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A study on foreign language students 
at the University of Vienna”

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<td>Eysenck Personality Questionnaire</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>Five Factor Model</td>
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1. Introduction

Everyone, who has some sort of experience as a foreign language learner, holds preconceived notions and beliefs about the nature and process of language learning. Because we usually do not consciously think about them, we may not be aware of the beliefs that unconsciously influence our learning behaviour. On the other hand, there are also a lot of popular and quite common ideas about language learning which everyone has certainly heard about. We often hear people saying, for example, that children learn languages easily or that women are better language learners than men. These are widely held but not necessarily true beliefs about language learning. Nevertheless, they can have a considerable impact on a learner's performance and their ultimate success in language learning. So the way we think about language learning can strongly influence the way we actually learn a foreign language. For example, a student who believes that grammar is the most important part when learning a foreign language will mainly concentrate on studying grammar rules, patterns and structures. However, a good command of the grammar does not imply that the student is able to communicate in a foreign language. A common belief among older learners is that they have naturally a harder time acquiring a foreign language than younger learners. What they often are not aware of, is, that such negative preconceptions can be counterproductive to their learning process.

The present thesis reports on a study that investigated beliefs about language learning among 386 foreign language students at the University of Vienna. It complements other studies in this field, and more specifically, adds to the body of knowledge of learner beliefs among different language groups which to date have remained unexplored. In the Austrian university context, so far there has been no reported study, discussing the role of the target language in the formation of learner beliefs. Thus, this study is unique in that it compares and contrasts the beliefs held by university students of English, Romance and Slavic languages.
Examining students’ beliefs in four major areas, it aims to find out whether at all, and in what areas, foreign language students at the University of Vienna differ from each other in their perceptions of language learning. A modified version of the popular ‘Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory’ (Horwitz 1987) was used to collect relevant data. The findings of the current study show that students of English, Romance and Slavic languages hold similar beliefs about a number of issues related to foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning and their preferred learning and communication strategies. This means that all in all, clearly more similarities than differences could be identified among the three language groups. However, for some statements, participants’ responses differed slightly or considerably. What is most striking about the results is that students of English and Romance languages showed more similarities in their beliefs, whereas respondents studying a Slavic language were found to differ from their counterparts in a number of aspects.

Before a detailed account of the empirical research project itself will be given, the theoretical background relevant to this study will be outlined. Accordingly, the thesis is structured into two parts. Reviewing the relevant literature in this area, the first part, including chapters two and three, establishes the theoretical framework for the empirical study, which is the topic of the second part. Chapter two provides a detailed overview of the individual learner differences (IDs) that influence second language acquisition and foreign language learning. Focusing on the ten most researched IDs, also referred to as learner characteristics, the second chapter aims to explain what makes some language learners more successful than others. Thus, it discusses the role of learner variables such as language aptitude, motivation, personality, learning strategies and self-esteem in foreign language learning, whereby the last variable introduced in chapter two are learner beliefs. As beliefs are the ultimate topic of this diploma thesis, the whole third chapter is devoted to the study of learner beliefs about language learning. More precisely, chapter three begins with a presentation of different definitions of learner beliefs
and then goes on explaining the various kinds of beliefs students hold regarding foreign language learning. Next, the possible sources of learner beliefs are analysed and it is illustrated how someone’s beliefs may influence their success in foreign language learning. This is followed by a discussion of the main approaches to the study of learner beliefs and a review of previous studies in this area.

The second part reports on the empirical study conducted for this thesis. Chapter four includes a description of the methodology, stating the research purpose and discussing the research instrument used and the study’s participants. In the fifth chapter, detailed survey findings are presented according to four topical areas: ‘Foreign language aptitude’, ‘The difficulty of language learning’, ‘The nature of language learning’ and ‘Learning and communication strategies’. After that, an analysis of the study’s findings is provided, along with a discussion of its limitations, suggestions for future research and pedagogical implications. Finally, a general conclusion is drawn in chapter eight.
2. The study of individual differences in language learning

Different learners learn in different ways and are used to individual learning practices. To put it differently, learning is almost always a matter of personal preference and choice which is specific to the individual. This applies to all acquisition of knowledge in general and likewise to second and foreign language learning in particular. In fact, every language learner has certain characteristics that affect the learning process and outcomes. These learner characteristics are often referred to as individual differences (IDs) and include variables such as aptitude, motivation, personality or learning strategies and styles. Some of them are easier to identify whereas other factors like motivation or anxiety are not easily identifiable and therefore more difficult to measure.

The main goal of researchers in this field is to develop an understanding of why some learners are better at acquiring a foreign language than others and what exactly makes them more successful. In other words, the study of individual learner differences in second language acquisition (SLA) is primarily concerned with those characteristics of language learners that distinguish good language learners from less effective ones. “As the term suggests, individual differences (IDs) are characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other”, Dörnyei (2005: 1) explains the concept in simple terms. He goes on elaborating that “ID constructs refer to dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree” (Dörnyei 2005: 4). Needless to say, different studies have been identifying different characteristics as the core IDs that influence the way someone learns a foreign language. In the following, an overview of the most researched learner variables will be provided.
2.1. **Foreign language aptitude**

Some people seem to learn foreign languages with great ease and quickness, while others appear to learn at a slower rate or even encounter great difficulty learning a language. There are people who have been living in a foreign country for a couple of years and have achieved native-like fluency. On the other hand, there are other motivated speakers, who have been acquiring a foreign language under the same circumstances for the same time period, but whose competence is rather poor. When we want to express that someone is good or not so good at foreign language learning (FLL), we often use idiomatic expressions such as ‘She has a natural flair for foreign languages’, ‘You simply have a knack for learning languages’ or ‘He has no ear for languages at all’. Utterances like these are quite common, even though they are made without deeper reflection.

This phenomenon of a special gift for language learning is referred to as ‘foreign language aptitude’ (FLA) in applied linguistics. John Carroll, one of the pioneering and most prominent scholars in this field defined FLA as “some characteristic of an individual which controls, at a given point of time, the rate of progress that he will make subsequently in learning a foreign language” (Carroll 1974: 320). Taking the view that everyone has the ability to learn a foreign language, he argues that those of us who learn at a fast and easy rate have high FLA compared to slower and struggling language learners with low FLA. His conception of FLA is, so to speak, based on someone’s speed of learning, i.e. their rate of progress. For Lightbown and Spada (2006: 57), possessing FLA means having “[s]pecific abilities [that are] thought to predict success in language learning”. Clearly, they emphasise the existence of certain abilities for foreign language learning and relate the concept of FLA to achievement and ultimate success. The relationship between FLA and success is also stressed by Sawyer and Ranta (2001: 320) who state that “language aptitude is the one [ID] that contributes most to accounting for differential success of individual learners”.

Keeping this in mind, the question arises how we come to know whether someone holds these abilities, this special gift for foreign languages known as language aptitude. Traditionally, it has been measured by the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll & Sapon 1955) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) (Pimsleur 1966), which are the two most popular and widely-used aptitude tests. Ellis (1989: 112) explains the nature of the MLAT and the PLAB:

These tests do not measure exactly the same behaviours. Both tests, however, seek to measure the abilities of learners to discriminate the meaningful sounds of a language, to associate sounds with written symbols, and to identify the grammatical regularities of a language. It is evident that this view of aptitude reflects the skills which the audio-lingual approach to language teaching, so popular in the post-war decades, emphasized.

It is therefore important to realise that these tests predict success only as far as language learning areas such as focus-on-form activities, audiolingual learning or grammar study are concerned. Results from these aptitude tests do, however, not say anything about how well someone will develop their communicative skills. “The concept of aptitude needs to be widened to take account of [the] communicative aspects of SLA”, as suggested by Ellis (1989: 113). This view is shared by other FLA researchers like Cook (2008:45), Dörnyei (2005: 42), Gregersen and MacIntyre (2013: 67) and Lightbown and Spada (2006: 58), who all agree that the MLAT and the PLAB are no longer adequate measuring instruments due to significant developments in language teaching and learning during the last decades. The fact that for a long time learners, who achieved high scores on e.g. the MLAT, were automatically thought to have high aptitude and consequently expected to be successful, is criticized by Ranta (2008: 151). Her definition of aptitude reflects a completely new understanding of the whole concept, which was for many years often merely regarded in terms of learners’ scores on aptitude tests developed in the distant 1950s and 1960s:

There has been a tendency over the years for scholars and practitioners alike to equate aptitude with a score on the MLAT rather than as an ability that could be measured in different ways. Rather than being merely a score on a
test associated with audiolingual teaching, a learner's aptitude reflects strengths and weaknesses in a range of cognitive abilities that underlie the language development process and which interact with other factors such as motivation and opportunity. (Ranta 2008: 151)

It still remains unspecified, though, how exactly FLA should be ideally measured in today's foreign language learning and teaching context. Nevertheless, in Ranta's concept of FLA, one can recognize a shift to a more open-minded and dynamic perspective that considers various aspects of language learning abilities.

2.2. Foreign language motivation

Motivation is considered a key factor in foreign language learning which is absolutely critical to success. It is their motivation that makes some individuals active, interested, self-directed, committed and successful language learners. Being aware of their own strengths, qualities and preferences, motivated learners usually know how to achieve their goals and compensate for eventual weaknesses. Dörnyei also stresses the importance of motivation, pointing out that it plays a preconditional role in foreign language learning:

Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in L2 acquisition presuppose motivation to some extent. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. (Dörnyei 1998: 117)

It could be argued that motivation is regarded as the key ID in foreign language learning and consequently the alpha and omega of success. Cohen and Dörnyei also take this view of motivation as the key factor, claiming that “without it, nothing much happens” (2002: 172). Gardner (1985: 10) defines motivation as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language”. A definition in similar terms is
provided by Ortega who indicates that “[m]otivation is usually understood to refer to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it” (2009: 168). Ushioda sees motivation as the driving force that “moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action” (2008: 19). Obviously, there seems to be general agreement upon the significant and essential role of motivation in the process of foreign language learning.

One of the most influential directions within this field was developed in the late 1950s by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, two Canadian psychologists. Later, their approach to foreign language motivation (FLM) became widely known as the socio-educational model (Gardner & Lambert 1972; Gardner 1985; Gardner 2010). This model assumes that there are both cultural and educational components involved in the process of learning a second or foreign language (Gardner 2010: 3). According to Gardner, the cultural component implies that language learners adopt characteristics of their target language community. The educational component, on the other hand, stands for language learning in school settings (Gardner 2010: 3). That is, a student's success is influenced by outside factors such as the classroom environment or the teacher. Moreover, in the socio-educational model an individual's overall motivation is quantified in three dimensions, as Gardner explains:

In the socio-educational model of second language acquisition we assess motivation in terms of three components, the desire to learn the language, attitudes toward learning the language, and motivational intensity (i.e. the effort extended to learn the language). Any one of these elements on its own does not adequately assess the construct of motivation; the tripartite assessment does, however, provide a fairly good estimate of motivation in all its complexity. (Gardner 2010: 9)

Each of the three dimensions, by itself, is thus seen as insufficient to predict an individual's motivation. Rather, the “truly motivated individual” obtains high scores on all three components (Gardner 2001: 6). At the core of the socio-educational model is the concept of integrative motivation. In fact, it was the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation developed by
Gardner and Lambert (1972), which became the dominant point of reference within the field of FLM. Whereas the goal of integratively motivated language learners is to be accepted by their target language community, instrumentally motivated learners want to learn a language for practical purposes, e.g. to get a better job. In other words, students with integrative motivation usually have the desire to identify with the native speakers and their culture. The goals of learners with instrumental motivation are, on the contrary, not related to the target language community. Instead, instrumentally motivated students might learn a language for their future professional or academic career.

Another important milestone in the area of FLM, also set by Gardner and one of his colleagues (Gardner & Smythe 1981), was the development of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). Focusing on motivational quantity, this testing instrument “was designed to assess various individual difference variables proposed in Gardner’s (1985) Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition” (Masgoret, Bernaus & Gardner 2001: 283). It has to be pointed out, however, that all of Gardner’s work represents motivation as a stable attribute of the language learner.

More recent researchers do not treat motivation as a static phenomenon anymore and instead show an awareness of its complex and dynamic nature. Dörnyei (2005: 83), for example, refers to it as “a dynamic factor that displays continuous fluctuation”. In his process-oriented approach (Dörnyei 2000, 2001, 2005), he emphasises the aspect of ‘temporal variation’ of motivation, focusing on an individual’s changes that take place over time. In support of his claims, Dörnyei (2005:83) puts forward the following explanation:

> [W]hen motivation is examined in its relationship to specific learner behaviors and classroom processes, there is a need to adopt a process-oriented approach/paradigm that can account for the daily ups and downs of motivation to learn [...]. Even during a single L2 class one can notice that language-learning motivation shows a certain amount of changeability, and in the context of learning a language for several months or years, or over a
life time, motivation is expected to go through rather diverse phases. 
(Dörnyei 2005:83)

Although a more process-oriented view of FLM has emerged among other researchers (e.g. Ushioda, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997) as well, there have still been a number of studies in recent years, which have failed to consider the dynamic character of motivation.

2.3. Personality

Of all ID variables that distinguish language learners from each other, their personality is certainly their most distinctive characteristic. Yet, despite its role as the most individual characteristic, its influence on SLA is considered less important than that of other factors such as motivation and aptitude, and therefore, there have been comparatively fewer studies on personality factors (Dörnyei 2005: 10).

