

# An Analysis of Career and Pathway Planning Students' Beliefs Regarding Language Training Programs

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## Abstract

The study was to explore and predict the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in Continuing Education (ACE). The research theoretical was based on the scholar of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to define the most effective component to that influenced the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education. This research study used two questionnaire instruments.

Based on 260 valid samples, the main findings were as follows:

- TPB successfully predicted the nature of the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students who intend to attend language training programs in continuing education.
- The results of this study showed that there was positive significance for the career and pathway planning students regarding their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.
- The strongest element to predict the behavioral intention in this research study was attitude. The Pearson correlation coefficient measured that the attitude did increased the significance level of  $p < .05$ , indicating a strong relationship between the attitude and the behavioral intention.
- The second strongest element to predict the behavioral intention in this study was perceived behavioral control. The Pearson correlation coefficient measured that the perceived behavioral control did reached the significance level of  $p < .05$  and showed a strong relationship between the perceived behavioral control and the behavioral intention.
- The third element in this research study to predict the behavioral intention was subjective norm. Although there was a correlation between the subjective norm and the behavioral intention, it did not increase statistical significance. The results showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient of the subjective norms did not reach the significance level  $p < .05$ .

**Keywords**— Behavior Intention, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavior Control. Career.

## I. Introduction

Career and pathway planning students go to school from elementary school to junior high school, to high school, then to the university, perhaps, then on to work. Straight line education means people need to acquire a level

of knowledge first, then work in the job market (Hsia, 2001). According to Wang (Hsia, 2001), the straight line education has three main negative aspects that act as barriers to continuing Education. First, it narrows a career and pathway planning students' learning opportunity. Second, what one has learned in

straight line education is not necessarily at all applicable in the workplace. Third, it is inflexible regarding career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in Continuing Education.

After working for many years, career and pathway planning students may find that they definitely need some additional knowledge or other skills. Typically, they begin to inquire into career and pathway planning students in order to enhance their professional knowledge or to sharpen their skills. Continuing education is sponsored by private or public institutions and provides learning opportunities to career and pathway planning students over age 18. It offers full or part-time learning. Career and pathway planning students may be self-motivated or under direction from the employer to acquire more knowledge and skills (Hussen & Postlethwaite, 1985). According to Jarvis (1995), continuing education provides flexible time for working people to take care of both work and learning. Working people can go to school Saturday and Sunday or take evening class from Monday through Friday, and choose the subjects that they want to learn or improve on in order to meet their needs in their practical life or workplace (Hsieh, 2001). Through enrolling in continuing education programs, career and pathway planning students can enhance their abilities for work and be more enabled to deal with job stresses as well as to develop their careers for the future.

In most organizations, to help their company grow, employers encourage their employees to learn a second language. Every career and pathway planning student is looking for a real and worthwhile learning experience that can make his or her life better (Inman, 1987). Therefore, continuing education language training programs are popular for career and pathway planning students to attend. The two most popular languages in career and pathway planning students are English and Japanese (Lee, 2002). Career and pathway planning students expect their instructors to know and understand their life experiences, so that their learning can be more useful and contribute to their career development.

In America and in Europe countries, more and more people realize that foreign language skills are important because many interdependent global marketplaces have emerged (Bourgoin, 1978). The western professionals realize that cultural sensitivity and fluency in foreign language are essentially important, if western countries are participating effectively in the communities or if we expect competition and cooperation to increase (Voght & Schaub, 1992).

### *Foreign Language and Career Development*

The world situation is a new competitive framework that requires employees to have essential “hard” and “soft” skills, such as technical skills and interpersonal and communication skills (Carnevale, 1991). The new competitive framework also has made foreign language training an essential career skill for business and industry (Rodamar, 1991). It has become important for many employees to understand and know the culture, history, politics, and economic systems of a variety of countries (Rhinesmith, 1992).

Combining business skills and foreign languages abilities will help all career and pathway planning students market their skills and become popular in the job market (Burgin, 1978). However, while applicants who have foreign language abilities and some basic business skills have a clear advantage when they apply for a job, owing to a major increase in bilingualism, companies can be more selective than ever (Burgin, 1978).

## **II. Statement of the Problem**

After Taiwan joined the WTO, the Taiwanese government encouraged the entire citizenry to learn foreign languages in order to acquire a more global world view and increase the country's economic growth. Also, more skill in foreign language ability would increase productivity in industries and businesses and increase Taiwan's competitive edge in overseas markets. Thus, foreign language skills are extremely important in the economy.

It is clear that economy is growing fast and its society is changing rapidly. Seeking continuing education has become even more important in order to increase workplace skills, further career development, and enrich life goals. The question, then, is, what is the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students regarding going back to school in a language training program.

### III. Significance of the Study

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) used to explore career and pathway planning students' intention behavior and the correlations among attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control elements affecting their intention to attend a language-training program. This study will focus on the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students. Results will provide information regarding career development for career and pathway planning students in order for them to fulfill their life goals. It will also provide information for educational institutions and the Taiwanese Ministry of Education to understand possible intentions for future career and pathway planning students and their development of foreign language skills.

### IV. Purpose of the Study

This research purpose is to explore career and pathway planning students' behavioral intention to attend language-training programs in continuing education. The study will use the three aspects of TPB, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in order to explain the behavioral intention behind career and pathway planning students desire to participate in continuing education in foreign language study.

### V. Research Questions

1. Behavioral control of non-traditional students' associates with behavioral intention to

attend language training in continuing education?

2. How is gender correlated with the attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of career and pathway planning students regarding their intention to attend language training in continuing education?

### VI. Theoretical Framework

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), was used as the conceptual framework of this research study. According to TRA, every individual's intentions to be involved in his or her behaviors are a function of his or her attitude toward that behavior; also subjective norms influence that behavior as well. The TRA contends that individuals are rational. Rational individuals have control over their own behavior, and look for, use, and process all available information before they undertake practical actions (cue & Koballa, 1994).

According to the TPB, behavior is determined by intention to perform the action.

Behavioral intention is determined by three factors: (1) attitude toward the behavior; (2) subjective norms; and (3) perceived behavioral control over the action. These three factors are determinants of behavioral intentions, which allow for predictions about behavior. Willingness to act is a function of behavioral intent. Many career and pathway planning students believe that if they seek language training, they can then enhance their career development.

Global Economy: Regarding the Taiwanese Need of a Foreign Language Career Development

After Taiwan joined the WTO, many businesses and organizations' globalization activities began to develop quickly. Foreign language, especially English, has become an important communication tool used to participate in international businesses and organizations (Hsieh, 2002). The European Union is planning

to promote the concept that Europeans need to learn to speak a third language. Recently, Japan also tried to make their official language English (Wu, 2002). Compared with these countries, Taiwan still needs to promote English learning to raise Taiwanese citizens to an international viewpoint and to extend business overseas (Lee, 2002). Based on Chu's (2002) inference, worldwide, one third of people currently live in English-speaking environments. By 2050, globally, one half of the population will speak the English language, and 85% of international organizations and countries will have their official language as English.

Kerka (1993) investigation demonstrated that foreign language ability has become the most important indication for personal income. Whether or not people are employed in international or overseas companies is influenced by the global economy. In the new global economy, every nation is not just competing with other nation's economic systems, but also with each other's educational systems, as well as each nation's research, and developmental progress.

According to Weatherford (1986), acquisition of a foreign language becomes an important part of the basic preparation needed to enhance people's careers. Although learning a foreign language cannot guarantee graduate students a first job, many human resource job reports show that having foreign language skills or ability can often enhance career mobility and improve one's possibility for promotion.

Recent trends in the job marketplace indicate that the value of general language training in an employee's career preparation is receiving revived recognition (Weatherford, 1986). In career and pathway planning students' regarding continuing education language training programs, the courses focus heavily on business management as well as the psychological aspects of learning. In continuing education career and pathway planning students often possess outstanding communication skills and this helps them to develop both written and oral abilities.

Yu (2002) described that, now, every country's economy is tied to other countries' economies, which has changed the international business community. This phenomenon of the world economy means that: "people are increasingly communicating across cultures" (Harris and Moran, 1996, p. 18). Overseas companies participate in many international business arrangements, such as licensing agreements, management contracts, and export and import agreements (Yu, 2002).

The global economy, international interactions are increasing. The English language can link two sides, as in tourism and the travel agency business. The English language is an extremely useful skill in every country (Warschauer, 2000). In international business, the English language is the most important communication instrument.

#### Language Learning Intention and Motivation in Taiwan

Huang (2001) argued that exploring Taiwan students' language learning intention and motivation could illuminate their needs for their work and their lives. Then, with this information, we could stimulate these career and pathway planning students' language learning intention and career development. For example, if a person is working for an international business company, then he or she will attend language training in continuing education with a positive attitude. It is likely that his or her company will ask all of their employees to improve their foreign language ability, because international markets will require more foreign language skills from employees. At the beginning, these employees' behavioral intention might be negative toward acquiring foreign language training. They realize that to learn a foreign language is not easy, so career and pathway planning students' likely they would be anxious about attending such language training in continuing education.

If a company's staff intend to attend language training and it is for an important reason, then these career and pathway planning behavioral intention would be stronger than who do not have an important reason to attend language

training (Hsieh, 2002). Career and pathway planning students believe that attending language learning is important for the future development. Career and pathway students do not believe that attending language training in the continuing education can enhance their future development, this affect their behavioral intention would not be strong to attend language training program.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that career and pathway students' intentions are influenced by two motivations to foreign language training in continuing education: First, integrative motivation: when these career and pathway students' consider foreign language learning and are interested in diverse cultures or societies as a value, then career and pathway students' approach foreign language training with the intention to harmoniously take part in the diverse cultures or societies. Second, instrumental motivation: career and pathway students' want to learn a foreign language because foreign language learning can enable them to do other useful things.

In most college level language training classes, writing means the individual's intellectual, linguistic, and vocabulary resources are used to create original thought by themselves, rather than using other career and pathway students' people's words or materials to make difficult sentences and stories (Hudelson, 1988). Attending language training's writing classes for career and pathway students' is a socio-cultural development process (Lu, 2000). In writing training, career and pathway students' can express their ideas and thoughts to communicate with other people outside the classroom (Song, 2002). According to Lee (as cited in Song, 2002), in contrast with other language training, such as listening, speaking, and reading, English writing training allows for more contemplation and reflection by career and pathway students' but also is the most complex part of a language training program in continuing education. Now, more and more colleges in Taiwan have designed their curricula to teach English language as a general subject and it is a required course in any major, a regulation of the Ministry of Education since

1995. The goals of the English language training courses are to improve career and pathway students' professional English abilities, in speaking, reading, writing and listening, business English, and practical English usage (Chen, 2002).

Continuing education department/ career and pathway students'. Many career and pathway students choose to go back to school to finish their college degree. These career and pathway students' include working people, children's teachers, housekeepers, businessmen, and employees. They might not have majored in foreign language before, but this time they major in a foreign language to facilitate career development and enhance career possibilities. Career and foreign language training combine to contribute to both the business and foreign language education professions significantly, because it is also a critical need in both disciplines to conduct global interactions successfully (Inman, 1987).

### Social Psychology

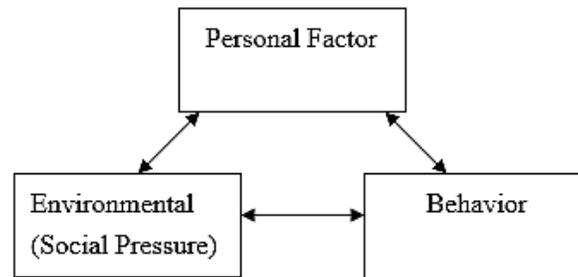
Behaviorism is one of the theories of social psychology. It is designed to examine types of association of causal influences in order to understand how environmental factors function, to discover and describe causal regularities, and to predict how the individual's behavior will change when the environment changes (Rey, 1997). One of the most famous behaviorists of the last several decades is Albert Bandura. In his research, Bandura introduced two important concepts, which are social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. These can explain human behavior, social factors, and personal factors (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) focused on how adults conduct their social experiences and how these social experience affects their behavior and development. Bandura's work has stimulated enormous research on learning and behavior.

