
ATTITUDE OF SECRETARIAL SCIENCE STUDENTS ON LEARNING PITMAN SHORTHAND IN POLYTECHNIC

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Abstract

This study investigated the attitudes of secretarial science students on learning Shorthand Pitman in a polytechnic context. The research design used in this study was descriptive, with surveys distributed for data collection. The population for the study consisted of 33 semester 4 students from the Diploma in Secretarial Science program at Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah. The collected data were analysed using mean, frequency, and standard deviation for the research questions and hypotheses. The results indicated no significant relationship between students' attitudes and the factors influencing their attitudes toward shorthand learning. It was concluded that the difficulty of the subject and lack of self-confidence contribute to these attitudes. It is highly recommended that shorthand lecturers facilitate and encourage students in the learning process. Additionally, shorthand lecturers should focus on engaging students and developing their interest in learning shorthand by delivering effective instruction, improving skills, and using technology or engaging approaches that align with students' interests.

Keywords: Attitude, Pitman, Polytechnic, Shorthand.

INTRODUCTION

Pitman Shorthand 2000 is a phonetic system that uses geometric shapes and symbols to represent sounds through a combination of consonants and vowels (Coombs, 2006). It is a fundamental skill for secretaries, enabling them to transcribe spoken content efficiently through shorthand, a vital aspect of real-time documentation (Fasae, 2023; Rayes, 2022).

At Polytechnic Malaysia institutions, students pursuing a Diploma in Secretarial Science are required to complete a Shorthand Course as part of their studies. However, factors such as absenteeism, lack of necessary materials, disinterest, and the perception of shorthand as a challenging subject can influence students' behavior and attitudes toward learning the skill (Fasae, 2023).

Brown and Davis (2019) emphasized a shift in student priorities away from traditional skills like shorthand in a technology-driven era. Understanding these evolving attitudes is crucial for enhancing curriculum and teaching strategies in polytechnic settings. This study explored the attitudes of Secretarial Science students toward learning shorthand at Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah, Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review investigates the history of Pitman Shorthand, exploring how students feel about learning it and how lecturers approach teaching it.

Pitman Shorthand

Fasae (2023) highlights that the interest in shorthand emerged in 16th-century England, leading to the development of various systems by different inventors, each offering unique advantages and limitations. Among these, Pitman Shorthand became widely adopted and continues to be utilized in contemporary practice (Rayes, 2022). Initially introduced by Sir Isaac Pitman in 1837, the system underwent several advancements, with Bride (2013) identifying Pitman 2000 Shorthand as a refined version of the original Pitman New Era system.

Shorthand, a technique used to transcribe spoken words efficiently using symbols and shapes representing consonants and vowels, is not exclusively associated with the Pitman system. Other systems, such as Gregg and Teeline, also contribute to shorthand education (Fasae, 2024). While shorthand offers a simplified writing method, especially for beginners, mastering the skill often presents significant challenges.

Within higher education, shorthand is an integral component of secretarial studies and is frequently included in the business education curriculum. Aina (2024) emphasizes its status as a core course, though it remains a challenging area for many students. Aburiya (2020) notes that students pursuing secretarial studies have historically struggled with, and in some cases failed, shorthand courses during their academic programs.

Students' Attitude

One of the significant challenges in learning shorthand is the ability to accurately distinguish word pronunciations, particularly as some words are pronounced phonetically while others include silent letters (Aina, 2024). Furthermore, students often encounter difficulties in shorthand examinations, primarily due to insufficient proficiency in the required skills (Aburiya, 2020). Developing a positive attitude and genuine interest in the subject, alongside effective writing abilities, is critical for achieving success in shorthand writing (Fasae, 2023).

The process of learning shorthand necessitates consistent and repetitive practice to develop proficiency. Fasae (2023) underscores the importance of daily exercises and sustained practice to enhance familiarity with shorthand techniques. Active engagement in classroom activities is equally important, as it fosters a higher level of involvement and promotes effective learning (Aburiya et al., 2020).