Personality has been defined as “those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving” (Pervin and John 2001: 4). According to Ortega (2009: 193), it “can be conceived of as stable traits or qualities in a person, as more dynamic moods that are related to the cognitive processing of emotions, or even as predispositions that have been learned through social experience”. Thus, the term personality basically refers to the dynamic set of personal qualities and characteristic traits that make an individual different from other people.

In general, a considerable number of personality variables have been thought to have an impact on foreign language learning. Among different scholars, however, there is a lack of agreement as to which personality characteristics ensure success and which ones rather have a negative effect on an individual’s performance. Traditionally, it has been suggested that outgoing and gregarious people are the more successful language learners. This is because sociable characters tend to
engage in social interaction more easily and participate in conversations without inhibition. Learners with more introvert personalities, on the other hand, are said to shrink from social contacts, being predominantly concerned with their own feelings and thoughts. Yet, this idea is not shared by all researchers in this field, as explained by Lightbown and Spada (2006: 60-61):

Although some studies have found that success in language learning is correlated with learners’ scores on questionnaires measuring characteristics associated with extroversion such as assertiveness and adventurousness, others have found that many successful language learners do not get high scores on measures of extroversion.

Whereas Swain and Burnaby (1976) and Naiman et al. (1978) did not find any significant relationship between learners’ scores in standard tests of extroversion and their language proficiency, the findings of Tucker, Hamayan and Genesee’s (1976) and Krashen (1981) show that success in language learning correlates with personality traits such as extroversion and assertiveness. Contrary to these previous findings, a recent study undertaken by Ehrman (2008) suggests that introverts tend to be the more successful language learners. According to her research results, personal qualities such as intuition, preciseness and logical thinking characterise the best language learners (Ehrman 2008: 70). However, at the same time, she stresses the importance of motivation in foreign language learning pointing out that “motivated individuals can become good language learners whatever their personalities” (Ehrman 2008: 70).

It might be noted, nevertheless, that individuals with an outgoing and sociable nature probably have advantages over learners with a reserved personality because they feel less inhibited when speaking a foreign language. Due to their openness and curiosity, they naturally participate in classroom discussions, show confidence when they hold presentations in front of an audience and find it easy to engage in everyday conversations using a foreign language. In such and similar learning situations, extraverts may profit from their personality, while the more introverted learners usually excel in other language contexts and tasks. Moreover,
one should bear in mind that “the effect of some personality traits can remain hidden in some situations or tasks, but may appear in other circumstances”, as Dewaele (2012: 43) puts it. He goes on explaining that when it comes to fluency in relaxed communication, there is no real difference between extraverts and introverts. Where they do differ in terms of fluency, is in oral exam situations in which extroverted learners perform significantly better, as his own research results show (Dewaele & Furnham 1999). Although outgoing people are often thought to be the better language learners, as already mentioned above, introverts have been found to outperform their talkative colleagues in certain types of tasks. The strengths of silent and rather shy students tend to lie in vocabulary tasks (Daele et al. 2006) and written tests (Robinson, Gabriel & Katchan 1994).

From the available studies it can be concluded that there seems to be no conclusive and generally accepted relationship between one’s personality and success in foreign language learning. As Ellis (1989: 122) aptly puts it, “[t]he major difficulty in investigating the effects of personality […] remains that of identification and measurement”. The three best known and widely employed inventories used to measure personality are the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964), the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & McCaulley 1985) and the Five Factor Model (FFM) (Costa & McCrae 1992). These models have been used over decades, but are now outdated because they do not take account of the context-dependent of personality traits. “Thus, a broader picture of personality requires complementing static trait-centered theories describing the structure of personality with more dynamic models that describe the situated processes associated with personality in specific contexts,” as Dörnyei (2005: 13) concludes.

2.4. Language learning strategies

Research on language learning strategies has focused on exploring how individuals employ learning strategies and how they differ in their use. Experts in this field
have been trying to identify the strategies of good language learners in order to make them available to less successful students. In other words, the idea behind this is to help weaker language learners progress through teaching them useful and effective learning strategies.

Over the last decades, different definitions of learning strategies have been proposed. Rubin, one of the earliest researchers in this area, defined them as “techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge” (1975: 43), arguing that they influence foreign language learning in both direct and indirect ways. In doing so, she created a list of learning strategies that are typical of good language learners. Bialystok (1978: 71) referred to language learning strategies as “optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language”. For her, strategies are so to speak options that language learners can choose autonomously in order to enhance their proficiency. A more current definition of the concept was provided by Oxford, who defined language learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language” (1999b: 518). “These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language”, she goes on explaining (Oxford 1999b: 518). Cohen (1998: 5) described his understanding of learning strategies in more detail:

Language learning strategies include strategies for identifying the material that needs to be learned, distinguishing it from other material if need be, grouping it for easier learning (e.g., grouping vocabulary by category into nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth), having repeated contact with the material (e.g., through classroom tasks or the completion of homework assignments), and formally committing the material to memory when it does not seem to be acquired naturally (whether through rote memory techniques such as repetition, the use of mnemonics, or some other memory technique).

The most recent definition of language learning strategies was offered by Griffiths (2008: 87), who defined them as “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning”. Taking into account earlier research findings in this field, her definition is based on six essential features. If learners
know how to use the various strategies adequately, they can themselves control, regulate and facilitate the learning process.

The key goal of language learning strategies is to “affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge” (Weinstein & Mayer 1986: 315). This means that the effective use of strategies increases students’ motivation to learn a foreign language and helps them to become independent learners. Consequently, successful strategy use facilitates language acquisition and eventually fosters greater learner autonomy. Enabling students to manage and regulate their own learning themselves, strategies ensure that they become more actively involved in the whole learning process.

When learners are asked to solve a task individually, each of them will use a unique manner to complete the task. Most tasks, such as reading comprehension exercises, answering questions on a film or writing an opinion essay, can be carried out in a variety of different ways. That is to say, there are as many individual ways of completing an exercise as there are individuals in a classroom. From this follows that different language learners make use of different language learning strategies. Hereby, “[e]very task and exercise will be underpinned by at least one strategy, although in most classrooms learners are unaware of these strategies”, as emphasised by Wong and Nunan (2011: 145). It seems that learning strategies are being utilised more often than one might think. This is because language learners use strategies automatically in a variety of situations without being aware of it. But in order to make the most out of them, learners need to become aware of the strategies they are employing to make them more effective for the learning process (Wong & Nunan 2011: 146; Richards & Lockhart 1994: 63; Cohen 2002: 62). Yet, students themselves are usually not capable of identifying and controlling their strategies. Therefore, teachers are the ones who should help their students and provide strategy training, as pointed out by Wong and Nunan (2011: 146):
Research shows that learners who are taught the strategies underlying their learning are more highly motivated than those who are not. Research has also shown that not all learners automatically know which strategies work best for them. For this reason, explicit strategy training, coupled with thinking about how one goes about learning and experimenting with different strategies, can lead to more effective learning. Cohen (1998), and Wenden (2002), also advocate the incorporation of learner strategy training into learning programs.

However, from the 1990s onwards the concept of learning strategies has more and more been regarded as undefined, problematic, fuzzy and too general (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003; Dörnyei 2005; Oxford 2011; Tseng, Dörnyei & Schmitt 2006) and a new construct called ‘self-regulation’ has emerged. Moreover, the questionnaires that have been used for a long time to measure language learning strategies have been criticised as being inadequate and unreliable. Instead, these and other scholars proposed to take a more dynamic and process-oriented view on the subject. Offering “a far broader perspective” (Dörnyei 2005: 190) than the traditional concept of learning strategies, the notion of self-regulation “refers to the degree to which individuals are active participants in their own learning” (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003: 611). Although several studies on self-regulation in language learning have already been carried out, the general understanding of the concept seems still rather vague and limited.

2.5. Learning styles and cognitive styles

If asked how we learn best, some would respond that they learn best by doing, whereas others would claim that they learn better visually. This notion that all humans have different styles of preferred learning also applies to SLA. There are students who have the ability to learn best aurally, meaning that they tend to understand and memorise new things faster and better by hearing them. Instead of taking notes, for example, aural learners prefer to listen carefully and repeat ideas that are orally presented. Yet, other people seem to progress more rapidly doing
hands-on activities such as role plays. These are typically referred to as kinaesthetic learners. Individuals, who cannot memorise something until they have seen it, learn best visually.

“Few would question that different learners can approach the same learning task in quite different ways and it is also a logical assumption that this variation in approach is not infinite but is characterized by systematic patterns” (Dörnyei 2005: 122). In the literature, these patterns are known as the concept of learning styles, which, according to Dörnyei (2005: 121) “represents a profile of the individual’s approach to learning, a blueprint of the habitual or preferred way the individual perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment.” Reid (1995: viii) defines the term as “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills”.

It is not difficult to notice that this concept is closely related to the concept of language learning strategies, “since they both denote specific ways learners go about carrying out learning tasks”, as Dörnyei (2005: 122) indicates. The question is, in what relationship the two concepts stand to each other and how they can be distinguished. Schmeck (1983: 233) succinctly illustrates the distinction between them, arguing that “a learning style is a a predisposition on the part of some students to adopt a particular learning strategy regardless of the specific demands of the learning task. Thus, a style is simply a strategy that is used with some cross-situational consistency”. To put it differently, if someone uses certain strategies habitually and cross-situationally, this learning behaviour can be referred to as learning style. In agreement with this claim, Snow, Corno and Jackson (1996: 281) explain that a learning style is a “strategy used consistently across a class of tasks”. For Sternberg and Grigorenko (2001: 3), on the other hand, the “degree of consciousness” involved is crucial, when it comes to distinguishing the two concepts. “Styles operate without individual awareness, whereas strategies involve
a conscious choice of alternatives”, as they emphasise (Sternberg & Grigorenko 2001: 3).

At this point, another critical distinction that has to be made clear is that between learning styles and cognitive styles. Although a number of scholars have used these two terms interchangeably, they are not the same. According to Rayner (2000: 117), learning styles are represented as a profile of a person’s approach to learning that is composed of two levels of functioning, the cognitive level and the level of the learning activity. Presumed to be an internalised, stable and predictable dimension, the cognitive level relates to an individual’s way of thinking and processing of information (Rayner 2000: 117). The level of the learning activity, on the contrary, is supposed to be more external, less stable and less predictable, and has to do with a person’s continuing adaption to the environment (Rayner 2000: 117). The cognitive level can thus be regarded as a constant and enduring factor that seems to be biologically determined. Rayner believes that it functions as the core of an individual’s learning style:

The central structure of a person’s learning style, that is, their cognitive style, seems to be an inherent and automatic way of responding to information and situations. It is probably present at birth, or at any rate is fixed early on in life, and is thought to be deeply pervasive, affecting a wide range of individual functioning. A person’s cognitive style is also a relatively fixed aspect of their learning performance and influences a person’s general attainment or achievement in learning situations. (Rayner 2000: 117-118)

This view is also shared by Richards and Lockhart (1994: 59), who describe cognitive styles “as predispositions to particular ways of approaching learning”. Moreover, they point out that cognitive styles “are intimately related to personality types” (Richards & Lockhart 1994: 59). In other words, cognitive styles represent the different personality-based behaviours individuals show in learning situations. For instance, the fact that some learners prefer to work individually, while others are fans of group-work, can be linked to the existence of different personality types. The term predisposition is also used by Dörnyei and Skehan (2003: 602) for distinguishing cognitive from learning styles. “The former can be defined as a
predisposition to process information in a characteristic manner while the latter can be defined as a typical preference for approaching learning in general”, as they put it (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003: 602). Thus, in contrast to cognitive styles which are restricted to preferred ways of information processing, learning styles imply all aspects of the learning process.

Dörnyei & Skehan (2003: 602) go on arguing that “[t]he major interpretation of cognitive style has been through studies of the constructs of field independence and field dependence”. Among the various dimensions of cognitive style that have been discussed in the literature, the dichotomy field independence/dependence has probably gained the greatest attention. Learners have been characterised as field independent or field dependent, according to their characteristic way of acquiring and processing information. “Field independents are seen as more likely to analyze information into its component parts, and to distinguish the essential from the inessential. Field dependents, in contrast, are more likely to deal with information structures as wholes, or ‘gestalts.’” (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003: 602). This means that field independents typically separate small details from the general background, whereas field dependents show a tendency to see things more holistically.

To summarise, one should keep in mind that “[l]earners clearly differ enormously in their preferred approach to L2 learning, but it is impossible to say which learning style works best” (Ellis 1994: 508). As has been noted by Dörnyei and Skehan, “each of the different choices or styles may have strengths and weaknesses” (2003: 601) which means that “different styles may be equally valid and advantageous” (2003: 601-602). For teachers, the challenge is to find teaching methods and approaches which take into account the manifold learning and cognitive styles of their students.
2.6. Foreign language anxiety

When learning a foreign language, many students experience feelings of tension, nervousness, worry, uneasiness, panic, stress and apprehension. In SLA literature, this widespread phenomenon has been extensively investigated and is referred to as foreign language anxiety (FLA). Undoubtedly, FLA is one of the most important and influential ID variables, as it probably “most pervasively obstructs the learning process” (Arnold & Brown 1999: 8).

