

**[Article]**

# ESL Teachers' Teaching Beliefs and Practices: A Case Study of Three Teachers in an ESL Program in Hawaii

Reiko Yoshihara

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' teaching beliefs and practices in an ESL program in Hawaii. The exploration is about the teaching beliefs teachers have, how they formulated those beliefs, and how they apply those beliefs to their teaching practices. I also explored how teachers' life experiences shape their pedagogical choices and topic choices in their classrooms. Three ESL teachers in Hawaii participated in this study. I conducted interviews with participants about their teaching beliefs, observed classroom practices, and asked follow-up questions by e-mail. To better understand participants' teaching practices, I collected copies of course statements, assignments, textbooks, other materials, and syllabi. I found that the participants had interpreted their roles similarly while agreeing with the curriculum guidelines for each course in the ESL program. They believed that one of their roles was to meet students' wants and demands. Although they had similar teaching beliefs, their concepts of students' wants and demands were slightly different. Therefore, the teachers deployed different approaches and strategies to guide their practices and mediate their roles. The study helps other ESL/EFL instructors inside and outside the United States develop curriculum and materials, manage classrooms, and innovate other aspects of teaching. The study also sheds light upon teachers' professional development.

## **I . Introduction**

In relation to the understanding of teachers' professional development, the investigation of teachers' beliefs and cognition has become an increasing interest in ESL/EFL education research over the past couple of decades (Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002; for reviews of the literature, see Arnett & Turnbull, 2008). The exploration of how ESL/EFL teachers became language teachers, what teaching beliefs they have

as language teachers, how they construct/reconstruct their teaching beliefs, how they apply their teaching beliefs to teaching practices, and what factors prevent them from actualizing their teaching beliefs in teaching practices helps us understand not only teachers' professional development but also what is going on in the classroom.

In *On Becoming a Language Educator*, Casanave and Schecter (Eds., 1997) collected autobiographical narratives about the professional development of well-known language educators and researchers. They described how each person became a language educator differently and how he/she developed professionally as an educator and researcher. They also showed the complexity, diversity, and transformation of the authors' identities, teaching beliefs, and teaching practices. They stated that one goal of the book was that "both readers and authors use the stories told here to view their own professional lives from fresh perspectives" (p. xiii). This kind of the documented collection of teachers' reflection on their professional lives can help audiences reflect on their own professional lives and teaching beliefs and develop their teaching practices.

In order to understand teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, I conducted a qualitative study in an ESL program in Hawaii through interviews, classroom observations and follow-up questions by e-mail. Three ESL teachers in Hawaii participated in this study. I attempted to explore what teaching beliefs the three ESL teachers have, how they construct their teaching beliefs, and how they apply their beliefs to teaching practices. Before I discuss their teaching beliefs and practices, I define key terms such as 'teaching beliefs' and 'teaching practices,' then review the qualitative research literature about ESL/EFL teachers' teaching beliefs and practices.

## II. Definitions of Key Terms

### *Teaching Beliefs*

In general education, Pajares (1992) was one of the first researchers to define teacher beliefs. By examining the meaning, definition, and nature of belief as outlined by prominent researchers, he argued that teacher beliefs are teachers' efficacy, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about teaching, the subject matter to be taught, and the educational process. In the TESOL field, teacher beliefs have been discussed over the past two decades (Borg, 2006). Like Pajares, Kagan (1992) defined teacher beliefs as "teachers' sense of self-efficacy and content-specific beliefs" (p. 67). She referred to teacher cognition as "teachers' self-reflections, beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, and content" (p. 421) and separated teacher beliefs from teacher cognition.

Similarly, Borg (2001, 2003, 2006) made a clear distinction between beliefs and cognition and asserted that teacher beliefs are a component of teacher cognition. Borg (2001) defined teacher beliefs as "teachers' pedagogic beliefs, or those beliefs of

relevance to an individual's teaching" (p. 187) and regarded teacher cognition as an inclusive concept shaping teachers' practices, not only teachers' beliefs, but also teachers' knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, images, perspectives about teaching, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, instructions, and the self.

Although I acknowledge that there is no clear-cut distinction between teacher beliefs and teacher cognition, in my study, I adopt Kagan's and Borg's definition of 'teacher beliefs' rather than their notion of 'teacher cognition' because I would like to focus on teachers' pedagogical beliefs. In my study, I define teaching beliefs as teachers' pedagogical beliefs, content-specific beliefs, teacher efficacy, and those beliefs of relevance to an individual's teaching, including particular political and ideological beliefs.

### *Teaching Practices*

Although the terms 'teaching practices' and 'classroom practices' are often used interchangeably, Krainer and Goffree (2005), as cited in Nishino (2009), distinguished between the two as follows:

Whereas "teaching practice" more clearly refers to the teacher as a person (perhaps primarily expressing an interest in his or her teaching, or an interest in studying different teaching styles), "classroom practice" more neutrally refers to the classroom as a system that includes more than the teacher's actions (e.g., expressing an interest in the interaction process among students or between the teacher and the students). (Nishino, 2009, p. 9)

I prefer to use 'teaching practices' rather than 'classroom practices' because I am interested in teachers' practices based on their teaching beliefs. Although both classroom practices and teaching practices are defined as what teachers actually do in classrooms, teaching practices focus on teachers' pedagogical actions and behaviors of relevance to a teacher's teaching beliefs rather than teachers' actions and behaviors.

## **III. Teachers' Teaching Beliefs and Practices in Qualitative Research in TESOL**

Several studies have shown the strong connection between teachers' teaching beliefs and teaching practices (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Nishino, 2009; Woods, 1991). Much of this literature has reported that teachers' teaching beliefs matched their teaching practices in several ways. Also, several studies discussed how teachers' life experiences shape their teaching beliefs and practices.<sup>1</sup> In these studies, life

---

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion in ESL, see Ajayi, 2011; Ellis, 2004; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Souto-Manning, 2006; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnston, 2005; Woods, 1991; for EFL, see Duff & Uchida, 1997; Hayes, 2005; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Tsui, 2007.

experiences of ESL/EFL instructors included teachers' personal experiences, life stories, ethnic, gender, and social backgrounds, language learning experiences, and teaching experiences. The life experiences of each teacher had an impact on their teaching beliefs and practices.

Researchers have conducted studies using an experiential qualitative approach to explore the relationship between ESL/EFL teachers' personal backgrounds and their teaching beliefs and practices. For instance, Duff and Uchida (1997) examined how teachers' teaching beliefs were constructed in relation to life experiences. They conducted an ethnographic case study with four EFL teachers (two Japanese females, one American male, and one American female) at a private language school in Japan. Duff and Uchida collected questionnaires, journals, classroom observations, field notes, interviews, instructional materials, and the participant-observer's research journal. They found that past language learning experiences influenced the EFL teachers' teaching beliefs and practices, whether the past experiences were good or bad. The two Japanese EFL teachers were conscious of their roles as former learners of English. Their overseas experiences, including learning and working experiences, had an impact on their teaching beliefs and teachers' roles. They believed that they could bridge the gap between Japanese learners' culture and English speaking countries' culture and focus on teaching to raise the learners' cross-cultural awareness. Their learning experiences as EFL learners strongly influenced their teaching beliefs and practices. Duff and Uchida also found that the teachers' unpleasant experience of learning foreign language influenced their teaching beliefs and practices. One American male teacher's unpleasant experience in a high school French course led him to believe that a language classroom should be real and natural. He taught students colloquial English and tried to create a fun classroom. In this instance, an EFL teacher's learning experiences had a significant impact on his teaching beliefs and practices.

Similarly, Ellis (2004) focused on the relationship between the language backgrounds of ESL teachers and their teaching practices. She conducted interviews with 31 ESL teachers (22 multilingual teachers, 9 monolingual teachers) with postgraduate TESOL qualifications in Australia and observed each teacher's class. Ellis found that multilingual teachers frequently referred to the similarities and differences between their first language (L1) and English and shared their own learning experiences of ESL in their teaching. Although native English speaking teachers shared the experience of being a foreign language learner, their teaching practices focused on the explanation about the nature of the English language, such as structures and functions and the role of English in society and education without mentioning other languages. Ellis' study revealed that although multilingual teachers used L1 knowledge in teaching English, monolingual teachers did not teach English as compared with other languages.

What other factors influence teachers' teaching beliefs and practices? Through qualitative research, Hayes(2005)found that teachers' mentors had an impact on their teaching beliefs and practices. He conducted in-depth interviews with three non-native EFL teachers in Sri Lanka. Through the interviews with these teachers, Hayes found that the teachers respected their own teachers and considered them their role models. The three EFL teachers in this study highly valued the teacher-student relationship because of their favorite and respected teachers' influences. All three also reported that they replicated the teaching methods their own teachers used in English classes. Although this study did not investigate how the three teachers felt about methods such as the memorization of vocabulary and grammar translation, their teachers as positive role models influenced their teaching practices.

Simon-Maeda(2004)discussed how EFL female teachers at the college level in Japan constructed their teaching beliefs and practices. She found that teachers' personal life experiences and identity influenced their teaching beliefs and practices. For example, one participant in her study who is an AIDS activist and educator used AIDS and other social issues in her classroom. The participant believed that using social issues in EFL classrooms offered students other viewpoints and led to personal growth. Her life experience as an AIDS activist influenced her teaching beliefs and teaching practices. Another participant in her study, who was a Korean Japanese, viewed the EFL classroom as a site to explore issues beyond language learning and believed that the Korean issue is one topic to teach in her classroom. Her ethnic identity as a Korean Japanese was strongly connected to her teaching beliefs and practices. Other interviewees who were Filipino and British used personal histories of "otherness" in Japan as teaching tools. They encouraged their students to think of their identity while sharing their own life stories. As Simon-Maeda stated, "a teacher's personal set of values, an integral part of her or his identity forged from a lifetime of social interactions, shape educational beliefs and professional practices that in turn affect students' learning context"(p. 428).

The studies I mentioned here suggest that teachers' teaching beliefs and practices are influenced by their language learning experiences, personal experiences, identity, and mentors. These studies also demonstrated that each teacher had diverse, multiple, and complex teaching beliefs and took different paths to attain them. However, there are not still enough qualitative studies on teachers' teaching beliefs and teaching practices in TESOL. I hope my research fills a gap in the academic literature about this issue.

## IV. The Study

### *Research Questions*

In my study I explore the complexity and multiplicity of teachers' teaching beliefs and practices. My research questions are as follows:

- (1) What teaching beliefs do three teachers in an ESL program in Hawaii have?
- (2) How did they construct their teaching beliefs?
- (3) How do they apply their teaching beliefs to teaching practices?