Skill-based courses such as shorthand require regular practice and interactive activities to improve students' competency and sustain their interest. Muhammad and Sulaiman (2023) highlight that active engagement and the incorporation of interactive approaches during learning can significantly influence students' attitudes and motivation toward shorthand. Moreover, fostering an environment that encourages exploration, idea exchange, and deeper understanding further supports the learning process. Interest and a positive attitude must be intentionally developed, as they are essential for mastering shorthand concepts efficiently and effectively (Fasae, 2023).

Lecturers' Disposition in Teaching Shorthand

When teaching Pitman Shorthand, it is important for educators to encourage a positive attitude among students, as shorthand courses involve various complex elements, such as phonetics, symbols, writing techniques, vocalization, and basic principles (Fasae, 2023). To make learning more engaging, lecturers can use teaching methods that relate to students' current experiences and interests.

Since shorthand is often introduced in higher education, students may find it unfamiliar and different from what they have studied before. Using clear and effective teaching methods can help improve students' understanding and performance in shorthand. Ikoyo (2016) suggests that lecturers can make learning easier by simplifying the material, using less technical language, and choosing vocabulary that is appropriate for the students' level of understanding.

Research Hypotheses

- H1** There is no significant relationship between students' attitude and factors responsible for students' attitude towards shorthand learning
- H2** There is no significant relationship between SC students' attitude and lecturers' disposition towards shorthand learning

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a survey as the primary data collection instrument, which was divided into four sections: respondent demographics, the types of attitudes secretarial science students bring to shorthand learning, factors influencing their attitudes towards shorthand learning, and the impact of lecturers' dispositions on students' attitudes. The survey employed a 4-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). A total of 33 students from the DSK4B class of the Diploma in Secretarial Science program at Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah in Sabak Bernam, Selangor, participated in the study. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 26.0, applying descriptive statistical methods to calculate frequencies, percentages, and mean values, which were then presented in detail. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the 21 items in the questionnaire was 0.654, indicating a moderate level of internal consistency among the items. While this value is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for good reliability, it is still considered acceptable for social science research. This reliability score, though not exceptionally high, is deemed adequate for exploratory studies and suggests that the survey items consistently measure students' attitudes, the factors influencing these attitudes, and the effect of lecturers' dispositions on shorthand learning (George & Mallery, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight on several key factors that influence the attitudes of Secretarial Science students on learning Pitman Shorthand in Polytechnic.

Research Question 1: What type of attitude do Secretarial Science (SC) students bring into shorthand learning?

Table 1. Mean responses on SC Students' Attitude to Shorthand Learning

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY				Mean	Stdv
		SD	D	A	SA		
1	I drill shorthand every day	0	9 (27.3)	21 (63.6)	3 (9.1)	2.8182	.58387
2	I usually enjoy the shorthand class	0	1 (3.0)	25 (75.8)	7 (21.2)	3.1818	.46466
3	When we have shorthand class, I am usually happy	0	4 (12.1)	23 (69.7)	6 (18.2)	3.0606	.55562
4	Shorthand improves my communication skill	0	7 (21.2)	22 (66.7)	4 (12.1)	2.9091	.57899
5	I love the way my shorthand lecturer teaches us	0	0	15 (45.5)	18 (54.5)	3.545	.5056

The data presented in Table 1 reveals a generally positive attitude towards shorthand learning, with a particularly strong appreciation for the lecturer's teaching style, as reflected in the highest mean score of 3.55, where 54.5% of students strongly agree. While a significant proportion of students (75.8%) express enjoyment of the shorthand class (mean = 3.18) and report feeling happy during it (mean = 3.06), their commitment to daily practice appears more moderate, as indicated by a lower mean score of 2.82. Furthermore, students moderately agree that shorthand enhances their communication skills (mean = 2.91), although fewer strongly endorse this perspective.

These findings align with prior research suggesting that students' attitudes towards challenging subjects are often shaped by their self-perception of competence (Fasae, 2023). Students who perceive a subject as difficult may experience feelings of overwhelm, leading to disengagement and a diminished sense of achievement. Additionally, a lack of self-confidence in mastering Pitman Shorthand, a skill that requires both speed and accuracy, may exacerbate feelings of frustration and helplessness. These results highlight the critical need for supportive learning environments that aim to build students' confidence and provide adequate resources. Incorporating gradual learning approaches, as well as supplementary support such as tutorials, peer mentoring, or additional practice exercises, may help students who struggle with the subject matter to improve their proficiency and overall engagement.

