

## Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory: A Brief Review

Samikshya Bidari 

Ph.D. Scholar, English Language Education (ELE), Kathmandu University, Nepal

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Samikshya Bidari, **E-mail:** samikshya\_phele21@kusoed.edu.np

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

**Received:** June 08, 2021

**Accepted:** July 22, 2021

**Volume:** 4

**Issue:** 7

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.7.23

### KEYWORDS

Foreign language learning, language learner beliefs, beliefs about language learning inventory (BALLI)

### ABSTRACT

Second language learners demonstrate various learning attitudes in various settings. Beliefs are essential elements in any field that deals with human performance and learning. Beliefs assist individuals in defining and understanding the world and themselves; they help define tasks and play an essential role in determining action (White, 1999). Recently, researchers have recognized the significance of language beliefs in the second language learning process; they have also been demonstrated interest in students' perspectives on language learning and their effects on learners' motivation, foreign language anxiety, and efficacy. This review summarized students' beliefs on learning a second language by combining key elements from previous research on this topic. This paper has analyzed findings from five previously published articles (Horwitz, 1987 Mori,1999; Ellis, 2008; Tanaka & Ellis, 2008and Li, 2012 ) and reported insights on learner beliefs, potential changes in learner beliefs, and factors influencing learner beliefs changes.

### 1. Introduction

The research on learner beliefs has been a significant factor in identifying the importance and insights of both the learner and the teacher in the foreign language classroom. Learner beliefs can be investigated to aid in the development of more effective lessons and the improvement of teaching techniques. On the other hand, learners will benefit from an understanding of their own behaviors and self-knowledge to perform better and increase their sense of autonomy. Learning processes are inextricably linked to learners' beliefs, which are linked to their approaches and strategies. Additionally, learners' experiences with language learning, motivation, and other factors are interconnected during the learning process, shaping their beliefs about Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The concept of learners' beliefs is formed by combining complex and non-separated components inherent in each individual and developing the idea of learners' beliefs. These components of learners' beliefs, in addition, are not fixed and are subject to change over time as a result of internal or external factors. Although the state of beliefs appears to be formed in stable conditions, the dynamics of language learning and individual differences indicate that this is not the case. As a result, to further the advancement of language learning, learners' beliefs could be shaped to accommodate changes that would improve SLA. These are the responsibilities of all concerned stakeholders, including teachers, institutions, friends or family, and, most importantly, the learners themselves, who hold the beliefs in their very own privilege. The numbers of learner belief studies produced empirical evidence, while theories to explain learner beliefs were uncommon.

### 2. Significance of the Study and Research Gap

Wen and Johnson (1997, as reported in Penhani, 2006) discovered a causal, direct association between beliefs and strategy factors as numerous measures of L1 and L2 competency.

In a study from Taiwanese university, Yang (1999) examined the relationship between language learning techniques and attitudes of 505 EFL university students in Taiwan, using Horwitz's (1987) BALLI and Oxford's (1990) SILL, the author discovered that language learners' self-efficacy views were highly linked to their use of all varieties of approaches

Similarly, Kim (2001) examined 60 Korean university students to explore if there was a link between their learning strategies and their beliefs about language acquisition. After administering the BALLI, a direct relationship between beliefs and strategy variables, the author claimed a high association between students' use of learning techniques and language learning beliefs. Likewise, using BALLI, Penhahi (2006) identified that learners' overall belief score significantly influenced cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies among 280 male university students in Iran. Despite promising benefits, there is a significant gap in theoretical explanations of learner beliefs, which has led researchers to pay little attention to this subject.

### **3. Literature Review**

Richardson (1996) defines. Beliefs are psychologically held understandings, premises, or assertions about the universe that are perceived to be true. The importance of learners' beliefs as a defining aspect of their learning behavior is supported by educational psychology. Similarly, Buyukazi (2010) mentioned, determining learners' beliefs about the language learning method aids in the development of effective learning strategies. Investigation of how instruction should be delivered is based on prior learning experiences and other varying learners' beliefs. This perception is linguistically referred as a learner's beliefs. In the words of Mori (1999), learners' beliefs are a complex system formed up of a variety of independent factors that have been liberally interpreted in their explanation. Similarly, Ellis (2008) defined beliefs as a collection of elements that have an impact on the learning process and the overall learning outcome. Furthermore, beliefs are formed as a result of individual differences and life experiences, among other things. It is also crucial, according to Tanaka and Ellis (2008), to examine learners' beliefs as they have a significant impact on learners' behaviors, such as learning strategies, affective aspects such as self-confidence, anxiety, and linguistic outcomes such as competencies, fluency, or language abilities. This paper aims to explain the categories and components of learners' beliefs proposed by Horwitz (1987) in the Beliefs About Language Learning (BALLI) survey and the possible components proposed by several other researchers. This paper has discussed findings from previous studies on learner beliefs, potential learner beliefs, and factors influencing learner beliefs changes. Learner beliefs and proficiency were investigated in these studies, as were learner beliefs and changes in performance (Mori, 1999).

