Using Action Research in Remedial Program to Investigate the Motivation and Beliefs of English Under-achievers with Particular Reference to the Freshmen of Chaoyang University of Technology

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Abstract

In recent years, some studies on EFL reading comprehension have pointed that under-achieved students exhibit limited reading skills, lower motivation, and fewer positive learning attitudes (Robb, 1995; Brown, 2001; Grade and Stroller, 2002). Taking extra remedial course as well as level-ranked English instruction has been particularly influential in contributing insights into foreign language learning for under-achieved students. Therefore, the researcher designed a case study through the action research to provide a more precise way to facilitate under-achieved students’ English learning in remedial course.

Based on the background, the aim of the present study was to investigate the changes of those under-achieved students’ learning beliefs and motivation in English remedial course. Three major sets of research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What is the difference in students’ beliefs toward English learning after they took the remedial program?
2. What is the difference in students’ learning motivation before and after students took the remedial program?
3. Is there any correlation between students’ learning motivation and belief in remedial program?

The result of this study could be useful to teachers’ responsibility for planning course work in remedial course. Through the deep exploration and understanding of students’ psychological journey in English learning, students’ learning problems can be better understood. Then, in Chaoyang University of Technology, students need to achieve GEPT primary level, TOEIC 350 or equivalent tests listed on Common Europe Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in order to pass the graduation doorsill.

Therefore, the study can also benefit the under-achieved students to better understand their English learning difficulties.

Key words: Action Research, Motivation, Belief, underachievers, Technological colleges, case study, EFL learning.
Background of the study

According to the survey done by Foreign Language Center in Chaoyang University of Technology, 37.2% of freshmen’s English score are below 60 points within total 100 points in entrance examination. In order to assign freshmen to the suitable class, they all took the placement test administrated by Foreign Language Center, Chaoyang University of Technology. Based on the results of the placement test, students will be divided into one of the four levels – Starters, Basic, Intermediate, and High-intermediate. There are 179 students classified to be the starters, belonged to 8 percent of the number of the freshmen. In addition, these students also need to participate into vocabulary recognition test to pronounce and identify the meaning of each word. The researcher as a teaching assistant conducted the vocabulary recognition test and found out that most of under-achievers felt frustrated to pronounce, not to mention identifying the vocabularies. All of them had studied English for at least six years since English is required in junior and senior high school education in Taiwan. In the requirement of vocational high school, they are expected to recognize at least 2000 vocabulary from daily life. However, these students didn’t seem to develop the competence required and struggled with unfamiliar words.

The main reason is that vocational high school students only take English course for four hours a week in vocational high school, so that they acquired a few vocabularies and a fragment of grammar knowledge. With time limitation and pressure on entrance examination, English teachers hardly facilitate these under-achieved students to follow up the regular course. Due to inadequate vocabularies and lack of strategies in reading comprehension, some studies reveal that the technical university students have limited reading competence (Chang, 2001; Lin 1996; Ou, 1997a, 1997b). In recent years, some studies on EFL reading comprehension have pointed that under-achieved students exhibit limited reading skills, lower motivation, and fewer positive learning attitudes (Robb, 1995; Brown, 2001; Grade and Stroller, 2002). Taking extra remedial course as well as level-rank English instruction has been particularly influential in contributing insights into foreign language learning for under-achieved students. I not only wonder whether under-achieved students will change their learning motivation and beliefs after taking the remedial course, but the students’ psychological journey in English learning.

In subsequent years, numerous studies were carried out on the effectiveness of remedial course to junior high school students in English learning. However, there has been far less research on the effects of the action research used to under-achieved undergraduates in remedial course. This process of action research can be repeated from reframing the problem, collecting fresh data, and rethinking our analysis, until the
researchers have found a suitable solution. Therefore, the research was designed as a case study through the action research to provide more precise ways to facilitate under-achieved undergraduates’ English learning.

**Purpose of the Study**

Based on the background, the aim of the present study was to investigate the changes of these under-achieved students’ learning beliefs and motivation in remedial course. The dimensions of the exploded beliefs cover beliefs about the understanding of student expectations, aptitude, learning difficulty, learning and communication strategies, and motivations. Therefore, this paper described and analyzed the freshmen’s English learning obstacles in Chaoyang University of Technology.

