

Motivation in English Learning: A Case Study of an ESP Course in a Thai University

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The Asian Conference on Education 2023
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Running an ESP course which requires students to participate actively in the course, the students' ability to interact with topics a teacher raises in class is important. As a teacher, the researcher had noticed that some students enjoyed the class while some did not. This brought to an investigation to see what caused this phenomenon to happen so as to understand the condition and factors that affect students' motivation in learning English. Then, more appropriate lessons may likely be focused for further courses. The investigation was done by an open-ended questionnaire with 103 participants who studied an ESP course in a Thai university. Three main questions were studied: (1) Do you like learning English? (Why or why not); (2) How much motivation do you have in learning English? (What are factors encouraging you to learn English); and (3) How much confidence do you have in speaking English? (What are problems affecting your confidence in speaking English?) The results showed that 76.70% of the students like to study English; while 18.45% do not, and 4.85% neither like nor dislike. Most students love learning English because they want to go abroad and use English to communicate. For their motivation scale ranking from 0-10, the average is at 7.15 with the reason on the ability to communicate with foreigners at 31.08%. For problems affecting confidence in speaking English, the low self-esteem in speaking English is highly stated at 34.16%. The average of confidence in speaking English is at 4.85 (out of 10).

Keywords: Learning Motivation, Speaking Confidence, Factors Affecting in Speaking

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Introduction

In a university which there are a lot of mixed levels of students, to use English as a medium language is in consideration of each specific case. Teachers should be able to cover the content, language structures, vocabulary, and functions as planned in the teaching schedule; while English is encouraged to be used in an English class to make students get familiar of listening and speaking English. However, in some classes, where there are a lot of low to average English proficient students, to use English may cause some difficulties for some students in case their understanding may need more struggling than other students. This may lessen their learning motivation.

Students' motivation is one of important factors which support students' learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1959, 1972; Coleman, James, Galaczi, and Astruc, 2007; Lier, 1996). As Gardner (1982) mentioned that motivation consists of three components: effort (which is about the time the students spend in learning the language and their drive to learn English); desire (relevant to the students' need to be proficient in English); and affect (that is linked to their feeling to study English). So, to be successful in learning a language, students' motivation is important and necessary. In addition, motivation is categorized into two main types, namely integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The integrative motivation aims to be able to integrate into the language; while the instrumental motivation tends to be able to use the language as functions to communicate. The teachers who teach English should make sure if the use of English does not destroy the students' learning motivation. As Deci and Ryan (1985) mentioned about the supportive learning situation can affect learning motivation.

This study, then, focuses on investigating students' preference in learning English to see if they like English or not. It is likely that students who love learning English tend to have high motivation in learning English than those who do not like to learn English. Liar (1996) mentioned that students who have motivation could achieve their goals in learning more than those who do not have. After that, motivation in learning English was investigated. This study focuses on students who study an ESP course. Most students were in low to average English proficiency. English was used a medium language in class. Moreover, their confidence in speaking English was also studied.

There are three main questions to be investigated:

1. Do you like learning English? (Why or why not)
2. How much motivation do you have in learning English? (What are factors encouraging you to learn English)
3. How much confidence do you have in speaking English? (What are problems affecting your confidence in speaking English?)

The data analysis was done by coding. This is to group similar ideas of answers together and count for frequency and calculate into percentage. Then, intra-coder or intra-rater technique was also employed in order to check for the reliability coefficient. The researcher took about 9 months to re-analyze the data again, then, compare the first and the second times of the data analysis.

The results of the study are presented according to the research questions respectively. The first part shows the findings from the coding, frequency, and percentage. The second part reveals the intra-coder reliability coefficient.

Part 1: Coding, Frequency, and Percentage

The below table is to answer **Question 1** “Do you like learning English?” Most of the students answered that they preferred learning English for 76.70%. About 18.45% said they did not like it and only 4.85% neither liked nor disliked learning English.

Items	Like	Dislike	Neither like nor dislike	Total
Numbers of Students	79	19	5	103
Percentage	76.70%	18.45%	4.85%	100%

Table 1: Students’ preference in English learning

This part is linked from the above part about their preference in English learning. Here are supporting reasons why they liked or disliked learning English. It could be seen that most of the students who preferred to learn English answered that they wanted to go abroad and be able to communicate for about 23.08%. Another two reasons with equal numbers of percentage were because English was fun and they were aware of the importance of English, which were 13.84% both.

