

Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction: An Experimental Study on Students' Motivation in English Language Classrooms

Mintra Phithakmethakun

Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
mintra.pmk@gmail.com

Sumalee Chinokul

Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
sumalee.c@chula.ac.th

Abstract

The present study aimed at exploring the effects of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction on students' motivation in English language classrooms, and aimed at investigating students' opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. The participants were 25 eleventh grade students, which were selected by purposive sampling. The research instruments were students' self-report motivation in English language classrooms questionnaire, and students' opinions toward autonomy-supportive English language instruction interview questions. The results revealed that students' motivation in English language classrooms increased significantly after receiving Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. In addition, students also had a positive opinion of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction in terms of motivation in learning English in the English language classrooms, teaching practices in the English language classrooms, and the teacher's motivation in teaching. The findings suggested that as Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction is considered highly effective, it should be applied to teaching students in other levels and study programs. In addition, since this type of instruction is not attached to any specific skills or teaching methodology, further study can be applied to teaching specific skills of English or integrating into the specific English language teaching methodology in order to investigate its effectiveness.

Keywords: autonomy support, autonomy control, motivation, self-determination theory, English language teaching

Introduction

Motivation is considered an important factor of success and failure in learning a language (Dörnyei, 2002). As English is one of the most important languages, it is essential to study how students are motivated to learn English (Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 2002; Inngam & Eamoraphan, 2014).

While a number of studies have shown that Thai students have high motivation in learning English, it is reported that their motivation is mostly extrinsic or instrumental (Choomthong & Chaichompoo, 2015; Kitjaroonchai & Kitjaroonchai, 2013) which suggested that students' motivation will decrease over a course of time. Vibulphol (2016) found that classroom instruction tended to rely on external sources of motivation, which resulted in the loss of students' intrinsic motivation during class time. As a result, students tend to lose long-term motivation in learning English (Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; Vibulphol, 2016).

To support students' intrinsic motivation, Self-Determination Theory suggests utilizing three basic human needs, which are the need for competence, the need for relatedness and the need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy

is defined as encouraging students' satisfaction via positive functioning, and psychological and physical well-being. Consequently, students experience higher - quality motivation, which significantly improves their classroom engagement and, subsequently, enhances their motivation in learning. As a result, students gain higher academic achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Reeve (2016) contended that students who receive autonomy support from their teachers experience higher-quality motivation and perform better in the classrooms. To illustrate, their needs is being satisfied which helps enhance their autonomous motivation and engagement in the classrooms. In addition, they learn better and seek for optical challenge rather than easy tasks. As a result, they have better psychological and physical well-being, and manifest higher academic achievement (Jang, Kim & Reeve, 2016; Jang, Reeve & Halusic, 2016).

Although the benefits of autonomy support are outstanding, there are not many empirical and experimental studies on students' motivation in language learning (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). The number is even less from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory. Only one study by Kaur, Hashim and Noman (2015) was found as an experimental study of providing autonomy support in the English language classroom. Therefore, there is a need for conducting experimental studies on autonomy-supportive teaching and students' motivation in English language classrooms.

Regarding the significance of autonomy support, the current study translates this principle into the English language classroom by developing a new model called Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction, which integrates six autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors described by Reeve (2016) into English language instruction during lessons, including incorporating the students' perspective, vitalizing inner motivational resources, providing explanatory rationales, acknowledging and accepting negative affectivity, relying on informational, non-pressuring language, and displaying patience. This study aims at exploring the effects of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction on students' motivation in English language classrooms and aimed at investigating students' opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction.

Review of Literature

English Language Learning Situations in Thailand

The low English proficiency of Thais has long been discussed. An attempt to address the English proficiency of Thai learners has been implemented by changing the curriculum from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach. According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008), learner-centeredness is being promoted for classroom instruction in order to enhance learners' capacity to fulfill their greatest potential in various aspects of their studies (Ministry of Education, 2008). Several learning processes such as, self-learning, knowledge-creation and thinking processes, in relation to autonomy in learning, were mentioned to be employed in order for learners to achieve their learning goals.

Although the aforementioned study suggested that teaching using a learner-centered approach can significantly improve learners' language proficiency, a study by Loima (2016) found that teacher-centeredness is conversely widely practiced in classrooms in Thailand. Similarly, a study on Thai primary school English teachers revealed that teachers have little knowledge about learner-centeredness and some even have misunderstandings about the concept which is due to the lack of teacher training. More studies are, therefore, required to seek the most suitable strategies for English classrooms (Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2011).

The ongoing issue can be explained by the fact that teacher-centeredness is a teaching style that has been rooted in Thai education for a long time. Students in classrooms in Thailand are normally motivated to learn as a whole group, which was believed to address their motivation and personal preferences (Loima, 2016; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014). This, in

fact, has demotivated students. It is suggested that this should be changed toward providing more learning space and offering more opportunities for students to take part in classes in order to enhance their motivation and attitudes in learning (Dueraman, 2013; Loima, 2016; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014). In addition, English instruction should be designed by aiming at promoting independent and life-long learning (Dueraman, 2013).

Accordingly, the learning environment which allows students more thinking and learning space, providing them more participation and assigning them more active roles is urgently required for classrooms in Thailand. This environment should be promoted together with providing teacher training in order to achieve the target outcomes.

Autonomy Support

According to Reeve (2016), autonomy support refers to the effort of providing instruction in a classroom context that support students' need for autonomy and teacher-student relationship. In other words, it is the teacher's style and behavior for interacting with students which identify, nurture and strengthen students' inner motivational resources. As suggested by Reeve (2016), the primary goal of autonomy support is to provide students with factors that support their autonomy, such as learning activities, classroom environment and student-teacher relationship. Autonomy-supportive behaviors include listening to students' opinions and suggestions, nurturing their inner motivational resources, allowing students' active participation and contribution, allowing students to control their own learning pace, acknowledging their perspective, providing rationales of doing activities, and communicating with them without pressure.

Benefits of Autonomy Support

It is important for teachers to provide autonomy support because it benefit students in various ways (Reeve, 2016). Students who experience autonomy support from their teachers experience higher-quality motivation, classroom engagement, motivation in learning, higher academic achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2017). To illustrate, their needs is being satisfied which helps enhance their autonomous motivation and engagement in the classrooms. In addition, they learn better and seek for optical challenge. As a result, they have better psychological and physical well-being, and manifest higher academic achievement (Jang, Kim & Reeve, 2016; Jang, Reeve & Halusic, 2016). Apart from benefitting students, providing autonomy support also benefits teachers in terms of having greater autonomy-supportive teaching, need satisfaction from teaching, passion for teaching, teaching efficacy, job satisfaction, vitality during teaching and having less exhaustion from teaching emotionally and physically.

