



Chinese Students' Beliefs about English Language and Their L2 Motivation

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Abstract

Introduction. This study adopts a Global Englishes perspective to examine dimensions within beliefs about English language held by Mainland Chinese university students. It also assesses whether and how these beliefs impact the students' motivation to learn English (L2 motivation).

Materials and Methods. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 460 students learning English as a Foreign Language at a large public university in Mainland China. The questionnaire contained 28 items to assess the students' language beliefs and their L2 motivation. One section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information about the respondents. The research instrument was approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee. Exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were performed to analyze the data.

Results. The Exploratory factor analysis identified four distinct dimensions within the language learners' beliefs, namely, Beliefs about Standard English, Beliefs about Global Englishes, Beliefs about English language education and Beliefs about China English. Three dimensions were identified within the students' L2 motivation, namely, International posture, Integrative orientation and Instrumental orientation. The ensuing regression analysis detected positive and statistically significant relationships between some dimensions in the language beliefs and L2 motivation. Particularly, Beliefs about English language education were found to have the strongest impact on L2 motivation.

Discussion and Conclusion. The findings from the exploratory factor analysis support the views that language-related beliefs have distinct dimensions. They also give empirical evidence to the validity of the Global Englishes notion. From a language teaching perspective, the findings highlight the need to adopt GE-oriented pedagogies.

Keywords: beliefs about English language, language learning motivation, Global Englishes, Mainland Chinese students, English language education, higher education

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Оригинальная статья

Представления о статусе английского языка и академическая мотивация среди китайских студентов

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Аннотация

Введение. Статус английского языка как инструмента международного общения нашел отражение в сравнительно новом термине «глобальный английский». Существуют разные точки зрения относительно легитимности этого термина. Цель статьи – представить результаты исследования о восприятии китайскими студентами статуса английского языка как глобального и влиянии этих представлений на академическую мотивацию студентов.

Материалы и методы. В исследовании приняли участие 460 студентов, обучающихся по профилю «Английский язык как иностранный» в одном из китайских университетов. Для сбора данных авторы использовали специально разработанный опросник, который содержал несколько параметров, относящихся к восприятию статуса английского языка и академической мотивации. Студенты оценивали каждый из пунктов опросника по 5-балльной шкале. Статистический метод анализа данных включал разведочный факторный анализ и множественный регрессионный анализ.

Результаты исследования. Разведочный факторный анализ обнаружил четыре фактора (скрытых переменных) в восприятии статуса английского языка и три фактора (скрытых переменных) в академической мотивации студентов. Последующий множественный регрессионный анализ выявил положительные и статистически значимые корреляции между рядом скрытых переменных. Например, переменная «Представления об обучении английскому языку» оказывала значительное статистическое влияние на каждую из трех параметров академической мотивации.

Обсуждение и заключение. Результаты статистических анализов в данном исследовании подтверждают ранние эмпирически основанные заключения, что представления о языке и его статусе состоят из отдельных самостоятельных компонентов. Также результаты факторного анализа указывают на валидность концепции «глобальный английский». С практической точки зрения материалы статьи подчеркивают необходимость интеграции концепции «глобальный английский» в процессы преподавания и изучения английского языка. Сделанные авторами выводы вносят вклад в дальнейшее развитие практики обучения английскому языку в контексте «глобального английского».

Ключевые слова: представления о статусе английского языка, академическая мотивация, глобальный английский, студенты китайских вузов, обучение английскому языку, высшее образование

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Introduction

People learn English not only in order to communicate with native speakers of the language but, more importantly, to acquire ability to communicate with people from all over the world. Currently, as He [1] noted, non-native speakers of English outnumber those for whom English is a mother tongue. As a result, English is being acquired by its native and non-native speakers in diverse ways [2], which gives rise to many varieties of English and a new

sociolinguistic phenomenon known as Global Englishes [3]. The term ‘Global Englishes’ has been defined as “the metamorphosis of English across borders in today’s globalized world” [4, p. 385].

The reality of English becoming a global language has exponentially increased the number and variety of stakeholders, both in academia and outside of it. In the academic circles, there have been calls for more active collaborations between scholars from various fields of linguistics. These calls are



especially pertinent in view that the theories that have been dominant over decades do not capture the present-day sociolinguistic realities [5; 6].