**Research Questions**

In view of the preceding research purpose, the researcher conducted this study with the goal of answering the following questions through the analysis of interviews with class teacher and students, researcher’s field-notes, teaching log, students’ reflection diary, and questionnaires. The three major sets of research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What is the difference in students’ beliefs toward English learning after they took the remedial program?
2. What is the difference in students’ learning motivation after they took the remedial program?
3. Is there any correlation between students’ learning motivation and belief in remedial program?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in two ways. First, the result of this study could be useful to teachers responsible for planning course work in remedial course. Through the deep exploration and understanding of students’ psychological journey in English learning, students’ learning problems can be better understood. Consequently, the findings of this study will give English teachers some support when they teach under-achieved students and provide solution to problem of low motivation toward English learning. Then, in Chaoyang University of Technology, students need to achieve GEPT primary level, TOEIC 350 or equivalent tests listed on Common Europe Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in order to pass the graduation doorsill. Therefore, the study can also benefit the under-achieved students to better understand their English learning difficulties.
Literature Review

Remedial Course

Some studies on EFL reading comprehension have pointed that low achieved students exhibit limited reading skills, lower motivation, and fewer positive learning attitudes (Robb, 1995; Brown, 2001; Grade and Stroller, 2002). Those students with low-leveled English proficiency mostly lack adequate vocabulary capacity and owned only basic idea of English grammar. They can benefit from taking extra remedial course as well as level-ranked English instruction. Sanka (2001) proposed that the students with low-leveled English proficiency require more direct, intensive, systematical teaching, and extra remedial instruction or assistance on the regular classes. There are two types of remedial instruction as follows. (1) The pull-out remedial instruction, exclusive programs, needs extra instructional time and endeavor. (2) The pull-in remedial instruction like inclusive education which is included in the regular classes (Yang, 2005). Most of the teachers prefer pull-in remedial instruction, because they can use the complete teaching scaffold in regular classes instead of after-class programs. However, not many students participated in the course, when remedial programs were first introduced. There are six reasons as follows: (a) Original teachers adopted the original material in the original ways. (b) Teachers had inadequate teaching skills and limited time. (c) Students were labeled and so their motivation reduced. (d) Teachers were hard to handle those students with different level of English. (e) Teachers concentrated on mechanical basic skills, not solid content. (f) Teachers slowed down the learning speed, but it couldn’t narrow the gap between students of lower and higher levels (Wu, 2003; Chang, 2001; Huang, 2000). Therefore, some researchers suggested the five points to solve these problems. (1) Utilize students’ unique intelligent to help them gain confidence and a sense of achievement. (2) Encourage students to participate actively and learn progressively. (3) Provide various learning opportunities for real learning (Wu, 2003; Huang, 2000). Chang (2001) provided the strategies for remedial lessons, including direct instruction, mastery teaching, individualized instruction and cooperative learning. It’s crucial to create a modulated atmosphere, cooperative spirit, and some teaching aids for teaching underachievers (Lee, 1993).

Action Research

McLean (1995) mentioned that the concept of action research which originated in the post-World War II. Then, action research has been extensively adopted by scholars and teachers ever since. The main notion to the definition is that action research concentrates on research and individual or small-group professional practice (see Figure
2.1), which the teacher or co-teachers play the role of researchers. Action research can take a variety of forms. Wallace (2002) stated that the advantages of individual approaches to action research tend to be more flexible and more easily implemented than others, such as writing personal field-notes and keeping a diary. On the other hand, the advantages of collaborative approaches can do much to maintain motivation, save time by the allocation of different tasks, and bring out much input from the gathered diverse insights of those involved.

This strategy is basically a way of reflecting on your teaching (or teacher-training, or management of an English department, or whatever it is you do in ELT). Action research “is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be” (Wallace, 2002). This kind of process can be repeated from reframing the problem, collecting fresh data, and rethinking our analysis, until the researchers have found a suitable solution.

**Case Study Approach**

Case studies focus on the unique case, such as individual units, special student, and particular group or class and so on. The results can not be generalized to the other population of learners and classes. Therefore, it is often explained in contrast with traditional empirical research approach. According to the traditional research, generalizations are more often made in terms of probability in the social science, however, the some exceptions are valuable to discuss in the education. Therefore, case study can be used to disprove a generalization (Wallace, 2002).

**The Reason for Using the Case Study**

When the researchers adopt action research, they concentrate on the unique situation to modify their teaching process. Therefore, the specific focus of the case study provides the positive benefit to the action researchers. In addition, it may complete the professional development rather than the empirical research relating to the large participants. Comparing with the traditional research, the case study research provides more human interest than generalized statistical findings.

Case studies are not statistically generalisable, but they can be an evidence to support a theory. The researcher can propose how this works out in practice by studying and analyzing the data of one particular class.

Wallace (2002, p.164) suggested that “action researchers might want to use the case study approach because it may lead to studies that are more focused or specific, more accessible and possibly also more interesting in human terms.” There are some
aims for case study as follows.

1. Solving problems
2. Applying theories to practice
3. Generating hypotheses
4. Providing illustrations

Moreover, case study approach can be manipulated through wide range techniques, such as observation, questionnaire and interview, verbal report, case diary studies, and think-aloud data. Action researchers can utilize those techniques to carry out their investigation. Therefore, case study approach really fits into the action research framework, because it tends to be appropriate tool for teachers to cultivate their professional development within their own context.

**Definitions of Motivation in Foreign Language Learning**

Keller (1983) provided a simple definition for motivation, “motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (p.389). In his education-oriented motivation theory, Keller further identified that motivation comprised four major determinants: (1) interest—a positive response to stimuli; (2) relevance—a prerequisite for sustained motivation and meeting personal needs; (3) expectancy—expectation for success and attributions concerning success of failure; (4) outcomes—reward or punishment. Moreover, Gardner (1988) also proposed that the definition regarding motivation of second language learning covers three constituents: (1) effort to achieve the destination; (2) the desire to learn the language; (3) attitudes toward the language-learning situation and the activities of language learning. All these three components must coexist with one another to describe the motivation in language learning (Gardner & Tremblay, 1995). On the other hand, the satisfaction will be brought by the goal achievement in the activity, which may be supposed to support students’ learning motivation toward second language learning.

When learners’ motivation is inspired, they can perceive higher anticipation to take more participation, and then, they can make more effort to attain the achievement and have better performances (Gardner, 1985). Dornyei (1990) considered that instrumental motive, integrative motive, need for achievement and attributions about past failures composed the dimensions of motivation.

**Definition of Learners’ Beliefs in Foreign Language Learning**

Students’ hold their beliefs toward second language learning, which greatly influence their learning motivation and expectation for their own success. As Horwitz
stated that the students hold the preconceived ideas about language learning affects how they go about doing it; therefore, it is important to investigate what learners’ beliefs to aid language learning and teaching. Kern (1995) proposed that studies on learners’ beliefs has been exploring to identify learners’ “preconceived notions about what is involved in learning a foreign language”. In addition, Horwitz (1988) also pointed out that learners’ beliefs about learning language have relevance to “the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes”. Furthermore, several researchers mentioned that the learners’ belief formed from their previous learning experiences, especially in traditional learning situation (Balet, 1985; Curtin, 1979; Horwitz, 1985; Kern, 1995; Roberts, 1992; Wenden, 1986b).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants were 36 freshmen, selected from the placement test administrated by Foreign Language Center, Chaoyang University of Technology in Taichung County. Before entering Chaoyang University of Technology, all of the participants had studied English for at least six years since English is required in junior and senior high school education in Taiwan. According to the results of the placement test, students will be divided into one of the four levels – Starters, Basic, Intermediate, and High-intermediate. There are 179 students classified to be the starters, belonged to 8 percent of the number of the freshmen. In my class, most of the students’ score in placement test ranged from 30 points to 36 points within total 100 points. In addition, Foreign Language Center also collected data in terms of their English score in the entrance examination, and the researcher found that the participants obtained English score ranged from 20 points to 60 points within total 100 points.

Research Procedure

Since this study was designed to investigate how the under-achieved freshmen’s beliefs and motivation toward English learning changed during the remedial course, the researcher adopted the case study in action research. Wallace (2002) mentioned that the specific focus of the case study therefore becomes a positive advantage for action researchers, since it may lead to studies that are more focused or specific, and more accessible. The research procedures include some stages described as follows:

(1) Pre-teaching Stage:

Based on the procedure of action research, the first step of the process was to consider the students’ difficulties in English learning. After questionnaires collected, it was not hard to analyze their aptitude, learning belief, strategies, and motivation. Then,
the researcher needed to select the suitable learning activities for those under-achievers depending on their learning problems. In general, most of under-achievers felt frustrated to pronounce, not to mention identifying the vocabularies. The function of the starter program is mainly aimed at the starters’ English competence to design the course with unified textbooks—KK & Phonics Easy Go! and First Choice as materials to teach them phonics, basic grammar, vocabularies, and listening comprehension. Therefore, the starters not only can obtain the instant assistance in English learning, but they also can lay the groundwork for their professional areas.

(2) Teaching Stage:

In action research method, Wallace (2002) stated that the advantages of collaborative approaches can do much to maintain motivation, save time by the allocation of different tasks, and bring out much input from the gathered diverse insights of those involved. With the concept in mind, the researcher as an assistant teacher adopted the collaborative approach to design the course with the class teacher. In order to get the deeper information in this study, the researcher utilized the triangulation to collect the data. First, the researcher needed to write personal field-notes during the class observation every week and keep a diary after class. In addition, teaching log for class teacher is to record and compare the students’ learning situation in reality. On the other hand, students also wrote down their reflection diary after the class. In this study, students needed to spend their extra time to take the subsidiary course. These 36 students were divided into three groups, so that they can have more chances to practice English. Moreover, the researcher as a tutor in subsidiary class facilitates students’ phonics learning and content of the textbook. Therefore, it is more accessible to handle students’ learning situation.

(3) Post-teaching Stage:

Action research “is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be” (Wallace, 2002). According to Wallace’s statement, the researcher not only had to discuss the students’ learning problems with the class teacher, but he or she also aimed these problems to modify the course in order to meet the students’ need.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, the reliability in the study is a crucial issue. It has to be said that sometimes action research data are not very reliable in this technical sense. Consequently, triangulation is necessary. In other words, researchers need to get more than one perspective on the topic or collect data from at least three sources (Wallace, 2002; Schwalbach, 2003). In this study, there are five data collection methods adopted
as follows:

(1) The participants were asked to fill out questionnaires, Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which elicited information concerning their learning aptitude, learning difficulty, learning strategies, and motivation.

(2) The data for this study were obtained by observation. The researcher’s observation demonstrated how the class was conducted and made the field-notes, which facilitated recording the basic information as Date and Time, Class Number present, Absentees, Word done, Punishments issued, Homework given.

(3) The data was derived from the interviews with the teacher and learners with higher motivation than before in the end of the semester. The purpose of the interview is to understand what the factors affect the students’ beliefs toward English learning.

(4) Data were collected using teachers’ teaching logs, which can be utilized to record some administrative details (class or date) before the lesson on objectives, outcomes and notes/points for attention. Therefore, it is valuable to use teaching log on reflective analysis.

(5) Students’ reflection diary show students’ reaction and suggestions regarding their English learning and remedial course. They need to write down their reflection after the class every week. From the data, the researcher can clearly know what they learn from each lesson, what difficulties they encounter, and how students change their beliefs and motivation toward English learning.

**Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were performed. The data used for analysis contained questionnaires, observation field notes, interview transcriptions, students’ reflection diary, and teachers’ teaching log. In quantitative data analyses, the researcher adopted the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13 to compute descriptive statistics for the data. The results of questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics. On the other hand, researcher’s observation field notes, interview transcriptions, students’ reflection diary, and teachers’ teaching log were analyzed qualitatively according to research questions. Based on the qualitative method, there are seven analytic procedures listed as follows: (1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories and themes; (3) coding the data; (4) offering interpretations through analytic memos; and (5) writing the report or other format for presenting the study (Catherine M. & Gretchen B. R., 2006). Therefore, researcher applied those five steps to analyze and compare the data derived from observation field notes, interview transcriptions, students’ reflection diary, and teachers’ teaching log.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study include the participants’ beliefs and motivation toward English learning. The first part of the results presents the whole participants’ beliefs and motivation after taking the remedial course, which are obtained from questionnaires. After analyzing the questionnaire, the researcher will choose learners with highest and lowest motivation and beliefs to conduct the interview in response to the research questions. The interviews are divided into questions regarding personal information about previous learning experience, motivation, and beliefs and transcribed to be analyzed. In addition, both participants’ reflection diary and researcher’s field notes are adopted to make Triangulation process in order to analyze precisely. After that, the researcher used statistics to represent the correlation between motivation and beliefs.

A. What is the difference in students’ beliefs toward English learning after they took the remedial program?

The whole class’ beliefs were obtained from the analysis of questionnaire shown in Table 4.1.

4.1 Results of T-test for participants’ belief toward English learning (pre- and post-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>.753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A paired –sample T-test was used to determine the deviation of participants’ beliefs toward English learning after taking remedial program at pre-test and post-test. Based on the data(Table 4.1), the results indicated that there were no statistically significant effects after one-semester period because the P value is larger than .05. The reason was probably that the participants only took the remedial course for four months in this semester. This is consistent with earlier findings suggesting that remedial course should last for a long period time, so that students can build their confidence toward English learning from basic.

B. What is the difference in students’ learning motivation after they took the remedial program?

Results of the t-test on motivation toward English learning are presented in Table 4.2.

4.2 Results of T-test for participants’ motivation toward English learning (pre- and post-test)
The findings reflected in Table 4.2 indicate that students’ learning motivation was found no significant differences after they took the remedial program (P value is larger than .05). The main reason is probably that most of under-achievers have negative learning experience in English learning. Therefore, it may be explained that under-achievers required more time to rebuild their motivation toward English learning.

C. Is there any correlation between students’ learning motivation and beliefs in remedial program?

Table 4.3 illustrates the correlation between students’ learning motivation and beliefs after taking the remedial course.

4.3 Results of correlation between students’ learning motivation and belief (post-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>.550**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of Pearson correlation showed that students’ learning motivation had high correlation with their leaning beliefs ($r = .550$, $p < .01$). In addition, the correlation coefficient turned out to be very close to zero at 0.01. The result in this case is a high and positive correlation coefficient of .55. Therefore, students’ learning motivation and beliefs appear to be highly related in the sense that as one set of numbers goes up so does the other.

It is valuable to investigate the unique case of students’ learning beliefs toward English learning during the remedial course. Therefore, the researcher chose learners with highest and lowest motivation and beliefs to conduct the interview. To summarize the salient features of the analysis, some findings are of interest shown in Table 4.4.

4.4 Results of participants with lowest and highest beliefs and motivation (pre- and post-test)
The student, CY, with the lowest beliefs, had the lowest motivation; moreover, the other one, YS, not only had the highest beliefs, but also had the highest motivation. In general, beliefs seemed to be closely connected to learning motivation. The student, CY, expressed his beliefs toward English learning in the interview. The researcher organized his responses of self-concept regarding remedial course below:

- **R:** Do you think that you can learn English well?
- **CY:** I’m supposed to spend more time to learn English rather than others, because I think English is really difficult.
- **R:** Do you think English is a difficult language?
- **CY:** really difficult......
- **R:** Which parts in English learning is more difficult?
- **CY:** There are too many vocabularies.....
- **R:** According to vocabularies memorizing, KK symbols, and grammar, which one is the most difficult?
- **CY:** All of them are difficult, but pronunciation is ok…(CY, Jan. 8th, 2010)

From CY’s interview, he seemed to think that he can’t learn English well with short period of time. This is consistent with earlier findings “low achieved students exhibit limited reading skills, lower motivation, and fewer positive learning attitudes (Robb, 1995; Brown, 2001; Grade and Stroller, 2002).”

In contrast to CY’s responses, YS expressed her confidence toward English learning after taking the remedial course as follows:

- **R:** Do you think everyone can learn English well?
- **YS:** They are supposed to learn well, if they try their best in English learning.
- **R:** Do you think you can learn English well?
- **YS:** Maybe I will be ok…
- **R:** Do you think English is a difficult language?
- **YS:** No…(YS, Jan. 11th, 2010)

The results of YS’s responses showed that if she can try her best to learn English, she can master English. It is likely that low-achievers’ confidence in learning English might have been increased because of their successful learning experiences in the remedial program.
As shown in the second row of Table 4.4, the student CY’s motivation seemed to decrease 1.03 after one semester. The participant’s motivation from interviews toward English learning might also provide us some clues as follows:

R: Concerning English course in this semester, do you actively think about what teacher taught?
CY: seldom…
R: Therefore, you don’t think that you can review what teacher taught today.
CY: Not often…
R: If teacher ask you questions in class, do you want to be the volunteer to answer it?
CY: No…
R: Why?
CY: Because I don’t want to make mistakes…
R: If there is no any exams and homework, will you take out CD to follow it and read out in English?
CY: seldom…(CY, Jan. 8th, 2010)

According to CY’s responses, he didn’t have any intrinsic motivation to make him study English, because he seldom thought what he learned in class and reviewed the content with CD attached in the textbook. In addition, CY was afraid to lose his face when he answered the question in front of class. Based on his learning experience, he said that he can’t attain achievement on English, so that he lost interests in learning English. The results suggest that remedial course may adopt small group teaching to focus on those under-achievers’ learning motivation and needs.