### **4. Discussions**

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), it has been recognized that the importance of investigating the impact of learners' beliefs on language learning is a critical topic in the context of individual differences. Because of the adaptability of learner beliefs, teacher-researchers are motivated to investigate the dynamics and relationships between them and the various factors that impact them. Example: In his research on the relationship between learner beliefs and emotions, Li (2012) proposed that it is dynamic and reciprocal. As a result of various factors, all of these variables are subject to change over time and are considered relatively dynamic. Based on total competence values, Ellis' research on the relationship between learner beliefs and second language skills has been carried out (Mori 1999; Tanaka & Ellis 2003).

Horwitz's BALLI questionnaire is a well-known instrument for understanding the complex area of beliefs, based on the BALLI model (1987). This questionnaire examines five major categories of language learning beliefs, each of which is addressed separately. There are several factors to consider: foreign language aptitude and difficulty, language learning nature, effective learning and communication strategies, motivation, and expectation (Mori, 1999). The first category of foreign language aptitude consists of nine items that discuss how and when learners should begin learning a foreign language and which gender is perceived to be a better language learner. The second category of foreign language aptitude consists of nine items that discuss how and when learners should begin learning a foreign language. A few aspects of the learner's presumption about natural ability or aptitude for a second language are discussed in more detail as a bonus. The difficulty of language learning characterizes the second category. This is related to how students indicate the level of difficulty they are experiencing while learning a second language. Six items are included, ranging from language skill preferences to the measurable amount of time spent studying to become fluent in a second language. This is followed by looking at the similarities and differences between grammar and lexical items in the first language and the second language, in the third category of the nature of language learning. Furthermore, this category includes considering the natural environment in which a foreign language should be learned, such as whether language learning should take place in the country where the language is being learned. The fourth category is devoted to learning and communication strategy. These items are all broadly related to learning strategies, how learners learn and practice L2, their perspectives on the importance of guessing the meaning, and the use of language laboratories. They are organized into four categories. The final category identified by Horwitz (1987) is motivation and expectations. There are only four items that address the learners' instrumental or external motivation and their internal motivation. On the other hand, the BALLI Questionnaire is not the only tool available for facilitating discussions about learner beliefs. Using a different approach, Cotterall (1995) discovered six major belief dimensions: the role of teachers, the role of feedback, learners' independence, learners' confidence in their ability to study, the experience of language learning, and the approach to studying (As cited in Mori, 1999). Other studies investigated learners' attitudes and their levels of anxiety and ambiguity tolerance (Mori, 1999). These variables, which together make up the understanding of examining learners' beliefs, yielded a variety of results in the research. According to researchers, when it comes to changes in learners' beliefs, these can

occur during or after the classroom experience over some time. Kern (1995) reveals that learners' beliefs change for a minimal amount over the course of a semester and that they are uncomfortable with the idea of changing their beliefs. Mori (1999), on the other hand, found differences in learner's beliefs between novice and advanced language learners in his other study, which was published in 1999. When it comes to changes in the learner's beliefs, the shifts could occur, for example, in the direction of learners who need to achieve a higher level of proficiency in the subject matter. When it comes to changing their construct of beliefs, they should do so with greater flexibility. As a result of changes in a learner's confidence, their attitude and motivation are two important components interconnected with the teacher's teaching methods and the length of time spent teaching (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Another study conducted by Zhong (2019) examined the relationship between learners' beliefs and their level of autonomy, concluding that some learners tended to favor autonomy. There are no such ideal beliefs that learners should precisely hold in the exact situation they find themselves in. However, according to the study's findings, the tendency that appears in the results suggests several possibilities that support the SLA. Previous categories on the BALLI Questionnaire, among other things, can influence beliefs in a variety of ways. Mori (1999) discovered several conditions in learner beliefs that influence and accommodate learners as they progress through second language acquisition. This is associated with the person who assists in the formation of the learner's beliefs, i.e., the teacher. When teaching, teachers should be more considerate of their students' prior knowledge and beliefs. They should use a better teaching method and lesson plan to support students' beliefs, which should consider their prior experience, motivation, and learning strategies. And then, there are the conditions of learner beliefs associated with achievement, as Mori (1999) described. First and foremost, innate ability is associated with lower levels of success. To facilitate SLA, learners' beliefs about innate ability should consider that natural ability is not fixed in time. This represents how the learners who perform better have confidence in their ability to improve as they progress through the language learning process. On the other hand, the second condition is concerned with the avoidance of ambiguity in language learning. In language learning, learners should use their imagination to guess or predict alternative answers rather than rely on a single, clear-cut answer. Students' performance in SLA will be improved if they hold these types of beliefs. According to Aslan and Thompson (2018), the relationship between learner beliefs and anxiety has been investigated to conclude that positive beliefs may reduce stress and improve linguistic confidence in learners.

## 5. Findings

Several inquiries that used Horwitz's instrument captured students' perspectives on language acquisition and provided beneficial insights for language teaching practice, despite the fact that BALLI statements were produced by language teachers rather than students. Several studies have discovered misalignments and disparities between teachers' and students' ideas of what language learning includes and how the language classroom should be organized.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper synthesized findings from five prior studies (Horwitz, 1987; Mori, 1999; Ellis, 2008; Tanaka & Ellis, 2008; Li, 2012) and reported insights on learner beliefs, prospective changes in learner views, and factors impacting learner beliefs changes. The findings highlighted those individual disparities in strategy choice can be explained by various factors, including beliefs about language learning. While learners' perceptions or beliefs about language learning have been established, it is recommended that teachers provide an environment in which learners can build a positive attitude toward language learning. To recapitulate, it is critical to comprehend learners' beliefs about language learning to understand learner strategies and design an effective language learning environment. It can be concluded that, despite being a three-decade-old method, BALLI can be used as a promising tool to examine language acquisition beliefs in a variety of linguistic and cultural environments.

## 7. Recommendations

The findings of this research should only be used as part of the literature in future studies to obtain more detailed information, and data collected directly from participants should only be used in the context of the research to obtain new results. The prospect of conducting research in an online classroom would fascinate researchers. Different research methods could compare the various levels of variables involved in online learning to those involved in a traditional classroom environment.

## References

- [1] Aslan, E. & Thompson, A. S., (2018). The interplay between learner beliefs and foreign language anxiety: Insights from the Turkish EFL context. *The Language Learning Journal* 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2018.1540649>
- [2] Buyukyazi, M. (2010). The Beliefs of University Foreign Language Students and their Teachers about Language Learning. *Sosyal Bilimler*, 8(1), 169-182.
- [3] Dörnyei, Z. & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the English learner*. Routledge.
- [4] Ellis, R. (2008). Learner beliefs and language learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4). 7-25.
- [5] Horwitz, K. (1987). Surveying student beliefs about language learning. In Wenden, Anita & Rubin, Joan (eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning*, 119–129. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.
- [6] Horwitz, E.K. (1988) The Beliefs about Language Learning of Beginning University Foreign Language Students. *Modern Language Journal*, 72, 283-294. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1988.tb04190.x>

- [7] Kovačević, E. The relationship between linguistic complexity measures and language learning beliefs. *Jezikoslovlje*, 20(3), 555–582. <https://doi.org/10.29162/JEZ.2019.20>
- [8] Kim, H. J. (2001). Language learning strategies, learning styles and beliefs about language learning of Korean university students. *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 31–46
- [9] Li, S. (2012). The dynamic nature of learner beliefs: The relationship between EFL learners' beliefs about language learning and proficiency in a Chinese context. *Asian EFL Journal*, 14, 177–211.
- [10] Mori, Y. (1999). Epistemological Beliefs and Language Learning Beliefs: What Do Language Learners Believe About Their Learning? *Language Learning*, 49(3), 377–415. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00094>
- [11] Penhahni, E. (2006). Language Learning Strategies, ELL Beliefs and Proficiency Levels. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Islamic Azad University-Tabriz.
- [12] Piroto, C. (2019). Learners' beliefs about language learning: A factorial investigation. In P. Clements, A. Krause, & P. Bennett (Eds.), *Diversity and inclusion*. Tokyo: JALT.
- [13] Richardson, V. (1996), *The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach*. In J. Sikula, T.J. Butter & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 102–119). Macmillan.
- [14] Sakui, K., & Gaies, S. J. (1999). Investigating Japanese learners' beliefs about language learning. *The system*, 27(4), 473–492. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(99\)00046-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00046-9)
- [15] Tanaka, K., & Ellis, R. (2003). Study-abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, 25(1), 63–85
- [16] Yang, N. D. (1999). The relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and learning strategy use. *System*, 27, 515–535. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(99\)00048-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00048-2)
- [17] Zhong, Q. M. (2013). Learner beliefs and learner autonomy: A case study of two Chinese
- [18] migrant learners in New Zealand. In May, Stephen (ed.), *LED2011: Conference proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity*, 1–11. Auckland: The University of Auckland.