

บทความวิจัย (Research Article)

แรงจูงใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนไทย กรณีศึกษานักศึกษา  
วิทยาศาสตร์ มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ ณ มหาวิทยาลัยรัฐแห่งหนึ่ง  
L2 Selves Motivation Among Thai Students: A Case study in Sciences,  
and Humanities and Social Sciences Students  
at a Government University

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บทคัดย่อ

การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นเรื่องสำคัญเนื่องจากภาษาอังกฤษได้รับการยอมรับอย่างกว้างขวางว่าเป็นภาษาสากล นักเรียนไทยควรสามารถสื่อสารกับผู้คนทั่วโลก ซึ่งจะทำให้พวกเขามีโอกาสในการแสวงหาอาชีพในอนาคตโดยการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนไทยอยู่ในระดับต่ำ ทำให้เกิดการวิจัยและการศึกษาจำนวนมากที่เกี่ยวข้อง และศึกษาสาเหตุของความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษที่ต่ำ มีปัจจัยสำคัญประการหนึ่งที่ทำให้เกิดปัญหานี้ คือ การขาดแรงจูงใจ ในงานวิจัยนี้มีการใช้แบบสอบถามและสัมภาษณ์เพื่อเก็บข้อมูลจากผู้เรียน 385 คน ที่ประกอบด้วยผู้เรียนสายวิทย์ 125 คน และสายมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ 260 คน ซึ่งผลการวิจัย พบว่า นักศึกษาศาสนาวิทยาศาสตร์ มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ ไม่มีความแตกต่างกันในการใช้ปัจจัยสิ่งแวดล้อม และปัจจัยตามบริบท L2-self รวมทั้งกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาและผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน นอกจากนี้ปัจจัยทั้งหมดยังมีความสัมพันธ์กันในระดับที่มีนัยสำคัญ ซึ่งหมายความว่า การใช้ปัจจัยเดียวอาจนำไปสู่การพัฒนาปัจจัยอื่น ๆ นอกจากนี้ผลจากวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพบ่งชี้ว่า นิสิตที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษสูงมีความสนใจที่จะฝึกภาษาอังกฤษทั้งในห้องเรียนและนอกห้องเรียน ส่วนนิสิตที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษอ่อนมองว่าภาษาอังกฤษคือวิชาหนึ่งและการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนเป็นไปเพื่อความบันเทิงเท่านั้น

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ แรงจูงใจ L2-self

Abstract

Learning the English language has become ever more important with the increasing adoption of English as the global language. Students from Thailand should be able to communicate with people from around the world and enhance their employment prospects by being able to speak English. Many researchers have investigated the low levels of competence in English amongst students in Thailand, looking for a cause. One potential cause is low motivation. A five point Likert

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scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed for collecting data from 385 participants. Participants were split into two categories, those studying science subjects (125 respondents) and those studying the humanities and social sciences (260). This research demonstrated that there was no difference between students in sciences and those in humanities and social sciences in terms of learning achievement, strategies for learning languages, L2 selves, or contextual factors. Additionally, all the factors seem to have a significant relationship with each other, meaning that when one has significance, the others will also. Qualitative data demonstrated that students who achieve well in English are in the habit of regularly practicing their English skills, both in the classroom and elsewhere; students who do not achieve so well regard English as simply an academic subject and have no desire to practice outside the classroom, although they do accept English when it is involved in entertainment.

**Keywords:** English language learning, L2 selves motivation

## Introduction

Over the last 30 years, research into motivation has seen numerous new concepts introduced, both theoretically and in methodology. Prior to these new theories focusing on the self, the socio-educational model of Gardner & Lambert (1972) had primacy, particularly regarding integrative motivation, which has associations with the motivation for learning a second language (L2) to allow the learner to successfully communicate with other communities and to appear like a member of them (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Sariçoban & Sariçoban, 2012). Research demonstrates that integrative motivation is a key element of motivation in general. Nevertheless, the concept is not necessarily as applicable to EFL environments in which learners have few opportunities to interact directly with the native language speaking community (Dörnyei et al., 2006; Khajavy et al., 2016). This has inspired further research regarding integrative motivation, i.e., integrativeness, and innovations around it.

With the rise in globalisation, the near-universal availability of the Internet, and the ease of international travel, those learning English have new and different perspectives. This has led to the robust model of integrativeness put forward by Gardner & Lambert (1972), which has been highly influential, being criticised by those involved in language teaching across the world. Because of this, Dörnyei (2009) created a theory that is founded on the individual's identity or personal centre. Prior to this concept, integrative motivation was the dominant theory in research into motivation. It has been noted that the theory only truly works when the learner lives in a community where native speakers are present and they want to integrate with them, e.g., French speakers in Canada. Subsequently, one of the most powerful new theories is Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, which has its roots in Markus & Nurius (1986) Possible Self Theory and Higgins (1987) Self Discrepancy Theory. This emergent L2MSS theory places more emphasis on individual motivations, and much motivational research now examines micro- rather than macro-level drivers of motivation.

