

Enhancing English Language Proficiency Among Dhammaduta Bhikkhus Through the Four IDDHIPĀDA-Based Language Learning Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores the application of the Four IDDHIPĀDA-Based Language Learning Strategies to enhance English language proficiency among Dhammaduta Bhikkhus, Buddhist monks dedicated to spreading the teachings of Buddhism. The four bases Chanda (Intention), Viriya (Effort), Citta (Concentration), and Vimamsa (Investigation) serve as guiding principles for this language training program.

The “Intention” base emphasizes setting clear language learning goals and fostering a strong desire to communicate Buddhist teachings effectively in English. “Effort” involves dedicating consistent time and energy to language practice, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. “Concentration” focuses on mindfulness practices to enhance concentration in language-related tasks. Lastly, “Investigation” encourages critical analysis and deep understanding of English language structures and nuances.

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To implement these strategies effectively, a tailored curriculum is designed to meet the specific needs and goals of Dhammaduta Bhikkhus. Access to English language resources, peer support, and regular assessments are provided. By integrating these Four IDHIPĀDA Based Language Learning Strategies, this study aims to empower Dhammaduta Bhikkhus with the language skills needed to share Buddhist wisdom with a global audience.

Keywords: Dhammaduta Bhikkhus; Four Iddhipāda; English Language Proficiency

Introduction

Buddhism plays a significant role in addressing social issues, particularly in times of societal upheaval. Its principles of compassion, mindfulness, and inner peace can provide guidance and solace to people facing challenges amidst the chaos of life. It's like a calm oasis amidst the turmoil (Sanu Mahatthanadull, 2013).

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has operated a training program for the overseas Dhammaduta Bhikkhus for almost 30 years, there are more than 2,500 missionaries' monks in total and sent abroad to propagate the Buddhism in many countries around the world. Which travel to propagate Buddhism in foreign countries. In addition to Buddhist skills, it is essential for Dhammaduta Bhikkhus to have English language skills for the propagation of the teachings of the Lord Buddha to get into it properly (Dhammaduta College, 2023).

“Dhammadūta” is a term from Buddhism, specifically Theravada Buddhism. It refers to individuals or groups of people who are engaged in the act of spreading or propagating the teachings of Buddhism, often to regions or communities where Buddhism is not well-established. Dhammadutas are essentially Buddhist missionaries or emissaries whose primary purpose is to share the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) with others, in the hopes of promoting understanding and practice of Buddhist principles. They might do this through various means such as teaching, preaching, distributing Buddhist texts, or engaging in other activities aimed at spreading Buddhist teachings.

Currently, English is used as the first language and official language in many countries around the world. It is most commonly spoken in the United Kingdom, the

United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and other African and Caribbean countries, including South Asia, for example. It has become the third most commonly used dialect after Mandarin and Spanish (David Crystal. 2003), and there are many other countries where English is a second language, including India, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore (Saraporn Sirikhun, 2014), etc. Davis Graddol said that the British Council's English Next study, the number of English language learners around the world, is increasing day by day. It is expected that in the next 10-15 In the next year (approximately 2015-2020), the number of learners will increase up to 2 billion people. From this research, it reflects that the world's population sees the importance of English in the modern world society (Phramaha Varasaya Varasayananda and others, 2020).

For the above reasons, it was found that the English language is important for Dhammaduta Bhikkus to have English language skills and can bring the Lord Buddha's teachings to foreign countries around the world.

The Importance of Using English for the Promotion of Buddhism

Promoting Buddhism is a significant process in history, starting with Lord Buddha sending his disciples to preach the religion. Later on, envoys were dispatched to different lands to spread Buddhism. The choice of language for dissemination is closely tied to the significance of language and culture in each era.

1. During Lord Buddha's time. Lord Buddha used the Pali language as a medium to teach Buddhism, as it was prominent in the Magadha region and widely trusted during that era.

2. During the reign of King Ashoka the Great. King Ashoka sent Buddhist emissaries to proclaim Buddhism in various lands, including Thailand. The Dhamma propagated consisted of the nine successive missions, covering the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal, to promote Buddhism.

3. In the present day. English plays a crucial role in propagating Buddhism to the global society due to its international influence and widespread usage. English is one of the most widely spoken languages globally. Buddhist monks in Thailand who need to

promote Buddhism to foreign visitors must develop English language skills.

The use of language for the promotion of Buddhism goes beyond mere communication; it also relates to teaching meditation and applying Buddhist principles in daily life. This includes teaching meditation in schools and applying these principles in various aspects of work. Such efforts aim to disseminate Buddhist knowledge and experiences to the global society in the present and future. Therefore, the development of English language skills for the purpose of promoting Buddhism is vital in contemporary Buddhist culture and for monks in the modern era. It also serves as a tool for effective communication with the global community, making Buddhist teachings more accessible internationally.

However, promoting Buddhism is not solely about language; it also involves understanding the culture and the needs of people in society who seek to learn more about Buddhism and applying meditation and Buddhist principles in their daily lives. Hence, the training of English language skills for the promotion of Buddhism is essential and holds great significance in the culture of Buddhism and for monks in the current era and the foreseeable future.

