

آراء الأساتذة والطلبة في كلية العلوم الاجتماعية بجامعة الكويت حول تعلم اللغة الأجنبية

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ملخص: تلقي هذه الدراسة الضوء على الأفكار والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة للطلاب والمعلمين في كلية العلوم الاجتماعية بجامعة الكويت فيما يتعلق بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وقد تمت الدراسة في شهري فبراير ومارس من العام الجامعي 2014/2015. اتبعت الدراسة المنهجية المسحية الاجتماعية كونها دراسة وصفية اجتماعية. تركز الدراسة على أوجه التشابه والاختلاف وكذلك تأثير اختلاف الجنس على تلك الأفكار والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة. تم اعتماد استبانة مستوحاة من فكرة الباحثة هورويتز وتعديلاتها (1985 و 1987 و 1988)، أو ما يعرف اختصاراً باسم (BALLI) أو (مخزون الأفكار والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة المتعلقة بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية). تم توزيع الاستبانة على كل من طلاب وأساتذة كلية العلوم الاجتماعية بجامعة الكويت. تنوعت أسئلة الاستبانة؛ حيث تناولت الموضوعات الآتية: طبيعة تعلم اللغة، والمحفزات والتوقعات في تعلم اللغة، وصعوبات تعلم اللغة، والاختلافات بين الجنسين، وأهلية تعلم لغة أجنبية، وإستراتيجيات التواصل والتعلم. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب والمعلمين يتبنون أفكاراً وآراء واعتقادات مسبقة مختلفة بهذا الشأن، وقد تم رصد 16 متغيراً جوهرياً في الآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة من بين 28 بنداً من بنود الاستبانة بمعيار تغير قدره ($P < .05$). كما تظهر الاختلافات بين الجنسين تأثيراً واضحاً على الأفكار والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة للطلاب. يعزى الاختلاف بين الأفكار

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والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة للطلاب والأساتذة إلى حالة الإحباط والرفض المبطن للأنشطة ومهارات التدريس غير الملائمة بالإضافة إلى فقدان الدافعية. تم إعطاء الطلاب والأساتذة المجال لتحديد وتقييم أفكارهم وآرائهم واعتقاداتهم المسبقة فيما يتعلق بتعلم اللغة، ولذلك أصبح من الممكن كشف عدم التطابق ومعالجته. قام كل من كريستيان وكراهنريك (1986) بتأييد فكرة أن الأفكار والآراء والاعتقادات المسبقة التي يحملها الدارسون عن اللغة تعتبر أساس رؤية ذات فائدة لتعلم اللغة، ولاسيما عند دمجها مع تحليل نشاط المتعلم وسلوك المعلم.

المصطلحات الأساسية: السلوك، الاختلافات بين الجنسين، الدافعية والتوقعات، استراتيجيات التعلم والتواصل، الرفض المبطن.

The Beliefs of Teachers and Students about Foreign Language Learning in the Faculty of Social Sciences - Kuwait University

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Abstract: This research, carried out in February and March of the academic year 2014/2015, sheds light on the beliefs of both students and teachers in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Kuwait University regarding learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Since the research is a social survey, it is classified as a social descriptive study. The focus of the study was on the similarities and differences between these beliefs as well as the influence of gender on these beliefs. The study comprised two samples of 168 students and 13 teachers. A questionnaire based on Horwitz's BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) of 1985, 1987, 1988 and its modifications, together with a demographic questionnaire, were given to the two samples of students and teachers. The questions varied in their scope and covered the following: the characteristics of foreign language learning, the learners' motivations and expectations, the difficulty of language learning, gender differences, foreign language aptitude, and learning and communication strategies. The results of the study show that students and teachers have different sets of beliefs, where substantial variables concerning beliefs were detected on 16 out of 28 items ($P < .05$). The differences in gender obviously show an influence on students' beliefs. The findings suggest that the differences in students' and teachers' expectations were attributed to the students' state of frustration, inherent refusal to activities, in appropriately focused study skills, and lack of motivation. Students and teachers were given the chance to identify and assess their own individual beliefs about language learning; therefore, it became possible to reveal and address any mismatches. Christian and Krahnke (1986) supported the idea that the beliefs language learners hold constitute a beneficial basis of insight

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into language learning, particularly in the case of combination with the analysis of both the learner's activity and teacher's behavior.

Key words: Behavior, Gender Differences, Motivations and Expectations, Learning and Communication Strategies, Inherent Refusal..

Introduction

People have certain beliefs about how languages are learned. Language learners face such notions on a daily basis. They vary in their beliefs on the duration of time required to learn a language: some believe that one hour a day is enough to master a language; some think that females are better language learners, while others find that children are capable of learning languages faster than adults. Hence, these popular beliefs about language learning leave an impact on all aspects of language teaching as a profession. Some sets of beliefs to classroom situations, pedagogical decisions, and instructional practices are consciously or unconsciously applied by curriculum designers, program managers, teacher educators, teachers and students. According to Kern 1995, the belief systems that both ESL teachers and learners hold are essential to our understanding of the language learning process at the higher level (i.e. university or college level). This research paper investigates the beliefs of ESL teachers and students about foreign language learning from three English language programs as well as the effect of gender on such beliefs. In an effort to predict potential domains of difficulty, the objective of this comparison and investigation carried out by this research was to ascertain predetermined beliefs about what is engaged in language learning and teaching. Examining these differences and the influences of gender on such beliefs about language learning can help shed light on the choice of instructional practices that might be appropriate for different individuals.