The L2MSS is a new way of looking at L2 learning in the framework of the self, which extends the range of motivation research around L2, has many different applications, and creates new pathways for providing motivation for language learners. The new framework adopts concepts that make connections between the personality of the individual and the second language, contradicting the concept that a foreign language (FL) is simply a coded form of communication that may be acquired in the same way as other academic subjects; it makes the assumption that L2 is in fact a key element of personal identity.

English language acquisition has become hugely important with English being the primary language of global communication. We cannot ignore the importance of the English language as it affects a nation's ability to communicate and innovate, data handling, education, medicine, science, industry, and the economic sphere (Kitjaroonchai & Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Students in Thailand need to communicate with others globally, and practising this would offer them career advantages via their knowledge of English. Thus it is essential that students in Thailand should improve their English capacities.

Unfortunately, studies of proficiency in English have demonstrated that students in Thailand have poor English skills, below those of students in nearly every other Asian country. This issue has created a significant amount of research to discover the cause of such poor performance. A key element of this poor performance is a lack of motivation (Noom-Ura, 2013). Additionally, Thonginkam (2003) has noted that students in Thailand have to be motivated due to the fact that the English language is not part of normal dialogue in the country. This means that an individual can get by without using English as a second language, which can render it simply an academic subject. Motivation is recognized by virtually every teacher and researcher as being the most substantial and influential factor in success or otherwise of learning a second language (Jung, 2011).

With insufficient motivation, even the brightest students will not achieve their aims and will remain at a low level. Because of this, there is a need for students in Thailand to create motivational strategies in order to improve their skills in English. Motivation is crucial in learning English and unmotivated students can be easily identified by their poor results at every stage (Aquino et al., 2016).

In looking at motivation, this research makes the assumption that the learning identities of second language students ("L2 Selves") represent a key independent variable that influences the motivation for students in Thailand learning English and how they learn it. Examining previous research, not many enquiries into the concept of L2 Selves for students in Thailand have been undertaken, although a number of research projects based in Asia have revealed empirical evidence that shows the concept is valid.

For the current research, the interest lies in revealing the correlation between strategies for learning a language and L2MSS. Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as the

"Specific actions taken by the learners to make learning more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8). Autonomous learning grows from the use of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). This pair of important concepts will be employed to reveal correlations with learning achievements. Because language learning strategies have a correlation with language proficiency and subsequently autonomous learning, the L2 self may help learners get through the more mundane elements of learning (Dörnyei, 2005). It is the intention of this research to demonstrate the correlations between contextual factors, learning achievement, the L2 self, and learning strategies.

### Research Questions

1. What correlations exist between the learning achievements of first-year science/humanities and social science students and their educational context, language learning strategies, and their L2 selves?
2. How do language learning strategies and L2 selves differ between science students and humanities and social science students?
3. What are students' perspectives of themselves as L2 learners, and how do their second selves influence their learning in English?

### Conceptual Research Framework

Research into L2MSS in Thailand is limited, and previous research has not looked at the influence of context in terms of developing the L2 Self. Dörnyei (2009) stated that further research was needed to clarify learning experiences. Research by Lamb (2009) found that having a privileged background was no guarantee of the development of the ideal or ought-to self. This research will pay particular attention to the influence of a number of contextual elements on the L2 Self, language learning strategies, and the learning outcome. It will also look at correlations between learning achievements and context, language learning strategy, and the L2 Self. The research is aimed at proving correlations between achievement in learning, learning strategies, and the L2 Self. This research will offer empirical evidence regarding student motivation that will allow teachers to create and employ strategies for improving poor levels of motivation.

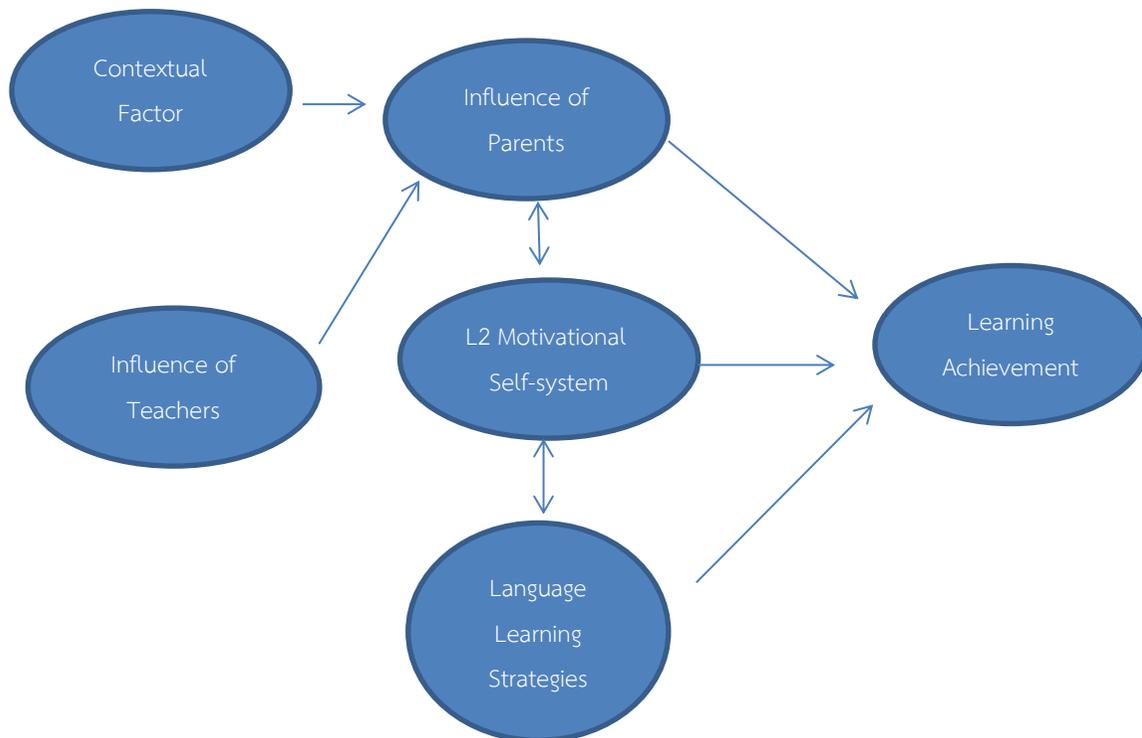


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework adapted from Srinusen (2020)

## Research Methodology

### Population/sampling

This research is an investigation of the operations of the L2MSS (ideal/ought-to L2 Self) for university students. The research targets university students who are not taking English as a major; the research design is a mixed-method one. Every participant is a native of Thailand, studying their first year at a state university in the northeast of the country. Around four students will be chosen at random to participate in a semi-structured interview to harvest detailed data regarding the L2 self and their perspectives on their learning experiences that could have an impact on how they learn languages. The research is highly focused on how students perceive their learning. The study sample is taken from first year students studying sciences or humanities and social sciences (total 10,561 students). Using Yamane's (1973) formula, the number of students selected was found to be suitable with a 5% error and confidence coefficient of 95%. Questionnaires were supplied to first-year students in science subjects and the humanities and social science. In total, 385 students were selected, as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 1** Populations and Sample size by

Students	Total population	Sample size	Plus 5% more
Sciences		125	132
Humanities and Social Sciences	10,561	260	273
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,561</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>405</b>

Although a sample size of 385 was chosen, 5% extra students were asked to fill in the questionnaire to allow for sampling errors, meaning 405 questionnaires in total were distributed. The questionnaires were primarily distributed through four research assistants (around 100 questionnaires each). Respondents were asked to fill in and return their questionnaires by the end of July 2018.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire comprised three sections: firstly, a section on demographics to ascertain information about the respondent, including their gender, faculty, year of study, and English results from the previous semester. The second section was divided into three subsections, looking at contextual elements, inference of motivational variables (Dörnyei, 2009), and language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). This second section comprise 72 items in total. Contextual influences are regarded as an implicit variable and added in line with the literature review of Chapter 2. They are split into two categories (parents and teachers) and measurements made for 24 items. 16 items related to opportunity, expectation, beliefs, and interactions with teachers (Srinusen, 2020); 8 items referred to the same factors relating to parents. The second implicit variable was language learning strategy (Oxford, 1990), measured via 18 questions, separated into six areas with three questions for each: the six areas were social strategy, affective strategy, metacognitive strategy, compensation strategy, cognitive strategy, and memory strategy. Participants were required to note the level to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement offered in accordance with a five point Likert scale (1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree). The third section addressed the implicit variable of the L2MSS, with respondents asked to reply to 30 Likert scale questions to measure 10 aspects of motivational variables (Dörnyei, 2009) with three questions on each; the aspects examined were attitudes to the L2 community, integrativeness, cultural interests, attitudes to learning English, prevention of instrumentality, promotion of instrumentality, influence of family, the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and criterion measures.

## Research Conclusion

### Demographics

The majority of respondents were female (281 participants, 73%), were studying at a C, D, or F level (321 respondents, 83.4%), and were enrolled on the humanities and social sciences program (260 respondents, 67.5%). Students enrolled on the science programs displayed a higher level of ability than those in humanities and social sciences programs, but on average students from both programs were achieving at a relatively low level (C, D, or F).

### Contextual elements, learning strategies, L2MSS

The statement that was most agreed with was "My teacher has good English skills", at a mean of 4.36, followed by "My teacher has stressed that I need English skills for future employment" (4.24). The five statements that received the least agreement were "I use words I have recently learned to build sentences to help remember them" (2.71), "I always review my English lessons" (2.79), "If I don't know the correct English vocabulary, I find a new word" (2.84), "I timetable sufficient time for studying and reviewing my English learning" (2.85), and, "I practice my English language skills by speaking with other students" (2.85).

**Research question one: what are the correlations between the learning achievements of students in the first year of study on the science program and the humanities and social sciences program and contextual elements, the L2 Self, and language learning strategies?**

The factor with the highest mean is contextual factors (3.845), followed by learning achievement (3.5807), then L2 Self (3.3818). The lowest mean was language learning strategies (3.1296). The data analysis demonstrated that contextual factors have a correlation with the L2 selves, with a significant level of  $r = 0.453$ . Additionally, there are correlations between contextual factors and language learning strategies ( $r = 0.413$ ). Contextual factors have a correlation with learning achievement ( $r = 0.508$ ). L2 Selves have a correlation with language learning strategies ( $r = 0.569$ ). Language learning strategies have a correlation with learning achievement ( $r = 0.747$ ). The graphs below illustrate these correlations.

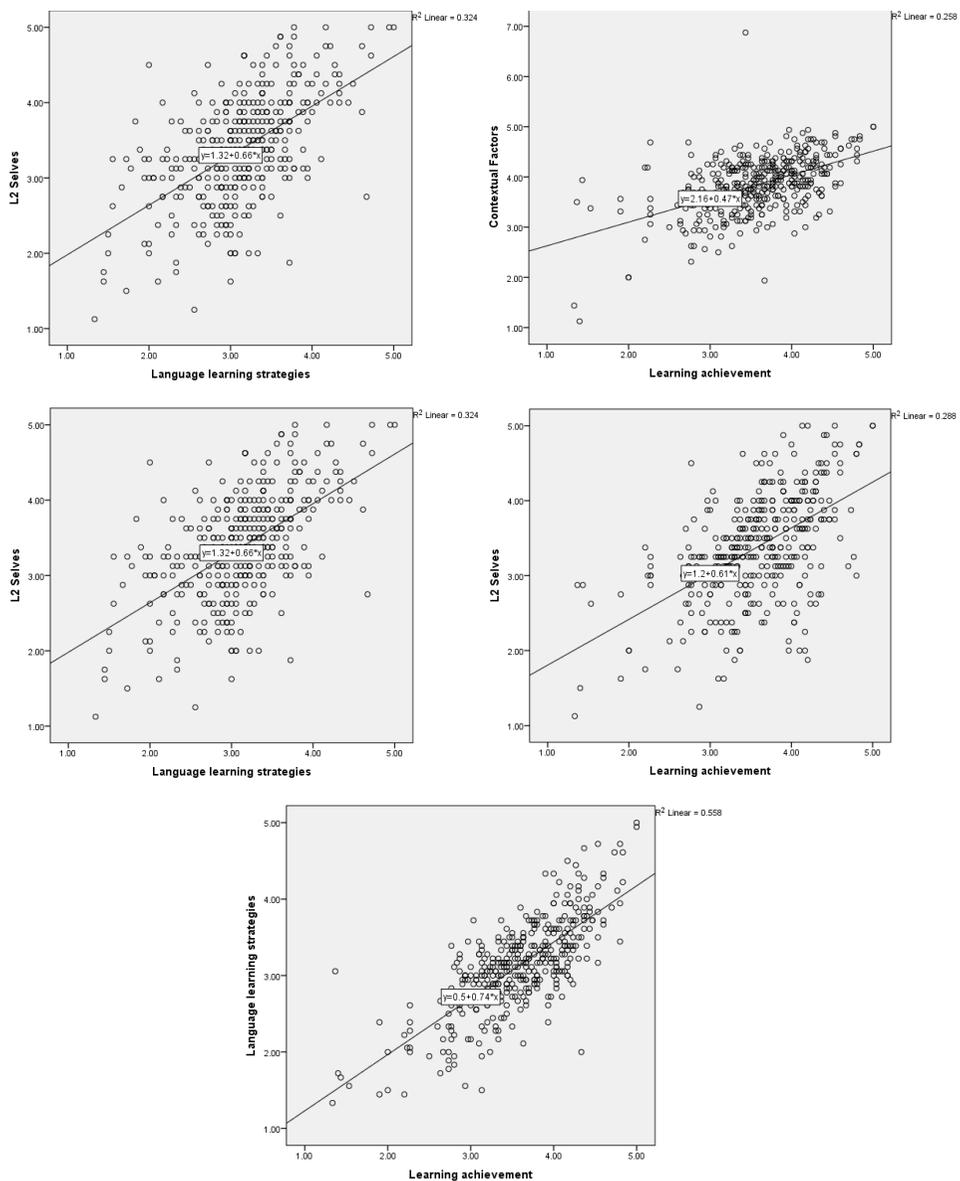
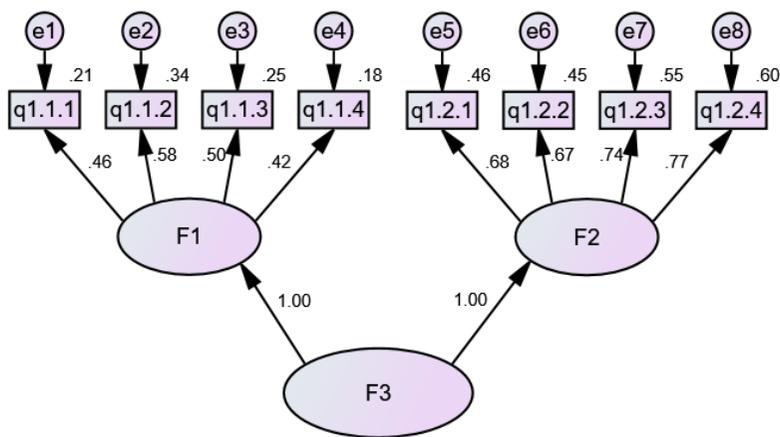


Figure 2 Correlation Analysis

Research Question Two: how do students on humanities and social sciences programs differ in terms of language learning strategies and L2 selves from students on the science programs?

This paper explores the statistical correlations between the learning achievements of first-year students on humanities/social sciences programs and science programs at a significant level in terms of language learning strategy, L2 selves, and contextual factors.

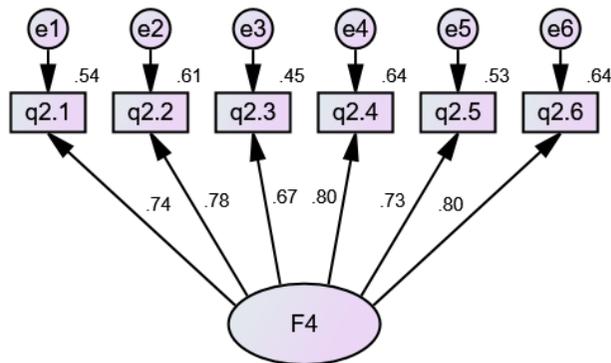
The findings demonstrate that students on the humanities and social science program pay greater attention to learning achievement, L2 selves, and contextual factors, whilst students on the science programs are more influenced by language learning strategy. As shown in the table, using multivariate MANOVA analysis, there is no statistically significant variation between the two groups of students regarding learning achievement, language learning strategies, L2 selves, or contextual factors. Thus this enquiry finds that there are no significant differences between the two groups in these areas.



Chi-square = 320.133 df.= 20 Sig.= .000 CMIN/df. = 16.007  
 CFI = .731 GFI = .781 AGFI = .606 RMSEA=.198  
 RMR = .070 NFI = .720 IFI = .733

Figure 3 CFA for Contextual Factors

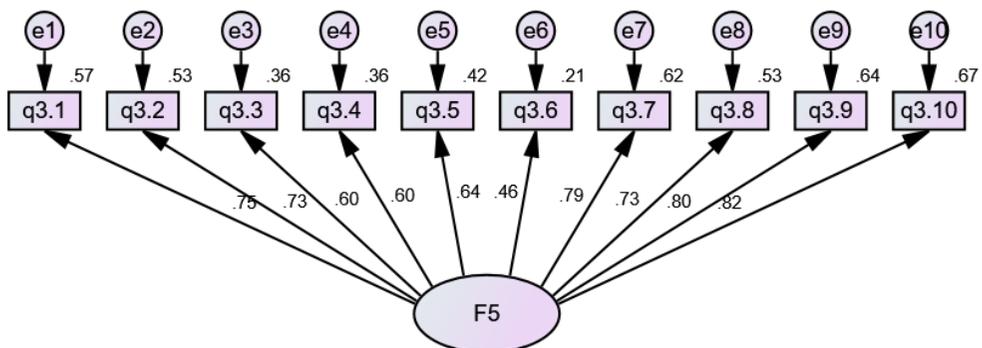
Eight variables were observed to measure the contextual factors variable. Four questions were used to measure the latent variable of teacher influence for every item, with parental influence being measured with two questions, being found to have a significant influence on contextual factors. The findings were shown to have adequate threshold levels according with the concept (Hair et al., 2006); Bollen, 1989). and through Chi-Square = 320.133, df = 20, Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, CMIN/df. = 16.007 > 5.0 . Nevertheless, CFI = 0.731 > 0.9, GFI = 0.781 > 0.900, AGFI = 0.606 < 0.80. The standardized loading factors all equal 1, the highest achievable level which shows the model has low acceptability and little likelihood of fitting the hypothesis.



Chi-square = 40.778 df = 9 Sig. = .000 CMIN/df. = 4.531  
 CFI = .972 GFI = .966 AGFI = .920 RMSEA = .096  
 RMR = .018 NFI = .965 IFI = .972

Figure 4 CFA for Language learning strategies

Six observed variables were used to observe the variable of language learning strategies. Three questions for each item were used to measure the latent variable of influence. The findings had very adequate threshold levels showing consistency with the concept (Hair et al., 2006; Bollen, 1989) with the Chi-Square = 40.778,  $df = 9$ ,  $Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$ ,  $CMIN/df. = 4.531 < 5.0$  and also  $CFI = 0.972 > 0.9$ ,  $GFI = 0.966 > 0.900$ ,  $AGFI = 0.920 > 0.80$ . Every standardized loading factor was above 0.5, which gives the model acceptability and fits the hypothesis.



Chi-square = 300.800 df = 35 Sig. = .000 CMIN/df. = 8.594  
 CFI = .869 GFI = .847 AGFI = .760 RMSEA = .141  
 RMR = .051 NFI = .855 IFI = .869

Figure 5 CFA for L2 Motivational Self-system

10 variables were used to measure the L2MSS variable. Three questions for each item were used to measure the latent variable of influence. The findings meet an adequate

threshold level and show consistency with the concept (Hair et al., 2006); Bollen, 1989) also Chi – Square = 300.8, df = 35, Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, CMIN/df. = 8.594 > 5.0 and additionally CFI = 0.869 < 0.9, GFI = 0.847 < 0.900, AGFI = 0.762 < 0.80. Every standardized loading factor was above 0.5, which gives the model acceptability and fits the hypothesis.

