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Investigating Iranian EFL Prospective and Practicing Teachers' Language Learning Beliefs: Targeting Contextual Differences

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Abstract

The current paper attempted to explore the beliefs of Iranian prospective and practicing teachers regarding foreign language learning. It sought to explore whether there was any significant difference between prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs about foreign language learning; and if context (school VS language institute) affected practicing teachers' beliefs with regards to learning a foreign language. To conduct the study, the 27-item BALLI questionnaire developed by Horwitz (1985) was utilized. The BALLI questionnaire was consisted of five components; foreign language aptitude, motivation and expectation, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and learning and communication strategies. 91 EFL practicing and prospective teachers participated in the study. The results showed that prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs differed significantly regarding motivation and expectation ($p<.01$), whereas with respect to foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and learning and communication strategies no significant difference was observed between prospective and practicing teachers. In exploring possible differences between school and language institute teachers' foreign language learning beliefs, the results were indicative of the fact that context did not have any significant impact on the English teachers' beliefs. Finally, it was found out that gender did not affect practicing teachers' beliefs about English language learning.

Keywords: Foreign language learning beliefs, Practicing teachers, Prospective teachers, Gender

Introduction:

For more than two decades, researchers were greatly fond of investigating foreign language learning beliefs of teachers and students because it was proved that "success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside individuals and between the people in the classroom" Stevick (1980, p.4 as cited in Vibulphol, 2004). What goes on inside of individuals refers to students and teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching.

From early 1980s, when Horwitz conducted a systematic research about language learning beliefs of foreign language students and their teachers by administering her questionnaire named BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory), other investigators surveyed students and teachers' beliefs about language learning in their own countries.

It is proved that knowledge of beliefs about language learning can play an essential role in students' learning success since it helps teachers to adjust students' positive beliefs and limit their unrealistic ideas regarding language learning. (Vibulphol. 2004).

In addition to students, exploring teacher students' (postgraduate students) language learning and teaching beliefs is valuable because MA teaching students are going to be a teacher soon and their ideas about language learning as well as real teachers' ideas will affect their future teaching program and their future students' learning program.

Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2004, as cited in Chatouphonexay & Intaraprasert, 2014) declares that teachers' beliefs are their thought of what to do, what to say, and what is the most suitable behavior in the classroom which affect their judgment, their lesson plan, their behavior and activities they perform in the classroom.

Language teachers, whether prospective or practicing teachers, may hold negative or unrealistic beliefs about language learning that can be transferred to their current or future students through their classroom practices Lixu (2012). The teachers' mistaken beliefs about language learning will contribute to negative influence on their students' success in English learning and how they perform their instructional activities in the classroom Chatouphonexay & Intaraprasert (2014). Still, some of their beliefs facilitate language learning and lead to improvement in their students' learning program.

Sometimes the prospective and the practicing teachers' ideas about language learning do not match which might be due to the fact that prospective teachers develop their language learning beliefs from their learning experiences in the classroom and teaching methodology classes but practicing teachers' beliefs root in their experiences in teaching.

According to Vibulphol (2004), teachers' language learning ideas must be explored before their teaching methodologies form because teachers' behaviors in the classroom mostly depend on their beliefs regarding how a language can be learned and taught the best.

Due the fact that the teachers, teacher students, and students' beliefs are effective regarding constructing fruitful teaching and learning methods and developing language learning capabilities of students, a great many researchers have become interested in the field of foreign language learning beliefs and the factors affecting students' or teachers' beliefs. They have attempted to find solutions which would help students and teachers to enhance their productive beliefs and facilitate the students and the teachers' language learning and teaching process (Lixu, 2012).

Since it is proved that teachers' beliefs are more important than their knowledge because they predict teachers' behavior, tasks, and activities in the classroom (Lixu, 2012), and since understanding teachers' beliefs about language learning is important in creating effective learning and teaching context (Bolumu, 2010), the present study aimed at examining the pattern of foreign language learning beliefs held by Iranian prospective and practicing teachers as well as the differences in their beliefs between prospective VS practicing teachers, between practicing male VS female teachers, and between practicing school VS language institute teachers.

Research Questions

1. Is there any significant difference between prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning with respect to foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, motivation and expectation, and learning and communication strategies?
2. Does context (school VS language institute) affect practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning?
3. Is there any significant difference between practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning with regard to gender?

Research Background

Puchta's (1999, as cited in Cimen, 2015) definition of belief is as organized rules which direct students for their performances. Ellis (2008) states that "beliefs constitute an individual difference variable notably different from the other individual difference factors" (cited in Cimen, 2015, p.267). Most definitions of beliefs state that beliefs direct people's understanding of action.

Horwitz (1998) asserted that the beliefs about language learning mostly are due to learning environments and foreign language nature. In her studies on beliefs about language learning, she found that students studying different languages and those who study in different learning circumstances have various concepts about language learning.

