

**A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF
NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS AT THE
ASIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates 77 non-native English graduate students attending post graduate programs at an international institute in Thailand, known as the Asian Institute of Technology. These students are in their second year of study and belong to different fields of study. This study investigates the factors that affect the English acquisition ability of these students.

The hypothesis that was formulated at the initial stage of the study says that positive attitude, good motivation and higher exposure enhance the acquisition of English proficiency among non-native English speakers.

The research data were collected from responses to a questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted on the web page and the respondents were asked to complete it. Results show that motivation, attitude as well as exposure to the language in the day to day life has strong positive effect on acquiring English proficiency. The fact that proficiency in English will help progress career either in the form of attaining a job or having the opportunity to study further internationally was found to be the single most important driving factor for acquiring English proficiency. The SPSS analysis for correlation studies shows that motivation is strongly correlated with acquiring English proficiency.

However, due to a small sample size, make it is difficult to produce any conclusive remark on this issue; it can be very well suggested that all three factors, motivation, exposure to the language and attitude, have a strong positive relationship with English language acquisition.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

English might not be the most widely spoken language in the world, especially in terms of number of native speakers, but it is the world's most prominent language. According to English as a Spoken Language statistics, it has been estimated that out of the, roughly, 6 billion people throughout the world about 450 million speak English. English is the ideal language for many governments around the world, and it is also prominent in business, education, world news, and communication. There are a number of powerful tools that have allowed more people to learn English than ever, one of which is using English as medium of instruction in education. In Thailand, a number of international institutions and programs have been established to achieve this goal. At present, both public and private universities in Thailand offer, altogether, 425 international programs using English as the medium of instruction at both undergraduate and graduate levels (MOE, 2003-2004). Most of the programs have a high number of students who do not use English as their native language.

Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) is one of the region's largest international graduate institutions offering higher degrees to students from around the world. It has 2,000 graduate students from more than 40 countries and territories and 130 world class faculty members from more than 20 countries. AIT, offer an excellent opportunity for multinational and multi- cultural interaction.

In all international programs, English is used as medium for instruction. Both understanding and communicating in English can have a direct influence on academic achievements. The communication of and learning of a second language, which in this case is English, is an arduous task which requires a lot of effort. However, no sufficient studies have been done on the effect of certain factors (such as aptitude, personality, motivation, attitudes, learner preferences, learner beliefs, age) on learning English language.

The study is intended to evaluate the comparative importance of various factors on non-native English Speaking students acquiring English proficiency with focus on importance of attitude, motivation and exposure to English in terms of learning environment. The English proficiency level of each respondent will be evaluated quantitatively by two standardize test scores organized by the Language Center of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In an international academic environment, a better interpersonal attitude results in higher improvement in acquiring English proficiency. An English placement test, English Interviewee Test (EIT), a mandatory test organized by Language Center of AIT and Academic Writing Placement Test (AWPT), organized after the intensive English course(s), for student who performed poorly in the EIT, will be used as the tool for evaluating improvement in English proficiency for non-native English speaking students.

The hypotheses used in the study are:

- A positive attitude towards English language would improve the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students.
- Good motivation towards English language would improve the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students.
- A high chance for exposure to English would improve the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 To study the role of attitude as an internal factor that affects the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students at AIT

1.3.2 To study the role of motivation as an internal factor that affects the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students at AIT

1.3.3 To study the exposure to English in terms of learning environment at AIT as an external factor that affects the English proficiency of non-native English speaking students at AIT

1.3.4 To investigate the students' opinions on being proficient in English.

1.3.5 To understand the relationship among the respondents' English proficiency towards factors on attitude, motivation and exposure to English.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher selected only second year graduate students enrolled in the Master Degree Program in the School of Environment, Resources and Development (SERD) as the samples for this research due to the following main reasons:

- Budget and time were personal limitations of the researcher.
- There would have been greater diversity in terms of their educational background, if the research study had been conducted on students from all three Schools of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).
- All AIT students in degree programs must attain a passing grade of 'C' or higher for the course EL19: Academic and Technical Writing; otherwise, they will not be allowed to graduate. Therefore, students from the master program requiring a two-year-duration were selected as the samples for this research to maintain a balance in the student groups in terms of years of study.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will focus on the effect of Social-Psychological factors; Motivation, Attitude; and Exposure to English in terms of the learning environment at AIT relating to acquiring English proficiency as a language for communication by non-native English speaking students, irrespective of their nationalities and ages.

Two different standardized English test scores, organized by the Language Center of AIT, of 207 non-native English speaking students from field of studies under SERD, were collected through the Language Center. The respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire to evaluate their English proficiency and to attain their point of views relating to academic environment at AIT that could encourage improvement of their English proficiency. This result will be statistically analyzed using Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of the terms of this study are as follows:

English proficiency refers to the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language. Proficient speakers demonstrate both accuracy and fluency, and use a variety of communication strategies in language.

AIT Non-native English Speaking student refers to the group of students studying in different social and technical programs at Master Degree level whose native language or mother tongue is not English, and need to use a certain level of effort to acquire proficiency in English as a Second language.

The Language Center offers a range intensive language and academic preparation programs for students preparing for study at AIT. The programs are intended to ensure that prospective students learn to use English for their own educational purposes while improving their competencies in the language. Regular courses are offered every semester and during term breaks.

AIT English Interviewee Test (AIT-EIT) refers to an in-house test of English proficiency. This test is called the AIT English Interviewee Test or **AIT-EIT**, as it is regularly taken by applicants who come to campus for an interview with a member of faculty; however, anyone interested can take the test before or after they apply. It is scored on a scale similar to IELTS, so a writing score of 4.5 is acceptable for admission to AIT. The **AIT-EIT** is a 90-minute test, which consists of three parts (Listening, English Structure and Essay Writing). Scaling pattern and further details of AWPT are presented in Chapter 2.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study can provide an excellent insight on the factors that play an important role in acquiring English skills. One of the main goals of international program is to create competent graduate students who can communicate proficiently in English language. This research will provide an insight about the interpersonal skills of respondents and their perspective of the learning environment. The study can be utilized to develop an approach to teach English which might differ from individual to individual as well as fixing any loopholes in the learning environment, if there any.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

A Study of Factors Affecting the English Proficiency of Non-Native English Speaking Students at the School of Environment, Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology is divided into 5 chapters.

Chapter 1 consists of the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study and definitions of terms. Also, the significance and organization of this study as well as the limitations of the research are included in this chapter.

Chapter 2 comprises a review of literature relevant to this study. There are five main issues discussed in the review of literature. The first issue is about the importance of English as Communication Language. The second issue provides some theories regarding the motivation in learning English. The third issue deals with relevant research on attitudes in learning English. The fourth issue deals with some studies on exposure to English. Lastly, the fifth issue provides some related studies on English proficiency.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this study which includes the population and sampling, instruments, data collection method and data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the information of the findings collected from the questionnaires.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study as well as the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

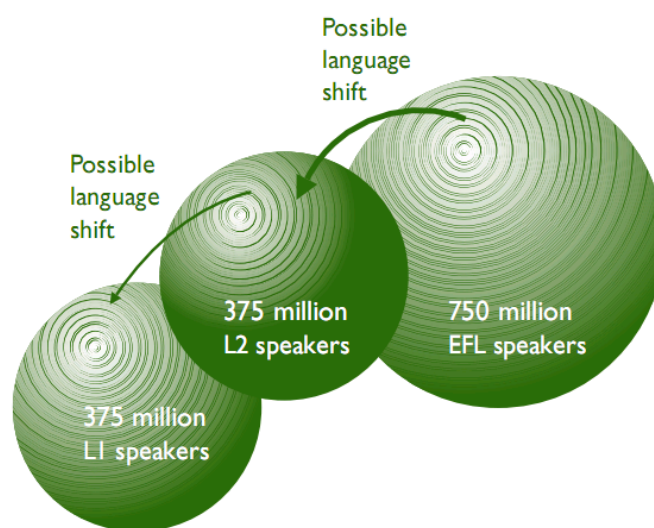
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH AS COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE

It is undeniable that English is an important means of communication, especially in the era of globalization. The quality of higher education was one of the major issues raised in the World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 1988 in Paris (Wang & Kim, 2000). In terms of English proficiency, TOEFL scores are one of the indicators to inform learners whether they are ready to study at graduate level. Most graduate schools in the West accept foreign students who have obtained a TOEFL score of at least 550.

According to Graddol (2000, p. 10), there are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language ‘belongs’ to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

Figure1. The three circles of English overlap making it easier to see how the ‘centre of gravity’ will shift towards L2 speakers at the start of the 21st century.



From: The future of English? (p.10) by D. Graddol, 2000. The British Council. The English Company (UK) Ltd.

For that reason we retain here the terminology of ‘first-language’ (L1), ‘second-language’ (L2) and ‘speaker of English as a foreign language’ (EFL). Figure 1 provides an alternative way of visualizing these three communities.

English, for non-native English speakers is second language acquisition. Second language acquisition is the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their native language(s) due to certain requirements or because of sheer interest. Learning a second language, especially in the formal classroom situation, is a hard task which requires a lot of effort, motivation, aptitude, and interpersonal skills.

2.2 INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LEARNING

Internal factors represent our ignorance of what really happens inside the learner’s mind. Some of the important internal factors which affect English acquisition in non-native speakers are: age, aptitude, motivation, attitude, personality, learning style.

2.2.1 AGE

Table 1. Influence of Age on Second Language Acquisition

			LANGUAGE LEARNING SUCCESS	
			In L2 CONTEXTS	In FL CONTEXTS
RATE			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults are faster Older children are faster than younger ones Decline in learning speed between 6 for pronunciation and 16 for grammar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not-so-young children and adults are faster at grammar & pronunciation with formal instruction
FINAL ACHIEVEMENT			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The earlier the arrival the better L2 similarities with L1 increase success No connection with number of years spent in L2 country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less probabilities of success, though there are exceptions
DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERNS			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same stages for children and adults, through different acquisition processes 	
AGE & OTHER FACTORS			(success is more probable if age is connected to other factors)	
INTERNAL TO LEARNER	ATTITUDE		(also applies to L2 ctxs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children benefit from memory, whereas adults benefit from analytical skills Effect stronger for FL ctxs.
	MOTIVATION		(also applies to L2 ctxs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effect stronger for FL ctxs.
	SEX		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls are better, particularly if early arrivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effect found yet
EXTERNAL TO LEARNER	TEACHING	Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal teaching recommended avoid fossilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supra-segmental and segmental training Authentic input and phonological feedback Input enhancement techniques
		Grammar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus-on-form teaching
	L1 LITERACY			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having developed L1 literacy skills

A number of studies have been done on the effects of age on second language acquisition. The studies conclude that adults have an initial advantage where rate of learning is concerned, particularly in grammar. They will eventually be overtaken by children who receive enough exposure to the L2. The results, however, do not complement when second language exposure happens in formal/instructional contexts.

2.2.2 APTITUDE

There has not been too much work done in this area due to the fact that aptitude is something quite difficult to alter. However, different authors have divided aptitude into different subdivisions. According to Carroll, 1991, it consists of four sub-components; phonetic coding ability, associative memory, grammatical sensitivity and inductive language analytic ability. However, according to Skehan (1998), components that contribute to aptitude development are auditory ability, linguistic ability, and memory ability. These components, as Table 2.2.2 shows, correlate strongly with language learning success.

Table 2. Three sub-components on aptitude (according to Skehan, 1998)

Aptitude factor	Stage	Operations
Phonemic coding ability	Input	Noticing
Language analytic ability	Central Processing	Pattern identification Generalization Restructuring Dual-code organization
Memory	Output	Retrieval -computed performance -exemplar-based perform.

Aptitude is a specific talent for language, which differs strongly from general intelligence: aptitude has a high correlation to language learning success, while intelligence does not.

Research shows that exceptional language learners might not be exceptional in two of three components which make up aptitude (phonemic coding ability and language analytic ability), but seem to ‘confine’ their exceptional nature to the third (memory). Very weak learners usually lack input skills.

2.2.3 MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Motivation is perhaps the factor generally believed to have the greatest impact on success. It is usually defined “as a psychological trait which leads people to achieve some goal. In language learning, that goal may be mastery of the language or achievement of some lesser aim” (McDonough, 1998, pp. 219–220).

According to Gardner and Lambert, cited in Spolsky, (2000, p. 149), attitude is the source of motivation. Attitude can be measured by an individual in the way of evaluating an object. Gardner also defined that “Motivation in the present context refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language” (Spolsky, 2000, p.149). Therefore, motivation is comprised of ‘orientation’, and ‘motivational intensity’;

2.2.3.1 Integrative Motivation: It has been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language by Crookes and Schmidt (as cited in Jacqueline Norris-Holt, 2001). It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used (Falk, 1978). This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members.

2.2.3.2 Instrumental Motivation: In contrast to integrative motivation, this is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. This is generally characterised by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson 2000, as cited in Jacqueline Norris-Holt, 2001). With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of

the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

Then, orientation provides reasons as to why a second language is learnt, while motivational intensity stands for the effort and persistence in the learning process.

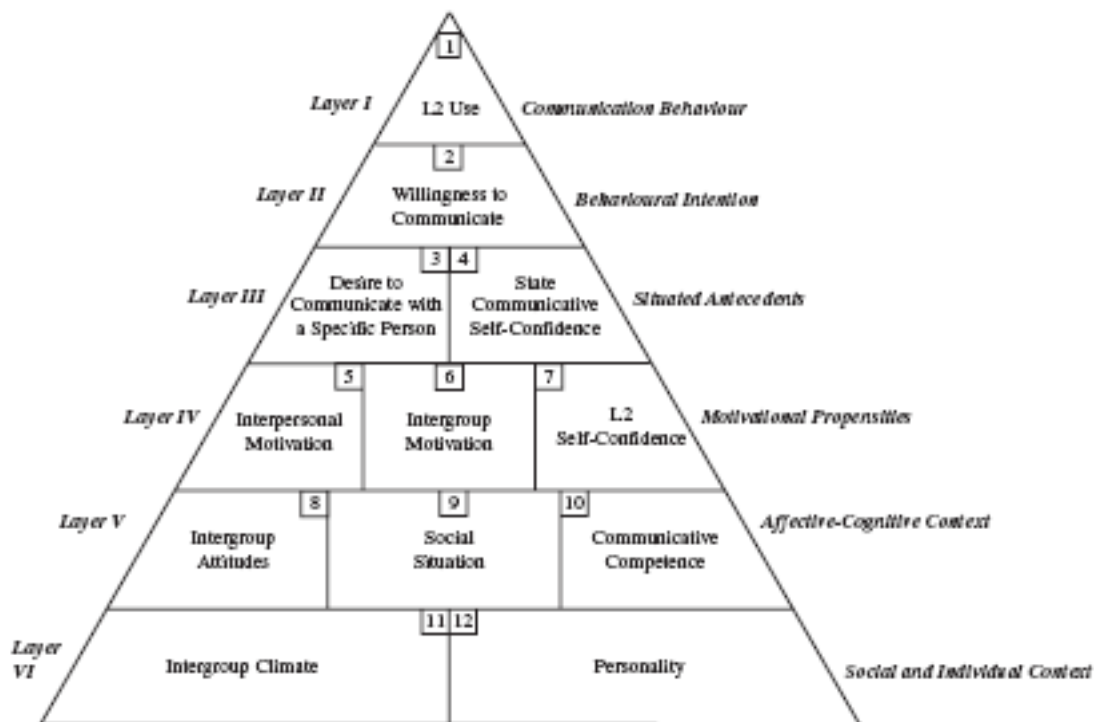
Falk J.(1978) showed that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used.

In a study conducted by Berwick and Ross (1989), a group of 90 first-year Japanese university students enrolled in an international commerce and a compulsory English course were examined to determine their degree and form of motivation. The students were found to possess motivation, with the underlying reason for studying English being the entrance exam requirements for university. However, upon entrance to the desired establishment the student's interest to continue study declined.

However, according to Dörnyei (2003, pp. 12-14), the motivation to learn a foreign or second language also involves the speaker's "willingness to communicate." Dörnyei stated that while willingness to communicate in the first language is inspired by the characteristic of the speakers themselves, the willingness to communicate in the second language is more complex depending on the level of second language (Dörnyei, 2003, p.12)

The variables of a learner influencing the willingness to communicate in the foreign or second language are shown in the following Pyramid:

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the variables influencing the willingness to communication by Dörnyei



According to the above theories, it can be proven that the reason that one decides to study another language is because of their survival needs. When a learner is in an environment or a society where English is commonly used, it is necessary for them to struggle and be more active in order to acquire the new language as rapidly as possible because this will also help the learner to survive, be able to interact with other people and finally become an acceptable member of such a community.

2.2.4 ATTITUDE

Attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. People that simultaneously possess a positive and a negative attitude towards certain issues or thing are known as "ambivalent". It is one factor that causes success or failure for learners.

Chandrasegaran (1981) gave a definition of 'attitude' as emotions and thoughts relating to English language, to the learning of English, and to the culture of English speaking peoples.

Rubin & Thompson (1994) defined attitude as the important key that brings success or failure to learners. It may have to do with the way learners feel

about the foreign culture and its people. They may admire the culture and want to learn more about it by becoming fluent in the foreign language or they may like the people who speak the language and want to be accepted by them. There is a certain relationship between attitudes and success when English language learners have an opportunity to know people who speak English. These positive attitudes help learners maintain their interest long enough to achieve their goals. However, some learners can succeed in English without an interest in a country or its people. These learners may need the language for academic or career purposes, so they have a pragmatic attitude.

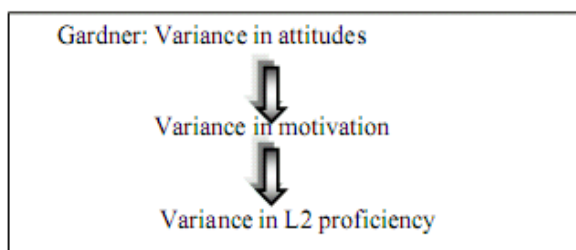
A study from Hendrickson (1997) found that motivation along with attitude were the best predictors of student grade point averages.

The researchers concluded that students with different types of learning styles, motivation, attitudes, and backgrounds learned equally well in Web-based courses.

Studies from Day, Raven, and Newman (1997) found that attitude towards particular type of learning does not affect learning styles and student achievement. A similar type of study by Ching-Chun Shih, Julia Gamon (2001) shows that students with difference in learning styles, motivation, attitudes, and backgrounds do not show difference in learning.

The attitude towards the specific group is the most important attitude; that is, the attitude learners have towards the members of the cultural group whose language they are leaning. Nevertheless, it is clearly evident that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. Therefore, the teacher needs to be aware of positive and negative attitudes (Brown, 1987). Gardner and some other authors instead of considering attitude and motivation separately consider them together as Social-Psychological factors. The effect of Social-Psychological factors on second Language acquisition can be represented as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Gardner's summary of Social-Psychological factors



2.2.5 PERSONALITY

Studies show that the major components of particular personality affect on acquiring second language are extroversion, anxiety, risk-taking, sensitivity to rejection, and empathy. Studies also show negative correlation between pronunciation and extroversion.

Extroversion does not lead to success in second language acquisition, but it may be a trait that encourages people to continue with their study, which in turn promotes second language acquisition. A higher risk taking behavior shows positive correlation with acquiring English proficiency skill. Some research studies indicate the nature of taking risk the willingness to guess, to appear foolish in order to communicate, relate with higher ability to second language acquisition.

Anxiety, sensitivity to rejection, an antithesis of risk-taking behavior, and empathy are not found to be directly related to second language acquiring skill. Table 3 shows the connection between various personality behaviors with second language acquisition success.

Table 3. Summary of personality behavior and their connection with SLA success

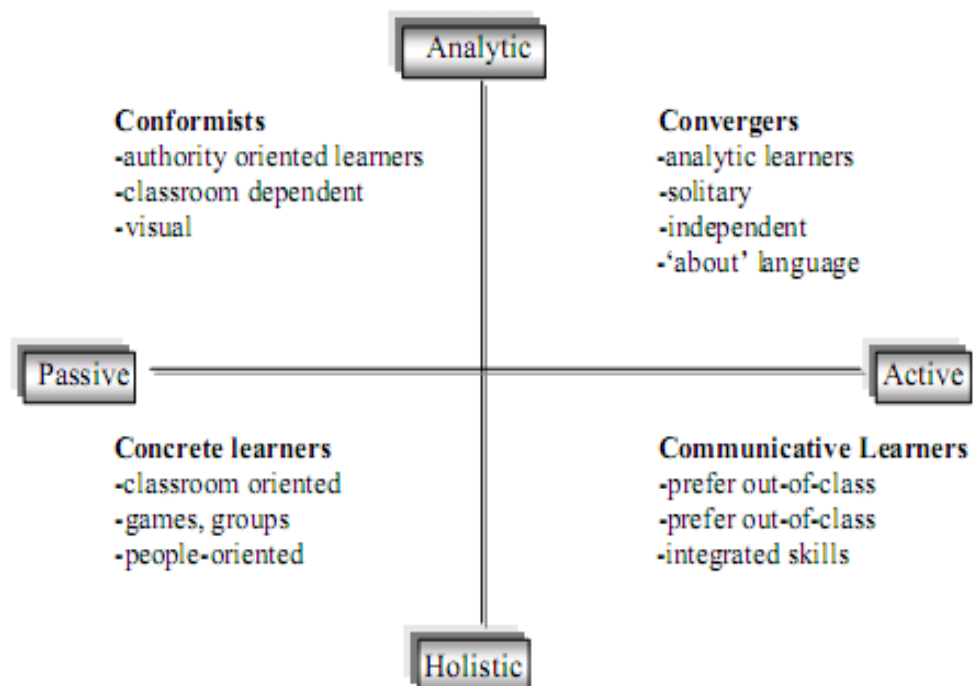
Personality variable	Definition	Connections with SLA success
Self-esteem	Feeling of self-worth of the individual Types: overall self-assessment / specific self-esteem / task self-esteem	
Extroversion-introversion	Extroverts are sociable, risk-taking, lively and active Introverts are quiet and prefer non-social activities	+++ connections with basic interpersonal skills + connections with reading and grammar skills
Risk-taking	Willingness to take risks	+ connections if moderate risk-taking behavior for testing hypothesis about language
Empathy	Ability to put oneself in another's place	
Inhibition	Extent to which individuals build defenses to protect their egos	
Tolerance of ambiguity	Ability to deal with ambiguous stimuli	+ connections with listening comprehension skills

Summary of personality variables and their connection with SLA success. A + indicates a weak correlation, whereas +++ shows very strong connections.

2.2.6 LEARNING STYLE

Learning style represents the preferred way in which individual process information or approach a particular task. It is a tendency, but those individuals favoring one style may switch to another in some circumstances. The four types of learners are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Four types of Cognitive/Learning Style



Conformists and convergers are field dependent (FD) learners, while the other two are field independent (FID) learners. Studies show that FID learners generally have higher ability to acquire proficiency in second language than field dependent learners.

2.3 EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH AS FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LEARNING

Exposure to the target language can bring success in learning a language. A study from Bialysok and Fohlch, cited in Chandeasegaran (1981) showed that the model of second language learning identifies two types of linguistic knowledge, which are explicit and implicit.

Explicit linguistic knowledge refers to the rules and vocabulary consciously learnt, while implicit linguistic knowledge refers to the rules and other features of the language which are unconsciously absorbed. These can be implied in Krashen's model for adult second language learners.

According to Krashen, adults learn second language in two ways: they may 'acquire' it or they may 'learn' it. We acquire when we are involved in meaningful interaction in the second language, with no attention to form. On the other hand, we learn by a conscious process of study and attention to form and error correction, the same as in a formal language classroom. For Krashen, acquisition is a more important process. He believes that language acquisition is the only effective way to develop fluent communication (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 27).

2.4 ACADEMIC WRITING PLACEMENT TEST (AWPT)

All students who are studying for a diploma or degree program at AIT are required to take the AIT Academic Writing Placement (AWP) Test when they first arrive on campus. You will not be allowed to enroll for any courses AIT unless you have taken the AWP Test.

The placement test consists of two tasks. The first is a description of data (75-100 words), and the second is an essay (250 - 350 words). These two tasks are scored on a nine point scale. (The scale is similar to the IELTS scores.) All students at AIT must attain a score of at least 6 out of 9 on the AWP Test.

2.4.1 AWPT SCORE AND INTERPRETATION

Students who receive an AWPT score of less than 6.0 are required to attend an EL writing course to improve their writing skill. Students who attend English classes are occasionally re-tested. Students need to continue attending EL courses until they score 6.0 or higher.

The writing score is an average of three sub-scores as follows:

- (a) Score for English structure and usage (grammar and vocabulary);
- (b) Score for coherence and cohesion (logical organization of ideas and use of linking words and phrases within and between paragraphs); and,
- (c) Score for task fulfillment (ability to describe data accurately and to produce an essay with a well-presented argument).

The minimum score for admission to AIT is 4.5, and the score that a student needs to receive in order to graduate is 6.0. Many students gain a score of 6.0 or higher on the placement Test. An explanation of the scores, an example of the test, and a description of the English courses provided by language center are provided in the appendix.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes: (1) subjects (2) instruments/materials (3) procedures, and (4) data analysis.

3.1 SUBJECTS

In this study, the total number of students whose native language is not English and who were enrolled in the Master's degree program in School of Environment, Resources and Development at Asian Institute of Technology formed the total population of the respondents. These respondents attained a re-test score of AWPT during their third semester of the study program.

According to the AIT Data Base, around 207 graduate students fall into this category. The respondents through non-probability sampling, were selected randomly from this population. The opinions of around 33% of the total population were used to analyze the study; thus, the subjects consist of 77 second year graduate students.

3.2 INSTRUMENT

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire that was designed to find out the opinions of post graduate students as well as to determine whether positive attitude and good motivation as Social-Psychological factors could improve the student's English proficiency.

The questionnaire provided closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and five-point Likert weighted scale (Kumar, 1999). The questions in the various categories employed the Likert Scale were credited as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA)	=	5	points
Agree (A)	=	4	points
Uncertain/Indifferent (U/I)	=	3	points
Disagree (D)	=	2	points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	=	1	points

The questionnaire was divided into four main parts.

3.2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

This part consisted of five questions asking about the background information of the respondents such as gender, age, as well as English language background and academic background information.

3.2.2 GENERAL INFORMATION ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL

This question asked for the respondents' information on English proficiency level passes through EIT and AWPT at AIT.

3.2.3 THE ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION AS INTERNAL FACTORS AND EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH (LEARNING ENVIRONMENT) THAT AFFECT THE STUDENT'S ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

These questions were used to find out whether positive attitude and good motivation as Social-Psychological factors could improve the student's English proficiency. The attitudinal scale with five-point Likert weighted scale was applied to this part.

3.2.4 SURVEY OF STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON HAVING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

This part consisted of three questions which were aimed to find out what the student thought of their English proficiency and other benefits on having themselves proficient in English, together with their suggestions on any improvement in teaching and social environment to enhance their English proficiency while studying at AIT.

3.3 PROCEDURES

The questionnaire was distributed to 207 respondents via email that could be accessed on the campus.

The email introduced the researcher, gave the purpose of the survey study and provided a web link containing the on-lined questionnaire for the respondents. The researcher started distributing the questionnaire in the middle of November, 2008 requesting that they returned the completed questionnaire to the researcher within two

weeks to facilitate the processing of the data. A copy of the email and on-line questionnaire are provided in the appendix.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The statistical methods used were descriptive statistics to compute frequencies, percentage, means, and standard deviation (SD) of factors on attitude, motivation and exposure to English that have an effect on English proficiency of the respondents.

The correlation analysis by the SPSS program was used to understand the relationship between English proficiency of the respondents towards factors on attitude, motivation and exposure to English.

CHPATER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings on attitude and motivation as Social-psychological factors affecting non-native English speaking students on their English proficiency. These results were obtained from on-line questionnaires distributed to 207 graduate students from the August 2007 intake, who were enrolled in the Master's degree program in School of Environment, Resources and Development at Asian Institute of Technology.

77 students, representing around 33% of the total population of 207, completed this on-line questionnaire via <http://www.quicktionnaire.com/index.php?sid=15491&lang=en> and submitted it electronically. The result were presented using descriptive statistics and were tabulated in ranking format by frequency, means, standard deviation (S.D.) The correlation analysis through SPSS program version 16.0 was applied to this study to understand the relationship between English proficiency and factors on attitude, motivation and exposure to English.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts consisting of closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and five-point Likert weighted scale to find out; 1) Background information 2) English Proficiency Level 3) Attitude, Motivation and Exposure to English and 4) the students' opinions on having English proficiency.

4.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 5. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	45	58.4
Male	32	41.6
Total	77	100

Table 5 presents the gender of the total 77 respondents. The majority of respondents were female, 58.4 %, and the minority of the respondents were male, 41.6%.

Table 6. Age Range of the Respondents

Age Range of Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
25-30 years	53	68.8
31-35 years	16	20.8
36-40 years	8	10.4
Total	77	100

Respondents aged between 25-30 years were significantly shared more than half, 68.8%, of the total respondents. There were about 20.8% of aged between 31-35 years, while respondents aged between 36-40 years account for 10.4%.

Table 7. Number of years since starting to learn English

Number of years since starting to learn English	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 12 years	37	48.1
12-15 years	12	15.6
More than 15 years	28	36.4
Total	77	100

Table 7 shows that the majority of students started learning English less than 12 years ago.

Table 8. Experience in using English

Experience in using English in previous studies/jobs before joining AIT	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	41	53.2
No	36	46.8
Total	77	100

Respondent who had experience in using English before joining AIT accounted for 53.2% of the total number of respondents, whereas 46.8% had no such experience .

Table 9. Academic Background

Academic Background	Frequency	Percent (%)
Technical /Engineering	48	62.3
Science	25	32.5
Social Science/ Humanities	4	5.2
Total	77	100

The respondents who held a bachelor degree of a technical or engineer nature accounted for the largest portion of the total respondents, (i.e. 48 students or 62.3%). 25 respondents, 32.5%, were from a science background while respondents with bachelor degree in Social Science/Humanities comprised of only 5.2% of the total 77 respondents.

4.2 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 10. English Proficiency Level

English Placement Test Score	Frequency	Percent (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Interviewee Test Scores: (1st Test/EIT) 		
Less than 5.0	19	24.68
5.0-5.4	24	31.17
5.5-5.9	30	38.96
6.0 and above	4	5.19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Writing Placement Test Scores: (2nd Test/AWPT) 		
Less than 5.0	0	0.00
5.0-5.4	16	20.78
5.5-5.9	15	19.48
6.0 and above	46	59.74
Total	77	100

At the English Interviewee Test (EIT), only 5.19% of respondent obtained a score of 6.0 or above. The majority of the respondents' EIT score was between 5.0-5.4 points, 31.17%, and 5.5-5.9 point, 19.48 %.

The number of respondents who achieved a score of 6.0 and above from the Academic Writing Placement Test (AWPT) increased to 59.74 %, while no respondent received a score less than 5.0.

4.3 THE INTERNAL FACTORS, ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION, THAT AFFECT ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF THE RESPONDENTS

The respondents were asked to rate their opinion about factors on attitude and motivation that could affect their English proficiency according to the degree of agreement or disagreement, starting as follows;

Strongly Agree (SA)	=	5	points
Agree (A)	=	4	points
Uncertain/Indifferent (U/I)	=	3	points
Disagree (D)	=	2	points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	=	1	points

4.3.1 EFFECT OF ATTITUDE ON ACQUIRING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Table 11 indicates that the factors on getting a better chance for job/ promotion after graduation than other colleagues has the highest mean – 4.57, followed by factor on advantage in pursuing their higher education at AIT – 4.53. The results suggest the respondents' perceptions in achieving advancement on their career path through higher education. However, from another aspect, this has not been reflected much in their opinion on factor of getting socially more respected if they know English well. – 3.65.

Table 11. Degree of Agreement about Factors on Attitude toward English Proficiency

Statements on Attitude	Mean	S.D.
1) I believe that with better English proficiency skill I will have a better chance to get job/	4.57	1.09

(table continues)

Table 11. (continued)

promotion after graduation than other colleagues.		
2) I believe that good English Proficiency Skill is useful for pursuing my higher education at AIT.	4.53	1.10
3) I like to know people from other countries and that requires good English skill	4.32	1.13
4) I could achieve higher GPA if I have good English proficiency	4.06	1.32
5) I think a well-educated-person should know English.	3.92	1.45
6) I will be socially more respected if I know English well.	3.65	1.60
Total	4.18	1.28

4.3.2 EFFECT OF MOTIVATION ON ACQUIRING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SKILL

The respondents were asked to rate their opinion about factors on motivation that could affect their English Proficiency according to the degree of agreement or disagreement, starting as follows;

Table 12. Degree of Agreement about Factors on Motivation toward English Proficiency

Statements on Motivation	Mean	S.D.
1) Learning English is important for me to get career advancement or to get a good job after graduation.	4.60	1.09
2) Learning English will enable me to pursue for a higher education level in an international program.	4.52	1.10
3) Learning English is necessary in my field of study	4.31	1.22
4) Learning English enables me to join more freely in the multicultural activities with friends at AIT.	4.10	1.28
Total	4.36	1.17

The highest mean score, 4.60, fell in the factor of importance in learning English for the respondents to get career advancement or to get a good job after graduation. Similarly, the factor on Learning English will enable them to pursue a higher education level in an international program, with mean score – 4.52. These top-two-mean scores present those factors on motivation as the driving force of the respondents to pursue their higher graduation under an international program.

4.4 EFFECT OF ENGLISH EXPOSURE ON ACQUIRING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The respondents were asked to rate their opinions about factors on exposure to English that could affect their English proficiency according to the degree of agreement or disagreement, as follows:

Table 13. Exposure to English

Statement on Exposure to English	Mean	S.D.
1) Regular presentations in English during my studies in AIT improve my English	4.38	1.14
2) The multicultural environment at AIT and interaction among various nationalities at AIT help me to improve my English.	4.30	1.12
3) Participation in extracurricular activities helps me to improve my English.	4.30	1.21
4) The course-instructors and method of teaching at the Language Center encourage me to improve my English.	4.10	1.17
5) Living on AIT campus allows me to use English in my daily life.	4.01	1.30
6) The course-content of the courses offered at the Language Center encourages me to improve my English.	3.90	1.17
7) I need to be good at English for accessing research	3.90	1.37

(table continues)

Table 13. (continued)

labs and the library at AIT.		
8) Participation in various gatherings like, Welcome show, Food festival, Cultural show organized by AIT help me to improve my English.	3.80	1.10
9) Reading e- mails sent from different units in AIT help me to get a better understanding of English.	3.79	1.36
Total	4.05	1.22

The factor regular presentations in English during the respondents' studies at AIT improve his/her English plays a major role in exposure to English with the top mean score of 4.38. The factor on 'Multicultural environment of AIT and interaction among various nationalities at AIT', and 'Participation in the extracurricular, activities helped them to improve their English were equally rated with the same mean score of 4.30.

4.5 THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE RESPONDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TOWARDS FACTORS ON ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION AND EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH.

The findings addressed the strength of linear relationship in pairs among these variables; AWPT Score, attitude, motivation and exposure to English of the respondents.

According to Table 4.6.1, the significance of the correlation coefficient is at 0.01 level with two-tailed decision. The resulting coefficient in pairs between attitude and motivation accounts for the highest value of correlation coefficient at 0.926, followed by correlation coefficient value between exposure to English towards attitude and motivation at 0.889. The AWPT score's correlation coefficient with motivation, attitude and exposure to English presents the value at 0.411, 0.319 and 0.306 respectively.

Table 14. Correlation Coefficients Factors on Attitude, Motivation and Exposure to English on English Proficiency,

Variable		AWPT Score	Attitude	Motivation	Exposure to English
AWPT Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.319**	.411**	.306**
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.319**	1	.926**	.889**
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.411**	.926**	1	.889**
Exposure to English	Pearson Correlation	.306**	.889**	.889**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.6 THE RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS ABOUT OPINION ON HAVING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Twenty five respondents from the total of 77 provided response to the descriptive type questions.

On the question of English proficiency of respondents, the majority of the student who responded generally felt that they have moderately good quality of English proficiency. The responses received included “it is moderate level”, “OK just enough to survive”, “Good but not adequate for further application”. Only two respondents felt that their English proficiency level was below standard.

The comments on this correlate with the fact that the majority of respondent scored between 5-6 in the AWP Test, which, according to score definition of AWPT score indicates that the students have moderate level of English.

On the question of improvement in teaching and social environment of AIT, they are looking to enhance their English proficiency, the respondent looks too diversified. On the aspect of improvement in teaching environment, few felt that faculties should spend more time with students. There were some respondents who felt that the test should be designed assess all areas like writing, reading, speaking and listening. On

Social aspect, the respondents generally agree on the point that the multicultural environment helps improve their proficiency if the students from different countries help each other more to improve their language and organize more social and community activities. There were a number of respondents who did not suggest any improvements but felt that the English proficiency classes provided by the language center at AIT helped to develop their skill of writing technical papers and presentations.

The majority of respondents felt that with a better communication skill in English they will have more chance to get high salary job globally and probably that serves a single most important driving factor of motivation in acquiring English proficiency skills. Some respondents consider the ability to express views to people from other countries, the ability to make friends with people from other countries and the increased ability to understand international news as some of the many benefits of acquiring English skills.

As mentioned earlier, since only some of respondents provided their views on these open- end questions, it is difficult to provide a generalized idea about their views on these issues. The author here discussed the responses which provide closest representation of the view of the respondents.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The objective of this study was to evaluate the factors affecting acquisition of secondary language i.e. English, by non-native English speaking students doing their advanced degree in different fields. The study was done through conducting a survey. The groups of respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire posted and which later analyzed. The study evaluated the effect of internal factors such as motivation, attitude as well as external factors like exposure to English, and academic environment on acquiring English proficiency skills. 77 responses were used to analyse these results accounting for 33% of the total population.

More than 50% of the respondents were female aged between 25-30 years. Most of the respondents have been exposed to English less than 12 years in their native country and have used English in their previous studies and/or job before joining AIT for pursuing higher education. Almost 62% of the respondents hold a bachelor degree with Technical/Engineer academic background.

5.1.2 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL

The English proficiency of the various non-native English speaking respondents attained from a standardized test was presented in Table 4.1. The results show a clear difference in standardized score of the two tests. The first test score which has taken by the respondents immediately after joining AIT shows that more than 50% of the graduate students scored less than 5.5, which is rated as unsatisfactory scale. There were almost 25% of the respondents whose score was less than 5.0 in first scale, which clearly indicated that even though the respondents were exposed to English in their native country less than 12 years, due to the natural habit

of conversing in their native language, their English proficiency was still unsatisfactory.

However, the scores significantly increased in the second test which is done after the respondents took English course(s) offered by the Language Center. The results show significantly higher amount of respondents scoring 6.0 and above which, according to the AWPT standards, represent a satisfactory level of English proficiency. The improvement in their English efficiency might be due to the teaching methods used by the Language Center instructors or might be due to the increased exposure to English in the multicultural environment at AIT.

The effect of exposure of language as well as internal factors on language proficiency, are discussed in the following section.

5.1.3 EFFECT OF INTERNAL FACTORS ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The internal factors affecting the skills are divided in two major sections; attitude and motivation; in learning a language. The respondents were asked to fill a certain number of questions in the questionnaire on a 5-point-scale where 5 points means strongly agree while 1 point indicates strong disagreement. An analysis of the results are discussed in a separate section.

5.1.3.1 Effect of Attitude on Acquiring English Proficiency:
The effect of respondents' attitudes on acquiring the English proficiency is analyzed and presented in Table 4.3.1. The results were presented using mean along with standard deviation. It can be inferred from Table 4.3.1 that getting a better job and usefulness of English in acquiring further higher education are the two most important driving factors. Most of the respondents strongly believe that if they are proficient in English they have a better chance of getting a better job or that it will be helpful to get opportunity for higher education. However, there were very few respondents who felt that English proficiency is essential to gain respect in social circle or to achieve expertise in the field. The results clearly indicate that the attitude driven by sense of achievement in a sense of mental or financial gain is more important in acquiring the skill rather than just the individual attitude. The results, however, conflict with the

findings of Day, Raven, and Newman (1997) as well as Ching-Chun Shih, Julia Gamon (2001) which show that students with different learning styles, and attitudes do not show differences in learning.

5.1.3.2 Effect of Motivation on acquiring English Proficiency:

Motivation, according to Gardner and Lambert, refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language and thus can play important role in acquisition of English proficiency skill. The effects of motivation for this study are presented in Table 4.3.2. The results show that similar to attitude, the most motivating factor that affects an individual to acquire English proficiency skills are the fact that an individual with better English has a better chance to get better job and higher opportunity for further studies. The respondents do not seem to be motivated much with the fact that a better English skill will make them able to be friends with the other international students doing their gradation in same field or in other field. The results are similar to the findings of Berwick and Ross (1989) who found in their study of 90 first-year Japanese university students enrolled in an international program that has a compulsory English course that motivation was linked with entrance exam requirements.

In the case of attitude, it was found that the respondents' agreed that financial and mental achievement motivated them more than social achievement.

5.1.4 EFFECT OF EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH ACQUIRING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

It is believed that exposure to secondary language enhances the ability to acquire proficiency in a secondary language. Considering this fact, the respondents were asked to provide their opinion on whether they feel that exposure of English has increased their proficiency in English. The result from the analysis is presented in Table 4.3.3. The results clearly show a strong agreement of the respondents on the fact that their exposure to English helped to gain a proficiency of the language. The academic exposure through medium of instruction and regular presentations by the respondents in English made the respondent consider it to be a very important factor to improve their English proficiency skill. Respondents also felt that, beside academic

exposure, social exposure through international friends, and participation in multicultural social gatherings plays a positive role in the improvement of their English skills. Living conditions at AIT are another factor which, according to the respondents, increases their English proficiency through regular exposure to the language. However, the respondents did not believe that the academic environment, other than class room environment, helps them much to increase their language proficiency.

5.1.5 RELATIONSHIP AMONG ABOVE FACTORS TOWARD ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Correlation analysis of various factors and improvement of English proficiency was done by T-test analysis through SPSS. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.3.4. The analysis was done to show the correlation between internal as well as external factors on acquiring English proficiency. The English proficiency is measured by the standardized score. The correlation analysis shows that both internal as well as external factors significantly affect acquisition of English proficiency skills. However, motivation found to be strongly correlated with acquiring the skill, which indicates the individual's motivation is the main factor to acquire a proficiency in English. Exposure to the language is also shown to be equally important with high level of correlation with AWPT score. The results from this study resonate the findings of different groups working in the field of factor effecting secondary language acquisition.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to evaluate various factors affecting the English proficiency skill of non-native English speaking students. The study was carried out at Asian Institute of Technology, an International Institution providing graduate level studies in different fields and which has students from 40 different countries. Study was done through a survey completed by the graduate students, who are in their second year of graduation, and belong to countries where the native language is not English. The survey in the form of questionnaire was posted on a website. The researcher requested to the respondent through internal mail to complete the survey. A

total of 77 respondents from the total population of 207 completed the survey and thus representing 33% of the population. The results were analyzed by Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 16.

The majority of the respondents (62%) are from technical science or from engineering fields. Almost 50% of the population responded that they have been learning English in their native country less than 12 years and are involve in dealing with communicating in English in their work or study. However, the score of standardize test organized by AIT, shows different results. In the placement test, which is organized upon arrival of the new students, 50% of the respondents had an unsatisfactory level of English proficiency. The score in the second test increased significantly which shows there might be some correlation of different internal factors like attitude, motivation as well as external factor on increase in English efficiency. The external factors evaluated in this study were exposure to English and academic environment outside of classroom environment.

Further analysis of responses on questions related to internal and external factors show that both internal and external factors have strong positive relationship with acquiring proficiency in English. The fact that proficiency in English will help in moving ahead in the career either in the form of a good job or in the form of opportunity for further studies internationally was found to be the single most important driving factor for acquiring English proficiency. The results clearly indicate that more than integrative motivation, as suggest by Crookes and Schmidt 1991 (as cited in Jacqueline Norris-Holt, 2001), the instrument motivation (Hudson, 2000) is more important in the context of this study. Responses to open-ended questions, which were posted to get input from the respondents on what kind of improvement they expect to further improve their language skills, suggest that at academic level the faculty should spend more time with the students and socially there should be more community events to enhance the chances of interaction among the international community. However, the responses these open-ended questions were provided by very few respondents to offer any concrete evidence.

The SPSS analysis for correlation studies shows that motivation is strongly correlated with acquiring English proficiency. English exposure in academic

environment and daily life also shows very high correlation value with acquiring English proficiency.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey studies are always provide a potential disadvantage in that they depend on socio-psychological state of the respondents while they are completing the questionnaire. The author tried her level best to limit any loop holes in the collecting the data. The questionnaires were posted on web space and giving the respondents the facility to complete the questionnaire through multiple visits. The respondents were selected from second year of their study. However, the posting of the questionnaire posed another limitation since the source does not have any control on the respondents, number of the respondent prefer not to respond especially the open-ended questions. Still, looking at the trends the author would like to make the following recommendations for future studies

- A bigger scale of the survey which include questionnaire filled in front of surveyor as well as through webpage to eliminate any discrepancies
- The survey should include different nationality and nationality wise studies should be done.
- Effect of colonization and education system on language proficiency also needs to be studied.
- This particular study considers the fact that a better writing ability indicate overall a better communication skill due to a limitation of resources; however, there is a need to develop a standardized test, for institution, that evaluate all aspects of English communication skill.
- The author would like to recommend an elaborated study on the effect of other internal and external factors on acquiring other language as well as English.

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APPENDIX A

What your test score means.

The placement test consists of two tasks. The first is a description of data (75-100 words), and the second is an essay (250 - 350 words). These two tasks are scored on a nine point scale. (The scale is similar to the IELTS scores.) All students at AIT must attain a score of at least 6 out of 9 on the AWP Test.

The 9 point scale.

If your writing score is less than 6.0, you are required to attend an [EL writing course](#) to improve your writing. Students who attend English classes are occasionally re-tested. You will continue to attend EL courses until you score 6.0 or higher.

The writing score is an average of three sub-scores as follows: (a) a score for English structure and usage (grammar and vocabulary); (b) a score for coherence and cohesion (logical organization of ideas and use of linking words and phrases within and between paragraphs); and, (c) a score for task fulfillment (ability to describe data accurately and to produce an essay with a well-presented argument).

The minimum score for admission to AIT is 4.5, and the score you need to graduate is 6.0. Many students score 6.0 or higher on the Placement Test. An explanation of the scores follows.

SKILL	Score	Task fulfillment	Coherence & cohesion	Vocabulary & sentence structure
PROFICIENT	9	The writing fulfils the task in a way that satisfies all requirements.	The message can be followed effortlessly. Coherence and cohesion are so skillfully managed that they attract no attention.	A wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures is used accurately and appropriately.
	8	The writing fulfils the task in a very satisfactory manner.	The message can be followed with ease. Coherence and cohesion are very good.	The range of vocabulary and sentence structures used is good, and well controlled for accuracy and

				appropriateness . There are no significant errors in word formation or spelling.
COMPETENT	7	The writing generally addresses the task relevantly, appropriately and accurately. However, it could be more fully developed.	The message can be followed throughout, and usually with ease. Information is generally arranged coherently, and cohesion within and between sentences is well managed.	There is a satisfactory range of vocabulary and sentence structures, usually used appropriately. There are only occasional minor flaws in word formation and in control of sentence structure. Spelling errors may occur, but they are not intrusive.
	6	The writing mostly addresses the task. However, the reader notices some irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate information in areas of minor importance. Minor details may be missing.	The message can be followed throughout. Information is generally arranged coherently, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty with misuse, overuse or omission of cohesive devices.	Vocabulary and sentence structures are generally adequate and appropriate, but the reader may feel that, control is achieved through the use of a restricted range. In contrast, examples of the use of a wider range of structures are not marked by the same level of accuracy. Some errors in

				word choice, word formation and spelling may occur, but they are only slightly intrusive.
UNSATISFACTORY	5	The writing is generally adequate, but the inclusion of irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate material in important areas detracts from its fulfillment of the task. There may be some details missing.	The message can generally be followed, although sometimes with difficulty. Both coherence and cohesion may present difficulties of comprehension .	The range of vocabulary and the appropriateness of its use are limited. There is a limited range of sentence structures and the greatest accuracy is achieved on short, simple sentences. Inappropriate choice of words and errors in areas such as agreement of tenses or subject/verb agreement are noticeable. Word formation and spelling errors may be quite intrusive.
	4	The writing attempts to fulfil the task but is prevented from doing so adequately by omission of key details, and by irrelevance,	The message is difficult to follow. Information is not arranged coherently, and cohesive devices are inadequate or missing.	The range of vocabulary is often inadequate and/or inappropriate and limited control of sentence structures, even

		inappropriateness, or inaccuracy.		short, simple ones, is evident. Choice of words can cause significant problems for the reader. Errors in such areas as agreement of tenses or subject/verb agreement, word formation and spelling can cause severe strain for the reader.
INADEQUATE	3	The seriousness of the problems in the writing makes it difficult to judge in relation to the task.	There are only occasional glimpses of a message. Neither coherence nor cohesion is apparent.	Control of vocabulary and sentence structure is evident only occasionally, and errors predominate.
	2	The writing does not appear to be related to the task.	There is no recognizable message.	There is little or no evidence of control of sentence structure, vocabulary, word form or spelling.
	1	The writing appears to be by a virtual non-writer, containing no assessable strings of English writing. OR The answer is wholly, or almost wholly, copied. OR Answer is less than two lines long.		
	0	Should only be used where a candidate did not attend or attempt the question in any way.		

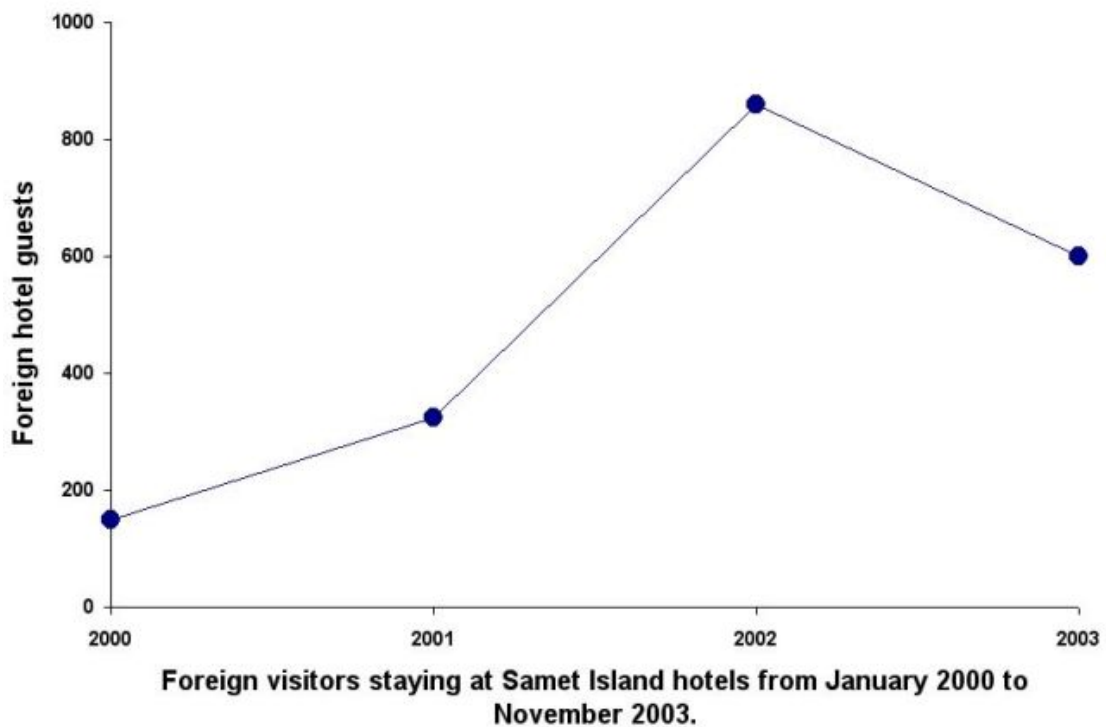
Source: <http://www.ait.ac.th/education/LanguageCenter/english/what-your-test-scores-mean.html>

APPENDIX B

Sample Placement Test

Task One: Describe _____ **20-30 minutes / 75-150 words**

Describe what the graph below show.



SAMPLE ANSWER

The graph above presents the number of foreign hotel guests that were visiting Samet Island hotels from the 2000 through 2003. It is clear that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of foreign guests during this short period. In 2000 there were less than 200, but in 2003 a peak was reached with well over 800 guests staying on the island. In 2003, the number declined. While it is not clear from the graph why the numbers varied, such large numbers of visitors must be making an impact on the environment on the island. (97 words - acceptable).

Task Two: Essay _____ 40-60 minutes / 300 words

Write an essay on the following topic.

TOPIC

The Internet or World Wide Web provides access to a lot information. However, who has access to the Internet and to the information it contains? (You may use the data in the table below in your essay.)

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS

World Regions	Population (2005 est.)	% of World Population	Internet Users, Latest Data	% of World Internet Users
Africa	900,465,411	14.0%	13,468,600	1.5%
Asia	3,612,363,165	56.3%	302,257,003	34.0%
Europe	730,991,138	11.4%	259,653,144	29.2%
Middle East	259,499,772	4.0%	19,370,700	2.2%
North America	328,387,059	5.1%	221,437,647	24.9%
Latin America & Caribbean	546,917,192	8.5%	56,224,957	6.3%
Oceania (Australia, Tasmania, etc.)	33,443,448	0.5%	16,269,080	1.8%
World Total	6,412,067,185	100.0%	888,681,131	100.0%

SOURCE of this table: *Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics*.

Retrieved 11 July 2005 from www.internetworldstats.com . ©Copyright 2005,

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Sample Essay Answers

Students please note!

Your essay should contain from 200 to 300 words (about 1 to 2 pages long); do not exceed 300 words. Use the paper provided. SUGGESTION:. Make notes or an outline before you begin to write. Do not simply list points to support your answer. Write in paragraphs. An essay must have an introduction. The following paragraphs should support the main point of the essay. There should also be a final concluding paragraph. Analyze the two sample essays below.

Sample Essay Answer 1:

The Internet or the World Wide Web has existed since the 1980's. It only became widely available in the early 1990's in North America. Since then its use has increased exponentially and it has expanded globally into every far corner of the world. This essay will briefly describe the early world wide usage of this all-encompassing tool and the current statistics on the percentage of world internet users. Initially the world wide web (www) was just an academic curiosity and tool used by a select few at universities in the United States. Individuals saw the vast opportunities available with this technology and it crept into the public domain. Since that time it has been a super nova of expansion into various aspects of daily life.

Currently approximately 900 million people use the internet. The global population as of 2005 was approximately 6.4 billion. That means about 1/7 of the population uses the internet. The largest percentage of users come from Asia, followed by Europe and closely after North America. Africa has the smallest percentage of users, but this has to do with the socio-economic circumstances of the continent.

In summary, the internet has expanded into our daily lives and the percentage of users will only increase as time goes on. (210 words - acceptable)

Sample Essay Answer 2:

Internet technology is rapidly changing everyday life around the globe, but not everyone has access to this technology. The given table presents the data on internet

usage and population of seven world regions - Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania.

Access to the internet is highest in North America. Although its population is just 5.1% of global population, it has 24.9% of world internet users. In terms of numbers, 221 million out of 328 million North Americans use the internet, i.e. more than 2/3 of North Americans. On the other hand, Africa, with some of the world's least developed countries, has the lowest internet usage. It is the second most populous continent after Asia, comprising 14% of world population, but there are only 1.5% of the world's internet users in Africa,

Internet usage is high in Oceania and Europe. They make up only 0.5% and 11.4% of world population but have 1.8% and 29.2% of the world's internet users, respectively. About a half of Oceanians and more than a third of Europeans have access to the internet and to the information it contains. Lower levels of access to the internet are found in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean at around 10% of the population in each of those regions. Combined these regions account for two-thirds of world population, which means large numbers of people are without access. In conclusion, there is a significant internet access divide between the developed world and developing world. The developed regions - North America, Europe and Oceania have high internet usage whereas Africa, the least developed region, has the lowest internet access.

Source: https://www.ait.ac.th/education/LanguageCenter/english/sample_placement-test

APPENDIX C

EL Writing Course Descriptions

EL13: English Composition I (Test score: 4.5 to 4.9)

You need to improve your use of English structure (grammar) and vocabulary. EL 13 introduces the fundamentals of sentence and paragraph structure and gives you lots of practice applying them. You practice several writing techniques - describing, defining, illustrating, comparing, contrasting, and explaining. You work on writing sentences and arranging them in paragraphs. Class time is divided between time for discussing (speaking and listening) and time for writing.

EL15: English Composition II (Test score 5.0 to 5.4)

You need to improve constructing paragraphs and building arguments to support your ideas. You also need to acquire more academic and technical vocabulary. In this course, you will have the opportunity to discuss and analyze good research writing and then to apply what you learn in your own writing. The link between good reading and good writing is examined. You will learn to analyze paragraphs, skim articles for main ideas, and scan them for specific information in order to help you build well-written paragraphs that describe and interpret facts, figures, trends and processes. In this course, you will also develop your editing skills to improve your own writing. In the second half of the course, you begin the process of writing essays.

EL19: Academic and Technical Writing Courses (Test score: 5.5 to 5.9)

This course is designed to give you feedback on your writing. You will learn to analyze your own writing and to identify and correct errors. You will work to improve the quality of your arguments so that you can produce well-organized essays that are clear from start to finish. You will practice writing different types of essays and in this process, you will develop a concise academic/technical style for expressing your ideas. You will also learn about referencing and citations as well as to adopt strategies to avoid plagiarism.

Source: <https://www.ait.ac.th/education/LanguageCenter/english/el-writing-courses>

APPENDIX D

From: **Wantana S.** (mec_research@hotmail.com)
Sent: Tuesday, November 18, 2008 2:32:13 AM
To: (Unknown)

Dear Friends,

I am a master student conducting this survey as part of my M.A. degree in English for Careers, at the Language Institute, Thammasat University.

Could you please take a few minutes to help me by completing this on-lined questionnaire at <http://www.quicktionnaire.com/index.php?sid=15491&lang=en> and submit electronically, it's safe from virus.

The objectives is to understand relation between English proficiency and factors on attitude, motivation and exposure to English of non- English speaking student in the School of Environment, Resource and Development (SERD) at Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

All the information that you shall have provided will be kept confidential and will be used for this research purpose only. I would like to thank your kindness and valuable time spends on this survey study.

Warm regards,

Miss Wantana Sa-Adpan,
MEC/LITU

QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: Background Information of the interviewee

* 100: Questionnaire No.: st _____@ait.ac.th

Please write your answer here:

* 101: 1. Sex:

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐

Female

☐

Male

* 102: 2. Your age:

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐

25-30 yrs

☐

31-35 yrs

☐

36-40 yrs

☐

41-45 yrs

* 103: 3. How many years you start learning English?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐

Less than 12 yrs

☐

12-15 yrs

☐

More than 15 yrs

* 104: 4. Did you have to use English in your previous studies or job before joining AIT ?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐

Yes

☐

No

* 105: 5. What is your previous academic background?

Please choose **all** that apply:

☐

Technical/Engineer

☐

Science

☐

Social Science/Humanities

Part II: English Proficiency Level.

206: 6. What are your English Placement Test Scores?

* 207: 7. Have you been requested to attend the recommended course(s)?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐

Yes

☐

No

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question '207 ']

*** 208:**

8. If yes, which course or courses have you been requested to attend?

(you can select more than one box, if applicable)

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ AWPT score of less than 5.0 EL13: English Composition I
- ☐ AWPT score from 5.0 to 5.4: EL15: English Composition II
- ☐ AWPT score from 5.5 to 5.9: EL19: Academic and Technical Writing

Part III. The Internal factors and Exposure to English (Learning Environment) that affect your English Proficiency

300: Checking the box which best describe whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

SA= strongly agree

A= agree

U/I = uncertain/Indifferent

D = disagree

SD = strongly disagree

*** 301: Attitude :**

	SA	A	U/I	D	SD
<u>Please choose the appropriate response for each item:</u>					
9. I believe that good English Proficiency Skill is useful for pursuing my higher education at AIT.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
10. I believe that with better English proficiency skill I will have a better chance to get job/ promotion after graduation than other colleagues.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
11. I like to know people from other countries and that requires good English skill	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
12. I think a well-educated-person should know English.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
13. I will be socially more respected if I know English well.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

14. I could achieve higher GPA if I have good English proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
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*** 302: Motivation:**

	SA	A	U/I	D	SD
<u>Please choose the appropriate response for each item:</u>					
15. Learning English will enable me to pursue a higher education level in an international program.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
16. Learning English is important for me to get career advancement or to get a good job after graduation.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
17. Learning English enables me to join more freely in the multicultural activities with friends at AIT.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
18. Learning English is necessary in my field of study	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

*** 303: Exposure to English/Learning Environment at AIT:**

	SA	A	U/I	D	SD					
<u>Please choose the appropriate response for each item:</u>										
19. I need to be good at English for accessing research labs and the library at AIT.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
20. Regular presentations in English during my studies in AIT improve my English	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
21. Reading e- mails sent from different units in AIT help me to get a better understanding English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
22. Living on AIT campus allow me to use English in daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
23. The course-instructors and method of teaching at the Language Center encourage me to improve my English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
24. The course content of the courses offered at Language Center encourages me to improve my English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
25. Participation in extracurricular, activities helps me to improve my	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1

English.										
26. Participation in various gatherings like, Welcome show, Food festival, Cultural show organized by AIT help me to improve my English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
27. The multicultural environment at AIT and interaction among various nationalities AIT help me to improve my English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1

Part IV. Student' s opinion on having English Proficiency

401: 28. What do think of your English Proficiency?

Please write your answer here:

402: 29. What improvement in Teaching and social environment of AIT you are looking for to enhance your English proficiency?

Please write your answer here:

403: 30. What are other benefits you will be having considering yourself proficient in English?

Please write your answer here:

Submit Your Survey.

Thank you for completing this survey. Please submit by 2008-11-30.

TITLE: A Study of Factors Affecting The English
Proficiency of Non-Native English Speaking
Students at the Asian Institute of Technology

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ACADEMIC YEAR: 2008

ABSTRACT

This study investigates 77 non-native English graduate students attending post graduate programs at an international institute in Thailand, known as the Asian Institute of Technology. These students are in their second year of study and belong to different fields of study. This study investigates the factors that affect the English acquisition ability of these students.

The hypothesis that was formulated at the initial stage of the study says that positive attitude, good motivation and higher exposure enhance the acquisition of English proficiency among non-native English speakers.

The research data were collected from responses to a questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted on the web page and the respondents were asked to complete it. Results show that motivation, attitude as well as exposure to the language in the day to day life has strong positive effect on acquiring English proficiency. The fact that proficiency in English will help progress career either in the form of attaining a job or having the opportunity to study further internationally was found to be the single most important driving factor for acquiring English proficiency. The SPSS analysis for correlation studies shows that motivation is strongly correlated with acquiring English proficiency.

However, due to a small sample size, make it is difficult to produce any conclusive remark on this issue; it can be very well suggested that all three factors, motivation, exposure to the language and attitude, have a strong positive relationship with English language acquisition.

**A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF
NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS AT THE
ASIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

WANTANA SA-ADPAN

Adviser: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Damrong Attaprechakul

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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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NOVEMBER 2008**