

The Use of Inspirational English Learning Activities to Improve English Achievement, Engagement, and Motivation Among Grade 5 Students at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School Thailand

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Engaged learning in English is important in primary education, as young learners benefit from supportive and motivating classroom environments. This study developed and implemented inspirational English learning activities and evaluated their effectiveness in improving Grade 5 students' English achievement, engagement, and motivation.

Methodology: A one-group pretest–posttest quasi-experimental design was used with 19 Grade 5 students at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School, Thailand. The intervention consisted of eight lesson plans over eight weeks (16 instructional periods) incorporating praise, encouragement, games, storytelling, collaborative tasks, and student choice. Data were collected using an English achievement test and questionnaires measuring engagement and motivation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test, and the paired-samples t-test.

Results: Three experts rated the instructional activities as highly appropriate for classroom implementation ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.20$). Students' English achievement increased from pretest ($M = 21.74$) to posttest ($M = 34.74$). Engagement and motivation scores also increased from moderate to very good levels after the intervention. Statistical analysis indicated significant differences between pretest and posttest results.

Conclusion: Inspirational English learning activities were associated with improvements in students' English achievement, engagement, and motivation. These findings suggest that motivational and student-centered instructional strategies may enhance English learning experiences among primary learners in the Thai context.

Keywords: Inspirational Teaching Techniques; English Learning Engagement; Motivation; English Learning Achievement; Grade 5 Students

Introduction

English is an important global language for communication, education, and future career opportunities. In Thailand, English is taught from the primary level to support students' academic and social development. However, many Thai primary students still experience difficulties in English learning, including low confidence, limited participation, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation (Bhattachaiyakorn & Phettakua, 2023; Yan Kyaw Oo, 2025). Traditional teacher-centered practices, such as memorization and textbook-based instruction, may not fully support young learners' emotional, motivational, and communicative needs.

Student engagement and motivation are key determinants of successful English language learning. Young learners tend to learn more effectively when lessons are enjoyable, meaningful, interactive, and emotionally supportive. Previous studies have shown that positive classroom environments, autonomy-supportive teaching, task-based instruction, and game-based activities can significantly enhance learners' participation, confidence, and motivation in English learning (Han, 2021; Saraiwang & Worawong, 2023; Ye, 2024). In the Thai EFL context, learners often experience anxiety and reluctance when using English; therefore, teachers must design learning experiences that reduce fear and encourage active participation.

Inspirational teaching techniques, such as praise, encouragement, supportive feedback, games, storytelling, songs, role-play, pair work, group work, and student choice, can enhance learners' confidence and engagement in English learning. These strategies are grounded in Self-Determination Theory, which explains that motivation increases when learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Gardner's socio-educational model further emphasizes the role of attitudes, motivation, and learning environment in second language acquisition (Gardner, 2010).

Inspirational teaching techniques are instructional-oriented strategies that extend beyond general communicative language teaching (CLT) and standard interactive approaches. While CLT primarily emphasizes meaningful communication and interaction, inspirational teaching deliberately integrates motivational and emotional dimensions such as encouragement, positive reinforcement, enjoyment, creativity, and confidence-building activities. These techniques are particularly designed to address affective barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence among young EFL learners.

At St. Joseph Ayutthaya School, Grade 5 students have been observed to face similar challenges in learning English. Many students demonstrate limited participation in speaking activities, hesitation in using English during classroom interaction, and reliance on memorization-based learning strategies. Informal classroom observations and teacher feedback indicate that students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English remain limited and require improvement.

In addition, school-based observations and informal assessment results suggest that several Grade 5 students demonstrate below-average performance in English communication skills, particularly in speaking and vocabulary usage. Student engagement during English lessons is often inconsistent, with some learners remaining passive unless directly encouraged by the teacher. These conditions highlight the need for more structured, engaging, and motivation-enhancing instructional approaches within the classroom.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of motivational and interactive teaching strategies in improving English language learning outcomes, most have been conducted in general EFL contexts or at the secondary and tertiary education levels. There remains limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on structured inspirational teaching interventions for primary-level learners in Thai private school settings, particularly over sustained instructional periods. Furthermore, few studies have examined how such interventions influence students' motivation, engagement, and achievement within a single, integrated framework in a Grade 5 classroom context. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by implementing and evaluating inspirational English learning activities in a primary school setting.

Therefore, this study aimed to develop and implement inspirational English learning activities for Grade 5 students at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School, Thailand. The study also evaluated the effectiveness of these activities in improving students' English learning achievement, engagement, and motivation. The intervention was implemented over eight weeks, with a total of 16 instructional periods.

Objectives

1. To develop and design a series of English language learning activities that integrate specific inspirational techniques tailored for Grade 5 students in the Thai context.
2. To implement the designed learning activities and evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing students' English learning achievement, English learning engagement, and motivation toward English learning.

Literature Review

Inspirational teaching refers to supportive, student-centered instructional practices designed to enhance learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in classroom activities. In English language learning, these techniques include praise, encouragement, constructive feedback, storytelling, games, songs, role-play, pair and group work, and autonomy-supportive communication. These approaches are particularly relevant for primary-level learners, whose engagement is highly dependent on teacher affect, classroom climate, and perceived enjoyment of learning activities.

Motivational teaching practices have been widely recognized as influential in shaping learners' effort, persistence, and participation in second language learning. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) demonstrated that teachers' motivational strategies are positively associated with increased learner motivation in EFL classrooms. Han (2021) further emphasized that autonomy-supportive teaching and positive teacher–student relationships enhance learner engagement and self-regulation. In primary education contexts, interactive and affectively engaging activities such as games, storytelling, and songs provide low-anxiety opportunities for language use, which can reduce learners' fear of making mistakes and increase willingness to communicate.

Student engagement is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Behavioral engagement refers to participation in learning activities; emotional engagement involves interest, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging; while cognitive engagement reflects learners' mental effort and investment in understanding tasks. Rather than functioning as separate outcomes, these dimensions are interdependent and can be simultaneously influenced by classroom motivational practices that shape both affective and behavioral responses to learning. Inspirational teaching techniques, therefore, play a facilitative role in creating learning environments where students are actively involved, emotionally secure, and cognitively invested.

Recent empirical evidence from Thailand and the broader Southeast Asian EFL context indicates a growing interest in motivationally oriented and student-centered instructional approaches. Studies conducted in Thai classrooms report that game-based learning, storytelling, and positive reinforcement improve participation and reduce language anxiety among young learners (Kovidadhaja, 2025). Similar findings in Southeast Asian contexts suggest that emotionally supportive and interactive instruction enhances learners' willingness to communicate in English. However, most of these studies examine isolated strategies within general communicative language teaching (CLT) frameworks rather than conceptualizing them as a unified inspirational teaching intervention with clearly defined components and structured implementation.

This study is anchored in Self-Determination Theory, which posits that intrinsic motivation is enhanced when learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Gardner's socio-educational model further supports the role of attitudes, motivation, and learning context in second language acquisition (Gardner, 2010).

Despite strong theoretical and empirical support for motivational and interactive pedagogy, a conceptual and methodological gap remains in the systematic definition, implementation, and evaluation of inspirational teaching as an integrated instructional approach in primary EFL settings. Existing studies rarely examine its effects using a combined framework of motivation, engagement, and achievement over the course of a sustained

classroom intervention. This study addresses this gap by operationalizing inspirational teaching as a structured set of instructional practices and evaluating its impact on Grade 5 learners' English learning outcomes in a Thai primary school *context*. Inspirational English learning activities are therefore expected to enhance learners' confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning English.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains the relationship between inspirational English learning activities and students' English learning achievement, engagement, and motivation. The independent variable is the set of inspirational English learning activities, which includes praise, encouragement, student choice, collaborative tasks, games, storytelling, and supportive feedback. These activities are designed to create a positive, supportive, and autonomy-enhancing English classroom environment that promotes active participation and reduces learning anxiety.

The effects of these activities on learners are explained through motivational and learning-engagement mechanisms. When students receive consistent encouragement, meaningful feedback, and opportunities for active participation, they are more likely to experience increased self-confidence, intrinsic interest, and a sense of autonomy in learning. Collaborative tasks and games further promote social interaction and active cognitive involvement, which deepen understanding and sustain attention during lessons. Storytelling and meaningful tasks also enhance emotional connection to the lesson content, making learning more relevant and memorable.

The theoretical basis of this framework is anchored in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), which emphasizes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance intrinsic motivation, and in engagement theory, which highlights the role of active participation and meaningful interaction in improving learning outcomes. These theories support the assumption that a supportive and motivating learning environment leads to improved student behavior, motivation, and academic performance.

The dependent variables are English learning achievement, English learning engagement, and motivation toward English learning. English learning achievement refers to students' improvement in English performance after the intervention, measured through assessments and performance tasks. Engagement refers to students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement during English lessons, including participation, attention, interest, and effort. Motivation refers to students' willingness, confidence, and sustained desire to learn English.

Overall, the framework assumes that when Grade 5 students participate in inspirational English learning activities, the learning environment enhances their autonomy, competence,

and relatedness, which in turn strengthens their motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved English learning achievement.

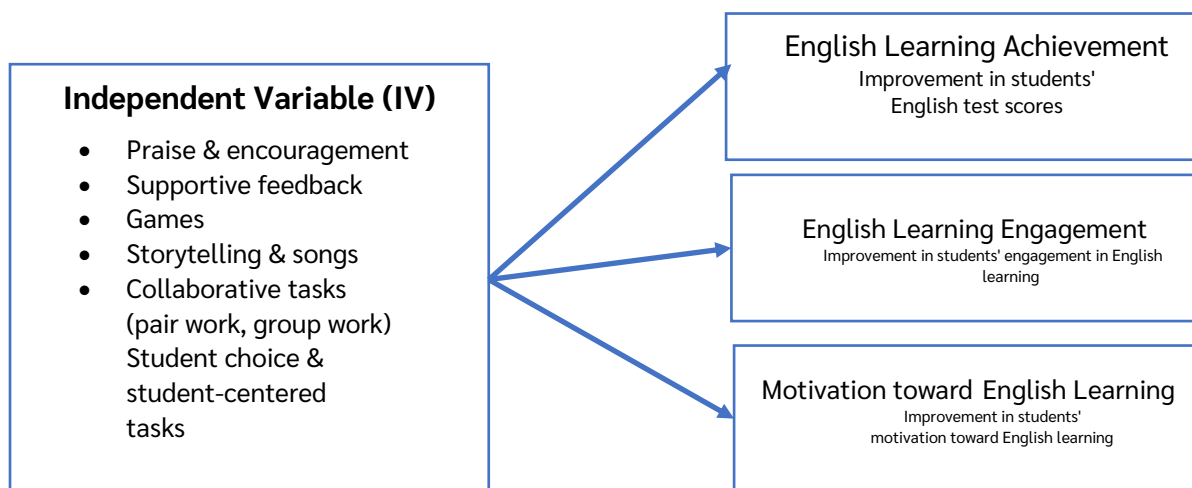


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework showing the interplay of the variables

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design to examine the effectiveness of inspirational English learning activities on Grade 5 students' English achievement, engagement, and motivation. This design is commonly used in classroom-based educational research to evaluate instructional interventions in natural learning environments where randomization is not feasible, allowing measurement of changes within the same group before and after the intervention.

The study was conducted at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School in Thailand during the 2025 academic year. The accessible population consisted of all students enrolled in one Grade 5 classroom (N = 19); all eligible students were included. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on enrollment in the English class, grade appropriateness, ability to participate in classroom activities, and parental consent and student assent.

The independent variable was researcher-developed inspirational English learning activities, including praise, encouragement, supportive feedback, games, songs, storytelling, pair work, group work, and student-centered tasks. The dependent variables were English achievement, engagement, and motivation. The intervention lasted eight weeks and consisted of eight structured lesson plans delivered over 16 instructional periods (two 50-minute sessions per week). English achievement was measured using pre- and post-tests.

Data were collected using an English achievement test, a Student Engagement Questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.82$), and a Motivation Questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.86$), indicating good internal consistency. Both questionnaires consisted of 15 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Engagement covered behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, while motivation included interest, confidence, willingness, and learning motivation. Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists, and a pilot test was conducted with a comparable group from a nearby school to ensure clarity and reliability.

Data collection followed five stages: obtaining ethical approval, administering pre-tests, implementing the intervention, administering post-tests, and preparing data for analysis. All procedures complied with institutional ethical standards and ensured voluntary participation. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) summarized the variables. The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed normality, and a paired-samples t-test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Table 1 shows that the set of inspirational English learning activities, as evaluated by three experts, was rated as very effective ($\bar{x} = 4.63$, $SD = 0.202$). This indicates that the developed learning activities were appropriate for Grade 5 students at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School. The highest-rated criterion was the alignment of assessment methods with lesson objectives ($\bar{x} = 5.00$, $SD = 0.000$). In contrast, the items “lesson activities promote student engagement and participation” and “lesson plan promotes student motivation and active learning” received slightly lower mean scores ($\bar{x} = 4.33$, $SD = 0.577$). However, both were still rated at the effective level.

