

# Students' Motivation and Learning and Teachers' Motivational Strategies in English Classrooms in Thailand

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Received: November 15, 2015 Accepted: February 26, 2016 Online Published: March 1, 2016

doi: 10.5539/elt.v9n4p64

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n4p64>

## Abstract

This research aimed to investigate second language learners' motivation and learning of English and the ways in which the teachers supported the students' motivation and learning in natural classroom settings. Based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), questionnaires were developed and data were collected from students and their teachers in twelve English language classrooms around Thailand. In addition, each lesson was observed by two observers. The data were triangulated and used to describe the students' motivation and learning and the teacher's motivational strategies in each class. The findings showed that most students had a relatively high level of motivation and many reported having internal interests in learning English; however, the level of learning was not assessed to be as high. Furthermore, a few students in almost every class showed a lack of motivation. The teachers were found to employ a variety of motivational strategies, including autonomy-support and controlling styles. While autonomy controlling strategies were commonly used in these classes, autonomy-support strategies were found only in highly motivated and high performing classrooms. The findings from this study suggest the use of strategies that do not only initialize but also nurture students' internal motivation in order to enhance sustainable learning of English in and outside the classroom; therefore, research on how motivation theories are deployed in teacher education programs should be further undertaken.

**Keywords:** motivation, English learning, motivational strategies, lifelong learning, Thai students

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background, Importance, and Research Questions

Given that learning a second language is not only learning a subject matter but the learner has to also engage in culture learning, motivation then plays a key role in the learning process (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 2007). Motivation 'kick starts' the process, 'lubricates' the parts, and 'fuels' the engine to keep it running. Without motivation, learners may not start the act of learning at all and for those who have started to learn, they may not be able to maintain their learning once experiencing hardship in the process (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 2007; Palmer, 2009). Consequently, highly motivated learners have been found to have higher achievement in learning English as a second language than those with lower motivation (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2008; Fan & Feng, 2012; Kitjaroonchai, 2012). In EFL contexts where motivation to learn English is driven mainly from external sources and exposure to English outside the classroom is somewhat limited (Al shlowiy, 2014; Cho, 2013; Hayes, 2014), teachers can play an important role in enhancing or undermining students' motivation (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Dörnyei, 2007; Dweck, 2002; Lai & Ting, 2013; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Urhahne, 2015). However, few studies have looked into 'what goes on in English classrooms' in this regard. This nationwide study thus aimed at investigating the motivation and learning of second language learners in Thailand and the ways in which English teachers support their students' motivation and learning.

Based on Self-determination Theory (SDT), learners may be driven to learn by two sources—internal and external. Learners are either 'intrinsically motivated' and engage in activities because of their internal interests, joy and excitement, or 'externally driven' and perform an action with an anticipation of some outcome other than the learning itself (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another state of motivation is referred to as 'amotivation'. This is the situation in which the learner lacks intention to engage in the learning activity—not feeling worthwhile to make any effort in the study—as a result of being externally controlled (Assor

et al., 2005; Deci & Ryan, 2008). These different types of motivation yield different effects on students' learning. With intrinsic motivation, learners learn better (Niemić & Ryan, 2009) and are more process-oriented (Garn & Jolly, 2014), more persistent in learning (Cho, 2012; Deci & Ryan, 2008) and more prone to self-learning and development (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ling, 2013; Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Taylor et al., 2014). However, some forms of extrinsic motivation may be necessary in the situation where the educational activities are not interesting or enjoyable by nature—serving as a springboard for learning (Cho, 2012; Niemić & Ryan, 2009). To engage learners in such tasks, the teacher can help regulate the learners' engagement by highlighting the importance of the task—pointing out how it can support the learner's own goals and interests in real life (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Jang, 2008). For learners with amotivation, they are more likely to quit the learning as soon as possible (Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000).

