

## An Investigation of Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices in English Language Institutes and High Schools in Iran

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated teachers' beliefs in Iranian high schools (HS) and English language institutes (ELI) to see if there was any relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. This study also compared the beliefs of teachers from high schools to teachers from English language institutes. First, six volunteer teachers (three males and three females) from Iranian high schools and six volunteer teachers (three men and three women) from English language institutes were selected. The next stage was to interview the teachers. The analysis of the results gained through the emerging categories and themes showed that the learning routes of teachers (their prior language learning experiences, prior teaching experiences and observations), the beliefs of the teachers and also how their beliefs affected on their classroom practices. The results of this study were in line with many other studies which confirm that teachers' beliefs have a substantial influence on their practices.

**Keywords:** teachers' beliefs, teacher practices, the learning routs of teachers

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

English is very widely spoken and it is a second language in many countries for international communication. English is used in many areas such as politics, economics, tourism, electronics, telecommunication, culture, science and technology. English is not only a means of communication in the international community but a good understanding of the language is also a requirement when accessing the latest achievements of science and technology. Therefore, it is necessary for people all over the world to have a good command of English to satisfy growing needs in developing countries.

Teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in Iran. English has been included in the curriculum at schools in Iran for many years and considerable attention has been paid to the language in society for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the latest technological and scientific resources are written in English. Secondly, English literacy is a necessity when

using the internet. And thirdly, English proficiency facilitates cultural exchange among nations (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006).

Beliefs are formed on a gradual basis, over a period of time, and they are the core of a teacher's decision making and classroom actions (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, cited Khonamri & Salimi, 2010, p.97). Beliefs are heavily influenced by the education and experience of a person. Beliefs about learning and teaching are often established by the time a student completes schooling (Johnson, 1994, cited Khonamri & Salimi, 2010, p.97). For future teachers, this includes beliefs about students and learning, teaching, subjects or curriculum, learning to teach and learning about the nature of teaching (Calderhead, 1996, cited Khonamri & Salimi, 2010, p.97). Social, psychological and environmental factors such as school requirements, expectations within society, state policies, mandated curriculum, and the practices of peers, workload and the availability of resources all affect the methods of teachers in the classroom (Calderhead, 1996, cited Khonamri & Salimi, 2010, p.97).

This paper aims to investigate the beliefs of and in Iranian HSs and ELIs. This qualitative research study will interview participants to discover their core beliefs about the nature of language teaching and to explore how their beliefs affect their teachings. It will also examine the differences there are between teachers' beliefs in HS and those of teachers in ELI.

The current research is a comparative study of teachers in HSs and teachers in ELIs. It will compare the beliefs about teaching that each individual has to see if there are similarities between the groups and find out to what extent their beliefs affect the way they teach and how these beliefs are shaped by their own learning experiences.

The areas of research interest can be identified by the following questions:

- What are the routes taken into teaching?
- What are core beliefs of high school and English language institute and how do these affect their teaching?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *A. English Language institute versus high school*

The students in the ELIs have a very active role in the learning process. Task based and audio visual materials are common in ELIs, whereas in the schools it is usually text based materials (Keihaniyan, 2011). Public schools require the use of textbooks to meet the needs of the students (Ghorbani, 2008). The English language teachers are not usually native speakers (Keihaniyan, 2011).

In high schools, the focus is on language components such as grammar and vocabulary (Keihaniyan, 2011). Students tend to be passive in the learning process. In the institutes, the learners are active because they have the opportunity to interact more with the teachers and can practice using the L2 (Pishghadam and Navari, 2010). Most high school graduates are unable to effectively use the English language at the end of their studying.

Those who have studies in ELIs tend to be able to communicate better (Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012).

HS in Iran is place where language teachers do anything they wish in term of knowledge delivery because of lack of monitoring. Indeed lack of resources such as teaching aids and computers cause them to avoid using additional materials except the course books. Even the course books do not include genuine materials and are imposed on the school by the ministry of education (Alijanian, 2012). ELI is different from HS. Each institute has some teaching standard to provide services for the learners. Classes are less crowded and students seem to be more interested there. Jobs in ELIs tend to also be better paid which result in more qualified teachers working there. They use different techniques and supplementary materials that allow students to produce and use the language without focusing on form and neglecting meaning (Alijanian, 2012). HS teachers do not usually feedback or use extra activities as they are teaching. This is the culture that exists HSs. ELI teachers are eager to give feedback and praise their students (Alijanian, 2012).

### *B. Teacher beliefs*

Teachers' beliefs about education are based on confidence in the classroom, reasoning behind how a student performs and approach toward teaching specific skills (Pajares, 1992). The knowledge, beliefs and theories of teachers are the makeup of teacher cognition (Borg, 2007). There have been different interpretations of teacher cognition. Teacher cognition is a combination of assumptions about instruction, students, learning and interaction in the classroom (Kagan, 1992 cited in Alijanian, 2012 p.335). Teacher cognition consists of 'beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, leanings, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, and instructional activities (Borg 2003, p. 41). Teacher cognition is seen as "consisting of a set of personally-defined practically orientated understandings of teaching and learning which exert significant influence on instructional decisions" (Borg, 1999 cited in Alijanian, 2012 p.335). The thought processes of teachers such as what they know, how they come to know this and how they use their knowledge in the classroom can help define teacher cognition (Borg, 2007).

Understanding teachers' beliefs is important in development and implementation of new programs and effective education (Richardson et al, 2012). There have been several studies on the subject of teachers' beliefs in recent years. They underline the importance of teachers' beliefs and the effects they have on teaching the English language. In this part, we consider previous studies related to teachers' beliefs and their results.

### *C. The Role of Background Sources in a Teacher's Practical Knowledge*

A teacher's practical knowledge is formed from their general knowledge, beliefs and thinking (Borg, 2003 cited in Arioğul, 2007) These elements can always be traced in their teaching practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988 cited in Arioğul, 2007) and they are shaped by various background sources (Borg, 2003 cited in Arioğul, 2007). There is some research that

discusses how language teachers are influenced by their prior language learning experiences and prior teaching experience.

Arioğul (2007) used a multiple case studies approach to find out what background sources influence EFL teachers' practical knowledge and classroom instruction. She studied a public university's English language school in Turkey. This school provided intensive English language education to students whose language proficiencies were inadequate to read academic texts in their respective departments. In a one-year intensive English language program, the students developed their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills for 20 to 30 hours a week. At the end of the academic year, the students took a final exam to determine their eligibility to start their undergraduate program.

Three teachers, who were working in the same school, had an extensive amount of teaching experience in various secondary and post-secondary schools in Turkey and were teaching intermediate level English, were involved in this study. Arioğul (2007) collected data from 20 classroom observations for each teacher, three formal interviews, two videotaped classes and two stimulus-recalls for each participating teacher. In the process of the interviews and the analysis of them, she realized that the teachers' knowledge has been partly shaped by their prior language learning experiences because of limited opportunities to speak English.

The first teacher's prior language learning years also influenced her pedagogical decision making and led her to remind her students to practice their oral skills as much as they could. One of the other teachers believed that being a language student herself helped her understand her students better. For this reason, she shaped her classroom teaching from the strategies she learnt whilst studying herself. The third teacher used her own experiences of being a former language student to help her own students. Whilst doing that, she remembered her own language learning experiences and avoided the instructional strategies she believed would be helpful to her students and reversed the strategies she regarded as negative. Arioğul (2007) concluded that when the teachers experienced a discrepancy within the context of the teaching or when they struggled to understand the material, their identities as former language students helped them in the process of their decision-making and instruction.

#### *D. Materials*

Lorduy et al. (1999) investigated in-service English teachers' beliefs about language teaching. The teachers agreed that materials were necessary, important, interesting and could affect students' learning. Some teachers stated that materials must be graded depending on the students' level. However, some teachers argued that materials could be implemented in all grades no matter what the students' level or their needs. Most teachers thought about text books when they were asked about materials which they employed in the classroom. They said that the pictures they contain help learners to understand the second language better. These teachers believed that some specific materials such as videos, laboratory experiments,

tape recorders and English music could help develop an English class, but they are not readily available in schools.

Ertmer et al. (2012) studied teacher beliefs and technology integration practices. They investigated how the pedagogical beliefs and classroom technology practices of teachers affected their teaching methods. They selected twelve K-12 classroom teachers based on their award-winning technology practices, supported by evidence from personal and/or classroom websites. Interviews were conducted to examine the correspondence between teachers' classroom practices and their pedagogical beliefs.

Their findings indicated that teachers were able to enact technology integration practices that were closely aligned with their beliefs. Teachers who believed that technology was best used for collaboration purposes described interesting projects in which students collaborated with local and distant peers. Teachers who believed that technology provided more diversity for student choice described examples in which students chose to demonstrate their learning using a variety of technological tools.

They concluded that teachers with student-centred beliefs tended to enact student-centred curricula despite technological, administrative or assessment barriers. Teachers' own beliefs and attitudes about the relevance of technology to students' learning were perceived as having the biggest effect on their success. Most teachers indicated that internal factors (such as passion for technology, having a problem-solving mentality) and support from others (such as administrators and personal learning networks) played key roles in shaping their practices. Teachers state that the strongest barriers preventing other teachers from using technology were their existing attitudes and beliefs toward technology, as well as their current levels of knowledge and skills.

Teachers' beliefs clearly play an important role in making decisions about the use of technology in classrooms (Gilakjani, 2012). Simonsson (2004) (cited in Gilakjani, 2012: p.66) used a questionnaire to investigate the beliefs of 103 teachers about the utilization of technology when incorporating cultural components of the curriculum. He indicated that the utilization of technology was related to teachers' beliefs about the use of technology and the extent to which other instructors employed technology in their teaching. The result demonstrated that many teachers believed that technology might assist them to incorporate cultural issues to clarify important points.

Buabeng-Andoh (2012) wanted to find out the extent of teachers' integration of ICT (information communication and technologies) into teaching and learning processes. Two-hundred and thirty-one teachers were selected from fourteen schools in Ghana. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Buabeng-Andoh (2012) found out from the teachers' responses that lack of computer literacy among teachers, lack of training with regard to integration of ICT into teaching and the absence of a properly developed computer skills curriculum were barriers to teachers' application of the technology.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### *A. Participants*

The sample of this study consisted of interviewing twelve English foreign teacher (EFL) teachers in Iran, just as the study of Ertmer et al. (2012) did. These twelve teachers were interviewed with a view to finding out how the pedagogical beliefs and classroom technology practices of teachers influenced their methods. Six teachers were chosen from public high schools and six from private language institutes. The institute language teachers taught courses at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. The public school teachers taught using textbooks assigned by the ministry of education, whereas the private school teachers used a commercial text book. The participants each had different experiences in teaching and learning the English language and possess different degrees and specialties in education.

#### *B. Instruments*

The semi structured interview used in this study consists of four sections and the aim is to find out about the route that teachers have taken in order to becoming a teacher, the ways of teaching and styles that they use in their current professional practice. The first section is the teacher's biography. This is about their age, job, and workplace and so on. The second section is about the learning history of the participants. The third section is looking at their methods, approaches and the materials that they use in their teaching. There are 15 questions in total, all of which are open-ended. These questions are adapted from Razmjoo & Riazi's work (2006) and the researcher's own questions.

#### *C. Procedure*

Twelve volunteer teachers have been selected from English language institutes and high schools. All the interviews were conducted within the high schools or English language institutes because it was accessible for the participants. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and also attempted to create an informal atmosphere to provide the opportunity to for them to get to know each other and gain mutual trust. The researcher also made each participant aware of the purpose of the research and explained that they could withdraw from the project at any time they wish to.

The researcher gave them consent forms that included reassurances on the purpose of the investigations and information on encroachment of privacy and confidentiality (Bell, 2010) and asked them to read it and, if they agree to participate in the interview, sign the declaration. By signing the declaration, they were giving an informed consent to the researcher and in turn, were exchanged the promise of anonymity and confidentiality (Dörnyei, 2007; p.68). The interviews were conducted for approximately 30 minutes per teacher and were recorded for the duration to catch the nuances reflected in their voices (Dörnyei, 2007; p.139). The researcher kept the audio recordings in her possession at all times. The researcher transcribed each interview but concealed the real names of the teachers

and the schools they teach at, as well as any other personal information brought up in the interviews.

#### *D. Data Analysis*

The relevant codes and sub codes were deciphered from the transcription of the semi structured interviews. The codes and sub codes were then grouped into a number of categories and themes for each participant teacher in the study (Carspecken, 1996, cited in Arioğul, 2007). The categories and themes that emerged were compared to the conceptual framework drawn from the author's literature review and were found to be consistent. The data sets for each teacher were kept individually. Immediately after the data collection was complete, the author continued listening to the interview recording, as this would later help in the transcription process. The transcribed data were then coded and grouped into a number of categories and themes for each teacher.

## **IV. RESULTS**

#### *A. Learning History*

After thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews, the following background sources were found to be influential in the teaching practices of EFL teachers: The learning routes of the teachers, their prior language learning experiences, prior teaching experiences, observations, and the beliefs for the teachers themselves. This section first presents the participants' learning histories and secondly the five main themes that emerged from the analysis of the data: Real life situations, group work, feedback, motivation and characteristics of a good teacher are authenticity.

#### *B. Qualifications*

All twelve HS and ELI teachers studied for four years in a university and each had a bachelor's degree in English language. One third of HS teachers (one female and one male) and half of the ELI teachers (two females and one male) studied a master's degree in English language for a further two years. More ELI teachers had a master's degree than HS teachers. More females had a master's degree than males.

#### *C. Theoretical Training*

All participants took theoretical training in their bachelor's (BA) and master's (MA) degree courses at Iranian universities. All of them learned different teaching methods and approaches such as grammar translation, direct method, audio lingual and silent method, communicative method, suggestopedia and natural approach, total physical response and cognitive method as theoretical training in methodology courses in a university. There is theoretical training for English language courses in Iranian universities and all HS and ELI teachers had the opportunity to learn different methods and approaches there.

#### *D. Practical Training*

Most of the participants had not experienced practical training in their BA or MA courses. Only HP2F took practical training in her bachelors' course. This suggests that practical training is not currently a feature of Iranian English language BA or MA.

#### *E. Teacher Training Courses*

One third of HS teachers (one female and one male) and five of the six ELI teachers (three females and two males) participated in teacher training courses (TTC) to learn English language teaching by practical training in an English language institute. One of the English language institute teachers said "I did not receive enough information about teaching methods in my university. I participated in a teacher training course because I wanted to learn how to teach". Teachers who participated in teacher training courses learned some methods and approaches such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the silent method and the total physical as practical training. It is clear that more ELI teachers participated in TTC than HS teachers. TTC also involved observation for all participants.

#### **Theme 1: Real life situations**

Two of HS participants (one female and one male) and two of ELI teachers (two females) preferred to put their learners in real life situations. HP1F believes that "learning language can occur properly in putting students in real life situations". Because of this, she gives roles to her students and she asks them to speak with each other. She tries to put her students in real life situations where possible. HP6M states that leaning any language should happen in real and relaxed situations. He tries to be friendly with his students and create a relaxed environment for them, but because of some limitations such as shortages of facilities and time he cannot easily create real life situations. It became evident that their beliefs affected the way that they taught.

#### **Theme 2: Group work**

Five of the six ELI teachers (two females and three males) and two third of HS teachers (three Men) believe that group work help learners to learn English easily. They use group work in their classes because of their beliefs. IP7F, IP8F and IP10M argue that communication is important for learning language and they teach with the communicative method. They use pair work and group work because their students can communicate with each other. IP11M suggests that pair work helps students in learning English language. He uses pair work in his classes by asking his students to check their answers with each other and discuss them together. IP12M says that "by having interaction with other learners, learning languages become easier; I use pair work and group work in every class".

### **Theme 3: Feedback**

Three ELI teachers (two females and one male) prefer to give feedback to learners afterwards, instead of correcting their mistakes immediately. IP10M mentioned that to have the occasional mistake in grammar or pronunciation does not matter too much. For this reason, he gives feedback and encourages the students to speak in class and he does not correct their mistakes instantly.

### **Theme 4: Characteristics of a good teacher**

Two HS teachers (both female) explain how their perceptions of what characteristics affect their teaching. HP1F stated that she uses the attitude of her own English language make good teacher in her teaching because she could tell that all her classmates were satisfied with her personality and teaching methods. It is clear that there is a relationship between the characteristics of a teacher and the teacher's learning experiences. HP1F took on board the characteristics of her teacher and used it in her teaching.

HP3F says that her teacher had a good personality and behaviour because she was patient and when her students did not study in their lessons, she motivated them by increasing competence and encouraging the students to study. She tries to use her old teacher's strategies and become patient. It is evident that the good characteristics of HP3F's own teacher motivated her students to learn the language and therefore, she tried to become like her teacher. IP12M said that "when I was student in an English language institute, my teacher was full of energetic and he played music and game in our class. He was very friendly and he was my favourite teacher. Now I try to become like him". Good characteristics of IP12M's old teacher and his learning experiences influenced on his own teaching and he tries to teach like his teacher.

### **Theme 5: Motivation**

Five of the six HS participants (three females and two males) and one third of ELI participants (one female and one male) mentioned that motivation can help in learning English language. IP11M says that colourful pictures in institute course books motivated his students and helped them learn. He believes that the pictures make course books more interesting and mean that the students will not get bored in class. HP5M states that materials such as computers and visual aids attract the attention of students and made language learning more pleasant, joyful and tangible. For this reason, he uses computers and software and sometimes the internet in class to make learning more pleasant. HP2F prefers to show scientific movies, ask the learners to write something such as a poem or take her learners out somewhere where they can talk English to motivate her students. HP2F explains that learning English is a very time consuming process and both English teachers and learners should be patient enough to continue their job. She does not believe that students can learn the language quickly. She tries to encourage learners to take their time when studying and learn English language progressively.

HP2F said that “when I was a student, I was very shy and I did not speak at class at all. Most teachers ignored me, but I had an English teacher who always asked questions to the shy students and she encouraged us to speak in class”. It was clear that her teacher motivated her by asking questions to the shy students and she encouraged them to speak English in class to improve their speaking. IP8F teaches course books that include reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar and pronunciation. There are interesting topics in course books and they are not deemed as boring for the students. Institutes use these books for teaching. She believes that interesting topics motivate learners and help them to improve four skills.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study was developed to identify HSs and ELIs teachers’ beliefs about language teaching, the sources of those beliefs, the coherence between teachers’ beliefs and their actions. This study also compares HS and ELI teachers’ views and beliefs about teaching. This research raises a number of issues with regard to teachers’ beliefs which provides answer to the research questions at the beginning of the project.

### *A. The Routes are Taken in Teaching*

In Iran, having a Certificate of Higher Education in English from university is a necessity for English language teachers in public schools and English language institutes but other skills, the passion for teaching and work experience are not always required. Table 2 shows that all participants have either a BA or MA degree in different divisions of English language and would be able to teach at ELIs and schools. In the UK, school teachers need to obtain professional qualified teacher status (QTS). They are required to complete a period of training, such as a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course. This is known as initial teacher training (ITT). To ensure teaching is the right career choice it is recommended to get some classroom experience. Training providers want to know that teachers have the practical skills and motivation to teach. Teachers need CELTA and DELTA certificates to teach in private language schools because practical training is a necessity for teachers and they must be fully qualified.

It is clear that general teaching skills, motivations, qualifications, practical training and work experiences are more important in the UK than Iran. In Iran, teachers with any qualification in English language such as English Language Translation, Linguistics and others can teach in public schools and ELIs. General teaching skills, the passion and desire to teach and previous work experience are not as important to employers. In the UK, school teachers should have experienced practical training at the kind of level they are going to teach at and they must demonstrate general teaching skills, the motivation to teach and at least some work experience in teaching.

All the HS and ELI participants have experienced theoretical or practical training in universities. Some participants studied TTC in an institute and experienced practical training and learnt modern methods of teaching. From table two, it is evident that more ELI participants studied TTC than HS participants. The reason for this could be that if English

language teachers participate in TTC and get a certificate, employers may be more likely to recruit them in ELIs, as oppose to teachers who did. It is not necessary for HS teachers to get TTC certificates as their university certificates are enough for employment. More of the female teachers participated in TTC than males. It could perhaps be said that females have more motivation than males for learning practical and modern trainings. In Iran there are clear differences between males and female teachers. Males are often less keen to become teachers because of low pay and the social degradation of teachers. Plus teaching is not always seen as a prestigious job (Alijanian, 2012). For these reasons, males are often not as motivated to teach. They look for the easiest way to teach without putting in as much effort. Female teachers are often more interested in teaching as a profession and they try to keep abreast of new techniques in teaching and learning (Alijanian, 2012).

Four ELI participants and two HS participants (three females and three males) have over five years teaching experience. The experienced teachers try to give feedback but rarely correct the errors that students make immediately because as they believe it that is the best way to facilitate learning. They are aware of the psychological damage they could cause when they correct errors immediately. This could be detrimental to the motivation and interest of the students. Some of the more inexperienced participants had classes that could be looked upon as boring by the students as they had not yet obtained enough experience in teaching English.

As Arioğul (2007) found, a teacher's knowledge is partly shaped by their prior language learning experiences. One HS participant (HP6M) and one ELI participant (IP12M) stated that utilised their own learning experiences when teaching. HP6M mentioned that when he was student he often looked up the meaning of words from a dictionary and this helped more than the meanings his teacher gave to the words. Now because of these experiences, he asks his students to find the meaning of words themselves. IP12M said that his old teacher's teaching methods affected his teaching because when he was students, his teacher taught grammar with English language but he could not understand. Now he tries to teach grammar with English language, then explain summary of it with Farsi language. It is clear that IP12M's and HP6M's prior language learning years influenced their pedagogical decision making because it led IP12M to teach grammar with both English and Farsi language and it led HP6M to ask his students to look for the meaning of the new words themselves.

Also HP6M's prior experiences of the way he was taught affected his decision making in teaching because he taught with different methods that he learnt in theoretical training. During his teaching, he has experienced the good and bad effectives that his methods had on the students. Now he uses only the methods that seem to have had a good effect on his students and ignores those that had a bad effect. For example, he uses games where possible and concentrates less on the teaching of grammar.

After analysing HS participants' responses, it was clear that all of the HS participants shaped their classroom teaching from strategies they learnt whilst studying themselves. For example, HP4M observed that his old teacher taught him additional words such as name of fruits, food and so on and this seemed to motivate the students in learning English language.

He uses methods of teaching in his classes. In analysing responses of ELI participants, it is evident that teachers' own experiences of being a former language student helped them to teach their own students. Whilst teaching, they remembered their own language learning experiences and applied instructional strategies that they believed will be helpful to their students and deferred away from strategies they regard as negative. For example, IP8F observed her teacher's methods in TTC classes and she could see that pair work and group work were effective strategies for learning a language, after which she used pair work and group work in her teaching.

### *B. Core Beliefs of HS and ELI Teachers and their Effects*

As mentioned in the literature review, English language teachers in Iran are often not native speakers (Keihaniyan, 2011). We can see that all twelve HS and ELI participants were not native speakers of the English language. In some countries such as Japan, they recruit NES teachers because they suggest that native English speaking teachers will have had more exposure to English than Japanese teachers (Sutherland, 2012). In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, only certain privileged NES teachers can teach English language in the classroom because it is thought that English allows for the expression of the individual cultural identities (Sharifian, 2009). It is clear that in some countries the teaching of NES cultures is important and they recruit NES teachers to teach their own cultures to the students but this is not considered important or necessary in Iran.

Teachers' beliefs affect their decisions and their attitudes toward teaching, learning and education (Pajares, 1992). Some teachers believe that motivation is the key to helping students to learn a language. They suggest that teacher strategies, course books, characteristics of teachers and additional materials such as computers help to motivate the students. Some HS participants prefer to teach about the cultures of the native speakers because they believe that it motivates the students. However, they are restricted by the educational minister because the ELT textbooks used in Iranian high school are unhelpful in developing intercultural competence and cultural understanding (Aliakbari, 2004). The textbooks in Iran do not include anything about the culture of English speaking countries, as the native culture is completely different from the target one (Dahmardeh, 2009 cited in Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012; p.89). The main goal of teaching is to prepare the students for exams. The teachers face time constraints and a shortage of resources and they often cannot use additional materials or teach the cultures of the native speakers.

Some teachers looked at how their teachers motivated them in learning English language and now use the same methods to motivate their students. For example, HP2F's old teacher always asked questions to the shy students and encouraged them to speak up in class to improve their speaking skills. Now she uses this same strategy in her teaching.

Some HS and ELI participants prefer to put their students in real life situations where possible because they believe this will help them to learning the language. For example, HP1F gave role plays to her students that encouraged them to speak and interact with each

other. One ELI participant (IP9F) cited that the students could learn from each other by putting them in real life situations. Now she uses this method in her classes. It is clear that their beliefs and experiences of the teachers affected their teaching methods.

As mentioned in the literature review, Ertmer et al. (2012) found that teachers' own beliefs and attitudes toward the relevance of technology to students' learning were perceived as having the biggest effect on their success in the classroom. It was clear from their responses that all participants believed technology is effective when teaching English. They believe that additional materials such as computers motivated the students because they could listen to the native speaker's pronunciation and improve their listening and speaking. For these reasons, all the ELI participants used computers to attract the attention of the students. Fewer HS participants were able to use them because of restrictions.

This study has illustrated that the beliefs teachers hold influence what they do in their classroom. It identifies some of the main sources of teachers' beliefs that affect their teaching. The teachers' prior language learning and teaching experiences, observations and methods that they learnt in their training influenced their teaching practices. Their techniques for motivating students such as using group works, giving feedback, putting their students in real life situations all had an impact on the effectiveness of their teaching. The participants tried to teach according to their beliefs where possible.

The researcher encountered some limitations because the responses were not as detailed as required. Using group interviews to allow participants to share their ideas and also using a check list for some questions to help the participants to choose among responses might have been a more effective approach. Sometimes group formats can help participants share their ideas so they contribute more detail. In the present study teachers were also not observed in the classroom. The actual observation of teachers could also enhance the results of this study in order to come to further qualitative evidence on how their beliefs affect their teaching.

In Iran, teachers do not experience practical training in university, they only study theoretical training. Teachers need to experience practical training in addition to theoretical training in university because practical training will give them confidence and they will know if they have the skills and motivation to teach. It would be better if practical training was added to university courses and all teachers experience it.

The findings suggest that constraints in HSs and ELIs which affect teacher's teaching practice can be seen as a continuous process. In the present study teachers were not observed in the classroom. The actual observation of teachers can enhance the results of this study in order to come to further qualitative evidence on how the teachers' belief affected on their teaching.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to Miss Kerry Bannister, who showed me the attitude and the substance of genius: she continually and persuasively conveyed a spirit of

adventure in regard to research. Without her supervision and constant help this study would not have been possible.

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