Autonomy-Supportive Teaching

Instructional behaviors

An autonomy-supportive includes six autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors, including 1) taking the student's perspective, 2) vitalizing inner motivational resources, 3) providing explanatory rationales for requests, 4) acknowledging and accepting students' expressions of negative effect, 5) relying on informational, non-pressuring language, and 6) displaying patience.

The above six behaviors can be divided into two main aspects according to the nature of the activities; first, the behaviors used to react when uninteresting activities are provided, and second, the behaviors used when the activities are interesting and supporting personal goals. The former includes providing explanatory rationales for requests, acknowledging and accepting students' expressions of negative affectivity, and relying on informational, non-

pressuring language. The latter includes taking the student's perspective, vitalizing inner motivational resources, and displaying patience.

Instructional flow

In practice, the behaviors can also be divided into three critical moments due to the flow of the lesson as presented in the figure.

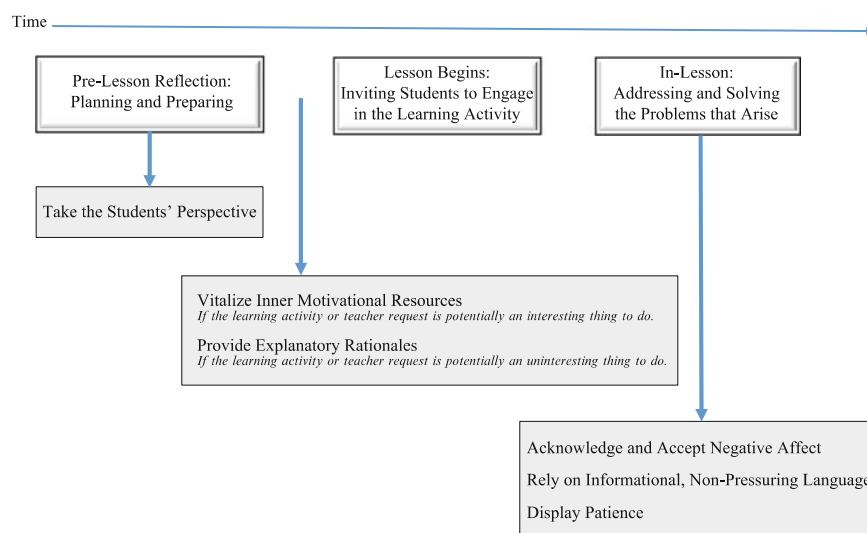


Fig 1. Three critical motivational moments in the flow of autonomy-supportive teaching (Reeve, 2016, p.136)

Motivation and Learning

Definition of Motivation

Motivation derives from the Latin verb *movere* which means to move (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2014; Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2014). It is a term that covers different meanings (Dörnyei, 2002). Middleton and Perks (2014) described motivation as the energy that leads to activity and engagement. As clarified by Schunk, Meece and Pintrich (2014), motivation is the process where activities led by goals are built and maintained. Besides, Harmer (2007) defined motivation as the internal drive which pushes someone to achieve something. In addition, Dörnyei (2002) stated that motivation is the abstract, complex and hypothetical concept that explains human behavior, the cause and origin of action, while Reeve (1996) viewed motivation as a study of human behavior which is a result of the internal process. To be more specific to learning, Wentzel and Brophy (2014) proposed that it is what students invest in order to pursue their goals which might not be as the teacher expected. In short, motivation is a term that is used to refer to the abstract and complex process which internally pushes a person to do something to achieve a goal.

As with human behavior, motivation is extremely complex (Dörnyei, 2002). It may originate from needs, cognition (thoughts, beliefs, and expectations) and emotions (Reeve, 1996). To explain human behavior, motivation involves direction and magnitude dimensions which identify why, how, how hard and how long people do something (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2014; Dörnyei, 2002) or it can be viewed as being composed of the choice of doing something, the effort to be invested, and the persistence to do the thing (Dörnyei, 2002). In the field of English language learning, motivation comprises motivation intensity, the desire to learn the language and attitudes toward learning the language. Therefore, motivated

students are those who are enthusiastic and engaged to learn, and have positive attitudes toward the learning.

The Importance of Motivation Toward Language Learning

Motivation plays a significant role in learning. It was said to be a key to learning (Brown, 2007), and a supporting factor from the beginning to the end of learning (Vibulphol, 2016). Motivation remarkably determines success and failure in learning (Brown, 2007; Dornyei, 2002). In addition, having high levels of motivation over a long period of time will eventually create specialization in tasks (Dweek, 2002). In second or foreign language learning, regardless of the proficiency they possess, students can be successful when having a certain level of motivation (Dornyei, 2002).

Types of Motivation

According to Brown (2007), there are three different perspectives of motivation from three different schools of thought, behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. For behaviorism, motivation is the anticipation of reward and the desire to receive positive reinforcement which are under the control of external and individual forces. We act to achieve further reinforcement, which is based on previous experiences of reward and the anticipation of positive reinforcement. On the other hand, from cognitivism's perspective, motivation is driven by basic human needs, exploration, manipulation, activity, stimulation, knowledge, and enhancement with different degrees of effort expended. Here, internal and individual forces are in control. Besides, looking from a constructivist point of view, motivation derives from both interactions with others and oneself, which are affected by social context, community, social status, and the security of the group. In this case, internal and interactive forces are believed to be in control. Although the three schools of thought articulate their ideas about motivation differently, needs seem to be the shared characteristics of all three philosophies as humans perform actions in order to fulfill their needs. This emphasizes how meeting needs is important. Overall, believing in different schools of thought about motivation can lead to different practices by teachers in order to motivate students.

According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), motivation is divided into three types with different regulatory styles. The first type is amotivation which is defined as "the state of lacking the intention to act". The only regulatory style under this type is non-regulation. The second type is extrinsic motivation, the motivation which is externally enhanced. There are four regulatory styles under this type of motivation ranging from least to most autonomous, namely external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. External regulation involves behaviors that are performed due to external stimulation. Introjected regulation involves behaviors that are performed to avoid guilt or anxiety. Identified regulation involves behaviors that are performed by perceiving the value of the behaviors. Integrated regulation derives when the behaviors are being evaluated and accepted as ones' needs and values. The last type is intrinsic motivation with the only regulatory style, intrinsic regulation. It refers to the highly autonomous motivation which is when behaviors are performed according to inherent satisfactions.