Background

To have a better understanding of language learning as well as identifying dispositional tendencies that may have an influence on language acquisition, numerous researchers have worked for more than three decades to identify the beliefs about language learning. Among the many researchers who worked in this field are Wenden (1986, 1987) and Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988). These two researchers identified the kinds of beliefs held by language learners. They also discussed the influence of such beliefs on the behavior of language learners. For example, Wenden

(1986) focused on the beliefs of second language learners by asking the learners about their own behavior in identified contexts. According to Wenden (1987), language learners hold certain beliefs that are reflected in their approaches to language learning. Moreover, Wenden (1987) believed that language learners were more vulnerable to lose confidence, motivation, or interest in studying if they were put in a learning atmosphere that opposed their beliefs. Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988), the pioneer researcher who worked on large populations of students and their beliefs about language learning, stated that:

Although student beliefs about language learning would seem to have obvious relevance to the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in and satisfaction with their language classes, they have remained relatively unexplored. (p. 283)

Horwitz not only focused on the beliefs of language learners and teachers but she also developed her research to include beliefs about language learning in general. To achieve this goal, Horwitz educated beliefs in many stages, including the use of free-recall tasks and focus on teachers and students of English and other languages. Based on these beliefs, Horwitz developed what is known as BALLI, or "Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory." This method created by Horwitz exceeded the classification of beliefs established by other researchers, such as Wenden and Christison (1986, 1987) and Krahne (1986). Horwitz identified five domains of beliefs generally held by people about second language learning. These beliefs involve: **(A)** the characteristics of foreign language learning, **(B)** the learners' motivations and expectations, **(C)** the difficulty of language learning, **(D)** gender differences, **(E)** foreign language aptitude, and **(F)** learning and communication strategies.

In 1988, Horwitz conducted a study on the beliefs of junior foreign language students in which she applied the BALLI. She found that students held beliefs that are generally conflicting with the fundamental pedagogical tenets of the institution. Likewise, Horwitz applied the BALLI on 32 ESL learners taking an intermediate intensive course in English. She found that some beliefs, but not all, were harmonious with the communicative approach regarding its techniques and activities. However, Horwitz also found that some beliefs were in contrast with the principles of the communicative approach adopted in language learning (Horwitz, 1987). Moreover, Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) proposed several

ways by which students' beliefs might affect their learning. Among these ways were the students' reactions to particular teaching methods, the students' evaluation of their learning progress, and their approach to language learning. Hence, Horwitz suggested taking into account the differences between classroom activities on one hand, and beliefs on the other hand. She also recommended several methods to deal with the variable students' beliefs.

The following question arises from Horwitz's (1985, 1987, 1988) suggestion that students and teachers might hold different views about language classrooms: To what degree, or in what ways are teachers' and students' beliefs about language learning different or similar? Kern (1995) was among the researchers who tried to answer this question. By applying the BALLI, Kern investigated the beliefs of American teachers and students regarding language learning. The study took place in the department of foreign languages at a public university. Kern wrote:

When the analysis focuses on group tendencies, students and teachers appear to be quite similar in terms of their beliefs about language learning. When the analysis examines individual responses, more differences between students and teachers come to light. (p. 77)

Students and teachers can have more realistic goals, Kern argues, if they have awareness of the beliefs they bring with them to the classroom. Furthermore, Kern thinks that beliefs are able to "shed light on our students' frustration and difficulties, and can allow us to provide more thoughtful (and ultimately more effective) guidance to our students in their efforts to learn a foreign language" (p. 82).

There is very little research dedicated to identifying the differences between the beliefs of ESL teachers and students. Nonetheless, Lutz (1990) and McCargar (1993) had some related studies in which they investigated the relationship between the teacher and the student. Lutz, for example, compared the norms and expectations of Japanese graduates with those of their American teachers. In his analysis of the interviews and questionnaires, Lutz discovered several differences. McCargar, on the other hand, focused on the role of expectations of ESL teachers and students. Using the Survey of Educational Expectations, McCargar noticed considerable differences in expectations between male and female teachers and students. In spite of the fact that these

studies suggest that students and teachers hold different pedagogical implications, there is a gap in ESL teachers' and students' beliefs. This research paper tries to fill this gap.

Gender plays a considerable role in the use of the BALLI. Rancer and Baukus (1984) conducted research in a form of questionnaire on 138 participants. The results showed that gender affected language learning beliefs, but it was not the only factor that had powerful effect on arguing. Other studies related to strategies of communication and learning - which are subcategory of the BALLI- identified some differences in the use of learning strategies that were attributed to gender. In their investigation of the gender-related effect on language learning, Oxford, Nyikos and Ehrman (1989), for instance, found that female students were more likely to use functional language strategies in certain situations. According to Elbaum, Berg, and Dodd (1993), the strategies of functional learning "involve activities that use the language for communicative purposes, such as conversing with native speakers" (Elbaum, Berg, & Dodd, (1993), p. 320). Generally speaking, women showed a higher tendency to engage themselves in more repeated applications of strategies related to language as a social behavior.

