EXPLORING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING BELIEF OF AN INDONESIAN ENGLISH TEACHER

[1]**Marham Jupri Hadi**

[1] University of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram & Beruga' Alam Institute, Indonesia
Corresponding email: marhamhadi@gmail.com

Article Info	Abstract
Article History *Received: November 2019* *Revised: December 2019* *Published: January 2020* ***Keywords*** *ELT;* *Belief;* *Motivation;* *Learning Strategies;*	*The present study investigated an English teacher's belief regarding the best strategies to learn and teach English. A case study was employed as it explored a case (an English teacher) in depth. In-depth interviews were carried to gain deep understanding about the participant's belief. This study reveals that he has been learning English for roughly ten years and his motivation changed from being forced to learn English (external) to having internal motivation. He believed that quality teacher affects his motivation to learn English. Concerning his personal theory about best way to learn English, he argues that there is no any best way to learn English. Instead, he believes that there are other effective approaches fitting different learning purposes. For him, the key feature to learn and teach English in his context is exposure to the language. He also believes that doing some changes like how he evaluates the learner's skill can reduce the students' negative feeling. He admits that these preferences as the reflection of this previous learning experiences form all his experiences in learning.*

INTRODUCTION

English plays a major role in today's globalized context. People use it as a tool for communication around the world. Not only does it connect people from diverse cultural backgrounds, but it also mediates people in business, politics, education and technology advancement. Despite this, English for the context of Indonesia remains a foreign language, and it is very unlikely to be adopted as a second language like those in neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei.

The status of English as a foreign language has implications on learners' and teachers' motivation for teaching and learning English (Haerazi, et al., 2018). For learners, they cannot find any immediate use of mastering English, except to pass the national exam. For teachers, the limited time allocated for learning English (only two hours per week) is of a great challenge (Martin-anatias, 2018). Time constraint leads to teachers' difficulty to create an engaging and encouraging learning atmosphere.

A plethora of studies have been conducted to deal with students' problems in learning English. These studies cover qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method and all of which aim to tackle the language learning issues and to promote effective learning and better learning outcomes. Despite the presence of the existing studies, there is limited discussion found in the literature about effective learning and teaching strategies from the context of English language teachers. This study aimed at uncovering an Indonesia English teacher's belief about effective ways to learn and teach English.

Review of Literature
Learners' Belief
Learner beliefs are "the beliefs that language learners have about what is involved in learning a language, how to learn it and their language-learning ability" (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 340). *Bernat et al further highlight that (2009)"…the results do not suggest a strong relationship between learner beliefs and personality traits in the population sampled"*. This indicates that what learners believe would have an impact not only on their personality but also on their performance in the classroom and their learning outcomes. In line with, Horwitz (2010) asserts that:

> *Students' beliefs about language learning may have an impact on their performance*
> *in class. For example, if a student believes that she doesn't have a very good aptitude*
> *for language learning, she may not make much effort to learn the language.*

For this reason, English teachers should be aware of their learners' beliefs about language learning. To ensure effective teaching, Horwitz (2010) further argues that it would be wise for teachers not to convince their students that they hold an invalid belief about language learning, rather, they have to emphasize researching and employing effective strategies to teaching them. This implies that teachers should knowledgable of their learner beliefs about language learning as that would allow them to increase their understanding their learners should be taught (Altan, 2006).

Studies on Language Learning Beliefs
A myriad of studies has been carried out to investigate learners' belief in language learning. Shibata (2019) conducted an illustrative case study, with two first-year students (one successful learner and one less-successful learner) at a Japanese private high school in the 2017 school year. This study aimed to explore the effects of learner beliefs about language learning on out-of-class learning. The finding of this study revealed that both learners had similar learning beliefs and followed them to engage in out-of-class learning even though their use of learning strategies differed. The author concluded that learner beliefs and their engagement in out-of-class learning demonstrated a direct relationship.

An earlier study by Sibel, Ariogul; Dalim Cigdem, Unal; and Irem, Onursal (2009) investigated the differences and similarities among English, German, and French language groups' beliefs about language learning. This study involved participant students (n = 343) who completed Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and a demographic information questionnaire. The findings of this study suggested that although French language learners had more positive expectations in language learning, all three groups held certain beliefs that would be detrimental to their long-term language learning. The author of this study recommended that negative outcomes of these beliefs on language learners could be alleviated by language teachers implementing and discussing positive instructional practices and realistic expectations in the classroom.