### Self-Cognition Theory

Bandura developed the social cognitive theory in early 1960s. This theory began in the major concepts of social psychology are social perception, attitudes and attitude change, and group influence. The self-cognition theoretical

perspective that considers human action is looked at as a product of a dynamic interaction of three factors; (1) personal factors in the

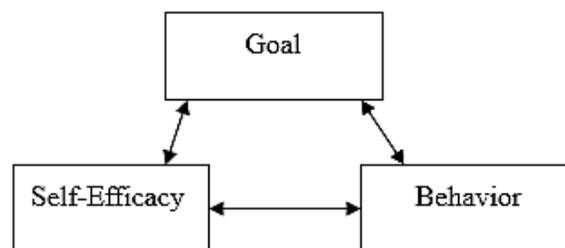
construct of cognition, affect and biological events, (2) behavior, and (3) environmental influences (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1991).



**Figure 1. Structure of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977)**

In social cognitive theory, environments and social systems affect an individual's behavior through psychological influences on the person. Therefore, in this theory it is assumed that human behavior is not directly affected by factors such as socioeconomic status, economic condition, family and educational structures. On the other hand, these factors do affect behavior to the degree that they affect the

individual's self-efficacy, individual standards, feelings, and aspirations. The social cognitive theory was developed from Bandura's behaviorist and learning theories used to research human behavior. Social cognitive theory can guide us to have a better understanding of human behavior and constructive influence on psychological thinking as we enter the new century.



**Figure 2. Structure of the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1982)**

### Self- Efficacy

According to Bandura (1977), if an individual believes a positive action will produce a positive outcome but is not sure about his or her ability to achieve those actions, then the individual has less confidence in his or her ability and would have behavioral intention to accomplish the outcome. Therefore, the individual's feelings of self-efficacy affect the individual more than their expectation of outcome. The individual's belief strength will determine his or her ability to attempt a difficult situation (Bandura, 1977).

In Bandura's opinion, self-efficacy belief enhances an individual's performance and well-being in many ways. Self-efficacy beliefs influence the decisions that an individual makes and the courses of action that the individual pursues (Bandura, 1977).

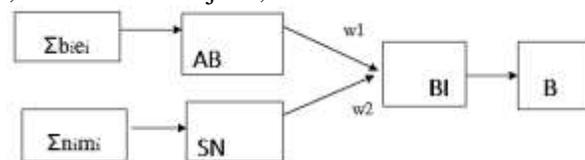
The theory of self-efficacy beliefs also explains the level of effort the individual will spend on an action, how long the individual will persist when faced with barriers, and how resilient they will be in the face of an unfavorable situation. The higher the sense of self-efficacy, the greater

the effort, persistence and resilience is (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy also affects an individual in their thought and in an emotional sense. If an individual has a high degree of self-efficacy, this then helps that individual to produce a measure of calm in approach to difficult tasks and activities (Bandura, 1986). Otherwise, if an individual has a low degree of self-efficacy, then the individual may believe that things are much harder to perform than the real situation requires. Low self-efficacy includes anxiety, a narrow point of view, depression, and the stress of how to solve the problem in the best way (Bandura, 1986). As a result, self-efficacy beliefs can affect the level at which the individual ultimately performs. The function of self-beliefs also produces a type of self-fulfilling prophecy that one accomplishes what one believes one can accomplish (Bandura, 1986).

#### Foundation of The Theory of Reasoned Action

Career and pathway planning students' attendance in education is a human social behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein determined behavioral intention as a framework to predict the primary motivation of human behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Fishbein & Ajzen,



**Figure 4. The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein,1980)**

#### *Determinants of Intention*

Randall (1989) explains that the theory of reasoned action (TRA) was developed originally to express that an individual's behavior is determined by intentions. Also TRA attempts to explain how to interpret career and pathway planning students' learning beliefs toward intentions, which basically can affect an individual's actual behavior. For example, people will develop their own beliefs and evaluate these beliefs when they apply them to

1980). The theory of reasoned action explains the personal processes of decision-making. Therefore, it is appropriate to use a behavioral theory to investigate career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in counting education.

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) equation for predicting an intention is

$$B \sim BI = w1 AB + w2 SN$$

Figure 3. Equation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980)

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) explained "Behavioral Intention" (BI) as reflecting the will of the individual's "Behavior" (B). BI was developed by two structures: (1). Attitude Toward the Behavior (AB); and (2) Subjective Norm (SN). The w1 and w2 (Figure 4., below) connect attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms in terms of weight. This model illustrates that the weight of the attitude toward the behavior and the order of the normative components reflect the important relation to the individual to determine behavioral intention. Otherwise, w1 and w2 are confirmed analyses that standardize multiple regression coefficients.

a new situation or activity (Randall, 1989). In both the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior, behavior is the result of intentions. Intentions, as described by these two theories, designate an individual's attitudes toward the behavior in a given situation and also the individual's subjective norms. Attitudes are the result of the expectation that the behavior will produce a specific outcome. The subjective norms are a combination of an individual's beliefs of how others regard the anticipated

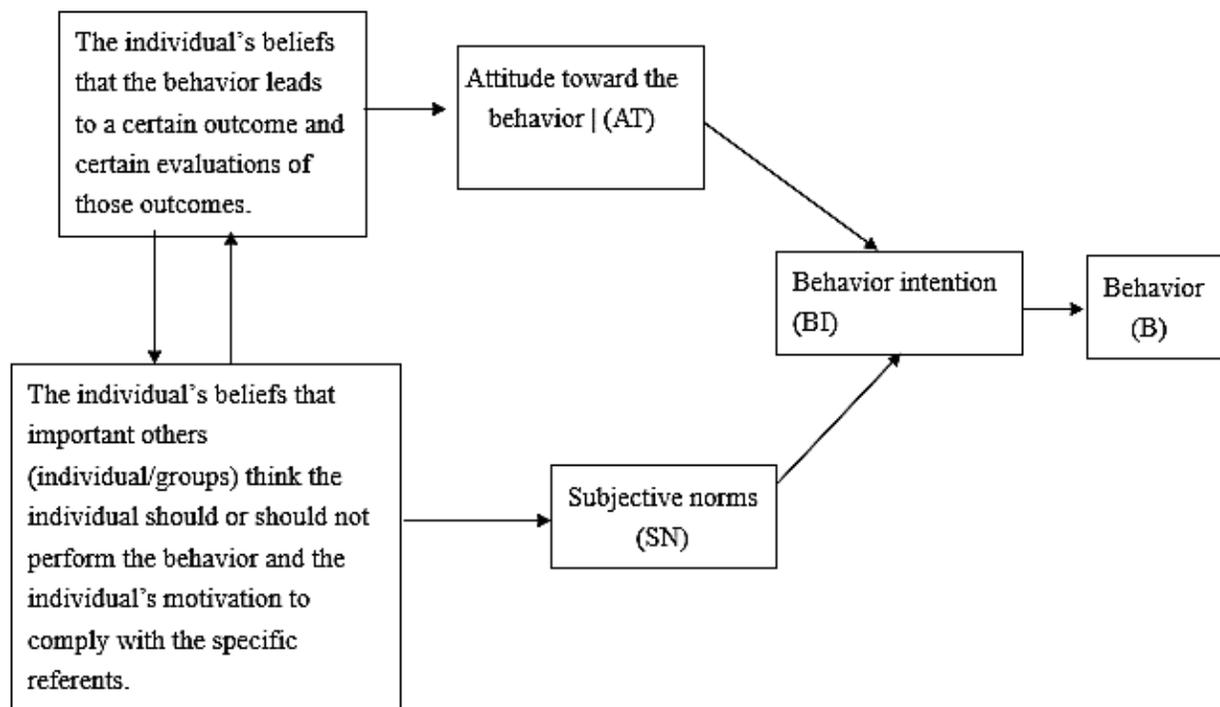
behavior and the value of these norms to predict the individual's decision.

Attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms may vary from one individual to another and one behavior to another. In general, the individual will try to perform a behavior when they evaluate it positively and also regard it to be important or because others think they should perform it. In addition, it is important to ensure that the measure of intention and the measure of the attitudinal and normative components correspond to each other.

Intention describes why individuals have a positive attitude and their relation to subjective norms. Attitude toward the behaviors are a function of beliefs in the TRA, and these beliefs underlie an individual's attitude toward the

behavior – thus called “behavioral beliefs”. That is, the subjective norm means that specific individuals' or groups' opinions regarding the individual's behavior influences whether or not the individual will perform that behavior. The beliefs underlying an individual's subjective norms are called normative beliefs. Normative beliefs mean underlying societal beliefs, nominally unstated, regarding specific behaviors, that is, social pressure.

The TRA posits that the key to predicting behavior begins with intentions and intentions are formed by attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Also both behavioral and normative beliefs are the ultimate source of those attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms.



**Figure 5. Explanation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980)**

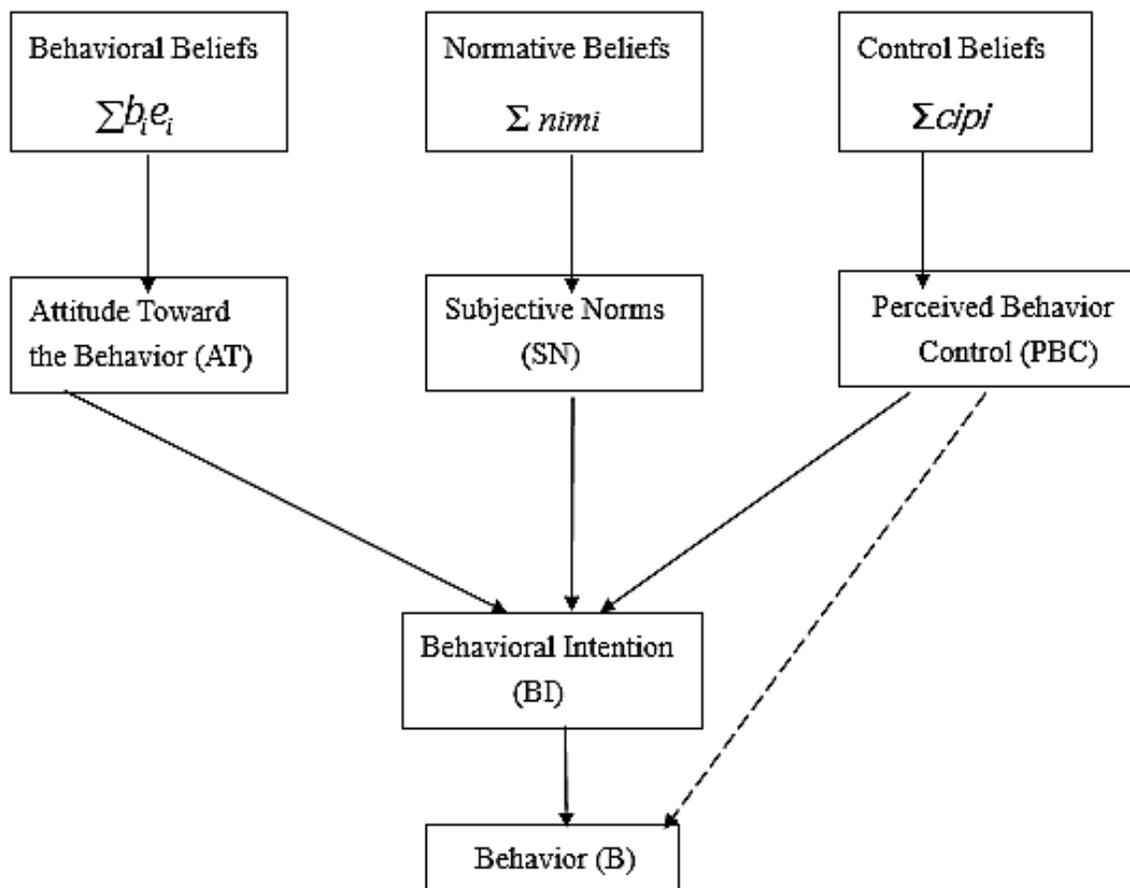
These situations can all be successfully predicted according to the theory of reasoned action (TRA). In the theory of reasoned action, there have been conflicting results as to whether attitude toward the behaviors directly affect intentions by behavior, as Bagozzi (1981) predicted in the theory, or more indirectly.

After several studies in different areas, the relationship among attitudes, beliefs and behavioral intentions were substantiated by the TRA and the results can be successfully used to explain the relationships of the theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

### Foundation of The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

According to Tasi (2001) these aspects included the field of health, for example, smoking, alcohol abuse, blood donation, weight control, dietary behavior, regular exercise, sexual behavior, AIDS prevention, and breast examination. Also discussed are examples in society and the field of learning behavior, such as voting, academic performance, and disobedient behavior. TPB also deals with the psychological processes involved in various

theoretical frameworks (Ajzen, 1985, 1987). How does an individual perform a given behavior from their behavioral intention? This can explain how hard people want to try and to achieve and how much effort they are planning to employ in a given behavior. As expected, if the behavioral intention to do the behavior is stronger, then the result is more performance. If the behavioral intention to do the behavior is weaker, then the result is less performance (Ajzen, 1991). These two explanations tell us that an individual's behavioral intention could be expressed in their own behavior.



