

A Study of Students' Motivation for English Language Learning: Instrumental Motivation and Integrative Motivation

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 1

Month: April

Year: 2025

P-ISSN: 2320-2653

E-ISSN: 2582-1334

Received: 15.03.2025

Accepted: 15.04.2025

Published Online: 21.04.2025

Citation:

Seangkul, P., Adipat, S., & Chotikapanich, R. (2025).

A Study of Students' Motivation for English Language Learning: Instrumental Motivation and Integrative Motivation. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 13(S1), 42-48.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v13iS1-April.8689>




This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Peerapon Seangkul

Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand

Surattana Adipat

Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2433-1547>

Rattanawadee Chotikapanich

Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the level of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation for English language learning among Grade 11 students at a Thai government secondary school. The instrument utilized was the five-point Linkert scale questionnaire developed by [Sudirman et al. \(2022\)](#) applied from [Gardner's \(1985\)](#) Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery (AMBT). The participants consisted of 175 Grade 11 students at a school in Thailand. Data was collected via an online survey using Google Forms. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation. The findings indicate that instrumental motivation scored slightly higher than integrative motivation, although the mean scores of either motivation type could be classified at the high level, indicating that the students perceived English as valuable for both personal enjoyment, such as understanding media and culture, and for practical reasons such as education and career opportunities.

Keywords: Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Integrative Motivation

Introduction

Technology and communication play important roles in contemporary daily life. Learning English has become necessary since it is an international language used to communicate around the world. People who speak different languages use English to interact with each other and exchange information and knowledge in various dimensions. English is taught in many other countries as they recognize its value. In Thailand, learning English as a foreign language is a fundamental subject. Schools aim to develop all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to provide them with adequate English language proficiency. It is therefore very important for students to develop their English language skills to meet international standards ([Adipat, 2021](#)).

However, the issue of English proficiency in Thailand is a pressing one that must be resolved because Thai people's ability to use English has remained at a relatively low level for a long time and has not been corrected or improved ([Niratsai, 2018](#)). According to the EF Proficiency Index in 2023, Thailand was ranked 101st out of 113 countries around the world and was ranked 21st out of 23 countries in Asia, indicating a very low level of English proficiency ([Education First, 2023](#)).

Moreover, the Ordinary National Education Test (ONET), a national test for Thai students organized by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization) to assess Grade 6, 9, and 12 students' knowledge, thinking ability, and academic proficiency according to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E 2551 (A.D. 2008), revealed that Thai students' English O-NET (Grade 12) test scores remain below standard. The mean test score for Grade 12 was 26.19 out of 100 in 2023. A potential explanation for why the students performed poorly and failed the test could be that there were no goals for language learning ([Naruponjirakul & Sanboonvej, 2019](#)).

According to [Gardner \(2004\)](#), learning English as a foreign language requires several factors. One of the essential factors influencing English language learning is motivation because achievement in learning a foreign language is positively correlated with motivation. In addition, motivation for learning a language comes from learning goals combined with the desire to achieve goals. Motivation is measured based on two types, integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

Considering the aforementioned problems, it is essential to develop the English language skills of secondary students. If teachers know students' motivation and behavior in learning English, they will be able to select appropriate teaching methods or strategies to motivate students, potentially increasing student engagement and success. Therefore, the researcher aims to study the secondary students' motivation for learning English.

[Gardner \(1985\)](#) divide motivation into two types, depending on different attitudes. First, integrative motivation is a positive attitude toward learning a language because of an interest in that language. Learners want to learn and apply English and are interested in the culture of the native-speaker community. Second, instrumental motivation is characterized by pursuing rational or utilitarian motives. Learners want to learn a language because it will be useful from a practical perspective, such as to pursue a promotion in their career, complete an academic program, or any other practical reason.

According to [Ryan and Deci's \(2002\)](#) theory of self-determination, motivation is a factor that affects

and promotes actions and behaviors to achieve desired goals. The type of motivation can be divided into various reasons and goals that result in action and can specifically be divided into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual receives motivation from external stimuli that cannot be controlled, such as the environment, rewards, academic performance, praise, or being forced. Intrinsic motivation occurs when a person is motivated by stimuli within themselves, such as interest or satisfaction in performing a task. Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation lead to actions that individuals take to reach their desired outcomes ([Ryan & Deci, 2002](#)). Moreover, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation both play a role in encouraging and driving different behaviors in individuals.

