



## Motivation and Attitudes in Studying Spanish of Students of Triam Udom Suksa School

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### Abstract

The popularity of studying Spanish as a foreign language in secondary school has increased in the last 5 years in Thailand and Triam Udom Suksa school is the first secondary school that offers Spanish classes with the aim to create students that are increasingly interested in enrolling every year with Spanish language skills. The purpose of this research is to study the motivations and attitudes of Triam Udom Suksa School students toward learning Spanish. The surveys were done by 60 students from Mattayom 4 to Mattayom 6. The findings showed that their experience and knowledge of Spanish mostly came from entertainment media such as songs, dramas, series, beauty pageants, sports games, or other media with Spanish insertion. The main reason why they chose to study Spanish language was that they believed that it would be a good opportunity for them in their future career as Spanish is spoken by few people in Thailand. The results from this study could be used as a database and as a guideline for increasing students' motivation and positive attitudes toward learning Spanish. Such information is useful for Spanish teachers in secondary school to design and develop appropriate contents for Spanish courses to improve student's academic achievement.

**Keywords:** motivation, attitude, Spanish as a foreign language, Spanish in secondary school, factors which affect language learning



## 1. Introduction

Spanish is spoken by more than 483 million people in the global community, and more than 21 countries around the world have Spanish as their official language. Spanish is also the third most studied language in the world. The above information clearly shows the important role of the Spanish language in world society. But in Thailand, the popularity of learning Spanish is not as widespread as it should be.

Concurrently, Triam Udom Suksa School, which is the first secondary school that provides Spanish language classes, has an increasing number of interested students that enter Arts-Spanish class every year.

Motivation and having a good attitude are important factors that help encourage students to develop the will to study hard. These are driving forces for students to successfully apply their knowledge, abilities, and language skills in various fields in the future.

For these reasons, the researcher recognized the importance of studying motivation in learning and collected the information about motivation and attitudes towards learning Spanish of the Triam Udom Suksa students through a specific questionnaire that directly explored the factors affecting learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning Spanish. Hence, the study will try to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates the students to study Spanish as their major?
2. What are the attitudes towards learning Spanish of the Spanish students of Triam Udom Suksa School?

## 2. Theory and related literature reviews

### *2.1 Concepts and theories of motivation and attitudes*

“Motivation is a key factor in the language learning process” (Gardner, et al., 2004; Spada & Lightbown, 1993). Motivation for learning a language refers to needs, efforts, and attitudes. The positive energy is driven from the internal processes that drive and motivate the learners to reach the learning goals that they have set. These processes are derived from the desire to achieve learning goals. This is considered a positive attitude towards language learning. This includes efforts to learn the language as well.



Moreover, Els (1984) states that there are two types of motivation in educational psychology (cited in Laksana Bunnimit, 1999):

1. Intrinsic Motivation (internal motivation) refers to the intrinsic drive that causes a person's desire to perform an action, such as learning, seeking something for himself without the need for other people to drive the action. For instance, learning a new language because you enjoy experiencing new cultures, not because it is your job required. You do things because it is enjoyable, and satisfying.

2. Extrinsic Motivation (external motivation) refers to the impulse from external stimuli that lead to a state that a person has a desire to do something. A person will express such behavior in response to a stimulus or incentive in the event of a need for something in return, such as a reward, recognition, honor, reputation. For instance, studying because you want to get a good grade and hope for praise from the people around you or going to work because you want to earn money.

Besides, most of the motivation for students comes from a combination of two motivations that create a driving force for learning in the learner. The level of motivation can also change all the time. (Gardner and Lambert, 1972 cited in Littlewood, 1984; Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Corresponding to this research, intrinsic motivation is driven by the learner's desire to learn Spanish. Whether it is the need to learn the characteristics of the language directly or the need to learn a language to understand the culture of a Spanish-speaking country to communicate. Learners who are motivated in this way tend to have higher chances of successful language learning, because of their strong internal interest without pressure from outsiders.

Besides, Learning Spanish can be driven by external factors: learners learn Spanish because they see opportunities for future use, whether it is beneficial to the learners themselves or even the student's own family, for example, learning Spanish for professional use or business, such as running a family business, etc.



### 3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology of the study consisting of the participants, the research instrument, and data collection and data analysis.

This research is qualitative research by using the data obtained from creating a questionnaire on motivation and attitudes in studying Spanish among high school learners from Triam Udom Suksa School to find and organize statistics.

#### 3.1 Population and participants

The participants of this research were the Spanish language students, from the Triam Udom Suksa School, academic year 2020, using the random selection method, 20 students per class, totaling a sample of 60 students.

#### 3.2 Research instruments

The questionnaire was an instrument to explore the opinions of the participants regarding motivation and attitudes in learning the Spanish language. The questionnaire was designed and based on Wongkamalasai (2017)<sup>1</sup>. The researcher created a questionnaire, via the google form platform, divided into 3 parts:

Part 1. General information which includes the grade level being studied.

Part 2. The motivation types that affect learning Spanish which includes asking students why they chose to study Spanish through 10 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question.

Part 3. Learners' personal opinion towards Spanish, which includes asking students personal opinions on teaching Spanish through 12 closed-ended questions.

The questionnaire was sent to the students via social network since they were studying online at that time, which was one of the difficulties that the researcher had to collect data from the participants.

<sup>1</sup> กาญจนาวงศ์กมลไสย. (2560). การเรียนการสอนภาษาสเปนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในระดับมัธยมศึกษาของ  
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### *3.3 Data collection and Data analysis*

The collected data from the questionnaire was analyzed utilizing the statistical results from google form to summarize the results of the study.

3.3.1 The five-point scale in the third part of the questionnaire was adopted to get the data scoring regarding the student's opinion from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

## **4. Results**

This section describes the results of the study obtained from the questionnaire.

### *4.1 The survey results of factors influencing students' motivation to learn Spanish*

It was found that most (55 percent) of the students had experience or knowledge of Spanish before starting school. 71.7 percent of learners said their experience and knowledge of Spanish came from entertainment media such as songs, TV dramas and series, beauty pageants, sports games, or other media in Spanish. These aroused the interest of Spanish learners and were part the first learning process before the learners started learning Spanish in earnest.

The main reason most students chose to learn Spanish is derived from Intrinsic Motivation. There is a view that the number of Spanish speakers in Thailand is still very low and the language is not very common. Therefore, 71.7 percent of learners see it as a great opportunity to learn Spanish. Followed by the idea of Spanish as a major world language. They are thought to have a wide range of language proficiency, at the same rate of 66.7 percent. Learners being interested in the Spanish language and culture of Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries accounted for 53.3 percent and 26.7 percent of learners are interested in the countries and histories of Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries. Also, 15% of students desire to study Spanish so they can converse with Spanish-speaking friends, relatives, and foreign acquaintances. Meanwhile, over half of all students believe that learning Spanish is simple, so they choose to study Spanish because it is similar to English. This is due to the learners' innate desire in learning, which is referred to as internal motivation.



Conversely, the survey found that Extrinsic Motivation also encouraged students' motivation in learning Spanish. 51.7 percent of students choose to learn Spanish to benefit their future careers. In addition, students who have hobbies related to Spanish, such as watching Spanish TV dramas or movies, listening to Spanish music and cheering for the Spanish national football team. Over 35 percent of learners have a desire to learn Spanish as a tool to support activities according to their own interests and pleasure. The above motivational factors reflect the impact of entertainment media culture and its important role in inspiring student's learning. More than 13 percent of students are interested in studying abroad in Spanish-speaking countries.

However, there are some other reasons that can be classified as both types of motivations, such as 20 percent of learners learning Spanish because they want to continue studying Spanish in university, 11.7 percent of students studying Spanish because it is recommended by others, and 3.3 percent studying Spanish because it is a required subject.

After the students had had the opportunity to learn Spanish for some time, it was found that the students rated their liking at a high level of 58.3 percent of the total sample group, which was considered satisfactory.

However, the most frequent problems were with communication skills with 55 percent of students being unable to comprehend through listening or conversation. Followed by the skill of memorizing vocabulary by 53.4 percent, which is considered a skill that is comprehensively important because it can be used to improve speaking, reading and writing skills. The problem with grammar structure is another problem facing many learners (38.4 percent). Students who were unable to form communicative sentences were 31.7 percent. Another 30 percent had the problem of pronunciation which the learners were unable to do correctly. Finally, reading skills accounted for 25 percent of students who are unable to grasp the meaning of an article.

From such statistics, it shows that learners want to enhance their communication skills greatly and that learners pay more attention to understanding the meaning of words or sentences in order to apply them in developing other skills thoroughly. The learners were of the opinion that when in situations where they had to use Spanish to communicate, they were often unable to figure out the word as well as being unable to conjugate verbs accordingly to indicate the tense of the sentence they want to convey or grammatical rules. This all confuses students a lot until they are

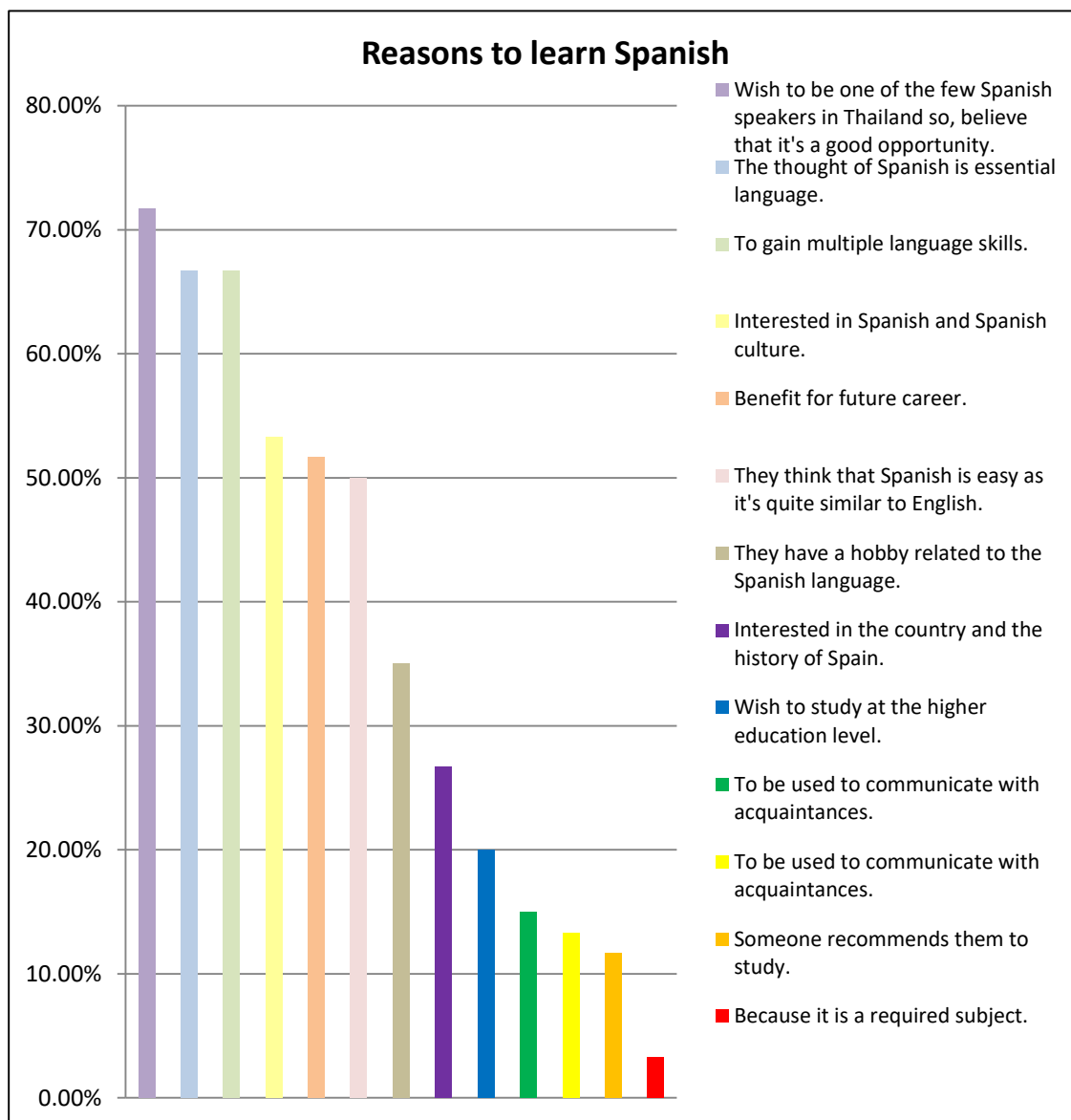


unable to create sentences for communication. Coupled with unfamiliarity with the accent and pronunciation, they may become insecure in themselves which hinders the development of communication, both in speaking and listening.

