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(MELACOM)**



Emergent Learner Beliefs

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Emergent Learner Beliefs

1. Introduction

With the appearance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the late 1970s and early 1980s and language being viewed as means of communication and negotiation of meaning, language learners have been recognized to play central and pivotal roles in the complex and multifaceted process of language development. Equally important are their needs, perspectives, and experiences (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013, p. 1). In the study of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), learner beliefs about language learning, along with other factors such as affective factors (anxiety, attitudes, and so on.) and personal factors (age, aptitude, learning style, motivation, and so on), are considered important factors contributing to individual learner differences, which interact reciprocally with learner strategy choice and learning outcomes (Ellis, 1999, pp. 472-474). Learner beliefs have been extensively researched since the mid-1980s and their significance lies in understanding the implications for instructional practices, choice of learning strategies, anxiety and self-regulated learning (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003, p. 1). These “definite preconceived notions” (Horwitz, 1988, p. 293) or philosophies learners bring into the language development process may have profound impact on how effective and sustainable the ongoing learning process is. If the ultimate goal of language development is bound for success and achievements, investigation into learners’ belief system and its interrelationship with other variables is of paramount importance. As Kalaja and Barcelos (2013) concluded,

the current state of affairs is further characterized by the recognition by most researchers that learner beliefs about aspects of language learning are much more crucial than was thought before in determining how learners approach their learning of second or foreign languages and as such are complex mediational tools intertwining

with learner action in complex ways. (p. 5)

Even though considerable research has been carried out to understand and interpret the nature of learner beliefs, for example, the relationship between beliefs and strategies (Wenden, 1987), a range of common beliefs and instructional implications (Horwitz, 1988), the relationship between beliefs and learner autonomy (Cotterall, 1999), and the mismatch and similarities between teachers' and students' beliefs (Barcelos, 2000), insufficient knowledge has been gained to understand how beliefs may change according to the learning and social context over time, which was also called for by Kalaja and Barcelos (2013) as one of the under-researched aspect- "Change in learner beliefs: How do learner beliefs change and develop (or transform)? What factors influence this change? How can teachers help in the development of learners' beliefs" (p. 5). Some recent research may have investigated how the language learning belief changes among Chinese learners either during a transitional period to tertiary study (Peng, 2011) or in an English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) context in China (Li & Ruan, 2015). The effects of studying abroad on changes of learner beliefs have also been explored in ESL students (Amuzie & Winke, 2009). Relatively little is known, however, about how beliefs during pre-university, university stages gradually change over time. To be more specific, how beliefs of teenage Chinese learners who are preparing to study different majors at tertiary level abroad may change as they receive increasing exposure to content-based learning, how the beliefs of the students who are already studying abroad have changed in comparison. These students are the main force of a much larger scale of social movement. According to a recent report from the Ministry of Education of China (2019), 662,100 Chinese students embarked on the pursuit of overseas studies in 2018, a continuous 8.83% increase from the previous year 2017 (608, 400), which had already witnessed an 11.74% increase from the year 2016. China has been ranked as the largest source country of international students in the world, with the U.S. and Western European countries being the most popular destinations (MOE, 2018). Given

the social context of this unstoppable momentum, it is of unprecedented significance to get an insight into the dynamics and evolution of these learners' belief systems, their perspectives of English language learning situated in a more comprehensive academic context. The present study is an attempt to investigate the potential changes in learner beliefs about English language learning among Chinese pre-university stage students and current overseas university students. It is hoped that this investigation will provide a different dimension to the accumulated wealth of more than three decades of empirical studies on learner beliefs.

2. Theoretical framework of learner beliefs

The following literature review first covers the evolution and diversity of the concept of learner beliefs, then pioneering classic research and more recent research and framework of learner beliefs, which can be categorized as “the normative approach,” “the metacognitive approach,” “the contextual approach” (Barcelos, 2003, p. 11), an ecological framework (Peng, 2011), and socio-cultural perspective (Li & Ruan, 2015). Research on the role of learner beliefs, on study abroad and beliefs will be analyzed. Then the focus narrows down to research on learner belief changes. Current understanding of the key characteristics of learner beliefs is also specified.

2.1 The concept of learner beliefs

To begin with, learners' beliefs or non-experts' beliefs used to be overlooked or undervalued. Initially, their contribution to the learning process and experience were not properly recognized. The unfair preconception of the lack of their validity was criticized, for example, by Allwright (1984) and Barkhuizen (1988). Even Wenden considered their knowledge to be “sometimes incorrect” (as cited in Barcelos, 2003, p. 9). In addition, Horwitz (1988) also described some learner beliefs as “an impediment to successful language learning,”

“limited knowledge,” “erroneous,” or “naive,” which needed modification and expert intervention (p. 292).

As far as the perception and definition of learner beliefs is concerned, it varies according to the researcher’s perspective. The meaning lies in the beholder. It ranges from “metacognitive knowledge” (Wenden, 1986b), “learner representations” (Holec, 1987), “folklinguistic theories of learning” (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995), or “the culture of learning languages” (Barcelos, 1995). Despite the differentiation in the terminology, the commonality seems to center around the unique qualities of language and language learning, and the social and cultural characteristics of beliefs, not only featuring learners’ cognitive awareness but also social and cultural contexts. (Barcelos, 2003, p. 8).

2.2 Studies following diverse approaches

Learner beliefs have been extensively researched since the 1980s. In Barcelos’ (2003) critical and comprehensive review of studies on SLA learner beliefs, she categorized these studies into three groups based on their methodology. These are “the normative approach,” “the metacognitive approach,” and “the contextual approach” (Barcelos, 2003, p. 11). With the sociocultural approach being a recent “off-shoot” (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011, p. 281) of the contextual approach, it is also included in the review. Closely related to the contextual approach is another spin-off, the ecological perspective which prioritizes the interaction between the learner and the social and cultural environment (Peng, 2011, p. 315).

2.2.1 Normative approach

According to Barcelos (2003), the early normative methodology took a descriptive and classifying approach towards learner beliefs, which basically addressed the *what* question. It may also draw a connection between beliefs and learner autonomy (p. 11) with the most commonly used instrument, a Likert-scale type of questionnaire. The most classic and widely

used one was developed by Horwitz (1985, 1988), the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Variation, adaptation or extension of this questionnaire has been done by different researchers to achieve their specific purposes of investigating what learners believed (Cotterall, 1999; Mantle-Bromley, 1995). In addition, qualitative measures such as interviews have also been complementary to validate results obtained by questionnaires (Sakui & Gaies, 1999). Studies using the normative approach seem to suggest a link between beliefs and autonomy or strategy use. For example, Yang (1999) suggested a strong correlation between beliefs and strategy use and “cyclical relationships” (p. 515) between them. In other words, not only beliefs influence strategy choice, but also strategies influence belief formation. However, there was a lack of direct and sufficient evidence to suggest a straightforward causative relationship between beliefs and behaviors. Other contextual factors would have to be considered. The relationship between beliefs and actions can be interactive and dynamic instead of linear and static (Barcelos, 2003, p. 15). The interpretation of learner beliefs would need to be contextualized. The *why* question remained to be explored.

2.2.2 Metacognitive approach

In contrast to the external descriptive normative approach, the metacognitive approach emphasized the understanding of learners’ internal perspectives and reflections of their own learning experience, in other words, their operationalized theories or self-awareness from first-hand experience (Wenden, 1987). Retrospective verbal accounts were analyzed in order to understand what knowledge learners had gained about language and language learning. According to Barcelos (2003), studies within this methodology suggested a stronger connection between beliefs and learner autonomy (p. 17). Wenden (1986b) pointed out that learners were aware of the “language (designating),” “language proficiency (diagnosing),” “outcome of strategies (evaluating),” “personal factors (self-analysing),” and “beliefs about how best to approach language learning (theorizing)” (pp. 197-198). Wenden (1999) suggested that

“learners' acquired knowledge about learning has been shown to influence two key phases in self-regulation: task analysis and monitoring” (p. 437). In other words, this insider knowledge the learner possessed served as a self-assessing, self-managing, self-monitoring, self-analyzing and self-regulating mechanism, either “consciously or unconsciously,” which contributed to learner autonomy (Wenden, 1986a, p. 4). However, the limitation of this approach seemed to be that despite its validity, only indirect inferences could be drawn from learners' narrations and reflections, leaving their actions unchecked (Barcelos, 2003, p. 19). The *how* question remained unanswered, as questioned in Wenden's (1986b) own words,

does learners' knowledge and understanding of language determine (a) the degree to which they utilize their social environment as a source of information on the language? (b) what they deem useful to attend to as they interact in their social environment? (c) the variety of strategies they develop to learn and use the language? And if so, how? (p. 198)

2.2.3 Contextual approach

The contextual approach interprets learner beliefs as context dependent. Context is socially interactive and dynamic in nature. According to Goodwin and Duranti (1992), context is a “socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon” within which “each additional move within the interaction modifies the existing context while creating a new arena for subsequent interaction” (pp. 5-6). Therefore, within this approach, learner beliefs are characterized as “contextual, dynamic and social” (Barcelos, 2003, p. 20), which are conditioned by situations (Sakui & Gaies, 1999, p. 48), and context-related (Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 464). Although learners' own interpretations are still highly valued in this approach, more diverse methodologies have been instrumented to get in-depth insights into the *what*, *why*, and *how* of learner belief mechanism, taking almost every contextual clue into consideration.

New approaches like case study (Barcelos, 2000), diaries (Nunan, 2000) and metaphor analysis (Ellis, 2001) offer intimate, unique, personal, and creative angles to see beliefs from new and exciting perspectives, getting unexpected results, such as seeing paradoxes or conflictions in learners' belief system.

2.2.4 Sociocultural/ecological approach

A more recent development of approach to study learner beliefs is the sociocultural/ecological framework, which is a “complementary path to exploring beliefs as contextually situated social meaning emerging in specific sense-making activities” (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011, p. 368). Studies within this framework emphasize how beliefs mediate “in cognition, in change and in the macro-political context” (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011, p. 286) when considering language construction within the interaction with its social environment (Peng, 2011, p. 315). Learner beliefs emerge from, respond to, react with the environment, and transform. The exact reactive and interrelated mechanism amongst beliefs, context, and actions have been interpreted differently within this framework. For example, in Yang and Kim's (2011) case study, they found that learner beliefs constantly evolved according to learning goals and within social interaction (p. 332), while Peng's (2011) study suggested that changes in learner beliefs were “mediated by classroom affordances” (p. 314), which could result in “affirmative” or “counterproductive” beliefs (p. 321).

2.3 Research on the role of learner beliefs in language acquisition

Given the importance of beliefs that individual learners bring into the learning process, together with other variables, such as affective factors and personal factors, their perceptions, attitudes, and metacognitive knowledge, learner beliefs about language learning contribute to individual differences, which interact with learning strategy and learning outcomes (Ellis, 1999, pp. 472-474). What was preconceived by learners may have an impact on their attitudes or

motivation, which may eventually lead to success or failure in their language acquisition (Kuntz, 1996, p. 4). To be more specific, learner beliefs have been found to have facilitative or debilitating effects on language learning (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 8).

On the one hand, positive or supportive beliefs would guide learners to deploy problem solving strategies, help keep them motivated, and help them become autonomous learners. Awareness of language learning can improve metacognitive knowledge and task participation. “Autonomous learners use their experience of attempting tasks, employing strategies and solving problems to develop their understanding of how language learning works” (Cotterall, 1995, p. 202). Similarly, Yang’s (1999) study also suggested that EFL learners’ self-efficacy beliefs were strongly correlated with their use of various learning strategies and that “learners’ beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English were closely linked to their use of formal oral-practice strategies” (p. 515).

Moreover, learner beliefs may have great impact on learner behaviors. As McDonough (1995) pointed out, they could influence decision and stimulate action, since

...what we believe we are doing, what we pay attention to, what we think is important, how we choose to behave, how we prefer to solve problems, form the basis for our personal decisions as to how to proceed. An important fact about this argument is that it is not necessary for these kinds of evidence to be true for them to have important consequences for our further development. (p. 9)

In addition, some evidence of the relationship between learner beliefs and learning outcomes was provided by Abraham and Vann’s (1987) comparative case study of two learners. It was suggested that the wider philosophy of language learning held by one learner might have contributed to his higher standardized test score while the better performance of the other learner in a speaking test suggested that the difference in views about language learning may result in difference in success. Furthermore, Park’s (1995) investigation of the relationship

among beliefs, strategy use, and L2 proficiency with 332 Korean university EFL students suggested learners who had confidence in English learning and intended to communicate with others in English tended to be more active users of English, especially outside class, and careful monitors of their own progress. These behaviors were suggested to be related to the improvement in their language proficiency.

On the other hand, in terms of learning outcomes, while insightful learner beliefs were said to associate with successful learning, restrictive or negative beliefs would be counterproductive or detrimental to learning. Mantle-Bromley (1995) proposed that learners who enrolled in language courses with misconceptions about language learning would be frustrated and hindered in their language development and progression (p. 372). This assumption was testified by Peacock's (1999) empirical study which concluded that certain learner beliefs were harmful to language learning, and that they caused dissatisfaction and frustration in students because these students were not able to comprehend the purpose of the language tasks in class (p. 247).

Additionally, according to Victori and Lockhart (1995),

if students develop or maintain misconceptions about their own learning, if they attribute undue importance to factors that are external to their own action. . .they are not likely to adopt a responsible and active attitude in their approach to learning and may never become autonomous. (p. 225)

These destructive and negative ideas may result in indifferent attitudes toward learning, poor performance in cognition, anxiety in class, or negative attitude toward autonomy (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, p. 225). In fact, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) pointed out that some learner beliefs could induce students' anxiety in the classroom as their beliefs and expectations may be in conflict (p. 127). Additionally, when there were discrepancies between learner beliefs and teacher beliefs, tensions in the classroom may arise. As suggested by Horwitz (1990), in communicative language teaching, learners who valued grammar accuracy and error

corrections may be confronted with teaching approaches that focused more on meaning and communication, and therefore may feel unconfident in and dissatisfied with the class while other students who believed in communication may feel offended when being over corrected (pp. 24-25). When learner beliefs or their prior experience were incompatible with the teaching approach, learners may reject the activities or ideas presented in class (Cotterall, 1995, p. 203).

Just as what Riley (1996) asserted, learner beliefs play an influential role in learning because

what they believe will influence their learning much, much more than what we believe, because it is their beliefs that hold sway over their motivations, attitudes and learning procedures. And obviously if there is a misfit between what learners believe and the beliefs embedded in the instructional structure in which they are enrolled, there is bound to be some degree of friction or dysfunction. (p. 128)

2.4 Research on study abroad and beliefs

It is generally believed that natural settings provide more opportunities for language acquisition than formal educational settings since they involve informal and incidental learning through contact with the target language and social interaction language community, which leads to higher level proficiency. Therefore, study-abroad is considered valuable and advantageous because it provides abundant informal learning opportunities (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003, p. 66). In Tanaka and Ellis' (2003) empirical research of a 15 weeks' study-abroad program in the U.S. for Japanese university students, changes in learners' beliefs about English learning and improvement in their English proficiency were investigated (p. 63). Two TOEFL tests were administered at two different times, the first one three months before the program, and the second one thirteen and a half weeks after the program. Furthermore, a learner belief questionnaire was administered at two time periods as well, the first three weeks before the students left for the program and the second one three days before they returned. The results

indicated that the most pronounced change in beliefs concerned “Self-Efficacy and Confidence” (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003, p. 79). It was suggested that the study and living abroad experience seemed to have had a major positive effect on learners’ beliefs about their capacity to communicate in English with increased confidence and lower apprehension, about feeling less concerned about mistakes while speaking, and about their overall improvement.

In addition, in Tanaka’s (2004) twelve-week longitudinal study of Japanese ESL students in New Zealand, changes from idealistic to realistic beliefs were identified, from initially believing in picking up the language quickly once they were in the target language country to eventually realizing that it was unlikely; from rejecting grammar to accepting the need for grammar (as cited in Ellis, 2014, p. 701).

2.5 Research on learner belief changes

The understanding of the characteristics of learner beliefs has shifted from being stable and static to dynamic and emergent (Hosenfeld, 2003), from decontextualized to contextualized, from preconceived and internal to experience-based and perceived. “Learner beliefs are situation specific and dynamic” (Ellis, 2014, p. 701). Changes in learner beliefs have been observed within different learning contexts mostly involving the same group of subjects.

First, according to Kern’s (1995) study, changes were reported in the beliefs of 180 university students learning first-year level French in the U.S. over the course of 15 weeks when individual responses of a pre-test and post-test administration of Horwitz’s BALLI were compared. It was found that 35 percent to 59 percent of the responses changed on any given item and a 52 percent change when considering all items. The most noticeable shift was found in Item 19 (“*If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on*”) with 37% of students shifting to greater agreement and 15% to lesser agreement with the statement, which suggested that a lot of students became increasingly aware of their own mistakes and they experienced difficulty unlearning them or accepting allowing them

uncorrected from the beginning (p. 79). Item 20 (“*Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules*”) also experienced major shift of beliefs. Thirty two percent of the students shifted toward greater agreement while twenty percent toward lesser agreement, which resulted a twelve percent shift toward greater agreement with the importance of learning grammar rules (pp. 79-80).

