FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' SATISFACTION
WITH THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM
IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS (MEC)
AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

BY

MR. LERJATE SUANJAN

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN
PARTIALFULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
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ENTITLED

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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirement for

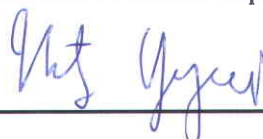the degree of Master of Arts in English for Careers

on July 30, 2016

Chairman _____

(Associate Professor Supong Tangkiengsirisin, Ph.D.)

Member and Advisor _____

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Independent Study Paper Title	FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS (MEC) AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the current level of students' satisfaction and factors influencing their satisfaction toward the MEC program. To complete the research aim, quantitative method (questionnaire) was used. The data was collected from students who registered for the MEC program in 2015 and are currently completing their second year of the program (n = 60). The open ended and close ended questions were included. The data was analyzed using statistical tools and content analysis. The descriptive analysis showed that individual attitudes toward the English language in general, and the coursework of the MEC class, were generally positive. Assessments of the course material, course content, and classroom environment were generally good and very good. Students could be described as satisfied to very satisfied. Students also self-assessed moderate improvements in each of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading). These results suggest that the students were generally positive, satisfied, and learning. The results indicated that students who had previous experience in English language programs had a significantly lower satisfaction level with the MEC program than those that did not. It also showed that the four factors tested (attitude to English, course materials, course

content, and classroom environment) revealed about 24% of variance in satisfaction. Of the four factors identified, only one factor – course content – was statistically significant in the regression equation.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

English has been designated the international language, and English language proficiency has become critical to success, particularly in the fields of business, science, and politics (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). The majority of nations have implemented compulsory English language programs in their schools (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), and research conducted by Suwanaram (2012) found that 89% of Thai university students believe that their future job prospects will be better if they achieve a high level of English language proficiency.

The Master of Arts Program in English for Careers (MEC) offered by the Language Institute at Thammasat University is a two-year masters program. The objective of this program is to provide opportunities for students to study and practice using English language skills for specific purposes, with the longer-term goal of enhancing their career prospects within the modern global economy. The program is offered as a series of courses, delivered over two 16-week semesters and an 8-week summer session. Classes are held on weekends from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, and students have the option to complete either a combination of course work and a thesis or course work, an examination, and independent study (Thammasat University, 2008). Despite the value of learning English for future career opportunities, as can be seen in Figure 1 below, registration in the MEC program has been declining in recent years. The cause of this decline is unknown.
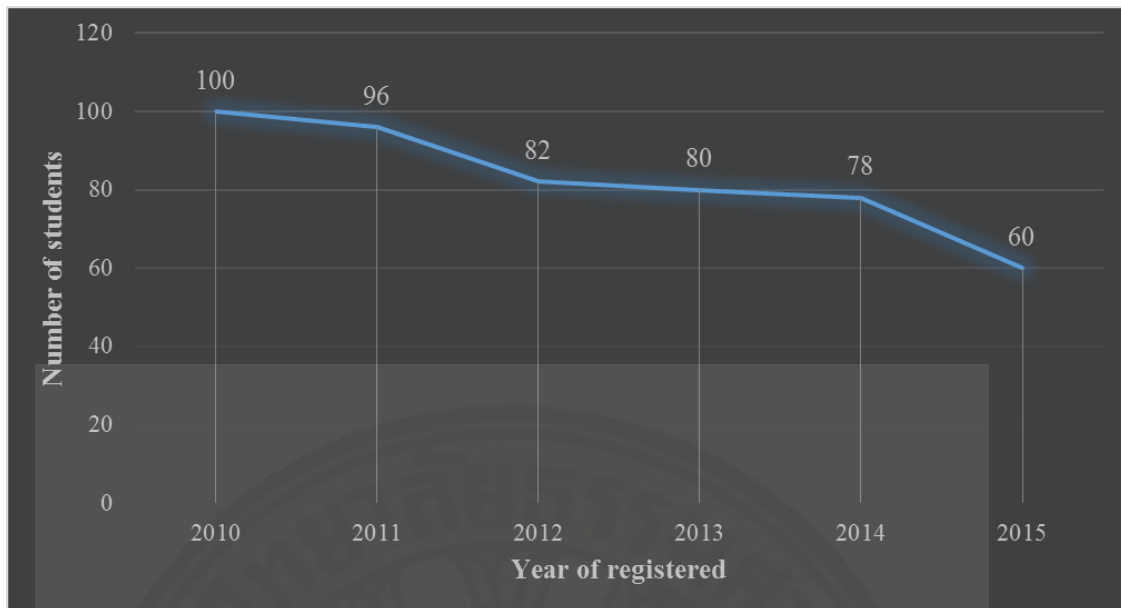
Figure 1.1: Declining registration rates for the MEC program

The rationale for this research is largely personal interest, as the researcher would like to determine why students are satisfied or unsatisfied with the MEC program. This interest arose because some classmates have expressed satisfaction with the MEC courses, whereas others are dissatisfied, and the researcher was curious as to why these different responses occur. However, in addition to personal interest, this research will be conducted to address a gap in the literature, given that few studies have examined the determinants of satisfaction among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners and none have done so using the set of the variables proposed for this research. A review of the literature indicates that research on EFL learners has tended to focus on motivation and teacher characteristics and methods, while few education researchers have examined the effects of attitudes, student backgrounds, course materials, course difficulty, and classroom environment on satisfaction, and none have examined the collective influence of these variables.

1.2 Research question

This research aims to answer the following question: "What are the factors that influence students' satisfaction with the MEC program?"

1.3 Research objective

The objective of this research is to examine the current level of students' satisfaction and factors influencing their satisfaction toward the MEC program.

1.4 Definition of terms

Attitude: The tendency to respond in a certain way toward something (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013), or a set of beliefs about something (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011)

Background: May include factors such as first language and culture (Kazar, 2013), prerequisite knowledge and skills (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), and prior education, including English language instruction (Bordia, Wales, Pittam, & Gallois, 2006)

Course material: Textbooks and other reference materials (Kikuchi, 2009), and the way in which these materials are organized and presented through various instructional methods (Kauffman, 2015)

Course content difficulty: Perceived EFL challenges such as large vocabularies and confusing grammar rules (Trang & Baldauf, 2007)

Classroom environment: May include factors such as class sizes, teaching methods, general classroom atmosphere (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), noise, interruptions, cleanliness, classmate characteristics, and instructor helpfulness (Sinclaire, 2013)
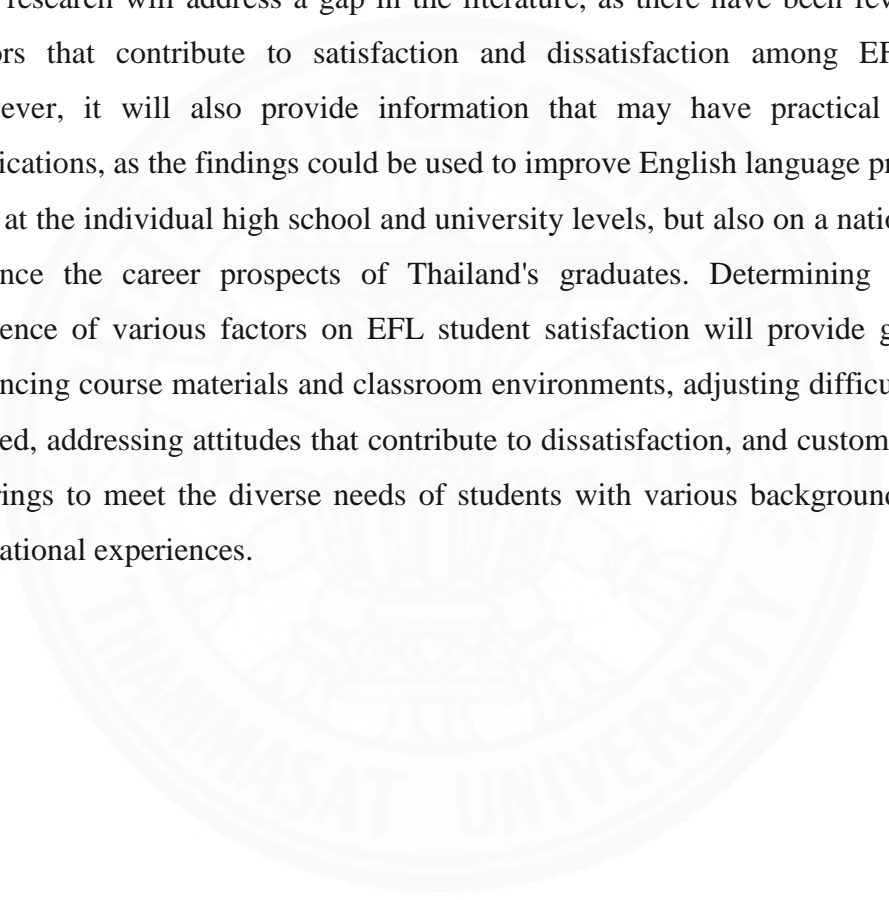
Satisfaction: The degree to which students feel that their learning experience has been successful and positive (Moore, 2009)

1.5 Significance of the study

Despite the importance of learning English to future career opportunities, success rates for second language learning are low, and drop-out rates are high (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Moreover, a recent study conducted at a Thai public university found that the majority of graduates lacked English language proficiency despite having completed the EFL courses that were required as part of their degrees (Suwanarak, 2012).

