

A Case Study of English Teacher's Teaching Belief in Senior High School ——Comparison and Analysis of New and Veteran Teacher's Belief

Min Zhong

Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, China

ABSTRACT. *In recent years, teacher's teaching belief has been a research hotspot in the field of education at home and abroad. It will have an important impact on teacher's professional development, work confidence, attitude, and students' learning behavior, habits, and interests. As an important subject in high school, the importance of teacher's teaching belief is self-evident. Teachers' teaching and students' learning are two concepts that interact and influence each other. Teachers' teaching methods, teaching ideas and teaching principles will affect students' learning methods, learning ideas and learning effects, and vice versa. What teachers say and do is imperceptibly affecting students. High school English teachers with better improved teaching beliefs are more able to guide students' learning process and constantly promote their own progress.*

KEYWORDS: *teaching belief, high school English, new teachers, veteran teacher*

1. Introduction

Teacher's belief has much importance to guide effects on teacher's teaching. It guides teachers' views on their own educational professions, attitudes towards students, and their daily teaching process for the arrangement of pre-, during-, and after-class activities. The subject of English in senior high school is one of the three major subjects in China at the current stage, having a significant status. Teacher's teaching belief directly affects teacher's design and implementation of the teaching process, which indirectly affects students' attitudes towards learning English subjects, mastery of knowledge and skills, and the display of learning results.

As for teachers' teaching beliefs, many scholars at home and abroad have been engaged in various aspects of research. This paper will explore the current status of teachers' teaching beliefs from the perspective of English teachers' teaching beliefs in high schools. There're five chapters in all, introduction, statements of previous theories, research design, analysis of the results, and conclusion.

1.1 Background of the Research

Teacher's teaching belief has been concerned and discussed by scholars at home and abroad. Many scholars have published their views on teaching beliefs, including some investigation and case studies on senior high school English teachers. At present, China is carrying out new curriculum reform. Under the background of the new curriculum reform, high school English teachers are expected to be better qualified in many aspects, such as higher professional competence, more effective teaching methods and so on.

The key to respond and advance the new curriculum reform lies in the renewal of English teacher's teaching belief. Only when teachers pay attention to, reflect on and renew their teaching beliefs in time, and apply them to the actual teaching, can they better implement the core literacy goal of English discipline, thus cultivating the English talents needed by the country and society and promote the all-round development of students' body and mind. Therefore, it is very important to study the teaching beliefs of senior high school English teachers.

1.2 Significance of the Research

In recent years, the research on teachers' teaching beliefs is a hot spot. The concept of the new English curriculum standard in senior high school has a strong impact on teachers' traditional teaching beliefs. It is particularly important to update and change teacher's teaching belief in time.

Through the research on the teaching beliefs of senior high school English teachers, it can provide valuable reference for senior high school English teachers, guide them to further realize the importance of teacher's teaching belief, to intentionally reflect on and cultivate their own teaching beliefs in English teaching, to explore teaching methods that are more in line with the new English curriculum standards of senior high school, and help teachers to improve teaching practice and the teaching effect of English classroom. In addition, through the improvement of teacher's teaching belief, students' foreign language learning effect and physical and mental development will be indirectly and positively affected.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of English Teacher's Teaching Belief

Different scholars at home and abroad have different views on the definition of English teacher's teaching belief. As Girardet and Céline (2017) argued, English teacher's teaching belief is a kind of consciousness in teacher's mind that can affect students' learning motivation. It is changed by the influence of classroom teaching practice, and should be conceptualized as one of the main sources of teaching practice, and also one of the main filters of teachers' change.

According to Li (2019:7~8), a Chinese scholar, teaching belief of senior high school English teachers should include six dimensions: English curriculum beliefs, teachers and students' role beliefs, English teaching beliefs, students' English learning beliefs, classroom management beliefs and evaluation beliefs.

Based on the views of various scholars, English teacher's teaching belief is a piece of teacher's mind which is accumulated from their life learning and teaching experiences, and affect their views on their professional development, roles of teachers and students, foreign language learning, classroom teaching, teachers' moral quality, and guide their actual practical actions.