I also explore how teachers' teaching beliefs are related to pedagogical choices and topic choices in their classrooms.

### *Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method*

To understand teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, I conducted a narrative study. Pajares(1992)has pointed out that to gain in-depth insights on teachers' beliefs, qualitative research methods such as narrative, biography, or case studies are appropriate. Connelly and Clandinin(1987)also mentioned that narrative inquiry is a useful tool for the study of teaching. In the TESOL field, Murray(2009)also stated that narrative inquiry can be used to explore not only motivation, identity, and multilingualism, but also practical pedagogical information. Thus, narrative inquiry is a useful tool to study these teachers' teaching beliefs and practices.

What is a narrative inquiry? One well-known definition of narrative inquiry was offered by Connelly and Clandinin(2006), who emphasized the study of experience in storied form:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

Narrative inquiry is a methodology for seeing personal experience as story, forming a story, finding and constructing phenomena in a storied form, and making the phenomena meaningful. Narrative inquiry allows me as a researcher to understand each teacher's teaching beliefs and practices and find phenomena in stories told by them. It helps me explore commonalities and differences among teachers on teaching beliefs and practices. It also helps me understand the diversity, multiplicity, complexity, and

ESL Teachers' Teaching Beliefs and Practices: A Case Study of Three Teachers in an ESL Program in Hawaii interconnectedness of teachers' teaching beliefs and practices.

*The Research Site*

This research was conducted at one ESL program located in Honolulu in Hawaii. The mission of the program is to equip students with the language and cultural skills necessary for success in academic, professional, and social contexts. The program offered a 10-week course. Students were streamed by means of an original test created by the program. There were 10-12 students in each class. Students took four 50-minute classes such as grammar, listening, oral production, and integrated skills in the morning from Monday through Friday. The majority of students were Asian, including Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. There were a few students from Europe.

*The Participants*

Three ESL teachers were selected on the basis of their reputation as good teachers and their willingness to participate in this study: one American male (pseudonym: John), one American female (pseudonym: Mary), and one Japanese female (pseudonym: Keiko). All three were in their late 30s to early 60s and had roughly 6 - 21 years of teaching experience in an ESL program at the outset of the study. A description of the teachers is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1 . Basic Data of the Three Participants**

Feature	John	Mary	Keiko
Age	50s	60s	30s
Sex	Male	Female	Female
Degree	M.A. in TESOL	M.A. in TESOL	M.A. in TESOL
Nationality	United States	United States	Japan
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Asian
Teaching experience in the institute (Years)	7 years	21 years	6 years

As I contacted these three participants, I attempted to meet my moral responsibility as a field researcher in terms of the protection of basic human rights of the participants by following three principles: informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. As for the informed consent, I got an official consent form

signed by each of them. As for confidentiality, I informed them that their individual privacy will be maintained in all written and published work and presentations resulting from the study, confidentiality of records identifying the participants will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms, and the data gathered will not be used for any purpose other than academic. Regarding voluntary participation, I explained in the informed consent that they had the right to drop out and refuse to share with me any information that they did not want to disclose.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data was collected at the ESL program over a 6-month period (from April to September, 2011) by the following means: (a) audiotaped interviews with each participant (see Appendix B), (b) classroom observations, (c) field notes, (d) follow-up questions via e-mail, and (e) instructional materials (e.g., course statements, assignments, textbooks, other materials, syllabi). I had one 50 to 80 minute interview with each participant and follow-up questions by e-mail. I had four e-mail exchanges with John and one e-mail exchange with Mary. I observed Keiko's class in August 11, 2011 and John and Mary's classes in August 12, 2011. While observing, I audio-recorded, made field notes and collected materials provided by them. I also attended John's classes and Mary's classes between April 11, 2011 and June 17, 2011, as an ESL student. From the outset, I informed the teachers that the study was about "Teachers' teaching beliefs and practices in an ESL program in Hawaii."

Analyses and interpretations were rendered in a recursive, reflective, and triangulated manner, incorporating insights from research participants as well as the researchers. I transcribed all interview data word for word. I did not transcribe some features of speech and nonlinguistic features of speech because my focus was on finding commonalities and differences among my participants in an overview of teaching beliefs and practices. To find those commonalities and differences, I mapped out the key issues in the range of participants' reported experiences and perspectives. I constructed a story of the participants' stories with other data such as classroom observations, classroom materials, field notes, and follow-up questions via e-mail for the final interpretation. Regarding translation, I asked a Japanese participant to check my translation of the quoted interview data because she was competent at checking my translation. I also shared my drafts with my participants and was open to their comments to avoid misunderstanding and over interpretation.

## **V. Findings**

### *Teaching Beliefs*



As for teachers' teaching beliefs, coincidentally all the three teachers stated that one of their teaching beliefs was to meet the students' wants and needs. Even though these three ESL teachers had this similar teaching belief, other aspects of their teaching beliefs were slightly different. Hereafter, I describe how they became an ESL teacher and what teaching beliefs they held.

