

Factors Causing Demotivation in English Learning among Thai Student in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology, Kmitl

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate factors in Thai context that demotivate students in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang. The research was developed in order to help students in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology to work toward an improvement of their English skills since they have got lower English proficiency than other faculties. The lack of demotivation study in Thailand also contributed to the need for this study as demotivation plays a very important role in English learning. Additionally, the study was designed as a quantitative case study involving a 24 item demotivation questionnaire along with an open ended question which was administered to participants consisted of 95 undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agricultural. The result indicated that participants perceived learning method such as "grammar focus learning", "exam oriented learning" and "non-communicative learning" to be strongly demotivating. Text books related issue and teacher related issue were moderate sources of demotivation while student related issue and learning environment were weak demotivation factors.

Keywords: demotivation, improvement, English skills, undergraduate students, KMITL

Background of the study

In the present day, English language learning has become a significant matter since English is widely considered to be the international language. The importance of English language cannot be overlooked as it directly influence the economy, industry, science, medicine, education, information and technology, and communication of the country (Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Thai students should be able to communicate with people all over the world which would provide them more opportunity to find their future careers through English language. For this reason, having decent English skills is essential for Thai students to become successful in today's world.



However, according to the most recent English proficiency index, Thailand's English proficiency is reported to be very low and even lower than most of the countries in Asia. The low English proficiency of Thai students has generated a substantial amount of investigation, research and study related to the cause of low English proficiency. One of the important factors causes the problem is the lack of motivation (Wiryachitra, and Noom-Ura, 2013). A. Nantana, 2003, further explained that Thai students lack motivation because English language is rarely used in daily communication in Thai. This eliminates the need to use English as a second language apart from the fact that students require to learn English at school. Moreover, motivation has been widely accepted by almost every teacher and researcher to be the most powerful and influential determining factors in the success of second language learning (Kyung Jung, 2011, Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Without enough motivation, even the best of student cannot accomplish the long-term goal and will likely result in low performance (Caitlin Aquino and Co, 2016 quoting from Dornyei, 1998). Hence, for a better learning of English, there is a need for Thai students to develop their own motivation towards English learning.

While motivation is very important to English learning, lack of motivation and demotivation appeared frequently through students in every level of education (Caitlin Aquino and Co, 2016). Ghadiradeh, 2012, point out that the result of many previous researches of this topic showed the loss of motivation and interest in some English learners during the learning process. This means demotivation can be a learning obstacle and potentially causing negative educational impact on English learning students. Thus, studying the concept of demotivation and Identifying the source of it will be important to English learning in Thailand. Especially since very few demotivation researches were conducted in Thai, other studies on this topic may not be representative of Thai students due to the fact that Thailand has its own educational context. For example, English learning in Thailand is considered to heavily focus on memorization and repetition on High school level which might result in low motivation. Static classroom and lack of student's involvement might also be the case (Kitjaroonchai, 2012).

Nonetheless, the results from Thai students spending twelve years studying English in primary and secondary schools are still questionable. Many non-English Major students in university can't speak English fluently. A lot of graduated Employees have little basic English skills. Numerous researches and articles also reported that the students in various schools, especially high school, show behaviors indicating the lack of motivation in English learning. Considering that English has been international language for decades, these problems could potentially effects Thai students in a long-run. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to investigate why Thai students have low English competency by finding demotivation factors in English learning Environment.



Undergraduate students in King Mongkuts' Institute of Technology Ladkrabang was chosen as a representative of Thai students using the Faculty of Agricultural Technology students in particular as they have get lower English proficiency than other faculties. With twelve years of English learning experience from primary and secondary schools, they can report the cause of demotivation from their past experience. Moreover, as cited from Kikuchi & Sakai, the previous research on this topic showed the significant different between lower proficiency group and higher proficiency group. Higher proficiency group are reported to have much less demotivation experience than lower proficiency group. Because of this, students in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology, whom have lower proficiency, are selected to extract their English learning experience. Hence, the goal of the study was to find out why students in Faculty of Agricultural Technology, King Mongkuts' Institute of Technology Ladkrabang have low English competency.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to identify what are the demotivation factors in English learning among students in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang.