Students and teachers come to an educational environment with various perceptions about foreign language learning and teaching. Students of all ages and teachers of different instructional experiences have preexisting points of view about instruction, materials and learning context, actually how to learn English. In spite of not having similar opinions on the above mentioned areas among teachers, students, teachers and students both, sometimes their beliefs are conflicting. Students' beliefs are said to be based on learning experiences, cultural background and learning and teaching strategies (Banya, 1997).

As it is mentioned by previous researchers, some beliefs have positive effect on students' language learning. On the contrary, some others do not. Students' expectations, consciousness, attitude toward learning and success are affected by their language learning concepts. Teachers' beliefs also influence their teaching methods planning, decision making about classroom practices and learners improvement. Thus considering teachers' language learning and teaching ideas can be significantly substantial in constructing effective learning and teaching methods and helping to learners' language learning abilities development (Bolumu, 2010).

Bernat (2005, as cited in Nhapulo, 2013) asserted that foreign language students' beliefs may to some extent be related to the nature of language they are studying, its difficulty, its acquisition process, certain learning strategies success, the existence of aptitude, and their expectations about achievement and teaching methodologies. Beliefs affect learners' behaviors in learning process, their motivation and language achievement, and helping teachers to identify students' needs and objectives.

Huang (2006, as cited in Abdi & Asadi, 2015) suggested that understanding learners' beliefs-including beliefs about needed time to achieve fluency, the difficulties of learning a foreign language, the suitable age of starting language learning, the role of grammar, vocabulary and communication in language learning – are essential because successful learners develop their own beliefs about language learning process, their abilities and effective learning strategies. This in turn facilitates their effective learning. Some students have negative beliefs which lead to negative attitude towards their learning experiences and classroom anxiety. It can also result in less effective learning strategies.

Beginning of Language Learning Beliefs' Research by Horwitz and Her Invented Instrument BALLI

Systematic research into beliefs about language learning started in 1980s with Horwitz's work (1985). She developed an instrument named Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) for the purpose of research and teachers' training which was consisted of 27 likert-scale items ranging from

strongly agree to strongly disagree (Horwitz, 1985). BALLI is a highly reliable instrument to gain insight into the reasons why the teachers select special methodologies and activities in their classrooms and to find the differences between teachers and students' point of view regarding language learning. Horwitz (1985) and followers have also used BALLI in teacher training programs to find out the language-related beliefs of prospective teachers in four areas including foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and language learning strategies (Vibulphol, 2004).

BALLI items were derived from an extensive collection of interviews with language teachers on a variety of issues related to language learning by Horwitz (1985, 1988). She worked with psychologists and rephrased the statements. Afterwards, she carried out a pilot study on 150 first year language students at the University of Texas (Horwitz, 1985). Over the years, the number, the system of encoding and the order of statement were changed by Horwitz to meet the special needs of each new sample group and to make it highly valid. Several distinct BALLIs are in use today: foreign language teacher version (Horwitz, 1985), ESL version (Horwitz, 1987), and foreign language students version (Horwitz, 1988) (Kuntz, 1996).

From 1985 many researchers showed interest in the research into language learning beliefs with an assumption that such a study can help second or foreign language teachers enhance their students' ability in language learning in such a way that correct students' beliefs or make them aware of their realistic or mistaken beliefs. Researchers provided different definitions of beliefs and various study approaches. They also based their approach on the BALLI and investigated such beliefs in different countries and cultures. For example in China (Zhang & Cui, 2010), Hong Kong (Peacock, 2001), Hungary (Rieger, 2009), Malaysia (Nikitina & Furuoka,2006), Thailand (Fujiwara,2010), Vietnam (Bernat,2004; Cimen,2015).

Horwitz(1988) investigated the beliefs of a number of first-semester foreign language learners and their teachers at Texas university;80 were studying German , 63 French and 98 Spanish.

Horwitz concluded that the gap between teachers and students beliefs resulted in negative outcomes for learners. She further added that it reduced learners' confidence and satisfaction with the class. Teachers encountered various beliefs, some enabling and some opposite to successful language learning strategy.

A Review of Studies on Language Learning Beliefs after Horwitz

Bacon & Finnemann (1990,as cited in Kuntz,1996) using a questionnaire consisting of 109 statements of language learning beliefs examined 1000 first-year Spanish students at two mid-western universities.

Vibulphol (2004) examined Thai pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs in two universities of Thailand (42 pre-service EFL teachers). These students were undergraduates and had received their B.A. After finishing university educations they had registered in the practice teaching course. Data were collected by the use of modified BALLI(ESL student version) which was developed by Horwitz(1987).

The aim of this study was to understand Thai EFL learners about language learning before and after practicing teaching; especially those beliefs which were acted as obstacles to their learning and their prospective students. Also, it aimed at exploring changes in students' beliefs after their practice teaching classes.

In another study Fox (1993, as cited in Kuntz, 1996) utilized parts of the Horwitz BALLI to reveal beliefs held by teaching assistants of the first-year French students in New York. The most common beliefs among the participants were, " everyone can learn a foreign language, women are not better language learners than men, mistakes are not hard to correct later, and students may learn the language well."

