Examining beliefs about language learning in relation to perceived linguistic self−confidence: Learners of Korean as a foreign language in Australia

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Jee, Min Jung. 2017. Examining beliefs about language learning in relation to perceived linguistic self-confidence: Learners of Korean as a foreign language in Australia. *Linguistic Research* 34(Special Edition), 25-48. This study investigated the language learning beliefs of students of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) in Australia. 156 students enrolled in Korean courses at a large public university in Australia completed the Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument, or BALLI (Horwitz, 1987, 1988) and items for Perceived Linguistic Self-confidence or PLS (Pyun, Kim, Cho, and Lee, 2014) in order to examine their language learning beliefs in relation to their level of PLS. For the data analysis, the KFL students were divided into three groups: High PLS group, Mid PLS group, and Low PLS group. Overall, the KFL students were neutral (total *M* = 3.33, SD = .27) on the statements of the BALLI, but significant differences were found among the groups in the total mean score of BALLI and the Motivation and Expectation (ME) category of the BALLI. Furthermore, the students' beliefs were found to reflect the features of good language learners, such as being open to the possibility of learning a foreign language, high expectation of learning to speak the Korean language very well, acknowledging the importance of practice, and high motivation. Among the 34 items, 10 items showed significant differences among the three groups, and generally, higher PLS students tended to be more positive than lower PLS students. Furthermore, small but significantly positive correlations were seen between the students' overall mean BALLI scores and their levels of PLS. The scores for the ME category also showed a significantly positive correlation with the students' PLS levels. Thus, those KFL students who had higher levels of PLS tended to agree more often with the BALLI statements, especially with those in the ME category, than did students with lower levels of PLS. **(The University of Queensland)**

Keywords beliefs about language learning, Korean as a foreign language, language learner individual differences, affective domains, foreign/second language self-confidence

1. Introduction

Various affective factors such as motivation (e.g., Dörnyei, 1994; Lee and Oh, 2011) and anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986) influence foreign/second language learners' learning and achievement. Among them, perceived concepts or beliefs can directly affect their learning process because these perceptions play an important role in decision-making (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Riley, 1997). However, a learner's beliefs may be one aspect of the learning process that can be changed by the learner (Horwitz, 1987). Therefore, there is room for instructors to actively involve themselves in their students' learning process by correcting misconceptions and giving clear information. In that way, students can leave behind any false beliefs they may have acquired before commencing their learning of a foreign/second language, and they will be more likely to succeed in mastering that language. As attempts to better understand the internal learning process, studies of learners' beliefs regarding language learning have been actively conducted in the last few decades in second language acquisition (SLA). Even though the general consensus is that good language learners hold positive beliefs regarding language learning, it has been suggested that many interfering factors (such as cultural background, academic settings, and individual variances) should be considered carefully, since each plays an important role in determining one's beliefs.

In recent years, enrolments in Korean language classes have increased dramatically, mostly influenced by the Korean Wave, or *Hallyu*, along with the social and economic growth of South Korea. Despite the fact that the Korean language is one of the more difficult languages to learn (Category IV[1]) for native speakers of English, its popularity has been growing in English-speaking countries. In the US, which has approximately a 100-year-long history of Korean language education, enrolments in Korean courses between 2009 and 2013 have increased (approximately 44.7%) the most among the less commonly taught languages (Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin, 2015), and Korean language programs are currently offered by approximately 100 universities[2]. In fact, Korean was ranked as the

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[1] The Defence Language Institute in the US categorized Korean language in Category IV, which has the highest difficulty in learning for native English speakers. Languages in this category require about four times more learning hours than the language in the Category I such as Spanish and French.

[2] http://www.aakt.org

seventh most popular language spoken in the US in 2011, according to the US Census Bureau data (Ryan, 2013). Similar to the US, the number of enrolments in Korean language classes has increased in Australia, too. Even though Australia has a relatively short history of Korean education in the formal education system (approximately 30 years), Korean language ranked 14th with respect to the number of enrolments in language courses in 2010 (Shin, 2010). Furthermore, as of 2016, six universities are offering Korean language programs, which is proportionately a much higher number of Korean programs than in the US.

So far, however, in the field of SLA, Korean language learner groups have been less explored compared to learners of other languages. Considering that learner affect plays an important role in learning a foreign/second language when the linguistic system of the target language is remote from their L1 (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz, 1999; Samimy and Tabuse, 1992), it is therefore important to study the affective variables of the Korean language learners. Thus, as the first study in the literature, this study examined beliefs held about language learning by students of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) in Australia (a rarely explored KFL group), in order to better understand Korean language learners' psychology in learning Korean, and to provide relevant advice to educators. Another affective variable, the students' perceived self-competence in Korean, which has been reported as a major factor influencing foreign/second language learners' success or failure (Clément, 1986; Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels, 1994), was also investigated in order to examine any effects on the students' language learning beliefs.

2. Background Literature

In attempts to specify the differences between more and less successful language learners (Horwitz, 1999; Nation and McLaughlin, 1986), studies into language learning beliefs have prospered since the 1970s. Since Horwitz (1987) developed a scale, the Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument (BALLI), studies focusing on beliefs about language learning have burgeoned. Horwitz (1987, 1999) raised the important issue of the possible influences of cultural and situational differences on the beliefs system, leading many researchers to consider learners' beliefs across different cultures, different target languages, and academic settings (e.g., Choi, 2011;

Horwitz, 1988, 1999; Jee, 2013; Kern, 1995; Kim, 2013; Kunt, 1997; Oh, 1996, Park 1995, Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1999). For example, in her study in 1999, Horwitz examined the findings of studies that examined different cultural groups and language learning contexts (American students learning French, Spanish, German, and Japanese, EFL students in Korea and Taiwan, Turkish heritage EFL students, and US university instructors of French), but no clear-cut differences were found among the groups. That study therefore concluded that it may be within-group variations, such as language learning context and age, that affected students' beliefs about language learning rather than cultural group. Later studies have supported her conclusion, by reporting that individual factors actually showed significant differences on students' language learning beliefs, such as language learning strategies (e.g., Choi, 2011; Horwitz, 1988; Park, 1995; Tang and Tian, 2015; Yang, 1999), anxiety (e.g., Banya and Cheng, 1997; Horwitz, 1999; Jee, 2014; Kunt, 1997; Truitt, 1995; Tsai, 2004), gender (e.g., Banya and Cheng, 1997; Siebert, 2003), motivation (e.g., Banya and Cheng, 1997; Kim-Yoon, 2000), past learning experiences (e.g., Horwitz, 1987; Truitt, 1995), personal traits (e.g., Bernet, Carter, and Hall, 2009), and language proficiency (e.g., Cheng, 2000; Huang and Tsai, 2003; Jee, 2013; Kim, 2013; Mori, 1999; Park, 1995; Peacock, 1999; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003).

In the literature, many studies examined the relationship between a learner's beliefs and their actual achievement, or proficiency level. The general consensus of those findings is that students with high achievement, or who are at a high proficiency level, have more positive beliefs concerning learning the target language than those students with low achievement, or who are at a low proficiency level. This implies that learners' beliefs about language learning directly relate to their actual achievement or proficiency level. Relationships between strategy use and language learning beliefs have also been studied extensively, leading to general agreement that there are strong correlations between the two, suggesting that beliefs involve the selection of strategy use, and that strategy use forms beliefs on language learning (Yang, 1999). Anxiety and motivation, proven to play important roles in language learning, have frequently been related to students' language learning beliefs. A negative correlation between anxiety and language learning beliefs and a positive relation between motivation and language learning beliefs are commonly reported findings.

Most studies into beliefs about language learning have been conducted for ESL,

EFL, and some other foreign languages, such as Spanish, French, Japanese, and Chinese (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Kunt, 1997; Le, 2004; Oh, 1996; Park, 1995; Yang, 1999), and there has been only a small number of studies of Korean language learners. With KFL students, Jee (2013) investigated the language learning beliefs held by 63 American university students from three different levels of Korean classes using the BALLI. Although no statistically significant differences were yielded among the three groups, the American KFL students held positive beliefs about learning Korean, and especially were highly motivated. In addition, a higher proportion of the more-experienced students believed that Korean is a difficult language to master than the less-experienced students. They also thought that they had more aptitude for learning a language than the less-experienced students. Overall, the students also valued culture, grammar, and vocabulary learning.

In another study, Jee (2014) examined 12 first-year American KFL students' changes in language learning beliefs over a year. The findings indicated that the students showed relatively positive beliefs about language learning, but no significant differences were observed between the mean scores of BALLI in the first semester and the second semester. However, a positive correlation was observed between the two mean scores, suggesting that students who, at the beginning of the year, held positive beliefs towards language learning in general, and towards learning the Korean language in particular, tended to continue to have positive beliefs by the end of the year.

With Korean heritage language (KHL) students in the US, Jee (2016) investigated the effects of the Korean-Americans' perceived cultural ethnicity on their beliefs about language learning. While the KHL students, overall, tended to show a high agreement rate with the BALLI statements, they showed the highest agreement rate in the 'Motivation and expectations' category. The KHL students who perceived their ethnic identity as Korean tended to show stronger motivation with less speaking anxiety than the KHS learners who perceived their ethnic identity as American. The 'Foreign language aptitude' category showed significant differences between the two groups, with more students with a perceived Korean identity agreeing with the statements than students with a perceived American identity.