The current research paper compares (identifying similarities) and contrasts (identifying differences) the beliefs of ESL teachers and their students as well as the effect of gender on those beliefs. Thus, the questions this paper aims to address are as follows:

- 1 - What are the predominant beliefs about language learning of both teachers and students in Academic English Language Courses?
- 2 - Are there any differences between the beliefs of ESL learners and teachers?
- 3 - Does gender affect learners' and teachers' beliefs about foreign language learning?

Target Population:

The number of participants in this study was a hundred sixty-eight participants from courses of three different levels of the English language program in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Kuwait University. The three levels of the English Language Program are 090, 141 and 142 which vary between 5 and 10 contact hours a week of intensive English.

The distribution of the 168 students participating in the study was as

follows: 96 (59%) were from the 090 program, 32(18%) students were from the 141 program, and 40 (23%) were from the 142 program; the age of the students ranged from 18 to 27 with a mean age of 21.5 years. For the gender distribution of the students, about 44% were female, and 56% were male. The number of students who mentioned that they had either lived in or travelled to an English speaking country before was 68 students or about 40.5%. Only 7 students had lived in an English speaking country for more than nine months. The level of the students and their programs, if compared to TOEFL scores, was 430 or higher. This level is considered a proficiency level appropriate for students to complete the BALLI in English.

The number of academic staff or teacher participants was 13. They were distributed as follows: 7 teachers (53%) were from the 090 program, 3 teachers (24%) were from the 141 program, and 3 teachers (24%) were from the 142 program. About 48% of the teachers were female and 58% were male. Years of experience ranged from 9 to 40 years. Four of them obtained their degrees in the eighties, 3 completed their degrees in the nineties, and six obtained their degrees after the year 2000. The degrees were either related to TESOL or ELT closely-related fields.

Procedure:

The students as well as the teachers were given either the student version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) or the teacher version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1985). A domestic questionnaire was also completed by the participants. The questionnaires were distributed by hand (hard copy), and teachers and students were given enough time to answer the questionnaires at home. The number of the items in each version varied: the students' version contained 34 simplified items, while the teachers' version contained 28 items. The beliefs about language learning involved: **(A)** the characteristics of foreign language learning, **(B)** the learners' motivations and expectations, **(C)** the difficulty of language learning, **(D)** gender differences, **(E)** foreign language aptitude, and **(F)** learning and communication strategies. With the exception of two items, all the items were rated by a Likert scale of five points: *Strongly agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly disagree*. For the items that were not rated by Likert Scale, two other five-point scales were used. The first scale measures the level of difficulty of the target language according to the

following points: *A very easy language*, *An easy language*, *a language with a medium difficulty*, *A difficult language*, and *A very difficult language*. The second scale, on the other hand, measures the respondents' opinions with respect to the time required to learn a foreign language; the five points of this scale are as follows: *Less than one year*, *from one to two years*, *from three to five years*, *from five to ten years*, and *You cannot learn a language in one hour a day*. There was no composite score because there were no right/wrong answers as the BALLI was not designed to evaluate opinions about the beliefs related to language learning.

All questionnaires were administrated in English during class times. Teachers were free to fill in the questionnaires later and give them back to the researchers. The students and teachers identities were not revealed to the researchers.

Data Analysis:

There is a fundamental difference between the data analysis of this study and that of other researchers who used the BALLI. This research, for example, differs from that of Yang (1993), Truitt (1995), and Oh (1996) in the classification of the data. It is common to use parametric statistical tests for data analysis when Likert scales are used. Likert-scale data are interval level data since parametric tests are designed for interval level data. The interval level of measurement "has the property that distances between the categories are defined in terms of fixed and equal valued units" (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975, p.5). On the other hand, the distance between the items of Likert Scale should be somehow disregarded. The reason for this action is attributed to the fact that the distance between *Disagree* and *Strongly disagree* is not necessarily the same as the distance between *Disagree* and *Neutral*. Instead, the researchers considered that each category in Likert Scale has only a position that is relative to the other categories. Hence, BALLI data are considered ordinal level rather than interval level.

A descriptive analysis in the form of percentages was implemented in this study. Since Likert Scale data was ordinal in nature, standard variations and means were not utilized in the data analysis. Instead, a modal category was applied, which is the category with the highest number of responses for each BALLI item. Two statistical tests were used to identify the comparisons between teachers' and students' responses.

(Paolillo et al., 2006). These two tests were Kendall's tau-b Test and Cramer's V Test. Kendall's tau-b Test is used to calculate the congruent and disparate pairs. The purpose of this use is to signal the directionality of substantial results when comparing teachers with learners. The Cramer's V Test, on the other hand, shows the information that exposes the amount of strength of the link between variables. The final statistical number is shown as a positive number as the majority of pairs is organized in the same direction on both variables. On the other hand, the final statistical number is shown as negative number as the majority of pairs is organized in different directions on both variables. All tests of significance in this research study are set at the .05 level.