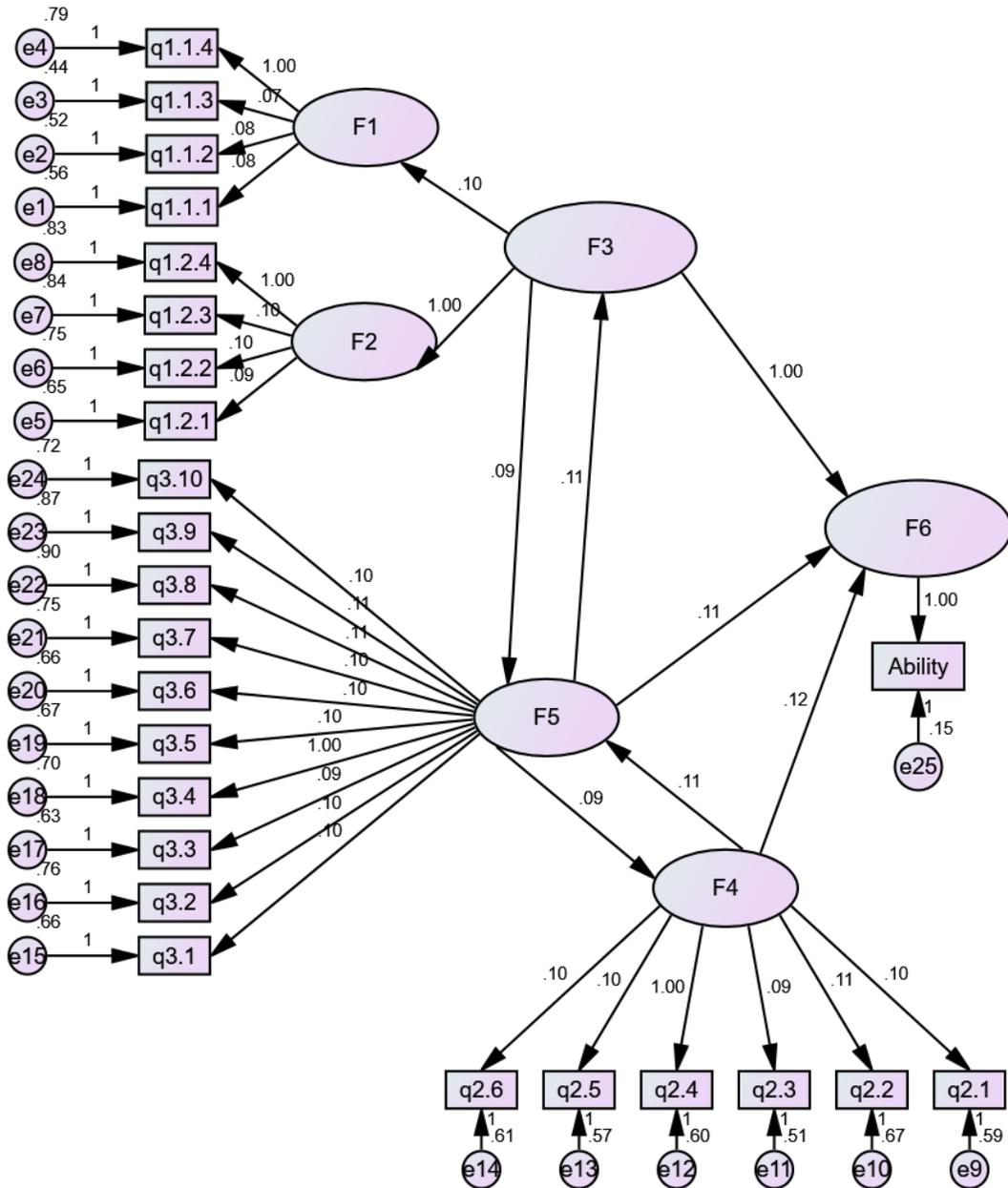


Figure 6 The Research Model

The data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Traditionally, the overall fit of the model and the degree of discrepancies between the sample and fitted covariances matrices is evaluated using the chi-Square value (Hu & Bentler, 1999). If the model is a good fit there should

be insignificant results at the 0.05 threshold (Barrett, 2007). The findings have shown adequate threshold levels that accord with the concept (Hair et al., 2006); Bollen, 1989). Additionally, the Chi-Square = 5151.827, GFI = 0.214 whilst it is not possible to identify other fit indices. Analyzing the model with SEM shows that, overall, there is a relatively weak fit.

Both the exogenous and endogenous variables in the SEM analysis display significant and identifiable relationships with the other standardized coefficients. There is positivity for all the coefficients related to contextual factors and teacher and parent influence. Looking at learning achievement, the contextual factors are 1, then learning language strategies, then L2MSS. Thus we can see that whether or not students identify themselves as L2 learners is strongly influenced by interactions, opportunities, expectations, and beliefs.

### **Research question three: How do students perceive themselves as L2 learners, and how do their second selves influence their achievements in English?**

This section offers extracts from the qualitative interviews undertaken with a high achieving student and a lower achieving student from both study programs. The information has been chosen to give a full overview of the findings.

#### **High achieving humanities and social sciences student**

This student is achieving to a high level. She was awarded an A grade on the foundation English course. She is relatively knowledgeable about English.

Q: Can you see yourself employing your English in future?

A: Yes, because as an English major, it's my intention to use it all I can in future.

This student was in her first year as an English major, but she was picturing herself employing English in an efficient manner, e.g. reading English newspapers.

Q: Can you picture yourself reading English newspapers?

A: Yes, because for all employment that requires English, we need to know as much English as possible and also to know about the global news.

The student also frequently used her English communication skills in the classroom. She said she found it easy to picture herself employing English as it was her major subject, so she didn't have a problem visualizing herself being a successful language user.

Q: Can you picture yourself using English to communicate with foreigners?

A: Yes, these days I try to use English at every opportunity with foreigners, for example talking to my foreign friends in English and chatting with other foreigners online.

### **High achieving science student**

This student was achieving to a high standard on the science program. As with the student above, she had good motivation for learning English. She stated that she would like to participate in the English activities offered by the Humanities faculty.

Q: Now you've been studying English at university for a while, do you feel your English has reached an acceptable standard?

A: Not really because although I can study English in General Education, I don't really use English in my specialist subject. When I want to learn more and to practice, I go to the Humanities and Social Sciences faculty, who have activities to support English learning every day of the week, for example watching English-language movies and so on. I wish that our teachers would have more in-class English speaking activities and that other faculties would hold the same activities for supporting English as the Humanities and Social Science faculty does.