Regarding learners of Korean as a second language (KSL), Choi (2011) examined the correlations among note-taking strategies, learning strategies, language learning beliefs, and Korean language proficiency for 160 Chinese students learning

Korean at a Korean language institution in Korea. Age, gender, and language proficiency were also considered as influencing factors and some statements showed significant differences among the students. For example, more female students were open to making guesses than male students, and more of the younger students were flexible about eradicating mistakes later on than older students. In addition, for the common belief that "women are better than men at learning a foreign language", more of the advanced students disagreed than beginners or intermediate learners. A strong correlation was also found between intrinsic motivation (i.e., I would like to learn the Korean language so that I can get to know its speakers better) and two of the note-taking strategies (i.e., I use space in the textbook for note-taking and I have my own strategy for note-taking). In Kim's (2013) study, 126 KSL students and 27 Korean native language teachers completed the BALLI, and significant differences were observed among the students, depending on their proficiency level (beginning, intermediate, or advanced level). More of the advanced level students thought Korean was a difficult language than beginning level students, and more students from the beginning group than from the advanced level wanted to learn Korean in order to get to know its speakers better. Generally, the students had positive attitudes toward learning Korean, and showed high motivation. Significant differences in language learning beliefs between the students and the teachers were also found, mostly in the language learning process and communication strategies.

Foreign/second language self-confidence has been considered as a major affective domain that can be directly related to student achievement in SLA (Clément, 1986; Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels, 1994; Pyun, Kim, Cho, and Lee, 2014). Foreign/ second language self-confidence, or perceived linguistic self-confidence (PLS), has been reported to especially influence communicative competence and anxiety (Noels, Pon, and Clément, 1996; Peng and Woodrow, 2010). Namely, students with higher perceived competence are more likely to try to speak the target language than students with lower perceived competence, regardless of their actual proficiency. Students with high anxiety tend to avoid speaking in the target language, resulting in fewer attempts to communicate in that language, and vice versa. In a study by Pyun et al. (2014), a significantly positive correlation was found between self-confidence with Korean and achievement among KFL students in the US, implying that KFL students with high confidence in Korean reached a high level of achievement.

Although various categories of Korean language learners (i.e., KFL, KSL, and

KHL) have been examined in studies of their beliefs, the number is still too small for us to fully understand the nature of each type of Korean language learner. Furthermore, as the number of learners of Korean is growing worldwide, there is a need for more studies on Korean language learners. Thus, in order to enrich the literature about language learning beliefs by expanding the number and nature of the learner groups studied, this study examines the beliefs about language learning held by university KFL students learning Korean in an Australian institution, and the relationships between their self-confidence with the Korean language and their beliefs. The findings will also enrich the explanations of how self-confidence affects KFL students' beliefs about language learning in general, and about Korean language learning in particular. The current study investigates the following three research questions:

(1) What beliefs do KFL students in Australia hold about language learning?
(2) Are there any significant differences in language learning beliefs among the KFL students with different levels of PLS?
(3) How are the KFL students' beliefs about language learning related to their level of PLS of Korean?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

A total of 156 KFL students who enrolled in Korean courses at a large public university in Australia participated in this study. Thirty-two were male and 124 were female. The age range was from 17 to 38, with a mean age of 20.6. Forty-three of these were first-year, 46 were second-year and 67 were third-year university students[3]. The study was introduced to the KFL students at the three different levels during first semester: 112 students from the First-year Korean class, 35 students from the Second-year Korean class, and 9 students from the Third-year Korean class. The students' majors were varied, and included Korean, Japanese, psychology, journalism, international relations, business, marketing, and science. One hundred and twenty-two

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3   In the Australian tertiary education system, the third year is the last year of university.

students had previously learned a foreign language(s) other than Korean, such as Japanese, French, English, Vietnamese, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, or German, while 34 students had no experience of learning a foreign language(s).

According to university policy, a semester consisted of 13 weeks, and a course comprised a total of 39 hours, based on a one-hour lecture and a two-hour tutorial class each week. The First-year Korean class was for novice[4] students who had no experience of learning Korean in a formal educational institute. Thus, the starting level was novice-low and the exit level was novice-mid or novice-high. The Second-year Korean class was designed for students who had completed one year of the First-year Korean courses. The starting level for these students was intermediate-low and the exit level was intermediate-mid. The next course, the Third-year Korean class, was developed for students who had finished one year of the Second-year Korean courses, so the starting level was intermediate-mid and the exit level was intermediate-high or above. Cultural aspects were strongly emphasized, as were the linguistic components in all the classes. The communicative approach was the main teaching method. Basically, all of these courses required written tests (i.e., mid-term and final written exams and vocabulary quizzes), and depending on the courses, oral activities and writing assignments were assigned.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument (BALLI)

This study adapted the BALLI developed by Horwitz (1987, 1988). The instrument consisted of 34 items in a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument examined five components: foreign language aptitude (FLA), difficulty of language learning (DLL), the nature of language learning (NLL), learning and communication strategies (LCS), and motivation and expectations (ME). Since the participants were students learning Korean, the words 'foreign language' and 'the target language' were replaced with 'Korean'. Although this instrument has received criticism (e.g., Kuntz, 1996; Sage, 2011), it has been widely used in various studies with different foreign/second language learners (e.g.,

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4   The proficiency levels were based on ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (http://www.actfl.org/publications/ guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012)

Jee, 2013, 2014, 2016; Kern, 1995; Kim, 2013; Oh, 1996; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003), attesting to its validity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the instrument was .80 in this study.

3.2.2 Items for Perceived Linguistic Self-confidence (PLS)

Items for PLS, by Pyun et al., (2014) were adapted for this study (Appendix 1). The instrument consisted of eight items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All items were written positively, so a high number represented high confidence. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was reported as .85 (N = 104, Pyun et al., 2014), and for this study was .90.

3.3 Procedures and Data analysis

During week 10 of the first semester, the students were recruited for the study. After consent forms were collected, students were asked to complete the survey packet (background information, the BALLI, and the PLS).

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data gathered from the participants. To examine the responses to the questionnaires in the survey, descriptive statistics were used. To investigate the mean differences, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed. To further investigate exactly where the differences existed, the Tukey post hoc test was performed. A Pearson correlation was performed in order to examine the relation between the language learning beliefs and the level of PLS of the students.

4. Results

4.1 KFL students' beliefs about language learning depending on their level of PLS

Overall, the KFL students in this study showed neutral opinions on the BALLI statements. Among the five categories, the students exhibited the most agreement with the statements of the ME categories, and the least agreement with the statements in the NLL category (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics: overall

	M	SD	Rank
FLA	3.32	.40	3
DLL	3.36	.64	2
NLL	3.13	.38	5
LCS	3.31	.43	4
ME	3.80	.58	1
BALLI (Total)	3.33	.27	

Regarding the level of self-confidence, the total mean scores of the eight items of the PLS was 3.40 (SD = .78). The students were divided into three groups depending on their level of self-confidence, using a z-score of .5: students with a z-score above .5 were categorized as the High PLS group, students with a z-score in the range of -.5 to .5 as the Mid PLS group, and students with a z-score of below -.5 as the Low PLS group. Forty-eight students were in the High PLS group, 66 were in the Mid PLS group, and 42 were in the Low PLS group. Table 2 reports each group's mean scores for the five categories of the BALLI.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics: by group

		M	SD
FLA	High[5]	3.42	.38
	Mid	3.27	.38
	Low	3.27	.43
DLL	High	3.47	.47
	Mid	3.25	.70
	Low	3.42	.71
NLL	High	3.12	.40
	Mid	3.10	.37
	Low	3.18	.37
LCS	High	3.35	.41
	Mid	3.28	.45
	Low	3.32	.42
ME	High	4.01	.48
	Mid	3.75	.60
	Low	3.64	.58
BALLI (Total)	High	3.41	.23
	Mid	3.29	.26
	Low	3.29	.29

Significant differences among the groups were found in the total mean scores of

5 'High' stands for 'High PLS group', 'Mid' stands for 'Mid PLS group', and 'Low' stands for 'Low PLS group.'

the BALLI ($F(2,153) = 3.162$, $p = .045$) and those of ME category ($F(2,153) = 5.207$, $p = .006$). A post hoc test found that those significant differences occurred in the ME category: between students in the Low ($M = 3.64$) and High groups ($M = 4.01$, $p = .007$) and between students in the Mid ($M = 3.75$) and High groups ($M = 4.01$, $p = .047$), implying that the High PLS students tended to have higher motivation and more positive expectations than the Low and Mid PLS students.

The first category of the BALLI items deals with the issue of foreign language aptitude, especially asking students about their beliefs regarding the existence of aptitude, which might be related to their expectations of success. As Table 3 shows, a majority of the students (60.3% strongly agreed, 29.5% agreed) believed that "everyone can learn to speak a foreign language" (item 34). However, they were not sure about their own ability to learn a foreign language, in item 15 (42.9% neutral). Regarding common beliefs about language learning, nearly 75% of the students supported the statement that "it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language" (item 1), whereas most of the students were not sure, or even disagreed, that "women are better than men at learning foreign languages" (item 22), and that "people who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages" (item 29). As well, more than half of the students acknowledged that learning a foreign language is a special ability (item 2), and that speaking more than one language indicates a high intelligence (item 32). Thus, most of the students acknowledged that the ability to learn a foreign language is very special and it can be achieved by highly intelligent people.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of FLA category

Items	SD* (%)	D	N	A	SA	*M*
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	4.5	3.8	16.7	30.1	44.9	4.07
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	5.1	10.9	23.7	32.1	28.2	3.67
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	2.6	13.5	38.5	33.3	12.2	3.39
15. I have foreign language aptitude.	12.8	23.1	42.9	18.6	2.6	2.75
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	16	28.8	47.4	6.4	1.3	2.48

	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	22.4	35.3	37.8	3.2	1.3	2.26
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	1.3	4.5	28.2	41.7	24.4	3.83
33. People from my culture are good at learning foreign languages.	8.3	20.5	47.4	17.3	6.4	2.93
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	0.6	1.3	8.3	29.5	60.3	4.55

*Note: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral, A = agree, SA = strongly agree

In this category, two items showed significant differences among the three groups: Item 2 ($F(2,153)$ = 3.361, p = .037) and Item 15 ($F(2,153)$ = 27.089, p = .000). According to the post hoc test, there were significant differences between the Low and Mid groups (p = .031) in item 2. Thus, more of the students in the Low group (M = 4.05) believed in an inborn language aptitude than did students in the Mid group (M = 3.48). Regarding item 15, there were significant differences among the three groups (Low group M = 2.05, Mid group M = 2.75, High group M = 3.38, p = .000). In other words, students with a higher level of PLS showed stronger beliefs in their aptitude for learning a foreign language.

The second category of items concerns the difficulty of learning a language, asking about both the general difficulty of learning a foreign language and the perceived difficulty of learning Korean (Table 4). Generally, an overwhelming majority of the students (approximately 82%) agreed or strongly agreed that "some languages are easier to learn than others" (item 3). This might reflect the students' prior experience of learning other foreign or second languages (approximately 78% students in this study had experienced learning a foreign or second language other than Korean). Regarding the difficulty of learning Korean, a majority of the students felt that the Korean language is a medium-difficulty language (49.4%) or a difficult language (25.6%), and they believed that if they spent one hour a day, they could become fluent in Korean in 3-5 years (37.8%) or 1-2 years (34.6%). Interestingly, with a majority of the students coming from the First-year Korean class (N = 112), with no experience of learning Korean before, the students seemed to think that the Korean language is relatively easy to learn. As well, many students thought that aural/oral skills (speaking and listening) were more difficult than reading and writing (item 28), while they believed understanding/listening was easier than speaking (item

24). In this category, two items (items 3 and 4) showed significant differences among the PLS groups. More High-group students ($M = 4.23$) believed that "some languages are easier to learn than others" (item 3, $F(2,153) = 3.852$, $p = .023$) than Low-group students ($M = 3.90$, $p = .030$). Furthermore, more High-group students ($M = 3.19$) believed that Korean is not a difficult language to learn (item 4, $F(2,153) = 4.152$, $p = .018$) than Low-group students ($M = 2.71$, $p = .020$).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of DLL category

Items	SD	D	N	A	SD	M
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	2.6	5.8	9.6	42.3	39.7	4.12
4. The Korean language is:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
(1) a very difficult language, (2) a difficult language, (3) a language of medium difficulty, (4) an easy language, (5) a very easy language.	3.8	25.6	49.4	17.9	3.2	2.91
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning the Korean language, how long would it take him or her to become fluent?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
(1) less than a year, (2) 1-2 years, (3) 3-5 years, (4) 5-10 years, (5) You can't learn a language in one hour a day.	10.3	34.6	37.8	10.3	7.1	2.69
24. It is easier to speak than understand the Korean language.	9	31.4	41	13.5	5.1	2.74
28. It is easier to read and write the Korean language than to speak and understand it.	7.1	19.9	28.8	30.8	13.5	3.24

The next group of items asks about the nature of the process of language learning, such as the meaning of learning a language and whether it is different from other types of learning. As seen in Table 5, a substantial number of students acknowledged that the structure of Korean is different from that of English (item 5). While many students believed that learning a foreign language is not a matter of translation (item 26), they

somewhat agreed with the importance of learning a lot of new words (item 16, 40.4% agreed) and grammar rules (item 20, 34.6% agreed). However, approximately 29% of the students were not sure about learning new vocabulary and 37.2% were neutral regarding learning grammar rules. As well, 67.3% of the students differentiated learning a foreign language from learning other school subjects (item 25), and more than half of the students acknowledged the importance of culture in learning a language (item 8). Only item 5 ($F(2,153) = 3.675$, $p = .028$) had significant differences between Low ($M = 1.71$) and High groups ($M = 1.36$, $p = .024$).

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of NLL category

Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
5. Korean language is structured in the same way as English.	52.6	39.7	7.7	0	0	1.55
8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.	0.6	8.3	23.7	48.1	19.2	3.77
11. It is easier to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	0.6	14.1	28.2	33.3	23.7	3.65
16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	4.5	17.9	28.8	40.4	8.3	3.30
20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	3.8	12.8	37.2	34.6	11.5	3.37
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	3.8	10.9	17.9	41.7	25.6	3.74
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from my own language.	18.6	35.3	30.1	10.9	5.1	2.49

Items 17 and 21 asked about strategies for learning a language (Table 6), especially Korean, and an overwhelmingly large number of students (approximately 93%) supported the importance of practice (item 17). Regarding learning Korean using traditional methods, such as using cassettes and video tapes, approximately 37% of the students were neutral and 34.6% of the students agreed.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of LCS category

Items	SD	D	N	A	SD	M
Learning Strategies						
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	0	1.3	5.8	39.7	53.2	4.45
21. It is important to practice Korean with cassettes or video tapes.	1.9	12.8	37.2	34.6	11.5	3.42
Communication Strategies						
7. It is important to speak the Korean language with an excellent accent.	0.6	5.8	31.4	35.9	26.3	3.81
9. You shouldn't say anything in the Korean language until you can say it correctly.	18.6	37.2	31.4	9.6	3.2	2.42
12. If I heard someone speaking the Korean language, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.	16	30.8	37.8	11.5	3.8	2.56
13. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in the Korean language.	2.6	14.7	30.8	39.1	12.8	3.45
18. I feel self-conscious speaking the Korean language in front of other people.	1.9	14.7	36.5	29.5	17.3	3.46
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.	5.8	28.8	29.5	24.4	11.5	3.07

Items about communication strategies address students' beliefs on the importance of correctness and the acceptance of risk-taking (Table 6). Approximately 60% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the importance of an excellent accent when speaking in Korean, but 31.4% were not sure about that. Regarding willingness to take risks (item 9) or guess (item 13), more than half of the students were very accepting. However, approximately 47% of the students were hesitant to speak Korean to others (item 12) and 46.8% of the students believed they would feel awkward if they spoke in Korean in front of other people (item 18). Regarding making mistakes (item 19), the students' beliefs were almost evenly distributed across "disagree" (28.8%), "neutral" (29.5%) and "agree" (24.4%).

Among the items in Communication Strategies, three were found to be significantly different among the three groups: item 7 ($F(2,153) = 7.554$, $p = .001$), item 13 ($F(2,153) = 3.717$, $p = .027$), and item 18 ($F(2,153) = 6.462$, $p = .002$). The post hoc test also revealed significant differences in these three items. Regarding accent (item 7), more students in the High group ($M = 4.21$) believed in the importance of speaking

Korean with an excellent accent than in the Low group ($M = 3.52$, $p = .001$) and Mid group ($M = 3.72$, $p = .010$). High-group students ($M = 3.66$) were more accepting of guessing (item 13) than Low-group students ($M = 3.12$, $p = .024$). Low-group students ($M = 3.88$) had more anxiety (item 18) than Mid-group students ($M = 3.40$, $p = .036$) and High-group students ($M = 3.15$, $p = .001$). Thus, students in the Low group showed more anxiety and less tolerance for guessing, and considered accent to be less important than students in the Mid and High groups.

The last group of items refers to students' motivation and expectations of learning Korean (Table 7). The students were very positive in their belief that they would "ultimately learn to speak the Korean language very well" (item 6). Many students (approximately 69% either agreed or strongly agreed) were also positive about having many opportunities to use Korean (item 23), and approximately half of the students believed that speaking Korean would be of benefit for them in getting a good job (item 27). However, 36.5 % of the students were not sure whether they could get a good job if they could speak Korean. They also had very high intrinsic motivation to get to know Korean speakers better (item 31) – approximately 80% either agreed or strongly agreed. Regarding item 30, which asked whether their culture considers speaking a foreign language to be important, students' responses were almost evenly distributed from "disagree" (22.4%) to "strongly agree" (26.3%).

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of ME category

Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	*M*
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak the Korean language very well.	0	2.6	15.4	47.4	34.6	4.14
23. If I get to speak the Korean language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	2.6	5.1	23.1	39.7	29.5	3.88
27. If I learn to speak the Korean language very well, it will help me get a good job.	3.8	11.5	36.5	31.4	16.7	3.46
30. People from my culture think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	5.8	22.4	22.4	23.1	26.3	3.42
31. I would like to learn the Korean language so that I can get to know its speakers better.	0	1.9	19.2	45.5	33.3	4.10

In this category, two items showed significant differences among the groups: item 6 ($F(2,153) = 8.421$, $p = .000$) and item 31 ($F(2,153) = 4.696$, $p = .010$). The post hoc test found significant differences. Regarding item 6, more students in the High group ($M = 4.45$) were significantly positive about their ability to ultimately speak the Korean language very well than were the students in the Low group ($M = 3.81$, $p = .032$). In terms of intrinsic motivation (item 31), High-group students ($M = 4.36$) were significantly more positive than Low-group students ($M = 3.88$, $p = .009$). In other words, students who had high PLS tended to have high intrinsic motivation with strong beliefs about their mastery of Korean, compared to those students who had low PLS.

4.2 Correlations between the BALLI and the PLS

A small but significantly positive correlation (Table 8) was found between the total BALLI scores and the level of PLS ($r = .205$), indicating that higher level of PLS is associated with more agreement to the items of BALLI. Among the five categories of the BALLI, only ME showed a significantly positive correlation with the PLS ($r = .243$), revealing that students in the High PLS group tended to have more positive motivations than students in the other groups.

Table 8. Correlation between the BALLI and the PLS

		BALLI	ME
PLS	Pearson Correlation	.205*	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.002
	N	156	156

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Discussion

This study investigated the beliefs about language learning held by KFL students in Australia in relation to their perceived Korean competency. Overall, the KFL students exhibited neutral opinions on the items of the BALLI (Total $M = 3.33$, SD $= .27$), with the highest agreement rate for items in the ME category. The students were also very positive about ultimately mastering the Korean language (item 6), with high intrinsic (item 31) and extrinsic (items 23 and 27) motivations, as seen in other studies of Korean

language learners (Choi, 2011; Jee, 2013, 2016; Kim, 2013). While the majority of students acknowledged that learning a foreign language is a special gift (item 2) and that it is different from other kinds of learning (item 25), many students were either not sure or disagreed that they themselves had aptitude for learning a foreign language (item 15). As well, the students felt that speaking in Korean was more difficult than reading, writing, and listening (items 24 and 28), and this ultimately led to high speaking anxiety (items 12 and 18). As previous studies have reported (Banya and Cheng, 1997; Horwitz, 1999; Jee, 2014; Kunt, 1997; Truitt, 1995; Tsai, 2004), it seems that the beliefs about language learning held by the KFL students are also related to anxiety. In other words, instructors of Korean should be aware that students with speaking anxiety tend to believe that speaking in Korean is difficult. This belief may lead them to be reluctant to speak in Korean, ultimately hindering their ability to communicate in Korean.

The KFL students also acknowledged that the structure of Korean was different from that of English (item 5), and a lot of the students believed that Korean was a medium-difficult or difficult language (item 4). They also believed that learning new words and grammar rules were important (items 16 and 20) (Jee, 2013, 2016; Kim, 2013; Le, 2004; Oh, 1996). However, approximately one third of the students were not sure whether vocabulary and grammar were important, or if translation was a good strategy for mastering Korean (item 26). Probably, this results from the fact that most of the participants were from the First-year Korean class (N = 112), therefore having had a relatively short period of learning the Korean language. Thus, instructors of Korean, especially those who teach First-year level students, should give their students some guidance as to what aspects are important in learning the Korean language and what strategies are useful.

In addition, the KFL students in this study already possessed some of the properties of good language learners, such as willingness to take risks (item 9) and to guess (item 13), knowing the importance of culture (item 8) and a lot of practice (item 17), and being open to the possibility of learning a foreign language (item 34) (Horwitz, 1988; Jee, 2013, 2016; Kern, 1995; Le, 2004; Oh, 1996).

However, for the items concerning their own culture, approximately half of the students were neutral on whether people from their culture are good at learning foreign languages (item 33), while for item 30 ("People from my culture think that it is important to speak a foreign language"), the students' responses were diverse, ranging from "disagree" to "strongly agree" with almost equal percentages. One

possible reason may be the diverse nature of the participants in terms of their cultural backgrounds[6]. Therefore, it is highly recommended that future studies should examine the role of cultural background (including elements such as L1, ethnicity, and attitudes) in influencing the KFL students' beliefs about language learning.

Regarding job opportunity (item 27), approximately half of the students expected to obtain a good job from having learnt Korean, while 37.3% of the students were not sure about that. Thus, instructors need to provide students with information about job opportunities requiring Korean language proficiency, in order to enhance their understanding regarding the extrinsic rewards of learning Korean. The KFL students in this study already showed high intrinsic motivation (item 31). Instructors could help their students to be more successful in learning the Korean language by further enhancing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Significant differences were found in the total BALLI scores and ME category scores among the High, Mid, and Low PLS groups. Overall, High-group students exhibited more positive beliefs about language learning, showed higher motivation and were seen to have more positive expectations than Low-group and Mid-group students. Among the 34 items, 10 items (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15, 18, and 31) showed significant differences among the three groups. Generally, higher PLS students tended to be more positive than lower PLS students: more students with higher PLS tended to believe that they had foreign language aptitude, that an excellent accent is important, that guessing is allowable, that the Korean language is not difficult to learn, and that they would ultimately master the Korean language. Furthermore, they had higher intrinsic motivation, and less anxiety than lower PLS students. The results were supported by the correlation data, as there were positive relations between the BALLI and the PLS level. Thus, it can be said that a student's level of confidence with Korean positively affected their beliefs about language learning, especially in terms of their motivation and expectations of learning Korean.

6. Conclusion

With an increasing number of students learning Korean in and outside of Korea,

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6   The students' cultural backgrounds were not in the scope of this study. However, considering that Australia is a highly multicultural society, it is very likely that the participants were from various cultural backgrounds.

more studies about Korean language learners are needed, in order to understand the nature of the students and to provide effective pedagogy to them. By studying, in particular, Korean language learners' beliefs, instructors would be more able to develop curricula and teaching materials that may enhance their students' learning of Korean. The effects of PLS on Korean language learners' beliefs can also provide instructors and researchers with useful information on an effective communicative approach in the KFL classroom. According to the findings of this study, KFL students' levels of self-confidence with Korean positively affected their beliefs about language learning. In particular, their levels of self-confidence positively influenced motivation and expectation. Furthermore, the KFL students exhibited features of successful foreign/second language learners, such as being open to the possibility of learning a foreign language, high expectation of learning to speak the Korean language very well, acknowledging the importance of practice, and high motivation.

Despite the findings, this study has several limitations. First of all, the present study depended solely on qualitative analysis, using SPSS. For triangulation of the data, it is recommended that researchers incorporate some qualitative methods (such as interviews and classroom observation) in future studies. In addition, in order to consider the possibly diverse cultural backgrounds of the students, a mixed method using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis is suggested for future studies. A longitudinal study of beliefs over a number of years is also recommended, to determine if these beliefs change over time. Furthermore, similar studies with different Korean language learner groups (such as Korean as a heritage language and Korean as a second language) are recommended, in order to see the effects of learning environment and motivation for learning Korean. Regarding the BALLI, because it was not originally developed for KFL learners, the instrument may not be the best scale for measuring KFL students' beliefs about language learning. Therefore, developing a modified instrument, specially designed for Korean language learner groups, is also recommended. Lastly, this study was conducted in the context of KFL students who were learning Korean in an Australian university. Therefore, the results should be interpreted in this context.

This study is the first to investigate KFL students' language learning beliefs in relation to their level of self-confidence in the Korean language in an Australian context. Given that this study examined a rarely studied group (KFL students in Australia) and, in particular, one of the affective domains (beliefs in language learning, which have huge influence on learning a foreign/second language), it makes a unique contribution

within SLA, in terms of expanding learner groups and research topic. The findings of the study will initiate discussions (particularly among the instructors and researchers who are interested in KFL students in Australia) about the role of language learning beliefs, and the role of linguistic self-confidence in learning the Korean language.

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Appendix 1

Items for Perceived Linguistic Self-confidence

Directions: For each statement, please indicate whether you
(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree,
(4) agree, or (5) strongly agree
Please give your first reaction to each statement and mark an answer for every statement.

1. I am confident I can understand most of what my teacher says in Korean class.
2. I am confident I can use Korean vocabulary and expressions that I learned to interact with my teacher or friends.
3. I am confident I can ask and answer various questions in Korean.
4. I am confident I can talk about myself in Korean using sentences.
5. I am confident I can talk about what I did last weekend using sentences in Korean.
6. I am confident I can do well in oral presentations in Korean.
7. I am confident I can order a meal in Korean at a restaurant.
8. I am confident I can ask for and give directions for locations in Korean.

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