

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TECHNOLOGY-BASED
MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE AMONG THAI LEARNERS AT WALL STREET
ENGLISH BANGKOK ACCORDING TO THEIR GENDER AND
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which new technologies, such as the Internet or social media, served as sources of motivation for Thai English language learners to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) at Wall Street English (WSE) Bangkok. The study also sought to compare learners' technology-based motivation for learning EFL based on their gender and English language proficiency. For these purposes, the researchers adopted a quantitative comparative research design, using a questionnaire that was developed, piloted, validated, and checked for internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered to 214 Thai English language learners from all four levels of proficiency (beginner, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced) from 11 centers of WSE in Bangkok. After splitting the collected data by gender, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to assess the significance of the results. At the same time, a one-way ANOVA test was used after splitting the collected data by English language proficiency to determine if there was a significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL among the resulting groups. The research findings indicated that Thai learners were highly motivated to learn English to work with technology more effectively, regardless of their gender or English language proficiency. No significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL between male and female Thai learners was derived from the data analysis. However, in relation to English language proficiency, it was found that the overall technology-based motivation for learning EFL was significantly higher in the beginner group

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than in the advanced group, as well as in the upper-intermediate group than in the advanced group.

Keywords: Technology-based Motivation; English as a Foreign Language; Thai Learners; Wall Street English; Gender; English Language Proficiency; Thailand

Introduction

Almost all human activities are triggered by incentives or “motivation.” Motivation is commonly considered an inner desire that moves an individual to engage in a particular action. Motivation for the second language (L2) learning can be defined as a combination of efforts and desire to learn the language and favorable attitudes toward learning the language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). A considerable number of language learning experts seem to agree on the pivotal role of motivation in L2 learning (e.g., Block & Cameron, 2002; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Lukmani, 1972). In 1972, Gardner and Lambert introduced two types of motivation that explain language learners’ behaviors and how they pursue their learning goals: integrative and instrumental motivations. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), when language learners wish to learn more about a cultural community because they are interested in it, they are integratively (or internally) motivated. However, suppose the purpose of language learning reflects more utilitarian values of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in their occupation. In that case, the learners are instrumentally (or externally) motivated.

Globalization introduced the English language as a powerful medium through technology, affecting many aspects of our life and westernizing the world (Doms, 2003). Hence, knowing English is a powerful tool that allows people to open the linguistic gates to worldwide business, technology, science, and travel (Kachru, 1986). Globalization of technology has highlighted the significance of the instrumental, or better said, utilitarian dimension of L2 motivation mostly in EFL contexts (Dörnyei et al., 2006; Lukmani, 1972; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000). A “motivational renaissance” in second language acquisition has been underway in the last decades (Gardner & Tremblay (1994), which the researchers believe led to the emergence of new concepts, new needs, and consequently, new motivational attitudes toward language learning. According to the researchers, the more global the use of English as the language of technology, the higher people’s motivation to learn it.

As one of the promoters of English language learning worldwide, Wall Street

English (WSE) is a global language center with over 400 learning centers located in 28 territories worldwide. To date, it has provided language instruction to over three million people, with a current enrollment of over 180,000 students (Wall Street English, 2019). As one of the English teachers at WSE and based on his observation and frequent interview with the learners, the researcher found out the learners at WSE seem to have many other reasons to learn English besides traditional parental encouragement, university course success, or job promotion. They seem to be encouraged more by global forces of Englishized technology. They tend to learn English to work more effectively with technologies (e.g., the Internet) or increasing social media (e.g., Facebook or online games). Teenage learners make up the higher proportion of the students enrolled at this world-famous language center. Each of them can probably have their technology-based motivation sources for learning English as a foreign language there.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were addressed in this study.

1. To determine the levels of technology-based motivation for learning EFL, according to gender, held by Thai learners at WSE Bangkok.
2. To determine the levels of technology-based motivation for learning EFL, according to English language proficiency, held by Thai learners at WSE Bangkok.
3. To determine whether there is a significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL between Thai learners at WSE Bangkok, according to their gender.
4. To determine whether there is a significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL between Thai English learners at WSE Bangkok, according to their English language proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted based on the following two supporting theories: the theory of language motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and the theory of English as a global language by Crystal (2003).

Theory of Language Motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972)

The fundamental framework for explaining motivation in this study is based on Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory of language motivation, which focuses on the relationship between motivation and orientation or "goal." This theory supports the idea that motivation in language learning is the effort learners put in to learn a second language due to their needs to satisfy a particular goal or their internal desire for learning the language. They established two commonly-used terms in language learning: integrative

motivation and instrumental orientation. For them, integrative motivation is to learn a language to get to know better the people who speak the language and their culture. In contrast, instrumental motivation is more concerned with practical reasons to learn a language, such as getting a job or university. The current study was more focused on instrumental motivation.

Theory of English as a Global Language (Crystal, 2003)

This theory is based on the idea that English is the indisputable global language used in all aspects of our life. This premise was primarily discussed by Crystal in 2003. To show the idea that English is the worldwide language, Crystal (2003) examined different historical, political, economic, and social issues while using extensive amounts of data to endorse the global preponderance of the English language in various aspects of our life.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the current study.

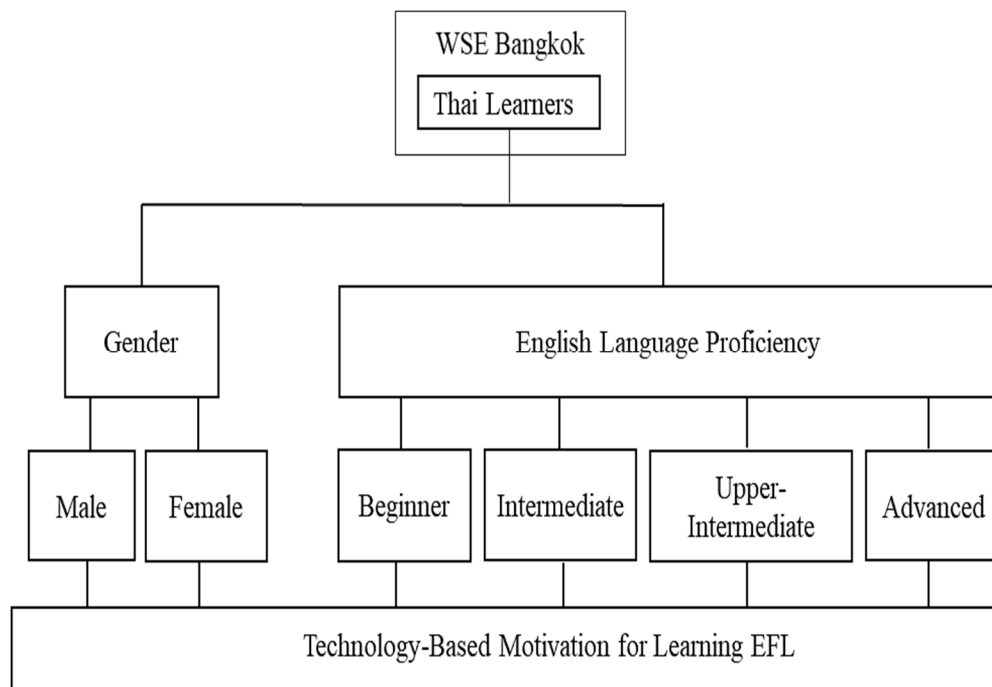


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Current Study

Literature Review

This section reviews and summarizes some relevant previous studies related to the research variables addressed in this study.

Mehrpur and Vojdani (2012) conducted a pioneering investigation on the new waves of motivational variables for English language learners in the 21st century in Iran. The authors studied the effects of technological variables (e.g., the Internet and satellite television programs) and social issues (e.g., immigration to English-speaking countries) as the new sources that can instrumentally motivate Iranian learners to study English. The study results showed that technological, sociological, and scientific aspects, which were all created or intensified through globalization, significantly affected Iranian English language learners' motivation to learn English and that their motivation was mainly instrumental. This study is considered innovative in its time. It revealed that motivation for learning English as a foreign language could evolve and change over time. English language learners are motivated mainly by economic and practical reasons for learning English and, to a lesser degree, inspired by an inner desire to connect with an English-speaking community.

Awwad et al. (2019) replicated the study by Mehrpur and Vojdani (2012) on Jordanian EFL learners. Utilizing the same methodology and questionnaire, the results of the data analysis were also similar. The research results revealed that, firstly, Jordanian EFL learners were instrumentally motivated to learn English, being the primary motivation sources to watch and understand satellite TV programs, work with the Internet, and migrate to other countries. The survey also supported the idea that technological, sociological, and scientific aspects of the globalization process increasingly motivate Jordanian EFL learners to learn English as the dominant global language.

Akobirov's Ph.D. dissertation in 2004 compared and analyzed the instructional use of technology, including social media, social networking websites, instant messaging applications, and online learning platforms, on two groups of students enrolled at the English Philology Department at Bukhara State University (BSU) and Kansas City Kansas Community College in Uzbekistan and Kansas in the United States, respectively. Concerning the technology-based questions, the results showed that BSU EFL students were more instrumentally motivated by the technical aspects addressed in the research. These results further support the significance of technology as a vital motivation source for EFL learners.

Alsulami (2016) conducted another research on technology-based motivation for learning English at Effatt College in Saudi Arabia. In comparison with Akobirov's (2004) study, he focused on the effects of a broader range of technology (e.g., computer software, social networking websites, online

videos, audio tools, and apps for smartphones and tablets). The findings of this study indicated that all kinds of technology considered in the survey questionnaire had a positive impact on students' English learning motivation and improved their communication skills. Alsulami's research was an excellent example of how a different variety of technologies can motivate English learners to practice English every day and how technology, on the other hand, can help learners develop their language skills in more authentic ways.

Wieking (2016) conducted an action research project to investigate the correlation between using technology in the classroom and students' motivation for learning social studies in Grade 7 at one school in Iowa, United States. All the Grade 7 students received a Dell Chromebook, operated entirely on web-based programs (e.g., Google Docs, Google Slides, and Google Forms) in his project. It allowed them to use different technologies while learning and accessing their needed information. The research findings showed that consistent technology integration into the classroom could build up students' motivation for learning the subject matter. The results also suggested that using different technologies allows the students to have the information they need at their fingertips and makes the lesson more entertaining.

Methodology/Procedure

Population and Sample

This research was conducted on a convenient and voluntary sample of 214 Thai English language learners. Many students from both genders at each level participated in the survey. Due to the unavailability of some students in the centers at the specific time, the research was conducted and the dispersion of the WSE centers in Bangkok, the researcher also conducted a distance survey by sending the questionnaires to the participants' emails. The participants consisted of 96 male and 118 female students from four different levels of English language proficiency: beginner (72), intermediate (68), upper-intermediate (52), and advanced (22) learners, purposively chosen from the 4,820 active students enrolled, by the moment of the data collection, at the 11 branches of WSE Bangkok.

Research Instrument

The Technology-Based Motivation for Learning English Questionnaire (TBMLEQ) collected data. The researchers designed this questionnaire to check if the target English language learners at WSE Bangkok were technologically motivated to learn English. The questionnaire comprised 15 items was partly developed based on the first author's previous study

(Mehrpur & Vojdani, 2012). The items from Mehrpur and Vojdani (2012) were revised, and a few others were added to make them more compatible with the research objectives and the newly emerged technology (Table 1).

Table 1. *Items Comprising the Technology-Based Motivation for Learning English Questionnaire (TBMLEQ)*

Item No.	Item statement
	I like to learn English ...
1	to be able to search on the internet for my work or study
2	to be able to surf more English websites in my free time
3	to be able to have effective online communication (for example, through emails or weblogs) with people everywhere in the world
4	to be able to listen to or read online international news
5	to be able to do online shopping at English websites
6	to be able to run e-marketing or e-business with different international companies
7	to be able to follow different online courses through the Internet
8	to watch and understand YouTube video clips and movies better
9	to watch and understand online English movies better
10	to be able to use social media sites such as Facebook or Instagram to read or write posts in English
11	to be able to use social media sites such as Facebook or Instagram to chat with foreigners
12	to be able to play online games with content in English
13	to be able to play online games with international online contestants
14	to understand and work with computer software better
15	to understand and work with mobile applications software better

The questionnaire was designed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). A pilot test was run, and 40 random Thai English learners from each gender group and different English proficiency levels at WSE participated. After the pilot test, exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the collected data using a principal component analysis (PCA) method with varimax rotation to test the questionnaire's construct validity. The PCA revealed four principal components, or factors, with eigenvalues higher than 1, which explained 75.09% of the variance. These four factors generated from the PCA were named according to the

nature of the technological domain implied by the items that loaded on those factors. Table 2 shows the details of the four conceptually distinct technological domains identified from the PCA analysis.

Table 2. *Breakdown of the Questionnaire Items for the Four Technological Domains Identified in the Study*

Technological domain	Item No.	% of variance explained	Factor loading range	Cronbach's α
Motivation for learning English to use ICT	3, 4, 6, 14, 15	45.88	.61-.85	.86
Motivation for learning English to use the Internet in daily routines	1, 2, 5, 7, 8	13.00	.58-.80	.85
Motivation for learning English to use online games	12, 13	8.42	.89-.91	.89
Motivation for learning English to have online verbal, oral, and written communication	9, 10, 11	7.79	.56-.86	.79
Technology-based motivation for learning EFL	1-15	75.09	.56-.91	.91

Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire, an overall Cronbach's alpha of .91 was obtained, revealing an excellent internal consistency of the piloted instrument (Table 2).

Research Findings

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and statistical hypothesis testing methods (independent samples *t*-test and one-way ANOVA, including a Scheffe posthoc multiple comparison tests). This section summarizes the findings obtained from the data analysis performed on the collected data.

Findings from Research Objective 1

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained. Mean scores were interpreted on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very high.

- The technology-based motivation for learning EFL (TBM) mean score for male participants was high, $M = 1.99$, $SD = .97$.

- A high level of technology-based motivation for learning EFL was found in female participants, $M = 1.86$, $SD = .84$.

Findings from Research Objective 2

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained. Mean scores were interpreted on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very high.

- The overall level of TBM for the beginner group was high, $M = 1.82$, $SD = .83$.
- The overall level of TBM for the intermediate group was high, $M = 1.95$, $SD = .86$.
- The overall level of TBM for the upper-intermediate group was high, $M = 1.86$, $SD = .91$.
- The overall level of TBM for the advanced group was high, $M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.29$.

Findings from Research Objective 3

Regarding this research objective, the following finding was obtained.

- The analysis of the independent samples *t*-test failed to reveal a significant difference in the technology-based motivation for learning EFL between male and female Thai learners at WSE Bangkok, $t(212) = 1.67$, $p = .098$.

Findings from Research Objective 4

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- The one-way ANOVA test results showed a statistically significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL among the four groups of learners, $F(3, 210) = 4.61$, $p = .004$.
- The results from the Scheffe post hoc multiple comparison test revealed that, regarding participants' technology-based motivation for learning EFL, the beginner group ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .83$) was significantly different from one of the advanced group ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.29$), $p = .006$.
- The Scheffe post hoc multiple comparison test results also revealed that the level of technology-based motivation for upper-intermediate group ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .91$) was significantly different from the one of the advanced group ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.29$), $p = .02$.

Discussion

In this section, the findings obtained from the current study are discussed. The discussion is presented and organized based on technology-based motivation for learning EFL as the primary variable of the research and the only standard variable between this study and the other previous studies.

Technology-Based Motivation for Learning EFL

The results of this study present a consistent picture that establishes the extent to which new motivation sources have emerged among EFL learners in Thailand, particularly in Thai learners at WSE Bangkok. The survey results showed that Thai EFL learners are highly technologically-based motivated to learn English. This can be interpreted as the participants having a high inner desire to learn English as a foreign language to use ICT, use the Internet in daily routines, play online games, and have online verbal, oral, and written communication in English.

Comparing this research study with the first author's previous study (Mehrpur & Vojdani, 2012), it could be said that the English learners participating in both surveys were instrumentally motivated to learn English to use technological aspects of globalization more efficiently, such as the Internet. In relation to the elements of technology, the similar topics discussed in both studies were utilizing computer software, using the Internet to search the information and communicating with foreign people through emails or using social media such as online chatrooms, and running e-marketing. The respondents showed a high technology-based motivation for learning English in both studies. However, the current study revealed newer aspects of technology serving as motivation sources, such as new forms of social media (e.g., Facebook or Instagram) and online games, which are seemingly further motivating Thai EFL learners to learn English nowadays. Unlike the previous study by Mehrpur and Vojdani (2012), this survey also compares learners' motivation levels for learning English based on their gender and English language proficiency, which provided a perspective on which technological domains are likely to encourage different groups of learners, and to what extent.

A similar comparison and contrast of results can be seen in the replication study on Jordanian EFL learners (Awwad et al., 2019). Both studies share that the Internet positively affects EFL learners' motivation and highly motivates them to learn English. Although Awwad et al.'s (2019) study discussed four variables of globalization, including the Internet, satellite television programs, migration, and scientific purposes that can motivate EFL learners to learn English, the results of that study revealed that Jordanian EFL learners were more highly motivated for learning English to use the Internet, in comparison with the other three motivational variables. This aligns with the current study's focus on technology as the leading motivation for Thai EFL learners at WSE Bangkok.

