

## The Students' Attitudes towards English Language Learning English Pedagogy Students, Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University

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### *Article Info:*

*Submitted: Apr 19, 2021*

*Revised: May 25, 2021*

*Accepted: Jun 04, 2021*

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to evaluate students' attitudes towards English language learning at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University and to compare the students' attitudes towards English learning which categorized by year of study and areas of study.

The samples were 90 students who majored in six areas of study at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University in the academic year 2019-2020 were randomly selected. In this study, the survey research was applied and questionnaire was utilized to collect information from the participants. The data was analyzed using SPSS Program, Version 24 and the data was displayed into Mean and Standard deviation. In order to compare students' attitudes toward English learning, One-Way ANOVA was used to see the statistical differences.

The results of the study showed that:

1). Overall, the students of the Faculty of Education have a low attitude towards English with an average of 2.39 and a standard deviation of 0.57, which indicates a negative attitude towards learning English.

2). To compare between year of study and subject areas, there were different attitudes towards English with a priority level of 0.01.

### **Keyword:**

*Attitudes, Learning English, English Pedagogy Student*

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### **1. Introduction**

Learning a new language and being able to communicate in a new language is a new scope in our lives (Hussenein, Demirok & Uzunboylu, 2009). From the past to present and future the initial language used to communicate across the globe is English, and there are many possible reasons for studying it (Ahmed, 2015). Probably a major number of students are studying it because it is on the curriculum. Some students study it because they think it offers a chance for advancement in their professional lives. They also believe that they will get a better job than those who only speak their mother tongues. Some students find themselves living in a target language community either temporarily or permanently. The students would need to learn English to survive in that community.

Students who are going to a university in the USA, UK, Australia or Canada, In addition, may need English so that they can write reports or essays and attending lectures effectively. Business executives need English for international trades. Waiters may need English to serve the customers. However, it is no secret that English is the international language which has been taught and widely used in areas of works in every country all around the globe. It can be said that English nowadays, cannot be denied . The same as in Laos, according to Lao education law( new edition ) No .133/ປປທ, released on August 14, 2015 English has been a subject in the curriculum and is compulsory from primary school – grade 3 – up to college and university. And yes, as a member of ASEAN, English is even more necessary.

It is vital for everyone to absorb English, so that they can communicate and make deeper relations among ASEAN countries and beyond. (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015)

It is argued that language learning is considered as the keystone of human being. “Knowing the language can help us to express our opinions, hopes, and even our dreams.” (Jafre & Abidin, 2012). With the increasing need and interest in learning English as a foreign language, it is very vital to study and understand the factors that can affect the learning process. In foreign language learning context, there are several factors that influence the learning process and one of the most important factors that impact on learning a language is students’ attitudes (Eshghinejad, 2016). Hence claims that attitude plays a crucial role in foreign language learning as it influences the learners’ behaviors, i.g., action taken to learn, or efforts exerted, during the learning process. Similarly, Gardner claims that the learners’ attitudes towards learning a language play a significant role in improving and motivating them to learn that language. Furthermore, it is discussed that those students who have positive beliefs about language learning seems to increase more positive attitudes towards language learning (Jafre & Abidin, 2012). In the same way, learners’ attitudes are very essential in language learning because it may influence their performances in acquiring the target language (Eshghinejad, 2016). “So, students’ attitudes, e.g., feelings, beliefs, likes, dislikes, needs, should be considered, since their attitudes influence language learning”.

However, the researcher has found that the English of students at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University seems to be still poor and they do not appear to be communicative in English. Moreover, some students seem to be not very enthusiastic to learn English and some do not like the English classes, and they complain of the difficulty in studying English. So, the researcher is very curious and interested in conducting this research to investigate the attitudes of the students towards English language learning. Moreover, the study attempts to find out the influence of students’ field of study on their attitudes towards learning English

## 2. Materials and Method

The subsequent sections explain the choice of

research method, as well as the process of selecting the sample, collecting the data and analyzing the data.

