



A GRADE-BASED COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING THAI LANGUAGE^{*}

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was twofold: (a) to examine the motivation for learning Thai language held by Thai students enrolled in Grades 9 to 12 at an international school in Thailand, and (b) to perform a statistical comparison of it, using the students' school grade as grouping factor. A population sample of 118 students (31 students from Grade 9, 25 students from Grade 10, 28 students from Grade 11, and 34 students from Grade 12) enrolled in the target international school during the academic year 2021-2022, participated in this study. For the data collection, the Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire, adapted from Gardner's (2010) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) international version, was used. From performing descriptive statistics on the collected data, it was found that the overall level of motivation for learning Thai language held by Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 students at the target international school was slightly high. From a quantitative comparative analysis, it was found that there was a significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language between Grade 10 and Grade 11 students, with the overall motivation for learning Thai language being significantly higher for the latter group than for the former, while no significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language was found between Grade 9 and Grade 11 students, Grade 9 and Grade 12 students, Grade 10 and Grade 12 students, and Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. Based on the research findings, recommendations for Thai high school students, teachers and future researchers are provided.

Keywords: Motivation for Learning, Thai Language, Thai High School Students, Mother Tongue Education, Comparative Study

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Introduction

Motivation is a factor that plays an important role for students in reaching educational success (Gardner, 2010). Motivation for learning a language refers to a combination of effort intensity plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language (Gardner, 1985, 2010). Motivation is one of the most important factors in learning a language; therefore, teachers have to always discover new ways to teach the target language as a result of their recognition of the importance of motivation (López Corría, 1999). Moreover, motivated students have a tendency to be inspired to go forward to perform successfully during the learning processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students must not only put effort, desire, and have a positive attitude to learn a language, but they also need to be motivated and stimulated to study hard and need to increase participation during learning and gain the knowledge taught in the school by the teachers as well (Gardner, 2010).

Previous studies (e.g., Brown, 2007; Ovando & Collier, 1988) have reported evidence of age-related differences in the motivation for learning a language. A student's age is an important factor and has an impact on the level of motivation for learning a language. Ovando and Collier (1988) found that successful language acquisition depends on the learner's age. Brown (2007) embraced the idea that children at a younger age are better at learning foreign languages than adults. The language acquisition competencies among older students seem to differ significantly from the way younger students acquire their mother tongue.

Mother tongue is referred to as the language that a child may have learned as the first language or may know the best, but can also be the language that the child uses the most (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Learning to speak in the mother tongue is very necessary for a child's comprehensive development. According to Milosevic (2019), the mother tongue also has an important role in developing a second or foreign language for international school students. As mastery of the mother tongue is a key for developing a second or foreign language, students who have a solid foundation in their mother tongue can develop stronger literacy skills in acquiring a second or foreign language (Milosevic, 2019).

According to the Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC), the purpose of instruction in the Thai Language and Thai Culture program at a Thai international school is to allow students to develop their skills to use Thai language to communicate in Thai at their fullest potential. Thai national students are the vital manpower to the nation's future, they have to be good, capable and happy citizens living lives according to Thai tradition and culture, and adhering to the democracy of the constitutional monarchy (OPEC, 2020). Thai language is mandatory for all Thai students at government and international schools in Thailand. During their school education, Thai nationals are required to cover all aspects of Thai language,



including reading, writing, speaking, and culture. Therefore, Thai students should develop their speaking and listening skills for the purposes of communication, effective learning, and application in daily life.

The first author has been working in an administrative department of the target international school for six years, and during that time, she had the opportunity to teach Thai language for high school students for one semester. During that experience, the first author observed a low enrolment of Thai students in the Thai Language classes at high school level. This could represent a problem, since it seems that many Thai high school students in the target international school dropped the Thai language at high school level, according to this researcher's observation. When the researcher asked some of these students about this behavior, they expressed that learning Thai language was not important, because they have the purpose to study abroad in higher education. Another reason was that learning Thai seems to be boring and too difficult for them. This could be interpreted as holding a negative attitude toward learning Thai language, which is an indicator of low motivation for learning Thai language (Gardner, 2010).