Items	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	Want to go abroad and be able to communicate	30	23.08%
2	Fun learning	18	13.84%
3	Be aware of importance of English	18	13.84%
4	Use for working	15	11.54%
5	Communicate with foreigners	11	8.46%
6	Use in daily life	11	8.46%
7	Use for practicing singing English songs	7	5.38%
8	Use to watch movies	6	4.62%
9	Value people who can use English	6	4.62%
10	Be attractive in learning English	6	4.62%
11	Effect from affective teacher	2	1.54%
Total		130	100%

Table 2: Supporting reasons of their preference in English learning (Like)

Next part shows the supporting reasons of those students who disliked learning English. Most of them (38.70%) mentioned that English had too many points to remember (such as grammar points). The second top supporting reason was because of their self-indulgence for about 29.03%. They thought that they were not competent enough to learn English so they did not have strong drive to push themselves to learn English with their utmost effort.

Items	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	Too many points to remember e.g. grammar	12	38.70%
2	Self-indulgence	9	29.03%
3	Teacher's inappropriate style of teaching	3	9.68%
4	Low-self confidence	3	9.68%
5	Lack of lexical knowledge to be used leading to low intention in studying English	2	6.45%
6	No interest in English learning	1	3.23%
7	Dislike the under-pressure environment in studying	1	3.23%
Total		31	100%

Table 3: Supporting reasons of their preference in English learning (Dislike)

The next table shows reasons of a number of students who neither liked nor disliked learning English. The top reason (40%) focused on the teacher's teaching style. So, this shows that teaching style could have an effect on students' preference in learning English in some aspect.

Items	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	Depend on the teacher and teaching style	2	40%
2	Realize that their English knowledge is ok (no problem in life)	1	20%
3	Just learn it because it's a must	1	20%
4	Just be able to learn it but feel so so	1	20%
Total		5	100%

Table 4: Supporting reasons of their preference in English learning (Neither like nor dislike)

Next, the results from **Question 2** show how much motivation the students have in learning English. This was to let students rank their score from 0 to 10. The average scores were 7.15.

Score Rank (0 – 10)	Frequency	%
Score at 10	10	9.71%
Score at 9	11	10.68%
Score at 8	25	24.27%
Score at 7	22	21.36%
Score at 6	15	14.56%
Score at 5	13	12.62%
Score at 4	7	6.80%
Score at 3	0	0
Score at 2	0	0
Score at 1	0	0
Score at 0	0	0
Total	103	100%

Table 5: Average score rank in learning English motivation

This part is to show lists of factors that encourage students to learn English. There were 11 lists of factors that the students mentioned. The top two factors were because English could help in communicating with foreigners for 31.08% while another factor focused on its use in working (28.38%).

Items	Factors	Frequency	%
1	It helps in communicating with foreigners.	46	31.08%
2	It helps in working.	42	28.38%
3	It helps in having good profiles.	16	10.81%
4	It helps in travelling.	14	9.46%
5	It helps in entertaining.	9	6.08%
6	It helps in everyday use.	7	4.73%
7	It helps in exploring new things.	5	3.38%
8	English is compulsory. I must learn it.	3	2.03%
9	Teachers and their teaching styles influence motivation.	3	2.03%
10	Students are motivated to learn English because they want to be like their idols.	2	1.35%
11	Students are motivated to learn English because of the environment they live in.	1	0.67%
Total		148	100%

Table 6: Factors encouraging students to learn English

The next part focuses on **Question 3** which is about students' confidence in speaking English. The same as the previous part, the students had to rank their scores from 0 to 10 to give themselves scores in their confidence to speak English. The average score of all students was only 4.85 out of 10 which was very low, not even pass half of the full score. This shows that most students had low self confidence in speaking English regardless of their competency.

