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## **BOSNIAN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING BELIEFS WITH RESPECT TO THEIR PROFICIENCY LEVEL**

### ***Abstract***

*Language learning beliefs create a considerable impact on the students' behavior, and thus greatly affect the final learning outcome. Therefore, there exists a compelling need to explore learners' beliefs, and in particular to specify the stances of those more successful learners, to provide accordingly a better learning environment for all students. The aim of the current paper was to investigate the language learning beliefs among Bosnian university students, and to focus on the differences that exist between the groups of the participants based on their self-evaluated proficiency level. A one way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the overall BALLI, whereas a significant difference was observed in one of the five subscales. The present study findings might be used to provide ground for the future improvement of language learning and teaching in a foreign language context similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

**Keywords:** language learning, learners' beliefs, second/ foreign language, proficiency level

### **Introduction**

To understand the relationship between the notion of knowledge or cognition and the one of beliefs, it is sufficient to look at one of the most widely accepted theories or, more specifically, definitions of knowledge. The explanatory theory,

accredited to Plato, says that knowledge is nothing but a justified true belief. In other words, the tripartite postulation proposes that one knows something only if he or she believes in the matter, has justified reasons to believe it, and if the matter itself is true (Egan, 1986). Whether the theory is fully adequate to explain how human cognition functions is questionable, but what seems to be a plausible derivation from it is the notion that human cognition is essentially connected to beliefs. Moreover, a string of studies in the field of psychology showed that humans are likely to conform to their beliefs even after being presented with scientifically-based facts (Jennings et al., 1981; Lepper et al., 1986; Ross et al., 1975; Shultz et al., 2001). Therefore, it seems safe to infer that some individuals are likely to classify a matter as knowledge or fact simply for their own belief in its being true. On a metacognitive level, humans also cling to different epistemological beliefs, i.e. convictions held about knowledge and knowing or, as defined by Schommer (1989), a set of beliefs about the “structure, certainty, and source of knowledge; and the control and speed of knowledge acquisition” (p. 2). These assumptions have shown to affect different domains of learning, including interpretation of information, perseverance in learning, as well as the final outcomes of knowledge acquisition (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Schommer, 1990; 1993).

Second language learning has been no exception here, with studies demonstrating that beliefs about a second or foreign language learning process create multifold effects on the process of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Gardner et al., 1999; Horwitz, 1999). Talking about individual factors, they seem to interact with learners' proficiency level (Abdolazadeh & Nia, 2014; Fujiwara, 2014; Ghavamnia et al., 2011; Ren & Bai, 2016), willingness to communicate (Zhong, 2013b), language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 1988), and learning strategies (Azar & Saeidi, 2013; Ghavamnia et al., 2011; Park, 1995; Zhong, 2008). With evidence of their interaction with some of the core segments of L2 acquisition as well as of their temporal plasticity, a more detailed scientific exploration of epistemic beliefs pertaining to language learning seems necessary. Thus, this study aims to explore one aspect of these beliefs; namely, their interaction with learners' proficiency level.

## **Literature review**

These implicit theories (Clark, 1988) or personal insights (Omaggio, 1978) that form a context for a learning process have been widely researched by language scholars. One of the most cited studies on the matter was conducted by Horwitz (1987), who, as an educator in practice, had previously designed a questionnaire for her own language class with the aim of surveying, analyzing, and confirming or refuting her students' beliefs about language learning. The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), primarily designed in 1981, was based on a set of widely-held assumptions about language acquisition and learning, classified into five categories: (1) foreign language aptitude, (2) difficulty of language learning, (3) nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivations and expectations. As a fairly comprehensive instrument for the analysis of learners' beliefs in L2 contexts, the inventory has been later used, both in its original form and modified variants to accommodate specific contextual differences or preferences, by a range of scholars, exploring the matter within groups of various backgrounds and affected by different factors (Abdolahzadeh & Nia, 2014; Barcelos, 2000; Bernat, 2004, 2006; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Diab, 2006; Fujiwara, 2014; Hong, 2006; Kim, 2001; Kuntz, 1997; Mori, 1999; Park, 1995; Peacock, 1999; Samimy & Lee, 1997; Rieger, 2009; Siebert, 2003; Su, 1995; Tercanlioglu, 2004; Yang, 1999; Zhong, 2012a; Zhong, 2015).

Among these studies, a section that deserves particular attention is the one examining the relationship between language learning beliefs and language proficiency (Abdolahzadeh & Nia, 2014; Elis & Tanaka, 2003; Fujiwara, 2014; Hong, 2006; Mori, 1999; Park, 1995; Samimy & Lee, 1997; Zhong, 2012a). Among these, a study of 226 Iranian high-school students aged 14-17 by Abdolahzadeh and Nia (2014) analyzed whether there is a significant correlation between their language learning beliefs and proficiency measured by a proficiency test on reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Key English Test). The findings showed that the students had generally positive beliefs, as diagnosed using the BALLI, particularly in the area of motivation and expectations.

In the light of their proficiency, a positive but low correlation was detected between the overall BALLI as well as every individual subscale and their KEY-based proficiency scores. A statistically significant but weak positive correlation was found between the intermediate-level students' proficiency and their overall beliefs, while significant correlations were not detected among the low and high-level proficiency learners. However, a negative and also low correlation was found between the highly proficient learners and the subscale of foreign language aptitude. Furthermore, Park (1995) explored the relationship between 332 Korean university students' language learning beliefs and their L2 proficiency and found that beliefs about self-efficacy and social interaction predicted their TOEFL scores. More specifically, the learners with higher confidence in learning English and a tendency to interact with others using the language had higher proficiency scores. In a similar study of university freshmen in Thailand, Fujiwara (2014) found that learners with low and intermediate proficiency scores, as measured by the university's entrance exam testing reading, writing, and grammar skills, significantly differed on several levels; the more successful students were less convinced in the importance of grammar, memorization, translation, vocabulary learning, and the idea that one should speak only if he or she is fluent. Simultaneously, they strongly believed in one's own as well as their compatriots' aptitude for learning foreign languages, considered English an easy language and felt less shy when interacting with others in the target language. Hong (2006), in a comparison study of monolingual Korean and bilingual Korean-Chinese university students in terms of their language learning beliefs as well as strategies, discovered that in both groups the participants' beliefs significantly differed based on their self-rated proficiency. Namely, post-hoc tests showed that monolinguals with intermediate self-rated proficiency had greater motivation for learning English and firmer beliefs about the nature of doing so in comparison with the beginner learners. Moreover, in alignment with the previously presented studies, the intermediate and

advanced learners, both monolinguals and bilinguals, in comparison with the ones of lower proficiency, had more confidence in learning the language and stronger beliefs about their self-efficacy. Finally, in their exploration of the relationship between the language-related personal epistemology and proficiency, Samimy and Lee (1997) confirmed the previous studies finding that learners with higher grades had more confidence in their foreign-language learning ability as well as more willingness to communicate with native speakers.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, there has been only few studies concerned with language learning beliefs; Ozturk and Turkyilmaz (2014) explored the beliefs of high-school students, Akbarov and Kovačević (2015) analyzed the relationship between them and language learning strategies, and Kovačević (2017) investigated the correlation between the convictions and the complexity of syntactic structures in students' written works. Thus, there has been no study investigating the relationship between language learning beliefs and students' proficiency level in this area, which is, considering the prominence of the English language in the educational system as well as the general social narrative, a significant gap. Therefore, aiming to fulfill this gap, this study will test the following hypotheses:

H1 There is no significant difference in the participants' beliefs about language learning (the BALLI) based on their self-evaluated proficiency level.

H2 There is no significant difference in the participants' beliefs about language learning (The BALLI's subscales) based on their self-evaluated proficiency level.