For these aforementioned reasons, the researchers decided to conduct a study to identify Thai students' motivation for learning Thai language in Grades 9 to 12 at an international school in Thailand, and compare them according to their grade.

Objectives of this Research

The following were the specific research objectives addressed in this study.

1. To determine the levels of motivation for learning Thai language of Thai high school students at an international school in Thailand, according to their grade.

1.1 To determine the level of motivation for learning Thai language of Thai Grade 9 students at an international school in Thailand.

1.2 To determine the level of motivation for learning Thai language of Thai Grade 10 students at an international school in Thailand.

1.3 To determine the level of motivation for learning Thai language of Thai Grade 11 students at an international school in Thailand.

1.4 To determine the level of motivation for learning Thai language of Thai Grade 12 students at an international school in Thailand.

2. To determine whether there is a significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language between Thai high school students at an international school in Thailand, according to their grade.



Research Methodology

In this section, details on the research design, population and sample, research tools, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and the research validity are provided.

1. Research Design

The researchers used a quantitative comparative survey research design in order to achieve the twofold purpose of this study, which was (a) to examine the motivation for learning Thai language held by Thai Grades 9 to 12 students at an international school in Thailand, and (b) to compare the four groups of students in terms of their motivation for learning Thai language

2. Population and Sample

A population sample, comprised of all the 118 Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 students enrolled in Thai language subject at the target international school in Thailand during the academic year 2021-202, participated in this study. The sample of participants was distributed as follows: 31 from Grade 9, 25 from Grade 10, 28 from Grade 11, and 34 from Grade 12.

3. Research Tools

This study was conducted using the following research instrument: the Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire (MLTLQ).

3.1 Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire (MLTLQ). In order to measure the participants' level of motivation for learning Thai language, the researchers administered the Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire (MLTLQ; see Table 1), which was adapted from the motivation construct of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) by Gardner (2010). The three subscales comprising the motivation construct from the AMTB were chosen for this study: motivational intensity (Items 1-10), desire to learn Thai language (Items 11-20), and attitudes toward learning Thai language (Items 21-30). Each part has five positively- and five negatively-worded items, and all the negatively-worded items (i.e., Items 6-10, 16-20, and 26-30) were reverse coded for data analysis, in order to standardize the directionality of the interpretation. The statements on all items were rated used 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = strongly agree). The mean scores obtained from averaging the Likert scale ratings of all items were interpreted using a continuum from 1.00 (very low motivation/very negative attitude) to 6.00 (very high motivation/very positive attitude).

**Table 1** Items in the Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire (MLTLQ)

| Item No. | Item statement |
|--|--|
| I. Motivational intensity | |
| 1 | I always try to understand all the Thai language I see and hear |
| 2 | I keep up to date with Thai language by working on it almost every day |
| 3 | When I have a problem understanding something in Thai language class, I always ask my teacher for help |
| 4 | I really work hard to learn Thai language |
| 5 | When I am studying Thai language, I ignore distractions and pay attention to my task |
| 6 | I do not pay much attention to the feedback I receive in my Thai language class |
| 7 | I do not bother checking my assignments when I get them back from my Thai language teacher |
| 8 | I postpone my Thai language homework as much as possible |
| 9 | I tend to give up and not pay attention when I do not understand my Thai language teacher's explanation of something |
| 10 | I cannot be bothered trying to understand the more complex aspects of Thai language |
| II. Desire to learn Thai language | |
| 11 | I have a strong desire to know all aspects of Thai language |
| 12 | If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning Thai language |
| 13 | I want to learn Thai language so well that it will become natural to me |
| 14 | I would like to learn as much Thai language as possible |
| 15 | I wish I were fluent in Thai language |
| 16 | Knowing Thai language isn't really an important goal in my life |
| 17 | I sometimes daydream about dropping Thai language |
| 18 | I'm losing any desire I ever had to know Thai language |
| 19 | To be honest, I really have no desire to learn Thai language |
| 20 | I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basics of Thai language |
| III. Attitudes toward learning Thai language | |
| 21 | Learning Thai language is really great |
| 22 | I really enjoy learning Thai language |
| 23 | Thai language is a very important part of the school program |
| 24 | I plan to learn as much Thai language as possible |
| 25 | I love learning Thai language |
| 26 | I hate Thai language |
| 27 | I would rather spend my time on subjects other than Thai language |
| 28 | Learning Thai language is a waste of time |
| 29 | I think that learning Thai language is dull |
| 30 | When I leave school, I will give up the study of Thai language because I am not interested in it |

