摘要

本研究调查了中国英语学习者的语言学习观念及其与语言水平的关系。研究的焦点在于中国英语学习者语言学习观念的基本特点以及他们的学习观念与语言水平的相关性问题。

通过对文献的综述，我们知道，语言学习者可能持有一些语言学习观念，并把这些观念带到课堂中来。而这些观念会对他们的学习行为、语言水平、学习效率以及学习策略等产生深远的影响。

在中国，尤其是大陆，不少专家学者对学习观念进行过研究和探讨，但是很少有人对学习者观念和语言水平的相关性进行直接、深入地研究。因此，到目前为止，在大陆范围内，对学习者观念和语言水平的相关性研究还寥寥无几，探讨大陆英语学习者学习观念之特点的研究也很少见诸文献。本项研究通过对中国英语学习者观念的调查，旨在弥补这一缺憾，为学习者观念研究提供原始数据和资料。

本研究主要探讨以下几个问题：1）中国英语学习者观念的基本特点以及与其它国家或文化背景下外语学习者观念的异同；2）中国英语学习者观念与语言水平的关系或相关性；3）本研究对中国英语/外语教学和学习的启示。该项研究的主要目的在于调查并确定中国英语学习者语言学习观念、探讨这些观念与语言水平的关系，以期对语言教学大纲设计和教师教学实践有所启示。

本研究对大陆3所高校的384名英语专业二年级学生进行了调查。调查中主要利用Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) 首创的"语言学习观念调查问卷"搜集定量数据。该问卷包括五个部分：外语学能、语言学习难度、语言学习本质、学习/交际策略以及动机。采用"受试者背景信息问卷"来调查他们的背景信息和其它语言学习观念。所有受试者都参加了2006年全国英语专业四级考试（TEM 4），本次统考成绩作为衡量受试者英语水平的依据。最后，调查还通过访谈的形式搜集了部分定性数据，作为对定量数据的补充。

调查结果发现，在"语言学习观念调查问卷"的34个学习观念中，有的与语言水平呈正相关（如观念4，6，12，13和15），而有些呈负相关（如观念9，11

和18）。文章总结了中国英语学习者观念的基本特点，并与美国和中国香港地区的类似研究进行了比较，结果发现：就总体趋势而言，不同文化背景下学习者观念的基本特点非常相似；但就某些具体观念来说，它们在特定文化背景下具有一定独特性。本文还探讨了该项研究对我国英语教学和学习的启示作用。最后，文章指出了该研究的不足之处以及在以后研究中的改进措施。

关键词：学习观念；语言水平；相关性；语言学习观念调查问卷

ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about foreign language learning and their language proficiency. The foci of the study are the general trends of Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about foreign language learning and how their learning beliefs correlate with the language proficiency.

Based on the literature, it is likely that language learners hold a variety of beliefs about language learning and bring these beliefs to the classroom. These beliefs may have a profound influence on learners' learning behaviors, their language proficiency, the efficiency and effectiveness of their learning, and their use of effective language learning strategies.

Although many studies concerning learning beliefs were conducted in China, they did not actually have a direct and intensive investigation into the relationship between learners' beliefs and their language proficiency. Therefore, so far, there has been a lack of reported study in Chinese context that specially investigates how EFL learners' beliefs about language learning correlate with their language proficiency and what the characteristics of Chinese EFL learners' learning beliefs are. This study is supposed to complement other studies, and adds to the body of knowledge of learners' beliefs in general, but more specifically, learning beliefs of EFL students in Mainland China context.

This study addresses the following questions: 1) What are the characteristics of language learning beliefs held by Chinese EFL learners and how do their beliefs differ from those held by learners in other learning groups or other cultural contexts? 2) What levels of correlation exist between language learning beliefs of Chinese EFL learners and their English language proficiency? 3) What pedagogical implications can the present research provide for EFL teaching and learning in China? The aims of the study are to identify the learning beliefs about foreign language learning in China for the purpose of informing syllabus design and teacher practice, and also to

investigate levels of correlations between learning beliefs and their language proficiency.

This thesis reports a study of the beliefs about language learning held by 384 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in Mainland China. The survey instrument, the "Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory" (BALLI) initiated by Horwitz (1985; 1987; 1988), is used to collect quantitative data. BALLI consists of five aspects of beliefs: difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations and expectations. A Questionnaire of Subjects' Background is included in this study to investigate the subjects' background information as well as their additional beliefs about foreign language learning. A standard English proficiency test ----TEM 4 (Test for English Majors Band 4) was used as a source to assess the subjects' English proficiency level. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to support the data collected from the BALLL.

The findings of the BALLI responses indicate that there are significant positive correlations between language proficiency and four learning beliefs (Items 4, 6, 12, 13 and 15), and negative correlation between language proficiency and two learning beliefs (Items 9, 11 and 18). Moreover, characteristics of Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs are summarized, and then compared with the research findings in U.S. and Chinese Hong Kong contexts. The results also suggest that in terms of the general trends of students' learning beliefs, beliefs about language learning reported by studies across cultural groups are similar in most categories, but some beliefs prove to be culturally specific. This study also discusses the implications of this study for China's EFL teaching and learning. Finally, the study concluded by stating limitations of this research and suggesting ways to improve it.

Key Words: Learning Beliefs; Language Proficiency; Correlation; BALLI

LIST OF TABLES

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Introduction

It is likely that language learners hold a variety of beliefs about language learning and bring these beliefs to the classroom. These beliefs may have a profound influence on learners' learning behaviors, their language proficiency, the efficiency and effectiveness of their acquisition, and their use of effective language learning strategies (Horwitz, 1987; Kuntz, 1999; Peacock, 1998; Yuen, 2002). According to Horwitz (1988: 283), "students' beliefs about language learning would seem to have obvious relevance to their understanding of student expectation of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes". Victori and Lockhart (1995) indicate that successful learners hold "insightful beliefs", while poor learners "negative or limited beliefs". What's more, Puchta (1999) asserts that "beliefs are guiding principles for our students' behavior and strong perceptual filters…they act as if they were true". All these quotations reveal the important role that learner beliefs play in the process of foreign language learning. Due to the importance of studying learner beliefs about language learning, the purposes of this study are to identify the beliefs about English language learning held by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in China, to develop hypotheses about Chinese learners' beliefs about foreign language learning, and to investigate levels of correlation between learning beliefs and their language proficiency.

Background to the Present Study

Up to now, a large body of research has been conducted in a variety of contexts and settings:

(1) Foreign language learners in the U.S.A.: (a) commonly taught foreign language learners in the U.S.A. (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Hurt, 1997; Rifkin, 2000; Linda E. Lassiter, 2003); (b) less commonly taught foreign languages in the U.S. A. (Oh, 1996, Kuntz, 1996; Sammimy & Lee, 1997; Mori, 1999a, 1999b; Hinenoya,

2000).

(2) Learners of English as a second language in an English-speaking country (Wenden, 1986b, 1987; Horwitz, 1987; Cotterall, 1995; Chawhan and Oliver, 2000; Siebert, 2003; Bernat, 2006).

(3) Learners of English as a foreign language in Japan (Luppescu & Day, 1990; Sakui & Gaies, 1999), Korea (Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995; Kim-Yoon, 2000; Youn, Yang, and Choi, 2001), China (Su,1995; Wang,1996; Wen & Johnson, 1997; Li, 2004; Lu, 2005), Chinese Hong Kong (Benson & Lor,1999; Peacock, 1998), Chinese Taiwan (Yang, 1992, 1999; Huang, 1997; Banya et al., 1997; Cheng, 2001; Huang & Tsai, 2003; Tsai, 2003), Norway (Dahl et al., 2005), Russia (Tumposky, 1991), Yemen (Kuntz, 1997), North Cyprus (Kunt, 1997), Viet Nam (Bernat, 2004), and Brazil (Barcelos, 1995).

Among the limited research with reference to Chinese context, Su (1995) focused on the study of English learning strategies and styles of Chinese university students in relation to their cultural beliefs and beliefs about learning English, Wang (1996) pointed to the relationship between Chinese college English majors' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies, while Wen & Johnson (1997) explored levels of correlation between a number of L2 learner variables and English achievement as well as the direct effects of belief variables on strategy variables. In addition, Li (2004) investigated Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about the role of rote learning in vocabulary learning strategies, the focus of which was "Chinese EFL learners' culturally-influenced beliefs about their preference for RL strategies as opposed to other memory strategies"; Lu (2006) investigated the learning beliefs of a group of fourth-year English majors from Shandong University by using BALLI, the findings of which indicated that "learning beliefs play an important role in language learning", and "may affect the choice and use of learning strategies, thus influencing the learning achievement".

Although the above-mentioned studies in Chinese context have more or less touched upon the problem of learners' beliefs about language learning, they did not actually have a direct and intensive investigation into the relationship between

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learners' beliefs and their language proficiency. Therefore, so far, there has been a lack of reported research in Chinese context that specially investigates how EFL learners' beliefs about language learning correlate with their language proficiency. Thus, this study complements other studies, and adds to the body of knowledge of learners' beliefs in general, but more specifically, learning beliefs of EFL students in Chinese context.

Significance of the Present Study

The present study has both important theoretical and practical significances.

Theoretically, the findings of this research are expected to add to the body of knowledge of, and to contribute to the development of existing theories of learners' beliefs about language learning. More importantly, this study will be one of the first in Chinese context to investigate intensively the direct relationship between learners' beliefs and language proficiency, and to provide empirical insights into the characteristics of Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. Previous studies either investigated the learning beliefs of learners based on other ethnic or cultural backgrounds, or touched very little upon the relationship between Chinese learners' learning beliefs and language proficiency. In order to bridge this gap, it is of great importance and significance to identify the uniqueness of learning beliefs held by Chinese EFL learners, and to examine how their beliefs are related to their language proficiency. Accordingly, this study is to compare the learning beliefs of Chinese EFL learners with those of learners from other cultural contexts, so as to discover whether there are differences between them, and if any, to what degree do they differ? In this way, the present study is to present a whole picture of the similarities and differences of language learning beliefs between Chinese EFL learners and those from other cultural backgrounds.

The findings of the present study may also provide practical values for EFL teaching and learning in China. Since this is one of the quantitative studies in China to explore thoroughly the learning beliefs of EFL learners, it might serve as a model or

provide implications for future research of the same kind. Moreover, the findings of this study might contribute to the EFL teaching in China in that they help Chinese teachers to better understand their students' learning beliefs and to devise learning strategies that support and improve students' language proficiency.

As far as students themselves are concerned, the process of exploring beliefs may ensure them to understand themselves more in the learning process (Yuen, 2002). Ideally, this can be the best way to lead to more effective language learning behaviors inside and outside classroom, as well as greater self-knowledge and autonomy (Horwitz, 1987, 1988).

Chapter One Literature Review

This chapter will first review the research literature pertaining to the two major constructs of this study: "belief" and "learning belief", including the paradoxical nature of "belief" as well as the definitions of "learning belief". Then, the literature review regarding the research history of language learning beliefs is to be included in this chapter. Finally, the relationship between language proficiency and learner beliefs will also be reviewed because this is the main focus of the present study.

1.1 The Paradoxical Nature of "Belief"

Researchers have established that the term "belief" is very difficult to define, and that's why Pajares (1992) regarded "belief" as a "messy" construct. He argued that the difficulty might be partly due to the paradoxical nature of beliefs and the varying agendas of researchers.

Izard and Smith (1982) argued that the paradoxical nature of beliefs stems from the verb "to believe" expressing both doubt and assurance; and the term belief is used to form or judge, justify or condemn.

Dewey (1983) explained that we are constantly interpreting reality and this means using our beliefs to make sense of our environment and its events. He (1983:84) further explained that "beliefs are not made by existence in a mechanical or logical or psychological sense"; "Reality naturally instigates belief"; Dewey described beliefs as paradoxical, changing and dynamic.

According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1988), beliefs are a central construct in every discipline that deals with human behavior and learning.

Dewey (1933) defined beliefs as a form of thought and a part of our experience; they are not considered the ideal form of thought because they are not based on evidence but on opinions, traditions and customs; as a part of our experience they are obstacles and promoters of knowledge at the same time. Rokeach (1968) defined the

term "belief" as "any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person say or does". These might be two of the earliest understandings of the term "belief".

Others also have identified the term "belief" from their own theoretical perspectives.

Hosenfeld (1978) established "beliefs" as "mini-theories", while Omaggio (1978) as "insights", and Riley (1980) as "learner assumptions".

James (1991) noted that beliefs influenced actions and actions or facts, in turn, modified beliefs. Pintrich et al. (1993) claimed the nature of beliefs as a paradox that existed for the learner: on the one hand, current conceptions potentially constituted momentum that resisted conceptual change; but they also provided frameworks that the learner could use to interpret and understand new potentially conflicting information. Rust (1994) identified "beliefs" as "self-constructed representational systems".

Borg (2001:186) summed up the definition of "belief" as follows: *A belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior.*

Such interdisciplinary Research suggest that beliefs are intertwined with factors such as self-concept and identity, self-efficacy, personality, and other individual differences (Epstein, 1990; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

According to Barcelos, (2000), the characteristics of beliefs are: a) They guide action, but they are also influenced by action; b) They are organized in a structure in which each belief has a specific domain.; c) They are more difficult to change, the earlier they are incorporated; d) They are socially constructed and culturally transmitted; e) They are part of our interpretive ability of making sense of our social world responding to the problems we face; f) They have to be inferred from statements, intentions, and actions; g) They are dynamic. What's more, the functions of beliefs are: a) help people understand themselves and others and adapt to the world; b) provide meaning; c) help individuals to identify with another group and form

groups and social systems; d) provide structure, order, direction and shared values; e) reduce dissonance and confusion; f) framing and defining tasks and facilitating the memory process.

To put it simply and for convenience's sake, the term "belief" can be defined in this research as *any preconceived notions, ideas, views and opinions that one has*, based on the definitions mentioned above.

1.2 Language Learning Beliefs

Some psychological studies into learner perceptions and beliefs about learning "opened a whole new Aladdin's cave of personal beliefs, myths, understandings, and superstitions as they were revealed by the persons' thoughts and feelings about their learning" (Thomas & Harri-Augustein, 1983: 338). For example, in cognitive psychology, learner beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning, or epistemological beliefs, have been investigated with the idea that they are part of the underlying mechanisms of meta-cognition (Flavell, 1987; Ryan, 1984), form the building blocks of epistemology (Goldman, 1986), and are a driving force in intellectual performance. From this perspective, beliefs about language learning are viewed as "a component of meta-cognitive knowledge", which include all that individuals understand about themselves as learners and thinkers, including their goals and needs (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

In applied linguistics, researchers are also trying to understand how students' learning beliefs influence the actions they take to learn a foreign or second language, and learning beliefs have been a topic of research for at least fourteen years (Barcelos, 2000). As in the case with "beliefs", it is also far from easy to define the term "language learning beliefs" (LLB) because many a term has been used to refer to LLB.

The following are different terms and definitions of language learning beliefs:

1. Folk-linguistic theories of learning (Miller & Ginsburg, 1995: 294): ideas that students have about language and language learning.

2. Learner representations (Holec, 1987: 152): learners' entering assumptions about their roles and functions of teachers and teaching materials.

3. Representations (Riley, 1994: 8): popular ideas about the nature of language and languages, language structure and language use, the relationship between language and thought, identity and language, language and intelligence, language and learning, and so on.

4. Learners' philosophy of language learning (Abraham and Vann, 1987: 95): beliefs about how language operates, and consequently, how it is learned.

5. Meta-cognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1986a: 163): the stable, and statable although sometimes incorrect knowledge that learners have acquired about language, learning and language learning process; also referred to as knowledge or concepts about language learning or learner beliefs; there are three kinds: person, task and strategic knowledge.

6. Beliefs (Wenden, 1986b: 5): opinions which are based on experience and the opinions of respected others, which influence the way students act.

7. Cultural beliefs (Gardner, 1988: 110): expectations in the minds of teachers, parents, and students concerning the entire second language acquisition task

8. Learning culture (Riley, 1997: 122): a set of representations, beliefs and values related to learning that directly influence students' learning behavior.

9. Culture of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996: 230): the cultural aspects teaching and learning; what people believe about "good" and "normal" learning activities and processes, where such beliefs have a cultural origin.

By looking at the different terms and definitions mentioned above, it is not difficult to make two general observations: First, all the definitions stress that LLB refer to the nature of language and language learning; second, some definitions emphasize the social/cultural nature of beliefs. In the present study, we adopt these two essentials as the basic concept of LLB. Thus, language learning beliefs, just as the term "belief", are not only a cognitive concept, but are social or cultural constructs born out of our experiences and problems. In this way, just as what Freeman (1991) pointed out, investigating beliefs means focusing on what students know, instead on

what they need to know.