As Rose noted, the fact that English has become a global language would inevitably impact many aspects of English language education, including the classroom proceedings, and generate a tremendous scope of issues that need to be explored¹. Jenkins pointed out the need to raise the awareness about the Global Englishes (GE) phenomenon among English language teachers and learners [7]. However, as Fang and Ren observed, “awareness of Global Englishes (GE) is generally lacking in ELT practices” [4, p. 384]. The situation might be changing as, increasingly, the focus of attention has been shifting to the perceptions and attitudes of learners of English in various geographical and educational contexts, including Mainland China [8]. This is an encouraging trend particularly in view of a mismatch between native English oriented curricula and the language learners’ need to use English to communicate with people all over the world in various spheres of human activities. As Fang and Ren proposed, “a GE-oriented pedagogy focuses on the authentic use of English in international situations” instead of promoting a native-oriented use of English [4, p. 385].

Among Asian countries, China is renowned for its people’s enthusiasm for learning English. In fact, China has the largest population of English language learners in the world [9]. This highlights the importance of understanding the aspirations of these learners as well as their views of the way English is – or should be – taught and learned. This also aligns with the call for English language educators to gain a deeper understanding of their students’ attitudes and needs², as well as their linguistic resources, in order to adopt a more fluid perspective on the ways the language is taught [10].

Against such a background, this study aims to gain Mainland Chinese language learners’

perspectives on, their beliefs about and motivations for learning English in the context of English as a global language. This study raises the following research questions:

1. What are the dimensions in Chinese EFL learners’ beliefs about English language?

2. What are the language learners’ motivational orientations?

3. To what extent do the language learners’ beliefs about English language influence their L2 motivation?

The next section offers a brief overview of studies that have included in their research framework the current study’s main constructs of interest.

Literature Review

L2 research on language learners’ beliefs.

As is the case with most psychological constructs, beliefs are an elusive concept that has been defined in several ways. As Pajares noted, beliefs “travel in disguise and often under alias – attitudes, values, judgements, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few” [11, p. 309]. This succinct excerpt highlights the fact that psychological constructs and processes are entangled and enmeshed [12].

In the current study, *beliefs* are recognized as a complex construct where other related constructs, such as perceptions, opinions, attitudes and ideologies, converge. This study also recognizes that exploring beliefs that language learners hold would permit making some inferences regarding their “predisposition to action” [11, p. 318]. In other words, we acknowledge that beliefs have power to motivate people, including language learners, to act in certain ways.

In SLA research, beliefs about language learning held by students and their

¹ Rose H. Researching English as an International Language. In: Barkhuizen G. (ed). *Qualitative Research Topics in Language Teacher Education*. Routledge; 2019. p. 131-136. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429461347-22/researching-english-international-language-heath-rose> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.)

² Pennycook A. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. Routledge; 2017. (In Eng.)

teachers is a thriving and prominent research topic. As far back as the 1980s, Horwitz introduced the “Beliefs about the Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)” and posited that there exist five major dimensions within beliefs that people hold about language learning³. Since then, the structure and dimensions of these beliefs have been assessed in numerous studies done in various geographical and educational contexts. Many of these studies used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) [13–15] and they were able to support validity of the dimensional structure proposed by Horwitz.

Besides this research direction, scholars have explored several other pertinent aspects, such as the influence of gender on the students’ beliefs about language learning [16], the interplay between these beliefs and language learning anxiety [17] and, more recently, the role of these beliefs in language maintenance and shift [18]. As our search of literature has revealed, gradually, the scope of the beliefs has expanded to incorporate other dimensions. Among them are the language learners’ views regarding using English for international communication and the role of cultural dimensions in forming these beliefs [18–20]. These developments indicate researchers’ continuous fascination with and interest in this topic [21; 22]. This could be due to the fact that the contents of beliefs about language and language learning tend to fluctuate and change over time and across educational and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, in the research fields of English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes and Global Englishes (GE) explorations focusing on the beliefs, perspectives and opinions held by language learners retain a prominent position⁴. A considerable number of such studies has been done among Mainland Chinese learners of English [1; 21; 23]. For example, He conducted a survey on Chinese students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards China English and World Englishes

and found that the respondents held positive beliefs about Standard English and attached great importance to learning it [1]. A study by Pan and Block explored Chinese EFL learners’ and their teachers’ beliefs pertaining to (1) the status of English in China, (2) the students’ motivations for learning English and (3) the teaching and learning of English [24]. The findings revealed that the students attached great importance to mastering the English language. At the same time, the students were dissatisfied with the status of English language education in China, especially its exam-oriented nature which did not meet their needs and aspirations for using the language as a tool for communication with a variety of people.

Some scholars explored changes in Mainland Chinese students’ language ideologies and beliefs. These researchers noted a shift from the previously predominant preferences for acquiring Standard English to a growing aspiration to learn English for communicating with people from all over the world [21; 24]. As He and Li reported, increasingly, learners of English in China believe that it is important to learn English in order to be able to communicate in various EFL settings, and not for the purpose of acquiring lexico-grammatical accuracy of Standard English [21]. Lu and Buripakdi, who explored language learners’ beliefs in the context of Global English, included in their study such aspects as (1) beliefs about the importance of English, (2) perceptions of English speakers and their cultures, (3) beliefs about English speaking in international communication, (4) attitudes toward varieties of English and (5) beliefs about the effects of a GE-informed pedagogy [19]. The researchers discovered that a GE-informed pedagogy had not only enhanced the students’ awareness of GE but also boosted their self-confidence as learners and users of the language [19]. Despite these promising developments, researchers acknowledge

³ Horwitz E. Surveying Student Beliefs about Language Learning. In: Wenden A., Rubin J. (eds). *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. Prentice Hall; 1987. p. 119-132. (In Eng.)

⁴ Fang F. (Gabriel). *Re-positioning Accent Attitude in the Global Englishes Paradigm: A Critical Phenomenological Case Study in the Chinese Context*. London: Routledge; 2019. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781351061308/re-positioning-accent-attitude-global-englishes-paradigm-fan-gabriel-fang> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.)



the complexities, challenges and difficulties faced by English language educators [22], particularly in their efforts to promote awareness of the global use of English among their students [23].

In sum, scholars, researchers and educators recognize the reality of English becoming a global language [9; 19]. Considerable efforts have been devoted to promoting more enlightened perspectives among English language educators and their students on the status of English and various ways the language can be taught and learned⁵ [21–23]. It should be noted that English language learners around the world are major stakeholders in language education policies devised by policy-makers in their countries. Their views and opinions need to be sought and considered, especially in the context of the English language classroom where the actual teaching and learning take place. The current study aims to address this need.

L2 Motivation and language learners' beliefs. Motivation, which is a psychological construct pertaining to people's intentions and goals for actions, has been linked in SLA research to a variety of social psychological aspects of learning an additional language, including language learners' attitudes and beliefs⁶ [12; 25]. Research in general psychology recognizes an individual person's pursuit of goals as a motivational 'orientation' and as one of the crucial components of a motivated behaviour [26]. To concur, Gardner⁷ distinguished two main goals for learning an additional language – integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. The originally proposed conceptualization

of integrative orientation has experienced some transformations. Currently, it pertains to a language learner's aspirations to learn a new language in order to get a better knowledge and understanding of the target language community and cultures [12; 27]. The conceptualization of instrumental orientation remains largely unchanged; it concerns practical or utilitarian intentions to master an L2, including getting higher grades and better job opportunities.

Similar to the explorations of language learners' beliefs, research on L2 motivation has expanded in scope. It has been recognized that language learners may want to learn an additional language in order to be associated with a cosmopolitan world and to acquire a global world identity⁸. In view of this understanding, Yashima [28] proposed to incorporate a new dimension, namely, 'international posture', into conceptualizations of L2 motivation. This dimension pertains to learning a new language with the goals to make friends with people from other countries, to work, to live or to do business abroad. These theoretical developments align well with the need uncovered in empirical studies [19–21] to expand the conceptualization of L2 motivation in the framework of Global Englishes.

A number of studies have linked L2 motivation and students' beliefs about language learning [29; 30]. In one such study Fang reported that the respondents had expressed a strong preference for acquiring Standard English; these learners' main goal or motivation was to get access to the realm of native speakers of English⁹. In a similar

⁵ Jenkins J. English as a Lingua Franca in the International University: The Politics of Academic English Language Policy. London: Routledge; 2013. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203798157/english-lingua-franca-international-university-jennifer-jenkins> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.); Seidlhofer B. Understanding English as a Lingua Franca. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2011. (In Eng.)

⁶ Gardner R.C., Lambert W.E. Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers; 1972. (In Eng.)

⁷ Gardner R.C. Motivation and Second Language Acquisition: The Socioeducational Model. New York: Peter Lang Publishing; 2010. (In Eng.)

⁸ Dörnyei Z. The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition. New York: Routledge; 2005. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781410613349/psychology-language-learner-zolt%C3%A1n-d%C3%B6rnyei> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.); Yashima T. International Posture and the Ideal L2 Self in the Japanese EFL Context. In: Dörnyei Z., Ushioda E. (eds). Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self. Multilingual Matters; 2009. p. 144–163. Available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.21832/9781847691293-008/html> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.)

⁹ Fang F. (Gabriel). Re-positioning Accent Attitude in the Global Englishes Paradigm: A Critical Phenomenological Case Study in the Chinese Context. (In Eng.)

way, Zheng noted that language learners in China preferred to learn Standard English; moreover, they felt compelled to form a vision of the future L2 self as a native-like speaker of English [30]. Despite this growing body of literature there remain some conspicuous research gaps. For example, there is a lack of studies within the GE framework that examined language learners' beliefs, their L2 motivation and the link between the two constructs. The present study addresses this gap.

This study acknowledges the status of English as a global language. It also recognizes that, for many language learners, developing an international outlook and ability to communicate effectively with speakers of English from various corners of the world are important goals of learning English [21; 24; 31]. To reflect this stance, the international posture dimension is included in the present study's analysis of L2 motivation. Some researchers have proposed that the international posture dimension would be a more fruitful alternative to the notion of integrative orientation¹⁰ [29]; however, there are opposing views as well [27]. The present study includes integrative orientation among its research variables. It defines integrative orientation as a language learner's intent to become associated with the native speakers of English. In other words integrative orientation is targeted toward communities of speakers within 'the inner circle' of English, while the international posture dimension aligns with the realm of Global Englishes.

Materials and Methods

Research instrument. A survey was conducted to collect data; the research instrument contained 28 items on language beliefs and L2 motivation. Each item was followed by a 5-point Likert-types scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Four measures that assessed the language learning beliefs were as follows:

1. Beliefs about Standard English; they examined the learners' opinions regarding

native-like norms of speaking English (Items #5, 11, 13, 14, 17). Examining these beliefs helped to assess the students' language ideologies.

2. Beliefs about Global Englishes; they examined the students' awareness of the concept of GE, which also concerned the existence of varieties of English (Items #1, 2, 3, 4).

3. Beliefs about English language education (Items #9, 10, 12, 15, 18); these items assessed the language learners' opinions about English language education in China.

4. Beliefs about China English (Items #6, 7, 8).

The measures of L2 motivation were as follows:

1. International posture (items #20, 22, 23, 26); this measure assessed the language learners' intention to learn English in order to have intercultural communication with, and to participate in, international activities with various communities around the world.

2. Instrumental orientation (items #24, 25, 27, 28); it assessed the students' desire to gain some practical advantages from their knowledge of English.

3. Integrative orientation (items #19, 21); the items in this measure assessed the language learners' intent to imitate or become associated with native speakers of English.

The questionnaire also gathered demographic information about the respondents. The research instrument received approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee. A pilot study was conducted with 20 English language majors and no major problems were identified with the instrument.

Participants. The participants in the main study were 460 (N = 460) students. Purposive sampling was adopted: all respondents majored in English as a Foreign Language at a university in North China. The majority (n = 426 or 92.6%) were female students, which reflects the gender ratio in English as a Foreign Language programs in China [32]. The respondents' age was between 18 and 24 years old (Mean = 20.31; SD = 1.62).

¹⁰ Geoghegan L. International Posture, Motivation and Identity in Study Abroad. In: Pérez Vidal C., López-Serrano S., Ament J., Thomas-Wilhelm D.J. (eds). *Learning Context Effects: Study Abroad, Formal Instruction and International Immersion Classrooms*. Language Science Press; 2018. p. 215-253. Available at: <https://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/180> (accessed 20.08.2021). (In Eng.)



Data collection. Due to restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the data collection for the pilot and the main study was done online using a professional data collection platform, *Wenjuanxing*. Participation in this study was voluntary. Necessary efforts were made to ensure that every student who wished to take part in the study could access the instrument. It took between 15 to 20 minutes for the students to complete the questionnaire.

Data analysis. Firstly, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to identify latent dimensions in the language learners' beliefs and L2 motivation. The EFA was performed using principal components extraction and varimax rotation. Only the items with loading above 0.4 were retained for further analysis. Construct reliability was established by checking each factor's Cronbach's alpha value. It should be noted that it is not necessary to assess Cronbach's alpha for individually held beliefs [11]; however, for greater clarity and accountability this study reports these values.

Secondly, multiple regression analysis assessed the impact of language belief on L2 motivation. Prior to performing the statistical

analyses, assumptions for each statistical test were checked. SPSS 22.0 software was used to perform the tests.

Results

Dimensions in the language learners' beliefs. The EFA was found to be appropriate to analyze the data on the beliefs held by language learners. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was established (.689) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed ($\chi^2 = 1400.907$; $p < .01$).

To answer Research Question 1 ("What are the dimensions in Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about English language?") the EFA identified five dimensions (see Table 1), which accounted for 46% of the variance. As it is often the case in studies performing the EFA, some items would load in a different from the originally assigned dimension. In the current study the item in question was "The English education I receive meets my expectations and needs". Upon a thorough examination of the conceptual meaning of the factors, only factors 1, 2, 3 and 4 were retained. They accounted for 38.2% of the variance.

Table 1. Dimensions in the beliefs about English language

| Items | Component | | | | |
|---|-----------|------|------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. Good English language instruction should focus on preparing students to use only American or British English | .741 | | | | |
| 5. The true owners of English language are from English-speaking countries (e.g., North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand) | .657 | | | | |
| 17. I feel that non-native spoken English is inferior to native spoken English | .627 | | | | |
| 14. China English should be avoided because it is incorrect | .620 | | | | |
| 13. English varieties, such as British and American English, are more correct than English varieties such as Indian English, Singapore English or China English | .593 | | | | |
| 2. I have heard the phrase "China English" | | .790 | | | |
| 3. I have heard the word "Chinglish" | | .695 | | | |
| 4. There are varieties of English around the world | | .567 | | | |
| 1. I have heard the phrase "Global Englishes" | | .484 | | | |
| 9. Teachers who are native speakers of English should teach in my university | | | .667 | | |
| 12. Good English language education should prepare students to communicate with people from all around the world | | | .648 | | |

End of table 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| 10. My learning target is to speak English with an accent of a native speaker | | | .574 | | |
| 15. The current English education in schools and universities in China is exam oriented | | | .566 | | |
| 18. English language programs should provide students more exposure to different varieties of English | | | .558 | | |
| 7. Only China English can properly express ideas that are specific to Chinese culture | | | .752 | | |
| 8. Students should learn about the special characteristics of China English | | | .741 | | |
| 6. It is fine to speak English with a Chinese accent as long as this does not impede communication | | | .580 | | |
| 16. The English education I receive meets my expectations and needs | | | | | .794 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.608 | 0.578 | 0.764 | 0.672 | — |

Next, each factor's contents were examined. It was found that Factor 1 mostly contained the items pertaining to the beliefs about 'correct', 'legitimate' and 'superior' variants of English. Therefore, the factor was labeled as Beliefs about Standard English. The composition of Factor 2 reflected the students' awareness of the existence of different varieties of English. Therefore, this factor was labeled Beliefs about Global Englishes. The five items forming Factor 3 concerned, for the most part, beliefs about the ways to provide English language education in China. Accordingly, this factor was named Beliefs about English language education. Finally, the items forming Factor 4 pertained to the participants' beliefs about China English. This factor was named Beliefs about China English. Each

factor formed a relevant variable for the ensuing regression analysis.

Dimensions in the language learners' L2 motivation. Suitability of the EFA procedure to assess dimensions within L2 motivation was established: the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was meritorious (.894) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded adequate results ($\chi^2 = 2976.628$; $p < .01$). Therefore, we proceeded to perform the EFA to answer Research Question 2 ("What are the language learners' motivational orientations?").

Three dimensions within L2 motivation were formed during the EFA (see Table 2); they accounted for 75.79% of the variance. An appropriate label was assigned to each dimension upon examining its contents and establishing its conceptual meaning.

Table 2. Dimensions in students L2 Motivation

| Items | Component | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. I learn English in order to know about various cultures and communities in the world | .848 | | |
| 22. I learn English in order to communicate with people from various countries in the world | .813 | | |
| 23. I learn English in order to participate in the activities of various cultural groups | .795 | | |
| 26. I learn English in order to be more modern, international and connected with the world | .794 | | |
| 28. I learn English in order to pass English exams with a good result | | .863 | |
| 24. I learn English in order to get a higher-paying job | | .776 | |
| 25. I learn English in order to have a better life | | .636 | |
| 27. I learn English in order to give an impression of a well-educated person | | .552 | |
| 19. I learn English with an aim to sound like a native English speaker one day | | | .873 |
| 21. I learn English mainly in order to communicate with native English speakers | | | .652 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.823 | 0.715 | 0.500 |

To be more specific, Factor 1, for the most part, contained items pertaining to international posture or the students' willingness and interest to be engaged in intercultural communications and participate in international activities involving various communities around the world. Factor 1 was, therefore, labeled International Posture.

The four items forming Factor 2 reflected the instrumental orientation of the language learners, including their desire to achieve higher grades, gain a high-paying job and have good life style. This factor was named "Instrumental Orientation". Factor 3 contained two items that pertained to the language learners' desire to communicate with native speakers of English and be associated with them by having a native-like accent. This factor could be considered as reflecting the integrative orientation for learning English. Therefore Factor 3 is labeled Integrative Orientation. Each factor formed an L2 motivation variable in the regression analysis.

Relationships between the language learners' beliefs and L2 motivation. A check of underlying assumptions of the regression analysis, including checking the diagnostic graphs and testing residual normality, homoscedasticity, linearity, multicollinearity and autocorrelation, indicated that the assumptions were met. Therefore, we proceeded to performing the multiple regression analysis to answer Research Question 3 ("To what extent do the language learners' beliefs about English language influence their L2 motivation?").

The variables included in the regression analysis were formed based on the findings from the EFA. To be more specific, the dependent variable was the language learners' L2 motivation; it consisted of three components, namely, International Posture, Instrumental Orientation and Integrative Orientation. The independent variables were the language learners' Beliefs about Global Englishes, Beliefs about China English, Beliefs about Standard English, and Beliefs about English language education. As can be seen from Table 3, the findings indicated that some dimensions in the students' language beliefs had a positive and statistically significant impact on their L2 motivation.

To be more specific, Beliefs about Standard English had a positive and statistically significant impact on integrative orientation ($\beta = 0.189$; t -statistic = 4.205; $R^2 = 0.104$; $p < .01$). Beliefs about English Language Education had a positive and statistically significant effect on all three dimensions within L2 motivation. The impact of these beliefs was the strongest on International Posture ($\beta = 0.419$; t -statistic = 9.259; $R^2 = 0.198$; $p < .01$); it was only marginally weaker on Instrumental Orientation ($\beta = 0.399$; t -statistic = 8.741; $R^2 = 0.187$; $p < .01$) but considerably weaker on Integrative Orientation ($\beta = 0.232$; t -statistic = 4.845; $R^2 = 0.104$; $p < .01$). At the same time, Beliefs about Global Englishes as well as Beliefs about China English did not have statistically significant influence on any dimension within L2 motivation. These findings are discussed in the next section.

Table 3. Summary of the findings from multiple regression

| Independent variables | Dependent variable (L2 Motivation) | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Integrative Orientation | | Instrumental Orientation | | International Posture | |
| | β | t | β | t | β | t |
| (Constant) | – | 6.419** | – | 7.060** | – | 8.547** |
| Beliefs about Global Englishes | .045 | .936 | .002 | .051 | .069 | 1.513 |
| Beliefs about Standard English | .189 | 4.205** | .112 | 2.602 | –.025 | –.580 |
| Belief about China English | –.093 | –2.051 | .051 | 1.170 | –.038 | –.892 |
| Belief about English Language Education | .232 | 4.845** | .399 | 8.741** | .419 | 9.259** |
| R^2 | .104 | | .187 | | .198 | |

Note: ** indicates significance at the 1% level; β is standardized regression coefficient; t is t -statistic; R^2 is the coefficient of determination.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first research question concerned the dimensions formed within the Mainland Chinese students' beliefs about the English language. The EFA identified four such dimensions, namely, Beliefs about Standard English, Beliefs about Global Englishes, Beliefs about English Language Education and Beliefs about China English. These findings provide empirical support to the proposition that language beliefs are systematic and that they can be separated into clear, interpretable and independent dimensions¹¹ [14; 15; 20]. Notably, the students had a well-defined set of beliefs about English language education or how the teaching of English should be done.

The current study intended to explore the Mainland Chinese English language learners' beliefs in the context of English as a global language. The findings are comparable with the earlier studies that adopted a similar perspective¹² [10; 19]. For example, in line with the findings reported by Pan and Block [24], the items pertaining to English language education in our study were grouped into one distinct dimension. The present study also found that the students held distinct beliefs about China English and Global Englishes, which could be insightful for English language educators. Some comparisons can be drawn between the current study and Lu and Buripakdi's findings concerning the 'ownership' of English [19]. For example, the EFA in this study placed the items regarding the 'ownership' of English into the Beliefs about Standard English dimension. Similarly, in Lu and Buripakdi's study, the category "English speakers and their cultures" was linked to speakers of Standard English varieties.

Regarding Research Question 2, the EFA uncovered three dimensions within L2 motivation, namely, International Posture; Integrative Orientation and Instrumental Orientation. Notably, the current study has provided additional empirical evidence to

the existence of the 'international posture' dimension proposed by Yashima¹³ [28]. This result aligns with the earlier studies done in the context of Mainland China, such as He and Li's study [21] where the students considered that it was important to learn English to be able to communicate with people from all over the world. We also found that integrative and instrumental orientations were distinct and still relevant dimensions within L2 motivation. Research Question 3 addressed the relationships between the language learners' belief and their L2 motivation. As the findings from the regression analysis indicate, Beliefs about English Language Education had a positive, strong and statistically significant impact on each and every dimension of the students' L2 motivation. Also, Beliefs about Standard English had a positive and statistically significant influence on the language learners' integrative orientation.

These results give empirical support to the propositions advanced in some earlier studies. For example, Fang maintained that language learners' beliefs about Standard English would have some impact on their L2 motivation and promote integratively-oriented learning aspirations¹⁴. The findings that the students' Beliefs about English Language Education had a statistically significant influence of their L2 motivational orientations highlighted the importance to consider and carefully plan the ways in which English language instruction is implemented. This finding is in line with some earlier studies [22–24]. A comparatively strong impact of the students' Beliefs about English Language Education on the instrumental orientation and the international posture dimensions within the L2 motivation points to the practical aspirations of the Mainland Chinese EFL learners and underscores their desire to master English in order to communicate with the global community, which aligns with the findings reported in the previous studies [21; 22; 24].

¹¹ Horwitz E. Surveying Student Beliefs about Language Learning. (In Eng.)

¹² Jenkins J. English as a Lingua Franca in the International University: The Politics of Academic English Language Policy. (In Eng.)

¹³ Yashima T. International Posture and the Ideal L2 Self in the Japanese EFL Context. (In Eng.)

¹⁴ Fang F. (Gabriel). Re-positioning Accent Attitude in the Global Englishes Paradigm: A Critical Phenomenological Case Study in the Chinese Context. (In Eng.)



The current study has examined the structure of beliefs about English language held by Mainland Chinese university students and assessed the relationships between these beliefs and the students' L2 motivation. It adopted a Global Englishes perspective, which is still rarely done by researchers in the field, with a hope to bring some additional insights into the nature of language learners' beliefs and their L2 motivation. The findings from the EFA offered empirical support to the validity of the notion of Global Englishes.

The results of the regression analysis indicated the presence of links between the language learners' beliefs and their motivation to learn English. Notably, the students' beliefs about English language education were found to have positive and statistically significant relationships with each dimension of L2 motivation.

The current study has some limitations. Firstly, the participants were students in a Chinese university, therefore the results might not be readily generalizable to English language learners in other parts of the world. Secondly, although the proposition concerning the existence of links between language beliefs and L2 motivation was supported by the statistical analysis, the variables in this study were necessarily limited. To address this limitation, future studies among Mainland

Chinese language learners might want to include additional attitudinal and motivational dimensions. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study have some theoretical and pedagogical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the results attested to the validity of the notion of Global Englishes, a perspective that is still rarely adopted by researchers and language educators.

An implication for pedagogical practice that could be drawn from this study is that English language educators in China need to raise their own as well as their students' awareness of the diversity of World Englishes spoken in various corners of the world. This diversity is getting recognition as the 'Global Englishes' sociolinguistic phenomenon. Language educators may want to convey the point to their students that, in the Global Englishes context, China English is a legitimate variety of the English language. While promoting this awareness, the language learners would also need to get more exposure to various types of English that they might encounter when communicating with people from different parts of the world and with those for whom English is not a native language. These efforts might not only expand the horizons of the students' linguistic and cultural knowledge but also enhance their confidence as speakers or users of English.

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