

# **THAI STUDENTS' MOTIVATION ON ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION**

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## **Abstract**

Thai students in Pattani province, southern part of Thailand have lack motivation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The purpose of this study is to investigate the Thai students' motivation on English reading comprehension. This study seeks to examine Thai students' level of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The participants of this study were 60 of first year students from a collage in Pattani province. This is a quantitative study using descriptive design. The instrument uses in this study is questionnaire which is adapted from Keller (2010). The findings from independent sample t-test indicate that students' mean scores for motivation questions is only 2.91 (SD .34) which is at a below average level. The findings confirmed that Thai students have low motivation toward learning EFL. Therefore, the Thai English teachers need to provide various teaching methods in order to make students interested in learning English reading comprehension. This study has crucial pedagogical implication to Ministry of Education and Teacher Training Division because serious planning and implementation are required to improve students' EFL reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

English is now regarded as a global language. We use English as a medium to communicate with other countries all over the world. People recognize that English is very important for our life. English has been accepted by the most people in the world (Crystal, 2003) because it is also regarded as a prestigious language. As Wilkins and Urbanovic (2014) mentioned that many families are interested to send their children to study overseas where they can practice English because they believe that by having high proficiency in English can provide them a better job. English in Thailand has been taught as a foreign language (EFL) because Thai people do not use English as an official language and most of English classes are using Thai language as a medium of instruction. It causes teaching and learning English in Thailand is not satisfactory. Related to this, Thai students are weak in English reading comprehension (Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Chomchaiya, 2014; Kasemsap & Lee, 2015; Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016; Uraiman, 2011). According to the latest result of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012), Thailand was ranked at 50<sup>th</sup> in English reading comprehension out of 65 countries.

Reading is regarded as one of the important language skills for academic success but Ministry of Thai Education (2013) reported that English reading skill of Thai students mostly at level 2 out of 5 levels. Related to low proficiency in reading skills, numerous researchers (Chomchaiya, 2014; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Kongkert, 2013; Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016) stressed that Thai students have low motivation in learning English because Thai English teachers are still using conventional teaching technique that is chalk and talk make students lack motivation in learning English reading skills. The area of this study is particular in Pattani province, southern part of Thailand. The uniqueness of students in this province is language.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Reading is one of the four important language skills for academic success and professional development (Dorkchandra, 2010). Unfortunately, there are many factors affecting learning EFL in Thailand concerning both teachers and students. The majority of the students in Pattani province, have to learn four languages; Thai, Malay, Arabic, and English. Among all these languages they believe that English is less important for them because they do not use in their daily life (Jehdo, 2009). They study English just to pass the examination. Consequently, the quality of English language learning is seen as unsatisfactory especially reading skills. Besides, Tamrackitkun (2010) stressed that, Thai English teachers are inapplicable to teach English because they still use teacher-centered make students uninterested and unmotivated in learning English. Kongkert (2013) emphasized that the common technique used by teachers in teaching reading in Thailand for example, the teacher reads aloud and asks students to follow sentence by sentence, or section by section and then answering comprehension questions. This way of teaching does not promote thinking skills and students have lack motivation as well as feel bored in learning English reading comprehension (Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016). In fact, motivation is a key factor in learning English as a foreign language. Due to era of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of English

cannot be denied. Therefore, EFL teachers should always look for different ways to raise students' motivation because motivation has a significant role in the L2 learning process (Gardner, 1985).

Numerous studies had been carried out to identify problems in EFL reading comprehension in Thailand (Chomthong, 2011; Hayikaleng, 2011; Jehdo, 2009; Kongkert, 2013; Tamrackitkun, 2010). The aims of their studies are to improve students' level of EFL reading comprehension as well as to find out ways in motivating and making students interested in learning English. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the Thai students' motivation on reading comprehension.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The following are the research objectives of this study:

1. To examine Thai students' motivation towards learning English reading comprehension.
2. To examine Thai students' level of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS).

## **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How are Thai students' motivation towards learning English reading comprehension?
2. How are Thai students' level of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS)?