John was one most popular and respected ESL teachers in the program. When I attended the first class meeting as a participant, one continuing student whispered in my ear that he was a great teacher. Another student told me that without John, she could not improve her English so much. John had taught English for many years inside and outside the United States. He had become an ESL teacher after many twists and turns. Before teaching English, he had enrolled in law school and worked as an archaeological assistant. However, he finally found that he really liked teaching, helping students achieve their English goals, and creating interesting lesson plans for his students. When I asked him about his teaching beliefs, he answered logically and rationally as follows:

The first thing is what students want and what I can help them get it. Some students just play and some students have a goal. I think it's all okay. ...The second thing I believe in is challenging my students. One of my goals is the motivation of learners. And one of my goals to teachers is to get the topics students are interested in and motivate them. ...I believe authentic materials. (Interview, 06/14/2011)

His teaching beliefs were to meet what students want, to motivate students, and to use authentic materials. He thought that students who take the course in this program want to go to universities or colleges in the United States. Therefore, he believed that he should provide these students with something academic, relevant to university courses, and helpful when they took university courses.

Keiko also stated that her teaching belief was to meet what students need and that her role as a teacher was to guide students to understand what they were studying. She first came to Hawaii as an exchange student when she was in college. After she graduated from a Japanese university, she came back to Hawaii and enrolled in graduate school. While she was a master's student, she started to teach English in ESL programs. One year after she finished her master's degree, she decided to go to doctoral study. Now, while she is an ESL teacher, she pursues her Ph.D. in educational psychology. She is married, has a small baby, works as an ESL teacher, and studies as a Ph.D. student. While she was an extremely busy woman, she was willing to have a long interview with me and let me observe her classroom. When I asked her about her teaching beliefs in the interview, she said that although it is difficult to choose one belief, it is important to think about what students need. She explained that students

came to the program with different reasons and purposes, so it was difficult to find one goal for all students. However, she believed that at minimum, students want to acquire the skills to survive in the United States, for example, understanding what people say and expressing their own opinions in English. Therefore, for her, what students want and need is to survive in the United States. To help students survive in the United States, she would be a guide and a helper.

Thinking of what students need and what their English level is, I wonder what I can do for them? Rather than teaching them, my role as a teacher is helping students. ...Guiding is my teacher role. In order to understand contents, students need language skills and some activities. Then, after they understand the content, what can students do with the content? ...I think my role is to help students express themselves with their knowledge. (Interview, 07/06/2011)

In the interview, she mentioned her teacher role as a guide and a helper several times, even in response to different questions. She strongly believed that her role as a teacher is to guide students to express their own ideas and opinions with their prior knowledge.

Mary is a very experienced senior ESL teacher and an academic coordinator who is respected by co-workers. She taught English at universities in Mexico for three years and in Japan for one year. She has taught English in the ESL program in Hawaii for 21 years and became an academic coordinator of the ESL program. Contrary to her magnificent career, the process of her becoming an ESL teacher was not straightforward. When she first attended university, she majored in art. However, she married and left the university. She did clerical work for ten years, divorced, and went back to school. She eventually earned a B.A. in French and a teacher's certification of French in high school. However, there were no opportunities to teach French at that time. Because she was interested in ESL and took some courses about English teaching at the university, she decided to continue to study and majored in TESOL in a graduate school in the early 1980s. After she completed her MA in TESOL, she found a teaching job in Mexico. When I asked her about her teaching beliefs, like John and Keiko, Mary said that teachers should provide what students want and need. Through the interview, I found that for her, what students want and need means communicating with others in English. She thought that one purpose of the ESL program was to provide skills that students are able to use to communicate with others in English and believed that students want to acquire communication skills. She also emphasized the content comprehension approach using multiple methods. She believed that all learners have different learning styles, and different approaches and methods are required to help students comprehend the content they are studying. For her, there was no one-size-fits-all teaching.

Thus, although these three teachers believed that it is important to provide

students with what they want and need, their perceptions of what students want and need were slightly different, and other aspects of their teaching beliefs were diverse. In the next section, I explore what factors influenced their teaching beliefs.

### *What Factors Influenced their Teaching Beliefs*

How did each ESL teacher construct his/her teaching beliefs? What factors had an impact on their teaching beliefs? Did the teachers' personal backgrounds and past experiences, including learning and teaching experiences, influence their teaching beliefs? Were there any books, articles, and scholars who had an impact on their teaching beliefs?

While John believed that it is important to meet what students want, he also believed that it is important for teachers to motivate students and to give them a challenge. In order to motivate students and give them a challenge, John used sociopolitical issues such as racism, HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment, and protesting. He was aware that his working-class background influenced his choice of topics, and the topics he chose were often related to equality and social justice. He thought that, "too many teachers choose childish, uninspiring or 'safe' topics instead of pushing students" (e-mail communication, 08/15/2011). For him, it was important to motivate and inspire students by using sociopolitical issues. However, when I asked him if he was a critical pedagogical teacher, he said that he supported teaching critical thinking in a language classroom but he did not see himself as a critical pedagogical teacher. He mentioned that his teaching goal is not to change his students' minds, but to motivate his students by using sociopolitical issues.

In his teaching beliefs, he seemed to be more concerned about teacher-student interaction and open-mindedness in his classroom than in teaching sociopolitical topics. When I asked him about choosing topics obstinately, he said, "honestly, I think it comes down teacher-student interaction more than topic. If there is a connection between them, the class will be just fine" (e-mail communication, 08/15/2011). For him, to develop rapport with students and to provide open-mindedness in his classroom is more important than topics. This perception came from his teachers and professors in his school days. He explained to me about a few teachers, including college professors and foreign language teachers, whom he really respected and liked. They taught him that it was important to acknowledge different personalities among students and to accept opposite ideas while at least respecting others' opinions. He learned from his mentors to be open to opposite ideas and students' individual differences in his teaching.

In Keiko's case, her belief in her role as a guide was strongly related to her experience as an international student herself in the United States. Like many Japanese students, she used to struggle to express her opinions on every occasion in the United

States. She recognized that there are cultural differences between Japan and the United States and that Japanese students struggled to express their opinions not only because of language problems but also because of cultural differences. She hoped that she could help students overcome cultural differences and survive in the United States.

On the other hand, she confessed her anxiety and worry about being a non-native English speaking teacher when she was a novice.

From a view of a Japanese student, it is a natural question: "Why do we have to learn English from a Japanese teacher, although we came to the United States?" When I started to teach English here, it was a big issue for me. So, I used to explain in the first meeting of the course that although I'm Japanese, I have strong points that native English speaking teachers do not have. I also admitted my weak points and explained to my students that I will ask and help from native English speaking teachers if needed. But I haven't done this explanation for these few years. (Interview, 07/06/2011)

She showed a lack of confidence when she was a novice non-native English speaking teacher. However, she seemed to gain confidence as a non-native ESL teacher because she realized that she has strong points that native ESL teachers lack. She knew and understood the mistakes and errors that Japanese or other foreign students often made because she was a non-native English speaker herself. Also, she mentioned that the reason why she has not done that kind of explanation in recent years is that many students do not know whether she can speak Japanese because she does not speak Japanese in or out of class.

When I asked her who or what had an impact on her teaching beliefs, she first mentioned her co-worker, Mary. Keiko said that Mary and she had a lot in common in teaching English; for example, they believed that their roles as teachers are to help students survive in the United States, acquire communicative skills in English, and understand the content they are studying. She also described how supportive Mary was when Keiko wanted to try a new, challenging teaching method. Mary was Keiko's mentor and influenced her teaching beliefs.

In Mary's case, her teaching experience in Mexico had a great impact on her teaching belief, in particular, her teaching approach. Her teaching experience in Mexico assured a content comprehension approach with multi-methods as follows:

One thing I noticed teaching my students in Mexico one day was that one approach would work one day with a few learners, another approach would work a few days with other learners. Maybe, if the approach works on Monday for students and on Tuesday something is going on with them, the same approach will not be working. So, I've always thought a multi-trade, multi-method approach and that all learners have different learning styles. The content they have to comprehend in their class

will require different approaches. (Interview, 07/01/2011)

She continued to state that, "if you need more teacher-fronting, you do it. No apology. If you think it is time to practice each other, you do that" (Interview, 07/01/2011). For her, it is very important to judge the character of students, understand their conditions and situations, and make out what is necessary for students at that time. She believed that according to the students' conditions, situations and learning styles, teacher should change teaching styles and methods.

### *How Their Teaching Beliefs were Applied to their Teaching Practices*

All three ESL teachers stated that to some extent, their teaching beliefs reflected their teaching practices. In the integrated skills class and the oral communication class in which he could use his own materials, John stated that he incorporated his teaching beliefs into his teaching practices very much. To meet what students want and to help them enter American universities and colleges, he taught five-paragraph essay writing and academic vocabulary and used authentic materials. To motivate and inspire students, he used sociopolitical issues such as racism and HIV/AIDS when I attended the course. In the previous sessions, he has used sex tourism, sexual harassment, protesting for advanced students and honesty, surviving college, and genetics of happiness for intermediate students. When I asked him about students' reactions toward these topics, he said that in general students enjoyed learning these topics. However, he mentioned that when he used sex tourism in his classroom, one female student was uncomfortable with the topic and did not want to learn about it. So, he developed other materials for her. He thinks that she came to his class to learn English, not to explore controversial topics. He also believes that the class' goal is to prepare students for college in the United States, so he uses authentic materials such as CNN news, website articles, films, and written artifacts.

When I asked John if there were any articles and books that influenced his teaching practice, he mentioned three TESOL scholars, Truscott (1996), Dornyei (1998), and Coxhead (2000). Truscott taught him that error correction did not help students learn English; Dornyei taught him about motivation, and the academic word list provided by Coxhead helped him teach vocabulary in his classroom. As he stated, he liked doing research for his practice. Thus, self-study helped him develop professionally.

On the other hand, John was not quite sure how much he could apply his teaching beliefs to his teaching practices in grammar and listening classes because there were required textbooks. He wished he could do more motivational things in his grammar class. He acknowledged that he could not always apply his teaching beliefs to his teaching practices for several reasons.

For Keiko, to meet what students want and need and to help them express their

own opinions in English, she said that she often asked students what topics they want to learn during the session, in particular in the integrated skills class and the oral communication class. In the past, she taught about Hawaii topics, career plan, children's behavior toward TVs, and agriculture and fair trade that students raised. She strongly believed that she should provide students with topics or content that students want to learn, that motivated students to express their own opinions drawing on prior knowledge. When asked if she would introduce sociopolitical issues, she said that she would not introduce these topics herself. It did not mean that she ignored these topics. If students raise social topics, she would do it. Actually she taught child labor a few years ago because her students raised the topic. Discussion was heated, and some students became very emotional, but she enjoyed teaching the topic. However, she focused more on what students want to learn instead of introducing her own topics.

She also explained about her classroom teaching. In the first and second week, she provided reading materials and handouts about the topic that students chose and helped students understand the content of the topic. In the third and fourth week, she showed a model presentation and asked students to give a presentation with handouts in the classroom. In the early period of the course, she initiated the class and tried to make students understand the content they were studying. However, she said that she gradually shifted from teacher-centered teaching to student-centered teaching. She believed in students' potential and knowledge. She told me that students know about some topics, such as business, better than she does. As her weak point, she mentioned that she has not done any job other than teaching. Therefore, in her practices, she allowed students to choose topics that they wanted to present and helped students express their ideas and opinions and give a presentation in the classroom.

When I observed her classroom, students were learning paragraph writing about Hawaiian culture and customs. She had taught about Hawaiian history, culture, and customs in the previous two weeks and had visited the mission house with students in the previous week. On the observation day, students brought their paragraph writing and Keiko asked them to make a pair and check each other's paragraph writing. She gave enough time for students to work in pairs. While students were reading their partner's papers, she was walking around the classroom and helping students individually, instead of telling students what to do. When she found mistakes common among many students, she explained to all them. After class, she mentioned that she let her students choose topics they want to present and give a presentation in the latter part of the course. The latter part of the course seemed to be more student-centered.

When I asked her if there were any specific things or events that influenced her teaching practice, she mentioned that there might be some that influenced her teaching practice such as readings and professors during her graduate study, but there was not

a specific thing she could point out at that time.

As I asked Mary who and what influenced her teaching practices, she mentioned her high school teacher. She explained that he was good at judging character, knew how to motivate students, and was good at studying human nature. This reflected her teaching practice. As an observer, I noticed that she carefully looked at each student and judged his/her character. She highly encouraged students who seemed to be quiet, gave challenging questions to students who seemed to be advanced in some cases, and gave appropriate and different comments to each student.

However, what most influenced her teaching practices was her own foreign language learning experiences. She has studied French, and her French teacher used grammar translation and error correction. She said that even though she completed her French undergraduate degree, she hardly spoke French at all. She also studied Spanish before she went to Mexico. Her Spanish teachers spent time doing verb drills, jazz chants, and journal writing with error correction. She hated these activities and said that they did not help her communicate with others in Spanish. She hardly spoke Spanish. On the other hand, she had a great experience learning Chinese with her graduate school friends. Her Chinese friend taught her Chinese with every method they had learned in a graduate school. When they read books and articles on topics such as communicative language teaching and the content approach in graduate school, they applied their new knowledge to teaching Chinese. Although she hardly speaks Chinese now, she spoke Chinese pretty fluently and communicated with her Chinese friends in Chinese for several hours at that time. She said that it was a great learning experience. This foreign language learning experience had a great impact on her ESL teaching. Thus, in her teaching practices, she focused on teaching communicative language skills to survive in the United States.

As for choosing topics, she was kind of in the middle between John and Keiko. She did not give students a free hand at choosing topics. She often gave options. That is, she provided students with several topics and asked them to choose the topics that they wanted to study during the session. When asked if she would introduce sociopolitical issues, she said, "It's a perfect vehicle to do so if students prefer to do it" (Interview, 07/01/2011). In the follow-up interview, she also pointed out that difficult social issues were not often brought up by students (Interview, 08/12/2011). Thus, if she thought students needed to know about these issues, she would be willing to bring them to her classroom. Actually she has done a gender equality issue several years ago. On the other hand, she wondered the extent to which her students understood it and doubted that the class could change students' minds and attitudes toward gender equality.



## VI. Discussion

This study has several points in common with previous studies. First, my participants applied their teaching beliefs to their teaching practices, like studies in Golombek & Johnson(2004), Nishino(2009)and Woods(1991). Although there were studies that showed that teaching beliefs are not always applied to teaching practices because of contextual factors(see Johnson, 1994; Nishino, 2008, 2009; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004), my study showed that their teaching beliefs matched their teaching practices in several ways.

Second, there were differences between non-native English teachers and native English teachers on constructing their professional identities. Keiko shared the similar perspectives as the two Japanese participants in Duff and Uchida(1997). Like those participants, Keiko was conscious of her role as a former learner of English and saw herself as a bilingual role model. She believed that she could give students advice on how to survive in American academic institutions and how to study English. Similarly, Ellis'(2004)study showed that multilingual teachers frequently shared their own learning experiences of ESL in their teaching. Why are non-native English speaking teachers concerned about their experience as former learners of English and bilingual role models? As Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnston(2005)pointed out, non-native English speaking teachers are worried about nativeness and must "find ways to forge a positive identity as a NNEST [non-native English speaking teachers] in order to avoid the risk of what Braine(1999)calls an 'identity crisis'"(p. 28). Keiko was worried about nativeness. On the other hand, she referred to her strong points that native English speaking teachers lack(Interview, 07/06/2011). As Varghese, et al. noted, she might form a positive identity as a non-native English speaking teacher in order to avoid an identity crisis. For non-native English speaking teachers working in communities where native English speaking teachers are the majority, non-nativeness is one factor impacting their professional development.

On the other hand, native English speaking teachers establish a professional identity as ESL teachers without worrying about nativeness. Their teaching beliefs are more influenced by other factors, such as foreign language learning experiences and their mentors. Whether their foreign language learning experiences were good or bad, and whether their teachers and mentors left them with a good impression or not, these factors influenced teachers' teaching beliefs and practices. Mary told me about both bad and good experiences of learning foreign languages and said that these experiences strongly influenced her teaching beliefs and practices. In Duff and Uchida's (1997)study, one native English-speaking teacher shared a similar story with Mary. He



had an unpleasant experience of learning a foreign language in a high school French course. His French teacher relied heavily on the textbook and taught content far from real and natural settings. As a result, in his teaching beliefs and practices, he rejected the way his French teacher taught. I saw the same tendency in Mary. She used her bad foreign language experiences as examples of how not to behave in her classroom and formulated her teaching belief such as the content comprehension approach with multiple methods.

Third, I found that teachers' social background influenced their teaching practices, like participants in Simon-Maeda's (2004) study. In my study, John's social background had an impact on his teaching practices. As he mentioned, his topics in his classroom were rooted in this background, for example, sexual discrimination, racism, and equality. He tries to reveal unfairness and inequality in a society and raise questions about this in students. To do so, he uses sociopolitical topics in his classroom. Like Simon-Maeda pointed out, teachers' values shaped their teaching practices.

However, this study is different from previous studies in some ways. First, although the three teachers in my study had similar teaching beliefs, their teaching practices were varied and different. Although Arnett and Turnbull (2007) noted that teachers' beliefs are not a fixed, stable, unitary and coherent phenomenon but rather they are multiple, shifting, and in conflict, I think that teachers' teaching practices are multiple, shifting, and complex as well. When I observed their classrooms, I found that Keiko and Mary preferred using group presentations and group work in their classrooms, while John preferred using essay-writing and individual presentations in his classroom. In a personal communication, John mentioned that he did not like group work and group presentations when he was a graduate student. Thus, teachers' individual preferences might influence teachers' teaching practices. Also, in Mary's case, she modified her teaching practices according to day-to-day teacher-student interactions, students' individual differences, and students' conditions. As she pointed out, just as there was no one-size-fits-all teaching method, classroom practices as well as teaching beliefs are shifting and in flux.

Second, although I found that for John social backgrounds influenced his teaching practices, for Keiko ethnic identity did not influence her teaching practices including choosing topics and teaching techniques. Even though she mentioned the strong point of non-native English speaking ESL teachers, she did not bring her L1 knowledge and linguistic information or her ethnicity and Japaneseness in her classroom. I also could not find that gender identity influenced the three participants in my study. I directly asked them whether their gender influenced teaching beliefs and practices. They thought about it for a while and answered no. They stated that they do not allow students to use discriminatory words and attitudes toward women in their

classrooms and try to create the classroom environment with gender equality. Mary mentioned that she wanted to encourage women students to see many possibilities in their lives, just as she was encouraged by her own parents. However, I could not find a relationship between their gender identity and their teaching beliefs and practices among the participants in this study. Therefore, their concerns about gender equality seemed to be rooted not in gender identity but in humanitarianism.

Although it might be off-topic, I want to bring out a limitation of critical and feminist pedagogy. Mary mentioned that when she taught gender equality in her classroom, she wondered whether students really understood it and how far the class could change students' minds and attitudes toward gender equality. When I teach about sociopolitical issues and gender issues in my classroom, I always have the same feeling. Students might understand the issues quickly, might not understand them at all, or might remember them after several years. Although awareness, consciousness-raising and social change are the purposes of critical and feminist pedagogy (see Crabtree, Sapp & Licona, 2009), it is difficult to see the effects of such teaching in students. A qualitative study on students' awareness and consciousness-raising in critical and feminist pedagogy needs to be conducted.

## VII. Conclusion

All the three teachers in this study stated that one of their teaching beliefs was to meet students' wants and needs. However, I found that each teacher had different teaching practices even though they had similar teaching beliefs. Their teaching beliefs and practices were influenced by their life experiences including class status, learning experiences, teaching experiences, and mentors.

From this study, I myself shared a number of experiences with these participants on teachers' teaching beliefs and practices. Through this study, I examined/re-examined my teaching beliefs and practices, including pedagogical choices and topic choices, and the self. Like my participants, my teaching beliefs emerged from my personal background, such as feminist identity, my experience as a former learner of English, learning experiences in American academic institutions, and teaching experiences in Japan. I also have changed my teaching practices as a result of students' responses and social interaction with other researchers. While we are engaged in teaching, our teaching beliefs and practices are evolving and shifting. This study enables us to learn the diversity, complexity, and multiplicity of teachers' beliefs and practices.

This study also helps us better understand professional development. Teachers' teaching beliefs play a critical role in their teaching practices. As Borg (2003, 2006) pointed out, teaching beliefs are not always applied to classroom practices because of

contextual factors. That is, even though teachers have strong beliefs about second/foreign language teaching, they might use the teaching approaches or practices which are far from their beliefs because they focus more on classroom management, school culture, and social factors. However, if they are allowed, they will apply their teaching beliefs to teaching practices. Even though they are not allowed to use their own materials, they might try to find some way to apply their teaching beliefs to teaching practices. The exploration of teachers' teaching beliefs and practices is one place to start professional development.

---

## Notes

This research was supported in part by a 2010 Overseas Research Grant from Nihon University. My appreciation goes to the ESL program directors and teachers who participated in this study and to Dr. Christine Pearson Casanave who gave me insightful suggestions for research methods and data analysis.

---

## References

- Ajayi, L.(2011). Exploring how ESL teachers relate their ethnic and social backgrounds to practice. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 14(2), 253-275.
- Arnett, K., & Turnbull, M.(2008). Chapter 2: Teacher beliefs in second and foreign language teaching: A state-of-the-art review. In H. J. Siskin (Ed.), *From thought to action: Exploring beliefs and outcomes in the foreign language program* (pp. 9-28). Boston, MA: Thomson Higher Education.
- Borg, M.(2001). Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal*, 55(2), 186-187.
- Borg, M.(2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Borg, S.(2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- Casanave, C. P., & Schechter, S. R.(Eds.).(1997). *On becoming a language educator: Personal essays on professional development*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Connelly, M. F. & Clandinin, J. D.(1987). On narrative method, biology and narrative unities in the study of teaching. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 21(3), 130-139.
- Connelly, M. F., & Clandinin, D. J.(2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. Elmore(Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*(3rd ed., pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Coxhead, A.(2000). A new academic world list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, 213-238.
- Crabtree, R., Sapp, D. A., & Licona, A. C.(Eds.) (2009). *Feminist pedagogy: Looking*

- back to move forward*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dornyei, Z.(1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31, 117-135.
- Duff, P. A., & Uchida, Y.(1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 451-486.
- Ellis, E. M.(2004). The invisible multilingual teacher: The contribution of language background to Australian ESL teachers' professional knowledge and beliefs. *The International Journal of Multiculturalism*, 1(2), 90-108.
- Freeman, D.(2002). The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach. *The Language Teacher*, 35, 1-13.
- Golombek, P. R., & Johnson, K. E.(2004). Narrative inquiry as a mediation space: examining emotional and cognitive dissonance in second-language teachers' development. *Teachers and Teaching*, 10, 307-327.
- Hayes, D.(2005). Exploring the lives of non-native speaking English educators in Sri Lanka. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practices*, 11, 169-194.
- Kagan, D. M.(1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, 27, 65-90.
- Johnson, K. E.(1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 10, 439-452.
- Murray, G.(2009). Narrative inquiry. In J. Heigham & R. A. Croker(Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*(pp. 45-65). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nishino, T.(2008). Japanese secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding communicative language teaching: An exploratory survey. *JALT Journal*, 30(1), 27-50.
- Nishino, T.(2009). *Communicative language teaching in Japanese high schools: Teacher's beliefs and classroom practices*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.
- Pajares, M. F.(1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62, 307-332.
- Sato, K., & Kleinsasser, R.(2004). Beliefs, practices, and interactions of teachers in a Japanese high school English department. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 797-816.
- Simon-Maeda, A.(2004). The complex construction of professional identities: Female EFL Educators in Japan speak out. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38, 405-436.
- Souto-Manning, M.(2006). A Latina teachers' journal: Reflections on language, culture, literacy, and discourse practices. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 5, 293-304.
- Truscott, J.(1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes.

*Language Learning*, 46, 327-369.

Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 657-680.

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnston, K. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 4, 21-44.

Woods, D. (1991). Teachers' interpretations of second language teaching curricula. *RELC Journal*, 22, 1-19.

### ESL教師の教育信念と実践：ハワイのESLプログラムにおける 3人の教師のケーススタディ

吉原 令子

この研究の目的はハワイのESLプログラムに所属する英語教員の教育信念と実践を探究することである。彼／彼女らがどのような教育信念をもっているのか、どのようにその教育信念を形成したのか、いかに彼／彼女らのジェンダーや人種、エスニシティ、社会的バックグラウンドと教育信念が関係しているのか、その教育信念がいかに教室での実践に反映されているのかを調査した。また、これらの教師たちの過去の自分の外国語学習経験や教鞭経験が現在の教育実践にいかにいかされているのかについても探究した。本研究の被験者はハワイ在住の3人のESL教師である。調査方法は主にインタビューと授業観察であるが、E-mailによるフォローアップ調査も行った。被験者の授業実践をより理解するために、授業のシラバス、テキスト、副教材、プリントなどをデータとして集めた。分析方法はインタビューのデータをもとにナラティブ分析を使った。結果は、3人の教師は偶然にして「学生のニーズに応じてあげること」と似たような教育信念をもち、所属するESLプログラムのカリキュラムのガイドラインに賛同していた。しかし、その学生のニーズに応えるという概念にはそれぞれ異なった見解をもっており、教室での授業実践も異なっていた。そして、彼／彼女らの教育実践には深く自らの過去の外国語学習経験が影響を与えていたこともわかった。また、ジェンダーや人種、エスニシティ、社会的バックグラウンドに関しては、これらの社会的要素が教育信念に深く関係している教師もいれば、いない教師もいた。本研究で明らかになったことは、教育信念は教師の社会的アイデンティティや学習や教鞭に関する過去の体験、高等教育の体験が影響しているということである。そして、たとえ、教育信念が類似していたとしてもその教育実践は異なることがあるということであった。本研究のような教師の教育信念や実践は、ファカルティ・ディベロップメントの面からも今後さらに探究されなければならない分野であると考えられる。