Literature review

To properly investigate the source of demotivation, educational context in Thailand must be first understood. Kitjaroonchai, 2012, Citing from the previous Thai Education Minister, Chinaworn, explain that English language was never stabilize its root in Thailand in the first place since English never brought through Thailand via colonization. This lead to the situation where Thai people rarely use English to communicate since Thai is the only official language of the country. Thai children are also raised in the environment where English language is obsolete in their daily life apart from the school which hinders the necessity to learn and use English. Chinaworn further point out the unchanged teaching style which emphasize Rote learning making students unable to think critically, as Rote learning only focus on memorization via repetition. Incompetence teachers in primary and secondary school and exam focus learning are also major problems. Eventually, this results in lowering learning motivation in Thai students. Hence, it is safe to assume that the factors are frequent in Thailand's English learning environment and should be given more attention.



In the field of demotivation research, Dornyei, 2001, investigate demotivation factors by focused on a specific learner who has been demotivated. According to him, demotivation refers to as “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” A demotivated learner is someone who was once eager to learn but lost his or her interest in learning process.

Other studies also give an interesting insight to demotivation, Hague, 2009, compiled 3 most frequent factors contributed to demotivation which include teacher-related issue, student-related issue and other learning environment such as classroom. He concluded that students learn better if they have personal connection with the teacher. On the other hand, Lack of teacher attention and push from teacher can render students demotivate.

Sook Kyung Jung, 2011, was undertaken to explore demotivation among students in primary and secondary schools. The result reveals that students’ motivation slowly changes overtime during the course of learning. He suggests that most students become demotivated when the context is difficult. Additionally, external factors influenced way more than internal factors in demotivating process.

Meshket, 2012, conducted demotivation study in Iran. In her study, students did not perceive lack of internal motivation as a source of demotivation at all. Key demotivation factors which appeared to be frequent were inadequate school facilities, learning content and material and teachers’ competency and teaching style. Interestingly, overly emphasis on grammar was the most demotivating aspect of learning content and material. She advised there is a need for students to interact with learning content.

In Thailand context, Llego, 2016, found 1 key demotivation factors as learning content and material particularly in vocabulary aspect. Researcher suggests the lack of communication in classroom is the cause of demotivation. Teacher should act as a speech couch and frequently provide feedback to the student.

Sakai and Kikuchi, (2009), conducted a research on Japanese students. From their finding, five common demotivating factors were found: course content and material, teacher competency and teaching style, inadequate school facilities, test score and non-communication learning method. They have inferred that such emphasis on grammar and examinations may act as a demotivating factor. Moreover, internal factor were absent in this study.

Sher Ali & Hussain Pathan’s (2017) study revealed course content and teaching material appeared as the key demotivation factor followed by teachers’ behavior, classroom environment and over emphasize on grammar, while internal factor appeared to be the least demotivation factor.

In general, demotivation is a significant ongoing problem that should be concern in English learning. There are many factors that negatively affect student motivation, the significant factor of which is the role of the teacher. Often times, students perceived teachers as the most demotivating aspects of English learning, and perceived internal factors as the least demotivating aspects. Therefore, the significant of teachers cannot be neglected as ineffective teacher can easily diminish student's motivation. Course content and material, specifically overly emphasize on grammar and non-communicative learning methods are also largely contributed to the problems. Additionally, demotivation is not concern about internal factors since they appeared to have minimum impact in demotivation studies or completely absent. Judging from Dornyei's definition of demotivation, it is clear that internal forces are rendered to be insignificant matter.

In Thai context, the general direction of previous studies correlates with background educational context of Thailand in that Thai teacher in primary and secondary schools are reported to be inefficient. Overly emphasize on grammar issue are also correlate with previous studies and are largely presented in Thailand as well. Since teacher-related issue and grammar focus learning are primary factor causing demotivation, this could potentially explain why Thai students, in general, become severely demotivated as they are today. If taken Thailand educational background such as memorization via repetition learning style and exam focus learning into account, English learners in Thai might have suffered more than some may think. Hence, the result is fully expected to correlates with previous studies of this topic.

Methodology

Data Collection

Data collection began in the second semester of 2017, within Faculty of Agricultural Technology, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang using the random sampling methods chosen only undergraduate students from the faculty. 95 participants were handed in questionnaire which consists of questions divide into two parts. Total numbers of 95 students from first year to fourth year in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology were chosen to answer the questions based on their past experience and return the questionnaire once they have finished.



Population and Sampling

Undergraduate students, consist of first year to fourth year students, from Faculty of Agricultural Technology, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang are the population of this study with a total population number of 2108 students. 95 participants were chosen by random sampling in the second semester of 2017. Participant's number was taken from the Taro Yamane population sample calculation method with 90% integrity.

Research instrument

Since no research tool was found to be suitable for Thailand context of this study, research tool was adapted from Sakai & Kikuchi Japanese demotivation questionnaire, (2009) which based on the conceptual framework of Dörnyei's nine category of demotivation. The questionnaire consists of two parts: first part was background information of participant consists of gender and level of study, second part involves twenty-four items question regarding of demotivates experience of participant. The second part questions will have participant rate the scale of demotivation level from one to five. After participants complete the task, the questionnaires were returned to the researcher for further data analysis.

Data Analysis Method

Collected data was brought to calculate in SPSS statistic base program after all 95 participants completed their questionnaire by finding percentage value, arithmetic mean and standard deviation of each questions and factors. After that, the calculated data of participants was analyzed to conclude the finding of this study.

Finding of The Study

Data Analysis

To investigate demotivation factors in English learning, a questionnaire was distributed to the ninety five participants. The original questionnaire was in Thai which consisted of two parts. The first part included of questions regarding background information of the participants. The second part concerns about demotivation experience of participants. Data obtained from the first part were calculated and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Data of the Subject

Background Information		Number of Participant	Percentage
Gender	Male	31	(32.6%)
	Female	64	(67.4%)
Year of study	Freshman	19	(20%)
	Sophomore	34	(35.8%)
	Junior	42	(44.2%)
	Senior	0	(0.0%)

The finding in the Table 1 indicated that of all the participants who answers questionnaire, 32.6% (31 participants) were male and 67.4% (64 participants) were female. The majority of participants were studying in the second year (sophomore) and third year (junior), with 35.8% (34 participants) and 44.2% (42 participants) respectively. However, none of participants were from the fourth year (Senior).

The second part of the questionnaire was rating scale questionnaire which attempt to investigate demotivation experience from participants. The data obtained from this part were calculated to find out their mean scores / standard deviation and presented in Table 2. The rating criteria used in this part were as cites:

5.00 – 4.20	refers to	Strongly Agree
4.19 – 3.40	refers to	Agree
3.39 – 2.60	refers to	Moderate
2.59 – 1.80	refers to	Disagree
1.79 – 1.00	refers to	Strongly Disagree

Participant's Questionnaire Responds Analysis

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic for Participant's Questionnaire responds

Factor 1: Learning Method

1- Learning style was focused on memorizing vocabulary and sentences in textbook too much.	30 (31.6%)	42 (44.2%)	22 (23.2%)	1 (1.1%)	- (0.0%)	4.06	0.77
2- Learning style was focused on reading from textbook too much.	23 (24.2%)	49 (51.6%)	21 (22.1%)	2 (2.1%)	- (0.0%)	3.97	0.74



Factor 1: Learning Method (Continued)

3- Most of the lessons are focused on grammar.	39 (41.1%)	36 (37.9%)	16 (16.8%)	4 (4.2%)	- (0.0%)	4.16	0.85
4- Most of the lessons were exam oriented.	52 (54.7%)	32 (33.7%)	10 (10.5%)	1 (1.1%)	- (0.0%)	<u>4.42</u>	0.72
5- Learning style wasn't focus on speaking practices.	45 (47.4%)	33 (34.7%)	16 (16.8%)	1 (1.1%)	- (0.0%)	4.28	0.78

Factor 2: Text book

6- English passages in the textbooks were too long.	24 (25.3%)	38 (40.0%)	30 (31.6%)	3 (3.2%)	- (0.0%)	3.87	0.83
7- Topics of the English passages used in lessons were not interesting.	28 (29.5%)	37 (38.9%)	23 (24.2%)	6 (6.3%)	1 (1.1%)	3.89	0.94
8- Contents in the textbooks were difficult to understand.	25 (26.3%)	32 (33.7%)	30 (31.6%)	8 (8.4%)	- (0.0%)	3.77	0.93
9- Textbooks have too difficult Vocabulary.	10 (10.5%)	37 (38.9%)	33 (34.7%)	13 (13.7%)	2 (2.2%)	3.42	0.93

Factor 3: Teacher

10- Teachers did not provide enough support for students.	28 (29.5%)	23 (24.2%)	34 (35.8%)	7 (7.4%)	3 (3.2%)	3.69	1.07
11- Teachers barely or never spoke English.	18 (18.9%)	24 (25.3%)	28 (29.5%)	21 (22.1%)	4 (4.2%)	3.32	1.14
12- Teachers often scold students when they made mistakes.	25 (26.3%)	19 (20.0%)	18 (18.9%)	27 (28.4%)	6 (6.3%)	3.31	<u>1.31</u>
13- Teachers' teaching style was monotonous and lacked student interactions.	33 (34.7%)	27 (28.4%)	25 (26.3%)	6 (6.3%)	4 (4.2%)	<u>3.83</u>	1.11
14- Teachers did not prepared lessons sufficiently before the class.	12 (12.6%)	17 (17.9%)	28 (29.5%)	28 (29.5%)	10 (10.5%)	<u>2.93</u>	1.19
15- Teachers' explanations were not easy to understand	20 (21.1%)	34 (35.8%)	28 (29.5%)	9 (9.5%)	4 (4.2%)	3.60	1.06



Factor 4 : Student

16- I had difficulty in memorizing words and phrases.	16 (16.8%)	37 (38.4%)	30 (31.6%)	8 (8.4%)	4 (4.2%)	<u>3.56</u>	1.01
17- I got low scores on tests (such as mid-term and final exam).	12 (12.6%)	26 (27.4%)	38 (40.0%)	14 (14.7%)	5 (5.3%)	3.27	1.04
18- I could not do as well on tests as my friends.	17 (17.9%)	25 (26.3%)	31 (32.6%)	17 (17.9%)	5 (5.3%)	3.34	1.13
19- I felt ashamed about my English pronunciation skill.	7 (7.4%)	31 (32.6%)	24 (25.3%)	19 (20.0%)	14 (14.7%)	<u>2.98</u>	1.19

Factor 5 :Classroom environment and Learning Facility

20- The size of the class was too big (too many students).	19 (20.0%)	32 (33.7%)	34 (35.8%)	9 (9.5%)	1 (1.1%)	3.62	0.95
21- Visual materials (such as videos and slideshows) were not used.	6 (6.3%)	33 (34.7%)	39 (41.1%)	14 (14.7%)	3 (3.2%)	3.26	0.90
22- Audio materials (such as CDs and tapes) were not used.	7 (7.4%)	28 (29.5%)	32 (33.7%)	21 (22.1%)	7 (7.4%)	3.07	1.05
23- Computer programs were not used in teaching.	8 (8.4%)	27 (28.4%)	36 (37.9%)	15 (15.8%)	9 (9.5%)	3.10	1.08
24- Environments were not suitable for learning (such as tight classroom, cramped classroom).	16 (16.8%)	19 (20.0%)	32 (33.7%)	22 (23.2%)	6 (6.3%)	3.18	1.16

According to the statistic in Table 2, 54.7% of the subjects strongly agree that the highest demotivating factor was item 4 ‘Most of the lessons were exam oriented’ with highest mean of 4.42. Item 3 ‘Most of the lessons are focused on grammar’ and item 5 ‘Learning style wasn’t focus on speaking practices’ were also perceived as highly demotivating factor with high mean score of 4.16 and 4.28 respectively. Hence, it can be said that among item related to factor 1 these three single items were deemed to be very demotivating. Additionally, all of the questions in the factor 2 had general rating of

agree with close mean and fairly low standard deviation. This suggests conformity of participant's answer. In other words, majority of participants agree for all items in this factor to be demotivating.

In the factor 3, it was reported that participants considered item 13 'Teachers' teaching style was monotonous and lacked student interactions' to be demotivating (34.7% strongly agree, 28.4% agree). However, item 14 'Teachers did not prepared lessons sufficiently before the class' were not perceived as very demotivating factor (29.5% moderate, 29.5% disagree). It's also noteworthy that item 12 'Teachers often scold students when they made mistakes' have highest standard deviation out of all question (1.31 mean) which indicated wide range of participants' answer. 26.3% strongly agree for this item to be demotivating while 28.4% reported disagreement. Other notable items were 16, 19, and 20. Item 16 'I had difficulty in memorizing words and phrases' was perceived as demotivating (16.8% strongly agree, 38.4% agree) while item 19 'I felt ashamed about my English pronunciation skill' had mix answer. 32.6% agree for this item to be demotivating but 14.7% answers strongly disagree. Regarding of the classroom environment, item 20 'The size of the class was too big (too many students)' in particular received higher mean than other question in the same factor (3.62 mean). Also, more than half of participants agree that this item was demotivating (20.0% strongly agree, 33.7% agree).