English is a crucial language for Thai Dhammaduta Bhikkhus to spreading Buddhism abroad. There are more than one hundred monks a year who enroll in and complete the training program, which is provided by Dhammaduta College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, and Mahamukut Buddhist University. The training curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including basic construction, Vipassana meditation, Buddhist propagation, and the English language. However, even after completing the course, many Thai overseas Dhammaduta monks still struggle with the English language. This is obviously our deficiency as compared to Buddhist monks from other countries (Ukhote et al., 2023).

The Four Iddhipāda Principles and English Language Training for Dhammaduta Bhikkhus

The “Iddhipāda” is a term from Buddhism that refers to four bases or paths to success in meditation and spiritual development. These four bases are.

1. Chanda Iddhipāda. This is the base of intention or will. It involves having a strong desire or intention to achieve a particular spiritual goal, such as enlightenment or liberation.

2. Viriya Iddhipāda. This is the base of effort or energy. It requires putting forth continuous effort, energy, and diligence in one's spiritual practice.

3. Citta Iddhipāda. This is the base of consciousness or concentration. It involves developing deep levels of concentration and focus through meditation.

4. Vimamsa Iddhipāda. This is the base of investigation or analysis. It entails the systematic investigation and analysis of one's experiences and the nature of reality to gain insight and wisdom.

Iddhipāda is a compound Pali word comprising 'Iddhi' and 'Pada'. 'Iddhi' can be translated as completeness or perfection. 'Pada' translates as the 'root' or 'basis'. Chanda is the concept that there is nothing within or without one's personality that can obstruct the attainment of the goal. "If I do not attain this accomplishment in this life, I shall not rest content." Virya is the energy and effort needed to achieve the goal against all odds, hardships and setbacks; denial of discouragement. "He is not discouraged even though it is said to him that he must put forth effort for many days, months and years." Citta is extreme, strong and ardent attachment to the goal. "One attains satisfaction and tranquility only when one's mind is absorbed in matters connected with the Iddhi (goal)." Vimamsa is the conscious perception of the gaining of knowledge and wisdom. "It is knowledge that can clearly perceive the advantages and benefits of the Iddhi", (Sayadaw, M.L. (1999) in David Brown, 2004)

These four bases are considered essential for the development of spiritual powers and the attainment of higher states of consciousness in Buddhism.

Using the "Four Iddhipāda" principles for English language training is a beneficial approach as follows.

1. Chanda Iddhipāda (Intention)

- Clearly define the objectives of learning English and cultivate a strong intention to excel in English language proficiency.
- Aspire to use English for spreading teachings or communication with others.

2. Viriya Iddhipāda (Effort)

- Invest time and energy diligently into English language practice.
- Regularly practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English.
- Persevere through challenges and doubts encountered during the learning

process.

3. Citta Iddhipāda (Concentration)

- Cultivate mindfulness practices to enhance concentration, which can also benefit language learning.

- Focus on attentive listening and clear pronunciation.
- Engage in deep reading and understanding of English language content.

4. Vimamsa Iddhipāda (Investigation)

- Analyze and break down English language structures to understand grammar and vocabulary.

- Study the nuances of English to effectively convey religious knowledge.
- Promote critical thinking and discussions in English to gain a deeper understanding (Supranee Sararat, 2021)

Conclusion

Enhancing English language proficiency among Dhammaduta Bhikkhus through the four Iddhipāda-based language learning strategies is a noble and effective approach.

There are how each of the four Iddhipāda bases can be applied to language learning.

1. Chanda Iddhipāda (Intention).

- Develop a strong intention to improve English proficiency for effective communication of Buddhist teachings.

- Set clear language learning goals and objectives.
- Cultivate a sincere desire to share the Dharma in English.

2. Viriya Iddhipāda (Effort).

- Dedicate consistent time and effort to language learning.
- Practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English regularly.

- Persevere through challenges and setbacks in the learning process.

3. Citta Iddhipāda (Concentration).

- Practice mindfulness meditation to enhance concentration, which can also benefit language learning.

- Focus on listening comprehension and pronunciation with undivided attention.

- Engage in deep reading and reflection on English Buddhist texts.

4. Vimamsa Iddhipāda (Investigation).

- Analyze and deconstruct English language structures to understand grammar and vocabulary.

- Explore the nuances of English to convey Buddhist teachings accurately.

- Encourage critical thinking and discussion in English to deepen understanding.

To implement these strategies effectively, consider the following.

- Establish a structured English language curriculum tailored to the specific needs and goals of Dhammaduta Bhikkhus.

- Provide access to English language resources, including books, courses, and online materials.

- Encourage peer support and group discussions in English.

- Organize regular assessments and feedback sessions to track progress.

By incorporating the four Iddhipāda bases into language learning, Dhammaduta Bhikkhus can not only enhance their English proficiency but also effectively spread the teachings of Buddhism to a wider audience.

New knowledge

To apply the “Four Iddhipāda” principles effectively in English language training, consider.

- Designing a curriculum tailored to the specific needs and goals of the learners.

- Providing access to English language resources, including books, courses, and online materials.

- Encouraging conversations and mutual support among peers in using English.

- Conducting regular assessments and sessions for feedback to track progress.

Incorporating the “Four Iddhipāda” principles into language learning will not only enhance English language proficiency but also enable learners to effectively disseminate religious knowledge and teachings to a broader audience with dedication towards success in learning and communication in this language.

**The Four Iddhipāda Principles and English Language Training
for Dhammaduta Bhikkhus**



Figure 1 New knowledge

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