

Research Article:

Beliefs About and Motivation for Chinese EFL Learners' English Language Learning: A Study Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

It is widely seen that research in the mainstream of education drew upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to examine learners' beliefs about and intentions/motivations to learn a second or foreign language. However, such research in a Global Englishes (GE) context is scant. This study employed an adapted TPB model to explore the beliefs held by English language learners in China concerning GE and English language learning, and to anticipate the relationships between learners' beliefs and their L2 (second language) motivation. The data was collected using questionnaires with 460 ($N = 460$) students at a university in China. Exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results showed that the students' beliefs formed five dimensions, namely, attitudes toward native English, attitudes toward China English, attitudes toward non-native English, subjective norm and self-efficacy. Two dimensions: attitudes toward native English and subjective norm were found to occupy a prominent place in students' beliefs. As for their L2 motivation, three dimensions were identified, namely, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation and international posture. The results of regression analysis showed that learners' L2 motivation were significantly shaped by some of their beliefs. Particularly, learners' attitudes toward native English had a significant relationship with every dimension of their L2 motivation. And their normative beliefs (subjective norm) were found to have the most significant influence on their L2 motivation, indicating that the social pressure perceived by Chinese students played an important role in their L2 learning. The employment of Ajzen's TPB model empirically supported to the validity of the theoretical model in examining learners' beliefs and motivation.

Keywords: Global Englishes, Theory of Planned Behaviour, language beliefs, L2 motivation

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INTRODUCTION

English is now used as a global language, bringing changes into the sociolinguistic realities (Crystal, 2003). Jenkins (2006) argued that non-native speakers would have crucial impact on the future of English language development as they have outnumbered native speakers of English. As English extends its range of functions around the world, it is therefore used in a diversity of forms and for a diversity of purposes. The diversity of English is now getting recognised as a sociolinguistic phenomenon “Global Englishes” (Galloway, 2013). In short, it has become the world’s global lingua franca (Galloway, 2017).

As an important part of the globalisation, China is a nation well-known for its people’s desire to acquire English, with the largest English-learning and -using population in the world (Crystal, 2008). Bolton (2003) stated that in many Chinese people’s beliefs, English seems inextricably connected to the nation’s continued economic growth. However, as typical English users in China, Chinese EFL (English as a foreign language) learners’ voice pertaining English as a global language is rarely heard (He, 2015).

It is widely discussed that understanding language learners’ beliefs helps educators predict their second language (L2) motivation, and beliefs can be mediators that affect the way learners engage in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, in the context of GE, the concepts of belief and motivation become subtle and fluid (Fang, 2019). As a successful model designed to examine and predict human intentions, Ajzen’s (1991; 2005) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been drawn on by many theoretically based and empirically grounded discussions in social psychology. Apart from studies focusing on students’ learning intentions (Xu et al., 2023), a few studies concerning students’ language learning have also employed and examined the effectiveness of TPB model (Alhamami, 2020; Yang, 2022). Considering the subtle concepts of belief and motivation in the GE context, it is of value to employ this solid framework to examine the dimensions underlying them, and to explore the relationship between them with an aim to draw further attention to learners’ needs of language learning and ultimately make further changes in the English language teaching (ELT) field.

The research questions of this study are:

1. What dimensions are formed by Chinese EFL students’ beliefs about GE and English language learning?
2. What dimensions are formed by the learners’ motivation regarding English language learning?
3. How can language learners’ beliefs have influence on their L2 motivation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Learner Beliefs and L2 Motivation

In several studies, the definitions and descriptions of beliefs are provided. For example, Horwitz (1988) defined “beliefs” as “student opinions on a variety of issues and controversies

related to language learning” (p. 284). Ajzen (2005) further explained that individuals shape “beliefs about an object by associating it with certain attributes” (p. 29). Underwood (2012) asserted that Ajzen’s definition of beliefs aligns with Pajares (1992), who presented beliefs as a messy construct. Pajares (1992) noted that beliefs “travel in disguise and often under alias — attitudes, values, judgements, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions...to name but a few” (p. 309). Learner beliefs have been regarded as one of individual difference characteristics, which have an effect on either the process or outcome of language learning (Kalaja et al., 2016). In this study, belief is interpreted as an overarching concept that converges substructures (perceptions, opinions, attitudes, ideologies and so on) which may be “interpreted by their functional connections to other beliefs and structures, and this connectedness permits one to infer their predisposition to action” (Pajares, 1992, p. 318).