Student satisfaction is linked to positive educational outcomes (Chitkushev, Vodenska, & Zlatevam, 2013; La Piana, 2014; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014), so the poor outcomes associated with EFL programs suggest that many students are dissatisfied with these courses. Given that English language proficiency is critical to success within the modern globalized information economy, it would be beneficial to determine why so many students seem to be dissatisfied with their EFL programs.

This research will address a gap in the literature, as there have been few studies on factors that contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction among EFL learners. However, it will also provide information that may have practical and policy implications, as the findings could be used to improve English language programs, not only at the individual high school and university levels, but also on a national scale to enhance the career prospects of Thailand's graduates. Determining the relative influence of various factors on EFL student satisfaction will provide guidance for enhancing course materials and classroom environments, adjusting difficulty levels as needed, addressing attitudes that contribute to dissatisfaction, and customizing course offerings to meet the diverse needs of students with various backgrounds and prior educational experiences.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the literature review that was completed prior to conducting this study. It begins with a discussion of the importance of English to students' future career prospects, specific English language skills that learners must acquire, and theories regarding English language and communication in section 2.1. Section 2.2 describes the Expectation-Confirmation Theory of satisfaction (which provided an additional theoretical foundation for this research). Section 2.2.1 presents information about the five variables of interest for this research: attitude, background and education, course materials, course content difficulty, and classroom environment, and section 2.2.2 presents evidence for the effects that student satisfaction has on various learning outcomes. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of related research, focusing on contributors to student satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with EFL programs and other types of courses, and the link between student satisfaction and the development of English language proficiency.

2.1 English language and skills improvement

Given the status of the English language as the international language of business learning it has become critical for ensuring good job prospects. However, despite the fact that many nations have established compulsory EFL programs, a significant proportion of EFL students do not learn English successfully, and drop-out rates for non-compulsory language courses are high (Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

There are four basic English language skills that EFL students need to master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The degree to which students become proficient in each of these skills can be affected by interference from their first language (Kilickaya, 2009; Sinha, Bannerjee, Sinha, & Shastri, 2009).

There are a number of theories regarding English language learning and communication, including Bolton and Kachru's (2006) Concentric Circle Model of World English (see Figure 2.2 below). According to Kilickaya (2009), this theory proposes that English has a different status and functionality in various world regions.

The inner circle comprises nations of native English speakers, including Canada, the U.S., the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. The outer circle is made up of former colonies, including Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The expansion zone of the circle consists of nations that are influenced by Western countries and are increasingly recognizing the importance of English as the global language of education, technology, science, and business. These nations include Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Those in the outer circle and expansion zone will experience interference from their first languages when learning English, and therefore make particular errors that can become permanently integrated within their speech. This has led to concerns that the English language will become subdivided into a number of different forms, and therefore lose its usefulness as a global language. On the other hand, it can be argued that no one really owns the English language, and each nation has the right to develop it as they see fit (Kilickaya, 2009). This has significant implications for English language teaching, as educators must decide whether to teach a single standard English based on the version spoken in nations where English is the primary language, or teach students multiple variations of English that have arisen in different nations to better facilitate cross-cultural communication.
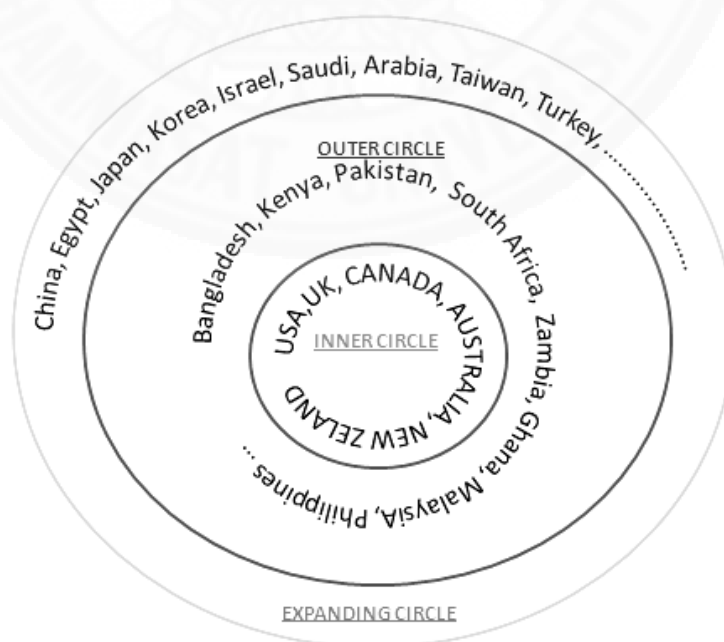
Figure 2.1: Concentric Circle Model of World Englishes (Source: Bolton & Kachru, 2006)

Lantolf (2006) describes another relevant theory, the sociocultural theory (SCT) of language learning, which is based on the theoretical foundations proposed by L.S. Vygotsky and colleagues. According to SCT, all mental processes, including the acquisition of language, are guided by culture. Therefore, the ability to become proficient in a language will be affected by a variety of factors beyond the classroom environment, including family life, interactions with peers, institutions, workplaces, and anything else that is shaped by culture. As a result, it is difficult for students of a foreign language to mediate their cognitive activity with the second language, even if they are able to communicate well, because their thinking processes are shaped by the culture associated with their first language. Essentially, SCT suggests that "cognitive and material activities are mediated by symbolic artifacts (such as languages, literacy, numeracy, concepts, and forms of logic and rationality) as well as by material artifacts and technologies" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 216). Therefore, the degree to which a second language can influence the learner's mental processes will be limited due to interference from the first language and the culture from which it arose.

Malone (2012) describes a third theory of language learning, developed by Steven Krashen and based on the prior work of Vygotsky and Noam Chomsky, which has risen to prominence in recent years. Two critical elements of this theory are comprehensible input and the affective filter. Comprehensible input is based on the idea that it is more effective to converse naturally with others and receive feedback than to learn in traditional ways (for example, rote memorization and drilling of vocabulary and grammatical rules). This aspect of the theory has significant implications for the way in which EFL courses are taught and the type of course materials that should be used. The affective filter arises in response to the feelings experienced by a learner during the language acquisition process. Negative feelings reduce the likelihood of successful acquisition, whereas positive feelings increase it. This aspect of the theory is therefore related to learner attitudes, as negative attitudes are more likely to produce negative feelings.

