

# Beliefs about Language Learning: A Study of American University Students Learning Korean

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This study investigated Korean as a Foreign Language (KFL) students' beliefs about language learning in three levels of Korean classes. Sixty-three students participated in this study, and the Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument (BALLI) by Horwitz (1987) was used to ask students' beliefs about language learning. Descriptive analysis yielded that most of the students had positive beliefs about learning Korean or foreign languages. They were highly motivated, and they thought that Korean is a useful language. However, ANOVA yielded no significant differences among the three levels of students, and there were no correlations between beliefs and final grades, and between beliefs and language levels. Such implications for instructors as teaching strategy use and motivating students to have specific goals were discussed.

**Keywords:** Learner Beliefs, Korean as a Foreign Language, Affect, BALLI

## 1. Introduction

As the focus in education has moved to learner-centered instruction, learners' affective domains such as motivation, anxiety, and beliefs have become a focus of research in the field of foreign language education during the last 30 years. Several studies conclude that in order to provide better instruction, it is important for teachers to understand the psychological factors that underpin learning. Among these affective factors, beliefs are defined as understandings or propositions held by a person about the world that are perceived (Richardson 1996, cited in Li 2011). Moreover, learners' beliefs about language learning are complex components shaped by one's background,

including past learning experiences (Little, Singleton, & Silvius 1984), culture, and personal factors. As factors that influence beliefs, recent studies have investigated learning strategies (Yang 1999), age (Banya & Chen 1997), gender (Banya & Chen 1997, Siebert 2003), anxiety (Banya & Chen 1997, Kunt 1997, Tsai 2004), motivation (Banya & Chen 1997, Kim 2000), personal traits (Bernat, Carter, & Hall 2009), and language proficiency (Hu 2010, Huang & Tsai 2003, Mori 1999, Park 1995, Tanaka & Ellis 2003). These factors eventually have the potential for the success or failure of a language learner (Bernat 2006).

Studies of students' belief system have increased since Horwitz (1987) developed an inventory to measure learner's beliefs about language learning by using a quantitative method. There have been many studies about learners' beliefs using the Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument (BALLI) in such languages as English (Kunt 1997, Park 1995, Yang 1999), Spanish (Horwitz 1988), Japanese (Oh 1996), and French (Horwitz 1988, Kern 1995). However, there have been few studies exploring the beliefs of college students learning Korean in the U.S. Thus, this study investigated beliefs of students in three levels of Korean classes in order to ascertain the nature of students' beliefs and their effects on final grades and class level.

## 2. Background

Many studies have been done in order to investigate factors that influence learners' beliefs. Little, Singleton, and Silvius (1984) surveyed undergraduate and postgraduate students of foreign languages and concluded that experiences in language learning played a major role in shaping students' attitudes to language learning. Banya and Chen's (1997) extensive study revealed that such factors as motivation, attitude, motivational intensity, strategy use, anxiety, and achievement influenced students' beliefs. They used BALLI as the instrument with 224 Taiwanese EFL students. They found that attitude was the most significant factor and that anxiety was negatively related to beliefs. Thus, students with a positive attitude had less anxiety with strong motivation.

Regarding the relationship between beliefs and motivation, Kim (2000) used BALLI and Motivation In Language Learning (MILL) with 664

EFL learners (235 high school students, 227 university students, and 202 white-collar adults). Two significant correlations were made between beliefs and motivation: learners' confidence in speaking was related to their general self-efficacy and Mastery Goal, and learners' perceived value and nature of language learning were related to their locus of control and Work-Avoidance Goal. Thus, beliefs about language learning and motivation were related to each other, and the relationship was multi-dimensional. Bernat, Carter, and Hall's (2009) sought a relationship between beliefs and personal traits. Two-hundred sixty-two ESL students participated in the study, and BALLI and NEO-Five Factory Inventory (Costa & McCrae 1985) were used. However, they did not find a strong relationship between learners' beliefs and personal traits.

Gender is another factor that shaped students' language beliefs according to Siebert (2003). Siebert (2003) administered BALLI to 156 ESL students of various nationalities. There were 91 male students and 64 female students, and there were significant differences in beliefs between male and female students. Male students tended to be more positive and optimistic in terms of their ability and taking time to learn a language. They also had different views on study methods.

Several studies focused on the relationship between beliefs and achievement. Park's (1995) study found that EFL students who had high confidence and willingness to learn English tended to have higher achievement than students with low confidence and willingness. Mori (1999) conducted a study with 187 college students learning Japanese as a foreign language, and found that students who believed L2 learning easy showed high achievement. Huang & Tsai (2003) compared high and low English proficiency learners' beliefs with 89 high school students. They used BALLI and the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). Their findings revealed that students with high proficiency tended to have language learning beliefs that were more positive than those of students with low proficiency. A study by Tanaka and Ellis (2003) investigated students' change of beliefs and the relationship of the change to TOEFL scores after a 15-week study-abroad program for Japanese university students. Their findings suggested that there were weak and non-significant correlations between students' responses to BALLI and TOEFL scores before and after the study-abroad period. In Hu (2010)'s study, 186 EFL students who majored in English

participated, and they were asked to fill out BALLI questionnaires. Hu also divided the participants into two groups: high and low proficiency levels. The results showed that high proficiency students had more positive beliefs about their ability to learn, highly valued role practice, and were more highly motivated to learn English than low proficiency students. These findings gave insights for developing curriculum and selecting teaching methods to focus on learners.

Based on the literature and as a first step for further investigation into the nature of students of learning Korean, this study has two research questions:

1. What are the beliefs about language learning held by students enrolled in three levels of Korean?
2. Does the class level (or students' proficiency level) and the final grades affect students' beliefs about language learning?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

The total of Sixty three students learning Korean in a U.S. university participated in this study: 20 students from a First-Year Korean I class (506), 22 students from a Second-Year Korean II class (412), and 21 students from an Accelerated First-Year Korean class (604<sup>1)</sup>). The age ranges were from 18 to 26, and the mean age was 20.69. Thirty five students were male, and 28 students were female. The first-Year Korean I class was the first and lowest-level class of the Korean language program at the university, and it was the first semester of learning Korean for the students. The second-Year Korean II class was the intermediate-low class, and it was the third semester of taking Korean for the students. The Accelerated First-Year Korean class was for Korean heritage students, and the students' level was high especially in terms of listening and speaking. However, it was the first semester to the students for taking an official Korean class. The three classes were all lower-division courses and when students finished either the Second- Year Korean II or Accelerated Second-

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1) 506, 412, and 604 are course numbers.

Year Korean class, they were allowed to take the Third-Year Korean I, an upper-division class.

### 3.2. Instruments and Data Analysis

The study adopted The Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument or BALLI (Horwitz, 1987). The instrument is a 34-item 5-point Likert scale on which respondents mark the degrees of strong agreement (1) to strong disagreement (5). Here are the five components:

- 1) Foreign language aptitude (items 1, 2, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, and 34)
- 2) The difficulty of language learning (items 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28)
- 3) The nature of language learning (items 5, 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, and 26)
- 4) Learning and communication strategies (items 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, and 21)
- 5) Motivation and expectations (items 23, 27, 30, and 31)

Items that contained the target language have been re-worded by Korean. For example, item number 6, I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak *this* language very well. has been changed to I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak *Korean* language very well. To collect the data, students filled out and submitted an informed-consent form in the first week of the semester. After the researcher gathered the forms, the background survey was administered during the first week of the semester as well. The BALLI was administered during the last week of the semester, and the final grades were calculated at the end of the semester. For statistical analysis, descriptive analysis and ANOVA were conducted using SPSS version 19.

## 4. Results

In order to answer the first research question, “What are the beliefs about language learning held by students enrolled in three different levels of Korean?”, descriptive analysis yielded the results by dividing five categories.

#### 4.1. Foreign Language Aptitude

The first category, Foreign Language Aptitude, consists of 9 items, and the items address characteristics of successful and unsuccessful language learners and common wisdom. Table 1 reports the responses to the items.

