
THE BELIEFS OF YEMENI EFL STUDENT TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Prof. Mohammad Abdu Ahmed Al-Mekhlafi (malmekhlafi@yahoo.com)
Department of English, College of Education, Sana'a University, Yemen

Abstract

The present study sought to investigate the beliefs about English language learning of one hundred and twenty seven Yemeni EFL student teachers studying at the teacher preparation program at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University in Yemen in the academic year 2015-2016. The study focused on research questions regarding (a) their perceptions about English language learning, and (b) whether the student teachers' perception about language learning differs according to gender. Data were collected via a literature-based instrument whose analysis revealed a positive perception about English language learning. The findings of this study revealed that the highest mean average among the five components of beliefs about language learning was the belief of motivation and expectations (M= 4.45), followed by the belief of the nature of language learning (M= 4.02) and the belief of learning and communication strategies (M= 3.82). The two components with the lowest scores were the belief of foreign language aptitude (M= 3.58) and the belief of language learning difficulty (M= 3.19). Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences between the beliefs of the male and female students. The study findings confirm the previous studies and provide some implications for further research.

Keywords: Language Learning, Language Aptitude, Language of Opportunity, Gender Differences, Student Teachers, EFL, TEFL

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 English Language Learning and Teaching in Yemen

With the emergence of globalization English has now been viewed as a medium of communication. According to Crystal (2007) it is "the world's first truly global language" (P.4). The knowledge of English is, therefore, essential in almost all branches of education and research. It also helps us establish economic, cultural, commercial and political relations with the

rest of the world for it is actually the medium of communication among politicians, scientists, scholars, technocrats, educators and the internet.

English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject in the curriculum of Yemeni schools and universities. Actually, it is the only foreign language that is taught in the Yemeni schools. English instruction in the Yemeni schools starts at the first year of the preparatory school (7th Grade), i.e., when the students are about thirteen years of age and continues through secondary school and then university. Moreover, it has been the medium of instruction in the colleges of medicine, science and engineering, in spite of serious attempts towards Arabization of the curricula in these fields. Hillenbrand (1994) has initiated a brief discussion on the language situation in Yemen: "Arabic is the language of government, the media, religious observance, and education in Yemen. However, English is the medium of teaching in the Faculties of Medicine, Science, and Architecture at the University of Sana'a. The principal foreign language taught in the schools and universities is English" (P. 5073).

In recent years English has become an important language in the Republic of Yemen because of the political and economic situation which took place in the country after the unification in 1990. The learning/teaching of English in Yemen which was associated with many slogans such as "khawagah" (European), "frangi"(foreigner) and "gharbi" (Western) seems to have now secured a definite place in the Yemeni educational system and become an economic reality as well. It has been in fact the most profitable business next to "qat" selling, of course. A great number of those who do not yet know English are trying hard to learn it. A great number of language institutes and colleges have been established throughout the Republic of Yemen. Thus, in modern Yemen English continues to hold an important position. The educated as well as the semi educated ones feel proud to use some English words in their conversation. Hillenbrand's (1994) observation in this regard is worth quoting: "Since unification, English is slowly beginning to become the most important second language in Yemen. English is the lingua franca among the non-Arab groups (from the UK, Germany, the USA, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and other countries) working in Yemen" (P. 5073).

At the individual level, the value of English as the language of "opportunity" is widely recognized. Any individual seeking socio-economic advancement will find the ability to speak

English an asset. The formal education system in the Republic of Yemen was established after the Revolution of 26th September, 1962 which marked the change from monarchy to a republic (Abdulmalik & Chapman, 1994). Thus, the introduction of the English language in the Yemeni educational system started at that time.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Beliefs about Language Learning

Research on the beliefs of language learning was initiated by Horwitz (1987) who developed several versions of Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Following this pioneering research, a number of research studies have explored language learning beliefs from different perspectives. Victori and Lockhart (1995) define beliefs as "general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of language learning" (P.224). Students' beliefs in the foreign language acquisition context are important because the students enter the classroom with such beliefs and certain wrong beliefs can negatively affect the way the students view the foreign language learning experience.

