

An Examination of Thai Students' Foreign Language Anxiety in Relation to Motivation and Achievement

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน (Asean Economic Community: AEC) คือการสร้างตลาดเดียวขึ้นในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ด้วยเหตุนี้ประเทศไทยจึงเผชิญกับงานที่ท้าทายในการส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนเพิ่มความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษ งานวิจัยที่ศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความวิตกกังวลด้านภาษาต่างประเทศชี้ให้เห็นว่า การพูดภาษาอังกฤษเป็นปัญหาในวัฒนธรรมไทย การวิจัยนี้ศึกษากลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 1,000 คน เป็นนักศึกษาจากมหาวิทยาลัย 5 แห่ง มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของความวิตกกังวลด้านภาษาต่างประเทศต่อระดับแรงจูงใจและผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน รวมทั้งให้ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการปรับปรุง

ความวิตกกังวลด้านการสื่อสารวัดโดยใช้มาตรวัดความวิตกกังวลด้านภาษาต่างประเทศ (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) ความวิตกกังวลด้านการเขียนวัดโดยใช้มาตรวัดความวิตกกังวลด้านการเขียนภาษาที่สอง (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004) และมาตรวัดแรงจูงใจทางวิชาการปรับปรุงจากมาตรวัดของ Robert, Vallerand, Pelletier et al. (1993)

การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้สถิติบรรยายและสถิติอ้างอิงและใช้โมเดลสมการโครงสร้างในการทดสอบโมเดลที่เสนอและสมมติฐาน 3 ข้อ ผลปรากฏว่า สมมติฐานที่ 1 สอดคล้องกับข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์บางส่วน เนื่องจากสมมติฐาน 1b ความวิตกกังวลด้านภาษาต่างประเทศนอกชั้นเรียนพบว่า มีความสัมพันธ์ทางลบกับแรงจูงใจภายใน ในขณะที่สมมติฐาน 1a ความวิตกกังวลด้านภาษาต่างประเทศในชั้นเรียนพบว่า ไม่มีความสัมพันธ์กับแรงจูงใจภายใน สมมติฐานที่ 2a และ 2b ไม่สอดคล้องกับข้อมูล เนื่องจากความวิตกกังวลในการเขียนไม่มีความสัมพันธ์กับแรงจูงใจภายในและไม่มีความสัมพันธ์กับผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน สำหรับสมมติฐาน 3a พบว่า ไม่มีความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างแรงจูงใจภายนอกกับแรงจูงใจทางวิชาการ ส่วนสมมติฐาน 3b พบว่า มีความสัมพันธ์เล็กน้อยระหว่างแรงจูงใจภายในกับผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน

โดยสรุป ผลการวิจัยนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า ทำให้นักศึกษาไทยจึงไม่สามารถพูดและเขียนภาษาอังกฤษได้ และสาเหตุที่นักศึกษาขาดแรงจูงใจในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

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Abstract

The objective of the ASEAN Economic Community is the establishment of a single market in Southeast Asia. Owing to this fact, Thailand is faced with the challenging task of encouraging persons to increase fluency in English. Existing studies on foreign language anxiety have discovered that speaking English is a perennial problem in Thai culture. The present study included a sample size of 1000 students from five universities with the purpose of investigating the impact of foreign language anxiety on motivational levels and academic performance, and providing suggestions for improvements.

Communication anxiety was measured by the foreign language anxiety (FLA) scale proposed by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & J. Cope in 1986, and writing anxiety was measured by the "Second Language Writing Anxiety Scale" (SLWAI) proposed by Cheng (2004). The Academic Motivation Scale proposed by Robert, Vallerand, Pelletier, et al in 1993 was utilized and modified.

Quantitative methods was utilized using descriptive, as well as inferential analyses. Structural equation modeling was utilized to test the proposed model and all three hypotheses. Out of the three hypotheses and sub-hypotheses that were proposed, hypothesis 1 was partially supported by the data, since hypothesis 1b out-of-class foreign language anxiety was negatively related to the intrinsic academic motivation, while hypothesis 1a, in-the-class foreign language anxiety had no relationship with the intrinsic academic motivation. Hypothesis 2a and b are not supported by the data since writing anxiety had no relationship with intrinsic academic motivation as well as on academic achievement. For Hypothesis 3a, the relationship between extrinsic academic motivation and student academic motivation was not found, but for hypothesis 3b a marginal relationship between intrinsic academic motivation and academic achievement was illustrated.

Overall, an understanding about why Thai students are inhibited to speak and write English, and reasons for their lack of motivation, can be sought from this research.

Keywords: Communication anxiety, Academic motivation, Academic achievement

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Introduction

Eighty-five percent of one's financial success is due to personality and ability to communicate, negotiate and lead. Shockingly, only 15% is due to technical knowledge" (Carnegie Institute of Technology, Forbes, 2012). Globalization and the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) provide an impetus for students in Thailand to consider the vital role of proficiency in English. One of the former Education Ministers, Woravat Auapinyakul (Bangkok Post, October 7, 2010) initiated the Thailand's English Speaking Year 2012 program in December 2011, in order to prepare Thais for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Another Education Minister, Mr Chaturon Chaisang (The Nation, 19th December 2011) also supported the idea that if Thailand has to compete internationally the education system needs to be revamped.

In Thailand, English is considered an unofficial second language, or a foreign language, rather than an second language officially since the Office of the Education Council (OEC) secretary-general, Tongthong Chandransu (The Nation, 11th October 2010) claimed that it was too soon to consider English as a second language for instruction in schools. Many other Southeast Asian countries have declared English as a second official language, but since Thailand has never been colonized, Thai will be the only official language of Thailand according to former Thai Education Minister, Chinaworn Boonyakiat (Bangkok Post, October 20, 2010).

Today many schools, colleges and family members focus on learning English to improve the prospects for their children, and some even endeavor to send their children to International Schools. Overall, the English levels are still sub-standard and this is indicated by the latest results of the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2012) conducted in October 2012 in which Denmark ranked 1st, but Thailand ranked 53rd out of 54 countries with Libya being the lowest (EF EPI, 2012). The average score was 43.36 and was categorized as a very low proficiency in English. Could the low scores be attributed to colonization, lack of interest, lack of engagement, family lingua franca, rare opportunities to practise English, quality of the school, quality of the teachers, or just lack of motivation? Many researchers in Thai and foreign cultures agree that motivation is one of the key components for higher achievement in language learning (Elyildirim & Ashton, 2006; Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008; Choosri & Intharaksa, 2011; and Kitjaroonchai & Kitjaroonchai, 2012). A recent finding (Loima & Vibulphol, 2014), indicates that the motivational levels of Thai 9th graders to study English was low to moderate, and there was no differences in the motivational levels of males and females. The question that arises here is *"What will be the impact of communication anxiety on students' levels of motivation and academic achievement?"*

The Concept of Reading and Writing Anxiety

The most popular definition of communication anxiety (CA) or communication bound anxiety, as mentioned initially, was introduced by McCroskey (1977) who defined CA as "an

individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 78).

The construct of Communication apprehension (CA) was measured by McCroskey (1982) using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) scale. According to the scale, a person can experience anxiety in four different contexts which are interpersonal, meeting, group, and public. In the first context, interpersonal communication anxiety/fear occurs in a real face-to-face situation or when a person thinks about communicating with another person. In the second and third contexts, the meeting or group communication anxiety occurs when a greater number of persons are present, and the fear or anxiety can be manifested when the person is faced with this situation. Lastly, public anxiety occurs when a person is faced with speaking to an audience and during a formal or classroom presentation. This can be similar to a social phobia.

Closely related to communication anxiety is the concept of "willingness to communicate" (WTC). Initially, the concept was used by Burgoon (1976), and it was referred to as "unwillingness to communicate", and defined as "chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication" (p. 60). So, the definition of willingness to communicate is the attitude of the person towards starting communication with others. Studies conducted by Chan & McCroskey (1987) show that students who participated more in classes have high WTC.

Communication anxiety can also include fear of writing. The concept of writing anxiety was first used in 1975 by Daly & Miller, and according to them writing anxiety is "the dysfunctional anxiety that many individuals suffer when confronted with writing tasks" (Cheng, 2002, p.647). Writing anxiety (Cheng, 2004) consists of three factors, namely, Somatic anxiety which refers to physical aspects of anxiety like being nervous and tense; Cognitive anxiety, which is related to thinking about performance, negative expectations and others' perceptions; and finally, avoidance behavior, which includes avoidance of writing.