[Harmer \(1991\)](#) explains motivation in second language learning by defining it through "goals", which are categorized into short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals refer to immediate objectives that students aim to achieve within a short period, such as passing exams, earning high grades, or achieving good scores. These goals often drive students to put in the necessary effort for immediate success. In contrast, long-term goals relate to aspirations that are focused on the future. For example, students may want to learn a second language to improve their career prospects, secure a better job, or communicate effectively with speakers of that language. Long-term goals give learners a sustained purpose, often leading to deeper engagement with the language as they work towards their future aspirations ([Harmer, 1991](#)).

As previously described, motivation can be classified into different types depending on the context and situation. Motivations may not cover all the factors that affect students' learning of English because there may be other factors involved. Nevertheless, the present study adopted Gardner's theory of motivation by emphasizing the integration of integrative and instrumental models since it achieves the proposed study's objective.

Research Question

What are the levels of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation among grade 11 students at a government secondary school?

Methodology

A survey study was conducted to investigate students' motivation for English language learning. In this study, the researcher employed a quantitative approach to measure and statistically analyze the data derived from the questionnaire responses.

Participants

From a population of 315 grade 11 students at a government school in Thailand, a sample of 175 students enrolled in EN32102 Fundamental English 4 during the second semester of the 2024 academic year was selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher utilized the questionnaire developed by [Sudirman et al. \(2022\)](#), based on [Gardner's \(1985\)](#) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), specifically because Sudirman adapted it for the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The questionnaire was divided into two parts, in which the first part gathered personal information, and the second part included 18 main items to gather information on participants' motivation for learning English as a foreign language. The first nine questions focused on instrumental motivation, and the remaining nine questions focused on integrative motivation.

The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in English language teaching. They assessed whether it measured what it was intended to measure, which was the primary purpose of the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), ranging from a high degree of congruence (+1) to a low degree of congruence or uncertainty (0) or no congruence. After receiving the results from the experts, the researcher analyzed the scores of each question to determine whether any questionnaire items were reliable and whether they should be improved. The IOC results revealed that all three experts agreed that every item on the questionnaire aimed at investigating the participants' motivation was valid, with the result for each item below 0.5 to guarantee that the questionnaire was valid.

Prior to the main study, the researcher conducted a pilot study involving 40 students, all of whom

had similar characteristics to the main study sample group. The aims were to determine the discrimination index and evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α). The results revealed 0.93 reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire was appropriate and acceptable.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from the sample group of 175 students enrolled in EN32102 Fundamental English 4 during the second semester of the 2024 academic year in November 2024. They were informed about the objective of the study and instructions on how to complete the survey. They were given 25-30 minutes to complete it, with the questionnaire results analyzed afterwards using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly agree" (5) to "Strongly disagree" (1), was employed to calculate the level and type of motivation students utilize in their English language learning. The level of agreement and disagreement of motivation was categorized into 5 ranges: Very low (1.00 – 1.49), Low (1.50 – 2.49), Moderate (2.50 – 3.49), High (3.50 – 4.49), and Very high (4.50 – 5.00) ([Kitijaroonchai & Kitijaroonchai, 2012](#)).

Results

The results are presented in three primary aspects as follows: 1) overall mean scores of integrative and instrumental motivations; 2) mean score of instrumental motivation; and 3) mean score of integrative motivation.

Table 1 Levels of Instrumental and Integrative Motivation Among English Language Learners (n=175)

Motivation Type	N	Mean	SD	Level
Instrumental Motivation	175	4.27	0.84	High
Integrative Motivation	175	4.14	0.83	High

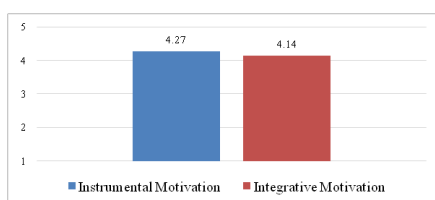


Figure 1 Comparison of Mean Scores for Instrumental and Integrative Motivation Among English Language Learners (n=175)

Figure 1 and Table 1 reveal that the mean scores of both instrumental motivation and integrative motivation were at a high level at $M = 4.27$ and $M = 4.14$, respectively, indicating the high level of motivation for learning English. Comparing the type of motivation the participants applied to their English learning shows they had approximately equal levels of instrumental and integrative motivation to learn

the English language, although the average mean score for instrumental motivation was slightly higher at 0.13.

Considering each type of motivation, Figure 2 and Table 2, as well as Figure 3, and Table 3 show the mean scores and standard deviation of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, respectively.

