

## **EFL STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF TEACHING BELIEFS SHIFT AFTER FIELD TEACHING PRACTICE**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to evaluate EFL students' understanding of how their teaching beliefs change while teaching in a real class on field teaching practice. The study employed a qualitative approach. Twenty EFL students from the English Education Department at one of the institutions in South East Sulawesi were chosen for this study based on their involvement in the field teaching practice program. The data for this study was gathered from EFL students' reflective notebooks. The findings suggested that EFL students were aware of significant variations between their teaching views before field teaching practice and their teaching beliefs after field teaching practice. Before participating in field teaching practice, most EFL students believed that the teacher was a source of knowledge, which caused them to feel anxious in front of the students. If they are not confident in their knowledge, vocabulary, and English speaking fluency, they are afraid to present the material. Meanwhile, it reveals EFL students' ideas about teaching attitudes, tactics, media, and performance during field teaching practice. As a result, this study suggests that changes in teacher beliefs influence teachers' teaching practices, including teaching attitudes, methods, and performance.

**Keywords:** *EFL Students' Awareness, Teaching Beliefs, Field Teaching Practice*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers' beliefs is an interesting topic for researcher due to provide improvement in English language teaching and learning (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). In terms of 21st-century learning, teachers' positive beliefs support professional development in shaping innovation skills in teaching (Bedir, 2019). Teachers and their beliefs are a significant factor in students' results because it gives impacts teacher actions in the learning process (Thomas, 2013). The most recent research about teaching beliefs focuses on the impact of teachers' practice in class (Snider & Roehl, 2007). It is because teachers' beliefs not only giving an impact on teachers but also influence learners' behavior in the learning process.

In international scope, education systems are gaining attention to what contributes to effective teaching and learning outcomes (Devine, Fahie & McGillicuddy, 2013). This study focuses on personal and professional factors that support effective learning environments for students in schools, one of them is teaching beliefs (Devine et al., 2013). Richard, Gallo, and Renandya (2001) stated that teacher beliefs strongly affect the materials and activities they choose for teaching the students in the classroom. In the Indonesian context, teaching beliefs have been investigated especially the Indonesian ELT teacher beliefs towards learner autonomy (Melvina & Suherdi, 2019). This study found the dominant result shows that the teachers believed their students are learning cooperatively. While the minimum of it is found the teachers believed the students are independent to learn. Thus, Indonesian ELT teachers consider the students to learn autonomously just in the library. Then, this study indicates that teacher beliefs toward learning autonomy can support students in taking responsibility for their learning.

Several studies found that teacher beliefs are consistent with classroom practice (Qiu, Xie, Xiong & Zhou, 2021). In language learning, Utami (2016) considered the teachers' belief as one of the key factors in how classroom instruction is planned, managed, and evaluated, and there have been studies about it, especially the relation between belief and the application of certain strategies or certain language skill learning. Teachers' beliefs are important for understanding and improving the educational process because they influence teachers' teaching strategies (Li, 2012). The change

in teachers' practice is the result of the changes in teachers' beliefs (Richards et al., 2001). The shift in teachers' beliefs can be occurred in how they modify their teaching practice. Yuan and Lee (2014) found that beliefs change into four processes such as confirmation by observing the consistency between beliefs and newly presented information, realization refers to the process of fully aware of beliefs, elaboration is the effort to support the beliefs by some source and disagreement as to the effort to be more critical on new beliefs that pre-service teacher will adopt.

The source of teachers' beliefs depends on teachers' personal. Previous studies about beliefs found that experience is the main source of teacher beliefs (Raymond, 1997). Then, Ulla and Winitkun (2018) found teachers' beliefs were shaped by their experience with teachers' training programs. Teachers' formal education and learning experience are influential in shaping teaching beliefs (Debreli, 2016). When pre-service teachers was the student and learning in the classroom for their education, they have experience concerning their own learning rules or strategies thus it can help them in shaping teaching beliefs that can be the reference when they teach in the real class and manage the class. As Berger et al., (2018) assumed that teacher experience relates to beliefs and the higher experience strongly supports the belief in constructivism in teaching. Apart from teachers' education and experience, curriculums also are the source of the change in teaching beliefs (Cansiz & Cansiz, 2019). Where the teachers teach, they will adapt the curriculum in the institutions. Therefore, it can determine beliefs, and even methodology and teachers can modify their teaching practice. Zhang and Liu (2014) also discussed teaching beliefs and school types. They argued that curriculum reform, professional training, school environment, and culture directly influence teachers' beliefs development (Zhang & Liu, 2014).