A two-tailed Spearman rank-order correlation test was used in this research to quantify the degree that students and teachers hold about language learning along with the effect of gender, beliefs, and status.

Results and Discussion

Out of the total 28 questionnaire items completed by both students and teachers, 16 items showed substantial differences between students and teachers. The five BALLI subcategories showed differences. The Appendix represents strong points of relationship in disparity percentage, estimated importance, and the directionality of the comparisons of teachers and students on all BALLI items with a substantial outcome. The main points of each subcategory are summarized below.

(A) Characteristics of Foreign Language Learning

Teachers and students have different views regarding the nature of language learning (Table 1). Although teachers and students agreed on item number 23 "Learning a foreign language is best in the foreign country", students have higher agreement as they chose "Strongly agree". In their responses to *Agree* and *Strongly agree*, teachers and students differed in their responses regarding how much they put emphasis on grammar (3% vs. 42%), translation (2% vs. 21%), and vocabulary (2% vs. 55%). Since students mostly believe that language learning highly depends on memorizing vocabulary lists and grammatical rules, they exert much effort and spend most of their time focusing on vocabulary and grammar at the expense of other language skills (Horwitz, 1988). Therefore, it can be easily concluded that the students'

reliance on memorizing grammar and vocabulary might contradict with the communicative approach activities adopted in class.

Regarding translation, however, students were divided between *Disagree* and *Strongly disagree* as the majority of students 54% chose either *Disagree* or *Strongly disagree*, while the minority 25% chose *Agree* or *Strongly agree*. According to many language acquisition experts, second language fluency is considered a fundamental process if textual or spoken language absorbs meaning directly (Krashen & Terrell, 1993). In this case, translation will be considered as an impediment to acquisition because it might change an important focus of language learning (Horwitz, 1988).

Students focus on structural components in language learning more than teachers do. There are significant differences on items 7, 12, and 18. Consequently, teachers face impediments to communicative activities, and students might believe that their needs are not fulfilled.

Table One
Responses to Characteristics of Foreign Language Learning

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
7*.	Translation from the native language is the most critical part in learning a foreign language.	S	1	3	22	33	6	16	Agree
		T	0	23	69	8	20	0	Agree
8*.	Language learning is different from learning other subjects.	S	1	4	19	27	1	22	Agree
		T	0	0	9	6	38	26	Agree
12*.	Learning grammar is the most critical part in learning a foreign language.	S	1	4	21	34	5	17	Neutral
		T	0	25	70	9	22	0	Dis-agree
18*.	Learning vocabulary is the most critical part in learning a foreign language.	S	1	4	10	28	39	18	Agree
		T	0	34	43	18	42	0	Dis-agree

Cont/ Table One
Responses to Characteristics of Foreign Language Learning

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
23*.	Learning a foreign language is best in the foreign country	S	1	5	7	7	21	65	Strongly Agree
		T	0	0	5	7	49	41	Agree
27.	Knowing the culture of a foreign language helps learn that language.	S	1	2	6	25	36	31	Agree
		T	0	0	9	21	65	9	Agree
<i>Note.</i> Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students'beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.									
'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i> , 2 = <i>Disagree</i> , 3 = <i>Neutral</i> , 4 = <i>Agree</i> , 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> . S = Students. T = Teachers.									
* Indicates a significant finding at p For details, see the Appendix.									

(B) The Learners' Motivations and Expectations

In table 2, only two questions were present in the subcategory of the BALLI in both questionnaire versions of teachers and students. However, both answers showed significant differences.

Students were expected to agree (79%) with item number 15 - According to the people in my country, speaking foreign languages is important - teachers, on the other hand, totally disagreed (88% either chose *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree*). In the second case, teachers and students disagreed on the relation between English proficiency and good job opportunities for students. About 41% of the teachers chose *Neutral*, while 52% of the students chose *Strongly Agree*. According to Gardner & Lambert, 1972, motivation is decisive in the development of second language learning. Therefore, teachers rely on this fact and accordingly

plan for their classes to meet their students' cooperation. The findings of this research showed that teachers appeared to be unaware of the degree to which students perceive learning English to be important for developing their job opportunities.

Some other results related to motivations and expectations show that 76% of the students chose *Strongly Agree*; others, 16%, chose *Agree* that they would like to learn to speak English well. Instrumental motivation seems to be slightly higher than integrative motivation. About 88% of the students said that they enjoy practicing English with native speakers, while 77% said that they would like to know people who speak English as a native language.