### 2.1 Research Methodology

To evaluate the participants’ attitudes toward English language learning, the researcher decided to use questionnaire as the data collection technique.

The questionnaire used in this study has two parts: personal information of participants and the attitudes toward English language learning (in this part consists of three sub-parts such as the behavioral aspect of attitude, the cognitive aspect of attitude, and the affective aspect of attitude toward English learning).

All the items in the questionnaire were rated using the Likert scale method (a five-point scales where the respondents are required to choose one appropriate response from the statements; strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (UD), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD), for every item -The items given, either indicate positive or negative attitudes.) In this research, however, the researcher only employed four-point scales in the purpose of avoiding the respondents hiding their attitudes because five point scales offer a 'neutral' position but four point scales force the respondents to go one way or the other, without a chance to 'hide' in a neutral position.

For the purpose of scoring, the responses are quantified as following;

**For positive stated items are scored as below:** Strongly agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly disagree (SD) = 1

**For the negative stated items, the scoring is reversed as follows:** Strongly disagree (SD) = 4, Disagree (D) = 3, Agree (A) = 2 and, Strongly agree (SA) = 1

### 2.2 Selecting sample

The populations for the research were the students whom are studying at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University with total 419 students that were 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students of academics years 2019-2020

The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling to choose the sample group. With this technique, the entire population is divided into homogeneous groups called strata. So in this study, were sample of 90 students from 6 majors, the

proportionate stratified random sample was obtained using this formula:  $\left( \frac{\text{Sample size}}{\text{Population size}} \right) \times \text{Stratum size}$ .

### 2.3 Data collection

The researcher conducted the research as the steps below:

Firstly, after reading through the theories in literature review and related literature several times, the researcher designed the questionnaires based on those theories.

Then the researcher submitted to the experts to check whether the questionnaires are appropriate and usable.

Next, the researcher requested a permission paper from the dean of the faculty to conduct the research and, after getting the permission paper and all the questionnaires were amended or edited, the researcher distributed those questionnaires to the participants, and explained the purpose of the questionnaires, how to respond, etc. in order to get the accurate information.

Finally, the researcher calculated, analyzed, and wrote the result of the study.

### 2.4 Data analysis

In this study, the collected data was calculated and analyzed through program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24.0. Descriptive statistics was employed to determine the percentage, mean score and the standard deviation of the data in order to describe the personal information, and the level of the students' attitudes. In addition, dependent sample One-Way ANOVA was used to compare the attitudes of the students, regarding their fields of study.

The Criteria for describing the scales, the program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24.0 was utilized to analyze the data to get mean score and standard deviation and to explain those results, the criteria for interpreting the levels of attitudes are presented as below:

#### 1). For the positive stated items

- If the average scale is between 3.50 – 4.00 refers to “strongly agree”
- If the average scale is between 2.50 – 3.49 refers to “agree”
- If the average scale is between 1.50 – 2.49 refers to “disagree”
- If the average scale is between 1.00 – 1.49

refers to “strongly disagree”

#### 2). For the negative stated items

- If the average scale is between 3.50 – 4.00 refers to “strongly disagree”
- If the average scale is between 2.50 – 3.49 refers to “disagree”
- If the average scale is between 1.50 – 2.49 refers to “agree”
- If the average scale is between 1.00 – 1.49 refers to “strongly agree”

#### 3). Criteria for overall attitudes

- If the average scale is between 3.50 – 4.00 refers to “highest attitude”
- If the average scale is between 2.50 – 3.49 refers to “high attitude”
- If the average scale is between 1.50 – 2.49 refers to “low attitude”
- If the average scale is between 1.00 – 1.49 refers to “lowest attitude”

### 3. Results

The study aimed to reveal students' attitudes toward English language learning among the 90 selected students at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University. The results of data analysis are presented and explained as the following:

The participants of the study were 90 students who were selected randomly in different fields of study. As it is shown on Pie Chart above, 53 % of them were males and 47 % were females and, the participants were from 6 different fields of study (Lao pedagogy = 13, English pedagogy = 14, Political science pedagogy = 17, Mathematical pedagogy = 15, Physical pedagogy = 15, and Chemical pedagogy = 16).

#### 3.1 The participants' attitudes towards English language learning

1). The behavioral aspect of attitude towards English language learning with the responses regarding the behavioral aspect of attitude toward English were low and the mean score was 2.43 and the standard deviation was 0.51, which means that the participants showed negative behavioral attitude. This negative attitude could be explained and proved by the fact that they do not have extra English classes ( $\bar{x} = 1.91$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) and most of them preferred other subject rather than English ( $\bar{x}$

= 2.21, SD = 0.29); they do not practice their English regularly even if they were encouraged by the teacher. The majority of them agreed that they do not pay any attention when the teacher is explaining the lesson ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.39, SD = 0.76) and never participated in the class ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.42, SD = 0.73). Furthermore, they do not study and review the lesson-learned before and after class. In addition, they are not enthusiastic to come to class when English is being taught ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.43, SD = 0.76). These responses indicated that the participants hold a negative behavioral attitude toward English language learning as showed on the table 1

2). The cognitive aspect of attitude towards English language learning with the total mean score of the responses regarding the cognitive aspect of attitude toward English was 2.47 with the standard deviation was 0.66. The result indicated that the respondents have a negative attitude toward cognitive attitude even if they believed that English will help them have better job opportunities ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.88, SD = 0.92) and will help them use the modern technology effectively ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.16, SD = 0.78). This negative cognitive attitude can be described by the following statements: a large number of the respondents thought that English language is difficult and complicated to learn ( $\bar{x}$  = 1.94, SD = 0.71). Most importantly, they approved that they cannot apply what they have learned from English subject in their real lives. Unfortunately, they study English just to pass the exam ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.46, SD = 0.78) and it is because it is only in the curriculum ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.46, SD = 0.72) as showed on the table 2

3.3 The affective aspect of attitude toward English language learning with the affective aspect of attitude towards English learning was 2.27 and the standard deviation was 0.63. The finding revealed that the participants have a negative emotional attitude. This could be proved by the fact of they are worried and anxious every time they have to speak English ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.01, SD = 0.77), and they are afraid people laughing at them ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.06, SD = 0.81). Furthermore, they feel embarrassed to speak in front of others ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.19, SD = 0.76). In addition, they agreed that they have no interest in English class ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.37, SD = 0.95) and they are not happy when they learn English ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.38, SD = 0.66). Moreover, they thought that studying English

is not fun ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.41, SD = 0.77) and they are bored when learning English ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.47, SD = 0.81). These responses indicated that the respondents hold a negative emotional attitude towards English learning as showed on the table 3

3.4 The overall attitudes toward English language learning with the result of descriptive analysis reveals that the overall mean score of three aspects of attitude among the participants was 2.39 and the standard deviation was 0.57. This finding pointed that the respondents have a negative attitude towards English language learning. In addition, the mean score of the three aspects of attitudes are different. As seen in the table, the cognitive aspect of attitude got the highest mean score of attitude with the mean score was 2.47 and standard deviation was 0.66. Follow by the behavioral aspect of attitude with the mean score was 2.43 and standard deviation was 0.51, while the emotional aspect of attitudes represented the lowest mean score 2.27 with the standard deviation was 0.57. To conclude, the total mean score of attitudes of the students at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University was slightly low, which can be told that the students hold a negative attitude towards English learning and most of them affirmed that they are worried and anxious when they have to speak English. Also, the majority of them agreed that they have no interest in English class and they feel bored when learning English. Furthermore, a large number of them are not aware of its importance and they just learn as it is a compulsory subject and just to pass the exam. In addition, they believed that learning English is difficult and complicated as showed on the table 4

3.5 The attitudes toward English language learning regarding the fields of study with the indicates that the mean score of attitudes among the English pedagogy was 2.95 (SD = 0.53); the mean score of attitudes among physical pedagogy was 2.47 (SD = 0.64); the mean score of attitudes among political pedagogy was 2.37 (SD = 0.49); the mean score of attitudes among mathematical pedagogy was 2.36 (SD = 0.52) and the mean score of attitudes among Lao pedagogy was 2.15 (SD = 0.42) while the mean score of attitudes among chemical pedagogy was 2.08 (SD = 0.46) which represents the lowest. Regarding to the result, It is pretty clear that English pedagogy indicated high attitudes toward English language learning compared to others and it

is the only one that held a positive towards learning as showed on the table 5

### 3.2 The comparing participants' attitudes towards English language learning

However, to investigate the probability of differences in attitudes of the students regarding their fields of study, One-Way ANOVA test was employed and the result is presented in the table below (table 6)

Table 6 shows the result of the test of homogeneity of variances and it displayed that the p-value (Sig.) was 0.036. Thus, the assumption of equal variances is not met because p-value is less than the Alpha level (0.05).

Result of One-Way ANOVA test as showed on table 7 indicates that there was a difference in attitudes among the students from six fields of study ( $F = 5.008$ , Sig. =  $0.000 < 0.01$ ).

So, it is concluded that there is statistically significant difference in students' attitudes towards English language learning regarding their field of study. In addition, the analysis of Multiple Comparison was utilized to determine which groups are statistically different and it is shown in the following table (table 8).

Table 8 reveals that the statistical differences were significant between English pedagogy, Lao pedagogy and Chemical pedagogy since p-value (Sig.) was less than Alpha level. The mean difference between English pedagogy and Lao pedagogy was 0.79 ( $p = 0.011 < 0.05$ ) and between English pedagogy and chemical pedagogy was 0.86 ( $p = 0.002 < 0.01$ ). Moreover, the results of Scheffe test also indicates that there were no any statistical differences among political pedagogy, physical pedagogy and mathematical pedagogy since p-value was higher than Alpha level. However, the findings demonstrates that English pedagogy held the highest attitude among the participants from six majoring and it is the only one that had a positive toward English language learning.

## 4. Discussion

The purposes of the research were to evaluate the learners' attitudes towards English language learning at Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University and to explore the students' attitudes towards English language learning regarding their academic fields of study. The research instrument was a set of questionnaire and the data was analyzed

through program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24.0. The descriptive statistics was employed to determine the mean score and the standard division of the data in order to describe the level of the students' attitudes. In addition, dependent sample One-Way ANOVA was utilized to compare the attitudes of the students, regarding the fields of study.

Concerning the first research objective "What are the students' attitude towards English language learning?", the results of descriptive analysis revealed that the overall attitudes among the 90 randomly selected respondents was 2.39 and the standard deviation was 0.57. This finding indicated that the participants hold a negative attitude toward English language learning regarding three aspects of attitudes which are in line with Dr. Mohamad Jafre and Zainol Abidin (2012) showed that 180 participants in the three specializations of Basic Sciences, Life Sciences, and Social Sciences held negative attitudes towards learning English and it also reported that the reason of such a negative attitude might have been a result from the instructional and traditional techniques used by some of the English teachers. In the same way, Shameem Ahmed (2015) revealed that 238 undergraduate EFL students at a public university in Malaysia had negative feelings or fear which was a reaction to classroom instructions, domains of usage and learning skills.

