

# การสำรวจอุปสรรคและทัศนคติต่อการเรียน ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาศูนย์การเรียนรู้เซเวียร์

## Probing the Attitudes and Struggles Toward English Language Learning of Xavier Learning Community (XLC) Students.

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## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้จัดทำขึ้น (1) ศึกษาแรงจูงใจและประเภทของแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาในศูนย์การเรียนรู้เซเวียร์ (2) สำรวจปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มผู้เข้าร่วมในการทำวิจัยได้แก่นักศึกษาศูนย์การเรียนรู้เซเวียร์ในระดับปริญญาตรีจำนวน 92 ท่าน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่แบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยดัดแปลงจาก The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Garner, 2004) และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติพรรณนา ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า (1) นักศึกษาเห็นความสำคัญของภาษาอังกฤษสูงโดยแรงจูงใจเชิงเครื่องมือเป็นแรงจูงใจหลักในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเพราะนักศึกษาเชื่อว่าภาษาอังกฤษเป็นประโยชน์ในอนาคต (2) ทักษะการฟังเป็นทักษะที่ยากที่สุดในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษตามด้วยทักษะการเขียน การพูด การอ่าน และการขาคำศัพท์ในการโต้ตอบเป็นปัญหาหลักของนักศึกษาชุมชนการเรียนรู้เซเวียร์

คำสำคัญ:            การเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ  
                          ทัศนคติ  
                          แรงจูงใจ  
                          อุปสรรค

## Abstract

This study aims to (1) survey Xavier Learning Community students' attitudes and motivation types toward English Language learning; and (2) to survey the struggles and needs in language learning in order to support their language learning effectively. The Participants in this research were 92 undergraduate students and English language learners from Xavier Learning Community. The research instrument was the questionnaire that was adapted from the Gardner's The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) from 2004. It was conducted, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study shows that (1) students exhibit a high level of interest and are aware of the importance of the English Language and instrumental motivation is the major motivation because students believe that English would be useful for their future; (2) listening skill is the most challenging skill for English learning, following by writing, speaking, and reading; and a lack of vocabulary for responding is the major problem in XLC students.

**Keywords:** English language learning  
attitude  
motivation  
struggles

## 1. Introduction

Xavier Learning Community (XLC) is committed to producing graduates who become ethical and competent leaders who are able to be proud of their own ethnic identity and who can uplift and empower their community. The school intends to uplift the ethnic minorities' capacity through English language competency along with the spiritual activity support to become a man for others. Pérez-Izaguirre and Cenoz (2021) explain that language is important to a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment because it becomes the accepted mark in society. As an ethnic minority in Thailand, many students have already struggled with the Thai language and the society's acceptance which might lower their self-esteem due to their lack of the ability to communicate appropriately in the official language, such as mispronouncing words and having strong accents from their mother tongue, and so on. Consequently, improving their proficiency in English could open

further opportunities and boost up their self-esteem. Most of the current students are young adult Thais from ethnic minorities who complete their basic education requirements from the Ministry of Education.

Regarding the education gap, a wide range of students' individual perceptions concerning academics can be seen, especially in the English language. Darasawang (2014) states that English language teaching has been conducted in Thailand since 1824 by American missionaries to cope with the threat of western colonization. Over the centuries, English has played a major role in international communication and found a place as a language subject in the basic education core curriculum. Based on the latest reform of Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E.2551 (A.D. 2008), foreign language learning in Thailand should focus on the main function of improving communicative language skills. In addition, cultural differences are also emphasized in the curriculum

in order to broaden the learner's vision of the era of globalization. As a result, although most XLC students spend six years in primary school and six years in secondary school studying English, the overall English competence and performance seem below average. Therefore, to support young ethnic minority's learning effectively, gaining an idea of their attitudes and motivation in English language learning would be necessary and also acquire them to get across their struggles in English language learning. Thus, this research intends to probe the attitudes toward English language learning of XLC students in order to understand their motivation for choosing to study English and also probe the struggles in English language learning.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Gardner (1985), in the language learning situation, if the students' attitudes are positive, it is reasonable to assume or predict that the other factors of language experi-

ences are also favorable, which prepare the students to encounter any of their struggles in language learning. In contrast, if they perceive language learning negatively, their experience will be predicted as unfavorable. Gardner (1985, citing Allport, 1954:45), quotes "an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related" (p.9). He believes that attitude consists of the cognitive - the individual believer's structure, the affective reaction, and the conative. He also states, "Motivation has very distinct characteristics...in the present context refer to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (p.10). In order to achieve language learning, students need both a positive attitude and strong motivation. Gardner (1985) notes that in psychology, motivation