Table Two
Responses to the Learners' Motivations and Expectations

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
3.	I want to get acquainted with native English speakers.	S	3	4	4	14	31	43	Strongly Agree
		--	--	--	--	--	--	----	-----
4.	I want to learn to speak English well.	S	2	5	0	2	16	81	Strongly Agree
		T							
6*.	Learning English increases my chance of having a good job opportunity.	S	3	4	4	9	36	49	Strongly Agree
		T	5	0	14	42	38	10	Neutral
11.	I want to learn English to speak with English native speakers.	S	1	1	7	17	43	30	Agree
		T							
15*.	According to the people in my country, speaking foreign languages is important.	S*	0	4	4	16	44	38	Agree
		T	0	46	44	14	0	0	Strongly Disagree

Cont/ Table Two
Responses to the Learners' Motivations and Expectations

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.									
'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i>, 2 = <i>Disagree</i>, 3 = <i>Neutral</i>, 4 = <i>Agree</i>, 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i>. S = Students. T = Teachers.									
* Indicates a significant finding at p For details, see the Appendix.									

(C)The Difficulty of Language Learning

Both teachers and students agreed on supporting the concept of language learning difficulty hierarchy. Both said that some languages are more difficult to learn than other languages. The findings of this study are incorporate with earlier studies using the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987; Kern, 1995; Yang, 1993). However, teachers and students held different opinions about how difficult it is to learn English. Most students considered English as a language of medium difficulty, while most teachers held different opinions: they believe that English is a difficult language. In their responses to item number 20 (See Table 3), students' responses were as follows: 20% believe that they need one to two years to learn a language, 30% believe that they need from three to five years to learn a language, and 20 % believe that they need five to ten years to learn a language, and 16% chose *Agree* with "*You cannot learn a language in one hour a day*, but 47.5% of the teachers believe that a learner needs from five to ten years to learn a language. (See Table 3)

Students' beliefs about the difficulty of learning a language is decisive in the progress of their expectations and dedication to learning English (Horwitz, 1988):

When students rate the task of language learning as being relatively

easy and rapidly accomplished, they are likely to become frustrated when their progress is not rapid. On the other hand, a belief that it will take an extraordinary amount of time to learn a language could be discouraging and cause them to make only minimal efforts. (p. 286)

It was surprising to find that the students' beliefs about the difficulty of learning English did not negatively impact their positive view for achievement. Most students showed confidence that they would learn English properly. However, teachers showed no surprise when their students did not develop in language learning as rapidly as the students expected.

Table Three
Responses to the Difficulty of Language Learning

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
1.	In foreign language learning, reading and writing skills are easier than speaking and listening.	S	1	11	21	29	29	12	Neutral
		T	3	5	42	30	15	0	Disagree
10.	In foreign language learning, speaking is easier than listening.	S	1	16	29	29	20	6	Neutral
		T	0	25	50	22	6	0	Disagree
20.	How long does it take for language learners to master a foreign language if they learn it one hour a day?	S	1	8	20	31	18	19	3-5 years
		T	0	0	5	7	49	44	5-10 years
30.	It is easy for me to learn to speak a foreign language very fast.	S	0	3	4	19	40	34	Strongly Agree
		T							
*31.	English is (1=very difficult. 5 = very easy)	S	1	8	28	51	14	2	Medium difficulty
		T	4	15	59	26	0	0	Difficult

Cont/ Table Three
Responses to the Difficulty of Language Learning

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
32.	Some languages are easier to learn than others.	S	0	6	15	18	32	29	Agree
		T	0	10	5	14	6	33	Agree
<i>Note.</i> Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.									
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* Indicates a significant finding at p For details, see the Appendix.									

(D) Gender Differences

A nonparametric correlated analysis utilizing a two-tailed Spearman rank-order correlation test was applied in this study. The reason behind this was to quantify the intensity in which the variables of gender and beliefs about language learning of students and teachers varied. The results show that males and females have some differences in beliefs regarding language learning.

In general, males tend to have higher ratings of their abilities than females. For example, male students responded more positively about their own abilities in learning foreign languages (item 19). About 24% of the male students chose *Agree*, while only 9% of the female students did, as $r_s = -.22$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Similarly, male students (48%) chose *Agree* more than female students did (22%) regarding the ability of learning foreign languages in their own country (item 29), as $r_s = -.21$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Moreover, males and females disagreed on how long it

takes one to learn a foreign language if he/she studies for one hour a day (item 20). In their answers to item number 20, male students chose either one to two years or three to five years. Female students, on the other hand, chose either five to ten years or it is impossible to learn a foreign language an hour a day, as $r_s = -.29$ ($n = 154$, $p < .05$). These findings are derived from the students' beliefs about their own abilities in learning a foreign language as well as the abilities of people in their country in learning foreign languages. Another interpretation of such differences of the origin of gender differences in beliefs is represented by Baker, who thinks that the differences are "presumably located in the socio-cultural behaviors of the two genders" (Baker, 1992, p.42).

It has also been noticed that men are more likely to support the beliefs that refer to a restrictive view of language learning. For example, male students strongly agreed (46%) twice as female students did (23%) in their responses to item number 28 about mastering pronunciation, as $r_s = -.16$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Males' preference for mastering pronunciation might show their communication concerns in communicative classrooms. Females, on the other hand, tend to prefer the communicative approach adopted in Kuwait. Again, in their responses to item number 12 (about the role of grammar in learning a foreign language), males and females differed in their beliefs as the number of males was double the number of females in this concern, as $r_s = -.17$ ($n = 155$, $p < .05$). The findings indicate that males are more likely to suffer in the communicative approach adopted in Kuwait University.