Assessing Motivation

As motivation is inherent in human behaviors, the methods which are generally employed in the study of motivation assessment include using questionnaires, observation and interviews. There are a number of motivation questionnaires which are grounded in self-determination theory. Each assesses different constructs of the theory.

Related Studies

In Thailand, few studies were conducted on students' motivation in English language classrooms as a result of autonomy-supportive teaching. Singhnarang and Gajasen (2018) conducted a survey study about effects of teacher's motivating styles on learner autonomy of English as a foreign language elementary students which was found that students had learner autonomy in the classroom when teachers had higher autonomy support comparing to when teachers had medium or lower autonomy support. The motivating styles were also stated to be related to learners' autonomy in the classroom. In addition, two experimental studies were also conducted with elementary students. For instance, Kaur, Hashim and Noman (2015) studied about the effectiveness of autonomy support instruction on Thai students' learning motivation in English language classrooms. The results revealed that teacher autonomy support intervention improved learning motivation of students in the experimental group. Another study was conducted in 2014. Kaur, Hashim and Noman (2014) also studied about effects of autonomy supportive teaching on motivation of Thai students which showed that students in the experimental group who received autonomy supportive teaching had higher interest, effort, relatedness and integrated regulation compared to those in the control group which were taught by using a traditional approach.

Rationale of the Study

Due to evident benefits of autonomy-supportive teaching and a great lack of studies in the field, more research studies on autonomy-supportive teaching and learners' motivation in English language classrooms are highly required. Moreover, since an experimental study on autonomy-supportive teaching in English language classrooms in Thailand with secondary students have not been conducted, studies are needed in order to bridge the gap.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction enhance students' motivation in English language classrooms?
2. What are the opinions of the students toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a one-group quasi-experimental research design, which implemented quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The independent variable of this study was the Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional and the dependent variable was students' motivation in English language classrooms.

Population and Samples

The population of this study was secondary level students who were studying in schools in Thailand. The samples of this study were purposively selected based on their qualification of being secondary students who studied English in a school in Thailand. In addition, the samples were also selected due to availability of class time and research supportiveness of the school and the English program department. The samples consisted of 29 eleventh grade students who were studying in the Mini English Program – Science and Mathematics at Sateesiriket School in Sisaket, Thailand in the second semester of the academic year 2018. Four students who attended the class less than 80% of the class time due to attendance of extra activities were removed from the study. The students attended the English course which intended to implement the study as a compulsory course. In the first half of the semester, they

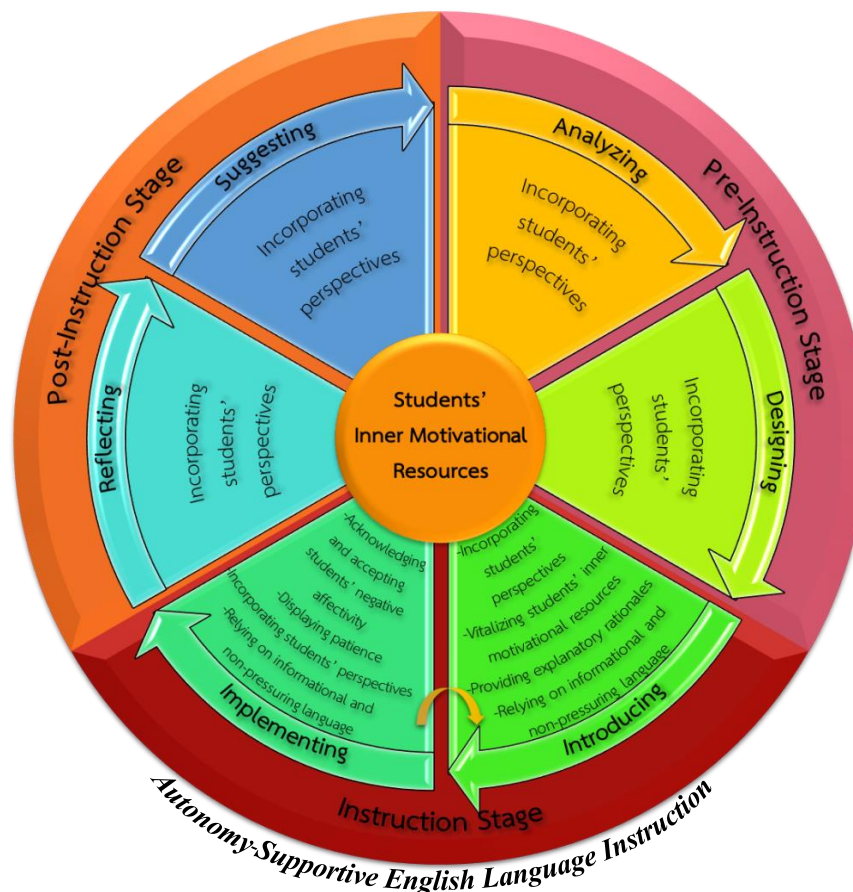
studied with other English language teachers. Then, the researcher replaced the teachers for the rest of the semester.

For the interviews, six students were selected from the samples to participate in the interviews who represented the high motivation group (2), moderate motivation group (2), and low motivation group (2) according to the results from the students' self-report motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire administered before the implementation of the study.

Prior to the implementation of the study, a letter of permission endorsed by the faculty was sent to the school to inform and ask for permission to conduct the study with the particular group of students. In addition, students were informed about the objectives, the research methodology and the research plan. Questions about the study were thoroughly answered. Subsequently, students were asked to complete a consent form which specified agreement according to the participation in this study. They were assured that their personal information was to be kept confidential and would only be revealed with their permission. They were made aware that they were at liberty to withdraw from participating in the study without any adverse effects on their grades and scores of this subject.

Research Framework

Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction was developed as a research framework of this study by integrating six teachers' instructional behaviors proposed by Reeve (2016) as follows:



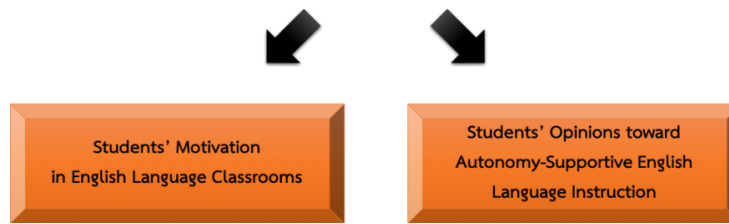


Figure 2. Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional Process

Figure 2 illustrates the Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional Process which was adapted from Reeve's Instructional Flow (2016). The Instructional Flow was synthesized and arranged into a cycle for developing, implementing and revising English language instruction in order to enhance students' motivation in learning English. Upon designing the process, students' inner motivational resources, which are the main sources of intrinsic motivation, were taken as a focus. The process is divided into three stages, including pre-instruction, instruction, and post-instruction stages. Each integrates and utilizes certain autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors adopted from Reeve (2016): 1) incorporating students' perspectives, 2) vitalizing students' inner motivational resources, 3) providing explanatory rationales, 4) relying on informational and non-pressuring language, 5) acknowledging and accepting students' negative affectivity, and 6) displaying patience.

