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Language Learning Beliefs of Thai EFL University Students: Dimensional Structure and Cultural Variations

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were (a) to investigate the dimensional structure of the language learning beliefs of Thai learners of EFL, (b) to determine if the conceptually developed categories were empirically identifiable, and (c) to examine the cultural variations of language learning beliefs. Horwitz's Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was administered to Thai EFL university students (N = 542). Through factor analysis, a five-factor structure was identified. This structure was similar to the Horwitz model with five categorical dimensions. Yet, some items clustered under a different category from that proposed in the BALLI model. Similarities were identified between Thai students and Taiwanese students in terms of the beliefs' structure at the dimensional level and the strength of the beliefs at each item level. Seventeen BALLI items were both conceptually and empirically identified as constituting subcategories of the beliefs, representing the commonality of the language learning beliefs.

1 Introduction

Learners' beliefs about language learning have been considered as an important variable, like many other individual differences in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz, 1999; Wenden, 1999). Beliefs about language learning were defined as "opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning" (Horwitz, 1987, p. 120). Wenden considered learner beliefs as metacognitive knowledge from a wider perspective, and defined them as "learners' acquired knowledge about learning: the nature of learning, the learning process, and humans as learners, including themselves" (p. 435). Over the past two decades, many researchers have explored language learning beliefs in various studies, covering varying groups of learners in different settings of learning: foreign language learners and English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) learners in the US (e.g. Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Kern, 1995; Loewen et al., 2009) and outside the US (e.g. Bernat, 2004; Diab, 2006; Peacock, 2001; Riley, 2009; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999). This situation reflects the potential impact of the beliefs on language learning, and consequently on the outcome of learning (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Mori, 1999; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). In addition, the availability of the paper-and-pencil measurement instrument developed by Horwitz (1987), Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), contributed to the growth of this research.

Despite the fact that BALLI has been the most widely used measurement instrument, and Horwitz (1987) has made remarkable contributions to the field, some issues were raised about the BALLI studies and this instrument's validity (Kuntz, 1996; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006). One critical issue pointed by Kuntz (1996) concerns the dimensional structure of the language learning beliefs. Horwitz divided the 34 BALLI items into five themes, considering what each item intended to measure. However, this grouping still remains not thoroughly empirically verified through sta-

tistical analyses. The current research examined this fundamental issue of the language learning beliefs: their dimensional structure and the categorization of the items. By widening the scope of study to an unexplored cultural group of learners, this study also investigated cultural variations of language learning beliefs.

1.1 Horwitz's Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

In her extensive review of the studies on learners' beliefs about language learning over the decade since Horwitz's (1985) pioneering study, Kuntz (1996) summarized that most of the quantitative studies exploring individuals' beliefs about language learning used BALLI or its variation. One noticeable characteristic about the Horwitz studies (1987, 1988) is in her methods of data analysis (Kuntz, 1996). Only descriptive statistics, i.e. the frequencies of the different responses (e.g. strongly agree, agree, etc.) to each item, were used in the analyses and reported in the findings. In addition, it was the frequencies of the modal response options (i.e. the responses selected by the largest number of participants) in each of the BALLI items that Horwitz (1999) used as a unit of comparison in her meta-analytical study. It was mainly because of this methodological constraint that Horwitz (1999) had to admit that "clear-cut conclusions do not seem possible" (p. 574), even if she identified many variations among several groups of learners.

Relating to this first issue, the dimensional structure of the beliefs has received very little attention from Horwitz and other researchers in their BALLI studies (Kuntz, 1996). They rarely empirically explored the multidimensionality through inferential statistical analyses of the BALLI responses. This makes it almost impossible to verify the five themes that Horwitz (1987) proposed. Horwitz categorized the 34 BALLI items into the following five themes: (a) foreign language aptitude (9 items); (b) the difficulty of language learning (6 items); (c) the nature of language learning (6 items); (d) learning and communication strategies (8 items); and (e) motivation and expectations (5 items).[1] Only a few studies (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006; Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1999) examined empirically whether the items within the same BALLI themes actually measure the same subcategory of the construct. This scarcity of empirical investigations of the multidimensionality also makes it difficult to examine cultural differences in the language learning beliefs with the BALLI questionnaire. Horwitz's (1999) comparisons were restricted to each item level in terms of the response frequencies in percentages. A similar limitation was also noticeable in other studies where groups of participants were compared only at each item level, even if the BALLI responses were statistically analyzed (e.g. Peacock, 2001; Rifkin, 2000; Schulz, 2001).

Meanwhile, recently, researchers have begun to empirically investigate the dimensionality. In most of the cases, however, the BALLI dimensions were not examined. The dimensionality was examined through statistical analyses of the learners' responses to different measurement instruments developed by researchers themselves, not BALLI. These unique instruments, many of which were at least partially based on BALLI, were developed for various reasons. Sometimes researchers were interested in more specific areas of the language learning beliefs, such as the beliefs about the role of grammar instruction and error correction (e.g. Loewen et al., 2009). As BALLI does not address this demand, a new measurement instrument was necessary. In other cases, researchers devised their own instruments because of their participants' unique cultural backgrounds (e.g. Diab, 2006; Sakui & Gaies, 1999). Other researchers investigated how the beliefs changed due to study abroad experiences, using a new questionnaire (e.g. Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). In spite of those efforts, the dimensionality of the BALLI model still remains mostly unexplored. To date, only in a very few studies reviewed in the following sections were the results of BALLI statistically analyzed by factor analysis to address those issues.

1.2 Dimensional structure examined through factor analyses

Yang's doctoral research (as cited in Kuntz, 1996) was the first BALLI study that used factor analysis to empirically investigate the underlying dimensional structure of the beliefs, according to

Kuntz (1996). This study was distinct from the other previous BALLI studies in various aspects, including its method of data analysis, as acknowledged by Kuntz. Yang's later study (1999) was partially based on Yang's doctoral dissertation. Thus, those two studies shared the same data collected using BALLI.