The slightly lower ratings for engagement- and motivation-related components may be attributed to the more subjective nature of affective and behavioral criteria, which are more difficult for experts to evaluate compared to structural elements such as assessment alignment. Despite this, the overall evaluation confirms that the developed inspirational English learning activities were suitable for implementation in the study.

Table 1 Effective Level of the Set of Inspirational English Learning Activities as Evaluated by Three Experts

Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Level
1. The lesson objectives are clear and appropriate for Primary 5 students.	4.67	.577	Very Effective
2. The lesson content is consistent with the English curriculum and appropriate for the students' level.	4.67	.577	Very Effective
3. The lesson activities promote student engagement and participation.	4.33	.577	Effective
4. The teaching methods are appropriate for English language learning.	4.67	.577	Very Effective

Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Level
5. The instructional materials and resources are appropriate and effective.	4.67	.577	Very Effective
6. The lesson procedures are logically organized and easy to follow.	4.67	.577	Very Effective
7. The assessment methods are aligned with the lesson objectives.	5.00	.000	Very Effective
8. The lesson plan promotes student motivation and active learning.	4.33	.577	Effective
9. The time allocation for each activity is appropriate.	4.67	.577	Very Effective
Average	4.63	.202	Very Effective

Table 2 on the next page shows the comparison of the students' pretest and posttest scores. The mean score of the pretest was 21.74 (SD = 8.79), while the mean score of the posttest was 34.74 (SD = 3.19). The result of the paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, $t(18) = -8.850$, $p < .001$. The effect size was Cohen's $d = 2.03$.

Table 2 Comparison of the Students' English Achievement Scores Before and After the Intervention

No	Test	N	M	SD	t(df)	p	Cohen's d
1	Pretest	19	21.74	8.79	$t(18) =$	< .001	2.03
2	Posttest	19	34.74	3.19	-8.850		

Table 3 presents the difference in the mean scores of English learning engagement indicators before and after the intervention. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed that both pre-intervention and post-intervention engagement scores were normally distributed ($p > .05$). Therefore, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the two sets of scores. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-intervention engagement scores (Mean Difference = -1.98, SD = 0.80, $t(18) = -10.79$, $p < .001$), with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.48$).

Table 3 Difference in the Mean Scores of English Learning Engagement Indicators Before and After the Intervention

Variable	Shapiro–Wilk W	p	Mean Difference	SD	t(df)	p	95% CI	Cohen's d
Pre–Post Engagement Indicators	Pre: .922 / Post: .938	Pre: .209 / Post: .361	-1.98	.80	t(18) = -10.79	< .001	[-2.37, -1.59]	2.48

Table 4 indicates a significant increase in student motivation after the intervention. Students demonstrated stronger interest in improving their English skills and greater enjoyment of classroom activities. A statistically significant difference was found between pre-intervention and post-intervention motivation scores (Mean Difference = -1.24, SD = 0.353, $t(18) = -15.31$, $p < .001$), with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 3.51$). The post-intervention mean score was higher than the pre-intervention mean score.

Table 4 Difference in the Mean Scores of Motivation Toward English Learning Indicators Before and After the Intervention

Variable	Shapiro–Wilk W	p	Mean Difference	SD	t(df)	p	95% CI	Cohen's d
Pre–Post Motivation indicators	Pre: .969 / Post: .903	Pre: .848 / Post: .108	-1.24	.353	t(18) = -15.31	< .001	[-1.44, -1.05]	3.51

Discussion

The expert evaluation confirmed that the developed inspirational English learning activities were of high quality and suitable for classroom implementation, with an overall rating at the very effective level ($\bar{x} = 4.63$, SD = 0.202). This finding suggests that the lesson design, content, procedures, materials, and assessment methods were appropriate for Grade 5 learners in the study context. The strong expert evaluation supports the value of using structured, supportive, and learner-centered instructional practices in English language teaching. This is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that students' motivation improves when learning environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, the slightly lower expert ratings for engagement and motivation indicators indicate that further improvement may be needed to strengthen active participation and learner-centered motivation within the lesson activities.