Pre-Instruction Stage

The pre-instruction stage consists of two main steps, 'analyzing' students' needs and preferences and 'designing' the lesson. The purpose of this stage is to develop lessons that align with students' inner motivational resources, their needs and interests. The autonomy-supportive instructional behavior employed during this stage is "incorporating students' perspectives".

'Analyzing' is first and foremost a step of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction that enables perspective taking and contributes to vitalizing students' inner motivational resources. 'Designing' is another step in the pre-instruction stage which aims at designing and/or adjusting lessons and learning activities to align better with students' inner motivational resources.

Instruction Stage

The instruction stage consists of two main steps, namely 'introducing' and 'implementing' the lesson. The purpose of this stage is to apply the designed lessons with students in the classroom. When starting a new learning activity, the introducing process is employed following by the implementing process. Each step employs slightly different autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors.

'Introducing' is a step conducted prior to starting the lesson. The autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors employed during this stage are "incorporating students' perspectives", "vitalizing inner motivational resources", "providing explanatory rationales", and "relying on informational and non-pressuring language". In addition, 'Implementing' is a step conducted during the lesson, which aims at addressing and solving issues that may cause students to lose their interest or attention in the lesson to maintain students' motivation in learning. The autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors employed during this stage are "acknowledging and accepting students' negative affectivity", "displaying patience", "incorporating students' perspectives", and "relying on informational and non-pressuring language".

Post-Instruction Stage

The post-instruction stage consists of two main processes, ‘reflecting’ the learned lesson, and ‘suggesting’ ideas for the next lesson. The purpose of this stage is to elicit comments and suggestions from students for improving the subsequent lessons. The autonomy-supportive instructional behavior employed during this stage is “incorporating students’ perspectives”.

‘Reflecting’ is a step conducted during the post-instruction stage right after each unit of the lessons. ‘Suggesting’ is another step conducted during post-instruction stage promptly after unit reflection. It aims at collecting students’ suggestions and additional preferences for the next lesson according to the topic stated. The autonomy-supportive strategy employed during this stage is “incorporating students’ perspectives”.

After these processes, comments, feedback and suggestions from students are processed in pre-instruction stage by being analyzed. Then, the lessons are re-designed or adjusted in the designing process again before being implemented in the instruction stage in the classroom. The procedure is repeated in cycle throughout the instructional process.

Instruments

This study employed two main types of instrument.

1. Instructional Instruments

There were two main types of instructional instruments, needs analysis questionnaires and lesson plans. The questionnaires were designed and administered to collect data for developing the lesson plans which were later implemented in the classroom.

1.1 The needs analysis questionnaire on students’ needs and preferences for English language classrooms

The needs analysis questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect students’ learning needs and preferences for English language classrooms in order to develop the lessons that align well with students’ interests. The students’ English language proficiency level, English language learning experiences, difficulties in using English, and needs and preferences for English language classrooms, namely topics, contents, learning activities, learning materials, learning tools, and learning assessment were identified. The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the field of English language instruction. The items were revised according to their comments.

1.2 The needs analysis questionnaire on students’ experiences and preferences for teachers’ instructional behaviors in English language classrooms

This needs analysis questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect students’ preferences for English language teachers’ behaviors by identifying teachers’ behaviors students had encountered in the past English language classrooms and specifying the types of behaviors they would like the English language teacher to express. Fourteen cases of classroom situations were presented to students as video clips. Students then identified whether they had experienced the situations and chose whether they would like the teacher to continue exploring them in the classroom. The data was used as a guideline to develop instructional practice in the English language classroom. The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the field of English language instruction. The items were revised according to their comments.

1.3 Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction Lesson Plans

The lesson plans were developed with an aim to demonstrate the ‘instruction stage’ of the Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction which included ‘introducing’ and ‘implementing’ steps. The instruction stage with its steps was completed within each period of the lesson which lasted 50 minutes. The autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors in the ‘introducing’ step were employed when introducing the lesson or learning activities through verbal and nonverbal expression. They focused on engaging students in the lesson

and learning activities by informing them of the lesson overall, so they acknowledged the process they had to encounter and were able to suggest changes according to their preferences. The role of the teacher during this stage was to be open for suggestions, provide rationales in doing each activity and communicating with students without pressure. In addition, the instructional behaviors for the ‘implementing’ step were employed when conducting the lesson and learning activities. They focused on engaging students during the lesson by providing students enough time to work on the task, adjusting the lesson to align with students’ preferences, communicating with students positively, and solving disengagement problems that arise during the lesson. The instructional behaviors which were employed as the principle in conducting this stage were interpreted and translated into the script and guideline for the teacher to conduct learning activities in the classroom.

The learning outcomes, content, assessment, instructional media, and learning activities of the lessons were developed based on the needs analysis, curriculum indicators and objectives of the course. The main objective of the course was to develop the four major English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There were 12 lesson plans altogether which were arranged into 4 units. Therefore, there were 3 lessons under each unit. Each lesson lasted 50 minutes which comprised 150 minutes of the teaching time of each unit. Each unit targeted at developing a combination of different skills ranging from listening, speaking, reading, and writing and each lesson were developed to support the production of the major skills by developing sub-skills, for example, vocabulary, pronunciation and structure in order to enable students to achieve the objectives of the lessons. The content was developed from topics students preferred for the English language classroom as collected from the needs analysis questionnaire. The objectives of the four units included:

- 1) Students will be able to identify the message of various English songs.
- 2) Students will be able to talk about the movies they like.
- 3) Students will be able to write a script for a speech about themselves.
- 4) Students will be able to give a speech on the topic ‘This is Who I Am.’

A sample lesson plan was validated by three experts from the field of English language instruction and revised according to their comments. After the end of each unit, the researcher asked students to reflect on the lessons they had learned. The suggestions and comments were then used to adjust the lessons in the following units to better align with students’ needs and interest so that students’ motivation in learning was maintained. The revisions of the lessons were discussed with the responsible teachers of the course and the experienced English language teacher in the department.

