

THE RELEVANCE OF BELIEFS TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: The article states the importance of foreign language learning beliefs and its relevance to teaching process. Teachers' and students' language learning beliefs are illustrated with major aspects of the beliefs. Teachers' experience and learners' expectations are included in the justifications.

Key words: aptitude, belief, communication strategies, difficulty, expectation, motivation, nature

English as foreign language is taught in an environment where English is not the native language. In an EFL situation, the learners learn English inside a classroom, but continue to speak their own language when leaving the classroom. Generally, there are many possible reasons for studying a foreign language. Perhaps a major number of language students in the world do it because it is on the curriculum. Some people want to study English or another foreign language because they think it offers a chance for advancement in their professional lives such as in business, to pursue higher educations, to build social network and the others. They will get a better job with two languages than if the only know their mother tongue. 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' beliefs exist on many levels from global to personal and serve as overarching frameworks for understanding and engaging with the world.

They can be thought of as guiding principles for teachers that serve as lenses through which new experiences can be understood. Teachers' beliefs guide their decision-making, behavior, and interactions with students and shape their

planning and curricular decisions, in effect determining what should be taught and path instruction should follow [3; 21-40].

Beliefs about language learning, as well as other cognitive and affective variables, have turned into an enthusiasm of scientists in the field of foreign language acquisition because of assumptions that “success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom.” Belief about language learning underlines five major aspects.

Beliefs about the Difficulty of Language Learning

Beliefs about the difficulty of language learning have been discussed and found to relate to language learning success. Beliefs about the difficulty of language learning concern the general and specific difficulty of the learners' target language. These beliefs also concern the difficulty of different language skills. It is found that learners who have a preconceived idea that the language they were learning as an easy language tended to do better than those who believed that as a difficult language. It is reported that most of the students rated English as a language of medium difficulty and others consider it to be an easy language.

Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude

Beliefs about foreign language aptitude concern to their beliefs about their capability in foreign language learning. The belief that some people have a special ability to learn a foreign language has been reported as having the possibility of negative effects on learners' language learning. In the studies about foreign language aptitude argued that learners who believe in the existence of foreign language aptitude and assume that they do not have it risk negative effects on their learning. The students who believed in language learning aptitude tended to be more confident in language learning while the students who still arguing their beliefs did not believe in their ability tend to be less confident.

Beliefs about Nature in Language Learning

Beliefs about nature language learning indicate learners' perception of what language learning is about. It is said that learners' preferred language learning techniques may have a negative impact on their learning process. It is assessed beliefs about nature in language learning included the role of cultural contact and language immersion, learners' view of language learning as different from other types of learning, students' perception of structural differences between English and the first language, and the students' conceptions of the focus of the language learning task.

Beliefs about Learning and Communication Strategies

Students' beliefs influence their preferences on approaches and strategies in language learning. Beliefs about learning and communication strategies related to the students' actual learning practice. These beliefs included their preferences learning strategies, and communication strategies. For example, in the study most of the students preferred supporting media out of class to develop their English skills. The common media were videos, movies, news reading, novels, comics, and English games. Beliefs about learning and communications strategies also define their willingness to take responsibility for their learning

Beliefs about Motivation and Expectation in Language Learning

Beliefs about motivation in language learning refer to the learners' perception of the importance of language learning and what makes them think so. The expectation in language learning refers to the learners' perception about the outcome of their language learning and its relevance to their success. It is stated that motivation is the most important factor that makes the learners keep on learning despite of the challenges they have in the learning process. It is assessed beliefs about motivation and expectation in language learning that concern the learners' desires and opportunities associated with the learning of their target language [1; 23].

Knowing students' beliefs about language learning is something the teacher can do to support the students' learning process. The teacher is not only providing

good materials and strategies in the learning process but also understanding the students' thoughts about what the language is and how to learn a language. It is suggested that beliefs about language learning are worth to be investigated to help the teacher sets appropriate teaching goals and approaches. It is also important for teachers to address the importance of beliefs and give the learners chance to reflect their beliefs so that they can take advantage to support their language learning. Identifying the students' beliefs also helps the teachers to exploit their positive beliefs for motivation and if the students hold negative beliefs the teacher can address them effectively. Understanding learner beliefs – including beliefs about the time needed to attain fluency, the relative difficulties of languages, the right age to start language learning, the roles of grammar, vocabulary and communication in language learning and other aspects of the learning process – in this context is essential, since it has been noted that successful learners develop insightful beliefs about language learning processes, their own abilities, and the use of effective learning strategies, which have a facilitative effect on learning. On the other hand, students can have „mistaken“, uninformed or negative beliefs, which may lead to a reliance on less effective strategies, resulting in a negative attitude towards learning experiences, classroom anxiety, and negative self-concepts.

Literature

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