Regarding the second research objective "Is there any statistically significant differences in attitudes toward English language learning?", the result of dependent sample One-Way ANOVA presented that there is statistically significant difference in students' attitudes towards English language learning regarding their field of study because p-value was less than Alpha level ( $F = 4.172$ , Sig. =  $0.002 < 0.01$ ). Based on the result in table 5, it showed that English major students have the highest attitudes among the participants and it is the only one that hold positive attitude toward English language learning ( $\bar{x} = 2.88$ , Std. = 0.57). The results are consistent with Dr. Mohamad and Jafre Zainol Abidin (2012) reported that there was statistically significant attitudinal difference regarding fields of study. This finding pointed out that the differences in attitudes might be influenced by the content of the curriculum and the nature of these specializations. Likewise, Shameem Ahmed

(2015) concluded that the students' attitudes toward learning English regarding fields of study were varied. This result might be in terms of the belief of using English and focus of learning skills which showed that a single curriculum or teaching methodology was not adequate.

## 5. Conclusion

The result of this study demonstrated that the students' attitudes towards English language learning at the Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University were "low attitude", and become important information for the lecturers applied different approaches and method to deal with students who were a low attitude toward English learning. It appears that they made the content of the lesson and related activities interesting, up-to-date and relevant to the context.

In addition, on the regarding to the findings, some recommendations are presented as following:

### 5.1 Application

1) **For students:** According to the obviously negative result, the students are suggested to:

- Deepen their perception about how important the English is.
- learn with the purpose of using it in future career and learn with good emotions.
- pay attention when the lessons are being explained.
- review lesson-learned and practice it day by day, so that they can be proficient in English
- not to be worried and anxious about making a mistake and get out of fear of people laughing.

2) **For teacher:** Regarding the negative results of attitude towards English language learning, the English teachers are recommended to:

- create an encouraging atmosphere in the English classes to promote the students' positive attitudes towards English
- motivate the students to learn English by underlining its importance.
- teach English, focusing on whatever approach that encourages learners to collaborate and discuss their experiences and other issues regarding language learning. This can increase their attitudes, enthusiasm and motivation to acquire the language.

Moreover, the curriculum makers should review the content and the design the curriculum based on the students' needs and the interests and

they should always be aware of differences in attitudes toward learning regarding specializations.

## 5.2 To further study

The researcher invites to conduct more research in the field of learners' attitudes towards language learning and they are recommended to:

- apply many different research instruments to collect the data from the participants.
- use more participants, so that the finding might be much clearer.

## 6. Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript.

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### Appendixes

**Table 1: The behavioral aspect of attitude**

No.	Statements	Students' attitudes		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Explanation
1	English is one of my favorite subjects.	2.48	0.75	Disagree
2	I was encouraged by my English teacher to speak English.	2.97	0.63	Agree
3	I practice my English day by day.	2.27	0.73	Disagree

**Table 1: The behavioral aspect of attitude (Continue)**

No.	Statements	Students' attitudes		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Explanation
4	I have extra English classes.	1.91	0.89	Disagree
5	I study and review the lesson-learned before and after class.	2.44	0.67	Disagree
6	I prefer to focus on other subjects rather than English	2.21	0.92	Agree
7	I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	2.39	0.76	Agree
8	I have never participated in class.	2.42	0.73	Agree
9	When I miss class, I never ask my friends or teachers for what has been taught.	2.79	0.61	Disagree
10	I am not enthusiastic to come to class when the English is being thought.	2.43	0.76	Agree
Total		2.43	0.51	Low

**Table 2: The cognitive aspect of attitude**

No.	Statements	Students' attitudes		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Explanation
11	Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	2.53	1.02	Agree
12	English will help me have better job opportunities.	2.88	0.92	Agree
13	Studying English is an important goal in my life.	2.30	0.90	Disagree
14	English is more interesting than other subjects.	2.44	0.79	Disagree
15	Being good at English will help me use modern technology effectively.	3.16	0.78	Agree
16	I cannot apply any English knowledget in my real life.	2.32	0.76	Agree
17	To be honest, I study English just to pass the exams.	2.46	0.78	Agree
18	I am not going to use English in the future.	2.21	0.99	Agree
19	In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.	1.94	0.71	Agree
20	I study English because it is in the curriculum	2.46	0.72	Agree
Total		2.47	0.66	Low

**Table 3: The affective aspect of attitude**

No.	Statements	Students' attitudes		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Explanation



21	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	2.40	0.82	Disagree
22	Studying English is fun.	2.41	0.77	Disagree
23	I feel happy when I learn English.	2.38	0.66	Disagree
24	I am interested in learning English	2.38	0.97	Disagree
25	I look forward to the time I study in English class.	2.12	0.75	Disagree
26	I feel bored when studying English.	2.47	0.81	Agree
27	I am worried and anxious when I have to speak English in class.	2.01	0.77	Agree
28	To tell the truth, I really have no interest in my English class.	2.37	0.95	Agree
29	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.	2.19	0.76	Agree
30	I'm afraid people will laugh at me if I make mistakes.	2.06	0.81	Agree

**Table 4: The students' attitudes toward English language learning**

No.	Aspects of attitudes	Students' attitudes			
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Explanation	Range
1	Behavioral aspect of attitude	2.43	0.51	Low	2
2	Cognitive aspect of attitude	2.47	0.66	Low	1
3	Emotional aspect of attitude	2.27	0.63	Low	3
Total		2.39	0.57	Low	

**Table 5: Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Attitudes			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.510	5	84	.036

**Table 6: The students' attitudes toward English regarding fields of study**

No.	Aspects of attitudes	Students' attitudes				
		N	$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation	Level of Attitudes	Range
1	Lao Pedagogy	13	2.15	0.42	Low	5
2	English Pedagogy	14	2.95	0.53	High	1
3	Political Pedagogy	17	2.37	0.49	Low	3
4	Mathematical Pedagogy	15	2.36	0.52	Low	4
5	Physical Pedagogy	15	2.47	0.64	Low	2
6	Chemical Pedagogy	16	2.08	0.46	Low	6

**Table 7: Result of One-Way ANOVA test**

Attitudes	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Between Groups	6.684	5	1.337	5.008	0.000
	Within Groups	22.420	84	0.267		
	Total	29.103	89			

**Table 8: Result of Multiple Comparisons Test**

Dependent Variances: Total Scheffe				
(I) Majoring		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Lao	English	-.79396*	0.19899	0.011
	Politics	-0.22127	0.19034	0.928
	Math	-0.20872	0.19577	0.950
	Physic	-0.32205	0.19577	0.744
	Chemistry	0.06795	0.19290	1.000
English	Lao	.79396*	0.19899	0.011
	Politics	0.57269	0.18645	0.105
	Math	0.58524	0.19198	0.110
	Physic	0.47190	0.19198	0.312
	Chemistry	.86190*	0.18907	0.002
Politics	Lao	0.22127	0.19034	0.928

**Table 8: Result of Multiple Comparisons Test (continue)**

(I) Majoring		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Politics	English	-0.57269	0.18645	0.105
	Math	0.01255	0.18301	1.000
	Physic	-0.10078	0.18301	0.997
	Chemistry	0.28922	0.17995	0.763
	Politics	-0.28922	0.17995	0.763
	Math	-0.27667	0.18567	0.816
	Physic	-0.39000	0.18567	0.497
Dependent Variances: Total Scheffe				
(I) Majoring		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Math	Lao	0.20872	0.19577	0.950
	English	-0.58524	0.19198	0.110
	Politics	-0.01255	0.18301	1.000
	Physic	-0.11333	0.18864	0.996
	Chemistry	0.27667	0.18567	0.816
	Lao	0.32205	0.19577	0.744
Physic	English	-0.47190	0.19198	0.312
	Politics	0.10078	0.18301	0.997
	Math	0.11333	0.18864	0.996
	Chemistry	0.39000	0.18567	0.497
Chemistry	Lao	-0.06795	0.19290	1.000
	English	-.86190*	0.18907	0.002
	Politics	-0.28922	0.17995	0.763
	Math	-0.27667	0.18567	0.816
	Physic	-0.39000	0.18567	0.497

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.