## **2. Literature Review**

Motivation is one of the most important components deals to the successful in teaching and learning. It plays a main role in mastering any target language learning (Dornyei, 2005; Celce-Murcia, 2001). According to Maslow (1970), motivation is the inner force which pushes a person towards a goal based on individual needs. In relation to learning, motivation to learn depends on learner's personality, learning styles and learner's view of what is being learned (Keller & Burkman, 1993). Gardner (1972) argues that motivation is directly affects L2 achievement and there is a positive correlation between motivation and L2 achievement in a study. This study adapts the Keller's theory of motivation which comes out with ARCS model. The principles embedded in this theory are as mentioned by Keller, 1979:

In brief, we can say that in order to have motivated students, their curiosity must be aroused and sustained; the instruction must be perceived to be relevant to personal values or instrumental to accomplishing desired goals; they must have the personal conviction that they will be able to succeed; and the consequences of the learning experience must be consistent with the personal incentives of the learner (pp. 6-7).

The principles mentioned earlier define the elements (ARCS) which are necessary to support students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Keller & Suzuki, 2004). Intrinsic motivation (IM) in language learning refers to motivation to involve in an activity because the activity is enjoyable and

interesting to take part. Extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to a performance which an individual performs in order to gain reward such as good grades or to increase salary, or alternatively to avoid from punishment. The first element is “A” stands for “Attention” refers to using various techniques to attract students’ attention in class (Keller, 2008). Next is “R” stands for “Relevance” refers to passages given by the teacher is relevance to students’ experience. The lesson must be compatible with the students’ proficiency level and related to students’ past experience (Keller & Suzuki, 2004). Then, “C” stands for “Confidence” is the element which makes the learners believe that they can succeed and understand in the learning task (Keller & Suzuki, 2004) for example, they are able to answer questions verbally and in writing. The first three elements create the motivation to learn (Keller & Suzuki, 2004) but the last element is “S” stands for “Satisfaction” refers to students’ satisfying experience during the learning process (Keller, 2008). If all the conditions (ARCS) are combined together then students most possibly have a high motivation to learn. The researcher carried out a study using Keller’s instrument to measure students’ motivation towards learning English reading comprehension. On other word, techniques of teaching are important to motivate students in learning EFL. Related to motivation, there are many researchers agree that there is a correlation between motivation and learning achievement as can be seen from previous studies below.

Fan (2012) analyzed students’ EFL learning motivation in Taiwanese Vocational College. The results indicate that there was a strong relationship between motivation and English learning achievement. To help students interested and motivated in learning English, Bahous, Bacha, and Nabhani (2011) stressed that teachers should provide appropriate materials and make clear connection between language courses and their future careers.

Cheng and Cheng (2012) carried out their study on reflections of the role of motivation on successful English learning among college EFL learners in Taiwan. The results suggested that to make students interest is very important to motivate and bring successful to English language learning outcomes. On this basis, teachers should play an important role to find out ways how to make students interested in the learning subject.

Based on Ryan and Deci (2000) mentioned that motivation refers to goal setting. Some researches revealed that setting goals and making obligations to achieve goals increase motivation and performance (Suwan, 2003). For instance, students who select to learn a language mainly for the certain purpose such as to find a good job that language will increase their motivation to learn and be successful in language learning.

Regarding setting goals, Vahidnia (2013) studied on an investigation into the influence of the power of goal choice and self-efficacy on motivation and writing achievement. This study was to investigate on students’ efficacy beliefs, motivation and their choice of goals. The findings showed that EFL learners’ motivation was significantly related to their self-efficacy. The study also

indicated that goal choice appeared to be a key factor which influences students' intrinsic motivation.

Pan and Wu (2013) carried out their study to investigate the effects of using cooperative learning to improve the English reading comprehension and learning motivation of EFL freshmen by comparing between the teacher-centered instruction and cooperative learning instruction. The findings showed that cooperative learning instruction increased students' motivation toward learning English reading.

Choosri and Intharaksa (2011) have conducted their study on the relationship between motivation and students' English learning achievement. The results revealed that there were positive relationship between motivation and students' English learning achievement. The findings could be useful for researchers and teachers in improving students' achievement by conducting effective teaching and learning strategies to develop students' motivation.

Khamkhien (2010) carried out her study to identify how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies. The findings revealed that, among these three factors, motivation was the most significant factor affecting the choice of language learning.