According to some other findings, females are interested in the social aspects of language learning, while males are not. For example, in their responses to item number 3, about 93% of the female students chose *Strongly Agree* compared to 72% of males, $r_s = -.28$ ($n = 153$, $p < .05$). This result is consistent with the belief that females prefer activities that utilize language for a communicative purpose (Oxford et al., 1989). Moreover, more females (37%) agreed with item number 10 - It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language - than males (25%) did, as $r_s = -.17$ ($n = 155$, $p < .05$). This result shows that females are more interested in receptive skills than they are with productive skills. There are some previous studies that support this idea as Farhady (1982) and Eisenstein (1982) who found that females tended to score better than males in listening comprehension tests as well as dialect discrimination tasks.

Finally, females tend to have limited interest or value in practice on cassettes and computers as listed in item number 9. Males prefer these devices three times more than females do - 8% of females versus 26% of males, as $r_s = -.24$ ($n = 155$, $p < .05$). The interpretation of this finding is represented in the fact that females consider language as a communicative means. Therefore, they believe that technology is not useful for language learning as males do.

Regarding male and female teachers, only one gender difference was identified. More female teachers chose *Strongly Disagree* than male teachers did in their responses to item number 26 - You must not say a word in a foreign language unless you can say it properly. This means that more female teachers tend to prefer communicative language than male teachers do.

Table Four
Male and Female Responses to Gender Differences

No.	Item	Females (n = 64)	Males (n = 91)
3.	I want to get acquainted with native English speakers.	93% Agree or Strongly Agree	71% Agree or Strongly Agree
9.	Technological devices, such as computers and cassettes, are important for practicing a foreign language.	8% Strongly Agree	26% Strongly Agree
10.	In foreign language learning, speaking is easier than listening.	37 % Disagree	25% Disagree
12.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	22% Agree or Strongly Agree	46% Agree or Strongly Agree
19.	I have special ability for learning languages.	9% Agree or Strongly Agree	24% Agree or Strongly Agree
20.	How long does it take for language learners to master a foreign language if they learn it one hour a day?	55% 5-10 years or You cannot learn a language in one hour a day	61% 1-2 years or 3-5 years

Cont/ Table Four
Male and Female Responses to Gender Differences

No.	Item	Females (n = 64)	Males (n = 91)
28.	Mastering pronunciation or accent of a foreign language is very important.	23% Strongly Agree	46% Strongly Agree
29.	People of my country are good language learners.	22% Agree or Strongly Agree	48% Agree or Strongly Agree
<i>Note.</i> Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.			

(E) Foreign Language Aptitude

The students involved in this study were aware of the presence of foreign language aptitude. Most students (81%) chose *Agree* to item number 34 - Children are faster foreign language learners than adults, while about 68% of the students chose *Agree* with item number 33 - Some people are more talented in learning foreign languages than others. Among those who answered that some people have special ability to learn languages about 15% said that they themselves had that ability; about 30% Disagreed; and about half of the students chose *Neutral*.

The results of students' and teachers' responses show significant differences in items 2, 5, 25, and 29. For example, teachers either chose *Neutral* or *Disagree* for item number 29 - People from my country are good foreign language learners, while students somehow supported this idea (36%). Another example of the differences between students and teachers is represented in item number 25 - Learning a foreign language helps learn another foreign language. Teachers agreed more than students. For item number 5 - People who can speak more than one language are very intelligent- teachers tended not to link between learning a language and intelligence (10% only), while half of the

students agreed. Based upon the previous findings, it seems that teachers and students hypothesize some different aspects regarding foreign language aptitude.

Finally, teachers and students have contradictory beliefs about the idea of the ability of everyone to learn a foreign language. Most teachers (62%) disagreed, while 54% of the students agreed. This finding is encouraging because it shows that students of English have positive beliefs about learning a foreign language.

Table Five
Responses to Foreign Language Aptitude

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
2*.	People are equal in their capabilities in learning foreign languages.	S	3	4	19	20	36	19	Agree
		T	5	10	50	13	17	9	Dis-agree
5*.	People who can speak more than one language are very intelligent.	S	1	5	14	29	31	18	Agree
		T	4	10	19	49	10	5	Neutral
16.	Females are better language learners than males.	S	1	21	22	31	21	10	Neutral
		T	6	29	22	31	10	0	Strongly Disagree
19.	I have a special capability to learn foreign languages.	S	0	6	25	50	20	1	Neutral
24.	People with mathematic and scientific capabilities are good at learning languages.	S	1	28	35	22	11	5	Agree
		T	5	34	26	30	5	0	Strongly Disagree
25.*	Learning a foreign language helps learn another foreign language.	S	1	7	15	27	40	11	Neutral
		T	0	0	0	17	55	29	Agree

Cont/ Table Five
Responses to Foreign Language Aptitude

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
29.*	People from my country are good foreign language learners.	S	0	5	18	38	31	11	Agree
		T	3	14	31	58	0	0	Neutral
33.	Some people are more talented in learning foreign languages than others.	S	2	4	4	23	48	21	Agree
		T	0	9	4	12	60	24	Agree
34.	Children are faster foreign language learners than adults.	S	0	5	5	10	23	59	Strongly Agree
		T	0	5	5	13	11	55	Strongly Agree
<i>Note.</i> Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.									
'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i> , 2 = <i>Disagree</i> , 3 = <i>Neutral</i> , 4 = <i>Agree</i> , 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> . S= Students. T= Teachers.									
* Indicates a significant finding at p For details, see the Appendix.									