2.2 Satisfaction theory

Student satisfaction has been defined as learners' perceptions of the value of the course and the learning experiences it provides (Kuo et al., 2013), or, alternatively, as the degree to which students are successful in their learning and pleased with the learning experience (Moore, 2009). According to Bordia et al. (2006), a prominent theory of satisfaction is Expectation-Confirmation Theory (also known as Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory). This theory holds that consumers compare their expectations of a product or service with its actual performance. If the performance matches expectations, confirmation occurs, which results in satisfaction, whereas if it does not, the result is disconfirmation, which can lead to either enhanced satisfaction or dissatisfaction, depending on whether the product or service exceeded expectations or fell short of them.
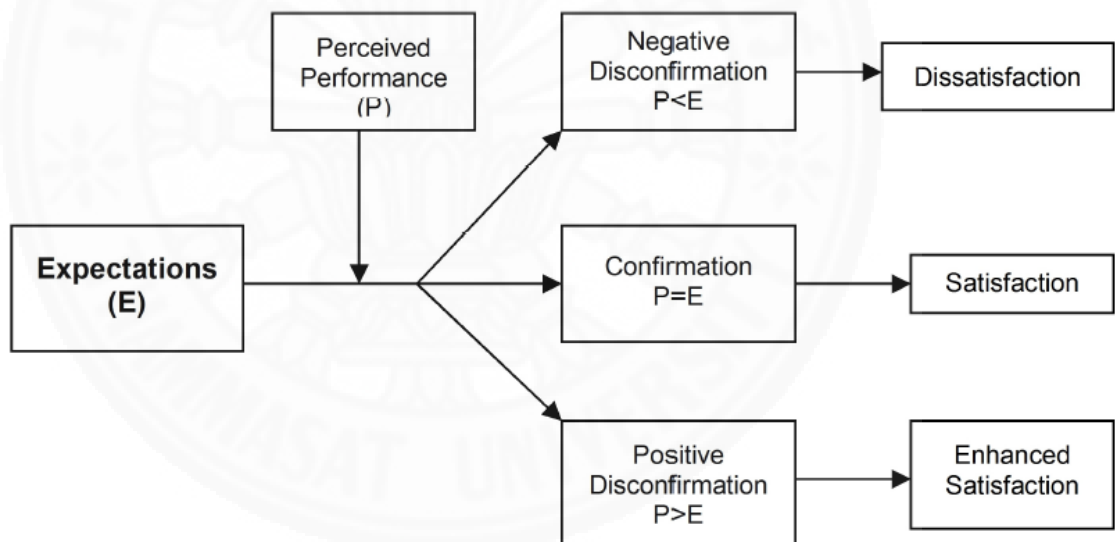
Figure 2.2 Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Source: Bordia et al., 2006, p. 5)

Expectation-Confirmation Theory can provide insights into why certain factors contribute to satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) among EFL students. For example, expectations may be shaped by background and education, as well as attitudes toward the English language. Also, students are likely to begin a class with certain expectations regarding course material, difficulty level, and classroom environment. They will then weigh their perceptions against their expectations, which will result in

dissatisfaction, satisfaction, or enhanced satisfaction. For example, a student who expects an English course to be extremely difficult may experience positive disconfirmation and a higher level of satisfaction than expected, whereas a student who expected the course to be easy and found it challenging would be more likely to feel dissatisfied, even though both students attended the same program. Also, a student who expected a classroom environment to be crowded and noisy would not suffer from negative disconfirmation and the resultant dissatisfaction if the environment matched expectations. However, a student who attended the same class but expected a small class size and a peaceful learning environment would probably be dissatisfied.

2.2.1 Factors influencing students satisfaction
2.2.1.1 Attitude toward the English language

An attitude can be defined as "a set of beliefs" (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011, p. 997) or "a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing such as an idea, object, person, or situation" (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013, p. 63). Preconceptions, which may be shaped by attitudes, can affect the strategies used to learn a language and the likelihood of becoming proficient (Suwanarak, 2012). Moreover, there is substantial evidence that attitudes can directly affect the degree to which students are able to develop their proficiency in a second language (Hosseni & pourmandnia, 2013).

Much of the research on language learning has focused on motivation, which is related to attitude because both motivation and attitude can be reasons for doing something (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). A positive attitude toward learning the English language, whether to enhance future employment prospects, enable the student to converse with English speakers, or simply for the joy of mastering a new skill, could contribute to motivation.

There is plenty of evidence attesting to the fact that motivation predicts the likelihood of success when learning a second language, and there are a number of reasons for this. Motivation influences the degree of effort students will exert, the frequency with which they use effective learning strategies, their level of interaction with native

speakers, scores on tests of second language proficiency, and whether or not their second language skills are maintained once the period of study has ended (Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

No studies were found that examined the impact of attitudes on satisfaction among EFL learners. However, Trang and Baldauf (2007) found that attitudes toward English accounted for demotivation in 16% of students surveyed, and demotivation is an indicator of dissatisfaction (for this research, attitudes were based on perceptions of difficulty regarding English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation rather than feelings about the language as a whole).

Although there have been no studies conducted to examine the impact of attitudes on EFL learner satisfaction, studies of e-learning systems provide support for a direct link between attitude and satisfaction. Malik (2010) found that student attitudes toward information and communication technologies predicted their satisfaction with online courses, and El-Gamal, Al-Khayyat, and El-Ewayed (2005) found that student attitudes regarding e-learning predicted their satisfaction with e-learning systems, which in turn predicted their performance in online classes. Further evidence for the importance of attitude to satisfaction comes from a general college study conducted by Sinclaire (2013), who found that a particular attitude (considering a subject to be interesting and relevant to the student's future profession) was critical to satisfaction for the majority of students surveyed.

2.2.1.2 Background and education

Kazar (2013, p. 18) argues that "English language learning in the classroom is not divorced from a student's first language, but rather, there is a significant amount of interplay between a student's first and second language." In other words, the first language influences the ease (or difficulty) with which a student learns English. In addition, cultural barriers can create difficulties in learning a new language, leading to the tendency to withdraw, which is an indicator of dissatisfaction (Kazar, 2013).

Some research suggests that lack of prerequisite knowledge and skills may also contribute to demotivation (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), which is likely to affect

satisfaction, given the link between motivation and attitude. Students enter university with various levels of English language proficiency based on their backgrounds and educational experiences, which can affect not only their beliefs regarding English language learning, but also their learning strategy preferences (Bordia et al., 2006; Suwanarak, 2012). Culture may also influence expectations, as can exposure to English-speaking media, student age, and marketing or word-of-mouth information related to a particular course (Bordia et al, 2006). These expectations will in turn influence satisfaction, according to Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Bordia et al., 2006).

2.2.1.3 Course material

EFL students begin their classes with certain expectations regarding the skills they must learn to support their further education and future career goals (Bordia et al., 2006). Given that expectations influence satisfaction, the expectations students have regarding course material may contribute to their satisfaction with the materials that are used to support a particular EFL program.

Research has shown that teacher selection of course material can be a demotivating factor for language learners (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), and therefore may contribute to satisfaction (or lack of satisfaction) by affecting motivation, which is related to attitude. Kikuchi (2009) found that dissatisfaction with EFL courses among Japanese students, as evidenced by demotivation, was caused by the emphasis on rote memorization of vocabulary and translation requirements, issues with the textbook and other course reference materials, and the failure of teachers to provide in-depth explanations of the course material.

Studies of other types of programs provide additional evidence for a link between course material and student satisfaction. For example, Roach and Lemasters (2006) found that the relevancy of materials to both course objectives and future career goals was an important factor in student satisfaction with masters-level educational management and leadership courses. Also, Kauffman's (2015) study of contributors to satisfaction and success among online learners found that aspects of course material and presentation, such as contructivist and applied learning opportunities,

organization of materials and assignments into units defined by clear learning goals, and alignment of instructional methods and learning activities with objectives, were all critical factors in student satisfaction.

2.2.1.4 Difficulty of course content

Some evidence suggests that receiving low test scores despite studying, having large vocabularies to learn, encountering difficult grammar rules, feeling left behind by other classmates, and being unable to successfully complete exercises or communicate in English contribute to demotivation, which is an indicator of dissatisfaction (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Moreover, some EFL students believe that instructors make learning English unnecessarily complicated (Shahriar, Pathan, Mari, & Umrani, 2011).

Trang and Baldauf (2007) found that beliefs regarding the difficulty of various aspects of the English language were demotivating factors for 16% of EFL students surveyed, and that lack of success due to perceptions of overall course difficulty were a factor for a further 17%. Thus, perceptions of difficulty contributed to demotivation (an indicator of dissatisfaction) for approximately one-third of the EFL learners who participated in the study.