was considered in different terms as reinforcement, instincts, expectancy, needs, valence, and drive reduction, which is currently referred to as self-determination, casual attribution, and goal setting. This concept has been implied in the area of motivation in second language learning, and he also defined it as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (p.10). Gardner (2006) clarified motivation from three perspectives. First, the social perspective of motivation focuses on the community level such as academic requirements, obtaining a degree, or job opportunities. This is probably one of the approaches in second language learning and acquisition. Secondly, it is a characteristic of the individual that is related directly to the task. It has an objective, goal setting, act performance, the outcome of experiences, values, and consequent behavior. The last one is characterized by Dornyei in 2001 as the combination of two different approaches

between “social motivation that treats second language acquisition as a task closely linked with self-identity and ethnic relation” (p.350), which describes it as education-friendly and focuses on individual and classroom interactions. Naruponjirakul & Sanboonvej (2019) mention that between integrative motivation, the desire to interact with the native speaker through cultures or common interests, and instrumental motivation, learning English for a specific purpose as to be accepted by the society; learners who are driven by integrative motivation shows a higher range of achievement in language competence and language performance which mean interacting with native speakers or surrounded by target language environment reinforce learners motivation of willing to earn more knowledge. However, Mercer, S. & Ryan, S. (2011) suggest that if learners believe that merely studying in the place the target language is spoken will help them improve their English, then there will be less self-motivation through their

own actions. Thus, in order to achieve the goal of language learning, learners need to believe that their successful learning will be accomplished through their own effort and action. They need to believe that they have the power to determine the learning outcome.

### Research questions

1. What is the level of attitude of the student learning the English language?
2. What are the students' struggles in terms of learning English?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Objective

To surveys

- 1) The student's attitude/motivation types toward English language learning
- 2) The struggles in English language learning.

### 3.2 Subject of the study

The quantitative survey was conducted in Xavier Learning Community in Chiangrai, Thailand. The participants are both students from the XLC regular

program and Xavier Immersion Program (XIP) who study English in Xavier Learning Community. Although the total of participants is 126 students due to personal matters, only 92 students were able to complete the questionnaire.

### 3.3 Research Instrument

The multiple-choice questionnaire was adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and approved by two experts. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, (1) requested personal information about the age, gender, year of beginning to study English, and total years of studying English; (2) focused on the insight of language learning and attitude in English language learning; (3) focused on motivation types and the struggle in English language learning from students' aspect.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The demographic information was analyzed, and descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage are used.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

##### 1. The level of attitude of the student learning the English language.

**Figure 1.1** personal attitude toward English (Do you like English?)

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	I like it. It's fun and interesting and also opens my worldwide view	72	78.3%
2	Not really, but it could be useful in the future.	20	21.7%

According to the questionnaire, the result shows that 62 percent of XLC students choose to continue their higher education with XLC because they want to study English and most of the learners began their English lessons when they were young/ Approximately 39 percent of XLC students began to learn English when they were in primary school, and 34 percent of them even began in Kindergarten. However, the number of years of learning does not indicate a student's personal interest in English, since they cannot avoid it because English is one of the required subjects in Thailand's Basic education curriculum. That being the case, the result shows that whereas 78 percent of XLC students like English and view English as a tool for helping them to learn and understand something new in the world, only 22 percent of them do not really appreciate the time that they have to learn English, but they believe that the English language could be useful for their future (figure 1.1). In other words, XLC students carry a positive attitude toward English which is relevant to their motivation for English learning. Consequently, they will pay more attention to learning English and value the language experiences as rewarding, including taking their assessment more seriously.



Figure 1.2 personal attitude toward English learning

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Learning English is not difficult but one needs to work hard	59	64.1%
2	Learning English is difficult, but it's needed	33	35.9%

According to figure 1.2, 64 percent of XLC students think that English is not difficult but needs much effort to accomplish. About 36 percent of them think that English is difficult, but it's necessary for better opportunities. It shows that although XLC students show less interest (negative attitude) in English learning, they have the motivation to accomplish their goal of learning English in order to prepare themselves for their future opportunities. Unfortunately, based on the research, 50 percent of the students spend less than 45 minutes each day on their own self-study, which is inadequate in their circumstances because high self-motivation affects learners' language aptitude and their learning condition. Moreover, even though learners have excellent language aptitude through the appropriate teaching strategy, without self-motivation, learners cannot succeed in their long-term goals (Dörnyei, 2005). The Xavier Learning Community reinforces English language learning by encouraging the community to use the English language as the official language via announcements, community meetings, classes, and any activity that they have to interact with their peers and foreign volunteers. More than 80 percent of the students are inspired and comfortable to use English in daily life. They are satisfied with the school supporting English language learning, such as studying with volunteer

teachers or increasing the opportunity to use English in their daily lives. Hence, they are able to build up their confidence in using English. However, 12 percent of the students feel anxiety and uncomfortable using English. (Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.3** English as an official language in school (announcement, meeting, classes)