The perceptions of learners about their English language learning play an important role in successful language learning, which is concerned with both personal judgments, and the performance levels of the students in course activities (Wang and Rajprasisit, 2015). Moreover, Kovačević and Akbarov (2015) argue that the study of learners' beliefs about language learning will contribute to a better understanding of the learner and improve the practices of their teachers. Furthermore, Hsieh and Kang (2010) assert that the perceptions of learners play an important role in their achievement and motivation. While, Abdolazadeh and Nia (2014) reported that language learners' expectations are developed prior to their experiences, and are also influenced and shaped by their beliefs.

Horwitz (1988) carried out a pioneering study to explore the beliefs of a number of first semester international students at the University of Texas. Her foreign language students appeared to underestimate the difficulty of language learning; 43 percent of them said that if you spent one hour a day learning a foreign language, you would become fluent within two years, and a further

35 percent said that it would take three to five years. 50 percent believed in the existence of foreign language aptitude. Horwitz proposed that these gaps between teacher and learner beliefs probably result in "negative (language-learning) outcomes" for students. Horwitz also suggested that a gap between teacher and student beliefs can lead to reduced student confidence and satisfaction with the class and to unwillingness to participate in communicative activities. Horwitz (1988) asserts "If beliefs about language learning are prevalent in the culture at-large, then foreign language teachers must consider that students bring these beliefs with them into the classroom" (P.283).

The existing body of research suggests that beliefs can be related to a number of factors such as language learning experience, gender, age, learning style, personality and academic performance differences. In this regard, Tavassoli and Kasraeean (2014) assert that "beliefs about language learning are independent constructs that consist of multiple dimensions" (P.32). They add that such beliefs are context specific and may vary depending on the amount of learning experience learners have received.

2.2 Previous Studies within the Framework of Gender Differences

There has been a continuous debate whether gender differences influence the beliefs about language learning or not. Some researchers claim that gender differences are strongly influenced by culture and contexts as well as the number of male and female respondents (Rieger, 2009). Therefore, throughout the literature, one can find that the previous studies which were conducted within the framework of gender differences reached different and contradictory conclusions. Some of them claim that gender can have an impact on the beliefs of students about language learning. For example, Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) found that the females in the Hungarian context were more motivated, more open to authentic input and had a more positive attitude than their male counterparts. Similar results were reported by Rieger (2009) who found that the mean of the female respondents was significantly higher than that of the male respondents in Hungary. Rieger concluded that gender plays a significant role in forming the beliefs about language learning. Moreover, Siebert (2003) conducted a study on the beliefs of international students studying English in the United States. The author reported significant gender-related differences. The male students believed that the learning of grammar was the most important component of

language learning. They also believed that a language could be learnt in a shorter time than their female counterparts did.

Another related study is Diab (2006) who carried out his study with 284 EFL male and female students learning English at three universities in Lebanon. He examined the respondents' beliefs about learning English and French. His findings revealed statistically significant differences in the beliefs that were related to the respondents' gender. He concluded that the female students were more motivated to learn French than their male counterparts. The females were also more confident in using the French language than the males.

A study by Nikitina and Furuoka (2007) was conducted to explore whether beliefs of male and female students were significantly different. This study was conducted among 65 female and 42 male Russian language students studying at the University of Malaysia Sabah. The author used the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire. Their results revealed that "the only statistically significant difference in male and female students" beliefs detected in this inquiry concerned the value and importance of the use of audio materials and CD recordings in the language classroom. The female students assigned a much greater importance to employing and utilizing these language learning tools." (Nikitina and Furuoka 2007, P.16).

Tavassoli and Kasraeean (2014) carried out a research study to explore the possible difference that existed between male and female students' attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. To this end, the Persian version of Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was administered among seventy-six male and eighty-eight female students. They are students of Master of Arts in English language teaching at Azad university of Shiraz in Iran. They concluded that the female students had stronger beliefs in foreign language learning than the male students.

On the other hand, Tercanlioglu (2005) reported no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in Turkey. A similar study was conducted by Bernat and Lloyd (2007) who investigated the beliefs about language learning and gender differences. Their respondents were 155 female and 107 male EFL students enrolled in an Academic English Program. Their findings indicated that overall males and females held similar beliefs about

language learning in all categories of the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire.

A recent study was carried out by Yazici (2015) who aimed at determining if there was a statistically significant difference between the male and female students' beliefs about language learning. Her subjects were 90 male and 90 female students from the Foreign Language Education Center at Cukurova University in Turkey. The findings of her study indicated no significant differences among males and females.

In Yemen, Fadhil (2003) examined gender differences in the perceptions of the students of the Faculty of Education at Sana'a University towards selecting teaching as a career. The author found that Yemeni female student teachers tended to be more satisfied in teaching than males. However, this satisfaction is yet to be correlated with their perceptions about English language learning.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1. Research Questions

This study tries to find answers to the following research questions:

- a) What do the Yemeni EFL student teachers report as their beliefs about English language learning? and
- b) What are the similarities and differences between the beliefs of both male and female student teachers about English language learning?

3.2. Method and Procedures

3.2.1. Participants

Using the total enumeration sampling technique, a hundred and twenty seven students who were enrolled in a Transformational Generative Grammar course participated in this study. They studied at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University in Yemen. They were enrolled in a four-year program (a total of 152 Credit hours) leading to a bachelor degree in

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They had to secure a minimum of 50% in order to pass a course. Upon the completion of the requirements of the program, they would be granted a Bachelor of Education degree in the Teaching of English. Ninety six (75.59 %) of the students were females and the other thirty one (24.41 %) were males. Their ages were between 21 and 25 and all were speakers of the same first language (Arabic). The student teachers were organized into three groups of about 45 students in each group. They were of mixed abilities in their English proficiency. Most of them were highly motivated and most of them were at the expected level, while a few of them were either below or above the expected level. They all attended seven courses of 19 credit hours per week for about 14 weeks of the academic year 2016/2017. The context of the teaching and learning situation is English as a foreign language (EFL) where the students are exposed to the English language only in the classroom.

7

3.2.2. Survey Questionnaire

The data of this study were collected by means of a closed ended questionnaire. The researcher adapted the survey questionnaire depending on the relative research studies and relevant literature with specific reference to Horwitz (1987); Vibulphol (2004); Rieger (2009); Yazici (2015). These studies used the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). The BALLI consists of thirty-four statements which are organized into five Domains, namely: Foreign Language Aptitude, Language Difficulty, Nature of Language Learning, Learning and Communication Strategies, and Motivation. It provides information about the perceptions of the Yemeni student teachers about their own English language learning beliefs. The emergent copy of the questionnaire developed for the purpose of this study was out of forty items distributed on the following five domains.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire Items on the Five Domains of the Scale, the Number of Items and Samples

Domain	Number of items	Sample Item
Language Aptitude	9	It is easier for children than adults to learn English
Language Difficulty	8	I think English is : easy
Nature of Language Learning	7	Learning English involves a lot of memorization.
Learning and Communication Strategies	9	In learning English it is important to practice a lot.

Motivation	7	If I can use English well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.
Total	40	

The instrument was translated into Arabic to ensure that all of the participants completely understood all the questions. It utilized a Likert scale format with response categories of: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The researcher calculated the internal consistency estimates of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha). The five subscales of the present study had acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient scores greater than 0.70. Alpha scores ranged between 0.79 and 0.84 which indicate reliability of the instrument. Frankel and Wallen (2006) argue that the reliability coefficient scores should be at least 0.70.

3.2.3. Data Analysis

Following the collection of the survey questionnaires, the answers were computer-coded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program. Descriptive statistics were produced for every item of the questionnaire and the calculations of the means and standard deviations were used. The Independent Samples t Test was computed to determine whether the student teachers’ beliefs about English language learning differ according to gender. The significance level in this study was set at $P < 0.05$.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Participants’ English Proficiency

The main focus of this study was to determine the perceptions of the Yemeni student teachers about their own English language learning beliefs. Besides, the participants of the study were asked to rate their own overall proficiency in English. The examination of data collected through survey questionnaires permitted a description of their self perceptions of their own English proficiency. Table (2) below presents the distribution of the participants of the study according to their proficiency in English.

