

## **Learner Beliefs on Learning English as A Second Language: A Study of Undergraduates in The University of the Visual and Performing Arts**

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A large body of research has been conducted in the area of language learning beliefs, across the world. Beliefs inevitably matters in the pragmatic aspect of language learning. If learners are driven by misconceptions of language learning, the performance in class might be really low. Teachers' consciousness about English language teaching is also reflected in the methods utilized in class. Research indicates that individual students differ considerably in their use of learning strategies. Elaine Horwit, who developed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was the first to conduct a systematic research into the nature of language learning beliefs. The theoretical framework of BALLI is based on five major components pertaining to language learning; foreign language aptitude, the difficulty in language learning, nature of (English) language learning, learning and communication strategies and motivation. In order to collect data, a questionnaire survey was conducted with a group of 30 ESL learners in the University of the Visual and Performing Arts. The sample group is little exposed to English since their medium of instruction is Sinhala and most of them come from rural backgrounds. The gathered data was statistically analyzed and several significant findings were revealed. According to the survey, it was found out the subjects believe that it is easy to learn a foreign language at a young age. The majority agreed that they have the ability to achieve proficiency in English. All the female participants believe that women are better than men at learning. Most of the subjects maintain a neutral opinion on learning English grammar. All the participants agreed that they want to learn English and believe that they will have better job opportunities if they learn English well. However, all the participants agreed that it is not necessary to be able to speak in English to live in Sri Lanka. It appears that this questionnaire is a valid instrument that can be applied to the Sri Lankan context to a great extent, despite its limitations. In order to make it more applicable to the Sri Lankan context, slight modifications should be done to make sure that the questions mirror the role played by culture, social background, discipline of study and field of work, in shaping beliefs of English language learners in Sri Lanka.

**Key words:** *The BALLI(Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory), Learner Beliefs, undergraduates, English, Learning a Second Language*

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