1.3 The Research History of Language Learning Beliefs

Since the 1970s, a considerable amount of research has so far been conducted in the field of language learning beliefs. Bernat (2006) summarized the research interests of the previous studies concerning the learning beliefs like this: Recent studies have examined learners' beliefs about language learning for their relationship to factors such as strategy use (Yang, 1999); anxiety (Tsai, 2004; Kunt, 1998; Banya & Chen, 1997); motivation (Kim-Yoon, 2000; Banya & Chen, 1997); learner autonomy (Cotterall, 1995; Wenden, 1991); attitude (Banya & Chen, 1997); achievement (Banya & Chen, 1997); gender (Bacon & Finnemann, 1992; Siebert, 2003; Banya & Chen, 1997), personality traits (Bernat, 2006); and language proficiency (Huang & Tsai, 2003; Peacock, 1998, 1999; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). All these research produced important insights into the role of language learning beliefs in foreign language learning and teaching.

Papalia's (1978) study of 316 ninth grade students is considered to be one of the earliest studies on beliefs about language learning. However, Horwitz is generally credited with initiating significant study of beliefs about language learning with the development of the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) which he used to investigate students', teachers', and pre-service teachers' beliefs (Horwitz, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1988). Since then, studies on learning beliefs have been carried out extensively within various paradigms.

Barcelos (2000, 2003) managed to classify the research into three categories based on the approaches different researchers employ: the Normative, the Meta-cognitive, and the Contextual. We also find out that there are studies (Peacock, 1998; Fan, 1999; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1992; Bernat, 2006) that are not based on any single approach mentioned above, but on the combination of all the three approaches. We may as well name this approach as "the Synthetic Approach". We adopt these four approaches (i.e., the Normative, the Meta-cognitive, the Contextual

and the Synthetic) here for the purpose of a brief literature review on the research history of language learning beliefs.

1.3.1 The Normative Approach

The normative approach is characterized by the use of Likert-scale questionnaires in the investigation of learner beliefs. Horwitz (1985, 1987) is generally credited with initiating significant research into beliefs with the development of the BALLI--Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory. Horwitz used this 34-item questionnaire to explore students', teachers', and pre-service teachers' beliefs. The BALLI contains 34 items that are categorized into 5 categories: (1) the difficulty of foreign learning; (2) foreign language aptitude; (3) the nature of language learning; (4) learning and communication strategies; and (5) motivation and expectations. The instrument was first pilot-tested with 150 first-semester foreign language students at The University of Texas at Austin (Horwitz, 1985), and then Horwitz (1987) administered the BALLI to 32 intermediate ESL (English as a Second Language) students from various cultural backgrounds enrolled in a university intensive English program. Subsequently, Horwitz (1988) used the BALLI with American students of foreign languages. Two hundred and forty-one university students of German, French and Spanish participated in this study. The results of both studies showed that most students believed in the difficulty of learning a second or foreign language but underestimated the time needed for mastering a language. They generally had overly-optimistic and unrealistic expectations for learning achievement.

Due to its high popularity, BALLI was consequently used in a number of small and large-scale research studies.

Kern (1995) used the BALLI to examine the degree to which American foreign language students' beliefs about language learning corresponded to those of their instructors. Twelve instructors and two hundred eighty-eight university students of French participated in this study. The findings showed that overall, the students' and the instructor's beliefs were similar, but some of the students' beliefs did not match their respective instructors, particularly with respect to pronunciation, error correction and the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary. Kern indicated that

instructors' practices might not be consistent with their own beliefs because the instructors had to follow the requirements of their program. Therefore, instructors' teaching practices might have a greater impact on learners' beliefs than the instructors' actual beliefs. The degree of "fitness" between teachers' and students' beliefs might "be related or depend on other factors such as instructors' personalities, teaching styles, level of experience, grading practices, choices and implementation of classroom activities"(Kern, 1995: 80).

Oh (1996) was probably the first to use the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of students of a less commonly taught foreign language. One hundred ninety-five university students enrolled in first- and second-year Japanese classes participated in this study. The results showed that more of the second-year students tended to agree or strongly agree with the individual BALLI items. While both groups considered Japanese to be a difficult to a very difficult language, the first-year students were more optimistic than the second year-students about the time needed to become fluent in Japanese. The second- year students more strongly believed that learning a foreign language required a special aptitude than the first-year students. Both groups recognized the importance of learning culture, but the second-year students emphasized learning grammar rules more than the first-year students. Both groups also highly valued learning Kanji and having an excellent pronunciation. They also overwhelmingly endorsed the importance of repeating and practicing a lot, showed a strong motivation to learn Japanese and had optimistic views about a better job. Oh concluded, "with the globalization of the economic communities of the world and the need for Americans to be competitive in international business, Japanese programs are attracting ambitious and motivated students. The data showed that they indeed held various beliefs and opinions that were different from students learning other commonly-taught languages" (Oh, 1996: 67).

Several studies used the BALLI to examine EFL learners' beliefs about language learning in foreign countries. Most of the studies were conducted in East Asian countries (Japan: Luppescu & Day, 1990; Saki & Gaies, 1999. Korea: Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995; Kim-Yoon, 2000. China: Su, 1995; Wang, 1996. Hong Kong: Benson &

Lor, 1999. Taiwan: Yang, 1992; Huang, 1997; Tsai, 2003). Rapidly developing economies in East Asia make EFL learners in this area the largest EFL population in the world. The differences between East Asian and American cultures, including the language systems, makes studies on EFL learners' beliefs about language learning particularly relevant to the present study.

Yang (1992) was the first to use the BALLI outside the North American context. She administered a Chinese version of the BALLI to 505 students enrolled in undergraduate English classes in Taiwan. The results indicated that EFL learners in Taiwan generally had similar beliefs about language learning to those of ESL learners in the U.S. However, EFL learners in Taiwan showed stronger agreement with traditional teaching and learning methods and more optimism about the time needed for mastering English, and their ultimate success in English than the ESL students. Many other studies in East Asian countries showed similar results (Korea: Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995; Kim-Yoon, 2000; Su, 1995; Wang, 1996; Huang, 1997; Tsai, 2003).

Su (1995) investigated the relationship between language learning strategies and learning styles of 369 Chinese university students and their cultural beliefs about learning and teaching English in a formal situation. The findings suggested that beliefs were not related to learners' preference of strategies. However, the author stated that one specific cultural belief – theory orientedness – was related to the memory strategies as determined by statistical analysis.

In addition, some other studies used modifications of the BALLI, such as those of Mantle-Bromley (1995) and Kuntz (1996). Both investigated American students of foreign languages.

Mantle-Bromley's study examined 94 high-school students' attitudes towards languages and culture in their first language class. Mantle-Bromley used class observations, interviews, and a modified version of the BALLI with only 29 items. Her results indicated that students believed Spanish and French were easy and could be learned in less than two years. They also believed that some people had a special ability to learn languages, that learning was mostly learning vocabulary and words, and that cultural understanding was not necessary to learn languages.

Kuntz (1996) expanded the BALLI and created the Kuntz-Rifkin Inventory. She investigated the LLB held by 113 students of commonly taught languages in the US, such as ESL, German, Spanish, and French, and compared them with the beliefs of students of Swahili. Kuntz explained that students of less commonly taught languages such as Swahili require more time to achieve the minimum level of proficiency. Her results showed that both groups believed in the importance of practice and repetition. Swahili students disagreed most strongly that one does not need to speak until one can say it correctly, whereas students of common taught language disagreed that one needs to know all the words in order to read in a foreign language.

Apart from the BALLI, other Likert-type questionnaires were also developed to investigate language learner beliefs.

Cotterall (1995) wanted to determine the factors in students' beliefs that would indicate their "readiness for autonomy." She constructed a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire from interviews with 130 adult ESL learners in tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Cotterall's study revealed six factors: the role of the teacher, the role of feedback, learner independence, learner confidence in study ability, experience of language learning, and approach to studying. The results indicated that learners were not "ready" for autonomy because they held traditional views of the teachers' role.

Campbell et al. (1993) investigated the beliefs held by 70 American university students in their first lower-level course. They did not use the BALLI but created a different questionnaire, called Beliefs about Language Learning, with seven statements and an open-ended question. The statements dealt with grammar, aptitude, fluency, and pronunciation. The results indicated that most students believed that learning how to use grammar correctly is more challenging than learning to use vocabulary correctly, that they should memorize grammar rules, and that most people can learn a foreign language, although some can learn faster than others. The open-ended question revealed students' beliefs in the role of age, the value of repetition, and keys to successful language learning, such as exposure to meaningful practice, determination and motivation, hard work, open-mindedness, and teachers' teaching. Two beliefs were similar to the ones reported in other studies that used the

BALLI – the role of age and repetition as the key to success. However, the open-ended part showed other beliefs that were not and are not present in any of the items of the BALLI such as determination, hard work, open-mindedness, and teachers' teaching ability.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) investigated 1,296 Japanese EFL learners' beliefs at public and private institutions of higher education using their own instrument. The study aimed to validate a 45-item questionnaire and examine the value of interview data to complement and explain the questionnaire data, and to describe Japanese learners' beliefs, as well as to determine the organization of these beliefs. Their findings suggest that beliefs about language learning are dynamic and situationally conditioned. The results provided a tentative support for the view that Japanese learners have internalized a coherent set of beliefs about methodological options for the EFL classroom instruction.

Dahl et al. (2005) examined the relationship between beliefs about learning and knowledge, and reports of learning strategy-use relevant for successful text comprehension, by investigating 81 Norwegian university students. Students' beliefs about knowledge and learning were measured with the Schommer Epistemological Questionnaire. Learning strategies particularly useful for text-based learning were measured with the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. A correlation analysis between measures and full regression analyses of how beliefs influence strategy selection were performed. They concluded that some, but not all, beliefs about knowledge and learning offer insight into students' reported use of learning strategies relevant for reading course literature.

The advantages of normative approach lie in that questionnaires "are less threatening than observation, useful if the researcher has limited resources and time" (Barcelos, 2000), "are easier to tabulate and particularly appropriate for large numbers of respondents" (Gimenez, 1994:76), and "afford precision and clarity, allow access to outside contexts, and allow data to be collected at different time slots" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). However, questionnaires also have some limitations. Questionnaires make it difficult to guarantee consistent interpretation by

the individuals because of the generality, and respondents tend to reply in terms of what they think would be appropriate (Gimenez, 1994; Block, 1998). Questionnaires also restrict respondents' choices by framing the answers according to a pre-established set of statements, thus making it difficult to investigate beliefs in students' or teachers' own terms (Benson & Lor, 1999; Block, 1997, 1998; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Gimenez, 1994, Kalaja, 1995; Kuntz, 1996; Munby, 1984; Pajares, 1992; Riley, 1996, 1999). Moreover, questionnaires make it difficult for researchers to see students' dilemmas or inconsistencies (Woods, 1996). Finally, questionnaires are too constraining, derived from scholarly literature, and predetermined by the researcher (Richardson, 1996). According to Richardson, teachers' and students' beliefs are highly eclectic and may be on both ends of a particular scholarly educational controversy or be very different from what the literature suggests.

1.3.2 The Meta-cognitive Approach

The meta-cognitive approach is characterized by the use of semi-structured interviews and self-reports rather than the use of questionnaires. In most studies of this approach, beliefs are defined as meta-cognitive knowledge. The implicit assumption in this approach is that students' meta-cognitive knowledge also constitutes their "theories in action" that help them to reflect on what they are doing and to develop their potential for learning (Wenden, 1987, 1988).

Wenden (1986a) investigated 25 ESL adult students enrolled in advanced level-classes at Columbia University by means of semi-structured interviews. The aim of this study was to investigate and classify learners' knowledge about their language learning. The findings indicated that learners are able to talk about (a) the language, (b) their proficiency in the language, (c) the outcome of their learning endeavors, (d) their role in the language learning process, and (e) the best approach to language learning.

Wenden (1987) reported on the learners' prescriptive beliefs and the relationship between their beliefs and strategies. The results showed that learners held prescriptive beliefs about (a) the importance of using the language in a natural way, (b) the importance of learning about the language, and (c) the importance of personal factors. She also concluded that common strategies were related to beliefs about using the

language, and that cognitive strategies were related to beliefs about the language.

Goh (1997) investigated forty ESL learners' meta-cognitive awareness about listening. She accessed to this knowledge by asking learners to keep a "listening diary" where they described the way they listen, react to, and perceive the information. In her study, Goh applied the same classification of meta-cognitive knowledge as Wenden (1991) used in her study: person knowledge, task knowledge and strategic knowledge. She also developed subcategories for each of these three main groups. The study revealed that the learners had a high degree of meta-cognitive awareness and were conscious of their learning strategies in listening. As is seen from the data, the students were able to both observe their cognitive processes as well as articulate their beliefs about learning to listen in English. One of the strengths of this research is that learners become aware of their learning styles, strategies and beliefs that could lead them to improve their own learning processes in other contexts.

Brownlee (2001) investigated the nature of epistemological beliefs, in particular the relationship between core and peripheral epistemological beliefs, in pre-service teacher education students. This study, basing on empirical data collected via semi-structured interviews from 29 student teachers in Australia, examined how core beliefs about knowing were related to peripheral beliefs about learning. A theoretical framework was developed for considering these beliefs about knowing in relation to beliefs about learning as an overall set of epistemological beliefs. As a group, it was found, students' beliefs about knowing ranged from a focus on knowledge as absolute and received to a view that knowledge was constructed and reasoned. The categories related to learning reflected a range of beliefs from reproductive through to more transformative beliefs about learning. A relationship was noted between the more sophisticated beliefs about knowing and transformative beliefs about learning.

The advantages and disadvantages of meta-cognitive approach are also obvious. The advantages consist in that the use of interviews "gives learners the opportunity to elaborate and reflect on their experience, allowing students to define and evaluate the learning process in their own terms" (Block, 1997), and that "it considers beliefs as knowledge, which implies that learners' beliefs are part of learners' reasoning"

(Barcelos, 2000). As for the disadvantages, in this approach, beliefs are seen as abstract entities inside learners' minds, and they are not inferred from actions, but from intentions and statements only. This approach also fails to explain the functions that beliefs play in students' contexts.

1.3.3 The Contextual Approach

The contextual approach is characterized by the use of ethnography (Barcelos, 1995; Allen, 1996), diaries, journals, narratives, and metaphors (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995). In this approach, beliefs are viewed as embedded in students' contexts. The basic idea behind this approach is combining different methods to interpret students' beliefs in their contexts (Barcelos, 2000).

Barcelos (1995) investigated 14 senior EFL undergraduate students in Brazil by using participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questionnaires for the purpose of understanding students' Language Learning Beliefs through the characterization of their culture of learning languages. She found that students held the beliefs about the role of grammar, the role of the teacher, and the role of the target-language country. She also concluded that students' previous language learning experiences exerted strong influence on their language learning beliefs.

Miller & Ginsberg (1995) employed 80 detailed narrative diaries, 29 audio-taped oral narratives, 10 student note-book journals, and student interviews to investigate American undergraduate and graduate students studying in Russia. They aimed to describe the folk-linguistic theories of students studying abroad about the nature of language learning and how it is learned. The results showed that students believed (a) language is words and syntax, (b) there is one correct way to say things and fixed rules, and (c) meaning of words lies in the words themselves, and that students also held metaphors about language learning.

Allen (1996) conducted a case study of one Libyan ESL intermediate student in Canada with the aid of classroom observation, document analysis, teacher and student interviews, learner diaries, the purpose of which is to understand the influence of teachers' beliefs on learners' language learning beliefs. She concluded that the learner

change his beliefs about language learning during the ESL course, and his beliefs became more similar to the teacher's beliefs.

The contextual approach offers a broader definition of beliefs as dynamic and social and proposes a different methodology to investigate beliefs. Investigating LLB in context means knowing why learners hold particular types of beliefs, how their beliefs fit with others that they have, and how their beliefs are related to their actions (Woods, 1997). In addition, this approach also presents a much more positive view of the learner than the normative and the meta-cognitive approaches, by taking students' own perspectives and contexts into account. But this approach also has its limitations. For example, some studies failed to investigate the evolution of learners' beliefs and the interaction between beliefs and actions; this approach seems more suitable for the studies with small samples only.

1.3.4 The Synthetic Approach

The Synthetic Approach is characterized by the use of not any single approach of research mentioned above but the combination of these three approaches. In other words, these types of research may be conducted by the use of Likert-scale questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and self-reports, etc. to interpret students' beliefs in their respective social/cultural contexts.

Peacock (1998: 149) conducted a study of 202 first-year students from the Science, Maths, and Engineering Departments and 45 teachers from the Department of English in Hong Kong City University by using a self-report questionnaire for learners on beliefs about language (BALLI) as well as a teacher version of the same questionnaire, a comprehensive proficiency test, a sheet on which learners were asked to self-rate their proficiency, a semi-structured interview sheet for learners and an essay topic. The purpose of the study was to investigate the links between learner beliefs, teacher beliefs and EFL proficiency. He concluded that "a statistically significant association was found between learner beliefs and proficiency" in Hong Kong context.