Several studies concerning beliefs have been conducted to confirm that teachers' beliefs affect teachers' behavior, teachers' teaching strategies, and approach in the classroom (Bedir, 2019; Cephe & Yalcin 2015; Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2017). However, it found a limited study that explored the awareness of teaching beliefs shift. Mostly, they focused on the role of beliefs in teaching practice (Bedir, 2019; Cephe & Yalcin 2015; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Utami, 2016). As known that teaching beliefs can be changed (Richard et al., 2001), it is important to explore teachers' awareness of beliefs shift because when teaching beliefs change, it is influential in teaching practice and approach (Richard et al., 2001). Bamanger and Gashan (2014) stated that recent trends in teacher education have focused on exploring teachers' beliefs.

Therefore, the study that focuses on EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift after field teaching practice will be explored. The researcher is interested in investigating EFL pre-service teacher awareness of teaching beliefs shift during teaching in the real class. Besides, the results of this study are expected to help the pre-service teacher to be more critical toward their belief improvement in facing real class in the next field teaching practice program, especially for EFL students at one of the Islamic universities in eastern Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research design to analyze the data. Qualitative research is an interpretative approach that attempts to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviors experienced in certain social phenomena through the subjective experiences of the participants (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006).

This study was conducted at the English Education Department grade 2017 of one of the Islamic universities in eastern Indonesia. The participants consist of 20 EFL pre-service teachers who have been following field teaching practice programs at schools in one of the high schools in eastern Indonesia. After field teaching practice, EFL pre-service teachers can reflect how their experience and beliefs in teaching. Thus, qualitative research will help the researcher to gain

information concerning participants' awareness of teaching beliefs shifted after teaching in the real class during field teaching practice.

The reflections sheet via Google form was distributed to 20 participants via personal chat in WhatsApp to get deeper information concerning EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift. The participants were asked to write their reflections in Bahasa Indonesian to help them in finishing them easily and given a week to complete their teaching reflections and sent them to the researchers' WhatsApp number. The first question in the reflection sheet is "Are your previous beliefs (at school or college) the same as your beliefs when you teach in real classes? If so, explain!". This first question aims to remind the participants concerning their previous beliefs. The second is "In your opinion, how should you (teaching beliefs) teach English in schools during PLP II?", in this question the participants reflected on how should they teach by their recent teaching beliefs. Then, the researchers' object is to participants' awareness of the teaching beliefs shift process through the third question "Explain the most significant difference between your teaching beliefs before and after field teaching practice.". The last question engages participants to compare their previous and recent teaching beliefs by describing significantly in reflection form.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used the steps from Creswell's study(2012) and thematic coding by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the data was collected from participants via WhatsApp and then prepared to be analyzed. After that, the researcher read the data to check the completeness of information in participants' reflection sheets while coding the text for themes and descriptions by several chosen colors. The data categorized into five sub-themes with each chosen color Teaching Performance is in the blue-color, Teaching Media is in the green-color, Teaching Strategy is in the red-color, Teacher as the source of Knowledge is in the orange-color, and teaching attitude is in the army color. Then, the data were recapitulated in Microsoft Excel by giving a score of 1 for each theme to see the number of data and give the interpretation.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to investigate EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift after field teaching practice. In EFL students' reflections, it found 2 main themes those are the awareness of teaching beliefs before field teaching practice and the awareness of teaching beliefs shift after teaching in the real class on field teaching practice.

### **EFL Students' Awareness of teaching Beliefs Before Field Teaching Practice**

Based on the first question in the reflection sheet, EFL students were found aware of their previous beliefs about English language learning. Most participants were aware of their beliefs on teaching strategies. Some of the participants stated that the teacher is the source of knowledge. Then some of them stated their beliefs about teaching attitude, and a few of them found awareness about teaching media and teaching performance.