Score Rank (0 – 10)	Frequency	%
Score at 10	1	0.97%
Score at 9	1	0.97%
Score at 8	3	2.91%
Score at 7	11	10.68%
Score at 6	15	14.56%
Score at 5	33	32.04%
Score at 4	23	22.33%
Score at 3	8	7.78%
Score at 2	3	2.91%
Score at 1	3	2.91%
Score at 0	2	1.94%
Total	103	100%

Table 7: Average score rank in speaking English

This part links to the above part about the confidence in English speaking of students. There were lists of problems that blocked the students from being able to speak English. The top three problems were their low self-image in their English proficiency (34.16%), limitation of vocabulary (22.28%), and their worry about accent (9.90%).

Items	Problems	Frequency	%
1	Low self-image in their English proficiency	69	34.16%
2	Limitation of vocabulary	45	22.28%
3	Worry about accent	20	9.90%
4	Lack of practice in English speaking	18	8.91%
5	Limitation of knowledge in sentence structure	14	6.93%
6	Lack of listening skill	14	6.93%
7	Worry about grammar	14	6.93%
8	Worry about pronunciation	7	3.47%
9	No interest in English	1	0.49%
Total		202	100%

Table 8: Problems affecting confidence in speaking English

After the presentation of the coding, frequency, and percentage in the above section, then, the next section shows the research findings with another method, which is the analysis of reliability coefficient. This method helps to double check about the reliability coefficient of the findings to see if the data analysis employed was reliable and acceptable in academic aspect or not.

Part 2: Intra-Coder Reliability Coefficient

The **intra-coder reliability** test is displayed below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of items coded the same in the first and second coding}}{\text{Number of items coded in the first coding}}$$

To answer **Question 1** about the students' preference in English learning, the students also gave reasons to support why they liked learning it. The first time, the researcher indicated 11 reasons; whereas, the second time of the data analysis, 9 reasons were found. Therefore, the reasons supporting student's preference in English learning were 9 reasons with the reliability coefficient of 0.82. Neuendorf, 2002 (p. 145) mentioned that "coefficients of .90 or more would be acceptable to all, for **.80 or more would be acceptable for most cases** and if it was below this point, there might be some unacceptable points to be discussed." So, in this part it means the finding is acceptable.

First time analysis: 11 reasons

Items	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	Want to go abroad and be able to communicate	30	23.08%
2	<i>Fun learning</i>	18	13.84%
3	Be aware of importance of English	18	13.84%
4	Use for working	15	11.54%
5	Communicate with foreigners	11	8.46%
6	Use in daily life	11	8.46%
7	Use for practicing singing English songs	7	5.38%
8	Use to watch movies	6	4.62%
9	Value people who can use English	6	4.62%
10	<i>Be attractive in learning English</i>	6	4.62%
11	Effect from affective teacher	2	1.54%
Total		130	100%

Table 9: 1st time analysis (Question 1: Reasons why they liked learning English)

Second time analysis: 9 reasons

Items	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	Want to go abroad and be able to communicate with foreigners	41	31.54%
2	<i>Fun learning and be attractive in learning English</i>	24	18.46%
3	Be aware of importance of English	18	13.84%
4	Use for working	15	11.54%
5	Use in daily life	11	8.46%
6	Use for practicing singing English songs	7	5.38%
7	Use to watch movies	6	4.62%
8	Value people who can use English	6	4.62%
9	Effect from affective teacher	2	1.54%
Total		130	100%

Table 10: 2nd time analysis (Question 1: Reasons why they liked learning English)

Intra-coder Reliability =

Analysis	1 st time analysis	2 nd time analysis
No. of Reasons	11	9

= 9/11 → **R = 0.82**

The next part is to answer **Question 2** about what factors encouraging the students to learn English. The first time of the analysis covered 11 factors; while the second time consisted of only 9 factors. The reliable coefficient of this part was 0.82 which is acceptable (Neuendorf, 2002).