Fox like Horwitz (1985), concluded that one of the most important factors regarding successful foreign language teaching and learning is teachers' knowledge of both students' beliefs and their own

beliefs. Also comparison of the students and teachers' beliefs makes goals observable and removes possible misunderstandings between teachers and students regarding learning situations.

Kern (1995) studied 180 first and second-semester French students and 12 instructors of the California University. He made use of BALLI to valuate students' language learning beliefs in comparison to their teachers and their same age's learners at one of the Texas universities.
Kern (1995) came to the conclusion that teachers' awareness of students' expectations helps them to recognize barriers to language learning.

Mantle-Bromley (1995, as cited in Abdi & Asadi, 2015) used the BALLI to examine the beliefs of 208 seventh grade middle school students taking first-year French and Spanish in Kansas. Her results suggested that some of the students' language learning beliefs differed from the teachers' beliefs.

Based on Liao and Chiang (2003) survey of 143 Chinese students and 15 teachers on their foreign language learning beliefs, it was argued that two groups held similar perceptions regarding their foreign language learning, but some differences between them were also found.

Diab (2006) did another research on 31 university teachers and 12 prospective teachers' language learning beliefs in Lebanon to explore their ideas about foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and the most effective learning strategies.

The utilized questionnaire consisted of 28 items on foreign language learning beliefs developed by Horwitz (1985). Besides, two of the instructors were involved in a semi-structured interview. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics.

Analyzing questionnaire showed that some of the Lebanese teachers' beliefs were productive to language learning while some of them were detrimental to successful language learning and teaching.

Teachers' responses to interview questions were analyzed regarding five major areas. The importance of learners' variables in language learning, The difficulty of language learning, The influence of environmental factors in language learning, The importance of accuracy in language learning, and Characteristics of successful language learners and teachers. Teachers agreed that the most important factors which affect foreign language learning is motivation, neither age nor intelligence. They argued that difficulty of a foreign language depends on the knowledge of the learners on their previous known languages. They put emphasis on the importance of reading and communication outside of the classroom as a useful strategy for developing the target language.

The participants insisted on communicative fluency. The teachers suggested that for beginner learners, accent is not so important. Finally their description of a good teacher and a good learner was like this, good teacher: hard work and aware of students' needs. Good learner: motivated in language learning, flexible and risk taker.

Diab (2006) concluded that all of the language teachers, either prospective or practicing ones, have certain concepts regarding foreign language learning which have an important impact on their educational situations.

Chatouphonexay & Intaraprasert (2014) investigated the existing similarities and differences of English language learning beliefs between Lao in-service and pre-service teachers. BALLI questionnaire (Horwirz, 1987) was used to obtain the data.

The results of the analysis showed that more similarities than differences of beliefs existed between pre-service and in-service teachers in Laos. In fact, 13 out of 39 items of beliefs varied among these two groups. For instance, both groups believed in the difficulty of learning English or the necessity of knowing English culture to speak English well. The researchers asserted that the more similarities of beliefs held by the teachers and students, the more successful the learning and teaching environment would be and vice versa, the wider the gap between beliefs would create negative learning outcomes for the learners. It would also result in their dissatisfaction with the classroom.

Cimen (2015) investigated 43 first year pre-service EFL teachers, 44 fourth year pre-service EFL teachers and 32 experienced in-service EFL teachers' language learning beliefs by using BALLI questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

The purpose of the study was discovering participants' foreign language learning beliefs and possible existence of differences between their opinions after passing the teacher education course by pre-service teachers.

According to major themes including aptitude, nature, difficulty, expectations, learning and communication strategies, systematic variations were observed among participants' foreign language learning beliefs. For example, 67 percent of the first year pre-service teachers agreed that people who spoke more than one languages were very intelligent while in-service and forth year teachers agreed with this statement. Even though 15 percent of the first year agreed with this statement "if someone spend one hour a day learning a language, it will take less than a year or two years to learn that language very well". 30 percent and 35 percent of the fourth years and in-service teachers agreed with this item. Translation had a major role in learning English for most of the first years while it was not the case for the fourth years and in-service teachers.

Examining the results showed that from the first year to the fourth year changes in certain beliefs take place with the pre-service teachers, and these changes can be attributed to the four year teacher education program they were engaged in. Furthermore, language teaching experiences create different language learning beliefs.

Cimen (2015) firmly stated that foreign language learning beliefs are not fixed and can be changed over time. Using BALLI questionnaire, Sadeghi and Abdi's (2015) research on 100 students (15 years old) from three language institutes and 80 language teachers (with an average age of 29) revealed teachers and students' language learning beliefs and significant differences between their opinions about language learning item-wise and in general.

The results showed that even some of the teachers' beliefs on language learning were undesirable which might affect their teaching behavior in the classroom. It was also found that some of the students' beliefs were unrealistic and could impede their attention from other language skills when could be harmful to their language learning. For example, they thought that they were not allowed to make mistakes at the beginnings. In total, the results of the study showed meaningful variations between students and teachers' beliefs and these differences can have a negative impact on students' learning process.

Research Methodology

Participants

To investigate the foreign language learning beliefs, 31 last year M.A. teaching students in Marvdasht Azad University, 30 English Language institute teachers from Parseh, Pooya, and Marefat Language Institutes in Marvdasht, and 30 school teachers from seventeen high and guidance schools of Marvdasht took part as the participants of the study.

Regarding the participants' age, the teacher students (MA teaching students) were ranged from 24 to 34, the institute teachers from 22 to 44, and the school teachers were from 28 to 45. In sum, 29 males and 62 females participated in the study.

The institute teachers had MA and BA degrees in English language teaching and translation. 17 of them were BA and the13 of them held a MA degree. 7 school teachers had a BA degree and 23 of them held a MA certificate.

Instruments

In order to identify teacher students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning, Horwitz developed an instrument called the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) Questionnaire

(Kuntz, 1996). According to Nikitina and Furuoka (2006), up to now the researchers who have studied language teachers' and learners' beliefs have asserted that BALLI is a reliable and valid research tool for evaluating learners' and teachers' beliefs about foreign language learning in different cultures and nations regardless of the language which is being learned. "The BALLI has proven its usefulness in the elicitation and comparison of many students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning" (Atlan, 2006, p. 51). The validity and reliability of BALLI have so far been confirmed by researchers who used this scale after Horwitz to measure language learning beliefs of students and teachers all over the world.

The BALLI items were derived from an extensive collection of interviews with 25 language teachers by Horwitz (1985). She worked with psychologists and rephrased the statements; afterwards, she carried out a pilot study on 150 first year language students at the University of Texas at Austin. The number, the system of encoding and the order of statements were changed several times by Horwitz to meet the special needs of each new sample and to make it highly valid.

For the purpose of the present study, the teacher version of the BALLI questionnaire (Horwitz, 1985) which included 27 items about foreign language learning was used. According to Shabani (2013), BALLI's format is a likert-scale and learners must select among strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly agree options for the items. The questionnaire consists of five components: Foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectation. Foreign language aptitude items are 1,2,17,23,25,26, and 27. The nature of language learning items are 6, 12, 15, 19, and 20. Language learning difficulty items are 3,4,8,11,18, and 22. Learning and communication strategy items are 5, 7, 9,10,13,14, 16, and motivation and expectation items are 21 and 24.

The BALLI questionnaire was translated into Persian to avoid any possible misunderstanding. The translation first was done by the researcher. Afterwards two experienced translators (with more than six years of experience) from Keyhan Translation Office of Shiraz were asked to have an eye on the translation. They provided some better equivalents for the translation of some of the items.

Afterwards, the translation was further approved by the researcher's advisor. Before distributing questionnaire it was tried with three B.A. teaching students at Marvdasht Azad University in order to check the comprehensibility of the translation. The students were asked to complete the BALLI items and make notes on the statements that they had difficulty with. Overall, the responses from the participants showed that the participants interpreted the statements in a way that Horwitz intended.

After completing the questionnaire by 91 prospective and practicing teachers, the collected data was tested for reliability using Cronbach alpha. The results showed that the questionnaire had a reliability of r=.70. The reliability of Banya's BALLI questionnaire (1997) was r=.61 and the reliability of Vibulphol's BALLI questionnaire (2004) was r=.69.

Data Collection

In order to gather the required data for the present study, the BALLI questionnaires (Horwitz, 1985) were distributed among 60 school and institute teachers and 31university teacher students. The participants were required to provide information regarding their age, gender, and educational degree. All of the teachers were non-native English teachers. The participants were informed that their presence in the research was voluntary and they could quit if they wanted. They were also asked to answer the questionnaire's statements according to their own viewpoint without consulting each other while completing it. The students filled the questionnaire during the class time on the May first. It took them about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Two students of the second class had not answered the questionnaire completely so they were omitted from the study.

The school teachers filled the questionnaire at school. It took them about 15 minutes. Since some of Marvdasht school-teachers were sent to other cities including Shiraz, and Jahrom by Ministry of Education, the researcher had to send them the questionnaire's word file through email. At the institutes,

because of the limited time of the classes and the teachers' request, the questionnaire's word file was sent to all of them through email. It took 17 days to collect the papers or responses from teachers in various schools and institutes from 2nd to May 19th.

Data Analysis

After the data were collected using SPSS software (version 21), descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were computed for BALLI items. Also, to obtain more in depth results, different groups were compared with regard to each of the BALLI components separately. Independent samples t-test was utilized to find any significant difference in the beliefs of prospective and practicing teachers; school and institute teachers; male and female practicing teachers with regard to foreign language learning.

