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Title of lecture :

TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

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1:1 : Introduction

It is widely recognized that language teachers bring to the classroom a set of beliefs that are derived from various sources, including individual personality, prior learning experiences as students, and teaching practices (Borg 2003). These beliefs are said to serve as guiding principles for instructional decisions and classroom practices, which in turn influence students' language learning in classrooms (Pajares 1992). Therefore, it is particularly important for educational researchers and teacher educators to understand the central role that teacher beliefs play in language teaching and learning.

Teachers' beliefs are important for understanding and improving educational process. They closely guide language teachers to adopt their teaching strategies for coping with their daily language teaching challenges, influence their general well-being, and in turn, shape language learners' learning environment, their motivation and their language achievement and ability.

Teachers' belief is defined as personal constructs that can provide understandings, judgments, and evaluations of teachers' practices.

Teachers' perception is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers' do-at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning.

Examining teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching can provide valuable insights into teachers' decision-making. This information can offer important implications for designing and implementing teacher education programs.

1:2: The Nature of Teacher Belief

Teachers are a product of their culture and experiences, and teacher beliefs and practices are embedded in cultural contexts. Therefore, it has been argued that teachers' beliefs should be studied aware of the influence of culture (Mansour 2009: 25). Even the term 'teacher belief' is not used consistently.

Tsui (2003: 61) claims that the term belief has been used together with terms such as assumptions, conceptions, or personal theories.

the significance of teachers' personal experience of learning (in grey) compared to other factors. Borg (2003: 81) maintains that teacher training programs which ignore trainee teachers' prior beliefs tend to be less effective at influencing beliefs than programs that acknowledge the importance of bringing forth student teachers' beliefs based on their own school experiences. As teachers learn and change, the process of articulating their conceptions of practice is not a linear one. Conscious understanding and studying of individual beliefs makes it possible to alter them. The outer circle with six different points highlights factors that may contribute to altering teachers' beliefs. Freeman (2001: 237) suggests that the process of teacher learning and change through teacher education programs is dialectical, in which new meanings to familiar perceptions are renamed. Thus, tacit knowledge interacts with, and is reshaped by, newly explicit understandings from the professional discourse.

1:3 : Historical Overview of Research on Language Teachers' Beliefs :

Pujaris (1992) inserts that beliefs are difficult concepts to be defined because they are not directly observable nor easily measurable . Despite the increasing research interest in teachers' beliefs, no agreement has been reached on what constitutes a good belief or an important one (McCarthy 1996).

Conceptual confusion over the difference between beliefs and knowledge is widespread. According to Nespor (1987), beliefs are unconsciously held and are often resistant to change.

Richardson (1996) stated that beliefs are subjective claims that the individual considers as true, while knowledge is objective truths.

Teachers' beliefs refer to those that are related to language learning and teaching, based on the notion that beliefs are "psychologically held understanding about the world" (Richardson 1996, 103).

In Kagan's view, teacher beliefs are 'tacit, often unconsciously' assumptions about students, classrooms and academic material.

Johnson (1994) outlines three underlying assumptions about teacher beliefs that provide a basis for research on teacher beliefs.

teaching.

1:4:Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs:

Pre-service teachers' entering beliefs have been recognized as a powerful factor influencing how they learn to teach, interpret new information, and make instructional decisions during teacher education (Borg 2003) . Pre-service teachers bring with them a set of pre-existing beliefs about teaching and learning. These entering beliefs come from their experiences as students, and comprehension. Studies have found that teacher candidates' emerging beliefs during a practicum are influenced by images of teachers and teaching they formed as students.

Some researchers have argued that pre-service teachers' beliefs are deeply rooted, stable and resistant to change. Other researchers have supported the view that teacher beliefs are developmental and dynamic.

Many interacting factors influence teachers' beliefs:

- 1- Previous (language) learning experience
- 2-Professional development programs
- 3-'Experts' such as prominent authors
- 4-Previous and present teaching experience
- 5-Learners, colleagues, friends.

In sum, the findings of many studies in teachers beliefs, given the assumption that pre-service teachers typically bring their existing beliefs to the teacher education program and changes in teachers' beliefs are likely to result in improved classroom practices, teacher education programs should continue to help pre-service teachers modify and reconstruct their deep-rooted existing beliefs for professional growth (Richardson 2003)

1 : 5 : In-Service Teachers' Beliefs :

While the beliefs of pre-service teachers have been extensively documented, the body of research on in-service teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching is still in its infancy. This small, but growing body of research has focused on two issues: (1) the impact of teacher education on in-service teachers' beliefs and (2) the relationship between the beliefs of in-service teachers and those of their students. Some studies have examined the impact of teacher education on in-service teachers' beliefs. These studies suggest that teacher education is generally successful in achieving change in the beliefs of EFL teachers.

The findings of these studies revealed that although the teacher education program did not lead teachers to make radical and significant changes in their beliefs, it enabled them to become more aware of and integrate their pre-existing beliefs. **It also helped them develop ways of adopting teaching practices that were aligned with their beliefs.**

It is generally accepted that effective teaching and learning occur when there is a correspondence between teachers' and students' beliefs, which can help teachers understand students' difficulties in language learning and provide more effective and fruitful instruction. (Kumaravadivelu 1991). In short, the findings of various studies suggest that mismatch between teachers' and students' beliefs may create tensions in the classroom and hinder students' success in learning.

1:6 : Teachers' and Students' Beliefs about Grammar Teaching:

One specific aspect of language teaching that has been given much consideration in the study of teacher beliefs is **grammar instruction** .

Two of the most topics are

- (1) Teachers' and students' beliefs about grammar teaching and
- (2) The association between teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and classroom practices. The issue of whether grammar should be explicitly taught has been a source of controversy in the field of language teaching. The controversy lies in whether formal grammar instruction is beneficial or detrimental to students' language learning. A number of studies investigating teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching have indicated that teachers generally consider grammar to be a vital component in language learning and teaching.

Teachers reported that their views about grammar teaching were mainly affected by their personal experiences as language learners and teachers. The majority of the teachers felt that grammar teaching was valuable for enhancing EAP students' language learning and grammar teaching is a vital component in language learning and teaching.

Various study suggested that it is imperative for teachers to explore their students' opinion particularly about the role of formal grammar instruction and error correction.

1: 7 : Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar Teaching and Classroom Practices :

Considerable work has been done to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs about **grammar teaching** and **classroom practices** in both pre-service and in-service contexts.

Some major findings from these studies include:

- 1– teachers' classroom practices are governed by their beliefs about grammar teaching,
- 2–teachers' stated beliefs are not always corresponding with their practices,
- 3– social contextual factors (e.g., time limits and institutional expectations) serve as powerful influences on teachers' grammar practices, and
- 4– the relative influence of core beliefs on teachers' practices may lead to conflict between teachers' stated beliefs and classroom practices.

Farrell and Lim (2005) examined the beliefs about grammar teaching and practices of two practicing teachers in an elementary school. Although teachers stated that they preferred a communicative language teaching approach, it was observed that their classroom practices were characterized by a teacher-centered approach with explicit teaching of grammar.