

Learners' Beliefs About English Language Learning in The Context of Vocational Education

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Human beings possess preconceived notions or beliefs on various issues and they can influence their comprehension or reactions towards new information. Simultaneously, learners of any language too develop their own assumptions about the nature of language learning and teaching. With the transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning, the learner is considered to be an active participant in the teaching learning process. Thus, it has been revealed that learners' beliefs play a significant role in second / foreign language learning. Hence, the experiments on learners' beliefs are considered to be essential as successful learners develop insightful beliefs that facilitate their language learning processes and the use of effective learning strategies. On the other hand, learners' beliefs are essential in planning and implementing effective language instructions too. This study aims at investigating whether learner beliefs in learning English is an influential factor in teaching English as a second language (TESL). The group of respondents are those who follow Travel and Tour Management at the University college of Kuliyapitiya which offers national diplomas at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 5 on vocational training courses. A mixed research approach of quantitative and qualitative methods was utilized to collect data in the study. Accordingly, the learners' beliefs were identified through questionnaires and interviews adapted from BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning inventory) framework which was developed by Horwitz (1985). Qualitative and quantitative data have been analyzed according to four categories in this study. They are; Foreign language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies and motivation and expectations. The first category of 'foreign language aptitude' means the general existence of special ability for learning language. The second category of 'The nature of language learning' includes assumptions and perceptions about the important perspectives of learning English. The third category of 'learning and communication strategies' depicts learners' practices of learning English language. The fourth category of 'motivations and expectations' concerns the desires and aspirations that learners intend to get fulfilled through learning English. According to the findings of the study, the learners' beliefs not only reflect their perceptions on language learning but also inform about the strategies that can be adopted to improve the quality of TESL at tertiary level.

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