



## **A Comparative Analysis of Kurdish Pre-service and In-service EFL Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learning**

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### **Abstract**

Teacher beliefs, as part of their cognition, about English language learning and teaching vary. The consensus, however, in the literature is that EFL teacher beliefs have a profound impact on the way teachers teach in the classroom, learn how to teach, and perceive educational reforms (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). This shows that exploring beliefs of EFL teachers is noteworthy for a better understanding of the state of English language education in specific EFL contexts. This quantitative study aims to explore the beliefs of Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers about English language learning and compare these beliefs to see whether any differences occur. Data were collected through administering Horwitz's (1988) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire to 23 Kurdish pre-service teachers of English from one of the public universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq, and 25 Kurdish in-service teachers of English from some basic schools in Qaladiza, a small town located in the same region. After the statistical analyses of the collected data, the results showed that both groups held both different and similar beliefs about English language learning. Furthermore, the reasons for holding these beliefs are explained in the discussion section of this study.

**Keywords:** Kurdistan Region of Iraq, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teacher and Learner Beliefs, English Language Learning (ELL), BALLI

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## **Introduction**

In the past few decades, research in Second Language Learning (SLL) and Teaching (SLT) has prioritized teacher and learner beliefs from various perspectives and in different contexts. The reason for this special interest in this area is believed to be that understanding and improving teaching and learning are difficult without uncovering the beliefs teachers and learners hold about language learning (Borg, 2009). Since beliefs are unobservable, related to the mental lives of particular individuals (Borg, 2009), and complex, researchers have faced serious challenges in giving the precise definition of beliefs (Johnson, 1994). Therefore, various terms have been coined to describe the concept of “beliefs”; among these terms are attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, dispositions, personal theories, perspectives, and rules of practice (Stergiopoulou, 2012). In the present study, the definition of Borg (2001) on beliefs as “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” (p. 186) is adopted to find teacher beliefs about English language learning. It can be inferred from the definition that beliefs have some characteristics, as they might be conscious or unconscious. Moreover, it indicates that people hold particular beliefs as each of them might have particular justifications for such beliefs, which are considered as conscious. Unconscious beliefs, on the other hand, are those that teachers have no reasons to justify their perceptions. Beliefs, in addition, might also be evaluative because they can be evaluated and judged for their convenience, usefulness, or success for a specific purpose or in particular context. Beliefs are also personal, as each individual has particular beliefs about concepts and they are completely private and might be different from the beliefs of others. Finally, beliefs guide actions. Linking these features to those of learners and teachers will be extremely helpful in understanding and improving the process of language learning.

In the related literature, beliefs about English language learning have been investigated mainly through three distinctive frameworks, namely, normative, metacognitive, and contextual. In the normative framework, beliefs are examined by using Likert-scale questionnaires, such as those of Horwitz’s (1988), Bernat & Gvozdenko’s (2005), Cotterall’s (1999), Kuntz’s (1996), Sakui & Gaies’s (1999). Furthermore, the metacognitive framework has also been adopted by

many researchers (for example, Goh, 1997; White, 1999; Wenden (2001) through the use of semi-structured interviews and self-reports to collect the necessary research data about beliefs. Finally, studies in which the contextual framework has been adopted, are qualitative and have used ethnography, narrative, and metaphors (Kramsch, 2003) through the means of case studies, ethnographic classroom observations, informal discussions and stimulated recalls (Allen, 1996; Barcelos, 2000), diaries (Hosenfeld, 2003), and discourse analysis (Kalaja, 2003).`

## **Literature Review**

Teacher beliefs, as part of teacher cognition, about English language learning have become a major topic of much research since the mid-1990s (Borg, 2003) for two major reasons. First, due to the developments in cognitive psychology, which highlights the influence of thinking on behavior (Borg, 2006), understanding teaching and what teachers do necessitated uncovering what is going on in the teachers mind, which is what Walberg (1977) called teachers “mental lives”. Second, because of the changes in teacher roles, teachers are seen less as knowledge transmitters in the classroom; rather, they have become active agents in the process of teaching.

It is widely believed that teacher beliefs are deeply rooted and formed long before they start in the aching profession (Johnson, 1994). The major sources of these deep-rooted beliefs are varied. For instance, Lortie’s (1975) famous phrase, “apprenticeship of observation”, might be a source of teacher beliefs. It indicates that teachers learning experiences and histories, when they were students, have a significant effect in shaping their beliefs (Farrell, 1999; Bailey, 1996). Furthermore, Borg (2003) believes that professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice can also influence and shape teacher beliefs. Therefore, the results of previous studies on teacher beliefs cannot be generalized to all contexts, because each context seems to be unique in providing learning experience and teaching programme.

Since teacher beliefs have gained much importance in the field of language education, research on both pre- and in- service teachers beliefs about English language learning has developed.

Assasfeh (2015), for instance, examined pre-service EFL teachers beliefs about EFL learning. In the study, a questionnaire was given to 200 (75 males and 125 females) participants

ranging from freshman to seniors in the program. The results showed that the participants had the strongest beliefs about motivation to language learning; whereas, their beliefs about language learning were weakest. Moreover, Altan (2012) conducted a study to uncover the beliefs of 217 prospective EFL teachers about foreign language learning through a questionnaire. The results revealed that the participants had various beliefs about language learning and such beliefs may affect and shape their future instruction. Additionally, Peacock (2001), in his longitudinal study, investigated 146 pre-service ESL teachers in Hong Kong to explore whether changes in their beliefs about second language learning occur. He collected data through the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire of Horwitz (1988). The results showed no change in the participants beliefs. In contrast, Grijalva and Barajas (2013) in their longitudinal study concluded that almost half of the pre-service teachers' beliefs were changed after receiving treatment on teacher preparation and teacher practice. This conclusion was drawn after investigating 14 Mexican pre-service teachers majoring in English through giving them a questionnaire and interviewing them. In Iraq, Abid (2012) conducted another study about the beliefs of EFL university learners. BALLI questionnaire was given to 101 EFL learners to explore their beliefs about the four skills of English language. The results showed that reading and writing skills were less difficult than listening and speaking; and between speaking and listening, participants chose speaking as easier than listening.

Apart from studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs, research has also been conducted to uncover in-service teachers beliefs on language learning. For example, Erkemen (2014) examined nine non-native novice EFL teachers teaching in Northern Cyprus to find out their beliefs about teaching, learning, and classroom practices. She collected data through the use of instruments like semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, post-lesson reflection forms, and stimulated recall interviews. The results revealed that the participants' prior experience had effects on shaping their beliefs, and contextual factors had main roles in making the novice teachers provide instruction incongruent with their beliefs. Furthermore, Stergiopoulou (2012), in two small case studies, compared experienced ( $n = 6$ ) and inexperienced ( $n = 9$ ) foreign language teachers beliefs about learning and teaching language. The necessary data were collected through pre- and post- questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Little difference was found between the beliefs of experienced and inexperienced

teachers, and context-related factors played an essential role in shaping and changing teacher beliefs.

Having considered the facts stemming from the previous literature on teacher beliefs about language learning, and since these beliefs are characterized as personal, cognitive, and context-dependent variables in EFL learning (Borg, 2001; Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008), the current study is worth conducting due to the following reasons: First, the participants will be Kurdish pre-service and in-service teachers of English, who are personally and contextually different from those who participated in the previous studies. Second, the context of the present study is the Kurdistan region of Iraq where there is a new context in which to investigate, and to the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on this topic. Finally, there still seems to be a shortage of studies in the related literature about comparing pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning. Therefore, exploring prospective and in-service EFL teachers' beliefs, particularly, those of Kurdish ones, about English language learning will significantly contribute to the related literature.

## **The Current Study**

The main aim of this study is to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers.

### *The instructional setting and Participants*

The study is conducted in two different settings. The first setting is the English department at the University of Raparin located in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were 23 Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers studying English and related teacher education subjects for about three (i.e. junior participants) and four (i.e. senior participants) years, who are expected to become teachers of English language in basic schools. The reason for choosing these participants is to understand their beliefs about English language learning, as it is likely to be determinant in shaping future English education.

The second instructional setting is some basic schools in Qaladiza, a town located in the eastern part of Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were 25 Kurdish in-service EFL teachers who had at least three years of experience, and graduated from different universities in

the region. The reasons for choosing these people are to understand the current situation of English language learning in basic schools and compare their beliefs about English learning to those of pre-service teachers of English.

### ***Research Instruments and Data Collection***

Quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire to explore the pre-service and in-service teachers beliefs about language learning. This questionnaire was (BALLI) designed by Horwitz (1988). It is a quantitative self-report questionnaire, which investigates beliefs about language learning in five different scales, namely, foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. Furthermore, it has a five-point-Likert-scale format which ranges from (1 = strongly disagree) to (5 = strongly agree). The aim of employing the BALLI scale is not to identify which beliefs can be correct or not, but to survey them and then discuss their potential impact on the process of language learning and teaching. In addition, the questionnaire has a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.79, which, according to Hair, *et al.* (1998), has the acceptable reliability since the value is more than 0.70. It is also worth mentioning that some items were slightly modified for use in both settings and with the selected participants.

The process of quantitative data collection was completed through the following steps. First, the participants were asked for their consent about participating in the potential research voluntarily. This was done by sending a message of volunteer participation to their Facebook account. Second, after receiving their positive replies, the questionnaire was sent to them online, and the participants were given three days to complete the questionnaire. In case the participants had questions about the questionnaire, they were told to ask any time without any hesitation. Third, within three days the questionnaires were collected and checked for their completeness before the data analysis. Finally, the collected data were put into the SPSS program for the analyses.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

This study aims to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed statistically to compare the beliefs of both pre-service and in-service teachers about English language learning. To do so, 35 variables representing whether the participant was pre-service or in-service, and the items in the questionnaire were created, and analyzed through using T-test. There are many reasons for employing the T-test. First, it is used for analyzing the means of two different populations. Second, it is commonly employed when the variances of two normal distributions are unknown, as seen in the data of the present study. Finally, it is widely used when a small sample size is investigated.

To understand the beliefs of the participants about difficulty of English language learning, which is represented by items 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28, the results of data analysis (see Table 1) showed that both pre-service and in-service teachers had common beliefs about the difficulty of English language learning. Furthermore, although there were small differences between the mean values of pre-service and in-service teachers about the items, these small differences were not statistically significant. It is worth noting from the results that the mean values of *item 4*, which is about the difficulty of learning English language, showed that pre-service (Mn = 3.17) and in-service (Mn = 3.00) teachers agreed that English language is of a medium difficulty to learn. Another considerable point from *item 14* is that both group participants believed, by spending 1-2 hours a day on learning English, learners can become fluent in it since the mean value for both groups is 2.48.

**Table 1***Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Difficulty of English Language Learning*

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
<b>3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.26	.68	.63
	In-service	25	4.36	.75	.63
<b>4. English language is 1) very difficult 2) difficult 3) medium 4) easy 5) very easy to learn.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.17	.77	.38
	In-service	25	3.00	.88	.37
<b>6. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.39	.65	.81
	In-service	25	3.44	.76	.81
<b>14. If someone spends one hour a day learning English, how long will it take him/her to become fluent?</b>	Pre-service	23	2.48	.99	.99
	In-service	25	2.48	.65	.99
1) less than a year 2) 1-2 years 3) 3-5 years 4) 5-10 years 5) never					
<b>24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.</b>	Pre-service	23	2.43	1.12	.38
	In-service	25	2.16	1.02	.38
<b>28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.72
	In-service	25	3.60	1.19	.72

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05



Concerning the participants beliefs about language learning aptitude, which is another component of the questionnaire, and represented through items 1, 2, 6, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, and 34, the following results (see Table 2) were obtained.

**Table 2**  
*Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude*

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
<b>1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English language.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.08	1.04	.71
	In-service	25	4.20	1.11	.71
<b>2. Some people are born with a special ability, which helps them learn English language.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.18
	In-service	25	3.88	.78	.18
<b>10. It is easier for someone who already speaks another foreign language to learn English.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.47	.89	.86
	In-service	25	3.52	.82	.86
<b>15. I have English language aptitude (= natural ability or skill).</b>	Pre-service	23	3.43	.94	.68
	In-service	25	3.32	.98	.68
<b>22. Women are better than men at learning English language.</b>	Pre-service	23	2.91	1.08	.87
	In-service	25	2.96	.88	.87
<b>29. People who are good at Math and Science are not good at learning English.</b>	Pre-service	23	2.17	.88	.35
	In-service	25	2.44	1.08	.35
<b>32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.91	.84	.22
	In-service	25	4.20	.76	.22
<b>33. Kurds are good at learning English.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.17	.49	.02

	In-service	25	3.80	.57	.02
<b>34. Everyone can learn to speak English.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.65	1.15	.72
	In-service	25	3.76	.92	.72

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

It can be inferred from the mean values of (Table 2) that the participants hold positive beliefs about most of the items of foreign language aptitude, as they had natural ability to learn English as a foreign language. Moreover, although the mean values of all items for both pre-service and in-service teachers are slightly different, the difference is statistically significant only for *item 33* ( $p = 0.02 < 0.05$ ) in favor of the pre-service teachers.

To explore pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning, the items 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, and 26 were analyzed. The results (see Table 3) showed that only the mean value of *item 8* was statistically significant ( $p = 0.01 < 0.05$ ), which indicates the pre-service teachers (Mn = 3.82) stronger beliefs about the importance of knowing English culture in speaking English language than that of in-service teachers (Mn = 3.04). However, no statistically significant results were found for the mean values of the other items.

**Table 3**

*Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about the Nature of English Language Learning*

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
<b>8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.82	.71	.01
	In-service	25	3.04	1.30	.01
<b>11. It is better to learn English language in an English country.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.82	.38	.58
	In-service	25	4.76	.43	.58
<b>16. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new English vocabulary.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.95	.87	.63
	In-service	25	3.84	.80	.63
<b>20. Learning English language is mostly a</b>	Pre-service	23	2.34	1.11	.08

<b>matter of learning a lot of grammatical rules.</b>	In-service	25	2.88	.97	.08
<b>25. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.69	1.06	.25
	In-service	25	4.00	.70	.25
<b>26. Learning English language is mostly a matter of translating from Kurdish.</b>	Pre-service	23	2.91	.90	.07
	In-service	25	2.44	.91	.07

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig.  $\leq$  .05

To understand the participants' beliefs about language learning and communication strategies, items 17, 21, 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, and 19 were analyzed. The results (see Table 4) revealed no significant differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about language learning and communication strategies ( $p > .05$ ). It is worth noting, however, that both groups almost strongly accept the belief about repetition and practicing as important in language learning. Furthermore, speaking English with an excellent accent and in a correct form was believed to be necessary in language learning.

**Table 4**

*Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning and Communication Strategies*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Sig. 2-tailed</b>
<b>17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.82	.49	.40
	In-service	25	4.68	.69	.40
<b>21. It is important to practice in language laboratory.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.35
	In-service	25	3.76	.87	.35
<b>7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.86	1.09	.58
	In-service	25	4.04	1.05	.58
<b>9. You should not say anything in English until you say it correctly.</b>	Pre-service	23	1.86	1.01	.13
	In-service	25	1.48	.71	.13
<b>12. If I see someone speaking English, I will go</b>	Pre-service	23	3.65	.77	.19

<b>to him/her so as to practice my English.</b>	In-service	25	3.96	.84	.19
<b>13. It is OK to guess, if you do not know a word in English.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.86	.96	.34
	In-service	25	4.08	.49	.35
<b>18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.60	.83	.72
	In-service	25	3.52	.91	.72
<b>19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of the mistakes later.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.00	1.31	1.00
	In-service	25	3.00	1.11	1.00

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

The last category of the BALLI questionnaire is beliefs about language learning motivations and expectations, and is represented by items 23, 27, 30, and 31. The results (see Table 5) of data analysis revealed that both pre-service and in-service teachers had strong motivation to and high expectations from learning English language.

**Table 5**

*Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learning Motivations and Expectations*

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig.
					2-tailed
<b>23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.26	1.13	.20
	In-service	25	3.92	.64	.21
<b>27. English language helps me to get/maintain my job.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.13	.75	.56
	In-service	25	4.24	.52	.56
<b>30. Kurds think that it is important to speak English language.</b>	Pre-service	23	4.21	.79	.90
	In-service	25	4.24	.43	.90
<b>31. English language helps me to get to know its speakers better.</b>	Pre-service	23	3.82	.57	.94
	In-service	25	3.84	.85	.94

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

To conclude, the results of data analyses showed that both pre-service and in-service teachers hold similar and different beliefs about the components of English language learning.

The following section will discuss these beliefs and make connections with those found in the related literature.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The major goal of this study was to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers.

The first section is about the difficulty of language learning. One of the noticeable similar beliefs between pre-service and in-service teachers is that English language is of medium of difficulty. Similarly, Diab's (2009) found that Arab pre-service teachers of English held similar beliefs about the difficulty of English language learning. However, in the study of Altan (2012), most of the participants, who were Turkish pre-service teachers of English, claimed that English was not at the medium level of difficulty. It is not surprising, indeed, that both groups in the current study had similar beliefs about the difficulty of language learning because they were educated in the same context and from the same system of education. Thus, their previous learning experience might have affected the teachers holding these beliefs (see Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1994), and such beliefs have been static and remained unchanged. This also supports what Peacock (2001) concluded, claiming that beliefs are very difficult to change.

Another stressing finding in this section is both groups had similar beliefs about the duration of learning English. The results showed that both groups thought that becoming fluent in English language takes almost 1-2 years after spending one hour a day on learning the language. This is a positive view, and might be a reflection of their beliefs about the difficulty of English language as it was found earlier that the language is at the medium level of difficulty. On the contrary, previous research (such as Diab, 2009; Peacock, 1999) dealing with the same item found that learners needed at least 3-5 years to become fluent in English. This finding in the present study seems to be new, though, since to the best of my knowledge, previous research has not shown that 1-2 years will be enough for becoming fluent. Consequently, this positive belief is likely to have reflection on the participants' current and future occupation, and the English language education system in the region. However, it is also important to be cautious about whether this belief is realistic, because the teachers may face frustrations when their students'

language development does not meet their expectation, which is becoming fluent in English in two years.

The second section of the questionnaire is about the beliefs about English language aptitude. The results showed that both groups were significantly different in holding beliefs about “*Kurds are good at learning English language*” in favor of pre-service teachers. Similarly, Peacock (1999), in his investigation found that smaller number of Chinese teachers comparing to their students believed that Hong Kong Chinese learners were good at learning English. This might be due to their experience with the students, as most students do not study hard, have enough participation, and show insufficient improvements throughout the course.

As for the other items in this section, on the other hand, both pre-service and in-service teachers held mostly similar beliefs, since the small differences between their mean values of the items were not statistically significant. For instance, they were neutral about whether women are better than men in learning English. In Diab’s (2009) study, however, the participants believed that men are better than women in learning English. Additionally, both groups in the present study disagreed about “*people who are good as Math and Science are not good at English*”. Similarly, Altan (2012) concluded in his study that most of the participants rejected the belief that people who are good at some scientific subjects are not good at English language. This could be interpreted in a way that the majority of respondents do not make a distinction between an aptitude for the sciences versus an aptitude for humanities subjects. This distinction is also put forward by Gardner’s (1983) multiple intelligence theory in which he distinguishes linguistic intelligence from logical/mathematical intelligence (Bernat 2006).

The third section of the questionnaire is about the nature of English language learning. According to the results obtained from data analysis, significant difference was found between the pre-service and in-service teachers’ beliefs about the importance of knowing culture in learning English language. Pre-service teachers, for instance, had stronger beliefs than in-service teachers about the necessity of knowing culture in learning English language. One of the reasons for having this difference is likely to be that pre-service teachers are studying many courses about English and American literature, and to understand this more effectively, culture plays an essential role. However, in-service teachers use a particular course book for teaching English, in which literature is rarely presented. Therefore, this has made them to be unaware of the importance of culture in English. The study conducted by Grijalva and Barajas (2013) supports

this claim showing that the beliefs of their pre-service EFL learners about the importance of English culture in learning English language were significantly changed after receiving courses on English literature in the course.

Concerning the other items presented in this section, both groups held mostly similar beliefs. For instance, one of the findings is that both groups strongly agree with the idea that English language should be taught in a foreign country. This belief seems to be highly realistic, because it has been supported conventionally, for example by Nuttal (1982), that the best way to learn a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. In addition, two other important findings should be highlighted here. First, both groups believed that vocabulary plays an essential role in learning English. In the study of Peacock (2009), moreover, students believed that vocabulary is necessary in learning English; whereas, the teachers did not think so. However, Diab (2009) found in his study that pre-service teachers did not think that vocabulary is necessary. Generally, it seems to be realistic to say that vocabulary is essential in learning language, because words carry meaning and they are the building blocks of language; without knowing English words, one cannot speak it. Second, both groups disagreed with “*learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammatical structures*”. This indicates that grammar-translation is no longer a focus of Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, and they are aware of the fact that grammar alone is not enough for learning English language. This is a positive belief because nowadays grammar is not the only component to be highly considered in the English classes. This finding seems to be related to the participants’ background of studying English and the theoretical courses taken in university, in a way that communicative competence might have been given the primary focus. This finding matches what Altan (2012), and contradicts with what Peacock (1999) found. In the former, most of the participants believed that grammar does not play the most important role in learning English; whereas in the latter, the participants thought it plays a significant role. One of the major reasons for having variety in holding beliefs about this item is that such studies are conducted in different contexts, as each context has its own principles for language learning and significance for shaping the learners beliefs about language learning (see Borg, 2006, 2009).

The fourth section of the questionnaire is about language learning and communication strategies. The results showed that the mean values were not statistically significant. It is worth mentioning, for example, that both groups almost strongly disagree with the belief “*You should*

*not say anything in English until you say it correctly*". This seems to be a strong indication of both pre-service and in-service teachers' intention of encouraging their students about speaking English without thinking of making mistakes. This is also found by Peacock (1999) and Diab (2009) as their participants rejected the belief of producing only correct English. Furthermore, another finding is that both groups believe that speaking with excellent accent is important. This seems to indicate that those participants who believe in the importance of having an 'excellent pronunciation' will probably hold some 'native-like accent' model in mind while instructing their students. However, nowadays, the new developments in English language pedagogy have seen a shift from a focus on 'excellent pronunciation' to internationally accepted pronunciation with communicative competence (Altan, 2012).

The last section of the questionnaire is beliefs about motivations and expectations of learning English language. The results of data analysis showed small differences between the mean values of both pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs but none was statistically significant. For instance, one of the worth mentioning findings is that pre-service and in-service teachers believed that learning English helps them to get or maintain the job in the future. This is perhaps a strong instrumental motivation because learning English would guarantee them getting or maintaining job opportunities.

Thus, from the mean values of this section it can be inferred that the responses of the participants reflect their strong desire to learn English as well as their optimism to be good speakers of this language one day. This supports the finding arrived earlier when analyzing the results of the items relating to foreign language aptitude in which the subjects are confident of their own abilities in learning English.

To conclude, the quantitative results obtained from BALLI questionnaire about Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers beliefs about English language learning showed that in most of the items both pre-service and in-service teachers held similar beliefs about the English language learning. However, they differed in two major areas, namely, the importance of culture in English learning and Kurds sufficiency in English language learning, in favor of pre-service teachers.

### **Limitations of the Study**



Two major limitations are detected by the researcher. First, the major instrument of this study is a questionnaire. Such instrument shows only the participants' perceptions about their actions; it does not provide direct evidence about what they really do (Borg, 2009). Therefore, if interviews were used along with the questionnaire, we would have deeper understanding about the participants' beliefs about English language learning and reasons for holding such beliefs. Second, the findings obtained from the current study may not be generalized to all Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers because the pre-service and in-service teachers were chosen from one specific university and one particular town in the region, respectively. To make broader generalizations, other Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from other universities and other schools in the region should have been asked to participate.

### **Recommendation for Future Studies**

The current study showed that there are significant differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about some items of BALLI questionnaire. However, it did not show why these differences occurred. Therefore, further research can investigate the reasons behind having these differences, which can be done through using interviews. Additionally, future research may include various Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from different parts of the region, which will provide us with a clearer picture about these groups beliefs about English language learning.

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## APPENDIX 1

### BALLI Questionnaire

For each item, please choose **one** of the options given on the right side of the item.

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
2. Some people are born with a special ability, which helps them learn English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
4. English language is ..... to learn.	<b>very difficult</b>	<b>difficult</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>easy</b>	<b>very easy</b>
5. English is structured in the same way as Kurdish.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
6. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
9. You should not say anything in English until you say it correctly.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks another foreign language to learn English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
11. It is better to learn English language in an English country.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
12. If I see someone speaking English, I will go to him/her so as to practice my English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
13. It is OK to guess, if you do not know a word in English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
14. If someone spends one hour a day learning English, how long will it take him/her to become fluent?	<b>less than a year</b>	<b>1-2 years</b>	<b>3-5 years</b>	<b>5-10 years</b>	<b>Never</b>
15. I have English language aptitude (= natural ability or skill).	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
16. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new English vocabulary.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of the mistakes later.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
20. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammatical rules.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
21. It is important to practice in language laboratory.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
22. Women are better than men at learning English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
25. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
26. Learning English language is mostly a matter of translating from Kurdish.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
27. English language helps me to get a job/maintain my job.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree