

# Exploring the Language Learning Beliefs of 'Above Average' and 'Below Average' English Language Students at a Teacher Training College in China

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## Abstract

Language learning beliefs (LLB) are learners' conceptions, perceptions, and beliefs about the process, methods, and goals of language learning, as well as their own roles and abilities in learning. These beliefs can influence learners' choice of learning strategies, motivation, learning outcomes, and attitudes towards the learning process. Beliefs are usually rooted in learners' cultural and educational backgrounds and personal experiences, and have a significant impact on learners' choice of learning strategies, motivation, and achievement. This study conducted a quantitative research to explore the language learning beliefs of 'above-average' and 'below-average' English language students at a teacher training college in China with Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). After collecting data from 156 participants, the result of the survey showed that 'above-average' group students owed more confidence in language learning aptitude, most of the 'above-average' students think that English is medium difficulty and most of 'below-average' students think it difficult or even very difficult. As for nature of language, these two groups also view it differently; they shared the same learning strategies but different communication strategies; the motivation to learn English is in agreement but the 'above-average' group is more motivated by getting a good job. Different learners have different language learning beliefs. Therefore, understanding and considering learners' beliefs about language learning in language education research is crucial to designing effective teaching methods and improving learners' learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Beliefs, 'Above-Average', 'Below-Average', Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory

## Introduction

This study is motivated by a dual concern within the Chinese teacher education context. Practically, while English proficiency is increasingly vital for future educators, there exists a pronounced performance gap among students at teacher training colleges.

Understanding the root causes of this disparity, particularly the often-overlooked psychological factor of language learning beliefs, is crucial for developing targeted pedagogical interventions. Theoretically, despite extensive research on learner beliefs globally, there is a paucity of qualitative, comparative investigations that specifically contrast the belief systems of distinct achievement groups within a homogeneous institutional and cultural setting. This study aims to bridge that gap.

The general background of studying language learning beliefs is to gain a deeper understanding of learners' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions in the language learning process, and how these beliefs affect their learning behavior and learning outcomes. According to the former study, it showed that in the classroom context, the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and metacognitive knowledge that students bring with them to the learning situation have been recognized as a significant contributory factor in the learning process and ultimate success (Breen, 2001). This kind of research helps to reveal learners' psychological mechanisms and provide more scientific guidance for teaching and learning practice, and help to design more effective teaching methods and course content that are better aligned with students' beliefs and learning needs, and help students to adopt more effective language learning strategies.

The Iceberg Model is used to describe the explicit and implicit aspects of culture (Edward, 1976). This model compares culture to an iceberg, with only a small portion of it showing above the surface and most of it hidden below. In the study of Language Learning Beliefs (LLBs), beliefs are also divided into explicit and implicit levels. Surface Beliefs are beliefs that can be directly observed and expressed; they are located in the upper part of the iceberg, above the water. These beliefs are easily recognized and discussed and are measurable. For example, students' explicitly stated beliefs about effective learning methods, e.g., "I think that memorizing vocabulary lists is the best way to remember words"; students' openly stated motivations for learning, e.g., "I am learning English to improve my career prospects". Students' attitudes and beliefs about participation in classroom activities, e.g., "I think it is important to participate in classroom discussions in order to improve my speaking skills". Students' explicit beliefs can be identified through questionnaires, open discussions and direct observation. Understanding these beliefs can help teachers adapt teaching strategies to better meet students' needs and expectations.

The majority of research conducted on language learners in the 1970s and 1980s (Chamot, 1987; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975) focused on the behaviours and actions of effective language learners, in contrast to the behaviours and actions of less successful learners. The interest in this area was particularly stimulated by the assumption that some students are more successful than others in learning a foreign language under the same conditions. It was postulated that "good learners" differ to some extent in certain sets of behaviours which they employ to enable them to be more successful. Therefore, success can be partially attributed to identifying the behaviours exhibited by "good" learners that are absent in "poor" learners. This can be achieved by examining the internal processes of the "good" language learner, including the strategies and cognitive processes employed to learn a language. This approach may lead to the development of well-structured theories regarding the processing of linguistic information, which can be effectively imparted to others (Rubin, 1975).

Some researchers suggest the need for studies on how beliefs differ across learners, particularly in terms of individual differences (Horwitz, 1999; Wenden, 1999; Rifkin, 2000). In this study, the aim is to explore English language learning beliefs of teacher training college students to fill the gap that existing research rarely pays attention to this type of academic population. Students' college entrance examination score which can be an indicator of their current English academic performance will be collected when they just entered the college to identify the students into "above average" group and "below average" group, to explore whether "above-average" students and "below-average" students have different English language learning belief systems.

### Literature Review

The term "language learning beliefs" refers to the beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions that individuals hold about the process of language learning. Horwitz (1987) was the first scholar to use the term "beliefs" to describe how people view the issue of learning a foreign language well. Subsequently, the term 'beliefs' was defined as 'psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true' (Richardson 1996, cited in Peacock 2001: 178) and that guide behavior. Learners enter the language classroom with a series of ideas, which can be broadly categorized as general assumptions about themselves as learners, factors influencing language learning and the nature of language learning (Richards and Lockhart, 1995).

The field of language learning beliefs can be divided into several distinct categories. Some investigate beliefs about language learning in general (Horwitz 1988; Su 1997; Da & Wang 2002; Sakui & Gaies 1999); some concern the relationship between learner beliefs and their learning strategy use (Wenden 1991; Wen & Wang 1996; Wen & Johnson 1997; Yang 1999); others investigate how learners' beliefs affect their language achievement (Abraham & Vann 1987; Wen & Johnson 1997). Wen Qiufang(1995) and Johnson (1997: 40) explored the relationship between learners' English learning beliefs and English achievement and found that the effects of beliefs on strategies were significant and consistent.

Learner beliefs about language learning are multiple and have notably effect on their learning experiences and outcomes (Lee & Oxford, 2024; Pawlak & Zawodniak, 2024; Wang & Peng, 2025; Kaymakamoğlu, 2016). These beliefs, which encloses perceptions of language aptitude, the nature and difficulty of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations, are often shaped by past experiences and are resistant to change (Šegedin, 2009). The learning context can influence these beliefs, with individuals holding different beliefs and evaluating their competence and performance in the language based on the environment in which they are learning (Khonamri *etal*, 2020). It is therefore of great importance for language teachers to be able to understand and address these beliefs, as they can either support or hinder students' language learning progress (Erlenawati, 2002; Wang & Peng, 2025). Fouad & Ahmad&Mustafa(2022) found in their study that language learners enter the process of language learning with certain, sometimes unexpected, beliefs that influence their behaviour during the process.

Based on the literature review, but little research have been done on junior college students. This study is going to investigate the language learning beliefs of students in a teacher training college which is a junior college in Guangxi.

## Research Methodology

### *Participants*

The research was carried out in Guangxi College for Preschool Education, a teacher training college in Guangxi, China, with the participant of 156 non-English major students. The students are freshmen in their first academic year. All of them are preschool education major who are going to be preschool teachers in their future career.

There were considerably more females (93.13%, n=149) than males (6.88%, n=11). The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 22 years. By ethnic groups, the majority of respondents were Han (66.28%, n=106), ethnic groups accounted for 33.75% (n=54). Because gender is not concluded in the analysis in this study, so the female students is a lot more than male student, which is a special feature in China's teacher training colleges, is acceptable.

The National College Entrance Examination of China (namely Gaokao) is a national level test. The full score of the English subject is 150, and the pass score is 90. With a score higher than 90, students were considered "above-average"; with a score lower than 90, students were considered "below-average". In this study, the participants were divided into "above-average" group and "below-average" group accordingly to their Gaokao English score.

### *Instrument*

This study employed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1988) to assess the beliefs about learning a foreign language. It has been used in many researches on language learning beliefs with a good validity and reliability. The 34-statement BALLI employs a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from answers indicating "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

The questionnaire BALLI investigates learner beliefs in five major categories: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectation.

The BALLI was distributed to the students in Chinese. Because to Chinese students, English is a foreign language, some adjustment need to be made on the expression of the questionnaire. The expression "this language" in item 4,5, adjusted to "the English language". The expression "English" in item 5 was changed to "Chinese" because Chinese is their native language. The expression "this language" in item 6, 23, 27, 28, 31 adjusted to "English" to make it more specific. The adjusted questionnaire was examined by two researcher in applied linguistic and the translation was examined by professor in English Translation field to make sure the face validity and content validity of the questionnaire. A pilot study has been done to ensure the reliability.

### *Procedure*

First the 34-statement BALLI (Horwitz, 1988) was input into the online questionnaire platform "Wenjuanxing", which is a specialist platform for delivering questionnaires and collecting data for research purposes in China. Then the questionnaire was distributed in September 2023 during the first week of the academic year in the classroom. The students were requested not to consult their classmates while working with the questionnaire in order to

ensure that the answers reflected each student’s own beliefs and opinions about learning a foreign language. After completing all the questions they submitted online.

**Data Analysis**

After the data was collected, statistical software SPSS was used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data obtained from the BALLI questionnaire.

**Results**

*Foreign Language Aptitude*

Table 1

*Foreign Language Aptitude*

		Percentage				
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language	Above	7.14%	7.14%	25.00%	42.86%	17.86%
	Below	0.78%	3.13%	25.00%	53.13%	17.97%
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	Above	7.14%	0.00%	25.00%	53.57%	14.29%
	Below	0.78%	4.69%	25.78%	59.38%	9.38%
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	Above	3.57%	3.57%	42.86%	46.43%	3.57%
	Below	1.56%	16.41%	41.41%	35.94%	4.69%
15. I have a foreign language aptitude.	Above	3.57%	17.86%	53.57%	21.43%	3.57%
	Below	11.72%	36.72%	41.41%	9.38%	0.78%
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	Above	0.00%	17.86%	35.71%	42.86%	3.57%
	Below	7.81%	24.22%	41.41%	22.66%	3.91%
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	Above	14.29%	42.86%	28.57%	14.29%	0.00%
	Below	7.81%	39.84%	33.59%	17.97%	0.78%
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	Above	7.14%	10.71%	28.57%	46.43%	7.14%
	Below	4.69%	19.53%	35.16%	35.94%	4.69%
33. Chinese are good at learning foreign languages.	Above	0.00%	7.14%	67.86%	21.43%	3.57%
	Below	7.03%	14.84%	57.81%	16.41%	3.91%
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	Above	3.57%	7.14%	42.86%	39.29%	7.14%
	Below	7.81%	21.88%	41.41%	25.00%	3.91%

From Table 1, it is obvious that the “above-average” group and the “below-average” group shared the same opinion that it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language with the percentage of 42.86% and 53.13%, and opinion that some people are born with a special ability to learn a foreign language which the percentage is 53.37% and 59.38%. Their opinion about people who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign language are quite similar. They are neither sure about if it is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one, nor sure about if Chinese are good at learning foreign languages because the “no idea” percentage is quite high which are 42.86% (“above-average” group) and 41.41% (“below-average” group), 67.86% (“above-average” group) and 57.81% (“below-average” group). Although they are neither sure about if they have a foreign language aptitude (53.57%, 41.41%), but “above-average” group is more sure with that with 21.43% students agree with it compared to 9.38% of the “below-average” group. Most “below-average” group students think that they don’t have a foreign language aptitude with a percentage of 36.72%. “Above-average” group agreed more that women are better than man in learning foreign languages, while “below-average” group agree more that not everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. What they share strong agreement is that they think it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language with the percentage of 17.86% and 17.97%. What they might disagree with is that people who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages, which 42.86% of “above-average” group and 39.84% of “below-average” group students show their disagreement.

### *Difficulty Of Language Learning*

Table 2

### *Difficulty of Language Learning*

		Percentage				
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	Above	0.00%	0.00%	35.71%	53.57%	10.71%
	Below	4.69%	14.06%	45.31%	32.03%	3.91%
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well.	Above	0.00%	0.00%	10.71%	57.14%	32.14%
	Below	3.13%	3.13%	35.94%	44.53%	13.28%
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	Above	3.13%	3.13%	35.94%	44.53%	13.28%
	Below	3.91%	17.19%	43.75%	29.69%	5.47%
28. It is easier to read and write this language than to speak	Above	3.57%	14.29%	35.71%	35.71%	10.71%
	Below	4.69%	14.84%	42.19%	33.59%	4.69%
		Very difficult	Difficult	Medium difficulty	Easy	Very Easy
4. The language I am trying to learn is:	Above	0.00%	10.71%	75.00%	10.71%	3.57%

		Percentage				
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	Above	0.00%	0.00%	35.71%	53.57%	10.71%
	Below	4.69%	14.06%	45.31%	32.03%	3.91%
	Below	21.88%	26.56%	48.44%	3.13%	0.00%
		Less than a year	1-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day
14. If someone spent an hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?	Above	14.29%	53.57%	25.00%	3.57%	3.57%
	Below	14.06%	45.31%	25.00%	9.38%	6.25%

Table 2 shows that 75% of 'above-average' group hold the idea that English is medium difficult, while one half 'below-average' group think English is difficult and very difficult, and the other half think it medium difficult. Very few considered it is easy or very easy. Both groups agreed on it will take 1-2 years to become fluent if someone spent an hour a day learning a language. Quarter of 'above-average' group and quarter of 'below-average' group agreed on it will take 3-5 years. 'Above-average' group showed high confidence on ultimately learning to speak English very well with 57.14% agree and 32.14% strongly agree. 35.94% of 'below-average' group have no idea about it, but the good thing is that over half of 'below-average' group showed confidence on it which means the students have an optimistic attitude towards English learning. 'Above-average' group are more agreed with 'It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language' than 'below-average' group with 57.85%(44.53% agree and 13.28% strongly agree) of 'above-average' group agreed on it while there are only 35.16%(29.69% agree and 5.47% strongly agree) of 'below-average' group agreed on it. Both groups shared the same opinion of it is easier to read and write English than to speak. This is a very common situation among Chinese English learners who have been learning English from primary school to high school but end up with 'deaf' English due to they don't have much chances to speak English out of the classroom, or even in the classroom which focus more on reading and writing in a transitional English class. (So the solution should be given students more chances to practice speaking which MALL is beneficial to it.)

*Nature of Language Learning*

Table 3

*Nature of Language Learning*

		Percentage					
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree	
5. The language I am trying to learn is structured in the same as Chinese	Above	7.14%	39.29%	28.57%	21.43%	3.57%	
	Below	12.50%	41.41%	32.81%	10.16%	3.13%	
8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.	Above	7.14%	3.57%	28.57%	46.43%	14.29%	
	Below	0.78%	6.25%	39.84%	46.09%	7.03%	
11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	Above	0.00%	10.71%	28.57%	35.71%	25.00%	
	Below	0.78%	6.25%	25.00%	48.44%	19.53%	
16. Learning a foreign language mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.	Above	0.00%	0.00%	17.86%	64.29%	17.86%	
	Below	0.78%	0.78%	19.53%	50.78%	28.13%	
20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a many of grammar rules.	Above	0.00%	0.00%	46.43%	46.43%	7.14%	
	Below	2.34%	1.56%	36.72%	45.31%	14.06%	
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	Above	0.00%	7.14%	53.57%	32.14%	7.14%	
	Below	1.56%	3.91%	41.41%	46.09%	7.03%	
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English.	Above	0.00%	17.86%	57.14%	21.43%	3.57%	
	Below	0.00%	6.25%	46.09%	40.63%	7.03%	

From Table 3, for the nature of language learning, neither 'above-average' group (39.29% disagree and 7.14% strongly disagree) nor 'below-average' group (41.41% disagree and 12.5% strongly disagree) agreed that English is structured in the same as Chinese. Both groups shared agreement on necessity to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language and better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country. As for the perspectives of learning a foreign language mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words and mostly a matter of learning a many of grammar rules, both groups shared a high agreement with the "Agree" percentage of 64.29%, 50.78%, 46.43%, 45.31%. But on the viewpoint on grammar rules, both groups are not sure about it with 46.43% of 'above-average' group and 36.72% of 'below-average' group chose "No idea" for this item. The same situation is that both groups are quite not sure about whether learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects and whether learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English, because both group students chose "No idea" of these two item is 53.57%, 41.41%, 57.14%, 46.09%, which is a relative high percentage. And on the opinion of learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating

from English, 'above-average 'group showed more disagreement (17.86%) than 'below-average 'group (6.25%), while 'below-average 'group (40.63%) see English learning is translating more than 'above-average 'group (21.43%).

*Learning and Communication Strategies*

Table 4

*Learning and communication strategies*

		Percentage				
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Learning Strategies</b>						
17. It is important to repeat and practice often.	<b>Above</b>	0.00%	0.00%	10.71%	46.43%	42.86%
	<b>Below</b>	0.00%	0.78%	17.19%	53.13%	28.91%
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	<b>Above</b>	0.00%	3.57%	28.57%	64.29%	3.57%
	<b>Below</b>	0.00%	3.13%	45.31%	42.97%	8.59%
<b>Communication Strategies</b>						
7. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.	<b>Above</b>	0.00%	3.57%	21.43%	50.00%	25.00%
	<b>Below</b>	1.56%	7.03%	24.22%	52.34%	14.84%
9. You should not say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly.	<b>Above</b>	17.86%	39.29%	28.57%	3.57%	10.71%
	<b>Below</b>	7.03%	28.13%	47.66%	14.84%	2.34%
12. If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.	<b>Above</b>	3.57%	0.00%	28.57%	53.57%	14.29%
	<b>Below</b>	5.47%	21.09%	49.22%	21.88%	2.34%
18. I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people.	<b>Above</b>	3.57%	14.29%	46.43%	25.00%	10.71%
	<b>Below</b>	2.34%	10.16%	42.19%	34.38%	10.94%
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.	<b>Above</b>	0.00%	10.71%	39.29%	42.86%	7.14%
	<b>Below</b>	0.00%	5.47%	29.69%	52.34%	12.50%
13. It is okay to guess if you do not know a word in the foreign language.	<b>Above</b>	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%
	<b>Below</b>	0.78%	0.78%	27.34%	55.47%	15.63%

In Table 4, as for learning strategies, both groups think repeating and practicing often is important in learning a language with a very high percentage of agreement, 'above-average' group 89.29% (46.43% agree and 42.86% strongly agree), 'below-average' group 82.03% (53.13% agree and 28.91% strongly agree). They all agree on the importance to practice in the language laboratory, 'above-average' group 64.29% agreed and 'below-average' group 42.97% agreed. As for Communication Strategies, both agreed on it is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent. They also agreed on once one is allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. 'Above-average' group (57.14% agree and 28.91% strongly agree) highly agreed on it is okay to guess if you do not know a word in the foreign language, so dose 'below-average' group (53.13% agree and 28.91% strongly agree). 39.29% of 'above-average' group disagreed on that one should not say anything in the foreign language until one can say it correctly while 28.13% of 'below-average' group disagreed with it and 47.66% of 'below-average' group had no idea of it. 'Above-average' group are very positive with "If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language", which showed they are willing to use communication strategies when learning English; while 'below-average' group showed 21.09% disagree and 21.88% agree and almost a half (49.22%) are not sure about it. 'below-average' group (45.31%) showed more self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people than 'above-average' group (35.71%). But the percentage of "No idea" is also quite high on this item which means that both groups are not very confident with speaking English in front of other people.

### Motivation and Expectations

Table 5

#### Motivation and expectations

		Percentage				
		Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	Above	3.57%	0.00%	21.43%	53.57%	21.43%
	Below	0.00%	1.56%	25.00%	53.13%	20.31%
27. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.	Above	0.00%	7.14%	25.00%	53.57%	14.29%
	Below	0.78%	5.47%	41.41%	39.06%	13.28%
30. Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	Above	0.00%	10.71%	42.86%	42.86%	3.57%
	Below	3.91%	3.91%	47.66%	31.25%	13.28%
31. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.	Above	3.57%	28.57%	46.43%	14.29%	7.14%
	Below	6.25%	25.00%	51.56%	14.06%	3.13%

If you look at Table 5, both 'above-average' group and 'below-average' group are high motivated by "If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it." with 53.57% agree and 21.43% strongly agree of 'above-average' group and 53.13% agree and 20.31% strongly agree of 'below-average' group. As for the motivation by speaking English

well will help with getting a good job, both groups are quite positive with it with 53.57% of 'above-average' group and 39.06% of 'below-average' group agreed with it. Neither groups showed very clear idea on "Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language." and "I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.", which made these two items are not the major motivation for these preschool college students to learn English. A part of 'above-average' group and 'below-average' group didn't think they would like to learn English so as to get to know English speakers better.

### Discussion

The first category is aptitude for language learning. This category is related to language learners, especially the successful language learners who think whether they have a special or an extraordinary talent in language learning or not. Learners who have the ability to learn something efficiently and effectively would get better learning achievements and results than the others. Learners who have the beliefs on negative language learning aptitude might lead to unsuccessful language learning. To sum up, there was a general agreement of 'above-average' group students and 'below-average' group students in the perception of language learning aptitude towards general people, a general less certainty in the perception of their own language learning aptitude, and "below-average" group students showed a relative lack of confidence.

The second category the difficulty of language learning involves general questions in terms of how difficult the learners believe English learning is. Language learners have different beliefs about the difficulty of language learning and they identify difficulty in learning different languages based on their own language learning experience. Based on the finding in Table 2, most of the above-average students think that English is medium difficulty based on their learning experience, while only a half of 'below-average' group think it is medium difficult and the other half them think it is quite difficult. From different attitude of two groups towards the difficulty of language learning, it can be seen that it is easier to learn a foreign language for some learners while other learners face some difficulties in learning a foreign language. The belief about the difficulty in language learning is also demonstrated in aspects of vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading and translation. Both 'above-average' group and 'below-average' group consider that listening is easier to learn than speaking. Such beliefs might affect their language learning procedures.

The third category is the nature of language learning. Language learning beliefs in this category are mainly concerned with the language learners' understanding about the importance of cultural communication and language immersion. To make a conclusion, one aspect of the nature of language learning is how do learners view language learning tasks and what are the differences between foreign language in terms of structure and mother tongue. More 'below-average' group learners think that learning foreign languages mean learning how to translate their native language into a foreign language, and both A and 'below-average' group agreed on the matter for learning grammar and vocabulary. Learners with this view would invest much time on grammar rules, new vocabulary and translation. Unfortunately they might ignore other important aspects of language learning tasks.

The fourth category is learning and communication strategies. Foreign language learning strategies and communication strategies are closely related to the language use of learners. To

sum up, from Table 4, both 'above-average' group and 'below-average' group shared agreement on learning strategies, but they held quite different view on communication strategies. There are also some language learners who have different requirements for the accuracy of language learning, and the final choices of possible learning strategies of 'above-average' group and 'below-average' group are different. When encountering new words in foreign language learning, instead of immediately resorting to the dictionary, some learners try to guess the meaning. For other learners, they will never use the strategy of guess if they don't know the exact meaning of a word.

The last category is motivation and expectations. Language learners' motivation and their expectations have effect on language learning. Base on the findings of Table 5, we can see that the motivations and expectations of language learners vary from learner to learner. Some learners are eager to travel abroad, while other learners try to find an outstanding job. Meanwhile some learners are just to cope with their exams. If learners have no intentions for language learning and have no clearly defined motivation, they will face depressing circumstances during the language learning process. This may results them to face difficulties in achieving an effective language learning result.

### **Conclusion**

By exploring the language learning beliefs of 'above-average' and 'below-average' English language students in the teacher training college, it can be seen that the learners' beliefs have a profound influence on the choice and application of learner's strategy. Learners who have the self-confidence to learn a foreign language think that they have ability to learn a language in a confident manner. Those who believe that repeated practice in the language lab is the most important way to learn language will make full use of the listening class to learn English. Knowing students' explicit beliefs, teachers can make adjustments in their teaching methods. For example, if the majority of students believe that memorizing vocabulary lists is an effective method of learning, teachers can introduce more vocabulary memorization techniques and exercises based on this. Therefore, it is significant to explore the current situation of college students' English learning beliefs, to be more specific, to explore the learners' internal minds and conceptions, and help learners to recognize their beliefs in learning and recognize themselves.

The anticipated contributions of this work are threefold. First, it will provide a nuanced, emic perspective on the constellation of beliefs held by above-average and below-average English learners in a Chinese teacher training college, moving beyond generic surveys to capture the depth and interrelation of these beliefs. Second, by systematically comparing these two groups, the research seeks to identify belief patterns that are potentially facilitative or detrimental to academic success, offering a cognitive-explanation for the observed performance gap. Third, and most significantly for teacher education, the findings are expected to yield concrete implications for curriculum design and student support. They can inform belief-awareness training, guide personalized learning advising, and ultimately contribute to nurturing more self-aware, resilient, and effective future English teachers in China.

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