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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
◌َ	a		◌ًا، ◌ًى	an
◌ُ	u		◌ٌو	un
◌ِ	i		◌ٍي	in
◌َا، ◌ٰ، ◌َى،	ā		◌َوْ	aw
◌ُو	ū		◌َيْ	ay
◌ِي	ī		◌ُوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			◌ِيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

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Language Learning Beliefs in Motion: The Role of Experience and Engagement

Alper Fener*
Ervin Kovačević**

Abstract: This study explores how learners' experiences shape language learning beliefs situated between tradition and progress, prescription and flexibility. The study specifically investigates whether the extent and recency of foreign language learning experience can account for the endorsement of traditional and progressive beliefs. A total of 294 participants completed the Questionnaire of Assumptions about Second Language Learning (QASLL). Results showed a significant difference on the progressive beliefs scale between learners who were not very active and those who were highly active; the latter supported more autonomous and flexible approaches. A further difference was found on the traditional scale between learners with 1–3 years and 9–12 years of experience, suggesting that extensive experience moderates rather than eliminates traditional beliefs. A three-dimensional model emerges with these findings, placing learners along axes of belief orientation, learning activity, and accumulated experience.

Keywords: Language Learning Beliefs, Experientialist Perspective, Traditional and Progressive Beliefs

Abstrak: Kajian ini meneroka bagaimana pengalaman pelajar membentuk kepercayaan pembelajaran bahasa yang terletak di antara tradisi dan kemajuan, serta preskripsi dan fleksibiliti. Secara khusus, kajian ini menyiasat sama

*Ph. D Candidate, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, International University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Email: 160103023@student.ius.edu.ba, alperfener@hotmail.com.
**Professor, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, International University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Email: ekovacevic@ius.edu.ba. *Corresponding author.*

ada tahap dan tempoh masa pengalaman pembelajaran bahasa asing dapat menjelaskan sokongan terhadap kepercayaan tradisional dan progresif. Seramai 294 peserta telah melengkapkan *Questionnaire of Assumptions about Second Language Learning* (QASLL). Dapatan menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan pada skala kepercayaan progresif antara pelajar yang kurang aktif dan mereka yang sangat aktif; kumpulan yang lebih aktif menunjukkan kecenderungan yang lebih tinggi terhadap pendekatan yang autonomi dan fleksibel. Perbezaan lanjut turut dikenalpasti pada skala tradisional antara pelajar dengan pengalaman 1–3 tahun dan 9–12 tahun, yang mencadangkan bahawa pengalaman yang lebih luas berfungsi untuk memoderasi, bukannya menghapuskan, kepercayaan tradisional. Berdasarkan dapatan ini, satu model tiga dimensi dirumuskan, yang meletakkan pelajar sepanjang paksi orientasi kepercayaan, aktiviti pembelajaran, dan pengalaman terkumpul.

Kata kunci: Kepercayaan Pembelajaran Bahasa, Perspektif Eksperiensialis, Kepercayaan Tradisional dan Progresif

Introduction

This study examines whether language learning beliefs can be meaningfully understood from an experientialist perspective, specifically by emphasising the factors of extent and recency of personal language learning experience. Extent refers to the overall accumulated experience, while recency corresponds to a learner's current or recent engagement in language learning. To avoid adding further layers of complexity to existing classifications of language learning beliefs, this study reduces them to two categories: traditional, rooted in conventional foreign language methodology, and progressive, emphasising flexible approaches. Situated within the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, the findings offer a framework for interpreting how learners' beliefs are shaped by the extent and immediacy of their experiences.

It has been established that instructional contexts, extent of schooling experience, and reflective judgment skills can influence our beliefs about knowledge and learning (Hofer, 1994; King & Kitchener, 2004). Several studies also support this conclusion. For example, it has been found that instructors' and their students' beliefs can be affected by immediate experience, identity (i.e., previous beliefs), shared environment, and ongoing interactions (Barcelos, 2000). There may be direct effects of

beliefs and reflective thinking on students' subject-related identities (Guo et al., 2022). Combining critical thinking instruction with specific instructional activities can change students' beliefs (Valanides & Angeli, 2005). Involving students in open-ended applied learning can improve students' beliefs about a particular scientific area (Wilcox & Lewandowski, 2016). These findings imply that we regulate beliefs, at least in part, through our accumulated and novel experiences within various contexts, as well as through interactions with others. We rely on a socially or culturally mediated lens combined with individual capacities and inclinations as we construct meaningful understandings of learning. These premises make the foundation of the experientialist perspective on learner beliefs.

It has also been concluded that knowledge of second language learning affects strategic reasoning and beliefs about the requirements for learning subsequent foreign languages. Students learning L3 believe that their L2 learning knowledge and experiences facilitate learning tasks, strengthen language learning and grammar knowledge even in the case of distant and unrelated languages, and support the development of an open mind, metacognitive awareness, and learning styles (Golonka, 2010). Beliefs were also reported to correlate positively and negatively with language output, thus subject to partly opposing findings that have added a layer of relativity to the relationship between language proficiency and assumptions about how it can be achieved (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Yuen, 2002; Jee, 2017; Kovačević, 2017; 2019). However, experiential variables such as recency or extent of language learning experience have not been recently accounted for in the research attempts to understand the relationship between learner beliefs and language learning.

The available studies do not prioritise examining how much language learning experience is necessary to develop a particular belief, or how actively engaged a learner must be to adopt it. A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between learning experience and belief strength is further complicated by the inconsistent use of belief taxonomies across studies. By reducing the taxonomies to two categories, traditional and progressive beliefs, and by integrating the variables of the extent and recency of language learning experience, this study seeks to contribute findings that may modestly advance our understanding of how language learning beliefs relate to learners' experiential profiles.

Theoretical Framework

Learning Beliefs in the Context of Learning Theory

Beliefs can be viewed as results of interpretations based on associative reasoning leading toward desired or away from undesired potential consequences (behaviourist perspective; Rilling, 2000), outcomes of socially mediated decoding efforts of encoded knowledge (constructivist/social constructivist perspectives; Sjøberg, 2010; Solomon, 1994; Beliavsky, 2006), compressed values utilised for promoting individual or collective growth (humanist perspective; Aloni, 2007), agents entangled with and being in reciprocal relationship with experience (experientialist perspective; Kolb, 2015/1984), and as units of information existing in neuronal networks that can be assembled and reassembled on demand (cognitivist/neuronalist perspectives; Reed, 2007; Zull, 2011).

Choosing any of these definitions is legitimate and informs the overall progress on understanding how learning beliefs fit into the matrix of learning behaviours, outcomes, and underlying factors. However, less exclusive perspectives, such as the experientialist one, can inform all other perspectives as human experience subsumes behavioural, cognitive, social, and emotional components (Kolb, 2015, p. xvii). This perspective views learning as a product of a dynamic exchange between the agents of concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation, and experimentation/application.

Beliefs, Language Learning Traditions, and Dilemmas

A review of methodological approaches to understanding beliefs about second language acquisition led researchers to a preliminary agreement that beliefs are indeed embedded in people's experiences and interactions (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003). It established that we need to employ a variety of methods to evaluate links between beliefs and language learning outcomes, consider how teachers can facilitate change, and how their and their students' beliefs support or hinder learning experiences.

It is useful to examine the extent to which foreign language teaching approaches reflect evolving beliefs about how languages are best learned and taught. Now we know that a single method cannot answer all learners' needs arising within idiosyncratic contexts and phases of language instruction. However, many of the principles

developed throughout the history of language methods are still on the spectrum of instructional alternatives, allowing modern language instructors to rely on "permutations and combinations of the familiar principles and procedures" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 161). The task of choosing from the available options is facilitated through textbooks and supplementary teaching packages but remains a fundamental issue that can never be resolved in advance. The varying levels and types of proficiency, learning abilities, or linguistic backgrounds require continuous reassembly of endorsed principles through not always best configured personal eclectic philosophies (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2008; Prodromou & Mishen, 2008; Donini, 1988). To avoid any cluttered presentation of possible principles informing our beliefs about second language acquisition, a deliberate reduction to traditional and progressive categories is possible. It should be noted that traditional and progressive attributes are not linked to chronological factors in the development of language teaching methodology. The distinction is based on evidence that many classical teaching principles have withstood the test of time and invite the prefix 'traditional.' In contrast, invitations for schooling flexibility, fuelled by the advancement of humanistic reasoning or problem-based and discovery learning advocacy, date back to the beginning of the first previous century (see Dewey, 1938). The following segments distinguish between traditional and progressive beliefs and highlight alternative standpoints regarding how languages are believed to be learned best.

Traditional Beliefs about Language Learning

While the history of foreign language teaching methodology recorded various sets of principles informing instructional behaviours, two methods have preserved their presence in the era of communicative approaches: the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Audiolingual Method (ALM). GTM can be traced back to at least the first half of the 19th century (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teaching activities integrate translation tasks, explicit grammar instruction, and vocabulary memorisation, emphasising accuracy, allowing for the mother language, and overlooking the creation of meaningful and spontaneous communication opportunities (Naghiyeva, 2025; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Today, these principles can still be identified in modern foreign language learning classrooms (Lan, 2025; Naghiyeva, 2025; Handayani & Sujito, 2025; Wu et al., 2023; Pitikornpuangpetch

& Suwanarak, 2021). Language teachers have been found to combine the method's techniques with progressive communicative language teaching principles (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). In addition, several recent studies have highlighted the method's benefits (Naghiyeva, 2025; Handayani & Sujito, 2025; Wu et al., 2023), and students have been found to appreciate its trademark exercises (Wu et al., 2023).

The first half of the 20th century gave us the Audiolingual Method (Renau, 2016; Mart, 2013). It focused on the structure as a unit of learning, and prioritised listening and speaking drills over reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Comparisons of target and mother languages' structures are believed to aid language acquisition, and mastering pronunciation is important. A recent experiment conducted with eighth-grade students demonstrated that this method could improve the students' scores on accuracy and comprehension but not fluency (Manda & Hermansyah, 2022). The method's predictability, linearity, and restrictive patterns of progression are recognised as promoting accuracy (Kumai, 2018). As is the case with the Grammar-Translation Method, there have been suggestions that language instructors should combine it with the Communicative Approach (Bidenko & Bespalova, 2017).

If we learn through the mechanism of experience (Kolb, 2015/1984), if learners' beliefs are shaped by their learning interactions and experiences (Barcelos, 2000; Wilcox & Lewandowski, 2016; Valanides & Angeli, 2005), and if our reasoning about language learning is grounded in our accumulated language learning experiences (Golonka, 2010), then it follows that when instructors apply teaching principles derived from traditional methods such as the GTM or ALM, they help sustain traditional beliefs. In such cases, curricula, teacher training programmes, and instructional routines become key agents in promoting and preserving learners' traditional conceptions of foreign language acquisition. The following findings support this conclusion.

For example, a group of language learners in China was found to believe that explicit vocabulary instruction, repetitive presentations of lexical items, utilising L1 teacher translations, prioritising exam-related content, and conventional drills, such as dictations, facilitate their language learning (Chung et al., 2025). A group of preservice teachers

in Spain was reported to believe that repeating and practicing a lot, and mainly not speaking at all until being able to speak correctly, is important (López Medina, 2024). The majority of Chinese and Thai learner-respondents in another study held the belief that translating from the mother language to English is the most important element of language learning and mainly agreed that learning grammar is also one of the most essential aspects of learning a language (Sun & Wudthayagorn, 2024). A study conducted in a primary school in Malaysia reports that learners believed all grammar mistakes in their essays should be marked and provided with their teachers' feedback, and their teachers practiced providing written feedback and detecting errors (Pui et al., 2023). Overall, these findings indicate that regardless of the L1 schooling cultural setting, certain traditional beliefs are held and employed.

Progressive Beliefs about Language Learning

The early to mid-20th century generated significant momentum for approaching education through cognitivist, constructivist, social-constructivist, and humanistic perspectives. Scholars began to emphasise that sensory input is not passively received but instead interpreted by the processing mind, transformed, stored, and later retrieved (Neisser, 2014/1967; Piaget, 2003/1947; Driver & Easley, 1978; Sjøberg, 2010). The view that knowledge is not only individually constructed but also socially mediated gained broader influence as Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories were increasingly contrasted and debated (Zhang, 2022). At the same time, there was a gradual shift in the key premises of foreign language teaching methodology. Chomsky (1957) disagreed that the creativity and uniqueness of languages had been adequately accounted for, and a growing consensus emerged that ALM-driving principles were insufficient (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The overall climate generated a broadly set approach intended to promote teaching practices aligned with the complex nature of the language, later to be known as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Since then, various curricular and language-promoting authorities have attempted to synchronise their communicative educational philosophies (see Wu et al., 2023; Diallo, 2014; Renau, 2016; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025).

Suppose the primary functions of language are to act on the environment, interact with others, express thoughts and feelings, learn, discover, or articulate and create (see Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In

that case, languages should be taught to develop such competencies. Embracing this premise opens a variety of instructional paths that diverge from those advocated by the core assumptions behind the GTM and ALM. For instance, the target language may be learned while it serves as a medium for content instruction or task completion; grammar and vocabulary can be acquired inductively; and implicit instruction may support a specific instructional goal (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025; Diallo, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). To highlight their creative, purpose-driven, and liberating character, we will refer to the underlying beliefs that inform these principles as progressive beliefs.

As is the case with traditional beliefs, teachers promote and assert progressive assumptions about second language acquisition. For instance, language instructors were found to rely on students' general knowledge and experiences (Kovačević, 2017), encourage real-life language use in group- and pair-work activities (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021), and use authentic materials, project-based activities, and easily accessible media (Lestari & Margana, 2024). As a result, their students are reported to believe that movies, news articles, class conversations, presentations, role-plays, and group work facilitate their language learning efforts (Wu et al., 2023). They also disagree that error-free speaking should be expected at the beginning stages of language learning or that learning grammar and translation are the most crucial outcomes of language learning efforts (Jelešković & Mulalić, 2024).

Research outcomes have clearly identified a difference between the traditional and progressive reasoning about language learning (see Kumai, 2018), but do not necessarily advocate for one side at the expense of the other; there are instead calls for and accounts of combining the two categories (Naghiyeva, 2025; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak; 2021; Wu et al., 2023; Diallo, 2014). The act of combining can depend on situational, contextual, curricular, or preferential reasons, and this is precisely what the post-method era requires; language instructors are advised to match the best teaching solutions with their teaching intentions, curricular particularities, and students' needs (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), as well as develop their authentic teaching methodologies. If we combine the principles, then our language learners are likely to recognise valid aspects of both traditional and progressive reasoning.

Experience and Beliefs about Language Learning

A limited number of recent studies have produced findings that support the premise that language learners with different learning experiences are likely to hold different beliefs. Chung et al. (2025) report that highly proficient secondary school students in Hong Kong held stronger beliefs in the benefits of strategy-focused instruction than mid- and low-proficiency students. Additionally, students in the final two years of secondary school were more supportive of explicit vocabulary instruction than those in their first year. The same study showed that lower-proficiency students preferred games, movies, and songs.

Negative correlations between beliefs about accuracy, practice, and self-regulation and the indices of lexical complexity in an essay corpus collected from freshman English university exams in Sarajevo were identified (Kovačević, 2019). The findings suggested that lower-proficiency students may hold stronger beliefs in these areas compared to their higher-proficiency peers and vice versa. The same data sample also showed negative correlations between beliefs about language learning and syntactic complexity indices (Kovačević, 2017). The only positive correlation was found between motivational beliefs and lexical complexity levels.

A few earlier studies provided partly inconsistent findings about the relationship between proficiency and language learning beliefs (Mori, 1999; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Yuen, 2002; Jee, 2017). Mori (1999) and Yuen (2002) identified both positive and negative correlations between language beliefs and proficiency. Tanaka and Ellis (2003) found negative, and Jee (2017) found positive correlations. Wan, Low, and Li (2011) found that students of varying English proficiency levels attribute different roles to EFL teachers. This study also found that freshman university students anticipated more autonomy and less explicit teaching than their junior colleagues. In another study, sophomore university students were measured to hold stronger agreements with two beliefs than their freshman fellows: the effective teacher should "only correct oral errors indirectly" and "require students to speak L2 first day of class" (Brown, 2009, p. 53).

Ultimately, it remains necessary to ask what our learners today believe to be true about language learning and how their experiences shape their beliefs.

Research Design

This study explores three research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the learners' most prevalent beliefs about foreign language learning?

RQ2: How strongly do learners endorse traditional and progressive beliefs about foreign language learning?

RQ3: To what extent can differences in these beliefs be explained by learners' EFL experience and level of engagement?

To investigate these questions systematically, the Questionnaire of Assumptions about Second Language Learning (QASLL) was developed and validated based on prior research (see Tables 6 and 7). A meta-analytic review of available studies revealed over 300 assumptions. After a preliminary reduction of items to 56, each rated on a five-point Likert scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(1540) = 4273.19$, $p < .001$, indicating sufficient correlations among items to proceed with factor analysis. Additionally, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .73, suggesting that the sample (N = 294) was adequate for factor analysis. Principal Axis Factoring analysis with Equamax rotation generated three factors, which were refined to two interpretable constructs—progressive and traditional assumptions scales—based on the face validity of the additional assessment.

Data was collected using snowball sampling through the researchers' international professional networks, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The reason behind using an international sample was to dilute a particular cultural influence and obtain results that could inform global foreign language teaching practices. Analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25). The distribution of the data was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, as well as visual inspection of histograms, Q–Q plots, and box plots. The progressive scale data were found to be normally distributed. The traditional scale data showed mild skewness; therefore, a log transformation was applied to normalise the distribution before the statistical evaluation of mean differences.

The first two research questions were addressed by examining the means of individual items and subscales. The third research question

was investigated using a one-way ANOVA with Tukey's HSD post hoc comparisons.

Participants

The participants (N = 294) represented diverse linguistic backgrounds, reported various occupations, and had different levels of EFL experience. The largest groups were of Bosnian (114), Bangladeshi (53), and Turkish (40) backgrounds. Most participants were women (58.16%), and 73.47% were young adults (18-35 years old). They were mainly proficient or very proficient, with almost 50% having more than 12 years of EFL experience. Over two-thirds were either active or very active in their current EFL engagement.