Research Findings

Research Question 1

The first research question focused on identifying the possible differences between the practicing and prospective teachers' language learning beliefs with respect to five BALLI components. Thus, first, the descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' and teacher students' beliefs on the five components of BALLI questionnaire were examined for the whole samples (Table 1); then, the difference between them was studied inferentially to test the null hypothesis "there are no significant differences between teacher students and teachers' beliefs about English language learning" (Table 2).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Question 1

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning

	practicing teachers					prospective teachers				
Components	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max
Foreign language aptitude	25.28	3.61	2.39	21.00	31.00	25.03	3.57	3.33	21.00	33.00
The difficulty of language learning	19.49	3.24	2.40	12.00	25.00	20.10	3.35	2.48	15.00	28.00
The nature of language learning	16.05	3.21	2.71	9.00	21.00	16.39	3.27	2.54	12.00	22.00
Learning and communication strategies	25.74	3.67	2.62	22.00	32.00	26.00	3.71	3.27	18.00	32.00
Motivation and expectation	6.98	3.49	1.30	4.00	10.00	8.10	4.05	1.30	6.00	10.00

According to the mean divided by the number of items (Table 1), the order of the strength of agreement for practicing teachers was as follows: 1. Learning and communication strategies, 2. Foreign language aptitude, 3. Motivation and expectation, 4. The difficulty of language learning, 5. The nature of

language learning. Although motivation was graded as the third one for practicing teachers, prospective teachers agreed more strongly on it than other components. In regard to other components, quite similar results were observed from prospective teachers. The order of their agreement was as follows: 1. Motivation and expectation, 2. Learning and communication strategies, 3. Foreign language aptitude, 4. The difficulty of language learning, 5. The nature of language learning.

Foreign Language Aptitude

Since the foreign language aptitude component has 7 items on a 5-graded Likert scale, the scores can range from 7 (possible minimum score) to 35 (possible maximum score).

As it is presented in Table 4.11, the mean total score for 60 practicing teachers about the perceptions of foreign language aptitude was 25.28 (SD=2.39). The mean score for 31 prospective teachers was 25.03(SD=3.33). The mean total score for the practicing teachers (25.28) indicated that they believed more strongly in foreign language aptitude. It meant that this group (practicing teachers) believed more in specific ability of some people to learn language. This kind of belief can be beneficial because people who do not believe in foreign language aptitude do not possess certain degree of confidence in learning English (Peacock, 2001). On the other hand, it can be discouraging to language learning. People who believe in their certain language ability might think that their success to some degree is dependent on their language learning aptitude. (Chatouphonexay & Intaraprasert, 2014).

Language Learning Difficulty

Since the foreign language difficulty component has 6 items on a 5-graded Likert scale, the scores can range from 6 (possible minimum score) to 30 (possible maximum score).

As it is shown in Table 4.11, the mean total scores of 19.49(SD=2.40) and 20.10(SD=2.48) were observed for 60 practicing teachers and 31 prospective teachers about the language learning difficulty beliefs, respectively. Regarding this component, the prospective teachers (M=20.10) believed more strongly in general and specific difficulty of learning a foreign language. The practicing teachers underestimated the difficulties of learning a foreign language.

The Nature of Language Learning

The nature of language learning component has 5 items on a 5-graded Likert scale; therefore, the scores can range from 5 (possible minimum score) to 25 (possible maximum score).

As it is shown in Table 4.11, the mean total score for 60 practicing teachers about the nature of language learning was (M=16.0, SD=2.71).The mean score for 31 prospective teachers was a little higher than practicing teacher's (M=16.39, SD=2.54). The prospective teachers (M=16.39) agreed more on the items of the nature of language learning beliefs than the prospective teachers (M=16.05). It indicated that the prospective teachers believed more in the importance of translation, grammar rules or vocabularies, cultural knowledge for speaking a foreign language and the difference between learning English and other school subjects. Gardner (1985, as cited in Chatouphonexay &Intaraprasert, 2014) agrees that languages unlike any other school subjects involve the acquisition of skills.

Learning and Communication Strategy

Learning and communication strategies component has 7 items on a 5-graded Likert scale; thus, the scores can range from 7 (possible minimum score) to 35 (possible maximum score).

Table 4.11 presents that 60 practicing teachers showed a slightly lower level of mean (M=25.74, SD=2.62) than the 31 prospective teachers (M=26, SD=3.27) in terms of learning and communication strategy component of the BALLI. It means that the prospective teachers insisted more on some of processes of language learning such as repeating or practicing in the language laboratory.

Motivation and Expectation

Motivation and expectation component has 2 items on a 5-graded Likert scale; so, the scores can range from 2 (possible minimum score) to 10 (possible maximum score).

Table 4.11 proves that the mean total score for 60 practicing teachers was lower (M=6.98, SD=1.30) than the observed mean score for 31 prospective teachers (M=8.10, SD=1.30) about motivation and expectation beliefs. It can be concluded that the prospective teachers care for better quality of their future students' behavior in the classroom and motivating students.

Inferential Statistics of Research Question 1

Before testing the hypothesis regarding research question 3, the results of the Levene's test for equality of variance which tests whether the variance of scores for the two groups of prospective and practicing teachers is the same was observed. The result of the test showed that the significant value for Levene's test was larger than .05 (p>.05) which means that the assumption of equal variances was assumed for research question 1.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test between prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning

Table 2. Independent samples t-test between prospective and practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning

					Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
Components	Teacher	N	M	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig
The difficulty of foreign language learning	practicing	60	19.49	2.40	.003	.956	-1.1	89	.267
	prospective	31	20.10	2.48					
Foreign language aptitude	practicing	60	25.28	2.39	2.75	.101	.40	89	.692
	prospective	31	25.03	3.33					
The nature of foreign language learning	practicing	60	16.05	2.71	.021	.886	-.57	89	.568
	prospective	31	16.39	2.54					
Learning and communication strategies	practicing	60	25.74	2.62	1.40	.240	-.41	89	.685
	prospective	31	26.00	3.27					
Motivation and expectation	practicing	60	6.98	1.30	.124	.726	-3.9	89	.000
	prospective	31	8.10	1.30	.003				

As Table 2 suggests, it can be asserted that the teacher students and the teachers did not have similar beliefs regarding motivation and expectation components. In other words, significant difference was found in the results of motivation category (p<.01). However, regarding other language learning beliefs, the teacher students and the teachers did not exhibit significant differences.

As a response to the third research question, it can be said that the practicing and the prospective teachers' language learning beliefs were not so various. In other words, there was a kind of similarity of views between participants regarding the components of the BALLI questionnaire, except for motivation and expectation beliefs which was the sole belief that showed a significant difference between the participants was the motivation and expectation category. The prospective teachers (M=8.10) agreed more on the two items of motivation and expectation beliefs than the practicing teachers (M=6.98).

With the assumptions that the prospective teachers develop their language learning beliefs from their learning experiences in the classroom and teaching methodology classes but the most important source of the practicing teachers' beliefs is their experiences in teaching, it is not surprising that sometimes some of the prospective and practicing teachers' ideas in language learning do not match. However, there are a number of significant factors that can influence practicing teachers' beliefs such as the students, the school curriculum, the used textbooks, common classroom practices adopted among the co-workers(practicing teachers) at the school, their supervisors' beliefs and instructional practices, and their own experiences as language learners (Vibulphol, 2004).

Research Question 2

Since the second research question of the study was to study whether there existed any significant differences between the school and language institute teachers' beliefs about English language learning regarding their context (school VS institute), first, the descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' beliefs on the five components of BALLI questionnaire were examined for the whole samples (Table 3); then, the difference between them was studied inferentially to test the null hypothesis , "there are no significant effects of context on school and language institute teachers' beliefs about English language learning " (Table 4).

According to the mean divided by the number of items (Table 3), the order of the strength of agreement for school teachers was as follows: 1. Foreign language aptitude, 2. Learning communication strategies, 3. Motivation and expectation, 4. The difficulty of language learning, and 5. The nature of language learning but the order of the strength of agreement for language institute teachers was as follows: 1. Learning and communication strategies, 2. Motivation and expectation, 3. Foreign language aptitude, 4. The nature of language learning, 5. The difficulty of language learning.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Question 2

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of school , and language institute teachers' beliefs about language learning

	school					language institute				
Components	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max
Foreign language aptitude	25.48	3.64	2.54	21.00	31.00	25.07	3.58	2.25	21.00	31.00
The difficulty of language learning	19.41	3.23	2.68	12.00	25.00	19.57	3.26	2.14	15.00	23.00
The nature of language learning	15.73	3.14	2.69	9.00	21.00	16.37	3.27	2.75	11.00	21.00

Learning and communication strategies	25.21	3.60	2.35	22.00	31.00	26.23	3.74	2.80	22.00	32.00
Motivation and expectation	6.73	3.36	1.26	4.00	8.00	7.23	3.61	1.30	4.00	10.00

Foreign Language Aptitude

As it was shown in Table 3, 30 school teachers and 30 language institute teachers had a mean total score of 25.48 (SD=2.54) and 25.07 (SD=2.25), respectively, regarding foreign language aptitude. The mean total score for the school teachers (25.48) indicated that they had a higher level of foreign language aptitude. It meant that this group (school teachers) believed more in specific ability of some people for achievement in language leaning.

Language Learning Difficulty

As Table 3 presents, the mean total score for 30 school teachers about the language learning difficulty beliefs was 19.41(SD=2.68), and for 30 language institute teachers was 19.57 (SD=2.14). On this component, the language institute teachers (M=19.57) agreed more. It offered that the institute teachers believed more in general and specific difficulty of learning a foreign language.

The nature of Language Learning

30 institute teachers demonstrated a higher level of mean total score about the nature of language learning beliefs (M=16.37, SD=2.75) than 30 school teachers (M=15.73, SD=2.69) (Table 3). It indicated that the institute teachers believed more that learning a target language is mostly a matter of translating from English or learning grammar rules or vocabulary words.

Learning and Communication Strategies

25.21 (SD=2.35) and 26.23 (SD=2.80) were the mean total scores about learning and communication strategies' components for 60 school and institute teachers, respectively (Table 3). It meant that the institute teachers insisted more on some processes of language learning such as repeating or practicing in the language laboratory.

Motivation and Expectation

The mean total score for 30 institute teachers was a little higher (M=7.23, SD=1.30) than the observed mean score for 30 language school teachers (M=6.73, SD=1.26) about motivation and expectation beliefs (Table 3). It can be concluded that the institute teachers care for better quality of students' behavior in the classroom and motivating students.

Inferential Statistics of research Question 2

Before testing the hypothesis regarding research question 4, the results of the Levene's test for equality of variance which tests whether the variation of scores for the two groups of school and institute teachers is the same was observed. The outcome of the test determined that the significant value for Levene's test was larger than .05 ($p>.05$) which means that the assumption of equal variances was assumed for research question 2.

Table 4. Independent samples t-test between high school VS language institute teachers' beliefs about language learning

Table 4. Independent samples t-test between high school VS language institute teachers' beliefs about language learning									
					Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
Components	Teacher	N	M	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig
The difficulty of foreign language learning	high school	30	19.41	2.68	.808	.372	-.24	58	.809
	language institute	30	19.57	2.14					
Foreign language aptitude	high school	30	25.48	2.54	.321	.573	.66	58	.515
	language institute	30	25.07	2.25					
The nature of language learning	high school	30	15.73	2.69	.347	.558	-.90	58	.371
	language institute	30	16.37	2.75					
Learning and communication strategies	high school	30	25.21	2.35	.625	.433	-1.4	58	.140
	language institute	30	26.23	2.80					
Motivation and expectation	high school	30	6.73	1.26	.282	.597	-1.5	58	.136
	language institute	30	7.23	1.30					.

As Table 4 offers, it can be asserted that the school teachers and the institute teachers showed similar beliefs regarding five BALLI components.

As a response to the forth research question, there were not any significant differences in responses of practicing teachers about foreign language learning beliefs. It can be concluded that the school and language institute teachers were somehow like-minded about language learning beliefs including the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language learning aptitude, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectation conceptions. In conclusion, the discussion of data illustrated in Table 4 provides a detailed answer to the forth research question "Does context (school VS language institute) affect practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning?" In addition, it confirms the validity of the second research hypothesis "Context does not affect practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning."

Research question 3

The fifth research question of the study was to find out whether there were any significant gender differences in school and language institute teachers' beliefs about English language learning in relation to the BALLI five categories. Towards this end, the descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' beliefs on the five components of BALLI questionnaire were examined for the whole samples (Table 5). Also the difference between them was studied to test the null hypothesis, "there are no significant effects of gender on school and language institute teachers' beliefs about English language learning" (Table 6).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Research Question 3

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning by gender

	practicing teachers									
	gender									
	men					women				
Components	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max	M	M/N	SD	Min	Max
Foreign language aptitude	25.48	3.64	2.66	22.00	31.00	25.16	3.59	2.25	21.00	31.00
The difficulty of language learning	19.24	3.20	1.79	16.00	23.00	19.63	3.27	2.70	12.00	25.00
The nature of language learning	15.86	3.17	2.33	9.00	20.00	16.15	3.23	2.92	9.00	21.00
Learning and communication strategies	25.86	3.69	2.54	23.00	31.00	25.68	3.66	2.70	22.00	32.00
Motivation and expectation	7.05	3.52	1.32	4.00	10.00	6.95	3.47	1.30	4.00	10.00

According to the mean divided by the number of items (Table 5), the order of the strength of agreement for male teachers was as follows: 1. Learning and communication strategies, 2. Foreign language aptitude, 3. Motivation and expectation, 4. The difficulty of language learning, and 5. The nature of language learning. Quite similar results were observed from prospective teachers. The order of their agreement was: 1. Learning and communication strategies, 2. Foreign language aptitude, 3. Motivation and expectation, 4. The difficulty of language learning, and 5. The nature of language learning.

Foreign Language Aptitude

As Table5 presents, 21 men (M=25.48, SD=2.66) demonstrated a slightly higher level of mean total score about foreign language learning aptitude compared with 39 women (M=25.16, SD=2.25). It meant that this group (males in practicing teachers) believed more in specific ability of some people for achievement in language leaning.

Language Learning Difficulty

The mean total score for 21 men practicing teachers about the language learning difficulty beliefs was 19.24(SD=1.79), and for 39 women practicing teachers was 19.63(SD=2.70). On this component, the female practicing teachers (M=19.63) agreed more. It indicated that females believed more in general and specific difficulty of learning a foreign language.

The Nature of Language Learning

Concerning the nature of language learning, 39 women had a larger mean total score (M=16.15, SD=2.92) than 21 men (M=15.86, SD=2.33). It indicated that the females believed more that learning a target language is mostly a matter of translating from English or learning grammar rules or vocabulary words.

Learning and Communication Strategies

The mean total scores of 25.86(SD=2.54) and 25.68(SD=2.70) were observed for 21 men and 39 women about the learning and communication strategy beliefs respectively. It meant that the male practicing teachers insisted more on some of processes of language learning such as repeating or practicing in the language laboratory.

Motivation and Expectation

The mean total score for 21 men was slightly higher (M=7.05, SD=1.32) than the observed mean score for 39 women (M=6.95, SD=1.30) about motivation and expectation beliefs. It can be concluded that the men practicing teachers care for better quality of students' behavior in the classroom and motivating students.

Inferential Statistics of Research Question 3

Before testing the hypothesis regarding research question 3, the results of the Levene's test for equality of variance which tests whether the variance of scores for the two groups of males and females is the same was observed. The result of the test showed that the significant value for Levene's test was larger than .05 (p>.05) which means that the assumption of equal variances was assumed for research question 3.

Table 6. Independent samples t-test between men& women practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning

Table 6. Independent samples t-test between men& women practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning									
					Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
Components	teacher	N	M	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig
The difficulty of language learning	men	21	19.24	1.79	3.01	.088	-.599	58	.552
	women	39	19.63	2.70					
Foreign language aptitude	men	21	25.48	2.66	.390	.535	.478	58	.635
	women	39	25.16	2.25					
The nature of language learning	men	21	15.86	2.33	2.176	.146	-.401	58	.690
	women	39	16.15	2.92					
Learning and communication strategies	men	21	25.86	2.54	.151	.699	.251	58	.802
	women	39	25.68	2.70					
Motivation and expectation	men	21	7.05	1.32	.100	.752	.280	58	.781
	women	39	6.95	1.30					

As Table 6 suggests, it can be asserted that male and female practicing teachers had some kinds of similar beliefs regarding language learning beliefs. Thus, gender did not affect the practicing teachers' language learning beliefs.

Regarding the third research question, there were not any significant differences in responses between male and female school teachers and language institute teachers with regard to their foreign

language learning beliefs including the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language learning aptitude, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectation beliefs. In conclusion, the discussion of data illustrated in Table 6 provides a detailed answer to the fifth research question "Is there any significant difference between practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning with regard to gender?" In addition, it confirms the validity of the third research hypothesis, "There is not any significant difference between practicing teachers' beliefs about language learning with regard to gender."

The results of the present study correspond with Tercanlioglu's results (2005). The researcher (2005) reported that there were no significant differences in language learning beliefs of 45 male and 73 female full-time undergraduate EFL teacher trainees at a Turkish university. However, the results of the current study vary with the results of Bernat and Lloyd (2007) who explored significant variations in responses of two BALLI items between males and females.

As the results suggested, females had a stronger belief than males that "people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent." But males enjoyed more to speak with the English speakers than females did (Daif-Allah, 2012).The findings of this study and Daif-Allah's research differed in such a way that males and females of his study (first year English language major students of the Intensive English Language Program at Qassim University) had different ideas with regard to foreign language aptitude, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectation. In fact, the female students in his study suggested higher trends towards above mentioned beliefs in comparison to the males. According to Daif-Allah (2012), in addition to gender, there might be some other sources that cause variation in the nature of foreign language teachers' beliefs e.g. age, stage of life, social, personal, cultural, cognitive and affective factors.

Conclusion

There was a kind of similarity of views between participants (prospective and practicing teachers) regarding five components of the BALLI questionnaire, except for motivation and expectation beliefs. The practicing teachers agreed more on the two items of motivation and expectation beliefs than the prospective teachers.

As it is mentioned before, the prospective teachers develop their language learning beliefs from their learning experiences in the classroom and the teaching methodology classes but the most important source of the practicing teachers' beliefs is their experiences in teaching. Therefore, it is not surprising that sometimes some of the prospective and practicing teachers' ideas in language learning do not match.

Regarding exploring the possible differences between male and female practicing teachers about five components of BALLI scale, there were not any significant differences between them. It can be concluded that the males and females school teachers and language institute teachers were somehow like-minded about language learning beliefs including the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language learning aptitude, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectation conceptions.

This study showed evidence that the school and language institute teachers shared some common beliefs about language learning according to the foreign language aptitude, the nature and the difficulty of language learning, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectation ideas. No conclusions about the relationship between school and language institute teachers' beliefs may be drawn because no studies till now have reported detailed evidence of such relationship.

The findings of this study can be used for some practical applications and suggestions for those involved in teaching or designing higher education courses. Like other studies regarding language learning beliefs, it can help second or foreign language teachers increase their students' language learning capability. Also, the results of this study help the prospective teachers become good teachers of English.

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