Teachers' Belief
Teachers' beliefs refer to teachers' knowledge and understanding of their world by shaping a complicated system of personal and professional knowledge (Clark & Peterson, 1986). There are five main categories of teachers' beliefs – beliefs about learners and learning, teaching, curriculum, learning to teach, and about the self and the nature of teaching and these five categories are well connected (Calderhead, 1996). Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri (2017) point out that teachers' belief refers to the understanding of how teachers shape their works which vital to understanding teaching methods they employed and a decision made in the classroom. They further argue that teachers' accomplishments in their classroom, their attitude, and their learners' beliefs are greatly affected by their belief. *Farrel*

and Ives (2014) claim that "teacher's beliefs provided a strong basis for his classroom actions" and play a pivotal role in language teaching (Li, 2012). It also influences their consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods, and teaching policies, teaching behavior and finally, learners' development (Altan, 2006). These studies indicate that teachers' belief is the major predictor of the success of language teaching.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

A learning strategy is a method chosen by a learner to achieve his or her learning objectives and develop his or her language proficiency more effectively and more efficiently (Oxford, 2011). This implies that strategies used by a learner would have an impact on his or her learning activities and learning outcomes. However, learners may not always select suitable learning strategies to learn which in turn affects their language skills mastery. They may not also possess a strong desire to develop their language skills when determining learning strategies (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015)

Leicester Learning Institute, University of Leicester proposes instructional models and language strategies of teaching-learning in higher education (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Those strategies include Teaching large groups (lectures), Small group teaching-learning, Demonstrating in practical classes, Massive open online courses (MOOCs), Flipped teaching-learning in the classroom, Active learning, Problem based learning, Work-based learning, Blended learning (face-to-face and non-face-to-face), and Student-led learning. Each of these strategies could effectively enhance language learning when used properly. Teachers' use of teaching strategies is greatly influenced by their teaching beliefs. In tune with this, Johnson (1992) asserts that teachers teaching strategies are based on their theoretical beliefs.

Reflecting on the discussion above, the evidence suggests that studies on learners' and teachers' beliefs about effective strategies for teaching and learning English have yet to be extensively explained from the Indonesian context. The present study aims at describing a non-native English teacher about his belief regarding learning and teaching strategies. The following research questions led the investigation: what do you think the best strategies to learn English? And what do you think the best strategies to teach English?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

A case study was employed to do the investigation. Johnson and Christensen (2004, p.376) define case study research simply as research that provides a detailed account and analysis of one or more cases. They also view a case itself as the bounded system. Similarly, Punch (1998, p.150) advises that " *the basic idea of a case study is to conduct a detailed study, using whatever method appropriate in order to understand a case or more cases in-depth in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its content*". In order words, the case study will enable the researcher to understand holistically about a particular case being investigated. In this study, an English teacher's personal belief concerning an effective way to learn and to teach English is considered the case. As this study focused on investigating an English language teacher, then a single case study was employed as the research design.

Participant

The participant in this study was an English teacher. He has been teaching English for five years in a senior high school in the province of West Kalimantan. We have known each other for about almost a year, as he is also a student at the same university. As we have been close friends, it was not difficult to get his consent to participate in this study. He voluntarily accepted the researcher's request to be the informant. However, I had to ensure that this study follow research ethics. Johnson and Christensen (2004, p.94) define research ethics as "*a set of principles to guide and assist researchers in conducting ethical studies*". Therefore, prior to conducting the interview, I have already informed him about the purpose of the study. I

also informed him that his identity would be given in pseudonym especially when writing on the research report and he would receive no risks of being a participant in this study. Furthermore, he was aware that all the information he gave would be transcribed and the transcript was not accessible to anyone except me. Therefore, I asked him to sign a consent letter and he did it. All these ethical considerations are necessary in order to reach responsible research that gives no harm to the research participant.

Data Collection and Analysis
        The interview is one of the main data collection tools in the qualitative study as it is one of the most powerful ways we have in understanding others (Johnson and Christensen 2004, p.175). In this study semi-structured interview was used in getting the information. Thus, prior to the interview a list of general questions relating to the investigated topic was prepared and asked the interviewee. However, during the interview session, more specific questions were asked. As Johnson and Christenson (p.176) reveal that specific questions will emerge after the interview unfold. As soon as he agreed to be the informant, We interviewed him based on the appointed time. The interviews were done twice because of some difficulties to get the needed information at one time. Online conversations through *Watsup* were done to gain further information. To analyze the interview data, the following steps were carried out. These include: organizing the data, finding and organizing ideas and concepts, building overarching themes in the data, ensuring reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the findings, finding possible and plausible explanations for findings, and an overview of the final steps (O'Connor, H. & Gibson, Nancy, 2003).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

Experiences in learning English
        The first time he started to learn English is when he was in grade one of Junior high school.
> *"I first started to learn English when I was in the first grade of junior high school. That was the first encounter with English because every student … of junior high school in Indonesia has to learn English…"* (Excerpt from the transcript)

        At that time, he was around 12 years old. In Indonesia, learning English in junior high school is compulsory and English is treated as a foreign language (EFL). In the EFL context, there are a few opportunities for exposure to the English language (Spada and Lighbown, 2013, p. 91). In total, he has been learning English for roughly ten years: three years in junior high school, three years of senior high school, and four years in university.
        When asked whether he has any particular motivation to learn English, he did not seem to have clear reason during his four years in learning English. The only motivation came from the external factor, that is English was a compulsory subject.
> *"…at first when I was a junior high school student, I didn't have any motivation because English was a compulsory subject to learn. I think when I completed my junior high school; I didn't have much motivation to learn".*(Excerpt from the transcript)

        His learning experiences in Junior high school suggest that he did not have any interesting English teachers and the teaching approach was grammar oriented. It was also informed by Haerazi, Vikasari, and Prayati (2019) who state English teachers at junior high schools still emphasize their teaching on grammatical competences. In addition, students did

not have much opportunity to communicate orally with the language; instead, he learned grammar in isolation, not in context. He said:

"…*the English* class *was not meant to develop... your oral communication at junior high school because at that time. Basically, I learned through reading and answering the questions, translating"*. (Excerpt from the transcript)

Further, he reported that the focus of this study was on learning the tenses and replicating the sentence examples provided by the teacher. However, his motivation to learn English grew after he entered the second year of senior high school, where he met an interesting English teacher. He believed that his motivation affects his learning efforts and progress. When he was in Junior high school, he did not make good progress until he met an English teacher in the second year of senior high school who could encourage him to learn more.

"*... I did make progress in the second year of senior high school because I met an English teacher. I was motivated to learn in the second year and third year until I graduated. I was motivated and I developed so much"*(Excerpt from the transcript)

He mentioned several reasons why he became more motivated to learn English from that teacher. First, his teacher teaching styles was attracted to him, and he became more motivated to learn more. Second, his teacher gave him a lot of supports. These factors are regarded as extrinsic motivation. B´Enabou and Tirole, (2003) argue that extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain an outcome; it encourages the learners to win and to beat others, not simply to enjoy the intrinsic rewards of the activity. Adding to that, he also mentioned another factor that could be categorized as intrinsic motivation. He became more enthusiastic to learn after he had successfully reached a certain level of English and this achievement encouraged him to learn more.

"…*I thought that I was good enough at the language at that time and since that, I was motivated to learn more and more…"*(Excerpt from the transcript)

What was reported by the informant indicates that it is his English teacher who influenced him to learn English? In a similar voice, Spada and Lightbown (2013, p.88) advocate that teachers can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn if classrooms are places that students enjoy coming. This might be due to the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and the atmosphere is supportive.

As he became more encouraged to learn English, he then invested more time to study outside the classroom and it seems that his intrinsic motivation played a dominant role. He began to attend another English class besides that he used to have in the classroom. He went to an afternoon English class and learned from the same teacher. As he reported

"...*having intrinsic motivation is very important because it drives me to struggle more. For instance…I learned on my own like reading school books, sometimes I borrowed friends' book and I also took an English course with my English teacher with this teacher"*.(Excerpt from the transcript)

Quality of a good teacher

He identifies some characteristics of an interesting teacher. First, the teacher is funny, as he would include senses of humor during his teaching. He believes that teachers should be humorous or should add some positive sense of humor into the ESL classroom, as they could make the learning become less intimidating and enjoyable. As he claims

"...*at that time English was one of the difficult one of the most difficult subjects students thought. Therefore, when students like me came to learn English that most*

of the time that I had not so funny teachers, serious not so much fun. It was intimidating, but with him, it was relaxing. Sometimes he would … tell funny stories first about his neighbors".(Excerpt from the transcript)

Second, the teacher was able to bring real-life examples to the classroom. Third, He also believes that a good English teacher has the ability to engage students in the learning activities in the classroom. This particular conception seems to be relevant to Watkins's (2007, p.53) idea who believes that effective learning is characterized by activity and collaboration, to be learner-driven and to involve learning about learning (Meta-learning). More importantly, the teachers should have fluent English because that will affect his trust in the teacher.

"*Yes of course, because I found that he was fluent and when he speaks, he could convince me that he knows the subject*"(Excerpt from the transcript)

Further, he observed that his previous English teacher was able to able to use the environment as learning media, in addition to the use of the module.

"*..Sometimes he took us out like in the garden and sometimes in front of the school. We did the classroom outside. He introduced some vocabulary related to the school… like daily words and vocabularies*"(Excerpt from the transcript)

Seifoori and colleagues (2012) in their study have identified a profile of an effective EFL teacher, in particular, a writing teacher. They found that "a *good writing teacher should use integrative approaches while teaching.* A good teacher should be able to consider the needs of the students and then decide on the right approach to be used in his/her classes".

English Speaking Zone

After completing his study in senior high school, he continued his studies in a university, majoring in English language education. In his faculty, he mentioned there is a formal rule that forces the students to use English as a means of communication.

"*…We had a formal rule where we had a... T junction…a place on our campus … if you enter that space you have to speak English. … if you pass you go through that T junction then you have to speak English. That's the formal rule in my department*". (Excerpt from the transcript)

The T-Junction was the only situation he had in the university. However, although the English club was not set, he found that the T-Junction rule is effective in developing his speaking ability because it forced him and provided many chances to use English.

"*…anytime when I sit there or I like to relax or do anything there so I had to speak English all the time in that zone…*" (Excerpt from the transcript)

Interestingly, the same regulation also applied to the lecturers when passing or being around the T-Junction. However, have also to speak English with their lecturers outside the area as well. In addition, it seems that he had more opportunities to use English. The opportunity came from his peers with whom he spoke very frequently in English.

"*…I had four err three close friends where we had a conversation in English most of the time in the campus area or when we went outside*".(Excerpt from the transcript)

However, he commented that the T-junction regulation and peer communication did not improve his writing and listening ability. They were only useful for developing his speaking ability and fluency.

> "*It helped to improve my speaking ability at that time, but it didn't help with like writing or listening. But in terms of speaking practice, it helped a lot*".(Excerpt from the transcript)

Beliefs about learning

Concerning his personal theory about the best way to learn English, he argues that there is no best way to learn English.

> "*…I think there is no such best way or the best way to learn English. Based on my own learning experience, I think as a learner I approached learning differently or flexibly…. I believe that learning or any language all about getting more and more exposure to the language. The more I read as I read sometimes anything in English the more I will learn*".(Excerpt from the transcript)

Instead, he believes that there are other effective approaches fitting different learning purposes.

> "*If you learn skills intentionally, they might be some other approaches or some methods because different contents of different skills might need a different method. Maybe when you write in the writing process might be different compared to the speaking process or pronunciation or something*"(Excerpt from the transcript)

Experiences and beliefs in teaching English

During his five-year teaching experiences, he encountered a problem concerning how he would teach learners with different learning styles. He also admits that it is hard to make learners understand the material. As he said

> "*…sometimes I teach through the old method sometimes you know through just reading sometimes I play the video…. But it's hard to make them understand the subject or to teach the lesson in an easier way*".(Excerpt from the transcript)

Concerning his teaching strategies, he highlights that it is the way he was taught as a second language learner that influences the way teaching. This supports Richardson's (1996, p.) argument who claimed that a teacher's own beliefs about teaching come from the previous learning experience. In tune with Richardson, Spada and Lightbown (2013, p. 91) indicate that teachers' beliefs that a particular type of instruction the best way for them to learn are usually based on previous learning experiences and the assumptions (right or wrong). In other words, I would assume that when he found any good interesting way his teacher taught him, he would use that in his ESL class. For instance, he tries to make his learning activities to be relaxed, not to be so serious. It is in line with Yi (2007) who proposes a number of steps to create an effective EFL classroom. These include motivating the students to communicate with their peers as well as their teacher in the target language, creating classroom activities attracting the students' attention and involving them in actual communication. In addition, Haerazi, Prayati, & Vikasari (2019) argue that teachers should be able to create a relaxed atmosphere and focus more fluency before accuracy in order to reduce learners' anxiety and to encourage learners to take the risk in using the language.

He also believes that doing some changes like how he evaluates the learner's skill can reduce the students negative feeling i.e. feeling intimidated. He admits that these preferences as the reflection of these previous learning experiences form all his experiences in learning.

"…I tend to be relaxed and a funny teacher because in my class I always tell my students … that your mark or your passing grade in my class is not determined by the … final exam or the mid-exam, but how you communicate with me. If you speak English with me anytime you meet me, you pass the course already". (Excerpt from the transcript)

In evaluating his learners' English, his main attention was as the students' braveness to communicate in English with him. He did not really care whether the sentences the learners used were correct or incorrect.

" …as long as you speak with me, it doesn't matter whether it's correct or incorrect … you will not fail my course .. it doesn't matter what you get in the exam. .. If they brave enough to speak to me, they pass the course". (Excerpt from the transcript)

In developing learners' speaking ability, most of the time, he would use small groups' strategy, which enables learners to interact with minimum negative pressure and reduces learners' anxiety. The advantage of this kind of group work is that it allows the use of English in a low-risk environment and makes students become less dependent on the teacher and more dependent on the group for their learning, and thus builds their self-confidence in using English for meaningful communication (Gan, 2012). He also sets a rule that everyone has two speak at least in two minutes with their partner, about any topic they like. This kind of activity indicates that he has been using free speaking activities.

"If I teach speaking, most of the time, I will make my students work in partners or groups of three or two".(Excerpt from the transcript)

He believes that teaching writing is the most difficult one; therefore, he has not found any best way to teach it. He identifies a number of reasons for this.

"…when they were at the junior high school, they were not enough exposed to words. They didn't have many words, enough words to write. Second, when they learn the reading, they were not exposed to the structure of the sentence in the reading which was integrated into the writing skills. So mostly they learn from the isolated sentences. So the teachers made an example by themselves. They didn't show, from the reading examples, how the sentence was formed. So when I asked them to write, most of the time, they could write but their writing was unreadable. We know… the meaning what they want to convey, but structurally it was incorrect".(Excerpt from the transcript)

Enhancing teaching strategies
Teacher is a learner; thus, he needs to learn how to improve his teaching strategies or how he would solve the learners' problems occurring in every meeting. In this context, Dafi believes that it is critical for teachers to improve their teaching knowledge and skills. Further, he identifies some strategies in enhancing his own competencies as an ESL teacher. He would do that by watching some videos from YouTube on how to teach English. Conversely, he hardly had time to read print references like journals about the teaching method. He also referred to reflective feedback given by learners that he would ask before starting the lesson or after completing the teaching session.

"…I did ask them to write their opinion like it is without a name like what do you think or how should I teach you?…"(Excerpt from the transcript)

However, he found that many students were not open to give evaluation or suggestions to him. He argues that cultural factors would prevent them from being critical to teachers. From this feedback, he believes that the teacher could

"*…know their preferences in learning…and…help the teachers to evaluate themselves. Maybe if we cannot accommodate them all so we can accommodate a little bit or just half…*" (Excerpt from the transcript)

CONCLUSION

Many scholars believe that motivation can give a significant contribution to success in learning a second language. For instance, Gardner (1982) identified several factors that play a significant role in second language acquisition, and one of these factors is motivation. Reflecting on Dafi's experience, motivation has affected his efforts and success in learning English**.** Therefore, teachers should develop their"skills in motivating learners as they are central to effective teaching (Dorney in Clece-Murcia, 2014, p.530). Further, Dorney classifies three relevant motivational strategies focusing on 1) the learners' future vision; 2) the individual is learning experience, and 3) the group learning experience.

One particular concept that the participant of this study mentioned as the key feature to learn and teach English in his context is exposure to the language. Exposure means teachers provide learners with opportunities to gain more input from learning and using the language. He believes that exposing students to the English language would enable them to improve significantly. For instance, if learners want to improve their oral communication skills, they have to find opportunities to communicate with the language for instance with peers or teachers. If they want to enrich their vocabulary or to learn how to write better, they have to read more. All of his ideas reflect his previous experience in learning and teaching English.

Drawing from the participant's own belief, exposure is very critical, especially in his teaching context. He also admits that his students have limited time to learn the English language in the classroom, thus he has to be able to provide more opportunities to learn and to use the language if aiming to reach higher success in second language learning. In this regard, Spada and Lightbown (2013, p.38) also maintain "*…learners, especially students in foreign language classrooms, receive far less exposure- perhaps only a few hours a week*".

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