#### **1. Belief in the Teaching Strategy**

Some participants think teachers have to be more active in the class and stated their belief in the teaching method, as following reflections:

*P4: "Previously, I believed that the teachers have to be more active in giving instruction and material to the learner and ask the learner to memorize a lot of vocabulary.*

*P7: "Before field teaching practice, I believed I can apply all of my knowledge about English to the students with the interesting teaching method."*

As seen in P4 reflection, P4 beliefs about the method are passive and forced the students in learning whereas some interesting methods can help to enrich students' vocabularies. According to the P7 reflection, in previous beliefs, P7 started to think of class management and teaching strategy that can be used when teaching in the classroom before field teaching practice.

## 2. Belief in the Teacher as the Source of Knowledge

Another participant stated that the teacher has a role as the source of knowledge and the subject in the teaching and learning process, and students have to be always guided by the teacher in learning, as P20 stated:

*P20: "When I was in senior high school, I believed that teachers were the only source of learning in class. Teachers are people who always give all their knowledge to students to learn so that they become smarter. At this time (Senior High School), especially learning English, I think that teachers should be smarter in speaking English than students. The teacher becomes the subject in the teaching process, where the teacher has a major role as a provider of learning information. Students are fully guided and given knowledge by the teacher. Concerning teaching materials, I think that teachers need to teach material on the vocabulary aspect with a larger portion than other aspects of English. I also think that when as a student I can know a lot of English vocabulary, and then I can understand the meaning and can answer all the questions on the English national exam. Not only that, by mastering a lot of vocabulary, students are easy to speak."*

P20 stated belief about the important role of teachers and vocabulary. P20 believes that students depend on the teacher in learning as she stated "*Students are fully guided and given knowledge by the teacher*". She also believed that the teachers were the only source of knowledge in the class so they have to support students' vocabulary enrichment. This is because, she believed that vocabulary is the main aspect of English so when the students can master a lot of vocabulary, it eases them not only in speaking but also in the national exam.

## 3. Belief in Teaching Attitude

Some participants also stated beliefs on attitudes as the following reflection:

*P16: "Previously, I thought that the English teacher has to teach in the class intelligently and master the material, and have a good attitude."*

*P15: "Before field teaching practice, I think I should be friendly to the students in the class".*

Based on the reflections above, it found positive beliefs concerning good attitudes that the teachers need to apply in the classroom. In line with Gourneau's (2005) study about teaching attitudes such as *demonstrating caring and kindness* found in P16 and P15's reflection.

## 4. Belief in Teaching Performance

Some participants found being anxious and not confident in front of the students, as the following reflection:

*P3: "My teaching belief before field teaching practice, I always felt anxious to face students in class..."*

*P6: "Before I did field teaching practice I was always worried and not confident enough to explain the material well and also worried if I couldn't answer questions from the students."*

Both of the reflections above, P3 and P6 have the same anxiety such as being worried to face the students. Moreover, P6 anxiety affects her self-confidence and even caused negative thinking that she cannot answer the question of the students during teaching. Anxiety is not a new topic in teaching, especially for pre-service teachers, most teachers before teaching will have a problem with their self-confidence and anxiety can occur before facing the students. It is because of some reasons such as they have not known about the student's background, they do not have experience with the class, or even they do not have much experience in teaching.

## 5. Belief in Teaching Media

Another participant also assumed the use of teaching media in supporting their teaching as the following reflection:

*P18: "Significantly, the difference of my teaching beliefs before field teaching practice was I think the students have a lot of vocabularies because I think they have a lot of media that supports their learning, especially in English education."*

Based on P18's reflection, shows previous beliefs concerning the effect of media on the student's vocabulary. P18 stated that students have a lot of vocabulary caused of media that supports them.

### **EFL Students' Awareness of Teaching Beliefs Shift after Field Teaching Practice**

Based on the third question "Explain the most significant difference between your teaching beliefs before and after field teaching practice." is aimed to engage participants to compare their previous and recent teaching beliefs by describing significantly in reflection form. It shows participants are aware of teaching beliefs shift after following the field teaching practice program. In this program, EFL students experienced changes in attitudes, strategies, performance, and the involvement of teaching media.

#### **1. Belief in Teaching Attitudes**

After following the field teaching practice program, some participants be aware of the attitude they have to adapt in the class. Most of the participants stated their beliefs toward teachers' attitudes in several classifications by Gourneau's (2005) study that classified teacher attitudes into five attitudes, such as:

a. Demonstrating Caring and Kindness, in P12's reflection which stated *"But after the PLP, I already understood specifically about the activities that the teacher had to do in the classroom, such as creating a good atmosphere, being obliged to know the needs of students, to prepare learning materials well."*

P12s' reflection shows the caring for learner needs and the importance of making students ready to learn by creating a good atmosphere. It is because in the learning process students usually become out of control so the teacher must prepare a good way to make the students happy when it happens.

b. Sharing Responsibility, in P9's reflection, stated *"I realized that being a great and good teacher is not enough. So, as a pre-service teacher, I need guidance as my foundation to become a good educator. Because being a teacher is a big responsibility."*

Based on P9's reflection, it shows the point of view is developed in which P9 be aware of their responsibility as a teacher. P9 stated how to be a teacher who always learns to get guidance to become better because being a teacher is a big responsibility. It shows good awareness in which the teacher becomes fully aware of their responsibility as the teacher and the effect of their teaching on the students.

c. Sensitively accepting diversity, at P1's reflection which stated *"Now, my belief is English teacher must be fun, a lot of experiences and can adapt to the condition".*

Based on P1's reflection, the differences in P1 teaching beliefs are teacher is not just to be smart, the teacher needs to be adaptive in the classroom. It can be seen that P1's awareness is developed after teaching and observing the real class.

d. Fostering Individualized Instruction, in P4's reflection stated *"After I teach in the real class on field teaching practice, the students must be more active and the teacher direct the student learn a material then the students be able to choose peer who will help them to learn and how their learning strategies, but the teacher still have to support, observe and control the students."*

As seen in the P4 reflection, reveals the awareness of teaching method improvement, from students, being fully guided by the teacher, to the students can learn appropriately to their learning

strategies with less dependence on teachers' instruction. It indicates learner autonomy which the students can learn independently and take responsibility for their learning.

e. Encouraging Creativity, in P10's reflection stated *"It's better if we think which way or method that good to be implemented to stimulate the students who are lazy to study become love to study. So, we can use interesting media and games that can make the students not sleepy and bored, so that's all my beliefs now."*

According to the reflection above, the participants assumed that in the classroom, the teacher is a role model who affects the classroom atmosphere and can influence student behavior in the classroom. So, teachers must be creative in planning the teaching and be able to bring a good mood in the classroom because students easily get bored learning when the teacher is very flat in teaching. As written in P10's reflection, it can be seen that her beliefs after following field teaching practice are consistent with being a creative teacher.

## 2. Belief in Teaching Strategy

After teaching in a real class during a field teaching practice program, some participants found to be aware they experienced an improvement in beliefs about learning strategy.

P9: *"...After field teaching practice I understood that teaching English is not just focused on speaking fluently and teaching material mastery, but how the teacher should be able to handle the students with different characters and levels of understanding. There are students with fast and low understanding abilities. So, the teachers have to know the students well by using various teaching strategies to overcome students' feeling bored with some games."*

Based on P9s' Reflection, shows P9 experienced the development of teaching beliefs as written on the teaching reflection sheet above. P9 more focuses on the importance of teaching strategies where in the class there are students with different characters and levels of understanding. In addition, P9 is also more aware of the importance of being a teacher who is sensitive to the classroom atmosphere and how to control it.

## 3. Belief in Teaching Media

Another participant shows that awareness of teaching beliefs concerning the use of media can make the students interested to study.

P11: *"My teaching belief before PLP was that I should become a teacher who mastered a lot of English vocabulary, but after PLP II I thought that we should prepare good and interesting learning media for students so that students do not feel bored in class."*

In the P11 teaching reflection, it can be seen the significant difference between teaching beliefs before and after the field teaching practice program. Previously, P11 assumed that teachers have to have a lot of English vocabulary. After doing teaching practice in the class, P11's belief shifted. P11 was aware that teacher also needs media in teaching. Moreover, P11 believed that teaching media can help the teacher to overcome students' feelings of boredom during teaching activities as P11 stated in the reflection sheet.

## 4. Belief in Teaching Performance

After field teaching practice, some participants experienced an improvement in their performance in facing the students. They were aware the anxiety before field teaching practice does not happen in the class.

P6: *"Before I follow field teaching practice, I was always worried and did not confidence to present the material well and also worry if I cannot answer the students' questions. After field teaching practice, I can explain the material well and answer the students' questions. I believe that I can do everything well if I believe in myself."*

Based on P6's reflection, it can be seen that P6 was aware of the significant differences between anxiety before field teaching practice and the reality after field teaching practice. Besides, P6 also has a problem with self-confidence in the class before teaching in the real class. Based on P6's anxiety about teaching the student, it had overcome by positive beliefs and self-confidence after field teaching practice.

### **Discussion**

In terms of the finding of this study, according to Flavian (2016), who stated that self-awareness usually used to describe someone's skills and define feelings, thoughts, and actions. In this study, self-awareness refers to EFL students' teaching beliefs which are they can describe the significant differences between their beliefs before and after teaching in a field teaching practice program. As Zaborowski and Slaski (2004) stated that belief is the content that appears in self-awareness. This study presented two main themes those are EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs before field teaching practice and EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift after field teaching practice.

According to the findings in the first theme concerning EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs before field teaching practice, five sub-themes occurred during analyzing of the data such as teaching strategies, teaching attitudes by Gourneau (2005), teachers' performance, teacher as the source of knowledge, the use of teaching media and teacher performance. This is related to Wiratmo (2017) that stated teachers' beliefs can guide the teachers to adopt teaching strategies, and shape the learning environment, motivation, and learning achievement. The second theme concerning EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shifts after field teaching practice is classified into four sub-themes those are teaching attitudes, teaching strategies, and teaching media and teaching performance.

After the field teaching practice program, most EFL students were aware of teaching beliefs shift especially on the differences in their beliefs before and after field teaching practice. It can be seen in how the participants understand their teaching deeply and they can describe the significant differences in their teaching beliefs. It indicates the shift of teaching beliefs as Richards et al., (2001) assumed that the change in teachers' practice is the result of the changes in teachers' beliefs. Therefore, most participants were aware of the improvement of their beliefs on teaching attitudes, as in Gourneau's (2005) study about five teaching attitudes found in the data such as; 1) demonstrating caring and kindness, 2) sharing responsibility, 3) sensitively accepting diversity, 4) fostering individualized instruction, and 5) encouraging creativity. Moreover, the participant's perception of the importance of teaching strategies and teaching media and teaching performance improved than to field teaching practice. It is in line with Gilakjani and Sabouri's (2017) statements' that beliefs guide teachers in adopting teaching strategies.

In the first theme, the majority of EFL students were aware on belief to the teaching strategy. Mostly, they assumed that the teacher has to be more active in the class because the teacher was the only subject. Whereas, in the second theme the participants expressed their teaching strategies improvement like the students should be more active in the learning process than the teacher. However, it revealed the majority of EFL students were aware of beliefs shifted to teaching attitudes in the class. The finding concerning EFL students' awareness of teaching attitudes is in line with Gourneau's (2005) study about five teaching attitudes such as demonstrating caring and kindness, sharing responsibility, sensitively accepting diversity, fostering individualized instruction, and encouraging creativity. Therefore, the five categories of teaching attitudes by Gourneau (2005) were found in the EFL students' reflections where they stated their beliefs on being caring and creative in teaching the students to make them interested to learn.

The research findings show the role of EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs development. It can be seen by the significant differences that were found in EFL students' reflection sheets. Before field teaching practice, most students have problems in their performance caused by negative beliefs. But after teaching in the real class, they were aware that they have to provide good teaching strategies and interesting teaching media caused by positive beliefs. According to Diedorff and Rubin (2015) who claimed that high self-awareness leads to better decision-making, the finding indicates that EFL preservice-teachers are more fully aware of which beliefs that supporting their teaching practice improvement.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift after teaching in a real class during field teaching practice. ELF pre-service teachers were found to be aware of the shift in their teaching beliefs after the field teaching practice program. This study revealed two main themes in the findings those are EFL students' awareness of their teaching beliefs before field teaching practice and EFL students' awareness of teaching beliefs shift after field teaching practice. Both themes indicated significant differences in EFL students' beliefs. The indicators in the first theme are the awareness of beliefs on teaching strategy, teacher as the source of knowledge, teaching attitudes, teaching media, and teaching performance, while in the second theme are beliefs on teaching attitudes, teaching strategy, and teaching media and teaching performance. Moreover, This study attempted to suggest EFL preservice teachers be more aware of their beliefs in teaching. It is because, beliefs can be their foundation in determining attitudes, strategies, or other teaching aspects. Moreover, the researcher recommends that EFL preservice-teachers need to follow some educational training, teaching practice program, or teaching community as an effort to improve teaching practice so it can help to adjust beliefs.

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