The intervention also produced a statistically significant improvement in students' English achievement from pretest (M = 21.74, SD = 8.79) to posttest (M = 34.74, SD = 3.19),

$t(18) = -8.850$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size ($d = 2.03$). This result suggests that inspirational English learning activities may support students' academic performance by creating more enjoyable, meaningful, and supportive learning experiences. The finding aligns with previous research indicating that motivational teaching strategies can improve learners' effort, participation, and classroom learning outcomes (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Han, 2021). Nevertheless, because the study used a one-group pretest–posttest design, the result should be interpreted with caution. The improvement may have been influenced not only by the intervention but also by normal classroom instruction, increased familiarity with the test format, or teacher expectancy effects.

Similarly, students' engagement scores significantly increased after the intervention, $t(18) = -10.79$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size ($d = 2.48$). This indicates that students became more attentive, participative, and emotionally involved in English lessons. The use of collaborative tasks, games, storytelling, praise, and encouragement may have helped create a more positive classroom climate and encouraged students to participate more actively. This finding is consistent with studies showing that interactive and supportive English learning environments can enhance student engagement and reduce reluctance to participate (Saraiwang & Worawong, 2023; Ye, 2024). However, the possibility of a novelty effect and the Hawthorne effect should also be considered, as students may have responded positively because the activities were new, enjoyable, and received greater teacher attention during the intervention period.

In addition, motivation toward English learning significantly improved from pre- to post-intervention, $t(18) = -15.31$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size ($d = 3.51$). This finding suggests that inspirational activities helped increase students' interest, confidence, enjoyment, and willingness to learn English. The result supports Gardner's socio-educational model, which emphasizes the importance of attitudes, motivation, and the learning environment in second language acquisition (Gardner, 2010). It also supports previous findings that autonomy-supportive teaching and positive teacher–student relationships contribute to stronger motivation in EFL classrooms (Han, 2021). However, motivational gains may also have been influenced by short-term emotional responses to enjoyable classroom activities and increased teacher support during the intervention.

Overall, the findings indicate that inspirational English learning activities were associated with improvements in students' English achievement, engagement, and motivation among Grade 5 students at St. Joseph Ayutthaya School. These results suggest that supportive, interactive, and student-centered English learning activities can contribute positively to primary students' English learning experiences. However, due to the quasi-experimental one-group design, small sample size ($N = 19$), and absence of a control group, the findings should be understood as context-specific rather than generalizable causal evidence. Future studies

should use larger samples, control groups, and longer intervention periods to confirm the effectiveness and sustainability of inspirational English learning activities.

Limitations

This study is limited by its small sample size ($N = 19$), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other Grade 5 populations. In addition, the use of a one-group pre-test and post-test design without a control group limits the ability to establish strong causal relationships between the intervention and observed outcomes. As the study was conducted in a single primary school in Thailand, the findings may not fully represent other Thai schools with different contextual, instructional, or learner characteristics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for teaching practice and educational application. The inspirational English learning activities were found to enhance Grade 5 students' English achievement, engagement, and motivation in this study. Therefore, supportive, interactive, and learner-centered teaching approaches should be promoted in primary English classrooms. The developed 8-lesson, 8-week intervention may be adapted for use in similar primary-level English contexts, with modifications based on learner needs and school conditions.

For Teachers:

Teachers are encouraged to integrate inspirational teaching strategies into English lessons to enhance student participation, confidence, and motivation. Practices such as praise, encouragement, collaborative work, games, songs, and supportive feedback may improve learning outcomes. A safe and supportive classroom environment should be established to encourage participation and reduce learner anxiety. Student-centered activities such as pair work, group work, storytelling, and games should be sustained to maintain engagement and support learning development.

For Schools:

Schools should provide adequate time, resources, and administrative support to implement motivational and learner-centered instructional approaches. Collaboration among teachers should be encouraged to share effective practices. Integrating interactive teaching strategies into the English curriculum may enhance students' learning experiences at the primary level.

For Curriculum Developers and Educators:

Curriculum developers and teacher educators should strengthen the integration of motivational strategies, learner-centered pedagogy, and supportive instructional design in English language programs. Development of age-appropriate and engaging learning materials

is recommended. Continuous professional development should be provided to support teachers in implementing innovative and motivational teaching approaches.

For Future Research:

Future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples and employ stronger research designs, particularly those with control groups, to improve validity and generalizability. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the sustainability of improvements in achievement, engagement, and motivation over an extended period, such as a full academic year. In addition, future research may incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews, classroom observations, and student reflections to gain deeper insight into learning experiences. Further studies may also examine variables such as prior English proficiency, gender differences, and the home learning environment to enrich understanding of English learning among young learners.

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