

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purposes

The study attempts to investigate:

1. The relationships between the student aptitudinal variables and achievement in English.
2. The relationship between the student attitudinal variable and achievement in English.
3. The relationship between the student GPA and achievement in English.
4. The interrelationships among aptitudinal and attitudinal variables, student GPA and the achievement in English.
5. The predictive power of aptitude scores, attitude scores and GPA on the English achievement scores.

Subjects

Subjects were one hundred and seventy five Thammasat University freshmen enrolled in three different fundamental English courses in the second semester of the 1981-82 academic year.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in data collecting: the Thai Language Aptitude Test Form A (TLAT) and an attitude

questionnaire measuring the students' attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. The former instrument is a standardized test of Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, the latter was developed by the researcher, replicating the attitude questionnaire designed by Gardner & Lambert, Jakobovits, and Achara Wangsotorn in their research studies on affective variables of second/foreign language learners.

Procedure.

The TLAT Form A and the revised questionnaire were administered to the subjects in normal classroom conditions. Scores obtained from the TLAT and the questionnaire together with the subjects' GPA for the first semester were statistically analyzed by the SPSS computer program through application of Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis.

Findings

1. The overall aptitude score positively and significantly correlated with the total English achievement, though the strength of correlation was low. ($r_{xy} = .154 - .290$)
2. The attitude score positively and significantly correlated with the total English score, though the strength of correlation was low. ($r_{xy} = .180 - .210$)
3. The student's GPA positively and very significantly correlated with the total English score. The strength of correlation was moderate. ($r_{xy} = .261 - .415$)

4. The three independent variables: language aptitude, attitude towards learning English as a foreign language and GPA were significantly related to achievement in English, and could significantly predict achievement in English. ($R^2 = .248$, $p < .01$).

5. The interrelationships among the aptitudinal, attitudinal and English achievement variables were between $r_{xy} = .165 - .711$, with levels of significance $.05 - .001$.

6. GPA emerged as the best predictor of the variance in English achievement, while the aptitude test subpart on numerical perception and attitude score came second and third respectively.

Discussion

In general, the findings are consonant with those of previous researchers whose works have been reviewed in Chapter II. Ideally, the aptitude and attitude scores should correlate strongly with achievement in English. The low correlations found between aptitudinal and attitudinal variables with English achievement may be explained as follows:

1. Since the English achievement test was constructed by the regular English instructors, the test might not reflect solely the students' level of proficiency in English but incorporate, among other factors, cognitive ability and perseverance in learning. This implication is substantiated by the fact that GPA, a representation of the cognitive component, was related more strongly and more significantly with English achievement than were attitude and aptitude.

In addition, reading (a subpart of English test) yielded more pairs of correlations than any other subparts of the test. Flahive¹ found that traditional multiple-choice reading tests were not "simply tests of language proficiency, but are also tests of non-verbal intelligence." If this is also the case in the Thammasat University context, perhaps the test formats of the fundamental English course need to be reconsidered.

2. Although evidence for the internal consistency of responses is supported by a high reliability coefficient, consistency alone is not sufficient. There is no way to prove that students did not modify their responses. The reliable variance may be due to the approval motive, self-flattery, and response set. Johnson and Krug² commented that in measuring an affective variable such as attitude, respondents may tend to give answers that they perceived to be socially desirable rather than answers that indicate their true feelings. There is even a greater tendency for

¹D.E. Flahive, "Separating the g Factor from Reading Comprehension," In J.W. Oller, Jr. & Kyle Perkins (Eds.) Research in Language Testing. (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1980), p. 34.

²T.R. Johnson and K. Krug, "Integrative and Instrumental Motivation: in Search of a Measure." In J.W. Oller, Jr. & Kyle Perkins (eds.) Research in Language Testing. (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1980), pp. 241-248.

this to occur when it is necessary to ask subjects to give their names and student numbers in order to match questionnaires with final English examination scores and GPA as was necessary in this study.

It may also be inferred that so long as the students remain cooperative and actively engage in classroom activities or as long as the relationship between the students and the teacher remains favourable, whether they like or dislike the English subject, attitudinal-motivational orientation will make no significant effect on achievement.

The reason why GPA correlated more strongly with English achievement than did attitude and aptitude may be explained as follows:

A portion of the GPA for all the courses attempted in the previous semester was accounted for by, in virtually all cases, an English subject. Lack of achievement in a subject at the college level may lower student motivation and thus the lack of intrinsic interest in English subject may, to a certain extent, be the result of the previous and concurrent degree of success in English and other school subjects.

Recommendations

For the language teachers:

1. The TLAT is suggested for use as prognostic device, in screening and placing students for a foreign

language course. It can help the teacher to understand the particular problems which certain students are facing, and to identify students who could be learning more quickly if they were willing to study more diligently.

2. All language teachers should create teaching activities that develop positive attitudes toward the target language, to help enhance the learning process of the students.

3. Inclusion of previous GPA would increase the predictive power of the aptitude battery.

For future research:

1. Further longitudinal studies are needed to tap on other aspects of student variables. For example, student's learning habits; attitude toward the language teacher, the method of instruction; the amount of the student's engagement in extra-curricular activities related to the foreign language; personality, etc.

To determine the students' attitude only by having them fill out questionnaires may not be an adequate method; it is advisable to combine student questionnaires with a variety of other evaluation techniques, such as teacher observation, interviewing, and follow-up studies.

2. Replication of this study should be conducted, using a standardized English proficiency test (such as

the TOEFL test, the Michigan Test, British Council Test, etc.) as the criterion measure. Results of such tests should be compared with those of teacher-constructed achievement tests in order to examine their validity.



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