On the other hand, YS expressed her motivation toward English learning after taking the remedial course as follows:

R: Concerning English course in this semester, do you actively think about what teacher taught?
YS: Sometimes… Although I haven’t rethink again yet, while Thursday is coming, the TA will teach again…. It’s fine! I can memorize all well.
R: Therefore, if you don’t review the content, you still think what you learn today.
YS: Yes…After one week, I will think about it.
R: What the reasons do you think what you learn today?
YS: I think I study in University; therefore, I’m supposed to learn something more.
R: If teacher didn’t ask you to answer the question and ask someone to be the
volunteer... Do you want to answer the question?
YS: It’s not bad, but I don’t actively to answer it. I still think the correct answer by myself. (YS, Jan. 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2010)

It is perceivable that YS have intrinsic motivation to inspire her to rethink what she learned in this week. In addition, she thought that she should acquire more knowledge in university. Although she didn’t volunteer to answer the question, she also considered what the answer was. This finding is in response to the relative study in terms of motivation toward second language learning. Oxford & Shearin (1944) stated that motivation determines the extent of active, personal involvement in second language learning.

In the interview, YS told the researcher that when she studied in vocational high school, she didn’t bring the textbook home. When I was a high school students, actually, I put English textbook in classroom. I didn’t bring them home, because I try in vain to read English. Now, I will read in a while. At least, the content of the materials are easy to understand. You can get the points as long as you study. (YS, Jan. 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2010)] Based on YS’s responses, materials in remedial course seems to be suitable for her English ability, so that not only she can easily understand the content of material, but she is also satisfied with her grades.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion
The results of the study revealed that the participants’ learning motivation was significantly associated with their learning beliefs. When the students attained the higher satisfaction in their learning, they also believed that they can learn English well. However, positive changes were not carried over to their motivation and beliefs in this semester. This might be in part because that the time span of the remedial program was not long enough to have conspicuous influence on this study. On the other hand, some of students mentioned they applied phonics rules to memorize new vocabularies rather than rote learning. They not only memorized the words easily, but also kept them in mind for long time. In addition, the materials in remedial course were suitable for students’ English proficiency, which made them comprehensible effortlessly. Therefore, one participant (YS) in particular, was more willing to study English, and her efforts put to English learning were evidenced.

Implications
The present study provides English teachers with a good example of how to better
understand the under-achievers learning problems and their attitude toward English learning. It has also taken a step in the direction of defining the relationship between motivation and beliefs toward English learning. Students’ learning motivation seems to be closely connected to beliefs toward English. Moreover, the results indicated that remedial program into the language course was beneficial to students. Therefore, the findings and implications of the study should be generalized to the extent that future groups of students are similar to the participants.

Limitations

Even though this body of research has the undeniable merit of offering valuable insights into remedial program, it has some limitations. First, the small sample size in this program was the limitation in this study, so that the results can not be generalized to extensive population, such as underachievers with different majors or in different regions in Taiwan. The second limitation is rooted in the short time allowed for the treatment in remedial course. Participants only took this course for four months in this semester. Not surprisingly, the findings of such studies were not very conclusive. Prolonging the time span of the program is likely to validate the effect of remedial course. Third, participants’ scores were not adopted to investigate their learning achievement. If researcher compared their learning effectiveness after the remedial program, this study would be completed.

Recommendations

According to the findings and limitation, some suggestions are given for future research. First, due to the participants from Science and Engineering, the study can not be generalized to the different majors. The future researchers who attempt to undergo similar studies can recruit a larger sample of underachievers, possibly covering the various majors to see the differences in their learning situation. Second, due to the schooling schedule, the study only was implemented for 16 weeks with 2 weeks for midterm and final examination. It is hard to manifest the effectiveness of remedial course obviously. Therefore, further studies can be conducted with a longer time frame. Third, the study focused on investigating the changes of underachievers’ learning motivation and beliefs without exploring their English performance. Further researchers can adopt different teaching methods, such as direct instruction or CALL with phonics, to compare what kinds of methods with remedial course that underachiever can benefit from. Therefore, we are hopeful that future research will provide more detailed results which may differentiate these views from one another.
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