4. Data Collection

The data were collected from the target participants as follows: In May 2022, the researchers administered the Motivation for Learning Thai Language Questionnaire (MLTLQ) to the participants from Grades 9 to 12 at the target international school in Thailand, using a Google Form. The response rate from administering the MLTLQ was 100%.

5. Data Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, the reliability of the whole questionnaire and its subscales was examined by computing the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (see Table 2) The Cronbach's



alpha values for the whole scale and its subscales ranged from .70 to .93, and hence it can be concluded that the MLTLQ items consistently measure the same construct and subscales across participants from various grade groups, so the collected data were reliable for hypothesis testing.

Table 2 Reliability Coefficients of the MLTLQ and Its Subscales for the Current Study

| Variable | Grade | | | |
|---|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Motivation for learning Thai language | .85 | .93 | .91 | .86 |
| Motivational intensity | .70 | .86 | .71 | .70 |
| Desire to learn Thai language | .72 | .80 | .83 | .79 |
| Attitudes toward learning Thai language | .89 | .84 | .85 | .74 |

After the reliability of the MLTLQ was established, the collected quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and quantitative comparative analysis (one-way analysis of variance [ANOVA] followed-up by a Scheffe post-hoc multiple comparison test), with the support of a statistical software package.

6. Ethical Considerations

Before joining the study, all the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from participating in the data collection at any time, for whatever reason, specified or unspecified, and without prejudice, questioning, or any adverse consequences. Moreover, the purpose and objectives of the research were explained to the participants prior to the administration of the questionnaires. The participants were also informed that the research results were going to be used only for the purpose of this study, and all their identities were going to be kept anonymous and confidential.

7. Research Validity

Regarding the validity, since the MLTLQ was adapted from the AMTB, the validity of the MLTLQ is grounded on the validity of the AMTB. After conducting a large-scale pilot testing in five different schools in London, Ontario, Canada, the final validation test of the AMTB was conducted on 1,521 Grades 7 to 11 students who studied French as their second language in the Ontario school system, where people have two mother tongues: French and English (Gardner, 1985, 2010). Moreover, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) found that the AMTB has a satisfactory construct and content validity in a variety of first, second and foreign language learning contexts.

Also, in order to match the context of this study, the original wording of the AMTB items was slightly modified to confirm content validity, by replacing all the occurrences of the word “English” in the original questionnaire with the word “Thai”. Then, the final item wording was revised and assessed by discussions among the researchers.



Research Results

The research findings obtained from the data collection and analysis follows, presented by research objective.

1. Findings from Research Objective 1

Table 3 displays the overall mean scores, standard deviations and interpretations for the levels of motivation for learning Thai language, and its three subscales, held by the Thai high school students participating in this study, according to their grade.

Table 3 Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Interpretations for the Levels of Motivation for Learning Thai Language and Its Subscales Held by the Participating Thai High School Students, According to Their Grade

| Grade | Motivation for learning | | | Motivational intensity | | | Desire to learn | | | Attitudes toward learning | | |
|-------|-------------------------|------|----------------|------------------------|------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|---------------------------|------|-------------------|
| | Thai language | | | Thai language | | | Thai language | | | Thai language | | |
| | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation |
| 9 | 3.91 | 1.30 | Slightly high | 4.30 | 1.25 | Slightly high | 3.59 | 1.37 | Slightly high | 3.84 | 1.27 | Slightly positive |
| 10 | 3.69 | 1.44 | Slightly high | 3.65 | 1.36 | Slightly high | 3.71 | 1.52 | Slightly high | 3.70 | 1.43 | Slightly positive |
| 11 | 4.23 | 1.16 | Slightly high | 4.27 | 1.27 | Slightly high | 4.03 | 1.25 | Slightly high | 4.38 | 0.94 | Slightly positive |
| 12 | 4.09 | 1.52 | Slightly high | 4.02 | 1.55 | Slightly high | 4.03 | 1.51 | Slightly high | 4.21 | 1.48 | Slightly positive |

1.1 Findings from Research Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4. Details on the mean scores, standard deviations and interpretations of the participants' answers to each item, the three subscales (i.e., motivational intensity [MI], desire to learn Thai language [DLTL], and attitudes toward learning Thai language [ALTL]) and the overall scale (i.e., motivation for learning Thai language [MLTL]) of the MLTLQ are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Interpretations of Each of the Items, Subscales and Overall Scale of the Participants' Responses to the MLTLQ, According to Their Grade

| Item N ^o | Grade 9 | | | Grade 10 | | | Grade 11 | | | Grade 12 | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|------|----------------|----------|------|----------------|----------|------|----------------|----------|------|----------------|
| | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation |
| I. Motivational intensity (MI) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 4.94 | 0.93 | High | 4.58 | 1.31 | High | 5.32 | 0.90 | High | 5.02 | 1.07 | High |
| 2 | 4.10 | 0.77 | Slightly high | 3.26 | 1.79 | Slightly low | 4.64 | 1.25 | High | 4.41 | 1.66 | Slightly high |
| 3 | 4.94 | 1.31 | High | 3.84 | 1.46 | Slightly high | 4.12 | 1.51 | Slightly high | 4.48 | 1.44 | Slightly high |
| 4 | 4.35 | 0.76 | Slightly high | 3.42 | 1.47 | Slightly low | 4.28 | 0.89 | Slightly high | 4.41 | 1.37 | Slightly high |
| 5 | 4.00 | 1.18 | Slightly high | 2.84 | 1.50 | Slightly low | 3.64 | 1.29 | Slightly high | 4.07 | 1.52 | Slightly high |
| 6 | 3.94 | 1.15 | Slightly high | 4.21 | 0.92 | Slightly high | 4.08 | 1.53 | Slightly high | 3.25 | 1.78 | Slightly low |
| 7 | 3.65 | 1.74 | Slightly high | 4.37 | 1.07 | Slightly high | 4.16 | 1.41 | Slightly high | 3.14 | 1.80 | Slightly low |
| 8 | 4.45 | 1.50 | Slightly high | 3.32 | 1.34 | Slightly low | 4.12 | 1.36 | Slightly high | 3.75 | 1.69 | Slightly high |
| 9 | 4.42 | 1.43 | Slightly high | 3.53 | 1.39 | Slightly high | 4.44 | 1.29 | Slightly high | 4.27 | 1.65 | Slightly high |
| 10 | 4.23 | 1.31 | Slightly high | 3.16 | 1.21 | Slightly low | 3.92 | 1.12 | Slightly high | 3.43 | 1.44 | Slightly low |
| MI | 4.30 | 1.25 | Slightly high | 3.65 | 1.36 | Slightly high | 4.27 | 1.27 | Slightly high | 4.02 | 1.55 | Slightly high |