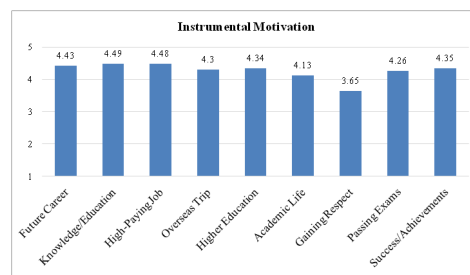


Figure 2 Instrumental Motivation Factors for English Language Learning

Table 2 Mean Scores of Instrumental Motivation Factors for English Language Learning (n=175)

Instrumental Motivation		Mean	SD	Motivational Level
Q1	Learning English is important because I will need it for my future career.	4.43	0.71	High
Q2	Learning English is important because it will make me more knowledgeable and educated.	4.49	0.69	High
Q3	Learning English is important because it will help me get a high-paying job.	4.48	0.77	High
Q4	Learning English is important because I will need it for my overseas trips.	4.30	0.81	High
Q5	Learning English is important because it will help me to pursue higher education.	4.34	0.83	High
Q6	Learning English is important because I will need it for my academic life since it will enable me to search for and access more literature resources and reading materials.	4.13	0.86	High
Q7	Learning English is important because I will gain more respect if I know English.	3.65	0.90	High
Q8	Learning English is important because I can pass the exams and get good grades.	4.26	0.84	High
Q9	Learning English is important because it can lead me to greater success and achievements in life.	4.35	0.80	High
		4.27	0.84	High

Figure 2 and Table 2 present high levels of instrumental motivation. Furthermore, the second question related to instrument motivation – “Q2: Learning English is important because it will make me more knowledgeable and educated” received the highest average mean score (4.49) with $SD = 0.69$ for instrumental motivation items. It can be interpreted

that students think English can be a key factor for accessing more information, doing better in lessons, and developing thinking skills. The lowest mean score was for question seven which referred to learning English to gain respect ($M = 3.65$).

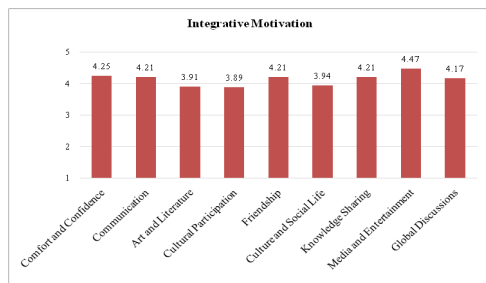


Figure 3 Integrative Motivation Factors for English Language Learning (n=175)

Figure 3 and Table 3 present the average mean scores and standard deviation of integrative

motivation. Similar to instrumental motivation, the results of integrative motivation reveal that the motivational levels of the grade 11 students were high. Question 17 received the highest average mean score of 4.47 (SD=0.76) – “Learning English is important because it allows me to understand the content of books, films, music, and other media in English.” This indicates that the students see English as important because it helps them understand books, movies, music, and other media. Moreover, this shows that they are highly motivated to learn English, not just for the academic purposes, but also for enjoying and connecting with global content.

Table 3 Mean Scores of Integrative Motivation Factors for English Language Learning (n=175)

Instrumental Motivation		Mean	SD	Motivational Level
Q1	Learning English is important because it will allow me to feel more at ease with people who speak English.	4.25	0.75	High
Q2	Learning English is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with a wider variety of people.	4.21	0.79	High
Q3	Learning English is important because it will help me better understand and appreciate the English art and literature.	3.91	0.84	High
Q4	Learning English is important because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.	3.89	0.83	High
Q5	Learning English is important because it will help me make friends from different parts of the world.	4.21	0.79	High
Q6	Learning English is important because it will allow me to learn about the culture and social life of English-speaking people.	3.94	0.88	High
Q7	Learning English enables me to share my knowledge with other people, such as giving directions to tourists.	4.21	0.83	High
Q8	Learning English is important because it allows me to understand the content of books, films, music, and other media in English.	4.47	0.76	High
Q9	Learning English enables me to discuss interesting topics in English with people from other national backgrounds.	4.17	0.83	High
		4.14	0.83	High

Discussion and Conclusions

The questionnaire results suggest that the participants were motivated by both of integrative and instrumental motivation to learn English, and there were high mean scores for both motivation types, consistent with [Naruponjirakul and Sanboonvej \(2019\)](#), and [Kanoksilapatham et al. \(2021\)](#). However, the instrumental motivation achieved a slightly higher average mean score (4.27) than the integrative motivation average mean score (4.14). In other words, there was a slightly different

influence of these motivational types towards English language learning.