Table 2: Student Teachers’ Proficiency in English

Proficiency	No of Student Teachers	Percentage
Excellent	17	13.4 %
Above Average	41	32.3 %

Average	62	48.8 %
Below Average	7	5.5 %
Poor	0	0 %

With regard to the participants' proficiency in English, Table (2) above shows that seventeen student teachers (13.4 %) rated themselves as having excellent proficiency in English, forty one (32.3 %) rated themselves as having "Above Average", sixty two student teachers (48.8 %) had an "Average" proficiency and the remaining seven (5.5 %) had "Below Average".

4.2. Participants' English Language Learning Beliefs

The participants of this study were asked to express their own perceptions and views about the English language learning beliefs using the following five point Likert-type scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree and (5) strongly agree. The researcher also specified the benchmarks in the light of which the results of the questionnaire would be interpreted as follows: (1 - 1.80) means strongly disagree, (1.81- 2.60) means disagree, (2.61- 3.40) means neutral, (3.41 – 4.20) means agree, and (4.21 – 5) means strongly agree. The responses to the 40 statements of the questionnaire were grouped into five domains, namely: Language Aptitude (LA), Language Difficulty (LD), Nature of Language Learning (NLL), Learning and Communication Strategies (LCS) and Motivation (M). Table (3) below presents the Means and Standard deviations results of the student teachers on the five subscales.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Results for the Student Teachers' Sample on the Five Subscales

Subscale	N	Mean	ST. deviation
Language Aptitude	127	3.58	0.95
Language Difficulty	127	3.19	0.41
Nature of Language Learning	127	4.02	0.48
Learning and Communication Strategies	127	3.82	0.40
Motivation and expectations	127	4.45	0.48
Average		3.77	0.45

Referring to Table (3) above, the responses of the participants to the questionnaire expressed as a mean score to the forty statements that were grouped into five domains. The Motivation subscale

came first with a mean of (4.45) out of (5), while the Language Difficulty subscale came last with a mean of (3.19). What follows is an analysis of the student teachers’ perceptions about the beliefs associated with each subscale.

4.2.1. Language Aptitude

The calculation of the means and standard deviations of the nine statements relating to the student teachers’ views and perceptions on the English language aptitude were calculated. The statements, and the participants’ responses, are shown in Table (4), below. They are reorganized to reflect how strongly the student teachers felt about each statement, in a descending order.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and the Statements of the Language Aptitude

N	Language Aptitude Perception Scale	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Mean	SD	Degree of Agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Everyone can learn to speak English.	11	8.7	5	3.9	111	87.4	4.11	0.94	Agree
2	People who speak more than one language are intelligent.	10	7.9	22	17.3	95	74.8	4.02	0.95	Agree
3	It is easier for children than adults to learn English	15	11.81	18	14.17	94	74.02	3.91	1.02	Agree
4	Some people have a special ability for learning English	10	7.9	17	13.4	100	78.7	3.91	0.97	Agree
5	I have a special ability for learning English	8	6.3	31	24.4	88	69.3	3.79	0.84	Agree
6	Yemeni people are good at learning English	8	6.3	39	30.7	80	63	3.66	0.77	Agree
7	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	23	18.1	24	18.9	80	63	3.64	1.04	Agree
8	Women are better than men at learning English.	38	29.9	36	28.3	53	41.7	3.17	1.06	Neutral
9	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English	109	85.8	6	4.7	12	9.4	2.00	0.93	Disagree
	Average							3.58	0.95	Agree

Table (4) shows that the average mean of the student teachers on the language aptitude perception scale was 3.58 (71.6 %). The results shown in the table above indicate that the student teachers agreed that everyone can learn to speak English (M= 4.11), that People who speak more than one language are intelligent (M= 4.02), and that It is easier for children than adults to learn English (M= 3.91). Similarly, they agreed that some people have a special ability for learning English (M= 3.91), that they have a special ability for learning English (M= 3.79), and that

Yemeni people are good at learning English (M= 3.66). They also agreed that It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one (M= 3.64), but they were neutral about the statement which states that Women are better than men at learning English (M= 3.17). They disagreed that People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English (M= 2.0).