The Concept of Academic Motivation

Motivation can be defined as a drive/action oriented behavior that helps us to achieve a need. Motivation to study a foreign language can increase if the learner perceives that what is studied is of value rather than the effort expended.

Social psychologists Gardner & Lambert (1972), and Gardner (1985) studied motivation from a socio-cultural aspect. In the socio-cultural model, Gardner (1985) suggested two variables: attitudes toward the learning situation and integrativeness as part of a learner's socio-cultural environment. An attitude towards the learning situations is how the language teacher and the foreign language studied are evaluated. Integrativeness, is the attitude towards the foreign language community and interest in studying the foreign language. Both these variables can be referred to as Integrated Motivation (Gardner, 1985). Deci & Ryan (1985), in the self-determination theory, explained that intrinsic motivation occurs when students feel satisfied because of some

internal factors like interest and challenge and a desire to perform an action. Extrinsic motivation occurs when students feel satisfied because of some external factors like rewards and the desire to perform an action leading to a desire to learn.

Noels et al. (2000) proposed three types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The first type of intrinsic motivation is knowledge (an activity done for acquiring new knowledge and ideas); the second is accomplishment (the sensations experienced for achieving a goal or tasks); and the third is simulation (the enjoyment and fun from doing a task). The first type of extrinsic motivation is external regulation (external factors like costs and benefits); the second is interjected regulation (doing an activity to avoid guilt or for ego-enhancement); and the third type is identified regulation (an activity is done for personal reasons and obtaining a valued goal). Noels (2001) agreed that the three types of extrinsic motivation differ in their levels of self-determination, with external regulation having the lowest self-determination, and identified regulation having the most self regulated type of extrinsic motivation which leads to a desire to learn (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003).

Psychological factors can also contribute to motivation, and according to Locke and Latham's (1984) Goal Setting Theory, the acceptance of difficult but achievable goals can influence a person's behavior. When the person perceives the goal as challenging but that which can be obtained, the person will get motivated. Cultural and social factors could also impact a person's levels of motivation according to Wen (1997) and Chen et al. (2005). In some cultures, intrinsic, rather than extrinsic motivation may manifest itself more.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives

1) To distinguish and understand the importance of foreign language communication anxiety of students from different universities studying in programs that use English as the medium of communication.

2) To analyze the influence of communication anxiety and classroom motivation of the students from different universities studying in programs that use English as the medium of communication.

3) To examine the influence of academic motivation on the academic achievement of students from different universities studying in programs that use English as the medium of communication

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1a. Classroom foreign language anxiety is negatively related to intrinsic academic motivation.

H1b Out-of-classroom foreign language anxiety is negatively related to intrinsic academic motivation.

H2a. Writing anxiety is negatively related to intrinsic academic motivation.

H2b. Writing anxiety is negatively related to academic achievement.

H3a. Extrinsic academic motivation is related to academic achievement.

H3b. Intrinsic academic motivation is related to academic achievement

Methodology and Data Analysis

Population Sampling and Sampling

One thousand two hundred undergraduate students enrolled in any international program in five Thai universities namely 1) Assumption University, 2) Thammasat University, 3) Chulalongkorn University, 4) Mahidol University, and 5) Bangkok University were chosen as the sample size using random sampling. One thousand and seven were finally used for data analysis since some forms were incomplete.

Questionnaires

To measure communication anxiety, the foreign language anxiety (FLA) questionnaire proposed by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope in 1986 was used. The scale contains 33 measurement items measuring listening and speaking anxiety when using a foreign language in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. A five-point rating scale was designed. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the pre-test was 0.859.

The second measurement scale was the "Second Language Writing Anxiety Scale" (SLWAI) proposed by Cheng (2004). The scale was composed of 22 measurement items to measure written communication anxiety. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the pre-test was 0.829.

To measure motivation, the Academic Motivation Scale proposed by Robert et al, in 1993 was utilized and modified. This scale contains 28 seven-point rating scale items varying from the lowest score of 1 which refers to "Does not correspond at all" to "Corresponds a little" to "Corresponds moderately" to "Corresponds a lot" to the highest score of 7 which refers to "Corresponds exactly". The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the pre-test was 0.94.

Data Analysis

At the initial stage, the data was analyzed descriptively. Then, the reliability of the survey data using Cronbach's analysis was conducted before proceeding to the hypotheses testing together with the confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the quality of the data. Satisfactory results were obtained since the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all constructs were exceeding the cutoff point of 0.7 where the good fit of the CFA = 10; CFI = 0.931; RMSEA=0.047). Finally structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to examine the research model and test all hypotheses. The SEM is appropriate for this study because it could be used to examine both direct and indirect relationships among several latent constructs as proposed in the research.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of the Main Constructs

Constructs/ Dimensions	Mean (Standard Deviation)					
	All Data	AU	BU	CU	MU	TU
Foreign Language Anxiety (Speaking & Listening)						
Classroom FLA	3.17 (0.53)	3.07 (0.56)	3.21 (0.54)	3.13 (0.43)	3.12 (0.47)	3.37 (0.51)
Out-of- class FLA	2.74 (0.61)	2.76 (0.63)	2.74 (0.57)	3.01 (0.57)	2.66 (0.50)	2.52 (0.64)
Writing Anxiety						
Cognitive Anxiety	3.07 (0.47)	2.99 (0.47)	2.96 (0.44)	3.14 (0.38)	3.09 (0.50)	3.21 (0.48)
Somatic Anxiety	3.09 (0.70)	2.92 (0.76)	3.15 (0.57)	3.11 (0.60)	3.05 (0.76)	3.34 (0.66)
Avoidance Anxiety	2.93 (0.59)	2.79 (0.55)	2.87 (0.57)	3.01 (0.62)	2.91 (0.66)	3.15 (0.54)
Student Academic Motivation						
Extrinsic Motivation	5.07 (1.04)	5.10 (1.12)	5.14 (1.03)	4.90 (1.00)	5.05 (0.98)	5.08 (0.95)
Intrinsic Motivation	4.84 (0.93)	4.85 (0.98)	4.99 (0.95)	4.52 (0.86)	4.79 (0.84)	4.97 (0.88)

Note: AU stands for Assumption University; BU stands for Bangkok University; CU stands for Chulalongkorn University; MU stands for Mahidol University; TU stands for Thammasat University

Table 2: SEM Relationship Estimated

Hypotheses and Paths in the Model		Estimated Relationship Coefficients	t-value	p-value
H1a	In-the-class FLA → Intrinsic Motivation	0.021(0.012)	0.449	0.653
H1b	Out-of-Class FLA → Intrinsic Motivation	-0.081(-0.054)	-3.556	***
H2a	Writing Anxiety → Intrinsic Motivation	0.079(0.031)	1.115	0.265
H2b	Writing Anxiety → Achievement	0.017(0.013)	0.229	0.819
H3a	Extrinsic Motivation → Achievement	0.028(0.059)	0.88	0.379
H3b	Intrinsic Motivation → Achievement	-0.07(-0.134)	-2.088	0.037

Notes: For the Estimated Relationship Coefficient,

Figures shown in each cell indicate the unstandardized coefficients shown in the brackets are standardized coefficients

*** *t*-values are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) of the Student Academic Achievement = 0.050^c

Conclusions and Discussion

For Hypothesis 1, a negative relationship between a) in-the-class foreign language anxiety and intrinsic academic motivation b) out-of-class foreign language anxiety and academic motivation was assumed. The results indicated that only H1b was supported by the data i.e. the out-of-class foreign language anxiety was negatively related to the intrinsic academic motivation while in-the-class foreign language anxiety had no relationship with the intrinsic academic motivation. Out-of-class foreign language anxiety was negatively related to the intrinsic academic motivation, with a coefficient of -0.081 at the 0.001 level of significance ($p < 0.001$) while in-the-classroom foreign language anxiety had no relationship with the intrinsic academic motivation. When out-of-class foreign language anxiety is higher, the intrinsic academic motivation of Thai students is lower. It is true that foreign language learner anxiety does have a correlation with, intrinsic motivation, academic motivation, achievement motivation, expectancy and causal attribution (Lens & DeCruyenaere (1991). Dornyei (2001) also stated that studying a second language compels high levels of motivation since a person has to alter his/her self-image, grammar and rules, cultural behaviors and ways of being, more than just learning skills. In the national curriculum of Thailand, English is the first foreign language rather than a second language, hence speaking in ones mother tongue out side of the classroom is abundant (Wiriyaichitra, 2012).

According to Sitthitikul (2010), Thai students perceive that foreign language learning is generally confined to a classroom, and to attain a high level of independence when speaking English is not a necessity. Thai students will only focus on what is assigned in the classroom, and extra reading activities which do not include personal interest are difficult to enjoy. Emphasizing on repetition and memorization does not enable Thai students to utilize their analytical and critical thinking skills. The outcome could be a lack of out-of-class motivation for learners of a foreign language.

Thai students also have limited exposure to English outside class and rarely practice English discussion. Archibald et al (2006) agreed that Thais study English for three hours per week or 45/90 hours per semester and believes that “Learning a second language for 95 hours per year for six years will not lead to functional bilingualism and fluency in the second language. Expectations must be realistic (p.3).” Forman (2005) stated that a Thai may lose their natural feeling of meaning about what is spoken in another foreign language which can lead to a lack of confidence and

hence unwillingness to communicate in a foreign language. Kanoksilapatham, (2010) agreed that a majority of Thai teachers use the text book and focus on grammar, structure, vocabulary and reading and normal Thai students may not get a chance to practice speaking with their colleagues which leads Thais to be shy. Therefore, when out-of-class foreign language anxiety is higher, the intrinsic academic motivation of Thai students is lower.

For Hypothesis 2, a negative relationship between a) writing anxiety and intrinsic academic motivation b) writing anxiety and academic achievement was hypothesized. Writing anxiety had no relationship with intrinsic academic motivation as well as on academic achievement.

For Hypothesis 3, a relationship between a) extrinsic academic motivation and academic achievement b) intrinsic academic motivation and academic achievement was hypothesized. However, the relationship between extrinsic academic motivation and student academic motivation was not found, but a marginal relationship between intrinsic academic motivation and academic achievement was illustrated with a coefficient of -0.07 which is significant at the 0.05 level.

Oranpattanachai's (2006) study of 420 Thai undergraduate engineering students in an English language classroom indicated that the key findings were that most students had extrinsic reasons for studying English, and the reason for taking English was to fulfill the foreign language requirement at the university and achieve a grade. According to Chalapati (2007), studying a language for its own sake is hardly of importance but vocational aspects of studies are given priority. For Thai students, studying English is just a matter of passing rather than of added value.

Another factor that could influence academic outcomes that academic achievement can have a multitude of measurements. According to Wong (1985) there are major differences in Asian and other cultures with regards to second language evaluation and how proficiency is measured. In an Asian context written formal examinations and tests which emphasize dictation, grammar, literature, composition and calligraphy are given priority. Although the Thai students possess motivation academic outcomes could be marginal. Walker and Deci, 2006 (cited in Wang 2008) believe that learners need to develop interest, a good attitude and enjoyment in studying a second language for better academic achievement scores.

Significance and Implications for Future Research

This seminal research, gathered information from five universities in Thailand with regards to English reading and writing anxiety, inside and outside the classroom and academic motivation. Furthermore, the relationship of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and academic achievement was analyzed. It was found that Thai students experience greater levels of out-of-class anxiety and lower levels of academic motivation to study English. However, although the intrinsic motivation to study English was good academic scores were marginal.

These results can be attributed to internal and external factors and educators need to be aware of the existence of these factors in order to implement methods to enhance motivation by developing programs in which students lower their inhibitions and fears to communicate openly to increase language learning. Teachers could have two alternatives. One is to focus on the existing problems of anxiety and aid students to find methods to cope. This approach is more student-centered. The second choice is for teachers to focus on what goes on in the classroom and try to enhance the learning environment. This approach is more teacher-centered. A clearer picture of learners' personality traits and characteristics can provide the teacher with insight on how to help students overcome their irrational fears. If the learning situation is more about students' beliefs and expectations, teachers can give students a better idea about the outcomes of learning a new language and what goals they can achieve within the specified period of time. Verbal praise and reinforcement can be provided.

Further research, gathering quantitative data about student's English proficiency may be insufficient since often students may not answer accurately and an overall picture of students in the real world setting is difficult to assess. An experiment can be conducted in which students' English proficiency and anxiety levels can be measured and diagnostic measures prepared. Other research, relating learning styles of students to motivation can be conducted to enhance learning. The impact of collaborative learning on the English language-learning process also deserves consideration.

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