

Investigating Indonesian Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learning

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Abstract

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This study sought to investigate the language learning beliefs of Indonesian pre-service teachers and determine whether these beliefs varied according to gender and majors of study. Employing a quantitative approach with a survey design, the study involved 69 pre-service teachers from English and non-English majors at an Islamic higher education institution in Jambi Province, Indonesia. The data were collected using an online questionnaire administered during classroom sessions and analyzed using SPSS through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that the participants held diverse, multidimensional, and generally positive beliefs about language learning, covering aspects such as language aptitude, learning difficulty, the nature of language learning, motivation, and learning strategies. Statistical analysis further showed that there were statistically significant differences in beliefs between male and female pre-service teachers ($p < .05$) but no significant differences were found regarding majors of study ($p > 0.05$). The study provides implications for educational institutions, teacher educators, and learners in supporting positive language learning beliefs within the Indonesian EFL context.

Kata Kunci:

*keyakinan, calon guru,
pembelajaran bahasa
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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki keyakinan tentang pembelajaran bahasa yang dimiliki oleh mahasiswa calon guru Indonesia serta mengetahui apakah keyakinan tersebut berbeda berdasarkan gender dan bidang studi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan desain survei, penelitian ini melibatkan 69 calon guru dari program studi Bahasa Inggris dan non-Bahasa Inggris di sebuah perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam di Provinsi Jambi, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring yang diberikan selama kegiatan perkuliahan dan dianalisis menggunakan SPSS melalui statistik deskriptif dan inferensial. Hasil penelitian

menunjukkan bahwa para peserta memiliki keyakinan yang beragam, multidimensional, dan secara umum positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa, yang mencakup aspek bakat berbahasa, tingkat kesulitan belajar bahasa, hakikat pembelajaran bahasa, motivasi, dan strategi belajar. Analisis statistik lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan keyakinan yang signifikan secara statistik antara mahasiswa calon guru laki-laki dan perempuan ($p < 0,05$), namun tidak ditemukan perbedaan yang signifikan berdasarkan program studi ($p > 0,05$). Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bagi institusi pendidikan, pendidik, dan mahasiswa calon guru dalam mendukung pengembangan keyakinan positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa dalam konteks EFL di Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, research in foreign language education has increasingly highlighted the importance of learners' beliefs as key psychological constructs that shape language learning processes and outcomes. Learners' beliefs, shaped through prior learning experiences, sociocultural contexts, and educational backgrounds, influence how individuals perceive language learning, select learning strategies, regulate their efforts, and maintain motivation (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1998; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). As part of the broader field of teacher cognition, beliefs play a significant role in influencing how future teachers understand language learning and eventually approach classroom instruction (Borg, 2006).

Research has consistently shown that beliefs are neither fixed nor universal; rather, they are dynamic, context-dependent, and subject to change through learning experiences and social interactions. Early studies by Horwitz (1987, 1988) demonstrated that learners enter language classrooms with preconceived beliefs about language aptitude, learning strategies, and the nature of language learning, which subsequently influence their learning behaviors and achievement. Later research emphasized that such beliefs are socially constructed and continuously shaped by educational, cultural, and experiential factors (Barcelos, 2003). Studies involving pre-service EFL teachers indicate that beliefs develop through interactions among personal experiences, institutional environments, teacher

education programs, and professional learning opportunities. Mattheoudakis (2007) found that teacher education programs can significantly reshape pre-service teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning. Recent studies suggest that beliefs continue to evolve as teachers encounter new pedagogical challenges, technological innovations, and diverse classroom contexts, underscoring the dynamic and developmental nature of belief formation in language education (Borg, 2011).

Recent developments in teacher education have also expanded research on beliefs to technology-mediated learning environments. For example, Springer (2024) found that although pre-service teachers demonstrated increased acceptance of augmented reality tools, improvements in technological competence did not necessarily lead to stronger professional beliefs. This finding suggests that belief formation is a complex process that extends beyond the acquisition of skills. Furthermore, mentoring quality, practicum experiences, and institutional culture play a significant role in shaping teachers' beliefs (Wyatt, 2021; Huang et al., 2022).

Given their influence on learning and teaching, beliefs about language learning have become an important area of inquiry in second language acquisition and teacher education research. Understanding how pre-service teachers conceptualize language learning is particularly important because these beliefs may affect future instructional decisions, classroom practices, and professional identities (Borg, 2006; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011).

Despite the substantial body of research on beliefs about language learning, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature has focused on specific belief domains, such as language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning strategies, and learner motivation (Horwitz, 1987; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). More recently, researchers have examined related constructs such as language mindsets and their influence on learning engagement and achievement (Kim, 2024). Contemporary reviews further indicate that beliefs remain central yet evolving constructs shaped by interactions between cognitive, affective, and contextual factors (Wang et al., 2024).

While a considerable number of studies have examined beliefs about English language learning in the Indonesian context, most have focused on English-major pre-service teachers, with relatively little attention given to pre-service teachers from different academic disciplines. Research in Islamic higher education institutions is also limited, despite their significant contribution to teacher education in Indonesia. Furthermore, few studies have explored whether beliefs about language learning vary across demographic and educational factors, particularly gender and field of study. In addition, advances in technology and the widespread use of digital platforms have changed the way students learn English, yet the impact of these developments on the beliefs of Indonesian pre-service teachers remains largely underexplored in recent years.

To address these gaps, this study investigated the beliefs about language learning held by Indonesian pre-service teachers. Specifically, it examined the common beliefs they held about English language learning and whether these beliefs differed based on gender and academic major. By focusing on the Indonesian teacher education context, the study contributes to a better understanding of how future teachers perceive language learning. The study also provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it adds to the body of research by providing evidence from a group that has received limited attention in previous studies. Practically, the findings may help teacher educators design programmes and learning experiences that promote positive and informed beliefs about language learning. To achieve these objectives, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What beliefs about language learning are commonly held by Indonesian pre-service teachers?
2. Are there significant differences in pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning based on gender?
3. Are there significant differences in pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning based on majors of study?

METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative methodology with a survey-based design. The survey approach was selected because it enabled the collection of data at one specific point in time to portray the prevailing situation, provide reference standards for comparison, and investigate the relationships among selected variables or events (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 334). A total of 69 Indonesian Pre-Service Teachers of the English major and non-English majors at an Islamic institution in Jambi Province, Indonesia, took part in this study. The participants comprised 26 male and 43 female pre-service teachers. Among them, 56 participants were aged between 17 and 20 years old, while 13 participants were aged 21 years and above.

Of these, 19 participants were enrolled in the second semester, 38 in the fourth semester, and 12 in the sixth semester. And, 48 participants are in the English major and 23 participants are in non-English majors. The participants were recruited using convenience sampling.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants (N=69)

Characteristics	Variables	Number
Gender	Male	26
	Female	43
Major	English	47
	Non-English	22
Semester	Second	19
	Fourth	38
	Sixth	12
Age	17-20	56
	21 years and above	13

To measure pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning, the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1987) were adopted. BALLI is one of the most widely used instruments in second language acquisition research and was designed to explore learners' assumptions, perceptions, and expectations regarding foreign language learning. Understanding these beliefs is important because they can influence learners' motivation, strategy use, anxiety levels, and overall language learning outcomes. The inventory consists of 34 items assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (very true of me). The items are organized into five dimensions

representing different aspects of language learning beliefs: 1) Foreign Language Aptitude (9 items), 2) Difficulty of Language Learning (6 items), 3) Nature of Language Learning (6 items), 4) Learning and Communication Strategies (5 items), 5) Motivation and Expectations (8 items).

Data were gathered through an internet-based survey that was distributed in printed form and administered directly in classroom settings. This approach was selected for its practical advantages, including ease of access and efficient communication with participants, as noted by Cohen et al. (2018). To ensure cultural and linguistic suitability for the Indonesian context, the questionnaire underwent a careful translation process, resulting in an Indonesian version of the BALLI. The original questionnaire has been extensively validated and applied in various cultural and educational contexts, making it a reliable instrument for examining language learning beliefs and facilitating comparisons across different learner populations.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, employing both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Prior to conducting inferential analyses, the normality of the data distribution was examined. The results indicated that the data did not meet the assumption of normality. Therefore, a non-parametric statistical procedure was deemed appropriate. Specifically, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied to examine potential significant differences in beliefs about English language learning among pre-service teachers based on gender and major of study. To ensure ethical compliance, all participants' identities were kept strictly confidential throughout the research and reporting process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about English language learning

Table 1: English Language Aptitude

Item No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1	It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	3.96	0.98
2	Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	3.96	0.76
6	People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	3.58	0.82
10	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	3.52	0.84
11	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	2.27	0.91
16	I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	3.28	0.88
19	Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	2.45	0.7
30	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent	3.87	0.75
33	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	4.31	0.82

Table 1 indicates that pre-service teachers hold generally positive and well-balanced beliefs about English language aptitude, with mean scores ranging from 2.27 to 4.31. The highest level of agreement is found in the belief that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language ($M = 4.31$), reflecting a strong endorsement of universal learning potential. Similarly, respondents agree that children learn languages more easily than adults and that some individuals possess a special aptitude for language learning (both $M = 3.96$). They also associate multilingualism with intelligence ($M = 3.87$). Moderate agreement is observed in beliefs about national ability ($M = 3.58$), the advantage of knowing another foreign language ($M = 3.52$), and their own perceived aptitude ($M = 3.28$), suggesting a reasonable level of self-confidence. In contrast, respondents tend to disagree with stereotypical notions, such as the idea that people skilled in mathematics or science are not good at languages ($M = 2.27$) and that women are better than men at language learning ($M = 2.45$). Overall, the findings demonstrate an inclusive and informed perspective that combines belief in equal opportunity with recognition of individual differences.

Table 2: Difficulties of English Language Learning

Items No.	Statements	Mean	SD
3	Some languages are easier to learn than others.	3.70	0.78
4	English is a hard subject.	2.65	0.81
5	I believe that I will learn to speak English well.	3.76	0.66
15	If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well.	2.92	0.91
25	It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	3.27	0.89
34	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	3.69	0.99

Table 2 presents pre-service teachers' beliefs about the difficulty of learning English, revealing generally moderate and slightly positive perceptions. Respondents tend to agree that some languages are easier to learn than others ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating an awareness of varying levels of language complexity. However, they do not strongly perceive English as a difficult subject ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.81$), suggesting that English is viewed as relatively accessible. This perception is reinforced by their high confidence in their ability to achieve proficiency, as reflected in the belief that they will learn to speak English well ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.66$).

Regarding the time required to reach fluency, responses are more neutral ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.91$), indicating uncertainty or differing expectations among participants. In terms of language skills, respondents slightly agree that speaking is easier than understanding ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.89$), yet they also agree that reading and writing are easier than speaking and understanding ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.99$). This suggests that productive oral skills are perceived as more challenging than literacy-based skills. Overall, the findings highlight confidence in learning English alongside recognition of differing skill difficulties.

Table 3 illustrates pre-service teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning, highlighting their views on key components and learning contexts. Overall, respondents showed strong agreement on the importance of vocabulary, with the highest mean score ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.62$), indicating that vocabulary is perceived as the most essential element in learning English. Cultural understanding was also considered important, as participants agree that knowing English-speaking

cultures is necessary to speak the language effectively ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.75$). Similarly, they moderately agree that learning English in an English-speaking country is beneficial ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.21$), although the higher standard deviation suggests varied opinions.

In terms of linguistic components, grammar is viewed as important but less central than vocabulary ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.01$). Translation is also not seen as the primary focus ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.95$), reflecting a more balanced or communicative perspective. Furthermore, respondents agree that language learning differs from other academic subjects ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.79$), suggesting an awareness of its unique, skill-based nature. Overall, the findings indicate that pre-service teachers.

Table 3: The Nature of Language Learning

Items No.	Statements	Mean	SD
8	It is necessary to know about English speaking cultures in order to speak English.	3.75	0.75
12	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	3.51	1.21
17	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	4.14	0.62
23	The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	3.31	1.01
27	Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	3.85	0.79
28	The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	3.25	0.95

Table 4: Learning and Communication Strategies

Items No.	Statements	Mean	SD
20	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	3.99	0.78
24	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native speakers of English better.	3.58	0.87
29	If I learn English very well. I will have better opportunities for a good job.	4.24	0.75
31	I want to learn to speak English well.	4.54	0.61
32	I would like to have friends whose native language is English.	4.21	0.86

Table 4 presents pre-service teachers' beliefs about learning and communication strategies, particularly focusing on motivation and social orientation toward English learning. Overall, the findings indicate very strong positive attitudes and high motivation among respondents. The highest mean score

is shown in the desire to speak English well ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.61$), reflecting a strong personal commitment to achieving oral proficiency. Similarly, participants strongly agree that mastering English will provide better job opportunities ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.75$), highlighting instrumental motivation as a key driving factor.

In addition, respondents express a high level of interest in forming social connections through English. They agree that they would like to have friends who are native speakers of English ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.86$) and to learn English to better know native speakers ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.87$), indicating integrative motivation. There is also strong agreement that English is considered important in their country ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.78$), suggesting societal support for learning the language. Overall, the table reveals that pre-service teachers are highly motivated both by practical benefits and by opportunities for communication and intercultural interaction.

Table 5: Motivation and Expectation

Items No.	Statements	Mean	SD
7	It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.	4.27	0.79
9	You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	2.11	0.98
13	I enjoy practicing English with the native speakers of English I meet.	3.96	0.69
14	It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	3.65	0.85
18	It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	4.56	0.55
21	I feel timid speaking English with other people.	3.21	1.01
22	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	4.10	0.83
26	It is important to practice with audio materials.	4.28	0.64

Table 5 presents pre-service teachers' beliefs about motivation and expectations in learning English, revealing strong emphasis on practice, accuracy, and active engagement. The highest mean score is for the importance of repetition and practice ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.55$), indicating a strong belief that consistent practice is essential for language mastery. Similarly, respondents highly value practicing with audio materials ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.64$) and achieving excellent pronunciation ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.79$), reflecting a focus on accurate and effective communication.

Participants also agree that allowing errors at early stages may negatively affect future accuracy ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.83$), showing a tendency toward form-focused learning. However, they generally disagree with the idea that learners should remain silent until they can speak correctly ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.98$), suggesting support for active participation despite imperfections. In addition, respondents enjoy interacting with native speakers ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.69$) and are open to using strategies such as guessing unknown words ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.85$). Nevertheless, moderate feelings of timidity ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.01$) indicate some affective barriers. Overall, the findings highlight a balance between accuracy, practice, and communicative engagement.

Differences in Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs Based on Gender

To examine whether pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning differed according to gender, a Mann–Whitney U test was performed. As shown in Table 6, female pre-service teachers ($n = 42$) obtained a higher mean rank (38.87) than male pre-service teachers ($n = 27$), whose mean rank was 28.98. This finding suggests that female pre-service teachers tended to hold stronger or more positive beliefs about language learning than their male counterparts.

Table 6: Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Beliefs	Males	27	28.98	782.50
	Females	42	38.87	1632.50
	Total	69		

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U Results of Beliefs Based on Gender

	Beliefs
Mann-Whitney U	404.500
Wilcoxon W	782.500
Z	-2.001
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.045

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

The results of the Mann–Whitney U test presented in Table 7 revealed statistically significant differences in beliefs between male and female pre-service teachers ($U = 404.50$, $Z = -2.001$, $p = .045$). Since the significance value was below the .05 threshold, the null hypothesis of no difference between genders was rejected.

Therefore, gender was found to be associated with differences in pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning. Specifically, female pre-service teachers demonstrated significantly higher belief scores than male pre-service teachers, as indicated by their higher mean rank. This result suggests that female pre-service teachers may possess stronger convictions regarding language learning processes, language aptitude, learning strategies, or motivation.

Differences in Students' Beliefs Based on Majors of Study

Another Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning based on their majors of study. As presented in Table 8, pre-service teachers majoring in English ($n = 46$) obtained a slightly higher mean rank (35.47) than those from non-English majors ($n = 23$), who had a mean rank of 34.07. Although English-major pre-service teachers appeared to report somewhat stronger beliefs about language learning, the difference in mean ranks was relatively small.

Table 8: Ranks

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Beliefs	English	46	35.47	1631.50
	Non-English	23	34.07	783.50
	Total	69		

Table 9: Mann-Whitney U Results of Beliefs Based on Majors of Study

	Beliefs
Mann-Whitney U	507.500
Wilcoxon W	783.500
Z	-.274
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.784

a. Grouping Variable: Majors of Study

The results of the Mann–Whitney U test shown in Table 9 indicated that the differences between the two groups were not statistically significant ($U = 507.50$, $Z = -0.274$, $p = .784$). Since the p-value was substantially greater than the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis was accepted. This result suggests that there were no significant differences in beliefs about language learning between English-major and non-English-major pre-service teachers. Therefore, major of study does

not appear to be a determining factor influencing pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning in the present sample.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Indonesian pre-service teachers hold balanced and constructive beliefs about language aptitude, combining a strong belief in universal learning potential with recognition of individual differences. The highest agreement—that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language—aligns with Self-efficacy Theory proposed by Bandura, which emphasizes the role of belief in one's capability in shaping motivation and success (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). At the same time, agreement with statements about age and aptitude reflects learners' beliefs that language learning success is influenced by both individual differences and learning conditions. Such beliefs are consistent with contemporary views that language aptitude contributes to language learning outcomes but does not solely determine success, as motivation, learning strategies, and learning experiences also play important roles (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Li, 2016).

The findings revealed that pre-service teachers hold moderately positive and realistic beliefs about the difficulty of learning English, combining confidence with an awareness of varying linguistic challenges. Their agreement that some languages are easier to learn than others reflects an understanding of cross-linguistic differences commonly discussed in Second Language Acquisition, where factors such as linguistic distance and prior knowledge influence learning difficulty. At the same time, their relatively low perception of English as a difficult subject, along with strong confidence in their ability to achieve proficiency, aligns with Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), suggesting that positive self-beliefs can enhance persistence and learning outcomes. The neutral responses regarding the time needed to reach fluency indicate some uncertainty, which is consistent with research showing that learners often have varied and sometimes unrealistic expectations about language learning timelines (Dörnyei, 2001; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Furthermore, the perception that speaking is more difficult than reading and writing

reflects findings from contemporary communicative language learning research. Speaking requires learners to simultaneously manage linguistic knowledge, discourse organization, sociocultural appropriateness, and interactional strategies in real time, making it one of the most cognitively demanding language skills. Unlike reading and writing, speaking often occurs under time pressure and requires immediate responses, which can increase learners' anxiety and perceived difficulty (Derakhshan et al., 2016). This perception is also consistent with recent communicative competence frameworks that view successful oral communication as the integration of multiple linguistic and social competencies (Council of Europe, 2020). Compared to earlier studies, such as those by Horwitz (1987), which found that learners often overestimate the difficulty of language learning and hold rigid beliefs about time and effort, these findings suggest a more balanced and informed perspective among pre-service teachers. Overall, the results indicate that while respondents recognize differences in skill difficulty and language complexity, they maintain a confident and constructive outlook that is conducive to effective language learning and future teaching practice.

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers hold a largely communicative and multidimensional view of the nature of language learning, emphasizing both linguistic knowledge and contextual understanding. The strong belief in the importance of vocabulary suggests an awareness of its central role in communication, as vocabulary knowledge has been consistently identified as a key predictor of language proficiency, comprehension, and fluency (Webb & Nation, 2017). Their recognition of cultural knowledge as an essential component of language learning is also consistent with contemporary views of communicative competence, which emphasize that effective communication requires not only linguistic knowledge but also sociocultural, pragmatic, and intercultural understanding (Council of Europe, 2020; Byram, 2021). Similarly, their moderate agreement on the benefits of learning in an English-speaking country reflects an understanding of authentic exposure, though the variation in responses suggests differing experiences or access to such environments. While grammar is still considered important, its lower emphasis compared to vocabulary, along with the

moderate stance on translation, indicates a shift away from traditional form-focused approaches toward more communicative and functional perspectives. This is further supported by their agreement that language learning differs from other academic subjects, recognizing its interactive and skill-based nature. Compared to earlier studies, such as those by Horwitz (1987), which often found stronger reliance on grammar and translation among learners, these results suggest that pre-service teachers are adopting more contemporary views influenced by communicative language teaching principles.

The findings also demonstrate that pre-service teachers possess very high motivation and positive orientations toward learning and using English, combining both practical and social goals. Their strong desire to speak English well and belief in its role in improving job opportunities reflect what Gardner (1985) conceptualized as instrumental motivation, where language learning is driven by tangible benefits such as career advancement. At the same time, their interest in forming friendships with native speakers and learning English to better understand them aligns with integrative motivation, also emphasized in the Socio-educational Model of Second Language Acquisition, which highlights the importance of social and cultural integration in successful language learning. These dual motivations suggest a well-rounded motivational profile that supports both persistence and meaningful engagement with the language (Dörnyei, 2001; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Furthermore, the strong perception of English as important within their national context indicates the influence of broader sociocultural factors on language learning. Contemporary Second Language Acquisition research increasingly views motivation as a socially situated construct shaped by cultural, institutional, and societal conditions rather than solely by individual psychological factors. Learners' motivation and investment in language learning are often influenced by how English is valued within society and by the opportunities it provides for academic, professional, and social advancement (Darvin & Norton, 2023).

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers hold a balanced yet slightly accuracy-oriented view of motivation and expectations in learning English, combining strong beliefs in practice with support for active communication. The

very high emphasis on repetition and consistent practice aligns with strategy research in Second Language Acquisition (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). At the same time, their willingness to communicate despite making errors reflects the principles of communicative language teaching, which prioritizes meaningful interaction and message exchange over perfect grammatical accuracy. Contemporary SLA research emphasizes that willingness to communicate is a key indicator of successful language learning because learners who actively engage in communication gain more opportunities to develop their linguistic and communicative competence. Recent studies have shown that learners' readiness to speak, even when their language production is imperfect, contributes positively to language development, communicative competence, and speaking performance (Leeming et al., 2024; Kirkpatrick et al., 2024).

The finding that female pre-service teachers demonstrated significantly stronger beliefs about language learning than male pre-service teachers suggests that females may possess greater confidence in language learning, stronger motivation to achieve proficiency, and more positive attitudes toward effective learning strategies. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that female learners tend to use language learning strategies more frequently and demonstrate stronger commitment to language learning tasks (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Similarly, Tercanlıoğlu (2005) found that female learners held stronger beliefs regarding the importance of effort and practice in language learning. From a sociocultural perspective, these differences may stem from variations in learning experiences, social expectations, and educational engagement, as learner beliefs are shaped by social and contextual influences (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). However, evidence remains mixed, with some studies reporting no significant gender differences and emphasizing the role of contextual factors such as educational settings and instructional practices (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). Therefore, gender should be viewed as one of several factors influencing language learning beliefs.

The finding that no significant differences existed between English-major and non-English-major pre-service teachers suggests that academic specialization may not be a major factor influencing beliefs about language learning. Although

English-major pre-service teachers showed a slightly higher mean rank, both groups held similar beliefs regarding language aptitude, learning strategies, motivation, and the nature of language learning. This supports the view that learner beliefs are shaped more by educational experiences, sociocultural contexts, and exposure to language learning opportunities than by field of study (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). The result is consistent with recent studies indicating that learner beliefs are influenced more by motivation, self-efficacy, and learning experiences than by academic major (Al-Hoorie, 2023; Öz, 2024; Wang & Zhang, 2023). Therefore, shared educational and sociocultural influences may explain the similarity in beliefs across disciplines.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs of Indonesian pre-service teachers regarding key aspects of language learning, including language aptitude, the difficulty of learning English, the nature of language learning, motivation and expectations, and whether these beliefs differ based on gender and academic background. Overall, the findings reveal that pre-service teachers hold balanced, informed, and constructive beliefs that are largely aligned with contemporary theories in Second Language Acquisition.

The respondents demonstrated a strong belief in universal language learning potential while still acknowledging individual differences in aptitude. This reflects a combination of self-efficacy and growth-oriented perspectives, suggesting that they view language ability as both developable and influenced by factors such as age. Their beliefs about language difficulty were realistic yet optimistic; they recognized that some languages and skills are more challenging than others, particularly speaking, but maintained confidence in their ability to achieve proficiency. Their understanding of the nature of language learning was also multidimensional, emphasizing the importance of vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and communicative competence rather than relying solely on grammar-based approaches.

In terms of motivation, the participants showed very high levels of both instrumental and integrative motivation, indicating strong personal, social, and professional reasons for learning English. Their beliefs about learning strategies and expectations further revealed a balanced approach, combining the importance of practice and repetition with a willingness to communicate despite making errors. In addition, the statistical analysis showed a significant difference in beliefs based on gender but no significant difference was found based on academic background, suggesting that individual characteristics may play a more influential role in shaping learners' beliefs about language learning than disciplinary affiliation.

The findings of this study have several implications for institutions, EFL teachers, and learners. For institutions, the results suggest the importance of providing learning environments and curricula that promote positive beliefs about language learning, communicative competence, cultural awareness, and learner autonomy. Since learners from different academic backgrounds demonstrated similar beliefs, language support programs, workshops, and opportunities for English use can be offered broadly across disciplines rather than being limited to specific majors. The significant gender differences identified in this study also highlight the need for institutions to ensure that learning environments are inclusive and supportive, enabling all learners to develop confidence and motivation in learning English. For EFL teachers, the findings emphasize the importance of encouraging learners to view language learning as a skill that can be developed through effort, practice, and effective learning strategies. Teachers should create supportive classrooms that promote meaningful communication, encourage risk-taking in language use, and help learners understand that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. In addition, teachers should be attentive to individual differences among learners and provide appropriate guidance to strengthen learners' confidence and motivation. For learners, the findings suggest that maintaining positive and realistic beliefs about language learning can contribute to greater motivation, persistence, and achievement. Learners should actively engage in language learning activities, seek opportunities to practice English inside and outside the classroom, and view challenges as opportunities for

growth. By developing strong motivation, confidence, and effective learning habits, learners can enhance their language proficiency and achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals in learning English.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The data were based on self-reported questionnaires, which may not fully reflect participants' actual beliefs or classroom practices. The sample size was relatively small and drawn only from one institution within a single province in Indonesia, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study relied primarily on quantitative data, which may not capture deeper explanations behind the beliefs observed. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples from multiple regions or institutions to enhance generalizability, as well as to incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, or classroom observations to provide richer and more in-depth insights into pre-service teachers' beliefs and their impact on teaching and learning practices.

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