4.2.2. Language Difficulty

The calculation of the means and standard deviations of the eight statements relating to the student teachers' views and perceptions on the English language difficulty were calculated. The statements, and the participants' responses, are shown in Table (5), below. They are reorganized to reflect how strongly the student teachers felt about each statement, in a descending order.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics and the Statements of the Language Difficulty

N	Language Difficulty Perception Scale	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Mean	SD	Degree of Agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	I believe that I will learn to speak English well	3	2.4	2	1.6	122	96	4.59	0.75	Strongly Agree
2	English is easier to learn than other languages.	10	7.9	24	18.9	93	73.2	3.83	0.81	Agree
3	I think English is : difficult	5	3.9	66	52.0	56	44.1	3.49	0.71	An easy language
4	In learning English, reading is easier than speaking and listening.	46	36.2	14	11.0	67	52.8	3.23	1.21	Neutral
5	In learning English, writing is easier than speaking and listening.	53	41.7	24	18.9	50	39.4	2.96	1.12	Neutral
6	In learning English, it is easier to speak than to understand what people say.	68	53.5	18	14.2	41	32.3	2.77	1.16	Neutral
7	It is difficult for Yemeni people to learn English because of the difference in the alphabet system.	76	59.8	18	14.2	33	26.0	2.57	1.11	Disagree
8	If someone spent one hour learning English everyday, how long would it take him or her to speak English well.	96	75.6	21	16.5	10	7.8	2.05	0.99	1-2 years

Table (5) shows that the average mean of the student teachers on the language difficulty scale was 3.19 (63.8%). The results shown in the table above indicate that the means for the eight statements regarding the language difficulty ranged between (4.59) and (2.05). As for the total average of the eight statements, the mean was 3.19. The highest rating was given to the

statement: *I believe that I will learn to speak English well* with a mean of (4.59), followed by the statement: *English is easier to learn than other languages* with a mean of (3.83). Then came the statement: *I think English is : difficult* with a mean of (3.49), followed by the statement: *In learning English, reading is easier than speaking and listening* with a mean of (3.23). In the fifth rank came the statement: *In learning English, writing is easier than speaking and listening* with a mean of (2.96) and in the sixth rank came the statement: *In learning English, it is easier to speak than to understand what people say* with a mean of (2.77). Then came the statement: *It is difficult for Yemeni people to learn English because of the difference in the alphabet system* with a mean of (2.57) and the statement: *If someone spent one hour learning English everyday, how long would it take him or her to speak English well* came last with a mean of (2.05).

4.2.3. The Nature of Language Learning

The EFL student teachers were asked to respond to seven statements relating to their perceptions about the nature of language learning. The statements, and the student teachers' responses, are shown in Table (6) below in a descending order.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics and the Statements of the Nature of Language Learning

N	The Nature of Language Learning Perception Scale	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Mean	SD	Degree of Agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Learning vocabulary words is an important part of learning English.	4	3.1	2	1.6	121	95.3	4.61	0.81	Strongly Agree
2	Learning the grammar is an important part of learning English.	8	6.3	9	7.1	110	86.6	4.29	0.94	Strongly Agree
3	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country such as England, the USA or Australia.	9	7.1	10	7.9	108	85.1	4.28	0.94	Strongly Agree
4	Learning English is different from learning other academic subjects..	6	4.7	21	16.5	100	78.7	3.89	0.77	Agree
5	Learning English involves a lot of memorization.	10	7.9	22	17.3	95	74.8	3.88	0.89	Agree
6	It is necessary to know the customs, the cultures, and the ways of life of English-speaking people (such as the British, Americans or Australians) in order to speak English correctly and appropriately in a particular context.	26	20.5	23	18.1	78	61.4	3.63	1.11	Agree
7	Learning how to translate from Arabic is an important part of learning English.	27	21.3	27	21.3	73	57.5	3.54	1.08	Agree
	Average							4.02	0.48	Agree

Table (6) shows that the average mean of the student teachers on the language aptitude perception scale was 4.02 (80.4 %). The results shown in the table above indicate that the means of the items associated with the nature of language learning dimension ranged between (4.61) and (3.54). The highest rating was given to the statement: *Learning vocabulary words is an important part of learning English*, while the lowest rating was given to the statement: *Learning how to translate from Arabic is an important part of learning English*.

