



EFL Teachers' Beliefs in Teaching Speaking to Elementary School Students Using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) : A Case Study

Vivi Inan Lolita Sari

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Author correspondence: viviintan26@gmail.com

Abstract. *This research aims to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about teaching English in elementary schools. The research participants were elementary school English teachers in Kediri. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview which allowed the participants to share their thought and experiences in English teaching for young learners. By gaining insights into teachers' beliefs, this study seeks to offer a fresh perspective on effective English teaching strategies. The findings aim to empower teachers in fostering more impactful teaching environments. The teachers believed that they should consider the characteristics of young learners in teaching English and their psychological factors. Thus, teachers believed that teaching English should be fun. They used some techniques to make the teaching learning fun, for example by using pictures, videos, songs, etc.*

Keywords: *Elementary school, Speaking, TBLT, Teachers' beliefs*

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) as a global phenomenon, particularly in Indonesia, underscores its significance in international education. Many parents now prioritize English education, leading to its integration into school curricula. However, successful English instruction hinges on various supports: teachers, teaching materials, methodologies, and teaching media, all interconnected to ensure effective learning experiences.

Karani (2008) emphasizes the pivotal role of these supports in shaping successful English education; deficiencies in any can hinder learning outcomes. For instance, traditional techniques like memorization and drilling, as experienced by Mr. X, can deter student engagement and learning. Hence, understanding teachers' beliefs regarding English instruction is crucial. Teachers' beliefs heavily influence classroom practices and decision-making (Richards, 1998). Thus, investigating teachers' perspectives on teaching speaking English to young learners, particularly in Kediri, East Java, forms a central research question in this study. This research aims to explore and describe teachers' beliefs about English instruction at elementary schools, focusing on current practices and methodologies employed. By gaining insights into teachers' beliefs, this study seeks to offer a fresh perspective on effective English teaching strategies. Ultimately, the findings aim to empower teachers in fostering more impactful learning environments for young English learners.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

In recent times, there has been a significant increase in the number of children learning English. Pinter (2006) noted that English is now commonly taught in primary schools worldwide. It has become essential for young learners to acquire English skills in this era of globalization, where English is viewed as an international language crucial for navigating global trends. Moreover, Muro and Kottman (1995) suggested that children exhibit high capabilities when learning a foreign language like English during their primary school years.

According to Scott and Ytreberg (1991), elementary school students typically range from seven to twelve years old and are characterized by their enthusiasm for exploring and learning about their environment through sensory experiences. Furthermore, Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that children between approximately seven to eleven years old are in the concrete operational stage, where they begin to use logical reasoning based on tangible objects and direct experiences (Wadsworth, 1979).

Brown (2001) emphasized that understanding the characteristics of young learners is crucial for effective teaching and learning. Young learners are highly engaged with physical activities that capture their immediate interest, enjoy fun and interesting activities, benefit from sensory aids to reinforce concepts, and possess a strong sense of humor and curiosity. Therefore, teachers need to take these characteristics into account to successfully achieve learning objectives.

The Definition of Beliefs

Pucta (1999) defines beliefs as fundamental principles guiding people's behaviors, a kind to cause and effect in how individuals react or act in various situations. Despite numerous studies on the topic, there is no consensus among researchers regarding a precise definition of beliefs. This lack of agreement complicates efforts to establish a definitive meaning.

Pajares (1992) suggests that defining beliefs is subjective, likening it to a game where definitions vary based on personal perspective. He lists a wide array of terms used in literature that can be associated with beliefs, such as attitudes, values, judgments, ideologies, perceptions, and conceptual systems.

Several definitions shed light on different aspects of beliefs. Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) define beliefs as conceptual representations that individuals hold to be sufficiently valid, truthful, or trustworthy to guide their thoughts and actions. Huang (1997) views beliefs in the context of language learning as learners' preconceptions about the task of

acquiring a new language. Kunt (1997) and Wang (1996) use terms like opinions, ideas, and views to describe beliefs, emphasizing their influence on individuals' decision-making processes.

Teachers' Beliefs and Its Influence of Teaching and Learning English

Researchers have extended their interest in beliefs about language learning beyond just language learners to include both in-service and pre-service teachers. Firstly, regarding teachers' instructional practices, Caner, Kara, and Subasi (2010) found that teachers preferred using diverse methods such as games, puzzles, music, and creative movement to deliver language materials. Teachers' beliefs that these varied approaches aim to engage students actively in learning. So, it boost teaching process effectively.

Secondly, another study by Burns, Copland, and Garton (2011) highlighted that teachers also focus on creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. They encourage students in their English language learning journey, fostering a supportive environment where learners feel motivated and comfortable.

Furthermore, Wang (2008) observed that teachers involved in teaching English at the primary school level invest considerable effort in creating visually appealing and stimulating learning environments, often using pictures and displaying children's own work. These teachers frequently provide encouragement and praise to their students. However, the study noted that praise was typically limited to a few expressions such as "very good," "good job," and "excellent." Therefore, teachers should also be mindful of students' psychological factors to ensure a holistic approach to their learning experience.

Teachers' belief systems encompass a range of elements including attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning. These beliefs are influenced by various factors such as their personal experiences as learners and educators, observations of other classrooms, and formal training (Richards, 1998). There is substantial literature indicating that teachers' beliefs significantly influence their instructional decisions and practices (Donoghue, 2003).

3. METOD

This study is a qualitative descriptive study focused on exploring teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of speaking skills to elementary school students using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The research collected data by conducting semi structured interviews with two teachers from Islamic elementary schools located in Kediri. The aim

was to delve into how these teachers perceive and approach the teaching of speaking skills within the framework of TBLT in their educational context.

The participants in this study consisted of two teachers from Islamic elementary schools in Kediri. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique, specifically criterion-based selection, as described by Blackledge (2001) and cited in Zacharias (2011). This method involved deliberately selecting teachers who met specific criteria. The criteria for selection were as follows: the teachers had to be English teachers at elementary schools who had graduated from the English Education Department. This criterion was based on the understanding that teachers with a background in English Education possess a strong foundation in English, which enhances their ability to effectively teach the language.

By selecting teachers who met these criteria, the study aimed to gather insights into how teachers with a specialized background in English education perceive and approach the teaching of speaking skills using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in their classrooms.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section examines primary school teachers' beliefs about teaching English to primary students through language-based teaching (TBLT). It was divided into three parts. Teachers' Beliefs About the Importance of Learning English at a Young Age Teachers' Beliefs About Teaching English to Young Learners Teachers' Beliefs About Teaching English to Primary Students Using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Teachers' Beliefs on The Importance of Learning English at Early Age.

In the interviews conducted with two teachers regarding their beliefs about teaching English in elementary school, both expressed a strong belief in the crucial importance of English education at this level. They provided several reasons to support their views. One significant reason highlighted, particularly by teacher A, was the widespread use of English as the primary language for accessing information. Teacher A emphasized that most information, including books, smartphones, and the internet, is predominantly available in English. This underscores the necessity for elementary school students to acquire English proficiency early on to effectively engage with and comprehend information in various contexts.

Teacher A, along with other teachers, firmly believes that English proficiency will be highly beneficial for children in their future lives. They recognize the importance of

equipping children with English language skills early on to prepare them for a globalized world where English proficiency is increasingly valued and necessary.

Teacher B emphasized that the second reason for the importance of learning English at an early age is its crucial role in facilitating communication. According to Teacher B, learning English early offers significant benefits to children beyond just academic learning. English should not be viewed solely as a subject to be studied, but rather as a practical tool for effective communication in various contexts.

Teacher B articulated their belief, stating that proficiency in English enables children to engage more confidently and effectively in global communication. This capability becomes increasingly essential in a world where English serves as a common language in international interactions, commerce, and cultural exchanges. Therefore, Teacher B advocates for integrating English education early in elementary school to empower children with essential communication skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching English for Young Learners

All the teachers unanimously agreed that teaching English to young learners requires a different approach compared to teaching adults. They emphasized that young learners require specialized teaching methods tailored to their developmental stages and learning styles. Teacher A articulated this belief, Scott and Yteberg (1990) agreed with Teacher A's assertion that learning activities for young learners should be engaging and avoid being long, monotonous, or boring. Teacher A, who understands from experience that young learners have a tendency to lose interest quickly, emphasizes the importance of creating enjoyable and stimulating learning experiences.

Regarding the concept of fun teaching and learning. Teacher B believed that a positive atmosphere in the classroom facilitates students' understanding of lessons quickly and effectively. The teacher observed that establishing a conducive atmosphere among students enables easier delivery of knowledge by the teacher. Teacher B shares a similar viewpoint with Scott and Yteberg (1990), who emphasized the significance of a positive classroom atmosphere. They noted that learning outcomes are greatly influenced by the atmosphere in the classroom; a boring atmosphere may lead students to remain passive or disengaged. In correlation with other teachers.

Teacher A's emphasis on the importance of fun learning aligns with the views of Scott and Ytreberg (1990), who suggested that effective teaching involves more than just

verbal explanations. They advocated for incorporating stories, songs, and diverse activities to engage children actively in the learning process. Teachers are encouraged to create an environment where children feel free to play, enjoy themselves, and learn simultaneously. This underscores the crucial role of teachers in teaching English as a foreign language, emphasizing creativity and hands-on learning experiences for children.

Not only good class atmosphere but also praising the students is also important to young learners. Noticing the characteristics of young learners. Teacher B believes that praising students is crucial because it enhances their confidence and contributes positively to their learning outcomes. Similarly, Kinsvatter (1992) also emphasized the importance of praising students, especially those who answer correctly. He suggested that praise plays a significant role in fostering a positive learning environment and encouraging students to engage more actively in learning. By acknowledging the positive impact of praise on student motivation and confidence, both Teacher B and Kinsvatter highlight the importance of using praise as a tool for reinforcing desired behaviors and achievements in the classroom.

Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching Speaking for Elementary School Students Using Task-Based Language Teaching (BLT)

All teachers involved in this research unanimously agreed that the language teaching process at elementary school should be both engaging and enjoyable. Teacher B expressed her belief on how English should be taught in the following manner. Teachers should equip themselves with various teaching techniques to ensure that the teaching and learning process is enjoyable and successful. There were several techniques used by the teachers to facilitate fun and effective English learning for elementary students. In accordance with the statement above, teachers should prepare themselves with diverse teaching techniques to ensure that the teaching and learning process is enjoyable and effective. Several techniques were employed by teachers to facilitate enjoyable and effective English learning for elementary students.

She believed that games are a fun technique for teaching English, fostering competition among students. Supporting this approach, Crookall and Oxford (1990), who share Teacher B's viewpoint, explain that games encourage effective learning strategies for several reasons. Firstly, games involve active participation and utilize all four language skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Additionally, games promote the development of communicative competence. Secondly, games motivate learners to enjoy

and actively participate in the learning process, as they are challenged to engage in various activities.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has explored teachers' beliefs regarding English language instruction at the elementary school level. According to the findings, teachers strongly advocate for early English language learning due to its pivotal role in the era of globalization, where English is integral across various facets of life. Early exposure to English is believed to provide children with significant advantages as they prepare to enter the global workforce in the future. When teaching young learners, teachers emphasize the importance of considering their unique characteristics to effectively achieve learning objectives. Consequently, delivering lessons in an engaging and enjoyable manner is essential. Teachers employ various techniques such as using pictures, videos, songs, and other audio-visual aids to maintain young learners' interest and ensure successful teaching and learning outcomes. However, this study is subject to two main limitations. Firstly, it is geographically limited to the teaching context in Kediri. Secondly, the study involved a small number of participants, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the participant pool to encompass a broader range of teaching contexts and perspectives. Additionally, it would be beneficial to investigate differences in beliefs between teachers who graduated from English Departments and those who did not, especially considering that some schools allow non-English Department graduates to teach English at the elementary level. This comparative study could shed light on how different educational backgrounds influence teachers' beliefs and practices in English language instruction.

REFERENCES

- Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Burns, A., Copland, F., & Garton, S. (2011). *Investigating global practices in teaching English to young learners*. London: Aston University.
- Cabaroglu, N., & Roberts, J. (2000). Development in student teachers' pre-existing beliefs during a 1-year PGCE programme. *System*, 28, 387–402.

- Caner, M., Subasi, G., & Kara, S. (2010). Teachers' beliefs on foreign language teaching practices in early phases of primary education: A case study. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(1), 62–74.
- Crookal, D., & Oxford, R. (1990). *Linking language learning and simulation gaming*. United States: Newbury House Publisher.
- Donoghue, F. (1992). Teachers' guides: A review of their function. *CLCS Occasional Paper*, No. 30.
- Gower, R., Phillips, D., & Walters, S. (2005). *Teaching practice handbook*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Huang, S. C. (1997). *Taiwanese senior high school students' EFL learning: Focus on learning strategies and learning beliefs* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas]. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58(03), 780A.
- Johnson, K. E. (1992). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 14(1), 83–108.
- Karani, E. (2008). *Pengembangan silabus KTSP Bahasa Inggris SD di Kalimantan Tengah*.
- Kim, L. S. (1999). Creative games for the language class. Retrieved March 27, 2013, from <http://www.teflgames.com/why.html>
- Kinsvatter, R., Wilen, W., & Ishler, M. (1992). *Dynamics of effective teaching* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Kunt, N. (1997). *Anxiety and beliefs about language learning: A study of Turkish-speaking university students learning English in North Cyprus* [Doctoral dissertation]. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59(01), 111A.
- Muro, J. J., & Kottman, T. (1995). *Guidance and counseling in the elementary and middle schools*. Iowa: Brown and Benchmark.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307–332.
- Paul, D. (2003). *Teaching English to children in Asia*. Hong Kong: Longman.
- Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching young language learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Puchta, H. (1999). Beyond materials, techniques and linguistic analyses: The role of motivation, beliefs and identity. In *Plenary session at the LATEFL: 33rd International Annual Conference* (pp. 64–72). Edinburgh.
- Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, W. A., & Ytreberg, L. H. (1990). *Teaching English to children*. New York: Longman Inc.

- Wadsworth, B. J. (1979). *Piaget's theory of cognitive development* (2nd ed.). London: Longmans.
- Wang, W.-P. (2008). *Teaching English to young learners in Taiwan: Issues relating to teaching, teacher education, teaching materials and teacher perspectives* [Master's thesis, University of Waikato]. New Zealand: University of Waikato.
- William, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, A. (2007). *Pictures for language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.