The current study's findings on new technologies serving as motivation sources for English language learners also aligned with Alsulami's (2016)

investigation on how female EFL students were positively affected and motivated to learn English. Alsulami focused on almost the same technologies as this survey, including computer software, social networking websites, online videos, audio tools, smartphones, and tablet apps. Hence, Alsulami's project suggests how EFL learners are motivated to learn English to have better chances using various digital technologies. Simultaneously, how new forms of digital technology provide opportunities for EFL learners to be more proficient in English language learning.

The results of this research also align with the commodifiable perspective of Hungarians on English language learning investigated by Dörnyei et al. (2006). It seems that Thai English language learners at WSE, like their Hungarian counterparts, learn English not because they wish to become bilinguals or love the language. Instead, they want to access the global Internet and worldwide social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, to communicate with people from all around the world.

The model of the technology-based motivation for learning English identified in this research is in line with the results reported by Akobirov (2004) on Uzbek EFL learners. Both Thai and Uzbek learners showed high motivation to learn English to work with social media, social networking, and instant messaging technologies.

Research conducted in other sciences has also yielded similar results, emphasizing the crucial role of technology and the Internet in motivating students in the learning process. The results reported by Wieking (2016) from his study on American Grade 7 students' motivation in learning social studies are in line with the current research's results. Although Wieking's action research project only focused on technologies such as computer laptops or tablets, it clearly showed that students' having access to the Internet while learning their lessons in the classroom can hugely build up their motivation to learn the subject matter.

Globalization has changed students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language. Nowadays, technology plays a crucial role in motivating students in general, and particularly EFL learners. The researchers hope that this innovative research study will pave the way for other graduate students and language experts to study technology-based motivation and its significance in English language learning and teaching.

In conclusion, the current survey showed that Thai English learners were highly motivated to learn English to deal with technology more effectively,

regardless of their gender or English language proficiency. Furthermore, no significant difference in technology-based motivation for learning EFL between male and female Thai learners was derived from the data analysis. Nonetheless, concerning English language proficiency, it was found that the overall technology-based motivation for learning EFL was significantly higher in the beginner group than in the advanced group and in the upper-intermediate group than in the advanced group.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the current study are intended to benefit students, teachers, curriculum designers, and future researchers.

Recommendations for Students

The findings obtained from this study showed that English language learners, regardless of their gender and English language proficiency level, were mainly highly motivated to learn English to use more effectively different aspects of technology, such as the Internet and social media. Therefore, the results of this study help Thai English language learners at WSE to raise their awareness to know what can motivate them to learn the English language faster. Consequently, students can use technologies such as social media while learning English to increase their motivation. It can also help them lead their practices more accurately to get better results in their English language learning process. The practices can be more technology-oriented to let them learn the technical expressions used to deal with different forms of technology.

Recommendations for Teachers

The results of this study would similarly help English teachers and instructors to raise their awareness of what can motivate their language learners more, so they can utilize those motivating factors more often while teaching. That is to say, English teachers can preferably use technology-related topics in their teaching contents and practices, which might lead their teaching methodologies and practices to be more encouraging and motivating for their language learners.

Recommendations for Curriculum Designers

The knowledge gained from this research study would hugely benefit the curriculum designers. A potential implication of this study for curriculum designers is to raise their awareness of more motivating and encouraging factors of language learning in the 21st century and implement them in their curricula. It would help them trigger their students' desires and implement more encouraging activities in their lesson plans. Implementing issues related to technology in their curriculum, for instance, can be quite appealing for

technology-based motivated learners.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Since the current study revealed that Thai learners at WSE Bangkok were mostly highly (or in some aspects very highly) motivated to learn English to use different aspects of technology more effectively. Future researchers could examine the relationship between instructional utilizing various modes of technology and the students' language skills or language performance.

A further research study can be conducted using a quasi-experimental research design to examine students' language achievement using different technological domains in the EFL classroom. Instead of using a more traditional approach, such as the translation method or textbook-based learning.

Moreover, technology literacy is one of the 21st-century skills that students need to develop nowadays; there seems to be a direct, positive relationship between technology-based motivation for learning and this new life skill. Future researchers could examine the influence of technology-based motivation on students' technology literacy and, more importantly, how TBM could improve learners' technology literacy.

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