In contrast, Riley (2009) reported significant negative changes in learner beliefs in his investigation of 661 first-year university students over nine months of English study in Japan by administering Sakui and Gaies’ (1999) beliefs survey at two different times. Changes were found in almost 15 percent of 45 items (p. 102). The most significant negative change between Time 1 and Time 2 was found in Item 4 (“*I believe that someday I will speak English very well*”) with a decreasing mean and a 16% drop in the number of students who agreed and strongly agreed with this statement, which may suggest a weakening perception of self-efficacy (p. 112).

In a different comparative study by Rifkin (2000), it involved more than 1000 learners of 10 different languages from three different institutions over a three-year period. They were enrolled in different levels of language courses starting from year one. When comparing beliefs held by first-year learners with those held by learners at other levels, differences were found. More specifically, in 11 out of 33 items, first-year learners held significantly different beliefs from those held by their higher-level peers (pp. 397-399). It was claimed that “one third of all the items is a sufficiently large proportion of all the items for us to conclude that we cannot assume that beliefs held by learners at the first-year level are always similar to beliefs held by learners at other levels” (p. 399).

In the Chinese EFL context, Peng’s (2011) longitudinal and qualitative study of one first-year college student during a transition period from secondary school to tertiary study reported significant fluctuations in the participant’s belief systems as a possible response to “the mediation of classroom affordances” (p. 314), which shaped and reconstructed his beliefs (p.

322). Another more recent large-scale longitudinal study about Chinese university students' belief changes in an English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) context, Li and Ruan (2015) reported significant changes in learner beliefs about the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, and learner autonomy. Four main causes to the changes were identified, i.e. "the changes in assessments, teachers' role, the study of content subjects in English, and extracurricular activities" (p. 50).

In terms of the effects of study abroad on belief changes, Amuzie and Winke's (2009) study of 70 international students (28 ESL students and 42 university degree students) in the U.S. reported that learners changed their beliefs significantly on learner autonomy and the teacher's role due to study abroad; the length of study abroad also strengthened their beliefs in learner autonomy (p. 366). Similarly, the findings from Yang and Kim's (2011) case study of two ESL learners suggested that the learners' beliefs continuously change according to their learning objectives and experiences (p. 325).

To sum up, currently interpreted as socially constructed and contextually situated, learner belief system is a complex and multifaceted construct that has been researched extensively following diverse methodologies, and changes or fluctuations in learner beliefs have been observed in different contexts. Not only do learner beliefs depend on context, they also interact with and change according to the environment and learning context. The changes in beliefs tend to be situation specific. The dynamics between the learner and language learning are perplexing yet intriguing. The previous findings have further confirmed the importance of understanding learner beliefs as an important individual difference factor and its impact on learning and the learner cannot be underestimated. The *what*, *why*, and *how* questions are still standing valid inquiries. The more it is investigated, the more complex the nature and process of SLA seems to be. Learner beliefs do not form in vacuum. When they are studied in context, they seem to propagate towards different directions.

Experts like Kalaja and Barcelos (2013) have been calling for further studies in the development and evolution in learner beliefs, more specifically, “how do learner beliefs change and develop (or transform)” (p. 5). Furthermore, Wesley (2012) has proposed that research on learner beliefs could focus on under-researched groups such as high school students or unconventional programs like “hybrid courses” or “immersion programs” (p. 112). Despite considerable research on learner belief changes in different contexts, little is known about the change in learner beliefs amongst the steadily growing number of Chinese international high school students who are preparing to study at overseas universities and how these beliefs continue to develop or transform once they commence their higher education in the destination country, given that these students are not simply EFL learners but more importantly majors in various core academic subjects. How would these learner beliefs evolve from an EFL context to a study-abroad context, from high school to university?

In light of the above literature review and inspired by Wesley’s (2012) proposed research questions (pp. 111-112), the current study sets out to investigate the potential changes in learner beliefs during transitional stages in an international high school extending to university and explore the most salient changes and their contributing factors. The following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: Do learner beliefs change according to learning context?

RQ2: What are the most salient changes in learner beliefs? What contributes to these changes?

3. The study

3.1 Setting

The study was situated at an international high school in Guangzhou City, the capital of Guangdong Province in southern China. The school consists of nearly 400 full-time students

and over 150 part-time language students. The full-time international program is a 3-year pathway program- an Advanced Placement (AP) program (from Grade 10 to Grade 12) for progression to universities in the U.S., Canada, and other countries or regions. Students on this program continue their Chinese high school curriculum in Grade 10 and undertake AP courses in Grades 11 and 12. Overall, the Grade 10 curriculum is more Chinese math and science intensive while the Grade 11 and 12 curricula is more western and diversified based on students' course choices. The English instruction in Grade 10 is limited and less demanding than those subjects taught in Grade 11 and 12: three English subjects in Grade 10 (Pre-AP English, English for Academic Purposes, General English 10), but at least four in Grade 11 or 12, including one to two English subjects (General English 11, English 11, English 12, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition) plus three other electives with instruction in English, such as math (AP Calculus, Advanced Calculus, AP Statistics), science (AP Physics, AP Chemistry, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP Computer Science), social science (AP Economics, AP Psychology, AP World History, AP US History, AP European History, AP Human Geography), history (AP Art History), or drama. The AP accredited subjects are of university introductory level. To fulfil graduation requirements, Grade 11 and 12 students must take English plus two to three AP subjects every year, and study and pass both math/science and social science subjects over the final two years of their study. Additionally, the part time program offers language courses: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) foundation courses and second foreign language courses such as German.

The school currently has 30 academic teaching staff, 18 of whom are native English speakers, 12 Chinese. The teaching styles vary. The Chinese teachers tend to be more teacher-centered and practice-oriented, while expat teachers are characterized by student centeredness with discussion, group work, or hands-on projects. The school endorses the philosophy of assessment for learning. Assessments include formative assessments such as quizzes,

homework, coursework, projects, presentations, poster projects, and portfolio, and summative assessments such as unit tests, end of semester exams, essays, research paper, lab reports, group debates, presentations, projects, and so on. Students also voluntarily and actively take part in various extra-curricular academic and non-academic activities involving English on and off campus, for example, speaking contests, debate tournaments, international competitions, summer school programs, among others.

3.2 Participants

A total of 214 students participated in the study, including current and former students who are either studying at overseas universities or working. The subjects were categorized into four subgroups according to their grade levels. Among them were 105 Grade 10 students, 54 Grade 11 & 12 students, 13 EAP language students, and 42 former students. The native language for all participants is Mandarin Chinese. In terms of their foreign language background, apparently Former Students, which is the most senior group, are the most experienced (93%) in getting English exposure and English education, and nearly half (48%) of them are learning other foreign languages apart from English. In contrast, among the current student participants, the youngest group, EAP students seem to outrun the other two groups in the experience of studying in English speaking countries/regions (62%) and learning other foreign languages besides English (39%). Interestingly, it seems the younger the current student participants are, the higher the percentage of experience of studying in English speaking countries is. Their foreign language background is shown in Figure 1 by group.

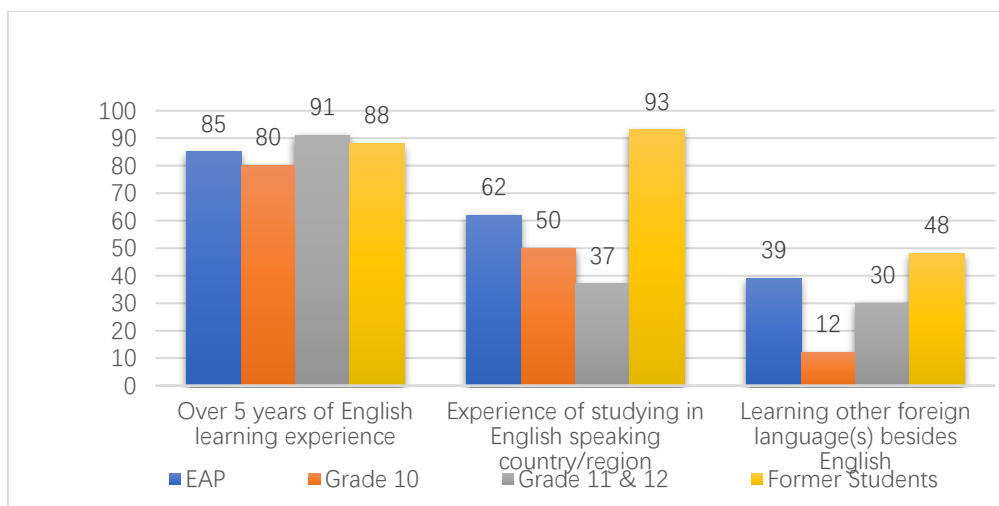


Figure 1. Foreign Language Background of Participants

As far as length of studying in English speaking countries is concerned, among the current student participants, nearly a third of Grade 10 (28%) or Grade 11 & 12 students (28%) have studied in English speaking countries/regions for less than a month. Again, the youngest group, EAP students have outrun the other two current student groups as one fourth of them (25%) have studied in English speaking countries/regions for more than nine months, as shown in Figure 2.

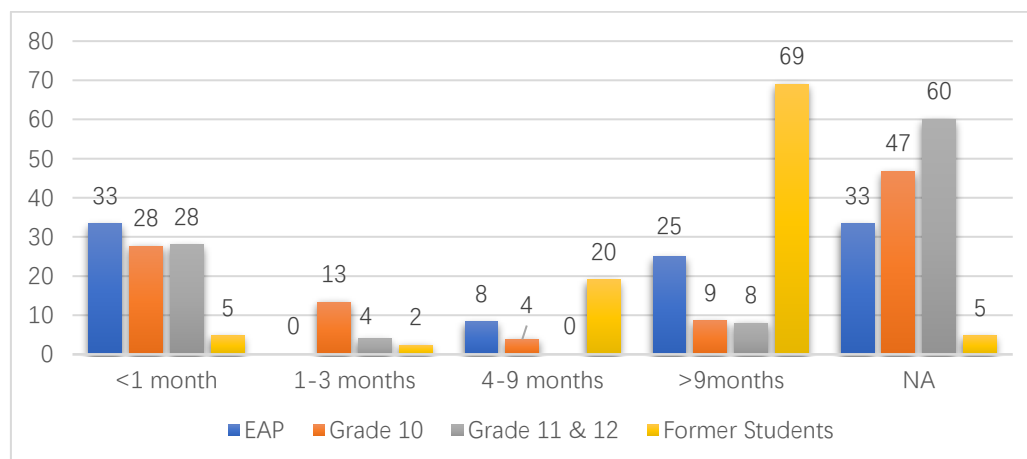


Figure 2. Time Spent Studying in English Speaking Country/Region

3.3 Instrument

In order to establish common ground for the analysis of potential changes among the

subgroups of participants, the BALLI (Horwitz, 1988) questionnaire was adopted, slightly modified, and instrumented. There were two nearly identical versions, A and B. The first version was designed for Grade 10 students (See Appendix A for Learner Beliefs Questionnaire A). It had 40 items in total, which included the 34 items from the original BALLI and six additional author-designed questions (Yes/No questions and specific open questions). The second version was designed for Grade 11 &12, EAP, and Former Students (See Appendix B for Learner Beliefs Questionnaire B). It had 43 items. The first 39 items were nearly identical to version A (except for Item 22, which had to be rephrased in order not to alienate the subjects), and the last four items were additional specific open-ended questions (Items 40-43). Item 40 in Version B was specifically designed to probe the cause of any belief change.

The first part of both versions of the questionnaire is to elicit quantitative data. It consists of the classic 34 items from the BALLI. It was adapted to accommodate the EFL learning context for Chinese students in China. It consists of statements related to language learning covering five categories: “1) difficulty of language learning; 2) foreign-language aptitude; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) learning and communication strategies; and 5) motivation and expectations” (Horwitz, 1988, p. 284). The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and instrumented bilingually for clarity and more importantly for higher data quality (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 79). The questionnaire kept the original 5-point Likert-scale rating.

The second part of the questionnaire in both versions elicits qualitative data and asks for background information. First, it consists of Yes/No questions and multiple choice questions asking for information about their language background, for example Item 35 “*Besides English, are you learning any other foreign languages,*” Item 36 “*How long have you been learning English,*” Item 37 “*Have you studied in an English speaking country/region,*” and Item 38 “*How long did you study there.*” Furthermore, to elicit qualitative responses about personal beliefs, one guided open question (Item 39) asked about “*From your experience, what do you*

believe to be the most important thing in learning a foreign language well.” In questionnaire Version B specifically targeting Grade 11 & 12, EAP, and former students, one explicit open question (Item 40) about change of belief and the perceived cause of change was added, i.e. *“Have your beliefs of English language learning dramatically changed over the years you have studied it? If yes, what caused them to change? What did you believe in before and what about now? If no, what keeps you believing in what you believe?”* Item 41 asked for additional comments. Two additional background information questions were also added, one to differentiate students from different subgroups (Item 42) and the other to ask whether they are working or studying (Item 43). Finally, through online personal communication, specific follow-up questions were designed and posed to a few selected individual students who had left outstanding comments to Item 40 for more in-depth understanding of the change.

3.4 Data collection

As an attempt to investigate the *what, how, and why* questions about learner beliefs and potential belief changes, the current study adopted a combined method in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data after taking into consideration the advantages of three of the approaches previously reviewed, namely normative, metacognitive, and contextual. The study intended to collect descriptive, reflective, and contextual evidence to address the research questions.

The procedures of data collection are as follows. First, Version A of the questionnaire was created on an online survey platform, SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey). Then it was administered to Grade 10 participants in late March 2019 during the second semester, which was nearly 30 teaching weeks into the first year of the AP program. Students needed internet connection to complete and submit their responses directly online. In the end, 105 valid responses were collected out of 120 students (88% return rate) for Version A. Later in April, Version B was created and modified based on Version A and administered to the other three

subgroups. Finally, 54 Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, 42 former students, and 13 EAP students responded voluntarily. The average time completing the survey was approximately 7 minutes.

Raw data were collected electronically. Questionnaire data were collected and stored automatically by SurveyMonkey (see Survey Monkey link for full results). As for the follow-up questions, personal communication was used to get responses from a few focus individual students.

3.5 Data analysis procedures

Since the sample size of participants from the EAP group was disproportionate compared to the other three (n=13, as opposed to Grade 10, n=105; Grade 11&12, n=54; Former students, n=42), and it was substantially below the suggested number of 50 to be of any statistical significance (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 82), it was excluded from the inter-group quantitative data analysis but included in the overall analysis and qualitative content analysis.

Before directly addressing the research questions, an overview of all the participants was provided for contextualized understanding of the features of learner beliefs of subgroups later and for meaningful analysis of potential changes and contributing factors. The overview is presented in percentages by item. The five scales have been collapsed into three for simplicity and clarity of reporting (Bernat, 2006; Peacock, 1999). Percentages of “Strongly agree” and “Agree” were combined as “Agree,” and percentages of “Strongly disagree” and “Disagree” were combined as “Disagree” in the analysis.

To address Research Question 1, “*Do learner beliefs change according to learning context,*” quantitative data underwent basic statistical analysis. Collapsed percentages of highlighted items of three subgroups (Grade 10, Grade 11&12, and Former Students) were compared and contrasted, and the upward or downward trends were identified and analyzed by category and item. Then means of Likert-scale response scores between neighboring groups (Grade 10 and

Grade 11&12, Grade 11&12 and Former Students) were compared and trends were also identified. Since the five-point Likert scale is a summated rating scale, it is possible that the responses have approximately equal intervals and intensities and therefore viewed as interval data (Riley, 2009, p. 107). It is important to note that the EAP group was excluded from this part of analysis due to the disproportionate number compared to the other three groups. Since the focus of the study mainly concerned the international program in the full-time curriculum, EAP students' responses were to provide prototypical perspective to the understanding of learner beliefs.

As stated in the research question the independent variable "learning context" is broadly categorized and generalized as a complex one. From the researcher's teaching experience and observation it is assumed to change from Grade 10 to Grade 11 &12 and surely to university because of the unique university pathway curriculum design in the international school. It is designed to be gradually more progressive and more academically demanding to meet university standards and demands. Students build up their university readiness as they progress. Therefore, the focus of the study was to examine if beliefs of students with experience studying in this particular institution and situation gradually would change, to what extent they changed, and what changed. In this sense, the change of "learning context" was generally defined as global change affected by a number of tangible and intangible factors: the nature of medium of instruction (from Chinese plus western curriculum in Grade 10 to totally western curriculum in Grade 11 & 12, to total immersion in universities), exposure to English (from partially in English to totally in English), English proficiency (from intermediate to advanced and mastery), language in use (from pragmatic use to real-life application), learning experience, foreign language related social experience.

To address Research Question 2, "*What are the most salient changes in learner beliefs? What contributes to these changes,*" qualitative data were analyzed. Content analysis was

applied to all individual responses to two explicit open questions, first to identify common themes of current beliefs about the key factor in successful foreign language learning within each subgroup, which were then coded, tagged, and categorized. The frequencies of these themes that were mentioned in the responses were then counted and compared among four subgroups. The emerging themes were discussed. After that, the narratives of dramatic changes in beliefs and their contributing factors were analyzed individually and categorized, with a selected few extended to responses to follow-up questions. The younger EAP group's responses have also been included in the analysis.

3.6 Results and discussion

3.6.1 An overall view of all participants

Before the results were analyzed in between subgroups, a general view of all the participants' beliefs was necessary in order to get the global picture of this particular mixed levels of subjects, to understand them in context. The results indicated that the participants were mostly skewed towards the majority of the 34 Likert-scale statements from all five categories. In fact, in 29 out of 32 "Agree/Disagree" statements, they either mostly agreed ("Strongly agree" and "Agree" combined) or disagreed ("Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" combined), in only one opinion rating statement they mostly chose "Neither", as shown in Table 1 (See Appendix A for questionnaire items). These learner belief characteristics, despite some variations in percentages, were strikingly similar to those found in Peacock's (1999) BALLI study of university EFL students in Hongkong, which reported that "27 out of the 34 items generated high levels of either agreement or disagreement" (p. 253), even though the two studies were two decades apart. This may suggest that Chinese EFL or ESL learners' characteristics have not undergone dramatic changes even though time has changed.

Table 1

Belief Percentages by Category and Item

Category	Item	1. SA	2. A	3. N	4. D	5. SD	1+2 ^a	4+5 ^a
I ^b	3	34	50	12	3	1	84^c	4
	4 ^d	7	23	54	14	2	30	16
	6	36	51	9	1	3	87	4
	14 ^e	15	37	29	12	7	52^f	19
	24	10	31	33	19	7	41	26
	28	8	23	28	31	9	31	40
II	1	48	41	8	3	0	89	3
	2	32	54	10	4	0	86	4
	10	8	47	36	8	1	55	9
	15	6	31	39	17	7	37	24
	22	4	6	24	33	33	10	66
	29	1	0	12	42	44	1	86
	32	9	39	33	14	6	48	20
	33	4	26	51	13	5	30	18
34	12	38	30	16	4	50	20	
III	5	1	4	19	47	29	5	76
	8	34	52	9	4	1	86	5
	11	38	44	15	3	0	82	3
	16	10	36	30	19	4	46	23
	20	4	31	34	22	8	35	30
	25	18	51	20	10	1	69	11
	26	1	6	21	47	25	7	72
IV	7	30	47	16	5	2	77	7
	9	2	2	12	45	39	4	84
	12	4	14	32	36	13	18	49
	13	25	57	14	3	1	82	4
	17	52	46	2	0	0	98	0
	18	4	16	33	36	12	20	48
	19	9	23	25	33	10	32	43
	21	28	59	10	2	1	87	3
V	23	46	42	9	2	0	88	2
	27	36	50	12	2	0	86	2
	30	20	57	19	2	2	77	4
	31	11	32	32	21	4	43	25

Note. a. 1+2 are collapsed Agree combining Strongly Agree and Agree; 4+5 are collapsed Disagree combining Disagree and Strongly disagree.

b. The five categories are: I. Difficulty of Language Learning, II. Foreign Language Aptitude, III. Nature of Language Learning, IV. Learning and Communication Strategies, V. Motivation and Expectations.

c. The percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. The highest collapsed score of percentages of each item was highlighted in **bold**.

d. Difficulty level: 1=very difficult, 2=difficult, 3=medium difficulty, 4=easy, 5=very easy.

e. Time to study the language: 1=less than a year, 2=1-2 years, 3=3-5 years, 4=5-10 years, 5=you can't learn a language in 1 hr /day.

f. 1+2 are combined percentages of less than a year and 1-2 years.

Looking at the five categories, some general trends were apparent, as shown in Table 1.

First, starting from the first category, as far as Difficulty of Language Learning is concerned,

over half of the students (54%) rated English of medium difficulty (Item 4) and the majority (87%; SA 36%; A 51%) have confidence in themselves to eventually speak it well (Item 6). More than half in total (52%) predicted that it will only take only less than a year (“1”=15%) or one to two years (“2”=37%) to become fluent in a foreign language if someone studies it an hour daily (Item 14). A difficulty hierarchy in language learning (Item 3) was also endorsed by the majority (84%; SA 34%; A 50%). In terms of the difficulty of language skills (Items 24 & 28), the opinions were split three ways.

Second, with regard to Foreign Language Aptitude, participants’ self-evaluation of their own foreign language aptitude (Item 15) were also almost split in three, i.e. 37% agreed, 39% neither agreed nor disagreed, 24% disagreed. However, the majority (86%; SA 32%; A 54%) endorsed the idea of other people having the innate aptitude (Item 2), more than half (55%) believed that knowing a foreign language would facilitate the learning of another (Item 10), and half (50%) were optimistic about all people’s potential of learning a foreign language (Item 34). Overwhelmingly, nearly 9 in 10 (89%; SA 48%, A 41%) students supported the common belief that children were more superior in learning foreign languages than adults (Item 1). As for whether other personal factors like gender is relevant to the success or failure of foreign language learning (Item 22) or whether people who are strong in logical and abstract thinking may be poor in foreign language learning (Item 29), more than half to the majority objected, 66% (SD 33%) and 86% (D 42%; SD 44%) respectively. Moreover, approximately half (48%) believed that people who are multilingual have high intelligence (Item 32). However, more than half (51%) were uncertain whether Chinese have strong foreign language aptitudes (Item 33).

Third, when it comes to the Nature of Language Learning, cultural contact (Item 8, SA 34%; A, 52%) and a naturalistic immersion language environment (Item 11, SA 38%; A 44%) were viewed by most as necessary and preferable (86% and 82% respectively). In comparison,

the importance of Chinese as their first language in facilitating foreign language learning has been downplayed (Item 26) by more than two-thirds (72%). Structural differences between Chinese and English (Item 5) were recognized by most students (76%) and more than two thirds (69%) believed that there was a difference between learning foreign language and other subjects (Item 25). As for elements of language learning, the importance of learning new vocabulary when learning a foreign language (Item 16) was endorsed by nearly half (46%, SA 10%; A 36%) while approximately a third (30%) were unsure. In contrast, the opinions regarding the importance of learning grammar rules when learning foreign languages (Item 20) were nearly equally divided three ways (35% agreed, 34% neither agreed nor disagreed, 30% disagreed).

Fourth, as for Learning and Communication Strategies, repetition and practice (Item 17), including in-class practice (Item 21, SA 28%; A 59%) was strongly supported by a landslide majority (98% and 87% respectively). Strategies of dealing with the meaning of unknown vocabulary by guessing (Item 13) were commonly acknowledged by the majority (82%, SA 25%; A 57%;). Many students (77%, SA 30%; A 47%) also highly valued native-like accents (Item 7). The idea of absolute accuracy prioritizing fluency (Item 9) was rejected by most (84%, D 45%; SD 39%). However, mixed opinions were found about the contention that mistakes would stick and would be hard to unlearn them if they were allowed at the beginning stage (Item 19), with 32% accepted, 25% neutral, and 43% objected. As for interpersonal communication strategies, around half students (49%) would not choose to approach English speaking people and practice speaking with them when they heard them speaking (Item 12) while around a third (32%) were uncertain about this approach. The perception of self-consciousness speaking English in front of others (Item 18) was felt differently (20% agreed, 33% neutral, 48% disagreed).

Finally, regarding Motivation and Expectations, the majority were optimistic about the

opportunities to use the English language (Item 23, SA 46%; A 42%) and the possibilities of getting a decent job if they could speak it well (Item 27, SA 36%; A 50%), 88% and 86% respectively. Over three fourths (77%) also considered Chinese people would value learning foreign languages (Item 30, A 57%). However, opinions about whether learning English is for getting to know English speaking people (Item 31) were split three ways (43% agreed, 32% neutral, 25% disagreed).

In summary, the characteristics of this group of participants are noteworthy. First, the majority of this particular mixed group of participants were optimistic about the difficulty of foreign language learning and they were quite confident in their abilities to eventually speak English well. Second, although they were not so sure about their own aptitudes in foreign language learning, they tended to believe that those who succeed have innate abilities and probably everyone has the potential of learning a foreign language. Their beliefs in that the younger the more advantageous in learning a foreign language and that multilinguals are more intelligent seemed consistent with common folklinguistic beliefs even though they mostly discarded the relevance of the role of gender in the success of foreign language learning. Third, the majority of them believed in the importance of learning the culture and being in the target country when learning a foreign language. They also seemed to differentiate Chinese and English as two distinct languages, as well as the study of foreign language and other school subjects. Forth, they also tended to attach greater importance to acquiring vocabulary than learning grammar rules while approximately a third were unsure. The overwhelming majority highly valued repetition and practice. Native accents were also regarded important by many. Strategies like guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words were believed to be appropriate and acceptable although many participants may not necessarily think it is appealing to approach strangers for the purpose of practicing oral English. Fifth, they generally held positive expectations for the opportunities and possibilities a good English level may bring even though

their motive of learning the language may not solely be to integrate into the target language community.

Although it seems both reassuring and rather concerning to acknowledge that this group of participants generally held positive, optimistic, practical, and mature yet somewhat oversimplistic or idealistic, slightly underconfident, unfounded, or even seemingly inhibiting beliefs, other than prematurely stereotyping these negative beliefs as erroneous or counterproductive preconceptions that they brought into the learning process, perhaps it would be better to understand them in the context of their origins. Some of these beliefs may have reflected their current stage of learning and their experience in language learning and have been influenced by a constellation of contextual factors.

3.6.2 Results for Research Question 1

Taking all the participants' language belief characteristics into perspective, it provides a comprehensive baseline which may facilitate the understanding of the subgroups' perspectives in investigation of the first research question. If the learning context of these participants is assumed to change from one grade level to another, transiting from a hybrid Chinese and western curriculum to a western curriculum finally to total immersion, will their perceptions of language learning change accordingly? As reflected by Rifkin (2000), "[l]earners change by virtue of the instruction they receive and we can only hope that the beliefs of students in intermediate, advanced, or even graduate level classes are different from the beliefs held by their peers in the introductory courses" (p. 395). However, even if they do change, will the change be definite?

The answer to the first research question (*Do learner beliefs change according to the learning context?*) is not a straightforward yes-or-no but a *yes-and-no*. This will be elaborated in detail by looking at frequency patterns, i.e. percentages of certain responses to each selected item from a lower level group to a higher level group and means between neighboring groups.

Firstly, the positive part of the answer can be drawn from observation of consistent and gradual strengthening or weakening of learner beliefs in 22 out of 34 (68%) of the Likert-scale items in the BALLI questionnaire in all five categories. When comparing percentages of responses to “Agree” and “Disagree,” consistent linear upward or downward trends could be observed across three ascending groups, i.e. from Grade 10 to Grade 11 & 12 to Former Students.

To begin with, in terms of the first category, the Difficulty of Language Learning, upward trends of learner belief strengthening could be observed in three out of six items (Items 3, 6, and 14). Additionally, both upward and downward trends could be observed in one item (Item 4) from lower level group to higher level group, i.e. from Grade 10 to Grade 11 & 12 to Former Students, as their learning context was supposed to continue to change. On the one hand, in the first category, responses to “Agree” to Item 3 (*“Some languages are easier to learn than others”*), Item 6 (*“I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well”*), and Item 14 (*“If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent”*) witnessed a consistent upward trend: Item 3 from 81% in Grade 10 to 91% in Grades 11 & 12 to 93% in Former Students; Item 6 from 84% to 85% to 93%. As for Item 14 regarding the length of time to learn to speak a language fluently, an increasing number of learners chose less than two years (from 45% to 54% to 62%). This was consistent with Tanaka and Ellis’ (2003) finding that suggested SA improved students’ confidence.

On the other hand, responses to “Agree” and “Disagree” to one item, Item 4 saw both consistent downward and upward trends across the three subgroups. As students’ grade level increased, a decreasing number of students considered English difficult (38%, 24%, 19%). Unsurprisingly, as their grade level increased, a reverse increasing number of students considered it easy (9%, 22%, 29%), while the amount of students who considered it of medium difficulty remained relatively stable (53%, 54%, 52%). This also resonated with Tanaka and

Ellis' (2003) study that found SA affected students' perception of self-efficacy. The upward and downward trends indicated by increasing or decreasing percentages are shown in Figure 3.

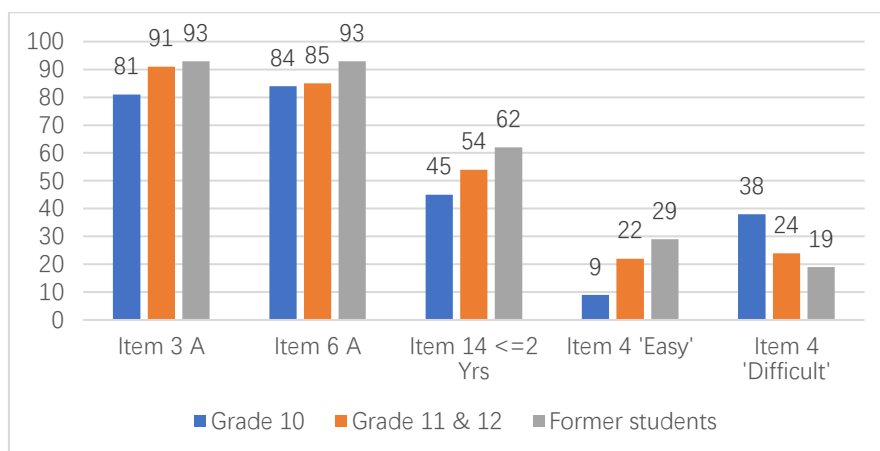


Figure 3. Strengthening or Weakening Beliefs in Category I in Percentages

For Category II, Foreign Language Aptitude, five out of nine items witnessed a consistent upward trend and another a near-upward trend in two items also suggested strengthening of certain beliefs across the three subgroups. To begin with, a near-upward trend was visible in the beliefs in children superiority over adults in foreign language learning (Item 1, from 87% to 93% and maintained 93%) and multilinguals' high intelligence (Item 32, from 42% to 50% and maintained 50%). In addition, an increasing number of students believed that *“It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one”* (Item 10), *“I have a foreign language aptitude”* (Item 15) and *“Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language”* (Item 34). In comparison, there was also an increasing number of students who disagreed with the statement that *“Whether someone is good at learning foreign languages is gender-based”* (Item 22). Moreover, there were gradually more students who disagreed with the statement that *“Chinese are good at learning foreign languages”* (Item 33). The upward or near upward trends represented by percentages are shown in Figure 4.

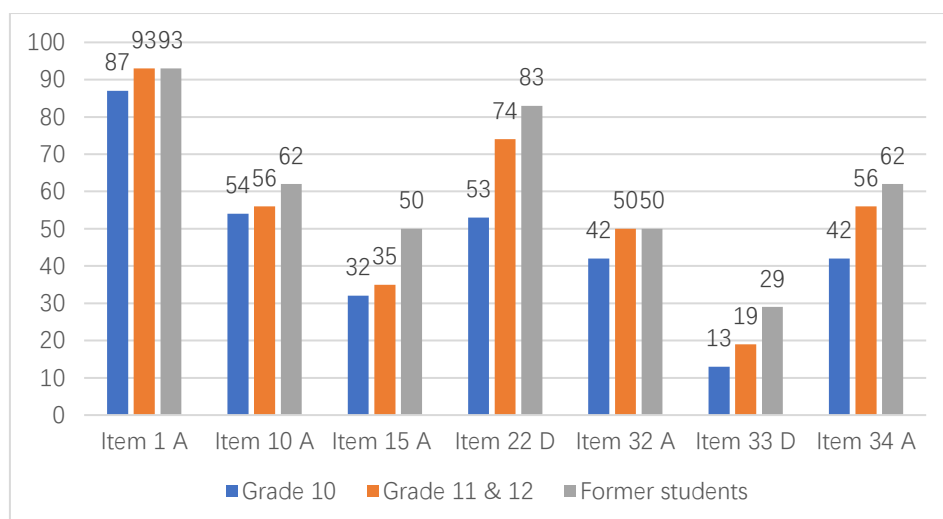


Figure 4. Strengthening Beliefs in Category II in Percentages

With regard to Category III, the Nature of Language Learning, there were also observable strengthening of beliefs. An increasing number of students disagreed with three out of seven items, i.e. Items 8, 11, and 26, while a steady increase in “Agree” could only be observed in 1 item (Item 25). Surprisingly, growth was marginally visible in a small number of students who did not consider that “*it is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language*” (Item 8) as their exposure to the language environment and culture were supposed to increase. They may consider communicating in the language independent of having knowledge of the culture. An equally interesting result was that there was also a slight increase across the three groups in the number of students who did not believe that “*it is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country*” (Item 11). They may gradually realize that learning a foreign language in the target language country may be favorable but not absolutely necessary. They may increasingly believe naturalistic environment may not be a guarantee of success in language learning. This seems consistent with the view that SA alone may not automatically produce proficiency (Tanaka, 2004). As for Item 26, gradually more students disagreed that “*learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese.*” On the other hand, there were gradually more students believing that “*learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects*” (Item 25). These upward trends are shown in

Figure 5.

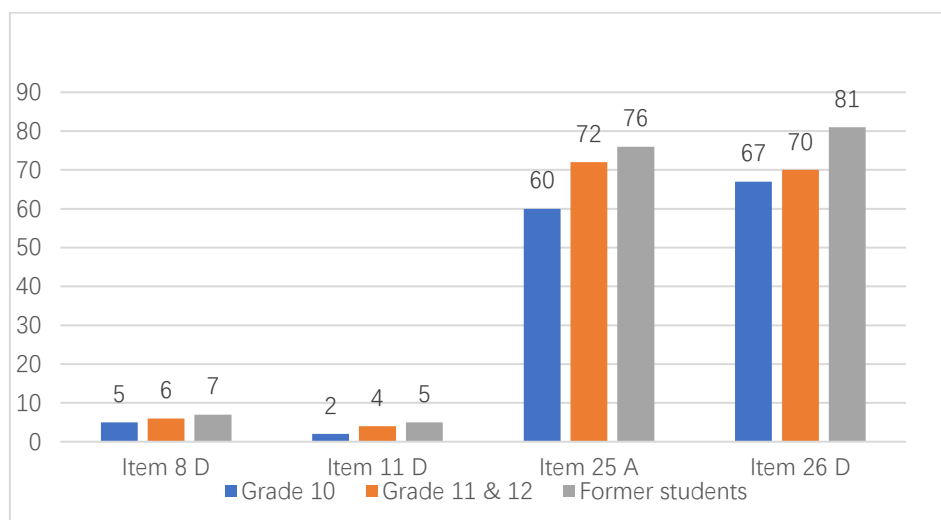


Figure 5. Strengthening Beliefs in Category III in Percentages

In the fourth category, Learning and Communication Strategies, upward or downward trends were identifiable in the percentages of responses to all the items across the three subgroups, which was another indication of some beliefs becoming stronger or weaker. First, on the consistent upward side, gradually more and more students believed that “*it is important to repeat and practice often*” (Item 17, 96% to 98% to 100%). The increase from a high majority to an absolute 100 percent was a clear indication of the firmer belief in the significance of repetition and frequent practice. Furthermore, an increasing number of students disagreed with the statement that said “*if you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on*” (Item 19, 40% to 44% to 48%), which could imply that students may have gradually realized that making mistakes was an inescapable part of the learning process. This provided counterevidence to Kern’s (1995) study that identified a 22% shift to agreement at the end of an intensive language program. However, this appeared to confirm what Tanaka and Ellis (2003) found about SA easing students’ concerns about making mistakes.

Second, on the consistent downward side, fewer and fewer students thought that “*it is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent*” (Item 7, 80% to 78% to 67%). This may suggest that as students progressed in their learning experience, their idealization of

native-speaker like accents gradually weakened. Additionally, there was a marginal downward slip in the percentage of students who agreed that “*it’s important to practice in language class*” (Item 21), although the percentages remained high (86%) and the slide was probably statistically insignificant.

In contrast, a gradual increase or near gradual increase could be observed in both “Agree” and “Disagree” in Item 12 (“*If I heard someone speaking English. I would go up to the so that I could practice speaking it*”) although “Disagree” remained high. A near linear decrease and increase trend was also noticeable in responses of “Agree” and “Disagree” to Item 18 (“*I feel conscious speaking English in front of other people*”) even though “Disagree” was still high, which may indicate that as their grade level increased, their self-confidence seemed to improve as well. Given the increased opportunities to apply English in different academic contexts, such as giving public presentations and speeches, group debates, pair and group discussions, students may also have changed the feeling of self-consciousness when speaking in public. They may have gradually learnt to overcome the uneasy feeling as their language ability improved. This seemed to offer additional support to Tanaka and Ellis’ (2003) finding that SA had positive impact on lowering students’ apprehension when communicating in English. The changing trends are shown in Figure 6.

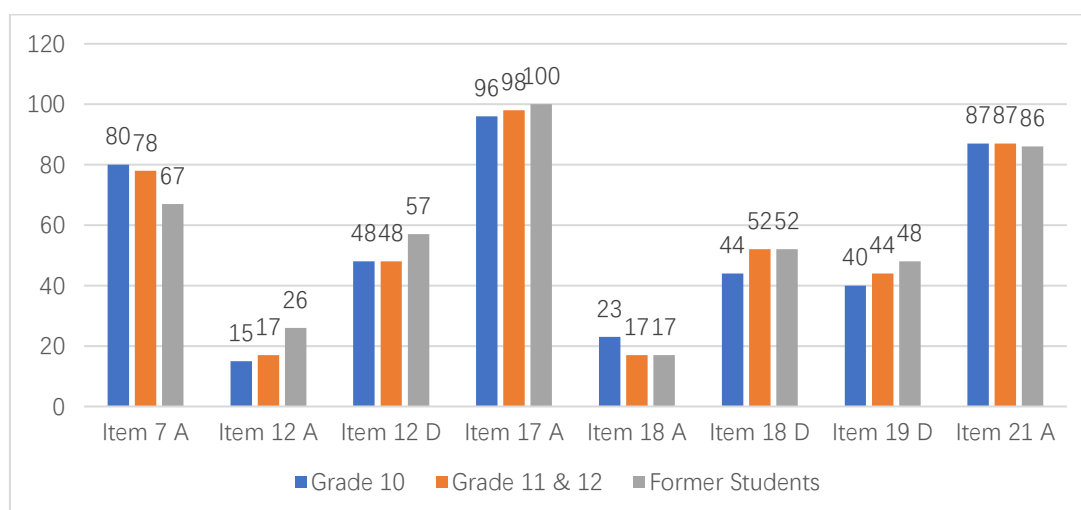


Figure 6. Strengthening and Weakening Beliefs in Category IV in Percentages

Finally, a firmer belief was observable in the fifth category, Motivations and Expectations. University students or former students who have completed their higher education and had working experience (93%) seemed to affirm more strongly than high school students (81-89%) that “*if I learn to speak English well, it will help me get a good job*” (Item 27). This upward trend is shown in Figure 7.

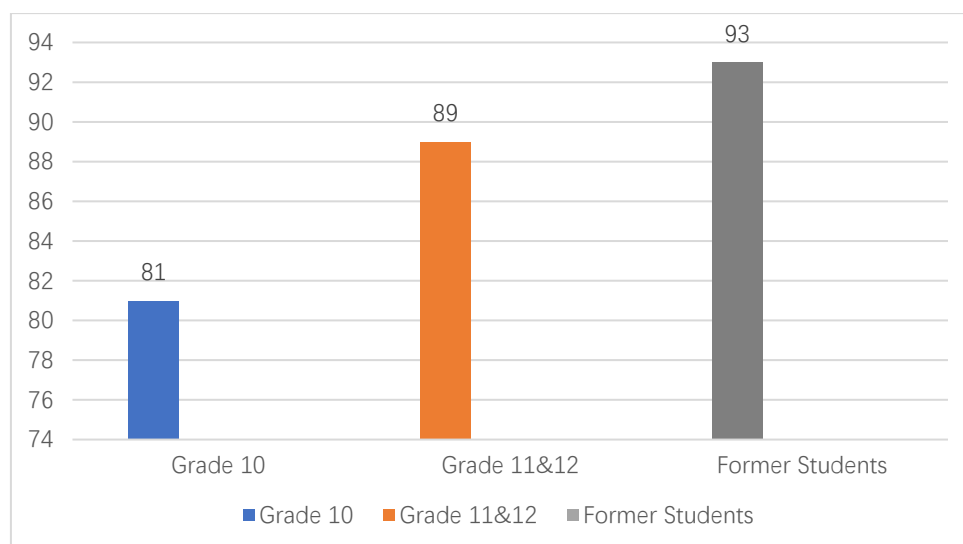


Figure 7. Strengthening Belief in Category V in Percentages

In conclusion, these linear upward or downward trends as previously discussed could not be mere coincidences but telltale signs of belief strengthening or weakening, a type of changes in belief strengthen possibly as response to the assumed changes in the predetermined learning context. This provides insight into the first Research Question (*Do learner beliefs change according to the learning context?*). Investigation in “differences in belief strength” is valuable in understanding learner beliefs (Horwitz, 1999, p. 575). It could be inferred that as students came into closer contact with increasing amount of exposure to formal instructions in English, more immersive language environment, and more demanding and authentic application of the language in different academic subjects, such as the situation in the international school being studied, international program students’ as well as university majors’ beliefs in language and language learning would be susceptible to change, in this case some grew stronger or waned.

These findings corroborate some previously reviewed studies in the Chinese EFL context (e.g. Li & Ruan, 2015; Peng, 2011) where learner beliefs tended to change according to the context. However, they provided counterevidence to Bernat's (2006) conclusion that learner beliefs are resistant to change from one context to another and her argument that instead, a more complex factor may be at play, "the individuals' complex metacognitive structure, as affected by a number of social, cultural, contextual, cognitive, affective, and personal factors that is responsible for the shaping nature and strength of these beliefs" (p. 222).

The unique educational context in this particular international school may explain the change. In Grade 10 in this international school curriculum, students had only three English subjects and a total of 12 English language instruction hours per week, while students from Grade 11 and 12 received a significantly larger amount of instruction in English, mostly in subjects such as AP English, Math, Science, History, and Social Science subjects, which are of demanding university introductory level delivered only in English by native English speaking teachers. The material, subject content, and language were not specifically tailored for EFL learners. They were as authentic as they could be. What this may suggest for the learners was that English language learning in content-based learning context may have become incidental while the subject knowledge and skills were primary learning objectives. This would have a major impact on how they would approach language learning, as a means to an end but not an end in itself. Moreover, suffice to say that the amount of language exposure, academic requirements, standards, and challenges at the university level were even more substantial and overwhelming for university students in comparison, which may also have greatly influenced how these advanced level students would approach their language learning, perceive the nature of language learning, refine their learning and communication strategies, and adjust their expectations and motivations, and so on.

To summarize, as the results may have shown, to a certain extent there seemed to be

gradual changes in learner beliefs across the three subgroups. The participants' self-confidence in mastering the English language gradually grew as their self-evaluation of the difficulty level lowered over the years, which may also lead to their strengthening belief that fluency would be achievable in less than two years if one spent an hour a day studying a foreign language. As their experience of language learning grew, they also held stronger and stronger belief in children's advantage over adults in learning a foreign language as well as a possible facilitative effect of knowing one foreign language in learning a second foreign language. At the same time, they may also become more self-assured that they may possess the innate ability for foreign language learning and become more optimistic that all may have foreign language aptitude. Moreover, an increasing number of students across the three groups disbelieved in the relevance of gender in foreign language learning. Although still a majority of students within the three groups considered culture inseparable from language learning and it would be more favorable to learn the foreign language in the target language country, a gradually bigger percentage of students negated its absolute necessity and language-environment interdependence.

Additionally, they continuously downplayed the importance of translating English into Chinese for comprehension and recognized the difference between studying English and the other subjects. The importance of speaking like a native-speaker was gradually decreasing, so was the necessity for integration through approaching native-speakers as their self-consciousness of speaking in front of the others dwindled. The most overpowering shift was the belief in repetition and practice. All former students reached a consensus on this golden rule of thumb. Making mistakes has also been gradually accepted as inevitable. Their optimism in enhanced future job prospects brought by strong English communication skills also grew stronger from lower level group to higher level group. All in all, participants' self-belief, self-confidence, and self-comfort in the control of the language seemed to have improved, their

perception of the nature of language learning have become progressively more realistic and less L1 dependent, their learning strategies tended to be more reliant on self-autonomy and self-efficacy through repetition and practice, and their interpersonal communication strategies appeared to concern less about sounding like natives.

However, these global trends of growth and wane in belief strength only revealed part of the bigger picture. The complex learning context may provide some explanation to the interpretation of results. It may need some backup from another dimension that involves all participants' opinions. In fact, when triangulating data using a different analysis procedure, investigating more closely the differences between group means of 21 out of the 22 items that experienced upward or downward trends (except for Item 14 about time needed to be fluent in a foreign language), other patterns were revealed in between ascending neighboring groups, specifically between Grade 10 and Grade 11&12, between Grade 11&12 and Former Students. Table 3 shows the three subgroups' beliefs, i.e. Grade 10 (n=105), Grade 11&12 (n=54), Former students (n=42), in terms of means of responses weighted on a five-point scale. It is important to note that the lower the numeric value of the mean, the stronger the belief due to the weighting scheme of the questionnaire (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree). To provide a more straight forward impression, obvious trends in changes of average have been presented in arrows: an upwards arrow (↑) signifying a continuous increase between two neighboring groups, a downwards arrow (↓) signifying a continuous decrease between two neighboring groups, a combination of the two (↓↑ or ↑↓) signifying a fluctuation, and an equal symbol (=) signifying no change between two neighboring groups. In this part of the analysis, the no change pattern (=) lends important insights into understanding the *No* part of the answer to the first research question. These trends are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Belief Change Trends in Neighboring Groups

Cate- gory	Item No.	Mean			Trend
		G10	G11&12	Former Ss	
I ^a	3	2.00	1.57	1.74	↓↑
	4 ^b	2.61	2.96	3.12	↑↑
	6	1.92	1.74	1.74	↓=
II	1	1.77	1.43	1.60	↓↑
	10	2.50	2.44	2.36	↓↓
	15	3.00	2.83	2.60	↓↓
	22	3.53	4.17	4.17	↑=
	32	2.71	2.74	2.69	↑↓
	33	2.83	2.98	2.95	↑↓
	34	2.78	2.43	2.43	↓=
III	8	1.90	1.74	1.93	↓↑
	11	1.82	1.69	1.98	↓↑
	25	2.27	2.31	2.21	↑↓
	26	3.80	3.83	4.00	↑↑
IV	17	1.55	1.50	1.45	↓↓
	21	1.93	1.91	1.88	↓↓
	7	1.96	2.00	2.33	↑↑
	12	3.44	3.37	3.43	↓↑
	18	3.23	3.54	3.43	↑↓
V	19	3.00	3.24	3.24	↑=
	27	1.86	1.76	1.74	↓↓

Note. a. The five categories are: I. Difficulty of Language Learning, II. Foreign Language Aptitude, III. Nature of Language Learning, IV. Learning and Communication Strategies, V. Motivation and Expectations.

b. 1=very difficult, 2=difficult, 3=medium difficulty, 4=easy, 5=very easy.

Indeed, when including all participants from each group and taking their opinions into consideration, the group means provided a different lens in understanding the consistent upward or downward belief change patterns in neighboring groups, which were observable in eight items (Items 4, 7, 10, 15, 17, 21, 26, and 27) across all five categories, which were representative features in the language belief construct, indicating their ideas about the difficulty of the English language, their own foreign language aptitude, people's ability to learn an additional foreign language, whether translation from the first language is the main approach to learning English, the importance of recycling and practice, and their expectations of future job prospects in relation to a good level of English speaking skills. This provides additional

support to confirm the Yes part of the answer to the research question and the previous statistical analysis.

First, as far as Difficulty of Language Learning is concerned, the change in the perceptions of the difficulty level of English (Item 4, $M=2.61$ to 2.96 to 3.12 , difficult to medium difficulty) was probably due to the significant changes in instructions and academic demands among these groups, from a moderate amount of English instruction to mostly EMI. As students' proficiency level and their command of the language improved as result of overall academic advancement, their self-perceptions of difficulty level seemed to change from rather difficult to moderately difficult. A side note is that it represented a substantial 19% drop (from 38% to 19%) in agreement with difficulty from Grade 10 to Former Students.

Second, with regard to Foreign Language Aptitude, interestingly, high school students' self-evaluation of their own foreign language aptitudes (Item 15) underwent subtle changes when they became university students ($M=3.00$ to 2.83 to 2.60 , neutral to somewhat agree), which was probably because they started out as generally uncertain or not very confident in their own aptitudes. However, as new opportunities and challenges arose and their command of the English language improved, as well as experiences with other foreign languages increased, their confidence in their own innate abilities was enhanced and reassured, so was the belief in the increasing easiness of learning a second foreign language (Item 10, $M=2.50$ to 2.44 to 2.36 , increasingly agree).

Third, as for the Nature of Language Learning, unsurprisingly, students across neighboring groups attached less and less importance ($M=3.80$ to 3.83 to 4.00 , increasingly disagree) to the translation approach in learning a foreign language (Item 26). This may seem plausible since students may have gradually discovered the differences between Chinese and other foreign languages, especially English, and that learning a foreign language through translation is not as effective as they instinctively thought and their learning experience in gradually more

immersive academic courses and curriculum that require spontaneous and instantaneous thinking in and using English at all times and discourage overreliance on Chinese translation would also have attributed to this positive change. English acquisition in this international school resembles an immersive program since the immediate language environment is primarily in English.

Fourth, when it comes to Learning and Communication Strategies, repetition, practice (Item 17), and in-class practice (Item 21) were consistently viewed as key learning strategies (M=1.55 to 1.50 to 1.45, M=1.93 to 1.91 to 1.88 respectively, consistently towards strongly agree). Similarly, the importance of native accents (Item 7) was consistently highly valued (M=1.96 to 2.00 to 2.33, strongly agree to agree). However, the more socially and communication adept learners may hold stronger beliefs that accents were increasingly less important compared to other aspects of communication possibly due to their accumulated social and learning experience, as well as adjusted expectations and positive feedback from others.

Fifth, regarding Motivation and Expectations, their expectations of good command of English leading to promising future job prospects (Item 27) remained consistently high (M=1.86 to 1.76 to 1.74, strongly agree). This positively high expectation may be related to the conventionally more instrumental orientations and motivations of Chinese English learners. It supports Dörnyei's (1990) conceptualization that for EFL students instrumental motivations play a major role in helping them achieve a reasonable proficiency level (pp. 45-46). The association between good English skills and well-paid jobs are palatable in students who invest in studying overseas and hoping to gain an edge in the future job market.

These trends appear to provide additional support to validate the previous analysis of item percentages in that they appear consistent with the prevalent emerging trends observed before. In addition, they seem to verify the assumption and speculation that beliefs do change, but only

to a certain extent. Generally speaking, these changes would seem positive. From a lower grade level to a higher grade level, English seemed to become relatively easier, and they grew more confident in their own foreign language aptitude, became less dependent on L1 when learning English, but still endorsed repetition and practice. There were signs that they attached less and less importance to sounding like natives although it was still highly admired. They also held high hopes for job opportunities that strong English speaking skills may bring.