## **The current study**

### ***The participants***

In order to gather data the authors used a convenience sampling method. The present study participants were 111 Bosnian students in the field of humanities and medicine, 72 (64.9%) female

and 39 (35.1%) male with the age span between 19 and 27, and the age mean ( $M = 21.32$ ). Out of the overall number of the participants, 15 (13.5%) were freshmen, 48 (43.3%) were sophomore, 24 (21.6%) were juniors and 24 (21.6%) were seniors at two universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one located in Sarajevo Canton and one in Zenica-Doboj Canton. 56 (50.5%) started learning English officially when they were younger than 9, while 55 (49.5%) did it at the age of 10 or more. The students were asked to evaluate their English proficiency level opting for one of the following: elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced and fluent. 12 of them claimed to have the elementary level of proficiency, 32 intermediate, 30 upper-intermediate, 26 advanced and 11 claimed to be fluent<sup>1</sup> in English (see Figure 1).

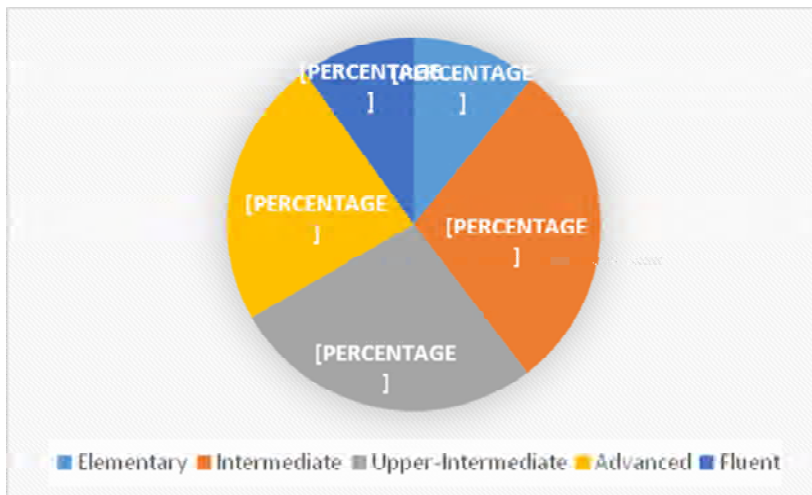


Figure 1. *The percentage of students claiming to have a specific English proficiency level*

<sup>1</sup> The students were given a detailed description of all the levels. The descriptions were based on the CEFR levels. Thus, the elementary level corresponded to the description for A1-A2 CEFR level, intermediate for B1, upper-intermediate for B2, advanced for C1 and fluent for C2 (for more on the CEFR levels see <https://www.fluentin3months.com/cefr-levels/>)

### *The instrument*

In addition to a general demographic survey, the instrument used to gather data for this study was the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) by Horwitz (1987) comprising 34 questions exploring five different areas: (1) Foreign language aptitude, (2) the difficulty of language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivations and expectations. The questionnaire items are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5, from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

The data were analyzed using SPSS, by means of which descriptive and inferential statistics were obtained. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the overall BALLI and its subscales. On a scale 1-5, the mean scores were in the range from ( $M = 3.39$ ) for the subscale of learning and communication strategies to ( $M = 4.04$ ) for the motivation and expectations subscale. The correlation between the subscales was not particularly high, with the relationship between the subscale of the difficulty of language learning and learning and communication strategies being even insignificant.

Table 1.  
Descriptive statistics and correlation for the BALLI and its subscales

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	difficulty of language learning	nature of language learning	learning and communication strategies	motivation and expectations
foreign language aptitude	3.59	.41	.267**	.227**	.338**	.435**
nature of language learning	3.57	.58			.364**	.277**
learning and communication strategies	3.39	.39				.379**
motivation and expectations	4.04	.58				
BALLI	3.55	.29				

\*correlation significant at the .05 level (two - tailed)

\*\*correlation significant at the .01 level (two – tailed)

## Results and discussion

A one way ANOVA was performed to check the differences between the groups on the overall BALLI and its subscales (Table 2). The findings indicated that the students share similar stances about second language learning regardless of their proficiency level. Thus, there was no statistically significant differences between the groups on the overall BALLI  $F(4, 106) = .689, p = .603$ , nor on the subscales of foreign language aptitude  $F(4, 106) = .116, p = .977$ , the nature of language learning  $F(4, 106) = .915, p = .458$ , learning and communication strategy  $F(4, 106) = 2.055$ , motivation and expectations  $F(4, 106) = .467, p = .760$ , whereas the groups significantly differed on the subscale of language learning difficulty  $F(4, 106) = 2.633, p = .038$ . A Post Hoc LSD test revealed that the difference existed between elementary and all other groups, namely intermediate ( $p = .027$ ), upper intermediate ( $p = .004$ ), advanced ( $p = .020$ ) and fluent level groups ( $p = .006$ ). On this subscale the means were higher in concordance with the proficiency level. Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed, and the second was partially confirmed, with the students' stances significantly differing on one of the subscales. The further analyses of all the items (Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7) provided a better insight into the existing differences.

These results showed that the majority of our students believe that young children acquire languages easier than older people ( $M = 4.45$ ), while they are more positive about their compatriots' language learning skills ( $M = 3.43$ ) than their own ( $M = 3.15$ ). Still, they strongly believe that everybody can learn a foreign language ( $M = 4.04$ ), while they are not so convinced that women are better at learning languages than men ( $M = 2.77$ ). When it comes to their experience of learning English, they consider it a rather easy language to acquire, while they are pretty optimistic about the period needed to learn a language, supporting practice as one of the key processes leading to success. Furthermore, they



approve of guessing in case one is not sure about the meaning of a given word ( $M = 3.67$ ). They are convinced that the best possible environment to learn English is an English speaking country ( $M = 4.30$ ), although they do not attach great value to knowing much about the target language culture ( $M = 2.85$ ). Interestingly, the participants appreciate more vocabulary ( $M = 3.81$ ) than grammar learning ( $M = 3.20$ ) and translation ( $M = 3.17$ ) in the overall process of language acquisition, while the majority highlight the importance of correct pronunciation ( $M = 3.35$ ). Unexpectedly for students in a country where explicit language teaching is well present and errors are regularly corrected (Habibić & Dubravac, 2016; Tankosić & Dubravac, 2016), they express their disagreement with the statement that one should not say something in the target language if it is not perfectly correct ( $M = 2.01$ ), while the majority report not to be shy when speaking to others in English ( $M = 2.52$ ). Furthermore, the results confirmed the earlier findings (Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Dubravac, 2016) that English stands out from all other foreign languages learned in the country, so the participants express a firm belief in the importance of learning English in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina ( $M = 4.71$ ), which might be assigned rather to their wish to find a good job ( $M = 4.32$ ) than to establish relationships with native speakers ( $M = 3.38$ ). Thus, the vast majority wish to learn English better ( $M = 4.54$ ).

When it comes to the differences between the groups, no significant variations were observed for the statements included in the subscale of foreign language aptitude, even though interesting was the finding aligned with the results reported by Park (1995), Samimy and Lee (1997) and Hong (2006) showing that the more proficient the students claim to be the more they believe to be talented for language learning. On the subscale of the difficulty of language learning, the participants' stances significantly varied for the item 34. Thus, those more proficient learners consider English to be easier in comparison to those less proficient. On the subscale of the nature of language learning, the students' opinions diverged

significantly in case of item 7 ( $p = .016$ ) and item 26 ( $p = .000$ ), with more proficient learners assigning more importance to the acquaintance with native culture and less to the importance of translation, the latter findings being in line with the Fujiwara's (2014) conclusion. Moreover, significant differences were observed for items 12 ( $p = .000$ ), 19 (.000) and 29 ( $p = .030$ ), with those claiming to have a better command of English enjoying more in communication with native speakers just like the participants in Park's (1995) and Samimy and Lee's (1995) studies, being less shy when communicating in English similarly to the participants in Fujiwara's research (2014) and wishing a bit less to learn to speak English well, which might be attributed to their already attained high level of proficiency.

Although no significant differences were noticed between the groups, in line with the Fujiwara's findings (2014), this study showed that more proficient learners tend to undermine the importance of learning new words, whereas contrary to the Fujiwara's participants the current study participants share interesting stances about the role of grammar. It enjoys the greatest support by the least proficient learners ( $M = 3.50$ ), then by those claiming to be fluent ( $M = 3.27$ ) followed by the upper intermediate ( $M = 3.12$ ) and intermediate level students ( $M = 3.00$ ). This once more confirms that the grammar-oriented language learning still occupies a leading role in our classrooms (Habibić & Dubravac, 2016). Still, it is encouraging that the most successful learners express the most considerable disagreement with the statement pertaining to the importance of correct language production ( $M = 1.73$ ), whereas the same idea being the most readily supported by the intermediate students ( $M = 2.76$ ).

Table 2. One way ANOVA between different grade levels on the subscales of the BALLI

Scale	Elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent		Df	F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Foreign language aptitude	3.57	.38	3.63	.36	3.59	.52	3.56	.38	3.63	.36	4	.116	.977
Language learning difficulty	3.09	.75	3.43	.38	3.53	.40	3.45	.30	3.60	.46	4	2.633	.038
Nature of language learning	3.55	.48	3.72	.56	3.44	.45	3.58	.72	3.58	.58	4	.915	.458
Learning and communication strategies	3.42	.41	3.48	.31	3.44	.45	3.33	.35	3.13	.41	4	2.055	.092
Motivation and expectations	4.00	1.02	4.11	.49	4.10	.59	3.96	.46	3.91	.46	4	.467	.760
BALLI	3.47	.37	3.61	.25	3.54	.32	3.53	.26	3.49	.33	4	.689	.603

Table 3. Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of foreign language aptitude

Item	Total	Elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent		Df	F	p
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Item 1	4.45	4.42	.90	4.34	.83	4.41	.68	4.69	.54	4.36	.67	4	.659	.433
Item 2	4.34	4.33	.98	4.41	.66	4.41	.57	4.23	.71	4.18	.60	4	.467	.760
Item 5	3.43	3.75	.87	3.41	.91	3.31	.85	3.23	1.07	3.91	.70	4	1.562	.190
Item 9	3.51	3.17	1.40	3.66	.86	3.52	1.09	3.50	.86	3.45	.93	4	.532	.712
Item 10	2.61	3.00	1.28	2.84	1.02	2.31	.85	2.38	.90	2.82	1.08	4	2.048	.093
Item 14	3.15	2.42	1.16	3.13	.79	3.21	.86	3.31	1.05	3.45	.82	4	2.416	.053
Item 17	2.77	2.50	1.00	2.81	.96	2.93	1.13	2.73	1.12	2.64	.92	4	.437	.782
Item 28	3.86	4.08	1.16	4.03	.97	3.67	1.03	3.81	.94	3.82	1.17	4	.660	.621
Item 31	4.04	3.67	1.30	4.00	.76	4.17	.87	4.00	.94	4.27	.79	4	.865	.488

Note: 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language; 2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages; 5. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages; 9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one; 10. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign language; 14. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages; 17. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages; 28. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent; 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

Table 4. Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of the difficulty of language learning

Item	Total		elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent	Df	F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Item 3	4.28	3.92	.90	4.25	.76	4.38	.56	4.27	.60	4.55	.52	4	.669	.215
Item 23	3.38	3.50	1.31	3.63	1.10	3.43	1.38	3.08	1.02	3.09	1.22	4	.033	.998
Item 32	2.99	3.08	1.44	3.22	.87	3.17	1.12	2.62	.90	2.64	.81	4	1.877	.120
Item 33	2.40	2.64	1.36	2.34	1.21	2.13	1.01	2.88	1.51	1.91	.30	4	2.020	.097
Item 34	3.22	2.27	.91	3.03	.74	3.30	.65	3.42	.65	4.00	.89	4	8.923	.000

Note: 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others; 23. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language; 32.It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it; 33. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?

Less than a year 1-2 years 2-3 years 3-5 years You cannot learn a language one hour a day.

34. English is a (.....) language. Very difficult Difficult Medium Easy Very easy

Table 5. Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of the nature of language learning

item	Total elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent		Df	F	p	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Item 7	2.85	1.92	.79	3.13	1.07	2.76	.99	2.85	1.26	3.36	1.50	4	3.193	.016
Item 11	4.30	4.50	.52	4.19	.86	4.17	.97	4.46	.58	4.36	.67	4	.840	.503
Item 15	3.81	4.08	.90	3.94	.72	3.90	.94	3.50	.91	3.64	1.12	4	1.420	.232
Item 21	3.20	3.00	1.28	3.50	1.05	3.00	1.02	3.12	.99	3.27	.91	4	1.109	.356
Item 25	4.13	3.83	1.03	3.84	.85	4.00	.74	4.69	3.60	4.27	.47	4	.891	.472
Item 26	3.17	4.00	.89	3.72	.89	2.77	.94	2.88	1.03	2.55	.93	4	8.026	.000

Note: 7. It is necessary to learn about English speaking cultures to speak English; 11. It is best to learn English in an English speaking country; 15 The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words; 21. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar; 25. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects; 26. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my own language.

Table 6. Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of learning and communication strategies

Item	Total	Elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent	Df	F	p	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD					
Item 6	3.35	3.33	1.37	3.41	1.04	3.24	.87	3.31	1.08	3.55	1.21	4	.199	.938
Item 8	2.01	2.42	.67	2.09	.96	2.76	.99	2.08	.89	1.73	1.01	4	1.491	.210
Item 12	3.96	3.00	1.28	3.88	.79	3.93	.84	4.42	.70	4.27	.65	4	6.382	.000
Item 13	3.67	3.64	1.03	3.63	.83	3.69	.76	3.81	.80	3.45	1.21	4	.359	.837
Item 16	4.39	4.17	.84	4.38	.61	4.55	.51	4.35	.49	4.36	.67	4	1.015	.403
Item 19	2.52	2.92	1.17	3.09	1.06	2.59	1.24	1.96	1.31	1.55	.82	4	5.736	.000
Item 20	3.46	3.67	1.23	3.69	.97	3.57	1.14	3.19	1.23	2.91	1.38	4	1.461	.219
Item 24	3.69	4.25	.87	3.69	.86	3.80	1.10	3.54	.86	3.18	1.08	4	2.087	.088

Note: 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation; 8. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly; 12. I enjoy practicing English with the native speakers of English I meet; 13. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English; 16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot; 19. I feel shy speaking English with other people; 20. If beginning students are allowed to make mistakes in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on; 24. It's important to practice with audio materials.

Table 7. Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of motivation and expectations

item	Total	elementary		Intermed.		Upper-intermed.		Advanced		Fluent		Df	F	p
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Item 4	4.22	3.58	1.44	4.16	.77	4.34	.77	4.42	.90	4.27	.65	4	2.091	.087
Item 18	4.71	4.42	.90	3.66	1.04	3.59	1.04	3.73	1.19	3.36	1.12	4	1.553	.192
Item 22	3.38	3.50	1.31	3.63	1.10	3.43	1.38	3.08	1.02	3.09	1.22	4	.956	.437
Item 27	4.32	4.33	1.07	4.31	.69	4.33	.80	4.23	.77	4.45	.52	4	.172	.952
Item 29	4.54	4.00	1.35	4.56	.62	4.70	.60	4.69	.55	4.27	.65	4	2.789	.030
Item 30	4.25	3.75	1.29	4.41	.71	4.40	.72	4.08	.85	4.36	.51	4	2.048	.093

Note: 4. I believe that I will learn to speak English better 18. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English; 22. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know Americans/British better; 27. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have better job opportunities; 29. I want to learn to speak English very well; 30. I would like to have English speaking friends.



## **Conclusion**

The tests performed show that although in this context a proficiency level does not present a significant factor modifying learners' beliefs when analyzed on the level of the overall BALLI, it significantly affects the beliefs included in the subscale of language learning difficulty, with those more proficient students sharing a more positive attitude towards the process of language learning. The results generally indicate the environment conducive to successful language learning. Much attention should not be paid to achieving perfection, but rather sending a meaningful message. Thus, language should be acquired for communication and while communicating, rather than through isolated grammar, vocabulary or translation lessons. Still, practice seems important as the students are aware that language cannot be acquired within a few days, but practice not in terms of drills and memorization but rather a real-life language use.

All these findings are even more significant since they are aligned with the current theory of second language acquisition, proposed by major scholars such as Ortega (2009), Lightbown and Spada (2006), Ellis (1994), to name a few. Thus, it seems that the process of language learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as seen by the present study participants, follows the current trends. Moreover, it is encouraging that Bosnian students wish to learn English, the modern global language, well. They are aware they need it for their future pursuits, as one of the main reasons why they hope for high proficiency in English is finding a good job. Educators should just rely on these stances to help learners acquire the language in the most efficient way possible. They should make use of an already high level of motivation for English language learning, and assist learners in their endeavor of acquiring it. Their assistance should be visible in terms of maintaining motivation for learning, encouraging a real-life language use, tolerating errors and setting realistic goals.

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## **UVJERENJA BOSANSKIH UČENIKA O UČENJU STRANOG JEZIKA S OBZIROM NA NIVO POZNAVANJA TOG JEZIKA**

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### ***Sažetak***

Uvjerenja o učenju nekog jezika uveliko utječu na ponašanje učenika, pa tako i na konačan ishod cijelog procesa učenja. Stoga se javlja i nužna potreba za istraživanjem uvjerenja učenika, posebno onih uspješnijih, kako bi se stvorilo bolje okruženje za učenje svih uključenih u proces. Cilj ovog rada bio je ispitati stavove o učenju stranog jezika bosanskih studenata, sa posebnim fokusom na razlike koje postoje između grupa učesnika baziranim na samoprocijenjenom nivou poznavanja jezika. Jednosmjerna ANOVA je pokazala da, kada se uzme u obzir cijeli instrument BALLI, ne postoji razlika među grupama, dok je statistički bitna razlika uočena na jednoj od pet skala. Ovi rezultati mogli bi predstavljati podlogu za unapređenje procesa učenja i poučavanja stranog jezika u kontekstima sličnim Bosni i Hercegovini.

**Ključne riječi:** učenje jezika, uvjerenja učenika, drugi/strani jezik, nivo poznavanja jezika.

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## تصورات الدارسين البوسنيين في تعلم اللغات الأجنبية بالنظر إلى مستوى معرفة اللغة

### الملخص

تؤثر تصورات تعلم اللغة بشكل كبير على سلوك الطالب وبالتالي على النتيجة النهائية لعملية التعلم بأكملها. لذلك، هناك حاجة ملحة لاستكشاف تصورات الطلاب، خاصة أولئك الذين حققوا نجاحًا أكبر، من أجل تهيئة بيئة تعليمية أفضل لجميع المشاركين في العملية. كان الهدف من هذا البحث هو دراسة المواقف تجاه تعلم اللغة الأجنبية للطلاب البوسنيين، ومع التركيز بشكل خاص على الاختلافات الموجودة بين مجموعات المشاركين على أساس المستوى الذاتي لتقييم الكفاءة اللغوية. أظهر اختبار آنوفا ذو الاتجاه الواحد أنه عند النظر في اختبار بالي بأكمله، لم يكن هناك فرق بين المجموعتين، بينما رصد وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية على أحد المقاييس الخمسة. يمكن أن توفر هذه النتائج أساسًا لتعزيز عملية تعلم وتعليم لغة أجنبية في سياقات مماثلة للبوسنة والهرسك.

الكلمات الأساسية: تعلم اللغة، تصورات الطلاب، اللغة الثانية/الأجنبية، مستوى إجادة اللغة