| II. Desire to learn Thai language (DLTL) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|-------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|-------------------|
| 11 | 4.16 | 1.07 | Slightly high | 2.63 | 1.67 | Slightly low | 3.88 | 1.13 | Slightly high |
| 12 | 3.19 | 1.30 | Slightly low | 2.47 | 1.31 | Low | 3.36 | 1.41 | Slightly low |
| 13 | 4.00 | 1.46 | Slightly high | 4.42 | 1.39 | Slightly high | 4.60 | 1.19 | High |
| 14 | 3.90 | 1.25 | Slightly high | 3.84 | 1.64 | Slightly high | 4.28 | 1.10 | Slightly high |
| 15 | 4.48 | 1.53 | Slightly high | 5.05 | 1.27 | High | 4.52 | 1.39 | High |
| 16 | 3.16 | 1.59 | Slightly low | 3.84 | 1.43 | Slightly high | 3.88 | 1.36 | Slightly high |
| 17 | 2.84 | 1.37 | Slightly low | 3.95 | 1.78 | Slightly high | 3.84 | 1.28 | Slightly high |
| 18 | 3.84 | 1.37 | Slightly high | 3.58 | 1.47 | Slightly high | 4.24 | 1.05 | Slightly high |
| 19 | 3.52 | 1.36 | Slightly high | 3.89 | 1.52 | Slightly high | 4.04 | 1.27 | Slightly high |
| 20 | 2.84 | 1.37 | Slightly low | 3.37 | 1.67 | Slightly low | 3.68 | 1.25 | Slightly high |
| DLTL | 3.59 | 1.37 | Slightly high | 3.71 | 1.52 | Slightly high | 4.03 | 1.25 | Slightly high |
| III. Attitudes toward learning Thai language (ALTL) | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 4.13 | 1.09 | Slightly positive | 4.26 | 1.59 | Slightly positive | 4.52 | 0.87 | Positive |
| 22 | 3.65 | 1.23 | Slightly positive | 4.00 | 1.56 | Slightly positive | 4.40 | 0.87 | Slightly positive |
| 23 | 4.26 | 1.67 | Slightly positive | 4.53 | .77 | Positive | 4.08 | 1.00 | Slightly positive |
| 24 | 3.55 | 1.12 | Slightly positive | 4.11 | 1.41 | Slightly positive | 4.16 | 0.85 | Slightly positive |
| 25 | 3.71 | 1.10 | Slightly positive | 3.84 | 1.71 | Slightly positive | 4.52 | 0.96 | Positive |
| 26 | 4.74 | 1.06 | Positive | 3.63 | 1.57 | Slightly positive | 5.12 | 1.09 | Positive |
| 27 | 2.74 | 1.13 | Slightly negative | 2.63 | 1.07 | Slightly negative | 3.24 | 0.78 | Slightly negative |
| 28 | 4.32 | 1.35 | Slightly positive | 3.68 | 1.49 | Slightly positive | 4.96 | 0.79 | Positive |
| 29 | 4.29 | 1.42 | Slightly positive | 3.05 | 1.51 | Slightly negative | 4.40 | 0.96 | Slightly positive |
| 30 | 3.00 | 1.44 | Slightly negative | 3.26 | 1.33 | Slightly negative | 4.44 | 1.19 | Slightly positive |
| ALTL | 3.84 | 1.27 | Slightly positive | 3.70 | 1.43 | Slightly positive | 4.38 | 0.94 | Slightly positive |
| MLTL | 3.91 | 1.30 | Slightly high | 3.69 | 1.44 | Slightly high | 4.23 | 1.16 | Slightly high |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Note. See Table 1 for the item statements.

2. Findings from Research Objective 2

Table 5 below shows the results obtained from performing a one-way ANOVA on the collected data, testing whether there was a significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language among Grades 9 to 12 Thai students at an international school in Thailand.

Table 5 Results from Performing a One-Way ANOVA and a Scheffe Post Hoc Test Comparing Grades 9 to 12 Thai Students' Motivation for Learning Thai Language at an International School in Thailand

| Grade | n | M | SD | ANOVA | | Scheffe post-hoc test | | | |
|-------------|----|------|------|-----------|-------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| | | | | F(3, 115) | p | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Grade 9 | 31 | 3.91 | 1.30 | 3.51 | .017* | — | | | |
| 2. Grade 10 | 25 | 3.69 | 1.44 | | | -0.28 (.544) | — | | |
| 3. Grade 11 | 28 | 4.23 | 1.16 | | | 0.32 (.348) | 0.60* (.032) | — | |
| 4. Grade 12 | 34 | 4.09 | 1.52 | | | 0.18 (.722) | 0.45 (.097) | -0.14 (.856) | — |



Note. * denotes a statistically significant difference (significance level set at $p = .05$, two-tailed). Under the Scheffe post hoc test results section, p-values appear within parentheses under the mean difference values.