Finally, from a statistic point of view, it is intriguing to note that in four items Grade 11 & 12 students have developed similar views to those of the university students', which were beliefs regarding their ultimate achievement, other people's foreign language ability, relevance of gender in foreign language learning, and attitudes towards making and learning from their own mistakes. For example, views in people's foreign language aptitude (Item 34, both group $M=2.43$, agree), as well as views in their own success in long-term learning outcome (Item 6, both $M=1.74$, strongly agree). As for whether foreign language learning is gender related (Item 22, $M=4.17$, disagree), the equivalent high group mean suggested that higher level students may have developed similar unprejudiced view as university students as their personal learning or social experience accumulated. Additionally, to seniors and university students, the idea of allowing mistakes seemed slightly less daunting and more acceptable as part of the learning process, especially at the beginning stage (Item 19, $M=3.24$, in between neutral and disagree).

The above findings were consistent with what Rifkin (2000) found in his study which reported that to a certain extent first-year foreign language students held different beliefs from their advanced counterparts (in 11 out of 33 items). In other words, more advanced and experienced learners tended to disagree more that foreign language learning is mostly a matter of translating from the first language (Item 26), that allowing mistakes at the early stage will cause problems later on (item 19); and tended to be more optimistic that they will eventually learn to speak the target language well (Item 6), that they themselves have foreign language

aptitude (Item 15), and that learning to speak the target language will help them get a good job (Item 27), among other beliefs.

Thus far, as the results seem to indicate, junior and senior students have developed beliefs more similar to those of university students' because the learning environment and demands in Grade 11 and 12 are a major step-up from Grade 10 but a close simulation to and preparation for the universities, such as the university introductory level AP courses, elective curriculum, assessment methods, study of subject content via EMI, independent learning, and so on, all of which require them great efforts and commitment in achieving their goals, confidence in their equal capacity to achievement, and continuous development despite mistakes or temporary setbacks.

In sum, the two step quantitative data analysis in item percentages and group means has suggested that consistent strengthening or weakening of certain beliefs covering the majority of BALLI items were indeed apparent across three subgroups, which may be a manifestation of the underlying differences and progressive changes in the learning context within these groups. This finding may echo the implications from Li and Ruan's (2015) and Peng's (2011) research findings which suggested that EFL learners' change or (re)formulation of beliefs were mediated by socio-cultural factors, such as immediate classroom environment, study of subject content via EMI, teacher's role, extracurricular activities, changes in assessment format, among others. Moreover, the analysis seems to provide evidence to an emergent, dynamic, and contextual concept of learner beliefs (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Barcelos, 2003, 2015).

However, the non-linear change or minor fluctuations or inconsistencies in some items between subgroups may be attributed to individual differences or other factors instead of one single contextual factor, for example, learning strategies, proficiency level, motivation, cultural or family background, significant others, gender, maturity, personality, affective state, among others. The fluctuations may be marginal and are still within the same scale range if analyzed

more closely. Non-change between the two most advanced groups happened to reflect the similarities in the leaning context between Grade 11 & 12 and Former Students.

All taken into consideration, it would still be premature to jump to the conclusion that learning context alone is *the* contributing factor of the changing trends. To some extent, the findings may have confirmed Bernat's (2006) speculation that instead of a single contextual setting learner beliefs variations could be "due to the effects of individuals' complex metacognitive structure (as affected by a number of social, cultural, contextual, cognitive, affective, and personal factors) that is responsible for the nature and strength of these beliefs" (p. 202). The analysis so far has focused on collective statistical trends other than individual changes, and quantitative data other than qualitative data. Individuals' changes or perspectives or their own contexts and situations have not yet been explored or taken into consideration.

3.6.3 Results for Research Question 2

Even if numbers do not lie, statistics may entail only one type of impersonal interpretation while self-reports may reveal other truths that will co-construct and validate the whole picture. Analysis of the responses to specific open questions (Items 39 & 40) provides valuable insights into individual students' own belief systems and belief developments in answer to Research Question 2 (*What are the most salient changes in learner beliefs? What contributes to these changes?*). First, the frequencies of common themes of beliefs about the key factor in successful foreign language learning have shown emergent insightfulness in certain beliefs from lower level students to higher level students. In addition, some individuals have indicated changes or (re)formations of some specific beliefs that are personally significant to them. The contributing factors to these changes are situation dependent and case specific. The following qualitative data analysis is organized by item.

3.6.3.1 Item 39 about the most important elements

While analyzing the responses to Item 39, *From your experience, what do you believe to*

be the most important element(s) in learning the English language well, respondents' free responses revealed some commonalities that are close to their core personal beliefs (See Appendix C for all responses). Five common themes that students identified as the most important elements in foreign language learning have been categorized, i.e., Practice, Learning Strategies, Learner Qualities, Language Environment, and Communication Strategies. These responses reflected participants' diverse learning experience and individual differences. The open interpretation of "element" from the question has taken on different dimensions, including external and internal factors. Some obvious tendencies were visible among subgroups, as shown in Figure 8. The numbers signify the frequency in total counts a particular theme has occurred in the responses within each group.

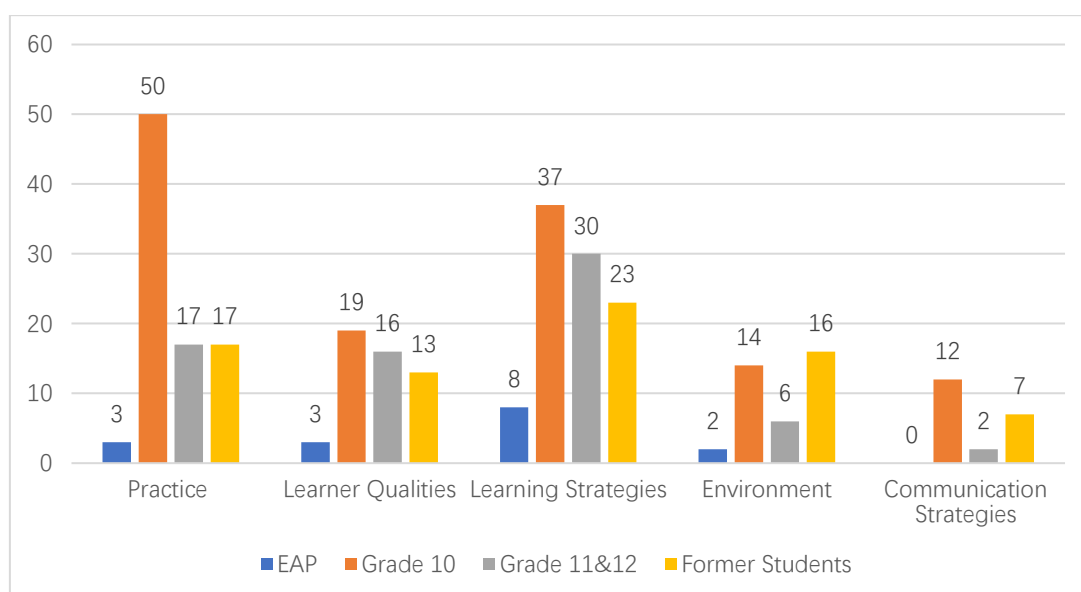


Figure 8. Common Themes in Responses to Item 39 in Frequencies

Firstly, different grade levels seemed to prioritize slightly different elements. Although practice was a recurrent theme in all four groups, novice EAP students seemed to prioritize certain learning strategies (50% of total counts) and certain learner qualities (19% of total counts) in the success of foreign language learning, such as memorizing new vocabulary daily, understanding the language structure, learning pronunciation and grammar, writing, listening, speaking, and reading; as well as effort, persistence, strength, and willingness to learn. For

language learners mainly focusing on the different academic language skills, priority in strengthening strategies seem inevitable if this is what the EAP language course's main learning objectives are. General good learner qualities would also associate with success in the process.

In contrast, Grade 10 students seemed to focus more on practice (38% of total counts), learning strategies (28% of total counts) as well as autonomous learner qualities, strategies such as practicing the four language skills, learning and memorizing vocabulary and grammar, using Chinese appropriately to facilitate learning, watching TV shows, expressing one's ideas in the foreign language while emphasizing on essential learner characteristics such as perseverance, being brave and not being afraid of making mistakes or being fearless, being thick-skinned, humble, being interested, confident, hard-working, having good attitudes, enjoying and being focused. Some of them also recognized the importance of getting exposure from the environment, learning the culture and historical background, watching TV shows, and communicating with native speakers. English language learning is more diversified in the Grade 10 curriculum and academic demands and standards are higher compared to that in the part-time EAP language program. Therefore, students are expected to be more resourceful in terms of strategies and conducive learner qualities and develop more autonomy. The exposure to western style teaching may also contribute to their recognition of the importance of building a language learning friendly environment.

Similarly, in Grade 11 and 12 the importance of learning strategies dominated (42% of total counts), such as imitation, memorization, creating the right context, learning the logic and structure behind the language. One even mentioned the age factor saying that it is better to start earlier since it helps build a good sense of the language. Apart from practice (24% of total counts), they also emphasized the significance of a wide variety of good learner qualities (23% of total counts) that associate with ultimate success, such as confidence, determination, persistence, courage, willingness to learn, effort, diligence, patience, interest, hard-working

spirit, passion, motivation, bravery, and not being afraid of making mistakes. In the Grade 11 and 12 curricula, the academic standards and criteria are much higher, comparable to those at the university level. In order to succeed, students are expected to have a more effective set of strategies to cope with the demands and endurance qualities that will sustain their motivation and dedication. Students are fully aware that competition is high and their future is at stake. Anything that gives them an edge over the others will be worth trying and doing.

In contrast, for students who have already had first-hand experience studying at tertiary level or even working language environment, culture (21% of total counts), and integrative communication strategies (9% of total counts) emerged as important factors in successful foreign language learning, while learning strategies (30% of total counts) and practice (23% of total counts) were also highlighted. Integrative communication strategies included talking with native speakers or expert users of English, integrating the language into one's mind, applying the language in different context on a daily basis, expressing one's own opinions, observing how native speakers interact and making an effort to try it themselves, being thick-skinned. Direct full exposure to the language environment and experience in daily communication using the language may have attributed to these more insightful beliefs. Language has become an integrated part of their life, social, academic, or professional. University students are no longer under the pressure of imminent application and admission. Their focus has shifted to academic exploration and fortification following their own interests and passion. It is understandable that they begin to attach more importance to the environment since they have benefited from it.

To a certain extent, these common themes appear to corroborate the opinions that the participants have expressed previously in the response to the Likert-scale questions, especially with regard to the high emphasis on practice, effective learning and communication strategies, the nature of language learning concerning naturalistic language environment. Even though previously they have expressed rather high disagreement (49% Disagree) with the strategy of

practicing oral English with English-speaking strangers and showed relatively divided views (43% Agree, 32% Neither agree nor disagree, 25% Disagree) about the motive of learning English is to get to know its speakers better, they do seem to value truly integrative communicative strategies in a natural social environment and the benefits that this could bring to language acquisition. The contradiction may be due to the wording and interpretation of the question itself or reflect a mixed integrative-instrumental orientation towards English learning in this group of Chinese EFL learners. In this integrated multilingual world, they may choose to maintain their Chinese identity and keep some distance between themselves and total acculturation.

From the common themes and the frequencies, it was evident that the more experienced the learners became in foreign language learning, the more importance they seemed to attach to environment and communication strategies than learning strategies, even though they were still a consistently strong theme across all groups. This may imply that students who are aiming at success will deploy strategical resources to maximize the effect while having heightened awareness of an immersive language environment and communication-oriented approach. In contrast, practice might become comparatively less prioritized. Communication strategies, which were not mentioned in the younger EAP group, were identified in the other groups. The finding of this emerging belief and the coexistence of other themes would also provide support to Yang and Kim's (2011) case study in a study abroad context which suggested that the alignment and synchronization of internalized language beliefs and "meaningful L2 environment" play an influential role in the success and sustainability of language learning. Almost all the participants in the current study are planning to study overseas or are currently studying overseas, and some may have finished their tertiary education overseas. They seem to have an increasingly balanced and realistic view of the different variables contributing to language proficiency.

The above analysis revealed the factors that individual students identified as the key to successful English language learning, presented in groups. This provides a basis for understanding more in-depth personal truths in flesh and blood, *his/her* truths.

3.6.3.2 Item 40 about change in beliefs

When analyzing the qualitative responses to Item 40 (See Appendix D), which explicitly asked for the change of beliefs and the contributing factors, EAP, Grade 11 & 12 and Former Students revealed more in-depth reflections of their own personal paths of the endeavor of English learning and various contributing factors. It is important to note that for this part of the study Grade 10 students were not included in this question due to the questionnaire design and the assumption that in this international school obvious changes in learning context start from Grade 11 onwards. A total of 32% of participants (33 out of 104 valid responses) reported *Yes* to dramatic changes in their beliefs.

To begin with, four EAP students (n=13) mentioned changes in their beliefs in the approach to learning English, difficulty of English, and motivation. One reported that before the primary goal in learning used to be building general interest in the English but now he has taken a more analytical approach in order to understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English. The causes to this change were knowledge of the history of the two different languages and gradual realization of the distinction between the two languages. Another student has changed the perception of the level of difficulty of English due to the one-year study in the part-time language program, the presence of significant others like the teachers and friends, and the learning atmosphere. This student has found English less difficult than previously. A third student mentioned that he had to study English because of the need to study abroad. Another student was pushed to improve her English because a teacher had made somewhat negative comments on her low English level.

For Grade 11 and 12 students (n=54), eleven of them reported change in their beliefs

regarding attitudes, expectations, motivation, drive, the language and learning. One admitted a complete change in attitude, from loathing English to loving it now all because of one TV series the Big Bang Theory. It was a 180-degree change. Another student reported change in the purpose of learning. The student started learning English for exams and considered Chinese and English the same after translation. However, this student is now attracted to the differences between the two cultures and history after the exposure to English literature and way of thinking behind the language. Similarly, another student suggested that learning English used to be a mundane task but now he has learned to enjoy it because more can be comprehended and appreciated. One compared what was believed in primary/high school and what is believed now saying that she once believed that the improvement of English could be achieved in the short term through memorization but now because of the teaching style in the international school she believed that English learning was more than just memorization of certain patterns and that progress could be achieved through long-term reading and studying. In addition, one student was not aware of the importance of reading before but is now.

Furthermore, changes to instrumental motives were also self-reported in Grade 11 and 12 group. One student said that to him English has become a tool. One admitted a positive change in belief with regard to motivation and confidence for learning saying that she is now more driven to learn English well by the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT, an equivalent to a university admission test) and learning English used to be just out of interest and now for the future. Another used to learn English to understand lectures and not to be embarrassed in class but now for the appreciation of the charm of the language. Besides, a reverse culture shock was experienced by one participant who had studied in the U.S. when he was young has also realized the different approaches of teaching English and grammar in the U.S. and China and found it difficult to adapt to and accept the Chinese approach. Another student was even forced to learn English because of the necessity to study abroad even though he did not particularly

like language learning.

To sum up, these changes of perceptions seem to have emerged from the changes in learning and education context, from self-reflection, experience, acquired appreciation and knowledge of the language, culture and history, change in motives, or even comments from others. These findings add weight to Bernat and Gvozdenko's (2005) conclusion that a multitude of factors besides contextual, such as socio-cultural, cognitive, emotional, and personal, past experience, among others, shape and form beliefs (p. 12).

When moving on to more mature, advanced, and experienced Former Students group (n=42), the university level students, the responses disclosed even more revealing and insightful personal narratives. More than 40% of former students reported changes between their previous and current beliefs, some regarding learning strategies, motivation, communication strategies and integrative orientations.

First, one vivid narrative of these was a dramatic shift of focus from grammar-oriented study to deep appreciation of culture, as shown in Response Sample 1.

Response Sample 1

Before I studied abroad, I focused a lot in grammar studying and neglected the cultural aspect of English. It wasn't until I came to America and had lots of opportunity to speak the language and meet the natives that I developed a deeper understanding of the importance of culture, including how people view time, the gender power dynamic, social and political issues and history, as well as pop culture and the slangs people use in different region. (Appendix D, Former Students, Item 40, Response No. 1)

A similar shift in learner belief regarding approach to learning vocabulary and reformation of new beliefs and strategies was reported in Response Sample 2.

Response Sample 2

I used to think that learning to speak English is about vocabs and learning to use them in various ways. Then I realized that, no, the daily vocab of an average adult is about 5 thousand words, and learning how to use these most-used words is more important than delving into more obscure vocabulary, which should be determined by your area of specialization and based on need. Also, the accuracy in using newly learned vocabulary is more important than anything else. (Appendix D, Former Students, Item 40, Response No. 13)

As this seemed to be an outstanding dramatic change, specific follow-up questions were posed to this individual student and she gave detailed and insightful explanations to the contributing factors that caused this salient change in beliefs (see Appendix E for follow-up questions and responses via personal communication, Respondent 13). It was reported that the changes happened during two time periods, first at the international school and then after going abroad. English was primarily treated as a school subject to be studied via preview and review. As a result, vocabulary and grammar rules were content to be specifically memorized for exam purposes. However, she gradually realized that English at most is a communication tool (or a medium for appreciating literature), whose main feature is practicality and efficiency. The example provided in the narration was that her major is related to computer science and biology. Therefore, it is natural that she is exposed to specialized major related technical terms more than other types of vocabulary through extensive reading and written assignments. In contrast, vocabulary associated with legal terms or finance, for example, is not familiar to her and not necessitated. She thinks time will be better spent on developing mastery in her major. The importance of accuracy in vocabulary use was also highlighted for a simple reason that sometimes it would be fatal to misunderstand the meaning by only guessing and worst of all not knowing the guessing could be a total misinterpretation. An example would be that it is most probable that the effort would be fruitless if the misinterpretation happened during an exam. It was also stated that the interest in getting to know English-speaking people is not that strong. Learning is mostly for academic needs since most research articles are in English. To sum up, the change in this participant's belief about the purpose of learning English and the emergence of the belief in the primacy of applying and understanding accurate meaning of vocabulary were mainly due to the changes in her learning context and current academic requirements and demands.

In addition, an altered view on the difficulty level of the language and improved confidence

was narrated and the cause for the change identified in Response Sample 3.

Response Sample 3

I was not very interested in learning English and considered it as a tedious mandatory course in school. After I went to [the international school], however, I was somehow forced to speak/read/write English everyday. I gradually got used to it and found it was not as difficult as I thought; I also built up some confidence during the high school years. (Response No.23)

Furthermore, change in beliefs regarding motivation and drive was also evident. These were mainly because of inspiration from reading, development of intrinsic motivation, real-life social communication, even retaliation to negative comments from others, as shown in Response Samples 4-10.

First, one change in belief was ignited by inspiration from reading and resolution to learn more about the world through the world's lingua franca, as narrated in Response Sample 4.

Response Sample 4

I got more motivated to learn English after reading John Locke's essay about the social contract. As I realized that the mainstream of nowadays social science and philosophy stems from the West, which widely utilizes English as the media for communication and expression, I was resolved to [learn] English well to get to know the outside world better. (Response No. 4)

Another change from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation was caused by the respondent's need for English in his/her personal development. This has transformed how she sees herself as a language learner, aspired to speak like a native. This transformation was shown in Response Sample 5.

Response Sample 5

At the beginning, I had to learn English because of my parents' request even though I wasn't good at it. Later, since English became a necessary part of my upbringing, I wanted to become a native speaker myself, like this is my native language. I became fond of English then and not just English. I liked learning different languages. Now, I think having an extra language is one of the pluses of self-added value. [Translation] (Response No. 5)

A similar experience of transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation was resonated by

another respondent, as shown in Response Sample 6.

Response Sample 6

Learning languages is very useful. I used to learn languages for exams, however, now I learn languages, for myself. (Response No. 16)

Higher expectations for better opportunities and better personal development have also emerged from learning experience, as explained in Response Sample 7.

Response Sample 7

I can have more opportunities to read more information since I know more than one language. I strongly agree that learning English can broad my view and pave my future development. (Response No. 14)

Another respondent reported a contrast between the motive she had learning English before and now. Although she had not felt particularly passionate about it and had not been very successful before, now that she has learned it reasonably well it has pathed the way to learning other languages. This learning path is described in Response Sample 8.

Response Sample 8

I used to learn English as a normal school subject, then had to learn it even though I wasn't good at it, now I have learned it and can learn other foreign languages. [Translation] (Response No. 24)

This participant's experience may have reflected many students' pragmatic approach to learning English. Through follow-up questions (see Appendix E, Respondent 24), it was revealed that this respondent did not feel she had any choice at the beginning since English learning was compulsory. It was simply regarded as a normal school subject. The study was mainly to fulfil education purposes. However, later because of the decision to study abroad, she had to improve her English. She now believes English is useful for students studying overseas. At the moment, she is confident to say that she has mastered English well enough to begin learning other foreign languages since only English is not sufficient for her future career development. That is exactly what she is doing now, studying other foreign languages.

Besides, change in perspective regarding communication strategies was also evident when students' positive social encounters boosted their confidence. This positive change was narrated in Response Sample 9.

Response Sample 9

I used to think that if I couldn't speak it well then it would be better not to speak at all. Then I realized that actually many foreigners were very friendly and could get what I was saying. So now I am braver to speak than before even if I don't speak perfectly. [Translation] (Response No. 6)

Positive change led by positive experience aside, an extreme case of being pushed to improve English as a reaction to negative comments was narrated in Response Sample 10.

Response Sample 10

My English was quite poor before. I then went to study overseas. Once I overheard people saying to our Chinese group of students that our English was terrible and so were our grades. I didn't want to be a loser and I started to practice. [Translation] (Response No. 10)

Some other students have also expressed similar views to the ones described above. One stated that the communication and contact with native speakers overseas have expanded his/her horizon. For another, what used to be a school subject has now become a communication tool after studying abroad. Because of this change in perspective, she has learned to observe how native speakers communicate in daily lives, especially informal oral communications in order to use this tool more accurately and effectively. Having an enlarged social circle of foreign friends has also improved one participant's confidence of communicating with others or even brought business opportunities.

Evidently, students' experience, either academic, cultural, or social, home or abroad, together with change in learning and education context, change in learning goals and objectives, change in orientations, change in attitudes, self-reflections, deeper appreciation and higher command of the language, or even unfair and diminishing comments from others would seem to trigger the change in beliefs and promote motivation, strategies, confidence, and some even

spring into actions and verification of new beliefs. To a certain extent, these findings corroborate results of previous studies which suggested that beliefs may constantly evolve and develop in response to learning objectives and experience (Yang & Kim, 2011), study abroad context (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003), significant others (Peng, 2011), or manifest in actions/behaviors (Hosenfeld, 2003).

Even though changes in beliefs were evident in self-reports, there were still a substantial percentage of students (68%) who also responded *No* to abrupt changes in their beliefs. The existing beliefs and contributing factors varied, some coming from personal reflections and some involving external factors. Firstly, self-reflections involved different aspects of consistent beliefs in learning. Some admitted that they always considered English learning very important, exciting, and enjoyable, to learn a language is to know its culture and better communicate with its people. Strong self-confidence and perseverance were also thought to be the reason for the sustainability of beliefs. One suggested that she chose to persevere thanks to the progress she had made following her own approaches. Another believed that the earlier the starting age is the easier becomes the learning. Learning English is just an alternative way of life is what one student continued to think. Finally, one student even made an analogy between English language learning and learning a musical instrument, a sport or a craft: practice is a prerequisite of progress, i.e. if there's enough practice, there will be improvement. The non-change cases confirmed what Goldman (1986) suggested, "on the assumption that prior beliefs are largely true, new prospective beliefs are examined for consistency with prior beliefs, since a necessary condition of a belief being true is consistency with all other true beliefs" (p. 100).

In contrast, a different source of unchanged belief could come from significant others or external sources. One participant reported that his/her mother had belief in his/her language talent and had transmitted that belief to him/her from an early age. Additionally, the rewards of getting high scores in English standard tests has reassured one student's belief in autonomous

reading and her personal objection to test preparation classes. Furthermore, another participant reported that participation in extra-curricular competitions since childhood has given him/her a sense of superiority and this positivity had probably been the driving force in his/her learning.

Regardless of change or non-change, as far as effective English language development and language proficiency are concerned, other characteristics or factors such as attitude, love for the culture, passion, interest, insights, effort, goal-orientation, perseverance, not being afraid of making mistakes, finding one's own way, patience, exposure, culture, real-life application, more autonomous reading, less test preparation and utilitarianism were again emphasized as the key factors in students' additional comments.

In brief, the findings of change and non-change in learner beliefs and the various tangible and intangible contributing factors reported have provide empirical support to the dynamic, socially situated and contextually dependent conception of emergent and changing learner beliefs (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Barcelos, 2003, 2015; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013; Li & Ruan, 2015; Peng, 2011; Tanaka, 2004; Yang & Kim 2011).

To summarize, from the two sections of data analysis addressing the two research questions above, changes in learner beliefs were clearly identifiable in parts of the responses to pre-determined statements from the BALLI questionnaire and even more salient and individualized in responses to guided open questions. The results have suggested that the majority students intuitively endorsed practice as essential. However, there was a difference between what lower level groups and higher level groups believed to be the most important element in successful foreign language learning. Lower level students tend to hold stronger beliefs in systematic learning strategies and a variety of internal 'good learner' qualities while more experienced learners appear to associate successful language learning and acquisition more with interaction with external factors such as the environment and context, real-life application and interpersonal communication strategies. Differentiated priorities in learners' beliefs seem

inevitable and natural as learners' learning context and social environment change and as their personal experience accumulates and expands. The change in learning context or being in different stages of education seems to have altered learners' belief systems mostly positively and profoundly. New belief systems emerge from students' development in academic achievement, social interaction, and personal experience (positive or negative) and self-reflection. The majority seem to mainly attribute contextual, social, experiential, and environmental factors to the evolution and development of their beliefs. New opportunities and challenges have given rise to the modification and calibration of their inner belief system. Even the non-change could be traced back to past experience, existing well-established belief system or even well-tested or preconceived ideology such as believing in one's aptitude or the young age factor (either affected by significant others like a parent or one's own positive or successful experience). The equilibrium of personal belief system is sustained via continuous adjustment and readjustment in new context. Change goes with the flow.

4. Conclusion

The social and cultural backdrop of the current study is the unstoppable Chinese national pursuit of overseas tertiary education. The research was an attempt to respond to linguistic experts' call for study in learner belief changes, specially "How do learner beliefs change and develop (or transform)? What factors influence this change?" (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013, p. 5). A refreshed perspective to the understanding of the complex nature of learner belief dynamics as an important individual difference factor using a combined methodology has been provided. It is expected that the study has provided additional empirical evidence to support that learner beliefs are indeed "contextual, dynamic and social" (Barcelos, 2003, p. 20), which are conditioned by situations (Sakui & Gaies, 1999, p. 48) and context-related (Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 464). Learner beliefs, which were once associated negatively with being "limited,"

“erroneous,” “naive,” or even “an impediment to successful language learning” (Horwitz, 1988, p. 292), would need to be re-evaluated and most importantly understood in learners’ then-and-there context since they are “situation specific and dynamic” (Ellis, 2014, p. 701). There should not be right or wrong learner beliefs but beliefs that are contextually and socially dependent and explainable and time-bound, which may be subject to change or evolution at a different stage along the learning continuum.

The current study was an attempt to investigate learner belief changes from a multilayered perspective using a mixed approach, specifically among different levels of Chinese students. It featured those students who are studying in a pathway international curriculum locally while continuously improving their language proficiency, readiness, and adaptation for overseas tertiary education, and those who are or have been overseas university students who have had long-term direct contact with the language, culture, society, target community, and environment.

Albeit not completely clear cut and multilayered, the findings of the study to the two research questions (“*Do learner beliefs change according to the learning context?*” and “*What are the most salient changes in learner beliefs? What contributes to these changes?*”) suggested that learner beliefs could strengthen or weaken in some occasions, and some changes seemed to occur due to various factors. Firstly, the linear upward or downward trends indicated by ascending or descending percentages suggested that a substantial level (68%) of beliefs consistently strengthened or weakened, possibly as a response to the progressive change in the nature of learning context. The analysis of the differences between neighboring group means regarding specific items also suggested that changes may occur more frequently between groups with significant differences in learning context such as EMI, curriculum design, language exposure and usage.

In addition, the content analysis and follow-up responses provided valuable insights into individual learners’ unique experiences, change in their beliefs, and relevant contributing

factors. Different level groups seemed to prioritize different elements in successful foreign language learning, which involved practice, learning strategies, learner qualities, language environment, and communication strategies. Belief in the profound power of practice seemed to have prevailed. Moreover, changes of beliefs in approaches to learning English, difficulty level of English, attitudes towards the language and learning, expectations, motivation, drive, learning strategies, communication strategies, instrumental and integrative orientations were reported. Interestingly, besides learning context, other contributing factors also surfaced. The changes seemed evolve not only from learners' immediate learning and educational context, but also personal and social context, self-reflection, accumulated experience of the language, appreciation of culture and history, change in motives, or even comments from significant others like a teacher or a parent. The belief in the utility of English could also change due to the purpose of learning. What was once believed to be important or necessary is no longer true now because the orientation and necessity have changed.

Several implications can be drawn from the preliminary findings of the current study, which involve curriculum design, instructional practices, and context optimization. The first is for policy makers and curriculum/assessment designers. According to the survey results, when looking at the data holistically there were still a considerable percentage of participants who considered grammar and vocabulary a major component of language learning even at an upper-intermediate or advanced level. This may have been a deeply rooted belief in many Chinese students' mindset as a coping strategy to the current test-oriented education system. Although students may succumb to the short-term necessity of memorizing a substantial quantity of vocabulary lists or grammar rules in order to comprehend demanding academic texts or to pass standardized tests, these cannot and will not be sustained in the long-term. Decontextualized rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules serves little real communicative purposes and will not meet the demands of deep understanding and critical thinking. It rarely guarantees

appropriate application in real life situations. The acquisition of building blocks of a language like vocabulary and grammar is only part of the learning. Such a short-term coping strategy would not be necessary if under a more communication-oriented curriculum. Additionally, an assessment system that favors learner autonomy, engagement, and creativity, that sparks real interest, that promotes authentic and contextual use of the language should be encouraged and integrated into the curriculum and assessment design. Moreover, in an increasingly globalized and multilingual world with English being the lingua franca, the introduction of diverse international cultures besides English cultures may need to be more explicitly integrated into textbooks or learning materials so that students get a more inclusive exposure from a younger age. An early exposure to diversity may foster open-mindedness towards languages and cultures in the future.

The second implication is for pedagogical methodologies albeit with caution (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). As a student reflected, “English, like other languages, comes with a whole culture package. It’s important for teachers and students to understand that” (See Appendix D, Former Students, Item 41, Response No. 31). If students gradually come to realize that the true purpose of learning a foreign language is not for passing exams but ultimately for personal enrichment, communication, and real-life application, this revelation and realization probably should be allowed and nurtured sooner rather than later. This revelation should also be harnessed for backward curriculum design by setting fewer short-term pragmatic learning outcomes. Communicative approaches and opportunities for students to interact would also need to be better integrated in instructional practices to encourage meaningful and authentic communications among English language learners from the start. On the other hand, students’ concerns about sounding like a native speaker should be understood and addressed, and students should be better informed. Instead of fixating on achieving a perfect accent and trying to leave a good first impression, probably learners should be more aware of other more

profound aspects of the language, for example socio-cultural pragmatic competence and communicative competence, among others. Allowing opportunities of dialogues and negotiation with learners and designing awareness raising activities will be more beneficial than a top-down approach of intervening or simply correcting their beliefs without considering their origins and causes.

Third, there are implications for improving the learning context as a whole and adapting to learners' needs. Since learners may have different needs at different learning stages and their beliefs are subject to change and development, a positive and supportive learning environment will create more positive learning experience, build more confidence, nurture more positive learner qualities, and stimulate long lasting intrinsic motivations in learners. On-going communications and dialogues between teachers and learners are necessary to optimize both internal and external factors, which will probably help learners achieve more fulfilling and sustainable learning outcomes.

However, there are several limitations, challenges, and complications in the current research. Caution should be taken when trying to overgeneralize or read into the results. First, the setting is limited. The study was conducted locally in one particular educational setting whose context may be unique. The features in its curriculum design and the whole learning context may not be applicable in other contexts. Given the increasing popularity of similar establishments of international programs like the AP program in China or other parts of the world, caution is warranted when trying to generalize the findings or replicate the results of the findings in similar settings.

Second, the instrument has its constraints. The study adopted the BALLI inventory (Horwitz, 1988), which was not originally designed to evaluate learner belief changes. Although its five pre-established categories provided a general understanding of the participants' views regarding a set of commonly held beliefs, the predetermined statements

may not have captured or reflected the beliefs that truly matter to or have greater impact on this group of participants. Interpretations of the changes mainly based on this inventory may not be representative enough for the understanding of the complex nature and evolution of belief dynamics that are socially and contextually interactive and responsive. In addition, due to the limitation of a questionnaire, even the responses to specific open questions only provided a snapshot and a dissection of the learners' complex ecological belief system, which was not sufficient to comprehend the bigger picture, how each individual has developed certain beliefs, in other words, individual student's truth other than the universal truth (Riley, 1997, p. 127). One individual's belief system already seems complex enough, let alone trying to unlock the colossal puzzle of an immense universe.

Third, the selection and division of subjects was not totally controlled. Four different intact groups were chosen basically based on their grade level instead of proficiency level or other clear-cut variables primarily for logistic convenience. The data analysis in percentages and group means was based on sample sizes that varied. Therefore, the results and interpretations might have been different if the sample sizes were more consistent and proportional among subgroups. However, since the questionnaire was completed voluntarily, the final subgroup size turned out to be beyond control and it differed from group to group, which might have affected data variability and validity. For example, the EAP group size was disproportionate compared to the other groups and some quantitative data had to be excluded when analyzing upward or downward trends. It would be interesting to probe into the primal state of some emergent beliefs and gain a more holistic view on the different developmental stages of learner belief evolution. The hypothetical differences between grade levels and age groups may not be conclusive since many other factors like proficiency level or maturity obviously have a role to play.

Finally, there were other intervening variables other than the predefined one. Although

participants' learning contexts were obviously different in general, other factors other than the predetermined physical category that are not so visible or immediately evident may have also contributed to their personal beliefs and may therefore have been overlooked. The independent variable "learning context" was rather broadly categorized and vaguely defined. Since the guided questions were somewhat open to interpretation, subjectively categorizing the contributing factors or variables was problematic due to the uniqueness of each individual's experience. Some factors were only relevant to individual cases and not representative. There was not a single overarching category that could possibly characterize the diversity of all contributing factors.

In conclusion, further research in the same line of studying elusive and subtle changes in learner beliefs could probably benefit from developing a learner belief inventory or system more relevant to and up to date with the characteristics of a particular group of students given the diversity of learner beliefs. As Rifkin (2000) pointed out, they are "as complex and varied as the learners, the variety of languages they study, the levels at which they study, and, most especially, the institutions in which they study" (p. 407). The diversity of the L2 learner population will only add depth and width to the perspective of learner beliefs.

Since the issue of whether beliefs change is no longer such a crucial or controversial one in the research field, the burning question of how it changes remains. Given the resources, time, and effort, longitudinal studies in belief changes following the same group of students or individual student case studies could be carried out over longer periods, to investigate their individual belief changes in relation to more crystalized factors such as learner's role, teacher's role, learner autonomy, with considerations of other well established individual difference variables such as study abroad, learning strategies, motivation, language attitudes, willingness to communicate, or behavior and performance, how they interplay with learner beliefs and affect learning and language development. Alternative approaches such as a socio-cultural or

ecological approach through autobiographies or journals, interviews, learner as researcher, among others may be more appropriate and provide objective insider perspectives to the dynamics and emergence of learner beliefs.

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Appendixes

Appendix A Learner Beliefs Questionnaire A

(Grade 10)

Source: Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(3), 283-294.

Learner Beliefs

Thank you for taking time to participate and share your insights!

Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with them by choosing the appropriate answer. For some statements, you will need to choose a specific answer to indicate your opinion. A few questions at the end ask about your language learning background.

It will only take a few minutes. Your honesty will be most appreciated!

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. 学外语儿童比成人学得更容易。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language. 有些人天生具备某种特殊能力，有助于他们学习外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. 某些语言比其他语言更容易学。
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
4. English is: 1 = Very difficult 2 = Difficult 3= Medium difficulty 4 = Easy 5 = Very Easy 英语：
1. 非常难 2. 难 3. 一般难 4. 容易 5. 非常容易
5. English is structured in the same way as Chinese. 英语结构与中文一样。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well. 我相信我最终能把英语讲得非常好。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
7. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent. 讲一门外语口音标准是重要的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree

8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language. 讲一门外语，有必要了解该语言的文化。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
9. You should not say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly. 在未能准确表达之前，不应该开口说这门外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. 已经会说一门外语的人再多学一门会更容易。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country. 学一门外语，在该外语国家里学比较好。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking it. 如果我听到有人在说英语，我会走上前去，为了能练习口语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
13. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English. 如果不懂某个英语单词，猜是OK的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1 = less than a year, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-5 years, 4 = 5-10 years, 5 = you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. 如果某人每天花一个小时学一门语言，要花多长时间能变得流利?
1. 1年内 2. 1-2年 3. 3-5年 4. 5-10年 5. 1天1个小时学不会一门语言
15. I have a foreign language aptitude. 我有学外语的天资。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words. 学一门外语主要是学很多新单词。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
17. It is important to repeat and practice often. 重复和经常练习是重要的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people. 在别人面前说英语我觉得不自在。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. 如果开始允许犯错的话，以后会难以纠正。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules. 学一门外语主要是学很多语法规则。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree

-
21. It is important to practice in the language class. 上课多练是重要的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages. 学外语女性比男性学得好。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
23. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it. 如果我英语讲得很好, 我会有很多机会用到它。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language. 说比理解一门外语要容易。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects. 学外语和学其他科不一样。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese. 学一门外语主要是从中文翻译过来。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
27. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job. 如果我英语讲得很好, 这会有助于我将来找份好工作。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it. 英语读、写比说和理解容易。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages. 数理科好的人学不好外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
30. Chinese think that it is important to speak a foreign language. 中国人认为会说一门外语是重要的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
31. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better. 我想学英语的目的是为了更好地了解说这门语言的人。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent. 会说超过一门语言的人非常聪明。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
33. Chinese are good at learning foreign languages. 中国人学外语很强。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. 所有人都能学会说一门外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5.Strongly Disagree

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35. Besides English, are you learning any other foreign language(s)? 除了英语, 你还有在学其他外语吗?
1. Yes
 2. No
- If yes, please specify.
36. How long have you been learning English? 你学英语多长时间了?
1. 1-2 years
 2. 3-5 years
 3. Over 5 years
37. Have you studied in an English-speaking country? 你有在英语国家学习过吗?
1. Yes
 2. No
38. How long did you study there? 在那里学习了多久?
1. < 1 month
 2. 1-3 months
 3. 4-9 months
 4. > 9 months
 5. NA
39. From your experience, what do you believe to be the most important thing in learning a foreign language well? 从你的经验来看, 你相信要学好一门外语最重要的是什么?
40. Other comments 其他

Appendix B Learner Beliefs Questionnaire B

(Grade 11&12, EAP, Former students)

Source: Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(3), 283-294.

Learner Beliefs

Instructions

Hello! This is Helen Cui, an English teacher from AP. First of all, I would like to thank you for taking time to participate in this survey and share your insights with me!

Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with them by choosing the appropriate answer (SA=strongly agree, A=agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree). For some statements, you will need to choose a specific answer to indicate your opinion. A few questions at the end ask about your language learning background and additional ideas. You are encouraged to provide more in-depth comments to the open-ended questions!

It will only take about 10 minutes. You will have until next Monday (April 15th, 2019) to finish it. Take your time! Your honesty and openness will be much appreciated! Thank you very much for your participation and cooperation! Any questions please reach me via email helencui@gdify.com. Thank you!

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. 学外语儿童比成人学得更容易。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language. 有些人天生具备某种特殊能力，有助于他们学习外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. 某些语言比其他语言更容易学。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
4. English is: 1 = Very difficult 2 = Difficult 3= Medium difficulty 4 = Easy 5 = Very Easy 英语难度为：
1. 非常难 2. 难 3. 一般难 4. 容易 5. 非常容易
5. English is structured in the same way as Chinese. 英语结构与中文一样。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well. 我相信我最终能把英语讲得非常好。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

7. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent. 讲一门外语口音标准是重要的。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language. 讲一门外语，有必要了解该语言的文化。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

9. You should not say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly. 在未能准确表达之前，不应该开口说这门外语。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. 已经会说一门外语的人再多学一门会更容易。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country. 学一门外语，在该外语国家里学比较好。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking it. 如果我听到有人在说英语，我会走上前去，为了能练习口语。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

13. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English. 如果不懂某个英语单词，猜是OK的。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

14. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1 = less than a year, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-5 years, 4 = 5-10 years, 5 = you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. 如果某人每天花一个小时学一门语言，要花多长时间能变得流利？

1. 1年内 2. 1-2年 3. 3-5年 4. 5-10年 5. 1天1个小时学不会一门语言

15. I have a foreign language aptitude. 我有学外语的天资。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words. 学一门外语主要是学很多新单词。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

17. It is important to repeat and practice often. 重复和经常练习是重要的。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people. 在别人面前说英语我觉得不自在。

1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. 如果开始允许犯错的话，以后会难以纠正。

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20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules. 学一门外语主要是学很多语法规则。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
21. It is important to practice in the language class. 上课多练是重要的。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
22. Whether someone is good at learning foreign languages is gender-based. 外语学得好不好与性别有关。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
23. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it. 如果我英语讲得很好, 我会有很多机会用到它。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
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25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects. 学外语和学其他科不一样。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from Chinese. 学一门外语主要是从中文翻译过来。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
27. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job. 如果我英语讲得很好, 这会有助于我将来找份好工作。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
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1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
33. Chinese are good at learning foreign languages. 中国人学外语很强。

-
- 1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. 所有人都能学会说一门外语。
1.Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
35. Besides English, are you learning any other foreign language(s)? 除了英语, 你还有在学其他外语吗?
1. Yes
2. No
If yes, please specify.
36. How long have you been learning English? 你学英语多长时间了?
1. 1-2 years 2. 3-5 years 3. Over 5 years
37. Have you studied in an English-speaking country? 你有在英语国家学习过吗?
1. Yes 2. No
38. How long did you study there? 在那里学习了多久?
1. < 1 month 2. 1-3 months 3. 4-9 months 4. > 9 months 5. NA
39. From your experience, what do you believe to be the most important thing in learning the English language well? 从你的经验来看, 你相信要学好英语最重要的是什么?
40. Have your beliefs of English language learning dramatically changed over the years you have studied it? If yes, what caused them to change? What did you believe in before and what about now? If no, what keeps you believing in what you believed? 在你的英语学习生涯中, 你的英语学习信念有过很大的变化吗? 如果有, 是什么导致的? 以前你相信什么? 现在呢? 如果没有, 是什么让你自始至终坚持这些信念呢?
41. Please leave other comments, opinions, or thoughts here...其他想法
42. Are you a current Grade11, Grade12, EAP student, or a former student? 你是在读 11 年级, 12 年级, EAP 学生还是往届生?
43. If you are a former student, do you work or study? 如果你是往届生, 现在是工作还是学习?

Appendix C Open ended responses to Item 39

From your experience, what do you believe to be the most important element(s) in learning the English language well? 从你的经验来看, 你相信要学好英语最重要的因素是什么?

EAP

- 1 愿意为学好英语努力
- 2 每天坚持记单词
- 3 环境
- 4 Willingness and logical thinking to understand its language structure
- 5 学好标准的发音和多的单词, 还有一些语法
- 6 Whether you try your best to write is important.
- 7 听说读写译都要重视
- 8 practice
- 9 是要理解以及要多加练习
- 10 多加练习
- 11 To have the strength to speak to other people and do more reading
- 12 多讲, 多读, 多看, 多写
- 13 语言环境, 多听多说

Grade 10

- 1 practice and enjoy
- 2 脸皮够厚
- 3 speak
- 4 加油 撸起袖子加油干
- 5 ...
- 6 Speak to natives
- 7 积累
- 8 practice
- 9 Concentrate
- 10 Do more practice improve your grammar and vocabulary
- 11 practice makes perfect
- 12 practice making mistakes is important, and don't be shy
- 13 practice
- 14 practice
- 15 Interest
- 16 多练习, 敢说, 好环境
- 17 良好环境
- 18 practice
- 19 多读书
- 20 God bless us.
- 21 理解外语文化并深刻体验语言
- 22 practice

-
- 23 practice
 - 24 I think that the most important thing in learning a foreign language is to speak and listen to that language more and not be afraid of making mistakes.
 - 25 I believe that the most important thing is to practice and to be not afraid of using the language.
 - 26 I recognize that the most significant condition of learning a foreign language well is to understand the meanings of not only the grammar of written materials but also the real communication with native speakers. Communicating fluently requires both comprehension and expression that another person can comprehend.
 - 27 I think the most important thing is to speak out.
 - 28 敢开口说，每天系统练习，去该外语国家旅行（如果可以的话）
 - 29 To be brave and fearless, don't speak until you perfect it, you perfect it by speaking.
 - 30 学会它背后的文化价值与文化意义
 - 31 Practice speaking and read more English books.
 - 32 多读书
 - 33 Reading!
 - 34 Learn its developing history and cultural background.
 - 35 Learn abroad
 - 36 Let using this language be a habit.
 - 37 practice and making mistakes
 - 38 practice more
 - 39 ...
 - 40 be confident
 - 41 persistence
 - 42 It is very important to stay in the foreign language environment because it forces you into speaking and learning the language.
 - 43 Seize opportunities to speak and practice it.
 - 44 Practice
 - 45 背单词
 - 46 It is to practice and do not be afraid of making mistakes.
 - 47 Practice
 - 48 Keep practicing
 - 49 练习
 - 50 Practice more
 - 51 持之以恒不要怕
 - 52 和老外拉家常
 - 53 有一张嘴可以说话
 - 54 practice
 - 55 Being able to express the opinion by communication effectively and being able to receive info from others and interact with them.
 - 56 To be humble. Don't make study become a burden for your own.
 - 57 persistence
 - 58 The most important is to learn the grammar. Then you should remember more words and practice more.
 - 59 坚持
 - 60 Practice
 - 61 keep practicing
 - 62 persistence never give up

-
- 63 Speaking
 - 64 Practice
 - 65 brave enough to practice
 - 66 Practice
 - 67 More practice
 - 68 enjoy it
 - 69 Have enough vocabulary
 - 70 Patient
 - 71 词汇量阅读量
 - 72 vocabulary
 - 73 speaking and listening
 - 74 Keep practicing
 - 75 花时间和这种语言接触，和掌握这门语言的人交流
 - 76 Be Confident
 - 77 Practice
 - 78 Have a proper-working brain.
 - 79 Practice more, and never be afraid to make mistakes
 - 80 坚持
 - 81 Reciting words and read more books
 - 82 practice
 - 83 practice
 - 84 confidence n environment
 - 85 Practice
 - 86 学好一门外语需要不间断的系统性的练习和知识。要从这门语言的逻辑入手，从最基础的学起，同时适当以中文辅助学习。
 - 87 看 DC 大法美剧
 - 88 live in such a country
 - 89 More practice.
 - 90 condition
 - 91 Practice and vocabulary
 - 92 You have the environment to be overwhelmed by this language. This is the best way but not necessary.
 - 93 practice more and work hard
 - 94 practice practice practice
 - 95 处于该语言环境中
 - 96 a good learning environment
 - 97 vocabulary. You learn vocabulary before everything
 - 98 Learners' own attitude towards it. Learners are more likely to practice and therefore progress in this language if they are interested in it or find it important to them.
 - 99 Explain your ideas in foreign language.
 - 100 Read and practice and be in an appropriate environment.
 - 101 READ AND SPEAK MORE
 - 102 Practice more.
 - 103 persistence practice and persistence
 - 104 Work hard.
 - 105 多读多练

Grade 11&12

- 1 practice and self-confidence, determination
- 2 不背单词是没有前途的
- 3 模仿
- 4 Repeating line in movies, plays, following the tone of native speakers
- 5 Culture
- 6 多接触
- 7 语境的创造和培养
- 8 运用
- 9 Speaking
- 10 practice makes perfect
- 11 listening reading speaking practicing
- 12 Practice and courage that supports you to practice.
- 13 自学能力
- 14 能力
- 15 Work hard and sleep enough.
- 16 一开始接触，可以尝试着多多朗读一些文章什么的，读着读着就会有最基本的感觉。然后可以听听力，也是锻炼自己反应能力，同时也检测对日常用语的熟练程度。最后才有必要背单词，阅读文章从而获取一些精细的句式，使说话更有文采。语法反倒是不太重要
- 17 practice
- 18 学啊
- 19 Persistence
- 20 Practice, imitation, vocabulary, memorization, reading, logic, grammar rules and writing
- 21 你愿意学
- 22 An environment that can allow you to keep using it.
- 23 多积累，多应用
- 24 Practice
- 25 Persistence and confidence.
- 26 Be diligent.
- 27 练习
- 28 Practice, Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, Listening, Speaking and writing
- 29 read books
- 30 builds your interests around this language that you are learning, for me is English talk show and tv series
- 31 Patience
- 32 多读多练多背
- 33 Imitate
- 34 Speak out confidently
- 35 practice/memorize/read
- 36 坚持 热爱 尝试 练习
- 37 处于一个学习英语的环境
- 38 practice
- 39 to comprehend the structure & logic behind the language
- 40 The early the better, because this help young students to get a sense to the language. Also, spend time on vocabulary.
- 41 Speak more, practice more.

- 42 理解
- 43 going to school
- 44 sleep well play well
- 45 have interest and motivation
- 46 多练
- 47 Vocabulary.
- 48 study
- 49 输出
- 50 Time
- 51 爱学
- 52 practice
- 53 To practice and to be brave to speak even you know you would make mistakes.
- 54 要多开口和其他人交流，不要害怕犯错丢人。

Former Students

- 1 Confidence, environment, practice and support
- 2 坚持练习；和说得好的人一起练习
- 3 just take it easy, play more basketball, practice more “crazy legs” and “shammgod”
- 4 多练多用
- 5 Being brave enough to speak out. Communication with native speakers is also appreciated.
- 6 Practice over and over again
- 7 练习和自信
- 8 Practice
- 9 坚持
- 10 我觉得最重要的是大胆开口说，不怕犯错，与人多交流
- 11 环境
- 12 More practice: reading, listening, speaking, writing etc.
- 13 先多听后理解最后多说多练
- 14 Study hard
- 15 Reading original texts to enhance understanding and “feel of the meaning”
- 16 diligence and perseverance
- 17 Practice and immersion in the environment
- 18 Repetition and practice
- 19 The willingness to incorporate the language into your mindset and an immersive environment where you need to use the language in different contexts on a daily basis
- 20 The opportunity to talk with native speakers and the opportunity to express the thoughts to them.
- 21 practice more
- 22 patient and practice
- 23 repeat and apply in everyday life
- 24 All sorts of practice
- 25 Vocab
- 26 further reading
- 27 Consistency
- 28 多尝试 到外语国家学习生活也有助于大幅度提高
- 29 Practice

-
- 30 接触 native speaker, 看英语节目
 - 31 Not being afraid to speak it and to watch a lot of pop culture products in that language like movies and TV series.
 - 32 Environment
 - 33 英语环境, 注意观察 native speaker 之间如何打交道。自己要敢于尝试
 - 34 Being in an environment where people speak that language
 - 35 Instruction
 - 36 Practice; Environment
 - 37 脸皮厚多点 and 老美交流
 - 38 活学活用
 - 39 -Practice and review
 - 40 NA
 - 41 随时练习
 - 42 狂看书, 狂背单词, 狂看剧

Appendix D Open ended responses to Items 40-41

Questionnaire Version B

Item 40 Have your beliefs of English language learning dramatically changed over the years you have studied it? If yes, what caused them to change? What did you believe in before and what about now? If no, what keeps you believing in what you believed? 在你的英语学习生涯中，你的英语学习信念有过很大的变化吗？如果有，是什么导致的？以前你相信什么？现在呢？如果没有，是什么让你自始至终坚持这些信念呢？

Item 41 Please leave other comments, opinions, or thoughts here... 其他想法

EAP students

Item 40

- 1 对英语的好感和想学好英语的坚持...
- 2 Before: Interest in English can help overcome all the difficulties.
Cause of change: learning the history of different languages gradually realizing the similarities and considerable differences between the ways that Chinese (my mother tongue) and English respectively work.
Now: focusing on understanding the differences and how I can see all the languages as a whole.
- 3 I will be disgraced if I cannot learn English well enough
- 4 从小就知道学习英语很重要，一直坚持。
- 5 一个原因是因为父母的要求，另一个原因是因为确实通过很多例子发现这些信念是正确的
- 6 我一直认为学习一门语言是为了了解别的文化或更好地与人交流，通过各种研学活动证实了这一点
- 7 When I was in third grade my English teacher told me that my English is the worst in my class, this actually encourages me to practice my English so my English now has become much better
- 8 其实让我有很大的改变我觉得是在...学习的那一年吧，因为那一年里让我觉得学习英语其实并不是很难的事情，可能是因为 HFI 的朋友、老师和氛围吧。
- 9 因为要出国，所以必须要学

Item 41

- 4 Language is the treasure of a civilization. I expect myself to gain a better understanding of the unique ability to use symbols and sounds to share inner feelings of the human civilization.
- 7 坚持!
- 12 其实我觉得学习心态和对某种语言文化的喜爱才是学会一门外语重要的因素之一吧
- 13 接触的多了就自然学会了

Grade 11&12 students

Item 40

- 1 I used to hate it, but I loved the show the Big Bang Theory so much and it totally changes everything
- 2 刚开始学英语主要是硬式, 觉得简单的中英翻译中两个语言是一样的 后来接触了英语文学以及英语思维, 才发现两者是文化上历史上的不同, 也更加被这种不同所吸引
- 3 its a tool now
- 4 ...
- 5 I hold neither passion nor aversion to English. It's just a subject I have to handle with.
- 6 自己的一些进步让我觉得方法没什么太大问题, 所以选择坚持
- 7 初学时是一种任务, 学到一定程度才体会到乐趣, 可能是因为能理解和体会的东西多了, 毕竟万事开头难
- 8 不太清楚信念的定义
- 9 In primary and junior high school, I once believed that English would definitely be improved in a short time if one memorized certain patterns in the language. This was indeed possible, but English was more than this. The form of teaching in HFI made me changed my belief. English was more likely to be improved over a long period of time of study and reading.
- 10 I started to learn English at a pretty young age, so I think English is easy to learn after all.
- 11 以前不知道阅读的重要性, 现在十分重视阅读 一直坚信无论说的多不好 都要开口说 再烂也要敢于跟 native speaker 开口聊
- 12 My mother's good at English and she always told me (when I was young) that I have that gift too.
- 13 Reading books has been saving me lots of time from participating English standard test preparation classes while rewarding me promising scores.
- 14 感觉没啥导致改变的因素
- 15 To better learn about foreign cultures, better communicate with people from different parts of the world, and better adapt to foreign life.
- 16 英语很重要啊
- 17 English in China and the US is taught in completely different ways. I thought I did not need to learn what grammar was, but when I went to China, everything about English was about GRAMMAR.
- 18 不喜欢语言学习, 因为要留学所以必须学
- 19 Honestly, I need English to get into top universities and reach out to more job opportunities.
- 20 考试形式, 以前不需要认真学都可以应付考试, 现在发现认真学还是可以学的很好很自信的, 也是因为 SAT 吧觉得挺有干劲的, 以前学英语是为了兴趣现在是为了将来
- 21 I just enjoy learning different languages and the excitement of communicating with foreigners with their language, and I can learn more about different cultures through learning languages.
- 22 以前为了能听懂课, 不出丑。现在是为了享受语言的魅力来学习它

Item 41

18 be patient

19 Everyone can have his or her own way of learning a foreign language.

25 I regard learning foreign language a way of enlarging visions and insights rather than utilitarianism.

29 we should not have too many test preparation classes, but teachers should increase reading expectations on students.

45 Learning foreign languages is difficulty, but interesting.

54 用功是学好任何东西的基础, 包括语言

Former Students

Item 40

- 1 Before I studied abroad, I focused a lot in grammar studying and neglected the cultural aspect of English. It wasn't until I came to America and had lots of opportunity to speak the language and meet the natives that I developed a deeper understanding of the importance of culture, including how people view time, the gender power dynamic, social and political issues and history, as well as pop culture and the slangs people use in different region.
- 2 我认为英语学习和一项乐器，一项运动，或者一项手艺是一样的，有足够的练习一定就会有进步。
- 3 My strong self-confidence
- 4 I got more motivated to learn English after reading John Locke's essay about the social contract. As I realized that the mainstream of nowadays social science and philosophy stems from the West, which widely utilizes English as the media for communication and expression, I was resolved to English well to get to know the outside world better.
- 5 一开始只是应家长要求觉得就算学习不聪明也要学习英语；到后来由于自己的成长环境也少不了英文，渐渐变成我想要成为 native speaker, like this is my native language, 那个时候自己是喜欢英语的，其实不只是英语，自己是喜欢学习不同个语言；再到现在，觉得拥有多一门语言是为自身价值加分的其中一点。
- 6 以前觉得说不好就不要说，后来发现其实很多外国人都很友好，也可以 get 到我在说什么，所以现在哪怕说的不完美也比以前更敢说了
- 7 以前我对自己的英语水平很自信，也很愿意说；反而是进入了国际部还有出国后越来越不敢用英语表达自己的观点，我觉得我需要改正这一点
- 8 没有信念，但一直学就好了
- 9 I have a dream of studying in the US when I was I child, so I thought I should learn English well to achieve that goal
- 10 以前英语挺不好的 后来出国留学 听到别的国家的人直接对着我们一群中国人说你们英语真的很差还说你们中国人成绩都不好 然后不服输 开始学开始练
- 11 N
- 12 The new opportunities it brings to me after I become more fluent
- 13 I used to think that learning to speak English is about vocabs and learning to use them in various ways. Then I realized that, no, the daily vocab of an average adult is about 5 thousand words, and learning how to use these most-used words is more important than delving into more obscure vocabulary, which should be determined by your area of specialization and based on need. Also, the accuracy in using newly learned vocabulary is more important than anything else.
- 14 I can have more opportunities to read more information since I know more than one language. I strongly agree that learning English can broad my view and pave my future development.
- 15 I made a lot of friends from USA England and some other countries. At the same time, I also do some business with these friends.
- 16 learning languages is very useful. I used to learn languages for exams, however, now I learn languages, for myself.
- 17 vocab is important
- 18 从小参加各种比赛 外语讲的话让我觉得有优越感
- 19 到国外跟 native speaker 交流中持续获得很多知识
- 20 It's just an alternative lifestyle.

- 21 以前把英语当成一门学科为了学分而去学。出国后开始把英语视作交流的工具, 为了更加正确, 有效率的去使用这种工具而更侧重于观察 native speaker 的日常如何交流。尤其是 informal 的日常口语
- 22 我有越来越多的外国朋友, 和他们的相处令我倍感信心
- 23 I was not very interested in learning English and considered it as a tedious mandatory course in school. After I went to ..., however, I was somehow forced to speak/read/write English everyday. I gradually got used to it and found it was not as difficult as I thought; I also built up some confidence during the high school years.
- 24 以前: 当作一门普通的课学 后来: 学不好也得学好 现在: 学会了, 可以学别的外语了

Item 41

- 1 I would recommend people who are learning English to watch movies and tv shows from English speaking countries and try to speak English as much as they can in class. Another very helpful idea is for students to be exposed to wide spread of vocabularies. Learning the root of English, i.e. prefix, and suffix... so students can get the general connotation of some words even if they don't fully know what they mean. I recommend assigning projects about researching cultural differences through media, literary or news. Or projects researching about linguistics history of English. This help them to understand the language better with the cultural context and help them communicate better with native speakers!
- 3 其实主要靠天赋
- 8 不要怕犯错, 对方能理解才是沟通最本质的目的
- 10 词汇量虽然重要, 但是能在生活中多 apply 比单纯背单词更重要
- 15 The more exposure you have to a language (no matter what form), the better your language proficiency
- 20 I want to learn more languages than only English.
- 21 in order to study in a foreign university, therefore, a lot of people begin to learn English
- 23 watching TV dramas in foreign languages is very effective to learn that language. I can't feel my Japanese skills are enhanced dramatically through watching Japanese TV dramas
- 31 English, like other languages, comes with a whole culture package. It's important for both teachers and students to understand that.
- 33 学校的 Ge 课目的主要还是需要应试, 对于日常生活中的英语使用的帮助有限。比如我考过 SAT, 但是刚出国别人问我 How is it going 还是不清楚如何回答
- 39 In my case, language learning mainly depends on interest; as long as I have some fun learning/using a language, I can become more and more devoted.

Appendix E Follow-up questions and responses via personal communications

Former students

1. Respondent No. 13

Follow-up question: Could you please explain your opinion further for Items 12, 16, 20, 31, and 40 in the questionnaire? (May 3, 2019, via Wechat APP)

Responses (May 5, 2019, via email):

Q12 If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking it. 如果我听到有人在说英语，我会走上前去，为了能练习口语。

A: Disagree. 我个人没有这个需求吧，我也不支持为了练口语而去硬聊天，因为挺无聊的，我也怀疑这样能练习到什么（也许就是哈打招呼吧）。练习或者学习一门语言还是建立在有趣、自然的基础上比较合适吧。

Q16 Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words. 学一门外语主要是学很多新单词。

A: Neither agree nor disagree. 一门外语固然有很多新单词要学习，但是不能说是“主要要素”。就我的感受，在学语言的开始阶段里学习新单词多半是很索然无味的，像单纯的工具一样；只有到对词根发音和语法结构的排列组合有更多了解后学习新单词才会变得比其他要素（例如语法）重要。（当然单词了解越多对语言学习整体体验提升很大，不过我还是不觉得新单词很“主要”）。

Q20 Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules. 学一门外语主要是学很多语法规则。

A: Agree. 像 Q16, 我比较同意语法规则的重要性。语言学上说“母语”对人影响最大的地方就是一个比较固化的语法结构，而如果学习语言但是不先去了解以这门语言为母语的人怎么用这门语言、有什么不一样的语法规则，那就不是太有效率。

Q31 I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better. 我想学英语的目的是为了更好地了解说这门语言的人。

A: Disagree. 我对美国人/英国人/澳大利亚人 etc 不是那么有兴趣。主要是学术需求（大部分研究文章都是英文书写）加上“不学白不学”。

Q40 Have your beliefs of English language learning Yes, dramatically changed over the years you have studied it? If yes, what caused them to change? What did you believe in before and what about now? If no, what keeps you believing in what you believed? 在你的英语学习生涯中，你的英语学习信念有过很大的变化吗？如有，是什么导致的？以前你相信什么？现在呢？如果没有，是什么让你自始至终坚持这些信念呢？

A: Yes. 这个变化主要出现在上国际高中和去美国上大学吧...在国内学英语的时候会把这个当作是一门需要预习复习的科目，单词和语法用法就好像是需要专门记背的考试内容。后来越发觉得英语最多最多是一种沟通工具，（也作为文学欣赏媒介，这是另一个话题

了), 而工具以实用和高效为主。举个例子, 我的专业和计算机和生物都关, 我在这两个方面的英语词汇和了解自然很多(尤其在大量(强迫)阅读和写作的时候这些是很自然而然的事情), 而相对的我不会很懂那些法律或者金融的词汇, 也没有太大需求, 不如用这个时间来拓展自己专业的知识面。准确度很重要, 原因很简单: 不会说一个词没关系, 查就可以, 但是误解一个词又不知道自己错了, 有时候很致命... (最简单例子是平时考试遇见不会的词, 不会可以问教授, 他们也理解, 但是如果按照自以为的意思做, 最可能的后果是白做了, 其实不管是日常交流还是学术生活都适用这个道理)。

2. Respondent No. 24

Follow-up question: Could you please explain your opinion further for Items 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21, 29, 31, and 40 in the questionnaire? (May 3, 2019, via Wechat APP)

Responses (May 4, 2019, via Wechat APP):

Q8 It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language. 讲一门外语, 有必要了解该语言的文化。

A: Disagree. 我觉得虽然语言不是独立于文化的存在, 但了解该语言的文化并不是学习这门语言的必要条件。小学和初中的时候学过日语, 达到了能阅读, 而且可以听懂绝大部分日常交流的水平。可我对日本文化至今不太了解, 以后也没有打算去深度了解。所以我觉得, 了解该语言的文化是一个附加项, 外语本身只是一门技能, 了解该国文化不一定对提升语言技能有什么实质性的帮助, 如果兴趣不大的话不必要去了解。

Q12 If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking it. 如果我听到有人在说英语, 我会走上前去, 为了能练习口语。

A: Disagree. 这种行为真的很容易给对方造成极大的困扰...刚学英语的时候我是这么做过, 后来我的一个美国朋友在学中文, 经常找我练习中文口语。听他讲那个支离破碎的中文真的是...一种折磨。所以后面我也不会用破碎的外语去交流。语言嘛, 毕竟是交流的工具, 用不好就不要拿出来用。

Q13 It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English. 如果不懂某个英语单词, 猜是 OK 的。

A: Disagree. 不 OK! 真的非常不 OK! 学英语的时候我觉得猜意思好像是可行的, 但后来学法语的时候才深刻意识到这是一种极容易导致学偏的坏习惯(在实际应用中付出了惨痛的代价)。一个单词本身是什么意思就是什么意思, 学会它最直接有效的方法就是 100%搞明白。猜的时候很容易觉得自己猜对了(但其实不是每次都能猜对), 如果之后忘了查, 那这个错误就被当成正确的意思给记住了, 之后使用的时候就很容易犯尴尬的错误。我觉得除非是考试的时候身不由己, 平常遇到不懂的词还是不要猜, 直接查比较好(但不一定要查英汉字典, 可以查英英字典, 这样对语境的理解可能会更准确一点)。

Q15 I have a foreign language aptitude. 我有学外语的天资。

A: Disagree. 对于我来说学外语是一件付出多少收获多少的事情, 花时间是肯定的, 不像写作或者画画, 到最后考验的是创造力。语言强调的是熟练度和情景反应, 这个没有

捷径。

Q16 Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words. 学一门外语主要是学很多新单词。

A: Agree. 这一点在我学英语的时候是没有明确意识到的, 可到后来学法语的时候才真正体会到得词汇者得天下 (当然不是说只靠抱着单词书背就够了)。语感再好, 口音再纯正, 不知道别人说出来的词什么意思, 或者找不到足够的词来准确表达自己的意思, 对于输入和输出都是很大的障碍。我觉得主要就是要掌握尽可能丰富的词汇, 在这个基础上再去考虑别的 (听力啦, 写作啦, 阅读啦这些), 不能搞反了, 搞反了就会学得很慢很辛苦。

Q19 If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. 如果开始允许犯错的话, 以后会难以纠正。

A: Agree. 这个观点当初学英语的时候我是不认同的, 但有了学法语经历的对比, 如果给我一次重来的机会, 我不会允许自己学英语的时候犯错。其实说白了就是习惯的养成。发音一开始一旦错了, 基本是改不了的; 语法一旦用错了, 要改过来也很难。我觉得要学就学到最好, 宁愿学得慢一点, 也要让每一个说出来的词、每一句写出来的话都是能直接用的。

Q21 It is important to practice in the language class. 上课多练是重要的。

A: Neither agree nor disagree. 因为上课的时间其实挺短的, 练或者不练都起不到什么作用。不自觉地人就上课练那么一下, 没用; 自觉的人下课也练, 课上那一点时间相比起来无关紧要。但! 下课多练是很重要的!

Q29 People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages. 数理科好的人外语学得不好。

A: Agree. 这个只是我主观的观察啦... 社科类拔尖的人无论是对中文还是外语的运用, 普遍都更自如一些。可能理科并不需要很多语言的描述去构建一个 context, 但社科类的学习是非常非常注重 context 以及上下文中藏在字里行间的逻辑关系的。

Q31 I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better. 我想学英语的目的是为了更好地了解说这门语言的人。

A: Disagree. 耿直地说, 我是为了上学... 从幼儿园开始就是必修, 我并没有选择权... 而且英语好确实很管用, 尤其对于留学生来说。

Q40 Have your beliefs of English language learning dramatically changed over the years you have studied it? If yes, what caused them to change? What did you believe in before and what about now? If no, what keeps you believing in what you believed? 在你的英语学习生涯中, 你的英语学习信念有过很大的变化吗? 如果有, 是什么导致的? 以前你相信什么? 现在呢? 如果没有, 是什么让你自始至终坚持这些信念呢?

A: Yes. 以前: 当作一门普通的课学 后来: 学不好也得学好 现在: 学会了, 可以学别的外语了。像 Q31 里说的, 一开始英语就是一门必修课, 当作普通的课学; 后来决定要出国留学, 所以必须得学好; 现在可以很自信地说我很好地掌握了英语, 但仅仅学会英语这一门外语对于我之后的工作来说其实是不够的, 所以也在学别的外语。