**Figure 6. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980)**

In the theory of planned behavior, it is assumed that if the individual is positive towards the behavior, if he or she feels pressure from society regarding it, and he or she also has control over the behavior, then the individual will adopt the behavioral intention more strongly. If the

perceived behavior is not completely under control by the individual, PBC will directly influence the behavior. If this situation happens, then the individual needs to consider perceived barriers and facilitative conditions

and perceived effectiveness (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

#### Determinants of Intention

Model of the theory of planned behavior:

$$B \sim BI = w_1 AB + w_2 SN + w_3 PBC$$

Figure 7. Equation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980)

There are four determinants in the theory of planned behavior of an individual's intent to perform a positive behavior.

#### Behavioral Intention (BI):

This is an indication of how much an individual is willing to try and of how much effort they are planning to exert in order to perform a behavior. Every factor could affect behavior, even though behavioral intention affects behavior performance indirectly. If the individual reflects a willingness to do a specific action behavior, then whether or not the individual adopts such behaviors directly affects behavioral intention.

#### (1) Attitude Toward the Behavior (AB)

This attitude toward the behavior depends on an individual's belief toward a specific behavior – is it positive or negative? These beliefs are called behavioral beliefs. When a person evaluates a situation positively then he or she will intend to perform a certain behavior. Behavioral intention is linked with subjective norm and perceived behavioral control is also directly affected by attitudes toward the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975).

The influential factors in attitude toward the behavior are past experience, reception of information, and social influence. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), if the individual holds a favorable attitude toward the behavior and the individual believes in the performance behavior, then, in general, they will get a positive result. On the other hand, if the individual does not believe he or she can carry out a positive performance of the behavior, and does not believe in the quality of the outcome of the performance of the behavior, then he or she

will not get a positive result (Mykytyn & Harrison, 1993).

#### Attitudinal Equation:

$$AB = \sum b_i e_i$$

Figure 8. Ajzen, 2001

For example, if career and pathway planning students believe that to attend language training could enhance their career development or could enhance their career possibilities ( $b_i$  High), and the career development or career possibilities have a high importance to these career and pathway planning students ( $e_i$  High), then this means that career and pathway planning students will have a positive attitude toward the behavior.

#### (2) Subjective Norms (SN)

In the theory of planned behavior, a factor that affects behavioral intention is subjective norm. Subjective norm means when the individual performs a behavior, they get either positive or negative pressure from society. That means that when we predict the individual's behavior, subjective norms could influence the individual's decision to adopt a specific behavior. Underlying the subjective norms belief system are normative beliefs (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

In the theory of planned behavior, subjective norms are a function of beliefs that people accept or do not accept about performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1988). Motivation to comply means when the individual adopts a specific behavior because relevant others (individuals or groups) influence the individual's will and expectations. On the other hand, subjective norm means these important others can influence the individual and the kind of behavior the individual should adopt. Therefore, subjective norms are influenced by the others (individuals or groups) opinions about whether the individual should adopt a behavior (normative belief) and the individual's will to comply (Ajzen, 1989). When the pressure of society is high or the will to comply is high, then the subjective norm and the behavioral intention increase. When the pressure of society is low or

the will to comply is low, then the subjective norm and the behavioral intention decrease (Ajzen, 1988).

Subjective Norms Equation:

$$SN = \sum ni mi$$

Figure 9. Ajzen, 2001

For example, if career and pathway planning students believe that their company expects them to have language training ( $ni$ ), and if career and pathway planning students' are willing to comply ( $mi$ ), then the subjective norm will have a strong and positive influence on career and pathway planning students' behavior.

### (3) Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Perceived behavioral control in the theory of planned behavior is defined as whether an individual's belief will be an easy or difficult behavior to perform (Ajzen, 1985, 1988, 1989; Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Perceived behavioral control of an individual's perception means that they have the ability and resources needed to perform the behavior. For example, why does one want to buy a house or why does one want to buy a computer? In the theory of planned behavior, perceived behavioral control refers to the individuals' feeling that performance and non-performance of the behavior is in question and under their volitional control.

The measure of the perceived behavioral control is control belief. Control belief is the individual's need for opportunity and information control level. In other words, this is the individual's cognition of how much information and the number of opportunities or barriers he or she could have. Therefore, perceived behavioral control is influenced by the individual's adoptive behavioral needs of opportunity and information.

Perceived Behavioral Control Equation:

$$PBC = \sum ci pi$$

Figure 10. Ajzen, 2001.

In a normal situation, if the behavior of the individual's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm are more positive, then the

individual's behavioral intention is stronger. This is relative to the basic assumption of the theory of reasoned action. Ajzen (1991) theory explained that an individual's behavioral intention control is continuous, one side is completely perceived to be controlled by the behavior; the other side is not completely under control by the perceived behavior. Most human behavior is spread between these two sides. Therefore, if we want to predict behaviors that are not completely under perceived behavioral control, then we need to reinforce this perceived behavioral control variable.

### Studies Using TPB in Different Fields Outside of Taiwan

Cordano and Frieze (2000) used Ajzen's theory of planned behavior to explain the behavior intention of management in U.S. environmental conservation fields. This research sampled the attitudes of 295 people on pollution prevention. The results showed that the theory was a good model in this environmental pollution case. It also found that perceived behavioral control and the action to reduce pollution had a negative relation.

David and Jordan (1998) used TRA and TPB to investigate the behavior of backache patients to do exercise during the treatment period. In this study, 23 Americans were the population. The result showed that attitudes and subjective norms did not affect backache patients' behavior to do exercise.

Ellen and Chere (1998) used TPB to investigate registered nurse's behavioral intention to attend distance-learning courses to pursue graduate degrees. In this study, 365 mid-Western American nurses were the population. The results showed that (1) behavioral intention is affected by attitudes and subjective norms and attitude's affect level is higher than subjective norms, and (2) regarding suggestion for the future study, to use TPB to predict nurses' behavior to attend Continuing Professional Education (CPE).

Hill, Amyot, Dery, and Godin (1997) used TPB to investigate the age when adolescents start smoking. The result showed that smoking

behavior was affected more by subjective norms than by perceived behavioral control.

Huff and Alden (2000), studied the marketing management attitudes toward promotion of four different countries: America, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. This research used Ajzen's theory of planned behavior as its framework. The researchers studied these four countries brand managers' use of grocery coupons regarding the behavioral intention of the promotional activity. The result showed that whatever the promotion activity or promotion's environment, short-term goal, past results and competition, it was the managers' attitudes, the long-term goal, and perceived customers' attitudes that were most important.

Jitramontree (2003) used TPB to describe exercise behavior, perceived benefits, negative consequences, and limitations to engaging in exercise in predicting exercise behavior. The results showed that (1) people who exercise a lot are used to walking at least 30 to 50 minutes a day, alone or with friend at home or at the parks, (2) females generally are not doing exercise everyday because of their family responsibilities, (3) perceived behavioral control can predict exercise behaviors directly, (4) subjective norms cannot predict exercise intention or behavior effectively in this study, (5) people who exercise a lot or very little have different benefit levels in terms of perception, positive and negative effects, and barriers to exercise, and (6) the most common factor to affect people who exercise a lot or very little are family responsibilities and bad weather.

#### *The Theoretical Model*

Regarding the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), an individual's behavioral intention or motivation to perform a behavior is most strongly determined by his or her attitude toward that behavior. Therefore, whether behavioral beliefs and outcome evaluations are considered to be positive or negative is determined by the individual's attitude of the belief toward that behavior. Considering this point, the researcher gave a measure to the attitude toward the behavior to correlate with behavioral intention

to attend language training program in continuing education. The researcher determined the normative beliefs, then, the career and pathway planning students' motivation to comply, and last, determined the subjective norm. This offered an evaluation of the effect social pressure (the subjective norm) had on career and pathway planning students, which was correlated with behavioral intention as well. Then, analyzing career and pathway planning students' control beliefs lead to an evaluation of their perceived behavioral control (PBC). The theory of planned behavior associates attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, thus measuring the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training program in continuing education by looking at the coefficient of independent variables from these three factors.

### **VII. Sample and Data Collection**

The population for this study was randomly selected career and pathway planning students who were going to attend non-degree, continuing education programs in Taiwan. Foreign language staffs in the foreign language departments helped the researcher distribute this questionnaire to career and pathway planning students who had come to apply to non-degree learning programs. The questionnaire was designed to examine their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education. The questionnaires were 260 distributed to three randomly selected continuing education in Taiwan. The three randomly selected continuing educations were in the north, central and southern regions of Taiwan. These questionnaires were completed in May of 2019.

### **VIII. Research Instrument**

The main purpose of the elicitation questions was to ask the career and pathway planning students' advantages and disadvantages in their behavioral intention to attend language training in continuing education. The first and second

questions were designed to ask career and pathway planning students their attitude beliefs and behaviors; the third and fourth questions were designed to investigate their normative belief; the last question was designed to address their control belief.

The second part, a self-administrated questionnaire, was used to measure the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training. A survey questionnaire was designed to collect research data from career and pathway planning students who intended to attend programs in continuing education. The survey participants for this research were career and pathway planning students who intended to attend a program in continuing education.

## IX. Elicitation Study

Ajzen (1991) recommended that every researcher conduct an elicitation study in order to determine the career and pathway planning student's most important beliefs thus predetermining their belief. In this study, the elicitation study was made by a convenience sample of the population intending to attend continuing education in Taiwan. The initial group ( $n = 30$ ) considered in the elicitation study was composed of career and pathway planning students who might attend a training program. There are two behavioral questions that the 30 prospective career and pathway planning students were asked to list: the advantages of attending a language-training program in continuing education and the disadvantages of attending a language training program in continuing education. The two normative questions that career and pathway planning students were asked to list were (1) Are there any important people who encouraged you to attend language training in continuing education? and (2) Are there any important people who discouraged you to attend language training in continuing education? The one control belief question that career and pathway planning students were asked to list was "Is there anything else you attribute to influencing you to attend a language training program in

continuing education?" The career and pathway planning students were informed that they were not required to fill out the elicitation study. The elicitation study took 20-30 minutes to complete. These responses ( $n = 30$ ) were made by convenience sample. The response rate was 100%.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recommended that if the participant response frequency rate was less than three ( $f < 3$ ). Similar responses or meanings were classified together. In addition, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recommend that responses from the top 75% from the elicitation study should be used to form a questionnaire (7-point Likert scale). Ajzen (2001) also recommended that intention in the questions must have a high internal consistency and also must correlate significantly ( $p < .05$ ) with each other.

A pilot questionnaire was developed based on career and pathway planning students' responses from elicitation study results and then the researcher used the top 75% of the responses to create the questionnaire.

### *Developing the Questionnaire*

Based on Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) and Ajzen's (1988) recommendation, the variables were selected from the results of the elicitation study. Behavioral intention must have high internal consistency and also must correlate with each factor (Ajzen, 2001, p .4). Each construct was developed by using a 7-point Likert-type scale. This is an example of the Likert response scale as follows: "+3" extremely likely; "+2" quite likely; "+1" slightly likely; "0" neither/nor likely; "-1" slightly unlikely; "-2" quite unlikely; "-3" extremely unlikely.

## X. The Pilot Study

The researcher found the pilot questionnaire has a high internal reliability. This was also used for the final questionnaire because it can be applied to the sample population. Since the questions internal reliability is high, it was not necessary to change the questions. Otherwise,

if the questions internal reliability had not been high then the questions would have needed to be reconstructed. Regarding the questionnaire, the panel experts did not find any significant corrections to the pilot study. However, they did suggest some changes in language structure and the correction of some grammatical errors.

### *Reliability*

Reliability means the degree to which the research instrument is trustworthy. The reliability score is usually represented by a correlation coefficient. When calculating the score, because we can get the total variation of the variables in different ways and from different resources, every different type of reliability coefficient can tell us the reliability at different levels. Generally, Cronbach's alpha is the most preferred type of reliability coefficient. Sometimes it is called lower bound. This is also the most popular reliability indicator.

