

The Role of Motivation in Achieving English Exit Examination: A Case Study on Thai Undergraduate Nursing

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Abstract

Motivation is believed to be one of the significant factors in English language achievement. It is a primary factor that encourages students' behavior to achieve language goals. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the motivation of third-year Thai undergraduate nursing students in English language learning (ELL) and discuss the implementation of the English Exit Examination at the university. The participants consisted of 24 students who were able to successfully pass the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). A qualitative case study, involving semi-structured in-depth interviews, was employed as a research instrument to gather real sources of information from the participants on their perspectives and experiences. The data were analyzed and coded by applying the steps used by Strauss (1987). The results indicated that students who acquired the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B1 level had both integrative and instrumental motivations. The students believed that English language ability was a key factor in their nursing careers. The students also spent their free time enjoying English music and movies. Furthermore, they wished to learn more about English people and their culture. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will benefit nursing students, English teachers, and university administrators in creating activities, strategies, policies, and environments to increase students' motivation toward achieving English language goals.

Keywords: CEFR B1 level, integrative motivation, instrumental motivations, TOEIC

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Introduction

In Thailand, English is extensively used and taught as a *foreign language* (EFL). As supported by Tang (2020), “English has become a global language, and teaching EFL has increasingly become a universal demand” (p. 97). English also plays a vital role in various fields (business, education, science, or a healthcare system) and is used as the means of communication among people who have different native languages (English as a lingua franca). Sudusinghe and Gamage (2023) stated that English is necessary in many contexts and used in a variety of work areas, including in the healthcare system.

The Thai government announced a policy that aimed to drive the country to become a medical hub. This could increase the number of people wishing to travel to the country for medical tourism because of its reputation for having quality hospitals and services (Sattayathamrongthian et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a high demand for medical personnel in Thailand, especially nurses. However, Thai nurses seemed to lack English proficiency. According to Pomat et al. (2022), Thai nursing students continue to have English language proficiency problems. Additionally, Anggoro (2020) emphasized the obstacles faced by Thai nursing students in communicating, such as mispronunciation, incorrect word choices, and grammatical mistakes, resulting in miscommunication when working with Indonesian nursing students. Chetsadanuwat (2018) supported that Thai nurses working in both public and private hospitals must use the four English language skills as tools for communicating and collaborating with patients, colleagues, and physicians on a daily basis. They concluded that the most needed English language skills for Thai nurses were listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Additionally, a significant obstacle for EFL nursing students is the environment, which does not encourage them to improve and become familiar with English. They only learn English in the classroom and lack the opportunity to learn outside the classroom (Akbari, 2015). Although Thai nurses may have been provided with many English courses when studying at school and university, they still lack English competency and confidence when communicating in English at hospitals (Wong, 2004).

In 2016, The Office of The Higher Education Commission announced the policy to enhance the English competency of Thai undergraduate students, stating that “*Universities in Thailand need to have policies, goals, and strategic plans to improve the English competency of undergraduate and graduate students both inside and outside classrooms. Furthermore, universities need to have an English Exit Exam as a requirement for graduation. The English Exit Exam needs to be aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*” (as cited in Wudthayagorn, 2022). According to the English Exit Exam requirement, undergraduate students need to achieve TOEIC scores higher than 380 or the CEFR B1 level, which is the level that the Office of Educational Quality Assurance applies to the university. On January 17, 2024, the English enhancement policy declared by The Office of The Higher Education Commission specified the CEFR level for an undergraduate diploma, a bachelor’s degree, and a master’s degree to be B1, B2, and C1, respectively. Despite students encountering difficulties in passing the B1 level, this policy has raised awareness of the need to improve English competency in Thailand,

particularly at Thai universities (Wudthayagorn 2022). According to Barr et al. (2024), the English proficiency of Thai students remains at a very low level and shows a gradually declining trend annually.

One of the variables that has long been studied in the field of education to assist language learners is motivation. This is the supportive factor that drives a learner to the successful accomplishment of ELL. Seven (2020) stated that a learner without motivation tends to lose effort during the journey of language learning, which deters them from studying a language. Abundant research has been conducted on the relationship between motivation and language achievement in higher education in various contexts. Polat (2020) found a positive relationship between language learners' success-oriented motivation level and their language proficiency scores. Another work by Calafato (2023) on learning another language also showed a relationship between language learning motivation and students' exam scores. Students with high language learning motivation attained B grades, while those with low language learning motivation received D grades. To highlight, motivation encourages students to endeavor to achieve their English language goals.

The English language exit exam is one of the conditions for nursing students to pass the CEFR B1 level to guarantee sufficient English proficiency to use the English language effectively in the hospital. The researchers recognize the significance of nursing students' English proficiency, as a nursing career is inadequate in countries without it. Perceiving the motivations of students who successfully passed the TOEIC could shed some light on English language teaching. Additionally, implementing the English Exit Examination seems to be an obstacle for nursing students because of their low English proficiency. To clarify, this implementation could slow the graduation of nursing students. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the motivations for ELL of 24 nursing students who passed the TOEIC exam in the second semester of the academic year 2566 and discuss the implementation of the English Exit Examination at the university.

Literature Review

1. English Language Exit Examination of Higher Education in Thailand

Language assessments are implemented at all levels of education institutions in Thailand to examine a student's language proficiency before entering school or university while studying a provided course and before graduating from school or university. Kremmel and Harding (2020) stated that language assessments are a vital part of the acceptance or refusal criteria of organizations. Additionally, Thailand has a national test called the Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET) to assess a student's all-inclusive knowledge in five area subjects: Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and English language. Students in Grades 6, 9, and 12 are required to take ONET since its outcomes are used to improve learning and teaching plans in fundamental education.

The admission system for Thailand's higher educational institutions requires students to submit scores from three tests: the Thai General Aptitude Test, Thai Professional Aptitude Test, and

Applied Knowledge Level. International tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), are required for admission into international programs. These placement tests are used to assess students before studying at a university. Perceiving the significance of the English language in the digital era, including the low language proficiency of Thai people from the English First Proficiency Index survey, the Ministry of Education in 2014 launched a reform of English language teaching policies for fundamental education (Grades 1–12), requiring schools to apply the CEFR model in language classes to enhance a student’s language abilities. The latter policy for higher education was announced to elevate university students’ language proficiency, mandating that every student be assessed for English language proficiency in alignment with the CEFR model (as cited in Wudthayagorn, 2022). Nevertheless, the latest English enhancement policy in 2024 emphasizes that all university students must take an English Exit Examination before graduating and achieve a B2 level for a bachelor’s degree.

Many educational institutions have encountered difficulties with this policy, especially with the English Exit Examination. According to this circumstance, there might be an effect on the teaching and learning process which is called “washback.” Jamalifar et al. (2021) defined washback as “the impact of testing on curriculum design, teaching practice, and learning behavior (p. 179).” Various international tests are commonly used in Thailand, the most notable being the TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. TOEIC is mostly used by undergraduate students since it is less expensive than the others and is widely accepted by both the educational and business sectors. Students use their TOEIC scores to increase their salary when applying for a job or pursuing their education. Supported by Kunasaraphan (2020), the TOEIC test helps employers identify qualified persons who have acquired sufficient English language ability. Hoang et al. (2021) also stated that TOEIC is a standardized test that most educational institutions use as a requirement for graduation.

This study aligns with the policy of the Ministry of Education in 2016 and follows the criteria of the External Quality Assessment Manual for Higher Education Institutions in 2021 concerning the English Exit Examination (B1 level or TOEIC at 380 scores) for undergraduate students. With the first-year university announcement in 2022, about 90% of students failed the test, and consequently, it is necessary to use the announced policy.

2. English Language Proficiency of Thai Nursing Students

English has long been considered one of the most important languages to learn. People from all over the world have been trying to acquire English language skills owing to their usefulness. Magyar et al. (2022) stated that English plays a vital role globally and that students must be proficient in English language skills.

In Thailand, people’s English language proficiency is relatively low and has been declining yearly, according to the score statistics of English proficiency from the EF English Proficiency Index (Barr et al., 2024). Thai students have been learning the English language for more than a decade (Grades 1–12); however, their English proficiency has rarely improved. Supported by Waluyo’s work

(2019), this study investigated the English proficiency of Thai EFL learners on CEFR levels, finding that 2,248 first-year students reported the level of basic users in CEFR as A1 and A2. These levels are equivalent to the English proficiency of students in primary and junior high schools. This might cause problems when they graduate and enter the workforce, leading to lower salaries, limited opportunities, and slow career advancement due to their lack of English language competence. Lertcharoenwanich (2022) emphasized that a good TOEIC score provides more opportunities for acquiring a good position and also a higher salary. From an employer's perspective, English language ability is one of the criteria for hiring employees (It-ngam et al., 2023). In another study by It-ngam et al. (2023), employees with good proficiency in English were revealed to be urgently needed; moreover, promotion to a higher position requires good English competency.

Under the medical hub plan, this situation may affect some groups of medical personnel. Khamwong et al. (2020) stated that medical personnel encountered obstacles despite having four English skills at moderate to high levels. In the healthcare system, nurses are the primary point of contact with patients, making it crucial for them to have adequate English language skills to communicate effectively. Nonmeatawat et al. (2022) affirmed that English communication is very important for nurses since they come into contact with international patients; furthermore, most nursing textbooks are in English. Low English proficiency in nursing students can hinder not only their work at the hospital but also their university studies. The reformation of the English language teaching policy announced by The Commission on Higher Education Standards in 2024 has resulted in nursing students facing difficulties. Many nursing students are unable to pass the English Exit Examination; consequently, they cannot graduate. This affects the health system because nurses are in high demand. Boonduaylan et al. (2022) stated that Thailand's healthcare system is facing a shortage of nursing staff.

3. Motivation in ELL

Motivation has been widely investigated in educational areas, especially in ELL. Motivation in ELL influences and encourages an individual's behavior (Moos & Marroquin, 2010; Santrock, 2004). In the context of language learning, motivation is a primary factor in successful teaching and learning (Gardner, 2007; Reusch, 2012; Wong, 2013). Consequently, motivation leads EFL students to perform well in the classroom (Dörnyei 2001). Furthermore, Smith (2012) determined that motivation can drive EFL students to attain language achievement. Finally, EFL students' motivation is a significant internal factor for ELL because it significantly correlates with language achievement (Gardner & Masgoret, 2003; Kormos & Csizér, 2010).

The two types of motivation in second language acquisition or foreign language learning are integrative and instrumental (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). First, integrative motivation refers to students' willingness to focus and interact with native speakers and learners' desires to understand the people and culture of the target language (Gardner, 1985). Students who wish to integrate themselves with native English speakers and their culture are motivated (Gardner, 1983).

Moreover, Dörnyei (2003) discusses that integrative motivation is not only associated with learners who intend to expose themselves to completely different cultures and ways of living, but they also have highly positive feelings toward native English speakers. Furthermore, Dörnyei (1990) claims that EFL students who have high integrative motivation for learning English will be at an intermediate proficiency level.

Conversely, instrumental motivation refers to the desire to learn a second language or a foreign language for specific reasons, such as working in the future, studying, and passing exams (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Moreover, Gardner (1985) pointed out that learners with high instrumental motivation do not wish to explore people or cultures of the target language themselves because they have other reasons, such as academic achievement and professional goals. McGroarty (1996) also indicated that learners with instrumental motivation like to learn the English language to attain other specific goals, such as financial, educational, and occupational purposes. Thus, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) stated that instrumental motivation is a powerful stimulator in the process of language learning. Nevertheless, they revealed that both integrative and instrumental motivations were positively correlated with academic achievement.

Therefore, perceiving the type of motivation expressed by students who successfully passed the TOEIC may benefit educational stakeholders, educational administration, English instructors, and students in recognizing the importance of motivation in achieving ELL. This could turn into a proper policy, a better course syllabus to assist the language learner, and an outstanding plan to overcome the obstacles of the English Exit Examination for language learners.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the motivation of third-year Thai undergraduate nursing students who were able to successfully achieve the TOEIC criteria score. Moreover, the researchers discussed the implementation of the English Exit Examination at the university in various aspects from the viewpoint of the test-taker.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the motivation of Thai undergraduate nursing students who achieved academic achievement on the English Exit Exam (TOEIC) and discussed the implementation of the English Exit Exam in the university in various aspects. Kampetch et al. (2021) supported that qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews are valid, as this is a direct form of communication. The researcher can provide clear questions and answers to interviewees in the event of a misunderstanding. In addition, the researcher observed the interviewees' behaviors when answering each question to determine the actual data gained. Ruslin et al. (2022) state that "the semi-structured interview is more powerful than other

types of interviews for qualitative research because it allows the researcher to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees” (p. 22). The average number of participants in qualitative research should be approximately 20–60 (Bekele & Ago, 2022). Thus, both a qualitative research approach and a specific number of participants could provide in-depth information to answer the research question in this study.

2. Population and Samples

A private university in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, had already announced the English Exit Exam rules and regulations for students in the academic year 2565. At the undergraduate level, nursing students must take the TOEIC after they complete four English courses (from IENG31XX English I to IENG31XX English IV). Thai nursing students would need to take the TOEIC during their third year in the second semester of each academic year.

The reason for choosing this private university is that the researchers have been teaching English courses at this institution and are responsible for the English Exit Examination policy. This offers convenience in contacting the participants, and the research can provide fundamental information to the university and others.

Purposive sampling was used in this study, and the criteria for research participants were the university requirement at the CEFR B1 level by TOEIC scores higher than 380 in the second semester of the academic year 2566. A total of 294 nursing students applied to take the TOEIC in the second semester of the academic year 2566; however, only 24 nursing students could meet the TOEIC criteria mentioned earlier. Thus, 24 students participated in the study. The participants' scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Participants' TOEIC Scores

Participants	Listening (495)	Reading (495)	TOEIC (990)
Participant 1	245	140	385
Participant 2	235	150	385
Participant 3	325	150	475
Participant 4	320	255	575
Participant 5	340	195	535
Participant 6	300	180	480
Participant 7	245	225	470

Table 1 (Continued)

Participants	Listening (495)	Reading (495)	TOEIC (990)
Participant 8	350	200	550
Participant 9	255	155	410
Participant 10	280	130	410
Participant 11	320	175	495
Participant 12	290	290	580
Participant 13	280	190	470
Participant 14	230	155	385
Participant 15	240	155	395
Participant 16	300	210	510
Participant 17	290	145	435
Participant 18	295	230	525
Participant 19	250	155	405
Participant 20	330	250	580
Participant 21	240	175	415
Participant 22	210	190	400
Participant 23	265	125	390
Participant 24	260	225	485

3. Instrument and Validation

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The duration of the interviews depended on the saturation of the data and the scope of the study.

The researchers designed the interview questions based on Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery scale to cover the research objective of the study, and then sent it to three experts to check and validate the content, with index objective congruence (IOC). Each question was given an average score of 0.67, and the questions that did not meet the score criteria were revised following the suggestions of experts. Example questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Example Questions

Question Number	Questions
1	How did you plan and manage yourself before taking the English Exit Examination?
2	What is the most important factor that made you pass the English Exit Examination?
3	Why do you need to study the English language?
4	What do you think about English language learning and the English Exit Examination?
5	Do you have any methods or strategies for learning English inside the classroom?
6	Do you have any methods or strategies for learning English outside the classroom?

4. Data Collection

Four important procedures were followed in preparation for in-depth interviews. First, in clinical practice, the participants were in different places; therefore, the researchers created a Microsoft Teams room for an online in-depth interview. Second, when the students had completed the English Exit Exam at the university, and the Educational Testing Service delivered the scores, the researchers made a formal memorandum to inform the head of the English section to ask for the student's personal information and contact those who obtained TOEIC scores higher than 380. Third, the researchers called each student individually to explain the objective of the study and asked them to join the interview. Finally, when all participants agreed to join, the researchers selected an appropriate date and time and reminded the participants to open the camera and stay in a quiet room during the interview.

Furthermore, before starting each interview, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the objectives and benefits of the study. The researchers distributed a consent form to receive permission from the research participants. Eventually, the researchers informed the participants that the interview data would be kept confidential.

5. Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed and transcribed verbatim using qualitative content analysis. The researchers read and reviewed the interview transcripts several times, applying three types of coding according to the steps proposed by Strauss (1987). First, using open

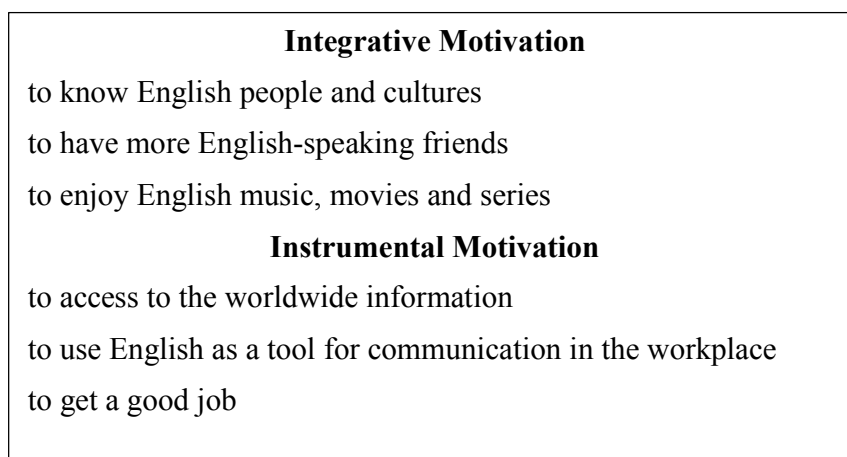
coding, the researchers scanned the data and labeled the codes. Second, axial coding was used to link the themes or concepts of the codes. Third, using selective coding, the students focused on themes or concepts where the data could be extended. Finally, when the data reached saturation to achieve the objective of the study and keep students' information confidential, the transcripts were sent to the participants for verification to ensure accuracy and credibility.

Results

The results were presented with the main theme of motivation of nursing students in ELL and the two themes: “integrative motivation” and “instrumental motivation.” According to Figure 1, the first theme indicated three sub-themes: to know English people and their culture, to have more English-speaking friends, and to enjoy English music, movies, and series. The second theme revealed three sub-themes: to access worldwide information, to use English as a tool for communication in the workplace, and to get a good job.

Figure 1

Motivation in ELL



Words of Frequency: Excerpts from the interview transcriptions were included in this section, focusing on motivation toward ELL. The researchers identified a high frequency of words in Word Cloud (Figure 2), such as “English,” “study,” “important,” “vocabulary,” “teachers,” “work,” “hospitals,” “nurses,” “music,” “movie,” and “Thailand.” The students displayed that the English language, especially vocabulary, would be important for them when they are working in hospitals. Regarding students' motivation in ELL, they had instrumental motivation to learn English. Additionally, teachers were a significant factor for ELL students. However, the students not only had instrumental motivation but also integrative motivation because they mentioned English music and movies several times. In other words, when the students had free time, they acquired the English language through music and movies.

Figure 2

Words Cloud



1. The Motivation of Nursing Students Toward ELL: Integrative Motivation

1.1 To Know English People and Cultures

Fifteen students wished to learn about English culture and traditions. This means that students who usually learn EFL have no opportunity to be in an English environment. They studied the English language among the local and Thai culture and traditions. They realized the importance of the English language and wished to learn more about some target language cultures and traditions.

"I studied the English language since I was young and heard that British people love drinking tea. I wanted to feel like a British person with a culture of drinking tea in the afternoon. I thought it would make me look cool."

Since Thailand is a global tourist destination, English was used as a language medium for travel purposes. Native English speakers, such as British, American, and Australians, also visited Thailand. Therefore, students had a great opportunity to explore English people, cultures, and traditions.

"I thought the English language was important for daily use because there were many foreigners in Thailand. If I could use and understand English, I would be able to understand more about them and their lives."

Nevertheless, this motivation could mean that students choose to study with native English-speaking teachers because English language learners want to know more about English people, ELL culture, and traditions. Thus, they were encouraged them to choose to study only with native English-speaking teachers.

“I always chose to study with foreign English teachers because I thought I could understand the English language better. It seemed like I was studying with a native English teacher.”

1.2 To Have More English-Speaking Friends

Ten students wanted more English-speaking friends. This meant that students wanted not only Thai friends but also foreign friends who could use English. By having English-speaking friends, students could practice their English skills and learn more about different cultures and ways of life.

“I sometimes chatted with my English-speaking friends online. It helped me practice my English and also helped my friends to try using the Thai language. I wanted to learn English from them, and they wanted to learn Thai from me.”

1.3 To Enjoy English Music, Movies, and Series

Many students (21 participants) agreed that they enjoyed English music, movies, and series. Students preferred spending their free time on English media. They felt relaxed and practiced English simultaneously. Furthermore, smartphones and gadgets were affordable for students, and the Internet was not as difficult to access as in the past. Thus, students could easily connect to English media, applications, and platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and Netflix:

“I always set the default language of my gadgets in English. Besides, I liked watching Netflix and listening to English music. Additionally, I usually listened to English music and looked up the lyrics because I wanted to understand the meaning of the songs.”

In addition to students who listened to English music and watched English series by themselves, English teachers who were their role models could have a critical impact on the students by guiding and sharing with them techniques and strategies on how to listen and watch English media. This could help students practice English efficiently.

“My secondary-school teacher taught me to listen to English music, then looked up the lyrics and watched English series, so I was still applying these strategies to my life.”

Nevertheless, forcing students to watch only English movies or series after a long practicum day might be exhausting for students. To feel more comfortable during their relaxation time but still eager to practice English, several entertainment applications and platforms have English subtitles for movies and series, such as Thai movies:

“I liked watching Thai movies, but I always looked at the English subtitles because I wanted to know about English phrases and sentences.”

2. The Motivation of Nursing Students Toward ELL: Instrumental Motivation

2.1 To Access Worldwide Information

Half of the students realized that current knowledge and information were published and created in the English language, especially on the Internet. Most of the knowledge and skills from research,

practices, and workshops that nurses were required to review and update were in English. Moreover, several international influencers who made content online, such as YouTuber and Tiktoker, used English as a tool to give instructions and educate audiences:

“I thought the English language could play an important role in enhancing my knowledge and helping me to adapt to the rapid changes of the world, such as new vocabulary and information that were on the internet.”

2.2 To Use English as a Tool for Communication in the Workplace

Twenty students believed that in their future careers, they must not avoid using English at work. As nurses, there were many circumstances in which they had to use English every day. For example, communicating with foreign patients and collaborating with their colleagues and physicians. Moreover, students recognized that at the hospital, they needed to use English medical vocabulary for medical cases and equipment:

“I had to study the English language because I had to use medical vocabulary when working at the hospital. Therefore, I thought to work as a nurse, I needed to use English to communicate with foreign patients and collaborate with my colleagues and physicians.”

2.3 To Get a Good Job

All students believed that if they were eager to have a high income and work in a prestigious hospital, they would need to be good at English and obtain a TOEIC score higher than 400. Therefore, some hospitals gave nurses the challenge that if they met the English score criteria, they would be able to receive extra pay:

“I thought the English language could improve my qualification to work as a nurse in big and famous hospitals in Thailand. Besides, my friend told me that at her hospital, if she had a TOEIC score higher than 500, she could get more income.”

These answers reflected the motivation of twenty-four nursing students who disclosed that their integrative and instrumental motivations influenced them to pass the CEFR B1 Level with TOEIC scores higher than 380. Although students enrolled in many courses during the second semester and had numerous daily assignments on clinical practices to finish, they were still motivated and managed to pass the university criteria for the English Exit Exam.

2. Summary Interview on the English Exit Examination Implementation

Most of the students agreed to have the English Exit Examination as a criterion for graduating from university, as many hospitals required the students to submit their TOEIC score. Additionally, the students could perceive their English language proficiency when knowing their TOEIC score. The students supported the fact that other universities have also implemented this policy. The CEFR B1 level, with a TOEIC score of 380, was a proper criterion for students. However, some of them would like the criterion score to be more than 380 because they acknowledged that some hospitals required a higher TOEIC score. The students also expressed that they had to do a practicum and, as a result, did not have time to prepare themselves for the

English Exit Examination. Finally, the students mentioned that they only paid attention to the English classes, which helped them pass the TOEIC.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study investigated 24 out of 294 nursing students' motivations for ELL who successfully passed the CEFR B1 Level with TOEIC scores higher than 380. The students' answers reflected their high motivation toward ELL. They have both instrumental and integrative motivations. The students were not only concerned with acquiring a job, their future career, and understanding English information, but also believed they needed to use English to interact with English speakers and expose themselves to various cultures and people. Both motivations can be found in a language learner, since numerous variables influence them. The most powerful variable is the learner's parents, who have a tremendous influence on a language learner. According to the findings of Kanoksilapatham et al. (2021), who investigated motivation in learning English among Thai undergraduate students of science and humanities at eight public universities. The study demonstrated that humanities students had less pressure to learn English than science students. The humanities students could freely choose to study English because they wanted to study, but on the other hand, the parents of science students might expect them to be good at English, either for studying abroad or for getting a better job. This could create different motivations for language learners.

Both instrumental and integrative motivations are critical for students who desire English language ability. This is consistent with the findings of Banafi (2023), who investigated the self-motivation and attitudes of nursing students toward communicative language teaching. Nursing students were found to show high motivation to learn medical English language skills, with both motivation and attitude being significant factors in enhancing students' language competency. Gardner and Masgoret (2003) found that student motivation is correlated with language achievement. Gardner (2007) illustrated that highly motivated students can perform better in ELL. In another study, Laiphrakpam and Aroonsrimorakot (2021) examined the motivation toward ELL of 129 Thai engineering students, including their attitudes and motivation toward the English learning experience. The findings showed that attitude and motivation affected English learners in many ways: the decision to do something in a language classroom, consistent participation in a language activity, or their endeavor to achieve language learning. Thus, the more motivated language learners are, the better their chances of success in language learning.

Indeed, the students in this study strongly agreed with the findings of Oducado et al. (2020) in that academic performance and the future employment prospects of nursing students depended on students' English language proficiency, since TOEIC is one of the criteria for recruiting nurses into famous hospitals in Thailand. The students, however, highlighted that creating an English environment for themselves could help students to become more familiar with the English language, such as "*setting English as a default language for gadgets,*" "*listening to English*

music,” “*watching English series or films,*” and “*speaking the English language with teachers, family members, and friends.*” The students indicated that when it was time for them to take the TOEIC test, all their accumulated English knowledge and skills could be utilized. Alqahtani (2022) concluded that extracurricular activities and workshops should be provided to nursing students to increase their use of English.

Many higher educational institutions in Thailand have encountered obstacles in implementing English exit examinations to raise awareness of English language teaching and learning. In the context of this university, only 10% of the students passed the TOEIC test, with some needing to take the test four or five times before passing, while others continued to fail. If students cannot meet the English language competency criteria announced by the government, they cannot graduate from the university. Wudthayagorn (2022) emphasized that the English Exit Examination policy and its implementation may motivate students to enhance students’ English language ability; however, this does not mean they may be able to meet the required English language competency level. Moreover, this can have significant consequences for language learning. The teaching strategies of an instructor would need to be changed to help a learner pass the English Exit Examination. This phenomenon is known as the washback effect. Teachers would be required to gradually integrate the teaching content to align with some English Exit Exam strategies (Athiworakun & Adunyarittigun, 2022) merely to pass the exam, which is not the purpose of acquiring the language.

The English language is essential for nursing careers because the Thai government is focusing on developing the medical field owing to its importance in attracting foreigners and driving the economy of the country. Thailand has the potential to become an international medical hub because many facilities and resources are already in place. Additionally, the English criteria at the higher education level increase annually, affecting educational stakeholders at all levels. If the primary and secondary levels cannot meet the CEFR standard, it will impact the higher education level. The findings of this research emphasize that motivation is a key point in assisting language learners to achieve English language competency. Educators should provide adequate opportunities for students to demonstrate their English language skills, particularly in classrooms where the teacher acts as a facilitator. More games and activities can be implemented in the classroom rather than using only textbooks and teaching grammar to increase students’ motivation toward learning English. The most important aspect is that all educational sectors and stakeholders need to join together to consider a policy that suits the current situation in the context of Thailand. Moreover, few studies have examined the English competency of Thai undergraduate nursing students and further research is required in this area.

The small number of participants may be a limitation of this study. Further research should be conducted with a larger number of nursing student participants at a variety of universities to obtain more detailed data. A quantitative approach may be added to provide additional resources and increase the reliability of the research.

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