

# English language students' beliefs about language learning. The case of "Aleksander Moisiu" University

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## Abstract

*Students' beliefs about language learning are an important component which will definitely have an impact in their future as teachers. The beliefs students hold and the way they are formed have been at the center of many studies. This article, however, reports the findings of a quantitative study related to English language students' beliefs about English language learning. The students surveyed had just finished the third semester of their school practice and the instrument used to collect the data was Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory – (BALLI, 1987). It included 35 items which covered a wide range of categories such as: language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, difficulty of the language and last but not the least Motivation. Apart from the beliefs, through the questionnaire we attempted to investigate if students had had other teaching experiences apart from their school practice and if there were teachers among their family members. At the end we tried to find out if these two variables had any effect on students' beliefs about English language learning. Recommendations for further research and implications of the findings are also part of the article.*

**Keywords:** *beliefs about language learning, English language, BALLI 1987.*

## *Introduction*

In-service or pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning have attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers for at least 30 years. A considerable number of studies have been undertaken all over the world with the aim to find out what the teachers and students' beliefs were and what their influence was in the teaching and learning process. As a matter of fact, it has been found that foreign language teachers come to class with certain ideas or beliefs of their own about language learning and the latter can influence their expectations

and actions in class. According to Elaine Horwitz,<sup>1</sup> pre-service second language teachers enter teacher education programs with preexisting ideas about language and language learning, just like second language learners. Furthermore, various studies have also considered the possible effects of teacher beliefs on their instructional practices, the development of teacher beliefs during foreign language education programs, etc.

In spite of the similarities in terms of University curriculum of foreign language teaching (in our case English language), textbooks, syllabi etc., pre-service teachers use different teaching techniques, strategies, styles in different stages of their teaching practice. That makes the difference from one to another. One of the main reasons is related to pre-service teachers' beliefs which are expressed in approaches chosen, type of instruction given, activities selected, decision-making, interactions with students, format of test design etc. Based on the great impact, it has been given a considerable importance in many countries. Unfortunately, we cannot affirm the same about the Albanian context where studies of this kind are quite rare for not saying inexistent. This fact attracted my attention and led me to investigate the English language students' beliefs in "Aleksander Moisiu" University.

In our university, among other subjects, English language students should follow three semesters of school practice. The first semester is called observation or passive practice and students are supposed to attend English classes in a ninth grade school, but are not expected to participate in teaching. The other two semesters are active practice and students became active in the teaching process. The BALLI 1987 questionnaire was administered to students, who had just finished their third semester of school practice and had a clear idea of the lesson stages, teacher-students interaction, discipline problems, lesson plans etc.

### *Literature review*

Being spread all over the world, English language learning had been the object of many beliefs and assumptions among English language learners and these beliefs almost certainly affect the whole process. In the context of second language acquisition, Richards and Schmit<sup>2</sup> would define learner beliefs as opinions learners have about various aspects of language, learning and teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> E. K. Horwitz, "Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in the foreign language methods course," *Foreign Language Annals* 18/4 (1985): 333-340.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Richard and R. Schmidt, eds., *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.) (London: Longman, 2002).

Another researcher, Dona Kagan would see teachers' beliefs as "often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught."<sup>3</sup> A more general view is provided by Borg<sup>4</sup> who is of the opinion that a belief is a proposition, which is consciously or unconsciously held and accepted true by the individual holding it and which serves as a guide to thought and behavior. From the definitions above, it is clear that we will find it hard to agree on a common statement about students' beliefs. However, despite this fact, what it is generally accepted, is that teachers' beliefs are established long before they start their profession.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Jutarat Vibulphol<sup>6</sup> believes that the development process of pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning starts from the period when they were language learners themselves and continuous till the time when they were in teacher education programs. Another point of view is provided by Frank Pajares<sup>7</sup> when he argues that teachers' beliefs about teaching are formed early in life through their experience as learners and these early beliefs exert an influence on teachers throughout their professional lives.

Concerning the importance of research in this direction, Elaine Horwitz<sup>8</sup> found out that understanding learners' beliefs is important since it helps teachers to become familiar with learners' approaches to language learning and learners' use of learning strategies based on which they can plan a more appropriate language instruction. Pajares<sup>9</sup> is more specific when he mentions that teachers' beliefs and attitudes affect their instructional decisions, especially in terms of defining tasks (including interpreting, planning and making general decisions), which in turn influences their classroom practices. In the same line, we can cite Karen Johnson<sup>10</sup> who argues that teachers' beliefs influence their judgment and perception, the classroom activities they use, and it can contribute to the improvement of teaching

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<sup>3</sup> D. M. Kagan, "Implications of research on teacher belief," *Educational Psychologist* 27, no. 1 (1992), 65.

<sup>4</sup> S. Borg, "Studying teacher cognition in second language grammar teaching," *System* 27 (1999): 19-31.

<sup>5</sup> Karen E. Johnson, "The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of pre-service English as a second language teachers," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 10, no. 4 (1994), 439-452.

<sup>6</sup> J. Vibulphol, "Beliefs about language learning and teaching approaches of pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand" (PhD diss, Oklahoma State University, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> M. F. Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct," *Review of Educational Research* 62 (1992): 307-332.

<sup>8</sup> E. K. Horwitz, "Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: a review of BALLI studies," *System* 27 (1999): 557-576.

<sup>9</sup> Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research."

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, "The emerging beliefs".

practices and teacher education programs. Apparently, the belief system serves as a base for the activities and practices used in class.

Pajares<sup>11</sup> provided a categorization of teachers' belief system into core and peripheral beliefs. According to him, core beliefs were stable and exerted a more powerful influence on behavior than peripheral beliefs. As it was expected, even Peacock's<sup>12</sup> study on teacher beliefs (especially core beliefs) revealed that they tended to be resistant to change. The researcher surveyed a group of second language teachers beliefs about language learning such as: beliefs about the importance of learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules; and the belief that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent etc. In the same vein is even Williams and Burden<sup>13</sup> study which asserted that teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about language learning would infuse into their classroom performances more than a particular methodology they have learnt during their teacher education programs. Cumming<sup>14</sup> reinforces this idea by indicating that the kinds of practical knowledge which the teachers use in teaching appear to exist largely in very personalized terms, based on unique experiences, individual conceptions, and their interactions with local contexts. Its personal significance differentiates it from prescribed models of educational theory. Wong<sup>15</sup> is more specific in his study which attests to the stability of teacher cognition. In particular, beliefs about language aptitude, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, the benefits of practice, and an immersion approach to language learning appeared to remain stable.

Concerning the sources of teachers' beliefs, Lortie<sup>16</sup> has identified two of them: teachers' learning experiences as students and teacher education programs. There are many studies that support the view that apart from formal schooling experience, teachers' learning experiences as students have an influential role on their construction of beliefs. Among them we can mention Milner<sup>17</sup> who argues that teachers' beliefs and practices are explicitly linked to their interactions and

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<sup>11</sup> Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research."

<sup>12</sup> M. Peacock, "Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: A longitudinal study," *System* 29 (2001): 177-195.

<sup>13</sup> M. Williams and R. Burden, *Psychology for Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> A. Cumming, "Student teachers' conceptions of curriculum: Towards an understanding of language teacher development," *TESL Canada Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 33-51.

<sup>15</sup> B. Wong and C. S. Chai, "Asian personal epistemologies and beyond: Overview and some reflections," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 19, no. 1 (2010): 1-6.

<sup>16</sup> D. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

<sup>17</sup> R. H. Milner, "Stability and change in US prospective teachers' beliefs and decisions about diversity and learning to teach," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2005): 767-786.

experiences with diverse individuals and contexts. Other studies like Johnson,<sup>18</sup> indicated how pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs are based on prior experience and the way such experience relates to classroom practice. Johnson<sup>19</sup> study revealed that pre-service teachers' instructional decisions during practicum were based on images of teachers, materials, activities and classroom organization generated by their own second language learning experience. Numrich<sup>20</sup> goes further by stating that teachers decided to promote or to avoid specific instructional strategies on the basis of their positive or negative experiences of these respective strategies as learners.

Other studies have emphasized the impact of language teacher education programs on pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices.<sup>21</sup> Almarza's study<sup>22</sup> showed that during teaching practice, student teachers drew on different sources of knowledge, which had its origin in the teacher education programme. However studies have confirmed the view that students' beliefs change with the passing of time. In this respect, Cole and Knowles<sup>23</sup> discovered that most pre-service teachers start their practicum with hopes, images, and expectations and during their teaching practice these images are shattered as they are exposed to school and classroom realities that do not match their expectation and previous experiences.

On the other hand, Mattheoudakis<sup>24</sup> conducted a study aiming at discovering pre-service English teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching in Greece during a three year teacher education program. The results indicated that through the practicum, the pre-service teachers realized that the classroom reality helped them test their knowledge and become more aware of their personal beliefs about learning and teaching. Furthermore, the study revealed that some of the EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs changed significantly after the three-year program in SLA and methodology in the Greek university, where the research occurred. Even Schick and Boothe<sup>25</sup> study on the beliefs of teachers in a graduate level of English

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<sup>18</sup> Johnson, "The emerging beliefs."

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> C. Numrich, "On becoming a language teacher: Insights from diary studies," *TESOL Quarterly* 30 (1996): 131-53.

<sup>21</sup> M. Mattheoudakis, "Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece: A longitudinal study," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23 (2007): 1272-1288.

<sup>22</sup> G. Almarza, "Student foreign language teachers' knowledge growth," in *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching*, eds. D. Freeman and J. Richards (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 50-78.

<sup>23</sup> A. L. Cole and J. G. Knowles, "Teacher development partnership research: A focus on methods and issues," *American Educational Research Journal* 30 (1993): 473-495.

<sup>24</sup> Mattheoudakis, "Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece."

<sup>25</sup> J. Schick and D. Boothe, "Survey of teachers' attitudes toward diversity: A pilot Study," ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED381515 (1995).

as a Second Language and culture class found signs of positive change between the administration of their pre-test and post-test questionnaire at the beginning and end of the courses. The view is supported by MacDonald, et al.<sup>26</sup> who found changes in pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about English language learning during teacher education second language acquisition courses as opposed to no significant changes for the control group who did not take an second language acquisition course.

Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers<sup>27</sup> see teachers' views shaped by students' wants, syllabus expectations, and prior experiences. According to them, this knowledge may change over time as teachers interact with students and get feedback from them. However, some researchers proposed that some beliefs are beneficial to learners while others argue that some beliefs can lead to negative effects on language learning. For example, Mantle-Bromley<sup>28</sup> suggested that learners who have positive attitudes and realistic language-related beliefs are more likely to behave in a more productive way in learning than those who have negative attitudes. In the same line, Mori<sup>29</sup> claimed that positive beliefs can compensate for learners' limited abilities. Bialystok<sup>30</sup> stated that as students advanced to a higher-level, formal practice with rules and forms was less and less effective. Whereas, Oxford and Nyiko<sup>31</sup> found that foreign language students who had studied the target language for a minimum of four or five years employed communication oriented strategies significantly more often than less experienced students.

### *The Study*

#### SUBJECTS

The study was conducted at "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durrës. The subjects of the study consisted of 30 students of the third year in the English

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<sup>26</sup> M. MacDonald, R. Badger and G. White, "Changing values: What use are theories of language learning and teaching," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17 (2001): 949-963.

<sup>27</sup> M. E. Eisenstein-Ebsworth and C. W. Schweers, "What researchers say and practitioners do: Perspectives on conscious grammar instruction in the ESL classroom," *Applied Language Learning* 8, no. 2 (1997): 237-260.

<sup>28</sup> C. Mantle-Bromley, "Positive attitudes and realistic beliefs: Links to proficiency," *The Modern Language Journal* 79, no. 3 (1995): 372-386.

<sup>29</sup> Y. Mori, "Epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs: What do 283 language learners believe about their learning?" *Language Learning* 49, no. 3 (1999): 377-415.

<sup>30</sup> E. Bialystok, "The role of linguistic knowledge in second language use," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 4 (1981): 31-45.

<sup>31</sup> R. L. Oxford and M. Nyikos, "Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students," *The Modern Language Journal* 73 (1989): 291-300.

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language branch. More specifically, the sample of the study consisted of students who were chosen randomly. Their participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. Of the subject, 5 were male and 25 were female students. The study was conducted at the end of the third semester of school practice, in May 2018. It was noticed that the subjects demonstrated a positive attitude towards the school practice, which was also evident in the fact that none of them refused to take part in the study.

#### INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used in this case was Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory – (BALLI, 1987). It included 35 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, and was designed to assess language learners' opinions on five major dimensions that are as follows: (1) beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, which belong to the general difficulty of learning a foreign language and the specific difficulty of a target language; (2) beliefs about foreign language aptitude, which has to do with the existence of language learning aptitude; (3) beliefs about the nature of language learning, which concern a range of issues relating to language learning process; (4) beliefs about learning and communication strategies, which are related to learners' actual language learning practices; and (5) learner motivations and expectations, which deal with interest and opportunities learners associate with the learning of a foreign language.

However, the first part of the questionnaire contained background information about the students involved in the study such as: their gender, years of learning English, other teaching experiences apart from their school practice and if there were teachers among their family members. We used quantitative methods to analyze the data.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

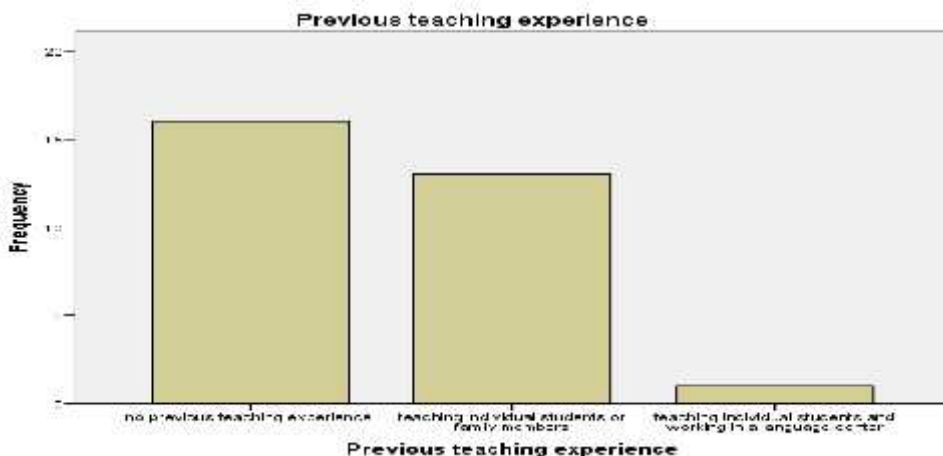
The research questions that we aimed at answering in our study are as follows:

1. Did students have teaching experiences prior to teaching practice?
2. Do the students have a family member or a relative that is a teacher?
3. What are English language students' beliefs about English language learning?

#### DATA ANALYSIS

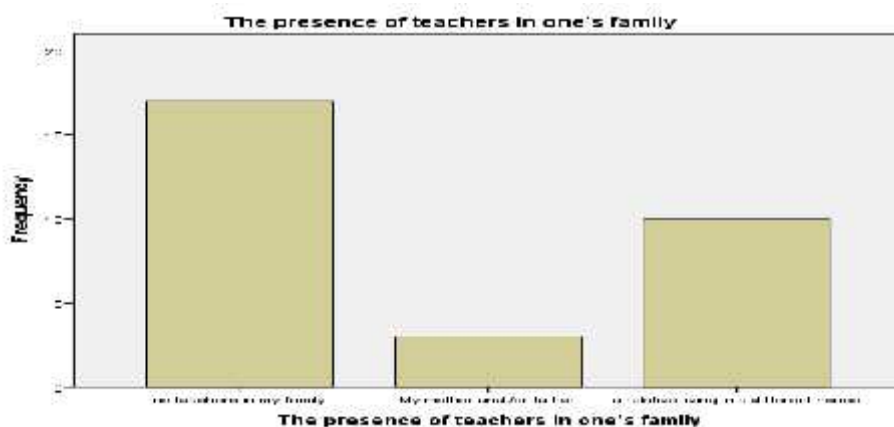
First of all, we intended to find out if the students surveyed had other teaching experiences prior to teaching practice which is obligatory for students of English language branch. The survey showed that their answers varied from: no

previous teaching experience (53%), teaching individual students or family members (43%) and teaching individual students and working in a language center (3% = 1 student). As we can see nearly half of the third year students surveyed had had previous contact with English language teaching. The findings are presented in graphic no.1.



*Graphic. no. 1*

We also tried to find out if a family member or a relative of the students was a teacher with the intention to find out any connection between this variable and their beliefs about language learning. Based on the finding their answers varied from: no teachers in my family (56%), mother or father teachers (10%) and students who had a relative who lived in a different house (that sometimes included a sister or brother) (34%). From the results we can say that at least 44% of the students surveyed reported the presence of a teacher among the family members or relatives. The findings are presented in graphic no. 2.



*Graphic. no. 2*



*English language students' beliefs about language learning*

For each dimension of the questionnaire we will present the overall frequency of each item included there as well as their respective means and standard deviation. Table no. 1 contains 10 items (1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 31, 34) which belong to the dimension of Language Aptitude. As we can see from the mean scores, students seem to strongly agree or agree with the first five items in the table as well as with the last one. Whereas concerning the item “*People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages.*” and “*Women are better than men at learning languages*” they tend to disagree or strongly disagree, despite the fact that most of the students surveyed are female.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	70.0%	26.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.33	.547
Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	63.3%	33.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.40	.563
I believe I will learn to speak English very well.	93.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.07	.254
It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	36.7%	50.0%	6.7%	6.7%	0.0%	1.83	.834
Albanians are good at learning foreign languages.	56.7%	30.0%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.57	.728
People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	10.0%	13.3%	16.7%	36.7%	23.3%	3.50	1.280
I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	30.0%	46.7%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.34	.734
Women are better than men at learning languages	10.0%	16.7%	20.0%	36.7%	16.7%	3.33	1.241
People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	3.3%	3.3%	4.0	1.94
Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.80	.761

*Table no.1*

Table no.2 presents descriptive statistics for the second dimension, namely “The Language Difficulty”. It consists of five items (3, 4, 15, 26, 35). Based on the mean score, we can say that the majority of the students agree or strongly agree with the first item on the table, more specifically: “*Some languages are easier than others*” (M = 1.67) and concerning the third one: “*If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?*” (M = 1.97) the majority believes that a period of 1-2 years is more than sufficient. Whereas concerning two other items: “*It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language*” (M= 3.27) and “*It is easier to read and write English than to*

“speak and understand it” (M = 3.03) students tend to disagree or to be undecided. The findings are presented in table no. 2.

Item description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Some languages are easier than others.	30	1.67	.758
English language I am trying to learn is:	30	2.65	.850
If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?	30	1.97	1.189
It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	30	3.27	1.015
It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	30	3.03	1.245
Valid N (listwise)	30		

Table no. 2.

Table no. 3 contains 6 other items (8, 12, 17, 24, 28, 29) which belong to the dimension of The Nature of Language Learning. All the students (100%) agree or strongly agree that “*It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.*” Most of them (76%) agree that “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words*”. Whereas concerning the 4<sup>th</sup> item “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar*” we notice that only 50% agree and 30% are undecided or neutral. We also see that for the last item on the table “*Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects*” most of the students (70%) agree. The findings are presented in table no. 3.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. It is necessary to learn about English speaking cultures to speak English	20.7%	48.3%	24.1%	6.9%	0.0%	2.17	.848
2. It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.	89.7%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.10	.310
3. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words.	36.7%	40.0%	16.7%	6.7%	0.0%	1.93	.907
4. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar.	10.0%	40.0%	30.0%	16.7%	3.3%	2.63	.999
5. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my own language.	16.7%	46.7%	33.3%	3.3%	0.0%	2.07	.907
6. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	30.0%	40.0%	23.3%	6.7%	0.0%	2.23	.774

Table no. 3

Table no. 4 contains 8 other items (7, 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 23, 27) which belong to the dimension of Learning and Communication Strategies. The majority of the students surveyed (93%) agree or strongly agree that it is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation. Concerning the following item, “*You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly*” we notice that

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they tend to disagree (60%). More than 90% of the students also agree with item 3, 4, 5 respectively:

*“I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet”, “It’s OK to guess if you don’t know a word in English”, “It is important to repeat and practice a lot. Another interesting finding is related to item 6 “I feel shy speaking English with English natives”. We notice that more than 70% of students disagree. As was expected, the majority of them (93%) agreed that it is important to practice with audio material. The findings are presented in table no. 4.*

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation	46.7%	46.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.60	.621
2. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly	3.3%	16.7%	20.0%	46.7%	13.3%	3.50	1.042
3. I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet	66.7%	30.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.37	.556
4. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English	23.3%	70.0%	3.3%	0.0%	3.3%	1.37	.556
5. It is important to repeat and practice a lot	76.7%	20.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.27	.521
6. I feel shy speaking English with English natives	3.3%	6.7%	16.7%	43.3%	30.0%	3.90	1.029
7. If beginning students are allowed to make mistakes in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on	26.7%	10.0%	30.0%	26.7%	6.7%	2.77	1.305
8. It's important to practice with audio-material.	43.3%	46.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.62	.622

*Table no. 4*

Table no. 5 contains only 5 items (20, 25, 30, 32, 33) which belong to the dimension of Motivation. As it is expected 100% of the students agree that people in Albania feel that is important to speak English. All of the students agreed that they wanted to learn to speak English. Furthermore, we see that 90% of them expressed the desire to make friends with English people. What is interesting about this dimension is the high percentage of students who agree with all statements.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.50	.509
2. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native English speakers better.	23.3%	43.3%	20.0%	13.3%	0.0%	2.23	.971
3. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have better job opportunities.	46.7%	46.7%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%	1.63	.718
4. I want to learn to speak English very well.	86.7%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.13	.346
5. I want to make friends with English people	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.40	.675

*Table no. 5*

#### CONCLUSIONS

After carefully analyzing the questionnaires administered to the students of the third year of the English language program at “Aleksander Moisiu” University, Durres with the SPSS program, we reached the following conclusions:

1. 53% of the surveyed had no previous teaching experience and 43% admitted teaching individual students or family members, As we can see nearly half of the third year students surveyed had had previous contact with English language teaching.

2. 56% of the students had no teachers in their families, 10% admitted that their mother or /and father was a teachers and 34% said that a relative who lived in a different house (that sometimes included a sister or brother was a teacher. Thus, 44% of the students surveyed reported the presence of a teacher among the family members or relatives.

3. Concerning the dimension Language Aptitude it results that students agree with statement 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 34, respectively “*It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language*”, “*Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages*”, “*I believe I will learn to speak English very well*”, “*Albanians are good at learning foreign languages*”, “*It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one*” and “*Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language*” but disagree with statement 11 and 19 respectively “*People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages*” and “*Women are better than men at learning languages*”.

4. Concerning the dimension Language Difficulty it results that most of the students agree with statement 3 “*Some languages are easier than others*”, but disagree with statement 26 and 35 respectively “*It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language*”, “*It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it*”.

5. In relation to the dimension Nature of Language Learning. In general we notice a positive attitude of students concerning the statements included in this category. However, we should mention that the students, with no exception, agree or strongly agree that “*It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.*” Most of them (76%) agree that “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words*”. Whereas concerning the statement “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar*” we notice that only 50% agree and 30% are undecided or neutral. We also see that for the last item on the table “*Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects*” most of the students (70%) agree.

6. Concerning the dimension Learning and Communication Strategies we notice that most of the students agree or strongly agree with statements 7, 13, 14, 18 and 27, respectively “*It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation*”, “*I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet*”, “*It’s OK to guess if you don’t know a word in English*”, “*It is important to repeat and practice a lot*” and “*It’s important to practice with audio-material*”. But they disagree with statement 9 and 21 respectively “*You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly*” and “*I feel shy speaking English with English natives*”.

7. The last dimension is that of Motivation. What is interesting about this dimension is the high percentage of students who agree with all statements included there.

#### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One of the main limitations of this study is related to the fact that in Albania there are not many studies related to students (in the quality of pre-service teachers) perception about language learning.

Secondly, a larger sample would have provided more specific results. But since we had only one group of English third year students this academic year it was difficult to get a larger sample to be considered representative.

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