IN THE NAME OF GOD

University of Ilam
Faculty of Humanities
English Language and Literature Department

M.A. Thesis

A Teachers' Beliefs Study of the ELT State of the Art in Iran

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ART (M.A.) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

By: Yasser Rezazadeh

Supervised by: Reza Khany, Ph.D

Advisor: Mahmood Samaie, Ph.D

September 2009

IN THE NAME OF GOD

A TEACHERS' BELIEFS STUDY OF THE ELT STATE OF THE ART IN IRAN

BY
YASSER REZAZADEH

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ART (M.A.)
IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

ILAM UNIVERSITY
ILAM
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

EVALUATED AND APPROVED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE AS: Excellent

R. Khany ....R. KHANY, Ph.D., ASSIST PROF.
(SUPERVISOR)
M. Samaie ....M. SAMAIE, Ph.D., ASSIST PROF.
(ADVISOR)
M. Shabani ....M. SHABANI, Ph.D., ASSIST PROF.
(EXAMINER)
M. Mansouri ....M. MANSURI, Ph.D., ASSIST PROF.
(EXAMINER)

September 2009

Abstract

This study explored beliefs teachers held about different methods, theories, and different types of assessment and content of English course books in high schools in Iran. It tried to find also if there is any relationship between teachers' beliefs about ELT theories and methods and their knowledge of current theories and methods and to find also whether strong relationships exist between their beliefs and the place they are teaching. The study was implemented among a population of 300 high school English language teachers in three Kurdish speaking provinces in Iran. An 80 item questionnaire was used to get teachers' beliefs and for correlation purpose, a knowledge test was designed based on a pilot study conducted earlier. Findings revealed that subjects agreed with current theories and methods of language teaching and learning, although they strongly disagreed with some concepts and techniques of theories and methods such as priority of speech over other skills, emphasis on meaning rather than form and error tolerance. The findings also showed that they strongly favored using mother tongue, translation, and deductive application of teaching grammar. Interview, essay test, open ended questions and multiple choice test were among the favorite types of assessment cited by teachers in the study. There were also beliefs challenging the content of current English course books such as writing and speaking parts. Findings indicated that teachers who held strong beliefs toward some theories and methods had high knowledge on related theory and methods and pointed out to some significant relationship. The place they were teaching showed to have no effect on their beliefs.

To Tammara

Acknowledgments

What makes us special is the signature of God on our lives (Max Lucado, 2000). Thanks be to God . . .

There is always the risk in showing one's appreciation for others that someone will be forgotten. So many individuals helped in direct and indirect ways with the completion of this thesis that I doubt I could ever remember to thank them all.

Beginning with my appreciation for the support I received in the course of my study, I would like to thank the English department of Ilam University who provided me with a grant for two semesters. I owe a great deal of gratitude to Dr. Reza Khani, not only for supervising my thesis, but for the invaluable support, help and patience. I would like to thank other members of English department for their being always ready to answer my questions or providing me with the necessary helps. Dr. Samaie for his accepting to consult me on my thesis: Dr. Aliakbari for all invaluable help during my study in Ilam University: Dr. Mansoori for his statistical guides that helped me a lot in my thesis and finally thanks to Dr. Shabani for his sharing of knowledge about some parts of the study.

Obviously, this study would never have been possible without the participation of the many participants. I would first like to thank Organization of Education in the provinces of Ilam, Kurdistan and Kermanshah who took the time to provide me with permission and help to find teachers who might participate in the study. Thanks to the teachers who took the time out of their hectic schedules to complete the questionnaires and answer the knowledge test. I learned a great deal about the teachers' world in our discussions and

appreciate their contributions as well as the support and encouragement they offered me .To nice friends who helped me at time of distributing questionnaires and knowledge test. To those kind and lovely people in unknown villages in Kermanshah and Kurdistan for their warm hospitality and accepting me as a guest for the time I was exhausted, I would like to say that I enjoyed "getting to know you"..

I must also thank those individuals who provided support and encouragement during the study. Thanks to my friends Mohammad, Ayat and Pannet who provided me with direct help. I would especially like to thank the members of my family: my mother who always encouraged me to keep studying, to my sisters and brother as well. Most of all, I would like to say thanks to my wife for her patience during some of the more intense periods of my research and for believing me when I told her: "Yes, there is an end. I won't be doing my thesis. forever!"

Table on Contents

Abstract…….……... iv

Dedication…….……..... v

Acknowledgements……...……..vi

Table of Contents……...…….……vii

List of Tables……..……..……...…...xvi

List of Figures…….……..……..……..…..xix

List of Abbreviations……..……xxi

Chapter One: Introduction 1

1.1 Introduction…….……2

1.2 Theoretical Background……..…….....…….…..…2

1.3 Statement of the Problem…….…….……..3

1.4 Significance of the Study…….……..……..5

1.5 Research Questions……...……...6

1.6 Research Hypothesis……...…….…..…...6

1.7 Definitions and Clarification of Terms…….……..……..…6

1.8 Overview of the Study……..…….…..7

1.9 Summary……..9

Chapter Two: Literature Review.....10

2.1 Introduction.....11

2.2 The Evolution of Second and Foreign Language Teaching.....11

2.2.1 1850s-1950s: Grammar Translation Method.....12

2.2.2 The Early 20th Century: Reform.....13

2.2.3 The Middle of 20th Century: Structures and Habits.....15

2.2.4 The Seventies and Eighties.....17

2.2.4.1 Community Language Learning.....18

2.2.4.2 Silent Way 20

2.2.4.3 Suggestopedia.....21

2.2.4.4 Total Physical Response.....23

2.2.4.5 Communicative Language Teaching.....25

2.2.5 Post Method Era.....27

2.2.6 Eclecticism or Integration.....29

2.2.7 Recent Approaches.....31

2.2.7.1 Task-based Approach.....31

2.2.7.2 Content-based Approach.....33

2.2.7.2.1 Theme-based Model.....34

2.2.7.2.2 Adjunct Model.....34

2.2.7.2.3 Sheltered Model.....34

2.2.8 Technology into Modern English Language Teaching……..35

2.3 Language Assessment……..…….38

2.3.1 Types of Assessment……...……..39

2.3.1.1 Formative vs. Summative……..……..39

2.3.1.2 Objective vs. Subjective…….……40

2.3.1.3Referencing…..……..…….……41

2.3.1.4 Informal vs. Formal…….....42

2.3.2 Standards of Quality…….....42

2.3.2.1 Reliability…….…...…42

2.3.2.2 Validity…….……..…..43

2.4 Content of Current English Course Books in Iran…….……..44

2.5 Teachers' Beliefs……..…….....…..45

2.5.1 Definition of Beliefs……..…….……..….46

2.5.2 How Beliefs Were and Are Formed?.....50

2.5.3 A Teachers' Beliefs and English Language Teaching……..…..52

2.6 Summary……...….58

Chapter Three: Methodology…….…..59

3.1 Introduction……...…60

3.2 Research Design……...…….……..60

3.3 Population and Sampling……..…….....…..61

3.4 Sources of Data Collection…….…….…….63

3.4.1 Questionnaire…….....63

3.4.2 Knowledge Test……...……..…..65

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures…….…..……..66

3.6 Summary……...66

Chapter Four: Results of the Study……...…….……68

4.1 Introduction.…….……..…….……69

4.2 General Beliefs……...……...…… .69

4.2.1 Beliefs about Behaviorism Theory……...…..……..70

4.2.2 Beliefs about Cognitivism Theory……...…...…….…..71

4.2.3 Beliefs about Metacognitive Theory……...……..……73

4.2.4 Beliefs about Communicative Theory…….…….…….75

4.2.5 Beliefs about Connectionism Theory……..……..76

4.2.6 Beliefs about Sociocognitive Theory……..…….……..…78

4.2.7 Beliefs about Grammar Translation Method……..……...…79

4.2.8 Beliefs about Direct Method……..…81

4.2.9 Beliefs about Audio-lingual Method…….……..…83

4.2.10 Beliefs about Community Language Learning…….…….....84

4.2.11 Beliefs about Total Physical Response…….…....86

4.2.12 Beliefs about Communicative Language Teaching…….…....87

4.2.13 Beliefs about Silent Way…….……89

4.2.14 Beliefs about Suggestopedia…….……90

4.2.15 Beliefs about Content-Based Approach……..……92

4.2.16 Beliefs about Task-Based Approach…….……...……94

4.2.17 Beliefs about Eclecticism…….95

4.2.18 Beliefs about Post Method Era…….97

4.2.19 Beliefs about Teaching by principle…….……...….98

4.2.20 Beliefs about Computer Assisted Language Learning……...…..99

4.2.21 Beliefs about Types of Assessment……..……..……100

4.2.22 Beliefs about Content of English Course Books…….....…102

4.3 Relationship……..…104

4.3.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Their Knowledge of

English Language Teaching Theories and Methods……..105

4.3.1.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Cognitive Theory……..….105

4.3.1.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Metacognitive Theory..…106

4.3.1.3 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on

Communicative Theory……..…108

4.3.1.4 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on
Connectionism Theory……..…109
4.3.1.5 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Sociocognitive Theory…..111
4.3.1.6 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on
Communicative Language Teaching…….……112
4.3.1.7 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Content-Based Approach...113
4.3.1.8 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on
Task-Based Approach…….…...…115
4.3.1.9 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Post Method Era…..……...116
4.3.1.10 Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge on Teaching by Principle.....117
4.3.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Their Place of Teaching……...…..117
4.4 Summary…….…….……118

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion……..……..…121
5.1 Introduction…….122
5.2 Teachers' Beliefs about Theories and Methods……122
5.2.1 Behaviorism Theory…….…….…….……..122
5.2.2 Cognitive Theory…….……..……...123
5.2.3 Metacognitive Theory……...…124
5.2.4 Communicative Theory……..……..…124

5.2.5 Connectionism Theory…….……125

5.2.6 Sociocognitive Theory…….…….……....…125

5.2.7 Grammar Translation Method……..…126

5.1.8 Direct Method…….……..…126

5.2 9 Audio-lingual Method……...…127

5.2.10 Community Language Learning……....…128

5.2.11 Total Physical Response…….……128

5.2.12 Communicative Language Teaching…….……....…..…129

5.2.13 Silent Way……..……129

5.2.14 Suggestopedia Method……...……130

5.2.15 Content-based Approach……..……..……131

5.2.16 Task-based Approach……...…..131

5.2.17 Eclecticism…….……..……...…132

5.2.18 Post Method Era……...……..…132

5.2.19 Teaching by principle…….…133

5.2.20 Computer Assisted Language Learning……....…133

5.2.21 Types of Assessment…….……..…….....…134

5.2.22 Content of Current English Course Books……....……....134

5.3 Relationship between Beliefs, Knowledge and Place of Teaching.....135

5.4 Conclusion…….……..…135

5.5 Pedagogical Implication……..137

5.6 Suggestions……...…….……..138

References……..…...……139

Appendices……...……..…146

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Items in Questionnaire Corresponding to Theories and Methods……..64

Table 3.2 Items in Knowledge Test Corresponding to

Current State of English Language Teaching.....…….65

Table 4.1 Frequency Counts for Behaviorism Theory ……..……70

Table 4.2 Frequency Counts for Cognitive Theory…….……...…72

Table 4.3 Frequency Counts for Metacognitive Theory…….……...….74

Table 4.4 Frequency Counts for Communicative Theory…….....76

Table 4.5 Frequency Counts for Connectionism Theory…….……..77

Table 4.6 Frequency Counts for Sociocognitive Theory…….……...79

Table 4.7 Frequency Counts for Grammar Translation Method…….....80

Table 4.8 Frequency Counts for Direct Method…….…….……...82

Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics for Audio-Lingual Method…….....83

Table 4.10 Frequency Counts for Community Language Learning Method.....84

Table 4.11 Frequency Counts for Total Physical Response Method…….86

Table 4.12 Frequency Counts for

Communicative Language Teaching Method……..87

Table 4.13 Descriptive Statistics for Silent Way Method……...89

Table 4.14 Frequency Counts for Suggestopedia Method…….....91

Table 4.15 Frequency Counts for Content-Based Approach…….93

Table 4.16 Frequency Counts for Task-Based Language Teaching……..94

Table 4.17 Frequency Counts for Eclecticism…….96

Table 4.18 Frequency Counts for Post Method Era…….....97

Table 4.19 Frequency Counts for Teaching by Principle……...98

Table 4.20 Frequency Counts for Computer Assisted Language Learning…….....99

Table 4.21 Frequency Counts for Types of Assessment……..….....101

Table 4.22 Frequency Counts for Content of Course Books…….....103

Table 4.23 Teachers' Belief and Their

Knowledge Test Scores on Cognitivism……..……..…..….....105

Table 4.24 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation on Cognitivism ……..…106

Table 4.25 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on

Metacognitivism…….……..…….....107

Table 4.26 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient for

Metacognitive Theory…….……...….107

Table 4.27 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on

Communicative Theory.……..…..…...108

Table 4.28 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient for

Communicative Theory…….……..……109

Table 4.29 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on

Connectionism Theory…….....110

Table 4.30 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient for

Connectionism Theory…….110

Table 4.31 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on

Sociocognitive Theory……..……..…..111

Table 4.32 Correlation Coefficient for Sociocognitive

Theory…….…….…….…112

Table 4.33 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on Communicative Language Teaching method……...…….…….....112

Table 4.34 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient for Communicative Language Teaching Method…….....….113

Table 4.35 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on Content-Based Approach …….…..114

Table 4.36 Descriptive and Correlation Coefficient for Content-Based Teaching Approach……...……..……..114

Table 4.37 Teachers' Belief and Their Knowledge Test Scores on Task-Based Language Teaching…….....…115

Table 4.38 Descriptive and Correlation Coefficient for Task-Based Language Teaching…….....…115

Table 4.39 Descriptive and Correlation Coefficient for Post Method Era……..…116

Table 4.40 Descriptive and Correlation Coefficient for Teaching by Principles...117

Table 4.41 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient Between Teachers' Beliefs and Place of Teaching…….…….118

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Teachers' Demographic Information in Ilam……61

Figure 3.2 Teachers' Demographic Information in Kermanshah…….……...62

Figure 3.3 Teachers' Demographic Information in Kurdistan…….…....62

Figure 4.1 Teachers' Beliefs on Behaviorism……...71

Figure 4.2 Teachers' Beliefs on Cognitivism……..…….73

Figure 4.3 Teachers' Beliefs on Metacognitive Theory……..….74

Figure 4.4 Teachers' Beliefs on Communicative Theory…….……..….75

Figure 4.5 Teachers' Beliefs on Connectionism Theory…….….78

Figure 4.6 Teachers' Beliefs on Sociocognitive Theory……..78

Figure 4.7 Teachers' Beliefs on Grammar Translation Method……...81

Figure 4.8 Teachers' Beliefs on Direct Method……..….81

Figure 4.9 Teachers' Beliefs on Audio-Lingual Method…….….84

Figure 4.10 Teachers' Beliefs on Community Language Learning Method……..….85

Figure 4.11 Teachers' Beliefs on Total Physical Response Method…….…...87

Figure 4.12 Teachers' Beliefs on Communicative Language Teaching Method…….88

Figure 4.13 Teachers' Beliefs on Silent Way Method…….90

Figure 4.14 Teachers' Beliefs on Suggestopedia…….92

Figure 4.15 Teachers' Beliefs on Content-Based Approach……...….92

Figure 4.16 Teachers' Beliefs on Task-Based Approach…….94

Figure 4.17 Teachers' Beliefs on Eclecticism……..……..….97

Figure 4.18 Teachers' Beliefs on Post-method Era…….……98

Figure 4.19 Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching by Principle……...……..99

Figure 4.20 Teachers' Beliefs on Computer Assisted Language Learning……100

Figure 4.21Teachers' Beliefs on Types of Assessment…….…...…..…159

Figure 4.22 Teachers' Beliefs on Content of English Course Books……..…….….160