



INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research

Volume 3 Nomor 6 Tahun 2023 Page 3209-3217

E-ISSN 2807-4238 and P-ISSN 2807-4246

Website: <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative>

Discovering Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi keyakinan guru tentang siswa muda, bagaimana keyakinan ini berdampak pada praktik pengajaran mereka, dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keyakinan dan praktik pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini melibatkan empat guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar yang berpengalaman di Bekasi, Jawa Barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus dan mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru memiliki pemahaman yang kuat tentang karakteristik siswa muda dan percaya bahwa mereka dapat mencapai tujuan pembelajaran bahasa melalui berbagai cara. Mereka menggunakan metode interaktif di dalam kelas, memadukan materi berbasis kurikulum, bahasa Inggris, dan bahasa kedua para siswa. Peran guru, pengetahuan, pengalaman, dan kepercayaan diri merupakan lima faktor kunci yang mempengaruhi keyakinan dan praktik guru. Secara khusus, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya pedagogi guru di kelas bahasa.

Kata Kunci: *Keyakinan, Praktek Guru, Pembelajaran Muda*

Abstract

This research explores teachers' beliefs about young students, how these beliefs impact their teaching practices, and the factors that influence English language teaching beliefs and practices. This research involved four experienced elementary school English teachers in Bekasi, West Java. This research uses case studies and collects data through observation, interviews and document analysis. Research findings show that teachers have a strong understanding of the characteristics of young students and believe that they can achieve language learning goals through a variety of means. They use interactive methods in the classroom, combining curriculum-based materials, English, and the students' second language. Teacher role, knowledge, experience, and self-confidence are five key factors that influence teacher beliefs and practices. In particular, this research highlights the importance of teacher pedagogy in the language classroom.

Keywords: *Teacher Beliefs, Practices, Young Learners*

INTRODUCTION

The beliefs of educators greatly influence the ways they teach and the thought processes they use while making decisions in the classroom (Alfiyanto, 2020; Sudirman et al., 2022). Teachers' language theories, the dynamics of language instruction, their professional responsibilities, and the quality of their connections with students all play a part in shaping their professional views over time. Frequently, they serve as a solid benchmark that instructors use to direct their actions (Richards, 1998). When people do things, it's because they think such things are right. Similarly, in ESL courses, a teacher is crucial in helping students become proficient (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017).

While instructing, it is crucial to keep the pupils' ages in mind. To accomplish their pedagogical goals, teachers need to have their own set of beliefs, ideas, and opinions before entering the classroom. When working with younger kids, teachers should be aware of their ages and make every effort to meet their needs. When planning classroom activities for instruction and student learning, bear this in mind. If they want their pupils to learn, instructors should adapt their lessons to their individual strengths. It is believed that students will be more motivated to study if lessons are designed with their age groups in mind (Harmer, 1999).

One may understand instructors' points of view and reality perceptions via their intricate personal and professional knowledge systems (Clark & Peterson, 1986). The conviction in one's own abilities as a teacher is analogous to their professional competence. A teacher's comprehension, judgment, and behavior are shaped by the growing specialization of their knowledge as they gain proficiency in their subject area (Kagan, 1992). This idea has developed over time. The foundation for classroom behavior and teacher decision-making is confidence, which includes both subjective and objective components (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Those in positions of power may make others believe this even if they aren't aware that they do (Borg, 2003). Education and life events begin to form beliefs at a young age (Johnson, 1994). Students' views on education and its role in shaping society develop during their time in school. There are five basic areas of teacher beliefs, which include ideas about curriculum, self-directed learning, teaching, learning, and the process of becoming a teacher.

Practical experience in the classroom is a crucial component of every teacher preparation program. An integral part of every effective teacher education program is student teaching. With the help of a wide range of teaching activities, this program gets future educators ready for the challenges of the profession. It begins with some background information on the teaching Teachers work in the classroom to help students apply what

they've learned in the classroom, build, test, and refine their own pedagogical practices; they also encourage student and faculty collaboration on these practices.

The lower class is comprised of the first, second, and third grade levels, while the upper class encompasses the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. In contrast Scot & Ytreberg (2007) categorizes them into two tiers: the first level for students aged 5-7 years and the second level for those over seven years old (8-10 years). When students commence their English studies at the second level, they are designated as beginners. According to Phillips (2001), "young students" refers to children from their first year of formal schooling (typically aged five or six) up to around eleven or twelve years. Notably, these young students are highly active and inquisitive. It is imperative for teachers to be attuned to the shifting thoughts of these children, as their focus can quickly change from one aspect to another. This awareness is crucial for identifying whether students exhibit active or passive behaviour.

Several studies have explored the beliefs and practices of teachers when instructing young learners. Yusuf (2020) identified the challenge of students using English in conversation and the multifaceted role of teachers as facilitators, assessors, organizers, and controllers in the classroom. Berger et al., (2018) found that teachers' belief systems significantly impact teaching in general, influencing awareness, attitudes, approaches, rules, and student progress. Teacher experience relates positively to self-efficacy and belief in constructivism, though it does not directly affect teaching practices. These studies collectively highlight the critical link between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices and outcomes.

The present study is aimed at analysing teachers' beliefs and classroom practices when teaching young learners and whether there is any connection between their beliefs and pedagogical practices on the characteristics of young learners, the learning of foreign languages by young learners and whether their beliefs showed in the process of teaching the students.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a case study approach because it investigates, understands, and examines a problem that occurs. The case study approach is a research strategy that requires empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts using multiple sources of evidence and is particularly valuable when the boundaries between phenomena and context are blurred (Yin, 2009).

The research was conducted in Islamic elementary Lab school STAI Bani Saleh Bekasi. The study involved four participants from one school. These participants volunteered to

take part in the study. The teachers teach in English (T1, T2, T3, and T4). All the teachers are females. The researcher used purposive sampling in this study since it specified precise criteria. The researcher chose them for various reasons. First, the teachers have a lengthy history of teaching English, as discussed more below. Second, they agreed to be a part of this research because they were concerned about the rising teaching of English to children in schools.

Researchers used two instruments: Observation, Interview, and Documentation classes. For data and information to be used in reasoning, the data and information must be facts. In a definite position as facts, these materials are ready to be used as evidence. The steps for conducting observations are as follows. The study employs two main research methods: interviews and classroom observations. The interviews are conducted face-to-face and are semi-structured, both before and after classroom observations. They focus on the teachers' classroom practices and typically last about an hour. These interviews are carried out in the L2 language (the second language being studied) and are recorded with the participants' consent.

Classroom observations in this study involve participant observation, with the goal of understanding the teachers' beliefs about teaching English. The primary objective is to uncover the teachers' beliefs in order to enhance their teaching practices and adapt their approaches to achieve better learning outcomes. The research has revealed that all English teachers at Labschool STAI Bani Saleh consider a teacher's beliefs in teaching young learners to be important. These beliefs encompass qualities such as being a facilitator, possessing content knowledge, having teaching experience, and maintaining self-confidence in teaching English. These themes emerged from the research findings and are discussed further.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Findings from interview results show various kinds of children's characters. T1 said that "kinds of children characteristics are they have spirit and enthusiastic for learning by looking when their respond." Another teacher expressed, "the characteristic of children is they have unlimited curiosity. They are also excited when doing new things." The characteristics of young learners are also influenced by their learning style. Such as the last teacher said. "They like to learn. while playing, singing, and moving their limbs. They have a short attention span and concentration. Children also like and more easily understand lessons from tangible and accompanied by real objects or objects or pictures of the words being studied, such as

chairs, tables, pencils, etc.

Teachers' Beliefs in Teaching English at Labschool STAI Bani Saleh

The next step is about a teachers' beliefs was to interview them. All English teachers think that a teachers' beliefs in teaching young learners are important. Teachers' beliefs in teaching English motivate students to be advanced in learning English. The researcher also found that the teachers' beliefs obtained from facilitator, content knowledge, experience, and self-confidence in teaching English. The emerging themes from the findings are presented below.

1. Teacher Beliefs About Facilitator

The role of the teacher in a second language class was of a facilitator, motivator, and partner for students, whereas the role of the students in the class is that of the main object in the class and a partner for the teacher. The teacher's responsibility is to give services and facilities to her students in order to make it simpler for them to acquire lessons. As a result, teaching and learning activities improve in effectiveness and efficiency. T4 stated:

When a teacher becomes a facilitator, the teacher must give what is best in the teaching and learning process. Teachers can create a comfortable and conducive classroom. As a facilitator, the teacher must maximize students' interest in learning by actively involving them in the learning process. As said by T3 that "to maximize a good learning process, I have to prepare interesting learning media. Motivate students in every activity, and always evaluate learning regularly." While T1 stated: "In maximizing student learning activities and practices, I always use a lot of media for learning such as Powerpoint, video, and audio. Because it helps students to learn optimally, in addition, asking students to repeat the material that has been delivered can help students easily understand the material being studied.

2. Teacher Beliefs About Content Knowledge

Another belief of a teacher is that teachers have a goal of success in their classrooms. This success comes from the content knowledge. they do. As T2 said "to achieve the goals of belief and practice in learning, a teacher must prepare lesson plans. Because, in the lesson plans there are beliefs that are supported by learning objectives, assessment instruments, and processes." While, T1 stated, "teacher's goal is an integrated personal view about the teaching materials, students, learning and learn. It is supported by the lesson plan that makes learning interactive, inspiring, fun, challenging, also motivating students to participate actively, creatively, and independently according to students' talents, interests, and physical and psychological development.

The T3 argues that "the goal of a teacher is to master the field as a whole. This is

important in "when teachers explain the material being taught in their class" because having knowledge is not enough for a teacher. A teacher must "know how to teach and apply skills in their classrooms.

3. Teacher Beliefs About Experience

Experience is something that has been lived, felt, and done. The teacher's experience is obtained from the activities or activities the teacher has done. One of the types of experiences they get is by participating in various training activities and workshops because they influence beliefs and help teachers create classroom practices. As mentioned by T2, "When I attended several workshops on teaching English, I received valuable materials and activities that I could apply in my language class. Besides that, to improve our competence in teaching, we also share opinions and ideas. Moreover, T4 stated, "What I get from workshops or training is very useful for me. It encourages me to face various problems that I always encounter when teaching a second language. I also become motivated to always give the best for my students.

4. Teacher Beliefs About Self-Confidence

Teacher confidence is also obtained from the confidence of a teacher. This confidence is needed and will be reflected in every behaviour. Therefore, seeing a person's confidence can be seen from his attitude and appearance of behaviors. As T4 says, "teachers' belief comes from various aspects, such as self-confidence, teacher creativity, activities carried out in the classroom, and how teachers motivate students to participate in classroom activities. On the other hand, T3 says that "belief self will affect a teacher's performance. They must be bold and loud when speaking in front of the class. However, T1 said that "a teacher's confidence is seen from how the teacher delivers learning materials. A teacher who prepares the material well will master it when he gives the material to his students." As for T2, "The teaching style of a teacher is also self-confidence. This interaction between the teacher and students is very much needed. Because with this interaction, we can find out whether students have understood what we have said or not.

Based on the interview above, it concluded that the teacher's belief in the classroom is very influential in improving students' competence in the language class. Various activities carried out by the teacher were also created because of the teacher's beliefs.

Discussion

The findings show that a teacher's beliefs greatly influence teaching in practice in the classroom. The researcher stated that the teacher's beliefs were influenced by some factors such as teachers' facilitator, teachers' content knowledge, teachers' experience, and the

teachers' self-confidence. According to Mansour (2009), belief becomes a personal pedagogy or theory that can guide teacher practice: teacher beliefs play an important role in defining the teacher's task in teaching and organizing knowledge and information relevant to the task.

In terms of content knowledge, the results of the interview confirm that teachers who prepare good content and learning objectives will give good results. This finding is in line with the results of Ball et al., (2008). Some teacher's belief that teaching and learning English to young learners should be enjoyable. Thus, a belief held consciously or subconsciously by the instructor is regarded correct by individuals and directs their thinking and action (Borg, 2003).

Teacher experience shows that experienced teachers have a strong impact on student engagement. This opinion is agreed by Berger et al., (2018). Data from a survey of several vocational teachers who participated in teacher education, examined the relationship between classroom management practices, teaching experience, and teacher beliefs (general pedagogical beliefs, beliefs about student motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs). Meanwhile, Wafa (2016) argues that teacher beliefs are important to understand and improve the educational process. The results of these findings state that a good teacher experience will have an impact on a good quality of education. In a teacher's self-confidence, this teacher's self-confidence and belief about the subjects they teach plays an important role in their teaching practice.

The four teacher beliefs such as teacher as facilitator, content knowledge, experience and self-confidence occur in the language teachers' beliefs are explored critically to reflect on their activities and practices in promoting more effective learning activities. The connection with this fact, the researcher hope that this research can be the only real contribution to the field of language learning approaches, especially in local contexts, where research is still rarely done.

CONCLUSION

To be a professional teacher, it's not enough to master teaching materials; you must apply them and possess four fundamental competencies. Understanding students' character is vital, although it can be challenging to identify the diverse personalities in a classroom. Knowing your students' character is a necessary step, as it allows teachers to guide and support them effectively, ensuring successful learning outcomes. Teachers believe that teaching experience, motivation, and learning experiences positively influence their beliefs in language classes. They feel well-equipped to develop effective learning

materials, thanks to ongoing language class training. These beliefs significantly impact their teaching practices, shaping the quality of language classes they offer. The belief reflected in the teaching and learning process is that students are capable of engaging with all materials and activities in the English class. The enthusiasm of students in participating in these engaging activities is seen as a key factor for successful learning, according to teachers' beliefs.

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