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Beliefs About Language Learning among College of Teacher Education Students

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ABSTRACT

The English language serves as the primary medium of instruction in our country's education system, emphasizing the importance of understanding student beliefs in language learning. This study investigates the beliefs on language learning among College of Teacher Education (CTE) students within a non-sectarian institution in Davao City. The research encompasses an exploration of respondents' demographic profiles and perceived levels of beliefs in language learning, focusing on experiences, behavior, confidence, strategies, and nature. Additionally, the study aims to identify any significant differences in the beliefs about language learning (BLI) levels among CTE students based on their profiles. Utilizing purposive sampling, the researchers employed a non-experimental quantitative research design, applying the comparative method to analyze the data. The results indicate a moderate level of belief about language learning among CTE students. Furthermore, the findings suggest that there is no significant difference in the students' beliefs based on their year level. However, a notable difference is observed when considering their program affiliation.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English are integral to the cultural identity of the Philippines. Across the world, Filipinos are renowned for their English language proficiency. This can be attributed to the fact that English is recognized as a predominant medium of instruction in Philippine schools. The English language is primarily used as the medium of instruction in education in the Philippines. Schools and universities in the country use English as the primary language for teaching subjects, especially at higher grade levels. It serves as the main language of instruction for subjects such as Science and Mathematics. This leads to the need for prospective teachers to hone both mastery of their subject specialization as well as proficiency in English, the medium of instruction (Domingo, 2020). A study conducted among education major students in the Philippines even showed that an overwhelming majority preferred or had a very positive opinion of using English as the teaching language (Somblino & Alieto, 2020). Having an essential knowledge of the English language gives students the ability to understand their professors in subjects that use English as a medium of instruction effectively. (Maramag-Manalastas & Batang, 2018; Santana, Garcia-Santillán, & López-Martínez, 2017). However, throughout recent years, it has been reported that the state of English language learning in the country is deteriorating (Domingo, 2020). Evidently, in 2022, the Philippines dropped to 22nd place from 18th place the previous year in the English Proficiency Index (EPI) by Education First. Santos *et al.* (2022) pointed out crucial factors that affect the said deteriorating condition. It includes how attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs are important components in successfully learning the English language. Likewise, as second language learners, Filipino students are dependent on the said factors. The more positive their beliefs are, the more likely they are to

exert more effort in learning and more likely to succeed in learning a second language (Alaga, 2019; Castro, 2018). The deterioration of English language learning outcomes in the Philippines highlighted by recent reports indicates a need to closely examine factors influencing Filipino students' success in acquiring English proficiency. Given the integral role of English in Philippine education and culture, it is critical to understand why student performance is declining. This study significantly contributes to the body of knowledge by exploring one major factor identified by researchers - the beliefs Filipino students hold about learning English. The study may provide valuable insights into how these key demographics view language learning. The findings revealing their level of beliefs and significant differences based on profile factors can guide efforts to improve English proficiency outcomes. Educators and policymakers may utilize the results to develop more effective curricula, instructional approaches, and teacher training practices tailored to this population's beliefs and needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary research studies uncovered a significant relationship between an individual's beliefs on language learning and how successfully they would learn that language. Soruç & Griffiths (2021) stated that students' beliefs about a language correlate with their effectiveness in learning the language and their proficiency in it. A study by Dağgöl & Akçayoğlu (2017) on 170 English major and non-English major university students in Turkey found that students' environment and experiences influenced their beliefs about language learning. In turn, these beliefs affected their actual learning process. Their research revealed that both groups had more similarities than differences in beliefs, such as views on the difficulty of learning English, its importance, and their preferred

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learning strategies. However, other studies focusing specifically on English majors showed that these students tended to have significantly more positive beliefs about learning English compared to non-majors. Although most students, regardless of major, believed they had an aptitude for learning English, some had more well-defined strategies that they employed. In the Philippines, research suggested that Filipino students' beliefs about English also drove their choice to pursue an English-related major, including perceptions of English as necessary for future employment and the role of English as the primary instructional language (Conda, 2014).

