

‘ELT for a Global World’



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Individual differences

A seminar course for TEFL students

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Language learners' beliefs

Definitions

Victori & Lockhart (1995): „general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of language learning” (p. 224)

Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000): „a set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action” (p. 388)

Why are beliefs important?

It seems that learners' beliefs about themselves and the learning process will influence their success in second language learning (Cotterall, 1999)

What is BALLI?

- An inventory compiled by Horwitz (1987, 1988) that measures various aspects of students' belief system concerning second/foreign language learning.

Beliefs about language learning inventory (BALLI)

Main types of beliefs: (Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory, 1988):

- The **difficulty** of L2 learning in general and the difficulty of learning the target language. E.g.: Some languages are easier to learn than others.
- The role of **language aptitude**. E.g.: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them to learn a foreign language.
- The **nature of language learning**. E.g.: It is better to learn the foreign language in the foreign country.
- Learning and communication **strategies**. E.g.: It is important to review and practice a lot.
- **Motivation** and expectations. E.g.: If I learn to speak this language well, it will help me to get a good job.

Criticism of BALLI

- Not scientifically compiled questionnaire, it is no coincidence that it is not called a questionnaire but an inventory. The instrument is the result of a brainstorming session of 25 teachers.
- Constructs are not always reliable in every context.
- Only two of the many ID variables are represented.

The use of BALLI

In connection with

1. Strategy use (Yang, 1999);
2. Proficiency (Mantle-Bromley, 1995)
3. Culture (Cortazzi, & Jin, 1996; McCarger, 1993; Horwitz, 1999)
4. Gender (Bernat, & Lloyd, 2007; Siebert, 2003; Tercanlioglu, 2005)

Studies in Hungarian contexts I.

Rieger (2009): Based on the BALLI, Hungarian university students' beliefs about English and German were examined. Apart from the language focus, Rieger also investigated the relationship between gender and beliefs.

RESULTS: Significant language- and gender-based differences were found.

LANGUAGE: Importance and difficulty

GENDER: approaches to learning

Studies in Hungarian contexts II.

Kontra (2014): Pre-service teacher trainees' beliefs about language learning were mapped. The investigation occurred within three cohorts, two of which were measured twice at the beginning and at the end of an academic semester.

RESULTS: Consistent results in accordance with current methodologies in language teaching. Change occurred for six items only.

The dynamic view of beliefs

Barcelos & Kalaja (2011, pp. 285–86): beliefs might be fluctuating, complex, ideologically determined, intrinsically related to other affective constructs such as emotions and self-concept, other-oriented, influenced by reflection and related to action in complex ways.

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