

**The Iranian EFL Journal April 2011 Volume 7 Issue 2**

***Iranian EFL Journal***



**ISSN On-line: 1836-8751**

**ISSN Print: 1836-8743**

**The Iranian EFL Journal**

**April 2011**

**Volume 7**

**Issue 2**

**Chief Editors:**

**Dr. Paul Robertson**

**Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh**



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Foreword: Dr. Paul Robertson and Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh</b>	<b>7</b>
2- Introducing Applied ELT as a New Approach in Second / Foreign Language Studies Reza Pishghadam	8 - 14
3- Exploring the Iranian Candidates' Use of Formulaic Sequences in the Writing Module of IELTS Keivan Zahedi and Mohammad Ali Shams	15 - 27
4- An Analysis of Demotivators in English Classes for Iranian university students Masoud Sharififar and Mahboubeh Akbarzadeh	28 - 40
5- What is not working? A study of students' perceptions of problems and concerns over English language learning at Islamic Azad University, Hajarabad Branch Ehsan Ghassemi and Nasser Shahsavari	41 - 52
6- Critical Discourse Analysis in an EFL Classroom Aram R. Sadeghi and Ali Asadi	53 - 67
7- Foreign Language Learners' Processing of Relative Clause Ambiguity: A Relevance Theory Perspective Sima Khezrlou, Ali Akbar Khomejani and Farahani Fateme Layeghi	68 - 80
8- Overt Pronoun Constraint in Persian Seyyed Mohammad Reza Amirian and Reza Bagheri Nevisi	81 - 88
9- The Effect of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation on Iranian EFL Learners' Language Learning Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani and Seyedeh Masoumeh Ahmadi	89 - 97



- 10- A study on Iranian University Students' and Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning  
Sanaz Ghobadi Mohebi and Ebrahim Khodadady 98 - 110
- 11- Refusals in English and Persian: A pragmatolinguistic investigation  
Naser Atasheneh and Ahmad Izadi 111 - 122
- 12- Guiding a Persian EFL Instructor to Create Individualized Classroom Environments: Novel Opportunities for ELT Practitioners  
Ali Rahimi and Nabi. A Ebrahimi 123 - 136
- 13- Assessing Iranian Students' English ability: Semantic Competence vs. Pragmatic Competence  
Reza Keshavarz and Rasool Roozegar 137 - 148
- 14- The Effect of Image Generation on Remembering Story Details in Iranian EFL learners  
Mahboobeh Abhaji Ezabadi 149 - 165
- 15- The Effect of the Method on the Trait: Investigating the Function of No-Error Options in Grammar Error-Identification Items in Admissions Tests  
Roya Khoii and Nazli Shamsi 166 - 179
- 16- The Relationship between Critical Thinking and Deductive/Inductive Teaching of Grammar to Iranian EFL Learners  
Mansoor Fahim and Shahla Azarnioushi 180 - 195

## **Title**

# **A Study on Iranian University Students' and Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning**

## **Authors**

**Sanaz Ghobadi Mohebi (M.A.)**

Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Mashhad, Iran

**Ebrahim Khodadady (Ph.D.)**

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

## **Bio Data**

**Sanaz Ghobadi Mohebi**, Graduated in Teaching English as a foreign language (M.A) from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. She is a lecturer at the department of English language, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Iran. Her major interest are Teaching English, Language learning, psychology of Language, and Individual Differences.

**Ebrahim Khodadady** is assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. He has offered undergraduate and graduate courses such as Advanced Writing, Advanced Speaking, Teaching Language Skills, Testing, Research Methods and Principles and Syllabus Design in Canada and Iran. He has published widely in the field.

## **Abstract**

The aim of the study is to investigate beliefs students usually held about language learning, based on the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire (Horwitz, 1988) and comparing them with teachers. For this purpose, 423 Iranian learners of English were selected. Running descriptive statistics and the scree plot test, five factors were extracted: Formal Learning and Motivation for English Learning, Learner's Confidence in Learning English, Strategy and Attitude in Learning English, Aptitude and Strategy in Learning English, and the Importance of English and Formal Learning. Evidence of the relative similarities and significant

differences between teachers' and learners' beliefs about language learning on nine items was provided. The findings of the current study suggest that teachers should be aware of learners' beliefs as well as their own in order to assist less successful language learners.

**Keywords:** BALLI, Beliefs about language learning, Learners' beliefs, Teachers' beliefs.

## Introduction

Beliefs about language learning refer to learners' notions, perceived ideas, insights, concepts, opinions, representations, assumptions, expectations or mini-theories of the nature of language or language learning (Hong, 2006). It is generally agreed that individual language learners hold different beliefs about how language is learned. The belief systems learners hold or develop help them to understand and adapt to new environments, to define what is expected of them and to act in accordance with those understandings (White, 1999). Influenced by previous experiences of language learners, or shaped by their own cultural backgrounds, second language learners often hold different beliefs or expectations about language learning that would likely affect the way they use their learning strategies and learn a second language. In case where these beliefs differ significantly from teacher ideas, they would influence learner satisfaction with the course (Yang, 1999).

Since both language students and teachers bring their unique sets of beliefs to bear in situations and decisions related to language learning and teaching, understanding students' beliefs about English learning is essential for the teacher to provide appropriate English instruction (Frugé, 2007). Liao and Chiang (2003) pointed out that the learning beliefs were often based on the previous learning experiences and cultural backgrounds, and would further influence strategies people would use to enhance their English learning and teaching. Learners take different approaches to language learning because they have different beliefs about language learning and also rich learning experience seems to be associated with more refined beliefs (Mori, 1999; King, 2000). As Horwitz (1985, 1987, & 1999) insisted, understanding the beliefs of learners is important because it helps teachers to understand learners' approaches to language learning and learners' use of learning strategies better, so that they can plan language instruction appropriately.

Teachers who have access to their learners' beliefs may choose to reinforce or to challenge certain beliefs. In either case, they will be better equipped to engage in meaningful dialogue about learning with their learners (Cotteral, 1999). In recent years, researchers have realized the important influence of language beliefs in foreign language learning process and have increasingly focused on students' beliefs about language learning and their effect on students' motivation, anxiety and the use of strategy (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Kuntz, 1996; Banya and Chea, 1997; Mori, 1999; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999; Horwitz, 2001; Bernat, 2002; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Lee, 2002; Liao & Chiang, 2003; Le, 2004; Diab, 2006; Hong, 2006; Huang, 2006; Camille Bakker, 2008). Horwitz (1985) developed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to assess students' opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning via free-recall protocols and group discussions with both foreign language and ESL learners and teachers. The BALLI has become a popular instrument for investigating beliefs about language learning. This questionnaire has proven very effective in increasing student learning as well as student satisfaction with the course. Altan (2006) asserted that BALLI can be helpful to language teacher educators both by determining popular beliefs of their students who are going to be teachers in future as well as in identifying minority groups with different opinions. Research on the topic, since Horwitz's pioneering study in 1985, has indicated that some of these beliefs are detrimental to learning.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) used the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of 208 seventh grade middle school students. Similar to Horwitz's study (1988), the students underestimated the difficulty of language learning to a certain extent. She found that positive attitudes and realistic beliefs had "links to proficiency" and recommended teachers to design and implement lessons on the language learning process that incorporated attitude-change methods. Banya and Chea (1997) found that students with positive beliefs about foreign language learning tended to have stronger motivation hold favorable attitude and higher motivational intensity, use more strategies, are less anxious, have better language achievement and are more proficient. Yang's (1999) study on Taiwanese students concluded as beliefs about language learning can affect the use of strategies, learning strategies may also influence learners' beliefs about language learning. Peacock (2001) investigated the beliefs of 146 undergraduate trainee teachers in a three-year study in Hong Kong and found a positive association between their beliefs on vocabulary and grammar and proficiency. Siebert's (2003) findings revealed that male were much more optimistic about their own abilities and the length of time it would take them to learn English, and they were almost twice as likely as females to endorse excellent pronunciation, and more than twice as likely to view grammar learning as the most important part of language acquisition. To identify the relationship between students' and teachers' conceptions on English learning Liao and Chiang (2003) did a study on a total of 143 students and 15 teachers in Taiwan. Their findings showed that students' and teachers' responses to the BALLI were on the whole rather consistent and strikingly similar with one another; but not in the areas of the nature of language learning and learning and communication strategies. Students' preference of learning grammar and translation did not go well with their teachers' communicative teaching methods, leading to a possible lack of learner satisfaction or self-confidence in the classroom.