2. Research Instruments

The research instruments included in this study are described as follows:

2.1 Students’ Self-Report Motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from the English Language Learner Motivation Scale (ELLMS): Pre-college (Ardasheva, Tong & Tretter, 2012) to investigate students’ motivation in learning English in the English language classroom before and after participation in this research study. The items were validated by three experts from the field of English language instruction. All of the items were accepted. The data obtained was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and t-test.

2.2 Students’ Opinions Toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed by the researcher to investigate the students’ opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction after participation in this research study. The items were validated by three experts from the field of English

language instruction. All of the items were accepted. The data obtained was analyzed by using content analysis.

Research Procedure

The research procedure of this study involved three main phases, 1) the development of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional process, 2) the implementation of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction, and 3) the investigation of effects of autonomy-supportive English language instruction and students' opinions. The overall cycle of the process is illustrated in Figure 3 as follows:

Phase 1: The Development of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional Process

- 1.1 Conducting the literature review (exploring theories and related research studies)
- 1.2 Specifying the population and participants
- 1.3 Studying primary information about students (curriculum indicators, requirements of the course and opinions of subject teachers)
- 1.4 Constructing needs analysis questionnaires on:
 - 1.4.1 Students' needs and preferences for English language classrooms
 - 1.4.2 Students' experiences and preferences for teachers' instructional behaviors in English language classrooms
- 1.5 Validating the needs analysis questionnaires
- 1.6 Revising the questionnaires
- 1.7 Piloting the questionnaires
- 1.8 Revising the questionnaires



Phase 2: The Implementation of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction

- 2.1 Pre-Instruction Stage
 - 2.1.1 Analyzing
 - 2.1.1.1 Conducting needs analysis
 - 2.1.1.2 Analyzing students' needs and preferences
 - 2.1.2 Designing
 - 2.1.2.1 Constructing the lesson plans and research instruments
 - 2.1.2.2 Validating the effectiveness of the lesson plans and research instruments
 - 2.1.2.3 Revising the instruments
 - 2.1.2.4 Piloting the instruments
 - 2.1.2.5 Revising the instruments
 - 2.1.3 Administering Students' Self-Report Motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire
- 2.2 Instruction Stage (providing Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction)
 - 2.2.1 Introducing
 - 2.2.1.1 Informing students of the topic, objectives, core content, main activities, and assessment of the lesson at the beginning of the class
 - 2.2.1.2 Inviting additional comments and suggestions toward the lesson from students
 - 2.2.1.3 Engaging students in learning activities

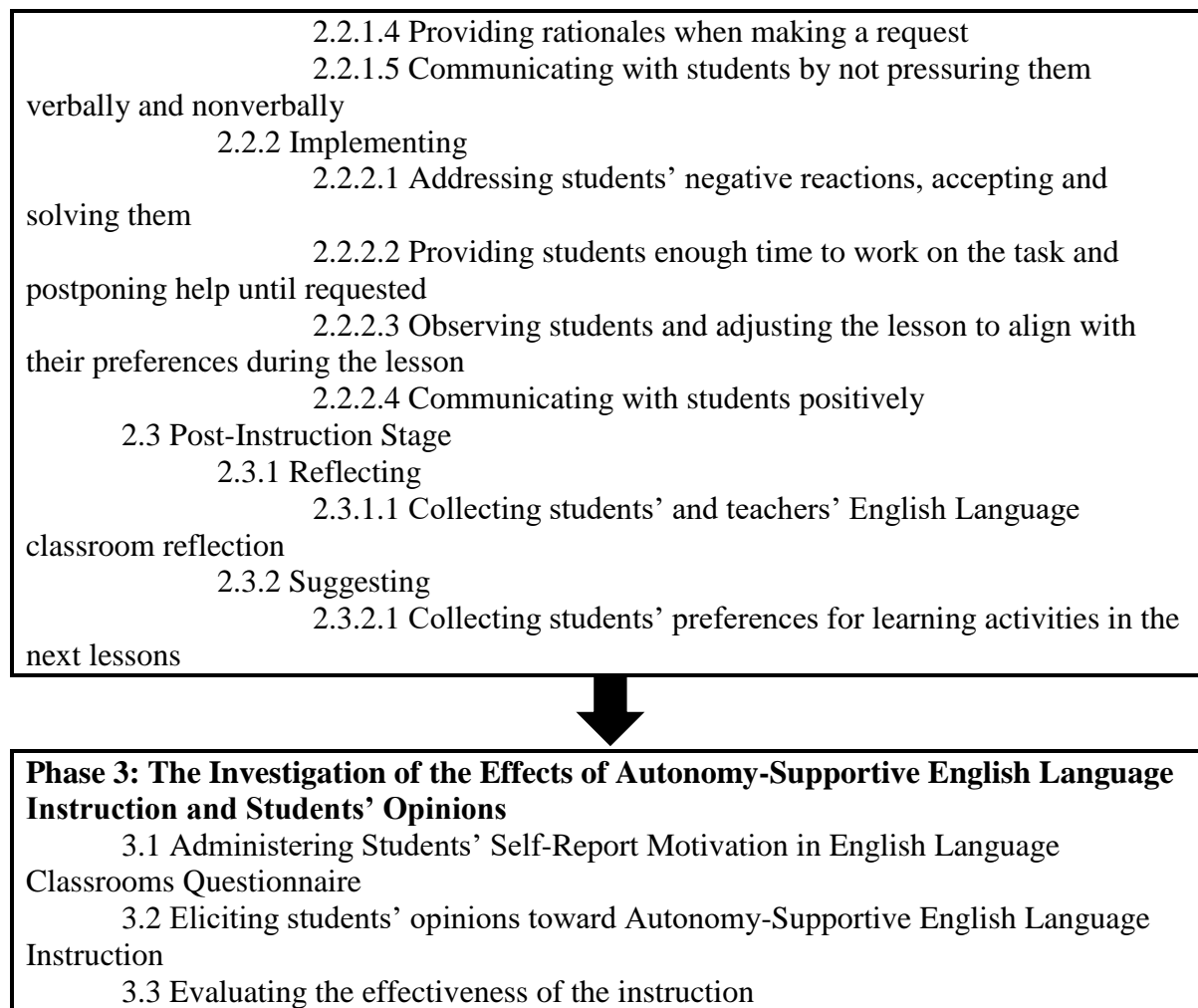


Figure 3. Summary of Research Procedures

According to Figure 3, the first phase, the development of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instructional process, was the primary study before developing the Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction which included conducting the literature review (exploring theories and related research studies), specifying the population and participants, studying primary information about students (curriculum indicators, requirements of the course and opinions of subject teachers), constructing needs analysis questionnaires on students' needs and preferences for English language classrooms and students' experiences and preferences for teachers' instructional behaviors in English language classrooms, validating the needs analysis questionnaires, revising the questionnaires, piloting the questionnaires and conducting the final revision of the questionnaires.

The second phase was the implementation of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. This phase followed stages and steps of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction based on the principle of autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors, including 1) incorporating students' perspectives, 2) vitalizing students' inner motivational resources, 3) providing explanatory rationales, 4) relying on informational and non-pressuring language, 5) acknowledging and accepting students' negative affectivity, and 6) displaying patience. The procedures included analyzing and designing in the pre-instruction stage, introducing and implementing in the instruction stage, and reflecting and suggesting in the post-instruction stage.

The pre-instruction stage employed “incorporating students’ perspectives” instructional behavior. To incorporate students’ perspectives in analyzing step, the needs analysis questionnaire on students’ needs and preferences for English language classrooms was administered to identify students’ English language proficiency level, English language learning experiences, difficulties in using English, and needs and preferences for English language classrooms, namely topics, contents, learning activities, learning materials, learning tools, and learning assessment. In addition, the needs analysis questionnaire on students’ experiences and preferences for teachers’ instructional behaviors in English language classrooms was also used to identify teachers’ behaviors students had encountered in the past English language classrooms and specify the types of behaviors they would like the English language teacher to express. Fourteen cases of classroom situations were presented to students as video clips. Students then identified whether they had experienced the situations and chose whether they would like the teacher to continue performing them in the classroom. Students’ responses were used as reassurance that students preferred autonomy-supportive teaching in the English language classroom. Apart from obtaining data from students, the researcher also reflected on experiences in teaching similar groups of students to predict reactions of the current group of students toward various kinds of learning activities. In addition, the researcher also discussed with other English language teachers who had experiences in teaching the class about students’ learning styles, their needs and preferences for the past English language classrooms, and their gaps that needs to be filled. Finally, students’ needs and preferences were analyzed.

In addition, in designing step, the data gained from the three sources, two needs analysis questionnaires and the reflection of teacher’s instructional experiences, were subsequently used for designing and developing the lessons. As a result, this stage provided lessons that are likely to correspond to students’ inner motivational resources.

For the first cycle of the process, before implementing Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction, Students’ Self-Report Motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire was administered to investigate students’ motivation in English language classrooms before providing the treatment.

The following stage was the instruction stage. During introducing step, “incorporating students’ perspectives”, “vitalizing inner motivational resources”, “providing explanatory rationales”, and “relying on informational and non-pressuring language” instructional behaviors were employed. To incorporate students’ perspectives, the teacher informed students of the topic, objectives, core content, main activities, and assessment of the lesson at the beginning of the class. The teacher then invited additional comments and suggestions toward the lesson from students. To vitalize students’ inner motivational resources, when introducing a learning activity, or when transitioning from one activity to another, the teacher tried to engage students in learning activities by providing them an opportunity to choose and do what they preferred (autonomy), set a goal in learning to overpass (competence), interact with classmates (relatedness), seek for answers to questions they had (curiosity), experience new things (interest), and improve themselves (intrinsic goals). In addition, to provide explanatory rationales, the teacher provided explanation when making a request with students. To relying on informational and non-pressuring language, the teacher communicated with students by not pressuring them verbally and nonverbally.

For implementing step, the autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors employed during this stage were “acknowledging and accepting students’ negative affectivity”, “displaying patience”, “incorporating students’ perspectives”, and “relying on informational and non-pressuring language”. To acknowledge and accept students’ negative affectivity, the teacher addressed students’ negative reactions, accepted them and tried to help solve them. To display patience, the teacher provided students enough time to work on the task and

postponed help until requested. To incorporate students' perspectives in this stage, the teacher observed students during the lesson and tried to adjust the lesson to align with their preferences. Besides, for relying on informational and non-pressuring language, the teacher continued to communicate with students positively.

The subsequent stage was the post-instruction stage which employed "incorporating students' perspectives" instructional behavior. For the reflecting step, to incorporate students' perspectives, the teacher asked students to complete the English language classroom reflection form to elicit students' opinions toward the lesson, their motivation in learning, their perception of accomplishment, and their comments and feedback on the lessons in the unit. This reflection form was completed anonymously so students could be open and honest. Students' comments were used to improve subsequent lessons. For suggesting step, to incorporate students' perspectives, the teacher asked students to answer a question in the provided English language classroom reflection form about learning activities they preferred for the next lessons. The main purpose was to improve students' learning experiences in the next lesson by incorporating students' suggestions and additional preferences for the topic into adjusting the lessons.

After the first cycle ended, the next cycle started with analyzing students' comments, feedback and suggestions following by re-designing the lesson plans. The stages and steps were followed until another cycle ended.

The last phase was conducted after the last cycle of the study which investigated the effects of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction and students' opinions. Within this phase, Students' Self-Report Motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire was administered to explore students' motivation in the English language classroom after receiving the treatment. Additionally, students' opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction were also elicited through a semi-structured interview. Finally, the effectiveness of the instruction was evaluated.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study were presented according to research questions as follows:

Research question 1: To what extent does Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction enhance students' motivation in English language classrooms?

To explore the effects of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction on students' motivation in English language classrooms, the data obtained from Students' Self-Report Motivation in English Language Classrooms Questionnaire were analyzed by using mean scores, standard deviations, mean difference, and paired-sample t-test to explore students' motivation in the English language classroom before and after the implementation of Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. Table 1 illustrated the results of data analysis by subscales of the motivation questionnaire.

Table 1

Students' motivation in the English language classrooms by subscales

| Subscale | Before | | After | | Mean Dif. | t | df | Sig. |
|--|--------|------|-------|------|-----------|------|----|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | | | |
| 1. Intrinsic motivation – knowledge | 3.73 | 0.73 | 4.29 | 0.47 | 0.56 | 4.62 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 2. Intrinsic motivation – accomplishment | 3.73 | 0.58 | 4.25 | 0.44 | 0.52 | 5.18 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 3. Introjected regulation | 3.43 | 0.54 | 3.92 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 7.33 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 4. External regulation | 3.81 | 0.49 | 3.92 | 0.45 | 0.11 | 2.57 | 24 | 0.02 |

| Subscale | Before | | After | | Mean Dif. | t | df | Sig. |
|-------------------|--------|------|-------|------|-----------|-------|----|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | | | |
| 5. Extra Subscale | 3.48 | 0.59 | 4.64 | 0.49 | 1.16 | 15.50 | 24 | 0.00 |
| Overall | 3.64 | 0.38 | 4.20 | 0.26 | 0.57 | 10.48 | 24 | 0.00 |

* $p < .05$

The criteria for the interpretation of the motivation score: 1.00-1.49 = very low motivation, 1.50-2.49 = low motivation, 2.50-3.49 = moderate motivation, 3.50-4.49 = high motivation, 4.50-5.00 = very high motivation

As illustrated in Table 1, students' motivation in the English language classroom after receiving Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction was significantly higher than their motivation before the participation in the study at the 0.05 level ($\text{sig.}=0.00$) in every aspect. The extra subscale which concerned the level of students' motivation in learning English induced by the teacher received the highest mean score at 4.64 which is considered 'very high motivation'. The subscale that improved the least was external regulation with mean difference at 0.11.