2.2.1.5 Classroom environment

The findings of a number of studies indicate that classroom environmental factors can lead to demotivation, which indicates dissatisfaction. These factors include having a teacher who is unenthusiastic or incompetent, boring or uncreative teaching methods, teaching and learning style conflicts, large class sizes, and the overall classroom atmosphere (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Trang and Baldauf (2007) found that teacher factors accounted for demotivation among 38% of students, and other classroom environmental factors were demotivating for 21%.

Non-EFL research provides additional evidence for the importance of learning environments to student satisfaction. Jung (2014), in a study of ubiquitous EFL learning environments facilitated by smart phones, found that a number of environmental characteristics, including customization options, opportunities for self-

directed learning, interactivity, and the degree to which learning was made enjoyable all influenced student satisfaction. Also, Sinclaire's (2013) study of satisfaction among college students found that factors such as class size, noise and interruptions, classroom cleanliness, attentive and participative classmates, and helpful instructors were important to student satisfaction.

2.2.2 Students' satisfaction and skill improvement

There is plenty of evidence indicating that student satisfaction is related to learning outcomes. Research has shown that students who are satisfied are less likely to drop out of a course, and they tend to be more motivated and persistent in their learning (Kirmizi, 2015). This latter effect is particularly important for developing speaking and writing skills, because listening and reading are receptive skills that can often be fully developed in a classroom setting, whereas students will only become proficient in speaking and writing if they are motivated to use the language regularly so that they practice sufficiently to become fluent communicators (Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012).

Research has shown that student satisfaction with second language speaking classes is correlated with both self-efficacy beliefs and speaking skills achievement, as well as the willingness to take on language learning challenges that are perceived as difficult (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015). Also, there is a significant relationship between satisfaction and grades received in language learning courses (La Piana, 2014; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014) and other educational programs (Chitkushev et al., 2013).

Research has shown that many English language learners either withdraw mentally from their language learning courses or seek ways to pass their exams with minimal effort (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), and this may be caused by dissatisfaction. Dissatisfied students are prone to suffering from confusion, anxiety, disappointment, anger, boredom, discouragement, disinterest, and declining performance, and they are more likely to engage in problem behaviors in the classroom, skip classes, and say negative things about an educational institution that produces dissatisfaction (Bordia et al, 2006). Satisfied students, on the other hand, are more likely to get along with

their peers and demonstrate a commitment to achieving their academic goals (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014).

2.3 Previous related studies

The following studies addressed a wide range of populations, including EFL students in Australia, Korea, and Iran as well as students in the US, Pakistan, Japan, and Viet Nam. Methodologically, they are broadly similar. There was one meta-analysis (Kauffman, 2015), but the rest used primary research. The majority of studies were conducted as quantitative questionnaires, sometimes including supplementary data like interviews or standardized test scores (Roach & Lemasters, 2006; Kikuchi, 2009; Shariar, et al., 2011; Sinclaire, 2013; Jung, 2014; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014; Asakereh & Dehghannazhad, 2015). However, a few studies used different approaches like group interviews (Bordia, et al., 2006) or stimulated recall essays (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). While most authors studied satisfaction, a few examined dissatisfaction (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Kikuchi, 2009; Shariar, et al., 2011).

Different clusters of satisfiers (or dissatisfiers) can be identified. Some studies focused on personal factors, like learning expectations (affected by cultural, social and educational background) (Bordia, et al., 2006); attitudes about learning (Trang & Baldauf, 2007); boredom with the course (Shariar, et al., 2011); and self-efficacy beliefs (Asakereh & Deghannazhad, 2015).

Other studies identified course-related factors. Some of the course-related factors included: relevance of the course to learning and career goals (Roach & Lemasters, 2006; Sinclaire, 2013); teaching behaviors and methods (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Kikuchi, 2009; Shariar, et al., 2011; Sinclaire, 2013; Jung, 2014l Kauffman, 2015;); the classroom environment and atmosphere (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Sinclaire, 2013; Jung 2014); materials quality (such as issues with the textbook or the use of rote memorization) (Kikuchi, 2009; Kauffman, 2015); and instructor characteristics such as helpfulness and self-efficacy (Sinclaire, 2013; Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015).

Studies that followed through generally found a connection between satisfaction with the course and student achievement (Bordia, et al., 2006; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014; Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015; Kauffman, 2015).

Table 2.1 provides a brief summary of research examining the factors that contribute to satisfaction with EFL courses and other types of learning programs, and the influence that student satisfaction has on learning outcomes.

Table 2.1: Related researches

Researchers	Purpose	Participants	Instrument	Findings
Bordia et al. (2006)	To investigate the factors that contribute to EFL student expectations, which in turn influence satisfaction	6 EFL students (4 Thai, 2 Indonesian) attending an Australian University	Group interviews	A number of factors shaped expectations, and thus contributed to satisfaction, including cultural, educational, and social background; satisfaction lead to better educational outcomes.
Roach & Lemasters (2006)	To investigate the factors that contribute to student satisfaction with online learning	9-41 U.S. students in 7 courses (the number of participants varied from one course to the next) pursuing degrees in educational administration and leadership	Questionnaire	A number of factors were important contributors to satisfaction, including the relevance of course materials to learning objectives and career goals.
Trang & Baldauf (2007)	To investigate the causes of dissatisfaction (as evidenced by demotivation) among Vietnamese EFL students	100 university students in Vietnam	Stimulated recall essays	Many factors contributed to dissatisfaction, as evidenced by demotivation, including negative attitudes regarding the difficulty of English language learning, teacher behaviors, teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and overall

				learning conditions.
Kikuchi (2009)	To investigate the factors that contribute to dissatisfaction, as evidenced by demotivation, among Japanese EFL learners	42 Japanese university students (questionnaire), 5 Japanese university students (interviews)	Questionnaire and interviews	Causes of student dissatisfaction included teacher behavior, translation methods, tests, rote memorization requirements for vocabulary, and issues with the textbook and other reference materials.
Shariar et al. (2011)	To examine the factors that affect learner motivation and satisfaction among those taking university-level EFL courses	67 Pakistani university students pursuing BAs	Questionnaire	Boredom with the course content and teaching methods was the primary reason for dissatisfaction (cited by 67%).
Sinclaire (2013)	To investigate the factors that contribute to satisfaction with college courses	460 U.S. college students	Questionnaire	Factors that contributed to satisfaction included the relevance of course material to learning and career objectives, and classroom environmental factors such as class size, noise, interruptions, cleanliness, attentive and participative classmates, and helpful instructors.
Jung (2014)	To investigate the factors that determine satisfaction with smart phone-facilitated ubiquitous learning environments	376 Korean EFL students attending middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities	Questionnaire	Ubiquitous learning environment characteristics such as context customization, interactivity, self-directed learning, and perceived enjoyment all influenced satisfaction.
Rashidi & Moghadam (2014)	To investigate the effects of teacher beliefs and self-efficacy on student satisfaction, and student satisfaction on achievement	255 intermediate EFL students and 16 instructors in Iran	Questionnaires and standardized test scores	Teacher beliefs and self-efficacy influenced student satisfaction, and student satisfaction had a significant effect on language learning achievement.
Asakereh & Dehghannezhad (2015)	To examine relationships among student satisfaction, self-efficacy beliefs, and EFL speaking	100 Iranian EFL undergraduate students	Questionnaires	Self-efficacy beliefs (which influence the likelihood of completing coursework perceived as difficult)

				and satisfaction were related, and satisfaction and self-efficacy predicted speaking skills achievement.
skills achievement				
Kauffman (2015)	To identify the factors that contribute to student satisfaction and success with online learning	Not specified, as the author was reviewing a large number of prior studies	Literature review	Factors that contributed to satisfaction with online learning included course materials that facilitate constructivist and practical learning, opportunities to apply learning, and clearly linking activities to learning objectives.
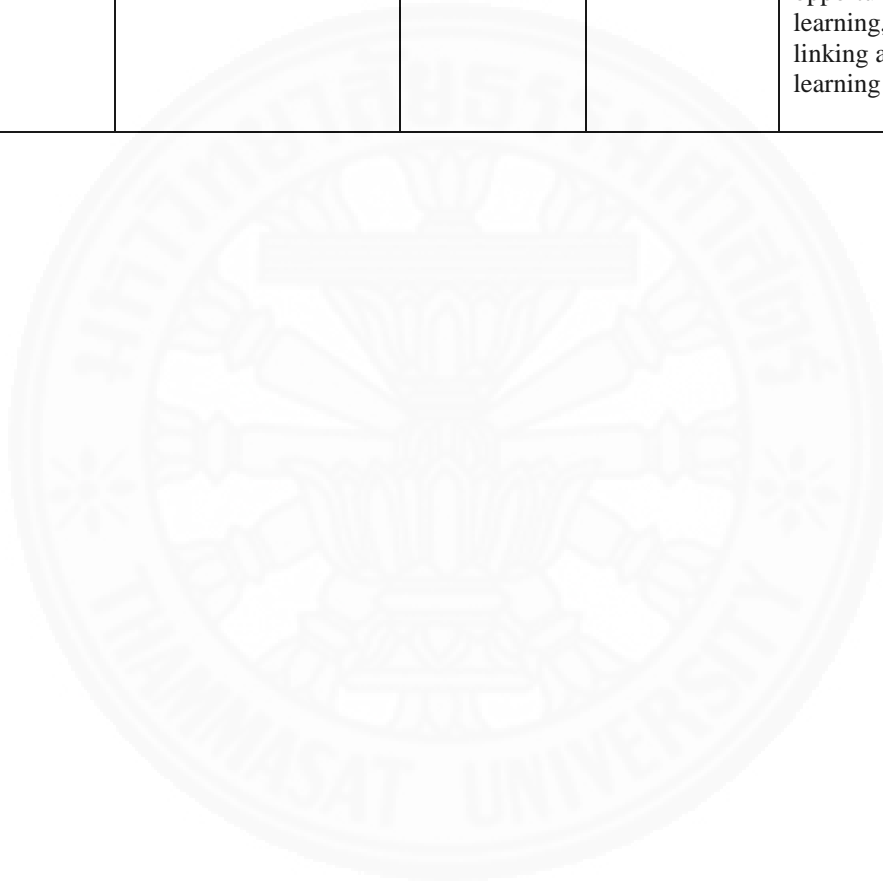
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used for this research. It began with a description of the study participants in section 3.1, followed by information about the research instrument that was used to collect data in section 3.2. This section provides an overview of the questionnaire that was developed for this study. The chapter concludes with section 3.3, which presents a description of the data analysis methods that were used. This section also includes two subsections: 3.3.1, which provides information about the conceptual framework and the development of the hypotheses that was tested for this study, and 3.3.2, which describes the statistical tools that were applied to analyze the quantitative data.

3.1 Participants

The participants for this study were students who registered for the MEC program in 2015 and are currently completing their second year of the program (n = 60). This study used a census approach to sampling, which is a sampling strategy in which every individual in the target population was included and a full set of data was collected from each member. The primary advantage of this approach is that census samples provide a very accurate impression of the issue of interest (Rao, 2008). Having an accurate and comprehensive data set is important for this research, as the goal is to determine the relative strength of various contributors to satisfaction for the MEC student population as a whole. Because a census sampling approach was used, there was no need to apply a random sampling procedure.

Using a census approach to sampling could eliminate the risk of selection bias. However, this study applied a cross-sectional design, and study participants were not entirely representative of MEC student populations in prior and subsequent years, as it is possible that the current MEC student population differs in some ways from other MEC cohorts. Also, perceptions of and attitudes toward aspects of the MEC program may have changed from the first year to the second year for some members of the current MEC student population. However, despite these limitations, the sample

provided a good representation of the attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction and achievement levels of current MEC students.

3.2 Research instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire

This research was conducted as a quantitative study, and therefore the collection of numerical data for analysis was required. Data was collected by using a questionnaire that was developed specifically to support this research. This questionnaire comprises four sections.

Part 1: **General Information**

This includes a series of questions designed to gather information about respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and prior experience with English language learning programs. This provides some background information about the respondents and an overview of sample characteristics. Questions in Part 1 were scored using a nominal scale, whereas Parts 2 through 4 were scored using an interval scale (a 5-point Likert scale).

Part 2: Factors influencing satisfactions toward MEC

This was used to generate scores for factors that may contribute to student satisfaction. These factors include the five independent variables of interest for this research: attitude toward the English language, background and education, course material, perceived course content difficulty, and perceptions of the classroom environment.

Part 3: Satisfaction toward MEC

This consisted of a series of statements designed to generate scores for the first dependent variable; student satisfaction with the MEC program.

Part 4: English language skills improvement

This was designed to generate scores regarding the second dependent variable; English language skills improvement, with a focus on the four key EFL skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Part 5: Recommendations

This is an open-ended question asking about student recommendations.

According to Part 2 to Part 4, the five-point Likert scale was used to measure the scale of students' satisfaction. They scale is described in the following table.

Level of satisfaction	Interpretation of level
5	Very high
4	High
3	Moderate
2	Low
1	Very low

3.3 Procedures

The procedure which were used to collect all data for this research could be divided into two parts as follows below.

3.3.1 Research design

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used as the material to collect the satisfaction level of students toward the MEC program. They were 2nd-year students, and they were completing their master's degree in the last semester of the academic year 2015. The questionnaire was collected from April 1-30, 2016. All of the returned questionnaires were kept as confidential information.

3.3.2 Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants before they started their classes, between 9.00-12.00 and 13.00-16.00, and they were returned to the researcher after their classes in the same day.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

The conceptual framework for this research is presented in Figure 3.1 below. According to this model, five independent variables, background and education, attitude, course materials, course content, and classroom environment influence satisfaction, which in turn influences learning outcomes. Based on this model and the findings of prior research, five hypotheses were developed. The first proposes that educational background influences student satisfaction with the MEC program. This hypothesis is based on past research indicating that student satisfaction (as evidenced by motivation) is influenced by prerequisite knowledge and skills (Trang & Baldauf, 2007), and that prior educational experience can also influence beliefs and learning strategy preferences (Bordia et al., 2006; Suwanarak, 2012), which could influence satisfaction via expectations, according to Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Bordia et al., 2006).

H1: Prior experience in English programs positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

The second hypothesis proposes that attitude toward the English language will influence student satisfaction with the MEC program. This hypothesis is based on the findings of prior research that attitude, as indicated by motivation, can influence satisfaction with educational programs (El-Gamal et al., 2005; Malik, 2010).

H2: Attitude toward the English language positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

The third hypothesis, which proposes a relationship between course material and student satisfaction with the MEC program, is based on prior research linking perceptions of course material with indicators of satisfaction such as motivation (Kikuchi, 2009; Kauffman, 2015; Roach & Lemasters, 2006; Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

H3: Course material positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

The fourth hypothesis, which proposes that student satisfaction with the MEC program will be influenced by the perceived difficulty of the course content, is supported by past research linking perceived difficulty with satisfaction, as indicated by motivation (Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

H4: Course content positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

The fifth hypothesis, which proposes a relationship between classroom environment and student satisfaction with the MEC program, is based on the findings of various studies linking perceptions of classroom environmental factors with satisfaction (Hung, 2014; Sinclaire, 2013; Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

H5: Classroom environment positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

The sixth hypothesis, which proposes that students who are satisfied with the MEC program will develop better English language skills than unsatisfied students, is also based on past research showing that satisfaction levels predict learning outcomes (Chitkushev et al., 2013; La Piana, 2014; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014).

H6: Satisfied students will have better English skills improvement than unsatisfied students.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual model
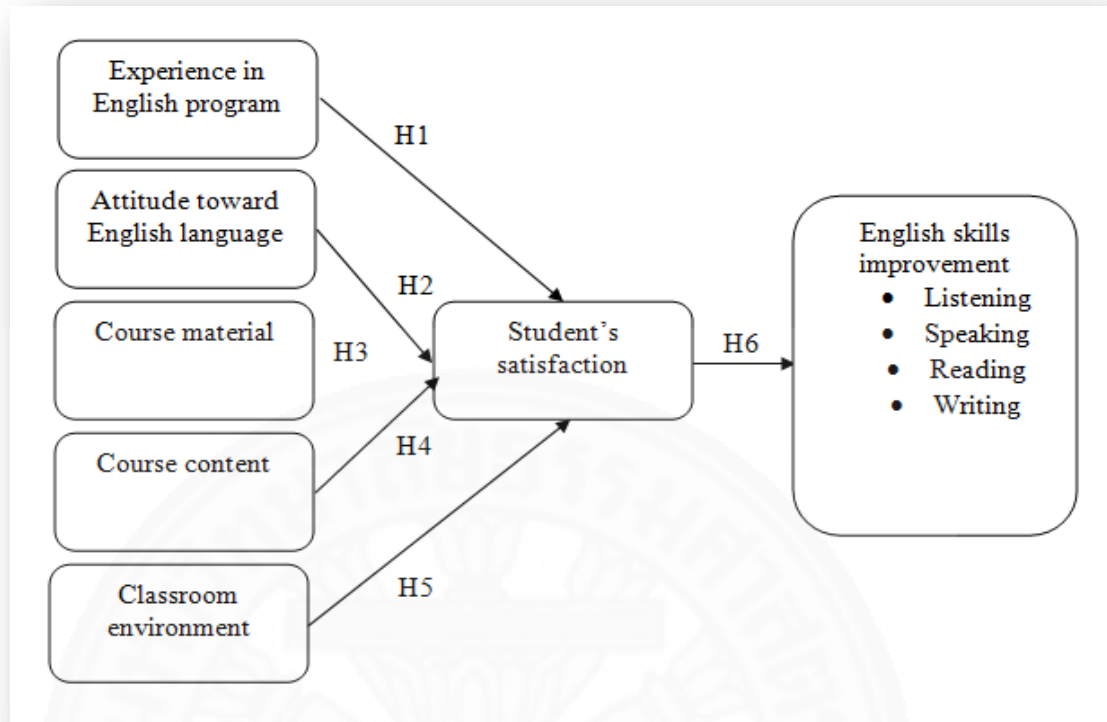
3.4.2 Data analysis tools

Data was analyzed using SPSS software. The analysis included descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, including an independent samples t-test for the first hypothesis, multiple regression analysis to test hypotheses 2 through 5, and a paired sample t-test for the sixth hypothesis.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents two main sections: the results in section 4.1, and the discussion in section 4.2. In first introducing the results, the chapter highlights findings that were obtained following the data analysis stage of the research project. This first section of the chapter is further divided into two other sections: a summary of descriptive results in section 4.1.1, and a summary of hypothesis results in section 4.1.2. Overall, the hypothesis results section is the one that plays a central role in validating the conceptual model this paper proposes. However, the descriptive findings section is the context that enables an in-depth interpretation of the hypothesis results. This interpretation is next covered in the second section of the chapter, which translates the results of the present research into relevant takeaways that also take into consideration the findings already available in the existing literature. As a result, this second section of the chapter also illustrates the significance of this study.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Descriptive Result

The questionnaire was distributed to students who registered for the MEC program in 2015 and were completing their second year of the program at the time of this study. Out of 60 surveyed participants, 56 returned the filled in questionnaire, resulting in a participation rate of 93.33%. All the results presented in this paper refer to this sample of 56 participants (n=56), unless stated otherwise.

Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample. The large majority of the 56 students were female (76.8% female, 23.2% male). Almost half of the participants (48.2%) reported ages between 25 and 30, followed by students with ages between 31 and 35 (30.4%), students older than 40 (10.7%), students with ages between 36 and 40 (7.1%), and the least represented group, that of students less than 25 years old (3.6%).

In terms of experience in attending English language learning programs, which was one of the 5 independent variables considered in the conceptual model, out of the 54 participants who provided answers for this specific item, the large majority (76.8%) reported having had such experiences. The remaining portion of this item's respondents (19.6%) provided a negative answer and in this way indicated their lack of experience in attending such programs.

Table 4.1 Demographic information

	Frequency (n=56)	**Percentage**
Gender (n=56)		
Male	13	23.2
Female	43	76.8
Age (n=56)		
Less than 25 years old	2	3.6
25-30 years old	27	48.2
31-35 years old	17	30.4
36-40 years old	4	7.1
Older than 40 years old	6	10.7
Experience in attending English language learning programs (n=54)		
Yes	43	76.8
No	11	19.6

In evaluating students' attitude toward the English language, which was the second independent variable considered in the conceptual model, five Likert items were used (as shown in Table 4.2 Attitude toward the English language). Out of these five items, three were positively worded items (items 2.1, 2.3, and 2.5). The remaining two were negatively worded items (items 2.2. and 2.5). The scale used was a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 = strongly agree, 3 = neutral and 5 = strongly disagree.

The first item (2.1) assessed participants' agreement as it pertained to the importance of learning English ('Learning English is important for me as English is a useful language.'). The sample as a whole showed a strong level of agreement with this statement ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.11$).

The second item (2.2) considered participants' agreement as it pertained to the usefulness of knowing English ('Knowing English is not more useful than knowing any

other language.'). The average agreement level for this statement was 2.88 (SD = 1.29). Considering the scale's value of 3 for those who choose to neither agree or disagree, this result indicates that there was only a slight (almost neutral) disagreement with this second statement.

The third item (2.3) evaluated participants' agreement with MEC course material being interesting and as a result motivating class participation ('MEC course material is interesting which motivates me to participate in the class.'). For this item, the average level of agreement as self-reported by students was 3.59 (SD = .85), which maps on to the scale's value of 4, indicative of agreement.

The fourth item (2.4) measured participants' agreement with MEC course content being too complicated ('I think the MEC course content is too complicated.'). A slight disagreement level (almost neutral) was observed for the sample as a whole (M = 2.63, SD = .86).

The fifth item (2.5) gauged participants' agreement as it pertained to the MEC class environment being supportive of learning ('The environment of MEC class is good in that it encourages learning'). The average level of agreement as self-reported by students for this item was 3.73 (SD = .73), which is closest to the scale's value of 4 and once again indicative of agreement.

Table 4.2 Attitude toward the English language

Items	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
2.1 Learning English is important for me as English is a useful language.	4.45	1.11060	Strongly agree
2.2 Knowing English is not more useful than knowing any other language.	2.88	1.29422	Disagree
2.3 MEC course material is interesting which motivates me to participate in the class.	3.59	0.84803	Agree
2.4 I think the MEC course content is too complicated.	2.63	0.86471	Disagree
2.5 The environment of MEC class is good in that it encourages learning	3.73	0.72591	Agree

Data for the remaining three independent variables was collected using one-item questions. For these three items the scale used was once again a five-point scale, yet the values were: poor, fair, good, very good and excellent. This is important to note as a value of 3 no longer indicated neutral agreement but it instead reflected a good perception.

Considering these values, the sample as a whole perceived the course material as being good (M = 3.16, SD = .80).The course content was also perceived by the same respondents as good (M = 3.25, SD = .81).The class environment was perceived as being somewhat in between good and very good (M = 3.50, SD = .79).

Table 4.3 Perception

Items	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
2.6.1 Course material	3.16	0.80401	Good
2.6.2 Course content	3.25	0.81464	Good
2.6.3 Class environment	3.50	0.78625	Very good

The first of the two dependent variables (satisfaction toward MEC) was assessed by employing two items.

The first item asked for participants' overall satisfaction with the MEC course ('How satisfied are you with the MEC course?'). Considering the five-point scale that was used for this item (where 1 = not at all satisfied, 3 = moderately satisfied, and 5 = extremely satisfied), participants were moderately to very satisfied (M = 3.54, SD = .71).

The second item asked participants to report to what extent they would recommend the MEC course to family and friends ('How would you agree with this statement "You would recommend your friends and family to take MEC program"?'). The scale used for this item was the same five-point agreement scale that was used for attitude towards the English language. In this context, participants' average agreement level was 3.7 (SD = .83).

Table 4.4 Satisfaction toward MEC

Items	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
3.1 How satisfied are you with the MEC course?	3.54	0.71260	Very satisfied
3.2 How would you agree with this statement "You would recommend your friends and family to take MEC program"?	3.70	0.82945	Agree

The second of the two dependent variables (English language skills improvement) was assessed using four self-ratings reflecting four language skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading). The scale used for these was a five-point scale, where 1 = not improved at all and 5 = extremely improved. Considering this scale, the average ratings participants provided indicate that all four language skills have improved moderately. First, for listening skills, the average rating was 3.61 (SD = .87). Second, for speaking skills, the average rating was 3.71 (SD = .85). Third, for writing skills, the average rating was 3.84 (SD = .80). Fourth, for reading skills, the average rating was 3.71 (SD = .87).

Table 4.5 English language skills improvement

English skill	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Listening	3.61	0.86715	Moderately improve
Speaking	3.71	0.84669	Moderately improve
Writing	3.84	0.80401	Moderately improve
Reading	3.71	0.86790	Moderately improve

Recommendations for improving the MEC program were collected using an open-ended item ('Any recommendations for improving MEC program'). Around half of the respondents also provided recommendations. Content-analysis revealed that a few respondents did not see any improvements to be made, while a few others even provided positive feedback regarding the program, its courses, its instructors and the learning environment it provides.

A theme that received mixed positive and improvement feedback was related to courses: to have additional and more diverse courses (electives in particular) and to address the minimum enrollment limits.

However, most of the comments were suggestions for improvements. One theme was the recommendation for English to be increasingly used in class or at all times. Yet another theme was that of general statements that the courses and materials could be improved. Other comments have highlighted the need to increase relevance of subjects covered in courses and by the Language Institute to work contexts. The remaining unique comments suggested specific improvements: books to better fit courses, teachers' teaching styles to be improved, program to be better promoted externally, minors and majors to be added.

4.1.2 Hypothesis Result

In testing the hypotheses presented earlier in the paper (in the conceptual model), two types of statistical tests were employed. Independent sample t-tests, which are generally used for testing whether the differences between two independent groups are statistically significant, were employed in testing the first and the last hypotheses. This type of tests were well suited given the fact that the independent variables considered for both hypotheses were dichotomous variables and as a result, they each divided the participants into two independent groups.

For the second, third, fourth and fifth hypotheses, a multiple regression was conducted. Data analysis relying on a multiple regression was better suited for these hypotheses as it allows the prediction of a dependent variable based on multiple independent variables. There were four independent variables acting as predictors in the regression model tested in this study: attitude towards the English language, course material, course content, and classroom environment. Also, for the purpose of this multiple regression, the first dependent variable represented by students' satisfaction with the MEC program, was treated as a continuous variable.

H1: Prior experience in English programs positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in satisfaction with the MEC program between those with prior experience in English programs and those lacking such experiences. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p = .853). Those lacking prior experience in English programs (M = 3.95, SD = 0.61) showed higher satisfaction with the MEC program than those who had previous experience in English programs (M = 3.56, SD = 0.58), a statistically significant difference, M = -0.40, 95% CI [-0.80, 0.48], $t(52)$ = -2.003, p = .050. There was a statistically significant difference between means ($p \leq$ .05), and, therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis. However, since prior experience in English programs was associated with lower satisfaction with the MEC program, the alternative hypothesis of prior experience in English programs positively influencing students' satisfaction with the MEC program is also not supported. Instead, the hypothesis that could be supported is that of prior experience in English programs negatively influencing students' satisfaction with the MEC program.

Table 4.6 T-test result of H1

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.035	0.853	-2.003	52	0.050	-0.39641	0.19786	-0.79345	0.00063
Equal variances not assumed			-1.941	14.952	0.071	-0.39641	0.20419	-0.83175	0.03894

H2: Attitude toward the English language positively influences students'
satisfaction with the MEC program.

H3: Course material positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC
program.

H4: Course content positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC
program.

H5: Classroom environment positively influences students' satisfaction with
the MEC program.

A multiple regression was run to predict students' satisfaction with the MEC program
based on attitude towards the English language, course material, course content, and
classroom environment. The multiple regression model statistically significantly
predicted students' satisfaction with the MEC program, $F(4, 51) = 3.949$, $p = .007$,
adj. $R^2 = .24$.

Among the four independent variables being considered, only the course material
added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p = .017$. A one unit increase in
course material rating was associated with an increase in students' satisfaction with
the MEC program of 0.381on the satisfaction scale.

Attitude towards the English language, course content, and classroom environment
did not add statistically significantly to the predictions (p > .05), indicating there is no
linear relationship between these variables and students' satisfaction with the MEC
program. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 4.7
(Coefficients) below.

In connecting the results in the multiple regression with the hypotheses that the
regression was intended to test, a few important conclusions emerge.

First, the hypothesis that attitude toward the English language positively
influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program was not supported.

Furthermore, attitude toward the English language did not negatively influence students' satisfaction either.

Second, the hypothesis that course material positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program was supported.

Third, the hypothesis that course content positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program was not supported. Moreover, the course content did not negatively influence students' satisfaction either.

Fourth, the hypothesis that classroom environment positively influences students' satisfaction with the MEC program was not supported. Once again, the predictor also did not impact students' satisfaction in a negative manner.

Table 4.7 Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.486[a]	0.236	0.177	0.54713

a. Predictors: (Constant), Environment, Content, Attitude, Material

Table 4.8 ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.729	4	1.182	3.949	0.007[a]
	Residual	15.267	51	0.299		
	Total	19.996	55			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Environment, Content, Attitude, Material

b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Table 4.9 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.863	0.679		2.742	0.008
	Attitude	0.033	0.081	0.052	0.402	0.690
	Material	0.381	0.154	0.419	2.477	0.017
	Content	0.043	0.185	0.034	0.233	0.817
	Environment	0.061	0.147	0.062	0.415	0.680

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

H6: Satisfied students will have better English skills improvement than unsatisfied students.

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in English skills self-reported improvement between those satisfied with the program and those dissatisfied with the program. The homogeneity of variances assumption was not met, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .020$). Those satisfied with the MEC program ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.51$) showed higher self-reported English skills improvements than those dissatisfied with the program ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.88$), a statistically significant difference, $M = -0.63$, 95% CI [-1.12, -1.46], $t(19.118) = -2.716$, $p = .014$. There was a statistically significant difference between means ($p \leq .05$), and, therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that satisfied students will have better English skills improvement than unsatisfied students.

Table 4.10 T-test result of H6

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | | |
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Eng. Skill	Equal variances assumed	5.738	0.020	-3.396	54	0.001	-0.63437	0.18680	-1.00888	-0.25987
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.716	19.118	0.014	-0.63437	0.23357	-1.12304	-0.14571

4.2 Discussion

The findings from this study have important implications for both theory and practice. This corresponds to the study's dual rationale: that of understanding potential causes to students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the MEC program, as well as that of adding to the existing literature by considering a previously under-represented research group (that of EFL learners) and a novel set of variables as predictors.

First of all, when focusing on the practical rationale of the study, the results highlighted in the dedicated section of the paper, particularly those obtained by requesting participants to share their recommendations, validate the researcher's initial observation that there are both high and low levels of satisfaction with the MEC courses among its students. This was reflected in the mix of positive and negative feedback that was voluntarily provided, even though the question did not directly ask for such feedback but rather for recommendations for improvement.

When considered together with the results from the Hypothesis Results section, this finding pinpoints to course material as a potential area of focus for improvements in

the MEC program design. This area of focus could be particularly relevant for the decision makers in the MEC program when planning to implement changes that would aim for an increase in students' satisfaction with the program.

Even though in the literature review support was found for the testing of students' previous experience with English programs, their attitude toward the English language, their evaluation of the course content, as well as their evaluation of the classroom environment as other potential predictors of student satisfaction, those factors were not found to influence the satisfaction with the educational program in the case of the MEC students. Further studies would be needed in order to verify if these findings are specific to the MEC program or apply at a national level. If such studies continue to find that only course material impact students' satisfaction with their educational program, which then impacts English language skills improvement, which in turn was thought to impact future job projects (Suwanaram, 2012), this finding could have significant implications by informing policies and prioritizing change and funding directions for EFL educational programs in Thailand. Given the interference from the first language with the degree to which students reach proficiency in a second language, such findings could also be relevant in informing educational policies for Thai speaking minorities in countries such as Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. For the same reason, the findings should not be extrapolated to non-Thai speaking countries or groups.

Second of all, when focusing on the theoretical rationale of the study, Bolton and Kachru's (2006) Concentric Circle Model of World English theory was supported by the findings in this study. One important aspect that applies to this theory is that several students raised the need for increased practice of the English language during courses and one even emphasized the need for English to be spoken at all times in the MEC program. This could be an indicator confirming the view that Thailand is among the countries in the Expanding Circle and as a result is experiencing an increased recognition of the importance of English at a global level, as well as interference between English and the Thai language.