Therefore, the teacher is a very important variable to help build confidence and reduce obstacles that affect the development of students' learning skills by providing a variety of activities to meet the needs of students.

The activities which students liked most were watching movies, cartoons, or films in Spanish by as high as 40 percent and the first 3 activities that most students are interested in and want teachers to focus on are watching movies in Spanish, which accounted for as high as 76.7 percent, followed by learning activities from entertainment media as well, which was learning through Spanish songs 53.3 percent. 51.7 percent of learners chose activities to improve listening and speaking skills from conversation recordings of native speakers. These are activities that require teachers to focus on teaching and learning to develop better communication skills. It will be a way for learners to open their minds to more Spanish and start to enjoy learning and improve understanding. This provides learners with the opportunity to practice until they become proficient in such skills and when the language barrier is reduced, it can result in a positive development of motivation in studying Spanish.

The majority of learners said they had an 83.3 percent chance of using Spanish outside of the classroom, of which 86.7 percent had the highest chance of adopting Spanish through using and developing their Spanish language skills through entertainment activities such as listening to music, translating songs, watching football, watching movies, etc. The survey results clearly reflect the role of the media as the top factor in motivating learners to be motivated to learn Spanish.



When asked about their wish to continue their studies in the future, more than 58.3 percent of students are interested in further study, which is the majority of the sample students. However, whether students will continue their studies or not depends on a variety of factors. Most students





chose to continue their studies with the intention of increasing knowledge and enhancing language skills in the form of a minor or elective subject, including maintaining proficiency in the Spanish language and continuing self-study and learning, believing that knowing the Spanish language will benefit oneself greatly in one's future career.

#### *4.2 Survey results of student attitudes and opinions towards teaching Spanish in schools*

The answers to each question can be summarized as follows:

1. Most learners (40 percents) are strongly satisfied with learning Spanish for 6-8 hours per week, this is suitable for developing all aspects of their language skills.

2. Most of the students (38.3 percents) agreed and preferred the teachers to use Spanish to communicate and interact in the classroom

3. Most learners (41.7 percents) feel more relaxed talking in Spanish with a Thai teacher than communicating with a foreign teacher.

4. Most students (28.3 percents) enjoy other activities such as listening to Spanish music and watching Spanish movies rather than just learning grammar or doing exercises.

5. Most learners (46.7 percents) still feel scared or insecure about making mistakes in language, such as mispronunciation and misuse of grammar.

6. Most learners are (45 percents) extremely nervous when doing things that are not prepared in advance, such as randomly being called in front of the classroom.

7. Most of the students (30 percents) feel free in raising their hands to ask the teacher questions about things they didn't understand.

8. Most of the students (33.3 percents) did not agree or disagree that they were not bored or have feelings of not wanting to take a Spanish course.

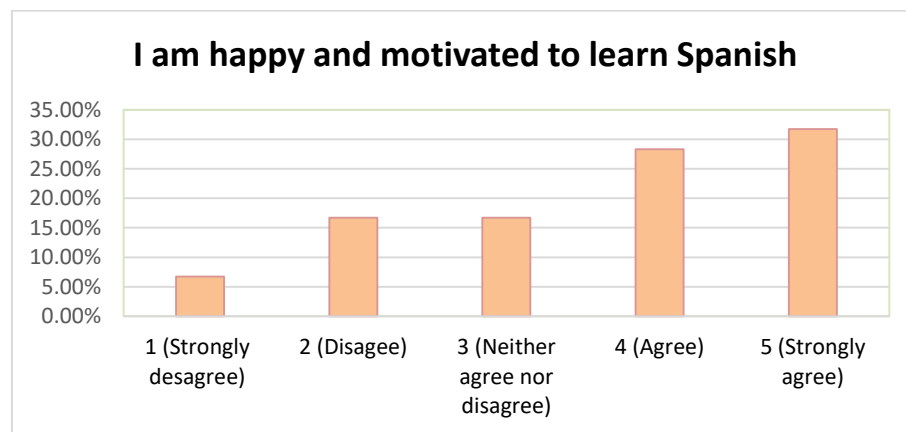
9. Most students (36.7 percents) think that teachers are not teaching too quickly, and the speed of teaching is appropriate.

