

## **Abstract**

Among the cognitive and affective variables thought to influence language learning are language learning beliefs (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1998; Ellis, 2008). These assumptions influence learners' strategy choices and, as a result, their potential success. Therefore, it is necessary for language teachers and language programme administrators to understand the language learning beliefs of each new group of learners. One relatively new group of English language learners in Malaysia is the international student population. Since recent research in language learning beliefs, as well as in second language acquisition, has advocated a contextual, socio-cultural approach to studying the language learning process, the contextual aspects of the language learning experience of international students learning English in Malaysia should be considered when examining their language learning beliefs. This study utilized Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to measure the language learning beliefs of 102 international students who were learning English to prepare for admission into Malaysian universities. In addition, contextual factors related to the participants' language learning experience were studied using a specially-designed questionnaire called the Perceptions of English Language Learning Experience in Malaysia (PELLEM) to measure participants' perceptions of their language learning experience in Malaysia. Data collected from these Likert-type questionnaires was analysed using SPSS for descriptive analysis and factor analysis. Furthermore, the quantitative data collected using the PELLEM was supplemented with semi-structured interviews for more insight into the factors influencing the learners' perceptions of their language learning experience. Findings of the study reveal that the language learning beliefs of the participants were similar to those of other groups of learners in previous studies in terms of items concerning the general process of language learning. However, although the international students in this study were more confident and optimistic than learners in other studies, they seemed to have more misconceptions on what language learning comprises and unrealistic estimations of the difficulty of language learning. With regard to participants' perceptions

about learning English in Malaysia, findings show that participants have an overall positive perception of Malaysia as a destination for learning English when compared to their home countries, mainly because of the presence of foreign teachers and the increased opportunity to practice speaking English in Malaysia. However, participants perceived Malaysia as being a less favourable place to learn English when compared to native English speaking countries like the U.S. and the U.K. This was largely due to factors outside the classroom, including a lack of opportunity for authentic English communication and negative perceptions of Malaysian English. The international students in this study also underestimated the level of English proficiency needed to succeed at university. The findings of this study show that English courses for international students in Malaysia should include aspects of learner training, in order to dispel learners' misconceptions which may hinder their language learning. Opportunities for social interaction and authentic practice outside the class are also necessary components in English courses for international students.

## **Abstrak**

Kepercayaan tentang pembelajaran bahasa adalah salah satu daripada variabel minda dan afektif yang dianggap mempengaruhi proses pembelajaran bahasa (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1998; Ellis, 2008). Kepercayaan ini mempengaruhi pelajar dalam pemilihan strategi pembelajaran, dan ini seterusnya mempengaruhi prestasi pelajar dalam pemerolehan bahasa asing. Oleh sebab itu, guru bahasa serta pengurus kursus bahasa perlu memperolehi maklumat yang lebih mendalam mengenai kepercayaan tentang pembelajaran bahasa yang dipegang oleh setiap kumpulan pelajar baru yang mengambil sesuatu kursus bahasa. Pelajar antarabangsa merupakan sekumpulan pelajar bahasa Inggeris yang agak baru di Malaysia. Oleh kerana penyelidikan terkini di bidang kepercayaan mengenai pembelajaran bahasa, mahupun di bidang pemerolehan bahasa kedua, telah mengutamakan pendekatan dari segi kontekstual and sosio-budaya, aspek kontekstual dalam pengalaman pembelajaran bahasa yang dialami oleh pelajar antarabangsa di Malaysia tidak boleh diabaikan. Penyelidikan ini mengguna Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) oleh Horwitz (1987) untuk mengkaji kepercayaan tentang pembelajaran bahasa yang dipegang oleh 102 orang pelajar antarabangsa yang sedang mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia untuk tujuan pendidikan tinggi. Seterusnya, faktor kontekstual yang berkaitan dengan pengalaman pembelajaran pelajar-pelajar tersebut dikaji dengan menggunakan soal-selidik Perceptions of English Language Learning Experience in Malaysia (PELLEM), yang telah dirangka khusus untuk kajian ini. Maklumat yang dikumpul dari kedua soal-selidik ini telah dianalisis dengan SPSS untuk analisa data deskriptif serta analisis faktor. Data kuantitatif yang dihasilkan oleh kedua soal-selidik tersebut telah ditambah dengan data kualitatif dari temuramah mengikut kaedah semi-struktur. Hasil dari penyelidikan ini menunjukkan bahawa dari segi pembelajaran bahasa asing secara am, terdapat banyak persamaan di antara kepercayaan tentang pembelajaran bahasa yang dipegang oleh sampel dibanding dengan penyelidikan terdahulu. Namun begitu, walaupun pelajar antarabangsa yang diselidik mempunyai tahap kepercayaan diri dan sifat optimis yang tinggi, mereka mempunyai

miskonsepsi tentang proses pembelajaran bahasa asing. Sampel ini juga membuat perkiraan yang terlalu rendah tentang tahap kesusahan dalam mempelajari bahasa asing. Dari segi persepsi pelajar tentang mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia, hasil penemuan menunjukkan bahawa secara am, pelajar tersebut mempunyai anggapan positif mengenai Malaysia sebagai destinasi untuk pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris jika dibanding dengan negara asal mereka kerana terdapat guru-guru yang tidak boleh bertutur dalam bahasa pertama pelajar tersebut, serta peluang yang lebih tinggi untuk berinteraksi dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Tetapi pelajar dalam penyelidikan ini juga memegang persepsi bahawa Malaysia adalah destinasi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang kurang baik jika dibanding dengan negara di mana Bahasa Inggeris adalah bahasa pertama, seperti Amerika Syarikat dan United Kingdom. Ini disebabkan oleh faktor di luar kelas terutamanya kekurangan peluang untuk berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris serta persepsi yang negatif terhadap Bahasa Inggeris yang digunakan di Malaysia. Hasil penemuan dari penyelidikan ini juga menunjukkan bahawa kursus Bahasa Inggeris untuk pelajar antarabangsa harus mengandungi aspek ‘pelatihan pelajar’, di mana pelajar diajar mengenai proses pembelajaran bahasa serta cara-cara efektif untuk mempelajari bahasa asing untuk tujuan membetulkan miskonsepsi yang dipegang pelajar tersebut mengenai pembelajaran bahasa asing. Kursus Bahasa Inggeris untuk pelajar asing juga harus mengandungi aktiviti yang memberi peluang kepada pelajar untuk berinteraksi-sosial dan untuk menjalankan komunikasi yang sah di luar kelas.

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