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986: 128) have identified the phenomenon as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feeling and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 159), FLA “refers to apprehension experienced by the individual in the language class or any situation in which the language is used”. For Gregersen and MacIntyre (2013: 3), “[l]anguage anxiety reflects the worry and negative emotional reaction” involved in language learning situations such as classroom activities. What Gregersen and MacIntyre (2013: 4) and Lightbown and Spada (2006: 62) point out when defining the construct, is, that FLAN is not a permanent characteristic of an individual. Rather, anxiety can be described as a temporary, dynamic, situation- and context-specific feature of the learner which is subject to change. A student might, for example, feel anxious when delivering his very first talk in front of his teacher and colleagues, but might be more relaxed after having given a couple of presentations to his class. Having said that, it also has to be noted that anxiety does not always necessarily have to be negative. Quite contrary, it has been shown that in some contexts, anxiety can actually have a positive impact on a learner’s performance (Dörnyei 2005: 198). This is also pointed out by Lightbown and Spada (2006: 62), who state “that a certain amount of tension can have a positive effect and even facilitate learning”. For example, feeling anxious before an exam or a presentation may serve as a sufficient motivational impetus for success (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 62).
However, it is a matter of fact that a too high degree of anxiety tends to harm our performance. In how far high levels of FLAN might negatively affect an individual, is demonstrated by Oxford (1999a: 60):

The negative kind of anxiety is sometimes called ‘debilitating anxiety’, because it harms learners’ performance in many ways, both indirectly through worry and self-doubt and directly by reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language. Harmful anxiety can be related to plummeting motivation, negative attitudes and beliefs, and language performance difficulties.

Debilitating anxiety is strongly associated with bad grades (Aida 1994), low self-esteem (Price 1991) and low self confidence in language learning (Gardner & MacIntyre 1993). Moreover, anxious students typically face physical symptoms such as increased heartbeat, tension and trembling (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986).

Not surprisingly, the sources and causes of FLAN are manifold. Tests, classroom procedures and instructional practices are identified as common generators of anxiety by Young (1991). Another potential source of FLAN may be error correction (Gregersen 2003; Young 1991). If students are corrected too often by their teachers, they might lose confidence and motivation and consequently develop feelings of anxiety. Moreover, “some types of activities and testing formats used in language learning classrooms provoke more anxiety than others. Activities and assessments that demand speaking in front of others have been reported by students as generating uneasiness” (Gregersen & MacIntyre 2013). Likewise, FLAN can arise when students’ learning styles are incompatible with the teaching style of their instructors (Gregersen & MacIntyre 2013).

The final question which has to be addressed when discussing the construct of FLAN is whether it is merely a short-term state or rather a lasting trait. In the ideal case, students’ feelings of anxiety diminish over time as they are simply a transitory state triggered by a particular situation or event (Oxford 1999a: 60).
Unfortunately, this does not apply to all learners as put forward by Oxford (1999a: 60):

However, language anxiety does not decrease over time for all students. If repeated occurrences cause students to associate anxiety with language performance, anxiety becomes a trait rather than a state (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993). Once language anxiety has evolved into a lasting trait, it can have pervasive effects on language learning and language performance.

In such cases, learners’ problems must not be ignored and measures to reduce FLAN must be implemented.

### 2.7. Willingness to communicate

In the field of foreign language learning, the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) has been most extensively researched by the Canadian professor of psychology, Peter D. MacIntyre. However, the term was not introduced by him but had been in use before.

Originally developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1991), WTC was initially applied to communication in the first language and “described as a cognitively based personality trait that reflects differences among persons in their predisposition toward oral communication” (MacIntyre 2013: 688). McCroskey’s and Richmond’s WTC construct was then adapted by MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei and Noels (1998), who applied it to the context of context of second language acquisition and foreign language learning. Instead of viewing it as a stable personality characteristic, “[t]hey proposed a situated model, one that is based on a feeling of being willing to communicate on a specific occasion with a specific person” (MacIntyre 2013: 689). According to Dörnyei (2005: 208), WTC can be conceptualized as a situation-specific construct “because [...] the level of one’s L2 proficiency, and particularly that of the individual’s L2 communicative competence, is [a] [...] powerful modifying variable”.

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Without deeper reflection, one would assume that learners are willing to speak, once they have decided to learn a foreign language. And one would also expect them to be aware that “WTC is a necessary part of becoming fluent in a second language, which is the ultimate goal of many L2 learners”, as MacIntyre and Doucette put it (2010). Yet, in practice, readiness to speak cannot always be taken for granted. Almost everyone, who has taken some sort of language class, is probably familiar with the fact that some students participate in discussions much more often than others do. There are learners who are always happy to share their opinion, not caring what others think about their language ability. On the other hand, there are also those who prefer to remain silent simply because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of their colleagues. A shy student may be reluctant to speak in the classroom, but may be more communicative when skyping with his English friend at home. According to MacIntyre (2013: 690), a learner’s unwillingness to communicate can have different reasons, among them error correction:

[L]earners often find themselves in an ambivalent state, both wanting to speak in the L2 and wanting to avoid it. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that subtle features of the situation have a dramatic effect on WTC (MacIntyre, Burns and Jessome, in press). For example, error correction might be welcome from some peers but not from others, or welcome from a teacher in one context but not another.

In general, WTC has been shown to be positively influenced by low anxiety levels, self-confidence, and high levels of self-perceived communication competence (MacIntyre 2013: 690; Clément, Baker & MacIntyre 2003: 192). To put it differently, self-conscious and anxious students with a negative self-image of their language competence will probably try to avoid engaging in a conversation. Those students definitely have a harder time learning a foreign language, as WTC “can be seen as the ultimate goal of L2 instruction” (Dörnyei 2005: 210).
2.8. Creativity

Since communicative language teaching has been introduced and practised in many teaching contexts, the role of the learner has changed considerably. Whereas in former times students were largely seen as passive recipients of knowledge provided by their foreign language teachers, in more recent years, they have been required to be active participants in the language learning process. Among the most sought after personality characteristics in the modern language classroom is certainly creativity, i.e. the “ability to come up with a large number of novel and statistically rare solutions on a given task” (Albert & Kormos 2011: 79). According to Ottó (1998: 764), “the term creative thinking describes the process of idea generation, whereas a person’s creativity refers to the cluster of abilities that determine the outcome of this process”. In short, creative learners can be described as being capable of producing unusual and original ideas to solve any given task. Already in 1998, Ottó recognized the importance of creativity, describing it as an advantageous skill of the modern language learner:

CLT emphasizes functional and situational language use and involves communicative tasks that require students to generate ideas on a topic or to participate actively in role-play tasks and simulations in which they have to use their imagination. Such tasks often require students to retrieve or construct their own ideas, and it is reasonable to suggest that the outcomes depend to a great extent on students’ creative abilities. Learners who lack the creativity required for such tasks may have difficulty performing them, which might negatively influence the development of their L2 proficiency. (Ottó 1998: 763)

Thus, without creative thinking, people learning a second or a foreign language may not be able to make the most out of their language learning potential. In other words, creative, imaginative and innovative individuals are likely to do better at communicative tasks, which demand creative abilities, such as putting oneself in another’s shoes in a role-play task.

Despite its relevance in the field of foreign language learning and second language acquisition, research on creativity as an ID variable has been scarce. There have
been two significant studies investigating the influence of creativity on students’ foreign language performance. Both Ottó (1998) and Albert and Kormos (2011) carried out a small-scale research project and found a positive relationship between a learner’s creativity and their actual performance in the foreign language. Their findings suggest that with regard to communicative language tasks, learning outcomes significantly depend on a student’s ability to produce original and novel ideas. These findings need to be systematically built on in future research, as proposed by Dörnyei (2005: 207):

[T]he limited empirical L2 data that is available on the impact of creativity on language learning provides evidence that creativity does play a role in shaping L2 outcomes. What we need now is more research and theoretical clarification on which aspects of creativity affect which aspects of language learning and use, and how creativity interacts with other ID variables.

### 2.9. Self-esteem

There is no question that the opinion we hold about ourselves impacts the way we act, live, work and learn. To some extent, it even determines our actual abilities and success. The very term used to describe feelings, beliefs and judgement about oneself is called self-esteem. Oxford (1999a: 62) defines self-esteem as “a self-judgement of worth or value, based on feelings of efficacy, a sense of interacting effectively with one’s own environment”, pointing out that like anxiety, it can be a trait or a state. Here one has to distinguish whether an individual’s self-esteem is “an inherent personality characteristic” or rather a temporary state “related to a particular situation” (Oxford 1999a: 62). This means that people, who feel good about themselves globally, may nevertheless have lower levels of self-esteem in situations related to specific events or a particular environment (Scarcella & Oxford 1992). In turn, negative beliefs and low self-esteem in areas which are considered very important by an individual, might have an influence on their global self-esteem (Oxford 1992: 37).
Not surprisingly, good language learners usually have higher levels of self-esteem than less successful students who often face problems and difficulties learning a foreign language (Price 1991). Moreover, studies have shown that learners with positive self-esteem find it easier to cope with failures (Baumeister 1999) and are more likely to succeed because they are more aware of their priorities and goals in language learning (Raffini 1996). Individuals suffering from low self-esteem, on the other hand, also “want success and approval”, but “they are often sceptical about their chances of achieving it” (Dörnyei 2005: 212).

Of course, not all students with a high opinion about themselves will be successful, and likewise, people with low self-esteem are not automatically bad language learners. Dörnyei (2005: 212) indicates that “some people hold themselves in a low regard despite their obvious qualities, whereas others seem to have a staggeringly positive impression of themselves”. It is difficult to say where self-esteem in language learning comes from and how it develops, but what is clear is that success almost always fosters self-esteem, which in turn fosters success.

2.10. Learner beliefs

Success in foreign language learning is influenced by a range of variables, as has been illustrated so far. Another characteristic that distinguishes language learners from each other are their beliefs, which have been found to be a significant contributory factor when it comes to the way individuals go about the task of learning a foreign language. The nature, role and importance of learner beliefs about language learning are of primary importance for this study and are therefore discussed in greater detail than the other IDs in the following chapter.
3. The study of learner beliefs about language learning

3.1. Definition of learner beliefs

Learner beliefs have been researched from a number of theoretical perspectives and defined in different contexts. In the past, various terms, including e.g. ‘folk-linguistic theories of learning’ (Miller & Ginsberg 1995), ‘learners’ philosophy of language learning’ (Abraham & Vann 1987) and ‘culture of learning languages’ (Barcelos 1995), have been used to refer to the concept of learner beliefs.

Miller and Ginsberg (1995: 294) define ‘folk-linguistic theories’ as “ideas that students have about language and language learning”. Abraham and Vann (1987: 95) use the term ‘learners’ philosophy of language learning’ to describe someone’s “beliefs about how language operates, and, consequently, how it is learned”. Other researchers, like Barcelos (1995), stress the cultural and social nature of beliefs in their definition. Her term ‘culture of learning languages’ refers to learners’ intuitive implicit (or explicit) knowledge made of beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and ideals about how to learn languages. This knowledge, according to learners’ age and social economic level, is based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people like family, friends, relatives, teachers and so forth. (Barcelos 1995: 40)

In very general terms, learner beliefs can be viewed as “opinions and ideas that learners (and teachers) have about the task of learning a second/foreign language” (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003: 1). They are considered as “one area of individual learner differences that may influence the processes and outcomes of second/foreign language learning/acquisition” (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003: 1). Victori and Lockhart (1995: 224) refer to learner beliefs as “general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning and about the nature of language learning”. Richards and Lockhart (1996) describe learners’ belief systems as a collection of a variety of beliefs about language learning in general, the nature of a language, its speakers, the skills of listening,
reading, writing and speaking, teaching activities, their own goals and ability for foreign language learning.

As can be seen from the several definitions provided above, there is no consensually agreed-upon definition of learner beliefs. Obviously, this plurality of terms and definitions appears “to reflect different researchers’ agendas” (Barcelos 2003: 8).

3.2. The subjects of learner beliefs

Language learners hold different beliefs about a number of issues involved in the process of FLL. They have their very own opinion about the native speakers of the language they are learning, the importance of native-like pronunciation or about what constitutes good teaching. Differing in their personalities, experience, expectations and goals, students have individual perceptions of their target languages and are unique in their preferences of learning strategies and teaching methods. Analysing ESL learners’ beliefs, Richards and Lockhart (1994: 52-56) identified eight categories of learner beliefs:

(a) **Beliefs about the nature of English**
Depending on their mother tongue, their former language learning experience, the country they are living in, etc., learners have different views concerning the difficulty, status and importance of English. Even if they might seem superficial, beliefs of this kind “do have psychological reality for learners and can hence influence how they approach learning English” (Richards & Lockhart 1994: 53). Individuals, who consider English to have a high status in their professional life, will probably have a strong motivation for learning it.

(b) **Beliefs about speakers of English**
Based on their experience with and knowledge about native speakers of English, students develop their personal attitudes towards them. “Although these kinds of
opinions may amount to little more than stereotyping, they can influence the degree to which students wish to interact with native speakers”, as stated by (Richards & Lockhart 1994: 53). If someone has had mainly negative encounters with British people, he or she will be likely to avoid further contact with them.

(c) Beliefs about the four language skills
Language learners typically hold various beliefs in terms of the nature of speaking, writing, reading and listening. For example, some students may believe that watching television and listening to radio programmes is the best way to improve their listening skills, whereas others are used to training them doing listening exercises in practice books.

(d) Beliefs about teaching
Especially older learners tend to have specific views on what makes a good language teacher. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 54) explain that “[b]y the time a student completes secondary school, he or she has been exposed to thousands of hours of teaching from a variety of different teachers. As a result the learner may have formed very definite views about what constitutes effective or ineffective teaching.” In other words, along with their experience in FLL, students develop individual preferences in terms of teaching styles and methods.

(e) Beliefs about language learning
How learners go about the task of learning a foreign language depends on the beliefs they hold about language learning. Usually, they have very specific ideas of approaches and activities that work most effectively for them.

(f) Beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour
As different as learners in a classroom are, as different are their views of appropriate classroom behaviour and interaction. Using polite language, showing respect and discipline, not interrupting others or following rules are examples of expected classroom behaviour, which might be respect by some learners, but disregarded by others. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 55) point out that students’
belies about appropriate classroom behaviour “may be culturally based and, at
times, at odds with the teacher's beliefs.”

(g) Beliefs about self
Whereas some learners have a quite positive attitude towards their self as a
language learner, others carry rather negative beliefs about their own language
learning abilities. These self-perceptions “can influence the use they make of
opportunities available for language learning and the priorities they set for
themselves”, as Richards and Lockhart (1994: 56) put it. This means, for example,
that self-conscious individuals might not feel confident enough to talk to native
speakers of their target language. Learners, who believe in their strengths, on the
other hand, probably try to grasp every chance to communicate with English-
speaking people.

(h) Beliefs about goals
Every learner is different when it comes to their goals, as well as how, when and
why they would like to achieve them. For instance, native-like pronunciation may
be regarded as the ultimate goal of students who want to become English teachers,
but might be considered irrelevant for learners who need it to communicate with
Chinese business partners.

It has to be noted that in their categorisation, Richards and Lockhart (1994: 52-56)
refer to beliefs of learners of the English language, but the same categories are
applicable to learner beliefs related to any foreign language.

3.3. The sources of learner beliefs

The beliefs we hold about the nature of language learning may derive from various
roots and change over time. When we started to learn English, our ideas and
opinions about the language were probably different to those we have now after
studying it a couple of years. For young learners, imitation plays an important role in the formation of their beliefs. According to Puchta (1999: 257),

> children frequently form their beliefs through the modelling of significant others. They observe the teacher, compare the teacher’s communication with themselves and classmates, and interpret this communication. Gradually, their interpretations become the foundations of their belief systems.

Thus, children naturally tend to interpret and adopt the language behaviour of those around them, which in turn influences their beliefs.

As has been pointed out by several scholars (Horwitz 1987; Little & Singleton 1990; Pajares 1992; Peacock 2001; Richardson 1996), previous experiences with the native language and with foreign language learning at school shape students’ beliefs about language learning. Particularly learning activities and teaching practices can be a vital source of students’ beliefs (Erlenawati 2002: 326). That teachers and their instructional practices may shape learners’ beliefs, is also stressed by Horwitz (2007: 6):

> Student beliefs about language learning are often based on limited knowledge and experience, and teachers can encourage more productive beliefs by offering better information about the language learning process. Unfortunately, students’ experience with foreign language instruction may contribute to the development of unproductive language learning beliefs.

It is the teacher’s task to provide their students with knowledge about the process of foreign language learning, in order to prevent them from developing ineffective and harmful beliefs about language learning. Other factors that may affect someone’s beliefs are their cultural and social backgrounds (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003; Puchta 1999) and individual differences such as personality traits (Langston & Sykes 1997; Abraham & Vann 1987).
3.4. The influence of learner beliefs on language learning

Students’ beliefs have been found to influence a range of issues related to the language learning process. In the past decades, numerous studies have correlated learner beliefs with motivation, expectations, learning behaviour, success, etc. What is particularly interesting is that some researchers have reported that successful language learners develop insights into their beliefs about the language learning process, the use of effective strategies and their own abilities (Ehrman & Oxford 1989, 1990; Oxford 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986).

To begin with, learner beliefs are central when it comes to the use of learning strategies. This means that it is their beliefs which, to a great part, determine the kinds of strategies a learner is going to use to solve a particular task (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 67). That people’s beliefs have a considerable impact on their strategy use has also been suggested by Richards and Lockhart (1994: 52) and Horwitz (1987: 120), who believes that “erroneous beliefs about language learning lead to less effective language learning strategies” (Horwitz 1987: 126). For her, “knowledge of student beliefs about language learning is an important step toward understanding the etiology of learning strategies” Horwitz (1987: 120).

A correlation between students’ beliefs and their ability to learn foreign languages was found by Ehrman and Oxford (1995). The results of their study showed that learners’ beliefs influence their proficiency in both reading and speaking. Other studies have linked learner beliefs to learning behaviour (Cotterall 1995; McCombs 1984) and the way students respond to teaching activities (Horwitz 1987). If a teacher’s methods are not in line with their beliefs, learners may show resistance and discontent (Horwitz 1987).

Not surprisingly, beliefs also contribute to students’ motivation, achievements and success (Puchta 1999; Sakui & Gaies 1999). A student, who takes an optimistic and enthusiastic approach towards foreign language learning, naturally tends to be
more motivated and successful than a language learner who is pessimistic, anxious and afraid of making mistakes. Puchta (1999: 257) is convinced that:

Strong supportive beliefs do not automatically guarantee success, but they help students access learning states in which they can more easily utilise their inner resources and become more aware of having a wider range of choices available to them. Negative beliefs influence our students’ expectations. Low expectations lead to a low level of motivation and every failure is seen as confirmation of the initial beliefs.

Whereas supportive beliefs help to perform better, negative beliefs may lead to low expectations and decrease our motivation. Of course, beliefs are not the only factor that determines success in foreign language learning, however, in some learning situations, they may have a more profound impact than one would expect.

3.5. Approaches to studying learner beliefs

Different scholars obviously have different views of how learner beliefs come into being. Roughly speaking, researchers and their perspectives can be divided into two broad groups. On the one hand, there is the ‘mainstream’ cognitivist approach claiming that learner beliefs are stable constructs. On the other hand, other scholars taking a socio-cultural approach argue for a context-dependent nature of beliefs. Within the traditional ‘mainstream’ approach beliefs have been treated as unchanging and relatively static, while more recent studies highlight the relevance of outside factors, investigating how beliefs are constructed in different cultural and social contexts. “Whether internal or external influences are emphasised depends largely on the research perspective adopted”, as Trinder (2012: 2) states.

Researchers who apply a cognitive perspective regard learner beliefs as unique and individual constructions and do not draw attention to the context in which they are embodied (Sykes 2011: 93-94). For cognitivist scholars, “[a] belief is an individual mental knowledge structure which is fairly fixed in nature and which can be studied using the traditional tools of experimental and quantitative
research” (Dufva 2003: 132). Using mainly questionnaires and surveys to collect data and analyse learner beliefs, cognitivist-oriented studies have been criticised for treating language learners as objects rather than subjects. Studies employing a socio-cultural perspective, on the contrary, consider learner beliefs as results of a specific socio-cultural context (Sykes 2011: 94).

In current research, beliefs are more and more viewed as “part of students’ experiences and interrelated with their environment, and attention is given to beliefs in conjunction with actions and possibilities within particular social contexts” (White 2008: 124). According to Hosenfeld (2003: 39), students’ beliefs “arise during learning” and “change along with the experiences in which they are embedded”. Being perceived as emergent, dynamic, changing and contextual, they are investigated through qualitative methods such as metaphor and discourse analysis (Hosenfeld 2003: 37). Other research tools employed by researchers taking a socio-cultural perspective to analyse learner beliefs include narratives, open-end questions, journal entries, focus group interviews and language learning autobiographies. It has to be pointed out, however, that there is no clear-cut distinction between these two research perspectives and therefore, this division should be treated with caution. These two groupings merely represent orientations which, for a long time, have been dominating research in this field.

Newer research methodologies and approaches to studying learner beliefs are the subject of discussion in Kalaja’s and Barcelos’ *Beliefs about SLA*, a comprehensive collection of articles, first published in 2003. The contributors of this rather recent collection work with methodologies, all of which can be labelled discursive research. Generally speaking, all of the authors study learner beliefs from a contextual perspective, focusing on an analysis on discourse, and moving away from traditionally used survey tools such as questionnaires. Investigating how beliefs emerge in everyday contexts, these researchers rely on qualitative data collection methods. They mainly gather data through interviews, observation, spoken and written narratives or a combination of these.
In the introductory chapter of this edited collection, one of the editors, Ana Maria F. Barcelos, provides a critical review of common research approaches that have been used in the past to explore learner beliefs about foreign language learning and second language acquisition. In contrast to other scholars, who have recognised only two main research approaches in the study of beliefs, Barcelos (2003: 11), suggests the existence of three approaches: normative, metacognitive, and contextual. In order to give a structured overview of her comparison of these three approaches, Barcelos’ (2003: 26-27) table has been adopted one-to-one for this thesis:

**Table 1 Features, advantages, and disadvantages of the three approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Normative</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
<th>Contextual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Data collection</strong></td>
<td>a) Likert-scale questionnaires</td>
<td>a) Interviews and self-report</td>
<td>a) Observations, interviews, diaries, and case studies, life stories, metaphor analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Descriptive statistics</td>
<td>b) Content analysis</td>
<td>b) Interpretative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of beliefs about SLA</strong></td>
<td>Beliefs are seen as synonymous with preconceived notions, misconceptions, and opinions.</td>
<td>Beliefs are described as metacognitive knowledge: stable and sometimes fallible knowledge learners have about language learning</td>
<td>Beliefs are part of the culture of learning and representations of language learning in a given society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship beliefs/actions</strong></td>
<td>Beliefs are seen as good indicators of future students’ behaviours, autonomy, and effectiveness as language learners</td>
<td>Beliefs are seen as good indicators of learners’ autonomy and effectiveness in language learning, although it is admitted the influence of other factors, such as purpose.</td>
<td>Beliefs are seen as context-specific, i.e., students’ beliefs are investigated within the context of their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Allows investigating beliefs with large samples, at different time slots, and at outside contexts.</td>
<td>Students use their own words, elaborate, and reflect upon their language learning experiences.</td>
<td>Beliefs are investigated taking into account students’ own words and the context of students’ actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Beliefs are inferred only from students' statements.</td>
<td>More suitable with small samples only. It is time-consuming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricts respondents' choices with a set of statements predetermined by the researcher. Students may have different interpretations about those statements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her discussion of the individual characteristics that each of the three approaches holds, Barcelos (2003: 26) argues that both the normative and the metacognitive approach provide an incomplete picture of the whole story, as they ignore the social aspect of learner beliefs, regarding them as stable mental traits. According to her, an understanding of beliefs in the social context is necessary:

> We should not forget that beliefs about SLA, like knowledge, are embedded in context. Research on beliefs about SLA needs to broaden its definition of beliefs and methods of investigation in order to answer intriguing questions and understand the functions that beliefs about SLA play in students’ language learning experiences. (Barcelos 2003: 26)

It might, however, not be right to generalise that these two approaches work with “an incomplete definition of beliefs about SLA” (Barcelos 2003: 26), because one has to take into account the researcher’s objective for a particular study, when judging whether a certain approach is appropriate or not. But this fact, that different research approaches suit different research purposes, is not even mentioned by Barcelos. Although she discusses the features, advantages and disadvantages of each of the three approaches, she does not acknowledge that the normative or the metacognitive approach, and not ‘her’ contextual approach, might be most suitable for a particular research purpose.
3.6. A review of previous studies on learner beliefs

Learner beliefs about language learning have been an issue in applied linguistics since the mid 1980s. As a result of the rather recent "shift in focus to learners and their contributions to learning second/foreign languages" (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003: 1), the research interest in this topic has been increasing remarkably in the last fifteen years. Generally speaking, it can be observed that initial research was dominated by normative, metacognitive and cognitivist approaches which treated learner beliefs as "cognitive entities to be found inside the minds of language learners" (Kalaja 1995: 192), whereas studies from the mid 1990s to the present have increasingly been using contextual (socio-cultural) approaches or a combination of two or three of them.

Probably the first study in this field was conducted by Elaine Horwitz (1985), whose aim it was to develop a survey instrument for the assessment of students’ opinions and beliefs about language learning. For this purpose, 25 American undergraduate students of teacher education were asked in a free-recall task to list their personal beliefs, other people’s and their students’ beliefs related to language learning. After an elimination process, a list of 30 items was compiled, which was then again given to the study’s participants, who were supposed to add more beliefs. The final version of the instrument was then piloted tested with 150 first semester students at the University of Texas at Austin. Finally, the resulting inventory was termed BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory), which later became the most popular and widely used questionnaire for investigating learner beliefs.

Two years later, Horwitz (1987) used her newly developed research tool again in a new research project at the University of Texas at Austin, but this time with 32 intermediate level ESL students of different cultural backgrounds. She found that most of them believed in the existence of foreign language aptitude and the importance of repetition and practice. Furthermore, her results showed that they
attached significance to the study of grammar and vocabulary and practising languages in the countries where they are spoken.

Yang (1999) used the BALLI, which he modified and translated into Chinese, to explore the relationship between learners’ beliefs and their learning strategy use. 505 EFL students from six different private and public universities in Taiwan participated in his study that combined the BALLI with qualitative data collection methods. The results indicated that the language students’ beliefs were strongly related to their use of all types of strategies, particularly functional practice strategies which “involve actively seeking or creating opportunities to use or practice English functionally” (Yang 1999: 528), i.e. using a foreign language in communicative, real-life situations. Moreover, their beliefs regarding spoken English correlated with their use of oral practice strategies.

A study of a comparative nature was carried out by Kuntz (1996), who investigated the beliefs held by 166 first month university students, of whom 53 studied Swahili and 113 French and Spanish. Using the Kuntz-Rifkin Instrument (KRI), a research tool based on Horwitz's BALLI and newly designed for this study, Kuntz wanted to find out in which kinds of language learning beliefs students of Swahili differ from students of French and Spanish. Overall, the responses from Swahili students were more positive compared to those from their counterparts. Swahili students reported strongest disagreement with the notion that you do not speak until you say it correctly, while the other group strongly disagreed with the idea that one must know all the words in order to read in a foreign language. The greatest number of all participants agreed, not surprisingly, on the relevance of practice and repetition in foreign language learning.

Within the metacognitive approach, Anita Wenden is the most representative researcher. With the purpose of exploring and classifying students’ knowledge about language learning, Wenden (1986) interviewed 25 advanced level ESL college students at Columbia University. Using semi-structured interviews, she
intended to make them think about language learning, their own beliefs, their preferred learning strategies, etc. What she found was that students are actually capable of discussing their language proficiency, learning outcomes and their preferred way of learning foreign languages.

Another example within the metacognitive approach is Graham’s (2006) study, which described the impact of metacognitive knowledge on learning strategy use and motivational persistence. 28 students of French in England, between the ages of 16 to 18, were interviewed, and ten out of those 28 interviews were then further analysed. Great differences among the participants concerning the image they held about themselves could be identified. The study concluded that concentrating on improving one’s own performance helps to develop self-efficacy and offers advice how students can develop a better self-image as language learners.

Studies within the more recent contextual approach have typically been using a range of alternative, mainly qualitative, data collection methods. For example, Allen (1996) employed, additionally to traditional interviews with students and teachers, classroom observation, learner diaries and document analysis, to explore whether and how teachers’ language learning beliefs influence those of their learners. The subject of her study was only one Libyan intermediate level ESL student, who took an English for Academic Purposes course at Carleton School of Linguistics in Canada. Her research results indicated that this particular learner changed his learning beliefs during the course, meaning that his beliefs approximated to those of his teacher.

Quite recently, a research project of a completely different kind, namely a three-year longitudinal case study, was conducted by Mercer (2011). Her subject was an Austrian university student of English and Spanish. Data for this study were collected using learning journals and interviews, which were analysed based on a Grounded Theory approach. As far as learner beliefs are concerned, the study found that beliefs about oneself as a language learner are subject to change. This
means that our beliefs can on the one hand be fairly stable, but at the same time also relatively dynamic.

It has to be noted that the purpose of the present literature review was to provide basic information on select studies on learner beliefs from each of the approaches. As it is not possible within this thesis, to report on all studies undertaken in this field, only the most representative examples in terms of research purposes, the methodology used and research results were included in this review. In this selection, the author thus tried to present the broad spectrum of approaches to the study of learner beliefs, outlining a diverse range of research results found by prominent researchers.
4. Methodology

4.1. Purpose of the study

This study investigates university students' beliefs about foreign language learning. Its purpose is to analyse and compare the beliefs held by students of English, Romance and Slavic languages at the University of Vienna. In other words, the main concern is to find out if at all and in which areas these students following different study programmes and learning different target languages differ in their beliefs about foreign language learning. If differences can be identified, this would indicate that students' beliefs about language learning are influenced by their target language.

4.2. Participants

Foreign language students at the University of Vienna were invited to participate in this study via e-mail, the university’s online platform Moodle and study groups on Facebook. A total of 386 students volunteered to take part in an online survey questionnaire. The mean age of the participants was 23.4 years, ranging from 18 to 78. In terms of gender, there was a considerable imbalance among the respondents which, however, nicely reflects the actual situation at the foreign language departments. Only 14.5% of all students who entered the study were males. Altogether 27 nationalities were represented in the survey, the great majority (78.8%) being Austrians. The 386 participants studied 13 different languages. For illustration, Figure 1 shows the distribution of languages studied by the survey respondents:
As Figure 1 illustrates, out of 386 participants, 124 were studying English, 71 Russian, 45 Italian, 43 Spanish, 32 French, 27 Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, 21 Czech, 12 Polish, 3 Bulgarian, 3 Ukrainian, 2 Slovak, 2 Portuguese and 1 Slovenian. In terms of language groups, students from all three departments were nearly equally represented, as Figure 2 shows:
As shown in Figure 2, out of 386 respondents, 36.3% were students of Slavic languages, 32.1% of the English language and 31.6% of Romance languages. Nearly two thirds of all respondents, namely 59.3%, were studying more than one language. Out of 386, 193 participants indicated to be enrolled in the BA programme, 154 in the Lehramt (teacher training) programme, 28 in the MA and 11 were studying BA or MA in combination with Lehramt.

As the purpose of the present study was to find out if students’ beliefs are based on their target language, the questionnaire required participants to indicate only one language, even if they were studying more than one. Therefore, the following note was included in the survey: “In case you are studying more than one language, please choose one and always relate to this language when answering the following questions”.

4.3. Research instrument and data collection

The study used a modified version of Horwitz’s BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory). This survey questionnaire was designed by Horwitz in 1987 “in close consultation with teachers, psychologists, linguists, educators, and language learners, from a variety of cultural backgrounds”, as Bernat (2004: 41) highlights. It is a widely used instrument which originally contains 34 items on a five-point Likert type scale. Respondents are asked to rate their agreement with 34 statements from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), assessing learner beliefs in five major areas: (1) foreign language aptitude; (2) the difficulty of language learning; (3) the nature of language learning; (4) learning and communication strategies; and, (5) motivations and expectations.

---

1 As this study compares the beliefs held by students from 3 departments at the University of Vienna, namely the departments of English, Romance and Slavic languages, the fact that English belongs to the Germanic language group is irrelevant for the present purpose.
As already stated above, Horwitz’s original inventory was slightly modified to suit the purpose of this study. The following seven items were omitted because they were either considered irrelevant for this research context or not appropriate for surveying beliefs of university students:

- No. 15\(^3\): If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?
- No. 20: People in my country feel that it is important to speak foreign languages.
- No. 24: I would like to learn English so that I can get to know Americans better.
- No. 27: Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.
- No. 29: If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.
- No. 31: I want to learn to speak English very well.
- No. 32: I would like to have American friends.

‘Motivations and expectations’, the fifth major area in Horwitz’s BALLI including items 20, 24, 29, 31 and 32, was thus completely excluded from the questionnaire used in this study. Instead, three new items were added, one to first category ‘Foreign language aptitude’ and the other two to the third category ‘The nature of language learning’:

- My accent is native-like.
- Every language student should spend an extended period of time (at least 5-6 continuous months) in a country where his/her target language is spoken.
- The best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it.

As native-likeness, studying abroad and communicative competence are highly relevant and partly controversial issues in a university context, students’ opinions

\(^3\) The numbers given indicate the original numbers of the items in Horwitz’s BALLI.
on these matters are of great importance for the present study. Moreover, the item ‘It is important to practise with cassettes or tapes’ was replaced by the statement ‘Exposure to authentic audio material is important’ and ‘English’ by ‘foreign language’. For reasons of practicality, the original order of the items was rearranged in the questionnaire employed in this study.

The final version of the modified inventory (see Appendix A) covers four areas:

(1) **Foreign language aptitude:**
This category includes a number of items related to students’ beliefs about whether some people are more likely to be successful in foreign language learning because they have a gift for languages. Moreover, they are asked to judge if they have a special ability for language learning. Other items in this area are concerned with the characteristics of more or less successful learners.

(2) **The difficulty of language learning:**
Items in this category mainly deal with students’ perceptions of the difficulty of foreign language learning in general, and of their target language in particular. Two of them address the difficulty of specific language skills.

(3) **The nature of language learning:**
This area covers a broad range of issues concerned with the nature of foreign language learning. The main focus lies on the question of how a foreign language is best learned. Additionally, students’ are asked about the importance of culture in language learning and if they think that language students should spend at least one semester in a country where their target language is spoken.

(4) **Learning and communication strategies:**
Items in this category focus on the process of language learning, particularly addressing the use of learning and communication strategies. They refer to their
actual learning preferences and ask respondents, for instance, about the importance of excellent pronunciation and exposure to audio material.

Before the respondents have to indicate their agreement to 30 statements, they are required to submit some personal information and answer a few questions related to their studies. The online survey was activated for participants on 2 December and closed on 2 June. Thus, data were collected over a period of 6 months.

5. Findings

In this chapter, the statistical data will be analysed, whereby respondents’ beliefs will be compared and contrasted according to their target language (group). Tables 1 to 29 show the percentages of students (1) strongly agreeing, (2) agreeing, (3) neither agreeing nor disagreeing, (4) disagreeing and (5) strongly disagreeing with the questionnaire statements, evaluated by eSurvey Creator. In the running text, the positive responses of (1) ‘strongly agree’ and (2) ‘agree’, as well as the negative responses of (4) ‘disagree’ and (5) ‘strongly disagree’, will be conflated and the percentages will be rounded to the closest whole number.

5.1. Foreign language aptitude

Students from all three language groups generally endorsed the concept of foreign language aptitude and the notion that some people possess a special gift for language learning. 94% of students of English, 86% of students of Romance languages and 92% of respondents studying a Slavic language either agreed or even strongly agreed that some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages. However, only 60% of participants studying English, 67% of students of French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, and 67% of all subjects studying a Slavic
language believed that they possess this special ability. Students’ responses are shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

**Table 2** Statement No. 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>53.23</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>45.08</td>
<td>40.98</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>48.57</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** Statement No. 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>14.52</td>
<td>45.16</td>
<td>34.68</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>50.82</td>
<td>25.41</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>34.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 2 and Table 3, there were only very few students among all three language groups, who disapproved of the existence of special abilities for language learning and merely a small percentage believed that they do not possess this gift. When they had to comment on the notions that children learn languages more easily and women are better language learners than men, students from the three departments gave parallel responses. The large majority (around 80%) of each language group agreed that it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. Around 40% of each language group felt neutral toward the belief that women are better language learners than men, whereas half of the students of each language group either disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. Table 4 and Table 5 illustrate respondents’ beliefs regarding these issues.

**Table 4** Statement No. 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>28.23</td>
<td>24.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>40.16</td>
<td>24.59</td>
<td>24.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>38.57</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the percentages in Table 4 and Table 5, it is easily observable that participants do believe in the existence of age-related, but not of gender-related differences in foreign language learning. Students’ responses were also quite similar when they were asked if they believe that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. Nearly 90% of all students who participated in the study supported this idea and only 8 out of 386 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. There was also agreement concerning the notion that it is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. 74% of students of English, 86% of Romance languages and 79% of respondents studying a Slavic language endorsed this commonly held belief. Table 6 and Table 7 below detail their responses.

Table 5 Statement No. 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language (20)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>47.58</td>
<td>33.06</td>
<td>13.71</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>39.34</td>
<td>39.34</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>12.86</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, hardly any differences among the three groups could be identified when they were to rate whether their accent is native-like. For illustration, Table 8 below
shows the distribution of their responses. 44% of students of English, 37% of respondents studying a Romance language and 33% of students of Slavic languages perceived their accent to be native-like or very native-like. 45% of the participants studying Slavic languages thought that their accent to be not native-like at all, compared to only one third of students from the other two groups.

Table 8 Statement No. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>14,52</td>
<td>29,03</td>
<td>30,65</td>
<td>22,58</td>
<td>3,23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>15,57</td>
<td>22,13</td>
<td>30,33</td>
<td>26,23</td>
<td>5,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>19,29</td>
<td>13,57</td>
<td>22,14</td>
<td>30,71</td>
<td>14,29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of students from all three language groups felt neutral towards the statement saying that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent. Within each of the three language groups, there were more students who (strongly) disagreed than those who (strongly) agreed with it. Similarly, around 60% of students from all three groups neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea that people from their country are good at learning foreign languages. The myth that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages was supported only by a very small number of all survey respondents. 59% of students of English, 75% of students of Romance languages and 69% of participants studying a Slavic language disapproved of this idea, whereas the rest of respondents felt neutral towards it. Detailed responses to these issues are shown in Table 9, Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 9 Statement No. 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People who speak more than one language are very intelligent. (28)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>3,23</td>
<td>12,10</td>
<td>59,68</td>
<td>16,13</td>
<td>8,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>12,30</td>
<td>54,10</td>
<td>22,13</td>
<td>9,84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>16,43</td>
<td>52,86</td>
<td>15,00</td>
<td>10,71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10 Statement No. 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People from my country are good at learning foreign languages. (23)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>20.16</td>
<td>61.29</td>
<td>14.52</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>63.11</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>61.43</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11 Statement No. 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages. (25)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>33.87</td>
<td>30.65</td>
<td>28.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>30.33</td>
<td>44.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>27.14</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>38.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2. The difficulty of language learning

Concerning the general difficulty of foreign language learning, there were no significant differences among the three language groups. 81% of students of English, 82% of students of Romance languages and 85% of participants studying a Slavic language endorsed the popular belief that some languages are easier to learn than others, as illustrated in Table 12.

### Table 12 Statement No. 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some languages are easier to learn than others. (22)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>39.52</td>
<td>41.94</td>
<td>13.71</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>39.34</td>
<td>42.62</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>52.14</td>
<td>32.86</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although students’ seemed to agree on the fact that some languages are easier to learn than others, their answers differed considerably when they were to judge the difficulty of their target language. For illustration, Figure 3 shows the distribution of English students’ beliefs concerning the difficulty of English.
As can be seen in Figure 3, 14% of participants studying English rated English as difficult, 56% considered it a language of medium difficulty, approximately a third believed that it is an easy or even very easy language and no one of them thought that English is a very difficult language. The responses of their colleagues from the department of Romance languages do not differ drastically from theirs, as Figure 4 illustrates.
Figure 4 shows that 2% judged the Romance language they are studying as very difficult, 17% of them believed their language to be difficult and the majority (67%) considered their language a language of medium difficulty. The remaining percentage thought of their target language as easy. Nevertheless, we can see in Figure 5 that the responses given by students of Slavic languages were in sharp contrast to those given by students of English and Romance languages.

From Figure 5 it may be calculated that an overwhelming majority (78%) of the respondents studying a Slavic language rated their particular target language as difficult (14%) or even very difficult (64%). Only 4 out of 140 students’ of Slavic languages who participated in the study thought that their language is easy or very easy.

Within the group of Romance languages and that of Slavic languages, respondents also differed as to the difficulty level of their particular target language. While 44% of students of French believed French is a difficult or very difficult language, only 16% of participants studying Italian called their language a difficult or very difficult one. Spanish was judged a difficult language only by a mere 5% of
respondents studying it. No one of them rated it as very difficult and 72% thought that it is a language of medium difficulty.

In the survey, there was no student of French who believed French to be a very easy language and only one out of 32 (3%) thought of it as an easy language. In contrast, 11% of subjects studying Italian and 23% of those studying Spanish rated their target language as easy. Not a single student of Spanish considered Spanish to be a very difficult language and one out of 45 (2%) students of Italian rated the language a very easy one. Out of 122 students of Romance languages, only two indicated to study Portuguese and both of them judged it as a language of medium difficulty.

Within the Slavic language group, Russian was judged the most difficult language, as 79% of the participants studying this Slavic language called it difficult or very difficult. Only two out of 71 (3%) students of Russian thought that their language is easy or very easy. All other Slavic languages, except Slovak, were rated as difficult or very difficult by two thirds of the respective respondents. Not surprisingly, then, with exception of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Polish, none of the other five Slavic languages was judged as easy or very easy. One out of 27 students of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian considered the 3 languages to be easy and not a single student believed them to be very easy. Likewise, Polish was regarded as easy by one out of 12 Polish students, while no one of them rated it as very easy.

Although, as illustrated in Table 13, the great majority of students from all three language groups believed that they will learn to speak the language they are studying very well, students of English (86%) and Romance languages (84%) had higher percentages of agreement than those studying a Slavic language (71%). Only 1% of English students and 7% of participants from the department of Romance languages disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while a considerable percentage (18%) of students of Slavic languages indicated (strong) disagreement.
Table 13 Statement No. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>44,35</td>
<td>41,13</td>
<td>13,71</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>44,26</td>
<td>40,16</td>
<td>8,20</td>
<td>5,74</td>
<td>1,64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>32,86</td>
<td>37,86</td>
<td>11,43</td>
<td>14,29</td>
<td>3,57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As far as the item 'It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language' is concerned, we can see from Table 14 that there were no significant differences among the responses given by students of the three different language groups. The vast majority (82%-88%) of each group disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 14 Statement No. 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>1,61</td>
<td>4,84</td>
<td>12,10</td>
<td>32,26</td>
<td>49,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>3,28</td>
<td>12,30</td>
<td>40,98</td>
<td>41,80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>1,43</td>
<td>3,57</td>
<td>7,14</td>
<td>43,57</td>
<td>44,29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, for most of the students, it is easier to understand a foreign language than to speak it. Students’ beliefs differed when they had to rate their agreement to the statement 'It is easier to read and write than to speak and understand a foreign language’. With regard to the English and the Romance language group, the responses for this item were fairly evenly distributed throughout the categories. Whereas 36% of students of English agreed or strongly agreed, 35% felt neutral towards it and the rest indicated disagreement or strongly disagreement. Among students of Romance languages, even 43% expressed agreement or strong agreement, 32% neither agreed nor disagreed and the remaining 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Interestingly, 58% of students of Spanish stated that reading and writing are easier than speaking and understanding, compared to only approximately a third of respondents studying French or Italian.
Students of Slavic languages were, however, considerably different to their counterparts in their responses. More than half of them (51%) believed that it is easier to read and write than to speak and understand their target language. One quarter of them were neutral about this item and for the other remaining quarter, reading and writing seem to be more difficult than speaking and understanding the language. Regarding the individual Slavic languages, the highest percentage of (strong) agreement (56%) was represented by students of Russian. Otherwise, there were no striking differences between students of the other Slavic languages. Table 15 below details students’ responses.

Table 15 Statement No. 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is easier to read and write than to speak and understand a foreign language (13)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>10,48</td>
<td>25,81</td>
<td>34,68</td>
<td>22,58</td>
<td>6,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>13,93</td>
<td>28,69</td>
<td>31,97</td>
<td>17,21</td>
<td>8,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>14,29</td>
<td>36,43</td>
<td>24,29</td>
<td>16,43</td>
<td>8,57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. The nature of language learning

Most participants strongly endorsed the notion that a foreign language is best to learn in its native country. 81% of students of the English language, 90% of students of Slavic languages and even 94% of participants studying a Romance language agreed or strongly agreed with this idea. Interestingly, the idea that every language student should spend an extended period of time in a country, where their target language is spoken, was supported by a slightly smaller percentage (around 80%) of each language group. When they were asked if it is necessary to know about the target language’s culture in order to speak it, approximately two thirds of respondents studying English and Romance languages and even three quarters of students of Slavic languages indicated agreement or strong agreement. Detailed percentages regarding these matters are given in Table 16, Table 17 and Table 18.
Moreover, the vast majority of students of English (84%), Romance (91%) and Slavic languages (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that the best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it. The idea that language learning is merely a matter of translating from one's native language was rejected by 74% of respondents studying English, and by 75% of those studying a Romance language. Surprisingly, only slightly more than the half, that is 56% of students of Slavic languages disapproved of this notion. For illustration, Table 19 and Table 20 show the exact distribution of students’ answers.

Table 19 Statement No. 8

The best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it. (8)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>50,00</td>
<td>33,87</td>
<td>15,32</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>46,72</td>
<td>44,26</td>
<td>7,38</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>51,43</td>
<td>35,71</td>
<td>10,00</td>
<td>2,86</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 Statement No. 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>3,23</td>
<td>22,58</td>
<td>44,35</td>
<td>29,84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>0,82</td>
<td>3,28</td>
<td>27,05</td>
<td>38,52</td>
<td>30,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>0,71</td>
<td>7,86</td>
<td>35,00</td>
<td>41,43</td>
<td>15,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be detected from Table 20, only a few out of all survey respondents thought that the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning how to translate from their native language. When they were to judge the statement 'The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar', students of Slavic languages had the highest percentage of agreement with 40%. In contrast, only 23% of students of English and 29% of students of Romance languages agreed or strongly agreed with this item. Almost half (45%) of respondents studying English disagreed with it, compared to only 22% of students of Slavic and 29% of students of Romance languages. 69% of participants from the departments of English and Slavic languages and only 55% of students of Romance languages agreed or strongly agreed that learning new vocabulary words is the most important part of learning a foreign language. Only less than 11% of respondents from each of the three language groups disapproved of this notion. Table 21 and Table 22 detail students’ answers.

Table 21 Statement No. 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>22,58</td>
<td>31,45</td>
<td>38,71</td>
<td>6,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>27,05</td>
<td>42,62</td>
<td>21,31</td>
<td>7,38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>35,00</td>
<td>37,86</td>
<td>20,00</td>
<td>2,14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22 Statement No. 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>16,94</td>
<td>51,61</td>
<td>20,97</td>
<td>8,06</td>
<td>2,42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>12,30</td>
<td>42,62</td>
<td>38,52</td>
<td>6,56</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>21,43</td>
<td>47,86</td>
<td>26,43</td>
<td>4,29</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4. Learning and communication strategies

Not surprisingly, students from all three language groups agreed almost unanimously that it is important to repeat and practise a lot. For illustration, Table 23 shows the detailed percentages. This very item was actually the only one in the whole questionnaire where not a single student indicated disagreement or strong disagreement. Students of Slavic languages most strongly (99%) supported it, as only 2 out of 140 respondents studying a Slavic language felt neutral towards the importance of practice and revision in foreign language learning. Likewise, only 2 out of 124 English students were neutral about this idea, whereas within the Romance language group, only 5 out of 122 (4%) students neither agreed nor disagreed.

Table 23 Statement No. 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is important to repeat and practise a lot. (19)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>57,26</td>
<td>41,13</td>
<td>1,61</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>63,93</td>
<td>31,97</td>
<td>4,10</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>70,00</td>
<td>28,57</td>
<td>1,43</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 24, exposure to authentic audio material was considered relevant or even highly relevant by 90% of students of English, 92% of participants from the Romance language group and 82% of subjects studying a Slavic language. While there was no student of English who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the importance of listening to authentic spoken discourse, only 2% of respondents studying a Slavic language and 4% of those studying did not see its relevance.

Table 24 Statement No. 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to authentic audio material is important. (14)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>43,55</td>
<td>45,97</td>
<td>6,45</td>
<td>3,23</td>
<td>0,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>41,80</td>
<td>50,00</td>
<td>8,20</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>31,43</td>
<td>50,71</td>
<td>15,71</td>
<td>1,43</td>
<td>0,71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 25 shows that most respondents from each language group expressed high agreement with the statement 'I enjoy practising my language skills with the native speakers I meet'. 6% of students of English and 10% of those from the other two departments felt neutral towards this issue, whereas only a few persons indicated that they do not welcome communication with natives of the language they are studying. Related to this concern, the notion of speaking a foreign language with an excellent pronunciation was endorsed by exactly two thirds of students from each of the three language groups, as can be seen from Table 26.

Table 25 Statement No. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I enjoy practising my language skills with the native speakers I meet. (2)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>72,58</td>
<td>20,16</td>
<td>5,65</td>
<td>1,61</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>62,30</td>
<td>26,23</td>
<td>9,02</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>0,82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>50,71</td>
<td>32,86</td>
<td>10,71</td>
<td>4,29</td>
<td>1,43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26 Statement No. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent pronunciation. (3)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>25,00</td>
<td>40,32</td>
<td>20,16</td>
<td>13,71</td>
<td>0,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>19,67</td>
<td>45,08</td>
<td>23,77</td>
<td>11,48</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>33,57</td>
<td>32,86</td>
<td>24,29</td>
<td>8,57</td>
<td>0,71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When students were asked whether they feel timid speaking their target language with other people, nearly half (47%) of the participants studying a Slavic language responded positively, compared to only 39% of students of Romance languages and 29% of students of English. With a percentage of 61%, students of English were also those who showed the highest disagreement with this statement. Within the groups of Romance and Slavic languages, on the contrary, only around 40% indicated disagreement or strong disagreement. Table 27 provides students’ detailed responses to this issue.
Table 27 Statement No. 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel timid (shy) when speaking the language with other people. (9)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>7,26</td>
<td>21,77</td>
<td>10,48</td>
<td>29,03</td>
<td>31,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>13,11</td>
<td>25,41</td>
<td>20,49</td>
<td>28,69</td>
<td>12,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>17,86</td>
<td>29,29</td>
<td>16,43</td>
<td>16,43</td>
<td>20,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only slight differences among the three groups could be found in their responses to the notion that until one cannot say something correctly one should not speak in a foreign language, as can be seen from Table 28. Whereas around 95% of respondents studying English and Romance languages disapproved of it, only 89% of students of Slavic languages disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. The statement ‘If beginning students are permitted to make errors in their target language, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on’ was rejected by more than half of respondents from each language group. However, while 70% of participants studying English and 68% of those studying Romance languages expressed disagreement or strong disagreement, only 52% of students of Slavic languages disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. Detailed responses to this item are given in Table 29.

Table 28 Statement No. 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You shouldn’t speak anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly. (10)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>4,03</td>
<td>25,81</td>
<td>69,35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>0,82</td>
<td>0,82</td>
<td>3,28</td>
<td>27,87</td>
<td>67,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>0,71</td>
<td>2,14</td>
<td>8,57</td>
<td>23,57</td>
<td>65,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 Statement No. 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If beginning students are permitted to make errors in their target language, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. (11)</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>7,26</td>
<td>6,45</td>
<td>16,13</td>
<td>42,74</td>
<td>27,42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance languages</td>
<td>4,92</td>
<td>7,38</td>
<td>19,67</td>
<td>39,34</td>
<td>28,69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic languages</td>
<td>6,43</td>
<td>15,00</td>
<td>26,43</td>
<td>27,86</td>
<td>24,39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, only one participant out of 386 was strongly against the idea to guess if one does not know a word in the foreign language. Within each language group, approximately 80% indicated (strong) agreement, nearly 20% felt neutral and only a few students expressed disagreement. For illustration, Table 30 below shows the detailed percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement No. 18</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English language</strong></td>
<td>29.84</td>
<td>47.58</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romance languages</strong></td>
<td>30.33</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slavic languages</strong></td>
<td>22.86</td>
<td>52.86</td>
<td>19.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 30, students from all three departments held quite similar beliefs regarding this issue.
6. Discussion of findings

In this section, the study’s findings described in the previous chapter will be discussed and reflected on. Generally speaking, the findings show that students of English, Romance and Slavic languages held quite similar beliefs about a great number of statements presented in the questionnaire. Within each of the four areas (‘foreign language aptitude’, ‘the difficulty of language learning’, ‘the nature of language learning’ and ‘learning and communication strategies’) clearly more similarities than differences could be identified. However, as will be illustrated in the following, for some statements students’ responses differed slightly or considerably.

6.1. Foreign language aptitude

The great majority of all three language groups believed in the existence of foreign language aptitude, supporting the idea that some individuals have a special ability for learning foreign languages. As not a single student out of all respondents studying English disagreed or strongly disagreed with this idea, they were the group who indicated the highest agreement and thus seemed to be most convinced that some people are naturally more gifted language learners than others. Surprisingly, at the same time students of English were also those who assessed their own aptitude for foreign language learning lower than their counterparts. However, the percentages for the statement ‘I have a special ability for learning foreign languages’ did not vary much among the three groups. Three fifths of participants studying English thought that they possess special language learning skills, compared to two thirds of each of the other two groups. Thus, students from the departments of Romance and Slavic languages appeared to be slightly more optimistic than their English colleagues.
When they were asked whether age and gender are determining factors in foreign language learning, participants from all three departments gave similar responses. Whereas the vast majority of all students endorsed the notion that children are likely to learn languages more quickly, they expressed neutrality or disagreement towards the commonly encountered belief that women are better than men at learning languages. Thus, respondents from all three language groups did believe in the existence of age-related differences in the question of foreign language aptitude, but they did not feel that language learning ability is related to gender.

Respondents’ reactions were also highly similar when they were confronted with the statement saying that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. Regardless whether studying English, a Romance or a Slavic language, the study’s participants saw no problem in why not everyone should be able to learn and consequently speak a foreign language. Only less than ten out of all respondents disapproved of this notion. Likewise, results indicate that students from all three departments agreed upon the idea that learning a foreign language is easier for people who already speak another one. Again, the three language groups showed no significant differences in their beliefs.

Regarding the issue of native-likeness, all participants appeared to be rather realistic and not too optimistic about their accent. Interestingly, it was students of Slavic languages who were most negative about their accent. Nevertheless, also students from the other two groups were rather pessimistic when they were asked about the native-likeness of their accent. This demonstrates that participants are probably aware of the fact that native-like pronunciation cannot be easily achieved and that many of them, very likely, have a hard time studying phonetics and phonology.

Moreover, the three language groups did not differ much from each other in their opinion towards the notion that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent. More than half of respondents from each group felt neutral
towards this statement. Similarly, the majority of each language group expressed neutrality when asked whether people from their country are good at learning foreign languages. Participants’ beliefs about the idea that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at foreign languages were also quite similar. Only a very small number of students from each language group endorsed this statement, whereas the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed with it.

All in all, within the category ‘Foreign language aptitude’, results indicate many similarities among the three language groups. Particularly the responses to more general statements such as ‘Women are better than men at learning foreign languages’ or ‘Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language’, were quite parallel across the three groups. Slight differences could be identified in their beliefs about their own accent and ability for language learning.

In any case, it must not be underestimated that beliefs about foreign language aptitude have a considerable power on the language learning process – in a positive as well as in a negative sense. Students, who are convinced of their own talent for foreign language learning, will most likely do better than self-conscious learners. This point is also stressed by Horwitz (1988: 288):

The concept of foreign language aptitude can be the source of a negative outlook on language learning. A student’s belief that some people are unable, or at least less able, to learn a second language can lead to negative expectations about their own capability, especially when they are members of that particular group. Students who feel that they personally lack some capacity necessary to language learning [...] probably doubt their own ability as language learners and expect to do poorly in language study.

According to Horwitz, negative beliefs about one’s own abilities very often predict failure and negative outcomes in language learning. But in order to be able to counteract harmful beliefs and replace them with positive ones, teachers as well as students themselves, have to strive for a deeper understanding of their beliefs. This means that learners can influence their beliefs and consequently their success,
only if they develop insights into their beliefs. Of course, teachers are the ones who should support them to do so.

6.2. The difficulty of language learning

Respondents from all three language groups overwhelmingly supported the idea of a hierarchy of languages by learning difficulty. This means that for the item ‘Some languages are easier to learn than others’, there was high agreement among students of English, Romance and Slavic languages. Otherwise, their responses in the category ‘The difficulty of language learning’ clearly show more differences than those in the first category.

In general, participants’ beliefs differed remarkably as to the difficulty of their particular target language. Whereas the responses given by students of English and students of Romance language differed only slightly from each other, respondents from the Slavic language group were somewhat different in their difficulty assessment. Regarding English, results were in line with the common belief that it is a language of medium difficulty, as more than half of respondents studying English selected this response to assess their own target language. Similarly, the majority of participants from the department of Romance languages thought that they are studying a language of average difficulty. In sharp contrast, only one fifth of respondents studying a Slavic language believed that they are studying a language of medium difficulty. The vast majority of participants from the department of Slavic languages assessed their particular target language as difficult or even very difficult. It can be interpreted from these results that Slavic languages are difficult to learn which, in fact, confirms the common opinion that languages like Russian, Croatian or Polish are difficult languages.

What is also interesting, are the differences in respondents’ beliefs within the Romance language group. Among French, Italian and Spanish, French was rated
the most difficult and Spanish the easiest language. While nearly half of the participants studying French thought of it as difficult or very difficult, only a few students of Spanish believed that they are studying a difficult language. The fourth Romance language, Portuguese, was judged a language of average difficulty by the two respondents studying it. Not surprisingly, out of thirteen different languages, Russian was rated the most difficult, as it was described as a difficult language by four fifths of the respondents studying Russian. All other languages, except Slovak, were perceived as difficult or very difficult by the subjects studying the respective language.

Generally speaking, the findings show that the difficulty of foreign language learning depends, to a certain degree, on the relative difficulty of the particular target language chosen. Of course, the results for the individual languages only reflect the opinions held by the present study's participants studying that language at the University of Vienna. Difficulty ratings might be considerably different, if, for example, students with other mother tongues were asked.

Interestingly, students of English and Romance languages were more optimistic that they will learn to speak their target language very well than their colleagues from the department of Slavic languages. The great majority (~85%) of students from the English and the Romance language group expected to speak their target language very well, compared to only slightly more than two thirds of participants studying a Slavic language. This might have to do with the fact that “student judgments about the difficulty of language learning are critical to the development of their expectations for and commitment to it”, as Horwitz (1988: 286) puts it. Her line of argumentation would also explain why respondents studying a Slavic language were quite pessimistic about their own prognosis as learners and speakers of the language. On the other hand, it has to be pointed out that those language students, who feel too relaxed about the task of learning a foreign language, might not succeed as much as they desired. “When students rate the task of language learning as being relatively easy and rapidly accomplished, they are
likely to become frustrated when their progress is not rapid”, as argued by Horwitz (1988: 286). Once more, it becomes evident that learner beliefs are a very complex system that may influence our abilities and ultimate outcome more than one would think.

Very similar beliefs were held among students from all three language groups, when they were asked whether speaking a foreign language is easier than understanding it. An overwhelming majority of students from all three departments disagreed with this statement, believing that it is easier to understand a foreign language than to speak it. Students of English, Romance and Slavic languages, however, differed in their beliefs about the difficulty of reading and writing compared to the difficulty of speaking and understanding in a foreign language. Whereas only slight differences could be identified in the responses of participants studying English or a Romance language, their counterparts from the department of Slavic languages held quite different views. For more than half of Slavic language students, it is apparently easier to read and write than to understand and speak their target language. In contrast, no tendency could be identified within the other two language groups. Very roughly, it can be said that the responses of participants studying English or a Romance language were distributed in thirds across the categories of agreement, neutrality and disagreement. This indicates that for some individuals speaking and understanding is easier than reading and writing, while for others it is vice versa. Thus, as far as the English and the Romance language group are concerned, students appeared to have no significant problems with either of the mentioned skills. With regard to the Slavic language group, on the contrary, it seems that respondents do not have an easy time learning to understand and speak their target language.
6.3. The nature of language learning

Not surprisingly, the great majority of all students who participated in this study felt enthusiastic about the notion that a foreign language can be learnt best in its native country. Nevertheless, students of Romance (94%) and Slavic (90%) indicated higher agreement with this statement than those studying English (81%). One explanation for these results could be that Romance and Slavic languages are extensively spoken only in their native countries, whereas English, as the lingua franca, is spoken everywhere. Of course, one cannot deny the fact that English is best learnt in its native environment, however, in Austria (and elsewhere), opportunities for practising English are generally certainly greater than those for practising Romance or Slavic languages.

Agreement with the idea that every language student should spend at least five to six months living in a country where their target language is spoken was not as high as expected. Only around four fifths of students from each of the three language groups felt that spending a semester abroad is a must for people who want to become language teachers or other kinds of experts of the language they are studying. Considering, moreover, that the subjects were all language majors and have probably been taking lectures and seminar courses dealing with the nature of foreign language learning, the author would have expected higher agreement with this item. The results, however, show that a considerable percentage of students from all three departments was not in favour of studying abroad.

The majority of all three language groups believed in the importance of cultural contact in language learning. Students of Slavic languages agreed most strongly with the statement that it is necessary to know about the target language’s culture in order to speak it. Whereas three quarters of their group indicated agreement or strong agreement with this statement, only two thirds of the other two language groups approved of it. This might imply that respondents studying Slavic
languages are more integratively motivated than their counterparts, meaning that they show more openness towards the target culture. As has been explained in chapter two, learners with integrative motivation strongly desire to be accepted by their target language community. This could be one explanation why students of Slavic languages considered the role of cultural contact more important than their colleagues, but of course their beliefs may have many sources.

In modern language teaching and learning, the emphasis is more and more on the communicative use of the target language and less on translation exercises. It is obvious that in the language classroom, the once dominating grammar and translation exercises have been replaced by communicative activities such as discussions, role-plays and problem-solving tasks. Fortunately, the vast majority of all language students seemed to be aware of the ever-increasing importance of communicative skills in the modern world, indicating agreement or strong agreement with the statement that the best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it. What is also positive is that not a single student out of 386 strongly disagreed with this notion.

Only a small minority of each language group supported the idea that the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning how to translate from their native language. Strikingly, only slightly more than half of Slavic language students disapproved of this notion, compared to three quarters of the other two language groups. This might indicate, for example, that respondents from the department of Slavic languages have been exposed to translation exercises more than their counterparts from the other two departments. Indeed, teachers and their instructional methods may contribute enormously to the formation of their students’ beliefs – in a positive as well as in a negative sense (Horwitz 2007: 6).

When participants were asked about the significance of grammar in foreign language learning, students of English and Romance languages again held similar beliefs, whereas responses given by students of Slavic languages were
considerably different. Respondents studying a Slavic language were the ones who indicated the highest agreement with the statement that learning the grammar is the most important part of learning a foreign language. Once again, this points to the explanation that their language teachers probably place more emphasis on grammar and translation practice than do the professors of their counterparts. Nevertheless, and surprisingly, Slavic language students also attached great importance to learning new vocabulary words. More than two thirds of the Slavic and the English language group believed in the relevance of learning new words in a foreign language, compared to only around half of participants studying a Romance language. These results imply that for students of Slavic languages, translation practice and grammar study are important but at the same time, they seem to be aware that one cannot learn a foreign language without learning new vocabulary items. Interestingly, participants studying a Romance language expressed the highest degree of neutrality towards this statement.

6.4. Learning and communication strategies

The statement 'It is important to repeat and practise a lot' was the one that received most support from all three language groups. Remarkably, not a single participant disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and only a few out of 386 participants felt neutral towards it. Similarly, the vast majority of students from all three departments believed exposure to authentic audio material to be important, whereby the Slavic language group indicated the lowest agreement (80%) among the three groups.

Likewise, hardly any differences among the three groups could be identified when they were asked whether they enjoy practising their target language with the native speakers they meet. Most respondents felt positive about this issue, whereas only a small percentage expressed neutrality or disagreement. Thus,
regardless of their target language, participants appeared to welcome communication with natives, which is, of course, a very good sign.

Respondents’ beliefs about native-like pronunciation in a foreign language were also quite similar. The statement ‘It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent pronunciation’ was supported by approximately two thirds of all language groups. Whereas a fifth of each group felt neutral towards this idea, a small percentage believed a native-like accent not to be relevant.

Minor differences in participants’ beliefs that are, however, worth mentioning, could be found in their responses to the question whether they feel timid speaking their target language with other people. Respondents studying a Slavic language appeared to be the most anxious speakers, as nearly half of them responded positively to this statement. With the smallest (29%) percentage of agreement, students of English have been found to be the most confident speakers. The fact that almost half of students from the Slavic language group admitted to feel shy in conversations may be a result of their beliefs about the difficulty of their target language. In other words, if they do not progress as much as expected because their target language is more difficult than they thought, this could be a cause for their feelings of insecurity.

In their beliefs about the statement ‘You shouldn’t speak anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly’, students of English, Romance and Slavic languages did not differ much from each other. An overwhelming majority of each of the three groups indicated disagreement with this idea. This, of course, is a very positive result, as learners who are too concerned with correctness “will probably have difficulty accepting, being comfortable with, and participating in the communicative approaches now common in many foreign language classes” (Horwitz 1988: 290).

Notable differences were found in participants’ reactions to the statement ‘If beginning students are permitted to make errors in their target language, it will be
difficult for them to speak correctly later on’. Interestingly, while only around half of Slavic language students disapproved of this idea, more than two thirds of the other two groups rejected it. Participants from the three departments agreed that it is okay to guess if one does not know a word in the foreign language. For this statement, responses have been strikingly similar among students of English, Slavic and Romance languages.

7. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The aim of the present study was to provide a comparison of language learning beliefs held by students of English, Romance and Slavic languages. In other words, it focused on identifying differences and similarities in beliefs among learners studying different target languages. Given the descriptive nature of the research design, a quantitative methodology seemed most suitable to conduct the present study. As has been pointed out in chapter three, this sort of approach to the study of learner beliefs about language learning offers the possibility to investigate large samples. For this kind of research, it is necessary to study a larger population in order to achieve reliable results.

Of course, questionnaires have their limitations, as they constrain respondents to selecting pre-determined response options. Accordingly, in the inventory used for this study, students were required to respond to a given set of beliefs concerning issues such as the difficulty of language learning and foreign language aptitude. They had no opportunity to express their own individual beliefs about foreign language learning. However, this limitation is not relevant if the research purpose is to compare the beliefs of different groups of students (Victori 1999: 16). Even if they are not always “a direct representation of the truth” (Kramsch 2000: 149), questionnaires are certainly adequate to “provide descriptions and comparisons of learner beliefs” (1999: 16).
It is obvious that the results of this study reflect only a static view of respondents’ beliefs. In order to get a more comprehensive picture of university students’ beliefs about language learning, it would be interesting to research whether and how their beliefs change over time, i.e. over the course of their studies. Thereby, it would also be essential to focus on students’ erroneous beliefs and follow them in a longitudinal qualitative study.

Future studies may also want to further research the links between the relationship between learner beliefs and other individual differences, such as personality, learning strategies and motivation. This means that the focus should be not on learner beliefs in isolation, but rather on the interaction of beliefs with other individual differences. In further research, it could also be investigated how learner variables reinforce each other. Another research direction might be to explore, to what extent learners’ beliefs are congruent with those of their teacher.

8. Pedagogical implications

From a pedagogical point of view, the results of the present study indicate a need to give more attention to language students’ beliefs and misconceptions in the language classroom. By providing their learners with knowledge about the process and nature of foreign language learning, teachers can help them to become aware of their dysfunctional beliefs and consequently help them to alleviate or even remove those misconceptions. “Since student beliefs about language learning are often based on limited knowledge and/or experience, the teacher’s most effective course may well be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information”, as argued by Horwitz (1987: 126). This means that it is the language teacher’s task to help their students develop an understanding of their own beliefs and guide them to become more effective users of the language they are studying. Horwitz, who surveyed the beliefs of American students, points out that belief inventories, such
as the BALLI, can serve as a useful tool to deal with learners’ beliefs in the language classroom:

Teachers at the Intensive English Program at the University of Texas, for example, have used the BALLI as a discussion stimulus at the onset of ESL classes to help students develop more effective learning strategies; they report that this discussion not only helped their students clear up some misconceptions about language learning, but also that the activity was one of their most successful discussions as students (and teachers) were vitally interested in the topic. This practice also helps teachers become better aware of their own students’ specific beliefs. (Horwitz 1987: 126)

By reflecting on students’ beliefs in form of a discussion, for example, it is also easier for teachers to gain deeper insights into their learners’ thoughts and ideas about language learning. This procedure, in turn, very likely makes teachers able to understand why their students approach certain learning tasks in the way they do. “In addition, by reflecting on learners’ beliefs, language teachers will be able to foster change in each individual and prepare the learners to become better language users”, as Erlenawati (2002: 336) puts it.

A first step towards this direction would be to formulate questions, such as the following ones, and address them in class: What are the most difficult aspects of learning English/French/Russian/…? Why are so many students rather negative about their accent? What can they do to achieve more native-like pronunciation? Should language students be obliged to spend a semester in their target language’s native country? What can introverts do to counteract speaking anxiety?

Moreover, language teachers from the departments of English, Romance and Slavic languages at the University of Vienna could draw on the findings of this study to ensure that their courses are compatible with their students’ interests, needs and expectations. Of course, it is not only the teachers and professors who are ‘responsible’ for their students’ beliefs, but, as discussed in chapter three, it has been shown that teachers’ beliefs and instructional methods play a strong role in the belief formation of their students. The importance of considering learners’ opinions, beliefs and preferences is also stressed by Trinder (2013: 9):
Given the negative impact of a mismatch between instructional approach and dominant belief system in terms of motivation, teachers should of course attempt to accommodate these [their students’] learning preferences – to whatever extent is possible.

The study’s findings allow teachers thus to reconsider and adapt their own instructional practices and teaching methods, in order to meet more closely the learning preferences and needs of their students. For example, findings show that for students of English and Romance languages, it is easier to understand and speak their target language than for those studying a Slavic language. Having this information, language teachers from the department of Slavic languages could search for ideas how to expose their students to more speaking activities. Of course, teachers also have to question their students’ beliefs, particularly if it seems that they hold misconceptions about certain aspects of language learning. Bernat (2004: 49) recommends that

if the degree of importance placed upon one aspect of language acquisition [...] is unrealistically high, the teacher could discuss its relative importance compared with other aspects of language and negotiate its weight in the course with his/her class. This will provide for a more learner-centred approach to language teaching, where different learning styles are accommodated and the curriculum is negotiated.

In many ways, the findings of studies investigating learner beliefs, such as the present one, are of great value for educators who care about improving teaching and learning.

9. Summary of the findings and conclusion

This study investigated the role of target language in the formation of language students’ beliefs about language learning. The aim was to find out whether learners of different target languages hold similar or rather different beliefs about issues related to foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning and communication and learning strategies. For this
purpose, a modified version of the popular Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), developed by Elaine Horwitz in the 1980s, was used to collect relevant data. A total of 386 subjects, all of them language students at the University of Vienna, participated in the study. Out of these 386 respondents, who completed the survey, 32% were students of English, 32% were studying a Romance language and 36% a Slavic language. Thus, the three language groups were relatively equally represented in the study.

The study’s findings which have been discussed in detail in chapter six will now be summarised whereby the identified similarities and differences in students’ beliefs will be pointed out. In general, the three groups agreed most on the existence of foreign language aptitude and age-related differences in language learning, the idea of a hierarchy of languages by learning difficulty and the importance of repetition, practice and exposure to authentic audio material. Moreover, the majority of all groups believed that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language and that learning a foreign language is easier for people who already speak one. Likewise, for most of them understanding a foreign language is easier than speaking it. All three groups expressed neutrality towards the notion that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent. Furthermore, the majority of students expressed disagreement with the ideas that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign language and that women are better language learners than men. Students of English, Romance and Slavic languages mainly agreed that language students should spend a semester in the native country of their target language and indicated that they enjoy practising the language with native speakers. Respondents generally disagreed with the statement that one should not speak anything in a foreign language until one can say it correctly but supported the idea to guess if one does not know a word.

A number of respondents’ beliefs show small to considerable differences among the three language groups. Whereas the great majority (85%) of participants studying English or a Romance language expected to learn to speak their target
language very well, only two thirds of their counterparts from the department of Slavic languages did so. In contrast, three quarters of students of Slavic languages stressed the importance of cultural contact, compared to only two thirds of the other two groups. Only half of Slavic language students disagreed that the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning its grammar, compared to three quarters of respondents studying English or a Romance language. Moreover, learners of Slavic languages interestingly indicated higher agreement to the importance of vocabulary and translation practice than their counterparts. Surprisingly, they were also more negative about their accent than their colleagues from the other two departments. While students of English appeared to be the most confident speakers among the three groups, even half of students of Slavic languages indicated to feel shy when speaking their target language with other people. Furthermore, the results show that for students of Slavic languages it is easier to read and write than to understand and speak their target language, whereas no tendency concerning the four skills could be identified within the English and the Romance language group. The most striking differences were, not surprisingly, found in their beliefs about the difficulty of their target language. The majority of respondents studying English or a Romance language believed that they are studying a language of medium difficulty, compared to only one fifth of students of Slavic languages. In fact, the majority of students from the Slavic language group perceived their target language as difficult or very difficult. Within the Slavic language group, Russian was rated the most difficult language, whereas French was perceived as the most difficult Romance language. Interestingly, compared to their counterparts, students of English indicated slightly lower agreement to the statements ‘A foreign language is best learnt in its native country’ and ‘I have a special ability for learning foreign languages’.

To conclude, students of English, Slavic and Romance languages held quite similar beliefs about a great number of statements presented in the questionnaire. Especially for more general statements, such as ‘Some people have a special ability
for learning foreign languages’ or ‘The best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it’, students’ responses were very similar. Slight to significant differences were, however, found in their beliefs about more specific matters such as the importance of vocabulary, translation and grammar exercises in language learning or the difficulty of their target language. Some of the results may surprise, while others probably confirm our preconceptions. What is most striking about the findings of this study is that students of English and Romance languages showed more similarities in their beliefs, whereas respondents studying a Slavic language were found to differ from their counterparts in a number of aspects. Attempts to explain these partly surprising results have been made in chapter six, however, more research is definitely needed to fully understand the relationship between students’ beliefs and their particular target language.
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11. Appendices

Appendix A  Questionnaire

Learner beliefs about language learning: a study on foreign language students at the University of Vienna

Note: This survey is a modified version of Horwitz’s (1987) BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory).

Gender *
Bitte wählen...

Age *

Nationality *

Which language are you studying? (In case you are studying MORE THAN ONE language, please CHOOSE ONE and always relate to this language when answering the following questions.) *
- Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian
- Bulgarian
- Czech
- English
- French
- Italian
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Russian
- Slovak
- Slovenian
- Spanish
- Ukrainian

To which language group does this language belong? *
Please choose...

Are you studying more than one language? *
- yes
- no

Study programme *
Bitte wählen...

How many semesters (including this semester) have you been in your current study programme? *

Read each of the following statements carefully and decide if you
- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

If you study more than one language, base your decisions on your experience in the language you have indicated above.

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17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.

18. It is OK to guess if you don’t know a word in the foreign language.

19. It is important to repeat and practise a lot.

20. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.

21. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.

22. Some languages are easier to learn than others.

23. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.

24. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

25. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.

26. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.

27. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.

28. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.

29. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

30. The language I’m studying is:  
   - a very difficult language  
   - a difficult language  
   - a language of medium difficulty  
   - an easy language  
   - a very easy language

THANK YOU!
Appendix B Abstract in German


Im ersten Teil der Diplomarbeit wird das Thema der individuellen Unterschiede im Fremdsprachenerwerb behandelt, wobei nach einer allgemeinen Einführung in die Materie Vorstellungen und Auffassungen ('learner beliefs about language learning') als individuelles Charakteristikum von Sprachenlernenden näher besprochen werden. Der anschließende empirische Teil stellt die Studie vor und fasst ihre Ergebnisse in einer kontrastiven Analyse zusammen.

Appendix C  Curriculum Vitae

Persönliche Daten

Name: Anna Leskovich
Geburtstag und -ort: 06.02.1990, Wien
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich
Wohnort: Parndorf
Sprachen: Deutsch, Englisch, Kroatisch

Ausbildung

2004 – 2008: Gymnasium Kurzwiese, Eisenstadt
2000 – 2004: Gymnasium Neusiedl am See
1996 – 2000: Volksschule Parndorf

Auslandsstudien

02/2010 – 06/2010: ERASMUS-Semester an der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Zagreb
09/2008 – 02/2009: Studium der Anglistik und Kroatistik an der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Zadar

Relevante Berufserfahrung

09/2012 – 08/2014: Vertragslehrerin beim Landesschulrat für Burgenland

Zusätzliche Ausbildungen und Seminare

08/2012: 41. Hrvatski seminar za strane slaviste (2-wöchiges Seminar für Slawisten in Dubrovnik)
07/2010: Stručni skup za odgojitelje, učitelje i nastavnike pripadnika hrvatske nacionalne manjine u inozemstvu i hrvatskog iseljeništva (1-wöchiges Seminar für Lehrer und Erzieher der kroatischen Minderheit in Pula)
07/2009: Stručni skup za odgojitelje, učitelje i nastavnike pripadnika hrvatske nacionalne manjine u inozemstvu i hrvatskog iseljeništva (1-wöchiges Seminar für Lehrer und Erzieher der kroatischen Minderheit in Primošten)