The results corresponded to the teacher's English language classroom reflection after each unit, which evaluated that the students were highly motivated to learn in every unit with the average score of 4.75 (very high motivation). Furthermore, students also completed the students' English language classroom reflection form, which signified that their motivation in learning in each unit was also 'very high'.

The results were confirmed by the study of Kaur et al. (2015) on teacher autonomy support intervention as a classroom practice in a Thai school that grade 6 students' motivation was significantly higher after receiving the autonomy support from the teacher. In addition, as suggested by Reeve (2016), students' motivation is greatly enhanced when they receive autonomy support from the teacher.

In addition, it was found that students' motivation in the external regulation increased the least, which could be explained by Deci and Ryan (2000) who observed that students possess less extrinsic motivation when they gain more intrinsic motivation.

According to studies in Thailand on students' motivation in English language classrooms, English language instruction in the classroom tended to demotivate students, and students tended to lose long-term or intrinsic motivation during class time (Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; Vibulphol, 2016). As suggested by Dueraman (2013), Loima (2016), Loima and Vibulphol (2014), teachers should provide more learning space and opportunities for students to participate in classroom instruction to enhance their motivation in learning. Therefore, the Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction provided by this study can be used to solve this problem of students' motivation in learning English.

Table 2

Students' motivation in the English language classrooms by items

| Items | Before | | After | | Mean Dif. | t | df | Sig. |
|--|--------|------|-------|------|-----------|------|----|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | | | |
| Subscale: Intrinsic motivation – knowledge | | | | | | | | |
| 1. It is fun to learn English. | 3.32 | 1.03 | 3.84 | 1.07 | 0.52 | 2.83 | 24 | 0.01 |
| 2. I like learning new things in English. | 3.76 | 1.09 | 4.48 | 0.65 | 0.72 | 3.52 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 3. I like to learn about | 4.12 | 0.67 | 4.56 | 0.51 | 0.44 | 3.38 | 24 | 0.00 |

| Items | Before | | After | | Mean Dif. | t | df | Sig. |
|---|--------|------|-------|------|-----------|-------|----|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | | | |
| foreigners and how they live. | | | | | | | | |
| Subscale: Intrinsic motivation – accomplishment | | | | | | | | |
| 4. I like it when I do well in the English language classroom. | 3.84 | 0.94 | 4.44 | 0.71 | 0.60 | 4.24 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 5. I like it when I can understand difficult things in English. | 3.52 | 0.87 | 4.20 | 0.71 | 0.68 | 4.24 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 6. I like doing difficult things in English. | 3.84 | 0.90 | 4.12 | 0.88 | 0.28 | 1.57 | 24 | 0.13 |
| 7. I will feel bad about myself if I could not speak English in the English language classroom. | 3.36 | 0.81 | 3.76 | 1.01 | 0.40 | 4.00 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 8. I will feel bad about myself if I could not speak to my foreign friends in English. | 3.48 | 1.01 | 4.00 | 0.82 | 0.52 | 3.64 | 24 | 0.00 |
| 9. I want to show my English teacher that I can learn English well. | 3.44 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 0.76 | 0.56 | 4.30 | 24 | 0.00 |
| Subscale: External regulation | | | | | | | | |
| 10. I want to find a good job when I grow up. | 4.44 | 0.92 | 4.60 | 0.71 | 0.16 | 2.14 | 24 | 0.04 |
| 11. My parents and teachers want me to learn English. | 3.12 | 0.97 | 3.00 | 1.12 | -0.12 | -1.14 | 24 | 0.27 |
| 12. Everybody in school has to learn English. | 3.88 | 1.09 | 4.16 | 1.11 | 0.28 | 3.06 | 24 | 0.01 |
| Extra Subscale | | | | | | | | |
| 13. My English language teacher makes me want to learn English. | 3.48 | 0.59 | 4.48 | 0.51 | 1.00 | 10.00 | 24 | 0.00 |

Table 2 displays the results from students' self-report motivation in the English language classroom by items. According to item 11 "My parents and teachers want me to learn English.", students' motivation registered a negative mean difference of -0.12, which signifies that external forces from parents and teachers that pushed students to learn decreased when they were more motivated to learn by themselves in the classroom.

Research question 2: What are the opinions of the students toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction?

The semi-structure interviews were employed after the treatment to investigate students' opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. Six students from high (H), moderate (M) and low (L) motivation group were invited to participate in the interview.

The interview questions included 1) What are the differences between this English language classroom and other English language classrooms you have attended?; 2) How do you feel about studying in English language classrooms before and after studying with the current teacher?; 3) How does the way the teacher teaches and reacts affect the way you study and your feelings toward studying English in this English language classroom?; and 4) How do you want the teacher to improve the instruction in future English language classrooms? The data were analyzed using content analysis. Students' opinions were categorized into two aspects, positive and neutral based on the keywords students expressed. The key words were then counted and reported using frequency and percentage. The following table presents results from the interviews.

Table 3

Frequencies and percentage of students' opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction from the interview

| Aspects of Students' Opinions | Frequencies of Keywords | Percentage of Keywords |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Positive Opinions | | |
| Toward learning English | 47 | 70.15 |
| Toward teaching practices | 9 | 13.43 |
| Toward the teacher | 7 | 10.45 |
| Neutral Opinions | | |
| Additional content required | 4 | 5.97 |
| Total | 67 | 100 |

Table 3 indicated that students had positive opinions toward students' motivation in learning English in the English language classrooms (70.15%). They reported that the class made them see the importance of learning English, they had lots of fun in learning because there were many activities for them to do in the classroom, and a variety of instructional materials was employed. For example, the students stated that "I saw the importance of English after learning with the teacher. (L1)", "I wanted to come to the English class more comparing to before. (H1)", and "It was not just learning. There were many activities integrated which made the lesson fun. (H2)"

In addition, students also expressed positive opinions toward teaching practices in the English language classrooms (13.43%). For example, the students stated that "The way the teacher taught was better in every aspect. (L1)", "I can express my opinions in the classroom. (M2)", and "The teacher motivated us to learn. (H1)".