This study used SPSS to examine one dependent variable, which is the behavioral intention and three independent variables, which are attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These four variables received the following reliability scores: 0.82(attitude), 0.75(subjective norms), 0.88(perceived behavior control), and the total reliability alpha score was 0.81 from viewing the total score of the Cronbach, the reliability were all above 0.7 ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ), which means that this questionnaire can be transformed to a formal one, then become a reliable instrument to test the population.

### *The Final Questionnaire*

In the final questionnaire, staffs in the foreign language department helped the researcher distribute 260 questionnaires to career and pathway planning students who had come to enroll in continuing educations. It was designed to examine their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education. Therefore, the population for this study was randomly selected career and pathway planning students of the 260 of questionnaires, 221 were valid questionnaires and 39 were invalid. These career and pathway planning students were located in three continuing education

departments from the north, central, and southern regions of Taiwan. This final questionnaire followed the same procedure in the pilot study and actual study in terms of career and pathway planning students' selection and confidentiality. In the demographic section, career and pathway planning students were only asked to give their gender and age information. After the researcher collected the entire final questionnaire, the data was examined and entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

### *Statistical Treatment of the Data*

The researcher used SPSS to measure both Pearson's correlations coefficients to measure the correlation between each indirect and direct variable. In addition, a p-value ( $p < .05$ ) was used to measure a two-tailed statistical significance. This study used SPSS to determine the correlation coefficient of indirect attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on the behavioral intention independently by running them through multiple regression. A p-value  $< .05$  was used to determine significance. After multiple regression analysis was performed, the researcher used Pearson's  $r$  to measure the relationship. A t-test also was performed for the indirect components of determining correlation coefficients of the purpose. Then, the behavioral intention to determine beta weights of the indirect components was measured against each other.

In these statistics, the p-value statistic is the most important and it was needed because the p - value points out whether the predictive model of the behavioral intentions was significant. The correlation was performed using Pearson's  $r$  to measure the relationship. The demographic information in this research study was limited to gender and age of career and pathway planning students. Age was measured by the group and analyzed through the ANOVA procedure. Gender was measured by the number of males and females.

### *Discussion*

The purpose of this study was to investigate their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education. The

population for this study was 260 career and pathway planning students who had come to apply language training programs in continuing education. The development of the questionnaire instrument involved two stages. The first was the elicitation study and the second was the survey questionnaire (7-point Likert scale). Research studies using the theory of planned behavior from the research literature related to Taiwan and outside of Taiwan were reviewed and the conclusions summarized. This information was used to develop the first draft of the questionnaire survey. The final questionnaire was constructed as follows: (1) one question related to behavioral intention, (2) twelve questions related to attitude toward the behavior, behavioral belief and outcome evaluation, (3) six questions related to subjective norms, normative belief and motivation to comply, and (4) three questions were related to perceived behavioral control.

The final questionnaire was completed in May of 2019. These career and pathway planning students were located in three continuing educations from the north, central, and southern regions of Taiwan. The questionnaire was randomly distributed to 260 career and pathway planning students who had come to apply to language training programs in counting educations. It was designed to examine their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education. English majors in the foreign language departments helped the researcher to distribute these questionnaires. After the questionnaire was conducted from these 260 career and pathway planning students, 221 were found to be valid questionnaires and 39 were found to be invalid. The 221 valid questionnaires were also considered to be significant in terms of internal reliability.

## **XI. Research Results in this Study**

In this study, the result from the first finding showed that from the demographic characteristics, most career and pathway planning students who intended to attend language training programs in continuing education were female and formed the largest

portion of the population, 58.2%, and the portion of males was 41.8%. Therefore, in this study, females had a stronger intention to attend a language training program in continuing education than males. The researcher found this surprising because career development in Taiwan is much more critical for males, thus one would expect that it would be the males who would be more motivated to attend language training in continuing education.

The second finding from the demographic characteristics of the career and pathway planning students regarding their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education was defined by age range. This was 20% in 18-29 years old, 45 % in 30-39 years old, 22 % in 40-49 years old, and 13 % above 50 years old. The highest range of ages with the intention to attend language training was distributed from 18 - 39 years old, with the total percentage of 65%. From these percentages, it is clear that career and pathway planning students aged 18-39 have a stronger intention to attend language training programs to enhance their language ability than career and pathway planning students above the age of 40.

In this study, demographic variables were not the main factors in determining the behavioral intention to attend language training programs in counting education. The results showed that there was no difference in the behavioral intention to attend language training programs among n career and pathway planning students in reference to age and gender. This means that age and gender were not considered to be influential factors in affecting career and pathway planning students' intention to attend language training program in continuing education.

The results of this research study showed that attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control were the important components to predict the most influential element to affect the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students regarding intention to attend language training programs continuing education. The study results showed that the strongest predictor of the behavioral intention was attitude toward

the behavior. Whether or not a career and pathway planning student was going to attend a language training program in continuing education was based on their attitude toward the behavior.

One of the expected results of this study was that the intensity of career and pathway planning students' belief would affect their motivation to attend a language training programs, which would thus increase their qualifications as an employee, self-esteem, work ability, future career possibilities, social ability, get more salary, language ability, and their knowledge of a diverse culture.

Perceived behavioral control is the second predictor of the behavioral intention (i.e., difficult or easy to perform a certain behavior). Perceived behavioral control refers to the individuals' feelings that performance and non-performance of the behavior is in question and under their volitional control. This study's results showed that the perceived behavioral control of career and pathway planning students' to attend a language training program in continuing education was dependent upon how much controllability they had (control belief) and whether if they attended language training program it would be easy or difficult for them (power belief); these two factors were about self-efficacy.

After Ajzen (1985) added the perceived behavioral control component to the theory of reasoned action, it became the theory of planned behavior, which predicts the behavioral intention and has even better results in research fields.

The final predictor of behavioral intention was subjective norm (i.e., the influence of important others and/or social pressure). The subjective norm of career and pathway planning students refers to the influence of the most important others, such as parents, spouse, boss, friends, and colleagues who encouraged them to attend language training programs.

Parents, spouse, boss, friends, and colleagues were the main people who affected the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students. Generally speaking, it is

possible that career and pathway planning students were being pressured by their important others and/or social pressure. However, the results showed in this study that the subjective norm was not a significant predictor of the behavioral intention. This means that important others, parents, spouse, boss, friends, and colleagues, and social pressures did not really significantly encourage or discourage the career and pathway planning students regarding their intention to attend a language training program in continuing education.