Research Discussion

In this section, a discussion of the research findings from the current study is provided, by relating such findings with the ones reported by previous research studies.

Motivation for Learning Thai Language

The results of the current study revealed that the levels of motivation for learning Thai language, motivational intensity, and desire to learn Thai language held by Grades 9 to 12 students at an international school in Thailand were all found to be slightly high. Moreover, the level of attitudes toward learning Thai language, one of the motivational factors comprising motivation for learning Thai language, was found to be slightly positive for all the participants in this study, regardless of their grade. This result is in line with some previous studies reported in the literature (e.g., Cahapay, 2020; Phindane, 2015; Wen, 2011). Cahapay (2020) found that there was a positive overall level of attitude toward the mother tongue held by 20 Grade 2 students considered as monolingual, enrolled at a rural public school in Southern Philippines. Phindane (2015) found that 50 learners in Foundation Phase School (Grades 1-3; 10 in Grade 1, and 20 in both Grades 2 and 3), purposively selected from schools located in Motheo District, Free State Province, South Africa, held a positive overall level of attitude toward the mother tongue. Wen (2011) found that the overall level of attitude toward the mother tongue was slightly positive for Chinese bilingual learners (CBLs), and positive for Chinese heritage-connected learners (CHCLs), and non-Chinese heritage learners (NCHLs). Moreover, the finding of the current study in relation to the Item 27 (“I would rather spend my time on subjects other than Thai language”) indicated that Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 students at the target school rated this item as slightly negative. This finding is in line with Berková et al. (2020), who found that 573 third-year (83 Czech and 206 Slovak) and fourth-year (81 Czech and 203 Slovak) students of secondary schools in Prague, Czech Republic, and Bratislava, Slovakia, ranked third attitudes toward the mother tongue among the four school subjects under study (economics, accounting, mathematics, and the mother tongue).

The current findings are not in line with some previous studies reported in the literature (e.g., Bachore, 2014; Cahapay, 2020; Wen, 2011). Bachore (2014) found that 70 primary school students from areas where the mother tongue was being used as a medium of instruction in primary schools from Sidama Zone (Dale, Shebedino and Hawassa Zuriya) in Ethiopia, held a moderate overall level of attitude toward the mother tongue. Cahapay (2020) found that, among the 20 items on attitudes toward the mother tongue he administered to



20 Grade 2 students considered as monolingual, enrolled at a rural public school in Southern Philippines, the lowest and highest mean score ranged from 3.70 to 4.60, which is different to the findings of the current study (2.74 to 4.94 for Grade 9; 2.47 to 5.05 for Grade 10; 3.24 to 5.32 for Grade 11; 3.11 to 5.02 for Grade 12). Wen (2011) found that the overall level of motivational intensity for learning the mother tongue was moderate for the CBLs, CHCLs, and NCHLs participating in the study. This is different to the findings of the current of the study, in which the overall level of Grades 9 to 12 students' motivational intensity was found to be slightly high. This can be due to the students' age, which is an important factor on motivation for learning a language (Brown, 2007; Ovando & Collier, 1988).

The Grade-Based Difference in Motivation for Learning Thai Language

The data analysis from the current study identified a significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language between Grades 10 and 11 (the overall motivation for learning Thai language was significantly higher for Grade 11 students than for Grade 10 ones), while no significant difference in motivation for learning Thai language was found between Grade 9 and Grade 11 students, Grade 9 and Grade 12 students, Grade 10 and Grade 12 students, and Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. These results were found to be not in line with a previous study reported in the literature (Berková et al., 2020). Berková et al. (2020) found that there was no significant difference in motivational variables (e.g., attitudes toward the mother tongue) between third-year and fourth-year Czech and Slovak secondary students from schools in Prague, Czech Republic, and Bratislava, Slovakia.