A significant part of the student's motivation was being able to go abroad as an exchange student: "I can imagine going – I always pictured going abroad on an exchange since I was young."

### **Medium achieving student on the humanities and social sciences program**

Q: Can you picture yourself in using English in future?

A: Sometimes I can, but sometimes not because my English isn't a great standard at the moment.

Part of her motivation to learn English was the role modeled for her by her father. Her father is a police officer who uses the English language as part of his job.

Q: Who is your role model in terms of English usage?

A: My father.

Q: Why is he your role model for English use? What does he do?

A: In his work as a policeman he would undertake interpreting. He speaks good English because of the training he had previously.

This student had had a strong motivation to enjoy English language speaking from the time she joined the University. She stated that joining the University had made her recognize how important English was, more so than at high school.

Q: Did you become aware of this yourself, or did other people raise your awareness?

A: I realized it for myself.

Q: What makes you recognize that learning English will be advantageous for you?

A: I've come to realize the way the world is changing these days.

She also mentioned that she thought the universities should help students in her faculty to raise their standard of English for the advantages it would give them.

### Low achieving student on the sciences program

This student was achieving to a low level on the science program; she couldn't picture herself as a competent English user due to her poor grasp of the language.

Q: Can you picture yourself using English in the future?

A: Not really.

Q: How do you picture yourself?

A: I'd like to be able to use English in future, I'd like to be able to speak it with others.

Q: Do you picture yourself speak English to foreigners?

A: Yes I do.

Q: Do you have a clear picture of that?

A: Not very clear, no.

Nevertheless, this student had motivation from seeing those senior to her working abroad.

Q: Where do you picture yourself working?

A: I'd like to get work in another Asian countries, I've heard that you get better wages working abroad.

This student occasionally listened to covers of English songs by singers from Thailand. She enjoys English entertainment shows, but does not approach them as a learning experience.

Q: You say you are interested in Kru Louk Golf, is that just for entertainment or for learning English?

A: Just for entertainment.

**Table 2** Matrix of Attitude towards English Learning of high and low achieving students

Track	Low Achievement	High Achievement
Science Faculty Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doesn't see herself much as an L2 learner</li> <li>- Has ambitions to work overseas</li> <li>- Is only interested in English as entertainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sees herself as an L2 learner</li> <li>- interested in more out of class English activities and more in-field subjects in English</li> </ul>
Track	Medium Achievement	High Achievement
Humanities and Social Science Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledges that English language learning is important</li> <li>- With her limited capacity for English, she didn't have a strong self image as a skillful language user. However, her attitudes had become more positive since joining the University.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a self image as an L2 learner</li> <li>- Is strongly ambitious to communicate in English and would like to be able to practice more often</li> </ul>

## Discussion

It has been demonstrated that there were no differences between students from the science faculties and the humanities and social sciences faculty in terms of the influence on the English learning achievement of language learning strategies, contextual factors, and L2 selves. It was showing that there were significant correlations between all factors, so that using one factor could influence all the others. These findings concur with those of Outhaichute & Raksasataya (2014), who found that learning effort intentions are influenced by the ideal L2 self, experience of English learning, encouragement from parents, and autonomous learning. The ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, autonomous learning and the encouragement of positive self evaluations all had an effect on learning achievement.

Additionally, there was no difference between humanities and social sciences and sciences in terms of learning achievement, language learning strategies, L2 selves, and contextual factors. Satta-Udom (2007) showed that there was no significant difference in strategies between students in the sciences and those in other areas. However, the former strategy employed differed, with science students favoring compensation strategies, with social strategies being bottom of their list. Those in other subjects most frequently employed metacognitive strategies, with memory strategies being the least frequently employed. These students are also much more likely to use social strategies.

In addition, we may conclude that when the learning environment is positive then students are more motivated. The quantitative findings showed that many of the students had positive feelings about their teachers and learning environment. The statistics demonstrated that learning environment had a significant effect on learning achievement. Student motivation was also positively influenced by having an exchange program and good facilities for learning. Although some students admitted that they were not interested in the English language before joining the University, having begun their studies, I suddenly realized the difference it could make to their life chances. This demonstrated that good teachers and the university environment in general had a positive influence on the motivation levels of students, even though some of them mentioned that their parents were not as supportive.

## Recommendation for Research

Research on L2MSS in universities in Thailand is still limited. The researcher therefore suggests firstly that more research should be undertaken regarding L2 selves with other student groups, e.g., comparing those from cities and those from rural areas, something that has never been done in Thailand. Secondly it is suggested that more research should be undertaken into the learning environment, e.g., the curriculum offered, something that was not part of this research.

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