As in Ajzen's predictive model, each component in the theory of planned behavior, which significantly predicted the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education. Therefore, this model predicted approximately 47% of the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning student intention to attend a language training program, and 53% apparently came from other factors that influenced the behavioral intention of the students to attend language training programs in continuing education.

## **XII. Conclusions**

The theory of planned behavior successfully predicted the nature of the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students for going back to continuing education to attend language training programs.

The behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students was affected by the three components in the theory of planned behavior. This positive belief together with positive environmental influence resulted in the career and pathway planning students having the intention to attend language training programs in order to advance their career development and their ability to work well and succeed in their career paths.

In this research study, the Pearson correlation coefficient measured that the attitude toward the behavior had reached the significance level of  $p < .05$  indicating a strong relationship between

the attitude toward the behavior and the behavioral intention. Therefore, the attitude toward the behavior is the strongest variable still influenced those career and pathway planning students' intention to attend language training programs in continuing education.

The second strongest variable to predict the behavioral intention in this study was perceived behavioral control. The perceived behavioral control influenced the behavioral intention of the career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education. In this research study, the Pearson correlation coefficient measured that the perceived behavioral control had reached the significance level of  $p < .05$  and showed a strong relationship between the perceived behavioral control and the behavioral intention. Therefore, the attitude toward the behavior still influenced those career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education.

The third variable in this research study to predict the behavioral intention was subjective norm. The subjective norm did influence the behavioral intention of the career and pathway planning students regarding their intention to attend language training programs in continuing education. However, the results of this study showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the subjective norms and the behavioral intention did not reach the significance level  $p < .05$ , but they were correlated to each other. This means that the subjective norm still influenced the career and pathway planning students to attend language-training programs in continuing education, but its power to influence was not as strong as the attitude toward the behavior and perceived behavioral control. The relationship between attitude toward the behavior and perceived behavioral control reached the significance level of  $p < .05$ .

### **XIII. Recommendations**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education. Ajzen's

theory of planned behavior was used to explore which is the most influential component to affect the potential students' behavioral intention to attend language training programs in continuing education.

#### **Recommendations for Using the Theory of Planned Behavior in Other Studies**

The theory of planned behavior could be used to investigate the behavioral intention of employees regarding attending job training in human resource development. What factors would motivate employees to take advantage of different job training programs within their own companies? One could also use the theory of planned behavior to investigate the difference between male and female attitudes toward job training. In the literature review, this researcher did not find any instances of the theory of planned behavior being used to explore gender issues as they relate to job training. Do men and women, for example, relate to social and job pressures differently in terms of determining to attend job training programs?

#### *Recommendations for Taiwan's Ministry of Education*

The study results showed that the factors influencing the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend continuing education language training programs were attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, as they were all correlated. Therefore, the researcher recommends to base on people need to develop, both in terms of career and pathway planning students and global worldview, that the majority of its citizens be encouraged to learn a foreign language.

Since Taiwan joined the World Trade Organization, the Ministry of Education should strongly encourage people to have positive attitudes regarding attending a language training program, not just in English. The more the people learn language learning, the more they will know diverse cultures. Therefore, if the Ministry of Education encourages the citizens to increase their language abilities, it will increase the success of Taiwan's economy, the overall

knowledge of the population, and promote a wider world view.

#### Recommendations for Colleges and Educational Institutions

In this research study, it was indicated that several factors affected the study population regarding their intention to attend language training. For example, their perceived control and power belief to attend language training program are important. That is, if they have enough control ability and whether attending a language training program would be easy or difficult for them, then their intention would increase. So for these career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs need to be designed which are applicable for the students to use in their practical environment. Programs need to be realistically oriented, clear, and available to the career and pathway planning students according to time, since the majority of them are already working.

The researcher recommends that diversify learning their language training programs in their own institutions. In Taiwan, English and Japanese have become the most popular foreign languages. Beside these two foreign languages, in continuing education offer Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Korean. However, these languages learning are not common in Taiwan's society, career and pathway planning students can be encouraged to learn these languages, they need opportunities furnished by the institutions to develop and practice them.

#### Recommendations for Future Study

Since behavioral intention can predict the primary motivation of human behavior, future studies could be developed based on using the theory of planned behavior combined or contrasted with the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1977). These theories both examine human behavioral intention. Bandura's theory, by itself, or combined with Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, could be used to determine what are the most influential factors affecting the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs in continuing education. According to

Bandura, these are personal factors, social pressure (environmental factors), and their effect on behavior. The final results could be compared to the results of this study using the theory of planned behavior in investigating behavioral intention.

In addition, the motivational theory of Gardner and Lambert (1972) could be used after we have determined the behavioral intention of these career and pathway planning students. The next step would be to explore what motivations these career and pathway planning students have. For example, instrumental motivation means that behavior is motivated by the belief that an intended behavior can be used to better one's life, such as more pay, better job, and so forth. Integrative motivation means that one intends to pursue a certain behavior in order to become a more educated and aware individual in their society.

In this research study, the dependent variable is behavioral intention. The researcher suggests that in future research the dependent variables could be changed from behavioral intention to, for example, attitude toward the attending language training program behavior, the perceived behavioral control of career and pathway planning students' learning strategies, and subjective norm to attend a language training program due to social pressures. Thus future study from different aspects could investigate the attitudes of perspective career and pathway planning students from other aspects.

For the research instrument, this research study used the survey questionnaire to investigate the behavioral intention of career and pathway planning students. A future research study could use an interview instrument to get direct answers regarding the behavioral intention of the study population to attend language training programs. Or, very experienced employers or managers could be interviewed to investigate what kind of motivation they are using to encourage their employees or themselves to adopt regarding attending a language training program in continuing education in continuing education. Such an interview instrument would get direct results and also investigate more

relative factors that affect the behavioral intention to attend language training programs.

The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire designed to evaluate the intention of career and pathway planning students to attend language training programs. However, this survey questionnaire was only used to evaluate the population of career and pathway planning students, not for other groups within the population, such as traditional students, older learners or teenagers. Therefore, using a survey questionnaire, the intention of different groups within the population to learn languages could be investigated in a future study.

Further research could investigate the actual benefits and drawbacks of to attend language training programs in counting education. The results would help career and pathway planning students to evaluate realistically the eventual effects of attending a language training program.

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