This difference is associated with how students learn English for Specific Purposes (ESP) - some learn it for their specific field such as English teaching majors, while others learn it for general purposes only (Hayati, 2015). Although English-major and non-English major education students exhibit similar degrees of beliefs about language learning, those specializing in English see themselves as internalizing the language more deeply. They possess more positive beliefs, especially in dealing with difficult language-learning situations and employing language-learning strategies (Dağgöl & Akçayoğlu, 2017). The perception or belief that learning and mastering the English language relies on its importance to one's field of specialization or the major a student is taking. College students whose majors are not related to English language teaching are reported to encounter inefficiencies and difficulties in learning English. This is thought to be because of a lack of belief that their majors primarily use the language only in article writing and literature reviews (Xie & Curle, 2020).

Researchers suggest that learners' beliefs are influenced by their experiences interacting with other people and society. These factors lead to individual differences and preferences in learning styles (Alhamami, 2019; Soruç & Griffiths, 2021; Tahimic & Tagadiad, 2022). Such individual variation stems largely from students' cultural backgrounds, previous language learning experiences, and personal preferences. In turn, these characteristics shape their beliefs about learning English. However, beliefs tend to vary based on the student's specific background and their situation and environment (Genç *et al.*, 2016). Supporting studies have also concluded that students' attitudes toward language learning have a significant impact on their cognitive abilities and academic success to some extent.

Age is one factor commonly considered to affect learners' beliefs about learning English. This idea is supported by the Critical Period Hypothesis, which correlates a learner's age with their language acquisition abilities. Age impacts how a learner views and approaches language learning (Hu, 2016). A study using a quasi-experimental design on college students in the Philippines concluded that student's age does not affect their English proficiency level, confidence, learning preferences, or attitudes toward the language (Maramag-Manalastas & Batang, 2018). Similarly, students' academic year level has no implications

for their motivation to pursue English proficiency or their attitudes and performance in learning it. Regardless of year level, students employed comparable strategies and maintained positive attitudes and achievement in English language learning (Alotumi, 2021).

Several studies pointed out that the learner's confidence in learning the language equates to how well they participate in language learning activities and the language learning process. Those who are confident in learning the language defy their fear and anxiety in learning English. They also more frequently engage themselves in activities both written and orally (Abdulkhussain *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, behaviors in learning English pertain to how students exert effort to learn, taking notes, closely paying attention to the discussion, attending the English subject class itself, and similar activities that show interest in learning it. Those who are interested in learning English demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and contribute to the class such as asking and answering questions as well as participating in activities and discussions (Pongpanya, 2019). The use of language learning strategies varies and is related to the preference, experience, and behavior in the learning of students. It is influenced by their individual differences, beliefs, and contextual and learning environment factors. According to studies, students primarily use cognitive strategies like; repetition, getting the meaning from the context given, summarizing, and memorization (Tudy & Villasor, 2017; Nguyen & Terry, 2017).

This study was primarily anchored to the "Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory" (BALLI) by Horwitz (1985). Horwitz stated that students taking courses concerning second language teaching hold varying beliefs and preferences about how a language should be acquired and taught. These preconceived beliefs and ideas directly influence how receptive students are to the information being presented and taught to them.

While existing research has extensively explored the beliefs about language learning among various student groups, a significant research gap exists with regard to College of Teacher Education (CTE) students. Despite the critical role of language proficiency in the teaching profession, there is a notable lack of studies investigating the specific language learning beliefs held by CTE students. The majority of research in this area has focused on general education students, English majors, and non-English majors, providing valuable insights into the relationship between beliefs and language learning outcomes. However, CTE students represent a unique population with distinct goals, responsibilities, and language requirements, particularly as future educators. Understanding the language learning beliefs of CTE students is crucial for designing targeted language instruction programs that align with their specific needs and challenges.

Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs about language learning among College of Teacher Education

(CTE) students in a non-sectarian institution in Davao City. Specifically, the researchers sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of the beliefs about language learning among College of Teacher Education Students?
2. Is there a significant difference in the beliefs about language learning among College of Teacher Education Students when analyzed based on:
 - 2.1 Year level; and
 - 2.2 Program

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers employed the non-experimental quantitative research design and applied the comparative method, which constituted that the variables were unaltered during the data collection. The comparative method, so-called, is the process of comparing situations, groups, cultures, or whatever, that are similar and yet differ in known ways using mean and ANOVA (Kenton, 2022.) Thus, it was appropriate and ideal for observing, gathering, and recording the data by measuring and describing the connection between the respondents' beliefs about language learning and the data that was collected.