The same interference, but this time as explained by cultural differences, was highlighted by Lantolf (2006). Nevertheless, the only insight from the study that could mildly support this theory was that one student suggested that more native teachers should be part of the program. A theory such as Lantolf's (2006) can have specific implications for the MEC program. For example, if validated in future studies on the MEC student population or even on the EFL student population in Thailand, it could direct universities' efforts towards exchange programs that take place in native English speaking countries, where cultural aspects also support English language acquisition.

Notably, the student's recommendation for English to be used at all times within the MEC program is also in line with Malone's (2012) theory, which highlighted natural conversations as a more effective language acquisition technique (as compared to traditional language teaching methods such as vocabulary and grammatical rules being taught).

The theory that was most prominently supported by the findings in the Hypothesis Results section and therefore through quantitative analysis is the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Bordia et al., 2006). Even though students with previous experience in English speaking programs were expected to experience confirmation of their expectations and as a result of that, satisfaction with the MEC program, based on the study's finding it seems that it is more likely for those without previous experience in English programs to be experiencing positive disconfirmation and, as a result of that, enhanced satisfaction with the MEC program. Moreover, even though implications of the same theory would have predicted that students' attitudes toward the English language and towards classroom environment also impacted their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the quantitative analysis did not support this direction. At the same time, given that course material acted as a predictor of satisfaction, students' expectations regarding course materials might have also interacted with their evaluations of course materials in determining satisfaction, in line with previous findings from the existing literature (Kauffman's, 2015; Kikuchi, 2009; Roach and Lemasters, 2006; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Either confirmation or positive disconfirmation potentially occurred and might be explaining the results.

The major contribution of this study to the present literature may be the confirmation that students' satisfaction with the MEC program was related to English skill improvements, which is a particular case of the existing literature' findings that student satisfaction and various learning outcomes are related. So far the research on student satisfaction has focused on the relationship with learning outcomes such as drop-outs, as well as aspects such as students' motivation and persistence in learning, self-efficacy, speaking skills achievement, grades in language learning courses and willingness to approach difficult language learning challenges (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015; Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012; Kirmizi, 2015; La Piana, 2014; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). While further validations are needed, the confirmation of the hypothesis that student satisfaction is associated with English skill improvement adds value not only to the existing research literature but also to the practices of EFL programs in Thailand and the MEC program at Thammasat University in particular.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

To conclude, this research study adds to the existing literature of factors predicting student satisfaction and learning outcomes that are in turn predicted by this satisfaction. The main contributions of the study come from its research design, which focused on a previously under-represented population group, that of EFL learners. Even though data was collected from a specific educational program (the MEC program offered by the Language Institute at Thammasat University), the research design was developed based on findings from the international literature, deeming this study replicable for EFL learners in other programs, schools, and countries. Moreover, the novelty of the research design is amplified by the mix of variables being considered.

By employing content analysis as well as a quantitative approach relying on descriptive statistics, independents sample t-test and a multiple regression as statistical tests, the study found support for one of the hypothesized relationships and a statistically significant relationship for a second hypothesis.

The main research question of this study was, "What are the factors that influence students' satisfaction with the MEC program?" The possible factors that were included in the research's conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) included experience in the previous English program taken, attitudes toward the English language, course materials, course content, and classroom environment.

The answer to the main research question of the study is that previous experience with English courses negatively affected satisfaction (causing dissatisfaction in more experienced learners), while course materials were positively associated with satisfaction.

The descriptive analysis (Section 4.1.1) showed that individual attitudes toward the English language in general, and the coursework of the MEC class, were generally positive. Assessments of the course material, course content, and classroom environment were generally good and very good. Students could be described as satisfied to very satisfied. Students also self-assessed moderate improvements in each of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading). These results suggest that the students were generally positive, satisfied, and learning.

The hypothesis tests (Section 4.1.2) used independent samples t-test (H1) and multiple regression (H2 to H5). The test of H1 showed that students who had previous experience in English language programs had a significantly lower satisfaction level with the MEC program than those that did not. The multiple regression test showed that the four factors tested (attitude to English, course materials, course content, and classroom environment) predicted about 24% of variance in satisfaction. Of the four factors identified, only one factor – course content – was statistically significant in the regression equation. Thus, of the hypothesis tests, H1 was not supported due to the direction of the relationship, while H2, H4, and H5 were not supported because factors are statistically insignificant.

5.2 Recommendations for the MEC program

The practical implications of this study serve as the foundation for potential improvements to be pursued in the design and implementation of the MEC program.

5.2.1 The relationship found between student satisfaction with the MEC program and their language skill improvements can be communicated publically in promoting the program (especially since promoting it externally was a specific recommendation coming from a student).

5.2.2 Base on two student's recommendations for MEC, the program should focus more on improving speaking and listening skills, respectively (as alternative to their observation that the program's focus at the time was on writing skills).

5.2.3 The expectations of the applicants and incoming students with previous experience in English programs should also be considered in order to avoid negative dissatisfaction. As a result, the recommendation here would be that an additional study is conducted to explore MEC students' and potential employers' expectations in regards to each of the four language acquisition skills, which are already recognized as important learning outcomes.

Other recommendations as resulting from the content analysis are available in detail in the Descriptive Results section.

5.3 Limitations

5.3.1 While the current study benefits from the methodological strength associated with a census approach, which is that the results accurately describe the issue of interest, the first limitation resulting from this method was that some of the potential participants considered not to participate. This might indicate that non-response bias could be present.

5.3.2 The second limitation is that in focusing on novel variables and how they apply to EFL learners at MEC, the study design did not include some of the variables that were previously shown to predict student satisfaction or act as learning outcomes.

5.3.3 The third limitation comes from the fact that the study would ideally aims to gauge causal relationships between the considered variables, an experimental or longitudinal approach would have improved the quality of its results.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

5.4.1 Others' modified questionnaires with pilot test could be run in testing the same groups' satisfaction with different approaches, such as English speaking skills focused courses or program in comparison with the existing program design.

5.4.2 A quantitative analysis reviewing additional data such as the overall registration trends at country and region level, as well as in other EFL programs

available at Thammasat University over the past five years could further help in addressing the question of why less students have opted for the MEC program.

   5.4.3 Understanding the reasons for this decrease remains a question of interest and could be addressed in future studies, such an exploratory, qualitative study in which students from other programs could be interviewed to understand their reasons for choosing a different program or school.

   5.4.4 As mentioned in the previous section, other directions for future research include longitudinal studies testing the same hypotheses, replication studies for a broader population based (other educational program in the university, in Thailand or in other non-native English speaking countries).

Such studies would help clarify if the findings of the current study are specific to the MEC program or rather representative of the relationships that exist between considered variables at national level or for EFL learners in general.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Part 1: General information

1.1 Gender
__ Male   __ Female

1.2 Age
__ Less than 25 years old   __ 25-30 years old   __ 31-35 years old

__ 36-40 years old   __ Older than 40 years old

1.3 Have you ever attend English language learning programs before?
__ yes   __ No

Part 2: Factors influencing satisfaction toward MEC

Items	Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2.1 Learning English is important for me as English is a useful language.					
2.2 Knowing English is nor useful than knowing any other language.					
2.3 MEC course material is interesting which motivates me to participate in the class.					
2.4 I think MEC course content is too complicated.					
2.5 The environment of MEC class is good which creates learning environment.					

2.6 How would you think about….

Items	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
2.6.1 Course material					
2.6.2 Course content					
2.6.3 Class environment					

Part 3: Satisfaction toward MEC

3.1 How would you satisfy with MEC course?

__ Not at all satisfied __ Slightly satisfied   __ Moderately satisfied

__ Very satisfied   __ Extremely satisfied

3.2 How would you agree with this statement "You would recommend your friends and family to take MEC program"?

__ Strongly disagree   __ Disagree   __Neutral

__ Agree   __ Strongly agree

Part 4: English language skills improvement

Please rate how your English skill has been improved after taking MEC course

English skill	Not improve at all	Slightly improve	Somewhat improve	Moderately improve	Extremely improve
Listening					
Speaking					
Writing					
Reading					

Part 5: Recommendations

5.1 Any recommendations for improving MEC program

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

BIOGRAPHY

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