

Beliefs about Language Learning as the Predictor of FL Classroom Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, and FL Achievement among Iranian EFL Learners



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Abstract

This study surveyed the predictive role of beliefs about language learning (BALL) as the predictor of FL anxiety and willingness to communicate (WTC) on language achievement of Iranian EFL learners. To do so, a sample of 120 advanced EFL learners in language institutes in Kerman was selected through convenience sampling to take part in this research. Participants were 50 male and 70 female learners with a mean age of 17. Data for the study were collected using three relevant questionnaires: A Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) scale, a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and a Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale. The results of the study utilizing multiple regression revealed that beliefs about language learning effectively contributed to predicting anxiety in L2 classes and these two variables had a negative linear relationship. Beliefs about language learning also had a positive significant role in predicting L2 achievement. However, beliefs about language learning did not have a role in the prediction of willingness to communicate in an EFL classroom and their relationship was insignificant. The findings of the present study can help EFL learners to become more aware of their beliefs about language learning and its effects on Anxiety and WTC. A clear understanding of learners' beliefs about language learning may change teachers' and students' views toward the importance of beliefs in learning an L2.

پیش بینی اعتقادات در مورد یادگیری زبان (BALL) را به عنوان پیش بینی کننده اضطراب و تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) در زمینه دستیابی به زبان ایران آموزش EFL

این مطالعه نقش پیش بینی اعتقادات در مورد یادگیری زبان (BALL) را به عنوان پیش بینی کننده اضطراب و تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) در زمینه دستیابی به زبان ایران آموزش EFL بررسی کرده است. برای این کار، نمونه ای از 120 زبان آموز پیشرفته EFL در مؤسسات زبان در کرمان از طریق نمونه گیری راحتی برای شرکت در این تحقیق انتخاب شد. شرکت کنندگان 50 مرد و 70 زباندار زن با میانگین سنی 17 ساله بودند. داده های این مطالعه با استفاده از سه پرسشنامه مربوطه جمع آوری شد: اعتقادات مربوط به مقیاس موجودی یادگیری زبان (Balli)، مقیاس اضطراب کلاس زبان خارجی (FLCAS) و یک تمایل برای برقراری ارتباط (WTC). نتایج مطالعه با استفاده از رگرسیون چندگانه نشان داد که اعتقادات در مورد یادگیری زبان به طور مؤثر در پیش بینی اضطراب در کلاس های L2 نقش داشته است و این دو متغیر دارای یک رابطه خطی منفی هستند. اعتقادات در مورد یادگیری زبان نیز نقش مهمی در پیش بینی موفقیت L2 داشت. با این حال، اعتقادات در مورد یادگیری زبان نقشی در پیش بینی تمایل به برقراری ارتباط در یک کلاس EFL نداشت و رابطه آنها ناچیز بود. یافته های پژوهش حاضر می تواند به زبان آموزان EFL کمک کند تا از اعتقادات خود در مورد یادگیری زبان و تأثیرات آن بر اضطراب و WTC آگاه شوند. درک روشنی از اعتقاد زبان آموزان در مورد یادگیری زبان ممکن است دیدگاه معلمان و دانش آموزان را نسبت به اهمیت اعتقادات در یادگیری L2 تغییر دهد.

واژگان کلیدی: عقاید در مورد یادگیری زبان، اضطراب کلاسی، دستیابی به زبان دوم، اشتیاق به ارتباط

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Introduction

Throughout the history of language teaching and language learning, many scholars and researchers have tried to propose the best method for teaching a foreign language (Brown,2007). These attempts range from the grammar-translation method, direct method, communicative language teaching, and other methods, strategies, and techniques used by language teachers. However, these methods are merely focused on the learners and fail to consider other options and factors that may hinder or promote the learning process. There are a great number of factors related to learners that are worth investigating in this context. The factors are beliefs about language learning, anxiety, and willingness to communicate, which are the main subject of this study and among the variables that would have contributed to language achievement.

Beliefs guide our behaviors and help individuals to define and understand the world and themselves, and they are instrumental in defining tasks and play an important role in defining behavior. According to Richardson (1996), beliefs are psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are held to be true. Beliefs are central constructs in every discipline that deals with human behavior and learning. In the context of language learning, beliefs about language learning are significant factors among EFL learners, and these beliefs influence language learning. Studies have found that second language learners come to the language class with some preconceived beliefs about language and language learning and these beliefs can indicate what expectations the learners have and what actions in their language learning they will take (Horwitz,1987). Mantle-Bromley (1995) suggested that learners who have positive attitudes and realistic language-related beliefs are more likely to behave more productively in learning than those who have negative attitudes and mistaken beliefs.

Another significant factor in language learning is anxiety, which is defined as “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” (Tanveer, 2007). Anxiety is parallel to many related abstract mental concepts: the more attention dedicated to it, the more questions emerge. According to Horwitz (2001), many language learners and instructors around the world experience, FL anxiety linked with their learning or teaching, and its potential to affect learning and performance are observed. According to Brown (2007) anxiety in second language learning can result in tension and apprehension and difficulties in speaking, listening, and learning. Willingness to communicate among language learners is another factor that was derived from studies in the first language. Brown (2007) defined this concept as "the intention to

initiate communication, given a choice”. According to researchers, willingness to communicate depends on some factors such as the degree of acquaintance between communicators, the number of people present, the formality of the situation, and the topic of discussion (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001).

The problem

Mentioned, “As the world is becoming borderless, the need to be conversant in more than one language has never been more pressing than at present. Currently, the most popular second language is English as it is spoken and understood by at least 1.5 billion people worldwide of which 1.1 billion use it as an additional language”. The beliefs language learners carry into the classroom are a strong predictor of behavior and therefore have educational implications. Horwitz (1987) believed that learners’ beliefs about SLA are important since they may determine whether students embrace effective learning strategies. Furthermore, when learners’ beliefs collide with instructional approaches, learners may feel less enthusiastic about classroom activities. Research in this area may also assist L2 instructors in pinpointing learners’ misconceptions that are most likely to negatively affect learning, so they are debated to promote learners' understanding and control of their learning processes.

“A roughly significant correlation was found between the students’ social class anxiety and their reading performance. The findings show that some degree of anxiety could help read performance. The results suggest that students’ reading performance could be improved by taking advantage of the facilitative aspect of anxiety” (Rezaabadi,2017, p.211-213). Peng and Woodrow (2010) have stated that “classroom environment predicts WTC, communication confidence, learner beliefs, and motivation. Motivation influences WTC indirectly through confidence. The direct effect of learner beliefs on motivation and confidence is identified”. In this era, many articles show the importance of learners’ and teachers’ beliefs in learning a foreign language, specifically English since today`s prominence of English. These beliefs can positively and negatively affect not only the process but also the outcome of the learning by manipulating many factors two of which can be anxiety and willingness to communicate. With anxiety and willingness to communicate being two of the most important factors of learning in classrooms that can affect the outcome of learning, this study surveys the predictive role of beliefs about language learning (BALL) as the predictor of FL anxiety and willingness to communicate (WTC) on language achievement.

Significance of the Study

This study can be considered significant from different perspectives. The first significance lies in the fact that exploring beliefs about language learning can provide numerous insights into the issue of language learning, which can finally lead to a better program of language teaching. Secondly, studies about willingness to communicate are still underdeveloped and other studies must be conducted to gain a better understanding of such a phenomenon. Thirdly, anxiety is a factor that is dependent upon many other issues and in language learning, there could be still other reasons that can justify this concept. Finally, the relationship between these three variables and the influence they exert on each other is of prime importance both for teachers and language learners because teachers want to enhance their performance and improve their efficacy, and language learners want to achieve their goals sooner. Thus, the present study investigated the effectiveness of BALL in predicting FL anxiety and WTC in classrooms and learners' FL achievement and if such a relationship existed, teachers could make use of these data to improve the learning process and its outcome by enhancing the learners' beliefs and lowering classroom anxiety as well as increasing WTC.

Research Questions

Based on the mentioned objectives, the researcher aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict anxiety in FL classrooms?

RQ2: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in FL classrooms?

RQ3: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict L2 achievement in FL classrooms?

Literature Review

In an early effort to classify the types of beliefs held by language learners, Horwitz (1987) administered the BALLI to groups of learners. Five general areas of beliefs arose from the analysis of their answers which are (1) the difficulty of language learning, (2) aptitude for language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivation and expectations. Wenden (1986) classified the beliefs she identified in 25 adults registered in a part-time advanced-level class at an American university into three general

categories: (1) use of the language (for example, the importance of ‘learning in a natural way’), (2) beliefs relating to learning about the language (for example, the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary), and (3) the importance of personal factors (i.e. beliefs about the feelings that facilitate or inhibit learning, self-concept, and aptitude for learning). Both of these early studies, then, recognized a very similar set of learner beliefs. There is growing attention to understanding the influence of beliefs in learning languages.

Benson and Lor (1999) identified higher-order ‘conceptions’ and lower-order ‘beliefs’ and defined ‘conceptions’ as ‘concerned with what the learner thinks the objects and processes of learning are’ whereas beliefs are ‘what the learner holds to be true about these objects and processes. According to Jusoh (2017) “Research on the beliefs about language learning has shown that beliefs held by learners have a great influence on language performance. These influences can either have supportive or damaging effects on their learning”. Furthermore, beliefs about language learning play a crucial role in successful language learning activities. Language learners’ thoughts about the extent to which they have control over the learning process affect learning performance. Learners with higher perceived control over the learning process attend classes more regularly, study more and achieve higher levels of proficiency. Moreover, learners’ beliefs about their ability to learn a language would help language teachers when they need to start new interventions, such as creating textbooks, developing teaching methods, and designing course objectives (Alhamami, 2019).

More (1999) examined the beliefs of 187 university students registered in Japanese at different proficiency levels in the US. She inspected the relationship between epistemological beliefs (i.e. beliefs about learning in general) and beliefs about language learning and also the connection between beliefs and L2 achievement. She found that strong beliefs in innate ability (i.e. the ability to learn is inherited and cannot be improved by effort) and in avoidance of ambiguity (i.e. the need for single, clear-cut answers) were associated with lower achievement. Learners who believed that L2 learning was easy showed higher levels of achievement. Peacock (2001) researched EFL learners and the results showed that some different learner beliefs were detrimental to language learning, and also these beliefs resulted in many dissatisfied and frustrated learners who did not understand the rationale behind the tasks they carried out in class. Ellis (2008) stated that “beliefs constitute an individual difference variable notably different from the other individual difference factors such as language aptitude or motivation but, like these variables, beliefs influence both the process and product of learning”.

Horwitz., Horwitz, and Cope (1986) explained Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process”. Language anxiety is higher among factors influencing language learning, whatever the learning setting is, and it has become central to any examination of factors contributing to the learning process and learner achievement. “Not only is it intuitive to many people that anxiety negatively influences language learning, but it is also logical because anxiety has been found to interfere with many types of learning and has been one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education” (Horwitz, 2001, p.112-126).

Psychologists differentiate several types of anxiety. Normally, anxiety as a personality trait is distinguished from a transient anxiety state. In other words, trait anxiety is theorized as a relatively stable personality characteristic whereas state anxiety is seen as a response to a particular anxiety-provoking stimulus such as an important test [18]. According to MacIntyre (1999), there is a type of anxiety that is called situation-specific anxiety. This type of anxiety is only shown in a particular situation. MacIntyre (1999) has mentioned that FLA is a situation-specific relationship with environments of foreign language learning, and it is felt when a student is required to use a foreign language. This indicates that language learning classes can be more anxiety-provoking than other classes. When learners feel anxious, they may have problems such as reduced word production and difficulty in understanding spoken instructions (Horwitz,2001).

One of the first attempts for investigating this concept was the work conducted by MacIntyre (1994). This researcher aimed to develop a structural model to explain the variance in L1 WTC. MacIntyre (1994) mentioned that two important factors influence WTC. These factors include communication apprehension and perceived competence. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément., & Conrod, (2001) investigated the differences between WTC of a first and second language. These researchers employed linguistic, communicative, and social-psychological concepts so that they can explain WTC in a second language. These researchers showed that the WTC of L2 is a situational variable that exerts transient and enduring influences on the learner. In addition, they found that, besides speaking, WTC influences other skills i.e. listening, writing, and reading. The researchers explained that there are individual factors (anxiety, motivation, attitudes, interpersonal attraction, etc.) and social contextual factors (ethnolinguistic vitality, language contact, etc.) that influence WTC.

Baghaei, Dourakhshan, and Salavati, (2012) carried out a study and investigated whether there was a relationship between willingness to communicate and achieving competence in an EFL setting. The results showed that these two factors influence language learning. These factors include willingness to communicate in the school context and willingness to communicate with native speakers of English. The findings showed that these factors were moderately correlated with language achievement, which was English in this context. In another study, [22] investigated Malaysian students' willingness to communicate in English as a second language (ESL). The researchers used a Structural Equation Model (SEM) to test a hypothesized model that integrates WTC in English, communication apprehension and competence, motivation, and language learning communication strategies. The results showed that Language learning communication strategies directly affect motivation, self-perceived communication competence, and WTC in English. Further, the results also demonstrated that motivation influences the two components of communication confidence and influences WTC indirectly through the two variables self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension. The final model correlated well with the data, thereby indicating the potential of using language learning communication strategies with WTC constructs to account for ESL communication.

Mahmoodi and Moazam (2014) studied the relationship between willingness to communicate and foreign language achievement. In this study, they used 44 Iranian undergraduate Arabic students as the participants of the study. The data collection instrument of this study was the Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language Scale (WTC-FLS) questionnaire, which was developed by Baghaei, Dourakhshan, and Salavati, (2012). The results of this study showed that there was a significant relationship between WTC and Arabic language achievement. In other words, students with higher levels of willingness to communicate achieve better results in language learning.

This brief exploration of related literature showed that willingness to communicate and anxiety play an important role in language learning. However, there are still vague points that require further investigation. As the review revealed, some areas are still under-studied and some contradictory points do not agree with previous works. Hence, more research must be conducted in this area to find appropriate answers to such questions. To the best knowledge of the researchers, no study used these variables together.

Methodology

Participants

To determine the sample of this study, 120 advanced EFL learners in language institutes in Kerman were selected through convenience sampling to take part in this research. All the learners took part in the study voluntarily. Because the process of placement tests at the institute is highly systematic, the researcher was certain of the homogeneity of the participants in the test. To this end, the initial population (n=360) was selected (i.e. non-alphabetically, or not based on gender); next, the link to the questionnaires was given to these individuals. This group consisted of 70 female learners and 50 male learners. In addition, the mean age of the participants of this study was around 17.

Instruments

Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) Scale

The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was developed by Horwitz (1988). The BALLI exists in three versions: the original 34-item version for use with American foreign language students, a 34-item version with simplified English for ESL students, and a 27-item teachers' version, used by Horwitz to evaluate the beliefs of student teachers (Horwitz, 1988). This study employed BALLI (1988) a 34-item Likert scale questionnaire with a maximum score of 170 and a minimum score of 34, developed by Horwitz (1988) to identify students' beliefs. The BALLI evaluates learners' beliefs in five main 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 (Horwitz, 1987). Among the 34 items in the BALLI, 32 items were scored on a five-point Likert scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Following Khodadady (2009) some minor alterations are done to better suit the Iranian participants. These changes include for instance item 4 was reworded for Persian learners. Besides, throughout the scale the term "Foreign language" was substituted with "English" and the term "English" was also changed to "Persian". Two items have different response scales (4 and 15). Item 4 asks about the supposed degree of difficulty of the English language: "English is 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language.". Item 15 asks about the amount of time needed to learn a language: "If someone spent a one-hour day learning a language, how long would

it take them to speak the language very well? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) you cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day.”

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

This scale is constructed by Horwitz., Horwitz, and Cope (1986) that was hypothesized to include three domains: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation and it has 33 items. It is a self-report questionnaire that uses a Likert scale format to assess issues related to FL classroom anxiety. Development of the questionnaire drew from the experiences of foreign language students (mainly students learning Spanish as a foreign language) who had self-selected into language support groups at the University of Texas at Austin for reasons such as anxiety or difficulty learning their target language (Horwitz., Horwitz, & Cope,1986).

The items on the FLCAS describe specific situations that might prompt anxiety for students, making the FLCAS an assessment of situation-specific anxiety. The situation-specific approach used by Horwitz., Horwitz, and Cope (1986) was also adopted in the present research for two primary reasons: (1) the situation-specific characterization of FLA is most consistent with the definition of FLA as anxiety that is prompted by the tasks and context unique to learning a foreign language, and (2) the situation-specific characterization affords numerous advantages for conceptualizing and assessing anxiety.

Karabiyık and Özkan (2017) pointed out “FLCAS is a self-report instrument developed by Horwitz., Horwitz, and Cope (1986, p.127).”. It consists of 33 items; 24 positively worded and 9 negatively worded items designed to quantify the FLA levels of students. It is scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (5) to “Strongly Disagree” (1). According to Horwitz (1988) based on a sample of 108 participants, the reliability score attained from the measure was .93. Moreover, based on a sample of 78 participants, the test-retest reliability of the instrument was ascertained to be $r = 0.83$ ($p < 0.001$) over 8 weeks. It is considered to be a reliable measure in assessing FLA levels of subjects revealed in many studies”. This questionnaire has a maximum score of 165 and the minimum score of 33. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was estimated by the researchers to be .83 which is quite satisfactory.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale

A modified version of the Likert-type questionnaire developed by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément., & Conrod, (2001) was used for measuring students’ willingness to communicate inside the

classroom. The scale comprises 27 items which range from 1 to 5 (1 = rarely willing, 2 = sometimes willing, 3 = willing half of the time, 4 = usually willing, and 5 = almost always willing). Students were requested to show how willing they would be to communicate during the class activities. The items were written in a way that involved students' willingness to communicate inside the classroom in all four skills. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément., & Conrod, (2001) Report this scale to be a valid and reliable one (alpha levels indicate reliability estimates): speaking (8 items, $\alpha = .81$), comprehension (5 items, $\alpha = .83$), reading (6 items, $\alpha = .83$), and writing (8 items, $\alpha = .88$).

The alpha reliability estimates for this instrument in the current study are as follows: speaking (8 items, $\alpha = .78$), comprehension (5 items, $\alpha = .79$), reading (6 items, $\alpha = .85$), and writing (8 items, $\alpha = .85$). In this scale, the word "French" was a change to "English" to better suit the learners. WTC in English inside the classroom questionnaire was adapted from MacIntyre, Baker, Clément., & Conrod, (2001) which evaluates the frequency of times that students would choose to speak in English in each classroom situation. Higher scores indicated higher levels of WTC in English inside the classroom. The minimum and maximum scores on this scale range from 27 to 135.

Data Collection Procedure

The current study was performed through the following steps. First, the statistical population of the study was determined. After the sampling procedures, the participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, and their scores and personal information would be kept confidential. Second, the questionnaires of this study were created via Google Forms and the link was sent to the participants and 120 filled out the questionnaire. The participants filled out the questionnaires and data analysis was performed. Finally, the research questions were answered.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data of this study were analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. Using this program, the descriptive statistics, reliability indices, and inferential statistics of the scales were determined. In addition, the data were analyzed by SPSS through multiple regression analysis, the results were studied and inferences were made.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the variables

Firstly, descriptive statistics of learners' beliefs about language learning, anxiety in L2 classrooms, willingness to communicate, and their L2 achievement are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
BALL	120	34.00	107.00	141.00	122.13	8.16	66.63
FL Anx	120	48.00	100.00	148.00	122.20	13.04	170.04
WTC	120	27.00	102.00	129.00	115.19	6.96	48.44
LA	120	37.00	56.00	93.00	80.05	8.28	68.59
Valid N (listwise)	120						

Note: Beliefs about language learning= BALL, Foreign language anxiety= FL Anx, Willingness to communicate= WTC, Language achievement= LA

Beliefs about Language Learning

As indicated in table 4.1, learners' scores on beliefs about language learning ranged from 107 to 141 with a mean of 122.13 and a standard deviation of 8.16.

Learners' Anxiety in L2 Classroom

Additionally, the results of descriptive statistics (table 1) show that learners' mean score on the anxiety scale was 122.20, their maximum score was 148 and their minimum score was 100, with a standard deviation of 13.04.

Learners' Willingness to Communicate

Learners' descriptive statistics on willingness to communicate (table 1) reveal that learners' mean score on willingness to communicate was 115.19, their maximum score was 129 and their minimum score was 102.

Learners' L2 achievement

Finally, descriptive statistics for learners' L2 achievement show (table 1) that their minimum and maximum score obtained on L2 achievement was 56 and 93. Learners' their L2 achievement mean

score was 80 with a standard deviation of 8.28 and also the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to check the normality of data; results are presented in table 4.2.

Table 2*One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

		BALL	FL Anx	WTC	LA
N		120	120	120	120
Normal Parameters^{a,b}	Mean	80.05	115.19	122.20	122.13
	Std. Deviation	8.28	6.960	13.04	8.163
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.105	.080	.11	.085
	Positive	.084	.074	.11	.085
	Negative	-.105	-.080	-.08	-.067
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.926	1.29	.878	1.155
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.357	.07	.423	.139

Table 2 reveals that the scores of beliefs about language learning, anxiety in L2 class, willingness to communicate and language achievement ($p = .35, .07, .42, .13, p > .05$) are normally distributed.

Inferential statistics**Investigating the First Research Question**

To answer the first research question investigating whether or not beliefs about language learning predict anxiety in foreign language classrooms (FL Anxiety), then a multiple regression was run. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3*Multiple Regression with Anxiety as Criteria and Beliefs as Predictor*

Criteria		Predictor			
Anxiety		Beliefs about Language Learning			
	β	-.512			
	T	-3.67			
	P	.00			
R= .321 ^a	R ² =.103	R ² _{adjusted} =	F= 13.51	df= 1	p= .00
		.095			

The regression variance analysis of learners' anxiety in the L2 class about beliefs about language learning (table 3) indicated that $R^2=.103$ (R^2 is the common variance between learners' anxiety and beliefs about language learning) and $p=.00$. Since $R^2 > 0$ and $p < .05$, the Multiple Linear Regression was significant. In other words, the predictor had a negative linear relationship with anxiety in the L2 class ($\beta =-.512$, $p < .05$). In other words, nine percent of the variance in anxiety in the L2 classroom can be explained by the predictor variable ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .095$).

Investigating the Second Research Question

To address the second research question concerning whether or not learners' beliefs about language learning predict willingness to communicate in an EFL classroom another multiple regression was calculated. Table 4 presents the results of multiple regression.

Table 4

Multiple Regression with a willingness to Communicate Criteria and Beliefs as a Predictor

Criteria	Predictor				
willingness to communicate	Beliefs about Language Learning				
	<i>B</i>	.102			
	<i>T</i>	1.11			
	<i>P</i>	.26			
$R = .102^a$	$R^2 = .010$	$R^2_{\text{adjusted}} =$.002	$F = 1.24$	$df = 1$	$p = .26$

The regression variance analysis of learners' willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms about beliefs about language learning (table 4) indicated that $R^2=.010$ (R^2 is the common variance between learners' willingness to communicate and beliefs about language learning) and $p=.26$. Since $p < .05$, the Multiple Linear Regression was not significant. In other words, the predictor did not have a linear relationship with willingness to communicate in the EFL classroom ($\beta =.102$, $p > .05$).

Investigating the Third Research Question

To address the third research question concerning whether or not learners' beliefs about language learning predict L2 achievement another multiple regression was computed.

Table 5*Multiple Regression with L2 achievement as Criteria and Beliefs as Predictor*

Criteria	Predictor				
L2 achievement	Beliefs about Language Learning				
	<i>B</i>	.545			
	<i>T</i>	7.069			
	<i>P</i>	.000			
R= .545 ^a	R ² =.297	R ² _{adjusted} =	F= 49.96	df= 1	p= .00
		.292			

The regression variance analysis of learners' L2 achievement about beliefs about language learning (table 5) indicated that $R^2=.297$ (R^2 is the common variance between learners' L2 achievement and beliefs about language learning) and $p=.00$. Since $R^2>0$ and $p<.05$, the Multiple Linear Regression was significant. In other words, the predictor had a linear relationship with L2 achievement ($\beta = .54$, $p<.05$). Indicating that 29 percent of the variance in L2 achievement can be explained by the Beliefs about language learning ($R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .292$).

Discussion

Throughout the history of language teaching, there have been lots of attempts and projects to enhance language teaching and learning. Some of these projects dealt with the teacher, some with the material, some with the method, and some with learners and their expectations. The current study was carried out to investigate the extent to which Iranian EFL learners' Beliefs About Language Learning (BALL) predicted their FL Anxiety in the language classrooms, Willingness to Communicate, and L2 Achievement. Considering these concepts, the following research questions were made and in summary, the corresponding answers were found for these questions:

RQ1: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict anxiety in FL classrooms?

The results of the first research question exploring whether or not beliefs about language learning predicted anxiety in the language classrooms, revealed that learners' beliefs about language learning accounted for a great proportion of learners' anxiety in the FL classroom. Thus, learners' belief about learning and communication strategies was a stronger predictor of Iranian EFL learners' anxiety in EFL classrooms.

In addition, a study conducted by Wang (2005) on a total of 175 first and second-year university students who participated in study showed that there was a significant negative relationship between beliefs about language learning and foreign language classroom anxiety. This result is in line with the findings of this study. In another study led by Truitt (1995), the results of two belief factors on 204 undergraduate English students were found significantly correlated with foreign language anxiety. The aforementioned result is also in agreement with the results of this study.

The results of this study are also consistent with the results of the study performed by Kunt (1997). According to Kunt (1997), the results of the study on Turkish-speaking students revealed a negative relationship between beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety. Kunt stated “the Turkish-speaking learners of English who are confident about their English ability tend to have low foreign language anxiety” (Kunt, 1997, p.3). In a different study conducted by Aslan and Thompson (2021) on 153 university-level Turkish EFL learners who completed the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS), the results indicated a negative relation between beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety. The results of this study are also in line with Aslan’s study.

On the other hand, the results of this study contrast with a study implemented by Zhang (2014) in China on Chinese university first-year English majors. The results of Zhang’s (2014) study revealed no significant relationship between learners’ beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety. This finding contrasts with Sioson (2011) who found no significant link between language learning beliefs and anxiety, suggesting that whether people have positive or negative language learning attitudes does not always indicate they have greater or lower anxiety levels. Hou (2013) investigated the link between language learning beliefs and foreign language classroom anxiety. He found a positive relationship between beliefs about language learning and anxiety which is in line with this study.

If we look at the three fundamental features of foreign language classroom anxiety: a) High feelings of self-consciousness; b) Fear of making mistakes; and c) Desire to be perfect while speaking (Foss, & Reitzel, 1988), we can see how they are linked to specific language-learning beliefs. When learners believe that others are better at language acquisition than they are, they experience high levels of self-consciousness. It might also be linked to the notion that they lacked a natural ability to learn a foreign language and were therefore bound to be humiliated in language lessons. Self-conscious students are afraid of being embarrassed in front of professors or other students whom they feel are more knowledgeable and skilled than they are.

RQ2: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in FL classrooms?

The second question explores whether learners' views about language learning influence their willingness to communicate in an EFL classroom. The results revealed that learners' beliefs about language learning did not have a linear connection with their willingness to communicate. This result is in line with a study conducted by Aini (2020). The results of Aini's (2020) study on 114 tenth graders of a government school in Sidoarjo and a private school in Surabaya showed that the correlation between students' beliefs and willingness to communicate was not significant.

In another study performed by Fatemipour, and Shirmohamadzadeh (2014) on 358 randomly selected university students of Applied Science and Technology majoring in Hotel Management, Hospitality, Cooking, and Tourism in Iran; the results revealed a significant relationship between beliefs about language learning and willingness to communicate. The results of Fatemipour and Shirmohamadzadeh's (2014) study contrast with the results obtained in this study. Moreover, the results are in contrast with the findings of the study performed by Dewaele, and Dewaele (2018). their results showed that beliefs about language learning predict EFL learners' Willingness to Communicate and a positive attitude about language learning can enhance willingness to communicate. The results of this study are also in contrast with a study conducted by Zarrinabadi, Lou, and Shirzad (2021). who reported a positive relationship between beliefs and willingness to communicate. Unfortunately, there has been little research on the relationship between these exact two variables which are beliefs about language learning and willingness to communicate.

RQ3: Do learners' beliefs about language learning predict L2 achievement in FL classrooms?

The third research question, which looked at whether learners' views about language learning predict L2 accomplishment, revealed that learners' attitudes about language learning had a linear connection with L2 achievement. This finding is in line with those reported by Peacock (2001). Pearson-correlation analysis in Abedini, Rahimi, and Zare-ee's (2011) study revealed that there were positive and significant connections between belief scores and proficiency scores of 203 Iranian undergraduate English learners. The finding of this study is in agreement with the study performed by [40]. According to these researchers, a significant relationship was observed between Beliefs About Language Learning and Iranian EFL learners' L2 Achievement. This

finding was verified in this study because the results revealed a significant relation between Beliefs About Language Learning and Iranian EFL learners' L2 Achievement in the sample of the study.

The finding of this study is also in line with the study implemented by Khodadady (2009). The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis of responses in Khodadady's (2009) study revealed that academic achievement is significantly related to beliefs about language learning. The finding of this study is also in agreement with the study performed by Rastegar, and Karami (2015). In this study, a Statistical test of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and an Independent T-Test were conducted to analyze the data and the results showed a significant relationship between beliefs about language learning and FL achievement. The results of this study also contrast with the findings of Mori (1999), which revealed that learners with greater Japanese success scores had lower scores on the idea that learning capacity is inherently fixed. The findings revealed that students' beliefs about learning are a greater indicator of classroom anxiety.

Conclusion

The current study aimed at investigating learners' Beliefs About Language Learning as the predictor of FL classroom Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, and FL Achievement among Iranian EFL learners. To this end, 120 advanced EFL learners in language institutes in Kerman were selected through convenience sampling and they took part in this research. Data analysis showed that learners' Beliefs about language learning had a negative linear relationship with anxiety in L2 class and they had a linear relationship with FL achievement yet they did not have a linear relationship with willingness to communicate. In summary, beliefs about language learning are the predictor of FL anxiety and FL achievement but they are not the predictor of willingness to communicate.

The current study can be of significance for a large number of people both practically and theoretically. Teachers, learners, institutions, schools, researchers, and material developers can make use of this study and apply its results to improve learning outcomes. This research can aid teachers and students to become more conscious about their BALL and their effects on Anxiety and WTC and help them to improve not only the process but also the outcome of learning in classrooms. The pedagogical implications of this study may apply to language classroom settings and instructors. This study aimed to examine and investigate learners' BALL as the predictor of FL classroom Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, and FL Achievement among Iranian EFL learners; as a result, the first implication of this study is related to language pedagogy. In this

regard, language teachers can use the result to enhance the learning of language learners. In other words, the results of this study can be used in classrooms directly.

Besides this point, the results of this study can be beneficial for teachers in that they can provide students with a better understanding of the nature of language learning. The third implication of this study is related to language learners. EFL learners can benefit from the result of improving their language skills, especially in the effective domain of language learning.

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