An analysis of participant's comments

To find out more detailed information about specific demotivation factor in English learning, open-end questions were administered to the subjects. Participant's answers were divided into categories based on the five factors. Their answers were mostly related to factor 1 (Learning method), factor 3 (Teachers) and factor 4 (Students). No one made comments about factor 5 (Classroom environment and Learning facilities) and only very few made comments about factor 2 (Textbooks).

As for the most concern factor: Learning method, participants mostly made comments about grammar focus, learning via memorization and exam oriented nature of Thai education which directly correlated to items 3, 1 and 4 accordingly. Lack of speaking practices in class was also mention but not as much as the other three.

As for factor 3, comment on teacher lack of support for students, monotonous teacher and scornful nature of teacher were reported. These comments are related to item 10, 13 and 12 accordingly. It's interesting to note that few comment on "teacher disregarding of student ability" and "teacher care only for student's understanding".



As for factor 4, participants only comment on student's lack of confident in English speaking and stating that "most students feel ashamed to speak because others would laugh at their pronunciation". This directly related to item 19.

Other comments were not related to the questionnaire. They mostly concerned with the lack of actual usage of English in real life situation. Some other comments also take blame on Thailand education system as a whole.

Conclusion and Discussion

The finding of this research revealed that "Learning Method" is heavily demotivating. That is, grammar focus learning, exam oriented learning and non-communicative learning method can highly demotivate students in learning English. The result is in agreement with Meshket (2012), Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and Sher Ali & Hussain Pathan (2017) in term of exam oriented learning and grammar focus learning being a strong demotivation factor. It's also in agreement with Llego (2016) finding that the lack of communication often scales down student motivation. However, unlike the results of other studies, teacher was not a big factor in this study affecting participants' demotivation. They tended to attribute their demotivation to learning context and methods. Even the negative characteristic of teacher (i.e: "Teachers barely or never spoke English" and "Teachers did not prepared lessons sufficiently before the class".) was a fairly small demotivation factor compared to Learning methods and Text book. This difference might come from English learning context in Thailand. For instance, English in Thailand is taught and view as foreign language. English is obsoleted in Thai student's life. In other word, most students rarely have opportunities to use English for communication purposes outside classrooms (Kitjaroonchai, 2012). This statement is also further reinforces by participants comments on open-end question which concern the lack of usage in real life situation. Thus, it is highly possible that this particular factor contributed to student's demotivation. Additionally, most of the English lesson in Thailand is still overly emphasized on grammar and preparation for university entrance examination. In this study, Factor 1: "Learning Method", (which consists of grammar focus learning, exam focus learning and lack of English communication in classroom) was perceived to be demotivating by majority of participant. The correlation between this present study and Thai context can be draw. Hence, it can be infer that such emphasis on grammar, examination and lack of proper speaking practice may function as demotivation factor for English learners in Thailand.



Given the fact that the key demotivation factor has been identified in this study, some recommendation can be made. Firstly, Thai education curriculum might needs to be fundamentally changes. Learning English via memorizing and repeating nature in Thailand will demotivate learners (Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Grammar focus learning and exam oriented learning were generally agreed to be demotivating by many previous study as well. The result from this research also supports this claim as evidence in participant's respond to question in factor 1 (Learning Method). Therefore, speaking practices in English learning should be prioritized instead of focusing on grammar. Creating communicative practices to allow learners to put English to an actual usage should be considered first to avoid demotivating learners. The exam preparation focus learning should also be avoid as it tainted learners by making them over-emphasizing the importance of the score as a measures of their ability (Paris S., 1995). Additionally, the text books might need some revision in terms of clarity and functionality. New text books need to be selected with interesting topic that contains more daily and practical words. In terms of teacher, the result reveals teachers' monotonous non-interactive classes to be strongly demotivating. Teachers should teach learners in an interactive way and promote interaction between learners and the teacher to avoid further demotivation.

Regarding of limitation, the current research has some limitation concerning demotivation factor in English learning process. Some suggestion for future research can be made. First, this study examines English learners in a single university in Thailand. Future research might need to involve more variety of learners regarding their proficiency level. Second, this study did not examine the influences of internal factors on demotivation at all. Despite previous researches claiming its minimal influence on demotivation, it is still important to examine the influences of both factor and investigate their relationship. Third, although the participants of this research include male and female students, studying the demotivation experiences in both genders was not taken into consideration in this particular study. It is suggested that the role of gender should be considered in future research. Taking these limitations into consideration, it will be necessary to investigate these neglected factors in the future research in order to understand demotivation factors of English learning in Thai context more throughout.



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