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An In-Depth Understanding of Five Asian English Teachers' Beliefs

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For the current study, five Asian English teachers participated in their case studies to investigate an in-depth understanding of their beliefs about teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Data were collected through structured and unstructured interviews, written documents, observations of teacher-participants' micro teaching, a research methodology journal and a self-reflection journal. This study described the beliefs that Asian English teachers brought to the teacher preparation program and examined to see if these teacher-participants who were involved in case studies perceived change in their beliefs. The study found that formal and informal learning experiences greatly shaped the way teacher-participants' beliefs about the way learning and teaching ought to be. In addition, early experiences of learning and teaching influenced teacher-participants' change in beliefs.

I. INTRODUCTION

This study investigated an in-depth understanding of beliefs from each teacher-participant's own perspective. My goal was to discover what the teacher-participants believe about teaching and learning, through gaining strong support and trust with the teacher-participants. Additionally, I wanted to learn what they believed and if they perceived change in their beliefs. I wanted to be an explorer who started the investigation with fresh mind, a "beginner's mind" (Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999) or "a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance"

(Spradley, 1979, p. 4) which benefit was to gain “new, unexpected, and unpredictable understandings” (Hornberger, 1994, p. 689).

II. BACKGROUND

1. The Roles of Teachers' Beliefs

In order to gain a better understanding of teachers and their teaching, the beliefs that govern teachers' behaviors, attitudes, and instructional practices need to be examined. A number of researchers (Johnson, 1994; Munby, 1982; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992) discuss the roles of teachers' beliefs, highlighting the need to scrutinize teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs have impact upon teachers' perceptions, decisions, and judgments, which can eventually affect what teachers say and do in their teaching practices. Moreover, teachers' beliefs play a pivotal role in influencing how teachers comprehend and interpret information and knowledge in the teacher preparation program.

Teachers' beliefs serve as a critical role in influencing how teachers learn to teach in the pre-service teacher education program. According to Kagan (1992), teachers' ingrained personal beliefs and images that they bring with them determine how much information and knowledge they are willing to acquire and interpret (p. 154). In other words, the extent to which teachers in the pre-service program absorb new information and knowledge depends on the underlying beliefs that they bring to the program. In agreement with Kagan, Pajares (1992) argues that teachers' beliefs determine how they understand certain views, choose certain courses, absorb experiences, define tasks, and accept actions in the program. In addition, teachers' beliefs affect teachers' acceptance and rejection about the content of the program. Thus, investigating teachers' beliefs enhances the pre-service teacher preparation program by helping teacher educators to design a program that meets teachers' expectations and needs.

In order for a pre-service teacher preparation program to have a positive impact on teachers, I believe that the first step is to help teachers identify and examine their beliefs by making them conscious of their beliefs. In this regard, Lasely (1990) and Stuart & Thurlow (2000) assert that if teachers do not identify and scrutinize their beliefs, teachers are likely to perpetuate their teaching. In order for teachers

to break this cycle in their teaching, they need to be aware of how their beliefs influence their teaching.

2. The Significance of Investigating Change in Teachers' Beliefs

From my review, I have found several studies on teachers' change in their behaviors (Freeman, 1989; Gebhard, 1990). However, due to the difficulty in defining teachers' beliefs and ambiguity about teachers' change in beliefs, scant studies on teachers' change in beliefs are found. In addition, because teachers' beliefs can be comprehended and examined in the context of their teaching practices, it is hard to discover evidence of teachers' beliefs and change in them when teachers study in the pre-service program (Pajares, 1993).

Numerous studies conclude that teachers do not seem to change their beliefs even after study in a pre-service teacher preparation program and indicate that the impact of the program on teachers' beliefs appears to be little (Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). These studies point out that even though teachers in the pre-service teacher program are exposed to new knowledge or information, they tend to be reluctant to change their beliefs.

Johnson (1994) states that pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs with an "accumulation or prior experiences" which "manifest themselves in the form of beliefs that tend to be quite stable and rather resistant to change" (p. 440). Nisbette & Ross (1980) add that people are not likely to change their beliefs even though change may be logical and necessary, probably because "people grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their self." Pajares (1992) also elaborates on the resistance to changing beliefs as follows:

Once beliefs are formed, individuals have a tendency to build casual explanations surrounding the aspects of those beliefs, whether these explanations are accurate or more invention (Pajares, 1992, p. 317).

III. METHOD

1. How My Study is a Case Study and How I Bring the Concept of Case Study into My Study

There are several distinctive characteristics of a case study that are portrayed in

my study. First, a case study is conducted for the purpose of “gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1991, xii). Likewise, my study aims at gaining a better, in-depth understanding of teachers’ change in belief. Second, the interest of a case study is “in process rather than outcome” (Merriam, 1991, xii). In my study, I will be also keenly interested in the process of how teachers’ beliefs are changed. Third, Merriam (1991) states that a case study pays attention to discovery rather than confirmation. As such, the attention of my study will be given to the discovery in how teachers learn to teach rather than confirming any hypothesis.

2. Teacher-Participants

I selected five teacher-participants who had just begun in either the M.A. TESOL program or the Ph.D. program at Southern Kentucky University in the U.S. They were Asian English teachers from four different countries: Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China. I did case studies of these teacher-participants, including the consideration of their formal and informal teaching as well as learning experiences. The most important reasons why I selected these five case studies are that 1) they were more articulate than others, expressing their thoughts and feelings; 2) they were more reflective than others; 3) I knew them in a personal level and even developed the relationship to friendship; 4) they showed interest in the topic of my study; 5) they showed their personal interest in the topic as I interviewed them for a few times. With the teacher-participants who engaged in depth case studies, I followed them through their experiences in the program for a year and learned about the changes they made (or didn’t make) in their beliefs. In addition, I recorded their statements about what and how experiences they had seemed to influence these changes (or lack of change). In doing so, I hoped that I was able to join them in their journey of growth.

I interviewed five teacher-participants engaged as case studies for approximately four semesters of their studies. I also collected their written documents, such as journals, journals portfolios, research papers, lesson plans, and research project. I analyzed these documents and compared these data with the interview data, my research methodology journal, and my field notes in order to triangulate data.

IV. FINDINGS

In this section, I presented a separate profile of case studies, describing a unique set of beliefs that five Asian teachers brought to the pre-service teacher program. I examined if the teachers reported their perceived stability and change in their beliefs about learning and teaching. Furthermore, I indicated evidence or signs of teachers perceived change or stability in their beliefs of learning and teaching through the teacher preparation program.

1. Case Study 1: Yu-tang--New Information and Knowledge as a Vehicle to Change in His Beliefs

A native of China, Yu-tang was a deeply committed teacher with a wealth of teaching experiences, finely articulated teaching philosophy, and firmly constructed beliefs about teaching and learning. At the point of my initial contact with him, he had been enrolled in the M.A. TESOL program since the fall of 1999 and expected to graduate in the spring of 2001. The interviews with him began at the end of his first semester and went on periodically at different stages of his studying in the program. I had numerous informal meetings with him that provided opportunities for me to get to know him as a person before I actually conducted formal interviews. In this manner, I hoped to get acquainted with him on a personal level. I always looked forward to hearing his fascinating stories of experiences and thoughts, including his rich, colorful learning as well as teaching experiences. He mentioned that he could move people's hearts and make them cry and laugh with his sense of humor and wisdom. Indeed, he had a gift to immerse me with his well-organized thoughts and his appealing way of delivering stories. My field notes revealed how thrilled I was by talking with him. At some point, I realized that he served as a mentor figure to me. I did not study him. I learned from him.

1) Early Influences on the Teachers' Beliefs

Yu-tang was a self-motivated learner who believed learning is willpower. Although both of his parents were illiterate and could not provide him with reading sources, reading became an important part of his life. He was limited to his school textbooks, the only available reading materials when he was a child. Despite his limited access to educational opportunities, he educated himself through reading. As he mentioned

earlier, he believed in willpower that led to successful learning. His self-motivated attitude toward learning from his childhood experiences formed his learning belief about the critical role of motivation in learning. He had possessed this belief throughout his life. Yu-tang's case suggested that early learning experiences had an influential impact on shaping his beliefs.