To enhance learners' motivation, previous studies have suggested that teachers' behaviors and instructional practices play an important role (Assor et al., 2005; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Dweck, 2002; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012; Lai & Ting, 2013; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014, 2016; Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Urhahne, 2015). Based on SDT, teachers can promote or suppress students' natural curiosity in learning (Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009). Teachers' autonomy-support styles can promote students' intrinsic motivation and lifelong learning since it gives students the sense of control over the task (Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009). Jang, Reeve and Deci (2010) explained that the more space the teacher gave to students' individual learning, the more intrinsically motivated the students would be. Loima and Vibulphol (2014, 2016) found this to be true in classrooms in Thailand as well. On the other hand, teachers' controlling styles suppress students' internal volition (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Dweck, 2002; Garn & Jolly, 2013; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini & Ratcheva, 2013; Niemić & Ryan, 2009), in some cases, to situation-based interests; thus, the students only did what they were told to do (Loima & Vibulphol, 2014). Yet, teachers' controlling style has been found to be common in classrooms for several reasons (Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009). Reeve elaborated that teachers may exercise a controlling style to motivate students in the classroom because of pressures from above—administrators and institutional requirements, below—students, or within—themselves. These pressures may condition the teacher to rely on external control in order to sustain students' interests in the learning task (Niemić & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009).

Considering the importance of English competency for Thai people (Choomthong, 2014; Foley, 2005; Hayes, 2014; Karnnawakul, 2004; Kimsuvan, 2004; Minh, 2013), English study is required from first grade to university level (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2008; Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), 2006). However, Thai students' low English proficiency has been a concern among educators and society in general (Hayes, 2014; Karnnawakul, 2004; Kimsuvan, 2004). A number of recent studies have then been conducted to investigate Thai students' motivation to learn English at various levels from a specific context such as students from one particular institution or one study program (e.g. Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Wimolmas, 2013). Using a questionnaire as the main instrument, some studies attempted to find whether the students studied English for intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan's SDT Theory), while others focused on the instrumental and integrative orientation of motivation (Gardner's Socio-educational Model). Overall, the findings suggest that Thai students at any level have a relatively high level of motivation, but their motivation is mainly extrinsic or instrumental (Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Wimolmas, 2013). These findings are consistent with those in other EFL contexts which have shown that EFL learners are aware of the importance of English but mainly driven to learn English by external, instrumental reasons (e.g. Cho, 2012; Fan & Feng, 2012; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Shams, 2008).

While most studies were interested in the motivational trait of English learners, Loima and Vibulphol (2014, 2016) focused on students' motivation and learning in natural classroom settings. In 2014, the motivation and learning were assessed by selected students, their teacher and two non-participant observers in three types of schools in Bangkok—public, private and demonstration schools. The findings showed that the students had a 'moderate' level of motivation regardless of the school type, and the teachers tended to employ the controlling style of motivational strategies. In all classes, the students' motivation and learning were supported at the group level—giving little space for individual learning. Consequently, the students' interests seemed to be limited to situation-based learning—they only did what they were told to do in class. Based on the findings from this qualitative study, the authors have suggested a large scale study to explore the situations of English classrooms around the country since baseline research in this area is needed. The nationwide study in 2016 thus focused on motivation and learning of students in four regions of Thailand and in schools of different sizes. The findings showed differences in motivation and learning among regions and small schools seemed to better support students' motivation and learning. As a part of the nationwide project, this article focused on the situations in English

classrooms specifically to explore the following research questions:

- 1) What is the level of motivation and learning of ninth grade students in English classes in public schools in Thailand?
- 2) How is the students' motivation supported by the English teacher in the classroom?

The insights gained from this nationwide study will benefit not only English teachers and teacher educators in Thailand, but those in similar contexts to understand the classroom situations and how they can best support EFL learners' intrinsic motivation and lifelong learning. In addition, since the use of motivational strategies has been found to be culture specific (Al shlowiy, 2014; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Wang & Vibulphol, 2015; Wong, 2014), the findings from Thai classrooms can be discussed in the light of those in other countries.

### *1.2 Data Collection, Instruments, and Analysis*

This qualitative study was designed based on the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in line with selected international studies such as Assor, Kaplan and Roth (2002), Niemiec and Ryan (2009), Reeve (2009), Palmer (2009), Wiśniewska (2013), and Loima and Vibulphol (2014, 2016). Since motivation cannot be observed directly (Dörnyei, 2001), this study employed two data collection methods, including a self-report questionnaire and observation, to be able to observe the phenomena from different perspectives—the teacher's, students' and outside observers'. Observations were used to add insights into the field since most previous studies mainly used questionnaires to investigate motivation (e.g. Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Wimolmas, 2013) and teachers' motivational strategies (e.g., Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2008; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Wang & Vibulphol, 2015).

The population in this study was ninth grade students and teachers in public schools in Thailand. The data were collected from twelve schools in four main regions of Thailand—North (N), Northeast (NE), Central (C) and South (S)—between January and February 2015. Stratified random sampling method was employed to select the participants to allow the distribution of sample over the population. First, from each region, one province was randomly selected. Second, in each province, three schools of different sizes, small (fewer than 500 students), medium (from 500-1500 students) and large (more than 1500 students), were randomly chosen to participate in the study. Finally, in each school, one English foundation classroom for ninth grade students was observed. In total, twelve English lessons were observed.

Two main sources of data were the students and the teachers in the observed classes - 329 students and 12 teachers altogether. The number of the students in each class varied, ranging from 8 to 47 (see Appendix A). These ninth graders had studied English for almost nine years, since English is one of the required subjects in Thai basic education. All participants were informed of the objectives, the methods of the study and the confidentiality of their identity. They were also aware that their participation was voluntary. After the observed lesson, the students and their teacher were asked to fill out questionnaires, which were adapted from Loima and Vibulphol (2014) (see also Loima & Vibulphol, 2016). The students were asked to assess their own learning and motivation in the lesson (see Appendix B), while the teachers were asked to assess the students' learning and motivation as a whole class. Moreover, they were asked to specify the methods they employed to motivate their students (see Appendix C). To assess the students' learning and motivation, multiple choice items were used in both the students' and teachers' questionnaires. As for the teachers' motivational strategies, eight statements describing different ways to support students' motivation and learning in the classroom were used. The teachers were asked to select the strategies from the list that they used in the lesson. Spaces for additional comments about the students' learning and motivation were also provided. The two questionnaires were administered in Thai, except for one English teacher whose first language is not Thai.

The third source of data came from structured observations (Richards, 2003). Each lesson was observed by two researchers using a questionnaire-based observation sheet with the same set of items as in the teachers' questionnaire to assess the students' motivation and learning and the teacher's motivating strategies. The two observers sat at the back of the class with no intervention to the instructional activities and each filled out the observation sheet on their own during the lesson. They were also given space to write down accounts of what they saw in the class to support their responses.

The data from the three sources were triangulated on a classroom basis on four aspects, including levels of students' motivation, levels of students' learning, types of students' motivation and teacher's motivational strategies. First, to determine the levels of motivation and learning, the data from the three sources, class by class, were triangulated. The data from the students were self-perception, while the data from the teacher and the

observers were their assessment of the students' observable behaviors during the lesson. The result of the triangulation was used to describe the class in focus. The levels of motivation and learning range from None, Low, Moderate, to High. In some classes, a double level such as Low-Moderate or Moderate-High was assigned due to inconsistency among the data sources or variation in the students' responses. Second, to identify the type of students' motivation, the data came from the students only. Three types of motivation were identified—intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation or no motivation. Lastly, to identify the teacher's motivational strategies, the data from the teachers and the two observers were analyzed. The strategies that the teacher identified and were also observed were used to describe how the teacher supported their students' motivation in the given classroom. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the data were read by two raters separately then compared. Inconsistencies in the analysis were discussed until reaching agreement using the additional comments in the questionnaires and observation sheet.

## 2. Findings and Discussion

### 2.1 Thai Ninth Grade Students' Motivation and Learning in English Classrooms

Regarding the first research question, the data from all three sources—students, teachers and observers—were triangulated. Overall, the results indicated that the students possessed a relatively high level of motivation but relatively low level of learning, while a large number of them reported having internal interests in learning English. This high level of motivation was also found among Thai students overall in the regional study by Loima and Vibulphol (2016), unlike most studies elsewhere that found the students at this age to have lost motivation to learn (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001). Among the twelve classes, four levels of motivation, ranging from 'Low-Moderate' to 'High' were identified (see Appendix A). Six out of twelve classes were assessed to be at the 'Moderate-High' level of motivation. The trend of the students' self-assessment of their motivation, in most classes, was consistent with or more positive than the assessment of the teacher and the observers (cf. Urhane, 2015). When determining the type of motivation, the majority of the students indicated possessing internal interests in learning — '[I] like to learn and pay close attention to the lesson.' This relatively high level of motivation to learn English has also been found in most survey studies in Thailand (see Choosri & Intharaksa, 2011; Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Hayes, 2014; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Wimolmas, 2013; cf Draper, 2012) and other EFL contexts (Cho, 2012; Fan & Feng, 2012; Wiśniewska, 2013), which reflects the notion that English is an important competency for people around the globe (Graddol, 2006; Fiedler, 2011; Johnson, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2008). However, the difference is the type of motivation. In the present study, the data suggested that most students possessed internal interests in learning English, whereas most previous studies in EFL contexts indicated students had high external motivation—learning for the instrumental value of English for education and job related purposes (e.g., Cho, 2012; Choosri & Intharaksa, 2011; Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Hayes, 2014; Hashwani, 2008; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Long, Ming, Chen, 2013; Wimolmas, 2013). This different finding should be discussed in the light of the data collection. Unlike most previous studies, the students' motivation in this study was assessed from three perspectives — the students', teachers' and observers', whereas most studies collected the data from students only (e.g. Cho, 2012, 2013; Choosri & Intharaksa, 2011; Chumcharoensuk, 2013; Hayes, 2014; Hashwani, 2008; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014; Kitjaroonchai, 2012; Long, Ming, & Chen, 2013; Wimolmas, 2013); and second, the motivation was assessed in classroom settings right after a lesson, which may reflect "classroom learning motivation", in Gardner's term (2007, p. 11), rather than the general trait of students' motivation.

For the students' level of learning, given that SDT suggests a positive relationship between internal motivation and learning achievement, one may expect that the level of learning of the students in this study would also be reported at high level, but this is not the case (cf. Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Fan & Feng, 2012; Kitjaroonchai, 2012). The students' level of learning was not assessed to be as high as the motivation by any party. The results from the triangulation indicated that no class performed at a 'High' level of learning (see Appendix A). Only one, the best performing class, was assessed to learn at 'Moderate-High' level—having learned 'almost all of the topics', while seven classes were rated at 'Low-Moderate' level and two at 'Low' level. These relatively low levels of learning shown in the data tend to support the concerns about Thai students' low performance in English skills (see EF, 2015; Hayes, 2014; Karnnawakul, 2004; Kimsuvan, 2004; NIETS, n.d.). No direct relationship between motivation and learning was shown as in previous studies (e.g. Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Fan & Feng, 2012; Kitjaroonchai, 2012). For example, the three 'High' motivating classes were assessed to have different levels of learning—Low-Moderate, Moderate, and Moderate-High, which can be interpreted that not all the 'High' motivated students in this study regarded themselves as high achievers in the lesson. The findings tend to suggest that interest alone may not be adequate to enhance the learning of these students (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Jang, 2008). According to Jang (2008), engagement in the academic activities that, by nature, are important but

uninteresting, English learning included, will require students to realize how the learning task relates to their personal goal or interests, so they can regulate themselves to be on task (see also Dörnyei, 2001; Noels et al., 2000). In addition, since the present study investigated students' motivation in a specific situation—classroom settings—not the motivation trait, a number of classroom factors may come into play (Alderman, 2008; Gardner, 2007; Lai & Ting, 2013; Wiśniewska, 2013). Loima and Vibulphol (2016), for instance, found 'acculturated external motivation,' or peer recognition, and student-teacher relationship to be key factors that influenced Thai students' motivation and learning in classrooms.

Another noteworthy finding is that the students' responses about their learning varied more greatly than their assessment of the motivation—showing that in the same lesson when some students did well and achieved the outcomes, the others did not learn much. This situation was also observed by the teacher and the observers. They commented on the differences in the engagement of the students in a number of classes saying that while some made an effort to follow the instruction, others showed no interest. This may lend support to the previous finding that the teacher and the instructional activities may not have nurtured students' motivation adequately throughout the lesson (Dörnyei, 2007); therefore, some students gradually lost their motivation, disengaged themselves from the task and consequently, could not achieve the outcomes of the lesson. In some classes, the students were observed to be initially interested in and paid close attention to the lesson, but their motivation seemed to be situation-based and reduced over the course of a lesson (see also Loima & Vibulphol, 2014).

Last but not least, even though the majority of the students in each class reported having a relatively high level of motivation, about twenty percent of the students overall showed a lack of motivation. Among this twenty percent, half reported that they "did not concentrate on learning and did something else during the class." These findings exemplify a wide range of motivational levels in English classrooms, where some students are interested and 'ready' to learn while others do not see any value in it. This again reflects the challenges that EFL teachers have been facing when English is viewed as a foreign language with only instrumental values (Barbin & Nicholls, n.d.; Choomthong, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Fan & Feng, 2012; Gardner, 2007; Minh, 2013; Wong, 2014). Even for the students who are aware of its importance, their motivation may not be high (Fan & Feng, 2012). The other half of the students who were not motivated to learn English by themselves reported that they paid attention because the teacher was good and they liked his or her teaching (see also Loima & Vibulphol, 2014, 2016). Based on this finding, teachers seem to be a powerful external source of motivation for some students in Thailand, in English classrooms as well as in other subjects (Loima & Vibulphol, 2016). In the light of previous studies, a good relationship between students and their teacher is one of the basic motivational conditions required in a classroom (Al shlowiy, 2014; De Witte & Rogget, 2013; Dörnyei, 2001, 2007; Urhane, 2015). The finding in this study supports what Al shlowiy proposed, "If they like the teacher, they will like the lesson and vice versa" (p. 132).

In brief, the findings about the first research question suggest that most Thai ninth graders already have a certain level of internal interest to learn English; however, the learning outcomes are not so high. Moreover, a number of students were externally motivated by the liking of the teacher, and a few had no motivation to learn English, suggesting that they are unlikely to conduct their own learning outside of class. Considering that grade nine is the last level of compulsory education in the Thai education system, these findings raise concerns about the readiness of basic education graduates in using English in real life for international communication, careers, or academic purposes.

## 2.2 Teachers' Motivational Strategies in English Classrooms

How do English teachers support students' motivation in English language classrooms in Thai schools? Based on the data from the teachers and observers, the English teachers in this study seemed to be aware of and employed a range of strategies to enhance students' motivation and learning in their classrooms, as suggested by motivational strategy literature (Dörnyei, 2001; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csízer, 1998; Wang & Vibulphol, 2015). All strategies, except "Supporting individual student's motivation development and capacity for autonomous learning," were identified (see Appendix A). Overall, the number of strategies that the teachers employed in the lessons did not seem to affect students' motivation and learning, but the type of strategies did.

Based on SDT, the strategies identified in this study comprised both autonomy-support and controlling styles, but the top strategy listed to be common in almost every class was a controlling style (see also Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Assor et al., 2005; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014, 2016; Reeve, 2009). Ten out of twelve teachers in the present study motivated their students to *learn together as a whole class*. From the observation, all these classes, regardless of the identified motivation level, tended to adopt this teacher-centered approach to a certain extent. Other motivating strategies that apply external control over the students' learning such as giving immediate feedback and using external sources of motivation, like rewards and punishment, were also

practiced in a number of classrooms. Examples of teacher-led whole class activities observed in this study included concept or rule explanation, new task demonstration, language practices such as reading texts aloud in chorus, doing exercises on the blackboard and giving feedback on students' assignments. By being externally motivated, some students were observed to gradually lose their internal interest to situation-based learning during the lesson and only did what they were told to do without natural interest or engagement in the learning task (see also Assor et al., 2005; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014). As suggested by motivation literature, students' internal motivation needs to be not only initialized but also protected and nurtured since some 'important' language learning tasks may be 'uninteresting' for the students (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007; Jang, 2008). Being driven to learn together with the whole class, regardless of the individual differences, students were left with little space for self-pace learning, sense of volition and personal interests, which would not support the development of students' autonomy (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Assor et al., 2005; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009).

Considering Reeve (2009), the reason that may have driven these teachers to use the whole class learning strategy could be due partly to their perception about the students' ability and the pressure that they have in ensuring students' learning outcomes. Since the data tended to indicate that the teachers regarded their students as low achievers—six out of twelve teachers rated their students at None or Low levels of learning, consequently, the lessons in these classes were kept simple at sentence level instruction and exercises were done together on the blackboard to make sure that all students 'get' the answers. These findings tended to suggest that the teachers may believe that chorus learning can help support their low ability students (cf. Bahanshal, 2013; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014). Another explanation concerns the classroom culture, as the findings in this study suggest that a certain level of teacher control and authority seems to be expected and accepted in Thai classrooms (see also Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Bruner, Sinwongsuwat, & Radić-Bojanić, 2015; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Cho, 2013; Wang & Vibulphol, 2015).

Even though teachers' autonomy controlling strategies were found to be common in most classes, autonomy-support strategies were found only in the classes with relatively high levels of motivation (Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; cf. Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). In these classes, the teachers seemed to be more proficient in initializing and maintaining students' internal motivation. In the class with the highest level of motivation and learning, for instance, the teacher created a positive learning atmosphere by playing lively music and using non-threatening language with students. In this class, the students had opportunities to take charge when working on a language task in small groups. Last, but not least, the lesson was made to be meaningful and relevant to the students—showing concerns about their internal interests. The task was created in a context close to students' real life, and the target structure was shown in authentic materials. The observation accounts from this class showed a structured lesson under the teacher's control with some room for students' individual growth (see also Dörnyei, 2007; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). In contrast, the least motivated class was observed to be strictly teacher-centered. All class time was spent on one whole-class activity, a grammar review exercise, with not much choice for the students. The major difference in these two classes was the changes in the students' attention over the course of the lesson. In the high motivating class, the students' motivation was sustained throughout, while in the least motivating class, most students withdrew from the task and sat idly or did something else shortly after the lesson started. The three strategies uniquely found in the 'high' motivated classes are well supported by motivation literature to be effective for autonomous motivation enhancement (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2001, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Jang, 2008; Wiśniewska, 2013) and learning engagement (Dörnyei, 2001; Assor et al., 2002; Jang, 2008) in classrooms across cultures since they provide a safe environment for the learners to take charge in the tasks that they find relevant.

To sum up, the findings to the second research question suggest that the current use of motivational strategies could not support at least 10-20 percent of the students in each classroom. The English teachers in the present study valued the use of external, controlling strategies to support their students' motivation more than autonomy-support strategies; however the effects of the controlling strategies on students' motivation were not clearly shown as suggested by previous studies, suggesting a certain level of acceptance to the external regulations among Thai students. Nevertheless, autonomy-support strategies showed better potentials in enhancing students' internal motivation and sustainable learning. They were only found in high performing, high motivating classes.

### 3. Conclusions and Suggestions

The findings from this nationwide study show the current situations of English learning and motivation of Thai ninth grade students in natural English classroom settings. First, the data tend to support the role of English as an international language since a large number of ninth graders in this study showed motivation to learn English and even reported having joy in learning, but the learning was not assessed to be High. Second, the students'

motivation did not seem to be nurtured well during the lesson. Most classrooms were observed with the motivational strategies that impose on students' learning, which affected the initial interests of some students to situation-based learning. Only the classes that concerned students' intrinsic motivation were assessed to have high levels of motivation and learning.

Further research should thus be conducted to find ways to enhance and sustain students' motivation better so that the students' engagement in learning and outcomes will be ensured. Strategies that can nurture and protect students' natural interests in learning and enhance their sense of regulation over the learning are definitely needed in this fast growing information society to ensure that the students will sustain their learning throughout their life. Secondly, the findings in this study raise a question about how pre-service and in-service teachers see their roles in protecting students' internal motivation and enhancing learner autonomy. Further studies should therefore explore how these topics are discussed and practiced in teacher education programs. Last, since motivation in learning has been found to decrease when students proceed to higher education levels, if it is not properly nurtured (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001), further studies can be conducted with upper secondary school students, specifically twelfth grade students to see whether the internal interest found in the ninth graders in this study are maintained until they graduate from basic education or not. Considering the impact that high-stake tests such as university entrance examination may have on upper secondary school students' learning goals and engagement, the students' learning and internal motivation may be vulnerable to this external regulation.

### Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Rachadaphiseksomphot Endowment Fund, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. The author is grateful for the advice of Adjunct Professor Jyrki Loima, Visiting Professor at Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, on the development of this study and manuscript. Portions of this study have been presented in a workshop at EDUCA 2015 at Impact Muang Thong Thani, Nontaburi, Thailand on October 15, 2015 and in an abstract form at the TESOL Regional Conference 2015 at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore on December 4, 2015.

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## Appendix A

### Students' Motivation and Learning and Teachers' Motivational Strategies in English Classrooms

Classes	No. of Students	Level of Learning	Level of Motivation	Teacher's Motivational Strategies*
1	21	Low-Mod	Mod-High	A,B,E,H
2	25	Low	Mod	B, D
3	36	Mod	High	D,E,F,H
4	18	Mod	Mod-High	D,G
5	18	Mod	Mod-High	D, H
6	27	Mod	Mod-High	D
7	8	Mod	Mod-High	B,D,E,F,G
8	29	Low	Mod	B
9	46	Low-mod	Mod	D
10	14	Mod-High	High	D, H
11	40	Low-mod	Mod-High	D,E,H
12	47	Low	Mod	D, G

Note \*

- A. Demanding students to behave in a certain way
- B. Paying special attention and giving support to the weakest students
- D. Encouraging students at the group level to learn as a class
- E. Correcting wrong/unexpected answers immediately
- F. Allowing time for students' self-paced learning and answering
- G. Motivating students using external sources, e.g., scores, punishment
- H. Relying on internal sources of motivation, e.g., interests, positive learning atmosphere

## Appendix B

### Student Questionnaire Items

1. How would you describe your learning in this lesson? Choose one level.
  - ( ) a. I learned all the topics of the lesson.
  - ( ) b. I learned most topics of the lesson.
  - ( ) c. I learned some topics of the lesson.
  - ( ) d. I did not learn most topics of the lesson.
2. Select one of the following to describe your learning during the lesson.
  - ( ) a. I was strongly interested in the topic and had a good motivation.
  - ( ) b. The topic was OK.
  - ( ) c. The topic was not so interesting but I felt it important to learn.
  - ( ) d. I was not interested in this topic.
  - ( ) e. Instead of learning, I did something else during the lesson
  - ( ) f. I learned something else rather than the topic/content during the lesson.

What? (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe your ways of and interest in learning.
- a. I like to learn, and I pay close attention to the lesson.
  - b. I do not like learning.
  - c. I do not fully concentrate on learning. I think about other things during the lessons.
  - d. I do not like learning, but this teacher is good and I like his/her teaching.
  - e. I do not like learning, but I like this subject.
4. I would like to improve the following things in the lesson, so I can learn better.

## Appendix C

### Teacher Questionnaire Items

1. Do you think your students achieved the goals that you set for this lesson? (Choose one level).
- a. All students achieved the goals at all levels.
  - b. Most of the students did it at a good level.
  - c. Most of the students did it at the satisfactory level.
  - d. Most of the students did not reach the learning objectives during the lesson.
- Please add your comments \_\_\_\_\_
2. What kind of motivating methods did you use during the lesson? (You can choose more than one).
- a. Demanding students to behave in a certain way
  - b. Paying special attention and giving support to the weakest students
  - c. Supporting individual student's motivation development and capacity for autonomous learning
  - d. Encouraging students at the group level to learn as a class
  - e. Correcting the wrong/unexpected answers immediately
  - f. Allowing time for students' self-paced learning and answering
  - g. Motivating students using external sources, e.g., scores, punishment
  - h. Relying on internal sources of motivation, e.g., interests, positive learning atmosphere
3. What is your estimation of your students' motivation level during the lesson?
- a. high
  - b. moderate
  - c. low
  - d. negative

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