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Beliefs about foreign language learning and their relationship to gender
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Abstract

Learners' beliefs about foreign language learning have been stressed in educational research because they are regarded as fundamental to learners' progress (e.g. Altan, 2012; Russell, 2009; Rieger, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;). This paper deals with the results of a research project conducted among first-year English language majors studying the Intensive English Language Program at Qassim University. A total of 250 male and female students participated in this study. A modified Arabic version of Horwitz's (1987) BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) was used to explore the overall beliefs of Saudi university students about learning English as a foreign language and to investigate the effect of gender on those beliefs. Results revealed that Saudi university students have positive and realistic beliefs about foreign language as regard the nature of language learning, communication strategies, and motivation and expectations about learning English as a foreign language. The findings also indicated that overall males and females held similar beliefs about language learning as regard the difficulty and the nature of language learning. However, statistical significant gender differences were found in the areas of English language aptitude, learning and communication, and motivation and expectations. The study recommends an identification of Saudi learners' beliefs on a wider scale, so as to provide guidelines to EFL teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to tailor their teaching methods to avoid mismatches between classroom practices and learners' beliefs. Finally, the study suggest that recognition of learners' beliefs and reflection on their possible effect on language learning might increase awareness and even adjustment of their expectations.

Author Keywords

Aptitude; Beliefs; Expectations; Motivation

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