4.2.4. Learning and Communication Strategies

The calculation of the means and standard deviations of the nine statements relating to the student teachers' views and perceptions on the learning and communication strategies were calculated. The statements, and the participants' responses, are shown in Table (7), below. They are reorganized to reflect how strongly the student teachers felt about each statement, in a descending order.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics and the Statements of the Learning and Communication Strategies

N	Learning and Communication Strategies	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Mean	SD	Degree of Agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	In learning English it is important to practice a lot.	2	1.6	0	0	125	98.4	4.77	0.61	Strongly Agree
2	It is important to speak English with a correct pronunciation.	4	3.1	1	0.8	122	96.1	4.59	0.77	Strongly Agree
3	In learning English, it is important to practice by listening to TV or radio programs in English frequently.	4	3.1	4	3.1	119	93.7	4.36	0.76	Strongly Agree
4	I enjoy practicing English with the foreigners I meet.	5	3.9	14	11.0	108	85.0	4.22	0.79	Strongly Agree
5	In learning English, it is important to practice with cassettes or tapes.	3	2.4	13	10.2	111	87.4	4.20	0.71	Agree
6	It is OK to guess if we don't know a word in English.	5	3.9	18	14.2	104	81.9	4.03	0.81	Agree
7	We should not say anything in English until we can say it correctly.	68	53.5	13	10.2	46	36.2	2.79	1.26	Neutral
8	I feel shy speaking English with other people.	65	51.2	27	21.3	35	27.6	2.72	1.15	Neutral
9	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	73	57.5	9	7.1	45	35.4	2.72	1.32	Neutral
	Average							3.82	0.91	Agree

Given the results shown in Table (7) above, it can be stated that the student teachers considered practice beneficial and advantageous. They *strongly agreed* that *in learning English it is important to practice a lot* (M= 4.77), that *it is important to speak English with a correct pronunciation* (M= 4.59), and that *in learning English, it is important to practice by listening to TV or radio programs in English frequently* (M= 4.36). They also *agreed* that *in learning English, it is important to practice with cassettes or tapes* (M= 4.20) and that *it is OK to guess if we don't know a word in English* (M= 4.03). They were also neutral about the last three .

4.2.5. Motivation and Expectations

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics and the Statements of Motivation and Expectations

N	Language Aptitude Perception Scale	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Mean	SD	Degree of Agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	I want to be able to speak English well.	3	2.4	0	0	124	97.6	4.80	0.67	Strongly Agree
2	If I can use English well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	3	2.4	3	2.4	121	95.3	4.61	0.73	Strongly Agree
3	Learning English will help me communicate with people from other countries because English is an international language.	2	1.6	2	1.6	123	96.8	4.61	0.68	Strongly Agree
4	English is important for higher education level, especially M.A and PhD programs.	0	0	9	7.1	118	93.0	4.52	0.63	Strongly Agree
5	I want to learn English well because it can help me access information from around the world.	4	3.1	8	6.3	115	90.6	4.44	0.81	Strongly Agree
6	I would like to have friends from other countries.	5	3.9	14	11.0	108	85.0	4.21	0.85	Strongly Agree
7	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know people who speak English (such as the British, Americans or Australians) better.	6	4.7	22	17.3	99	78	3.98	0.79	Agree
	Average							4.45	0.74	Strongly Agree

Table (8) shows that the average mean of the student teachers on the language aptitude perception scale was 4.45 (89 %). The results shown in the table above indicate that the subjects of this study *strongly agreed* with the first six statements and *agreed* with the last statement.

4.3. Gender Differences

The aim of the second question of the present study was to determine whether the student teachers' beliefs about English language learning differ according to gender. To answer this question, the Independent Samples t Test was computed as shown in Table (6) below:

Table (6): Independent Samples t Test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude	Male	31	3.66	0.25	0.793	125	0.429
	Female	96	3.57	0.41	1.178	17.983	0.254
Difficulty	Male	31	3.26	0.42	0.651	125	0.516
	Female	96	3.18	0.41	0.636	13.266	0.536
Nature Lang.	Male	31	3.99	0.58	-.235	125	0.814
	Female	96	4.02	0.47	-.197	12.531	0.847
Communication	Male	31	4.01	0.36	1.699	125	0.092
	Female	96	3.80	0.40	1.849	13.983	0.086
Motivation	Male	31	4.54	0.27	0.609	125	0.544
	Female	96	4.45	0.50	0.979	19.863	0.340
Total	Male	31	3.23	0.20	1.024	125	0.31
	Female	96	3.15	0.26	1.285	15.34	0.22

Table (6) shows that the average mean of the male student on their beliefs about English language learning was 3.23 while the average mean of their female counterparts was 3.15. The mean scores of the male student teachers and the females were compared using an F- test. This analysis resulted in an F- score of (0.762) ($P < 0.308$). This means that the difference between the two samples was not statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. The results clearly demonstrate that the female students' perceptions on the English language learning were the same as that of the male students. This result lends support to the findings of Tercanlioglu (2005) and Yazici (2015) who reported no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in Turkey. On the other hand, this finding contradicts that of Rieger (2009) who found a number of significant differences based on the gender of respondents. Rieger concluded that gender plays an important role in forming the beliefs about language learning.

4.4. Pedagogical Implications

The present study is expected to raise the awareness of Yemeni policy makers and EFL teachers with the importance of the beliefs of English language learning. The results of the present study may have some pedagogical implications for the people concerned about the Yemeni TEFL and

some suggestions for further research. The Yemeni teachers should take advantage of the data obtained in this study to expand their awareness of the different components of students' beliefs about language learning. The teachers should provide opportunities for students to share their own beliefs with peers and teachers, discuss language learning beliefs in class, and encourage the positive language learning beliefs. Thus, it will produce positive attitudes towards language learning. Horwitz (1988) suggests that better understanding of students' beliefs of language learning may allow language teachers to better understand students' expectations and satisfactions with their language class.

As the focus of the present study was limited to the perceptions of the student teachers at Sana'a University, it is suggested that the teachers of English who teach at the secondary stage can use the instrument used in this study to explore the perceptions of their students about foreign language learning and to shed more light on the issue. Finally, future studies can focus on employing more respondents in order to get more generalizable results.

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Yemeni EFL student teachers about the English language learning. The second goal was to explore any similarities and differences between males and females in terms of their beliefs about language learning. The participants were 127 student teachers enrolled in the teacher preparation program at the Department of English in the College of Education at Sana'a University in Yemen. The results of this study indicated that the highest mean average among the five components of beliefs about language learning was the belief of motivation and expectations ($M= 4.45$), followed by the belief of the nature of language learning ($M= 4.02$) and the belief of learning and communication strategies ($M= 3.82$). Finally came the belief of foreign language aptitude ($M= 3.58$) and the belief of language learning difficulty ($M= 3.19$). This study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of their beliefs towards English language learning.

WORKS CITED

- Abdolahzadeh E., & Nia, M. R. Language learning beliefs of Iranian learners: Examining the role of English language proficiency. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 2014, pp. 22-28.
- Abdulmalik, Hassan A. and Chapman, David W. Teacher nationality and classroom practice in the Republic of Yemen. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10 (3), 1994.
- Bernat, E. and Lloyd, R. Exploring the gender effect on EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. *Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 7, 2007, pp.79-91.
- Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*, (second edition). U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Diab, R. L. University students' beliefs about learning English and French in Lebanon. *System*, 34 (1), 2006, pp. 80-96.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. The effects of intercultural contact and tourism on English as a foreign language: attitudes, selves and motivated learning behavior. *Language Learning*, 58(2), 2005, pp. 327-355.
- Fadhil, Z. Attitudes of the students of the College of Education- Sana'a towards the teaching profession. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Sciences*, 2 (3), 2003, pp.57 – 74.
- Frankel, J. and Wallen, N. *How to design and evaluate research in education*. (6th ed.). The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2006.
- Hillenbrand, C. Yemen: Language situation. In Asher, R. E. (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, vol. 3 , 1994, p. 5073.
- Horwitz, E.K. Surveying student beliefs about language learning. In A.L. Wenden & J. Rubin (eds), *Learner strategies in language learning*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall,1987, pp. 119-129.
- _____. The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *Modern Language Journal*, 72, 1988, pp. 283-294.
- Hsieh, P., & Kang, H. (2010). Attribution and self-efficacy and their interrelationship in the Korean EFL context. *Language Learning*, 60(3), 2010, pp. 606-627.
- Kovačević, E. and Akbarov, A. Language Learning Beliefs and Strategies: A Bosnian EFL Case. *Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies*, 8, (3), 2015, pp. 74 – 87.
- Nikitina, L. and Furuoka, F. Are Beliefs about Language Learning Gender-Related? A Case Study of Russian Language Learners at Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MANU, *Journal Pusat Penataran Limu & Bahasa*, 13, 2007, pp. 146-160.
- Rieger, B. Hungarian University Students' Beliefs about Language Learning: A Questionnaire Study. *WoPaLP*, 3, 2009, pp. 97- 113.
- Siebert, L.L. Pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about foreign language learning. *The ORTESOL Journal*, 21, 2003, pp. 7-39.
- Tavassoli, A. and Kasraeean, A. The relationship between students' beliefs about language learning and their attitudes towards their teachers. A study in English language classes at Azad University, Shiraz, Iran. *Journal of Studies in Learning and Teaching English*, 2 (6), 2014, pp. 25-47.
- Tercanlioglu, L. Pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about foreign language learning and how they relate to gender. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 53(1), 2005, pp. 145-162. Retrieved on August 28th , 2017, from: www.investigacion-psicopedagogica.org/revista/articulos /5/english/Art_5_58.pdf.
- Vibulphol, Jutarat. Beliefs about Language Learning and Teaching Approaches of Pre-Service EFL Teachers in Thailand. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Oklahoma State University, USA, 2004.
- Victori, M., & Lockhart, W. Enhancing metacognition in self-directed language learning. *System*, 23, 1995, pp. 223-234.

Wang, Tuntiga & Rajprasit, Krich. Identifying affirmative beliefs about English language learning: self-perceptions of Thai learners with different language proficiency. *English Language Teaching*, 8 (4) , 2015, pp. 1- 13.

Yazici, Ilkay. Beliefs about language learning: Gender related or not? *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 23 (1), 2015, pp. 229 – 238. Retrieved on August 28th , 2017, from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282019981_Beliefs_About_Language_Learning_Gender-Related_or_Not

About the Author



Prof. Mohammad Abdu Ahmed Al-Mekhlafi is currently a Professor of English at the Department of English, College of Education, Sana'a University in Yemen. He got his PhD in ELT from the CIEFL, Hyderabad, India in 1999. He also attended Ball State University in the USA where he was awarded a Master degree in Linguistics and TEFL (1990- 1992).

Throughout his varied career in the field of Education, Mohammad has worked as a teacher educator at the Department of English, College of Education, Sana'a University, Yemen since 1989. He was the Head of the Department of English (2001 – 2005). He was the Dean of the College of Languages, Arts and Education in Al-Yemenia University (2001 – 2007). He worked as a visiting associate professor in TEFL at Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman (2007 – 2012). He has been the Head of the Department of English in the College of Languages and Social Sciences in the Future University, Yemen (2014- present). His main areas of research interest are: teacher training, multiple intelligences, writing instruction, grammar instruction and second language pedagogy. He has participated in more than 20 international conferences in Britain, the USA, India, the UAE, Oman, Malaysia and Yemen. E-mail: malmekhlafi@yahoo.com