The average mean score of instrumental motivation was 4.27. In particular, the participants were more in agreement with question two, “Learning English is important because it will make me more knowledgeable and educated,” which had the highest mean score of (4.49). This shows that participants see learning English as important because it helps them become more knowledgeable and educated. The findings are congruent with those of [Kitjaroonchai](#)

and Kitjaroonchai (2012), who found that Thai students at Asia-Pacific International University tended to be dominated by instrumental reasons for learning English because they want to become more knowledgeable. Many learners believe that English can improve their learning and understanding. This supports the idea of instrumental motivation, where people learn a language for practical reasons such as academic achievement or for career advancement.

Based on the results of the integrative motivation, the average mean score for this motivation type is 4.14. Question number 17, “Learning English is important because it allows me to understand the content of books, films, music, and other media in English,” had the highest mean score for integrative motivation at 4.47. Supported by Naruponjirakul and Sanboonvej’s (2019) findings, the participants are motivated to learn English because it helps them understand and enjoy books, movies, music, and other media. They see English as a way to connect with different cultures and entertainment. This supports integrative motivation, where people learn a language to better engage with its culture and community.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the students were motivated to learn English by both instrumental and integrative motivation factors at the same level, as evidenced by the high mean scores. This suggests that they see English as valuable for both personal enjoyment such as understanding media and culture, and for practical reasons such as education and career opportunities.

Many teaching methods that combine new approaches constitute an effective solution for boosting instrumental motivation and integrative motivation development. For example, phenomenon-based learning stands as a successful method that lets students discover their particular interests alongside developing practical abilities which will become useful for career development or advanced education (Adipat, 2023; 2024). Another effective method teachers can incorporate is game-based learning with real-life scenarios. Learning environments based on games duplicate real-life situations or conceptual academic obstacles that push students to participate through their actions while they decide what to do. It promotes both engagement from students who

want to learn new things (integrative motivation) and training of practical abilities while achieving educational targets (instrumental motivation). In addition, educational training programs for teachers should prioritize pedagogical strategy instruction with motivational methodologies and technology integration to deliver personalized learning environments that engages learners effectively.

Recommendations for Future Research

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher would like to provide recommendations for further studies.

- This study focused only on grade 11 students. Further research should be conducted with students at different educational levels since this could yield different outcomes.
- This study employed the survey method. Further studies should use qualitative methods of study, such as interviews or experimentation, to gather more information.

References

- Adipat, S. (2024). Transcending traditional paradigms: The multifaceted realm of phenomenon-based learning. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1-5.
- Adipat, S. (2023). An artificial intelligence-enhanced phenomenon-based learning approach for interdisciplinary understanding and speaking skills. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(3), 531-550.
- Adipat, S. (2021). Developing Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) through Technology-enhanced Content and Language-Integrated Learning (T-CLIL) instruction. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26(5), 6461-6477.
- Education First. (2023). *EF English Proficiency Index 2023*.
- Gardner, R. C. (2004). *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery: International AMBT Research Project*. The University of Western Ontario.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. Edward Arnold.

- Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Longman.
- Kanoksilapatham, B., Khamkhien, A, Kitkha, P., & Na Nongkhai, A. (2021). Motivation of Thai university students from two disciplinary backgrounds using a hybrid questionnaire. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 14(1), 455-491.
- Kitijaroonchai, N., & Kitijaroonchai, T. (2012). Motivation towards English language learning of Thai students majoring in English at Asia-Pacific International University. *Catalyst*, 7(1), 21-40.
- Naruponjirakul, S., & Sanboonvej, S. (2019). A study of motivation on English language learning of students from the elementary education program, faculty of education, Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University. *Proceedings of the 6th National Academic Conference*.
- Niratsai, S. (2018). Attitudes, motivation, and English learning behavior of Phuket Rajabhat University students. *Humanity and Social Science Journal Ubon Ratchathani University*, 9(2), 138-170.
- Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2002). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67.
- Sudirman, A. M., Junaid, R., & Gon, W. (2022). A survey study of students' motivation in English language learning. *Batara Didi: English Language Journal*, 1(1), 38-48.

Author Details

Peerapon Seangkul, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand

Surattana Adipat, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand, **Email ID:** supot.r@mail.rmutk.ac.th

Rattanawadee Chotikapanich, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand