

Not Quite What It Seems: Rethinking the Way We View Teachers' Beliefs and Practices – A Case Study of a Malaysian ESL Teacher

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that there is high congruity between pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices among expert teachers and how this demarcates them from their novice counterparts. However, this is not necessarily true for all experts and novices in the profession because their individual differences affect the degree of congruity and this has caused revisions in the ways which the expert-novice divide is understood. This paper examines belief-practice congruity and expert-novice differences through a case study of a novice Malaysian ESL teacher. The teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning were obtained via a two-part questionnaire, while the classroom practices were analysed based on permitted recordings of her lessons. The findings reveal a convergence between the teacher's classroom practices and her personal beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as the teacher's role in the ESL classroom. The findings also reveal the teacher's classroom practices, especially her use of error correction techniques, mirrored those of expert teachers. It was also found that the teacher's own perceptions of student learning, her teaching experience and the realities of her classroom have shaped her beliefs and influenced her practices. The findings may not only provide useful insights into belief-practice congruity as experienced by novice ESL teachers, but also imply the need for increased awareness of expert and novice teachers' individual differences which have direct consequences on instruction and learning.

Keywords: teacher's beliefs; classroom practices; convergence/divergence; expert/novice teachers; ESL classroom

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' beliefs and practices are key components of education and they are important for many reasons, one of them being that they provide critical insights for the understanding and improvement of the educational processes. These insights reveal rich information about the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the ways in which these beliefs influence their instructional decisions and practices. The impacts of teachers' beliefs and practices on the students' learning and the teachers' own teaching have become one of the most studied topics in educational research (König 2012, Fives & Gill 2015, Zheng 2015). Much research has focused on the complex relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices, particularly the study of their congruity-incongruity/consistency-inconsistency. In their review of the literature in the field, Buehl and Beck (2015) conclude that "there [is] never a perfect correspondence between beliefs and practices [mainly because] beliefs are aligned for some teachers, but are mismatched for others" (p. 71) for a variety of reasons and in many areas of teaching and learning. But Buehl and Beck (2015) are quick to remind us that the focus on congruity-incongruity/consistency-inconsistency may not be the thing that we should be concentrating on. They assert that

It is not a matter of whether beliefs and practices are or are not congruent but rather *the degree* of congruence or incongruence between beliefs and practices. . . Instead of seeking evidence that beliefs are or not related, alternative lines of inquiry should seek to understand *the variations* in the relations between beliefs and practices as well as *the consequences* of belief congruence and incongruence (p. 71; emphases added)

The complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices (and its characteristic congruity-incongruity/consistency-inconsistency) has been extensively examined in relation to the differences between pedagogical beliefs and practices among expert and novice teachers.

Studies have shown that expert teachers demonstrate high alignment in both their beliefs and practices related to learning as compared to their novice counterparts (Tsui 2003 & 2009, Kuzborska 2011, Yang 2014). But others argue that this may not necessarily be the case, since there are many factors (i.e. experiential, cognitive, contextual) that may come into play in affecting the belief-practice relationship. Bigelow (2000), for instance, found that both expert and novice teachers in her study displayed a consistency in belief and action in the areas related to lesson planning (e.g., lesson format, timing, choice of activities), which was attributed to the pedagogical beliefs and knowledge they gained from "teacher education programs" (p. 88). There was also evidence of inconsistency in her study where one novice teacher adhered to his belief about and knowledge of a "prototypical" class format but implemented a lesson that placed much emphasis on students' interests and needs – a trait that *typifies* most novice teachers (Blömeke et al. 2014, Evans et al. 2014, Nassaji & Kartchava 2017). But Bigelow is quick to caution us not to take this inconsistency for granted because "the differences observed could be attributed to individual differences, rather than differences in expertise" (p. 86), and that much more needs to be done to discover what she describes as the realms of individual differences and expert/novice differences by examining the strategies used and decisions made by teachers in planning their lessons. Bigelow's call for more studies in this area, coupled with Buehl and Beck's call for alternative lines of inquiry should be heeded to rethink the ways in which teachers' beliefs and practices have been commonly viewed: the belief-practice relationship *is not quite what it seems* as it is not necessarily characterized or typified by expert teachers' belief-practice congruity/consistency and novice teachers' incongruity/inconsistency. The case study presented in paper took up these calls by investigating the degree of belief-practice congruity in the observed lessons of a novice Malaysian ESL teacher, with a focus on the strategies used and decisions she made in lesson planning and execution.