According to the definition of English teacher's teaching belief, the research objects of this paper mainly involve the teacher's opinions about choosing of teaching method, setting of teaching aims, selecting of teaching contents, identifying of key points and difficult points, and arranging of classroom activities. Besides, the education stage discussed in this paper is high school English classroom settings.

2.2 Related Studies at Home and Abroad

According to Pan (2017), who interviewed three senior high school English teachers and observed these teacher's classroom teaching, the teacher's teaching belief is sometimes inconsistent with the actual teaching behaviors. She argued that the main reasons are teachers' prior learning experience, teachers' teaching experience and practice, and other external factors. The two domestic scholars, Long and Xie (2019), thought that there are internal factors influencing teacher's teaching belief, such as the teacher's teaching efficiency, early personal experiences and independent development capacity, and external factors like overseas learning experience, cultural environment of the school, students' competence level and institutional cooperation. Another domestic scholar, Chen (2016) pointed out that senior high school English teacher's teaching belief is related to the gender, academic qualification, professional training and the area where the school is located.

Through case interview and observation, Farrell (2005), a foreign scholar has found that English teachers prefer a deductive approach to an inductive approach in English grammar teaching. At the same time, English teachers prefer flexible teaching methods, although these methods are subject to external factors such as limited time in the actual teaching. Through classroom observation and interviews with in-service teachers, some abroad scholars found that it is helpful to understand the sources of teacher's belief and self-efficacy to enhance students' ability of writing and learning English.

Being studied and discussed by scholars at home and abroad through various methods, English teacher's teaching belief has a rich connotation, which brings important influence on both teachers' professional development and students' foreign language learning. Teachers' teaching and students' learning are two concepts that interact and influence each other. Teachers' teaching methods, teaching ideas and teaching principles will affect students' learning methods,

learning ideas and learning effects, and vice versa. What teachers say and do in the classroom is imperceptibly affecting students. High school English teachers with better improved teaching beliefs are more able to guide students' learning process and constantly promote their own progress. Since the importance of high school English teacher's teaching belief is self-evident, it deserves extensive attention and research.

3. Research Design

This research mainly discusses the senior high school English teacher's belief on classroom teaching, specifically, including the following issues:

- (1) What is the current senior high school English teacher's teaching belief?
- (2) Are there any differences in teaching belief between new teachers and veteran teachers?
- (3) What are the reasons for this difference or consistency?

3.1 Research Method

There are many kinds of research methods about teacher's belief, including qualitative research, quantitative research and comprehensive research. According to Wu(2010), qualitative researches includes investigation and collection of a large number of different materials, such as case analysis, personal experience, life history, interviews, as well as the depiction of some personal habits in life, or the query of special value moments and meanings, are all resulting in the observation, in the historical, interactive and visual texts. Many western researches on Teacher's belief adopt the method of interview. The researchers basically analyze the essence of different types of teacher's belief by describing their own teaching experience and process.

In order to understand the current situation of senior high school English teachers' teaching beliefs more clearly, the case interview method is adopted in this study.

First of all, on the basis of viewing and analyzing the relevant research literature, this paper summarized the content of English teachers' teaching beliefs. After defining what is teacher's teaching belief, the author chose one of the multiple dimensions as the content of this study, then formulated the questions needed in the interview according to the research content. During the interview, relevant records, including notes, recordings, etc. were made in time. After finishing the interview, the teachers' answers were sorted out and analyzed to explore the causes of the results. Finally, the paper puts forward the corresponding suggestions, and feasible solutions for the problems found in the study, so as to promote English teaching in senior high school.

3.2 Research Subjects

There are four senior high school English teachers participating in the interview. Three of them are working in Yudu middle school, Ganzhou City, Jiangxi Province. The first one is Mrs. A, who has been teaching English in the senior high school for about 30 years until now, and her highest educational qualification is undergraduate. At present, she is teaching English in grade three. The second one is Mrs. B with 11 years of English teaching. Her highest educational qualification is undergraduate and now she is teaching students in grade one.