(F) Learning and Communication Strategies

The sample students showed some general support of certain practices needed for taking part in communicative activities, such as guessing. The fundamental difference between students and teachers on item number 26 - You must not say a word in a foreign language unless you can say it properly - is represented in teachers' choice of *Strongly Agree* (85%) for 40% of students. Likewise, teachers and students significantly differed again in their responses to item number 21 - Guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary is acceptable in practicing

a foreign language. Teachers preferred *Strongly Agree* more than students did (65% vs. 27%). Students who chose *Disagree* constituted only 12%. Hence, based upon these findings one can conclude that students of foreign languages prefer communicative classroom activities.

Another significant difference between students and teachers is shown in item number 28 - Mastering the pronunciation / accent in learning a foreign language is very important. Only 3% of the teachers chose *Agree*, while 78% of the students chose either *Agree* or *Disagree*. Students' responses to items number 26 and 28 need more investigation in the future about the strategies students adopt to overcome the pronunciation difficulties they encounter while speaking. This is because the results show apparent paradox: students believe that it is important to speak with excellent pronunciation or accent although it is acceptable if they are unable to say some words correctly. However, some students (13%) believe that they should not say anything unless they can correctly say it; others think that it is not a good idea to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. As a result, the students' emphasis on being correct will most likely impede their acceptance of the communicative approach adopted in many English language programs (Horwitz, 1987). Therefore, teachers should be aware of this issue when they prepare their lessons so that students are guaranteed to take part in the activities that seem in contradiction with their favorite strategies for communication and language learning.

The inconsistency between teachers and students regarding pronunciation mastery needs some attention. Kern (1995) tackled this issue when he said "Pronunciation is not emphasized in many teacher education programs, nor is it frequently discussed in the recent professional literature. For learners, however, it remains an important goal" (p. 77.). Therefore, many questions arise: "Is it a good idea if we teach what we believe about both language learning and students' needs?"; and "Is it a good idea if we teach what they (students) need regarding language learning?"

Table Six
Responses to Learning and Communication Strategies

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
9*.	Technological devices, such as computers and cassettes, are important for practicing a foreign language.	S	1	5	11	28	40	18	Agree
		T	0	9	18	50	26	0	Neutral
13.	Technological devices, such as cassettes and computers are important in practicing a foreign language.	S	1	14	34	30	18	6	Dis-agree
		T	0	33	35	25	9	0	Agree
14.	I do not have the courage to speak with others.	S	0	18	29	27	24	6	Neutral
17.	Practicing and repetition are important in learning a foreign language.	S	0	5	2	6	40	53	Strongly Agree
		T	0	0	0	5	58	38	Agree
21*.	Guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary is acceptable in practicing a foreign language.	S	0	4	9	11	45	25	Agree
		T	4	0	0	9	23	66	Strongly Agree
22.	I enjoy speaking with English native speakers.	S	0	4	5	8	40	47	Strongly Agree
		T							
26*.	You must not say a word in a foreign language unless you know you can say it properly.	S	0	39	30	12	9	4	Strongly Disagree
		T	0	88	15	0	0	0	Strongly Disagree

Cont/ Table Six
Responses to Learning and Communication Strategies

No.	Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal Category
*28.	Mastering the pronunciation / accent in learning a foreign language is very important.	S	0	5	6	16	45	35	Agree
		T	5	7	46	41	2	0	Disagree
<i>Note.</i> Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.									
'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i> , 2 = <i>Disagree</i> , 3 = <i>Neutral</i> , 4 = <i>Agree</i> , 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> . S = Students. T = Teachers.									
* Indicates a significant finding at p For details, see the Appendix.									

Limitations

Like any other study, this study has some limitations that should be considered when analyzing the results. First of all, this study is based on responses of 168 male and female students and 13 teachers from three English language courses in Kuwait University, two credit courses (courses 141 and 142), and one pass/fail course or remedial course (course 090). Although the characteristics of both male and female students and teachers are almost the same - all students are Kuwait citizens, while teachers are mostly Kuwaitis - the generalization of results might be limited. However, with some caution, it can be expected that these findings can be applied to other English language courses in other faculties in Kuwait University with similar student and teacher population and background as well as similar instructional methods.

Another limitation can be related to the validity of evaluating beliefs and attitudes via a questionnaire. According to Kern (1995), there are always some methodological problems of objectivity, sampling, and

validity in all questionnaires. For example, there might be some difficulties for students - or at least for some - in the BALLI to understand well so that their choices are influenced. Moreover, due to the characteristics of self-report data, the findings are based upon the participants' willingness to correctly and truthfully answer the items of the questionnaire. Therefore, interviews might be more valid than questionnaires.