In an extensive study on 428 monolingual Korean and 420 bilingual Korean-Chinese university students, Hong (2006) investigated the relationship between the learners' beliefs and their learning strategy use and also the influence of background variables. Significant influences of the individual variables of academic major and self-rated English proficiency on strategy use and beliefs concerning language learning were found. Diab (2006) supported the general contention that different cultural backgrounds, background variables within group and variation in a particular group's belief about learning different target languages are influential factors on learner belief. His findings indicated that learning a foreign language seemed to be related to the political and socio-cultural context. Bernat (2006) found that the beliefs held by participants in the Australian and American context were similar in all categories. Statistically significant differences were also claimed with respect to gender.

Although the BALLI and its modified or enlarged versions have been used in eliciting learners' beliefs about language learning in studies of foreign language learners in the U.S., ESL learners in English speaking countries and EFL learners in foreign countries, to date there is no comparable study on learners' beliefs about language learning done in Iran, especially regarding the relation between belief system of students and teachers. Therefore, this article explores the beliefs of both teachers and students and argues that teachers should try to eliminate any detrimental beliefs in their trainees before they start to teach ESL, to ensure that they do not form their trainees' teaching.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

To investigate the beliefs about language learning, 423 students from four universities and three Teacher Training Centers in Iran were selected. Among the 423 participants, 299 students had not taught English before (70.7 %) and 124 students had (29.3%). Most of the students who had the experience of teaching English had taught English for about one year (about 10.0% of the 299 students). In terms of academic degree, 419 of the participants were undergraduate and 4 participants were students of PhD. Most of the students were juniors (52.3%), 23.1% were sophomores and 24.7% were seniors. In terms of gender, the students were not balanced with 108 males and 315

females. Their age ranged from 19 to 49 with an average age of 22.41. Less than 4% of the subjects had the experience of living abroad.

### **Instruments**

In order to collect additional information on the individual background, the researcher designed the Personal Information Questionnaire. It contained items related to demographic information of the participants (e.g., age, gender, institution, academic major, degree of study, and year of study).

The EFL BALLI version was used to identify the beliefs held by EFL learners about language learning. The version of the ESL/EFL BALLI used for this study contained 34 items. The items on the BALLI assess learners' beliefs in five areas: 1) the difficulty of language learning (six items), 2) foreign language aptitude (nine items), 3) the nature of language learning (six items), 4) learning and communication strategies (eight items), and 5) motivation and expectations (five items). BALLI was designed based on free recall tasks asking respondents to list beliefs about language learning. Horwitz (1985) firstly developed the BALLI to assess beliefs about language learning. Horwitz originally designed three different versions of BALLI; one for foreign language teachers (1985) with 27 items, another one for ESL students (1987) with 27 items, and a third for U.S. students learning a foreign language (1988) with 34 items. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale: A=strongly disagree, B=disagree, C=neither agree nor disagree, D=agree, E=strongly agree.

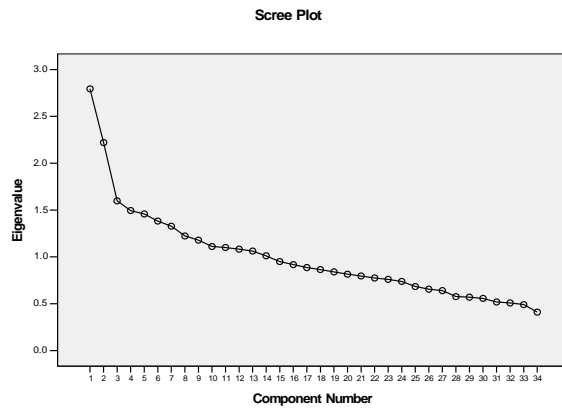
### **Data collection and analysis**

The instruments were distributed during class time preceded by a brief explanation of the purpose and nature of the study. After the completion of the instrument, the questionnaires were collected by the researcher for data analysis. First, descriptive analysis was run to summarize the learners' beliefs about language learning item by item. The principal component analysis and a scree test were used to extract the set of variables using a criterion of eigen values equal to or greater than 1.0. The varimax rotation (uncorrelated factor rotation) was run to yield the final factor loadings and to increase interpretability of the underlying factors (Kim & Mueller, 1978). Then students were divided into two groups of students and teachers and descriptive analysis was used to compare their beliefs.

## **Results**

### **Results of descriptive analyses and factor analyses on the BALLI items**

The BALLI was used to examine the learners' beliefs about language learning. Descriptive statistics were computed on the students' responses to the BALLI items. In order to investigate patterns in the subjects' responses to the 34 questionnaire items, a factor analysis was performed. Based on the results of principal component analyses on this study, 14 factors were found as an initial solution on the BALLI. However, after the application of the scree plot test, again to refine the factor dimensions, five factors were extracted: 1) Formal Learning and Motivation for English Learning, 2) Learner's Confidence in Learning English, 3) Strategy and Attitude in Learning English, 4) Aptitude and Strategy in Learning English, and 5) the Importance of English and Formal Learning. These five factors accounted for 28.13% of the total variance for the students and included 28 of the 34 items. A varimax rotation test was applied to make the factors more interpretable. Table 1 presents the final factor loading of the BALLI items. The scree plot is shown below.



**Table 1. Rotated Factor Structure of the BALLI Variables**

Items	F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5
I19	0.64				
I15	0.63				
I31	0.49				
I25	0.48				
I07	0.41				
I20	0.35				
I26	0.32				
I30	0.31				
I22	0.31				
I14		0.60			
I06		0.57			
I04		-0.57			
I17		0.51			
I10		0.30			
I24			0.53		
I11			0.49		
I08			0.44		
I13			0.39		
I01			0.37		
I12			0.33		
I28				0.63	
I23				0.56	
I09				0.53	
I02				0.40	
I32					0.47
I33					0.38
I29					0.32
I05					0.32

*Note:* Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 A. Rotation converged in 10 item rations

Tables 2 through 6 present the items that loaded with a value equal to or greater than  $\pm .30$  (Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991), overall frequency (%) on these items, the means and the standard deviation, as well as the name of each factor and the number and content of the items<sup>i</sup>.



**Table 2.** BALLI Factor 1. Formal Learning and Motivation for English Learning

Item Description	1*	2	3	4	5	Load	M	SD
19. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many of grammar rules.	5.2	25.8	17.0	42.3	9.7	0.64	3.26	1.10
15. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.	14.2	38.8	12.5	29.3	4.0	0.63	2.67	1.18
31. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	24.3	44.0	16.1	12.8	2.6	0.49	2.25	1.04
25. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Persian.	2.8	9.7	14.9	43.5	28.8	0.48	3.85	1.04
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	37.8	38.1	10.9	11.6	1.7	0.41	2.01	1.05
20. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	24.1	46.3	17.0	11.1	1.4	0.41	2.19	0.97
26. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me to get a good job.	34.0	41.4	13.7	9.2	0.7	0.35	1.98	0.97
30. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.	21.0	47.5	22.0	6.4	2.6	0.32	2.21	0.94
22. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	44.2	40.7	8.0	4.5	2.1	0.31	1.78	0.93

*Note.* \* 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree  
+ The remained percentage in some items belongs to the blank answers.

As shown in Table 2, Factor 1 was labeled as formal learning and motivation for English learning because many items (19, 15, 31, 25, 7, 20, 26, 30 and 22) related to motivational beliefs and formal learning of English were identically loaded on Factor 1.

More than half of the students (52%) disagreed that grammar plays an important role in language learning. Regarding the importance of vocabulary in language learning, fewer students (33.3%) disagreed with the importance of learning new vocabulary than agreed with (53%). A great number of students (72.3%) disagreed that translating from English into Persian played the most important role in English learning. Many of the students (75.9%) believed excellent pronunciation was important. A great number of participants (70.4%) felt that "It is important to practice in the language laboratory". This case also happened for getting a good job; about 75% agreed that "If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me to get a good job". The majority of them agreed (85%) that "If I spoke English well I will have many opportunities to use it". A larger number of students (68.5%) believed that they would like to learn English so that they could get to know English speakers better.

Factor 2 had five items (14, 6, 4, 17, and 10) which dealt with beliefs about Learner's Confidence in Learning English (see Table 3). About three quarter (71%) disagreed that they had an aptitude for learning English. The majority of the participants (82.7%) believed that "I will ultimately learn to speak English very well". When asked about the difficulty involved in learning English, most of the students did not consider English as a difficult language (81.8%). Also, 67% of students respectively agreed that it was easier for someone who already spoke a foreign language to learn another one.

**Table 3. BALLI Factor 2. Learner's Confidence in Learning English**

Item Description	1*	2	3	4	5	Loa d	M	SD
14. I have an English aptitude. i.e., have the ability to learn it.	21.3	49.6	21.5	5.4	0.9	0.60	2.12	0.87
6. I believe I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	36.6	46.1	9.9	5.4	1.7	0.57	1.89	0.91
4. Learning English is very difficult.	2.1	5.7	9.5	56.7	25.1	-0.57	3.94	0.94
17. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	15.1	32.2	26.2	19.6	5.9	0.51	2.66	1.15
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	21.0	46.1	23.4	6.9	2.4	0.30	2.23	0.94

Note. \* 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree  
+ The remained percentage in some items belongs to the blank answers.

**Table 4. BALLI Factor 3. Strategy and Attitude in Learning English**

Item Description	1*	2	3	4	5	Loa d	M	SD
24. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.	17.0	43.7	21.5	13.2	4.3	0.53	2.43	1.06
11. It is better to learn English in an English speaking country.	61.9	27.0	4.7	3.5	2.8	0.49	1.58	0.94
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak it.	22.7	38.3	19.4	17.0	2.6	0.44	2.39	1.09
13. It is okay to guess if you do not know a word in English.	32.6	48.7	10.4	5.7	2.1	0.39	1.95	0.93
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	53.2	37.8	3.5	4.5	0.7	0.37	1.61	0.81
12. If I heard some people speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.	27.4	41.6	25.1	5.0	0.9	0.33	2.10	0.89

Note. \* 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree  
+ The remained percentage in some items belongs to the blank answers.

As shown in Table 4, factor 3 included six items (24, 11, 8, 13, 1, and 12) related to strategy and attitude in learning English. More than half of the students (60.7%) agreed that learning English was different from learning other academic subjects. The majority of the participants (88.9%) felt that it would be better to learn English in an English speaking country. Many of the students (61%) believed that "it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English". The students were greatly disposed (81.3% agreement) toward guessing unknown words in English. About 90% of the students agreed that it was easier for children than for adults to learn English. Only 5.9% of the participants were timid in going up and practicing English if they heard some people spoke English.

**Table 5.** BALLI Factor 4. Aptitude and Strategy in Learning English

Item Description	1*	2	3	4	5	Load	M	SD
28. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning English.	1.9	5.7	33.3	32.4	25.8	0.63	3.72	1.03
23. It is easier to speak than understand English.	5.4	14.2	17.5	44.9	17.7	0.56	3.55	1.11
9. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	4.0	10.4	5.9	42.6	37.1	0.53	3.98	1.10
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.	11.3	44.9	19.6	19.4	4.7	0.40	2.61	1.06

Note. \* 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree  
+ The remained percentage in some items belongs to the blank answers.

As shown in Table 5, items 28, 23, 9, and 2 loaded on Factor 4, aptitude and strategy in learning English. When asked about the item “People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages,” only 7.6% of students agreed. With regard to ease of skills, only 19.6% felt that speaking was easier than understanding. However, 79% students were much more likely to disagree that they should not say anything in English until they could say it correctly, indicating their greater belief in the importance of accuracy. More than half of the participants (55%) believed that some people had a special ability for learning English.

The last factor, factor 5, had four items (32, 33, 29, and 5) which dealt with the importance of English and formal learning of English (Table 6). An interesting number of participants (78.9%) strongly agreed or agreed that everyone could learn to speak English. Only 12.5% did not feel that “Iranians are good at learning foreign languages”. Most of the participants (68.4%) did not believe English was structured in the same way as Persian. When asking about “Iranians think that it is important to speak English”, 63.6% agreed.

**Table 6.** BALLI Factor 5. The Importance of English and Formal Learning

Item Description	1*	2	3	4	5	Load	M	SD
32. Iranians are good at learning English.	10.6	39.2	36.9	10.4	2.1	0.47	2.5	0.91
33. Everyone can learn to speak English.	31.9	46.8	11.1	7.6	0.9	0.38	2	0.93
29. Iranians think that it is important to speak English.	16.3	47.3	21.3	10.9	3.3	0.32	1.9	2.35
5. English is structured in the same way as Persian.	2.1	8.5	21.3	49.9	17.5	0.32	2.3	0.97

Note. \* 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree  
+ The remained percentage in some items belongs to the blank answers.

### Beliefs of Students and teachers

In order to see what influence teaching of English can have on a person, the participants were divided into two groups. The first group was the participants who had not taught English previously. The second group was the ones who had the experience of teaching English. The results come below.

**Table 7.** Students' and Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning

Item		1	3	3
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	Students	94.3	2.7	3.0
	Teachers	83.9	5.6	10.5
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak it.	Students	57.9	20.7	21.4
	Teachers	68.5	16.1	15.3
15. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.	Students	57.5	11.6	31.0
	Teachers	44.4	15.3	40.3
17. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	Students	43.1	27.9	29.0
	Teachers	59.0	23.0	18.0
19. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many of grammar rules.	Students	33.8	17.4	48.8
	Teachers	24.2	16.1	59.7
25. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Persian.	Students	16.1	14.8	69.1
	Teachers	4.0	15.3	80.6
26. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me to get a good job.	Students	79.4	10.8	9.8
	Teachers	68.3	21.1	10.6
30. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.	Students	72.1	20.5	7.4
	Teachers	61.3	25.8	12.9

On eight items (1, 8, 15, 17, 19, 25, 26, and 30), the answers may have implications for the learning and teaching of EFL. Since the teachers were mostly inexperienced student teachers, the reported differences were not so considerable. Therefore, difference of 10% or more was chosen as contrast. In order to have easier interpretation of the results and for more clarity, strongly agree and agree (1) and strongly disagree and disagree (3) are grouped together. Number 2 shows the percentage of neutrality. All results are expressed as percentages:

On item 1, 94.3% of students and 83.9% of teachers agreed that "It is easier for children than adults to learn English". On item 8, about 58% of students believed that it was necessary to know English culture in order to speak it; whereas, 68.5% of teachers believed in it. On item 15, "Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words", 57.5% and 44.4% of students and teachers agreed; 31.0% and 40.3% disagreed respectively.

On item 17, "I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people", a difference of 16% was found. On item 19, only 24.2% of teachers believed grammar rules were important, about 60.0% did not believe so. These percents were 33.8% and 48.8% respectively for students. On item 25, about the importance of translating from English to Farsi for learning English, only 4.0% of teachers agreed; about 80.0% disagreed. The percent of students' agreement and disagreement were 16.1% and 69.1% respectively. Among students, 79.4% believed in item 26, "If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me to get a good job"; 68.3% of teachers agreed with this notion. As for item 30, about 72.0% of students and 61.0% of teachers felt that they liked to learn English so that they could get to know English speakers better.

## Discussion

In the present study, the beliefs of English students about language learning were explored, as measured by the BALLI (Horwitz, 1988). It was reported that students hold a variety of beliefs about language learning.

Ninety-five percent of the subjects agreed with item 7 ("It is important to speak English with an excellent accent"). People in Iran usually place a high value on English proficiency. Perhaps, since most Iranian students have perfectionism view toward learning English, speaking English with an excellent pronunciation is particularly important for them to attain this goal. Sixty-nine percent of the subjects agreed with item 12 ("If I heard some people speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language") (n= 292). Wanting to speak English with native speakers is probably one of the main reasons why these students came to study English. Eighty-one percent of the subjects overall agreed with item 13 ("It is O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English") (n= 344). Findings may show that Iranians are risk taker and ready to guess (81.0%). Iranian alphabetical system consists of many components which are related to the sound or the meaning of words and therefore, makes guessing strategy very useful in memorizing, recognizing and recalling a word. The agreement rate for item 11 ("It is best to learn English in an English speaking country") is so high, i.e. 89% (n= 376). This might imply that ethnic backgrounds might influence beliefs about learning target languages. It may also show that the beliefs and attitudes on the importance of knowing culture in target language learning are almost important for Iranians.

The responses to item 14 ("I have a foreign language aptitude") would appear that many of the subjects see themselves as gifted language learners, with an adequate ability to the task of language learning. Iranian students have a very high estimate of their aptitude in learning English. Half of the subjects agreed with item 17 "Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words" (53% agreement and 33.3% disagreement). The findings on item 15 show that learning vocabulary words has great value among Iranian (53.0%). One of the likely reasons is culture, learning environments and teaching methods in Iran. It seems that in Iran texts and readings are usually emphasized. In such a learning environment, it is understandable why students studying English attach more importance to learning vocabulary. These beliefs may lead students to invest their time memorizing vocabulary lists at the expense of other language learning tasks. About 70% of students agreed on item 8 ("It is necessary to know the foreign language culture in order to speak the foreign language."). Also, 69% of the subjects agreed with item 30 "I would like to learn English so that they know English speakers better". The data demonstrate that the Iranian students have a strong integrative motivation. These findings imply that ethnic backgrounds might influence beliefs about learning target languages. Iranians consider culture of the target language so significant; they think that foreign languages are so important and knowing their speakers will yield so many benefits. They attach so importance to and are so enthusiastic toward culture. They show more integrative motivation for learning a language.

The factors found in this study include Motivation and Formal English Learning, Learner's Confidence in Learning English, Strategy and Attitude in Learning English, Aptitude and Strategy in Learning English, and The Importance of English and Formal Learning. The special combination of formal learning and motivation as the first

factor may suggest the attention participants in this study pay to the formal language learning and their motivation for learning it. It seems likely that they are motivated both instrumentally and integratively to learn formal English rules and any related subjects to get better situations. Contrary to the expectation, having confidence as the second factor and the high percentage of students' agreement on the related items may show a new picture of the Iranians' self-efficacy in learning English and, therefore, more attention on the part of teachers to employ the learners' confidence in teaching is needed. The third and fourth factors might show the distinct characteristic and beliefs of Iranian students toward learning strategies. The last factor, the importance of English and formal learning, mainly shows Iranian beliefs about themselves, the importance of English and the structural differences between the two languages.

## Conclusion

The present study has identified some unique and important beliefs of Iranian students studying English. It can be pointed out that the items with which respondents agreed most strongly (items which had a percentage of 80 or higher) cover a variety of beliefs. It was shown that students reported holding various opinions about language learning. For instance, the majority of students endorsed the easiness of some languages, superiority of children in learning English, their ultimate success in language learning, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and the importance of repetition and practice in learning English. A great number of them also stated that "it is better to learn English in an English speaking country" and "everyone can learn to speak English".

Furthermore, the participant in this study held not only similar but also different beliefs concerning language learning from those of American foreign language learners (Horwitz, 1988). Some findings of the present study contrast with those conducted in various learning and cultural contexts to support the argument that learners' beliefs are influenced by the different language learning contexts (ESL, EFL, or FL), educational or cultural background, and stages of language learning. Students in the present study, for example, held strong instrumental motivation for learning English, possibly, because of self imposed or other-imposed pressures at home. They were also motivated to learn English for academic purposes and better job opportunities, more so than the American students in Horwitz's (1988) work. Interestingly, they expressed a high agreement on the area of aptitude and self-efficacy and believed that they would ultimately be successful in learning and speaking English. Their percentage of agreement was more than Horwitz's. Furthermore, the students saw English as an easy language and believed "Iranians are good at Learning English". They were reported having more self-confidence, comparing with Americans.

In addition to differences among students' beliefs, some differences were found between students' and teachers' beliefs on items 1, 8, 15, 17, 19, 25, 26, 30, and 33. Compared with teachers, more students believed the superiority of children in language learning, importance of learning new vocabulary, importance of learning grammar rules, and importance of translation. More students also liked to learn English so that they could get to know English speakers better. On the other hand, more teachers endorsed guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary and having self-consciousness in speaking English in front of people. They also stated that if they learned to speak English very well, it would help them to get a good job.

In terms of pedagogical implications of learner-beliefs research, identification of beliefs and reflection on their potential impact on language learning and teaching in general, as well as in more specific areas such as learners' expectations and strategy use, can inform future syllabus design and teacher practice in an EFL course as well as increased awareness and adjustment of expectations concerning language learning (Bernat & Llyod, 2007). More importantly, teachers should be more aware of the conflicting beliefs between them and students, and try to integrate these conflicting beliefs into teaching through strategy training in order to develop greater flexibility in learners' ways of approaching English.

## References

- Altan, M. Z. (2006). Beliefs about language learning of foreign language-major university students. Erciyes University. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 31 (2), 45-51.
- Bakker, S. C. (2008). Byu students' beliefs about language learning and communicative language teaching activities. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University.
- Banya, K., & Chen, M. (1997). Beliefs about foreign language learning: A study of beliefs of teachers' and students' cross cultural settings. Paper presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Speakers of Other Languages, Florida. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED411691).
- Bernat, E. (2002). Investigating Vietnamese ESL Learners' beliefs about language learning. *EA Journal*, 21 (2), 40-54.
- Bernat, E. (2006). Assessing EAP learners' beliefs about language learning in the Australian context. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8 (2).
- Bernat, E., & Lloyd, R. (2007). Exploring the Gender Effect on EFL Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*. 7, 79-91.
- Cotteral, S. (1999). Key variables in language learning: what do learners believe about them? *System*, 27 (1999), 493-513.
- Diab, R. L. (2006). University students' beliefs about learning English and French in Lebanon. *System*, 34 (1), 80-96.
- Frugé, Ch. (2007). Epistemological congruency in community college classrooms: Effects of epistemological beliefs on students' experiences. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ794367).
- Hatch, E., & Lazaraton, A. (1991). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. Boston, Mas: Heinle & Heinle.
- Hong, K. (2006). Beliefs about language learning and language learning strategy use in an EFL context: a comparison study of monolingual Korean and bilingual Korean-Chinese university students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of North Texas.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1985). Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in the foreign language methods course. *Foreign Language Annals*, 18 (4), 333-340.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1987). Surveying student beliefs about language learning. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice/Hall International.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72 (3), 283-294.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125-132.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1999). Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: A review of BALLI studies. *System*, 27 (4), 557- 576.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126.
- Horwitz, E. K., & Gregersen, T. (2002). Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious language learners' reactions to their own oral performance. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86 (4), 562-570.
- Huang, Z. W. (2006). Learner Beliefs of Language Learning Revisited. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 3 (3), 62-67.
- Kim, J. O., & Mueller, C. W. (1978). *Introduction to factor analysis*. Beverly Hill, CA: Sage Publications.
- King, P. M. (2000). Learning to make reflective judgments. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 82, 15-26.
- Kuntz, P. S. (1996). Beliefs about language learning: The Horwitz model. HEA Title VI African Studies

- Centers. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. (*ERIC Document Reproduction Service* No. ED 397649).
- Le, J. (2004). Affective characteristics of American students studying Chinese in China: A study of heritage and non-heritage learners' beliefs and foreign language anxiety. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Texas University, Austin.
- Lee, S. I. (2002). The beliefs and values of Japanese of low language proficiency. Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity and Ryukoku.
- Liao, P. S., & Chiang, M. Y. (2003). The study of students' and their teachers' beliefs about English learning. International Conference on English Teaching and Learning in the Republic of China.
- Mantle-Bromley, C. (1995). Positive attitudes and realistic beliefs: Links to proficiency. *Modern Language Journal*, 79 (3), 372-386.
- Mori, Y. (1999). Epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs: What do language learners believe about their learning? *Language Learning*, 49 (3), 377-415. (*ERIC Document Reproduction Service* No. ED406657).
- Peacock, M. (1999). The links between learner beliefs, teacher beliefs, and EFL proficiency. *Perspective*, 10 (1), 125-159.
- Peacock, M. (2001). Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: a longitudinal study. *System*, 29(2), 177-195.
- Sakui, K. & Gaies, S. J. (1999). Investigating Japanese Learners' beliefs about language learning. *System*, 27(4), 473-492.
- Siebert, L. L. (2003). Student and teacher beliefs about language learning. *The ORTESOL Journal*, 21, 7-39.
- White, C. (1999). Expectations and emergent beliefs of self-instructed language learners. *System*, 27 (4), 443-457.
- Yang, N. D. (1999). The relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and learning strategy use. *System*, 27 (4), 515-535.