The third one is Miss. C, who is a green hand in teaching. Now she is teaching English in grade one, and her highest educational qualification is undergraduate, too. The other one, Miss. D is teaching students in grade one, in Shangrao first middle school, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province. She is a new teacher, having a Master's degree. Their basic information can be demonstrated in the following chart:

Teachers	Gender	Years of Teaching	Educational Background	Grade Where They Are Teaching
Mrs. A	Female	30years	Bachelor	Grade three
Mrs. B	Female	11years	Bachelor	Grade one
Miss C	Female	6months	Bachelor	Grade one
Miss D	Female	6months	Master	Grade one

3.3 Results Collection and Processing

On the morning of March 17th, the author got in touch with Mrs. A through WeChat video call, and completed the interview with her on the phone for about an hour. On the morning and afternoon of March 19th, the author interviewed Mrs. B and Miss. C respectively in the same way for about 45 minutes. And Miss D was interviewed on March 20th for about 30 minutes. During the interview, notes were taken and the WeChat conversation were recorded. After finishing the interview, the notes and recordings are arranged to form a complete written answer to the questions in the questionnaire.

4. Analysis of the Result

Considering the understanding of the connotation of teacher's teaching belief, the author analyzes teacher's teaching belief from six aspects: setting of teaching objectives, identifying of key points and difficult points, choosing of teaching method, arranging of classroom activities, the students' experience and interests, and selecting of teaching contents. The analysis of the high school English teacher's teaching belief will be divided into the corresponding aspects.

4.1 Description of the Status Quo of Veteran Teacher's Teaching Belief

(1) Setting of teaching objectives

Asked the question of how to set teaching objectives in the process of preparing lessons, Mrs. A said that she usually focused on main aspects: the textbook and the students. To be specific, the content in the textbook, where the students are supposed to reach at the end of the class, and what aims are the students able to achieve are all the factors she would take into consideration. Mrs. B think that the most important is to help students to master the knowledges and use them flexibly in different situations and the cultivation of language skills and emotional objectives are also can't be ignored. In other words, how to work out the teaching objectives mainly depends on the textbook and the requirement of curriculum standard.

(2) Identifying of key points and difficult points

While the author mentioned how to determine the key and difficult points in the process of preparing lessons, Mrs. A noticed that the previous teaching experience plays an important role. For a single class, what kind of knowledge or skills will be easy for them to master and what kind of knowledge or skills will be hard for them. For instance, non-finite verbs and subjunctive mood are always difficult for students to understand, because these language forms can't be found in Chinese. Agreeing with Mrs. A, Mrs. B also stressed that the students' actual competence is the vital factor when determine the key points and difficult points.

(3) Choosing of teaching method

For what kind of teaching method do they usually adopt in high school English classroom teaching, Mrs. A mentioned that she usually uses stodgy methods for she has been teaching senior students for the recent years all the time in recent years. It means that she often makes her students review and practice what the students have learned. But when she teaches the junior students, she usually uses more flexible and students-centered teaching methods. Mrs. B criticized herself for she often applies traditional teaching method, which make the students accept knowledge passively although she knew that the class should be a stage where students perform.

(4) Arranging of classroom activities

When asked whether their classroom teaching activities are generally teacher-led or student-centered, Mrs. A emphasizes that the role teachers play in the classroom is just the director and it is the students that are the actors to perform. In other word, Mrs. A thinks her classroom activities are student-centered. However, in Mrs. B's class, the activities are usually teacher-led although she thought a good English class should be students-centered.

(5) The students' experience and interests

When the author asked whether they think students' interests, experience, etc. should be considered in the classroom teaching process, both of the two veteran teachers believe students' interests and experience are the significant factors need to

be considered. If the teaching activities are boring for students, they will not be willing to take part in thus learn quiet few things.