The results of the current study might be due to the instructional contents that the students have to learn in Thai language class in Grades 10 and 11. In Grade 10, they have to study about the Thai literature, Thai poems, and short stories that the students might not find interesting or relevant to their daily life, and hence their relatively low mean score of motivation for learning ($M = 3.69$) and attitudes toward learning Thai language ($M = 3.70$). However, in Grade 11, they have to study the connection between Thai language and culture, Constructing Sentences with Poise, Adding Words into Context, Thoughts and Language, Manners and Integrity in Communication, Questioning and Answering, Listening and Reading with Consideration, Public Speaking, Conferential Conversations and Speaking, which are topics that they may find more interesting, relevant and useful for their daily and future life, and hence their higher mean score in motivation for learning ($M = 4.23$) and attitudes toward learning Thai language ($M = 4.38$). Also, this might be due to Grade 11 students worrying more about their academic performance, since they have soon to apply to the university. Academic performance has been found to be significantly and positively correlated with students' attitudes toward the mother tongue (Cahapay, 2020; Gardner, 2010).

Research Body of Knowledge

The body of knowledge identified from conducting this study is summarized in Figure 1, which displays the different factors that were found to be either significantly related or influencing participants' motivation for learning Thai language.

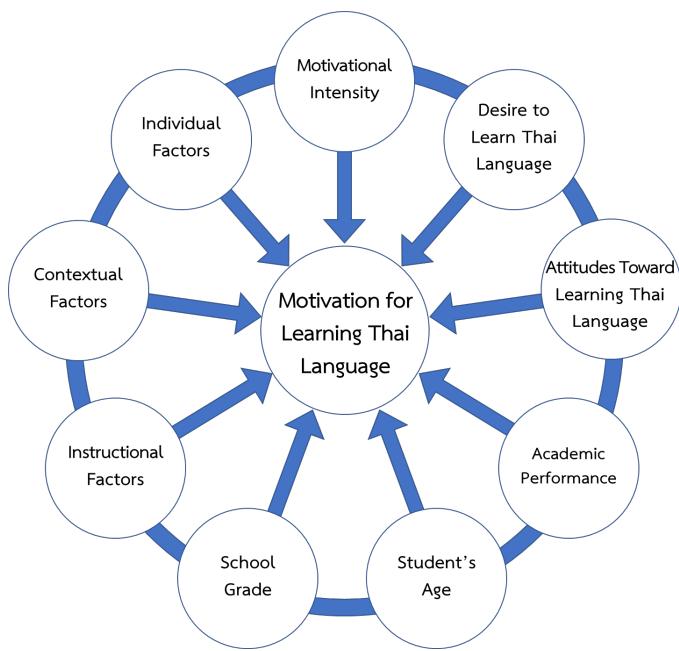


Figure 1 Research Body of Knowledge

Under Gardner's (2010) socio-educational model of second language acquisition, motivation for learning a language is hypothesized to be a composite construct comprised of three subscales: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and attitudes toward learning the language. Moreover, the discussion of the study's findings in relation to the literature reviewed on the research topic revealed that the overall level of motivation for learning Thai language (or any other mother tongue) could be significantly influenced by the academic performance (Cahapay, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the student's age (Brown, 2007; Ovando & Collier, 1988), the school grade in which the student is enrolled in (Gardner, 2010), instructional factors (e.g., perceived levels of practical importance and difficulty, attractiveness of the curriculum contents, teaching strategies; Berková et al., 2020; Gardner, 2010; López Corría, 1999), contextual factors (e.g., teachers, peers, parents, school administration, school culture, popularity of the language; Berková et al., 2020; Gardner, 1985, 2010); and individual factors (e.g., interest in the mother tongue, interest in foreign languages, attitude toward foreign languages, career path interest; Berková et al., 2020; Gardner, 2010; Phindane, 2015; Wen, 2011).



Research Suggestions

1. Suggestions in Practice

1.1 The findings of this study showed that the participants rated particularly low some items of the questionnaire. For example, Grade 9, 10 and 11 students at the target school rated Item 12 (“If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning Thai language”) as low (Grade 10) or slightly low (Grades 9 and 11). Therefore, the researchers suggest that students should focus their attention on Thai language topics that they might find their useful or interesting in daily life, such as language transmission through the internet and engage in educational projects (Grades 9 and 10); public speaking and conferential conversation/speaking (Grade 11). These activities can be considered new ways to learn Thai language for the targeted students, which may trigger their motivation for learning the language (López Corría, 1999). Moreover, focusing on interesting aspects of Thai language may trigger the students desire to learn and acquire knowledge and proficiency in Thai language (Gardner, 2010).

1.2 Grades 9 and 12 students at the target school rated Item 20 (“I haven’t any great wish to learn more than the basics of Thai language”) as slightly low. Therefore, the researchers suggest that students should understand that, in order to follow many career paths in Thailand, such as medical doctors, business owners, lawyers, actors and politicians, it is fundamental to be able to communicate in Thai language beyond the basics.

1.3 Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 students at the target school rated Item 27 (“I would rather spend my time on subjects other than Thai language”) as slightly negative. This might be due to students focusing on other subjects to prepare for the university entrance examination. Therefore, the researchers suggest that students should not overlook the importance of Thai language as a subject, because a low score in Thai language class may affect the students’ GPA, and then their university entrance.

1.4 Grades 9 and 10 students at the target school rated Item 30 (“When I leave school, I will give up the study of Thai language because I am not interested in it”) as slightly negative. Therefore, the researchers suggest that students should understand that if they continue the higher education in Thailand, they have to study Thai language, because in the university it is also compulsory for Thai students to take Thai language courses. Moreover, some particular majors, such as law and medicine, require Thai students to learn courses on specialized and technical terms in Thai language.

1.5 In order to support students to have higher overall levels of motivation for learning Thai language, the researchers would like to suggest teachers to provide activities that students might find useful or interesting in their daily or future life, such as language transmission through the internet using social media, and engaging students in educational



projects that involve using the internet and public conversation and speaking.

1.6 The researchers would also like to suggest teachers to emphasize the importance of Thai language for particular career paths in Thailand. For this purpose, teachers may invite to the classroom, as guest speakers, Thai professionals from different career paths, such as medical doctors, business owners, lawyers, actors and politicians, to talk to Thai students about the importance of communicating in Thai language beyond the basics. The experiences from these guest speakers may also highlight the importance of Thai language as a subject, and even after leaving school, which may make students' attitude toward learning Thai language more positive, so they stop overlooking the importance of Thai language.

2. Suggestions for Research

2.1 The data of this study were collected from 118 students (i.e., 31 students from Grade 9, 25 students from Grade 10, 28 students from Grade 11, and 34 students from Grade 12). Based on this limitation, it is suggested that future researchers could examine a larger sample size of students, from an even wider range of grade levels, school subjects, and schools, which would be conducive to obtain more generalizable results and clearer trends regarding the behavior of the variables addressed in this study could emerge.

2.2 In terms of the research variables considered in this study, it was found that the grade in which participants were enrolled in (which was the independent variable in the current study), for some particular grade pairings (Grade 9 and Grade 11, Grade 9 and Grade 12, Grade 10 and Grade 12, and Grade 11 and Grade 12), appeared to have no significant effect on their motivation for learning Thai language. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers consider to include in their studies some of the variables and factors that have been reported in the literature to influence and have a significant impact on students' motivation, that were not included in the current study, such as attitude toward English language (Phindane, 2015), perceived level of practical importance, difficulty or popularity of the subject; attractiveness of the curriculum contents of the subject (Berková et al., 2020), and academic performance (Cahapay, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000).



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