Research Question 2: What are the factors responsible for SC students' attitude towards shorthand learning?

Table 2. Mean responses on factors responsible for SC Students' Attitude towards Shorthand Learning

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY				Mean	Stdv
		SD	D	A	SA		
6	Shorthand is too difficult to learn.		14 (42.4)	17 (51.5)	2 (6.1)	2.6364	.60302
7	Lack of self-confidence affects my learning of shorthand.	3 (9.1)	17 (51.5)	12 (36.4)	1 (3.0)	2.3333	.69222
8	I don't just understand the subject	2 (6.1)	14 (42.4)	16 (48.5)	1 (3.0)	2.4848	.66714
9	No time for constant practice and drilling because I offer too many courses per semester	1 (3.0)	18 (54.5)	14 (42.4)	0	2.3939	.55562
10	I do not enjoy shorthand class because we are too many	16 (48.5)	16 (48.5)	1 (3.0)	0	1.5455	.56408
11	Lack of financial support	15 (45.5)	17 (51.5)	1 (3.0)	0	1.5758	.56071
12	I have poor English language background	9 (27.3)	17 (51.5)	6 (18.2)	1 (3.0)	1.9697	.76994
13	I cannot concentrate in shorthand classes	8 (24.2)	20 (60.6)	5 (15.2)	0	1.9091	.63066

The data presented in Table 2 indicates that one of the primary factors influencing students' attitudes towards shorthand is the perceived difficulty of the subject, with a mean score of 2.64, as 51.5% of students agree that shorthand is too difficult to learn. Other contributing factors include a lack of self-confidence (mean = 2.33) and insufficient understanding of the subject (mean = 2.48), with a significant number of students acknowledging that these issues hinder their learning. Time constraints due to the demands of multiple courses (mean = 2.39) also play a role. However, factors such as overcrowded classes (mean = 1.55) and lack of financial support (mean = 1.58) were less significant, as most students disagreed with these statements. Additionally, a weak English language background (mean = 1.97) and difficulty concentrating in class (mean = 1.91) had a slight impact on students' attitudes, but were not identified as primary concerns.

These findings align with the research of Vundi, Nasongo, and Majanga (2011), which identifies shorthand as a challenging subject that influences students' attitudes towards learning it. Moreover, the difficulty of the subject contributes to a belief among students that often leads them to avoid shorthand learning altogether (Mohd Dzin & Lay, 2021). Challenges in shorthand learning may arise from difficulties in understanding the variety of vowels, the shapes and symbols used to represent consonants and vowels, and the process of adapting to the methods employed in shorthand study. According to Mohd Rameli, Ahmad Alhassora, Bunyamin, and Hanri (2020), low self-confidence among students further affects their ability to adapt to the learning process. Self-confidence is crucial, as it not only strengthens students' belief in their capacity to learn new concepts, but also plays a key role in shaping their attitudes and enhancing their potential in study skills courses, such as shorthand.

Research Question 3: How does lecturers' disposition affect SC students' attitude towards shorthand learning?

Table 3. Mean responses on Lecturers' Disposition and Students' Attitude towards Shorthand Learning

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY				Mean	Stdv
		SD	D	A	SA		
14	Lecturers can't cover the required content in a semester	9 (27.3)	18 (54.5)	6 (18.2)	0	1.9091	.67840
15	Poor method of lecture delivery	13 (39.4)	20 (60.6)	0	0	1.6061	.49620
16	My lecturers make shorthand an interesting and easy subject to Learn	20 (60.6)	13 (39.4)	0	0	3.3939	.49620
17	Shorthand lecturers have less interest in students' welfare	11 (33.3)	19 (57.6)	3 (9.1)	0	1.7576	.61392
18	I hate shorthand because of the way my lecturer handles us	17 (51.5)	15 (45.5)	1 (3.0)	0	1.5152	.56575
19	I like my shorthand lecturer, but I don't like shorthand	2 (6.1)	12 (36.4)	12 (36.4)	7 (21.2)	2.7273	.87581
20	My shorthand lecturer always makes the shorthand class boring to me	16 (48.5)	16 (48.5)	1 (3.0)	0	1.5455	.56408
21	I don't usually attend shorthand class because of my lecturer	21 (63.6)	12 (36.4)	0	0	1.3636	.48850

