A case study of EFL students' beliefs about English language learning

Hieu Manh Do[1]
[1]The Saigon International University, Vietnam

Article Info

Abstract

Students' beliefs about learning English play a crucial role in both learning and teaching. This study, therefore, examines Vietnamese EFL students' beliefs about learning English across five different factors: self-efficacy, the roles of teachers and students, the nature of learning, and expectations. A total of 121 undergraduate students majoring in English from universities in Ho Chi Minh City were invited to complete an online survey via Google Forms. Their ratings were compared across the five belief areas, and independent T-tests were performed to identify any significant differences between male and female students' ratings. Results showed that students' perceptions of their own roles and self-efficacy were rated much higher than those of teachers, the learning process, and traditional learning expectations. Additionally, gender had little influence on beliefs about learning English. However, there was a significant difference in beliefs about self-efficacy and traditional learning orientation. Specifically, male students demonstrated higher confidence in their self-efficacy, while female students preferred traditional approaches more. The findings are discussed in terms of implications for teaching methods, especially the use of task-based language teaching and learner-centered instruction.

INTRODUCTION

With the widespread popularity of English in the modern world (Christison & Murray, 2014), there has been a variety of research attempting to enhance an in-depth understanding of English language learning. One strand of this research emphasizes the role of learners' beliefs, which are widely recognized as key determinants of language learning outcomes. Learners' beliefs shape their motivation, learning strategies, and engagement with instruction, thereby influencing the overall success of their language development (Genç et al., 2016). Studies across different contexts have demonstrated that these beliefs directly affect how students approach learning. For example, Abhakorn (2014) highlighted that Thai students' perceptions of learning methods and their confidence in their abilities were central to their language development. Cotterall (1995) further emphasized that students' beliefs affected performance and determined outcomes, while Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) showed that self-efficacious students were more likely to seek strategies to improve their learning. At the same time, mismatches between teachers' and learners' beliefs may result in poor confidence and dissatisfaction (Horwitz, 1988, cited in Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014). Accordingly, scholars have urged educators to take learners' beliefs into account to avoid conflict between classroom practices and learner expectations (Alsamaani, 2012; Schulz, 2001).

Although research in varied EFL contexts has shed light on this issue, beliefs in English learning remain an underexplored area in Vietnam. English has long been a compulsory subject in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, with students often attending extra classes at language centers. Nevertheless, Vietnamese graduates continue to face criticism for insufficient communication skills despite many years of study (Do, 2023a; Huynh, 2020). Previous studies have suggested that a key factor behind this discrepancy lies in the persistence of examination-driven instruction (Do, 2023b; Tonogbanua, 2018). Such instruction emphasizes grammar and reading skills at the expense of listening and speaking, leaving students poorly prepared for communicative use of English. Moreover, classroom dynamics tend to position teachers as authoritative transmitters of knowledge while students remain passive recipients (Do, 2023a; Nguyen & Habok, 2021). These practices limit students' opportunities for active participation and language use, potentially reinforcing beliefs that English is primarily about passing exams rather than developing communicative competence.

The urgency of revisiting learner beliefs in Vietnam stems from both local and global considerations. Locally, despite substantial investment in projects such as the National Foreign Languages Project 2020, the country has not achieved its desired outcomes in English proficiency. Learners' beliefs may explain why reforms have not taken hold as effectively as expected. If students continue to believe that English learning is primarily exam-oriented, reforms promoting communicative approaches are likely to meet resistance. Globally, the rise of technology and the integration of artificial intelligence into education are reshaping language learning (Do, 2025). In this shifting landscape, understanding learners' beliefs is crucial, as such beliefs influence whether students adopt or resist pedagogical innovations. Thus, research on Vietnamese learners' beliefs contributes not only to national educational reform but also to broader discussions about how learners' mindsets shape the effectiveness of global trends in language education.

Another dimension that remains underexplored in Vietnam is the role of gender in shaping learners' beliefs. While studies in other EFL contexts have pointed to differences in learning styles, motivation, and self-efficacy between male and female learners (Genç et al., 2016), few Vietnamese studies have investigated whether such differences exist and how they might affect language learning outcomes. Addressing this gap is significant because gendered beliefs may influence classroom participation, confidence, and willingness to communicate, all of which have implications for teaching practices. Insights into gendered differences could help educators design more inclusive pedagogies that address the specific needs of both male and female learners.

In short, while research (e.g., Tonogbanua, 2018) highlighted the dominance of exam-driven learning in Vietnam, little has been done to update this picture in light of recent reforms or to investigate gendered differences in beliefs. Current evidence (Nguyen & Habok, 2021) suggests that traditional teacher authority and passive student roles remain pervasive, indicating that changes have been limited. This leaves a critical research gap: little is known about how Vietnamese undergraduate English majors currently perceive English learning, how they view the roles of students and teachers, how self-efficacy shapes their learning, and whether beliefs differ across gender. Addressing this gap is both timely and urgent, as it provides insights that can help align

Vietnamese English education with global communicative standards while contributing to the international literature on the impact of learner beliefs in second language learning.

The present study, therefore, aims to investigate Vietnamese undergraduate EFL students' beliefs about English language learning across five dimensions: self-efficacy, students' roles, teachers' roles, the nature of language learning, and the orientation of English study. Furthermore, it seeks to explore whether there are significant gender differences in these beliefs. By doing so, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of learner perspectives, offering practical implications for curriculum design and teaching practices in Vietnam and extending global discussions on the role of beliefs in shaping language learning outcomes. The two research questions that guided the study are presented as follows:

1. What are undergraduate Vietnamese EFL English-majored students' beliefs in English language learning?
2. Are there any significant differences between males' and females' beliefs about English language learning?

Literature review

Learners' Beliefs

According to Wenden (1998b) and Flavell (1987), learners' belief was considered as a part of metacognitive knowledge. To be specific, it is "the ability to use the knowledge to plan, monitor, and evaluate their language learning. The learners' metacognition influences the degree of autonomous behaviors toward learning" (Abhakorn, 2014, p.47). Learners directly influence their language learning process (Cotterall, 1995). If students hold negative beliefs on the way they learn a language, they might receive poor achievement (Horwitz, 1988). Generally speaking, learners' belief in language learning has a profound effect on the learning process (Dörnyei, 2005; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Rad, 2010), learners' motivation and behavior (Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002; Cotterall, 1995), and language achievement (Alsamaani, 2012; Fazilatfar et al., 2015; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Ren & Bai, 2016) and their learning behavior or learning styles (Cotterall, 1995; Sakui & Gaies, 1999).

Related Studies on Students' Beliefs in EFL Contexts

There are various studies investigating learners' beliefs in English language learning. The role of teachers and the focus on grammar are the two remarkable points found from previous studies (Ambigapathy, 2002; Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Jantrasakul, 2004; Jaliyya & Idrus, 2017; Nguyen & Habok, 2021). A majority of researchers recognized that focusing on grammar and depending too much on teachers might limit students' communicative ability and their learning achievement. However, the teacher plays a crucial role in the learning process of students, especially in Asian contexts. To be specific, Thai students had a misconception about learning the English language when their principal purpose of learning English was to pass the examination at school, so they believed that teachers would show them how to learn effectively for the tests (Jantrasakul, 2004). Thai students then preferred to be receivers while they considered their teachers as providers. When it comes to non-English major students in the Vietnamese context, similarly, the teacher's role was significant in pupils' learning English as they believed that teachers would provide guidance, explanation, and correction (Nguyen & Habok, 2021). Also, Ambigapathy (2002) reported that Malaysian students were required to learn grammatical skills and rules, which were then tested throughout school and on national examinations. As a result, communicative competence was limited. In the same vein, Indonesian students faced the problem of English communication anxiety due to the examination-driven learning approach (Jaliyya & Idrus, 2017).

On the other hand, students' beliefs in self-efficacy, self-motivation, and self-regulated learning have a big effect on their learning English (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Macaro, 2001; Ren & Bai, 2016). For instance, Ren and Bai (2016) found that hard work was believed to be a factor influencing Chinese students' learning English achievement. Students' self-motivation, including activities, didactic materials, learners' interests, and autonomy, should also be encouraged. As for self-regulated learning, Amuzie and Winke (2009) interviewed EFL students about the differences in learning and teaching English between their home countries and the United States. Indonesian and Korean students shared the same cultural language teaching, and the examination-driven teaching was dominant. They received the information from teachers and worked on grammar rules instead of practicing speaking with their peers or teachers. By contrast, the researchers found a different

result when Asian students studied in America, where learners were allowed to express their opinions and provided with varied group activities. By doing so, students had many more opportunities to use English naturally. Thus, teachers played as facilitators in L2 classrooms instead of authority figures. It could be recognized that self-directed and self-regulated learning processes enable students to achieve language learning goals. As Macaro (2001) stated that learners usually performed better when they were proactive in language learning.

Regarding the nature of English language learning, Turkish students believed that practicing with native speakers and audio materials helped learn English effectively (Jiménez, 2018). The researcher also found that exploring new things and adopting several learning styles helped students perform well in English. Regarding learners' beliefs in traditional orientation, Sakui and Gaies (1999) found that Japanese students ranked six items at medium level (mean <3.0). This finding suggested that Japanese learners did not prefer using L1 translation in English classrooms.

To sum up, there is no doubt that teachers' roles and language mechanics focus are important in teaching the English language. However, the nature of learning in making connections to how a language is used in real communicative events and the factors of self-efficacy seem to be neglected. Besides, the teacher-centered approach makes students depend on them and affects their beliefs about how to learn the English language, and limits their language achievement.

Students' Beliefs Between Males and Females

The differences between males and females in terms of learners' beliefs have been widely explored in various EFL learning contexts. Nikitina and Furuoka (2007) investigated 107 students at a university in Malaysia who enrolled in a language course to explore whether language learning beliefs differ between female and male learners. They revealed that gender-related significant differences in learning beliefs were minimal. They just found out that female students rated higher for language learning tools such as audio materials and CD recordings than males did. It means that females thought it was of much greater importance to employ learning tools than males. Nguyen and Habók (2021) also explored Vietnamese students' beliefs about teachers' roles in EFL classrooms. They found that male learners' perspectives tended to be more teacher-centered than those of female learners. In Daif-Allah's study (2012), he explored the overall beliefs of 250 Saudi university students. He postulated that males and females held similar beliefs about language learning concerning the difficulty and the nature of language learning, but there was a significant difference between genders when it came to beliefs about motivation and expectations. Particularly, females were more likely to enjoy practicing English in the language lab and prefer repetition and memorization than males did. Also, females showed much higher confidence in their learning abilities than males.

The Significance of Study

According to the results of previous studies, it is significant to investigate Vietnamese students' beliefs in language learning for the following reasons. First, EFL students have different beliefs about English language learning, which might depend on educational background, culture, and language proficiency (Alsamaani, 2012; Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Bassano, 1986). Therefore, this investigation could be a foundational step to give EFL teachers, especially Vietnamese teachers and native English teachers teaching in Vietnam, a better understanding of their learners' beliefs in language learning related to five distinct factors. For instance, teachers will know how students acknowledge their English learning abilities (strengths, weaknesses, styles, and roles), or their learning motivation and expectations. Second, findings on gender-related beliefs would be helpful for teachers in terms of choosing appropriate teaching methods or assessments for their target students based on gender. To be specific, they could have suitable feedback to males and females (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Sakui & Gaies, 1999). They might tailor their teaching methods to eliminate incongruities between classroom practices, students' beliefs (Alsamaani, 2012; Ellis, 2008; Yalçın, 2013), and students' learning style preferences (Oxford, 1990). Finally, this research benefits language teachers by enhancing the quality of their English instruction and assisting students in learning effectively (cited in Ren & Bai, 2016).

METHODS
Participants

In total, 121 undergraduate students majoring in English participated in this study, consisting of 71 males and 50 females. The number of participants was determined by voluntary consent and availability, rather than pre-stratified gender quotas.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Sex			English proficiency level self-rating					
Male	Female	Total	Poor	Very Poor	Medium	Good	Excellent	Total
71	50	121	9	20	39	40	13	121
58.7 %	41.3%	100 %	7.4%	16.5%	32.2 %	33.1 %	10.7%	100%

All of them were students studying for undergraduate degrees at three different universities in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam (32 freshmen, 51 second-year students, 26 juniors, and 12 seniors). To understand learner proficiency levels, they were also asked to self-rate from poor to excellent. It seems that most participants are at the medium and good levels, as 83.5% rated themselves at medium and higher levels.

Instruments

The questionnaire, including two parts: students' background information and students' beliefs (appendix), was adopted. First, to get demographic information of participants, questions related to gender, English proficiency, and class levels were asked. The students' beliefs questionnaire contains 29 items in which 24 items of them adopted from Cotterall (1999) and Horwitz (1988) concerning students' beliefs in their self-efficacy, students' and teacher's roles, and the nature of English language learning. The decision was made to include 29 items aimed at balancing comprehensiveness and manageability. A larger set of items (e.g., 50–60) may risk fatigue and reduce response accuracy (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), whereas a very short set (e.g., 10–15 items) may fail to capture the multidimensional nature of learner beliefs adequately. By selecting 29 items, the instrument maintained coverage of the key dimensions while ensuring participants could complete the survey within 10–15 minutes, thus enhancing the reliability of responses.

Particularly, self-efficacy refers to students' learning abilities, which affects how they think, feel, behave, and inspire themselves (Albert Bandura, 1994), while the nature of language learning relates to different aspects of learning English, facilitating their learning process, such as learning new vocabulary, grammar rules, practicing, or loving learning English. Also, learners' expectations adopted from Sakui and Gaies (1999) questionnaire (five questions) are used to explore learners' perspectives toward the traditional teaching method, which involves L1 translation. A total of 29 questions were based on a 5-Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The five-point format was chosen because it strikes an appropriate balance between simplicity and sensitivity. Fewer response categories (e.g., a three-point scale) may limit the ability to capture nuanced differences in learners' beliefs, while too many categories (e.g., seven- or nine-point scales) can confuse respondents and reduce response reliability (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). To avoid misunderstanding, all questions were written in both English and Vietnamese.

Data collection procedures

This study applies a quantitative method (survey questions) to collect data. The researcher used Google Forms to collect data, and students finished the survey in a regular class session. Teachers introduced the purpose of the study and guided students on how to answer the questions if there was any confusion.

The survey was administered through Google Forms, an online tool that offers several advantages for classroom-based research. First, it allows the researcher to standardize the format of the questionnaire and automatically store responses in a spreadsheet, minimizing errors from manual data entry (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Second, Google Forms is free, widely accessible, and mobile-friendly, making it a practical choice for both teachers and students in the Vietnamese EFL context. Third, it ensures anonymity and confidentiality, which helps reduce social desirability bias and encourages students to provide more honest responses (Wright, 2005).

Participants accessed the Google Form via a shared link and completed the survey individually using their devices. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic questions (gender, English proficiency, and class level) and 29 Likert-scale items on students' beliefs about English language learning (Appendix). On average, it took students approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. Surveying within the classroom setting helped maintain focus, ensured that all participants had equal access to the technology, and reduced the likelihood of missing responses.

Overall, the choice of Google Forms combined with in-class administration offered a balance of efficiency, reliability, and accessibility, aligning well with the study's aims to gather valid and complete data from a large group of participants.

Data analysis

As the data were collected through Google Forms, all responses were automatically compiled into a Google Spreadsheet, which minimized the risk of manual entry errors. The researcher then exported the dataset into Microsoft Excel and subsequently into SPSS for analysis. Before conducting statistical tests, several steps were taken to prepare the dataset for analysis.

First, the raw data were screened for completeness. Incomplete responses were excluded to ensure the accuracy of the results. Next, all negatively worded items were reverse-coded so that higher scores consistently reflected more positive beliefs. This step ensured consistency across items and improved the interpretability of the data.

Second, the researcher checked the dataset for outliers and inconsistencies (e.g., patterns of uniform responses such as selecting the same option for all items). These cases were carefully reviewed and, if necessary, removed from the analysis.

Third, to assess the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for the five belief categories (self-efficacy, students' role, teachers' role, nature of language learning, and traditional orientation). This step was essential to confirm internal consistency and determine whether the items within each construct reliably measured the same underlying belief.

Once the dataset was cleaned and reliability confirmed, the data were analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions) were computed to provide an overall picture of students' beliefs in English language learning. The mean scores of the 29 items were also used to identify patterns and relative strengths across the five categories.

To further examine gender differences, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare male and female students' beliefs. Through these systematic procedures, the raw survey responses were transformed into a reliable and analyzable dataset, ensuring validity and rigor in addressing the research questions.

To interpret students' beliefs, the mean scores of each item on the 5-point Likert scale were categorized into three levels: high, medium, and low. This categorization followed the procedure suggested by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) in their Language Learning Strategy Inventory, which has been widely used in applied linguistics and EFL research to interpret Likert-scale data.

The cut-off points were calculated by dividing the range of the Likert scale (1 to 5) into three approximately equal intervals. The overall range of the scale is 4 points ($5 - 1 = 4$). Dividing this range by three gives approximately 1.33 points per interval. Based on this, the following ranges were defined: Low: 1.0 – 2.4; Medium: 2.5 – 3.4; and High: 3.5 – 5.0. Thus, a mean score above 3.5 was interpreted as indicating a high level of agreement (positive belief), a score between 2.5 and 3.4 as a moderate or neutral belief, and a score below 2.5 as a low level of agreement (negative or weak belief).

These belief levels provided a criterion to compare different categories. To examine whether there were significant differences between male and female learners' beliefs about English language learning, the data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics. An independent-samples t-test was conducted because this test is designed to compare the mean scores of two independent groups (in this case, male and female learners). To gain a deeper insight into the noticeable differences between groups, mean scores of each item in each group were also counted and independent sample T-tests were carried out.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Vietnamese English-Major Students' Beliefs in English Language Learning

To answer the first research question, the overall mean scores of all five factors related to students' learning beliefs were calculated and presented in Table two.

Table 2: Mean Scores of All Five Factors

Items	N	Mean	SD
Students' self-efficacy	121	3.73	.52
Teacher's role	121	3.62	.72
Students' role	121	3.90	.82
Nature of learning	121	3.70	.1.01
Traditional orientation of English language learning	121	3.12	.78
Total learning beliefs	**121**	**3.61**	**.55**

As can be seen from Table two, the overall mean score of five aspects of English learning beliefs was 3.61, SD=.55, which suggests a high level of belief or respondents showing strong agreement with general learning beliefs. In particular, learners only rated medium for the traditional orientation of English language learning, while they rated high for the other factors. This finding suggests that participants hold low interest in traditional beliefs of learning English and support the importance of their own self-efficacy, teachers' and learners' roles, and the nature of learning. To interpret how learners rated these factors, the following sections provide further descriptions of five categories.

Self-efficacy of English Language Learning

First, the mean scores in self-efficacy, indicating how much students' beliefs about their learning abilities (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) were calculated, and the results are presented in Table three.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Self-efficacy of English Learning

Items	N	Mean	SD
I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	121	3.65	1.11
I believe that I have the ability to learn English successfully.	121	4.01	.58
I believe that I know my strengths and weaknesses in English learning.	121	3.74	1.17
I believe that I know how to study English.	121	3.75	.73
I set my goals for learning English.	121	4.05	.63
I believe that I am confident about checking my work for mistakes.	121	3.18	.87

Table three shows that 83% of self-efficacy items were reported at a high level, with mean scores being above 3.5, which indicates that Vietnamese undergraduates believe that they have the ability to produce the results that are wanted. Specifically, most students set the aim for learning English (M=4.05, SD=.63) and reckon that they are able to learn English successfully (M=4.01, SD=.58). Also, participants revealed that they were aware of learning methods and acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses (M=3.75, SD=.73 and M=3.74, SD=1.17, respectively). Students, on the other hand, expressed a lack of confidence when it came to double-checking their errors (M = 3.18, SD =.87).

Teachers' and Students' Roles in English Language Learning

Table four below shows that most students agreed that teachers' main roles are to tell them what to do (M=3.98, SD=.80); give comments on pupils' learning to encourage their confidence (M=3.83, SD=1.18) and deliver feedback to enhance learners' progress. (M=3.74, SD=1.12). Nonetheless, learners were not likely to agree that the teacher was the person who determined their success or gave them chances to practice English (M= 3.38, SD= 1.06 and M=3.31, SD= 1.03, respectively).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Roles in English Language Learning

Items	N	Mean	SD
I believe that teacher feedback helps me learn English effectively.	121	3.74	1.12
I believe that teacher comments on my learning encourage confidence.	121	3.83	1.18
I believe that my language success depends on what the teacher does in the classroom.	121	3.38	1.06
I believe that opportunities to use the language should be provided by the teacher.	121	3.31	1.03
I believe that the role of the teacher is to tell me what to do.	121	3.98	.80
I believe that the role of teacher is to set my learning goals.	121	3.49	1.10

In terms of students' roles, participants ranked those items higher than teachers' roles. Students, interestingly, believed that their efforts determined their success in learning English (M = 4.31, SD =.85). Participants also shared that they thought learners' major roles are to acknowledge their weaknesses (M=4.05, SD=.68); establish their learning goals (M=3.88, SD=.79) and seek for opportunities to practice English (M=3.83, SD=1.22). Table five presents the descriptive statistics for students' roles in English language learning.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Student Roles in English Language Learning

Items	N	Mean	SD
I should find my own opportunities to use/practice the language.	121	3.83	1.22
I believe that my language success depends on what I do outside the classroom.	121	3.49	1.42
I believe that the role of a learner is to know which aspects of English he/she wants to improve.	121	4.05	.68
I believe that the role of learner is to set his/her learning goals.	121	3.88	.79
I believe that the role of the learner is to look for solutions to his/her problems.	121	3.79	.89
I believe that my own effort plays an important role in successful language learning.	121	4.31	.85

Nature of English Language Learning (Motivation)
As for the nature of English language learning, Table six shows that learners support the traditional learning strategies in which repetition and practice are considered good ways to learn English (M=3.92, SD=1.36). Many students also revealed that listening to English programs on TV was very useful when learning English (M=3.83, SD=1.22). The majority of respondents reported that they considered learning English as a matter of grammar and lexical learning (M=3.78, SD=1.12, and M=3.69, SD=1.06, respectively). Therefore, students are likely to spend a huge amount of time memorizing new vocabulary and practicing grammar rules. However, participants revealed that knowing about English-speaking countries was not important in learning English as they ranked it at a medium level (M=3.4, SD=1.1).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for the Nature of English Language Learning

Items	N	Mean	SD

I believe that those who love to talk will learn English better.	121	3.56	1.11
I believe that the most important part of learning English is learning new vocabulary.	121	3.69	1.06
I believe that learning English is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules.	121	3.78	1.12
I believe that listening to tapes and watching English programs on television are very important in learning English.	121	3.83	1.22
I believe that it is useful to know about English-speaking countries in order to speak English.	121	3.40	1.11
I believe that in learning English, it is important to repeat and practice a lot.	121	3.92	1.36

Traditional Orientation to Learning English (Expectation)

In general, the respondents viewed traditional orientation to English learning as less important than other aspects of students' beliefs because they ranked them quite low at a medium level (M< 3.5). In particular, the students do not prefer L1 translation in English classes or thinking in their mother tongue (M< 3.05). Most respondents do not consider learning English as a matter of translation into L1 (M=3.08, SD=.98). To sum up, they do not share the same view with the traditional orientation of learning English, and L1 is not supported in English classrooms.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Traditional Orientation to Learning English

Items	N	Mean	SD
I believe that to understand English, it must be translated into Vietnamese.	121	3.04	.81
I believe that to say something in English, I think of how I would say it in Vietnamese and then translate it into English.	121	3.03	1.21
I believe that learning a word means learning the Vietnamese translation.	121	3.27	.79
I believe that learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Vietnamese.	121	3.08	.98
I believe that in English classes, I prefer to have my teacher provide explanations in Vietnamese.	121	3.17	.86

Vietnamese Males' and Females' Beliefs in English Language Learning

To answer the second research question, which asks whether there is a significant difference in learning English beliefs between male and female respondents, the mean scores of each statement in five categories, namely self-efficacy, teacher's role, students' role, motivation, and expectation, were calculated and presented in Table eight.

Table 8: Comparison of Mean Ratings in Five Aspects of Learning Beliefs by Males and Females

	Males		Females		t-test			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p	d
Overall self-efficacy	3.84	.54	3.57	.44	2.869	119	.005*	.50423
Overall teacher' role	3.63	.63	3.60	.83	.243	119	.809	.71974
Overall students' role	3.91	.79	3.86	.85	.351	119	.726	.81970
Overall motivation	3.72	.92	3.67	1.14	.263	119	.793	1.0168

Overall expectation	2.96	.79	3.35	.72	-.803	119	.006*	.76190
Overall learning beliefs	3.61	.51	3.61	.61	.018	119	.986	.553

Note: * = significant at the level of .05

There is no significant impact of gender on Vietnamese students' general beliefs about learning English (p>0.05) while significant differences between females and males were found in beliefs about self-efficacy and expectation. By adopting the 0.05 level, the study follows widely accepted research practices, allowing for comparability with previous studies in EFL and second language acquisition. Thus, a result with p < 0.05 was interpreted as statistically significant, meaning that the observed difference was unlikely to have occurred by chance, whereas a result with p > 0.05 indicated no statistically significant difference.

With regard to descriptive statistics, male students rated higher than female students in most of the learning beliefs, except for expectation. Learners reported a medium level of belief in expectation, while they showed a high level for the other aspects. In other words, the students considered traditional orientation to learning English less important than self-efficacy, the teacher's role, the learners' role, and their motivation (M<3.5). Using an adjusted alpha level, the independent sample T-test reported a statistically significant difference in the means of self-efficacy and expectation for males and females; meanwhile, no significant differences were found in other teacher's roles, learners' roles, and motivation (p>.05). To gain insight into subscales, a series of T-tests comparing mean scores of males and females on each item of these two aspects was conducted as shown in Tables nine and ten.

Table 9. Comparison of Mean Ratings in Self-efficacy by Males and Females

	Males		Females		t-test			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p	d
I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	3.83	1.10	3.40	1.09	2.137	119	.035*	1.0923
I believe that I have the ability to learn English successfully.	4.06	.67	3.94	.42	1.164	119	.247	.58406
I believe that I know my strengths and weaknesses in English learning.	4.00	1.06	3.38	1.23	2.897	119	.005*	1.1294
I believe that I know how to study English.	3.89	.77	3.56	.64	2.468	119	.015*	.71842
I set my goals for learning English.	4.14	.62	3.92	.63	1.918	119	.057	.62357
I believe that I am confident about checking my work for mistakes.	3.13	.96	3.24	.74	-.701	119	.484	.87437

Note: * = significant at the level of .05

Table nine suggests that there was a statistically significant relationship between male and female participants on half of the items related to self-efficacy (p<0.05). This finding emphasizes that males have a stronger belief in their ability to speak English well than females. Also, male participants show better awareness of their advantages, disadvantages, and methods for learning English than females do. However, no significant differences were found in learners' beliefs about other items. It seems that both men and women show the same attitudes in their ability to succeed, confidence to check mistakes, and setting aims for their learning.

Table 10. Comparison of Mean Ratings in Traditional Orientation to Learning English
(Expectation) by Males and Females

	Males		Females		t-test			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p	d
I believe that to understand English, it must be translated into Vietnamese.	2.87	.81	3.28	.76	-2.795	119	.006*	.78825
I believe that to say something in English, I think of how I would say it in Vietnamese and then translate it into English.	2.82	1.29	3.34	1.02	-2.483	119	.014*	1.1876
I believe that learning a word means learning the Vietnamese translation.	3.14	.80	3.46	.73	-2.238	119	.027*	.77249
I believe that learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Vietnamese.	2.93	1.05	3.30	.84	-2.076	119	.040*	.06644
I believe that in English classes, I prefer to have my teacher provide explanations in Vietnamese.	3.03	.83	3.38	.88	-2.245	119	.027*	.84874

Note: * = significant at the level of .05

In terms of traditional orientation to learning English, there were significant differences found between males and females in all aspects of motivation (p<0.05). Specifically, female learners showed higher ratings of all these traditional orientations than those of males. The findings indicate that female learners hold higher preferences for learning English in traditional ways compared to males.

Discussion
Students' Beliefs in Learning the English Language
In general, the participants reported the highest mean score in their beliefs about the learners' role, which was greater than that of the teachers' role. It seems that the Vietnamese English-majored

students in this study seem to be active in learning English. This finding is not in line with a previous study by Nguyen and Habok (2021), which postulated that Vietnamese learners relied on teachers to learn English by guiding them to correct the errors. It could be explained that participants in Nguyen and Habok's study were not majoring in English, and their proficiency in English was not high, so they preferred a teacher-centered approach. While the respondents in this study majored in English, indicating a higher level of proficiency, they were less reliant on instructors. Additionally, the participants ranked the role of teachers lower than their self-efficacy. According to previous studies, self-efficacy and students' confidence in English language learning have positive impacts on the student learning process (Jiménez, 2018; Kim, 2012; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Genç et al., 2016). In particular, Amuzie and Winke (2009) indicated that ESL students who studied in the States with a learner-centered orientation performed better when they studied in their home countries, where a teacher-centered orientation was dominant. Teacher-centered approach enjoyed widespread popularity in EFL contexts (Ambigapathy, 2002; Jantrasakul, 2004), especially in Vietnamese institutions. Based on the findings of this study, the learner-centered approach should be adopted among high-proficiency learners, or teachers might give students opportunities to self-correct their mistakes and self-improve their learning process. In short, Vietnamese language teachers might consider their pupils' preferred learning approaches and adapt suitable methods for varied learner groups in English classrooms. Teachers are supreme authorities who always provide knowledge and ask students what to do to learn English, which might not be appropriate in English classes at higher education.

As for the nature of English language learning, participants ranked highest for practicing and repeating English. The students in this study believed that practice was the most important factor in studying language. Vocabulary and grammar were also ranked high. In other words, learners assumed that the nature of learning English was to acquire grammar and lexical resources. Facilitators, hence, should provide learners with several opportunities to use English and pay attention to these two aspects of language when teaching Vietnamese students. Besides, the respondents thought that watching English channels was effective in improving their English. This finding is in line with Jiménez's (2018), who found that Turkish students liked practicing with native speakers and using audio materials to learn English. Meanwhile, they revealed that learning about English-speaking countries seemed unnecessary, as learning a language did not mean exploring countries whose mother tongues were English. Additionally, students wanted their instructors to use the target language all the time, although using L1 language, which is a phenomenon in English classes in Vietnam. Therefore, language teachers should switch to a new approach in which English is the dominant language. For example, teachers might show more English movies, play recordings, organize English clubs, or involve native speakers (Celce-Murcia, 2014). When it comes to traditional orientation in language learning, students did not support the translation methods when learning English. This exploration supports the finding of Sakui and Gaies' (1999) study that Japanese students neglected using L1 translation in English classrooms. Hence, teachers should encourage the target language usage in L2 classes, and the tradition of teaching and learning is not suitable.

English Learning Beliefs Between Male and Female Students

Generally, the results suggested that gender has little effect on learners' beliefs in learning English. This finding is consistent with Nikitina and Furuoka's study (2007) which postulated that gender-related differences were little in learning beliefs. It could be argued that differences in language learning beliefs are determined by pupils' proficiency and prior learning experiences rather than gender roles (Politzer, 1983; Wharton, 2000).

However, significant differences among genders were found in their beliefs about self-efficacy and expectation. Male students, in particular, demonstrated greater confidence in their ability to learn English than female students. Males thought that they acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses and knew how to study English better than females. These findings were not in line with Daif-Allah's study (2012), as he found that females believed in their ability to learn English better than males did. In terms of expectations, female participants in the current study preferred a traditional orientation in learning English related to L1 translation than males did. This finding is similar to Daif-Allah's study (2012), which revealed that females enjoy traditional teaching methods such as practicing English in the language lab, repetition, and memorization.

The differences found by the current study regarding self-efficacy and expectation between males and females support the statement emphasized by Alsamaani (2012), Amuzie and Winke (2009), and Bassano (1986) that EFL students have different beliefs about English language learning, which might depend on educational background, learning strategies, and language proficiency. Thus, these differences might be due to different language proficiency.

Implications

According to the aforementioned findings, there are some implications that EFL language teachers might consider in teaching English. First, teachers might apply different teaching methods to English language classes instead of traditional teaching and teacher-centered approaches. For example, student-centered instruction should be dominant in L2 classrooms as Brown and Lee (2015) postulated that it was important to encourage students' role and communicative skills. Secondly, task-based language teaching is a good example that should be encouraged in teaching English to Vietnamese English-major students at universities (Do, 2023b). This teaching approach provides more opportunities for students to be involved in their learning, in which they work with their classmates through various pair and group activities, and teachers will be their supporters in classrooms. Thus, teachers could create a supportive and relaxing learning atmosphere in English classrooms. Besides, using English in the classroom and watching English videos are highly recommended to apply in English classes. Teachers also provide more activities to help low-proficiency learners improve their English, such as organizing English clubs or peer tutoring. It is possible to recognize that classroom practices should be linked to theory with sociocultural elements of language learning that deal with communicative use. As Musa et al. (2012) indicated, language learning should be a set of language skills as well as meaningful interactions. Additionally, as the study suggested significant differences in learning beliefs between males and females regarding self-efficacy and learning expectation, language instructors may be flexible in tailoring their teaching methods based on gender domination.

CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on students' beliefs in English language learning (i.e., self-efficacy, students' role, teacher's role, expectation, and nature of learning language), which has been rarely investigated in previous studies in the specific Vietnamese context. As the findings showed, students had a high awareness of their self-efficacy in learning English; especially, they believed in their learning abilities, and they actively set their goals for learning English. Also, they were more active in their learning process and were more enthusiastic about learning because their role in learning English was reported to be greater than that of teachers. As for motivation in learning English, students postulated that learning vocabulary and grammar, repetition, and practice were essential. In addition, listening to English channels was considered an effective learning tool. Finally, L1 translation was not supported when speaking or learning English and using Vietnamese in an English class was not encouraged by participants. Besides, no significant difference in overall learning beliefs was found between males and females in the current study. However, there were statistical differences in their belief in self-efficacy and traditional orientation in learning a different language. Particularly, males were more likely to believe in their efficacy than female students, while females showed higher ratings for learning expectations of traditional methods than males.

This study has some research limitations and suggestions for future researchers who are interested in this research area. Future researchers might consider enlarging the number of participants (students in the central or the north of Vietnam). Another issue worth noting is that only the quantitative method was used in the current study, but Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) emphasized that observation and in-depth interviews of qualitative methodology would help collect reliable results. Therefore, future researchers should combine other research tools like interviewing students and teachers, to find out more about the reasons for their learning preferences. Lastly, future researchers may explore the beliefs of students at different English levels, which has not been done by the current study.

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