

MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING AMONG THAI STUDENTS STUDYING KOREAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THAILAND

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Abstract: This study was conducted to examine the degree of motivation among Thai students learning Korean as a foreign language. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), developed by Gardner (1985b), was used for measuring the degree of motivation. Two parts of the AMTB, integrative and instrumental goal orientation, were administered to 120 students at the King Sejong Institute Foundation's Bangkok training institute during the 2014 academic year. The data collected were analyzed using a statistical software program. To analyze the data in accordance with the research objectives and hypothesis, different statistical methods such as mean and standard deviations, frequency were used. The study found a high degree of both integrative and instrumental motivation among the students.

Keywords: Korean language, Achievement, Motivation, Thailand, King Sejong Institute Foundation.

Introduction

Motivation has been a leading concern of scholars in psychology since the 1920s. With mainstream education making a transition from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches, an individual learner's motivational difference is the most concerning factor in teaching and learning. Dornyei (2001) stated that the learner's enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence are the key determinants of success or failure. In the context of language learning, Gardner (1985a) defined motivation as the extent to which a person strives to acquire a language because of the desire to do so and the satisfaction derived from it. In recent years, globalization has fostered a greater spreading of cultures across national borders and a greater interest in learning foreign languages. For instance, since the 1990s, South Korean culture has become popular in many Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand. The Chinese media coined the term Korean Wave for this phenomenon; it describes how countries like China, Taiwan, and Vietnam followed South Korean culture. Today, media in English-speaking countries, including the New York Times, use the term "Korean Fever" (Oh, 2013). As an example of this trend, from January 1 to December 5, 2011, K-pop (a South Korean musical genre) was viewed more than 2.3 billion times on

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YouTube by people from 235 countries around the world; 220 million of those YouTube views came from Thailand, the third-highest total after Japan and the United States (Jung, 2012).

Owing to the popularity of forms of Korean culture such as dramas and songs, the number of Thai students who want to study Korean has rapidly increased (Sattathamkul, 2008). Korean now ranks as the third most popular foreign language among Thai students, after Chinese and Japanese (Thandee, 2008). Currently, 9 universities and 51 secondary schools offer Korean as a foreign language in Thailand.

Chomphungam (2010) found that Korean dramas were very popular in Thai society, especially among women. An (2005) found that 22% of Thai students majoring in the Korean language said that their main purpose for learning Korean was to learn about and understand the Korean culture and people. Kim (2012) surveyed students taking elective courses in Korean at universities in Thailand, reporting that 64% of them students were motivated by an interest in Korean culture. These findings are consistent with the importance, originally highlighted by Gardner and his colleagues, of sociocultural and contextual factors in motivating foreign-language learners (McGroarty, 1996).

In spite of this situation, less research has been conducted on students learning Korean in Thailand than on students learning other foreign languages (Chomphungam, 2010). Instruction in the Korean language at Thai universities began in 1986, but academic research on the topic started only 10 years ago (Sattathamkul, 2008). As a result, learning Korean in Thailand remains a relatively new challenge for teachers as well as for learners.

In my experience teaching Korean in Thailand for three years, I confirmed that most of my students were attracted to the language because of their interest in popular Korean culture. I was thus able to motivate my students by using Korean culture, stories, and dramas as teaching materials; however, at the same time, I found it difficult to persuade students to take the official Korean-language exam (the TOPIK), or to use Korean in their careers. Moreover, understanding the students' purpose of learning is important to ensure that teaching is effective. In addition, when students start learning the Korean language, their motivation seems to be high; however, their motivation degree exhibits a decreasing trend, as they move to a higher level. At the same time, their test scores are not noticeably affected by their motivation. My experience led me to ponder on the question of whether students of Korean might have different motivations compared to those studying other foreign languages, as well as in the relationship among students' test scores. In order to improve teaching and promote effective learning for Korean as a foreign language in Thailand, a strong understanding of the students and their motivations is necessary.

In previous research by Dornyei (2001) and Gardner (1985a) on motivation, learners were observed to have different kinds as well as different degrees of motivation. The model developed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) has received the most attention in the study of motivation to learn a second language. Gardner (1985a) identified two distinct motivational orientations: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to learners' positive attitude toward the target community and its language as well as learners' desire to become integrated into the target language community. Instrumental motivation involves seeking to learn a

foreign language in order to achieve defined life goals such as developing a career opportunity, passing exams, or gaining a promotion.

According to Gardner and Lambert's early findings, learners' integrative motivation is a main contributory factor to second-language achievement. Crooks and Schmidt (1991) pointed out that integrative concerns seem to be relevant only in certain sociocultural contexts. Nevertheless, the paradigm of integrative and instrumental motivations suggested by Gardner and Lambert has been applied in many studies of motivation in language learning. Gardner's theory has been revised and expanded based on new research, which has sometimes had conflicting results, thus continuing to stimulate further study of the role of the learner's motivation in language learning (Gonzales, 2010).

Research Objectives

The main focus of this study was to determine the degree of integrative and instrumental motivation of Thai students learning Korean at various course levels and whether there was a significant relationship between the students' degree of motivation and their academic achievement.

Literature Review

History of Korean Language Studies in Thailand

In 1986, Songkla University's Pattani campus became the first university in Thailand to offer the Korean language as an elective subject. The reason for teaching Korean was more economic than cultural at that time; as Korean companies established businesses in Thailand, they needed employees who could communicate in Korean. Chulalongkorn University began teaching Korean in 1988, initially as a special elective, and then, as of 1991, as an official elective course. Today, 24 Thai universities offer Korean language studies; seven of them offer Korean language studies as a major and one for a minor, while the other 16 universities teach Korean as an elective course in liberal arts departments. According to Song (2010), in February 2007, a total of 2,357 Thai students were learning Korean at 14 universities. Among these students, the number of middle and high school students studying Korean is approximately 311 and Korean majors in universities total 440. The remaining 1606 students were learning Korean as an elective at Thai universities. Korean is now also taught in Thailand by the King Sejong Institute Foundation in Bangkok.

The King Sejong Institute Foundation

The King Sejong Institute Foundation is named after King Sejong of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), who invented the Korean alphabet known as Hangeul. It is an educational institution established by the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism to provide integrated and standardized curricula for people in other countries who want to learn the Korean language and Korean culture. The foundation first started in Mongolia in 2007; its work has since then spread to four continents, with operations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Belgium, Turkey, and Zimbabwe as well as across Asia as of 2011 (Kim, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

The Socio-educational Model of Second Language Learning

The most important early researchers in second-language learning motivation were Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert in Canada. Gardner, Belgium, Canada, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, Zimbabwe, United Kingdom, Turkey, India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Thailand. The most influential and well-known attribution of Gardner's motivation theory is perhaps the socio-educational model, which first proposed by Gardner and Smythe (1975) and has undergone a number of changes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner, 2000, 2005).

Gardner's empirical research was conducted in an English as a second language (ESL) situation in Canada, where English and French are official languages. Gardner and Lambert introduced an instrument to measure students' motivational orientation for learning French as their second language (Gardner, 1985a). As noted above, they identified two motivational orientations, which they described as integrative and instrumental. Gardner (1985a) stated that second-language learning was related to social matters, requiring learners to understand the culture and people of the target language. Gardner (1985a) contended that if students' attitudes toward the culture of the target language or community were positive, language learning would be more enjoyable and the students would be more likely to persist in learning the target language. Gardner (1985a) strongly believed that such attitudes influence one's success in language learning.

On the other hand, instrumental orientation refers to learning a language as a means to attain utilitarian values such as career advancement, passing a required examination, or gaining social recognition (Brown, 2000; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The purpose of instrumentally motivated learners is not primarily related to social contact with the target language community but is more practical in nature. Other researchers have criticized Gardner's motivation theory. Ely (1986) expressed two objections: first, it is not always easy to distinguish between integrative and instrumental orientation; second, the integrative and instrumental conceptualizations may not capture the full spectrum of student motivations for learning a second language. Brown (2000) argued that most second-language learning situations involved a mixture of instrumental and integrative motivations. Ellis (1997) also argued that instrumental and integrative motivations could exist at the same time.

Gardner's initial socio-educational model was presented in 1979, followed by revisions in 1985 and again in 2001. Gardner and his colleagues expanded their socio-educational model to clearly describe learner motivation in second-language learning (Ehrman et al., 2003; Gardner, 1985a). The revised socio-educational model contains four main constructs: external influences (such as one's sociocultural environment, family background, or teachers), individual differences, language acquisition, and outcomes. Individual differences was further divided into five subcategories: attitudes toward the learning situation, integrativeness, motivation, language anxiety, and instrumental orientation. In this context, integrativeness reflects an interest in learning the second language in order to become psychologically closer to the other language community. It involves emotional identification with another cultural group (Gardner, 2001). Gardner clarified that integrativeness did not mean wanting to

become a member of another cultural community, but rather an individual's openness to interacting with another cultural or linguistic group.

Gardner (2005) stated that individuals with a high degree of integrativeness would tend to view their learning experience in a positive manner. Further, he stated that integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning context (i.e., the school climate, the teacher, the course, and the study materials), and instrumental orientation are the three elements that influence motivation. Gardner believed that motivation played the most important role in second language learning, but he also acknowledged the influence of language aptitude on the learner's success. Learners with high motivation may still have unsatisfactory outcomes, and less motivated learners may still be successful in acquiring language skills.

Method

The present study was designed to identify the integrative and instrumental motivations of students learning Korean as a foreign language at the King Sejong Institute in Bangkok, Thailand. The study sample consisted of the students enrolled in Korean at the institute during the second semester (March through June) of 2014. The study questionnaire was distributed to all 125 students and 120 completed questionnaires were received, with a return rate of 96%.

The Research Instrument

The research instrument contained a demographic section including the student's name, level, gender, nationality (Thai or other), and number of years learning Korean. It then contained questions from two subscales, on integrative and instrumental orientation, of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985a, 1985b). This questionnaire was used because it was developed especially for second-language learners, has been used in numerous studies of second-language learning, and has been demonstrated to be valid and reliable (Gardner, 1985b).

The AMTB was originally developed for English-speaking Canadians studying French as a second language. Based on the original AMTB, Gardner (2004) developed another version for ESL students, and this version was used in his research in Brazil, Croatia, Finland, Poland, Romania, and Spain. The complete battery contains 12 subscales and more than 100 questions (Gardner, 2004). Since the present study was concerned only with investigating integrative and instrumental motivational orientations, only eight of the items were selected for use. These items were modified for Korean-language learners. The odd-numbered items (i.e., questions 1, 3, 5, and 7) covered instrumental orientation and the even-numbered items addressed integrative orientation.

Students were asked to answer each question on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). Therefore, the possible score range for each orientation was from 4 to 24. A higher score indicated a higher level of orientation. The AMTB does not indicate what scores should be considered as representing a high, moderate, or low degree of motivation, so I established categorizations as follows for each orientation: 20 to 24 points, high motivation; 16 to 19 points, relatively high motivation; 12 to 15 points, moderate degree of motivation; 8 to 11 points, relatively low motivation; and 4 to 7 points, low motivation.

Validity and Reliability

In his initial research, Gardner (1985b) administered the AMTB to a sample of students in seven regions of Canada, obtaining an overall Cronbach coefficient of .85. Regarding each subcategory within the AMTB, although the instrumental orientation section had the lowest score at .62, this was acceptable. In the present study, I confirmed the validity of the subscales by calculating Cronbach's alpha for integrative and instrumental motivation as 0.75 each. In general, a Cronbach's alpha value of .70 or higher on is known to provide a good support for internal consistency reliability (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2007).

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed on April 7, 2014 and collected on April 20. The return rate was 96%.

Results

The data were analyzed using a statistical software program. Table 1 presents the distribution of students by gender and level of study. It shows that 89% of the students were female and that approximately two-thirds were in one of the two lowest course levels.

Table 1: Respondents' Gender and Level of Study

	Beginner	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Advanced	Total	Percentage
Male	3	3	4	3	13	10.8
Female	42	35	21	9	107	89.2
Total	45	38	25	12	120	100

Table 2 indicates the responses as to the number of years spent studying Korean.

Table 2: Number of Years Spent Studying Korean

Duration of Studying Korean	Beginner	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Advanced	Total Number	Percentage
Less than 1 year	40	9	0	0	49	40.8 %
1 to 2 years	2	27	1	0	30	25.0%
2 to 3 years	3	2	18	1	24	20.0%
3 to 4 years	0	0	4	9	13	10.8%
4 to 5 years	0	0	2	1	3	2.5%

Table 2: Number of Years Spent Studying Korean

Duration of Studying Korean	Beginner	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Advanced	Total Number	Percentage
5 years or more	0	0	0	1	1	0.8%
<i>Total Number</i>	45	38	25	12	120	100 %

Main Findings

Integrative Motivation

The findings with regard to integrative motivation are presented in Table 3. The mean score for integrative motivation among all 120 respondents was 20.58 out of a possible 24 points, indicating that these students had a high level of integrative motivation to study Korean. The mean score for beginning-level students was 21.4, the highest score among all the levels. Conversely, the mean for advanced-level students dropped to 16.75, the lowest score for any level, though still representing relatively high motivation. The degree of integrative motivation for studying Korean decreased as students progressed.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Integrative Motivation (N = 120)

Level	Beginner (n = 45)	Inter. 1 (n = 38)	Inter. 2 (n = 25)	Advanced (n = 12)	Total (n = 120)
Integrative Mean	21.4	20.76	20.32	16.75	20.58
S.D.	2.64	2.46	4.08	4.49	3.38

Note: Inter. = Intermediate

Instrumental Motivation

Findings from the survey questions on instrumental motivation are shown in Table 4. The overall mean score for instrumental motivation was 19.16, representing relatively high instrumental motivation. The mean for beginner-level students was 20.68, again the highest among all levels, whereas the mean for advanced-level students was again the lowest at 16.16. Thus, the degree of instrumental motivation for studying Korean also decreased as students progressed. The scores indicated that the degree of integrative motivation of students' at all four levels was slightly higher than that of instrumental motivation.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Instrumental Motivation (N = 120)

Level	Beginner (n = 45)	Inter. 1 (n = 38)	Inter. 2 (n = 25)	Advanced (n = 12)	Total (n = 120)
Integrative Mean	20.68	19.92	18.88	16.16	19.16
S.D.	2.54	2.36	3.03	4.28	3.07

Note: Inter. = Intermediate

Discussion

The Korean Wave has increased contact between Korean and Thai cultures, fostering a greater interest in studying the Korean language in Thailand. Nevertheless, when compared with other languages such as English, Chinese, or Japanese, the research on Korean-language study in Thailand is limited. The present study examined the motivations of a sample of Thai students learning Korean at the King Sejong Institute in Bangkok.

The most striking demographic observation was that nearly 90% of the students were females. More than 40% were in their first year of studying Korean and 65% were in their first two years.

Respondents indicated high degrees of both integrative and instrumental motivation, with overall average scores of 20.58 and 19.16, respectively, out of a possible 24 points. The slightly higher scores for integrative motivation were not surprising, given that many previous researchers had found that interest in Korean popular culture was the primary driving force encouraging Thai students to learn Korean (Jung, 2007; Park, 2008; Sattathamkul, 2008; Yim, 2005). Nevertheless, the high scores in instrumental motivation suggested that the students believed that studying Korean would help them in their future career pursuits or enable them to earn other types of rewards.

Data analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the degree of motivation across the four levels of students. Moreover, as the students progressed to higher course levels, their degree of both types of motivation consistently decreased. This decrease could reflect frustration with the increasing difficulty of the content or that their curiosity about the Korean people and culture declined over time. Many beginner-level students wanted to study Korean because of their interest in Korean pop songs, television series, and movies. When students reach the Intermediate 1 level, the content materials of the course become more academic and complicated. For example, an important aspect of the Korean language is the distinction between formal and informal ways of speaking. The language contains different levels of politeness depending on whether one is talking with elderly people, managers, teachers, or a younger sister or friend. On the other hand, as students' progress in their learning, they could become more aware of practical reasons for learning Korean, such as opening up career opportunities. But the challenges involved in finding a job that uses one's specialized language skills could discourage students.

Dorney (1994) observed that motivation for learning a second language was considered one of the most influential factors that made learners successful. In this regard, the current study found that there appeared to be a significant relationship between the degree of both integrative and instrumental motivation and academic achievement for students at the beginner and Intermediate 1 levels. This finding suggests that the students' positive feelings about Korean pop culture and the Korean people led them to study hard, as did their hopes of preparing themselves for a good job or a promising career path.

However, for students at the Intermediate 2 and advanced levels, there was no significant relationship between the degree of either integrative or instrumental motivation and test scores. It is possible that since motivation is a complex concept, the items used to measure integrative and instrumental motivation in this study did

not fully capture the range of student motivation for learning a second language (Ely, 1986). Also, Gardner's (2005) socio-educational model emphasizes that each learner's learning situation can affect student achievement. Such other factors could be particularly influential for students at the Intermediate 2 and advanced levels who have been studying Korean for a long time.

It was not possible to compare results for the two genders in this study, because the number of male students taking Korean language classes was very small. In the future, most Thai teachers of Korean will likely be female, since an overwhelming majority of the current Thai students are female.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

Considering that the respondents had a high degree of both integrative and instrumental motivation to learn Korean but that this motivation appeared to decline at higher levels of study, it is recommended that administrators and teachers take advantage of the initially high motivation levels and that teachers of more advanced students should make a particular effort to apply teaching and learning strategies that will enhance students' instrumental motivation. Teachers in higher-level classes should be sensitive to the difficulty of the content being taught and should try to continue capitalizing on students' positive feelings and curiosity about the Korean culture and people. Administrators should examine the curriculum and look for ways to enhance it in order to sustain motivation. They should also locate good information about career opportunities where the Korean language is needed and share it with students to enhance their instrumental motivation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include larger groups of higher-level students. The present study had only 25 Intermediate 2 students and 12 advanced students in a sample of 120. The results for these students were quite different from those of students in the first two levels of study. Also, future research should investigate in greater depth the factors that cause higher-level students to become less motivated.

This research investigated only integrative and instrumental motivation. As such, it may not have captured the full spectrum of student motivation for learning Korean. Thus, I would recommend future investigations using other dimensions of motivation, such as intrinsic and extrinsic conceptualizations. It would also be both feasible and instructive to compare results between students at the King Sejong Institute in Thailand and those enrolled in King Sejong Institutes in other countries.

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