2) Micro-teaching and Self-analysis

Before Yu-tang speculated about changes in his beliefs about teaching and learning, he had to identify the beliefs he brought with him into the program. At first, he confessed that he found it difficult to make a list of his teaching beliefs because some teaching beliefs were not clear. He explained that some of his teaching beliefs seemed unclear to him because they had been deeply embedded in him for such a long time, and he did not have a chance to make these implicit beliefs explicit. He expressed in the interview, "some of my actions in my micro-teaching were not explained very clearly. I just did that unconsciously. As an experienced teacher, I teach most of the time unconsciously." His first experience of micro-teaching in the course of Observation of Teaching English made him realize that he could not explain why he did what he did. His patterned teaching remained untouched over a course of his teaching experiences. In other words, he perpetuated his teaching because he did not take a careful, analytic look at himself as a teacher. Micro-teaching and self-analysis offered him a chance to take a fresh, reflective look at himself as a teacher. By means of this self-awakening experience, he was able to make his implicit beliefs explicit ones. He developed a sense of awareness as to why he did what he did in the classroom. He described in the interview:

I had taught 11 years. When I analyzed my teaching behavior in micro-teaching, I followed IRE unconsciously. Now I can explain why. Before even though I did some question behaviors, I could not explain why (10-11-2000).

He stated that one of the benefits he gained while studying in the program was that he could justify his actions and explain why he did what he did in the classroom. In order to explain why he did what he did, in his 15 minutes of micro-teaching, he attempted to explain his actions by discussing his beliefs and

philosophy for his self-analysis on his teaching. He attempted to make a connection between what and why he did what he did in the classroom with what he believed about teaching and learning. He gained an understanding of how crucially his beliefs affected his teaching behaviors and instructional practices.

3) The Mismatch between the Teacher's Claimed-beliefs and Instructional Practice

Among his well-articulated beliefs, I realized that he had contradictory statements. For instance, he stated that he used to regard teachers as authority figures in the classroom, but he had changed this belief as he progressed through the program. He remarked, "I have changed this belief. Now I regard myself as a friend with students." At the same time, he sustained the difference of social status between teachers and students. He indicated that students and teachers should be different, emphasizing, "I do not like students to call me by my first name because I am still their teacher. Students should respect their teachers." Even though he expressed that he perceived change in his belief, it was not manifested in his instructional practice. His mismatch between his claimed-beliefs and his instructional practices raised some questions. Did that mean that he was aware of his change in belief, but he needed more time to carry out his newly changed belief? Or was his changed belief so vulnerable that it could be reversed in different contexts?

4) The Teacher's Perceived Change in Beliefs

He had the deeply rooted conviction as to why he believed in learning vocabulary as an important part of learning a language. He believed that it would promote students ability to learn English if they had an extensive amount of vocabulary. He showed me his study book which contained a list of vocabulary and short sentences. He proudly showed it to me saying that improving his vocabulary skills helped him to learn English at a fast rate. This belief on the importance of learning vocabulary remained intact throughout his studying in the program. He perceived he changed his teaching beliefs about the way vocabulary should be learned and taught. And his perceived change in his belief in learning vocabulary altered his approach of teaching vocabulary. For example, he recalled his ways of teaching vocabulary in the classroom when he was in China.

Learning second language learning should take place in a meaningful context. For example, my past learning was memorizing. So I asked my students to memorize a lot of vocabulary. Those vocabulary, I think, did not take place in a meaningful context. I asked them to memorize individual words. But now if I teach my students again, I put those words in contexts (2-14-2000).

He used to learn and teach memorizing vocabulary in an isolated, meaningless context. His newly changed belief was that learning was an active process. Therefore, he believed that using words in meaningful contexts would result in better learning outcome.

The following excerpt shows Yu-tang perceived change in his beliefs, due in part to his interest in reading.

When I was a child, I regarded teachers as authority figures in the classroom. I have changed this belief. I changed because of reading a wide range of books about western culture and education. Now the role of teacher is a mediator, not a director. I have to mediate and negotiate with my students. My role as a teacher is an advisor (12-27-1999).

Yu-tang confirmed that some of his beliefs would not change. For instance, he expressed in the interview that teachers must be a paragon of virtue and learning. I think that this belief will never be changed. Another belief he did not think would change was students motivation.

When there was a mismatch between Yu-tang's beliefs and what the program advocated, he seemed to be affected by that gap. His confession of his perceived changes in beliefs while studying in the program made him realize that being teacher-centered was not effective for students' learning. His exposure to the support of a student-centered classroom stimulated him to think about the alternatives. As he faced the new argument in the program, he doubted the way he had been taught in China was effective. In his 15 minutes of micro-teaching, his newly-changed beliefs were manifested in his teaching practice. He implemented group work after some short direction to students and tried not to intervene while students worked on their tasks. He played the role of a facilitator rather than a lecturer, the role he played when he was in China. Through his study, he showed partial change in his beliefs.

In short, there are four possible factors that may have contributed to his

perceived change in beliefs during his study in the program:

- micro-teaching and self-analysis of his teaching
- exposure to new knowledge by reading current books and articles
- discussing issues with his classmates and teachers
- writing journal entries which serve as a reflective thinking process

2. Case Study 2: Sun-Mi--A Self-Reflective Process

Sun-Mi was a M.A. TESOL student from Korea where she taught English in the elementary school for eight years. She already held her master's degree in English literature. I met her on a number of informal occasions in order to get to know her on a personal level, and formal interviews were carried out during various stages of her studying in the program. Her written documents, such as journal portfolios in which she recorded her personal experiences of learning and teaching, were collected. Also, I observed her 15 minute micro-teaching and read her self-analysis report on micro-teaching to triangulate the data.

1) Writing Journals as a Means of Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness

In her journal portfolio, she presented how writing journals helped her reflect on her experiences and identify beliefs about teaching and learning. Writing journals gave her an opportunity to reflect, for the first time in her life, upon how she had taught. Her reflection seemed to lead to awareness, which brought about change. By means of writing in her journals, she became clear about what made a good teacher, and she discovered a way to explore her teaching. Writing journals enabled Sun-Mi to take a fresh look at herself in a professional and different point of view. She stated that her reflection and awareness eventually enabled her to change her beliefs about learning and teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, Sun-Mi was one of the teacher-participants who reported that she perceived obvious change in beliefs and acknowledged her change in her beliefs. She wrote in her portfolio:

Writing journals as an assignment broadens my awareness about teaching. It gave me an opportunity to reflect on my teaching and belief in Korea. And reflecting through a teaching journal let me have more genuine desire to be a good teacher. And now what makes a good teacher is an eternal question

that I answer. To answer this question, I will keep a journal to explore my teaching (Spring 2000).

Three key words, awareness, reflection and exploration in the paragraph above imply that Sun-Mi was on her way to learning to teach.

2) The Teacher's Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Sun-Mi's rationale as to why she wanted to learn TESOL was revealed clearly in the introduction of her journal entry. Like some other teacher-participants, one of her wishes to study in the program stemmed from an awareness that she had to improve herself as an English teacher and an English language learner. Sun-Mi explained in her journal entry:

To be a good teacher, what should I prepare? Why did I apply for M.A. TESOL? My teaching English was based on deficiencies from my learning experience. In regular school education. So I was not content with myself as an English teacher. Through this program, I wished to enhance my teaching competence and develop my speaking English. I felt I needed more cognition about second language acquisition to teach English more effectively (Spring 2001).

Her self-consciousness about her language proficiency derived from her belief that language is imitation. She believed that the teacher has to make an effort to pronounce English words correctly because children mimic the teachers' pronunciation and the teacher needs to repeat it in order to make students memorize it. During interviews, she acknowledged that,

I didn't realize that teaching is that complex before I took this course Observation of Teaching English. A lot of things to consider and think about (5-4-2000).

3) The Teacher's Beliefs in the Teachers' Roles

Sun-Mi from Korea was one of the teacher-participants who addressed the issue of the teacher's role as a trustworthy and approachable teacher. She indicated in her journal portfolio that "learning works best when the student has the feeling of

trust and approachability for the teacher that takes responsibility." Her journal portfolio corroborated her comments in the interviews. In the interview, Sun-Mi commented, "I did not start teaching because I had certain teaching philosophy. I just wanted to be friends with my students. I wanted to have students to have easy access to me." In addition to her desire to be friends with her students as one of the teacher's roles, Sun-Mi described the teacher's multiple roles in her journal portfolio:

The teacher analyzes the learners' needs, interests and preferences. The teacher collects information and observe class to analyze learner's preference, etc (Spring 2001).

4) The Impact of the Teacher Preparation Program on the Teacher's Change in Beliefs

During the first interview, she was already in the transitional period when she began to think about her teaching in a different light. Sun-Mi also added, "realized what I did wrong when I taught in Korea as I read books for this class." Her statement showed the strong impact the program was having on her beliefs. Sun-Mi told me that whenever she read the required textbooks for the course, *Observation of Teaching English*, she thought about my questions and made a note in the margin for a later interview. She expressed that our assistance was reciprocal. "Through articulating my beliefs to you and reflection on my prior teaching, I can understand why I taught the way I did in the classroom."

She expressed to me that her stories of learning and teaching English before entering the program empowered her to look back on a time when she taught. She came to a realization that becoming an English teacher required much more than she thought it did as she took the course, *Observation of English Teaching*.

Sun-Mi stated that she had a chance to reflect on what and how she taught while taking the course, *Observation of Teaching English*. Certain activities, such as micro-teaching, self-analysis of her own teaching, and a writing action research paper allowed her to think about her beliefs. Analyzing her micro-teaching, she said, "I actually integrated eight years of my teaching experiences and reflect upon them." In addition, as she read required books for the course, she got a chance to reflect on her beliefs about teaching and learning English as foreign language:

In my case, Gebhard mentioned in his book (1999) as to the connection

between personal life and professional life. I had never had that kind of connection before. That connection part in his book made me think. Beyond the pedagogy and class management, I was glad to know the significance of connecting between my personal life and professional life (2-10-2001).

She realized through this learning process that teaching was complex and required a number of elements to be considered. Her changes in beliefs seemed rather broad. Since she had studied in the program, she looked at teaching from a global point of view as she discarded the notion that teaching was about skills or techniques. A wide range of activities provided opportunities for Sun-Mi to reflect upon her past teaching experiences, thereby altering her beliefs to some degree.

Her first exposure to the pre-service teacher preparation program had a beneficial role in her gaining awareness of her teaching and learning beliefs and her perception about changing her beliefs about teaching. She noted that reflection through writing journals seemed to enhance opportunities to identify her beliefs and helped her have openness to change.

3. Case Study 3: Kazu--Dual Self: Inconsistency Between Beliefs and Instructional Practices

Kazu, from Japan, struggled with facing a dual self and had an ongoing conflict between what he was supposed to do in the classroom and what kind of teacher he should be, and what he hoped and intended to do in the classroom and be as a teacher. In other words, he predicted that his expectations and others expectations, such as his students, colleagues, supervisors, and students' parents would not be met. His struggle and conflict had been manifested throughout his studying in the teacher preparation program. He also confessed that he experienced inconsistency between his beliefs and instructional practices derived from inevitable forces, such as professors' advocated beliefs and the popular trend in TESOL. His upfront, honest comments and answers allowed me to look into his struggle, conflict and dilemmas as the semester progressed.

1) The Impact of Early Learning Experience on the Teacher's Beliefs

Kazu stated that he was a self-reliant learner since his secondary years of learning. He believed that he was a well-read student who believed in learners

taking responsibility for their own learning. He put heavy weight on the learners' roles. On the other hand, he believed that the teachers' roles did not have significant impact upon students' learning. Likewise, his self-reliant learning experience served as a filter through which he perceived and defined learning and teaching. His self-reliant attitude was shown throughout his articulated beliefs. For instance, he described his view on teacher development: "Don't rely on the school and the teacher for your teacher development. It's you that take some action to it."

Kazu from Japan portrayed that he taught himself and felt like he did not learn anything from schools or teachers. In his journal entry, he reported that learners' roles were clear and dominant while the teacher's roles were not defined explicitly. He believed that teachers did not take responsibility for students' learning, and learners should determine their success of learning. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Kazu.

Kazu: I did not go to college in Japan.

Researcher: What do you mean? You said that you got your undergraduate degree majoring in English language and literature in Japan.

K: I mean, I just went to college during the mid-term and final term. Other than that, I did not attend classes.

R: Why not? Could you explain more about that?

K: I felt like I did not learn anything from classes. It was same old same old...just translation, grammar rules and uninteresting activities I could learn much more by myself (1-17-2000).

His success in self-reliant learning formed his view on the teacher's and students' roles. In Kazu's case, he placed a lot of weight on the students' roles and was vague about the teacher's roles.

The first interview with Kazu was held in December of 2000. He just finished up his first semester of his Ph.D. program. I sat in the class, Observation of Teaching English, which he attended in the spring of 2001. Sitting in the class with Kazu gave me the role of participant-observer. Sometimes I recorded Kazu's comments that were contributed during the small group discussion as well as the whole class discussion. In doing so, I was able to uncover his beliefs about teaching and learning. He often participated in class and shared his opinions and experiences with other classmates. He openly shared his sense of frustration toward the reality that he had to face in Japan and his desire to do something different in his teaching

practices with his classmates. In the interview, he explicitly described his dilemma in earnest:

I may not be the teacher Japanese students expect. I am not going to give them exercise or practices in class. I will just give information and introduce learning strategies (2-22-2000).

2) The Teacher's Conflict between His Teaching Practices and Beliefs

Kazu was aware of the pre-existing conflict that he might confront in his future teaching. It seemed that he used sharing experiences with other Asian English teachers as catharsis in which he could earn support and a sense of oneness with other teachers. He made recurring remarks such as, "I am contradicting myself, that is why it is my conflict and my conflicting beliefs." He was aware of this conflict within himself, but I wondered if it meant that his beliefs would change. He expressed his conflict in his journal portfolio:

Actually, I am not sure of myself. As writing journal entries, I talked about student-centered, creating comfortable environment in the class. It is a part of myself. The other part of me is telling me, you are avoiding your responsibility as a teacher by emphasizing student-centered and having fun. In a way, I avoid real active role as a teacher (5-2-2000).

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that Kazu struggled between his projected image and real self. Writing journal entries served as an introspective means through which he became aware of his conflict. His conflict, as a form of inconsistency, was also manifested in his instructional practices and his beliefs. He believed that collaboration did not promote language acquisition, but in his teaching practice that I observed, he led the class to a student-centered one, as seen in his implementation of a lot of collaboration between students, such as peer work and group discussion. He felt obligated to follow what TESOL advocated that language teaching should be interactive and learner-centered. Although he commented that those who wanted to be teachers wanted to be authority figures, in his teaching, he tried to make himself approachable and accessible to students. His micro-teaching and his illustrations of his previous teaching experiences were inconsistent with his beliefs. His conflict continued with his assignment to please

the professor, and he did not feel free revealing his true beliefs.

To be honest with you, I didn't want to write teaching philosophy like that, but I had to do it to please a professor, although I know that they are bunch of lies. What I believe does not mean what I teach, according to my beliefs (5-13-2000).

His beliefs were not reflected in his instructional decisions and practices. The external forces, such as the trend in the TESOL field or professors preconceived beliefs and ideas prevented him from revealing his true beliefs about learning and teaching in his teaching practice. It seemed that change should occur within Kazu, not by the outsider forces.

Kazu claimed that he had not changed his beliefs about teaching and learning English as a foreign language during his study in the pre-service teacher preparation program. Nevertheless, through studying in the program, he noted that he discovered conflicts between what he perceived the ideal image of teachers and his real self. And it seemed that his conflict, what Kazu refers inner struggle, led to self-awakening within himself.

4. Case Study 4: Pei-ying-Struggling with Two Images of Teacher

Pei-ying was a M.A. TESOL student from Taiwan where she taught English in junior high school for six years. As a secondary school teacher who was supposed to follow restrictions and regulations set up by the school, she expressed that she struggled with two images of a teacher: the teacher she wanted to be and the teacher she was supposed to be. She gave me an example of how heavily the influence of the school constrained her teaching approaches and her dominant beliefs. "Our school evaluates teachers from students score of grade they got, for this reason, the administrator thinks that a teacher is a good teacher if the students score is higher." Due to the outside forces, such as the entrance exam, the preconceived beliefs the administrators and parents had, and the cultural beliefs on the teachers' roles and students' roles, she had to change her teaching even though it was not congruent with her beliefs in teaching and learning. Pei-ying's case was a good example of the inconsistency between teachers' possessed beliefs and their instructional practices due to the contextual factors.

1) The First-Hand Experience on the Teacher's Beliefs

Pei-ying brought well-developed beliefs about learning and teaching English as a foreign language derived from her first hand experiences. Pei-ying's beliefs articulated in her portfolio provided an understanding of how much her first-hand experiences as a learner and teacher influenced her beliefs:

- Language should be learned in a natural way.
- Oral skills (listening and speaking) should be developed before written skills (reading and writing).
- The more opportunities students are exposed to the target-like environment, the better their language proficiency will be.
- A student-centered classroom is the goal.
- Collaboration is encouraged in the class.

Her beliefs seemed to derive from her own learning experience as an ESL student. She described in her journal that as an EFL student, she did not have opportunities to interact with native speakers of English, and the only input she received was to repeat the vocabulary after the teacher. Because of her negative learning experience, she felt the way she was taught did not help her to communicate in English.

She believed that language should be learned or acquired in a natural way. As she described earlier, she had mechanical drills and pattern practice as the main ways of learning English that she believed created an artificial learning environment. She revealed the negative images of her leaning experience and how it affected her belief in her journal:

If the teacher always speaks slowly, deliberately, the students will not know the speed that native speakers use in speaking. Teachers should teach in the classroom the same language that is used outside the classroom. It wastes time and efforts to learn a language that is antiquated. It's a pity for me to know that some of the English words or sentences I learned are not actually used by native speakers (Her journal entry, Fall 1999).

Her belief, the goal of language learning is on the use of the language rather than on the study of the language itself, also came from her learning experience. Moreover, she indicated that her beliefs derived from her teaching experiences,

especially through the mistakes she made as an English teacher.

2) The Teacher's Change in Beliefs-Reflection as a Contributing Factor

In the interview, Pei-ying reported that she perceived change in her beliefs due to a certain course, Observation of Teaching English. She described, "I changed most in the course, Observation of Teaching English. It teaches us to reflect on our teaching." Furthermore, Pei-ying contributed reflection to her perceived change in beliefs. In her journal entry, she wrote, "by reflection my own experience I am able to adjust my beliefs." Her narrative statements in the interview also supported her reasoning. In the interview, she recalled:

I taught in junior high school for six years, but always, I was very busy, so I didn't think or reflect my own teaching. When I came here, I reflected my own teaching and the way I did in the class. Then, I know there should be alternative ways to teach, and I can find some answers why some problems occur (3-2-2000).

Furthermore, she regarded observing her classmates from different countries and micro-teaching as the contributing factors in changing her teaching beliefs. She stated in the interview:

When I did micro-teaching, I emphasized four skills, integrated skills. But it still depends on students levels. My belief in teaching, in the past, I didn't recognize students learning styles. Some students took longer time to understand. I didn't know different students have different learning styles. From my classmates, I learned it. Most of my changes are from observing my classmates (3-2-2000).

In her presentation for her self-analysis on her own teaching, she described what she learned through her experience as doing micro-teaching.

- Self-identity is the first step before starting teaching.
- In the actual teaching, many unexpected things might occur.
- Clarification should come before doing an activity.
- Focus on one point at a time.
- Teach based on students' need.

Her dominant concern about external constraints was still persistent. Even though she stated that she perceived change in her beliefs, it might not mean that her theoretical beliefs would be manifested in her teaching practices due to the contextual factors. Pei-ying's case supports the argument that inconsistencies exist between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. Her case allowed me to take into consideration that even if teachers' altered beliefs were not reflected in their teaching contexts, it did not necessarily mean that their beliefs remained unchanged.

5. Case Study 5: Shuhei--Reconstructing Beliefs

Shuhei, a native of Japan who enrolled in the M.A. TESOL program, had just finished his first semester when I had an initial interview with him. We met at a coffee shop on campus so that we could talk things out more freely and comfortably. He was shy at first, but he started to open up as we met more frequently. I approached him not as a researcher, but as a person interested in establishing friendship. In a later stage of my research, we became friends and talked about ourselves on a personal level. It helped me understand Shuhei and his general perspectives on his life and future goals. Shuhei was very lenient about spending a large amount of time on my study. His amicable personality prompted me to choose him as one of my case studies. Also, whenever he needed help with his studies or needed suggestions, he reached out to me. I lent him a few books to read and my papers for his research projects. In addition, he sought my counsel when he thought about writing his master's thesis. In the M.A. TESOL program, writing a thesis is optional, but Shuhei said that a thesis might present more opportunities for a job. He was the only participant in the M.A. TESOL program who was determined to write a thesis. He felt free to verbalize his thoughts and ideas. In so doing, he could get a clearer idea about his work with his thesis. I was exhilarated to become his confidante and friend with whom he could seek out academic assistance.

I noticed that early in the interviews he tended to answer questions with vague explanations and seemed unclear about his own pre-existing beliefs. I noticed change in him after his third semester, especially after he took *Observation of Teaching English*. He seemed to have clearer ideas on his beliefs. Writing journal entries, micro-teaching, self-analysis his micro-teaching and reading books about teacher development played possible contributing factors, which enabled him to verbalize his beliefs.

1) A Critical Event of Learning on the Teacher's Beliefs about Learning and Teaching

He had the transitory period of learning and teaching English as a foreign language when he was a junior in college. This crucial event of his learning occurred when he was an exchange student in England for three months. This influential event opened new ways of learning and teaching to him. Before his experience as an exchange student in England, he had never thought of becoming a teacher. Although he took a part-time teaching job before he went to England, he did not consider teaching as a long-term career. This changed after he went to England. He met a wonderful, impressive ESL teacher who became his memorable teacher. As he exposed himself to student-centered classes and communicative approaches of learning English, he began to believe that communicative approaches and interaction would facilitate students learning English. There was a change in a pedagogical perspective as he accepted the new ways of learning and teaching English as opposed to his former English education in Japan. After he came back from England, he took another part-time teaching job. This time, he made an effort to make changes in the way he had been taught. He had a conflict on making changes in the classroom because the goal of students was to learn grammar rules and structure of the English language to get into high school. Therefore, he concluded that his new implementation did not seem as successful as he thought it would. His comment in his lesson plan reflected evidence on his preferred beliefs in methodology (implementing workshops and writing conferences):

I will provide students with workshop in the computer center. I will hold writing conferences with students (one to one conference) about twenty minutes per student (1-7-2001).

His statement in his journal portfolio also supported his notion that interaction played a key role. The teacher will be required to interact with every student to understand what students attempt to write.

His claimed beliefs were consistent with the communicative orientation of teaching and learning, a prevailing trend in the TESOL field. His claimed beliefs were student-centered, interactional, communicational, and process-oriented writing. Shuhei did not change his previously held beliefs much while studying in the program, possibly because it seemed that his beliefs were congruent with what

the program advocated. Thus, the beliefs he brought to the program were reinforced.

2) The Cultural Influence on the Teacher's Beliefs about Learners' roles and the Teacher's Roles

His active learning attitude had been discouraged in formal schooling. After this negative response to his learning attitude on his active role in learning in class, he became a passive learner, just like other Japanese learners who were quiet, receptive, and passive. The cultural norms for the roles students were expected to play barred Shuhei from having his own voice in his learning. He showed outright rejection against the traditional Japanese learning and teaching style that was exam-oriented and memory-based learning. Shuhei's pessimistic tone when he addressed the Japanese education system was revealed in his remarks: "I hate the authoritarian figure." When I asked him about his English learning experience in Japan, he promptly responded, "I am going to criticize Japanese education." The word, hate was peppered throughout the interview. Although he did not want to follow his former teachers foot steps in his teaching, he controlled the class much like his previous authoritarian teachers in Japan.

3) The Relationship between the Teacher's Beliefs and his Instructional Practice

In order to speculate whether his beliefs would be reflected in teaching practice, I observed and analyzed his fifteen minutes of micro-teaching. But, his stated beliefs were not evident in his classroom practice. Rather, he maintained the teachers role that he detested so much. He even admitted in his self-analysis for micro-teaching that his teaching resembled the traditional Japanese style in teaching English. Shuhei's class was teacher-dominated, and he focused on grammatical rules and examples of English sentences rather than on students discovering rules and learning a language in meaningful ways. Despite his belief against a teacher-centered class, he still taught the way he had been taught.

His case shows how difficult it is for teachers to break away from the way they have been taught. This cycle of perpetuating teaching is evidence of a rare case of a teachers change in beliefs. Nevertheless, I do not like to conclude that his beliefs remained unchanged, and they were inconsistent with his teaching practices. I would like to present assumptions as to why Shuehei's stated beliefs were not

manifested in his teaching. Maybe he needs more time to bring his reported beliefs to the class in a supportive environment. His professors and colleagues observed his behaviors and teaching during his micro-teaching. That kind of environment could be threatening to Shuhei perhaps because he was afraid of their criticism. In other words, Shuhei needs a different context where he can exercise his newly held beliefs safely. It was hard for me to determine that he perceived he did not change his beliefs, given the circumstance and time restraints. It would be exciting to follow up on his future teaching in Japan. It is going to be my life-long assignment, yet I can't wait to see Shuhei's development as a teacher.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study may not support the findings from other research on teachers' change in beliefs (Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Those studies concluded that teachers were not likely to change their beliefs although they studied in the pre-service teacher preparation program. However, my findings indicated that teachers' perceived change in beliefs depended on the definition of change and beliefs and contexts in which newly changed beliefs could be manifested in teaching practices. My findings of this study suggested that a consistency did not always exist between teachers' beliefs and their behaviors, attitudes, and teaching practices. Therefore, investigating teachers' perceived change in beliefs requires specific definitions as well as concepts about key terms in the study and an enduring dedication to following teachers' development after they leave the program.

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