

EXPLORING THE BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE ENGINEERING STUDENTS

***Siti Norzaimalina Abd Majid**

Centre for Modern Languages
Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah, 26600, Pekan, Pahang, MALAYSIA

Rosnani Ismail

Centre for Modern Languages
Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah, 26600, Pekan, Pahang, MALAYSIA

email: norzaimalina@umpsa.edu.my, rosnani@umpsa.edu.my
**Corresponding author: Siti Norzaimalina Abd Majid*

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Abstract: Beliefs about language learning are viewed as the preconceived notions that students hold about their attitudes, motivations, learning strategies, and language learning styles. Engineering students may have different beliefs from other subjects because their discipline focuses more on scientific and technical skills. The employer always argued that these engineers lack English language skills, which may stem from their beliefs. Students may hold misconceptions that can affect their language learning strategies. Thus, to explore this issue, a descriptive quantitative study was conducted. This study involved 258 engineering students in one public university in Malaysia, comprised of 181 males and 77 females. A questionnaire consisting of 34 items developed by Horwitz (1987) was used to examine the engineering students' beliefs about language learning. There were five major areas in assessing students' beliefs, namely: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations and expectations. Based on the results, engineering students showed a mean value of 1.88, indicating a very strong belief (1.00 – 1.99) in the motivation and expectation dimension. The respondents believed that motivation and expectation are crucial when learning a language, but other factors, such as lack of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, affect their language skills. Thus, it is crucial to tailor programs to meet their demands, and teachers need to incorporate technical content into language learning activities. In addition, it is necessary to bridge what the industry wants and what education institutions can offer so these students will have realistic expectations and remain motivated throughout their language learning.

Keywords: attitudes, beliefs, engineering students, language learning, motivation

INTRODUCTION

In this globalised world, English language proficiency has become a pivotal skill in all industries. Being proficient in English has become one of the factors that enhance employability among undergraduate students (Radwan, 2023; Zainuddin et al., 2019). The ability to communicate in English in an organisation is highly valued as it can boost the workers' motivation, lead to better performance and increase production (Jaafar et al., 2023). Given the importance of English proficiency in the workplace, learners' beliefs about language learning play a significant role in developing the skill.

Understanding language learning beliefs is important to ensure effectiveness in language learning classrooms. Horwitz (1987) conducted systematic research about language learning beliefs and developed the Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) for evaluating learners' beliefs. She categorised them into foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, strategies for learning and communication, and motivation and expectation. Horwitz (1987) posited that the way students learn language is influenced by the predetermined beliefs they hold throughout their learning journey. If negative beliefs are wrongly instilled, it affects the choice of learning strategies, attitudes, motivations and expectations in language learning. For example, a student who believes that learning English is inherently difficult to master, he or she may be hesitant to be involved in any activities related to English. This reluctance can hinder them from practising the language and eventually slow down their language development over time and negatively impact overall language learning outcomes.

BALLI has been widely utilised to evaluate learners' beliefs about language learning. (Yan, 2020). These beliefs, which include attitudes, motivations, strategies, and learning styles, serve as the foundation for shaping learners' educational journeys. It is an instrument to comprehend how learners view the language acquisition process. This inventory has been used across diverse settings, and research has shown that BALLI can provide insights into the multifaceted nature of learners' beliefs. Fujiwara (2018) validates the five factors of BALLI elements among Thai students learning Japanese and asserts the applicability of this inventory across different language learning scenarios. Therefore, this study chose this inventory due to the ability to capture learners' beliefs.

Despite a lot of similar research in this field, there are noticeable gaps in the language learning beliefs of engineering students. Their learning environments are quite different from those in arts, languages, business, or social sciences. Encouraging students to develop growth mindsets is good, as they can adapt themselves to handle stressful and difficult situations better than those with fixed mindsets (Costa & Faria, 2018). Engineering students who are known for their analytical thinking and problem-solving skills may have different beliefs about language learning than students from other fields. The focus on technical accuracy and science in their education could lead to unique views on aptitude, difficulty, and importance of language learning. Campbell et al. (2021) think that the beliefs and actions that guide learning among engineering students are complex and sometimes conflicting. They often come from each individual's unique situations, which makes it hard to study and understand how they affect learning.

Recently, employers voiced their concerns about engineers not mastering the English language, which could stem from deep-rooted beliefs. Yan (2020) and Nakano (2021) clarify that their students focused more on improving their English for better job opportunities rather than having fun throughout the learning process. It was also found that when people are proficient in English, they have a significant advantage in career prospects (Silalahi et al., 2023). These examples show that motivation to learn the English language is based on instrumental motivation, that is, learning because of practical benefits. On the other hand, Lin et al. (2023)

found that the rise of Korean culture increased the interest among Chinese undergraduate students to learn the language and be part of the cultural community. This indicates that people choose to learn the language because of its influence and because it is rooted in integrative desires to connect with the desired communities. While English is commonly regarded as an asset for career advancement, the motivation behind learning a particular language could change based on cultural or personal attractions.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand the language learning beliefs held by engineering students. The main objective of this study is to identify the most common beliefs possessed by engineering undergraduate students using a questionnaire adapted from Horwitz (1987). This study seeks to give insight into students' beliefs about English language learning and provide stakeholders with some understanding of these beliefs. This insight can help them to develop interventions and find the best ways to improve English language skills for engineering students. Through this research, targeted strategies can be developed to address the identified beliefs and foster a more conducive learning environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks Related to Language Learning Beliefs

One of the underpinning theories in beliefs about language is constructivist theory. This theory suggests that prior knowledge and past experiences shape a learner's beliefs and influence the learning process. Learners construct knowledge and understanding of the world through experiences with their surroundings and reflection on their experiences (Chen, 2023). Reflecting on past experiences allows students to create personal meaning and promote meaningful learner experiences. This indicates that learning is not a passive process, but it involves integrating new knowledge into learners' minds (Chen, 2023). The interplay between prior knowledge and experiences is essential to shape learner's beliefs and facilitating the learning process.

In fostering effective learning environments, it is also essential to understand the needs and motivations that contribute to students' learning process. One of the related theories is the self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci. This theory posits that human motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy refers to the ability to control one's own learning by determining the suitable choice based on one's goals. According to Teng and Wu (2023), this autonomy is related to self-efficacy beliefs, which mediate between motivation and learning outcomes. Furthermore, Bai and Wang (2020) suggested that learners who hold positive beliefs about their autonomy are likely to have high motivation and achievement. Next, the second need is competence, which refers to how these learners perceive their abilities and sense of achievement. When they feel competent with their skills and teachers and peers give positive feedback about their achievements, it will reinforce their belief that they can master the language (Rajić et al., 2022). Finally, relatedness is the feeling of belonging in the learning process. It is crucial in language learning contexts to learn within a social environment. This theory provides insight into the beliefs and motivations of language learners that can enhance language learning outcomes.

Another theoretical framework that provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between personal beliefs, behaviours, and environmental factors is the Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986). This theory asserts that the way people function is the outcome of the continuous interplay between personal elements (such as beliefs and attitudes), behaviours, and environments. In the language learning context, this theory puts emphasis on the role of learners' beliefs about their skills, particularly self-efficacy, in impacting their

motivation and achievement. Self-efficacy influences how people address challenges, become persistent and become motivated to engage with the language itself (Mills et al., 2007; Raoofi et al., 2012). A study by Mills et al. (2007) reported that students with higher self-efficacy have greater motivation and engage more in learning activities, which positively affects their achievements. This self-efficacy serves as an important belief that can affect motivation and learning success.

Moreover, the interaction between self-efficacy and environmental factors is also critical in shaping language learning outcomes. When the learning environments provide opportunities for practice and positive feedback is given during learning activities, it further enhances learners' motivation and performance (Nosratinia et al., 2014; Raoofi et al., 2012). Meanwhile, negative experiences and lack of support result in lower motivation and poor engagement. Therefore, this relationship shows how learner's self-efficacy is developed or hindered by the environment, which in turn strengthens or weakens their beliefs in language learning.

In conclusion, it is important to foster positive beliefs to students as it can influence motivation, attitudes, behaviours and learning success. Their beliefs about their capability of to be successful in language learning can be developed through creating supporting environments that empower learners in their language learning journey.

Horwitz's Beliefs About Language Learning

Beliefs about language learning studies have significantly influenced the field of second language acquisition. Horwitz (1987) introduced the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which contains five categories: foreign language aptitude, beliefs about the difficulty of learning a foreign language, beliefs about the nature of the language learning process, beliefs about learning and communicative strategies, and motivations and expectations for language learning. These categories provide us with a framework for how learners view their language learning experiences and the elements that affect their performance.

The first category is foreign language aptitude. This dimension can also be applied to second language aptitude. Aptitude about language learning refers to the belief that people have special abilities or talents to learn language. They have perceptions that people are better at language due to their natural ability and intelligence. Age and gender are also considered in terms of foreign language aptitudes.

Next category is language learning difficulty. It refers to the relative difficulty that people perceived in learning language. This category also includes beliefs about the duration it takes for a person to learn a language as well as how difficult of specific language skills. In sum, it focuses on the views on the overall difficulty of language learning.

The third category is nature of language learning, which is beliefs about the role of cultural knowledge in language learning. It also covers whether learning a language is different from other subjects, perceptions about translation and its role in language learning as well as the importance of vocabulary and grammar.

The fourth category is learning and communication strategies. This category highlights learners' perceptions about the role of repetition, error correction and practice when learning language. It also uncovers students' attitudes and their perceptions on language accuracy and fluency.

Finally, the last category of BALLI is motivations and expectations. This category refers to their beliefs about the opportunities of learning a language, the importance of learning it, the career-related expectations when learning the language. The areas highlighted in BALLI are significant to address learners' beliefs in fostering a supportive learning environment.

Factors Influencing Beliefs

The shaping of beliefs about language learning draws from a variety of factors that influence the learners' perspective and motivations, which results in new language acquisition. These factors fall into three broad categories, namely individual, social, and contextual influences. Individual levels incorporate personal unique experiences, self-efficacy and psychological characteristics. Learners' past experiences with learning a language greatly affect their belief systems. Indeed, either positive or negative experiences in previous language learning courses can potentially result in the formation of beliefs about their abilities and the process of language learning (Tanaka, 2003; Yan, 2020). Furthermore, self-efficacy, representing an individual's belief in their abilities to achieve specific tasks, works with the utmost influence on these beliefs. Evidently, students with strengthened self-efficacy prove more likely to adopt favourable outlooks towards their own language learning potentials, which garners enhanced motivation and engagement (Raofi et al., 2012). Moreover, Yan (2020) discovered that personality differences, such as the willingness to try new experiences and resilience, can profoundly influence how language learners perceive challenges and opportunities.

Meanwhile, social factors encompassing relations with educators, friends, and family members have a strong impact on shaping beliefs about language learning. The perceptions about language education held by educators can have a profound influence on learners' own beliefs and attitudes. For instance, an educator who holds positive beliefs about the effectiveness of communicative techniques might inspire similar beliefs in their learners, sparking motivation and active participation (Al-Roomy, 2015). Concurrently, peer interactions can reinforce or challenge individual beliefs. Biró (2015) mentioned that in collaborative learning, learners often exchange their personal beliefs and strategies, which may incite an evolution of beliefs born out of shared experiences. The family's cultural heritage and attitude towards language learning hold a significant role, given they instil the core values and anticipations that influence learners' beliefs (Tanaka, 2003; Yan, 2020).

The learning environment, including the classroom setting and educational context, also influences learners' beliefs. According to Mohebi & Khodadady (2011), a supportive classroom environment encouraging novel attempts and appreciating errors as integral aspects of the learning process might cultivate constructive beliefs about language learning. In contrast, a high-pressure setting prioritising grades and achievements might lead to negative beliefs and escalate stress among learners (Tanaka, 2003). Besides classroom elements and strategies, external factors include societal perspectives towards language learning, and the perceived practicality of the language being learned might influence learners' beliefs (Krishnasamy et al., 2013). Hence, language learning beliefs are influenced by individual, societal, and contextual factors. Acknowledging these influences is crucial for educators to construct conducive education environments that cultivate positive beliefs and boost language learning outcomes.

Impact of Beliefs on Learning Outcomes

The beliefs students possess about language learning significantly impact their learning outcomes in terms of shaping their motivation, strategy utilisation, and overall success in learning a new language. Such beliefs influence the learners' educational approach, interaction with the language, and self-interpretation of their skills, which consequently affect their performance. Their beliefs in one's abilities and their understanding of language learning's nature can deeply affect learners' motivation. Learners who consider language learning to be innately challenging may confront their studies with fear, causing a reduction in motivation and engagement (Bidari, 2021; Lai et al., 2014; Horwitz, 2000). In contrast, Kormos and Kiddle (2013) illustrated that positive beliefs about language learning can bolster motivation by

making learners feel more confident about their skills and more likely to persevere when faced with challenges. Learners who possess a strong belief in self-efficacy are usually higher in motivation and tend to portray better performance in language learning.

Beliefs also play a significant role in determining the strategies adopted by learners on their route to language acquisition. Some individuals believe that learners who heavily rely on rote memorisation may not necessarily cultivate communicative competence (Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013; Wong, 2010). Conversely, those who believe that practice and interaction are important for mastering a language often find themselves drawn towards fostering interaction with native speakers or immersion in language exchange programs. Consequently, these divergent strategies can lead to differing degrees of linguistic competence.

Academic achievement is directly affected by the beliefs held by learners and educators. In the light of language learning, pedagogical philosophies can streamline educators' instructional methods, accordingly, subsequently impacting students' beliefs and learning experiences (Yan, 2020). Hadizadeh (2022) asserts that educators who convey to learners that linguistic abilities can be developed through effort enhance learners' academic growth. Conversely, when teachers have negative beliefs about their students' abilities, students internalise these beliefs, resulting in decreased performance (Rahmawati, 2020; Taib et al., 2022). Thus, beliefs about language learning serve a significant role in shaping learners' motivation, strategy use, and academic achievement. By nourishing positive beliefs and addressing negative ones, educators have the potential to elevate language learning outcomes while concurrently supporting learners in their progression towards language proficiency.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study aimed to determine engineering students' beliefs about language learning. To answer the research question, a questionnaire by Horwitz (1987), Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), was adopted as the instrument of this study. This questionnaire has been used widely and has been accepted as a reliable instrument to identify people's beliefs about language learning. For this study, the questionnaire was pilot tested with the engineering student population, and the reliability score was 0.803, which is an acceptable level of internal consistency. This questionnaire was administered to 258 engineering students through purposive sampling in one public university in Malaysia. The criteria of the students are that the students selected must register in the engineering program for at least one year, have undergone English language classes in primary and secondary schools, and be willing to participate in this study.

Instrument

For the instrument of this study, there are two parts: Part A is personal information (seven demographic questions and three questions that are related to their own beliefs about their language proficiency), and Part B is the beliefs about language learning inventory (34 items). BALLI consists of five major areas: "foreign language aptitude", "the difficulty of language learning", "the nature of language learning", "learning and communication strategies", and "motivation and expectations". It has been used to understand the nature of students' beliefs and to explore what type of beliefs the learners have in language learning. In this questionnaire, the 5-Likert scale was used: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Data collection and data analysis

Before the collection process, the researchers identified the students that fit with the sampling criteria. With the assistance of research assistants and the researcher's colleagues, the questionnaire was distributed manually using a pen-and-paper approach. This approach ensures higher completion rates within the target population and minimises digital distractions while completing the questionnaires, which will improve response quality and focus. Students were given fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaires. Next, the questionnaires were collected, and the data were transferred to Microsoft Excel form and imported into SPSS for further statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse this data. The researcher used SPSS 23.0 to compute and analyse the data. Mean, mode and standard deviation were used to report the items in the inventory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Questionnaire

The results from BALLI produced interesting findings that give some insights into engineering students’ beliefs about foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, as well as motivations and expectations. To answer the research questions on the beliefs that most engineering students have about English language learning, frequencies of responses were tabulated individually and according to dimensions. Before describing the result of BALLI, the demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information

Variables		Frequency	%
Age	18-19	83	32.2
	20-21	140	54.3
	22-23	32	12.4
	24-25	3	1.1
Gender	Male	181	70.2
	Female	77	29.8
Course	Diploma	92	35.7
	Degree	166	64.3

To evaluate participants’ general beliefs about language learning, a mean score was generated from the five-point Likert scale. From the mean scores, the student’s level of beliefs will be categorised into four parts: very strong belief (1.00 – 1.99), strong belief (2.00 – 2.99), neutral belief (3.00 – 3.99) and weak belief (4.00 – 5.00).

Table 2: General students’ beliefs about language learning

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D)
Foreign language aptitude	2.5224	.44043
Difficulty of language learning	2.4984	.46654

continued

Nature of language learning	2.1764	.53621
Learning and communication strategies	2.5228	.40036
Motivation and expectation	1.8831	.62205

From Table 2, we can observe that engineering students' language learning beliefs range from strong to very strong. It is depicted that the students showed the strongest beliefs in motivation and expectation dimensions, as this area has the highest mean score of 1.88 and a standard deviation of 0.62. This finding shows that the students believed that motivations and expectations in language learning are the most important factors in their learning process. They believed that English is an important language for gaining better jobs and meeting people's expectations. The next highest dimension that has a high mean score is the nature of language learning, with 2.18 and a standard deviation of 0.53. The students believed that vocabulary and grammar are the most important parts of language learning, and almost 80% of students agreed with the statements. They understood that the number of words you know in English and the mastery of language rules are essential to becoming a good language learner. The other dimensions, foreign language aptitude has a mean score of 2.52 and a standard deviation of 0.44; difficulty of language learning has a mean score of 2.50 and a standard deviation of 0.47; and learning and communication strategies has a mean score of 2.52 and a standard deviation of 0.40, are categorised under strong beliefs. We can conclude that engineering students possess strong beliefs about language learning.

a) Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude

The responses for BALLI were categorised into five dimensions suggested by Horwitz (1987). The data were presented in frequencies and percentages in Table 2. To analyse the data, two positively worded Likert scale agreements (strongly agree and agree) and two negatively worded disagreement scales (strongly disagree and disagree) were grouped. This grouping makes the reporting simpler, and we can clearly observe whether the students have overall strong or weak beliefs for each statement.

Table 3: Foreign Language Aptitude

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	186	72.1	19.0	7.4	53	20.5
2	Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	205	79.5	14	5.4	39	15.1
6	People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	118	45.7	29.0	11.3	111	43.0
10	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	102	39.5	41.9	15.9	115	44.6
11	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	48	18.6	142	55.0	68	26.4

continued

16	I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	49	19.0	69	26.7	140	54.3
19	Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	71	27.5	72	27.9	115	44.6
30	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	176	68.2	17	6.6	65	25.2
33	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	221	85.6	10	3.9	27	10.5

BALLI items 1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 30 and 33 concern students' beliefs of specialised abilities for language learning and beliefs about the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful language learners. From Table 3, most of the students have chosen item 33 with the statement "Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language" as the strongest belief about language. About 85.6% agreed with the statement. Only 10.5% neither agree nor disagree, and 3.7% disagree with the statement. It is followed by "Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages" (79.5%) and "It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language" (72.1%).

b) Beliefs about Language Learning Difficulties

Table 4: Language Learning Difficulties

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
3	Some languages are easier to learn than others.	178	69.0	18	7.0	62	24.0
4	English is: 1) A very difficult language 2) A difficult language 3) A language of medium difficulty 4) An easy language 5) A very easy language	2 38 179 37 2	0.8 14. 7 69. 4 14. 3 0.8				
15	If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well: 1) Less than a year 2) 1-2 years 3) 3-5 years 4) 5-10 years 5) You can't learn a language in one hour a day	73 97 47 21 20 2	28. 3 37. 6 18. 2 8.1 7.8				
25	It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language.	86	33.3	60	23.3	112	43.4
34	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	170	65.9	27	10.5	61	23.6

BALLI items 3, 4, 15, 25 and 34 concern the difficulties that they face when learning foreign/second language, as tabulated in Table 4. The belief that most of the respondents agree is item 3, “some languages are easier to learn than others” with a percentage of 69.0%. About 65.9% believe that “it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.” In terms of the difficulty of the English language, about 69.4% agree that the English language is a language of medium difficulty. For item 15, 65.9% of respondents believe that if they spend one hour a day learning English, they will be able to speak the language very well in less than two years.

c) Beliefs about the Nature of Language Learning

Table 5: Nature of Language Learning

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
8	It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to learn to speak English.	163	63.2	19	7.4	76	29.5
1 2	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	177	68.6	24	9.3	57	22.1
1 7	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary.	205	79.5	14	5.4	39	15.1
2 3	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	201	77.9	16	6.2	41	15.9
2 7	Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	171	66.3	19	7.4	68	26.4
2 8	The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	150	58.1	27	10.5	81	31.4

BALLI items 8, 12,17, 23,27 and 28 in Table 5 assess the opinions about the nature of the language learning process, such as the role of culture, immersive learning, and what is involved in learning the language. Items 17, 23, and 28 focus on the most important part of language learning. Among those items, the highest percentage is item 17, "the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the vocabulary", with 79.5%. Meanwhile, 77.9% believe that learning grammar is the most important thing (item 23). Only 58.1% believe that translating from the native language to English is the most important in learning language (item 28), which is the lowest percentage among all items in Table 5. For items 8, 12, and 27, the percentages were 63.2%, 68.6%, and 66.3 % respectively.

d) Beliefs about Learning and Communication Strategies

Table 6: Learning and Communication Strategies

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
7	It is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation. *	215	83.3	14	5.4	29	11.2

continued

9	You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	39	15.1	163	63.2	56	21.7
13	I enjoy practising English with the native speakers of English I meet.	172	66.7	19	7.4	67	26.0
14	It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	130	50.4	44	17.1	84	32.6
18	It is important to repeat and practice a lot. *	239	92.6	8	3.1	11	4.3
21	I feel timid speaking English with other people.	96	37.2	35	13.6	127	49.2
22	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	97	37.6	74	28.7	87	33.7
26	It is important to practice with cassettes or tapes.	108	41.9	44	17.1	106	41.1

BALLI items 7, 9, 13, 14, 21 and 22 are related to communication strategies, and items 18 and 26 refer to learning strategies. These items reflect their beliefs about different language learning practices. Based on Table 6, there were two items with high percentages, namely items 18 and 7. Item 18, "It is important to repeat and practice a lot", has the highest percentage of 92.6%. The next highest percentage is item 7, which states, "It is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation", with a percentage of 83.3%. About 66.7% of respondents said they enjoyed practising English with native English speakers. The remaining items, items 9, 14, 21, 22 and 26, have agreement percentages of 15.1%, 50.4%, 37.2%, 37.6%, and 41.9% respectively.

e) Beliefs about Motivation and Expectations

Table 7: Motivations and Expectations

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
5	I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.	202	78.3	10	3.9	46	17.8
20	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	187	72.5	14	5.4	57	22.1
24	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native speakers of English better.	199	77.1	11	4.3	48	18.6
29	If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job. *	218	84.5	13	5.0	27	10.5
31	I want to learn to speak English well. *	236	91.5	6	2.3	16	6.2
32	I would like to have native English-speaking friends.	203	78.7	10	3.9	45	17.4

BALLI items 5, 20, 24, 29, 31, and 32 measure students' motivation and expectation for learning the English language. In this category, about 91.6% of the respondents have the desire to speak English well, and only 2.4% of the respondents disagree with it, as shown in Table 6.

Meanwhile, 84.5% believe that they will have better job opportunities if they learn English very well. About 78.7% would like to have native English-speaking friends. For items 5, 20, and 24, the percentages are 78.3%, 72.5%, and 77.1%, respectively. The discussion about the results will be explained in the next section.

Discussion

Based on the findings, these students possess strong beliefs in the areas of motivation and attitudes. Motivations and attitudes are regarded as one of the significant predictors of successful language learning (Memon et al., 2019; Öztürk, 2014; Yan, 2020). They are likely to be more persistent and able to maintain a positive mindset when learning the language. According to Gardner's (1985) motivation theory, people are motivated to learn the target language when they want to fulfil their individual self-concept, or the "ideal selves", such as to be accepted in the language community, make new friends, increase affiliation and job opportunities. Having strong beliefs in motivation leads to increased self-efficacy, perceived value of learning, and self-regulation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005), which can help in better language acquisition. These respondents had the necessary motivation to learn the language, but maybe they lacked cognitive and metacognitive strategies to learn the language. Motivation and action-control mechanisms (see Kuhl, 1985) should be emphasised for students to achieve their language learning goals. The way individuals approach the task or are motivated to perform a task, either action-oriented or state-oriented, is essential to be understood by students so they can employ effective strategies in learning. Some examples of the strategies are asking friends to help, identifying recurring distractions, developing routines and exploiting a positive environment. These strategies should be taught and exposed to students since they already have clear motivation and expectations in language learning.

Students' beliefs in language learning, especially in terms of attitude, may also be related to the way their teachers' efforts to motivate students to learn English effectively (Wang & Zhan, 2020). The students may be influenced by their 'model' (in this case, the teacher) based on his or her knowledge and experiences in the real world. For example, teachers can emphasise the importance of practice in learning language in workplace communication and how it will open wider job opportunities if students can communicate well in English. When these beliefs are instilled in the classroom, they can influence students' engagement in language learning activities and show a great willingness to practice, which will contribute to overall language learning outcomes (Horwitz, 1988).

Based on the findings, about 83.3 % believed that it is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation. When asking students about "excellent" pronunciation, the reference was always the native English varieties. It is desirable to have excellent pronunciation as the goal, but students should be enlightened about different varieties of English around the world and how it can enhance their communicative abilities (Lee, 2020). It is true that excellent pronunciation can enhance communication clarity, reduce misunderstandings and improve overall fluency, but as a second language English speaker, this should not be the only factor in becoming a good English speaker. Teachers need to prepare students to understand that effective communication is not only about pronunciation but also about the flow of ideas, choice of words, linguistic diversity, and mutual understanding. As English continues to become a global language, it is essential to highlight the similarities and differences between native English and World English to prepare students for diverse communication contexts (Seidlhofer, 2004). Students should understand that 'perfect' pronunciation is not necessary, but effective communication is the primary goal.

To sum up the discussion, engineering students possessed the necessary beliefs in language learning, especially in terms of motivation and attitude. It is important to understand the

students' beliefs before language learning so that any misconceptions about the beliefs can be addressed earlier. However, the findings of this study are specific to this context, and they can vary according to different variables such as gender, level of education, niche area, region and others.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, engineering students exhibit the most positive beliefs about language learning, particularly in terms of motivation and attitudes. Generally, these engineering students have the necessary beliefs needed to learn the language. However, strategies and effective teaching strategies are required to translate these beliefs into meaningful and successful language learning experiences. From this study, educators and policymakers can gain some perspectives about learners' beliefs and tailor the current teaching practices and curriculum to be suitable for learners' needs. Teachers can try to boost students' motivation in language learning by leveraging technologies as part of their teaching method (Cao et al., 2023; Majid & Salam, 2021). Furthermore, teachers need to find ways to foster positive student attitudes as well as create a motivated and positive learning atmosphere so these engineering students can become more confident in their English language communication and excel in their workplace. However, this study has some limitations. The sample selected for this study is from one university only and cannot be generalised to all engineering students in Malaysia. Because this is a descriptive quantitative study, the analysis is limited to describing the frequencies and means, thus limiting the representation from multiple viewpoints. As a suggestion for future research direction, a qualitative study to examine 'why' and 'how' their beliefs may affect their language learning strategies and performance can enlighten more insight about this matter. Future researchers can also identify underlying factors that contribute to their beliefs through observation or in-depth interviews.

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