**Table 1.** Foreign Language Aptitude

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D <sup>2)</sup> (4)&(5)	Mean
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	506	16	3	1	1.80
	412	18	3	1	1.45
	604	20	0	1	1.42
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	506	10	4	6	2.73
	412	12	7	3	2.27
	604	11	3	7	2.71
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	506	11	4	5	2.60
	412	6	7	9	3.27
	604	9	5	7	2.85
15. I have foreign language aptitude.	506	3	11	6	3.20
	412	8	8	6	2.95
	604	4	16	1	2.80
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	506	1	9	10	3.55
	412	4	11	7	3.18
	604	2	9	10	3.61
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	506	1	10	9	3.50
	412	1	11	10	3.59
	604	1	7	13	3.90
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	506	12	6	2	2.40
	412	11	8	3	2.50
	604	11	5	5	2.57
33. People from my culture are good at learning foreign languages.	506	1	13	6	3.30
	412	3	14	5	3.09
	604	6	12	3	2.71
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	506	16	3	1	2.05
	412	17	0	5	1.86
	604	17	3	1	1.57

For items 1, 2, 32, and 34, most students were positive. However, with items 22 and 29, they were negative, and with items 15, and 33, the students had neutral opinions. To item 2 that asked about general concept of special inborn ability of language learning, the majority of all three levels of students agreed (50% of 506 Class, 68% of 412 Class, and 52% of 604 Class). However, to the item 15 that asked about their own ability to learn a language, 506 Class students were quite negative. 76% of 604 Class students had neutral opinion and 35% of 412 Class students agreed. Thus, in terms of individual ability for learning a foreign language, students had diverse views, and there was a tendency that students with more experience of Korean learning had slightly more positive opinion about their ability than students with less experience of Korean learning. On the other hand, an overwhelmingly large number of all three levels of students agreed with the statement: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. Thus, students agreed with the statement of general language learning ability but they seemed to believe that they were not gifted people with special ability to learn a foreign language.

Regarding the common wisdom of “it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language,” the majority of all three levels of students agreed (80% of 506 Class, 81% of 412 Class, and 95% of 604 Class). However, regarding the other commonly believed statement, “Women are better than men at learning foreign language,” most of the three levels of students had either a neutral view or disagreement. Likewise, to the statement, “People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages,” students had either a neutral view or disagreement. On the contrary, the majority of the students agreed with the statement, “People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.” However, to the statement, “People from my culture are good at learning foreign languages,” students mostly were neutral, even though Korean heritage students had slightly more positive responses than the other two class students.

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2) In order to increase validity, Strongly Agree (1) and Agree (2) are combined as “A” response, and Disagree (4) and Strongly Disagree (5) are combined as “D” response in data analysis. “N” stands for “Neutral” responses.

## 4.2. Difficulty of Language Learning

The second category, Difficulty of Language Learning, consists of 6 items, and the items contain general difficulty in learning foreign languages (item 3), specific difficulty in learning Korean language (items 4, 14, 24, and 28), and expectations for success (item 6). The responses are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Difficulty of Language Learning

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	506	17	2	1	1.95
	412	20	1	1	1.72
	604	20	1	0	1.38
4. The Korean language is: a. a very difficult language, b. a difficult language, c. a language of medium difficulty, d. an easy language, e. a very easy language.	506	9	10	1	2.55
	412	20	1	1	1.72
	604	20	1	0	1.38
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak the Korean language very well.	506	16	3	1	1.95
	412	13	6	3	2.27
	604	17	4	0	1.57
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning the Korean language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? a. less than a year, b. 1-2 years, c. 3-5 years, d. 5-10 years, e. You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.	506	9	6	5	2.85
	412	5	9	8	3.13
	604	15	5	1	2.19
24. It is easier to speak than understand the Korean language.	506	4	8	8	3.10
	412	6	4	12	3.36
	604	9	6	6	2.66
28. It is easier to read and write the Korean language than to speak and understand it.	506	6	5	9	3.10
	412	13	3	6	2.50
	604	5	5	11	3.42

The majority of the students agreed with the statement, "Some languages are easier to learn than others," and this indicated that students believed that language learning difficulty is dependent on the language that they learn. In addition, ANOVA analysis yielded that

the mean scores of 506 Class and 604 Class showed significant differences. Thus, Korean heritage students had more positive beliefs about the statement than American students in 506 class (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Item 3

(I) class	(J) class	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
412	506	-.22273	.570
	604	.34632	.254
506	412	.22273	.570
	604	.56905*	.034
604	412	-.34632	.254
	506	-.56905*	.034

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

For judging the difficulty of Korean language, 506 class students believed that Korean language is a medium difficulty language (50%) or a very difficult/difficult language (45%). However, 91% of 412 Class students and 95% of 604 Class students thought that Korean language is a very difficult or difficult language. In other words, students who had more experience of exposure to learning Korean strongly believed that Korean language is difficult to learn, and it seems that this belief actually affect the low enrollment of upper Korean classes. Regarding the item 6, a large number of all three levels of students believed that they would be a successful Korean language learner. In other words, even though students believed that Korean language is difficult to learn, their expectation as a successful Korean language learner was very high. Moreover, in ANOVA and the Tukey Post-hoc test, the mean scores of 412 Class and 604 Class showed significant differences (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Item 6

(I) class	(J) class	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
412	506	.32273	.480
	604	.70130*	.034
506	412	-.32273	.480
	604	.37857	.374

(I) class	(J) class	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
604	412	-.70130*	.034
	506	-.37857	.374

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Thus, Korean heritage students had stronger belief in mastering in Korean than American students who had learned Korean for three semesters.

Concerning the time requirement (item 14), students of 412 Class thought that learning the Korean language needed more time than students of 506 Class and 604 Class, who were in their first semester of learning Korean. Thus, students who had more classroom learning experience believed that learning Korean takes longer than students who had about one semester of learning Korean at school. Even though their feeling about learning Korean was very positive (item 6), students had different opinions about time requirements depending on the classroom learning experience. Regarding specific skills, 412 Class students felt that speaking in Korean is more difficult than reading and writing, but 604 Class students felt that reading and writing in Korean is more difficult than speaking. This exactly reflected the curriculum. In 412 Class, speaking and listening were emphasized, but in 604 Class, reading and writing were emphasized.

### 4.3. Nature of Language Learning

The third category, Nature of Language Learning, consists of 7 items, and these items concern broad issues of the language learning process. Table 5 shows the results.

**Table 5.** Nature of Language Learning

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
5. Korean language is structured in the same way as English.	506	0	0	20	4.8
	412	0	0	22	4.9
	604	0	0	21	4.9

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.	506	13	3	4	2.5
	412	13	5	4	2.54
	604	14	4	3	2.23
11. It is easier to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	506	16	3	1	2.1
	412	16	5	1	1.95
	604	15	2	4	2.00
16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	506	6	7	7	3.05
	412	9	5	8	2.86
	604	10	7	4	2.66
20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	506	13	4	3	2.50
	412	11	7	4	2.50
	604	7	9	5	2.80
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	506	16	3	1	2.05
	412	15	3	4	2.36
	604	9	7	5	2.66
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from my own language.	506	2	8	10	3.45
	412	3	9	10	3.45
	604	3	3	15	3.71

Regarding cultural importance in learning foreign languages, the majority of the students considered culture to be important factor in mastering the target language (items 8 and 11). Most of 506 Class and 412 Class students believed that learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects (80% of 506 Class, and 68% of 412 Class). However, Korean heritage students had a diverse views on that statement. 43% of the students agreed, 33% of the students had neutral position, and 24% of the students disagreed. Concerning the focus of learning a foreign language (items of 16, 20, and 26), most of the students agreed or had a neutral position about the grammar learning. However, most of them disagreed with the statement, "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from my own language." To the item 16, the students had diverse opinions and did not show a strong preference of learning vocabulary. In other words, students did not spend much time to translate Korean to English

and to study vocabulary when they studied Korean. However, for grammar learning, students had positive responses, so students considered grammar learning to be important part of learning a foreign language.

#### 4.4. Learning and Communication Strategies

The fourth category, Learning and Communication Strategies, consists of 8 items. Items 17 and 21 refer to learning strategies and items 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, and 19 refer to communication strategies. Table 6 reports the responses.

**Table 6.** Learning and Communication Strategies

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
7. It is important to speak the Korean language with an excellent accent.	506	11	5	4	2.50
	412	12	4	6	2.63
	604	15	6	0	1.85
9. You shouldn't say anything in the Korean language until you can say it correctly.	506	3	3	14	3.70
	412	2	4	16	3.95
	604	0	3	18	4.38
12. If I heard someone speaking the Korean language, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.	506	0	9	11	3.85
	412	3	4	15	4.00
	604	15	2	4	3.28
13. It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in the Korean language.	506	8	5	7	3.00
	412	11	5	6	2.68
	604	12	6	3	2.42
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	506	20	0	0	1.25
	412	20	1	1	1.50
	604	20	1	0	1.28
18. I feel self-conscious speaking the Korean language in front of other people.	506	10	7	3	2.50
	412	8	2	12	3.18
	604	9	3	9	3.14
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.	506	8	2	10	2.95
	412	6	6	10	3.18
	604	9	7	5	2.71

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	506	8	10	2	2.60
	412	10	7	5	2.63
	604	7	9	5	2.80

Most of the three levels of students unanimously agreed that it is important to repeat and practice a lot (100% of 506 Class, 91% of 412 Class, and 95% of 604 Class). Moreover, many students thought that it is important to practice in the language laboratory. Thus, students had strong beliefs in favor of traditional language learning methods.

Regarding communication strategies, the majority of the students agreed that it is important to speak the Korean language with an excellent accent. In fact, there were significant differences in mean scores between 412 Class and 604 Class students to the statement. Thus, Korean heritage students who had more experiences of learning Korean in natural settings considered accent a more important element in conversation than 412 Class students who had learned Korean mostly in classroom settings (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Item 7

(I) class	(J) class	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
412	506	.13636	.899
	604	.77922*	.036
506	412	-.13636	.899
	604	.64286	.110
604	412	-.77922*	.036
	506	-.64286	.110

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Most of the students thought that guessing a word (items 13) is quite unavoidable, and the majority of them disagreed with the statement, "You shouldn't say anything in the Korean language until you can say it correctly." Regarding the willingness of speaking Korean (item 12), most heritage Korean students agreed to the statement. Concerning self-conscious about speaking Korean in front of other people (item 18), 50% of 506 Class students agreed. However, students of

412 Class and 604 Class, who had more experience of learning Korean had complex responses. In 412 Class, 36% of the students agreed but 55% of the students disagreed. In 604 Class, 43% agreed and 43% disagreed. Thus, it seems that personality may affect their beliefs rather than class level or teaching methods. The students did not show any preferences regarding making mistakes and fixing them later (item 19). In other words, their focus was on practicing with emphasis on conversational meanings rather than form or grammar. This also reflects the current teaching methods by the instructor that focus on communication and drill instruction (especially with 506 Class).

4.5. Motivation and Expectations

The last category, Motivation and Expectations, consists of 4 items, and Table 8 reports the results.

**Table 8.** Motivation and Expectations

Items	Class	A (1)&(2)	N (3)	D (4)&(5)	Mean
23. If I get to speak the Korean language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	506	18	2	0	1.64
	412	15	6	1	2.04
	604	20	1	0	1.38
27. If I learn to speak the Korean language very well, it will help me get a good job.	506	4	8	8	3.10
	412	6	4	12	3.36
	604	9	6	6	2.66
30. People from my culture think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	506	7	8	5	2.90
	412	8	8	6	2.77
	604	13	6	2	2.00
31. I would like to learn the Korean language so that I can get to know its speakers better.	506	15	4	1	2.00
	412	17	3	2	2.04
	604	13	5	3	2.19

Even though the majority of the students thought that they would have many opportunities to use Korean language, only the heritage Korean students thought that they would get a good job if they speak Korean language very well. However, all three levels of the students said that they would like to learn Korean in order to know its speak-

ers better. In addition, more heritage Korean students agreed that “people from my culture think that it is important to speak a foreign language” than other American students in 506 Class and 412 Class. Considering the nature of heritage students whose parents had struggled with learning English (a foreign or second language to them), the responses were quite expected. In ANOVA and the Tukey Post-hoc test, there were significant differences between the mean scores of the 506 Class students and the 604 Class students (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Item 30

(I) class	(J) class	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
412	506	-.12727	.929
	604	.77273	.070
506	412	.12727	.929
	604	.90000*	.034
604	412	-.77273	.070
	506	-.90000*	.034

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Regarding the second research question, “Does the class level (or students’ proficiency level) and the final grades affect students’ beliefs about language learning?”, ANOVA yielded no significant differences between the beliefs and class level. Moreover, there were no significant differences between beliefs and students’ final grades. In other words, in this study, neither proficiency level nor grades affected students’ beliefs about language learning.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated language learning beliefs of students of learning Korean in a U.S. university. Three levels of students participated and they were asked to answer the questionnaire of BALLI (Horwitz 1987) on a 5-point, Likert scale. Even though students were not sure or were somewhat negative on their own ability to learn foreign languages (item 15), they had positive beliefs on mastering Korean (item 6). Moreover, students who had more exposure to Korean or more experience of learning Korean believed that Korean language is

a very difficult or difficult language (item 4). The majority of the students, regardless of class level, thought that it would take more about 2-5 years in order to be fluent in Korean (item 14). Regarding specific skills, non-heritage Korean students felt that speaking was difficult, but heritage Korean students felt that reading and writing were more difficult than speaking (item 24 and item 28). All levels of students considered culture an important element for mastering a foreign language (item 8 and 11). They also did not believe that “foreign language learning is a matter of translating from their own language” (item 26), but they valued grammar and vocabulary learning (item 16 and 20). Concerning risk-taking strategy, most students had a neutral position or disagreed with the statement: “You shouldn’t say anything in the Korean language until you can say it correctly” (item 9). Thus, they considered taking risks or challenges as a positive way to improve Korean. They also thought that “accent is important in speaking Korean” (item 7), and almost all students thought that “repeating and practicing is very important” (item 17). Furthermore, all three levels of students had high expectations that by learning Korean, they would have many opportunities to use Korean (item 23) and they stated that they would like to learn Korean so that they could get to know Korean speaker better (item 31). In contrast, descriptive analysis yielded significant differences among the three levels of students with respect to items 3, 6, 7, and 30. In these items, advanced students or heritage Korean students had more positive beliefs about language learning than low-level students. For example, 604 Class students had a stronger belief that they can master Korean than 412 Class students. 604 Class students also thought that their culture considered learning a foreign language important. Moreover, they had a stronger belief than 412 Class students in that some languages are easier to learn than others. Furthermore, Korean heritage students valued accent as an important factor in speaking Korean. Considering learning experiences as an important factor influencing beliefs (Little, Singleton, & Silvius 1984), it seems that their complicated Korean learning experiences affected their beliefs in several items, which were different from other American students.

In addition, there were no significant differences between beliefs and language levels (or class levels), and beliefs and final grades as in Tanaka and Ellis’s (2003) study. In fact, there was a high similarity

of beliefs among three levels of students. Even though there were slightly different percentages of responses, the overall responses were consistent across class levels. In addition, there were no correlations between beliefs and final grades. Thus, in this study, grades and levels did not affect students' beliefs about language learning. A small number of students of each level may fail to induce the differences statistically. Another possibility is that beliefs are conceptual and may not determine action, so even though students believed something, they may not act according to their beliefs (Ellis 2008). Thus, if qualitative methods such as interviews and self-report are combined, more specific results may be obtained.

As pedagogical tips, Korean instructors should encourage students continually in order to make them successful Korean language learners. Korean is a Category IV language in the U.S., and it is considered to be the most difficult language for students whose native language is English. One of the findings of the present study indicated that students had strong beliefs that Korean is a difficult language as they learn more about it. However, students were very positive about their capacity to learn to speak Korean very well. Therefore, it is critical that instructors keep students motivated and the class interesting in order for students to continue their learning, especially for the higher level students. It would be helpful if instructors guide students to have explicit and realistic goals, especially low-level students or students who have very limited experience with learning Korean. Having open discussions (Horwitz 1987) with students about learning Korean might also be help in order to reduce students' misconceptions or worries about Korean language learning. Also, avoiding excessive translation and adopting communicative teaching methods may increase students' learning. Emphasizing Korean culture and correct accent during the class, and giving students opportunities of study abroad in Korea or taking Korean immersive class are suggested in order to satisfy the students' expectations for having many opportunities to use Korean and getting to know Korean speakers better. For those who have low expectations or have misunderstandings about learning Korean language, individual teaching might be effective. Furthermore, as the results showed, the views of heritage Korean students about Korean language learning sometimes differed from those of other American students. Thus, different teaching approaches and special attention

that can accelerate heritage students' learning are beneficial.

Despite the findings, the present study has several limitations to consider. First of all, because the number of participants at each course level was relatively small, it may harm the external validity. In order to secure the external validity, future studies should include more participants. Secondly, qualitative research methods such as interviews are also required for better analysis of the data. Moreover, the study was conducted only with the students who enrolled in three Korean classes in a U.S. university. Thus, the results should be interpreted in this particular context, and future studies should be conducted in different contexts with different levels of students in order to provide a more complete picture of KFL students' beliefs. Regarding the survey questionnaire, if items were customized specifically for KFL learners, future studies might yield more definitive conclusions on KFL students' beliefs than the present study. Moreover, the survey was not originally designed for heritage students, and because of the complicated nature of heritage students, different measures or research methods are necessary for those students in the future studies.

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