But before proceeding further, it is necessary to mention that the case study presented in this paper was part of a larger research entitled "Capturing Malaysian Educational Practice" initiated by a group of researchers from two Malaysian public universities. The nationwide research arose from the need to (1) describe current educational practice in Malaysian classrooms in relation to existing comparative and international education research, (2) provide theoretically-informed and generalizable data for policy, scholarly and institutional discussions and recommendations, (3) provide benchmark data for future Malaysian studies (e.g. longitudinal, comparative studies), and (4) allow for more nuanced theorizing about classroom practice. Guided by the constructivist learning theories, particularly those expounded in the works of Charlotte Danielson (2011), the researchers examined the current state of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices, as well as teachers' views of teaching and/or learning and investigated the link between all these and teachers' characteristics in Malaysian secondary school classrooms. Figure 1 below shows the framework that was developed by the researchers to examine the relationship between teachers' characteristics and their instructional, assessment and curricular practices. For instance, a teacher's use of questioning and discussion during instruction may be affected by his/her age, gender, education background, experience and/or personal beliefs.

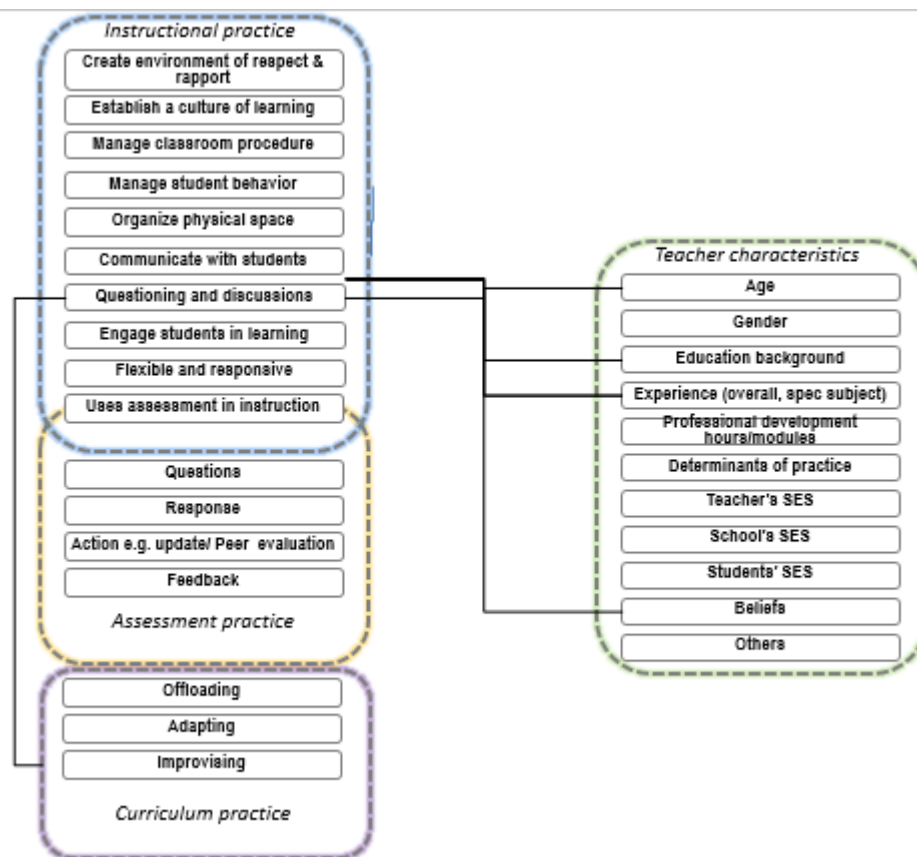


FIGURE 1. Framework for understanding relationships between teacher characteristics and instructional, assessment and curriculum practices

It is also important to mention that the case study presented in this paper may provide useful insights into teachers’ practices and beliefs related to the teaching and learning of the English language in Malaysia – a language that is officially acknowledged as the country’s second language and has been made compulsory for students at all levels of education. The English language curriculum for secondary school, for example, seeks to “extend learners’ English proficiency to meet their needs to use English in certain situations in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs” (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia 2003, p. 1). This learner-centred curriculum, which is delivered using, among others, communicative task-based approaches, integrates critical and creative thinking, information and communications technological skills *in addition* to language skills. The recent revamping of the national education system witnessed the establishment of Malaysia’s 12-year educational blueprint (2013-2025) and 10-year roadmap of English language education (2015-2025), both of which place major emphasis on boosting students’ and teachers’ English proficiency to a level of English that is highly regarded worldwide (Hazita 2016).

TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

As mentioned earlier, teachers’ beliefs and practices have become one of the most studied topics in educational research. These beliefs exist in various forms such as “the teacher’s expectations of his/her students’ performance” or “the teacher’s theories about a particular subject area’s learning and teaching” (Fang 1996, p. 50), and are drawn from diverse sources

including “(the teacher’s) personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge” (Richardson 1996, 2003).

Teachers’ beliefs have profound impacts on various aspects of language teaching and learning including teachers’ instructional practices and their decisions in relation to these practices (see Borg 2003, Breen et al. 2001, Farrell & Bennis 2013, Farrell & Lim 2005, Johnson 1992). The relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices is a complex one as it is governed by a plethora of factors including the experiential (e.g., teachers’ experiences), cognitive (e.g. teachers’ knowledge), and contextual (e.g., classroom) (see Borg 1999). These factors, as many studies have shown, contribute to the congruity/incongruity between teachers’ beliefs and practices that not only shape, but characterize the divide between experienced and novice teachers. In his review of recent research on this phenomenon, Basturkmen (as cited in Farrell & Bennis 2013) maintains that such convergence is frequently observable among experienced ESL teachers compared to their novice counterparts. The former not only teach according to their pedagogical beliefs, but acknowledge that these beliefs shape their classroom practices and their students’ perceptions about learning. This is mainly because experienced ESL teachers are “highly sensitive to their students’ contributions to the class”, “consistently aware of the need to know”, “consistently preoccupied with their students’ progress in the course of the class”, “consider student contributions to the class in terms of the students’ personalities, abilities, needs, attitudes, background, and learning styles”, and, “have a good rapport with students” (Gatbonton 1999, p. 79). This is unlike novice ESL teachers whose preoccupation with “student behaviour, student reactions, students level of engagement, and the relationship with students” (Farrell & Benisi 2013, p. 173) have led them to enact classroom practices that diverge from their beliefs about second language teaching.

However, this is not always the case as experienced ESL teachers experience divergence because of, among others, “the natural flow of the development of the lesson” (Farrell & Benisi 2013, p. 175). Experienced ESL teachers in Barrot’s (2016) study, for example, not only displayed a consistency between their beliefs and practices, but also an inconsistency between their beliefs and practices in the area related to language learning concepts/principles: they expressed belief in the concepts/principles of differentiation and reflective learning but failed to incorporate them into their actual lessons due to “the high difficulty level of integrating reflective learning and differentiation into classroom teaching” (p. 160). The teachers also expressed belief in the concept of self-assessment but found it difficult to integrate into instruction because they “felt that students have the tendency to overestimate or underestimate their performance relative to their assessment” (p. 160).

A similar inconsistency was also found in Shanina’s (2014) study of expert and novice Malaysian ESL teachers’ beliefs about pronunciation and teaching pronunciation, and their actual classroom practices. While the teachers confirmed their belief in the importance of pronunciation and teaching pronunciation, they did not fully integrate or focus on it in their actual lessons for several reasons such as, limited knowledge and exposure to teaching pronunciation as reported by the novice teachers, and insufficient time allocated for teaching the subject as claimed by their expert counterparts. In addition, the limited time was attributed to the teachers’ commitment to administrative tasks and involvement with non-teaching jobs such extra-curricular activities (Shanina 2014).

The point here is not to prove that one is more divergent in beliefs and practices over the other or vice versa, but to show that the convergence *and* divergence experienced by these teachers may have been resulted from “(their) individual differences, rather than expert/novice differences” (Bigelow 2000, p. 86). It is these differences and “the degree” of belief-practice convergence and divergence (Buehl & Beck 2015, p. 71) that should be

explored to rethink the way we understand the expert/novice differences. To achieve this, a case study was carried out to investigate the degree of convergence in a novice ESL teacher's pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices and the contributing factors to the phenomenon. The findings may not only provide useful insights into expert/novice differences, but also address the need to “(elicit) both novice and experienced teachers' beliefs” to be used as “a basis of comparison and reflection on classroom practices” (Farrell & Ives 2015, p. 604).

METHODOLOGY

The case study method was utilized, which has been frequently used in other studies that examined, among others, the relationship between ESL teachers' beliefs and practices. The method was chosen in accordance to Farrell and Ives's (2015) contention that the case study method helps address the lacunae in the literature on second language teachers' beliefs and practices by gathering rich data using multiple sources of data and techniques for collection and analysis (e.g., questionnaire and classroom observation).

The subject under study, May (pseudonym, also known as T34), was purposely selected from a total of nine English teachers from East Malaysia who volunteered to participate in the research. The selection criterion was based on Gatbonton's (2008) definition of novice teachers: “[those] who have just commenced teaching and still have very little (e.g. less than two years) experience behind them” (p. 162). May is in her late 20s and has worked as an English teacher for a couple of years. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) with a minor in Information Technology. May teaches English for general and specific purposes (i.e., preparation for public examination) to low-intermediate and intermediate level students. She was teaching general English (mainly focusing on writing instructions) to two groups of low-intermediate (lower secondary) level students when the case study was carried out. The topic was on *staying fit and healthy through outdoor activities* and students were asked to develop a weekly schedule of these activities. The data was collected over a one-week period via a two-part questionnaire and observations of two lessons: a 40-minute lesson with Group 1 and a 60-minute lesson with Group 2. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. Part 1 comprises four main sections: Section 1 *Background Information* (Items 1-10); Section 2 *Reflections on Teaching and Learning* (Items 11-22); Section 3 *Opinions on Curriculum Specification* (Items 23-24); and Section 4 *Opinions on Assessments* (Items 25-27). The teacher was asked to read all questions and rank her agreement or disagreement with the statements that reflected her beliefs about teaching and learning on a four-point scale. Part 2 comprises of 11 open-response questions on language planning and assessment (Items 28-39). The teacher was given the option to answer the questions either in Malay or English. Only data from Sections 2 and 5 are presented and discussed in this paper. The observed lessons were videotaped and transcribed, and the data were analysed along with those obtained from the questionnaire to determine the extent to which the teacher's classroom practices converged with her beliefs about second language learning and teaching. Factors contributing to the evidence of convergence and divergence were also discussed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes May's degree of agreement on her beliefs about teaching and learning and Table 2 shows the results of her observed classroom practices. The findings are discussed

by highlighting the degree of convergence between May’s beliefs and classroom practices in relation to the themes of *Teacher’s Role*, *Student Learning*, and *Teaching and Learning*.

TABLE 1. May’s beliefs about teaching and learning

No.	Statements	Degree of Agreement
1.	An effective/A good teacher shows the correct ways to solve a problem.	✓
2.	It is better when teachers and not students make the decision about instructional activities.	✗
3.	My role as a teacher is to act as a facilitator and assist students in making their own inquiries.	✓
4.	Teachers know more than the students, and therefore do not have to let the students construct their own answers that are probably incorrect. Moreover, teachers need to continue to explain the correct answer.	✗
5.	Students learn more effectively when they find their own solutions to the problems.	✓
6.	Students should be given the opportunity to think about themselves as a practical solution to the problem before the teacher shows how the problem is solved/ addressed.	▲
7.	No matter how much students have learned depends a lot on the previous knowledge they have– that is why teaching facts are very much needed.	▲
8.	Teaching should be built around clear problems with correct answers, and around ideas that are easily understood.	✓
9.	A quiet classroom is generally necessary for effective learning.	✗
10.	Thinking and reasoning processes are more important than specific content knowledge in the syllabus.	✓

Key: ▼ Strongly disagree; ✗ Disagree; ✓ Agree; ▲ Strongly agree

TABLE 2. May’s beliefs and classroom practices

Theme	Belief	Observed Group Lesson	
		Group 1	Group 2
Teacher’s Role	An effective/A good teacher shows the correct ways to solve a problem.	Evident , but the focus was more on the group task.	Evident , but the focus was more on the group task.
	It is better when teachers and not students make the decision about instructional activities.	Not evident . The teacher made the decision instead.	Not evident . The teacher made the decision instead.
	My role as a teacher is to act as a facilitator and assist students in making their own inquiries.	Evident . The teacher gave clear instructions for the task.	Evident . The teacher gave clear instructions and guided students to complete the task.
	Teachers know more than the students, and therefore do not have to let the students construct their own answers that are probably incorrect. Moreover, teachers need to continue to explain the correct answer.	Evident . The teacher encouraged students to give various answers and supplied them with the correct answers through various error correction techniques (mainly face correction).	Evident . The teacher used word completion activity and encouraged students to fill in the missing words with possible answers, and supplied them with the correct answers through various error correction techniques (mainly face correction).
Student Learning	Students learn more effectively when they find their own solutions to problems.	Not evident . Students were asked to accomplish the task <i>after</i> the lesson.	Evident when students carried out the task <i>during</i> the lesson.
	Students should be given the opportunity to think about themselves as a practical solution to the problem before the teacher shows how the problem is solved/ addressed.	Not evident . The teacher solved the problem by pairing students for the task.	Evident . The teacher allowed students to choose their own partners for the task.

	No matter how much students have learned depends a lot on the previous knowledge they have— that is why teaching facts are very much needed.	Evident. The teacher provided correct answers using error correction techniques.	Evident. The teacher provided correct answers using error correction techniques.
Teaching and Learning	Teaching should be built around clear problems with correct answers, and around ideas that are easily understood.	Evident, but the focus was more on group task.	Evident, but the focus was more on group task.
	A quiet classroom is generally necessary for effective learning.	Evident. Students were responsive.	Evident. Students were responsive.
	Thinking and reasoning processes are more important than specific content knowledge in the syllabus.	Evident (Level-appropriate thinking and reasoning processes).	Evident (Level-appropriate thinking and reasoning processes).

TEACHER'S ROLE

The findings show that May's beliefs about a teacher's role converged with her classroom practices. Consistent with her belief that an effective or good teacher should show the correct ways to solve a problem and that a teacher should play the role of a facilitator to assist students in making their own inquiries, May not only explained the steps involved in the task, but guided her students to accomplish it. In Group 2, for instance, May gave clear instructions and asked students key questions that guided them to complete the task while the students, in return, posed many task-related questions throughout the lesson. Claiming that students *rather than the teacher* know more and, therefore, should be allowed to construct their own answers, May encouraged her students to give possible responses to topic related questions. For instance, May used a word completion activity and encouraged students in both groups to guess the missing letters to form the name of specific activities (e.g. taekwondo; *skate blading*) (see the transcribed classroom interaction in Appendix 1). Additionally, May provided students with correct answers to, among others, their task-related questions, which was congruous with her belief that despite encouraging students to guess the answers, teachers should continue to explain why correct answers are correct and vice versa. May was observed using "face correction" technique which involves "facial contortion to signal an error and elicit self-correction" (Farrell & Benisi 2013, p. 172). (SS: Video game.../T34: Video game? Noo... (facial contortion) ... computer games? Noo ... this (referring to the task) is more of the outdoor activities). May's emphasis over correct answers was shaped by her strong belief about assessment. In her responses to the open-response questions, May attested to the importance of assessments because it allowed her to measure students' achievements and in the process, it helped her to plan her lessons and use different approaches to instruction. May added that assessments helped students to see their own strengths and weaknesses, and reflect on their individual achievement in the subject.

However, a divergence between May's belief and her classroom practices was captured in both of her lessons. Despite her claim that it is better when students *rather than the teacher* make decisions about instructional tasks, May did the complete opposite by making all those decisions. This could be due to her own perception of students' learning, particularly their level of proficiency which hindered their ability to come up with ideas for the activities.

STUDENT LEARNING

It was found that May's classroom practices diverged from her belief about student learning. Despite agreeing (and believing) that students learn more effectively when they find their own solutions to problems and that students should be given the opportunity to think about

themselves as practical solutions to a problem, May assisted Group 1 students to solve the problem of, among other things, finding a partner for the task (see the transcribed teacher-student interaction in Appendix 1).

It was observed that May allowed Group 2 students to choose their own partners and, as expected, the students did so with glee. The divergence and convergence in both lessons could be due to her own experience teaching *racially diverse classroom*, students' own perception of learning (i.e., feel at ease working with those of similar ethnicity/threatened by other ethnicity) and *the realities in the classroom* (e.g., student diversity). More importantly, May's lesson planning and her selection of instructional strategies were dependent on the students' level of achievements in the subject. Different levels of achievements, as May explained in her responses to the open-response questions, required different approaches to teaching and learning. Students' understanding could be measured through oral and written assessments, with the latter used to assess students having difficulty speaking English in class. May added that she would modify her instructional approaches according to the students' level of achievement with special attention on those with poor English language skills (i.e. vocabulary and grammar). Therefore, reinforcement was, in May's own words, of paramount importance to ESL instruction and learning and teachers should focus more on this rather than confining their lessons to the prescribed syllabus. Furthermore, May demonstrated her belief that the measure of how much students has learned depends largely on previous knowledge they acquired (hence the importance of teaching the facts), thus she provides the students with correct answers to task-related questions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The findings reveal a consistency between May's classroom practices and her beliefs about teaching and learning. May demonstrated her belief that teaching should be built around clear problems with correct answers and around ideas that are easily understood by developing her lessons around a simple, level-appropriate task that required students to provide specific answers (e.g., develop a weekly schedule of outdoor activities). It was observed that students were mostly engaged in level-appropriate thinking and reasoning processes throughout the lessons as a way of acquiring the subject content knowledge (see the transcribed classroom interaction in Appendix 1). This is congruous with May's belief that thinking, and reasoning processes are more important than specific content knowledge in the syllabus. May affirmed her belief in her responses to the open-response questions in that she did not adhere strictly to the syllabus and modified her lessons to ensure her students understand and learn new things in the process. She even went so far as to say that she would introduce in her lessons topics not found or covered in the curriculum as this provided opportunities for her students to apply thinking skills into their learning. As May explained: "I will provide students some keywords related to a topic and get them to explain what they mean and look for additional information to enrich their understanding of the topic" (researchers' translation). Furthermore, students in both lessons were evidently responsive (i.e., calling her out and even coming up to May to ask task-related questions and verify English terms for specific outdoor sports and activities) confirming her belief that a lively classroom, rather than a quiet classroom is generally necessary for effective learning. However, it is hard to ascertain whether it was down to actual effective learning taking place or due to the responsiveness of the students because they knew they were being videotaped.

Generally, the findings from this case study raise more questions about the results of previous studies in the field. Firstly, the consistency between May's pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices challenges previous findings that show such consistency mostly occur among experienced rather than novice ESL teachers (Basturkmen 2012). This could probably

be due to May's teacher training background and her exposure to teaching during practicum (Gatbonton 2008). Secondly, May's emphasis on error correction and her use of various error correction techniques beg questions on previous findings that show experienced rather than novice ESL teachers stress on the importance of error correction using a variety of techniques to accommodate students' diverse learning styles and needs (Farrell & Benisi 2013). May's use of "face correction" technique, for example, is similarly used by experienced ESL teachers in correcting students during instruction. The findings from this case study also confirm the findings of previous studies in the field, particularly May's beliefs about student learning and her role as a teacher. The fact that she made decisions about instructional tasks and allowed students to choose their own partner for the task is consistent with previous findings on novice ESL teachers who were more sensitive toward "student behaviour, student reactions, students level of engagement, and the relationship with students" (Farrell and Benisi, 2013, p. 173) when making instructional decisions. There are many possible factors that contribute to this, such as time constraint and teachers' perceptions of student learning (e.g., it was probably best for May to plan those activities considering the time allocated for the lesson and students' proficiency level), teachers' teaching experience (e.g., the experience that May gained from teaching practice) and the realities of classroom (e.g., diversity in May's classes).

CONCLUSION

This case study investigated the degree of convergence in a novice ESL teacher's pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices, and their contributing factors. The findings indicate that the teacher's beliefs not only exemplified those of novice ESL teachers, but closely mirrored those who have extensive experience in the profession. The findings also reveal that the teacher's classroom practices converged with her beliefs about language teaching and learning with little divergence. Time constraint, teaching experience, and perceptions of student learning, among others, were found to be possible factors affecting the relationship between the teacher's beliefs and practices.

There are, however, several limitations to this study. Firstly, it could have delved deeper into the teachers' pedagogical beliefs in relation to a wide range of elements such as identity, motivation, cognition, and emotion, to name just a few, which have profound impacts on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (Fives & Gill 2015, Raths & McAninch 2003). *Teachers' cognition* or thoughts related to their decisions about teaching, for instance, comprises of *core* and *peripheral beliefs* – the latter, being theoretically adopted by teachers, are not always demonstrated in their classroom practices, while the former, being experientially embedded, are more powerful than the latter in moulding teachers' behaviours or actions in the classroom (Phipps & Borgas cited in Roche, Sinha & Dinman 2015). *Teachers' emotions*, on the other hand, particularly those experienced during teaching, not only influence teachers' beliefs about their pedagogical decisions, but also learners' instructional experience (Gill & Hardin 2015). The high level of consistency between May's pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices may have been influenced by her *cognition-core beliefs*, while her decision to allow students to choose their own partners for the task may have been prompted by her emotional experiences while engaging with students during instruction. Secondly, the study could have explored the ways in which pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices may be moulded by the current situation and issues affecting the teaching of English, particularly in the Malaysian context which include, among others, the (over) emphasis on examination and the use of the national Malay language during

instruction (Ali 2003), the lack of skilled teachers to teach the subject to multilingual learners and the urban/rural difference that governs their exposure to and use of the language (Darus 2010), greater stress on reading and writing skills instruction and grammar rule acquisition (Normazidah, Koo & Hazita, 2012). May's decision to advise students to work with their peers of other races may have been driven by the challenge of teaching English to multicultural *and* multilingual learners.

But despite these limitations, this paper does approach a subject that is often typified by the experienced/novice differences. The findings imply a need for increased awareness of the degree of belief-practice congruity and their variations which has a direct impact on instruction and learning. Furthermore, the paper begs more questions about current research on experienced and novice ESL teachers, especially about the reported instances of convergence in the observed lessons of the Malaysian ESL classroom. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies examine these instances in relation to the pedagogical beliefs and practices of experienced *and* novice ESL teachers at various levels of education (e.g. urban, rural, national and national-type schools), experientially, cognitively, contextually along with a host of other factors that may govern their beliefs and practices, as well as with the effects of reported convergence (or divergence) on the curriculum, teacher training and student learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by University of Malaya Research Grant (UMRG) RP004-13SBS, The Equitable Society Research Cluster and the University of Malaya Rakan Penyelidikan Grant

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APPENDIX 1

Teachers' Role

Group 1

- T34: Taekwondo. How to spell taekwondo?
SS: T-A-E-K-W-O-N-D-O.
T34: (writes on blackboard) T-A-E-K?
SS: W-O-N-D-O. *inaudible*
T34: (erases letters on blackboard) Tae? T-A
SS: E *inaudible*
T34: E-K?
SS: W-O-N-D-O.
T34: (writes on blackboard) W-E?
SS: O. *inaudible*
T34: Tae, kwon, do. (underlines syllables) Taekwondo. Okay next? 8?

Group 2

- T34: Rollerskate?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: *inaudible* Crystal I beg your pardon?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: What is that?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: No. (returns to teacher's table)
SS: *inaudible*
T34: No. (writes on blackboard)
SS: Skateboard. *inaudible*
T34: No.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Okay consonant here,
SS: A.
T34: Consonant here, ((writes on blackboard) consonant here, means b, c, d, f, g and, vowel here means, a, e, i, o, u. (points and writes on blackboard) Consonant vowel, consonant, vowel, consonant, consonant.
SS: *inaudible* R.
T34: R? No. (writes on blackboard)
SS: A.
T34: A? (points at blackboard) I want to have, consonant.
SS: C.
T34: No.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: No.
SS: F. *inaudible*
T34: No.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: No.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Consonant.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: C no.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Okay. All those letters except a e i o u we consider them as a consonant.
SS: L.
T34: L? Yes, L, (writes on blackboard) the second?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: (writes on blackboard) A yes.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Consonant again.
SS: D.
T34: D? *inaudible* (writes on blackboard)

SS: B. I. *inaudible* E.
T34: I. (writes on blackboard)
SS: N.
T34: (writes on blackboard)
SS: *inaudible*
T34: (teacher nods and writes on blackboard) Okay. Skate, blading. Or, roller, blading. Not rollercoaster.
Okay remember that's skate-blading or, roller,
SS: Blading.

Student Learning

T34: No. 2 person form group, I want to have the pair work.
SS: *inaudible* 3.
T34: No.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: *inaudible* 49 of you is it?
SS: Teacher. *inaudible*
T34: Who is absent today?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Beatrice. She's not around? That's mean 48 of you,
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Alan is around.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Okay, if you don't want to use manila card, just write it on *inaudible* blackboard.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Yes?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Okay. Discount, 3 persons in 1 group. Which mean that we are going to have, 16 groups. 16 groups. ,
You want to decide your own member or I am the one who ah who is going to decide for you?
SS: No. *inaudible*
T34: Okay I choose, okay never mind.
SS: No. *inaudible* Teacher.

Minutes later

T34: Grace, , okay how many of you do not have a group yet? Alan. Okay Pablo, ((points)) *inaudible* I
know it is hard for you to communicate if (hushes class) okay hold on. I know it is hard for you to communicate,
if you are coming from different race. *inaudible* I notice that before this, but I want you to learn.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Learn to communicate with different races.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: *inaudible* that's why I'm asking you to discuss in English.
SS: *inaudible*
T34: *inaudible*
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Okay (points) Grace, Pablo, *inaudible* in one group, Francesca, ((hushes class)) Francesca,
inaudible who is the other one*inaudible*
SS: *inaudible*
T34: *inaudible* You have the group? Okay. Rise up your hand if you do not have a group yet. , Okay.
(points) *inaudible* , *inaudible* Francesca and, who's the other one? Oh *inaudible* so two of you first, and
if, he's around,
bell rings
T34: ask him to join your group.
SS: *inaudible*

Teaching and Learning

T34: Indoor but ah, this is considered as one of the, *inaudible* One of the sports is it? Okay ah, (flips
through book) if, you look at, the pictures on page 43, these are the games, these are the activities that
we can have, in order to keep ourself? Keep ourself?
SS: *inaudible*

- T34: Fit. And stay?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Stay healthy. Not stay alive. Okay, you are alive. In order to keep yourself, fit and? Stay healthy. , Okay. Besides that this type of activities, what are those activities that you can have in order to keep yourself healthy?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Yes? Other than, skipping,
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Frisbee. Playing Frisbee, yes.
SS: *inaudible* Cycling.
T34: Cycling.
SS: Handball.
T34: Yes handball, yes?
SS: *inaudible* Volleyball.
T34: Volleyball yes?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Jogging, walking,
SS: *inaudible*
T34: (points and laughs) Definitely no for sleeping. Dancing yes,
SS: *inaudible* Playing Barbie doll.
T34: Play Barbi (teacher laughs, class laughs) Do you think that play Barbie doll *inaudible* keep yourself, (teacher laughs) fit and healthy? I don't think so. Any other activities?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: Flying? (class laughs) How are you going to fly?
SS: *inaudible*
T34: That's travelling not flying.