Regarding the definition of motivation, Ryan and Deci (2000) claimed that “to be motivated means to be moved to do something” (p. 54). Gardner and Lambert (1972) described motivation as a concept involving attempt and desire to acquire the objective of learning a language plus desirable attitudes toward language learning. The socio-educational model developed by Gardner (1985) categorised L2 motivation into integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. The operationalisation of the original integrative orientation has been through several transformations (Gearing & Roger, 2019; Nikitina, 2021). In this study, it refers to learners’ desire to learn a second language to obtain a well-rounded understanding and knowledge of the cultures and community of target language (Nikitina, 2021). On the other hand, the conceptualisation of the instrumental orientation stayed largely the same. It interprets learners’ practical intentions to master an L2, such as obtaining good exam results or better job opportunities in this study.

In the consideration of the GE context, this study describes and measures another multicultural-driven orientation named “international posture” proposed by Yashima (2002; 2009), which is aligned with Dörnyei’s (2005) proposition that language learners may possess an attempt or desire to be connected with a globalised “world identity” in L2 learning. In this study, international posture pertains to learners’ desire to learn an L2 because of their interest in contacting people from other communities and cultures, to strive for their education or their career.

It is asserted that certain beliefs can heavily influence a learners’ motivation to master a target language (Kouritzin et al., 2009). As Gardner (1985) exerted, motivation might be a way of realising and understanding learner beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions since it provides an effective way to explain personal differences in second language acquisition. It is not easy to explore the correlation of learners’ beliefs with their L2 motivation in a global context since transformations might continuously occur to beliefs and motivations in such context (Fang, 2019). Therefore, the current research requires to be undertaken with great concern to ensure the validity. The TPB offers a solid framework to examine and predict a diversity of beliefs and motivations under volitional control (Alhamami, 2020; Yang, 2022). However, the employment of TPB in EFL context are very limited thus far. TPB studies in GE field are even scarcer. With the emphasis on examining learners’ beliefs about GE and

English language learning that may influence their L2 motivation, the TPB is applied as the framework for this investigation.

The TPB

It is often demonstrated that Ajzen’s TPB provides one of the most well-developed frameworks for interpreting the complexity of learner beliefs and how beliefs effect on language learning (Alhamami, 2020; Underwood, 2012; Yang, 2022). The TPB contains three constructs that can directly influence behavioural intention, namely, attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behaviour control. Three main components of TPB represent three kinds of beliefs: behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs (see Figure 1).

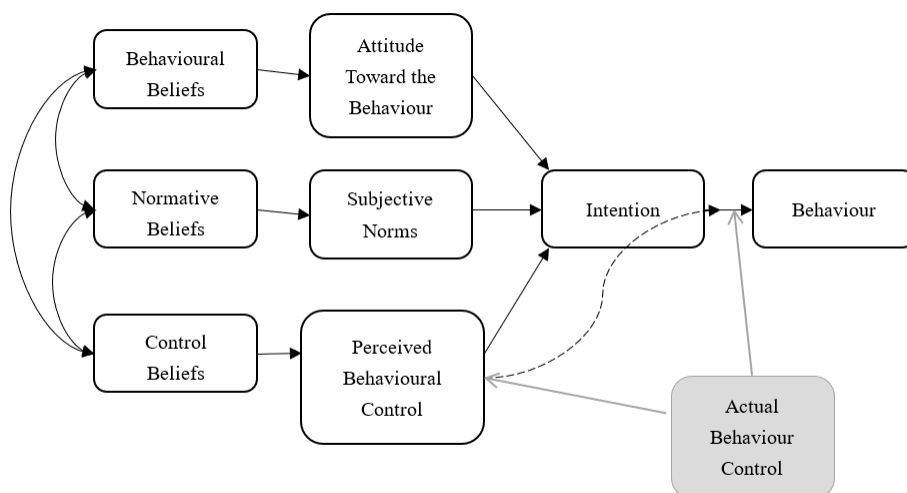


Figure 1. Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour Model (Ajzen, 2006).

Attitudes

The first construct in TPB model is attitude toward behaviour (described as attitude below, representing learners’ behavioural beliefs). Ajzen (2006) stated that a learner’s attitude reflects the learners’ behavioural beliefs, which concern the degree to which performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) further defined attitude as “latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favourableness or unfavourableness to a psychological object” (p. 76). In this study, attitude is measured as the degree to which a type of English language spoken is positively or negatively valued by students. Furthermore, attitudes/behavioural beliefs are tapped using semantic differential measures in this study.

Subjective Norm

The second construct in TPB model is subjective norm (representing learners' normative beliefs). Ajzen (2005) stated that normative beliefs pertain to someone's perception of social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior under expectations from important individuals or groups, such as an individual's family, friends, teachers, or classmates. Underwood (2012) further remarked that the subjective norm could be the representation of the individual's motivation to comply with this subjective perception of social pressure. Thus, in this study, subjective norm refers to beliefs about the normative expectations of important others and motivation to comply with these expectations that result in perceived social pressure. This study measured Chinese EFL learners' subjective norm about English learning by several five-point questions designed in the questionnaire.

Self-efficacy/Perceived Behavioural Control

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), the third predictor of intentions in TPB model, represents learners' control beliefs or "the sense of self-efficacy or ability to perform the behavior of interest" (Ajzen, 2005, p. 118). PBC is argued to be virtually identical with perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), a psychological construct that captures an individual's perceived capabilities and proficiency to intentionally execute a behavior. Therefore, in this study, PBC is interchangeably used with the term "self-efficacy" and defined as Chinese EFL learners' perception of their ability to learn English language or GE. It is found that learners' self-efficacy can influence their L2 learning intentions and behaviours (Yang, 2022). Self-efficacy/control beliefs are measured in this study by several five-point questions designed in the questionnaire.

Motivation/Intention

The original centre concept in the TPB model is intention. Intention is assumed to capture a group of motivational factors (Ajzen, 1991). In TPB framework, an individual's intention, or motivation is a function of attitudes (behavioural beliefs), subjective norm (normative beliefs), and self-efficacy (control beliefs). This study focuses on "motivation" which aligns with the "intention" in Ajzen's (1991) TPB model. A few literatures have suggested the relationship between the three constructs with motivation. For example, a number of empirical studies state that positive language attitudes always give rise to strong L2 motivation (Csizér & Kontra, 2012; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Alhamami (2020) explained that there are external pressures (subjective norm) that can motivate learners to learn a language. Researchers also found the correlations between motivation and self-efficacy in language learning (Girardelli et al., 2017; Zhong, 2013). Therefore, in the current study, it is believed that various belief factors in TPB model have impact on learners' L2 motivation. In this study, the variable "motivation" is put forward and measured instead of "intention", to better examine the relationship between learners' beliefs and L2 motivation. Below is the adapted model diagram that applies to this research (see Figure 2).

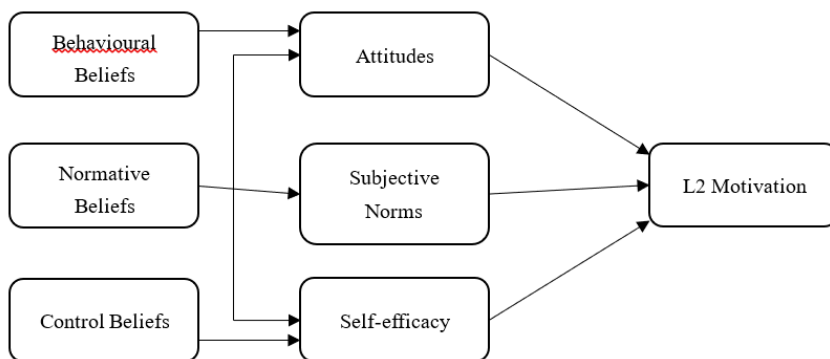


Figure 2. Adapted Model of Theory of Planned Behavior (adapted from Ajzen, 1991).

Dimensions of and Correlations Between Language Belief and Motivation in Research

Previous research has revealed different dimensions of and significant relationships between learners’ language beliefs and L2 motivation. For example, in a study conducted with Pakistani postgraduates, Ali et al. (2015) identified 11 factors among students’ beliefs and motivation and found a positive relationship between students’ attitudes toward English learning and their different motivations. Li (2014) discovered a significant relationship between students’ attitudes toward English learning with their instrumental motivation. Correlations between attitudes toward English learning and their international posture were also reported (Yashima, 2002). Furthermore, students’ normative beliefs (subjective norm) about English learning and their motivation are found closely related (Alhamami, 2020; Sung & Tsai, 2014). Research also showed that self-efficacy level had a positive influence on students’ motivation (Fujiwara, 2012). Yan (2020) reported five dimensions in Chinese and Korean college students’ beliefs and L2 motivation by performing exploratory factor analysis. A significant relationship impact of students’ self-efficacy on L2 motivation was reported. In addition, a study conducted in Japan (Liu & Su, 2016) introduced the identification of 12 factors regarding students’ beliefs and motivation through the analysis of literature instead of factor analysis. Correlations were found between students’ self-efficacy beliefs, normative beliefs, language learning anxiety and L2 orientations in their study.

With the spread of English use, a few of researchers investigated learners’ beliefs and motivation in contexts of GE and English as a lingua franca (ELF). Lu and Buripakdi (2020) found a correlation between students’ beliefs about and attitudes toward varieties of English. Fang (2019) commented that Chinese EFL learners’ beliefs about and attitudes toward “standard” English (e.g. American English) would lead to an integrative orientation in their English learning. Gu et al. (2022) further reported statistically significant relationships between Chinese students’ beliefs toward “standard” English with their instrumental orientation, integrative orientation and international posture.

Factors of and correlations between language beliefs and L2 motivation were also examined in several linguistic studies that applied the TPB model. To give an example, using an extended model of TPB, Girardelli et al. (2017) found Chinese students' attitudes, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and face-saving during English learning explained 46% of the variance in their motivation for English class participation. Zhong (2013) applied a TPB framework and confirmed that behavioural beliefs, in combination with normative beliefs and control/self-efficacy beliefs influence Chinese students' willingness to communicate in L2 learning. In a TPB study conducted in Saudi Arabia, Alhamami (2018) investigated learners' intention to attend classes and learn a foreign language. Attitudes toward learning environment (attitudes), beliefs of people around them (subjective norm), and beliefs about their abilities to participate in English class (self-efficacy) were found to significantly predict learners' motivation to engage in learning a foreign language. Using an adapted TPB model as the conceptual framework, Yang (2022) identified several factors that have shaped EFL learners' learning behaviours, including learners' attitudes about pragmatic comprehension, their self-efficacy and actual behavioural control. These empirical TPB studies not only illustrate dimensions of and relationships between students' beliefs and motivation, but also indicate that TPB can help provide additional insights into the nature of beliefs and motivation to learn a language. Though the usefulness and validity of TPB model was proved, the employment of it in GE/ELF context is rarely seen. To address this gap and explore how learners' subtle and fluid GE beliefs would influence their L2 motivation, this study uses the adapted TPB model to identify the variables and examine the relationships among different variables.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study adopted a purposive sampling method. It was conducted at a public university located in North China. Participants in this study were 460 ($N = 460$) students who majored in EFL programme. Freshman to senior students were included. They were between 18 and 24 years old (Mean = 20.31; SD = 1.62). The majority (92.6%) were female students, reflecting the general gender ratio in EFL programmes in Mainland China (Wei & Zhai, 2016).

Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire that consisted of 18 items on language attitudes, subjective norm, self-efficacy and L2 motivation. As Ajzen (2002) suggested, items 1, 2 and 3 that focused on learners' attitudes toward English language used semantic differential measures to tap positive or negative attitudes of learners. Items 4–18 were followed by a 5-point Likert-types scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The research instrument obtained approval from the university's Research Ethics Committee. A pilot study was done with 20 students and no critical problems were pointed out with the questionnaire.

The measures that examined learners' beliefs are presented as follows:

1. Attitudes toward GE (behavioural beliefs); they examined the degree of students' favourableness or unfavourableness to different varieties of English (items 1, 2, 3). Each item contains seven sub-categories that represent learners' feelings of certain variety of English language.
2. Subjective norm of English learning (normative beliefs); they examined learners' perception of social pressure to learn English under expectations from important individuals or groups, such as their family and teachers (items 4, 5, 6).
3. Self-efficacy for English learning (control beliefs); they examined learners' perception of their capabilities and proficiency to master English language (items 7, 8).

Concerning learners' motivation assessment, the measures are presented as follows:

1. International posture (items 10, 12, 13, 16); they examined learners' intention to learn English in order to have intercultural communication with, or to participate in, international activities with various communities around the world.
2. Instrumental orientation (items 14, 15, 17, 18); these items assessed learners' desire to obtain certain practical or utilitarian advantages by having knowledge of English.
3. Integrative orientation (items 9, 11); they examined learners' desire to be successful imitators of native speakers of English or to be in touch with native speakers.

Data Collection

It should be noted that the data were collected online due to the inevitable obstacles imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A professional data collection platform named Wenjuanxing was employed. Participation in this study was voluntary. It largely took the participants 15 to 20 minutes to finish the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

To perform the following analytic procedures, SPSS 22.0 software was applied. The first step of data analysis was performing exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify latent dimensions in learners' beliefs and L2 motivation. Principal components extraction, and varimax rotation were used in performing the EFA. For further analysis, only items with loading above 0.4 were retained. By confirming each factor's Cronbach's alpha value, construct reliability was established. Though Pajares (1992) argued it is of no necessity to examine Cronbach's alpha for students' personally held beliefs, this study proceeds to report Cronbach's alpha values for greater clarity and accountability.

Secondly, as the factors underlying language beliefs and L2 motivation were hypothesised to be correlated with each other, the researcher employed diagnostic graphs and a series of tests to ensure that the statistical analyses are appropriate, such as homoscedasticity test, residual normality test, linearity test and multicollinearity test. Then, the Durbin-Watson

test examined autocorrelation. The results confirmed that there were no serious violations of any of the underlying assumptions. Finally, to establish the nature and the magnitude of the relationships between the independent (attitudes, subjective norm, self-efficacy) and dependent variables (L2 motivation), the researcher performed multiple regression analysis and compared the standardised coefficients (β), the t -statistic and the coefficient of determination (R^2).

RESULTS

Dimensions of Learners' Attitudes, Subjective Norm and Self-efficacy

The results showed that EFA is appropriate to analyse the data on the language learners' beliefs. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was firstly established (0.934) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed ($\chi^2 = 10154.723$; $p < 0.01$). To address Research Question 1 "What dimensions are formed by Chinese EFL students' beliefs about GE and English language learning?", the EFA identified five dimensions (see Table 1), which accounted for 73.629% of the variance.

Table 1: Rotated factor matrix of attitudes, subjective norm and self-efficacy

Items	Sub-categories	Components				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. For me, China English is	attractive	0.845				
	modern	0.831				
	clear	0.810				
	good English	0.772				
	grammatical	0.760				
	pleasant	0.753				
	familiar	0.731				
2. For me, British English or American English is	attractive		0.879			
	modern		0.855			
	clear		0.854			
	good English		0.843			
	grammatical		0.831			
	pleasant		0.674			
	familiar		0.637			

(Continued on next page)

Table 1. (Continued)

Items	Sub-categories	Components				
		1	2	3	4	5
3. For me, other types of English, such as Indian English, Sri Lanka English, Singapore English, Italian English are	attractive			0.845		
	clear			0.818		
	modern			0.800		
	grammatical			0.791		
	good English			0.785		
	pleasant			0.720		
	familiar			0.718		
4. When it comes to learning English, I want to do what my teacher thinks I should do.					0.818	
5. I must pass English exams in order to not disappoint my parents.					0.784	
6. People who are important to me, such as my parents, think that I should learn English.					0.743	
7. I am not confident to speak English because of my China accent.						0.901
8. I try not to speak English because I am afraid to say something wrong.						0.881
Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)		0.933	0.920	0.916	0.666	0.500

Then, the contents of each factor were examined. It should be noted that factors 1, 2 and 3 all distinctly referred to the participants' attitudes (behavioural beliefs) toward GE; and they were respectively loaded by items 1, 2 and 3. These items examined the students' attitudes, and each item contained seven sub-categories that designed to obtain the participants' attitudinal scales on different types of English. To be more specific, factor 1 obtained high loadings from item 1 and its sub-categories, which examined participants' attitudes toward China English (the localised variety of English in China). Participants were supposed to mark their attitudinal rating on the semantic scale. This factor is named "attitudes toward China English" in following statistical analysis. Factor 2 obtained high loadings from item 2 and its sub-categories, which examined participants' attitudes toward some varieties of English spoken by English native speakers, such as American English

and British English. This study uses the term “native English” to refer to such varieties of English according to Galloway’s (2017) descriptions. Therefore factor 2 was labelled “attitudes toward native English”. Factor 3 captured high loadings from item 3 and the sub-items, which investigated participants’ positive or negative feelings on some varieties of English spoken by non-native English speakers, such as Indian English and Italian English. These varieties were described as “non-native English” in this study. This factor was labelled “attitudes toward non-native English”.

Items loading on factor 4 (4, 5, 6) were found to interpret the participants’ subjective norm, in other words, normative beliefs about English learning; that is “to what extent do they perceive the external pressures and the expectations from important individuals or groups around them”. The factor is therefore named “subjective norm”. Factor 5 obtained high loadings from items 7 and 8, which assessed the students’ self-efficacy, that is, beliefs about their capabilities and proficiency to learn English. Therefore, factor 5 was labelled “Self-efficacy”. Each factor formed an independent variable for the ensuing regression analysis.

Dimensions of L2 Motivation

The results found that EFA was applicable to analyse the data on the participants’ L2 motivation. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was quite exemplary (0.894) and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was measured to be adequate ($\chi^2 = 2976.628$; $p < 0.01$). To answer Research Question 2 “What dimensions are formed by the learners’ motivation regarding English language learning?”, three factors were captured from 10 items, which accounted for 75.79% of the variance (see Table 2). An appropriate label was assigned to each dimension upon the examination of the conceptual meaning of these factors.

Table 2: Rotated factor matrix of L2 motivation

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
10. I learn English in order to know about various cultures and communities in the world.	0.848		
12. I learn English in order to communicate with people from various countries in the world.	0.813		
13. I learn English in order to participate in the activities of various cultural groups.	0.795		
16. I learn English in order to be more modern, international and connected with the world.	0.794		
18. I learn English in order to pass English exams with a good result.		0.863	
14. I learn English in order to get a higher-paying job.		0.776	
15. I learn English in order to have a better life.		0.636	

(Continued on next page)

Table 2. (Continued)

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
17. I learn English in order to give an impression of a well-educated person.		0.552	
9. I learn English with an aim to sound like a native English speaker one day.			0.873
11. I learn English mainly in order to communicate with native English speakers.			0.652
Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)	0.823	0.715	0.500

Factor 1 captured high loadings from four items (items 10, 12, 13 and 16). These items pertained to learners' intention to learn English in order to have intercultural communications with, and to participate in international activities in various communities around the world (Yashima, 2009). Factor 1 was therefore, named "international posture". Four items received high loadings on factor 2, including items 14, 15, 17 and 18. The predominant content of these items suggested that factor 2 refer to as instrumental orientation, that is, learners' desire to gain social recognition or practical advantage from the knowledge of English language (Gardner, 1985). Thus, factor 2 was labelled "instrumental orientation". Factor 3 obtained high loadings from items 9 and 11, which distinctly reflected participants' integrative orientation for English learning, that is, language learners' favourable interest and attitudes toward a target language community as well as their intent to imitate or to be associated with native speakers of the target language (Gardner, 1985). Thus, this factor is labelled as "integrative orientation". Each factor formed a dependent variable in the following regression analysis.

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

To answer Research Question 3 "How can language learners' beliefs have influence on their L2 motivation?", multiple regression analysis was performed to ascertain and explain the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The Pearson's correlation test examined the associations between the learners' beliefs and their L2 motivation. More specifically, the dependent variables pertained to the learners' L2 motivation, containing three components: international posture, instrumental orientation and integrative orientation. Meanwhile, the independent variables were about language learners' beliefs, including five components: attitudes toward native English, attitudes toward China English, attitudes toward non-native English, subjective norm, and self-efficacy. The results of the multiple regression analysis are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of the findings from multiple regression analysis

Independent variables	Dependent variables (L2 motivation)					
	Integrative orientation		Instrumental orientation		International posture	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
(constant)		6.297**		8.949**		10.346**
Attitudes toward native English	0.254	4.891**	0.185	3.719**	0.285	5.709**
Attitudes toward China English	-0.094	-1.653	0.034	0.625	0.015	0.282
Attitudes toward non-native English	0.044	0.785	0.012	0.228	0.059	1.105
Subjective norm	0.332	7.639**	0.412	9.844**	0.298	7.112**
Self-efficacy	0.030	0.704	0.028	0.690	-0.076	-1.839
R ²	0.192		0.253		0.248	

Notes: β is standardised regression coefficient; t is t -statistic; R² is the coefficient of determination; ** indicates significance at the 1% level (two tailed); * indicates significance at the 5% level (two tailed)

As Table 3 shows, the findings indicated that some of the participants' language beliefs had a positive and statistically significant influence on their L2 motivation. Considered together, two variables (attitudes toward native English and subjective norm) were statistically significant predictors of motivation. In particular, the learners' attitudes toward native English had statistically relationships with each and every dimension of their L2 motivation. Notably, a strongest and direct effect of the learners' attitudes toward native English on their international posture was found (t -statistic = 5.709; R² = 0.248; $p < 0.01$). And these attitudes had lower but also statistically significant effect on their integrative orientation (t -statistic = 4.819; R² = 0.192; $p < 0.01$) and instrumental orientation (t -statistic = 3.719; R² = 0.253; $p < 0.01$).

Another variable that had statistically significant impact on all motivational variables was "subjective norm". A most positive and statistically significant relationship was found between the learners' subjective norm with their instrumental orientation (t -statistic = 9.844; R² = 0.253; $p < 0.01$). These values suggested that the social pressure perceived by the learners likely lead to an instrumentality during their English learning. Moreover, the learners' subjective norm significantly influenced their integrative orientation (t -statistic = 7.639; R² = 0.192; $p < 0.01$). The results also showed subjective norm as a statistically significant predictor of the learners' international posture (t -statistic = 7.112; R² = 0.248; $p < 0.01$). At the same time, factors "attitudes toward China English", "attitudes toward non-native English", and "self-efficacy" produced no statistically significant impact on any dimension within L2 motivation. These findings are discussed in the following section.

DISCUSSION

Dimensions of Learners' Language Beliefs

The first research question focused on dimensions formed by Chinese EFL students' language beliefs. The results suggested that the employment of TPB model help systematically and clearly identified dimensions of the learners' language beliefs and L2 motivation. The learners hold a distinct set of their behavioural beliefs (attitudes), normative beliefs (subjective norm), and control beliefs (self-efficacy) about GE and English learning. Regarding these beliefs, five dimensions were identified by performing EFA, namely, attitudes toward native English, attitudes toward China English, attitudes toward non-native English, subjective norm and self-efficacy.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the EFA sharply identified three dimensions amongst participants' attitudes toward three types of English. The findings are not only in line with the findings reported in previous studies (Li, 2014; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Yang, 2022), but also provide additional empirical evidence to the validity and usefulness of the EFA employment in GE-oriented contexts. The successful application of factor analysis in this study may further provide insights for both future GE-oriented attitudinal research and TPB research.

Secondly, the learners' normative beliefs, in other words, subjective norm of learning English were distinctly identified in this study. The findings share several similarities with previous studies (Alhamami, 2020; Li, 2014; Sung & Tsai, 2014). For example, echoing the findings reported by Li (2014), the items pertaining to normative beliefs among EFL learners in this study were also clearly grouped into one dimension. The interpretation of factor "subjective norm" in this study also aligns with that of the factor "milieu" reported by Sung and Tsai (2014). The findings provide empirical evidence to the idea of using a TPB model to investigate learners' normative beliefs within a GE context, which might be insightful for GE/ELF researchers.

The students' self-efficacy beliefs were also distinctly identified in this study. Some comparisons can be drawn between the current findings and Fujiwara's (2012) findings on learners' self-efficacy in English learning and using. For example, a latent belief factor identified by EFA in Fujiwara's (2012) study was labelled as "Self-efficacy and feelings about using Chinese/Japanese"; the items loaded on this factor were considerably relevant to items loaded on "Self-efficacy" in this study. The clearly identified factor "self-efficacy" in the current study also echoed the factor "Perceived self-efficacy" which served as an important factor in the TPB model and predicted learners' L2 learning intention and behavior (Yang, 2022). Furthermore, similar to some studies that applied TPB to examine learners' self-efficacy for English learning (Alhamami, 2020; Zhong, 2013), this GE-oriented study also provided empirical support for the validity and usefulness of TPB model in linguistics field. Notably, the findings of this study highlighted that Ajzen's (1991) TPB model could provide a solid theoretical framework in GE/ELF context.

Dimensions of L2 Motivation

Regarding the dimensions formed by students' L2 motivation, the EFA distinctly identified three dimensions, namely, international posture, integrative orientation, and instrumental orientation. The findings shared both similarities and differences with some earlier studies. First, besides the studies that examined international posture as a factor (Ali et al., 2015; Geoghegan, 2018; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), the results suggested that it is theoretically and empirically viable to include international posture among L2 motivational factors. By using TPB model as a conceptual framework, this study statistically supported the notion of "international posture" put forward by Yashima (2002) in a GE context. In addition, integrative orientation and instrumental orientation were also found to be distinctly identified and well correlated in this study, which corresponded to the findings reported in earlier studies (Nikitina, 2019, 2021; Sung & Tsai, 2014). Though in those studies, the similarly themed factors were labelled in different ways, the orientation they concerned shared similarities to a great extent. For example, in Sung and Tsai's (2014) study, the items assigned to factors "interest in culture, travel, and people" and "interest in contemporary cultural media" had the same concern with the items loaded on the factor "integrative orientation" in this study. Thus, the structure of L2 motivation were also empirically supported in this study.

Relationship between Language Beliefs and L2 Motivation

Research Question 3 addressed the relationship between the learners' language beliefs with their L2 motivation. As the findings from the regression analysis indicate, the students' attitudes (behavioural beliefs) toward native English significantly influenced every dimension of their L2 motivation. The findings partly align with Lam's (2002) argument that though English is widely taught and learnt in China, the "standard" English belief has been playing a significant role in Chinese EFL learners' English learning and using. The overall findings are also in line with other studies (Pan & Block, 2011; Yashima, 2009). For example, Pan and Block's (2011) findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about "standard" English with their instrumental orientation. Wesely (2012) similarly asserted that students' attitudes toward the target language and community were contributing to either their "integrative motivation" or their "international posture", which then in turn influenced L2 motivation in general. Furthermore, Yashima (2009) addressed the correlation of international posture and students' attitudes toward the target language. The findings in the current study also aligns with Kong et al. (2018), where medium to large regression coefficients between a positive L2 learning attitude and international posture were found.

On the other hand, the results of the multiple regression analysis indicated the students' subjective norm (normative beliefs) had the most dominant impact on their instrumental orientation, and slightly weaker impact on integrative orientation and international posture. These findings aligned with the conclusion reached by several researchers that English learners' motivation would be remarkably influenced by their normative beliefs (Li, 2014; Liu & Su, 2016; Sung & Tsai, 2014). The findings also supported Alhamami's (2020)

assertion that in a TPB study, students' normative beliefs might significantly shape their orientations and intentions to learn English as a foreign language. In addition, the results empirically and demonstrably supported the practicalities and effectiveness of using TPB model in a GE context.

CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the structure of beliefs about GE and English learning held by Chinese EFL learners; and explored the nature of the relations between language beliefs and L2 motivation. A GE perspective was adopted and an adapted TPB model was employed, which is rarely done in research literature. This study was conducted with a hope to provide more insights into the nature of learners' language beliefs and L2 motivation.

Some limitations existed in this study. Firstly, the participants were students at a public university in North China. Consequently, the results may not be promptly generalisable to learners in different places of the world. Secondly, the employment of TPB model theoretically and empirically supported the presence of relationships between the beliefs and the L2 motivation; however, the variables measured in the TPB model were inevitably limited. Future research among language learners in China might want to develop additional belief/motivation-related items and dimensions by adopting or extending TPB framework. Despite the limitations, the findings contribute to some theoretical and pedagogical implications. From a theoretical viewpoint, the results evidenced the validity of the notion of GE and international posture. This study also empirically supports the effectiveness of the TPB model as a heuristic and solid framework for investigating the complex dimensions of, and relationships between, learner beliefs and motivational orientations.

These findings may also have some pedagogical implications for researchers and educators. The generally positive attitudes in this study suggested the significant impact of traditional native-speaker teaching model on language learners' English learning. It recommended that there is a need for English language educators in China to increase both their own and students' awareness of the diversity of English, which is being acknowledged as "Global Englishes". Learners and users of English language in China are also suggested to get more associated with China English, the legitimate and localised variety of English within GE context. The significant influence of subjective norm contributed on the students' L2 motivation, together with the weak sense of self-efficacy in L2 learning demonstrate that China's educators should provide a more friendly environment and get learners prepared to be more confident to speak and use English. This study also suggests that language educators convey a view to the language learners that they could be successful multi-competent speakers, but not failed imitators of native speakers. Through these attempts, not only are students' cultural and linguistic horizons expected to be broadened, but also their confidence while learning and using English would be enhanced instead of the sense of inferiority.

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