Youn, Yang, and Choi (2001) investigated the nature of epistemological beliefs about learning by analyzing the type of factors involved in the epistemological

development of South Korean high school students. The questionnaire package, consisting of the Korean version of epistemological scale developed by Jehng et al. and the Korean version of self-construal scale by Singelis, was administered to a group of Korean high school students (N=455). The package also included a survey sheet collecting demographic information on age, gender, educational level, GPA, social economic status (family income, parents educational level, etc.), and religion. This study showed that South Korean students learning beliefs were related with their independent-self construal (individualistic self-view) but not with their interdependent self-construal (collectivistic self-view). These results reconfirmed the culture-specific nature of epistemological beliefs which were identified from previous comparative studies with South Korean and American college students.

Bernat (2004) reported on a study that investigated beliefs about language learning among 20 adult ESL learners in Vietnamese context. The survey instrument, a "Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory" (Horwitz 1987), was used to collect data. The primary aim was to identify learners' beliefs about second language learning for the purpose of informing syllabus design and teacher practice. The secondary aim, was to discover if links existed between students' motivation for language learning and their beliefs. Results indicated that, despite the respondents' reported lack of language learning aptitude, and the belief in the supremacy of child's second language acquisition, the learners' motivation remained high. She thus concluded that external motivators, such as need for employment predominated.

Su (1995) studied 369 university EFL students in Chinese context in order to determine the relationship between students' major learning strategy/style preferences and their beliefs about language learning by the use of SILL (Strategy Inventory about Language Learning), Learning Style Survey, BALLI, and BALAT (Beliefs about learning and teaching), etc. She concluded that cultural beliefs were not directly related to learner's preference of strategies.

Sakui & Gaies (1999) studied 1,296 students at colleges and universities in Japanese context by the use of beliefs questionnaire (45 Likert-type items) and semi-structured interviews to investigate the beliefs of Japanese learners of English

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and determine if learners are consistent in reporting their beliefs about language learning. They concluded that LLB can change depending on the situation, and students interpret items in the questionnaire differently from researchers.

Yang (1992) studied in Chinese Taiwan 504 undergraduates enrolled in English classes at colleges and universities to explore second language learners' beliefs about language learning and their use of language learning strategies. He reached the conclusion that relationship between beliefs and strategy is not a simple one and should be interpreted carefully.

Yuen (2002) reported a survey of the beliefs about learning English held by 72 Secondary Four students in Chinese Hong Kong context. The aims of the study were to investigate the levels of their oral proficiency and their beliefs, and to examine levels of correlations between their beliefs and oral proficiency. The BALLI questionnaire by Horwitz (1985) was used. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to support the data collected from the BALLI. In this study, it was found that there was significant positive correlation between oral proficiency in relation to eleven out of thirty-four BALLI items. Of these, one fell into foreign language aptitude, two into the nature of language learning aspects, and four into learning and communication strategies, and motivations and expectations respectively.

Bernat (2006) reported a study of beliefs held by 262 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) language learners in Australian context. Horwitz's (1987) BALLI was used to collect data, which was later compared with an American study of 156 EAP learners (Siebert, 2003). Data analysis using frequency statistics showed that beliefs about language learning reported by both study groups were similar in all categories. It was concluded that despite a small number of inter-group differences, it seems premature to conclude that beliefs about language learning vary by contextual setting. Rather, they are due to the effects of individuals' complex meta-cognitive structure (as affected by a number of social, cultural, contextual, cognitive, affective, and personal factors) that is responsible for the nature and strength of these beliefs.

1.4 Language Learning Beliefs and Language Proficiency

Ehrman and Oxford (1995) examined the relationships of a variety of individual variables to end-of training proficiency ratings in speaking and reading for 855 adults in intensive training in a wide range of languages at the US Department of States. They found a strong correlation between cognitive aptitude and proficiency test results in both skills. They also reported that "believing that one can learn languages well was significantly correlated with proficiency in both speaking and reading" (1995: 79). However, the correlation of the use of cognitive strategies with speaking proficiency was found to be low.

Mantle-Bromley (1995: 373-383) used the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of 208 seventh grade middle school students taking first-year French and Spanish in Kansas. She found that some of her students' beliefs about language learning differ from commonly held teachers' beliefs. The results also demonstrate that her learners underestimate the difficulty of language learning to a great extent and many young students enter their first language class with misconceptions about language learning that might hinder their progress in language learning. Therefore, she stresses that teachers need to have a clear understanding of foreign language students' beliefs, because learners with realistic and informed beliefs are more likely to behave productively in class, work harder outside class, and persist longer with language study. Finally, she proposes that when student beliefs and performance do not match, they become frustrated with their class and their potential for learning will be damaged and that certain misinformed beliefs and expectations may actually prove harmful to their success in the classroom.

Wen and Johnson (1997) reported a study in a Chinese context of L2 variables and their relationship to English achievement. The subjects were 242 second-year English majors from five tertiary institutions in Nanjing and Shanghai. In the study, a hypothetical causal model of sixteen variables affecting English achievement was constructed. It was found that five variables including sex, LI and L2 proficiency, strategies relating to vocabulary learning and mother tongue avoidance, had positive

direct effects and one variable, risk-taking strategy, had negative direct effects on English achievement. Moreover, the direct effects of beliefs variables on strategy variables were examined and found to be strong and consistent. This reinforces the view that teachers and materials writers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, students' pre-existing assumptions about the language learning process.

Fan (1999) carried out an investigation into the beliefs and strategies of Hong Kong students in learning English, the purpose of which was to find out if there is any relationship between these two factors and whether they are related to language proficiency. The subjects under study included 529 Year One degree students at one of the tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire adapted from Wen (1993) based mainly on the three issues relevant to the language learning process discussed in Stern (1986; 1992). Findings of the study revealed a consistent relationship between language learning beliefs and strategies as well as other complicated relationships between them. Moreover, language learning beliefs and strategies related to high English proficiency have been identified. There was a negative correlation between English proficiency and attribution beliefs, form-focus beliefs and L1-reliant beliefs while a negative correlation between L1-reliant beliefs and English proficiency was statistically significant. In contrast, English proficiency correlated positively with management beliefs and meaning-focus beliefs and its relationship with the latter was significant.

Mori (1999a) considers how the beliefs that individuals hold about language learning relate to their more general beliefs. In her study of examining 187 college students learning Japanese as a foreign language, she finds some empirical evidence for the existence of language learning-related belief dimensions and for a relationship between general epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs. She also finds some evidence for relationships between learners' beliefs, achievement in a foreign language (variables include daily quizzes, achievement exams, proficiency test, and course achievement), the amount of language instruction received, and perception of the course in which the learners enrolled.

Peacock (1998) used the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of 202 EFL students

and 45 EFL teachers in the Department of English at the City University of Hong Kong. Results indicated that four of the mismatched learner beliefs negatively affected EFL proficiency. The students who agreed that "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules" were less proficient than those who disagreed. The students who underestimated the difficulty of learning a foreign were less proficient than those with a more realistic view. The students who disagreed with the statement "if you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on" were more proficient than those who agreed. The students who disagreed with statement "You shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly" were more proficient than those who agreed. In addition, the study found that a number of different learner beliefs were truly detrimental to successful language learning and they resulted in many dissatisfied and frustrated students who could not understand the rationale behind the tasks they carried out in class. Furthermore, the findings about the gaps between teacher and learner beliefs were similar to Horwitz's (1988) and Mantle-Bromley's (1995). Learners' satisfaction with the course, confidence in teachers and achievement might be negatively affected.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has first looked at the paradoxical nature of the term "belief". Based on the definitions reviewed, "belief" is defined as "any preconceived notions, ideas, views and opinions that one has". Then, this chapter has reviewed different definitions and the nature of language learning beliefs. Just as the term "belief", language learning beliefs are not only a cognitive concept, but are social or cultural constructs born out of one's experiences and problems. The research history of language learning beliefs has also been reviewed in accordance with the approaches different researchers employ: the Normative, the Meta-cognitive, the Contextual and the Synthetic. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach have been summarized respectively. Finally, this chapter turns to the literature review concerning the studies that

investigate the relationship between language learning beliefs and language proficiency, since this is the main focus of the present study.

Chapter Two　Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

The main foci of the present study are the students' beliefs about English language learning and their relationship with language proficiency. This study is to address the following questions:

1. What are the general trends and characteristics of language learning beliefs held by Chinese EFL learners?

2. What levels of correlation exist between language learning beliefs of Chinese EFL learners and their English language proficiency?

3. How do their beliefs differ from those held by learners in other learning groups or cultural contexts?

4. What pedagogical implications can the present research provide for EFL teaching and learning in China?

2.2 Subjects

Altogether nine classes of English majors from School of Foreign Languages of Shandong Institute of Light Industry, Jinan University and Linyi University participated in the study----a total of 384 students, with 58 males and 326 females (The seriously imbalanced proportion of males to females is the status quo of foreign language classes in nearly all the Chinese colleges or universities, the limitations of which are to be addressed in the corresponding part of the Conclusion Section.). Their average age is about 21, and all students are from Mainland China. All of them began studying English from their junior middle school, i.e. they have previously studied English for at least 7 years. They are sophomore English majors who have been studying such courses as Basic English, Reading, Listening, Oral English, Society and Culture of English-speaking Countries, etc. They have just taken the national English

proficiency test for English majors—TEM 4, the scores of which will be used to evaluate the students' English proficiency.

2.3 Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Four data collection instruments are used in this study.

1. A self-report questionnaire----Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) initiated by Horwitz (1985)

The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) is a self-report questionnaire developed by Horwitz in 1985 that investigated 34 different learner beliefs about language learning. In this research, the BALLI was used almost unchanged, apart from a couple of items slightly modified for Chinese context. It had a Likert-scale format: learners were asked to choose from 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree' for questions (randomly ordered) which fell into five areas: (1) difficulty of language learning; (2) foreign language aptitude; (3) the nature of language learning; (4) learning and communication strategies; and (5) motivations and expectations.

The BALLI was administered to 384 students. They completed the questionnaire in class, one form for each learner, so the response rate was 100 percent. The Questionnaire is both in English and Chinese version and is slightly changed to suit the Chinese context. For example, item 30 was changed into "*Mainland Chinese* think that it is important to speak a foreign language" and item 33 into "*Mainland Chinese* are good at learning foreign languages". If learners have questions concerning the statements, I would explain them to the students in Chinese. The forms were completed anonymously, and the students were told that their information would be kept strictly confidential.

2. A questionnaire of subjects' background information

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data concerning the students' previous learning experiences, their background information that is of help to this study, as well as their additional beliefs about English language learning.

Students' background information and other additional beliefs held by the subjects were collected through open-ended questions. Students also completed the background questionnaire as well as the BALLI in class.

3. A standard English proficiency test for English majors

We used TEM 4, 2006 (Test for English Majors, Grade 4) to assess the students' proficiency level. This test consists of 7 parts: Writing, Dictation, Listening Comprehension, Cloze, Reading Comprehension in addition to Vocabulary and Structure. TEM 4 covers a wide range of questions to evaluate students' English proficiency, and is considered to be one of the most convincing and reliable proficiency tests in China.

The full score of the test is to be converted into 100. Students were classified as three groups. Students who get 65-100 points are to be classified as high-proficiency learners. Those scoring 57-64 and 40-56 will be categorized as middle-proficiency learners and low-proficiency learners respectively.

4. A semi-structured interview

The aim of these 5-minute semi-structured interviews is to collect qualitative data about the origins of the subjects' beliefs to back up and assist interpretation of the data obtained from the BALLI. The interviews are to be held after students complete the questionnaires. Due to a lack of time, only a total of 9 students (3 from each category ---- high-, middle-, and low-proficiency learners) will be interviewed. The whole process of interviews will be audio-taped for later transcription and interpretation.

Both questionnaires and students' examination scores lead to quantitative information about students' beliefs about English language learning and their language proficiency, whereas the questionnaire of subjects' background information as well as the open-ended interviews lead to qualitative information.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

To summarize the students' responses to the BALLI items and students' proficiency test scores, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were computed for each item by running SPSS procedures. Since there are no clear-cut right and wrong answers to the BALLI questions (For example, the question of "everyone can learn to speak English well" is the subject of controversy.), it is not the purpose of this paper to identify "incorrect" student opinions, rather, it seeks to describe specific beliefs and discuss the potential impact of these beliefs on learner expectations and strategies. Statistical analysis was also done to compute the correlation (r) between students' beliefs and their language proficiency. Subjects' responses to the BALLI items were analyzed by calculating mean scores. The five positions running from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" were given weights of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for scoring purposes. Students' English proficiency is marked from 0 to 100.

The results were expressed in a correlation coefficient which ranges from -1.00, indicating perfect negative correlation, to 1.00 indicating perfect positive correlation.

The results of the BALLI were compared with the results of previous studies of other ESL or EFL students to investigate if there would be differences between beliefs of Chinese EFL learners and those held by learners in other learning groups or other cultural contexts.

2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

As a qualitative data collection tool, interviewing is another appropriate instrument to meet the requirements of the present study. Tuckman (1975: 293) says that "by providing access to what is 'inside a person's head', (it) makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)". Moreover, interviewing is defined by Fontana & Frey (1994:361) as "one of the most common and most powerful ways (we use) to try to understand our fellow human beings".

Interviewing can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured, depending on the degree of control over the interview. In the present study, semi-structured interviews,

which mean that the interviews are based on the use of an interview guide ---- a list of questions and topics needed to be covered in a particular order (Bernard, 1994), are adopted because of the time constraint and the limit of resources.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has first put forward the research questions of the present study, the main foci of which are the general trends of Chinese students' beliefs about English language learning and the relationship with their language proficiency. Afterwards, the subjects, instruments and data collection procedures of this study have been specified. Altogether nine classes of English majors from School of Foreign Languages of Shandong Institute of Light Industry, Jinan University and Linyi University participated in the study----a total of 384 students, with 58 males and 326 females. In this research, we mainly used questionnaires to collect quantitative data. In order to overcome the limitations of the over-dependence on quantitative data, we also collected qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Three Results and Discussion

This chapter will present the results of the present study. The results include students' English language proficiency, background information of learning English, students' responses to the BALLI which show their language learning beliefs, and correlations between students' beliefs and their language proficiency. Information about students' origins of beliefs from the semi-structured interviews will also be reported.

This chapter is also devoted to discussing the responses of three groups of students with different levels of language proficiency to the topics addressed by the BALLI. The results are going to be discussed according to the five main aspects relating to learners' beliefs that the BALLI intends to investigate. The characteristics of Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs will be summarized. This chapter will also discuss the similarities and differences of language learning beliefs between different research contexts.

3.1 English Language Proficiency Test

Table 1 gives the English language proficiency test results. The subjects were divided into three groups of roughly equal numbers on the basis of proficiency scores. For a large sample like this, it is recommended that the high, middle and low proficiency groups each include equally one-third of the whole research population (Qin, 2003: 37). In that case, there should be 128 (1/3 of 384) subjects in each proficiency group. However, in the present study, from the 128th to the 145th, they all have 64 points. Therefore, we have to take the top 127 as the high proficiency group. This rule also applies to the division of the other two groups. That is why each proficiency group does not have equal numbers of subjects.

Table 1. Proficiency Test Results (TEM 4)

Group	Number	Percent	Range of scores	Mean	Std. Deviation
High	127	33.1	65-100	71.1496	6.17609
Middle	134	34.9	57-64	60.5672	2.24930
Low	123	32.0	40-56	51.0488	4.16632
Total	384	100	40-100	61.0182	9.26614

3.2 Background Information of Learning English

This part summaries students' background information on learning English, which is supposed to help support and explain students' learning beliefs. Tables 2, 3 and 4 will present the information including the frequency of using English outside classroom, the frequency of watching TV or movies or listening to the radio in English, as well as students' expectations of achievements in the first English examination this academic year.

Table 2. The Frequency of Using English Outside Classroom

		Using English Outside Classroom				Total
		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	
Group	High	8	68	48	3	127
	Middle	16	73	44	1	134
	Low	26	72	24	1	123
Total		50	213	116	5	384

Table 3. The Frequency of Watching TV/Movies or Listening to Radios

		Watching TV/Movies or Listening to Radios					Total
		Never	Less than once a month	1 to 3 times a month	Once a week	More than once a week	
Group	High	5	18	32	21	51	127
	Middle	5	40	29	17	43	134
	Low	12	29	33	19	30	123
Total		22	87	94	57	124	384

Table 4. The Frequency of Students' Expectations of achievements

		Expected Scores in the First English Examination This Year				Total
		0-29	30-59	60-79	80-100	
Group	High	0	0	23	104	127
	Middle	0	0	7	127	134
	Low	0	0	12	111	123
Total		0	0	42	342	384

Generally speaking, the frequency of using or being exposed to English outside classroom for both students with high, middle and low proficiency is quite low. Only 5 students out of 384 report to use English outside classroom often, with only 3 from high proficiency group, 1 from middle and low respectively. About 13 percent (50) students report that they never use English out of class, and altogether more than 85 percent (329) of the students use English more or less outside classroom. Relatively, more students with high English proficiency will use English outside classroom than students with low proficiency.

What is more, in terms of the frequency of watching TV/movies or listening to radios, students with high proficiency will watch TV/movies or listen to radios in English more often than those with middle and low proficiency.

As far as the frequency of students' expected marks is concerned, all students, high, middle or low proficiency, report a high frequency of getting high marks in the first examination in the year: All the students expect to get more than 60, and more than 89 percent (342) of them express the wishes to get at lest 80 in the coming English examination. However, there is one point that needs to be noticed: Students with middle and low language proficiency have a higher expectation of their English examination results since only about 82 percent (104) of the students with high proficiency expect that they would get at least 80 in their examination, while 95 percent (127) of the students with middle and 90 percent (111) with low language

proficiency expect that they would get at least 80 in the exam.

3.3 The Self-Report Questionnaire -- BALLI

Descriptive statistics were first computed for the BALLI, and, ANOVA was then conducted to check if there were significant differences among the three proficiency groups on the BALLI items. Finally, correlation analysis (Bivariate) was conducted to check if there were significant correlations between BALLI items and language proficiency.

3.3.1 Descriptive Analysis of the BALLI

The students' responses to the 34 items of the BALLI are reported in this part. The results are to be presented in relation to the five aspects----foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, the difficulty of language learning, and motivations and expectations---- which the questionnaire statements were designed to investigate. The subjects' responses were analyzed descriptively (Crosstab) in order to determine the trends of learning beliefs that the learners held.

3.3.1.1 Foreign Language Aptitude

Items in this aspect of learning beliefs concern the general existence of specialized abilities for language learning and beliefs about the characteristics of more or less successful language learners. Thus, these items address the issue of individual potential for achievement in language learning. Table 5 reports responses to the foreign language aptitude items.

Table 5. Responses to Foreign Language Aptitude Items (BALLI items 1,2,10,15,22,29, 32, 33, and 34)

		1/2*	3	4/5
Item1: It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.				
Group	High	19	12	96
	Middle	11	10	113
	Low	16	13	94
Item2: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.				

Group	High	9	14	104
	Middle	9	14	111
	Low	5	15	103

Item10: It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

Group	High	39	42	46
	Middle	40	49	44
	Low	40	40	43

Item15: I have foreign language aptitude (a special ability for learning foreign languages).

Group	High	29	16	81
	Middle	40	51	41
	Low	93	9	21

Item22: Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.

Group	High	39	37	51
	Middle	36	45	48
	Low	41	36	43

Item29: People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.

Group	High	94	21	11
	Middle	98	23	10
	Low	94	17	10

Item32: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.

Group	High	39	42	45
	Middle	43	42	44
	Low	43	37	42

Item33: Mainland Chinese are good at learning foreign languages.

Group	High	38	63	25
	Middle	46	67	18
	Low	44	54	24

Item34: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well.

Group	High	30	42	55
	Middle	31	36	64
	Low	40	23	59

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Figures represent numbers of respondents.

Item 1 indicates that about 79 percent (303 out of 384) of the students believe that "It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language". This shows that for most students from China, it might be easier to learn a foreign language in their childhood period.

Item 2 indicates that more than 82 percent (318 out of 384) of the students believe that "Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a

foreign language", which explains the difference between high proficiency students and low proficiency students as shown by the high degree of correlation (r=0.489) between item 15 and language proficiency. If one tends to attribute the success of high proficiency students only to their special ability in foreign language learning, he/she is unlikely to make substantial efforts to learn a foreign language, thus resulting in low proficiency or poor performance. In that case, for those students who lack self-confidence, teachers' encouragements would be of great value.

Item 29 indicates that about 74 percent (286 out of 384) of the students do not believe that "People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages". This finding provides statistical evidence against the complaints of those frustrated teachers who fail in front of the students majoring in mathematics or science. This can also explain the fact that mathematics and science students are no less capable of gaining high proficiency than other students in learning a foreign language.

Results from item 32 indicate that 34 percent of the learners believed that "people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent", 33 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed, and still other 33 percent were in a neutral position. This finding suggests the diversified opinions of Chinese EFL learners in this respect.

Item 33 indicates that only 17 percent (67 out of 384) of the students agreed that "Mainland Chinese are good at learning foreign languages". This is an indication that generally, for Mainland Chinese students, there is a lack of student confidence which will probably lead to poor performance in proficiency. This belief might be caused by the vast cultural and linguistic differences between Chinese and English.

3.3.1.2 Nature of Language Learning

This category includes a broad range of issues related to the nature of language learning, such as the role of cultural contact and language immersion in language learning, and the learners' conception of the focus of the language learning task. Responses to these items are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Responses to Nature of Language Learning Items (BALLI items 5,8,11,16,20,25, and 26)

		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Item5: English is structured in the same way as Chinese.				
Group	High	118	9	0
	Middle	129	5	0
	Low	121	2	0
Item8: It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well.				
Group	High	3	11	113
	Middle	2	12	120
	Low	4	10	109
Item11: It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.				
Group	High	8	8	111
	Middle	6	3	125
	Low	1	4	117
Item16: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.				
Group	High	116	6	5
	Middle	118	8	5
	Low	110	10	3
Item20: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.				
Group	High	121	4	2
	Middle	119	7	5
	Low	113	7	2
Item25: Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.				
Group	High	23	34	70
	Middle	16	38	77
	Low	25	37	60
Item26: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese.				
Group	High	122	4	1
	Middle	117	5	8
	Low	114	5	3

[a]*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*
Figures represent numbers of respondents.

Results of item 5 indicate that the vast majority of the students investigated (about 96 percent), whether they were from the high or low proficiency group, did not agree to the point that "English is structured in the same way as Chinese". What's most surprising is that there was not a single student who strongly agreed or agreed to this belief. This may be explained by the fact that most of the Chinese EFL learners tend to ascribe their slow progress or lack of success in foreign language learning to

the striking differences between Chinese and English. As is known, the English language belongs to the Indo-European family, whereas Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. So, in the minds of Chinese EFL learners, the sharp differences between Chinese and English constitute the major difficulties in language learning.

Findings from item 8 indicate that more than 89 percent of the students believed that "It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well"; moreover, even 88.6 percent of the students from the low proficiency group agreed to this belief. This shows that most Chinese EFL learners have already realized the importance of "culture" in the process of foreign language learning. To put it simply, most of them are culture-conscious. This is undoubtedly one of the results of the current teaching rationale in the classroom: cultivating Chinese students' cultural awareness.

Item 11 indicates that about 92 percent of the students believed that "It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country", and 96 percent of the students from the low proficiency group agreed to this point. From students' background information, we know that none of the investigated has ever had the chance of traveling abroad. Therefore, most of them longed for having the opportunities to learn English in the English-speaking countries. This is also explained by the fact that most Chinese EFL learners complain the lack of English environment in the process of learning English. This may lead to a further assumption that Chinese EFL students, especially those with low proficiency, are likely to attribute their slow progress or lack of success in foreign language learning to the lack of opportunities to study abroad or to the lack of foreign language learning environments. We can also make another inference from the result of item 11 that in foreign language teaching, school authorities or teachers should provide or create more real or positive foreign language learning environments inside or outside the classroom so as to increase the students' learning interests and language proficiency. As for the students, they should take an active part in the real or simulated English activities or games to facilitate their English language learning. As is shown in students' background information and in the interviews, the major difference between the high and low proficiency students in

this study is that the former have been exposed more frequently to real or simulated English learning environments, such as watching English movies, mingling with native speakers, or taking part in English activities or games, and so forth.

Items 16, 20 and 26 indicate that more than 90, 92 and 91 percent of the students respectively did not agree that "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words", "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules", and "Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese". These findings are quite different from the traditional conceptions held by Chinese EFL learners, and also suggest a couple of changes of Chinese EFL teaching and learning during the past decade. The first change is the transition from exam-oriented to quality-oriented education. As is known, traditionally, Chinese EFL teaching and learning are based on "passing exams", which is referred to as "exam-oriented education". In this context, for most foreign language teachers and learners, learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words and grammar rules, which resulted in too many drawbacks in foreign language teaching and learning. After years of exploration and reforming efforts, Chinese EFL teaching and learning has turned to stressing the importance of "quality" rather than "exams", which is referred to as "quality-oriented education". Although in practice still a lot of teachers and learners are practicing exam-oriented foreign language teaching and learning, the conception of "quality-oriented" teaching and learning has become deeply instilled in the minds of Chinese students. The second change these items suggest is the transition of teaching approach from "grammar-translation teaching" to the current "communicative language teaching" and "task-based teaching". Traditional approach of teaching English emphasized grammar teaching. No matter what to learn, speaking, writing or reading, they would focus on whether their grammar was correct or not. In addition, the basic teaching process was to translate from one language to another. This teaching approach has proved to be outdated and of little help for the improvement of students' foreign language proficiency, especially the oral proficiency. In that case, the emergence of communicative language teaching and task-based teaching has become inevitable.

The results from these three items suggest the strong impact of China's educational reform these years on Chinese students' beliefs of foreign language learning.

3.3.1.3 Learning and Communication Strategies

These items address learning and communication strategies and are said to be most directly related to a students' actual language learning practice. Items 17 and 21 refer to learning strategies, and items 7, 9, 12, 13, 18 and 19 concern communication strategies. Students' responses to these items are found in Table 7.

Table 7. Responses to Learning and Communication Strategy Items (BALLI items 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 21)

		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Learning Strategies				
Item17: It is important to repeat and practice a lot.				
Group	High	3	2	120
	Middle	3	6	121
	Low	3	2	115
Item21: It is important to practice with cassettes or video tapes.				
Group	High	4	11	112
	Middle	3	14	113
	Low	2	23	98
Communication Strategies				
Item7: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.				
Group	High	23	30	74
	Middle	24	34	76
	Low	33	26	64
Item9: You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.				
Group	High	110	6	11
	Middle	71	22	40
	Low	22	2	98
Item12: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.				
Group	High	27	22	78
	Middle	45	62	27
	Low	92	19	12
Item13: It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English.				
Group	High	6	10	111
	Middle	7	24	101
	Low	78	17	28
Item18: I feel self-conscious speaking English with other people.				

Group	High	88	11	28
	Middle	18	39	75
	Low	17	10	96
Item19: If you are allowed to make errors in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on.				
Group	High	52	29	46
	Middle	60	18	54
	Low	51	24	48

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Figures represent numbers of respondents.

In regard to traditional learning strategies, both students of high and low proficiency endorsed repetition and practice. Altogether more than 92 percent of the students believed that "It is important to repeat and practice a lot". These results may reflect that the concept, "practice makes perfect" is deeply rooted in students' minds. However, practically, a greater number of high proficiency students are willing to spend more time on revision or practice so that their proficiency may be better than those with low proficiency.

According to the result from item 21, more than 84 percent of the students acknowledged the importance of using cassettes or video tapes to practice English. This suggests the powerful impact of traditional language laboratory on students' learning of the English language. Such beliefs held by most students are consistent with the general situation of foreign language teaching and learning in most areas of China. In China, not all colleges or universities can provide their students with enough real English-speaking settings or environments for them to practise English; Most students still rely on cassettes or video tapes or other electronic facilities (in the classroom or sound lab, or at home) to practice listening or speaking.

As to item 7, we find that only 20 percent of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed to the belief "It is important to speak English with an excellent accent". Most students put great value on accent, which suggests that the traditional criterion for second or foreign language success prevails in the minds of the students. Traditionally, the second or foreign language success is measured against the native speaker; That is to say, the goal of foreign language learners is to achieve the

proficiency of native speakers, or to achieve native-like proficiency. In order to be able to speak like native speakers, it is not surprising for students to attach great importance to the "standard" or "excellent" accent.

The values of such findings are as follows. According to Peacock (1998:258), "any strategy that directly promotes language learning should perhaps be taught to students" and teachers should try best "to help students use the more effective strategies in the learning process" (Fan, 1999:76). It is also advised that a comfortable and pressure-free environment of learning English should be provided to reduce students' anxieties and make them have progress in their oral proficiency.

3.3.1.4 Difficulty of Language Learning

These items concern the difficulty of learning English as a second or foreign language. Items 24 and 28 assess the relative difficulty of different language skills, and item 6 surveys students' expectations for success. Responses to the difficulty of language learning are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Responses to Difficulty of Language Learning Items (BALLI items 3,4,6,14,24 and 28)

		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Item3: Some languages are easier to learn than others.				
Group	High	17	27	82
	Middle	23	27	82
	Low	16	25	80
Item4: English is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4)an easy language, 5) a very easy language				
Group	High	10	73	44
	Middle	14	84	36
	Low	91	17	13
Item6: I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.				
Group	High	4	9	114
	Middle	3	16	114
	Low	6	20	97
Item14: If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language fluently? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.				
Group	High	31	27	69
	Middle	43	20	69

	Low	44	28	51
Item24: It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.				
Group	High	59	32	34
	Middle	62	33	36
	Low	48	34	38
Item28: It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand (listen to) it.				
Group	High	46	24	57
	Middle	42	24	64
	Low	52	26	44

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree,
5 = strongly agree
Figures represent numbers of respondents.

Item 14 asked respondents to estimate the length of time necessary to learn a language. Only 30 percent of the students believed that one can learn to speak a language fluently within 2 years if he or she spends one hour a day learning the language. This suggests that in the eyes of most Chinese students, the English language is not easy to learn. This outcome is consistent with that of item 4 in that altogether only 24 percent of students think that English is an (very) easy language. This finding can account for the overall low proficiency of Chinese EFL learners, especially those none-English-majors.

According to item 6, generally, more than 84 percent of the students believed that they will learn to speak English very well. Most interestingly, although most low proficiency students thought English was far from easy to learn, they (78 percent) still cherished a high expectation of learning English well. However, we must be clear that the seemingly same result may have different implications: For the high proficiency students, this belief indicates their strong self-confidence, whereas for the low proficiency ones, it reflects nothing but their strong desire to be successful in foreign language learning or their determination move ahead in spite of so many difficulties.

3.3.1.5 Motivations and Expectations

These items concern desires and opportunities the students associate with the learning of English. Responses to these items are reported in Table 9.

Table 9. Responses to Motivations and Expectations Items (BALLI items 23, 27, 30 and 31)

		1/2ᵃ	3	4/5
Item23: If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.				
Group	High	4	10	113
	Middle	5	17	109
	Low	3	11	108
Item27: If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.				
Group	High	1	10	116
	Middle	2	11	119
	Low	3	8	111
Item30: Mainland Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language.				
Group	High	7	16	104
	Middle	4	13	114
	Low	7	22	92
Item31: I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.				
Group	High	65	43	18
	Middle	77	33	21
	Low	67	39	14

ᵃ*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*
Figures represent numbers of respondents.

According to Table 9, 81 percent of the students thought that it was important for Chinese people to speak a foreign language. This suggests that the majority of Chinese students have realized the importance of mastering a foreign language in China. This results from the facts that China is now engaged in opening-up and modernization drive and is in need of talents who can speak at least one foreign language.

The majority of students associated the ability to speak English with better job opportunities (90 percent) and thought they would have "many opportunities" to use English (86 percent). In the semi-structured interview, all the respondents stressed that it was easy for people whose English proficiency was good to find a job and to get promoted. In addition, according to the result of item 31, only 14 percent of the students expressed a strong desire for friendships with people who speak English. In the semi-structured interview as well, few students said that they would like to learn English so that they could get to know its speakers better.

This finding is quite unique and reflects most Chinese EFL students' motivation of learning a foreign language. As we know, an important distinction within motivation can be drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The former is thought of as "being within the task itself: a sense of achievement, self-esteem, pride in solving the problem, enjoyment of the class, being able to use the language as desired", while the latter is "therefore external to the task itself, usually other consequences of success on the task: prize for doing well, getting the job of one's choice, a higher position, gaining some certificate on a test score"(Johnson & Johnson, 2001: 220). For most Chinese EFL learners, their motivation to learn a foreign language is extrinsic: passing examinations, getting some useful certificates, job opportunities, promotion possibilities, and so on. For some others, their motivation may be both intrinsic and extrinsic.

According to Kern (1995: 81), second language learners have "instrumental and integrative motivation" and "students will be frustrated if classroom methods do not match their expectations". Therefore, "more teachers should be seeking their learners' opinions on how they learn and on what they wish to do in class" (Peacock, 1998: 260).

Although the responses show that some students have a strong willingness to talk with and to get to know people who speak English, there is a lack of evidence that these students actually know how to establish such contacts. In fact, in Chinese context, there are not so many opportunities for students to make friends with people from foreign countries and it lacks a rich English-speaking environment for students. Therefore, school authorities and teachers should help in this regard by creating a language-rich environment and providing greater opportunities for purposeful use of English so that the students' integrative or intrinsic motivation can be developed further.

3.3.2 Analysis of Variance of the Three Proficiency Groups

In this section, results of ANOVA are presented to check if there were significant differences among the three proficiency groups on the BALLI items.

As can be seen in Table 10, a one-way ANOVA test shows that a significant difference exists among the proficiency groups for item 4 (F=80.670, p=0.000), item 9 (F=106.779, p=0.000), item 11 (F=3.391, p=0.035), item 12 (F=63.951, p=0.000), item 13 (F=140.026, p=0.000), item 15 (F=49.067, p=0.000), and item 18 (F=76.893, p=0.000), but not for other items (The detailed ANOVA results are outlined in the Appendix I).

In order to examine the specific differences, post-hoc multiple comparison tests (Scheffe) were performed. The results are outlined in Table 11. The results of the comparison for items 4 and 13 show that the students in low proficiency group are significantly different from those in high proficiency group A (p=0.000) and middle proficiency group (p=0.000). For items 9, 12 and 15, Scheffe indicates that there is a significant difference at the $p < 0.001$ level (p=0.000) between the three proficiency groups. As to item 11, the low proficiency group is significantly different from the high proficiency group (p=0.035), but significant difference does not exist between the low and the middle proficiency group (p=0.498) or between the middle and the high proficiency group (p=0.343). As for item 18, the high group is significantly different at the $p < 0.001$ level from the other two groups, but the low proficiency group is different from the middle proficiency group at the $p < 0.05$ level (p=0.088). For other BALLI items, no significant differences are found between the three proficiency groups, the statistical details of which are listed in the Appendix II.

Table 10. ANOVA of Proficiency Groups by BALLI Items

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Item4	Between Groups	61.728	2	30.864	80.670	.000
	Within Groups	145.005	379	.383		
	Total	206.733	381			
Item9	Between Groups	124.110	2	62.055	106.779	.000
	Within Groups	220.257	379	.581		
	Total	344.366	381			
Item11	Between Groups	1.222	2	.611	3.391	.035
	Within Groups	68.490	380	.180		
	Total	69.713	382			
Item12	Between Groups	69.178	2	34.589	63.951	.000

		206.069	381	.541		
	Within Groups	206.069	381	.541		
	Total	275.247	383			
Item13	Between Groups	115.958	2	57.979	140.029	.000
	Within Groups	156.924	379	.414		
	Total	272.882	381			
Item15	Between Groups	62.667	2	31.333	49.067	.000
	Within Groups	241.386	378	.639		
	Total	304.052	380			
Item18	Between Groups	88.580	2	44.290	76.893	.000
	Within Groups	218.300	379	.576		
	Total	306.880	381			

Table 11. Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons of Proficiency Groups by BALLI Items

Scheffe

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item4	Low	Middle	-.80881(*)	.07757	.000
		High	-.91234(*)	.07858	.000
	Middle	Low	.80881(*)	.07757	.000
		High	-.10354	.07660	.402
	High	Low	.91234(*)	.07858	.000
		Middle	.10354	.07660	.402
Item9	Low	Middle	.85603(*)	.09557	.000
		High	1.40248(*)	.09664	.000
	Middle	Low	-.85603(*)	.09557	.000
		High	.54644(*)	.09458	.000
	High	Low	-1.40248(*)	.09664	.000
		Middle	-.54644(*)	.09458	.000
Item11	Low	Middle	.06276	.05313	.498
		High	.13980(*)	.05382	.035
	Middle	Low	-.06276	.05313	.498
		High	.07704	.05258	.343
	High	Low	-.13980(*)	.05382	.035
		Middle	-.07704	.05258	.343
Item12	Low	Middle	-.51608(*)	.09183	.000
		High	-1.05198(*)	.09304	.000
	Middle	Low	.51608(*)	.09183	.000
		High	-.53590(*)	.09108	.000
	High	Low	1.05198(*)	.09304	.000
		Middle	.53590(*)	.09108	.000
Item13	Low	Middle	-1.11863(*)	.08064	.000

			High	-1.23328(*)	.08140	.000
		Middle	Low	1.11863(*)	.08064	.000
			High	-.11465	.07998	.359
		High	Low	1.23328(*)	.08140	.000
			Middle	.11465	.07998	.359
Item15	Low		Middle	-.59294(*)	.10015	.000
			High	-.99806(*)	.10129	.000
		Middle	Low	.59294(*)	.10015	.000
			High	-.40512(*)	.09953	.000
		High	Low	.99806(*)	.10129	.000
			Middle	.40512(*)	.09953	.000
Item18	Low		Middle	.21046	.09511	.088
			High	1.11472(*)	.09601	.000
		Middle	Low	-.21046	.09511	.088
			High	.90426(*)	.09433	.000
		High	Low	-1.11472(*)	.09601	.000
			Middle	-.90426(*)	.09433	.000

* *The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

3.3.3 Correlations between Learning Beliefs and Language Proficiency

It was found that there were positive correlations between proficiency and five learning beliefs, and negative correlations between proficiency and three other learning beliefs. The learning beliefs and the summary of the correlation results for the BALLI items are presented in Table 10. In addition, of the BALLI items which showed statistically significant association with language proficiency, two fell into difficulty of language (items 4, and 6), one into the nature of language learning (item 11), one into foreign language aptitude (item 15), and four into learning and communication strategies (9, 12, 13 and 18).

Table 12. Summary of Correlations between Beliefs and Proficiency

		Item4	Proficiency Test Scores
Item4	Pearson Correlation	1	.411(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.411(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item6	Proficiency Test Scores
Item6	Pearson Correlation	1	.152(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	384	383
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.152(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	383	383

		Item9	Proficiency Test Scores
Item9	Pearson Correlation	1	-.537(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.537(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item11	Proficiency Test Scores
Item11	Pearson Correlation	1	-.114(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	384	383
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.114(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	383	383

		Item12	Proficiency Test Scores
Item12	Pearson Correlation	1	.473(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.473(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	384	384

		Item13	Proficiency Test Scores
Item13	Pearson Correlation	1	.480(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.480(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item15	Proficiency Test Scores

Item15	Pearson Correlation	1	.489(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	381
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.489(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	381	381
		Item18	Proficiency Test Scores
Item18	Pearson Correlation	1	-.490(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.490(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

   * *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
  ** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

3.3.3.1 Foreign Language Aptitude

Of the 9 items (1, 2, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33 and 34) in the aspect of foreign language aptitude, only item 15 (I have foreign language aptitude.) has a positive correlation with the language proficiency, with the Correlation Coefficient being 0.489, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This means that the students who believed they themselves possessed the foreign language aptitude are likely to be more proficient in English, and vice versa. This finding clearly suggests that students' confidence in language learning can add to their success, and this, in turn, may well lead to their self-confidence, thus making the foreign language learning process much easier.

3.3.3.2 Difficulty of Language Learning

Of all the items (3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28) concerning the difficulty of language learning, only items 4 (r=0.411, p=0.000) and 6 (r=0.152, p=0.003) were found to have a positive correlation with language proficiency.

Students from the high proficiency group overwhelmingly (92 percent) believed that English was of average difficulty and an easy language. However, 73 percent of the students from the low proficiency group reported that English was a (very) difficult language. These suggest that the more difficult a student thinks of a language,

the less proficient he/she is likely to be and vice versa. This may be explained by the assumption that students' different assessments of language difficulty can lead to different learning attitudes and learning efforts, thus causing different levels of proficiency. According to Horwitz (1987: 123), "students' judgments about the difficulty of language learning are critical to the development of students' expectation for and commitment to language learning". If the students think one task is too difficult to learn, they are likely to become frustrated and less positive when they do not make progress as quickly as they expect. A vicious cycle may appear and consequently they form the belief that English is difficult to learn, and therefore, they are unenthusiastic and reluctant to learn. This results in poor English proficiency. In return, this strongly deepens their belief that English is difficult to learn or good oral proficiency is hard to achieve.

Item 6 indicates that more students from the high or middle proficiency group than those from the low believed that they would learn to speak English very well, although across the groups more than 84 percent were confident of their English learning prospect.

3.3.3.3 Nature of Language Learning

In this category, only item 11 was found to be negatively correlated with language proficiency ($r=-0.114$, $p=0.026$). This finding is interesting in that although the vast majority of the respondents (91.9 percent) agreed or strongly agreed to this belief, more students from the low and middle proficiency group than from the high attached great importance to learning a foreign language in the foreign country. This might be explained by the fact that those less proficient students are more likely to attribute their unsuccessfulness in learning a foreign language to the lack of native-like environments. Therefore, they expressed a stronger desire to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.

3.3.3.4 Learning and Communication Strategies

With reference to the aspect of learning and communication strategies, 4 items (items 9, 12, 13 and 18) were found to be either positively or negatively correlated with language proficiency, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. A few

others in this aspect provide implications for language teaching and learning.

Responses to item 9 indicate that there is a negative correlation between this belief (You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly) and language proficiency, with the correlation coefficient up to -0.537 ($p=0.000$). Moreover, the mean scores of high, middle and low proficiency groups are 1.2205, 1.7669 and 2.6230 respectively. All these suggest that the more proficient a student is, the less likely he or she is to be afraid of making mistakes. This may show that students with high proficiency are willing to make attempt to learn something they do not know and feel positively about speaking English. Similar to Mantle-Bromley's (1995) study, students with low proficiency who are reluctant to speak before mastery may cause unproductive inhibitions in the language classroom.

Another one that is negatively correlated with language proficiency is item 18 (I feel self-conscious speaking English with other people), the correlation coefficient of which is -0.490 ($p=0.000$). Learners who thought that they felt self-conscious speaking English with other people were significantly less proficient than those who thought otherwise. This result is quite different from those of other research (Fan, 1999; Horwitz, 1987; Peacock, 1998/1999; Yang, 1999). This may be caused by the possibility that most of the students investigated misunderstood the phrase "self-conscious" as "uneasy". This proves that for most students, they are not aware of the conception of "the language-related anxiety", thus being unable to judge whether they feel self-conscious when speaking English with other people.

As is shown in table 10, item 12 (If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.) and item 13 (It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English.) are closely related to language proficiency in a positive way with the correlation coefficient being 0.473 ($p=0.000$) and 0.480 ($p=0.000$) respectively.

Responses to item 12 reveal that more than 61 percent of the students from high proficiency group would take every chance possible to practice speaking English, while less than 10 percent from the low proficiency group would do that. This explains the proficiency difference between the three groups in terms of the

importance of practice in the process of foreign language learning.

Responses to item 13 indicate that at least 87 percent of the students from the high proficiency group would make use of the strategy of guessing when encountering a new word, and only 23 percent of those from the low proficiency group would do that. In other words, the learners who agreed that it was acceptable to guess if they did not know a word in English were significantly more proficient than learners who did not.

3.3.4 Characteristics of Chinese EFL Students' Learning Beliefs

The above has already discussed in detail the relationships between five aspects of beliefs about English learning and their proficiency in accordance with the results of statistical procedures. This section is to summarize and present the characteristics of Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs in two dimensions: 1) The learning beliefs that can predict learners' language proficiency; 2) The learning beliefs that Chinese EFL learners most agree or disagree.

3.3.4.1 The Learning Beliefs That Can Predict Learners' Language Proficiency

In the category of foreign language aptitude, item 15 is positively correlated with language proficiency ($r=0.489$, $p=0.000$), which indicates that the students who believe that they have foreign language aptitude are more proficient in English than those who don't. This can also be interpreted in another way—The more confident one is, the more proficient he or she is likely to be.

In the category of the difficulty of language learning, items 4 ($r= 0.411$, $p= 0.000$) and 6 ($r=0.152$, $p= 0.003$) are positively correlated with language proficiency. Item 4 suggests that the more proficient one is in a foreign language, the less difficult he or she thinks about it and vice versa. Item 6 shows that the more proficient one is, the more confident of success in foreign language learning he or she would be.

As to the category of learning and communication strategies, items 12 ($r=0.473$, $p=0.000$) and 13 ($r=0.480$, $p=0.000$) are positively correlated with language proficiency. In addition, items 9 ($r=-0.537$, $p=0.000$) and 18 ($r=-0.490$, $p=0.000$) is negatively related with language proficiency. Far more items in this category than

other categories are related to language proficiency, which suggests that for most Chinese EFL learners, learning and communication strategies play a very important role in predicting language proficiency.

Finally, in the category of the nature of language learning, item 11 (r=-0.114, p=0.026) is negatively correlated with language proficiency. It is likely that the students of low proficiency attribute their unsuccessfulness to the lack of native-like environments of learning English in China.

3.3.4.2 The Learning Beliefs That Chinese EFL Learners Most Agree or Disagree

This section briefly summarizes the learning beliefs that Chinese EFL Learners most agree or disagree on the basis of the findings in the present study. The purpose of this is to get a general picture of what Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs are like, so as to pave the way for comparing the research outcomes from different cultural contexts. The summaries are presented in Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13. Learning Beliefs That Chinese EFL Learners Most Agree

Item 1: It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.
Item 2: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.
Item 6: I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.
Item 8: It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well.
Item 11: It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.
Item 13: It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English.
Item 17: It is important to repeat and practice a lot.
Item 21: It is important to practice with cassettes or video tapes.
Item 23: If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.
Item 27: If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.
Item 30: Mainland Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language.

Table 14. Learning Beliefs That Chinese EFL Learners Most Disagree

Item 5: English is structured in the same way as Chinese.
Item 16: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.
Item 20: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.
Item 26: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese.

3.3.5 Similarities and Differences of Language Learning Beliefs in Different Research Contexts

As is shown in the literature review section of the present research, many similar studies have been conducted in different cultural contexts during the past decades; and in the above section, characteristics of Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs have been summarized in accordance with the statistical findings of the present study. Therefore, this section is devoted to comparing the outcomes of these studies conducted in different cultural contexts so as to find out the similarities and contrasts of foreign language learning beliefs held by students from different research settings.

However, it is very difficult and even impossible to compare the results from all cultural contexts due to limitations of this research. For convenience's sake, this study only selects a few contexts that are considered to be representative enough, and then makes a brief comparison with the outcomes of the present study.

The comparisons are to be made in two dimensions: 1) to compare the general trends of learning beliefs held by the learners from Mainland China, and the U.S. (Siebert, 2003); 2) to compare how learning beliefs held by learners from Chinese and Chinese Hong Kong (Peacock, 1998) are related to language proficiency.

3.3.5.1 The General Trends of Learning Beliefs: China VS the U.S.

This section is to make a comparison of the general trends of learning beliefs held by learners from Chinese and the U.S. contexts on the basis of the statistical outcomes of this study and those of Siebert (2003). Statistical figures are to be contrasted in Tables 15-19 in terms of the five aspects of BALLI and discussed afterwards.

Foreign Language Aptitude

Table 15. Frequencies of Response in Foreign Language Aptitude

Items		1/2*	3	4/5
Item1: It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	China	12	9	79
	U. S.	8	11	82
Item2: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	China	6	11	83
	U. S.	6	22	71

Item10: It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	China	31	34	35
	U. S.	22	26	51
Item15: I have foreign language aptitude (a special ability for learning foreign languages).	China	42	20	38
	U. S.	29	52	19
Item22: Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	China	30	31	39
	U. S.	39	33	28
Item29: People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	China	74	16	10
	U. S.	59	23	16
Item32: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	China	33	32	35
	U. S.	17	31	50
Item33: Mainland Chinese are good at learning foreign languages.	China	33	48	19
	U. S.	23	40	38
Item34: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well.	China	26	26	48
	U. S.	20	22	56

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree,
   5 = strongly agree
   Figures represent percentages.

Similarities

1) With reference to the age factor in BALLI Item 1, 79 percent of the respondents in this study either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language", reflecting a popular belief that children are better language learners than adults. This finding is similar to that of Siebert's study (82 percent).

2) The respondents in this study also endorsed the concept of the existence of special abilities for foreign language learning. In Item 2, 83 percent indicated that some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages, though, in Item 15, only 38 percent agreed that *they* have this special ability. This is comparatively similar to Siebert's findings with 71 percent and 19 percent respectively.

3) Item 34 shows that 48 percent believed that *everyone* can learn to speak a foreign language, with 56 percent reported by Siebert.

4) As to whether language aptitude is gender specific, 39 percent of learners believed that females are better than males at learning foreign languages, which is comparatively similar to that of Siebert's (28 percent).

5) 74 percent of the respondents did not believe that being good at mathematics or science meant that one would not be good at learning foreign languages, suggesting

that the majority of the respondents do not make a distinction between an aptitude for the sciences versus an aptitude for the humanity-type subjects. This finding is much the same as Siebert's of 59 percent.

Differences

1) In the current study 38 percent of learners believed that they possessed a special aptitude for foreign language learning, compared with only 19 percent in Siebert's study;

2) In terms of whether language aptitude is culture specific (Item 33), only 19 percent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that people from their country were good at learning foreign languages (Siebert's study reported 38 percent). This suggests that most Chinese EFL students are not optimistic about the prospect of their foreign language learning.

3) With reference to the effects of intelligence on language learning (Item 32), the respondents were divided. Here, 35 percent of respondents believed that "people who speak more than one language are very intelligent", however 32 percent were uncertain of the effects of one's IQ on acquiring additional languages. On this issue Siebert's study reported quite different findings with 50 percent believing this belief.

Nature of Language Learning

Table 16. Frequencies of Response in Nature of Language Learning

Items		$1/2^a$	3	4/5
Item8: It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well.	China	2	9	89
	U. S.	10	24	65
Item11: It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	China	4	4	92
	U. S.	10	6	83
Item16: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	China	90	6	4
	U. S.	13	29	57
Item20: Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	China	92	5	3
	U. S.	25	35	39
Item25: Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.	China	17	28	55
	U. S.	20	26	54
Item26: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese.	China	92	4	4
	U. S.	52	25	23

*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree,
5 = strongly agree
Figures represent percentages.

Similarities

1) In this study 89 percent, compared with Siebert's 65 percent of respondents, believed that it is necessary to know the culture of the foreign language under study in order to speak the language, reflecting an understanding of the importance of gaining a linguistic pragmatic awareness for effective communication.

2) Similar to Siebert's findings of 83 percent, 92 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "It is better to learn English in an English-speaking country", recognizing the inherent value of learning language in an immersion-type setting, where there is a greater exposure to the foreign language, its culture and its people.

3) Item 25 determines if the learner views language learning as different from other types of learning. Again, quite similar findings are reported in both studies. 55 percent of respondents here, and 54 percent in Siebert's study, agreed that "Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects"; and, 28 percent and 26 percent respectively, neither agreed nor disagreed on the matter.

Differences

1) Item 16 related to the importance of vocabulary learning when acquiring a new language. Only 4 percent of respondents in this study believed that learning new words is the *most important* part of language learning, and 90 percent did not believed this belief, whereas 57 percent in Siebert's agreed or strongly agreed, and only 13 percent disagreed with the statement. The results among respondents in both studies seem to be quite the opposite. Similar findings are noted in Item 20. These findings, may likely be due to a recent shift in language teaching methodologies in China, as one of the results of educational reform efforts these years. Influenced by the change of traditional teaching methods in classroom, most Chinese learners may have already embraced approaches with a lesser focus on form and rule learning.

2) Item 26 asks learners whether they believe the *most important* part of learning English is learning to translate from the learners' own mother tongue. Responses

indicate that 92 percent of learners do not believe translating to be a highly valued learning strategy, thus reflecting a departure from the grammar-translation methods in foreign language learning. This differs considerably from Siebert's findings with 52 percent reported. Further, a small minority in this study (4 percent), but almost a quarter of respondents in Siebert's (23 percent) had in fact emphasized translation as a very important part of language learning.

Learning and Communication Strategies

Table 17. Frequencies of Response in Learning and Communication Strategy

Items		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Item17: It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	China	2	3	95
	U. S.	5	5	89
Item21: It is important to practice with cassettes or video tapes.	China	2	13	85
	U. S.	14	30	55
Item7: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	China	21	23	56
	U. S.	9	14	77
Item9: You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	China	53	8	39
	U. S.	73	13	13
Item12: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.	China	43	27	30
	U. S.	7	7	86
Item13: It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	China	24	13	63
	U. S.	13	13	74
Item18: I feel self-conscious speaking English with other people.	China	32	16	52
	U. S.	46	28	26
Item19: If you are allowed to make errors in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on.	China	42	11	47
	U. S.	46	31	22

[a]Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree
Figures represent percentages.

Similarities

1) With reference to traditional learning strategies (Item 17 and 21), the majority of students, 95 percent and 85 percent respectively (89 percent and 55 percent in Siebert's study), believed the importance of repetition or practice and endorsed repetition or practice with cassettes/tapes. This finding highlights the learners' perception of the importance of self-access learning and the belief about autonomous

learning.

2) As to Item 7, the majority of students from both settings (56 percent Vs 77 percent) believed "It is important to speak English with an excellent accent". These findings seem to suggest that learners view it more important to speak with an excellent pronunciation rather than with grammatical correctness.

3) It is encouraging to find that 63 percent (and 74 percent in Siebert's study) believed that "It is OK to guess if you don't know a word English", which likely means that learners feel confident that they can work out the meaning of unfamiliar words form the context of the utterance or written text, and not feel anxious about having to understand each individual word.

Differences

1) In Item 21, more Chinese learners (85 percent) than those of the U.S. (55 percent) endorsed practice with cassettes/tapes, which suggests that for most Chinese EFL students, the lack of other native-like environments or opportunities leads to their over-dependence on cassettes/tapes in practicing English.

2) As far as Item 7 is concerned, although most students from both settings believed the importance of "excellent accent" in speaking a foreign language, far more Chinese (21 percent) than Americans (only 9 percent) disagreed with this point. This can be explained by the fact that, nowadays in China, as one result of China's education reform, new developments in English language pedagogy have seen a shift from a focus on "excellent pronunciation" to intelligibility and communicative competence.

3) Although in Item 17, most students from both settings acknowledged the importance of practice in the process of foreign language learning, only 30 percent of Chinese students admitted that "If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language" (Item 12), 43 percent didn't agree with this statement, and 27 percent were neutral. In comparison, a greater portion of learners enjoyed practicing English with native speakers in Siebert's US study (86 percent), and significantly less (7 percent) were neutral about it. Apart from contextual factors (Bernat, 2006) (such as the degree of willingness of native speakers

to engage in conversation with practicing foreign language learners, and/or their social openness to casual conversations with strangers in general), learners' inhibition to speak a foreign language may be explained by the learners' feeling of shyness (Item 18) in such situations. In fact, 52 percent of Chinese respondents (26 percent in Siebert's study) reported feeling self-conscious or shy in this situation.

4) Item 19 assessed the learners' belief on whether one can 'unlearn' incorrectly acquired language forms. To the statement "If you are allowed to make errors in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on", 42 percent responded in disagreement, however 47 percent believed that if their mistakes were not corrected immediately, they might become 'fossilized'. In the American study, the figures are quite different, with 46 percent and 22 percent respectively.

Difficulty of Language Learning

Table 18. Frequencies of Response in Difficulty of Language Learning

Items		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Item3: Some languages are easier to learn than others.	China	15	21	64
	U. S.	17	17	65
Item4: English is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language	China	30	45	25
	U. S.	13	49	37
Item14: If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language fluently? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.	China	31	20	49
	U. S.	25	29	40
Item24: It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	China	44	26	30
	U. S.	45	31	24
Item28: It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand (listen to) it.	China	36	19	45
	U. S.	32	28	38

[a]*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*
Figures represent percentages.

Similarities

1) In Item 3, 64 percent of respondents believed that some languages are easier than others, though 15 percent did not make such a distinction. This outcome is very

much the same as that of Siebert's with 65 percent and 17 percent respectively.

2) In terms of the difficulty of the English language in Item 4, 45 percent regarded English as a language of medium difficulty. This finding is similar to Siebert's with 49 percent regarding English as "medium difficult".

3) As to the length of time one needs to study a foreign language, if someone spent 1 hour per day learning a language, 31 percent believed it would take one to two years to learn it, 20 percent believed it would take 3-5 years to learn it, and 49 percent believed that it would take at least 4-10 years to learn it and that one cannot learn a new language by studying it for one hour a day. The disparity of responses could likely be explained by the subjective nature of the question, namely, that the question gives no other clues as to the learners' exposure to the language outside the '1-hour block', which could likely affect the rate of acquisition (Bernat, 2006). Siebert's study reported an almost equal distribution of responses with respect to the length of time between 'less than a year' to '3-5 years' as the current study.

4) In both settings, responses to Item 24 and 28 were equally divided in much the same way. With respect to the difficulty of oral productive and aural receptive skills (Item 24), 44 percent of respondents believed that it is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language, however, 30 percent disagreed and 26 percent were neutral; the percentages in Siebert's study were 24 percent, 45 percent and 31 percent respectively. Similarly, in Item 28, 45 percent of respondents agreed that it is easier to read than write in a foreign language, however, 36 percent disagreed. A further 19 percent neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Responses to this question (38 percent, 32 percent and 28 percent) were also similar to those reported by Siebert.

Differences

1) In Item 4, more Chinese (30 percent) than the U.S. (only 13 percent) students reported that English is (very) difficult. This is consistent with the fact that many EFL learners in China are always complaining that English is difficult to learn.

2) With reference to Item 14, 49 percent of Chinese students reported that one need at least 5-10 years or that one can't learn a language in 1 hour a day, which is contrasted with 40 percent in the US context. This finding is consistent with that of

Item 4, suggesting that most Chinese EFL learners are quite pessimistic about their prospects of learning English.

Motivations and Expectations

Table 19. Frequencies of Response in Motivations and Expectations

Items		1/2[a]	3	4/5
Item27: If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	China	2	7	91
	U. S.	6	7	85
Item30: Mainland Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	China	5	13	82
	U. S.	8	14	78
Item31: I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.	China	54	30	16
	U. S.	8	18	73

[a]*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*
   Figures represent percentages.

Similarities

In Item 27, 91 percent of respondents (and 85 percent reported by Siebert) agreed that they would have better opportunities for a good job if they learn English very well. This shows that students' instrumental motivation of learning a foreign language prevails in both cultural contexts.

Similarly, Item 30 indicates that the majority of students from both cultural settings agreed that it is very important to speak a foreign language in their countries. This finding may reflect the elevated status of English as a lingua franca around the world. With increasing globalization in commerce, science and technology, increased movement of capital, labor, and tourism, and its widespread use in media and entertainment, English has become the vehicle for international communication. Hence, English is now an international language in much demand globally. This also suggests that the role of English language as an international language has already been deeply rooted in the students' minds, especially for Chinese EFL learners. This is one of the results of China's pursuit of opening-up policy.

Differences

The only major differences of responses between the two settings in this category lie in Item 31 in that 54 percent of Chinese students did not agree that "I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better", while 73 percent from the US setting agreed. What's more, 30 percent of Chinese students (only 18 percent in the US setting) held the neutral position. This is not surprising since in Item 27, most Chinese students' motivation to learn a foreign language is reported to be mainly instrumental. This finding also suggests that students of EFL from the US setting are more integrative-motivated than those from Chinese context. This is perhaps due to circumstances of the learners' current situation. As international students living abroad, the need to integrate with peers and become part of the local community is a necessary survival strategy for the duration of their study abroad, while learning EFL in one's home country would not make this aspect of any relevant importance (Bernat, 2006).

3.3.5.2 Correlations between Learning Beliefs and Proficiency: Mainland China VS Chinese Hong Kong

This section is to compare how learning beliefs held by learners from Mainland China and Chinese Hong Kong relate to language proficiency, on the basis of the current research findings and those of Peacock (1998). In a similar study conducted in Chinese Hong Kong setting, Peacock investigated 202 students in ten EFL classes by means of BALLI, in order to find out the links between learning beliefs and EFL proficiency and to "develop hypotheses about the origins of Hong Kong learner beliefs about language learning".

In terms of correlations between learning beliefs and proficiency, she reported that "a statistically significant association was found between three student beliefs about language learning (Items 9, 14 and 20) and proficiency". However, in the current study, statistically significant associations were found between eight learning beliefs (Items 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 18, the details of which were presented in Table 10) and proficiency.

Peacock's findings of Item 9 indicate that the students who disagreed with "You

shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly" were more proficient than those who agreed. In other words, the belief of Item 9 has a negative relationship with language proficiency, which is the same as the outcome in the present study. This "provides some indication of a casual link between the use of one language learning strategy and proficiency", suggested by Peacock, and "if the link exists, there are implications for learner training--any strategy that directly promotes language learning should perhaps be taught to students".

Peacock's findings of Item 14 indicate that in Hong Kong context, the students who underestimated the difficulty of learning a foreign language were less proficient than those with a more realistic view and the difference was statistically significant. Such statistically significant correlations were not found in the current study.

Peacock's findings of Item 20 show that the students who agreed that "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules" were less proficient than those who disagreed and the difference was statistically significant. However, in Chinese context, no such correlation was found between this belief and language proficiency. According to Table 14, the vast majority of Chinese EFL learners, high or low proficient, disagreed with this belief.

In addition, in Chinese context, the beliefs in Items 4, 12, 13 and 15 were found to be positively correlated with language proficiency, and the belief in Item 18 was negatively related with it. However, no such correlations were found in Peacock's study.

3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

In the semi-structured interviews, 9 students (3 from each proficiency group,) are asked questions concerning four topics: 1) Do you like learning English? Why or why not; 2) From where did you get your beliefs about language learning; 3) What do you think is the best way to learn English; 4) Do you think there is a relationship between what you believe and your language proficiency?

When asked the first question "Do you like learning English?", two students

from the high proficiency group reported that they were interested in learning English, eight students from the three groups agreed that learning English well can help them find good jobs in the future, and two from the low proficiency group clamed that they had no interest in learning English and they had to learn for the purpose of future career or for passing exams.

As for the question "From where did you get your beliefs about language learning", students' responses are much the same as those of the study in Hong Kong context investigated by Peacock (1998). Most students, especially students with low language proficiency, did not seem to know, or were unsure of, the origin of their beliefs. After rephrasing the question, some students said that they got the beliefs from parents, relatives, teachers, or other channels in society; One students with low proficiency said he was never aware of the concept of language learning beliefs and he just knew these ideas from his personal experience.

When asked "What do you think is the best way to learn English?", all of them agreed on the importance of practicing more, such as reading and listening extensively, engaging frequently in English-speaking activities, or interacting with native speakers. But the students from the low proficiency group reported that they simply lack such practices due to various reasons (personal or environmental).

As for the last question "Do you think there is a relationship between what you believe and your language proficiency?", most of the students reported there were more or less some relations, positive or negative; only two (one from the middle proficiency group and one from the low) said that such relationship did not exist at all.

In this section, general patterns of English learning beliefs held by students with different levels of English language proficiency had been found. It was also found that there were positive correlations between proficiency and five learning beliefs, and negative correlations between proficiency and three learning beliefs, and all these correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the main findings of the present study. What deserves attention in this part is the results of the BALLI items because they may provide pedagogical implications. The descriptive analysis of the three proficiency groups by the BALLI items shows the general trend of Chinese EFL students' learning beliefs. The ANOVA analysis suggests whether the three proficiency groups significantly differ from each other in terms of each learning belief and how the differences will be. Correlation analysis indicates how the students' learning beliefs are related with their language proficiency. Moreover, the characteristics of the students' learning beliefs are summarized on the basis of the findings of the present research, and then compared with those from the U.S. and Chinese Hong Kong settings.

Conclusion

This section is dedicated to presenting the main findings of this research by answering the research questions briefly one by one, and to pointing out the pedagogical implications of the present study for EFL teaching and learning in China. Then, limitations of the present study are to be pointed out. Finally, the dissertation is to be concluded by putting forward suggestions for further research.

Summary of Main Findings

1) What are the general trends and characteristics of language learning beliefs held by Chinese EFL learners?

With reference to foreign language aptitude, the majority of Chinese EFL learners believed that it would be easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language, and that some people are born with a special ability which may help them learn a foreign language. But when they were asked whether they possessed that kind of "special ability", opinions were equally divided across proficiency groups.

With reference to the nature of language learning, most Chinese EFL learners believe that it is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well, and that it is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country. Most of them do not think that English is structured in the same way as Chinese. Moreover, most Chinese students investigated in the present study do not think that learning vocabulary or grammar is the most important part of learning a foreign language. It also seems that the notion that learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese is no more favored by most of Chinese EFL learners.

As far as learning and communication strategies are concerned, the vast majority of Chinese EFL learners endorsed the importance of practice and repetition, and the role of cassettes or video tapes, in the process of foreign language learning; what's more, most of them are likely to resort to the strategy of guessing when they

encounter new words.

In terms of the difficulty of language, although many students believed that English language is not easy for Chinese to learn, most of them were comparatively optimistic about their prospect of English language learning.

Finally, as for motivations and expectations of language learning, the majority of Mainland Chinese learners associated English language learning with job opportunities, and agreed to the importance of mastering a foreign language for Mainland Chinese people.

2) What levels of correlation exist between language learning beliefs of Chinese EFL learners and their English language proficiency?

The current study has found that eight beliefs of language learning are related with language proficiency.

One belief (item 15) in *foreign language aptitude*, two (items 4 and 6) in *the difficulty of language learning*, and two (items 12 and 13) in *learning and communication strategies* are positively associated with language proficiency. One belief (item 11) in *the nature of language learning*, two (items 9 and 18) in *learning and communication strategies* are negatively associated with language proficiency.

3) How do their beliefs differ from those held by learners in other learning groups or other cultural contexts?

In terms of the general trends of language learning beliefs, most of the beliefs held by Chinese EFL learners are similar to those held by learners in the U.S. setting; only a few beliefs proved to be different across cultural settings.

In terms of levels of correlation between beliefs and proficiency, differences outweigh similarities, compared with the findings in Chinese Hong Kong setting.

4) What pedagogical implications can the present research provide for EFL teaching and learning in China?

The study of learning beliefs can lead to more effective instructional planning and implementation of teachers, help remove students' misconceptions by providing knowledge or illustrations concerning the nature and process of foreign language acquisition, and act as a component of policy and program evaluation. But most

important of all, for learners, the process of exploring their own beliefs may lead to more effective language learning behaviors, as well as greater self-knowledge and autonomy.

Pedagogical Implications for EFL Teaching and Learning in China

Investigating students' beliefs has a great value and far-reaching implications, and what's more, one of the purposes of the current study is to provide pedagogical implications for EFL teaching and learning in China. This section is to discuss what pedagogical insights the present study can have for Chinese foreign language teaching and learning.

Researchers who have investigated learners' beliefs have repeatedly emphasized the value of insights gained. When students come to the classrooms, they will have their own beliefs towards learning. If teachers can know more about what students think and need, for example, what can motivate students to learn English, how do students assess the difficulties of learning English and what strategies students use in the process of learning English, they can pay more attention to their daily teaching in terms of preparing suitable teaching and learning materials, carrying out appropriate pedagogy, and using relevant assessments. In other words, the insights gained by investigating students' beliefs about language learning can lead to more effective instructional planning and implementation. It is believed that students' language proficiency will also be improved accordingly.

Teachers can also draw on the research findings to facilitate more effective teaching planning and implementation, such as: greater consideration for choice of teaching methods and materials, lesson content and sequence. Moreover, the knowledge of student beliefs will make it possible for teachers to create a mode of instruction in which students' needs and goals are satisfied (Sakui & Gaies, 1999).

For example, 30 percent of the respondents in this survey (strongly) endorsed that English is a (very) difficult language, and 49 percent of them believed that it would take them at least 5-10 years to learn to speak English; in addition, the less

proficient in English one *is*, the more difficult he or she thinks English is. According to Peacock (1998), learners who under-estimated the difficulty of language learning would be less proficient in English; similarly, learners' over-estimation of the difficulty of English would also result in the failure of language learning in that learners would feel frustrated with themselves. On this regard, teachers' intervention or encouragements are of essential importance.

For another example, in terms of the nature of language learning, the vast majority of Chinese students did not endorse that "Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words", "Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules" and "Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese to English". These suggest the recent shift of Chinese language teaching methodologies from the traditional "grammar-translation" to the current "communicative language teaching", with the latter being generally accepted by the students. The modern teaching methods provide for a more learner-centred approach to language teaching, where different learning styles are accommodated and the curriculum is negotiated. Equipped with this knowledge, teachers of this class could ensure that the curriculum and lesson planning meet the perceived needs and expectations of the learners. Otherwise, when language classes fail to meet student expectations, students can lose confidence in the instructional approach and their ultimate achievement can be limited (Horwitz 1987; Kern 1995).

In addition, incorrect learner beliefs negatively affect language learning (Peacock, 1998), which calls for teachers' intervention in the EFL classroom. In other words, if incorrect beliefs are detrimental to language learning, perhaps steps should be taken to correct those beliefs. Consequently, the time and effort spent investigating and fostering positive beliefs that lead to effective learning strategy use and minimizing negative beliefs that inhibit learning will be time well spent (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). Teachers can remove students' misconceptions by providing knowledge or illustrations concerning the nature and process of foreign language teaching. Persuasive communication or group discussion can be conducted to raise students' meta-cognitive awareness (Wenden, 1991; Yang 1999).

On the basis of the present research, it is also suggested that research on students' beliefs about language learning can act as a component of policy and program evaluation, by providing insight into the degree of awareness of and commitment of an educational innovation by learners. This can greatly help teachers understand, become comfortable with, and internalize the proposed changes. Spontaneously, the chances of being successful of any innovations will be greater with the supports of teachers.

It is important that teachers' teaching methodologies are compatible with learner beliefs. As Horwitz (1988:283) put it, "knowledge of the relationship of learners' beliefs about language learning and strategy use should provide teachers with better understanding of the students' expectation of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes".

The information offered in this study might also help Chinese administers, textbook authors, instructors as well as teachers to develop proper programs, and to design better curriculums or syllabi, so as to meet the expectations of learners in China. In short, the knowledge of student beliefs will greatly benefit the decision makers of the curriculum.

Finally, for learners, the process of exploring their own beliefs can lead to more effective language learning behaviors, as well as greater self-knowledge and autonomy (Horwitz 1987, 1988; Victori and Lockhart 1995; Wenden 1991). Wenden (1986) also suggested that classroom activities in which learners examine and evaluate their own beliefs may lead to increased awareness and modification of their expectations concerning language learning.

Limitations of the Study

In interpreting the findings, we should keep in mind several limitations of this study, although the methodology of the present study has been carefully designed. First of all, this study was based on a sample of 384 Chinese college students learning English in only three universities in Shandong Province. Although the sample of this

study is comparatively not small, the subjects for this study may be not representative enough of Chinese students learning English as a foreign language in China as a cultural group. Therefore, it is questionable that the findings of this study can be statistically generalizable as to the learning characteristics of all students learning English in China.

Secondly, one of the research instruments used in this study, the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), was not primarily or specifically designed for Chinese students learning English as a foreign language but adapted, with slight changes to suit Chinese context, from that of Horwitz (1985) which was designed primarily for students learning commonly taught foreign languages in the U.S. Horwitz's BALLI was chosen for this study because it was the most suitable instrument available at the time when this study was designed.

Thirdly, as regards the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions for teaching English because the number of students was too small to make any attempt at generalising results to other classrooms and contexts. These data remain for interested readers to compare with students ideas and suggestions within their own classrooms.

Another limitation of the present study is the seriously imbalanced proportion of male to female participants (58 to 326). Such imbalance seems to be almost impossible to be avoided since this is the status quo of foreign language classes in nearly all the Chinese colleges or universities. Due to this limitation, this study did not investigate how males and females differ with reference to language learning beliefs and proficiency.

Recommendations for Further Studies

There are several recommendations for further research.

First, considering the large population of students studying English as a foreign language in China but the small sample available in this study, this study only chose the students in three universities of Shandong Province, which is far from being

representative enough of the whole Chinese setting. Future research with large samples may include the students from universities across China.

Second, due to the limitations of space and time, this study did not discuss the factors that are likely to account for the characteristics of Mainland Chinese EFL learners' beliefs. Future studies may as well touch upon this issue.

Third, this study has found out various language learning beliefs held by Chinese students and has shown the importance of investigating students' beliefs in their learning. In a learning process, teachers' role is also vital. Therefore, I suggest that teachers' beliefs can also be examined, particularly whether they differ significantly from students' ideas. Further investigations may answer the questions of how far student and teacher beliefs diverge, why they diverge, what the effects of the divergence on learning are, and how these differences can be removed, etc.

Four, since in this study the sample of students who took part in the semi-structured interviews is too small, the qualitative data collected are far from being reliable to draw firm conclusions. In the future research, more subjects are supposed to be involved to collect qualitative data to back up the quantitative data.

Finally, this study has shown the relationship between students' beliefs and their language proficiency. I suggest that further studies check the correlation between the students' beliefs and other English language skills, e.g. speaking, writing, reading, listening and so on.

Appendices

Appendix I

ANOVA of Proficiency Groups by BALLI Items

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Item1	Between Groups	1.788	2	.894	1.944	.145
	Within Groups	175.210	381	.460		
	Total	176.997	383			
Item2	Between Groups	.158	2	.079	.264	.768
	Within Groups	114.214	381	.300		
	Total	114.372	383			
Item3	Between Groups	.498	2	.249	.454	.635
	Within Groups	206.246	376	.549		
	Total	206.744	378			
Item4	Between Groups	61.728	2	30.864	80.670	.000
	Within Groups	145.005	379	.383		
	Total	206.733	381			
Item5	Between Groups	.190	2	.095	2.393	.093
	Within Groups	15.143	381	.040		
	Total	15.333	383			
Item6	Between Groups	1.078	2	.539	2.475	.086
	Within Groups	82.760	380	.218		
	Total	83.838	382			
Item7	Between Groups	1.712	2	.856	1.328	.266
	Within Groups	245.528	381	.644		
	Total	247.240	383			
Item8	Between Groups	.047	2	.023	.143	.867
	Within Groups	62.180	381	.163		
	Total	62.227	383			
Item9	Between Groups	124.110	2	62.055	106.779	.000
	Within Groups	220.257	379	.581		
	Total	344.366	381			
Item10	Between Groups	.068	2	.034	.051	.950
	Within Groups	251.421	380	.662		
	Total	251.488	382			
Item11	Between Groups	1.222	2	.611	3.391	.035
	Within Groups	68.490	380	.180		

	Total	69.713	382		
Item12	Between Groups	69.178	2	34.589	63.951	.000
	Within Groups	206.069	381	.541		
	Total	275.247	383			
Item13	Between Groups	115.958	2	57.979	140.029	.000
	Within Groups	156.924	379	.414		
	Total	272.882	381			
Item14	Between Groups	3.693	2	1.847	2.412	.091
	Within Groups	290.110	379	.765		
	Total	293.804	381			
Item15	Between Groups	62.667	2	31.333	49.067	.000
	Within Groups	241.386	378	.639		
	Total	304.052	380			
Item16	Between Groups	.009	2	.004	.024	.977
	Within Groups	69.430	378	.184		
	Total	69.438	380			
Item17	Between Groups	.062	2	.031	.265	.768
	Within Groups	43.847	372	.118		
	Total	43.909	374			
Item18	Between Groups	88.580	2	44.290	76.893	.000
	Within Groups	218.300	379	.576		
	Total	306.880	381			
Item19	Between Groups	.040	2	.020	.025	.976
	Within Groups	310.371	379	.819		
	Total	310.411	381			
Item20	Between Groups	.291	2	.146	1.092	.337
	Within Groups	50.298	377	.133		
	Total	50.589	379			
Item21	Between Groups	.383	2	.192	1.001	.369
	Within Groups	72.154	377	.191		
	Total	72.537	379			
Item22	Between Groups	.486	2	.243	.354	.702
	Within Groups	255.717	373	.686		
	Total	256.202	375			
Item23	Between Groups	.369	2	.185	.921	.399
	Within Groups	75.515	377	.200		
	Total	75.884	379			
Item24	Between Groups	1.097	2	.549	.769	.464
	Within Groups	266.006	373	.713		
	Total	267.104	375			
Item25	Between Groups	2.026	2	1.013	1.775	.171
	Within Groups	215.161	377	.571		

	Total	217.187	379			
Item26	Between Groups	.858	2	.429	2.812	.061
	Within Groups	57.332	376	.152		
	Total	58.190	378			
Item27	Between Groups	.033	2	.016	.128	.880
	Within Groups	48.555	378	.128		
	Total	48.588	380			
Item28	Between Groups	3.551	2	1.776	2.227	.109
	Within Groups	299.800	376	.797		
	Total	303.351	378			
Item29	Between Groups	.079	2	.040	.103	.902
	Within Groups	144.897	375	.386		
	Total	144.976	377			
Item30	Between Groups	1.193	2	.596	2.202	.112
	Within Groups	101.836	376	.271		
	Total	103.029	378			
Item31	Between Groups	.327	2	.164	.310	.733
	Within Groups	197.121	374	.527		
	Total	197.448	376			
Item32	Between Groups	.207	2	.103	.152	.859
	Within Groups	255.698	376	.680		
	Total	255.905	378			
Item33	Between Groups	.787	2	.393	.802	.449
	Within Groups	184.395	376	.490		
	Total	185.182	378			
Item34	Between Groups	.591	2	.295	.424	.655
	Within Groups	262.807	377	.697		
	Total	263.397	379			

Appendix II

Post-hoc Multiple Comparisons of Proficiency Groups by BALLI Items

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item1	Low	Middle	-.12705	.08468	.326
		High	.02785	.08579	.949
	Middle	Low	.12705	.08468	.326
		High	.15489	.08398	.184
	High	Low	-.02785	.08579	.949
		Middle	-.15489	.08398	.184
Item2	Low	Middle	.03555	.06837	.874
		High	.04872	.06926	.781
	Middle	Low	-.03555	.06837	.874
		High	.01316	.06781	.981
	High	Low	-.04872	.06926	.781
		Middle	-.01316	.06781	.981
Item3	Low	Middle	.08196	.09321	.680
		High	.01305	.09427	.990
	Middle	Low	-.08196	.09321	.680
		High	-.06890	.09224	.757
	High	Low	-.01305	.09427	.990
		Middle	.06890	.09224	.757
Item4	Low	Middle	-.80881(*)	.07757	.000
		High	-.91234(*)	.07858	.000
	Middle	Low	.80881(*)	.07757	.000
		High	-.10354	.07660	.402
	High	Low	.91234(*)	.07858	.000
		Middle	.10354	.07660	.402
Item5	Low	Middle	-.02105	.02489	.700
		High	-.05461	.02522	.097
	Middle	Low	.02105	.02489	.700
		High	-.03355	.02469	.398
	High	Low	.05461	.02522	.097
		Middle	.03355	.02469	.398
Item6	Low	Middle	-.09475	.05838	.269
		High	-.12630	.05904	.103
	Middle	Low	.09475	.05838	.269
		High	-.03156	.05790	.862
	High	Low	.12630	.05904	.103

		Middle	.03156	.05790	.862
Item7	Low	Middle	-.13603	.10024	.399
		High	-.14954	.10156	.339
	Middle	Low	.13603	.10024	.399
		High	-.01352	.09942	.991
	High	Low	.14954	.10156	.339
		Middle	.01352	.09942	.991
Item8	Low	Middle	-.02694	.05045	.867
		High	-.01248	.05111	.971
	Middle	Low	.02694	.05045	.867
		High	.01446	.05003	.959
	High	Low	.01248	.05111	.971
		Middle	-.01446	.05003	.959
Item9	Low	Middle	.85603(*)	.09557	.000
		High	1.40248(*)	.09664	.000
	Middle	Low	-.85603(*)	.09557	.000
		High	.54644(*)	.09458	.000
	High	Low	-1.40248(*)	.09664	.000
		Middle	-.54644(*)	.09458	.000
Item10	Low	Middle	-.00568	.10175	.998
		High	-.03073	.10290	.956
	Middle	Low	.00568	.10175	.998
		High	-.02504	.10092	.970
	High	Low	.03073	.10290	.956
		Middle	.02504	.10092	.970
Item11	Low	Middle	.06276	.05313	.498
		High	.13980(*)	.05382	.035
	Middle	Low	-.06276	.05313	.498
		High	.07704	.05258	.343
	High	Low	-.13980(*)	.05382	.035
		Middle	-.07704	.05258	.343
Item12	Low	Middle	-.51608(*)	.09183	.000
		High	-1.05198(*)	.09304	.000
	Middle	Low	.51608(*)	.09183	.000
		High	-.53590(*)	.09108	.000
	High	Low	.1.05198(*)	.09304	.000
		Middle	.53590(*)	.09108	.000
Item13	Low	Middle	-1.11863(*)	.08064	.000
		High	-1.23328(*)	.08140	.000
	Middle	Low	1.11863(*)	.08064	.000
		High	-.11465	.07998	.359
	High	Low	1.23328(*)	.08140	.000
		Middle	.11465	.07998	.359
Item14	Low	Middle	-.14006	.10965	.443

		High	-.24230	.11068	.092
	Middle	Low	.14006	.10965	.443
		High	-.10224	.10875	.643
	High	Low	.24230	.11068	.092
		Middle	.10224	.10875	.643
Item15	Low	Middle	-.59294(*)	.10015	.000
		High	-.99806(*)	.10129	.000
	Middle	Low	.59294(*)	.10015	.000
		High	-.40512(*)	.09953	.000
	High	Low	.99806(*)	.10129	.000
		Middle	.40512(*)	.09953	.000
Item16	Low	Middle	-.00732	.05381	.991
		High	.00410	.05422	.997
	Middle	Low	.00732	.05381	.991
		High	.01142	.05337	.977
	High	Low	-.00410	.05422	.997
		Middle	-.01142	.05337	.977
Item17	Low	Middle	.02564	.04346	.840
		High	-.00267	.04388	.998
	Middle	Low	-.02564	.04346	.840
		High	-.02831	.04301	.805
	High	Low	.00267	.04388	.998
		Middle	.02831	.04301	.805
Item18	Low	Middle	.21046	.09511	.088
		High	1.11472(*)	.09601	.000
	Middle	Low	-.21046	.09511	.088
		High	.90426(*)	.09433	.000
	High	Low	-1.11472(*)	.09601	.000
		Middle	-.90426(*)	.09433	.000
Item19	Low	Middle	.02106	.11341	.983
		High	.02285	.11448	.980
	Middle	Low	-.02106	.11341	.983
		High	.00179	.11248	1.000
	High	Low	-.02285	.11448	.980
		Middle	-.00179	.11248	1.000
Item20	Low	Middle	-.03961	.04596	.690
		High	.02717	.04630	.842
	Middle	Low	.03961	.04596	.690
		High	.06678	.04549	.341
	High	Low	-.02717	.04630	.842
		Middle	-.06678	.04549	.341
Item21	Low	Middle	-.06567	.05503	.491
		High	-.06991	.05534	.451
	Middle	Low	.06567	.05503	.491

			High	-.00424	.05458	.997
	High	Low		.06991	.05534	.451
		Middle		.00424	.05458	.997
Item22	Low	Middle		-.07636	.10501	.768
		High		-.07782	.10541	.762
	Middle	Low		.07636	.10501	.768
		High		-.00146	.10350	1.000
	High	Low		.07782	.10541	.762
		Middle		.00146	.10350	1.000
Item23	Low	Middle		.06676	.05631	.496
		High		.00239	.05674	.999
	Middle	Low		-.06676	.05631	.496
		High		-.06437	.05573	.514
	High	Low		-.00239	.05674	.999
		Middle		.06437	.05573	.514
Item24	Low	Middle		.11514	.10671	.559
		High		.11667	.10793	.558
	Middle	Low		-.11514	.10671	.559
		High		.00153	.10559	1.000
	High	Low		-.11667	.10793	.558
		Middle		-.00153	.10559	1.000
Item25	Low	Middle		-.17876	.09505	.172
		High		-.08319	.09577	.686
	Middle	Low		.17876	.09505	.172
		High		.09557	.09408	.597
	High	Low		.08319	.09577	.686
		Middle		-.09557	.09408	.597
Item26	Low	Middle		-.07137	.04922	.350
		High		.04292	.04950	.687
	Middle	Low		.07137	.04922	.350
		High		.11429	.04872	.065
	High	Low		-.04292	.04950	.687
		Middle		-.11429	.04872	.065
Item27	Low	Middle		-.00112	.04501	1.000
		High		-.02027	.04543	.905
	Middle	Low		.00112	.04501	1.000
		High		-.01915	.04455	.912
	High	Low		.02027	.04543	.905
		Middle		.01915	.04455	.912
Item28	Low	Middle		-.23480	.11256	.115
		High		-.15219	.11320	.406
	Middle	Low		.23480	.11256	.115
		High		.08262	.11141	.760
	High	Low		.15219	.11320	.406

		Middle	-.08262	.11141	.760
Item29	Low	Middle	-.02246	.07838	.960
		High	-.03548	.07912	.904
	Middle	Low	.02246	.07838	.960
		High	-.01303	.07756	.986
	High	Low	.03548	.07912	.904
		Middle	.01303	.07756	.986
Item30	Low	Middle	-.13722	.06562	.114
		High	-.06130	.06611	.651
	Middle	Low	.13722	.06562	.114
		High	.07592	.06481	.504
	High	Low	.06130	.06611	.651
		Middle	-.07592	.06481	.504
Item31	Low	Middle	-.01419	.09174	.988
		High	-.06865	.09260	.760
	Middle	Low	.01419	.09174	.988
		High	-.05447	.09059	.835
	High	Low	.06865	.09260	.760
		Middle	.05447	.09059	.835
Item32	Low	Middle	-.01583	.10376	.988
		High	-.05582	.10474	.868
	Middle	Low	.01583	.10376	.988
		High	-.03999	.10290	.927
	High	Low	.05582	.10474	.868
		Middle	.03999	.10290	.927
Item33	Low	Middle	.04981	.08811	.852
		High	-.06076	.08895	.792
	Middle	Low	-.04981	.08811	.852
		High	-.11057	.08738	.450
	High	Low	.06076	.08895	.792
		Middle	.11057	.08738	.450
Item34	Low	Middle	-.09617	.10505	.658
		High	-.04111	.10584	.927
	Middle	Low	.09617	.10505	.658
		High	.05506	.10397	.869
	High	Low	.04111	.10584	.927
		Middle	-.05506	.10397	.869

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Appendix III

Summary Of Correlation Between Proficiency And All The BALLI Learners' Beliefs Items

Correlations

		Item1	Proficiency Test Scores
Item1	Pearson Correlation	1	.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.921
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.005	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.921	
	N	384	384

		Item2	Proficiency Test Scores
Item2	Pearson Correlation	1	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.907
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.006	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.907	
	N	384	384

		Item3	Proficiency Test Scores
Item3	Pearson Correlation	1	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.602
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.027	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	
	N	379	379

		Item4	Proficiency Test Scores
Item4	Pearson Correlation	1	.411(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item5	Proficiency Test Scores
Item5	Pearson Correlation	1	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.171
	N	384	384

Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.070	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.171	
	N	384	384

		Item6	Proficiency Test Scores
Item6	Pearson Correlation	1	.152(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	384	383
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.152(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	383	383

		Item7	Proficiency Test Scores
Item7	Pearson Correlation	1	.068
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.184
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.068	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.184	
	N	384	384

		Item8	Proficiency Test Scores
Item8	Pearson Correlation	1	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.300
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.300	
	N	384	384

		Item9	Proficiency Test Scores
Item9	Pearson Correlation	1	-.537(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.537(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item10	Proficiency Test Scores
Item10	Pearson Correlation	1	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.515
	N	384	383
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.515	
	N	383	383

		Item11	Proficiency

			Test Scores
Item11	Pearson Correlation	1	-.114(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	384	383
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.114(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	383	383

		Item12	Proficiency Test Scores
Item12	Pearson Correlation	1	.473(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.473(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	384	384

		Item13	Proficiency Test Scores
Item13	Pearson Correlation	1	.480(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.480(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item14	Proficiency Test Scores
Item14	Pearson Correlation	1	.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.069
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.093	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	
	N	382	382

		Item15	Proficiency Test Scores
Item15	Pearson Correlation	1	.489(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	381
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.489(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	381	381

		Item16	Proficiency Test Scores
Item16	Pearson Correlation	1	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.382
	N	384	381

Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.045	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.382	
	N	381	381

		Item17	Proficiency Test Scores
Item17	Pearson Correlation	1	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.667
	N	384	375
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.667	
	N	375	375

		Item18	Proficiency Test Scores
Item18	Pearson Correlation	1	-.490(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.490(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	382	382

		Item19	Proficiency Test Scores
Item19	Pearson Correlation	1	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.870
	N	384	382
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.008	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.870	
	N	382	382

		Item20	Proficiency Test Scores
Item20	Pearson Correlation	1	-.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.230
	N	384	380
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.062	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.230	
	N	380	380

		Item21	Proficiency Test Scores
Item21	Pearson Correlation	1	.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.127
	N	384	380
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.078	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	
	N	380	380

		Item22	Proficiency Test Scores
Item22	Pearson Correlation	1	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.770
	N	384	376
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.770	
	N	376	376

		Item23	Proficiency Test Scores
Item23	Pearson Correlation	1	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.525
	N	384	380
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.525	
	N	380	380

		Item24	Proficiency Test Scores
Item24	Pearson Correlation	1	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.306
	N	384	376
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	
	N	376	376

		Item25	Proficiency Test Scores
Item25	Pearson Correlation	1	.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.965
	N	384	380
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.002	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.965	
	N	380	380

		Item26	Proficiency Test Scores
Item26	Pearson Correlation	1	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.387
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.045	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.387	
	N	379	379

		Item27	Proficiency Test Scores
Item27	Pearson Correlation	1	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.390

			384	381
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation		.044	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.390	
	N		381	381

		Item28	Proficiency Test Scores
Item28	Pearson Correlation	1	.061
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.235
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.061	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.235	
	N	379	379

		Item29	Proficiency Test Scores
Item29	Pearson Correlation	1	.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.798
	N	384	378
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.013	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.798	
	N	378	378

		Item30	Proficiency Test Scores
Item30	Pearson Correlation	1	.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.087
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.088	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.087	
	N	379	379

		Item31	Proficiency Test Scores
Item31	Pearson Correlation	1	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.398
	N	384	377
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.044	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.398	
	N	377	377

		Item32	Proficiency Test Scores
Item32	Pearson Correlation	1	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.266
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.057	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.266	
	N	379	379

		Item33	Proficiency Test Scores
Item33	Pearson Correlation	1	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.294
	N	384	379
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	.054	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.294	
	N	379	379

		Item34	Proficiency Test Scores
Item34	Pearson Correlation	1	-.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.941
	N	384	380
Proficiency Test Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.004	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.941	
	N	380	380

*   *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
**   *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Appendix IV

Students' Background questionnaire

Please answer the following questions or put a tick in the appropriate boxes.

请如实回答下列问题或在相应选项的横线上划勾√。

1. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

2. Age: _____ years old

3. TEM 4 Scores（本次专四成绩）： _____

4. How many years have you studied English? _____ years

5. How many years have you had a native-speaking English teacher? _____

6. How often do you use English outside school?
   _____ never _____ seldom _____ sometimes _____ often

7. Have you ever traveled to or lived in an English-speaking country?
   _____ Yes _____ No
   (a) If yes, what country(ies)? _____
   (b) How long were you there? _____

8. How many native English-speaking friends or relatives have you known? _____
   If 1 or more, how often did you speak English with this person?
   _____ never _____ seldom _____ sometimes _____ often

9. How often do you watch TV or movies or listen to the radio in English (without looking the Chinese subtitles)?
   _____ never _____ less than once a month
   _____ 1 to 3 times a month _____ once a week
   _____ more than once a week

10. What was your score on the final English examination of the previous academic term?
    _____ 0-29 _____ 30-59 _____ 60-79 _____ 80-100

11. What scores do you expect to receive in the first English examination this academic year?
    _____ 0-29 _____ 30-59 _____ 60-79 _____ 80-100

Appendix V

Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)
语言学习信念调查问卷

Please put a √ in the box provided to show your preference. 请在选中的方格内划 √。

Notes: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

注：1 = 坚决不同意；2 = 不同意；3 = 既不同意也不反对；4 = 同意；5 = 完全同意

Item 项目	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English. 儿童比成人更容易习得英语。					
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English. 有些人具有学习英语的天赋。					
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. 有些语言比起其它语言来更加容易习得。					
4. English is: (1) a very difficult language; (2) a difficult language; (3) a language of medium difficulty; (4) an easy language; (5) a very easy language. 英语：（1）非常难学；（2）难学；（3）中等难度；（4）易学；（5）比较容易。					
5. English is structured in the same way as Chinese. 英语语言结构与汉语语言结构是一样的。					
6. I believe that I will learn to speak English very well. 我相信我能够学好、说好英语。					
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent. 说英语，重要的是一流的、标准的语音语调。					
8、It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English well. 要说好英语，有必要了解英语国家的文化。					
9. I say nothing in English until I can say it correctly. 我一般不开口讲英语，除非我已能够说得很好。					
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. 一个人若已经掌握一门外语，就更容易习得另一门外语。					
11. It is better to learn English in the foreign country. 在国外学英语会更加容易。					
12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. 若发现有人说英语，我就会走上前去练习英语口语。					
13. It's O.K. to guess if I don't know a word in English. 碰到英语生词，我会去猜测它的意思。					
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take them to speak the language fluently: (1) less than a year; (2) 1-2 years; (3) 3-5 years; (4) 5-10 years; (5) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.					

假设一个人每天花一小时学习英语，那么你认为这个人需要多长时间才能说好英语：（1）一年以内；（2）1-2年；（3）3-5年；（4）5-10年；（5）一天只花一小时是学不好一门外语的。				
15. I have English aptitude (a special ability for learning foreign languages). 我具有英语学能（一种学习外语的特殊能力）。				
16. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words. 学习英语不过是学习一些新的词汇而已。				
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot 多重复、多练习（对英语学习）很重要。				
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English with other people. 同别人用英语交谈时，我感到胆怯。				
19. If I am allowed to make errors in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on. 我认为如果一开始就允许犯（语言）错误，那么以后要想改正就会很困难。				
20. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules. 学习英语不过是学习一些语法规则而已。				
21. It is important to practise with cassettes or video tapes. 用磁带或者录像带辅助练习英语很重要。				
22. Women are better than men at learning English. 在英语学习方面，女人要比男人强。				
23. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it. 如果我英语说得很好，我会有许多使用它的机会。				
24. It is easier to speak than understand English. 说英语比懂英语容易。				
25. Learning English is different from learning other academic subjects. 英语学习跟其它学科的学习不同。				
26. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese. 英语学习不过是从汉语到英语的翻译过程而已。				
27. If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job. 我认为如果我学好英语，将会更有机会找到一份理想的工作。				
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand (listen to) it. 英语读、写比说、理解（听）英语更容易。				
29. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English. 擅长数学或理科的人不擅长学习英语。				
30. Mainland Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language. 中国大陆人认为会说一门外语是非常重要的。				
31. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better. 我学英语是为了更好地了解讲英语的人。				
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent 会讲多种语言的人更聪明。				
33. Mainland Chinese are good at learning foreign languages. 中国大陆人擅长学习外语。				

34. Everyone can learn to speak English well. 任何人都能够学好、说好英语。					

Appendix VI

Transcriptions of the Interview with One Student from High Proficiency Group

T: Do you like learning English? Why or why not?

S: I like learning English, because if I learn English well, I am able to find a good job in the future. You know, I am an English major, and after graduation, I want to be an interpreter or a teacher. So I think, learning English hard now will help me to realize my dream.

T: You think that learning English can help your career. Do you like learning English just because of a good job in the future or because of your own interest as well? If you don't need to take English examinations, would you like to learn English?

S: Er..., I think I will still learn English because, I love learning English, and I enjoy learning it. I think that should be called "interest". In other words, I am interested in learning it.

T: As you just said, learning English well can help you find a good job in the future. Why do you have such thinking?

S: Because English is an international language. It is widely used all over the world. Nowadays, China is opening to the outside world, and..., and there is an increasing demand for the talents who can speak English well.

T: From where did you get such beliefs about language learning? Are there any people teaching you this concept? Or you have such belief when you were born? Or the atmosphere of the society affects you?

S: My parents and all my teachers stress the importance of learning English. And at school, English is one of the most important courses. I also hear that when you look for a job, the employers will choose those who are fluent in English. That is to say, the whole society is, er..., is attaching great importance to learning English.

T: Since you are very interested in learning English, and your English is very fluent...

S: Thank you very much. (Laughing)

T: ...What do you think is the best way of learning English?

S: It is said that practice makes perfect. So I think the best way of learning English is to practise more and often.

T: Your anwser is very concise. (Laugh) How do you usually practise English?

S: First, I get up very early in the morning, and I listen to the VOA or BBC news or other programs on radio. And I also practise listening by listening to the tapes. I often take part in English corners or other activities to practise my oral English. I also like reading English books in the library.

T: Let me ask you the final question. Do you think there is a relationship between what you believe and your language proficiency?

S: Pardon?... Oh, I see. Of course, there is some relationship.

T: Can you specify what kind of relationship it is, positive or negative?

S: It is hard to say. Some beliefs or thoughts are not good for learning English. And some are helpful.

T: For example?

S: For example, er..., mmm..., if you think learning English is useless, you will not spend enough time on it; So you will never learn English well. Just like some of my classmates. That is negative. And if you believe that learning English well can help you find a good job, you will spare much time learn(ing) it; and you will learn it well.

T: Thank you very much. I think your answers are very witty, and your English is very good.

S:　Thank you for your praise.

T: Teacher (me)　　S: Student

Appendix VII

Transcriptions of the Interview with One Student from Middle Proficiency Group

T: Do you like learning English? Why or why not?

S: I like learning English. Why? I think nowadays, everybody should be able to speak English. I admire the people who can speak English well.

T: Anything else?

S: I think, I can find a good job if I can speak a foreign language.

T: You think that learning English can help your career. Do you like learning English just because of a good job in the future or because of your own interest as well? If you don't need to take English examinations, would you like to learn English?

S: To be frank, if there *is* no English exams, maybe I will not learn English, because it is too hard.

T: As you just said, learning English well can help you find a good job in the future. Why do you have such thinking?

S: The reality is like this. I mean, I find, no, I hear when you look for a job, *they* will see your Band 4 and Band 8 certificates. If you haven't, you will lose the job.

T: From where did you get such beliefs about language learning? Are there any people teaching you this concept? Or you have such belief when you were born? Or the atmosphere of the society affects you?

S: I get this from my friends and my teachers. They all emphasize the importance of English. They say if you do not study hard, you will not find a job in the future. So we are forced to learn it.

T: Another question... What do you think is the best way of learning English?

S: I don't know, you see my English is so poor. But I think, the best way is go(ing) to English-(speaking) countries, and study there.

T: Why do you think so?

S: Because, er..., you can talk with foreigners. This way can help you practise English. I have a friend, studying in Canada, her English improves very quickly. So I think the best way of learning English is go(ing) to English countries.

T: You mean English-speaking countries.

S: Yes. Yes.

T: Let me ask you the final question. Do you think there is a relationship between what you believe and your language proficiency?

S: What you believe? What do you mean?

T: Your learning beliefs. Or your opinions about language learnng. Do you think they have any relationship with your English proficiency?

S: I do not think so.

T: Why?

S: You mean the questionnaire last time.

T: Yes, that questionnaire is about language learning beliefs. Do you think the items affect your language proficiency?

S: Not much.

T: Why?

S: When I learn Enlgish, I do not think about that questions. So that questions do not affect me.

T: But you mentioned you are encouraged to learning English because you will be able to find a good job in the future. I think the belief of "learning English well can help you find a good job" affect your English learning. Isn't it?

S: Yes. So I think not much. Most of those beliefs do not affect me. Only some, I think, have something with my English proficiency.

T: Thank you very much.

T: Teacher (me)   S: Student

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