

Epistemological Beliefs and University English Learning Demands: The Case of First-year Students

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Abstract

Research evidence shows that epistemic beliefs, among other individuals' affective characteristics, play an important role in the process of language learning. The aim behind the present study is to substantiate the role students' language learning preconceptions play in predicting the success or failure of instructional methods. For this end, the epistemological beliefs of 110 freshman students enrolled in the Department of English, University of Mentouri were analysed using the Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI). The data analysis showed that university students during their entire first year hold naive epistemological beliefs ($M=3.18, >2.72$). This paper suggests that students' unintended and immature views may interfere with their ability to learn the English language at the university level given that the latter is a context where there is no room for spoon-feeding and where students are expected to be mature self-regulated learners. Pedagogical implications are suggested not only to help students adapt to university demands and adopt sophisticated beliefs but also to help teachers take instructional decisions that promote students' future conceptual change.

Key words: naive and sophisticated epistemic beliefs, conceptual change, English learning, and adapting/adopting instructional methods