative reinforcement. The third factor that enabled the birth of the Audio-lingual method was outbreak of World War II, which created the need to post large number of American servicemen all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

The Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction was developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative, cognitive, and flexible. The Orton-Gillingham Approach has been in use since the 1930s. The approach is so named because of the foundational and seminal contributions of Dr. Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Comparison of The Audio-lingual Method and The Orton-Gillingham Method**

No.		The Audio-lingual Method	The Orton-Gillingham Method	Combined Method of Audio-lingual Method and Orton-Gillingham Method
1.	Aims	The aural-oral skill was used systematically to emphasize communication skill. The foreign language is taught for communication, with a view to achieve development of communication skill.	Orton-Gillingham is an instructional approach intended primarily for use with persons who have difficulty with reading, spelling, and writing of the sort associated with dyslexia.	Combined method aims to get development of communication skill, reading and writing skills, listening and speaking skills, and creative thinking skill.
2.	Techniques	The skill in the Audio-lingual method was taught in the following order: Listening-speaking-reading-writing. Language was taught through dialogues which contained useful vocabulary and common structures of communication.	The Orton-Gillingham methodology utilizes phonetics and emphasizes visual auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles. The students is directly taught reading, handwriting, and written expression as one logical body of knowledge. The Orton-Gillingham method is language based and success- oriented.	Combined method is taught through dialogues which contained useful vocabulary and common structures of communication by visual auditory and kinesthetic learning styles.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio-lingual Method.](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio-lingual_Method)

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orton-Gillingham Method.](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orton-Gillingham_Method)

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3.	Approach	<p>In a typical audio-lingual lesson, the following procedures would be observed.(1) Students first hear a model dialogue (either read by the teacher or on tape) containing the key structures that are the focus of the lesson.(2) The dialogue is adapted to the students' interest or situation, through changing certain key words or phrases. (3) Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as basis for pattern drills of different kind.(4) The students may refer to their textbook, and follow-up reading, writing, or vocabulary activities based on dialogue may be introduced. (5) Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out.</p>	<p>A daily lesson using the Orton-Gillingham approach typically lasts between 45-60 minutes. It requires seven steps:(1) review of letters and sounds already learned,(2) introduction of new phonogram (symbol) and its sound,(3) lists of individual words for reading aloud, carefully selected to review previously learned associations, (4) diction of new and previously learned sounds, (5)dictions of sentences using only those phonograms and phonemes previously taught,(6) diction of sentences using words made up of phonograms and phonemes previously taught,(7) oral reading from a text controlled for orthography.</p>	<p>A daily lesson using, (1) Students first hear a model dialogue (either read by the teacher or on tape) containing the key structures that are the focus of the lesson. (2) lists of individual words for reading/ speaking aloud, carefully selected to review previously learned associations. (3) Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as basis for pattern drills of different kind.(4) diction of new and previously learned sounds, (5) oral reading from a text controlled for orthography and feedback. (6) Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out.</p>
4.	Advantage	<p>Listening and speaking skills are emphasized and especially the former rigorously developed. The use of visual aids has proven effective in vocabulary teaching. The method is just as functional and easy to execute in larger groups. Correct pronunciation and structure is emphasized and acquired. It is grounded on a solid theory of language learning.</p>	<p>Comprehensive and thorough training of practitioners to control for fidelity of implementation-Explicit and systematic instruction for students with severe reading disabilities - Clearly delineated scope and sequence.</p>	<p>More effective in communication skill, reading and writing skills, listening and speaking skills, and creative thinking skill.</p>
5.	Weaknesses	<p>The behaviorist approach to learning is now discredited. Many scholars have proven its weakness. It does not pay sufficient attention to communicative competence. It only language form is considered, while meaning is</p>	<p>Teacher intensive daily planning for creating student specific lesson.</p>	<p>Teacher intensive daily planning for creating student specific lesson.</p>

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		neglected. The learner is passive role; the learner has little control over their learning.		
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### 3.2 Procedure of Myanmar Language Teaching Using Combined Method

These sample lesson plans feature the ways to train language skills in Myanmar Language Teaching.

#### 1. Basic Level

#### Yangon University of Foreign Languages

#### Myanmar Department

#### Lesson Plan

Class/ Level	Basic Level
Duration	50 mins
Major Skill	communication skill, Listening and speaking skills,
Skills integrated	reading and writing skills, Creative thinking skill.
Topics	Greeting
Objective	To communicate with each other
Anticipated problem	Pronunciation of / နှစ် /

No.	Focus	Teaching Procedure	Teaching Aids	Time limit
1.	Warming up (Opening Phase)	Model and Imitation	Text Book Diagram and Pictures White Board Language Lab	5 mins.
2.	Stimulation Phase	lists of individual words that is concerned with 'Greeting' for speaking aloud, carefully selected to review previously learned associations /min gala ba/ /min gala ba shin/ /min gala bakhinbja/ /min gala baSayar/ /mingalarba Sayarma/	Text Book Diagram Pictures White Board Language Lab	10mins.
3.	Participation Phase	Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as basis for pattern drills of different kind.	Text Book Diagram Pictures White Board Language Lab	5 mins.
4.	Closure Phase	Diction of new and previously learned sounds	Text Book Diagram Pictures White Board Language Lab	10 mins
5.	Evaluation Phase	Oral reading from a text controlled for orthography, pair work, group work, role	Text Book Diagram Pictures White Board	10 mins

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		play and feedback.	Language Lab	
6.	Follow up Phase	Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out.	Text Book Diagram Pictures White Board Language Lab	10 mins

### 2. Intermediate Level

#### Yangon University of Foreign Languages

#### Myanmar Department

#### Lesson Plan

Class/ Level	Intermediate Level
Duration	50 mins
Major Skill	communication skill, reading and writing skills,
Skills integrated	listening and speaking skills, Creative thinking skill.
Topics	Areca nut, Betel leaf and limestone story
Objective	To know the usage of Myanmar Chewing Culture,
Anticipated problem	Pronunciation of / * / / ♀ / / ♀ /

No.	Focus	Teaching Procedure	Teaching Aids	Time limit
1.	Warming up (Opening Phase)	Model and Imitation	Text Book Diagram and Pictures Real teaching aids Language Lab	5 mins.
2.	Stimulation Phase	lists of individual words concerning Areca nut, Betel leaf and limestone story, carefully selected to review previously learned associations /kun-yar/ /kun-thee/ /kun-ywak/ /htone/ /kun it/ /kun taungkai/	Text Book Diagram Pictures Realia White Board Language Lab	10mins.
3.	Participation Phase	Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as basis for pattern drills of different kind./kun sar de/ /kun we me/ /kun kyaikete/	Text Book Diagram Pictures Realia White Board Language Lab	5 mins.
4.	Closure Phase	Diction of new and previously learned sounds,	Text Book Diagram Pictures Real teaching aids Language Lab	10 mins
5.	Evaluation Phase	Oral reading from a text controlled for orthography and	Text Book Diagram Pictures	10 mins

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		pair work, group work, role play and feedback.	Realia Language Lab	
6.	Follow up Phase	Reading and writing activities and self monitoring	Text Book Diagram Pictures Realia Language Lab	10 mins

### 3. Advanced Level

#### Yangon University of Foreign Languages

#### Myanmar Department

#### Lesson Plan

Class/ Level	Advanced Level
Duration	50 mins
Major Skill	communication skill, Listening and speaking skills,
Skills integrated	reading and writing skills, Creative thinking skill.
Topics	Myanmar Wedding Culture
Objective	To know the usage of Myanmar Wedding Culture
Anticipated problem	Pronunciation of / * / / ☠ / / ☹ /

No.	Focus	Teaching Procedure	Teaching Aids	Time limit
1.	Warming up (Opening Phase)	Model and Imitation	Text Book Diagram and Pictures Video Language Lab	5 mins.
2.	Stimulation Phase	lists of individual words for speaking aloud, carefully selected to review previously learned associations./min gala saung/ /tha toe tharr//tha toe thamee/ /min gala let phwe/ /min gala let saung/ /baiktheikSayar/	Text Book Diagram Pictures Video Language Lab	10 mins.
3.	Participation Phase	Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as basis for pattern drills of different kind	Text Book Diagram Pictures Video Language Lab	5 mins.
4.	Closure Phase	diction of new and previously learned sounds.	Text Book Diagram Pictures Video	10 mins



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			Language Lab	
5.	Evaluation Phase	oral reading from a text controlled for orthography and pair work, group work, role play and feedback.	Text Book Diagram Pictures Video Language Lab	10 mins
6.	Follow up Phase	Reading and writing activities and self monitoring	Text Book Diagram Pictures Video Language Lab	10 mins

A questionnaire was given to the foreign students of Yangon University of Foreign Languages. There are 30 students at basic level, 41 students at intermediate level and 45 students at advanced level. 10 students are randomly chosen for each level. Their nationalities are Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian and Bangladeshi. They have been introduced with combined method. They are happy to learn Myanmar Language and most of them want to learn it for their business or academic interest.

**Table 2. Analysis of Learner interest at Basic Level**

No.	Skills at Basic Level	Numbers of learners	%
1.	Speaking & Listening skills	8	80%
2.	Reading & Writing skills	4	40%
3.	Communication skills	6	60%
4.	Creative thinking skills	6	60%

**Table 3. Analysis of Learner interest at Intermediate Level**

No.	Skills at Intermediate Level	Numbers of learners	%
1.	Speaking & Listening skills	9	90%
2.	Reading & Writing skills	6	60%
3.	Communication skills	9	90%
4.	Creative thinking skills	9	90%

**Table 4. Analysis of Learner interest at Advanced Level**

No.	Skills at Advanced Level	Numbers of learners	%
1.	Speaking & Listening skills	9	90%
2.	Reading & Writing skills	9	90%
3.	Communication skills	10	100%
4.	Creative thinking skills	10	100%

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For Basic level students and Intermediate level students, reading and writing skills are difficult for them because they are confused about Myanmar writing style. For Basic level students, 80% of learners are interested in speaking and listening skills and 40% of learners are interested in reading and writing skills. 60% of learners are interested in communication and creative thinking skills. For intermediate level students, 90% of learners are interested in speaking and listening skills and 60% of learners are interested in reading and writing skills. 90% of learners are interested in communication and creative thinking skills. For advanced level students 100 % of learners are interested in communication skills and creative thinking skills. 90% of learners are interested in speaking and listening skills and reading and writing skills. 100% of learners are interested in communication and creative thinking skills. According to this result, Advanced level students are more interested in language skills.

Besides, they know their weak skills and they solve the problem by practicing themselves in Myanmar language teaching. Language Lab is the teaching aid they like best. It helps improve their speaking and listening skills. They think speaking and listening skills are important for communication. They are happy and satisfied with Myanmar language learning. Therefore combined method is effective in Myanmar language teaching.

### Conclusion

This paper presented how to teach Myanmar Language more effectively as a foreign language. There are so many language teaching methods in Knowledge age. Combined Method of Audio-lingual Method and Orton-Gillingham Method is used more effectively in Myanmar language teaching.

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