First time analysis: 11 factors

Items	Factors	Frequency	%
1	It helps in communicating with foreigners.	46	31.08%
2	<i>It helps in working.</i>	42	28.38%
3	<i>It helps in having good profiles.</i>	16	10.81%
4	It helps in travelling.	14	9.46%
5	It helps in entertaining.	9	6.08%
6	It helps in everyday use.	7	4.73%
7	It helps in exploring new things.	5	3.38%
8	English is compulsory. I must learn it.	3	2.03%
9	Teachers and their teaching styles influence motivation.	3	2.03%
10	Students are motivated to learn English because they want to be like their idols.	2	1.35%
11	Students are motivated to learn English because of the environment they live in.	1	0.67%
Total		148	100%

Table 11: 1st time analysis (Question 2: Factors encouraging the students to learn English)

Second time analysis: 9 factors

Items	Factors	Frequency	%
1	It helps in communicating with foreigners and use in travelling	60	40.54%
2	<i>It helps in working and have good profiles</i>	58	39.19%
3	It helps in entertaining.	9	6.08%
4	It helps in everyday use.	7	4.73%
5	It helps in exploring new things.	5	3.38%
6	English is compulsory. I must learn it.	3	2.03%
7	Teachers and their teaching styles influence motivation.	3	2.03%
8	Students are motivated to learn English because they want to be like their idols.	2	1.35%
9	Students are motivated to learn English because of the environment they live in.	1	0.67%
Total		148	100%

Table 12: 2nd time analysis (Question 2: Factors encouraging the students to learn English)

Intra-coder Reliability =

Analysis	1 st time analysis	2 nd time analysis
No. of factors	11	9

$$= 9/11 \rightarrow R = 0.82$$

This part shows **Question 3** about the problems indicated to affect confidence in speaking English. Both the first and the second times of the analysis, equal items of problems were coded. Therefore, the reliability coefficient was 1.00 which was mentioned that “**coefficients of .90 or more would be acceptable to all**, for .80 or more would be acceptable for most cases and if it was below this point, there might be some unacceptable points to be discussed” (Neuendorf, 2002, p.145).

First time analysis: 9 Problems

Items	Problems	Frequency	%
1	Low self-image in their English proficiency	69	34.16%
2	Limitation of vocabulary	45	22.28%
3	Worry about accent	20	9.90%
4	Lack of practice in English speaking	18	8.91%
5	Limitation of knowledge in sentence structure	14	6.93%
6	Lack of listening skill	14	6.93%
7	Worry about grammar	14	6.93%
8	Worry about pronunciation	7	3.47%
9	No interest in English	1	0.49%
Total		202	100%

Table 13: 1st time analysis (Question 3: Problem affecting confidence in speaking English)

Second time analysis: 9 Problems

Items	Problems	Frequency	%
1	Low self-image in their English proficiency	69	34.16%
2	Limitation of vocabulary	45	22.28%
3	Worry about accent	20	9.90%
4	Lack of practice in English speaking	18	8.91%
5	Limitation of knowledge in sentence structure	14	6.93%
6	Lack of listening skill	14	6.93%
7	Worry about grammar	14	6.93%
8	Worry about pronunciation	7	3.47%
9	No interest in English	1	0.49%
Total		202	100%

Table 14: 2nd time analysis (Question 3: Problem affecting confidence in speaking English)

Intra-coder Reliability =

Analysis	1 st time analysis	2 nd time analysis
No. of problems	9	9

= 9/9 → **R = 1.00**

Conclusion

From the results of the study, it could be seen that most students, regardless of their English proficiency, preferred to study English because they would like to be able to communicate with other people. This is similar to Carrió-Pastor and Mestre Mestre (2014) which mention that generally most students have motivation to learn a language because they want to be able to use it (instrumental motivation) not to understand it (integrative motivation). So, from this finding, it can be implied that activities and practices in class should also focus more on language application, not just only language point to be memorized. An interesting point which was found in the study was that among students who neither liked nor disliked learning English mentioned that they would wait to decide if they like learning or not by considering the teachers' teaching style. This links to Phan (2010) that the teacher's support in English learning could have an effect on their learning motivation.

The reason most students mentioned for motivating them to learn English was about communication and for work purposes. This shows that they concern about English use as

functional instrument to help them in the future. English which was used as a medium language in class even if the majority of students were in low to average proficiency but from the finding, it showed that most of them preferred that the teacher used English. This might be because they could have a chance to practice their listening skills which could be useful in their work or personal purposes.

Referring to the above paragraph of the conclusion and discussion about the use of English in class; however, most students have low self-esteem in speaking English. They had low self perception on speaking skill. This could be seen from their average speaking score they chose to represent their speaking ability. Then, this could lead to the activity preparation in class that the teachers should find or create some kinds of activity which can help them increase their confidence and self esteem in speaking English with other people.

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