Yang (1999) investigated Taiwanese students (N = 505) learning EFL at six universities in Taiwan, using the 35-item BALLI questionnaire.[2] The majority (73%) of the participants were first-year students, but their subject majors were not reported. Through factor analysis, four components were identified: (a) self-efficacy and expectation (6 items, $\alpha = .71$); (b) value and nature of learning spoken English (9 items, $\alpha = .63$); (c) foreign language aptitude (7 items, $\alpha = .52$); and (d) formal, structured study (7 items, $\alpha = .55$). The number of items grouped together in each factor and the internal consistency reliability value are represented in parentheses next to the factors' labels. Yang's results were different from the BALLI model. First, the number of the factors was different. Only four factors were identified by Yang. The labels of the identified factors were also very different from the names of Horwitz's (1987) categories, except one factor that was labelled "foreign language aptitude." The grouping of the items was different from that of Horwitz's BALLI. Within the same factor, items belonging to two or more different BALLI themes were grouped together. Items from the same BALLI category were spread over and divided into two or more different factors.

In Yang's (1999) study, the dimensional structure of the beliefs was not her primary concern. No discussion was given either regarding the dimensional structure or the composition of the BALLI items. Meanwhile, Kuntz (1996) claimed that the results of Yang's doctoral study suggested a unique belief structure of the examined sample, i.e. Taiwanese EFL students. Kuntz stated that the dimensional structure of language learning beliefs might be different among groups of learners with different cultural backgrounds.

Truitt (1995) used the 36-item BALLI questionnaire to investigate EFL students (N = 204) at a Korean university.[3] Five factors were identified through factor analysis: (a) value and nature of learning English (6 items); (b) self-efficacy/confidence in speaking (5 items); (c) importance of correctness/formal learning (6 items); (d) ease of learning English (5 items); and (e) motivational factors (3 items). The number of items in parentheses next to the factors represents the items grouped together under each factor. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were not reported. The number of the identified factors was five, as proposed in Horwitz's (1987) model. Yet Truitt's results were different from the BALLI model in other aspects. First, like in Yang's (1999) results, the labels of the factors were very different from those in Horwitz's scheme. The grouping of the items in each factor was also different from the conceptual model. Only 25 out of the 36 BALLI items were divided into the five factors, because items with a factor loading smaller than .4 or larger than -.4 were eliminated. Truitt did not discuss how the grouping of the items he identified compared to Horwitz's conceptual grouping, as it was not the purpose of the study.

Most recently, Nikitina and Furuoka (2006) examined undergraduate students (N = 107) learning Russian at a Malaysian university, using the 34-statement BALLI questionnaire to measure their language learning beliefs. They addressed the issue of the dimensional structure straightforwardly. Through factor analysis, four factors were identified: (a) motivation (4 items); (b) aptitude (2 items); (c) strategy (2 items); and (d) ease of learning (2 items). The number of items in parentheses indicates the items that grouped together for each factor. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were not reported. The factor structure was similar to that proposed by Horwitz (1987), except that it was a four-factor structure. Each factor represented one different theme of Horwitz's model exclusively. Only the theme of "nature of learning" was missing. All the items loaded on each factor were from the same theme, except the fourth factor of "ease of learning". However, only 10 out of the 34 items were used in the final results. Some items were eliminated due to their lower communalities. Other items were removed because they had a high loading larger than .5 or smaller than -.5 on two or more factors simultaneously. Nevertheless, Nikitina and Furuoka concluded that the dimensional structure proposed by Horwitz was empirically supported in their study.

In spite of the findings of the studies reviewed in the previous sections, it is not yet clear whether the language learning beliefs have a multidimensional structure covering the five themes proposed by Horwitz (1987). Two studies acknowledged the differences from the conceptual model, while the other claimed to endorse the model. Thus, it is still necessary to address this challenging task.

Several studies examined Asian students using BALLI, as reviewed in the previous sections: Taiwanese (e.g. Yang, 1999), Hong Kong Chinese (e.g. Peacock, 2001), and Koreans (e.g. Truitt, 1995). Recently Bernat (2004) as well as Nikitina and Furuoka (2006) expanded the scope of the BALLI studies beyond East Asian students, and investigated Vietnamese and Malaysians, respectively. Meanwhile, Turkish students were examined by two recent studies (Altan, 2006; Tercanlioglu, 2005). To our best knowledge, there have been no published BALLI studies that investigated Thai students. It is likely that cultures play an important role in the development of an individual's beliefs about language learning (e.g. Diab, 2006; Horwitz, 1999; Wenden, 1999). Yet, still very little is known about the similarities and differences across different cultural groups. The current research was conducted to address this deficiency, and it explored cultural variations in the beliefs through systematic comparisons among groups of learners beyond simple response frequency comparisons at each item level.

1.3 Teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Thailand

It is necessary to consider the contexts of teaching and learning EFL in Thailand for an investigation of Thai EFL students. The national and official language in Thailand is Thai. English is the most widely taught and learned foreign language. According to Prapphal (2008), English is taught throughout the regular school system from the primary level onwards as a school subject. English is also an important subject in the entrance examination for universities (Prapphal, 2008).

There is a remarkable trend over the past few years in educational settings that indicates the growing value and role of the English language in Thailand. English is becoming the language of instruction in an increasing number of educational institutes. First, in tertiary education, undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs that are taught entirely in English, called "international programs" locally, have been drastically increasing in number over the past 10 years (Commission on Higher Education, 2008; Prapphal, 2008). This trend reflects the popularity of the international programs among local high school students.

A similar situation is also apparent at the primary and secondary levels, but it is still subtle. The number of the "bilingual programs" offered as formal education by regular local schools is rapidly increasing over the last decade. In these bilingual programs, one of two languages is used as the medium of communication and instruction, depending on the school subjects. Many subjects such as English and the sciences are taught in English, while other subjects deeply related to Thai culture, like Thai and social studies, are taught in Thai. However, in spite of these new trends, Thai is still the language of instruction in the majority of educational institutions of all levels in Thailand.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This study explored the multidimensional structure of the language learning beliefs held by Thai EFL university students through statistical analyses of their responses to BALLI. The subcategories of their language learning beliefs were empirically examined through a factor analysis of their BALLI responses. The results of this factor analysis were then compared to the conceptual BALLI categories, and to the findings of another study which investigated a different cultural group, using a comparable method.

Specifically, the research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What is the dimensional structure of the beliefs about language learning held by Thai university undergraduate students learning EFL?

2. Are the dimensional structure and the composition of subcategories of the beliefs about language learning identified empirically similar to those conceptually developed?
3. Are the beliefs about language learning different between groups of learners with different cultural backgrounds in terms of their dimensional structure and the composition of subcategories?

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants (N = 542) were recruited from a large, research-oriented state university in the Bangkok metropolitan area in Thailand. They were learning EFL at the university. They were all first-year students and native Thai speakers. The age of the participants was between 17 and 24 years, and the mean was 18.81 years. The majority were either 18 (27.1%) or 19 years old (67.2%). Female students were predominant (67.0%). They were from 19 different faculties and colleges of the university. The largest category consisted of medical students studying in four medical schools (19.2%).[4] Nursing students studying in two faculties were the next largest group (14.8%), followed by science majors (12.9%) and engineering majors (10.9%). Many other students were in medicine-related and health science fields. Other majors included environment and resource studies, and sport science and technology.

The participants were divided into three groups according to their English language proficiency, A very small number of students (3.3%) were in advanced-level English classes, while the majority were either in intermediate-level classes (26.9%) or elementary-level classes (69.7%). This grouping was based on the students' scores in the English test of the university's entrance examination.

Only first-year students were recruited as the participants of this study to make them as comparable to those of Yang (1999) as possible. Most of Yang's participants were first-year students. In this way, we could keep many variables of the participants of the two studies very similar, including those variables likely to influence the language learning beliefs. This also enabled us to have participants with almost the same number of years of English language learning before coming to the university.[5]

2.2 Materials

A Thai language version of Horwitz' 35-item Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), translated from Yang's (1999) 35 BALLI items in the English Learning Questionnaire, was used for this study. The translation from English into Thai was done by a Thai language instructor who was fluent in both languages. English language instructors teaching at the participants' university, who were native Thai speakers, were then invited to evaluate the Thai version of the instrument by responding to each item. Their feedback was considered to improve the item statements. This process was further supplemented by a pilot test with 20 respondents selected from the same population of this study.[6]

The participants were asked to rate statements on the beliefs about language learning on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) for 33 items. The remaining two items had a different scale and different response options. They measured the level of difficulty of English (item 4) and the period of time necessary to learn a new language (item 15).

The statements used to create the Thai version were exactly the same as those in Yang's questionnaire, except for the following three cases. The term "Americans" was replaced by "English-speaking people" in two items (items 13 and 24). In another item (item 32), "American friends" was replaced by "English-speaking friends."[7] Additionally, the phrase "cassettes or tapes" was replaced by "audio-visual materials (such as CDs, and DVDs)" to accommodate the current

situations caused by the technological advancement (item 26). Some demographic questions about age, gender, nationality, native language, and so forth, were also included at the end of the measurement instrument.

3 Results

3.1 Dimensional structure of language learning beliefs

The participants' responses to the 35 items were analyzed through principal component analysis, in order to investigate the underlying dimensional structure of their beliefs about language learning. Prior to the principal component analysis, the suitability of the data for the factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was .754, and it was larger than the recommended value of .6. This indicated that the relationships among the items were strong enough , as it was evaluated "middling" (Kaiser, as cited by Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003, p. 78). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity result was significant, $\chi 2 = 2433.242$, $p < .001$. This result endorsed the existence of correlations among the items (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). This characteristic was further confirmed, as a substantial number of correlation coefficients above .3 were noticeable in the correlation matrix. All these test results together affirmed that the items were sufficiently intercorrelated to produce underlying factors. Thus the factorability of the data was supported.

Through an exploratory principal component analysis (Direct Oblimin rotation), five factors were extracted. The five factors explained 32.73% of the total variance. Each factor explained 10.29%, 8.49%, 5.08%, 4.76%, and 4.11% of variance, respectively. Several criteria were used in order to identify and determine this number of factors, as described below. First, an inspection of the scree plot revealed breaks after the third, fifth, and sixth components. Second, twelve components had an eigenvalue larger than one. Third, parallel analysis indicated that only five components had eigenvalue exceeding the corresponding criterion value for a randomly generated matrix of the same size (35 variables x 542 participants). Furthermore, the interpretability of the factors was also considered as a criterion. Additionally, the number of the subcategories in the Horwitz model (i.e. five) and the number of the factors identified in Yang's (1999) empirical study (i.e. four) were also considered, because of the objectives of this study. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each factor were .489, .591, .553, .491, and .566, respectively. Table 1 represents the five identified factors, together with the items constituting each factor. The numbers express the factor loadings of the items.

	Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Factor 1 – Learning and communication strategies (8 items; α = .489)						
18.	It is important to repeat and practice a lot. (LCS)	**.568**	.094	.061	-.004	-.196
33.	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. (FLA)	**.477**	-.110	.193	-.207	.146
7.	It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation. (LCS)	**.452**	.254	-.039	-.039	.233
26.	It is important to practice with audio-visual materials (such as CDs, and DVDs). (LCS)	**.418**	.115	.094	-.054	.079
29.[a]	If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job. (MAE)	**.416**	-.048	.157	.403	-.239
1.	It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. (FLA)	**.400**	-.142	-.083	.207	.061
22.[b]	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. (LCS)	**.357**	.133	-.019	.087	.065
11.[b]	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages. (FLA)	**-.356**	.326	.107	.255	-.131
Factor 2 – Important aspects of language learning (6 items; α = .591)						
23.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar. (NLL)	.178	**.640**	.059	-.126	.019
34.	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it. (DLL)	.098	**.569**	-.200	-.008	.067
35.	Language learning involves a lot of memorization. (NLL)	.007	**.528**	-.167	.109	-.217
28	The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language. (NLL)	-.109	**.520**	.360	-.062	-.160
17	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words. (NLL)	.159	**.487**	.022	.100	-.058
9.	You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly. (LCS)	-.305	**.455**	.066	-.085	.059
Factor 3 – Expectations and difficulty of learning English (6 items; α = .553)						
32.	I would like to have English-speaking friends. (MAE)	.340	-.089	**.550**	.205	.002
25.	It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language. (DLL)	-.098	-.026	**.546**	.080	.043
13.	I enjoy practicing English with English-speaking people I meet. (LCS)	.047	.031	**.541**	-.080	.349
31.	I want to learn to speak English well. (MAE)	.305	-.026	**.530**	.292	-.216
24.[b]	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know English-speaking people better. (MAE)	.222	.169	**.394**	.153	.070
15.[b]	If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to speak the language very well? c (DLL)	.048	.025	**-.311**	.233	-.092
Factor 4 – Nature and aptitude of language learning (9 items; α = .491)						
12.	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country. (NLL)	-.044	-.049	.076	**.530**	-.086
10.	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. (FLA)	-.086	-.073	.060	**.494**	.022

20.	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English. (MAE)	.250	-.168	.136	**.435**	.065
30.	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent. (FLA)	-.050	.307	.136	**.419**	.023
3.	Some languages are easier to learn than others. (DLL)	-.041	.061	-.290	**.418**	.376
2.[b]	Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages. (FLA)	.082	.022	-.132	**.330**	.033
27.[b]	Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects. (NLL)	-.008	.165	.026	**.311**	-.126
19.[b]	Women are better than men at learning foreign languages. (FLA)	-.275	.152	.039	**.306**	.23
8.[b]	It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English. (NLL)	.141	.176	.042	**.285**	.250
Factor 5 – Difficulty and ability of language learning (6 items; α = .566)						
4.	English is: (1) a very difficult language/ (5) a very easy language. d (DLL)	.127	-.192	-.088	.023	**.610**
16.	I have a special ability for learning foreign languages. (FLA)	-.185	.155	.192	.047	**.563**
5.	I believe that I will learn to speak English very well. (DLL)	.139	-.121	.296	-.096	**.534**
21.	I feel timid speaking English with other people. (LCS)	.100	.264	-.165	.040	**-.468**
6.[b]	People from my country are good at learning foreign languages. (FLA)	.271	.075	-.033	-.197	**.391**
14.[b]	It is OK to guess if you don't know a word in English. (LCS)	.090	-.143	-.001	.279	**.337**

[a] The item had a factor loading larger than .4 on two factors, F1 and F4.
[b] The items had a factor loading smaller than .4 or larger than -.4.
[c] The response options for this item were: 1, Less than a year; 2, 1-2 years; 3, 3-5 years; 4, 6-10 years; and 5, You can't learn a language in one hour a day.
[d] The response options for this item were: 1, a very difficult language; 2, a difficult language; 3, a language of medium difficulty; 4, an easy language; and 5, a very easy language.

Table 1: Dimensional structure of Thai EFL students' language learning beliefs

As indicated in Table 1, 10 items had a factor loading smaller than .4 or larger than -.4 (i.e. non-significant loading), and one item (item 29) had a factor loading larger than .4 on two factors (i.e. cross-loading). When a factor analysis was further conducted again without these 11 items, the percentage explained by the five factors increased to 40.75%. In this case, each factor explained 12.33%, 10.45%, 6.46%, 6.07%, and 5.44% of variance, respectively. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each factor was almost the same as those obtained in the first factor analysis with all the 35 items. They were .467, .591, .565, .392, and .558, respectively.

3.2 Identified factors of language learning beliefs

All the five factors had a complex structure, and included items from two or more of the five conceptual dimensions. This structure made it difficult to interpret their nature and name them. Nevertheless, the five factors were labeled as follows: (a) Factor 1: learning and communication strategies (8 items, α = .489); (b) Factor 2: important aspects of language learning (6 items, α = .591); (c) Factor 3: expectations and difficulty of learning English (6 items, α = .553); (d) Factor 4: nature and aptitude of language learning (9 items, α = .491); and (e) Factor 5: difficulty and ability of language learning (6 items, α = .566). The number of items grouped together within each factor and the internal consistency reliability value are represented in parentheses next to the labels

of the factors. Of 35 items, three items had a negative loading. namely, item 11 in Factor 1, item 15 in Factor 3, and item 21 in Factor 5. This indicated that these items varied together with the other items in the respective factors, but in an opposite direction. For example, if one student tended to agree with all the other seven items in Factor 1, he/she was likely to disagree with the item 11. Table 2 specifies the mean score and standard deviation of each factor. These factor-level data were obtained after the values of the responses in the three items with a negative loading (i.e. items 11, 15, and 21) were reversed by replacing the value 5 by 1, the value 4 by 2, and so forth.

Factors	*M* [a]	*SD*
Factor 1: Learning and communication strategies	4.22	0.335
Factor 2: Important aspects of language learning	2.97	0.542
Factor 3: Expectations and difficulty of learning English	3.78	0.495
Factor 4: Nature and aptitude of language learning	3.54	0.376
Factor 5: Difficulty and ability of language learning	2.94	0.377

[a] The mean score of each factor was calculated after the responses in the three items with a negative factor loading (items 11, 15, and 21) were reversed. Thus, the mean scores of Factors 1, 3 and 5 do not correspond to the mean score of the items grouped together within those three factors.

Table 2: Identified factors with mean score and standard deviation

3.3 Constituting items of the identified factors

In all the five identified factors, except Factor 5, only one or two BALLI themes were predominantly represented by the items grouped together. Table 3 indicates the BALLI item grouping identified in this study compared to Horwitz's original categorization of the 35 BALLI items.

Items	Identified factors in this study[b]	Horwitz's themes [c]
7	Factor 1	4
18		
12		
22 [a]		
26		1
1		
11 [a]		
33 [b]		
29		5

17	Factor 2	3
23		
28		
35		
9		4
34		2
24 [a]		5
31		
32		
15 [a]		
25		2
13		4
2 [a]	Factor 4	1
10		
19 [a]		
30		
8 [a]		3
12		
27 [a]		
3		2
20		5
4	Factor 5	2
5		
6 [a]		1
16		
14 [a]		4
21		

[a] The items had a factor loading smaller than .4 or larger than -.4.
[b] The item had a factor loading larger than .4 on two factors.
[c] Factor 1, Learning and communication strategies; Factor 2, Important aspects of language learning; Factor 3, Expectations and difficulty of learning English; Factor 4, Nature and aptitude of language learning; and Factor 5, Difficulty and ability of language learning.
[d] Theme 1, Foreign language aptitude (FLA); Theme 2, The difficulty of language learning (DLL); Theme 3, The nature of language learning (NLL); Theme 4, Learning and communication strategies (LCS); and Theme 5, Motivation and expectations (MAE).

Table 3: Comparison of the item grouping of BALLI to Horwitz (1987)

Factor 1 covered eight items in total, and they were from three of Horwitz's themes. However, two of them were much more prominent and extensively represented. Four items belonged to the category of learning and communication strategies (LCS) and three to foreign language aptitude (FLA). Only one item was from another theme of motivation and expectations (MAE). When it was limited to the items with a factor loading larger than .4 or smaller than -.4, the theme of LCS still remained as the most widely exhibited category. Three out of the six items belonged to LCS. The item with the highest factor loading was also from this category. Accordingly, this factor was named as "learning and communication strategies."

Factor 2 also had three of Horwitz's categories represented by its items, but one of the categories was much more dominant than the other two. The theme of the nature of language learning (NLL) was represented by four out of the six items. The other two themes, namely, LCS and the difficulty of language learning (DLL), were represented by only one item each. Three of the four NLL items described the most important aspect in learning a foreign language or English. To make it more specific and precise, "important aspects of language learning" was given to this factor as its label.

In Factor 3, three of Horwitz's BALLI themes were more or less equally represented. Three items were from MAE, two from DLL, and one from LCS. The situation did not improve even if only the items with a factor loading larger than .4 or smaller than -.4 were considered. In addition, there was no item with a very high factor loading distinguishable from the other items. Nevertheless, considering what each item intended to measure, the factor was labeled as "expectations and difficulty of learning English."

Factor 4 was more complicated, and it included items from all the five categories except one. The most dominant category was FLA with four items, followed by NLL with three items. The other two themes of DLL and MAE were exhibited by only one item, respectively. No item had a very high factor loading. Among the five items with a factor loading larger than .4, the category of FLA was most prominently represented. With all those characteristics considered, this factor was named as "nature and aptitude of language learning."

Factor 5 is the most difficult to interpret and to label. The factor had items from three categories: DLL, FLA and LCS. Moreover, all the three themes were equally represented by two items, respectively. Two out of the four items with a factor loading larger than .4 or smaller than -.4 were from DLL. One of the two remaining items was from FLA, and another from LCS. The item with the highest factor loading was from DLL. Consequently, this factor was named as "difficulty and ability of language learning."

3.4 Language learning beliefs at the item levels

The characteristics of the language learning beliefs identified at each item level are described in the following sections. This is based on the distributions (i.e. frequencies) of each response options for the BALLI items. Table 4 describes the response frequency distribution in percentage, mean score, and standard deviation for each of the 35 items.

	Items	5[a]	4	3	2	1	*M*	*SD*
Factor 1 (eight items)								
18.	It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	73b	26	1	0	0	4.72	0.478
33.	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	47	44	7	1	0	4.39	0.656
7.	It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation	43	50	5	2	0	4.34	0.668
26.	It is important to practice with audio-visual materials (such as CDs, and DVDs).	17	48	30	5	1	3.75	0.816
29.	If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	70	27	3	0	0	4.67	0.545
1.	It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	27	57	13	3	0	4.07	0.736
22	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	29	56	12	3	0	4.09	0.742
11.[c]	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	3	7	24	43	23	2.24	0.968
Factor 2 (six items)								
23.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	5	28	37	25	5	3.03	0.958
34.	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	7	25	43	22	4	3.10	0.941
35.	Language learning involves a lot of memorization.	8	32	32	24	5	3.14	1.015
28.	The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	7	34	30	25	4	3.13	1.003
17.	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	13	47	24	14	2	3.56	0.933
9.	You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	1	4	8	54	33	1.86	0.808
Factor 3 (six items)								
32.	I would like to have English-speaking friends.	34	51	13	2	0	4.16	0.745
25.	It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	8	27	46	18	2	3.22	0.875
13.	I enjoy practicing English with English-speaking people I meet.	13	33	38	14	2	3.41	0.950
31.	I want to learn to speak English well.	38	49	10	3	0	4.23	0.748
24.	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know English-speaking people better.	26	48	17	8	1	3.91	0.899
15.[c]	If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to speak the language very well? [d]	4	11	15	43	26	2.22	1.068
Factor 4 (nine items)								
12.	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	17	39	22	19	3	3.47	1.079
10.	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	9	44	34	12	1	3.49	0.850
20.	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	27	64	7	2	0	4.15	0.627

30	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	8	35	38	18	2	3.29	0.903
3.	Some languages are easier to learn than others.	8	33	43	15	2	3.29	0.879
2.	Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	35	52	9	3	0	4.18	0.749
27.	Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	11	57	23	8	1	3.70	0.807
19.	Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	2	9	45	35	9	2.61	0.853
8.	It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	12	51	28	10	0	3.64	0.817
Factor 5 (six items)								
4.	English is: (1) a very difficult language/ (5) a very easy language.[e]	0	5	58	32	4	2.64	0.639
16.	I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	0	2	28	51	18	2.15	0.730
5.	I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.	6	43	44	6	1	3.48	0.731
21.[c]	I feel timid speaking English with other people.	15	53	19	10	2	3.69	0.928
6.	People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	7	39	47	7	1	3.44	0.746
14.	It is OK to guess if you don't know a word in English.	14	54	26	4	0	3.78	0.743

[a] The numbers indicates 5, strongly agree; 4, agree; 3, neither agree nor disagree; 2, disagree; and 1, strongly disagree.
[b] The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, and therefore the total of all the percentages of one item isn't always one hundred.
[c] The items had a negative factor loading.
d The response options for this item were: 1, Less than a year; 2, 1-2 years; 3, 3-5 years; 4, 6-10 years; and 5, You can't learn a language in one hour a day.
[e] The response options for this item were: 1, a very difficult language; 2, a difficult language; 3, a language of medium difficulty; 4, an easy language; and 5, a very easy language.

Table 4: Response Frequency (in percentage), Mean, and Standard Deviation of the BALLI Items

In Factor 1, a high level of agreement was manifested in all but one item. The importance of repeating and practicing frequently was overwhelmingly endorsed by the majority of the participants, exhibiting a consensus among the students about this belief. Similarly strong agreement was also apparent for the item about instrumental benefits of learning English. The majority believed that their English language skills would provide a brighter future for their professional career. The response of "strongly agree" received a high endorsement (47%) also for the item about everyone's ability to become able to speak a foreign language. A similar percentage of the students selected "agree" for this item. A parallel pattern was also noticed in the item about the importance of speaking English with an excellent pronunciation. The students believed in children's advantageous position in learning a foreign language and the potential negative impact of making errors at an early stage of language learning, as more than 50% selected "agree." There was weaker support for the item about the benefits of using audio-visual materials. Many participants seemed to be skeptical about the relationships between talents in mathematics and sciences and those in language learning. Yet, there was no apparent consensus among the students. A negative factor loading of this item 11 indicated that the students doubting this relationship were more likely to agree with the other seven items. This tendency seems intuitively reasonable and acceptable. For ex-

ample, it is plausible that the students who did not support this interdisciplinary relationship might have endorsed everyone's ability of mastering a foreign language.

The level of agreement in Factor 2 was also high for all but one item, though it was lower than that in Factor 1. The three items describing the most important aspects of language learning received a similar pattern of responses. Learning vocabulary achieved the highest level of agreement, followed by learning how to translate into English and learning the grammar. In all the three cases, the majority of the participants's responses fell into the categories, "agree", "neutral", and "disagree," indicating that there was no consensus among the students. This pattern was also observable in the other two items. The students had a different strength of beliefs regarding the various skills of communication in English and the role of memorization. On the other hand, the majority of the participants (nearly 90 %) rejected the idea that you need to be perfect when saying anything in English.

Factor 3 was between Factor 1 and Factor 2 in terms of the level of agreement and the response distribution. Three of the six items achieved a very high level of agreement. The other two items received only a moderate level of agreement. The majority of the students were interested in having English-speaking friends. Nearly 90% of the participants indicated that they wanted to learn to speak English fluently. Most of the students also stated that one of their objectives to learn English was to get to know English-speaking people better. While many of them seemed to enjoy practicing English with English-speaking people, many others did not enjoy this type of practice. The students seemed to have various ideas about the easy parts of language usage. Nearly half of them adopted a neutral position when they were asked if speaking was easier than understanding a foreign language. Yet, many others either agreed or disagreed with this idea. In the item regarding the time required to become able to speak a new foreign language, nearly half of the students optimistically thought that one to two years was enough. A negative factor loading of this item 15 indicated that the shorter the participants estimated this study period, the stronger they agree with the beliefs stated in the other five items. It would certainly be necessary to be positive and sometimes even optimistic about one's success to keep one learning a foreign language.

In Factor 4, the level of agreement was also high. For six out of the nine items, most participants stated thar they "agree" with the items. The majority believed that Thai people recognized the importance of speaking English. A very similar pattern was observed for the item stating that the special ability for learning foreign languages was shared by only gifted learners. The other four items had a similar response distribution pattern. For all four items, "agree' received the largest number of responses followed by "neutral." Most of the students clearly acknowledged that learning a foreign language was different from learning other academic subjects. They also thought that it was necessary to learn the English-speaking cultures in order to learn English. The idea that it was easier for someone who already spoke one foreign language to learn another one was also endorsed by many students, yet one third of the participants were neutral about this idea. Most of the Thai students believed strongly that a person could learn English most effectively in an English-speaking country. On the other hand, many participants were neutral regarding the ideas that people who speak two or more languages were intelligent and that some languages were easier than others. However, nevertheless, more than one third of the participants supported these two ideas. Nearly half of the participants were neutral about the belief that women were better than men at learning foreign languages, although more than one third disagreed or strongly disagreed with this belief.

For Factor 5, there was very strong agreement with four items, while one item was strongly rejected. Many students endorsed the role of guessing in learning English and communicating in English, with 54% indicating agreement and 14% indicating strong agreement. A very similar pattern was observed for another item about feeling shy in speaking English with other people. This item, item 21, had a negative factor loading, suggesting that the participants who agreed with the idea tended to disagree with the beliefs stated in the other items. This is also plausible because the idea in item 21 is counter-productive and is not helpful to language learning unlike the other beliefs in Factor 5. Nearly half of the participants were neutral about the idea that people from their

country (i.e. Thai people) were good at learning foreign languages, but 39% agreed with this idea. A similar pattern was recognizable for the belief about the participants' own ability. Around 40% believed that they would learn to speak English very well, while approximately 40% selected "neutral" for this belief. On the other hand, a little contradictory at a glance, slightly more than half of the students believed that they did not have a special ability for learning foreign languages. In spite of this, more than half of the respondents believed that English was a language of medium difficulty. One third even thought that it was an easy language.

3.5 Comparison of constituting items of the identified factors with Yang (1999)

In order to examine cultural variations in the language learning beliefs, the results of this study were compared with those of Yang (1999). The two studies shared almost all except one characteristic: Yang examined Taiwanese students, while this study investigated Thai students. The two studies used the same methodology. The participants of the two studies were mainly first-year university students learning EFL. Yet, they might not have been comparable in terms of their subject major. Yang did not describe her participants' subject majors. Nevertheless, the similarities made it ideal to compare the results of the two studies.

The item grouping obtained in the two studies was very similar despite the different number of factors identified: four in Yang (1999), and five in this study. One of Yang's four factors was clearly predominantly exhibited in four of the five factors identified in this study. Table 5 indicates the groupings of the 35 BALLI items empirically confirmed in the two studies.

Items	Identified factors in this study[b]	Identified factors in Yang (1999)[b]
7	Factor 1	2
18		
26		
29		
33		3
1		
11		4
22		
17	Factor 2	4
23		
28		
34		
35		2
9		
15	Factor 3	2
31		
32		1
13		3
24		

25		4
2	Factor 4	3
8		
10		
19		
27		
30		
3		2
12		
20		
4	Factor 5	1
5		
6		
16		
21		
14		**3**

[a] Factor 1, Learning and communication strategies; Factor 2, Important aspects of language learning; Factor 3, Expectations and difficulty of learning English; Factor 4, Nature and aptitude of language learning; and Factor 5, Difficulty and ability of language learning.
[b] Factor 1, Self-efficacy and expectation; Factor 2, Value and nature of learning spoken English; Factor 3, Foreign language aptitude; and Factor 4, Formal, structured study.

Table 5: Comparison of the Item Grouping of BALLI to Yang (1999)

Five of the eight items in Factor 1 of this study were also grouped together under one factor in Yang's (1999) study. This trend was much more remarkable for Factor 2. All but one items in this study's Factor 2 were also grouped together within one factor in Yang's research. Factor 2 was more or less equally distinct and independent from other factors in the two studies, with almost the same items constituting the factor. The situation seems differentfor Factor 3. This factor did not correspond to any of Yang's factors. The six items in Factor 3 of this study were distributed across all the four different dimensions identified in Yang's research. However, three of the six items loaded on one of Yang's four dimensions. For each of the Factors 4 and 5, the items grouped under one of the factors from Yang's study. Six out of the nine items of Factor 4 were grouped under one same factor in Yang. Factor 5 had a clear-cut composition of the items. Five of the six items were empirically identified as constituting items of one factor in the two studies.

4 Discussion and conclusion

A five-factor structure was identified for the language learning beliefs held by Thai university students learning EFL through a factor analysis of their responses to the BALLI questionnaire. The five factors were labeled as follows: (a) Factor 1: learning and communication strategies (8 items); (b) Factor 2: important aspects of language learning (6 items); (c) Factor 3: expectations and difficulty of learning English (6 items); (d) Factor 4: nature and aptitude of language learning (9

items); and (e) Factor 5: difficulty and ability of language learning (6 items). The 35 BALLI items loaded on the five factors, as indicated by the numbers in parentheses next to the factors' labels. For all except one factor (Factor 5), one or two of Horwitz's (1987) themes were more prominent than others. A greater level of similarity was observed in the item grouping when the findings of this research were compared to the results of Yang (1999).

The first findings from the factor analysis demonstrate that the language learning beliefs can be characterized by a multidimensional structure, covering several distinguishable categorical themes, as proposed in the Horwitz model. In this aspect of multidimensionality, the findings also support what Yang (1999) identified from the Taiwanese EFL students and what Nikitina and Furuoka (2006) concluded from their investigation of Malaysian students. However, the internal consistency reliability value was small for some of the identified factors. The items that grouped together might not constitute a dimension clearly distinguishable from each other. In fact, this issue of small Cronbach's coefficient alpha was also observable in some of the factors in Yang's study. This might represent an aspect of the nature of the language learning beliefs.

Unlike the dimensionality, the item grouping proposed by Horwitz (1987) was not completely replicated for the Thai EFL students. All the five factors included items originating from two or more categories proposed by Horwitz. Similarly, the items from the same category of the Horwitz model were scattered and were distrbuted onto two or more of the five factors. This factorial structure made it very difficult to interpret the characteristics of each factor as a whole and to name them. From a macroanalytic perspective, most of the identified factors were represented predominantly by only one or two of Horwitz's themes, as mentioned earlier. In three of the five factors, two BALLI themes were much more predominant and remarkable than others. In another identified factor, only one BALLI theme was distinctively noticeable.

Therefore the BALLI themes and their item grouping were empirically verified only to a certain extent. The factors seem to measure mostly one or two BALLI subcategories of the language learning beliefs. The subcategories were empirically identified more or less independently from each other, but the item grouping was different from that proposed by Horwitz. Some of the items that Horwitz conceptually identified as measuring the same theme were likely to measure a different theme.

Regarding the cultural variations of the beliefs, the results of this study indicate that the Thai and the Taiwanese are similar in terms of their language learning beliefs' structure. The findings imply that regardless of their different cultural backgrounds the EFL learners have a similar pattern in the dimensional structure of their language learning beliefs. Yet, the two groups of learners (Taiwanese and Thai) may share many things in common in their experiences of learning English in particular and foreign languages in general. Those shared experiences might have produced similarities in the learners' beliefs. This could apply even beyond language learning, and also to learning and studying in general.

Considering educational practices in Asian contexts, this interpretation could be a more plausible speculation. A number of differences identified among learners of the same cultural backgrounds in Horwitz's (1999) meta-analytical study appear to support this interpretation, although she used a different index as a comparison unit. Horwitz argued that the language learning contexts should be considered as an important determinant of language learning beliefs. This argument implies that learning circumstances have a potential impact on the development of the language learning beliefs. Consequently, the similarities identified between the different cultural groups of learners could be interpreted in a parallel manner. That is, a high level of commonality between the Thai and Taiwanese students in terms of the language learning belief structure is likely to be attributable to their similar language learning contexts and similar learning experiences. However, it is impossible to tell if this speculation is correct for the interpretation of the findings. Variables related to language learning contexts potentially influential to the language learning beliefs, such as classroom instructions, were not measured in this study.

Furthermore, this high degree of similarity between the two Asian groups of EFL students was also clearly noticeable at each item level. The two groups showed a very similar strength of the

beliefs. This was manifested in the frequencies (in percentage) of the response options in the BALLI items and the mean scores of each of these items.[8] Strong agreement was observed both in this study and Yang (1999) for 11 items (items 1, 2, 8, 10, 17, 18, 20, 22, 26, 27, and 32), producing very similar mean scores. The same response choice ("strongly agree" or "agree") received the strongest support from the participants. Similarly, a low agreement rate was identified equally in the two studies for one item (item 11). In this item, the same response ("disagree") was observed most frequently, and a similar mean score was produced. This pattern was also apparent for the item regarding the necessary period of time to learn a new foreign language (item 15). On the other hand, the two empirical studies had distinct results only in two items (items 24 and 28). The Thai students were more interested in getting to know English-speaking people than the Taiwanese students. The Thai EFL learners indicated stronger agreement with the importance of learning how to translate into English than the Taiwanese learners.

The results from the two comparisons, that is, the comparisons of the findings of this study with Horwitz's (1987) model and with Yang's (1999) findings, when considered together, clearly reveals an obvious commonality in the item grouping. Some particular items were always identified as closely related to each other both conceptually and empirically, and thus likely to measure one particular dimension of the language learning beliefs.

In Factor 1, three items (items 7, 18 and 26) were grouped together in the two empirical studies and in Horwitz's model. The items were from Horwitz's theme of learning and communication strategies. They described important things to do in order to be successful in language learning and communication settings. Factor 2 included four items (items 17, 23, 28 and 35) that were clustered under one category in all three studies. They represented the theme of the nature of language learning in the Horwitz model. Three items (items 17, 23 and 28) indicated a particular task or activity as most important for learning English or a foreign language. Another item (item 35) expressed a belief about the role of memorization in language learning. In Factor 3, it was only two items (items 31 and 32) that were judged as constituting one particular category by all the three studies. The two items belonged to the theme of motivation and expectation in Horwitz's categorization. They described learners' two different wishes. One was to learn to speak English fluently (item 31), and the other was to have English-speaking friends (item 32). Four items (items 2, 10, 19, and 30) in Factor 4 were considered to be measuring Horwitz's theme of foreign language aptitude. One item portrayed a special ability required for learning foreign languages (item 2). Another item depicted the nature of learning another foreign language after having already mastered a foreign language (item 10). The two other items described women's superiority in learning foreign languages (item 19), and a high level of intelligence of the people speaking two or more languages (item 30). Factor 5 had two separate pairs of items that were grouped in the same way across the three categorizations. In other words, the four items were grouped empirically together by this study and by Yang, but they covered two different BALLI themes: difficulty of language learning and foreign language aptitude. The two items related to the difficulty of language learning described the difficulty of English (item 4), and the learners' own ability to learn to speak English fluently (item 5). The two foreign language aptitude items were related to foreign language aptitude of the general public in the respondents' home country (item 6), and the learners' own self-perceived ability of learning foreign languages (item 16).

To summarize, this study identified 17 BALLI items as being classified under the same categories both empirically and conceptually. The 17 items seem to form the core dimensions of the language learning beliefs and these dimensions seem to be distinct and independent from each other. They could be considered as the commonality of the language learning beliefs, and a representation of "a world culture of language learning and teaching which encourages learners of many cultural backgrounds to perceive language learning very similarly," as pointed out by Horwitz (1999, p. 575).

The findings of this study enhanced our understanding of the dimensionality of the language learning beliefs, but limitations need to be acknowledged. The first issue is related to the participants. The conclusions about the multidimensional structure of the language learning beliefs and

the item grouping were based on the empirical investigations of Asian students, more specifically Thai university EFL students. The Taiwanese students in Yang's (1999) study were also examined, but only indirectly through the comparisons of their results to this study. This research empirically supports the Horwitz model only to some degree as far as the two Asian EFL university students were concerned. It is very likely that the language learning beliefs are influenced by the learners' cultural backgrounds, as well as the language learning contexts or circumstances (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz, 1987, 1999; Wenden, 1999). Therefore, further empirical explorations of students with non-Asian backgrounds and learners of languages other than English are required to address the issue of multidimensionality.

In relation to this first matter, careful caution is necessary about the issue of the cultural variations of the language learning beliefs. A high level of similarity was empirically identified between the two Asian EFL learners from the BALLI questionnaire in terms of various aspects: the dimensional structure, the compositions of items in each dimension, and the strengths of beliefs at each item level. It seems, however, that we do not have enough evidence yet to conclude that the beliefs about language learning are similar and shared across groups of students of different cultural backgrounds. This is simply because there are still very few systematic investigations of these issues in the literature. This situation is similar to Horwitz (1999) who refrained from concluding that the language learning beliefs vary by cultural groups, but for a different reason. In her case, the methodological constraints prevented her from making clear-cut conclusions. Extensive comparisons using statistical analyses such as MANOVA at the dimensional levels rather than sheer frequency comparisons at the item level would certainly help to solve this problem. In this regard, empirical inquires about the dimensional structure are required as a first step to make firm conclusions on the cultural variations of the beliefs.

Even with sophisticated statistical comparisons mentioned above, it is still very challenging to empirically identify the nature of cultural variations. This is another reason for us and partially also for Horwitz (1999) to suspend the conclusion about the issue. Horwitz argued that various factors related to language learning circumstances such as instructional practices seem to play an important role in influencing learners' beliefs. The variables directly related to the participants' learning experiences were not measured in this study, but it is undoubtedly necessary to investigate those variables in order to empirically identify the cultural variations.

This study reveals the language learning beliefs shared by many language learners beyond cultural boundaries as well as potential belief variations among language learners of different cultural backgrounds. The findings provide useful information for language instructors, as it is crucial for them to enhance their understanding of their students' beliefs about language learning. Furthermore, with the individuals' learning experiences identified as a potential determinant variable for their belief development, this study also sheds light on the importance of the context or setting of language learning. With all the relevant variables identified, we will understand more systematically how various factors will influence individuals' beliefs about language learning, and the ultimate success of their language learning.

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Notes

[1] The original BALLI does not have any abbreviations for the name of its five themes. They were created by the author of this paper for convenience.

[2] The original BALLI has 34 items. However, according to Yang (1999), one more item was added in a later

version by Horwitz, describing a belief about the role of memorization. This 35-item version was used in Yang's (1999) study.

[3] This 36-item BALLI has one additional item regarding translation. This version includes two separate items about translation: one from Korean to English, and another from English to Korean.

[4] Medical schools in Thai universities offer undergraduate programs to produce medical doctors. The students in the medical school study for six years to receive the degree of Doctor of Medicine. For admission to the undergraduate programs in the medical schools in Thailand, a bachelor degree is not required. High school graduates are eligible to apply for the programs. Therefore, in terms of the previous educational experiences, the participants of this study are very similar regardless of their subject major. All of them completed only 12 years of pre-university education.

[5] The relationship between the learners' language beliefs and their language proficiency and subject major is beyond the scope of this paper and will be investigated in a separate paper.

[6] These students were not included as participants of the main study.

[7] The wording in the three items (items 13, 24, and 32) was changed to make the statements consistent across all the items in the questionnaire. In Yang's (1999) questionnaire and in the original BALLI, some items were worded in two different ways. Sometimes "Americans" (items 13 and 24) and "American friends" (item 32) were used, but in other cases, "English-speaking country" (item 12) and "English-speaking cultures" (item 8) were used. Through this modification in the wording, all the item statements became consistent. All items refer not only to America and Americans, but to all English-speaking countries and their people.

[8] The mean scores of each item were not reported in Yang (1999). Those values were calculated by the author of this paper from the frequencies of each response options reported in Yang's research.

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