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Relationship Between the Socio Education Factors to English Language Learning in Albania High Schools and Pupil's Final Grades in English Course

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Abstract

This paper aimed to study the relationship between the socioeducative factors from Attitude Motivation Test Battery, (AMTB, Gardner R.C. 2004) for learning English as a foreign language in high schools in Albania and the pupils` achievement, the final grades in English course. The study found that the correlation with Spearman Rho coefficient was significant at p"smaller than".05 and the grades in English course were moderately related with four variables: first, the integrative language role r=.404, p"smaller than"0.001, second, motivation r=.361, p"smaller than"0.001, third, parental support r=. 313, p=0.001, and fourth, instrumental language orientation r=.305, p"smaller than"0.001. It was found a smaller correlation value between grades and pupils' attitudes towards the English learning context at the value: r=.164, p"smaller than"0.001. A small negative, but significant correlation was found between pupils` anxiety to learn the language and the grades in English course: r=-.130, p"smaller than"0.001.

Keywords: Attitude Motivation Test Battery, Socioeducative Model for foreign Languages, high school pupils, final grades in English, anxiety in foreign languages, integrative language role, instrumental orientation, parental support to learn foreign language.

Languages, high school pupils, final grades in English, anxiety in foreign languages, integrative language role, instrumental orientation, parental support to learn foreign language.

Introduction

Empirical studies about learning foreign languages have most commonly been based on the international Attitude and Motivation Test Battery, (Gardner R.C., 2004,

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery; International AMTB Research Project), which derived from the original test Gardner R. C., Smythe P.C. (1974). This battery has been broadly used either by the author and his colleagues in Canada and elsewhere (Gardner R.C. et.al., 1975, 1985, 2001), in a well organized way or other researchers worldwide, in countries like Croatia, Japan, Poland, Romania and Spain. It the very first time that the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery; International AMTB was applied in Albania as a need of filling a gap in the socio education domain of learning foreign languages from a quantitative study perspective. Furthermore, Albania as a country undergoing many development stages in many directions through the last decades has gone through diverse amendments made to the by acts and directives from the Ministry of Education, especially related to English language. For example the strategic document for preuniversity system in Albania, 2014-2020 foresees European standards that have as an objective to deliver high school programs which prepare pupils to learn two foreign languages till the end of class XII and their performance in language should reach B2 level according to the Common European Framework of References in Foreign languages (CEFR), (MAS, 2015, SZHAPU, f.45). Another directive from the Ministry of Education orients the graduate students from Bachelor program to certify their English knowledge in an international standard at the rate B1-C1 in order to be accepted in the second cycle of studies, the Masters Program.

Logically, it is important that these changes in law for education in Albania must be considered for their effect in students` performance in school curricula and it is necessary to investigate how capable pupils are in Albania to achieve these results and which are the indicators that best correlate to their results in the English course for the high school program.

Literature Review

Gardner R.C. (1985a) constructed the Socio Education Model for foreign language learning based on synthesized scales of ATMB (Gardner, R.C., Lalonde, R.N. & Moorcroft, R. 1985). The model introduced six conceptual constructs, (motivation, attitudes to learning context, integrativeness, instrumentality, anxiety, and parental support) placing in the centre of the Model the construct of motivation to learn foreign languages. In this model was added the education role to lean languages expressed with attitudes to the context of learning the language, composed of the scales evaluation of the language instructor and evaluation of the English class. This Model does not formally refer to the physic context where lesson takes place, at least not in a direct way (Gardner R.C., 2005, f.9).

Research conducted by Gardner R.C., Lambert (1959), Gardner R.C. (1960), Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E. (1972), Gardner R., Smythe P.C.(1975), Gardner, R.C., Lalonde, R.N.&Moorcroft, R. (1985), Gardner R.C. (2004), in the psycho social field, as well as Robert C., Gardner (1985a), socio educative approach to learning foreign languages smashed the belief that "language aptitude is an independent gift or skill from other

factors such as motivation, personality, context of learning and such a skill is innate and has an independent effect on language learning", (Carrol, 1981, cited in Stansfield C., 2004, f.48). A lot of findings related to the motivation theory to foreign language learning have been published that reveal sustainable results for the factors that mostly affect the students success in language learning (Gardner R.C., 1960; Gardner et.al 1975, 1985, 2001). In the following studies it was found that motivation was the factor that was better related to the success in foreign languages, meanwhile the integrative role and attitudes to the context of learning had equally strong correlation to the students grades, (Gardner R.C., Masgoret, 2003). In other studies with international samples the correlation coefficients values of *motivation to learn English* and secondary school *students grades* in foreign language course varied from a country to another: in Croatia r=.40, Poland r=.47, Romania r=.40, Spain r=.39, Brazil r=.48, Japan r=.47 (cited by Gardner R.C., 2009, CaaltalkOtawa) . In Albania this test battery has been used for the very first time and there is no empirical evidence till now for its use. The neighbouring countries empirical studies like Romania, Greece, Croatia, and Poland will serve as comparative to the ones in this study.