Based on previous studies can be concluded that motivation is one of the factors influence the success in learning English as a foreign language in Thailand (Choosri, 2011; Khamkhien, 2010). There is a strong relation between motivation and English learning achievement as mentioned by Fan (2012). Teachers can play an important role to motivate their students by applying appropriate teaching materials and making clear to the students about the importance of English and future careers (Bahous, Bacha & Nabhani, 2011). Providing interesting materials is important and passages given should be related to daily life and based on students' ability (Cheng & Cheng, 2012). Nonetheless, teachers should provide opportunities for students to select their own goals to increase intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Slavin, 2003; Vahidnia, 2013). In other words, students should make their own decisions and guide their own behavior. Furthermore, teachers should use learner-centered approach by encouraging students to learn in groups, exchange students' ideas and develop self-confidence (Pan & Wu, 2013).

### **3. Methodology**

This is a quantitative study using descriptive research design. The participants of the study consist of 60 first year students from a collage in Pattani district, Southern Thailand. The instrument used in this study was questionnaires. It has 34 items adapted from Keller (2010) to be used to collect data concerning students' motivation towards reading comprehension. Prior to this, the questionnaires will be given to the participants in Thai version which are translated back to back by an expert in applied linguistics in order to make the participants fully understand of what is really meant by it. The close-ended items contained statements with a Five-Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly

disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The values set for interpreting the rating scales for both positive and negative statements are as follows:

Table 3.1

*The rating scales for both positive and negative statements*

Positive	Negative
1 means strongly disagree	5 means strongly disagree
2 means disagree	4 means disagree
3 means not sure	3 means not sure
4 means agree	2 means agree
5 means strongly agree	1 means strongly agree

The students took 40 minutes to answer all questions. The two English teachers from a college in Pattani who have more than five years of experience in teaching English were asked to verify and make sure that the questions are suitable for the students. The two English teachers distributed the questions and did the correction based on scale given. The total marks for questionnaires were converted into percentages. Independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion:

##### 1. How are Thai students' motivation towards learning English reading comprehension?

Table 4.1: Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation 1	60			2.9132	
Valid N (List wise)	60	2.41	3.62		.34035

The results in table 4.1 show students' mean scores for motivation questions is 2.91 (SD .34) which is at a below average level. This findings are also in line with the findings of Tamrackitkun (2010) and Kongkert (2013) who stressed that Thai students have low motivation in learning English because Thai English teachers use inappropriate teaching method make students uninterested and unmotivated in learning English especially reading skills (Chomchaiya, 2014; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Kongkert, 2013; Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016). Therefore, Thai English

teachers need to find out interesting method to motivate students on learning English reading comprehension.

## 2. 2. How are Thai students' level of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS)?

Table 4.2: Statistics

	Attention	Relevance	Confidence	Satisfaction
N Valid	60	60	60	60
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.1146	2.9852	2.8250	2.7407
Std.Deviation	.40670	.37132	.41182	.53957

The results in table 4.2 show students' mean scores for "Attention" is 3.11 (SD .41) which is at an average level. The mean scores for "Relevance" is 2.99 (SD .37), "Confidence" is 2.83 (SD .41), and "Satisfaction" is 2.74 (SD .54) which are below average. The findings indicate that Thai students have low motivation toward learning EFL. Therefore, the Thai English teachers need to find new methods to apply for the students in teaching reading comprehension. They should prepare interesting topics for students and those topics should be related to students' experiences in order to help students to get confidence in learning and answering the questions asked by teachers. As a result, students would satisfy with the lesson. This study is congruence with the study of Cheng and Cheng (2012) who stressed that providing interesting materials is important and reading passages given should be related to daily life and based on students' ability. Teachers can play an important role to motivate their students by applying appropriate teaching materials and making clear to the students about the importance of English and future careers (Bahous, Bacha & Nabhani, 2011) because there is a strong relationship between motivation and English learning achievement (Fan, 2012).

## Conclusion

This study has implications on the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in the English language (EFL) classroom. According to Subadrah and Norain (2004) said that reading is a complex process which involves the feeling, opinion and cognition of the readers. Motivation is regarded as an important component to make students success in their English learning. This study has revealed that Thai students have low motivation because the Thai English teachers use inappropriate teaching method that is chalk and talk make students uninterested and unmotivated to learn English especially reading skills. Related to this, previous studies have showed that there is a positive relation between motivation and students' achievement. Therefore, the Thai English teachers should change their way of teaching from teacher-centered to learner-centered, creates goal of learning and makes clear between language courses and their future careers. The Thai English teachers should play an import role to find out ways to motivate and make students interested to learn English

especially reading skills. The findings of this study also serve as a guide to the Ministry of Education, in particular to the Teacher Training Division to out ways to motivate and make students interested to learn English especially reading skills.

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