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Feeling be inspired	62	45.7%
2	Feeling comfortable to use English in daily life.	35	42.2%
3	Feeling anxiety	10	10.9 %
4	Feeling uncomfortable	1	1.1%

## 2. The struggles of students in terms of learning the English language

**Figure 2.1** the most difficult skill in English language

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Listening	42	45.7%
2	Writing	31	33.7%
3	Speaking	15	16.3%
4	Reading	4	4.3%

Based on four basic skills in English, the result shows that about 45 percent of the XLC students struggle with listening the most, followed by writing skills, speaking skills, and writing (figure 2.1). Furthermore, the questionnaire shows that almost 72 percent of XLC students are struggling with lacking the vocabulary to express their feeling, ideas, or opinions. When they want to respond to the subject, 11 percent are unable to understand the various accents clearly, and the rest have a problem with getting the main idea from reading and are too shy for a verbal response. (Figure 2.2)

**Figure 2.2** the most difficulty in English language uses

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of vocabulary to express feeling, idea, opinion	66	71.77%
2	Unable to understand the different accent	10	10.9 %
3	Unable to catch the main idea in reading	9	9.8 %
4	Too shy to speak	7	7.6 %

Based on the frequency of the chosen answers of XLC students in difficulty in the English language uses and vocabulary, the study shows that the greatest struggle in vocabulary or the most problematic in vocabulary is recognition of the parts of speech, followed by a confusion in the meaning of words between Thai and English, and the struggle to make a sentence. (figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 the difficulty in vocabulary

Issue no.	Issue statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Unable to recognize part of speech	37	40 %
2	Unsure that the meaning in Thai and English could be used in the content	35	38%
3	Unable to make the sentence at all	20	22%

Accordingly, the result seems contradictory. Whereas the reading skill is the less difficult from the students' perspective, vocabulary skill becomes their major problem. Since reading is fundamental to word-building; if learners have strong reading skills, it is supposed to include the skill of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. However, the survey is based on their personal perspective, which each of them has a different level of goal achievement and skills satisfaction. Therefore, their actual English language aptitude cannot be measured. In other words, the study shows what they want to be improved in themselves rather than their actual skill.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

### Attitude and Motivation

According to the study result, XLC students hold a positive attitude toward English. They think that it is fun and interesting and it helps them to open their perception worldwide. Students are aware of the importance of the English language as a tool to improve their quality of life, such as a better career or higher education. Therefore, while instrumental motivation seems to be the major motivation of XLC students to keep going on their language learning as to be accepted by the society or prepared them for the labor market, integrative motivation is their sub-motivation to make learning English language is more interesting for XLC students.

### Listening skills and lack of vocabulary, the struggle in English Language Learning in XLC

Accordingly, the survey shows that the most struggle area for XLC students in English language learning is listening. The lack of

vocabulary to express their idea and respond properly is the major problem in their English language learning. Consequently, students are unable to recognize the part of speech and the meaning in various content; therefore, they are unsure of applying it in a real situation. However, keep in mind that the study is based on the students' perspective, how they see themselves, and how they consider their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore the results are based on the questionnaire only; there is no English proficiency test to prove their actual skills.

Overall, students are more motivated to learn English through real-time interaction with their foreign teachers and volunteer teachers from a foreign country which could naturally improve their vocabulary skills over time. Besides, the school strongly needs to promote self-learning and provide sufficient self-access learning facilities and materials, especially vocabulary. This should be promoted properly to help the students with

their English basic development in words, which directly affects their English productivity. Gaining English language competency and performance through their hard work would improve their self-esteem and affect their self-confidence in the long run.

#### **6. Suggestion and Recommendations for Further Study**

1. The current study presents only the results based on the multiple-choice questionnaire. It may show the overview result, but it is unable to cover the deep detail of students' personal difficulties and problems in English learning. Therefore, personal interviews should be used in future research for accurate information.

2. Although the finding research shows that the students are struggling with listening skills, the standard English proficiency test should be conducted to confirm their language aptitude skills for the teaching strategy development in the future.

3. The current study presents only the students' perspective on their attitude, motivation, and struggle toward English language learning; it may be worthwhile to the other side perspective from the teacher i.e. the difficulty in teaching English to adult learners with different backgrounds of education.

4. Frequency of word use in XLC criteria should be investigated to create a vocabulary book for new students in order to introduce new words and decrease the anxiety in English learning in XLC.

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