In terms of the teacher's motivation in teaching students (10.45%), students reported that the teacher was eager and had passion to teach; the teacher was good at teaching and the teacher's accent was easy to understand. For example, the students stated that "The teacher was eager to teach. (L1)", "The teacher had passion to teach. (M1)" and "It would be great if every teacher in the school expressed like this. (L2)"

For neutral opinions, students expressed that they would like to have additional content in the lesson (5.97%), for example, "I would like the teacher to teach about studying in the university. (H1)", "I would like the teacher to tell us about test taking. (H2)" and "I would like the teacher to include more entertainment in the lesson. (M1)"

Additionally, students also suggested that the class time was limited and that it should be extended. For example, students stated that "I feel that the 50 minutes of our class time was too little. We got to learn less content when doing a lot of activities. It would be fine if we have a double period. (H2)" Another student stated that "I think the only problem here is time. It would be great if we meet for the whole semester. (L2)"

From students answers during the interviews, it was evident that students had positive opinions toward learning English in the English language classrooms. They were highly engaged in learning. As students commented, the way the teacher taught and the learning activities that the teacher employed played a big part in students' motivation in learning. This showed that Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction helped enhance students' motivation in learning English in the English language classroom.

Conclusions

It was found that students' motivation in English language classrooms increased significantly after receiving Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction. In addition, students also had positive opinions toward Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction in terms of motivation in learning English in the English language classrooms, teaching practices in the English language classrooms, and the teacher's motivation in teaching. The results affirmed that Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction was highly effective. By employing autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors, the teacher can help enhance students' motivation in English language classrooms. Students perceived that the teacher involved them in every aspect of the classroom learning environment and regarded them as important.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study was successful, there were certain limitations including the limited class time and students' reliance on experiences in previous classes which might have affected the findings. In terms of limited class time, as the instructional process of autonomy-supportive teaching requires a lot of time for learners to process their learning to become autonomous learners, the regular class time of 50 minutes, with actual 30 minutes of teaching time, was inadequate. Therefore, some parts of the content and learning activities were not covered. In addition, the study relied on students' comparison of their experiences in learning English with their previous teachers when having to complete questionnaires of the study. Therefore, factors affecting students' learning in previous English language classrooms were beyond the researcher's control and the instructional practices could be various.

Recommendations

As Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction is considered highly effective for grade 11 students who were studying in the Mini English Program – Science and Mathematics, it is suggested that the intervention be applied to teaching students in other levels and study programs. In addition, since this type of instruction is not attached to any specific skills or teaching methodology, further study can be applied to teaching specific skills of English or integrating into the specific English language teaching methodology in order to investigate its effectiveness.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by Teaching English as a Foreign Language (International Program), Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University.

About the Authors

Mintra Phithakmethakun: an M.Ed. student in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (International Program), Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Sumalee Chinokul: an Associate Professor from Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

References

- Ardasheva, Y., Tong, S. S., & Tretter, T. R. (2012). Validating the English Language Learner Motivation Scale (ELLMS): Pre-college to measure language learning motivational orientations among young ELLs. *Learning and Individual differences*, 22(4), 473-483.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.): White Plains, NY : Pearson Longman.
- Cheng, H.-F., & Dörnyei, Z. (2007). The use of motivational strategies in language instruction: The case of EFL teaching in Taiwan. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 153-174.
- Choomthong, D., & Chaichompoo, C. (2015). English language learning motivation of Thai undergraduate students in the globalized era. *Suranaree Journal of Social Science*, 9(2), 23-45.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2002). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2014). *Teaching and researching: Motivation*. Routledge.
- Dueraman, B. (2013). Focus on Thai learners of English: Their self-reports about foreign language learning. *International Research Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(7), 176-186.
- Dweek, C. S. (2002). The development of ability conception. *Development of achievement motivation*, 57-88.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.): Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Inngam, P., & Eamoraphan, S. (2014). A comparison of students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language in selected public and private schools in Bangkok. *Scholar*, 6(1), 15-19.
- Jang, H., Kim, E. J., & Reeve, J. (2016). Why students become more engaged or more disengaged during the semester: A self-determination theory dual-process model. *Learning and Instruction*, 43, 27-38.
- Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Halusic, M. (2016). A new autonomy-supportive way of teaching that increases conceptual learning: Teaching in students' preferred ways. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 84(4), 686-701.
- Kaur, A., Hashim, R. A., & Noman, M. (2014). Teacher autonomy support: Does it hinder motivation among Thai students?. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 11, 171-189.
- Kaur, A., Hashim, R. A., & Noman, M. (2015). Teacher autonomy support intervention as a classroom practice in a Thai school: A self-determination theory perspective. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 9(1), 10-27.
- Kitjaroonchai, N., & Kitjaroonchai, T. (2013). Motivation toward English language learning of students in secondary and high schools in Education Service Area Office 4, Saraburi Province, Thailand. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 1(1), 22-33. doi:10.11648/j.ijll.20130101.14
- Loima, J. (2016). A decision-maker or a collaborator? Reflecting teacher's professional development trends in Thailand. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1-9.

- Loima, J., & Vibulphol, J. (2014). Internal interest or external performing? A qualitative study on motivation and learning of 9th graders in Thailand basic education. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 3(3), 194-203. doi:10.5539/jel.v3n3p194
- Ministry of Education (2008). *The Basic education core curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008)*. Retrieved from <http://www.act.ac.th/document/1741.pdf>
- Reeve, J. (1996). *Motivating others: Nurturing inner motivational resources*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Reeve, J. (2016). Autonomy-supportive teaching: What it is, how to do it. *Building Autonomous Learners*, 129-152.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (2014). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Merrill.
- Singhnarang, P., & Gajaseni, C. (2018). Effects of teacher's motivating styles on learner autonomy of English as a foreign language elementary students. *An Online Journal of Education*, 13(4), 257-269. Retrieved from <https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/OJED/article/view/204722>
- Tongpoon-Patanasorn, A. (2011). Impact of learner-centeredness on primary school teachers: A case study in Northeast Thailand. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 8(3), 1-28.
- Vibulphol, J. (2016). Students' motivation and learning and teachers' motivational strategies in English classrooms in Thailand. *English Language Teaching*, 9(4), 64-75. doi:10.5539/elt.v9n4p64
- Wentzel, K. R., & Brophy, J. E. (2014). *Motivating students to learn*. New York, NY: Routledge.