A third limitation of this study is represented in the BALLI. Although BALLI is acceptable in assessing the students' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding language learning, the results should be carefully interpreted. However, the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sets of beliefs applied in this study should be questioned. The BALLI provides no data regarding all contemporary issues in foreign language pedagogy. In addition, some BALLI questions seem to address more than one belief. For example, items number 1, 9, and 17 address more than one aspect.

This research suggests some possible connections between behavior and beliefs, but what the data can provide is only hypotheses. There should be some more research about the link between beliefs and behavior.

Implications

To Language Teachers

According to many researchers, beliefs cannot be disregarded when talking about language learning. A reasonable application of beliefs research would be to help students characterize and evaluate their own individual beliefs by giving them the chance to express their beliefs in belief assessments like the BALLI. In this concern, according to Wenden (1986), when learners examine and evaluate their beliefs in their activities they will be more likely aware of their changes and of their expectations regarding language learning. Moreover, Horwitz (1987) noticed that some English language teachers apply the BALLI when they start their classes in order to stimulate the learners to develop more efficient methods in learning a foreign language. In this regard Horwitz says that teachers "report that this discussion not only helped their students clear up some misconceptions about language learning, but also that the activity was one of their most successful discussions as students (and teachers) were vitally interested in the topic" (p. 126). Moreover, Horwitz thinks that students' beliefs usually rely on limited experience and

knowledge. Therefore, she suggested that "The teacher's most effective course may well be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information" (p. 126). Some other researchers, such as Wenden (1987), supported Horwitz. Wenden, states:

The beliefs listed by students... point to learning-teaching issues that classroom teachers must confront and resolve. They provide us with learners' views on methodological questions and can be a source of insight into their learning difficulties and to the overt and hidden resistance to some of the activities we organize to help them learn. (p. 113)

Therefore, teachers are required to understand the fact that students should know that language is not vocabulary and grammar only, and they are not requested at all to master pronunciation or speak with perfect accent. Hence, since traditional methods of teaching influence students' beliefs about grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation as they are evaluated in language classrooms, it will be very difficult to change these beliefs. Horwitz (1988) suggested that "teachers must show students by example and instructional practice the holistic nature of language learning and reward students accordingly" (p. 292).

To Teacher Trainers

Teacher educators, or trainers, are requested to give future teachers the opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs about language learning. This can be achieved by administering some form of belief assessment. Horwitz (1985) says:

It is a commonly neglected truism that the students in a methods class have preconceived ideas about language learning and teaching. These preconceptions inhibit the prospective teacher's receptiveness to the information and ideas presented in the methods class particularly when the perspectives are not in consonance with the student's own experience as a language learner. (p. 333)

Future Research

In order to make the results of this research paper more reliable and generalizable, the study should be repeated in some other English programs in other faculties of Kuwait University as well as some other universities in Kuwait (i.e. private universities). Moreover, interviews and observations can help describe students' and teachers' beliefs about

language learning more accurately and comprehensively. Finally, future studies require many variables to tackle the extent of the complexity of the beliefs of teachers and students. Researchers, for example, may expand their research to include anxiety, motivation, acquisition, cognitive style, and the use of learning strategies in order to have a better understanding of such issues that affect language learning.

Appendix

Significance, Strength Value (in %), and Directionality Value for BALLI Items

	Item	Value	Significance
2.	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well.	18.02 -0.247	.001*
5.	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	16.3 -0.223	.013*
6.	If I/students learn English very well, I/they will have better opportunities for a good job.	21.14 -0.336	.000*
7.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning how to translate from the native language.	22.29 -0.393	.000*
8.	Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.	15.55 0.183	.032*
9.	It is important to practice with cassettes, videotapes, or computers.	15.36 -0.206	.040*
12.	The most important part of learning a language is learning the grammar.	22.51 -0.411	.000*
15.	People in my country feel that it is important to speak foreign languages.	26.22 -0.497	.000*
18.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	24.04 -0.435	.000*
21.	It is okay to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.	16.94 0.246	.005*
23.	It is best to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	15.52 -0.115	.034*

Cont/ Significance, Strength Value (in %), and Directionality Value for BALLI Items

	Item	Value	Signifi- cance
25.	It's easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	16.12 0.237	.016*
26.	You shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly.	17.14 -0.272	.003*
28.	It is important to speak a foreign language with excellent pronunciation/ accent.	23.91 -0.433	.000*
29.	People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	16.7 -0.237	.007*
31.	English is (1 = very difficult. 5 = very easy)	16.37' -0.249b	.012*
<i>Note:</i> Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying students' beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), <i>Learner strategies in language learning</i> (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.			
*Cramer's V = top number (strength of relationship/percent-of-variance-explained). 'Kendall's tau-b = bottom number (indicates directionality).			
*P < .05.			

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Submitted: March 2016

Accepted: May 2016