Outline of the Problem

Strategy Development Document of preuniversity school system in Albania, 2014-2020 from The Ministry of Education and Sports foresees European Standards which aim that high school students should learn two foreign languages and the level expected to be achieved is B2 according to the Common European Framework of References in Foreign languages (CEFR) , (MAS, 2015, SZHAPU, p.45). English language has been considered a priority in our National Education Strategy, 2009-2013 and it was added to the compulsory exams in A-levels (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015)[1]. Under these circumstances it is essential to investigate the relation between the socio educative factors of language learning and grades in the English course for the high school pupils in Albania.

Methodology

Objective of the Study

This study aims to investigate the relationship between the socio - educative factors according to Socio Educative Model for foreign language learning, Gardner R. C. 2001 and students` achievement indicated with final grades in the English course.

Research Question

What is the relationship between the socio - educative factors according to Socio Educative Model for foreign language learning, (Gardner R. C. 2005) and students` achievement indicated with final grades in the English course?

Variables

In order to check the relationship between the students` achievement in English and socio educative factors are considered certain variables. First, the achievement in English language learning is indicated with the students` final grades in the English course (Robert C. Gardner, 1985, 2001, 2005, 2006). The grades are taken by the end of the school year as an

> *1 Ministry of Education and Sports, Tiranë, 2015, Law No.69/2012 and Decision of Council of Ministers No. 78 for the A-levels and University admissions*

average mark and are categorized in three intervals: passing grades 5-6, medium average mark 7-8 and high average mark 9-10. The final grades in English course are considered a dependent variable. The independent categorical variables are: attitudes towards the English learning context, integrative language role, motivation to learn English, anxiety to learn English, instrumental language orientation, and parental encouragement, (Gardner R.C., 2005).

Instrument

The instrument used in this study is the Attitude Motivation Test Battery, the international version, (Gardner R.C., 2004). It consists of 12 scales which are merged into six aggregate variables (See table 1). These variables construct the Socio Education Model for foreign language learning, Gardner R.C. (2005). It is assessed with a Likert scale comprising 6 scales that range from: strongly agree, moderately agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. There is no neutral scale in this instrument.

Constructs	Scales
Motivation to learn English	Motivation Intensity Desire to learn English Attitudes to language
Integrative role of language	Integrative Orientation of language Interest in foreign languages Attitudes towards the foreigners
Attitudes towards the context of language learning	Language teacher evaluation Language course evaluation
Anxiety in foreign language	Language class anxiety Language use anxiety
Instrumentality	Instrumental orientation
Parental encouragement	Parental encouragement

Procedures of the study **Sample of the study** In the sample selection was applied the 'Stage' and 'Cluster Sampling**'** technique. The size of population for the research question was the representative sample number of high school students in Tirana N=814, out of which was calculated the sample for the study. On the basis of sample size calculator 'Roarsoft Sample size', with a representative power of 95 %, error

limit acceptance 5% and the disperse of the answers 50% it resulted a sample of : *n= 260 subjects*. Internal consistency for the constructs of Socio educative Model for foreign language learning Reliability analysis The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of scales of AMTB were as follows: Motivation (α= .781), attitudes to learning context (α= .880), integrativeness (α=.730), instrumentality (α= .852), anxiety (α=.701 and parental support (α=.671). Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of overall scales was α=.777, which makes the test 77% reliable (Brown et al., 2001, f. 264, cited at Hashimoto Y., 2003, f.46). Cronbach Alfa coefficients are above 0.6 for each of the scales which makes them consistent and reliable to measure what they are foreseen to measure (Dörnyei Z., Taugchi, 2010). Data gathering The data in this study was collected in a five months period of time, January – May, 2015, during the school year 2014- 2015 in Tirana, capital city of Albania. In the data gathering procedure were included certain criteria such as the confidential

> *1 Overview of Socio Education Model on language learning, Gardner R.C. (2009), p.4, Gardner and Lambert (1959): Fifty Years and Counting, http:// publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/*

aspect of the participants in the study, the initial notice for test application on the free will and the necessity for fair answers to the items in the tests. The students were given abundant time to check the answers in the test and were asked to fill the test in their routine class, which lasted for about 25-30 minutes. The English teacher was excluded from being part of the surveyor team considering the conflict of interest, due to certain items in the test which were connected to the teachers` performance and evaluation. **Data analysis** A non-parametric statistical technique was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Initially the significant coefficient was set for all the analysis at the value (p=.05). Spearman's rho coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between: English language proficiency grade and socio educative variables. The tests takers were coded from 1 to 260. The data was checked for the frequencies, missing values or unusual values. Preliminary analysis was made to make sure the testing of the hypothesis for the following analysis (Pallant, 2010). The homogeneity test of variances was made for the analysis. The Levene test of homogeneity revealed that the variable of grade did not fulfil the condition for parametric analysis it was lower than the coefficient that was set (p=.03). Thus for this variable were used non parametric analysis. **Results** Correlations between the final Grades in English Language Course and socio educative factors for language learning In order to assess the relationship between the final grades in English language course and socio educative factors for language learning (*attitudes towards the English learning context*, *integrative language role*, *motivation to learn English, anxiety to learn English, instrumental language orientation, parental support,* Gardner R.C. (2005), is

used the non parametric analysis Spearman Rho when the variables are measured on a scale that is at least ordinal. Correlations between language learning English indicated with the variable of final grade in English course and socio educative factors according to the Socio Education Model for foreign language learning, (Gardner, R. C., 2005) are shown in table 2. **Table 2 Correlation between final grades in English Language Course and socio educative factors for language learning**

	Grade	Attitudes towards the English learning context	Integrative language role	Motivation to learn English	Anxiety	Instrumental language orientation	Parental encouragement
Spearman's rho Grade	1.000	.164**	.404**	.361**	-.130**	.305**	.313**
Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
N	260	260	260	260	260	260	

**p< 0.05 level (2-tailed). a. County = Tirana

It was found a small correlation between grades in the English course with attitudes towards the English learning context r=.164, p<0.001. The coefficient for the relationship between the grade and integrative language role is moderate, but compared to the other socio educative factors has the highest values, r=.404, p<0.001, the coefficient for the variable of motivation has the value: r=.361, p<0.001. It was found a small negative correlation between grades and pupils` anxiety, r=-.130, p<0.001. There was a moderate coefficient between the grades and two other scales: instrumental orientation r=.305, p<0.001 and parental support r=.313**,** p=0.001**.** All of the correlation coefficients were significant, p<.05.

Discussions

This study found that there are significant relationships between the high school pupils` grades in the English course and the socio education factors. From the correlation view, the highest Spearman Rho coefficients belong to the relationship between the grades in English course and two other variables: integrative role of language r=.404, p<0.001 and motivation to learn the language, r=.361, p<0.001. These results go alongside with the empirical findings of Gardner R. and Masgoret (2003), who discovered that the strongest relationships of the grades in English are with motivation and integrative role of language (r = .37), (Gardner R.C., Caaltalkfinal2005).

Other empirical studies, Gardner and Lambert (1959) ; Gardner R. C. and Lambert (1960, 1972), Gardner and Smythe (1974), Gardner R.C. (2001), (2006) support the

findings in this paper that the integrative role of language (favourable attitudes towards the language and foreigners speaking English language) are great contributors to the students` motivation to learn the language. Other studies in the European countries show that there exists a significant moderate relationship between the grades and the integrative role, which goes alongside with the finding in this paper (Nikolaou A., 2007, Greece; Bernaus M., 2004, Spain ; Murkowska, A. 2006, Poland; Mihaljevi H., Romania). There exists a difference only for the results of the study in Croatia compared to the results in this study, where the relationship between the integrative role of the language and grades is weaker (See table 3 in the end of this section). The fact that there exists a significant moderate relationship between the integrative role of the language and the students` results in English language is expressed with the awareness of the young generation on the importance of English language in the long run of Albania, as a state that adheres to become part of the European Union. These results also reflect the political and social stage Albania was going through when the study was carried out. In June 2014 Albania was granted the European candidate status, which was reached after 11 years, since June 2003 (source: ec.europa.eu).

The finding in this paper that the strongest relationship with grades stands for the variables of integrative role of language and motivation are different though from the studies in the 70s and the 80s (Clement and Gliksman (1976), Gardner and Smythe (1982), Gardner R. (1985), Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft and Evers (1987), which defined as the strongest relationship to the grades, the variable of attitudes towards the context of language, (the English class and the language teacher) in the Socio Education Model.

The findings in this study also go alongside with the classic studies with the Socio - education Model of language learning, that reveal the best connection of the language achievement to the integrative role of language, Gardner R.C. Lambert, (1959), (1960), (1972), Gardner , Smythe (1974), Gardner, R.C (2001), (2006), who found that the integrative role of language (favourable attitudes to the language and the community that speaks the language is the best predictor to motivation to learn English, consequently is related to the pupils achievement in the English course as the Socio Education Model predicts. The fact that the integrative role of language is the best related variable to their grades in the English course is explained with favourable and positive attitudes of high school pupils towards the foreign communities that live in Albania, who in most of the cases speak English as a foreign language, and less often as a native language. The Albanian pupils perceive that the communication with foreigners plays a major role in language learning and they show great interest for the social status and culture of foreign community.

In this study motivation is the second factor that best relates to the grades in English and this is a finding that goes alongside to the other studies in Europe, (Nikolaou A. (2007), Greece; Murkowska, A.,(2006) Poland; Gabriela S. Matei, Croatia; Mihaljevi H.

Romania, Bernaus, M. (2008), Spain (See table 3). The findings about motivation to learn the language and the cultural context (integrative role of foreign language) as two key factors that best relate to students achievement in foreign language learning are very similar to the findings reported in 'Perceptions on motivation for second language learning on 50th anniversary of Gardner and Lambert, 1959, (Gardner, R.C. (2009), Fifty years and counting). The findings in this study for socio education factors to learn English language go in the same line with empirical studies Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft and Evers (1987), about the attitudes towards the Franco Canadian community and the impact in the motivational factor which set a relationship between the ethnic attitudes, students` orientations, motivation and achievement in English language, (Gardner, 1985, p. 64).

This study found that the lowest coefficient of correlation stands for the variable of anxiety which is completely different from the other studies in Europe, especially in the region around the Balkans, which show that the highest coefficients of relationship between the socio education factors and the grades stand for the variable of anxiety (See table 3).

Table 3 European studies for correlation values of socio education factors and high school pupils` final grades in language

	Croatia	Romania	Poland	Spain
Attitudes towards the English learning context	.18	.12	.17**	.18**
integrative role of language	.20*	.30**	.35**	.37**
Anxiety	-.39**	.50**	.37**	-.38**
Instrumental orientation	.07	.15	.16	.21**
Parental support	.04	.23*	.16	.21**
Motivation to learn English	.35**	.40**	.28**	.49**

> *Motivation to learn English .35** .40** .28** .49** * P< .05 ** p<.01*

Source*: Gardner R. C. (2005) Caaltalk final, P. 20, Joint Plenary Talk, Canada*

Conclusions

The study about the relationship between high school pupils' motivation and attitudes to learn English, (N= 260) and final grades in the English course, by using the Socio Education Model, Gardner R.C. (2004) found that the higher the students interest is to approach other communities and the greater their desire is to associate with these groups, and the more favourable their attitudes are towards the foreigners speaking English, the better their learning results are in English language. This paper found that the greater the integrative role of the language is the higher language achievement is. Another finding from this study shows that the more motivated to learn the language the pupils are, the better the grades in English course.

Correlation Analysis with Spearman Rho coefficient found that there existed a significant positive moderate relationship between the *integrative role* of language and the grades in the English course: *r=.404, p<0.001.* This variable resulted to be best related to the pupils` grades than any other factor of the Socio Education Model.

This study found that the second socio education factor that best relates to pupils results in the English course is motivation to learn the language. The correlation is significant and positive at the value *r=.361, p<0.001.*

The third socio education factor that best relates to the pupils grades in English course is parental encouragement. The correlation is significant and positive at the value *r=.313, p<0.001).* The more parents encourage and support their children to learn English as a foreign language, the better their results are in the course.

The fourth socio education factor that best relates to the students grades in English course is the instrumental role of language with a value *r=.305, p<0.001.* The more students are interested in the functional language aspect, and its utility, the more they learn English.

The variable that is less related to the students grades in foreign language in a significant and positive direction is the variable 'attitudes to the learning context' at a value *r=.164, p<0.001.* This concludes that the more positive attitudes to the learning context, the better the grades in language, despite being a rather weak relationship.

The last socio education factor ranked in the relationship with the grades in English course is the variable of 'anxiety' with a significant, but negative value (r=-.130, p<0.01). This value shows that the less anxious the students are in English class the better their grades are in English.

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