10. Most of the students (35 percents) felt indifferent, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they could complete the exam every time without worry.

11. Most of the students (30 percents) felt indifferent, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that simply studying in the classroom was not enough until having to prepare to study hard for the exam.

12. Even the increased content of the study did not continually confuse the 30 percents) of sample students.

13. Most students (31.7 percents) are very happy and motivated to learn Spanish.



## 5. Conclusion and suggestion

This part consists of the conclusion of the results, and suggestions as in the following;

### 5.1 Conclusion

Research shows that the majority of students have a positive attitude towards learning Spanish. Therefore, the positive attitude of the learner affects their motivation in learning the language and when the motivation for choosing to learn Spanish was analyzed and compared with the theory used in this research.

Gardener & Lambert (1972) classified motivation into two types: Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation, It was shown that the sample students had more intrinsic motivation. That is to say, personal interests and preferences result in a need for learning Spanish rather than an extrinsic motivation.



The reason why most students chose to learn Spanish is because there is an opinion that there are few Thai Spanish speakers in Thailand and that the language is not very popular. Therefore, students see it as a beneficial opportunity to learn Spanish, followed by the thought of Spanish as one of the world's essential languages and the thought of having knowledge of a wide range of languages for themselves. Also, more than half of the students are interested in the Spanish language and culture of Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries.

The students' enthusiasm for the subject can also be shown in the different activities they are considering for learning Spanish at this point. It is not only demonstrating an interest in learning Spanish through traditional classroom activities, but also showing a sense of curiosity and a desire to try new things that can help with Spanish learning, such as Spanish dancing or handicrafts, which are not very popular among today's youth. However, according to the findings, most students still place a high value on these activities.

The desire of students to learn about foreign cultures in order to better understand the world and the people of the native-speaking community is a type of intrinsic motivation that encourages learners to become interested and committed to learning, which is an internal drive towards the student's goal of success.

This is not the only type of motivation that drives learners to choose to learn Spanish. The survey found that extrinsic motivation also plays an important role in creating satisfactory academic achievement for learners. More than half of the students chose to learn Spanish for the benefit of their future careers. This is clearly an Extrinsic Motivation.

When students think that learning Spanish is important for future work purposes, it indicates consideration for future benefits, such as a higher income, recognition or reputation. Therefore, it is considered as an incentive to use the language in practice.

Student's hobbies have influence as well. Learners who have Spanish-related hobbies such as watching Spanish-language dramas or movies, listening to Spanish music, or cheering for the Spanish national football team have a need for learning Spanish to use as a tool to support activities connected to their interests and hobbies.



## 5.2 Suggestions

1. As for motivation, schools should promote activities to encourage learners to realize the importance of learning Spanish, such as Spanish language camps, scholarships for exchanges or a short-term language course in Spain or other Spanish-speaking countries to guide students to find motivation and inspiration in learning Spanish through such experiences.

2. In the field of teaching Spanish teachers should increase learning activities and teaching materials to be diverse, interesting and more in line with the needs of the learners. From the survey results of this research, it was found that the students were very interested in teaching media materials in the form of movies. Therefore, more media-related activities should be organized., etc.

3. A central unit should be established to coordinate course planning together, including designing content and textbooks to be standard so that every school has guidelines for teaching and learning and are heading in the same direction.

4. The Ministry of Education should be encouraged to approve the opening of Spanish PAT courses. As the exam is not currently approved for such subjects, the majority of students are not motivated to learn Spanish as the language can't be used for admission to higher education.

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ในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ และผลสัมฤทธิ์ในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียน ชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 3 ในโรงเรียนสังกัดกรมสามัญศึกษา  
กรุงเทพมหานคร .วิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาครุศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต คณะครุศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย.