ENGLISH TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN TEACHING WRITING

(A Case Study at Assalaam Islamic Modern Boarding School 2015/2016 Academic Year)

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Abstract

This study was a case study of English teachers’ beliefs and practices at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School. The objectives were (1) to describe teachers’ beliefs and practices in teaching writing, (2) to investigate the practices of teachers’ beliefs in classroom practices, (3) to carry out the discrepancy between teachers’ beliefs and practices, and (4) to find out the factors contributing in shaping teachers’ beliefs and practices in teaching writing. The type of the study was a qualitative study with case study approach. The object of the study was the beliefs of teachers of writing subject at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School. The subject of the study was the teachers of writing subject at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School. The data of the study were script of interviews, questionnaire results, field notes, and documents. The techniques of collecting data were through questionnaire, interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. The data validity used was triangulation to gain information through various ways of sources. The techniques of analyzing the data was using Mile’s and Huberman’s model (1993). The finding of the study showed that, first, the two teachers were consistent with the practices of their beliefs, namely: learning objectives, teaching techniques, learners’ roles, and instructional materials. There were discrepancy found in the practices of the beliefs, namely, teaching plan, teaching methodology, classroom procedure, teachers’ roles, and assessment. The factors which contribute in discrepancy were class time and students. The factors which contribute in shaping the beliefs and practices of writing teachers at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School, they are: (1) learning experience (2) teaching experience (3) class time (4) students, and (5) standardized test.

Keywords: Teachers’ Beliefs, Teaching Beliefs, Teaching Practices, Discrepancy


Kata kunci: Keyakinan Guru, Pengajaran Keyakinan, Pengajaran Praktek, Kesenjangan

1. INTRODUCTION

When a teacher comes to a class they must have something in their minds about what they are going to instruct the students. Any of decisions teachers make is affected by their beliefs about the subject they are going to teach. The way the teachers deliver the materials, the way they instruct the students, the way they give feedback, any of decisions are affected by their beliefs. Therefore, teachers’ beliefs in a teaching learning process are crucial. What teachers have in their mind about teaching and learning is called teachers’ beliefs.

Beliefs are “propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and resistant to change” (Borg, 2011: 370-371). Kuborzka (2012: 102) also added that “teachers’ beliefs influence their goals, procedures, materials, classroom interaction patterns, their roles, their students, and the schools they work in”. Noe (2004) stated that beliefs have a close relationship with actions and practices. Borg (2003) mentions those teachers’ beliefs have been revealed to have an important influence on teachers’ practices. Furthermore, Liao (2007) mentioned that understanding teachers’ specific beliefs about English teaching can inform researchers and teacher trainers about how teachers are likely to implement their teaching, and how to provide appropriate teacher education programs. This means revealing teacher’s belief in teaching is important since they contribute to affecting teacher’s instructional decisions.

Gebel and Schrier (2002) also mention that teachers’ stated beliefs correspond with what they do in the classroom, and there is evidence that the two do not always coincide. On the other hand, not all teachers’ beliefs are fully represented in classroom practices. For example, a lesson plan carefully designed by the teacher to be applied in classroom, sometimes, does not run as it is planned; they cannot be fully done because of some problems, like the students’ behavior or limited time, and so on.
The beliefs that teachers hold in their minds are not instantly shaped. They are formed as a result of a long process since the teachers became an English learner until they become a language teacher. Borg (2003: 94) stated the factors contributing in shaping teachers’ beliefs in language teaching, namely: parents, principal’s requirement, the school, society, curriculum orders, classroom and school layout, school policies, colleagues, standardized test and the availability of resources may hinder language teachers; ability to carry out instructional practices reelecting their beliefs. The results of teachers’ experiences inside and outside of school contribute to the shaping teachers’ beliefs in language teaching.

There have been many studies in the field of teachers’ beliefs and practices in teaching writing. Malketo (2012) examined teachers’ beliefs and practices in Ethiopia and the result shows that there is a mismatch between the beliefs and practices in the steps of pre-writing, writing, and error analysis. Salteh and Sadegi (2015) investigated teachers’ beliefs and practices in teaching writing and the result shows that there is incompatibility between beliefs and practices because of some factors such as shifting from traditional approach to new approach, administration, parents’ expectation, and mixed ability level classes. Uddin (2014) conducted a study on the approach used by the teachers in Bangladesh and the result shows that the teachers stated beliefs is they believe that process approach is used and beneficial for the students but in practice they use the product approach to writing.

In the field of assessment, Shulin (2013) investigated teachers’ beliefs and practices about the use of peer-feedback in evaluation and the result shows that even though the teachers believe that it is beneficial, some of them did not practice it because of time management. Paiva (2012) also investigated teachers in Brazil whether they believe that grammar feedback can help students or not and the result shows that the teachers used grammar feedback and even though it does not help the students write better but it helps the students to write accurately. Based on study conducted by Abadi and Marzban (2012) adolescent and children teachers of writing also focus more on grammar for the error correction. Ferede (2012) found that teachers in Jimma Zone focuses more on grammar materials in the last semester to prepare the students for summative test and national examination. Alvita (2015) also found that teacher of Islamic State Senior High School of Surakarta uses some categories in assessment such as grammar, diction, coherence, and topic, but, mechanic is not considered crucial for assessment.

From the reviews of theories and previous research above, therefore, the researcher limits the current study at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School on
eight components, namely: lesson plan, learning objectives, teaching method, classroom procedures, classroom techniques, teachers’ roles and learners’ roles, instructional materials, and assessment. The following study encompasses the following objectives: (1) investigating teachers’ beliefs in teaching writing (2) finding out how those beliefs are represented in classroom practices (3) finding out the discrepancy between teachers’ beliefs and practices (4) finding out factors contribute in shaping teachers’ beliefs in teaching writing and its practices.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of the research is qualitative with the case study. The design type of case study employed is descriptive case study. The participants of the study were two English writing teachers at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Modern Boarding school. The data were collected from classroom observation, interview and document. Merriam (1998: 2004: 204-205) suggested six basic ways to increase the validity, they are: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer-examination, participatory or collaborative mode of the research, and researcher’s bias. The current research used the triangulation and member check. Triangulation and member check was applied in the research. Data analysis used in this study is Miles and Hubberman’s Model (1993) which is begun with a series steps; (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and then (3) conclusion drawing/ verification.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the analysis of open ended questionnaire, semi-structured interview and document analysis, the findings of teachers’ beliefs and practices of English teaching at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Modern Boarding school are as follow.

a. Teachers’ Beliefs

In lesson plan, the teachers believe that lesson plan should be prepared in the beginning of semester. The school which became the setting of the current research holds annual audit to check teachers’ preparation in the beginning of the academic year.

The second is learning objectives. The teachers believe that the objectives of the learning writing are that students can make a text based on the taught materials. This belief is also supported with the existence of learning objectives in lesson plan, scoring instruments, and assessment process stated in the lesson plan.
The teachers believe that the methodology used for teaching writing is the methodology which used the steps of teaching in Curriculum 2013, which is called Inquiry Based Learning. There are five steps there, observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and communicating. It can be concluded that the methodology she used in teaching writing is Inquiry Based Learning (IBL). Teaching method has a close relationship with classroom procedure, in which, it represents the method used.

The teacher believes that the procedure is the first procedure is, the teacher said salaam, checking attendance, and then explaining materials, discussing examples, and then asking the students to make the text. On the other hand, the other teacher believes that the teacher uses the following steps, the teacher gives an example and discussed it, after that, twelfth grade teacher explains the materials, and after that, twelfth grade teacher asked the students to make the text. Therefore, there are two procedures by two different teachers with different curriculum, namely tenth and eleventh grade teacher believes that she used the Presentation, Practice, and produce (PPP), on the other hand, twelfth grade teacher believes that she used the Exploration, Elaboration, and Confirmation stage.

In classroom techniques, the teachers believe that the activities that can help the students to learn write better are the activities that the teacher does during the lesson are editing text, analyzing text, arranging sentences and paragraphs, writing text, and translation.

For books used as the sources of teaching, the teachers believe that the books are teacher Erlangga book, English book from Government, English Grammar in Use, and some materials from internet. In addition, the teachers also believe that the students do not contribute in selecting materials to be taught.

The teachers believe that teachers’ roles in writing class are as facilitator, motivator, and partner for the students. The teachers also believe that learners’ roles in writing class are as the main object in the class and as partners to the teachers.

In assessment, the teachers believe that the components of assessing students’ works are parts of speech, organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, punctuation, and capitalization. The teachers also believe that they return the students’ works maximally a week after the work is submitted.

b. Teachers’ Practices of Beliefs in Teaching Writing
Based on the analysis of the findings, teachers at Islamic Senior High School of Assalaam Islamic Boarding School have consistencies and inconsistencies in the practices of their beliefs in teaching writing.

1) Lesson Plan

In lesson plan, the teachers believe that it should be prepared in the beginning of semester. In practice, one of the teachers did not have the lesson plan, which means, the stated belief is not represented in the practices. Moreover, there are some aspects of the lesson plan which were not represented in the practices, namely: materials, teaching method, classroom procedure, and assessment rubrics.

The following result is in line with Abadi and Marzban’s work (2012) which was stated in their work that teachers tend to put less attention for supporting students in their preparation for teaching than they actually do it in the classroom. Alvita (2015) also provides the same result that teachers do not provide specific lesson plan. They only plan a technique to teach writing. Therefore, we can conclude that less attention to lesson plan may result discrepancy.

2) Learning Objectives

The teachers believe that the objectives of the learning writing are that students can make a text based on the taught materials. This belief is also supported with the existence of learning objectives in lesson plan, scoring instruments, and assessment process stated in the lesson plan. The practice of the teachers are consistent with the belief with the proofs are the existence of learning objectives in lesson plan, the activities of doing tasks to get the result, and assessment process done by the teacher to get the result of objectives.

The result of the following research corresponds to the result of Uddin (2014) in which the learning objectives of learning writing are that students can produce writing. Moreover, this also corresponds to Alvita (2015) the objective is that the students can use writing for composing something and use it for communication. The objectives mentioned in the lesson plan are also assessable and observable which is also in line with the theory, Wong et. al. (2000) that the objective is assessable and observable. But, the finding of the following research does not correspond to theory of Heinich (2002) that the objectives does not have the proposed components, namely: audience, behavior, condition, degree.
3) **Teaching Method and Classroom Procedure**

Teaching method has a close relationship with teaching procedure. Based on her statement, the teacher uses the Inquiry Based Learning. Tenth and eleventh grade teacher used the Presentation, Practice, and Produce classroom procedure. In practice, tenth and eleventh grade teacher used the Presentation, Practice, and Produce (PPP) step which is not a representation of Inquiry Based Learning. The curriculum 2013 which is used by the school is not matched with the mentioned methodology by the teacher. Therefore, there is a discrepancy between the stated methodology and the practice of procedures, in which, the procedure mentioned is not in line with the methodology and curriculum used by the teacher.

Twelfth grade teacher stated that she used the Inquiry Based Approach. The mentioned steps are more like the PPP procedure with preview and then imitating. The steps in Inquiry based learning of school based curriculum is exploration, elaboration, and communication. Twelfth grade teacher, in her practice, is not consistent with the steps of Inquiry Based Learning in School Based Curriculum. Rather, the teacher did a preview and asked the students to make the same grammar form, and checked together on whiteboard. These steps are more like Presentation, Practice, and Produce (PPP) procedure which is not the representation of Inquiry Based Learning. The following result corresponds to Correspond to Uddin (2014) in which the teacher’s procedure stated belief is not like the practice. The current result is in line with Malketo (2012) in which the students are given grammar lesson in writing class. Moreover this result of also supports Malketo (2012) in which the teacher is teaching the test rather than teaching the subject.

4) **Classroom techniques**

Based on the stated belief, the teachers believe that the activities to help students to write better are editing text, analyzing text, arranging sentences and paragraphs, writing text, and translation. In practice, the practices are consistent with the beliefs. Also, the techniques used by the teacher in the finding corresponds to Correspond to the work of Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012) the teachers use various samples and analyze them and also the individual work and collaborative work are used in the practices and corresponds to the finding of Malketo (2012)

5) **Instructional Materials**
The teachers demonstrate the importance of instructional materials in teaching; they prepared all tools for teaching like supplementary book, main book, videos, and pictures to facilitate the learning process. The teachers are consistent in combining sources of materials from various sources mentioned in the beliefs. The teachers are also consistent in not giving a chance to the students to contribute in materials selection.

Mulyasa (2007: 226) stated that in every learning, the teacher may use various methods and media to accomplish the goal. Thus, it is free for the teacher to choose any kinds of media and method to reach the goal of teaching learning. This result is in line with Alvita (2015) in which the teachers use many main books as the supplementary books and the books are used to complete the weaknesses of each other.

6) Teachers’ Roles and Learners’ Roles

The stated beliefs about teachers’ roles are teachers as facilitator, motivator, and partners to the students. During the practice, the roles of teachers as facilitator and partner are represented in classroom. But, teachers’ role as motivator is not seen in the practice. During the teaching learning process, the teachers did transfer knowledge, facilitating students with activities that can help them to achieve the objective of learning, and help students with difficulties. The atmosphere which was joyful in the process of learning indicates that the teacher posits the students as partners.

The result of the current study is in line with Uddin (2014) finding echoes that teachers in writing class is more to a facilitator rather a motivator. The finding also supports the theory of teachers’ roles in class (Harmer: 2007). On the other hand, the result of the current study does not correspond to finding of Uddin (2014) in which those teachers are too dominant in classroom and play an active role.

7) Assessment

Tenth and eleventh grade teacher stated that she used some indicators, there are eight, namely: diction, cohesion, and coherence of the text organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics which includes punctuation, capitalization. On the other hand, twelfth grade teacher stated that she used only two indicators in correcting students’ works, they are grammar and punctuation. In practice, Tenth and eleventh grade teacher only corrected in three items, grammar and capitalization, therefore, the rest of the indicators were not used to correct student’s work.
The result of the current study supports the finding of Alvita (2015) that the teachers use grammar, diction, coherence, and topic as the evaluation factor in writing assessment. In addition, the result also mentioned that mechanics is not crucial in assessment. The current finding does not correspond to Alvita (2015) in which the finding shows that mechanics is not considered important in assessment of writing. Therefore, the teachers focus on grammar, organization, and structure. Also, the current research supports the result of Paiva (2011) in which the result shows that teachers use grammar as the tool in assessing students’ works.

8) Discrepancy Between Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices

Based on the beliefs and practices mentioned above, there is discrepancy in lesson plan, teaching method, classroom procedure, teachers’ role, and assessment in writing class.

In lesson plan, the teachers believe that it should be prepared in the beginning of semester. In practice, one of the teachers did not have the lesson plan, which means, the stated belief is not represented in the practices.

In teaching method, the stated method is not consistent with the classroom procedure of the method used. The teaching method used was the Inquiry Based Learning which has some steps, such as observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and communicating. On the other hand, the stated belief of teacher’s classroom procedure, PPP procedure, is not consistent with the method used, although, the practice of the stated classroom procedure, PPP procedure, is consistent, but it is not the representation of Inquiry Based Learning. Therefore, there is inconsistency between teachers’ stated method and practices.

In teachers’ roles, the stated beliefs about teachers’ roles are teachers as facilitator, motivator, and partners to the students. During the practice, the roles of teachers as facilitator and partner are represented in classroom. But, teachers’ role as motivator is not seen in the practice.

In assessment, the teacher believed some categories to assess students’ works, such as, text organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics which includes punctuation, capitalization. In practice, the teacher corrected students’ works based on two categories, grammar and capitalization. Therefore, the stated belief and practice is not consistent.

9) Factors that contribute in the discrepancy between Practices and Beliefs
The current research found that the factors contribute in the discrepancy between beliefs and practices are teaching time, students’ condition, and reason of national examination. The teachers mentioned that different portion of teaching in different grade has made the teacher could not follow the steps which is required in the curriculum. The teachers also added that students’ condition in classroom also affected the teachers in practices. They added that different class has different characteristic. So, it is possible that the same material cannot be delivered the same way as the other classes. Another factor is the national examination reason. Teacher of Composition subject focused more on grammar review that can help students to face national examination. Therefore, the materials delivered during the practices are reviews for national examination preparation.

10) Factors that contribute in the forming of Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices

The teachers mentioned some factors that influence them in their beliefs in teaching writing, they are teaching experience, learning experience, students, class time, test, colleagues, and motivation. The teachers mentioned that learning experience are the best teachers and they also mentioned what they got when they were a learner is applied in their teaching. The teachers explained the varied condition of students. Therefore, students are special and they become the factor in both teachers’ beliefs in teaching writing. The teacher also mentioned that the students need much help in carrying out brilliant ideas and the teachers need to pay attention to students’ psychological conditions that affects what the teacher does in classroom.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From this study, it can be concluded that teachers’ beliefs are a important to be revealed as the ideal concept of teachers about their activities as teachers. What they believe could be the same as what they do. This belief may develop from time to time through long experience as a teacher. The deeper our experience a teacher has the more beliefs the teacher holds. Even teachers’ beliefs can change depends on their experiences as a learner, teacher, and partners of other teachers. Therefore, teachers’ beliefs in teaching play an important role of how the teachers may bring the class into a class which is the same as their beliefs. Although, during the practice, teachers may face obstacles that require the teachers to totally change her plan in order to achieve learning objectives.

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