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that positive lecturer engagement has a significant impact on students' attitudes, with a high mean score of 3.39, suggesting that 60.6% of students believe their lecturers make shorthand an interesting and manageable subject. However, students express dissatisfaction with the methods of lecture delivery, as 60.6% disagree with the statement regarding poor delivery (mean = 1.61). Additionally, students do not feel that lecturers lack interest in their well-being (mean = 1.76), and only a small proportion attribute their dislike of shorthand to the way the lecturer manages the class (mean = 1.52). Conversely, 63.6% of students report skipping shorthand classes due to their lecturer, reflecting a strong negative impact (mean = 1.36).

Students' attitudes towards shorthand learning are significantly shaped by how lecturers present the subject. Teaching that is both engaging and systematic, combined with friendly interactions, fosters a positive learning environment that encourages student participation (Taat & Francis, 2019). As shorthand is a skill-based subject that introduces new concepts and experiences, it is crucial for educators to employ a variety of teaching methods, including engaging approaches, to stimulate students' interest. This not only enhances their motivation to learn but also positively influences their attitude towards and acceptance of the subject.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant relationship between students' attitude and factors responsible for students' attitude towards shorthand learning.

Table 4. Correlation for SC students' attitude and factors responsible for their attitude to learning shorthand

Correlations		Students' attitude	Reasons for students' attitude
Students' attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.316
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.073
	N	33	33
Reasons students' attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.316	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	
	N	33	33

The correlation analysis presented in Table 4 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.316 between students' attitudes and the factors influencing their attitude towards shorthand learning, indicating a weak negative relationship. However, the p-value (Sig. = 0.073) exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.05, suggesting that the relationship is not statistically significant. Consequently, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant relationship between students' attitudes and the factors affecting their attitude towards shorthand learning.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant relationship between SC students' attitude and lecturers' disposition towards shorthand learning.

Table 5. Correlation for SC Students' attitude and Lecturers' disposition towards shorthand learning

Correlations		Students' attitude	Lecturers disposition
Students' attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.418*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	33	33
Lecturers disposition	Pearson Correlation	-.418*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	33	33

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis in Table 5 reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.418 between students' attitudes and lecturers' dispositions, indicating a moderate negative relationship. The p-value (Sig. = 0.015) is less than the significance threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is a significant relationship between secretarial science students' attitudes and lecturers' dispositions

towards shorthand learning. This suggests that lecturers' dispositions have a negative impact on students' attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that the perceived difficulty of the course and a lack of self-confidence are key factors influencing students' attitudes towards learning shorthand. These results are in line with previous research, which shows that students' attitudes toward challenging subjects are often shaped by how they view their own abilities (Fasae, 2023). The lack of self-confidence in mastering Pitman Shorthand highlights the need for additional support and resources to help students overcome difficulties. As noted by Muhammad & Sulaiman (2023), confidence is crucial for students' success in learning shorthand, particularly for secretarial science students.

The results also show that positive lecturer engagement plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes. Many students feel that their lecturers make the subject more interesting and easier to understand, which helps keep them engaged in the learning process. Lecturers play a vital role in not only delivering content but also motivating and supporting students (Muhammad & Sulaiman, 2023). With the right guidance, lecturers can help make difficult subjects like shorthand more approachable and foster a greater interest in the subject.

On the other hand, the study found that lecturers' attitudes can have a negative impact on students' attitudes toward shorthand. When lecturers have a negative or disengaged approach, it can make learning more difficult and less enjoyable for students. This aligns with previous studies that highlight how a lecturer's attitude can influence student motivation and engagement (Fasae, 2023). To improve the learning experience, it is important for lecturers to engage students, create interest in the subject, and use effective teaching methods. Future research could look into how specific teaching strategies, such as outcome-based learning, affect students' attitudes towards learning Pitman Shorthand.

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