The study utilized purposive sampling, which intends to determine the population, particularly by identifying the respondents based on their demographic profile (year level and major/specialization) which are the following: Secondary Education majoring in English, Mathematics, Filipino, General Science, Early Childhood, Special Needs, Social Studies, Physical Education, and Elementary Education. Researchers used purposive sampling, which refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques, and it relies on identifying and selecting the individuals, cases, or events that can provide the best information to achieve the study's objectives. In connection, the proponents identified the College of Teacher Education in a non-sectarian institution, as the target population comprising all year levels from different programs. The respondents for this study were CTE students enrolled in English-mediated courses at all year levels during the 2022-2023 academic year semesters. Their beliefs about language learning in the following areas were examined: experiences in learning English, behavior when learning the language, confidence in language learning, use of learning and communication strategies, and perceptions of the nature of language learning. The goal was to assess whether students had acquired the necessary knowledge and skills from their language studies. While other colleges at the university were excluded, the target population was students in various teacher education programs, as these represent the primary source of language learning. The researchers adopted the following research instrument: the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1988), and researchers modified the instrument and added the 5-point Likert scale to measure the independent variable which is the Beliefs about Language Learning developed by Horwitz (1988) and to quantify the dependent variable

which is the year level and the specialization of the respondents. In the first section, the survey asked for the demographic profile of the respondents, such as name (optional), year level, and specialization. In the second section, the beliefs about language learning include the BLL and adapted indicators such as the experiences in learning the English language, behavior in learning the language, confidence in learning the language, learning, and communication strategies, and nature of language learning to ascertain the level of beliefs about language learning among the respondents. The researchers presented the survey instruments to the two assigned validators for instrument validation, resulting in a mean of (4.1), a threshold for a very valid instrument. After the instrument validation, the researchers proceeded to the pilot testing with the guidance of the statistician to determine Cronbach's alpha, which is .875 and .882, respectively. Then, the proponents used the ANOVA to determine the significant difference in the level of BLL of the CTE students according to their profile.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of CTE Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile and the total population of CTE respondents needed in our study. The researchers gathered and analyzed the data from our respondents, which were composed of 59 - first-year students, 73 - second-year students, 175 - third-year students, and 16 - fourth-year students with a total of 323 respondents coming from different specializations which are: BSED English, Filipino, Mathematics, PE, Science, Elementary, and Special Needs.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of CTE Respondents

Profiles	Frequency	%
Year Level		
1 st	59	18.27
2 nd	73	22.61
3 rd	175	54.18
4 th	16	4.96
Specialization		
Elementary	29	8.98
English	50	15.48
Filipino	49	15.18
Mathematics	51	15.48
Physical Education	50	10.22
Science	33	9.29
Special Needs	30	9.6

Level of Beliefs about Language Learning

Table 2 shows the level of beliefs about language learning among the College of Teacher Education students in terms of the following: experiences, behavior, confidence, learning and communications strategies, and nature of language learning.

Table 2: Level of Beliefs about Language Learning

Indicators	Mean	SD
Experiences	3.643	.608
Behavior	3.711	.585
Confidence	3.749	.538
Strategies	3.940	.642
Nature	3.560	.596
Overall	3.720	.452

The results, learning strategies, and communication approaches acquired a mean of 3.940 (SD = 0.642), the highest among all indicators. This suggests that most respondents find it important to frequently repeat and practice the English language, irrespective of their year level and specialization. This is associated with how students approach learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP); some learn it for their fields, such as English teaching majors, while others do it for general purposes (Hayati, 2015). Despite differences in their reasons, most respondents believe that learning the English language mainly involves acquiring new vocabulary words and expressing them with an excellent accent. This implies that, regardless of their year level, students employ similar degrees of strategies and maintain positive attitudes and performance in learning English (Alotumi, 2021).

Students' confidence in learning the language secured a mean of 3.749 (SD = 0.538). The result indicates that students believe that learning the language boosts their confidence. Abdullhussain *et al.* (2017) suggested that those confident in learning the language overcome fear and anxiety, engaging more frequently in both written and spoken activities. Students' behavior in learning the language obtained a mean of 3.711 (SD = 0.585), and experiences in learning the language acquired a mean of 3.643 (SD = 0.608). This demonstrates that respondents are actively exerting effort to learn the language. Those interested in learning it show willingness to cooperate

and contribute to the class, participating in activities, discussions, and asking and answering questions (Pongpanya, 2019).

Lastly, the lowest among all other indicators is the nature of language learning, with a mean of 3.560 (SD = 0.596). This indicates that respondents mostly feel that students who excel in other subjects such as mathematics and science may not necessarily be proficient in learning the English language. Despite English being the primary language of instruction in the country's educational institutions, particularly in higher years, and for disciplines like science and mathematics, students believe that making mistakes during the English language learning process is natural. This emphasizes the importance of honing prospective teachers' mastery in both their specialization and the medium of instruction, namely English (Domingo, 2016).

The Significant Difference in The Level of BLL of the CTE Students According to Their Profile Year Level

Table 3 shows the significant difference in beliefs about language learning of CTE students when analyzed according to year level. Their beliefs about language learning differ based on their academic year level. The tally shows an F-value of 0.663 and a corresponding p-value of .576. Since the p-value or Significance Level is greater than the level of significance, which is 0.05, indicating that there is no significant difference. This result supports the study of Maramag-Manalastas & Batang (2018) which states that the age, and subsequently the year level of students does not affect their performance and beliefs in learning English. It is also in line with the findings of Alotumi (2021) who also analyzed how year level affects their proficiency in employing strategies and English proficiency. Students still view English as integral in their program despite their progress in it. Whether they are in their 1st year or 3rd year, they retain a positive attitude and employ strategies in learning the language.

Table 3: Significance of difference in terms of year level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	.407	3	.136	.663
Within Groups	65.307	319	.205	
Total	65.714	322		

* $p < 0.05$

Program

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows the F-statistic value of 3.69. It has a corresponding p-value of .001. The results indicate that the p-value of .001 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This result indicates that there is a significant difference in English language learning when analyzed based on the program. This result supports Dağgöl & Akçayoğlu (2017), which stated that the program or field of specialization affects how they view and approach English language learning. Students' views about language

learning differ depending on their specialization. English major students tend to view themselves as having more aptitude in learning English. They also deal with situations more adaptively such as employing more strategies. Meanwhile, non-English teaching majors deal with difficulty more often than the aforementioned. Hayati (2015) added that students use more language learning strategies to better suit their major or program. Students whose major does not deal with teaching English tend to have fewer strategies employed when learning the English

language. Xie and Curle (2020) explained that students whose specialization is not concerned with teaching English do not internalize its use. They usually only view its importance on the language's use in academic outputs such as writing and critiques. Moreover, the results of this

study affirmed Horwitz's (1985) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which posited that language learning students have contrasting beliefs in learning the language relative to their field of specialization.

Table 4: Significance of difference in terms of program

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	4.984	7	.712	3.69*
Within Groups	60.730	315	.193	
Total	65.714	322		

* $p < 0.05$

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, the respondent's demographic profile was the primary basis for assessing their beliefs about language learning in terms of their experiences, behaviors, confidence, strategies, and nature. Furthermore, the level of beliefs about language learning of the respondents was tested, and it resulted in a moderate level, indicating that experiences in learning the English language, behavior in learning the language, confidence in learning the language, learning and communication strategies, and the nature of language learning are relatively average. However, the learning and communication strategies show the highest threshold among the others in the mean, which emphasizes substantial commonality in any communication activity in the College of Teacher Education. On the other hand, in terms of the difference in the level of BLL of the CTE students according to their profiles, there was no significant difference in respondents' beliefs about language learning when analyzed based on year level. Meanwhile, there is a significant difference in respondents' beliefs about language learning when analyzed based on the program.

RECOMMENDATION

Taking into consideration the conclusion presented, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Since the study indicates a moderate level of beliefs in language learning, educators should design language learning programs that cater to the diverse beliefs of students. Understanding and incorporating these varied beliefs can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction.
2. Recognizing the significant difference in beliefs based on the program, educators and administrators should explore the specific challenges and needs of different programs within the College of Teacher Education. Tailor language learning initiatives to address these unique aspects.
3. For programs with significant differences in beliefs, consider implementing targeted interventions or additional support systems. This could include specialized workshops, resources, or mentoring programs to address specific challenges related to language learning.

4. Conduct further research to identify any external factors that may influence students' beliefs about language learning. Addressing these factors, such as cultural influences or external pressures, can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and improvement of language learning experiences.

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