

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Teaching Speaking Skills: A Case StudyDawit Birhanu Mammo^{1*}, Abiy Yigzaw², Yifter Melesse³

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of a qualitative case study exploring seven English language teachers' (participants) beliefs vis-à-vis their classroom practices in teaching speaking skills at 'Hidar' 11 Secondary School in Gondar town. I collected data through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The interviews engrossed in participants' beliefs. Before the classroom observations, I conducted the background and situational interviews, and after the classroom observations, I administered the recall interviews. I observed the classrooms in a natural setting. Thematic analysis was the analytic strategy I used for this qualitative research. The findings show that participants' beliefs and classroom practices did not mirror up-to-date points of view in teaching speaking skills; they lacked theoretical bases. There were consistencies and inconsistencies between the two constructs. Participants' learning and teaching experiences, lack of pedagogical and content knowledge, students' reluctance to speak, and the school context were some of the factors for the consistencies and inconsistencies between English teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in teaching speaking skills. In addition, the consistencies and inconsistencies between beliefs and practices are influenced by each other; beliefs influence practices at one time, and practices influence beliefs at another time. Hence, teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching speaking skills in courses must be developed through short- and long-term training programs. To make teachers reflective practitioners, their awareness-raising on beliefs, practices, and applicable skills must be an intrinsic part of all teacher training programs.

Keywords: /Beliefs/Consistency/Interview/ Participant/Practice/Speaking/

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1. Introduction

Studies indicate that teachers' beliefs may be sources for their actions (Burns, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Good, 1987 as cited in Kaymakamoglu, 2018). Teachers' beliefs are potent forces in their actions that influence students' achievement. It means that teachers' beliefs are associated with student enactment. Additionally, beliefs play dominant roles in the teaching practices. The teachers reflect those beliefs in deciding on teaching methods, activities, decisions, and evaluations (Borg, 2001).

By going over the preceding points, it can be considered that teachers' beliefs are a set of philosophies ingrained in the psychological and mental content of the teachers having a fundamental role in guiding their teaching behavior. Researchers believe that teachers' beliefs are the causes of resistance to change and work as a watchdog for every new knowledge. They also serve as barriers to re-forms in teaching practices (Pajares, 1992).

Academic failure of students results from teachers' beliefs about students. Occasionally, teachers have low expectations of their students, which can become self-fulfilling insight behaviors, classroom management, and activities driven by those beliefs (Kaymakamoglu, 2018). Teachers who have low beliefs about their students organize low-quality materials and apply low-quality teaching. Teachers' beliefs have practical and theoretical features, but some Foreign Language (FL) teacher beliefs investigators considered that teachers' beliefs are not only practical or theoretical descriptions. For instance, Nespor (1987) describes that teachers develop different views of their teaching, which amalgamate knowledge and experience. The knowledge is based on the theoretical feature of teacher beliefs, and the experience is based on practical teacher beliefs. Practical beliefs are stronger than theoretical beliefs because teachers practically learn more from their experiences (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Theoretical beliefs might be sources of the mismatch between beliefs and practices (Sakui & Gaies, 2003; Farrell, 2008).

Many types of researches in Ethiopia also show inconsistencies between EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (Abiy, 2000; Birhanu, 2012; Tagesse, 2012; Behailu, 2018; Tesfaye & Geesje, 2018). Abiy (2000) researched beliefs and actual classroom practices of high school English teachers concerning error correction. The result indicated that there was an inconsistency between the two constructs. Another research concerning secondary school EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices on all language skills indicated no correlation between beliefs and practices (Birhanu, 2012). Nevertheless, as this research uncovered, due attention was not given to the teachers' beliefs and practices in the teaching of speaking skills. Tagesse (2012) at Wolaita Sodo University conducted a qualitative case study on tensions between English instructors' pedagogical beliefs and practices concerning University writing instructions. He collected the data through interviews and classroom observations. The result shows no relationship between pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices. However, another local study showed the consistency between the two constructs (Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018).

Thus, as various studies showed different results regarding teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, and as no research had been conducted regarding teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching speaking skills, there was a need to conduct this research. Hence, the study has the following specific objectives:

- to explore English teachers' beliefs in teaching speaking skills at 'Hidar' 11 Secondary School
- to assess the relationship between English teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in teaching speaking skills

2. Review of Related Literature

Teachers' beliefs imply views related to pedagogy concerning the teaching situation that influences classroom behaviors (Borg, 1998; Richards, 2008). Beliefs are a vital part of life and teaching because they support a logical sense of the world. Johnson (1994) also attempted to see the impact of beliefs on teachers' mental lives and classroom practices. Firstly, beliefs impact teachers' learning to teach. Secondly, beliefs affect perception and judgment, which influence classroom behavior. Finally, bearing these beliefs in mind is significant to develop teaching practices and teacher training.

Teachers' learning experiences at school and higher education play a prominent role in affecting their beliefs and classroom enactments (Borg, 2003a; Williams & Burden, 2007). Borg added that investigation of teachers' beliefs on condition shows that teachers' prior experiences as students enlighten their beliefs and impact their teaching experience all over their teaching careers. Borg also advises teacher educators to consider student teachers' beliefs, to train them to be able to reveal their prior experiences, and to apply these experiences in determining their classroom practices. Likewise, Williams and Burden (2007) emphasized that teachers' established beliefs concerning language learning would pervade their classroom enactments over and above a specific methodology they have learned for the period of teacher education programs in higher institutions.

Phipps and Borg (2009) stated that understanding EFL teachers' beliefs concerning language teaching and learning help us know about them and their teaching. The consequence of beliefs is vested in their liaison to practice. Researchers conducted various studies to explore the link between beliefs and classroom practices like teaching approaches, decision-making, and problem-solving techniques. The research results show interactive, dialectic, and complex liaison between beliefs and classroom practices (Breen et al., 2001; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Kuzborska, 2011). According to Borg (2003), schooling (i.e., the previous learning experience), professional coursework (i.e., pre-service and in-service teacher training), contextual factors, and classroom practice are influential factors for beliefs.

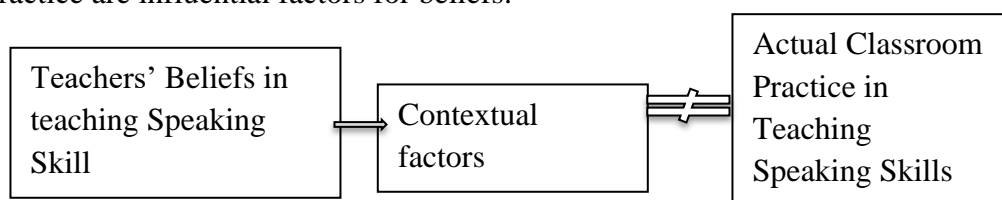


Figure 1: The context of EFL teachers' beliefs in teaching speaking skills and their actual classroom practice

Therefore, the above figure shows the context of EFL teachers' beliefs in teaching speaking skills and their actual classroom practice (Adapted from Borg, 2003). Even though teachers have some sort of beliefs about their teaching speaking skills, they are influenced by various factors; these factors impacted them to act or not to act what they believed in their speaking classes. Hence, the above figure shows that teachers' beliefs followed by various contexts may lead to congruence or incongruence with their actual practices in teaching speaking skills.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sampling Techniques

This research is conducted in an exploratory case study research design which was qualitative in nature (Creswell, 2012). The inductive approach was appropriate to answer the research questions as the research is qualitative. I tried to produce an impression of the participants' minds to recognize their interpretation and how this impacted their teaching of speaking skills. I believed it was possible to generate different meanings from different individuals.

In this study, I selected 'Hidar' 11 Secondary School as a research site using a convenient sampling technique (Dornyei, 2007; Creswell, 2012). I chose the participants using the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique incorporates participants who have knowledge of or experience with significant concern. I needed them for their accessibility, willingness, ability to transfer messages, and thoughts expressively.

3.2 The Participants

I invited seven English language teachers to better understand their educational experiences as students and how their experiences influenced their beliefs and their actual classroom practices in teaching speaking skills as teachers. The number of participants was not large because it is not possible to generalize case studies to a larger context (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Pseudonyms were used for this study (T1-T7). Four of the participants were females (T2, T4, T5, & T7), and the rest three were males (T1, T3, & T6). All the participants speak Amharic as their first language and have at least a first degree in English except T4, whose first degree is in teaching Amharic. Each of them had at least five years of teaching experience.

3.3 Recording and Data Transformation

I used audio and video recordings for this study (kasunic, 2010). I used the video records for the classroom observations and the audio records for background, situational, and stimulated-recall interviews.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Interview. This study held in-depth and semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument (Seidman, 1998). The background interviews (BI) were the first interviews for the participants; these interviews helped me to get a profile of the participants. I adapted background interview questions from Tantani (2012). I conducted these interviews from September 30, 2019, to October 02, 2019. Situational interviews (SI) were the other tools I used to collect data (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004). I designed those interviews related to teachers' teaching speaking skills. I prepared these questions because I wanted to know how the participants solved problems in speaking classrooms based on their past or current experience. I managed these interviews from October 2, 2019, to October 4, 2019. Stimulated-recall interviews (SRI) were the other interviews that came after each couple of classroom observations. To remember what was happening during the classroom observation, I made the participants watch the video records and invited them to give reflective responses to the stimulated-recall interview questions. I did these interviews from November 14, 2019, to March 11, 2020. I conducted six interviews with each of the four participants and five with each of the rest. The interviews were conducted in the English Language, but I gave them opportunities to respond in English and /or in Amharic. I did this not to miss relevant information because of problems with English expressions. The background and

situational interviews took 40 min to 1 hr., and the stimulated-recall interviews took 10-15 min. The duration of the interviews depended upon the interaction between the interviewees and me.

Classroom observation. I was a non-participant observer during the class observations (OC) for this study. I did unstructured, non-participant classroom observations (Borg, 2006), and used video recordings. Firstly, the observations assisted me in having video records of what was happening in the classroom. Secondly, they helped me let the participants remember the situation for the stimulated-recall interviews. Thirdly, I used them for transcription purposes. As Hoffman and Seidel (2015) stated, constant classroom observations increase the validity of the data. I had seven classroom observations for each of the four participants and six for the rest. I conducted the classroom observations from November 12, 2019, to March 11, 2020.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The background interviews were the first interviews that preceded all the data collection instruments. I prepared questions to collect information on participants' beliefs in teaching speaking skills. In the situational interviews, I interviewed the participants about solutions for the problems in teaching speaking skills. The stimulated-recall interviews depended upon the lessons observed. Thus, some recall interview questions were different from one participant to the other because strategies, methods, and teaching materials varied in some ways. I made them look at the video of the respective classes, and I asked some questions about that specific class. I observed all the speaking lessons from November 2019 to March 2020. Within seven months, I observed each participant teaching speaking lessons, for 42 min period. The speaking lessons observed were from grades 9–12. All observed speaking lessons were video-recorded for transcription.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

I transcribed data from classroom observations and interviews (stimulated-recall and final) on my personal computer; data were transcribed manually. I listened to the audio (interviews) and video (observations) and wrote the notes on my personal computer. I corrected some linguistic features of the collected data without missing its original message (Dornyei, 2007). Next, I labeled the transcribed data. In this stage, I built up each participant's profile and developed new questions for the subsequent interview sessions. The phases of the coding include initial, instant, and ultimate coding. I started the initial coding in November 2019 by emphasizing the transcription of the data and relating it to my research questions designed (Silverman, 2015). Then, by revising these interesting extracts, I labeled and organized the data based on the research questions. I used the initial phase of the coding stage as a gate valve to the instant phase of the coding stage. It started after I finished collecting the data in May 2020. The instant phase of the coding comprised combining the data, seeking themes and patterns, and sorting out the relevant data from the irrelevant ones.

3.7 Trustworthiness

In this research, I used various techniques to increase the trustworthiness of the research—collecting data for seven months, quarrying intense responses from the entire participants for the interview questions, and having persistent classroom observations. Inviting the participants to read and comment on their transcribed interviews (member checks) and having data triangulation (the classroom observations and interviews) increased the trustworthiness of the results. I confirmed dependability through an audit trail to scrutinize the research and consider the truthfulness of the procedure and the result (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman, 2012). In addition, I had complete records of events in every phase of the research process. They include problem

formulation, selection of research participants, interview transcripts, classroom observation transcripts, data analysis decisions, and others in a reachable manner.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

I informed the participants that their participation in this research was entirely voluntary-based and their choice to participate or not had no consequences on their teaching career (Wiles, 2013; APA, 2020).

4. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Beliefs and Practices in Accuracy and Fluency

Most participants believed that their students were not fluent and accurate in speaking. T1 said, “All my students are not fluent, and only 3%–5% of them are accurate in speaking skills”. He added that to make them fluent and accurate, it was crucial to give them tutorial classes and to encourage them to read books, listen to audio and watch videos. However, from all classroom observations (T1, Observed Class 1–6), he (T1) did not try to improve students’ accuracy and fluency. In the stimulated-recall interview, he said that the students lacked background knowledge and the willingness to speak.

T2 said that the trend the students brought from elementary school made them weaker in fluency and accuracy in speaking. English teachers focused on teaching reading and grammar but not on speaking skills. As students told her they wanted to complete grade 10; therefore, most of them did not focus on their lessons. During the classroom observations, I saw students had accuracy and fluency problems, and all the lessons were teacher-dominated. For example,

Student 1: You should participating [participate] actively. (T2, Observed Class 1)

Student 1: Could you tell me the bus station [sic]? (T2, Observed Class 3)

Student 2: Stadium is the sport of club [sic]. (T2, Observed Class 3)

Student 3: Governmental road about the ministry of education [sic]. (T2, Observed Class 3)

Student 3: The negative of [the] bank is above the government road [sic]. (T2, Observed Class 3)

Student 2: Meat is better ice cream [sic] (T2, Observed Class 7)

In addition, I did not listen to students speaking fluently; they utter junk words. In the stimulated-recall interview, I asked T2 what she did to improve students’ fluency and accuracy. She responded that she did not do anything special other than the usual teaching speaking that I had seen in her classrooms.

As T3 stated, teachers need to motivate and give related exercises to improve students’ fluency. In addition, teachers need to help students with sentence structures and pronouncing words correctly to improve students’ accuracy in speaking. The students’ fluency and accuracy were low during the classroom observation; they made various errors. T4 said most English teachers, including her, were not teaching speaking skills well. The students were also not willing to participate in speaking lessons. In addition, according to her, the students did not speak English outside the classroom. From the classroom observations, I confirmed T4’s beliefs regarding the students’ fluency and accuracy. Student 3’s fluency and accuracy is shown below:

Abeba stays home because her mother told her to look after the baby. Her mother's name is W/ro Fetya or the other name for W/ro Fetaya is W/ro Haha. The name of W/ro Haha comes from she prepare [prepares] food by that means she gets W/ro Haha [Haha's] name and her husband is Ato Haha. He comes at 9 o'clock and he drink [s] [drinks] a lot of coffee. W/ro Haha and Ato Haha has [have] many childrens [children]... Is there anybody who tell [sic]? (T4, Observed Class 1)

Student 2: Man helping to man. When the first man is broken his leg and other women support him and she will going [go] to.... [Sic] (T4, Observed Class 2)

In this lesson, Role-play with Different Situations, one of the group members introduced himself and explained the situation. Another student came to the classroom with [a] nose bleeding.

Student 1: Oh, my sister what is the accident explain for your nose [sic]?

Student 2: I do not know. Where is the make and I see my face I see that the bleed is... [sic]?

Student 1: Oh, am sorry, please. I give first aid and go to Hospital [sic].

Then, Student 1 took student 2 to the hospital.

Student 1: Absolutely, here, she is my sister has got several nose bleed [sic] /bled/.

Student 3: Ok, let me what are telling [sic]?

Student 2: Before 1hr the blood bleed in my nose and... [Sic]

Student 3: Therefore, take this medicine.

Student 2: Ok, Doctor. (T4, Observed Class 2)

T5 thought that her students knew the grammar by form, but they could not apply them in their speaking. Then, I wanted to get an explanation about this point. She said that she was teaching grammar, but she was not contextualizing the lessons into their speaking. According to T5, the students could not understand the grammatical rules as they were not able to construct good sentences. Then, another string of questions followed about how one approaches students who were not fluent and good at speaking; she replied:

I believe one gives chance for clever students to share experiences with other students. I make students repeat after me to increase their fluency and accuracy. I think one gives reinforcement to those who work hard and motivate the passive ones. As for me, I give reinforcement by saying good, very good, excellent, etc. I believe hard work is needed by responsible bodies. Continuous training should be given; teachers should love teaching, and the size of the textbooks should be minimized. (T5, Background Interview)

As I mentioned above, this participant mainly focused on drilling. She thought repetition is the key strategy to teaching speaking. Similarly, T6 wanted his students to be accurate in speaking because they would take higher education entrance examinations. He wanted his students to be good at grammar and other aspects of the language. However, he believed that most of the students were not accurate and fluent in speaking. Therefore, I asked him a chain of questions about students who are not fluent and accurate in speaking. He preferred to be accurate to be fluent in speaking for exam takers. But he added that he did not do anything special to improve students' speaking accuracy as he was in a rush to finish the course. The reality in the

classes observed also showed that students' level of accuracy and fluency was in question. During the classroom observations, I saw most students did not want to say anything, but they were murmuring.

T7 preferred to be an accurate speaker to a fluent speaker. She said it was impossible to use only English in the classroom, so she used Amharic. In addition, teachers need to give extra activities and more chances for the slow students to improve their speaking. She used Amharic in the classroom; she said, "The students cannot understand me unless I use Amharic. They asked me to use Amharic, and I let them use it; then, I translate it into English" (T7, Background Interview). The lessons observed indicated that students were not accurate and fluent in speaking. They constructed sentences that were full of errors. T7 needed to focus on accuracy; however, I did not see her working on students' accuracy.

For the students to be accurate and fluent in speaking, teachers need to teach them to use the correct vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Nunan, 1999). To be accurate means to be perfect in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Yuan & Ellis, 2003); to be fluent means, to keep speaking naturally without pauses and hesitations (Skehan, 1996). Of course, frequent pauses in speaking might hinder speaking fluency and put a brake on speaking. Nevertheless, speakers talk so fast that occasional pausing is natural (Nunan, 1999). The participants explained students' backgrounds and lack of willingness to pronounce words and practice speaking were some of the problems that hinder students' speaking. Some EFL teachers emphasize fluency, and others focus on accuracy in teaching speaking skills; however, the balance between them is essential to teaching speaking skills (Lindsay & Knight, 2006). These researchers explained that English teachers need to create an impeccable balance between fluency and accuracy in teaching speaking skills.

There are different views regarding fluency and accuracy in speaking. Some say that students need to speak without giving attention to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. On the other hand, others say students should focus on any aspect of the language (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, &, etc.). People who support the first view are proponents of fluency, and those who support the second view are proponents of accuracy in speaking. Errors in grammar and vocabulary are irrelevant in the early learning stages. In contrast, too much focus on correcting them is also detrimental as it causes excessive control in the students' minds and hinders the natural approach to the acquisition of speaking skills. Proponents of the natural approach believe that students improve naturally through speaking, and many EFL teachers support this point of view.

Contrariwise, others prefer to be accurate to fluent. They believe in giving more grammatical and pronunciation error corrections. The approach is called the accuracy-oriented approach. The proponents of this approach believe in practising a newly introduced language item by repetition. For instance, in this study, T5 tried to teach her students by giving more drills. She was making her students repeat the language item various times. Although many linguists support it, it is an old-fashioned viewpoint. Stern (1991) says that EFL teachers who follow this approach are criticized for the problem of making their students effective in speaking in their classes.

However, fluency and accuracy are closely related terms; every English teacher should consider both and become eclectic in teaching speaking skills. It is not contradictory to be eclectic; it is possible to gain authenticity in speaking classes. It is because fluency brings accuracy, and accuracy brings fluency (Dincer *et al.*, 2012). One cannot be perfect at speaking. If you listen to a foreigner or a teacher, they make errors.

3.2 Beliefs and Practices in Pronunciation Teaching

T1 believed that he needed to teach pronunciation as it was highly related to speaking skills; however, he said he had pronunciation problems. He added that he was unable to teach pronunciation. Therefore, there were no pronunciation lessons and pronunciation error corrections in his speaking classes. On the other hand, T2

thought she felt comfortable teaching pronunciation, and it was good to focus on it. And she believed that students need to focus on pronunciation if they wanted to be good speakers. She said students were happy when they learned pronunciation. She believed when the students recognized the correct pronunciation, they could speak more and avoid frustration. Consequently, teaching pronunciation was very helpful in improving students' speaking abilities. In the situational interview, I asked her how to solve a situation if a student did not want to speak in the classroom because he thought he had bad pronunciation. She responded, "I encourage him/her to practice day-to-day. I tell this student not to worry about the pronunciation error; s/he improves pronunciation as s/he tries day-to-day" (T2, Situational Interview). She taught one pronunciation lesson (pronunciation endings). In this lesson, the pronunciation of the past verb form, -ed, was taught. She made the students pronounce these verbs under each category, /t/, /d/, /id/. She encouraged students to stand up and read the words. She called out and asked them to pronounce verbs ending '-d' or '-ed' and to say altogether. T2 used the chorus in this class. And finally, she asked the students to categorize regular verb endings from the list and did it in class. In the stimulated-recall interview, T2 said, "As I told you earlier, pronunciation is important to be good speakers of English; I believe that repetition is a good strategy to teach pronunciation" (T2, Stimulated-recall Interview 1).

In a similar vein, T3 said the following:

Yeah, I teach pronunciation; I believe in correct pronunciation, and I correct students' pronunciation errors at speaking. I feel comfortable dealing with pronunciation, and both pronunciation and speaking are related. I tell students that a word may have different pronunciations that bring meaning differences and suggest the correct pronunciation. I like correcting pronunciation errors by pronouncing errors correctly and making students repeat after me. (T3, Background Interview)

In observed class five, T3 taught pronunciation with a lesson topic of "Pronunciation-contractions". He first introduced the lesson topic and asked the students to define the word contractions; however, no one defined the word. Then, he *explained about contractions*. He gave examples to the students about the short and full forms of words and phrases and made them repeat after him. In this lesson, the students were expected to listen to one another as the lesson was pronunciation, but they were so noisy and participated poorly in the daily lesson.

T5 thought she could not teach pronunciation properly because she believed she was poor at it. She added that she did not have a good background when she was a student. Therefore, she became poor in pronunciation. She said it was good to focus on pronunciation in speaking classes, but she did not feel comfortable. She said, "I do not teach pronunciation properly because I have problems in pronouncing words. For instance, I pronounced the past form "ask" as /d/, but it should not have been like this; therefore, I need training on pronunciation" (T5, Stimulated-recall Interview 3). In observed lesson 3, this participant taught pronunciation endings, -ed forms; she said:

When we see the pronunciation of regular verb endings like /d/ and /t/ to verb 2 or verb 3, we pronounce them as the/id/ sound. If the verb ends in a vowel sound or a voiced consonant (l, n, r, b, g, m, z, s, v), the -ed form is pronounced as /d/. Other regular verb endings are pronounced as the/t/ sound. What do you mean by voiced and voiceless in our mother language, Amharic, (she used Amharic)? Voiced means sounded with the vibration of our vocal cords.

Then, she wrote some regular verb endings to be pronounced as /t/, /d/ or /id/. Then, T5 took out her mobile and used a dictionary to pronounce some regular verb endings like greeted, asked, and learned. She explained how the students could pronounce regular verb endings and repeat words several times.

T5: Asked /t/ say all of you, asked.

Students: Asked

T5: Asked, again

Students: Asked

T5: Again

Students: Asked

T5: Work...worked /t/

Students: Worked

T5: Again

Students: Worked

T5: As I told you at the beginning of the lesson, it is very important and very difficult. Practice it, please.

Asked

Students: Asked

T5: Again

Students: Asked

T5: Again

Students: Asked

T5: Greeted /id/

Students: Greeted

T5: Again

Students: Greeted

T5: Again

Students: Greeted

T5: Say it again.

Students: Greeted

T5: Read loudly, please.

Students: Greeted

T5: Again

Students: Greeted

T5: Again

Students: Greeted

T5: Learned /d/

Students: Learned

T5: Again

Students: Learned

T5: Again

Students: Learned

T5 asked a student to pronounce the word “worked”, but the student pronounced it as worked /-d/, and she corrected him to pronounce the verb ending as /t/.

T5: Read it, please, worked /t/

Students: Worked

T5: Again

Students: Worked

T5: Say it again

Students: Worked

T5: Very good, what is the other word?

Students: Group 1, 3, 2 (shouting)

T5: Group 1 or 3?

Students: 3

T5: The word is wanted

Students: Wanted

T5: Wanted /-id/

Students: Wanted

T5: Say it again.

Students: Wanted

T5: Very good, practice the rest words.

T5 emphasized repetition. She made her students repeat the same item loudly and several times. But in her stimulated-recall interview, she stated, “The daily lesson was interesting; however, I think I did not pronounce verb endings correctly because I was not good at pronouncing words”.

T6 also commented,

I feel comfortable dealing with pronunciation. My students want to focus on pronunciation, but they are not good at it. I believe both pronunciation and speaking need practice. It is problematic to pronounce the word unless one speaks. My experience in pronouncing words is one challenge. The other is students want to pronounce words by pronouncing each letter e.g., “a lot of”. (T7, Background Interview)

I asked her to justify her and the students’ experience in pronouncing words. When she was a student, English teachers did not teach her how to pronounce words. They taught structure, but they did not pronounce words correctly. Therefore, she believed she encountered similar problems when she was teaching. She added she and her students read words by articulating each letter. I asked her a series of questions about how to solve a problem if a student was reluctant to speak as they are afraid of mispronunciation; she said, “I will encourage this student to continue speaking and give the right pronunciation” (T7, Situational Interview). But in the lessons observed, the participant did not teach pronunciation or correct any oral errors. The finding indicates the existence of gaps between beliefs and practices in teaching speaking skills.

Furthermore, T6 and T4 supposed the need for good pronunciation in enhancing students' speaking competence; however, they stated they were not good at pronunciation. I asked T6 a situational question concerning students who were reluctant to speak afraid of having good pronunciation. He responded that he did not obligate them to focus on pronunciation errors because knowing how to pronounce words does not mean knowing the language. He added that he encouraged students to speak out about what was coming to their minds focusing on the message to inform.

As Goh (2007) believed, pronunciation plays a role in speaking. However, it was not sufficiently taught in any of the classes observed. Four participants (T1, T4, T5, & T6) explained they did not like teaching pronunciation because they thought they had pronunciation problems (Macdonald, 2002; Underhill, 2005). They thought that they did not have a native-like pronunciation; nevertheless, the aim of pronouncing it like a native speaker of the language is impracticable. Macdonald (2002) stated the causes for avoiding pronunciation teaching. He said the lack of appropriate teaching materials and knowledge in addressing pronunciation in an integrative manner were the causes for teachers' problems in teaching pronunciation. In this school, there were no materials for teaching pronunciation. The problem was observed almost in all of the observed speaking lessons.

As Celce-Murcia and others (1996) stated, it is imperative to be aware that FL students need to target good pronunciation, but this does not mean that they must have native-like speakers' pronunciation. Instead, FL speakers necessitate understanding the target language. Thus, teaching pronunciation requires being well-thought-out as a vital feature in FL programs as some errors are possible in existence. Regarding this, Littlewood (1991) said that pronunciation errors were fossilized. They become everlasting sorts of student speech.

T5 taught one pronunciation activity in her speaking lesson that she made her students listen from dictionary software on her mobile phone though that was not audible. T5's pronunciation activity class was oral drilling which agrees with Tice's (2004) findings. T5 made her students listen to the pronunciation and repeat the audio from the mobile phone (individually then wholly). Even though the over-employment of drilling is unacceptable these days, this technique is still beneficial in the classroom suitably. For instance, drills can support students in the improvement of self-confidence because they have pronunciation practice as a whole class. According to Tice, drilling will be meaningful when it is understood by the students what they are drilling; conversely, monotonous chanting of the drills is inappropriate for the students. The duties of the teachers in the drilling are modeling words to be repeated and getting the students to repeat after them. This technique helps the students to build self-confidence and emphasis pronunciation difficulties; however, too much drilling is so boring (Tice, 2004).

The correct pronunciation is significant in language teaching because it helps students communicate very easily (Varasarin, 2007). English teachers should give due attention to teaching pronunciation; students' truncated talent in pronunciation can obstruct their proper speaking (Liu, 2007). As the participants believed, the students did not have the confidence to speak because they were not acquainted with the pronunciation of words. They were also afraid of being laughed at by their friends due to their pronunciation. Concerning this, language experts interpret inappropriate pronunciation as instigated by teaching goals, and English as foreign language teachers have problems pronouncing words correctly (Varasarin, 2007). Therefore, English teachers miss teaching pronunciation as they are poor at pronouncing words correctly; they lacked the confidence, skill, and knowledge to teach it. Thus, the above points indicate that there is a match and mismatch between Teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching pronunciation in speaking classes.

3.3 Beliefs and Practices in Grammar Teaching

T4 believed that she adored teaching grammar. However, observed lesson 4 revealed that her teaching method was teacher-dominated; she said, “Even though the daily lesson was grammar, students were not actively participating” (T4, Stimulated-recall Interview 1). She believed that she did not like teaching speaking skills as she thought teaching speaking skills was difficult.

T5 said she liked teaching grammar. I asked her about teaching grammar for the enhancement of speaking skills. And she replied, “Yeah, grammar is useful for speaking” (T5, Background Interview). Thus, in the lessons observed, she taught grammar:

T5: Look, the picture shows the old city wall. Is it past or simple present tense?

Students: Simple present

T5: The picture shows the old city wall. Here, the underlined word is old. Is it an adjective or a noun?

Students: Adjective.

T5: Adjective, what kind of adjective? That is a descriptive adjective. A descriptive adjective is an adjective that states the behavior or attitude of the noun, which describes the noun. So, the position of the adjective is before the noun. What kind of city wall?

Students: Old.

T5: What kind of city wall?

Students: Old

T5: Is the picture singular or plural?

Students: Singular (T5, Observed Class2)

T5: When do you get up?

Student: I always get up at 12 o'clock.

T5: I always get up at 12 o'clock (She wrote on the board). It is a simple present tense. Who can correct it? Where is the position of the frequency verb?

Student: I always get up at 12 o'clock.

T5: I always get up at 12 o'clock. (T5, Observed Class5)

T6 also commented on his grammar teaching. He said, “I want my students to be accurate in grammar and other aspects of the language.” (T6, Background Interview)

The observed lessons indicated that this participant focused on teaching grammar e.g., in observed speaking lesson 1, he focused on the structure, “We + found + it + adj. +...”

We found it difficult to study mathematics subject.

We found it challenging to learn through plasma.

We found it difficult to get clean water in the school compound.

In observed lesson 3 (The Future Prediction), the participant strictly focused on:

Will + v1 (simple future)

Will + have+ v3 (future perfect)

Going to the structure is all used to predict the future.

In observed lesson 5, T6 taught grammar. In this lesson, he organized the students into groups; then, he asked the students to give their alternative responses to the given choices.

T6: You are on the way to taking the matric exam. Right after taking the matric exam, you expect a good result. After getting a good result, you are expected to join a good university. The field that you need to study should be decided. How many of you have decided? Chale, have you made up your mind?

Student Chale: Yes

T6: So, make-up means to decide. Ok, any group?

T7 and T1 explained that they preferred teaching grammar to other features of language skills. T7 said, "I like teaching grammar more than other skills because I think grammar is the base. You can't speak, listen, write, and read unless you understand the grammar" (T7, Background Interview). T1 also said, "I like teaching grammar based on structure, but I dislike teaching speaking skills because my students hate speaking classes" (T1, Background Interview).

The participants believed grammar was a basic feature of speaking competence. They ranked it as the first level for students. A study by Cohen and Fass (2000) stated, "Teachers tended to value form and accuracy in oral language as can be seen by their ranking "grammar" as the most important and "vocabulary" and "pronunciation" second of the items they listed as characteristics of good oral production" (p.17). Moreover, grammar acts as an indispensable role in learning English. However, the practice of correct use of grammar in one's speech is more significant than learning the perfect use of grammar. According to Larsen-Freeman (2001), it appears challenging for EFL students to use the appropriate grammar in their speaking. Even though all participants believed their students had problems with grammar, they did not give sufficient corrections for the students' grammatical errors during the speaking lessons. Some of them (T1, T2, & T7) skipped the errors students made at the time of their speaking. There were observed consistency and inconsistency between the participants' beliefs and practices in this regard.

Speakers need to find the correct grammar and words and consolidate the speech understood by the listeners. As speaking is an essential language skill, FL students need to master it (Ur, 1996; Richards, 2008). The practice of language features is imperative for students' oral ability (Saunders & O'Brien, 2006). Studies indicated that well-organized communication is not possible without accurate grammar (Savage et al., 2010). Grammar affords the correct sentences; they organize and put thoughts for speaking. Students cannot express their ideas sufficiently unless they have a good command of English. Consequently, teaching grammar is vital for students to speak English better.

A speaker should discover the utmost suitable words and the exact grammar to transfer meaning accurately, and they should organize the speech to be listened to and understood. Thornbury (2005) expresses that speaking is collaborative and necessitates working together in the speaking process.

3.4 Beliefs and Practices in Vocabulary Teaching

T4 believed the use of vocabulary teaching in enhancing students' speaking ability, and from the observed speaking class one (Accidents), she taught a vocabulary activity. In that lesson, she listed some vocabulary items like the picture, burn, snakebite, nose bleed, bleeding, fracture, poison, insect bite, and eye injury on the chalkboard, and asked the students to match each word with their respective types of pictures. Then, she made them construct their sentences using vocabulary and discussed all the accidents. Then, she asked the students to say their answers.

T4: Who can give me an answer for number 1? Who can present this? For number one the accident is...

Students: Bleeding

T4: For number 2

Students: I. I. . . (Students shouting) burning

T4: Picture 3, what is the accident?

Students: Eye injury

T4: What?

Students: Eye injury

T4: Number 4, what is the accident?

Students: Snakebite

I also asked T5 how she was teaching vocabulary and its connection to speaking; she said, “I teach vocabulary because we cannot speak unless we have enough words. I usually teach vocabulary by giving the definition. First, I ask them to define the word; then, I give them the definition” (T5, Stimulated-recall Interview). She taught vocabulary, for example, in observed lesson 1 (T5, Observed Class1):

T5: What is a letter? Raise your hand.

Student 1: A letter is divided into...

T5: A letter is a piece of writing to address someone to communicate to send through a post. A letter is divided into two. What are they? You!

T5: Very good, another, at the back, can you try? What do you mean by survey?

Student 4: Survey is a particular view.

T5: Yes, a survey is a view of or point of someone or a class. Class survey means the particular view of the students. What do you mean by questionnaires? For example, how old are you? What is your name? What is your father's name? So, what do you mean by questionnaire?

Student 5: Questionnaire means a thing you take what you want from...

T5: Very good and thank you for your participation.

Student 6: When someone needs information from the other.

T5: When someone needs information from the other e.g., your name, your father's name, you ask questionnaire. A questionnaire is a means of gathering information for a particular idea.

In observed lesson 5 (T5, Observed Class 5):

T5: In the previous lesson, last time, about what we discussed? Who can tell me? You!

Student 1: About adverbs.

T5: Yes, Adverbs. What do you mean by an adverb? Yes... stand up.

Student 2: An adverb is a word that modifies an adjective, a verb or another adverb.

T5: Very good, very good. An adverb is a word to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

T6 also commented on his vocabulary teaching; “I like teaching vocabulary as I have experience in learning it. I believe that without knowing the word, students cannot speak anymore. Of course, I suppose that vocabulary alone is nothing” (T6, Background Interview).

The observed lessons indicated that T5 taught vocabulary e.g., in observed speaking lesson 5, he taught both grammar and vocabulary. In this lesson, he organized the students into groups; then, he asked the students to give their alternative responses to the given choices.

T6: You are on the way to taking the matric exam. Right after taking the matric exam, you expect a good result. After getting a good result, you are expected to join a good university. The field that you need to study should be decided. How many of you have decided? Chale, have you made up your mind?

Student Chale: Yes.

T6: So, make-up means to decide. Ok, any group?

In this lesson, T6 taught new vocabulary in context. He used the phrasal verb “made up” in a sentence and told them the meaning of the phrasal verb, makeup.

The participants believed vocabulary is the basic feature of speaking competence. A study by Cohen and Fass (2000) states that teachers tend to value vocabulary and pronunciation teaching next to grammar teaching in speaking lessons.

In this study, most participants except T2 and T7 stated that vocabulary is necessary for EFL students as it is a part of everyday language. However, not all of the participants taught vocabulary in the observed classes. Nation (2001) states students use their words for their productive skills (speaking and writing); in this case, they can apply them in their spoken language. As a result, it is indispensable for EFL students to possess various vocabularies in their lexicon. Besides, the capability to put on words from one's lexicon possibly will cover speaking fluency (Levelt, 1993; Carter, 2001). A speaker should discover the utmost suitable words to transfer meaning accurately, and s/he should organize the speech to be listened to and understood. Thornbury (2005) expresses that speaking is collaborative and necessitates working together in the speaking process. As the participants of the current study stated, lack of sufficient vocabulary is one of the obstacles for the students to speak and express their ideas in English.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to explore EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching speaking skills in one secondary school. The beliefs of the participants reveal that they were concerned with teaching speaking skills. The teachers stated the advantages of teaching speaking skills. However, the findings indicate consistency and inconsistency between beliefs and actual classroom practices in teaching speaking skills. The consistency and inconsistencies between the two constructs were caused by participants' learning and teaching experiences, a lack of knowledge, students' unwillingness to communicate and poor background, and the school situation. Furthermore, the consistency and inconsistency of beliefs and practices in teaching speaking skills are influenced by each other; beliefs impact practices at one moment, while practices influence beliefs at another. The findings also show that participants need to build and differentiate the teaching of speaking skills based on students' needs and aim to practice teaching speaking satisfactorily.

5.2 Recommendations

Higher institutions can use the domino effect from this research to improve English teachers' training programs regarding overall teaching on ways of collaborative policies in secondary schools, and teacher development programs. Short-term and long-term training programs need to emerge teachers' content and knowledge in teaching speaking skills in classes. English teachers need to reflect on their beliefs and discuss their practices. Regarding this, Borg (2003) indicated that though professional preparation shapes trainees' cognitions, programs that ignore trainee teachers' prior beliefs may be less effective at influencing these beliefs. Teachers' awareness-raising on beliefs, practices and relevant skills need to be an integral part of all teachers' training programs to make them reflective practitioners.

This study has also the following recommendations for further research. Firstly, a longitudinal study will offer insights into teachers' belief change and their relations with the various contextual factors over time. Secondly, it might be remarkable to explore studies from participants' various backgrounds like first-degree holders vs. second-degree holders; experienced vs. inexperienced; males vs. females, elementary school teachers vs. secondary school teachers; private schools vs. governmental schools to see the variances and the

effects on individuals' beliefs and actual practices in teaching speaking skills in classes. Thirdly, participants need some training to improve their skills to teach speaking skills. Thus, notifying the development of teachers' training programs is a significant recommendation of the current study. Hence, investigating teachers' beliefs concerning these training programs and their impact on teachers' beliefs and practices is unquestionably a significant recommendation for further research.

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