

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale and Statement of the Problem

English, the most important international language, can lend its many benefits to those who know this language. Since it is widely used as the medium for international trade, tourism, science and technology development, and education, those who know English can have more opportunities in doing business overseas, travelling to other countries, conducting research in foreign countries, or studying abroad.

In addition to the advantages of knowing English stated above, English is also a key to the cyber world. Since the birth of the Internet, all countries have been connected, and the world has become a 'global village.' This means all members of the global community can communicate with no boundary and no concerns of distance. This matter has increased the importance of English as a medium mostly used for exchanging information in the cyberspace.

Moreover, browsing through the websites reveals that most of them are in English, or at least bilingual with English as one of the two languages. Therefore, those who know English will have access to the biggest library on earth with no language barriers.

Despite the fact that Thailand is a member of this 'global village', Thai students are not competent in English. Wongsothorn (1993) assessed English proficiency of students in Matthayomsuksa Three, Matthayomsuksa Six, and third-year undergraduates at Chalalongkorn University. She found that students at all three levels needed improvement in all four language skills. Prabpal and Ophanont-amata (2000) investigated English proficiency of Thai graduates in comparison to students from other Southeast Asian countries. They found that English proficiency of Thai students was the lowest in Southeast Asia.

In order to figure out the causes of the student's learning problems, we may need to examine a list of factors affecting student's learning. Finocchiaro (1989) suggests that there are four categories of factors that are important to student's learning, i.e., the students themselves, the school and community, the teacher, and the learning environment. However, it would be logical to say that the students themselves are the most crucial

factor in the learning process because they are the center of their learning.

To be more specific, one of the most important language learning factors is motivation, and the student's lack of motivation can be one of the factors that contribute to Thai students' low English proficiency. This claim is supported by a research study conducted in Thailand in 1988. Chamnansri (1988) surveyed the opinions of Matthayomsuksa Six teachers from 66 schools about students' learning problems. One of the problems reported by those teachers was students did not think that English was important for them which led to low motivation in English learning. This corresponds with the results from many other studies (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1995; Keitges, 1987; Noels, 2003; Tavani & Losh, 2003) which confirm the relation between learners' motivation and their achievement in learning.

The next important learning factor may be language teachers because they are the ones who interact with students in the classroom. For this reason, the person who may help students increase their learning motivation the best may be the language teacher.

Finocchiaro (1986) points out the importance of the teacher as one crucial factor in students' learning by saying, "The heart of any successful learning program is

the classroom teacher" (p. 22). She then lists characteristics of what she calls "superior teachers", and one of them is motivating students to learn.

They keep the motivation of students at a high level by using their interests, their lives, and their communities as a starting point for the introduction of all material; by adapting procedure; by using a variety of instructional materials in addition to the basic text; and by reassuring students of the normalcy of reaching plateaus in learning. (p. 23)

In order to increase students' learning motivation, the teacher needs to know what students' motivational orientations are. The problem is that Thai teachers may not know what their students' motivational orientations are, or in the worst case, they may not care about their students' motivation to learn English at all. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore English as a foreign language (EFL) college students' motivational orientations.

### Significance of the Study

The current study is of significance to motivation research in Thailand for the following reasons. Firstly, studies related to students' motivation to learn conducted in Thailand were mostly experimental studies focusing on the effects of various types of teaching approaches on students' motivation to learn specific skills, for instance writing skills, speaking skills, and reading skills. This kind of study does not provide detailed information on learners' motivation. Moreover, most of the motivation studies in Thailand were conducted on secondary level students which might yield different results than research studies on college level students. Finally, the participants of these studies were quite small in number; consequently, the results from these studies might not be generalized to a larger group of students. For these reasons, a survey study like the current study would add different dimensions to the line of motivation research in Thailand.

## Definition of Terms

- motivation "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language." (Gardner 1985, p.10)
- extrinsic motivation The motivation which is derived from the desire to get the outcome of a certain activity (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, cited in Williams & Burden 1997).
- intrinsic motivation The eagerness and willingness to do something merely to gain the pleasure from doing those activities, not for any other things out of them (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, cited in Williams & Burden 1997).
- integrative orientation "a desire to learn the L2 in order to have contact with, and perhaps to identify with, members from the L2 community." (Noels, Pelletier, & Clement, 2000, p.59)
- instrumental orientation "a desire to learn the L2 to achieve some practical goal, such as job advancement or course credit." (Noels, Pelletier, & Clement, 2000, p.59)

- amotivation "the situation in which people see no relation between their actions and the consequences of those actions; the consequences are seen as arising as a result of factors beyond their control."  
(Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000, p.62)
- achievement motivation Motivation that makes a person try to succeed according to his or her expectation. (Hanprakubsuk, cited in Tangtragul, 2001)
- factor "Technically speaking, factors (as from PFA -- principal factor analysis, a.k.a. principal axis factoring, a.k.a. common factor analysis) represent the common variance of variables, excluding unique variance, and is thus a correlation-focused approach seeking to reproduce the intercorrelation among the variables."  
(Garson, 2006, p.1)
- component "By comparison, components (from PCA - principal components analysis) reflect both common and unique variance of the variables and may be seen as a variance-focused approach seeking to reproduce both

the total variable variance with all components and to reproduce the correlations. PCA is far more common than PFA, however, and it is common to use 'factors' interchangeably with 'components.'" (Garson, 2006, p.1)

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