

## RECALLING STUDENT TEACHER'S BELIEFS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: EVIDENCE FROM A PRE-SERVICE TEACHING PROGRAM IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

Pedagogical decisions and teaching practice are influenced by student teachers' belief. Personal predispositions of student teachers' beliefs on teaching practice are strongly affected by their experiences, or course content they have been taken. In developing their beliefs, values, and practice of teaching, student teachers adopt theories about good teaching practice by interpreting these experiences in teaching or taking courses. The numbers of studies have been conducted about student teachers' belief on teaching practice from their experiences in teaching-learning, but less attention put on student teachers' belief in interpreting their pedagogical knowledge from theories to practices. Thus, to fill the gap, the writers conduct a case study regarding to a student teacher's belief after she had received pedagogical courses and finished preservice teaching program. Using a thematic analysis from a semi structured interview and reflective journal from a student teacher in English Education Department in Tasikmalaya, the researchers examined the student teacher's belief based on her experiences in pre-service teaching program. The overall contribution of this study is to evaluate student teachers' teaching belief with the principle of teaching given in the class, since teaching belief is significant to personal development of pre-service teachers.

**Keywords:** pre-service teacher, student teacher belief, teaching practice

### INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teaching program is one of requirements for the student teacher to take for completing their teaching courses in order to be a teacher. Student teacher entered pre-service teaching practice program with thousands hours of experience in classrooms as learners. They entered pre-service teaching with their knowledge about teaching as a preparation to be a teacher (Wall, 2016). Before the student teachers join pre-service teaching program, they have taken Language Assessment course as a preparation for teaching practice because it is considered to be useful to reflect on our own values and beliefs about teaching and learning languages and to consider how these influence assessment decisions that we make in our classroom (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p. 22). In Language Assessment course, the student teacher learns about teacher beliefs. The way teachers teach can be reflected from their beliefs which may be resistant to change. Besides, it is also formed by beliefs that are stable constructs based on many studies that propose the essential of teaching practice which is related to teachers' personal philosophies of teaching as stated by Jenkins (2011). According to Huang (1997) beliefs are preconceptions language learners have about learning a language. Hancock and Gallard (2004) define *belief* as an understanding that guides, influences and shapes an

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individual's intentions for action. Further, the word *belief* has been defined as a personal judgment from experiences (Raymond, 1997). Teacher's belief in teaching learning plays an important role. As stated by Lortie (1975), pre-service teacher beliefs cannot be separated from their personal experiences. Thus, pre-service teachers' beliefs influence their pedagogical decisions and actions in the classroom. In this case, pedagogical decision could be understood as assessment which plays an essential role in language teaching and learning (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p.1 ). Furthermore, Kumagai and Black (2018:465) argued "teaching philosophy is a set of fundamental core beliefs for teaching that are shaped from an accumulation of personal experiences". It is parallel with Payant (2016) who stated, "A TP needs to emerge as a result of a deep examination of values, belief systems, and educational experiences in connection with social and educational contexts" (p. 3). Moreover, according to another study who investigated the teacher's belief also found that there were changes in teacher's belief after a professional development project for teaching writing, such as the project broadened the teacher's understanding of different writing theories, provided a clear model of how to integrate these new approaches into regular writing courses, changed their instructional focus and shifted their perception of teachers' roles in teaching practice (Teng, 2016 p. 109). Therefore, those changes are the results of integrating their education experiences.

Li (2012) denotes that beliefs have a key role in language teaching. Zheng (2009) also stated that teachers' beliefs are significant ideas in comprehending teachers' thought processes, teaching methods, and learning to teach. Their beliefs affect on planning the lessons, adopting types of decisions, choosing classroom activity and managing the classroom. In the previous research, the researcher investigates teacher beliefs before and after pre-service teaching program until they become a teacher. Because the research is a longitudinal study which spent two periods. Meanwhile, this research focuses on investigating the student teacher's beliefs after they finished pre-service teaching program in three months.

Research findings concentrated in this study will inform the generalizations about teaching and learning based on their beliefs as pre-service teachers who entered the pre-service teaching program. Therefore, this research aims to bring on rich descriptions of student teachers beliefs on teaching practice after taking the courses in college, and to investigate their beliefs after finishing pre-service teaching program.

## **METHOD**

This comparative case study investigated the conceptual journey of a student teacher who had finished a pre-service teaching program in Indonesia. The participant is 22 years old woman, she always made a reflective journal after she finished teaching her students every week, recorded her teaching journey with those reflective journals. Additionally, she conducted the program in three months, in those months pre-service teacher gain the real experiences in teaching real students in real school. In this case, pre-service teacher applied their belief on teaching. Before conducting the program, participant had taken several courses as theories and practices in teaching. Those experiences of taken courses might build student teacher's belief. The data is collected by a semi structured interview and reflective journal. In semi structured interview, participant described their journey of belief on teaching practice. The framework was driven by the data which is analyzed with thematic analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Student teacher's belief in teaching English**

#### **1. Teaching junior and senior high school students will be easy**

The student teacher finished an assignment in Reflective Micro Teaching course, in which she conducted a peer teaching which the peer pretended to be the

objective students. In this case, she had idealistic preconception about the ease and simplicity of teaching. She explained she was easy to manage the class and to deliver the material.

Excerpt 1

*"Before conducting pre-service teaching program, as what I have learned from reflective micro teaching course, I believed that it will be easy to teach junior or senior high school students, because that was what I experienced in Micro Teaching course. That was easy to teach the materials on students"*

This finding is supported by Furlong and Maynard (1995) who state student teachers enter the course with an idealistic, simplistic view of teaching as the classroom event happened without a great deal of effort (as cited in Wall, 2016). Participant thought the teaching process was easy and simple because of the material that she carried out at that time. However, this belief appeared because she taught her friends who pretended to be students who already know about English.

Excerpt 2

*"I think when I conducted Micro Teaching, my students were my friends, so they understood about English, then I think that's not too hard to make them understand about the material"*

In fact, when teaching the real students, the participant lost the ease of teaching. The pre-service teacher's perception of students who already had understood about English made teaching was viewed as easy and simple. Nevertheless, student teacher forgot about current ability of students, it made some instruction did not run well as what it planned.

Excerpt 3

*"I started to worry when my teaching didn't carry out as my teaching plan because of some problems such I didn't prepare well for the learning media and sometimes I forgot some learning instruction with the students between 5 classes I had been taught."*

The present research found that participant's belief shifted through the experience in real teaching. She had an easy judgment on teaching without knowing the context or the ability of students. However, students' ability is very crucial in deciding classroom activity. Gurson and Marlot (2015) stated culture of learning depended on students' situation, this play important roles in teaching to be succeed.

## **2. Teaching English means using English as instruction**

Student teacher thought using English in teaching and learning process would be the best for students. It gives student more opportunity to use English. By doing so, the students are expected to immerse with English as they used it in teaching learning process. Using English as the only means of instruction may provide better learning experiences for the students since they can be informed of the recommended prerequisite English skills and types of class interaction, (Kim and Tatar, 2017, p.12). It is in line with the participant's assumption that can be seen on the following excerpt:

Excerpt 4

*"When I think about teaching English I have to teach them with full English, everything what I say in the classroom should be in English"*

However, she did not aware of the context of students' English proficiency in Indonesia. She considered that the students would understand the materials when she used English. In contrast, when she used English as the instruction, the class was silent. Kim and Tatar (2017) argued in using English as instruction, there is the need of teacher to address students' English proficiency in addition to other instructional concerns. Thus, the teacher should carefully identify the students' level of English proficiency in delivering the instruction.

Excerpt 4

*"I got some trouble when I taught them using English, it made them silent, so I mixed my language with Indonesia and they understand about the material I taught in the classroom"*

Thus, code switching is one of tools to overcome misunderstanding among students related with the instruction and materials given by the teacher. In line with this, during the instruction she mixed her language between English and Bahasa Indonesia to clarify the instruction. This resembles Sweetnam Evans, Lee, & Kim's study (2014) which found that using L1 in the classroom is useful and functional in getting students' text comprehension and instruction.

### **3. Practicing is a must before the real teaching takes place**

Student teachers usually practice more before they conducted the real teaching test. These practices help them in preparing herself to teach in a real classroom situation. According to De Vries, Jansen, Helms-Lorenz, & van de Grift (2015), teacher learning contributes in increasing teacher effectiveness and improving the quality of teaching practices and student learning. Hence, the participant also believe that practicing the way of teaching before conducting teaching and learning process in the class would be very beneficial fo her. However, when she entered the program she could not practice before teaching in the classroom, because she got busier than before as can be seen on the following statement:

Excerpt 5

*"... and I able to learn before I teach in the classroom I have much time for learning to teach, but when I was conducting pre-service teaching program, I get busier than before"*

It resulted in her wondering of how classroom teaching and learning process would be, since she did not have enough time to practice for conducting the instruction.

### **4. Lesson planning is the only teaching administration**

Courses taught student teacher about the lesson plan. Lesson planning is one of teaching administration, containing objectives, media, method, and procedures of teaching. Every teacher uses lesson plan to keep the teaching practice in the right track. Thus, the participant also learnt and made a lesson plan before the class began.

In Indonesian state schools, teaching administration is not only covering lesson plan. There are several documents that have to accomplish by teacher. As a pre-service teacher who teaches in the real school, participant had to compile these

documents. This actually was not what she expected. As a result, she got busier than before.

Excerpt 6

*"Before, I believe that when I teach, I just only need to prepare Lesson Plan or teaching media, and I able to learn and practice before I teach in the classroom. Besides, I also have much time for teaching and learning. However, when I was conducting pre-service teaching program, I got busier than before and in that school that wasn't not only about lesson plan, because in pre-service teaching program I wasn't only teach but I also need to learn more about teaching administration beside lesson plan"*

Hence, she was overwhelmed to compile the administration document that she had to accomplish as a teacher. It is also related to the previous belief about practicing before conducting the instruction which is considered to be very beneficial for the student teachers. Since she had to prepare many teaching documents, she had no time to practice for conducting teaching and learning process.

## **5. Giving different kind of instruction based on students' characteristics**

As a beginner in teaching activity, this pre-service teacher has the opinion to treat her students through giving different instruction based on students' characteristics. However, she decided to change the decision into giving the same instruction for the students, which made it more focused. In the middle of her teaching, she thought that evaluation will be one of her consideration to apply that method in the classroom, but in fact, she was confused to determine of what should be applied in the classroom. Additionally, another thing that became the difficulty while doing pre-service teaching program is her self-confidence. Thus, to avoid all of the trouble, she tried to made list of instructions to implement in the next meeting as can be seen on the following excerpt:

Excerpt 7

*"I think it is good to try using different instruction or even way of teaching. However as my experience even less for a beginner such me, it's better to focus first on one way or same teaching instruction. Then, I can evaluate my instruction in weekend such what I write now."*

## **B. Student teacher progression in pre-service teaching program**

The data obtained did not only show several changes on student teacher's belief, but also the progression on her belief in teaching practice through the pre-service teaching program. Those beliefs including: (1) student teacher entered the program with idealistic conception about teaching, (2) student teacher faced some conflict in classroom that caused her making new decision, (3) student teacher began to build confidence to be a teacher. The developmental progression delineated by participant's reflective journal when she had conducted the teaching program.

At the time she conducted her first meeting in the program, she introduced herself to classes confidently. She made her introduction with game based learning which could attract students' attention. This resembled her belief that placing the first teaching was to get the best attention of the students. She believed to make students engaged with the materials. Firstly she had to get students' attention, then they would be comfortable and enjoy while learning with her.

## Excerpt 8

*"When they are happy they will feel happy when I give them the materials, and that is related with the reason of getting closer with my students. When we teach we need to get the students' heart, because 'I imagine if I was student' when I feel bored I will hard to understand and remember the materials even though the materials were easy"*

In the third meeting, the participant began to doubt her decision in choosing the instruction. At that time, she used to make different instruction for each class, unfortunately the instruction didn't go well. It made her hesitation getting worse than before, and then she started to reflect and search for the solution. Accordingly, Kömür (2010) also state that reflection play a crucial role in teacher education, it is one of essential component for building understanding to myriad issues in the classroom.

## Excerpt 9

*"I really confuse and worry about what I've done. I lost my confident that time. I feel not being such an assertive teacher. Is my way of teaching right? Is my decision right? Am I didn't put my wisdom as a teacher in the right order?"*

Every week she reflected every problem that occurred in the classroom through sharing with her teacher mentor and her friends. From this peer sharing, she was inspired to make plenty of methods other than game based learning. In the end of the programs, she used different method such as group work, role-play, and stimulating them with the thing or object as classroom activity.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are several changes in student teacher's belief after finishing pre-service teaching program. First, teaching junior and senior high school students will be easy due to her experience while doing the test of micro teaching course which required her to teach in front of her friends, and she began to assume that teaching in junior and senior high school students would be easy as resembled with college students. Second, teaching English means to use English as the only means of communication during the instruction. However, the students seemed to be in trouble in joining the instruction, since they remained silent. Therefore, she used code mixing as an alternative in explaining the instruction. Third, practicing before the real teaching happen would be beneficial. In the beginning, she thought that this was the best preparation for the learning. However, it could not bring into reality since unfortunately she got busier than before while entering the school. Fourth, lesson planning is the only teaching administration. Due to her knowledge that lesson planning is the only thing of administration, she then got busier to accomplish several teaching documents such as syllabus, absence documents etc. Fifth, giving different kinds of instruction based on students' characteristic. However, when she came to practice she was confused because her students did not pay attention or understand the instruction. Thus, she decided to use one instruction or same instruction for every class, it could help her in evaluating the instruction.

During the research, there are some progressions occurred on her belief. These progressions including: (1) student teacher entered the program with idealistic conception about teaching, (2) student teacher faced some conflict in classroom that caused her to make new decision, (3) student teacher began to build confidence to be a teacher. Those progressions came from the issues she faced in the classroom. In the classrooms, participant got problems, started from her unclear instruction, sleeping students, until a hectic class. Those problems made her reflect the whole processes of teaching learning,

so she searched for the best solution. In finding the solution, she was not only doing a self-reflective but also asked suggestion from her mentor teacher and other pre-service teacher.

In conclusion, this small-scale research provides useful suggestion in personal development for student teacher who will conduct a pre-service teaching program and contributes to language teacher education research in general. We suggest for further research to include more participants and longitudinal studies to provide a better understanding.

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