Table 1

Participants' Gender

Gender	n	%
Female	171	58.16
Male	115	39.11
Prefer not to say	8	2.72
Total	294	100

Table 2

Participants' Age

Age Group	n	%
18-35	216	73.47
36-50	67	22.79
51-65	9	3.06
65+	2	0.68
Total	294	100

Table 3

Participants' English Proficiency

English Proficiency	n	%
Not Proficient	18	6.12
Proficient	90	30.61
Very Proficient	98	33.33
Native-like	66	22.45
Native	22	7.48
Total	294	100

Table 4

Participants' EFL Experience

EFL Experience (in years)	n	%
1-3	17	5.78
4-8	49	16.67
9-12	59	20.07
More than 12	146	49.66
Not applicable	23	7.82
Total	294	100

Table 5

Participants' EFL Status

EFL Status	n	%
Not very active	64	21.77
Active	123	41.84
Very active	80	27.21
Other	27	9.18
Total	294	100

Results

RQ1 and RQ2: Learners' Prevalent Beliefs and The Strength of Endorsement

In the case of progressive beliefs, the highest agreement was with items Q1 (*A foreign language can be learned easily when it is used in day-to-day activities*), Q22 (*A foreign language is best learned by speaking a lot*), Q54 (*Reading more often can improve your writing skills*), and Q2 (*A relaxed learning environment makes it easier to learn and appreciate a foreign language*). The weakest agreement was with items Q42 (*Online language learning environment is as effective as a traditional classroom*) and Q3 (*Mandatory homework in a language class is a waste of time*). Average agreement with the progressive beliefs was higher than agreement with the traditional beliefs.

Table 6

Progressive Beliefs

Item	M	SD	*
Q1 A foreign language can be learned easily when it is used in day-to-day activities.	4.49	0.78	
Q22 A foreign language is best learned by speaking a lot.	4.42	0.7	
Q54 Reading more often can improve your writing skills.	4.27	0.66	
Q2 A relaxed learning environment makes it easier to learn and appreciate a foreign language.	4.23	0.79	
Q24 Self-directed language learning is important because class time cannot cover everything.	4.15	0.66	
Q41 The internet offers great assistance with language learning.	4.15	0.71	
Q56 Giving and getting lots of feedback is a must in a foreign language class.	4.14	0.72	HIIGH
Q8 Even very proficient foreign language users can face a language problem.	4.11	0.7	
Q16 You can have a better understanding of other countries and their cultures if you speak a foreign language.	4.11	0.79	
Q11 If you want to learn a foreign language, it has to become an important part of your routine life.	4.07	0.76	
Q9 Good language learners ask lots of questions, take extra responsibility, and make an extra effort to learn.	4.06	0.77	
Q44 Good foreign language instruction is not enough. You have to use your own ways to learn a foreign language.	4.04	0.69	
Q40 The internet is a great assistance in using a foreign language correctly.	3.99	0.79	

Q43 Networking with others is crucial for successful foreign language learning.	3.91	0.8	HIGH
Q19 If you experience a grammatical dilemma when writing in a foreign language, it is OK to google it right away.	3.86	0.82	
Q4 When you learn the language of a people, you have to learn about their culture.	3.85	0.93	
Q46 Interactive online games are a great way to improve your language skills.	3.82	0.89	
Q48 Foreign language teachers should focus more on communication and less on linguistic rules.	3.76	0.9	
Q10 Having internet access in a foreign language learning classroom is a must nowadays.	3.75	0.93	
Q53 Speaking one foreign language will not be enough in the near future.	3.71	1.05	MODERATE
Q35 It is important to learn how to coin new words in a foreign language class.	3.7	0.74	
Q6 It is OK to make pronunciation errors.	3.65	0.96	
Q12 Studying a foreign language at home is a great way to improve your proficiency.	3.65	0.93	
Q31 English is learned best by watching movies with English subtitles.	3.65	0.92	
Q20 A good language teacher must know her or his students a little better than other teachers do.	3.61	0.86	
Q47 Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networks are good ways to improve your language skills.	3.56	0.98	
Q21 A foreign language can be learned with or without a teacher.	3.54	0.98	
Q13 Learning English as a foreign language helps appreciating the English culture.	3.42	0.89	
Q7 A foreign language is best learned by reading a lot.	3.4	1.03	
Q25 English does not belong to any particular nation. If you can speak English, you can say that it belongs to you.	3.38	1.02	
Q17 People should learn a foreign language like they learn their mother tongue.	3.26	1.08	
Q34 English is best learned by researching online.	3.05	0.93	
Q18 A foreign language is best learned by writing a lot.	3.04	0.95	
Q42 Online language learning environment is as effective as a traditional classroom.	2.98	0.99	LOW
Q3 Mandatory homework in a language class is a waste of time.	2.45	0.94	
AVERAGE TOTAL	3.74	0.85	

* Level of agreement

The highest agreement with the traditional beliefs was identified with items Q37 (*Learner's self-confidence is very important in a foreign language class*), Q27 (*A foreign language is best learned by listening a lot*), and Q45 (*Reviewing previous lessons is very important in a foreign language class*). The lowest agreement was with items Q50 (*Native-*

like English proficiency can only be acquired in an English-speaking country) and Q55 (*It is impossible to master a foreign language unless you start learning it at a very young age*).

Table 7

Traditional Beliefs

Item	M	SD	*
Q37 Learner's self-confidence is very important in a foreign language class.	4.28	0.74	HIGH
Q27 A foreign language is best learned by listening a lot.	4.15	0.68	
Q45 Reviewing previous lessons is very important in a foreign language class.	4.14	0.57	
Q52 Educated people must speak at least one foreign language.	3.92	1.03	
Q39 A good language learner is always interested in the class activities.	3.8	0.92	
Q33 To find jobs you must speak good English.	3.78	0.96	
Q49 Good language teachers give you some time to get ready before they ask you to speak.	3.77	0.84	
Q23 Good language teachers often correct their students' speaking errors.	3.7	0.92	MODERATE
Q5 In order to speak a foreign language, first you must have some grammar knowledge.	3.54	1.01	
Q36 Good language teachers always correct their students' mistakes.	3.54	1.06	
Q14 Grammar is a road map to learning a foreign language.	3.5	0.94	
Q26 A foreign language is best learned by memorising its words.	3.48	0.92	
Q15 It is OK to worry about your speaking skills in a foreign language class.	3.46	1	
Q29 Learning English is about mastering its sentence structures.	3.4	0.91	
Q32 Whole class speaking activities can be frightening in a foreign language class.	3.36	1	
Q30 Having enough vocabulary and grammar knowledge is enough to be proficient in a foreign language.	3.14	1.02	
Q28 Learning a foreign language is about mastering its grammar rules.	3.07	0.96	
Q51 Good language teachers have a native-like accent.	3.05	1.03	
Q50 Native-like English proficiency can only be acquired in an English-speaking country.	2.85	1.21	LOW
Q55 It is impossible to master a foreign language unless you start learning it at a very young age.	2.43	1.07	
AVERAGE TOTAL	3.44	0.94	

* Level of agreement

RQ 3: Mapping Belief Differences Across EFL Experience and Engagement Levels

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare progressive and traditional assumptions endorsement across gender, age, level of English proficiency, extent of EFL learning experience, and EFL status. Statistically significant group differences were found for the endorsement of traditional assumptions across levels of EFL experience (F[4, 289] = 2.87, p = .023) and for the endorsement of progressive assumptions in the case of EFL status (F[3, 290] = 3.58, p = .014).

Tukey's HSD post hoc test revealed that participants with 9–12 years of EFL experience (M = 69.41) endorsed traditional assumptions significantly less than those with 1–3 years of EFL experience (M = 75.59), log-transformed mean difference = – 0.037, p = .040, 95% CI [–0.07, 0.00]. The same test revealed that very active learners (M = 134.31) scored significantly higher on the progressive scale than not very active learners (M = 129.59), mean difference = 4.72, p = .030, 95% CI [0.25, 9.18].

Table 8

Belief Endorsement Means across Participant Characteristics

Participant Characteristics	Progressive Beliefs		Traditional Beliefs	
	M	SD	M	SD
Female	132.11	10.39	72.18	7.68
Male	129.75	10.68	70.83	8.01
Prefer not to say	134.25	4.06	76.00	9.59
18-35	131.73	10.36	71.81	7.84
36-50	129.78	10.69	71.58	7.92
51-65	131.44	8.52	71.89	9.92
65+	127.00	22.63	71.00	9.90
Not Proficient	132.22	13.62	74.28	7.08
Proficient	129.33	8.74	73.00	7.45
Very Proficient	131.46	11.17	71.33	8.55
Native-like	133.92	10.09	70.67	7.92
Native	129.27	10.52	69.82	6.43
1-3	130.76	11.24	75.59*	7.83

4-8	131.06	9.04	73.12	7.70
9-12	129.24	8.85	69.41*	7.02
More than 12	132.58	11.32	71.99	11.32
Not applicable	128.65	9.99	70.61	8.08
Not very active	129.59*	10.84	71.34	7.67
Active	130.66	10.34	72.28	8.43
Very active	134.31*	10.29	72.08	7.50
Other (learner status)	128.74	8.70	69.44	6.90

*Statistically significant difference within the category

Discussion

The gender and age variables were not anticipated to yield any differences between the levels of endorsement of traditional and progressive beliefs. Still, it was considered that analysing their mean differences might provide additional insight into the data sample. The initial assumptions were correct; no differences were found. A few studies reported sporadic differences between male and female learners' beliefs, but the overall number was low and diagnosed with individual survey items (see Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Tercanlioglu, 2005; Siebert, 2003). This study shows that gender does not account for differences in the endorsement of traditional or progressive beliefs.

Age was shown to influence beliefs in general, particularly across developmental stages from early childhood to full maturity (Hofer, 2005). The participants in this study were predominantly from the young adult group (18-35), with middle adulthood learners (36–50) showing no meaningful divergence in beliefs. Late (51-65) and older adulthood groups (65+) were underrepresented. Given the steady presence of both types of beliefs in our classrooms and considering the assumption that increasing maturity facilitates the adoption of more relativistic views, it seemed plausible to expect differences between different adult groups. That assumption, however, was not supported by the results.

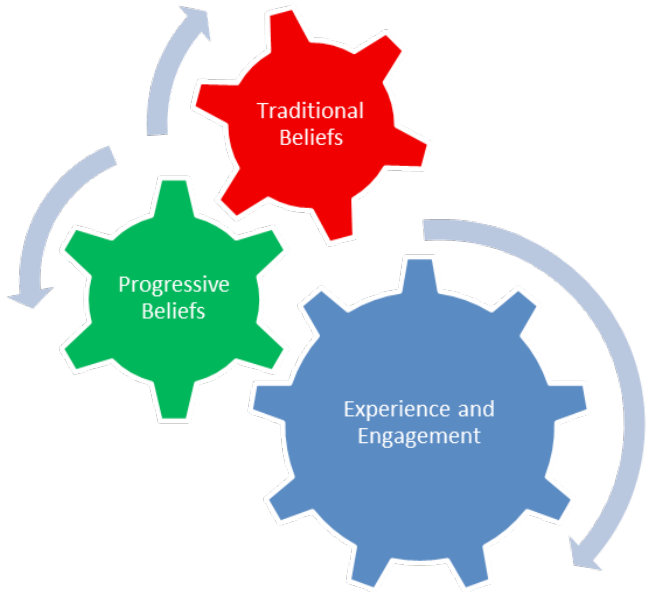
Nevertheless, three other findings were evaluated as crucial. First, EFL proficiency is not a variable that accounts for a preference between traditional and progressive beliefs. Second, learners with '9–12 years of EFL experience' and those with '1–3 years' embrace both traditional and progressive beliefs, but the former reported weaker endorsement of

traditional beliefs. Third, learners who reported being 'very active' held stronger progressive beliefs compared to those who reported being 'not very active' (see Figure 1).

The latter two findings confirm the interpretive utility of the experientialist perspective. Beliefs appear to be related to both the extent of language learning experience and the learner's current level of engagement. However, no statistically significant differences were found between the groups with a moderate amount of learning experience (4-8 years) and 'active' learning status. Learners with either very little or extensive experience, and those who are either very or not very active, seem to adopt different beliefs. Being in between their poles obscures any significant differentiation.

Figure 1

Fluid Relations among Experience, Engagement, and Language Learning Beliefs



Although proficiency did not produce statistically significant differences, the mean values of traditional beliefs appear to decrease as self-reported proficiency increases (not proficient: 74.28, proficient: 73.00, very proficient: 71.33, native-like: 70.67, native: 69.82). Previous

research has related proficiency to the endorsement of beliefs (Mori, 1999; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Yuen, 2002; Brown, 2009; Jee, 2017; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011; Chung, Fung, & Wan, 2025). The regressive pattern identified in this study complements earlier findings reporting negative correlations between beliefs and proficiency (Mori, 1999; Yuen, 2002; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Kovačević, 2017; 2019). Increased experience seems to temper particular beliefs without rejecting them.

The average agreement with traditional belief items was 3.44 (1.00 = min; 5.00 = max). For progressive beliefs, it was higher (*M* = 3.74). Taken together, these mean scores suggest a balanced but slightly progressive-leaning orientation among learners. As argued in the review, teachers and their learners hold both types of beliefs because both are projected through instructional alternatives (Chung, Fung, & Wan, 2025; Pui, Pung, & Ho, 2023; Kovačević, 2017; Diallo, 2014), teacher training programmes (López Medina, 2024), and authoritative publications (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The present findings support the duality. However, the subtle observation that greater experience may encourage a more relativistic stance toward traditional beliefs calls for a nuanced argument: Long-term language learners may validate alternative principles and partly lower the value of traditional ones without entirely dismissing them.

The progressive scale produced a statistically significant difference between 'not very active' (*M* = 129.59) and 'very active' learners (*M* = 134.31). Despite their proficiency levels, the learners' level of active engagement offers a valuable insight into the patterns of endorsement of language learning beliefs. The recency of experience does not impact the embracing of traditional beliefs, but it does influence the endorsement of progressive ones. This may be related to the increasingly autonomous learning environments available to learners today. There was a very low agreement with item Q42 (*Online language learning environment is as effective as a traditional classroom*. However, moderately strong agreement with items Q44 (*Good foreign language instruction is not enough. You have to use your own ways to learn a foreign language*), Q40 (*The internet is a great assistance in using a foreign language correctly*), Q43 (*Networking with others is crucial for successful foreign language learning*), or Q46 (*Interactive online games are a great way to improve your language skills*) suggests that autonomy of language learning experience helps learners recognise the benefits of flexible

learning modes. Interestingly, this is the case with specifically very active learners.

A learner who is not actively seeking language learning outcomes may underappreciate the advantages associated with the flexible, spontaneous, and nonlinear nature of progressive principles. Individuals who are *very* actively seeking language learning outcomes can be more receptive to their benefits. Although the 'very active' group also scored higher than the 'not very active' one on the traditional scale, the difference was not statistically significant. Still, it seems plausible that the ongoing learning experience, coupled with immediate goals and a sense of autonomy, can help learners attach more value to both types of beliefs.

The results confirm that the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) continues to hold an indirect presence. For example, a moderate level of agreement with items Q23 (*Good language teachers often correct their students' speaking errors*), Q5 (*In order to speak a foreign language, first you must have some grammar knowledge*), Q36 (*Good language teachers always correct their students' mistakes*), or Q14 (*Grammar is a road map to learning a foreign language*) yields awareness of grammar and accuracy as priorities. Therefore, recent calls for a reappreciation of conventional instructional principles (see Naghiyeva, 2025; Chung, Fung, & Wan, 2025) are reinforced by learners' own expectations; the conventional approach is still anticipated.

Likewise, tenets of the Audiolingual Method (ALM) resonate with contemporary learners. There was a strong agreement with item Q27 (*A foreign language is best learned by listening a lot*) and moderate support for Q29 (*Learning English is about mastering its sentence structures*) and Q51 (*Good language teachers have a native-like accent*). This points to an appreciation for aural immersion, structural focus, and native-like pronunciation—ALM's core staples. These findings imply that in contexts where communicative approaches are absent or underused (Diallo, 2014), traditional solutions step in to fill the void. Their persistence may not necessarily be a result of methodological superiority but rather a kind of experienced legitimacy shaped by historical authority, continuity, and familiarity.

Although conventional foreign language teaching principles have cemented their status in practice, progressive alternatives have also

secured firm ground. The participants support active language use, individual initiative, and pragmatic application. There was strong agreement with item Q48 (*Foreign language teachers should focus more on communication and less on linguistic rules*) and moderate support for items Q34 (*English is best learned by researching online*) and Q21 (*A foreign language can be learned with or without a teacher*). Learners also value a relaxed learning environment and view speech errors as acceptable. These findings suggest that instructors should rely on language learning activities that extend beyond drills, controlled repetition, and rule-based focus.

Conclusion

This study found that the tension between tradition and progress, between prescription and flexibility, is not only a theoretical binary but a deeply ingrained reality. To summarise the patterns observed in this study, a three-dimensional interpretive space may be conceptualised. The first axis represents learners' belief orientation, ranging from traditional to progressive. The second locates their level of recent engagement with language learning, from not very active to very active. The third reflects the extent of language learning experience, from minimal to extensive. The three intersecting axes are open-ended lines along which learners oscillate, pause, and reconfigure their beliefs. Each learner's belief, then, may be understood as temporarily occupying a unique point within this tri-axial space. Rather than suggesting rigid categories, this model captures fluid positioning and a nuanced account of how both recent activity and accumulated experience can explain beliefs.

One limitation of this study is the use of the Questionnaire of Assumptions about Second Language Learning (QASLL). The instrument was intended as a novel tool to capture the nuances of learners' language learning beliefs. While it offers originality, its emerging status warrants caution. Researchers aiming to compare their findings obtained with classical instruments, such as BALLI (Horwitz, 1985) or BALLI 2.0 (Horwitz, 2013), are advised to scrutinise QASLL items for construct alignment. Notably, QASLL's broader applicability now awaits cross-study validation. Nevertheless, the tool remains open for use and adaptation, and researchers are encouraged to consider its potential when investigating belief systems in varied contexts.

Another limitation concerns the decision to draw from an international sample. The choice aimed to broaden participant profiles and offer a more generalised interpretive model. However, this decision may conceal contextual dynamics that are often more visible in localised studies. Future research could replicate this study in specific cultural or educational settings to test the robustness of the proposed three-dimensional model. Such replications would offer more grounded comparisons, potentially revealing how local conditions shape the way learners occupy different points along the belief, experience, and engagement axes. In this way, the model's capacity to explain belief development could be assessed not only across individual profiles but also across different learning systems.

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
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