(6) Selecting of teaching contents outside the textbook

Mrs. A said if she found any good English materials like essays and videos outside textbooks, she probably designs them into teaching, as long as she can operate the relevant app. But if she can't, she would just tell the students to learn by themselves. Mrs. B is very glad to add other good learning materials for her students. Take the 2019 novel coronavirus for example, she said she would teach some relative words and expressions to students, because it's necessary for students to learn new things and they may be used in the exams. As language learners, students should not only master the knowledge in books, but also understand the true linguistic information in life. Only when they can use language in true communication can we say that students really learned a language.

4.2 Description of the Status Quo of New Teacher's Teaching Belief

(1) Setting of teaching objectives

Miss C told that her setting teaching objectives is usually depends on the key points and difficult points, the students' current stages and the physical teaching conditions. In Miss D's opinion, to set teaching objectives teachers should carefully study the textbooks first, then combine the students' actual capacity.

(2) Identifying of key points and difficult points

In order to identify the key points and difficult points, Miss C usually finish the practice of a whole unit first, then distills the important points. As for the difficult points she will refer to the teacher's book and adjust slightly according to the students' actual capacity. While Miss D argued that it was hard for them, new teachers to determine what is the key points and what is the difficult points of a class. Therefore, she often attends veteran teachers' lectures and refers to teacher's book.

(3) Choosing of teaching method

According to Miss C, she often uses traditional teaching method and sometimes TBLT for classroom teaching. She said this is because the actual teaching environment and situation are different from what is preset in books. Miss D uses TBLT in most of her class because she is most familiar with this method.

(4) Arranging of classroom activities

When asked whether the classroom activities are student-centered or not depends on the type of a particular class, Miss C said. For example, when teaching vocabulary, she prefers to let students be the masters of the class, while if she teaches grammar, she would like to lead the students. As for the exercise class, it is student-centered only if time permitted. Miss D also thinks that it's nearly impossible to let the students to become the center of every class.

(5) The students' experience and interests

Both of the teachers believe that teaching design and the actual classroom activities should certainly take into consideration the students' previous experience and interest. However, Miss C admitted that the reality is not consistent with the ideal due to the overwhelming teaching tasks and the situation of evaluating students based on scores alone.

(6) Selecting of teaching contents outside the textbook

Due to lack of media equipment in the classroom of grade one, Miss C haven't taught any material beyond textbooks, but if the objective teaching condition is improved, she would be willing to introduce appropriate video or texts to the students. Miss D points out that interest is the first teacher for students, thus, she often teaches some appropriate English materials like video, music, texts or apps to her students, which are both interesting and useful for them and contain some meaningful knowledges.

4.3 Comparison of Teaching Beliefs Between Veteran and New Teachers

From the interviews with four teachers, it is clear the teaching beliefs between new teachers and veteran teachers are not exactly the same or different. There are both commonalities and differences between them.

4.3.1 Commonalities

The commonalities of the four teachers' teaching beliefs of senior high English mainly lie in how to set teaching objectives, whether the teaching design refers to students' previous experience and interests, and whether to provide students with appropriate extracurricular language materials.

(1) Setting Teaching Objectives

When answering the question that how to set teaching objectives, four teachers regarded the contents of textbooks and the students' actual competence as the main influential factors. All of them said that text books are the basis of teaching, so what knowledge, skills and attitude the students ought to learn and what needs teachers to help students to get, are determined by the textbook.

Besides, the students' current stage formulates the upper limit and the lower limit. For example, when learning the modal verbs, "should" and "ought to", both of which have the same Chinese translation, students with weak academic foundation may just remember the meanings of them and regard them as the totally synonyms, while the students with better foundation probably understand the delicate deference between these two modal verbs and appropriately apply them in deferent situations.

(2) The Students' Experience and Interests

As Miss D emphasized that interest is the first teacher, all of the interviewed teachers agree with that. According to their statement, students' interests, as well as

previous experiences, play a vital role in students' language learning process. For instance, when they learn some interesting reading materials or play some teaching games and contests, even just when the teacher brings a funny teaching aids, they usually put all their attention to the class.

However, while learning the tedious knowledges such as grammar, the students' minds often wander. Fortunately, if there are any activities which could attract the students' attention or stimulate their curiosity, they would also try to listen to the class. Therefore, teachers always make effort to design some attractive activities to draw students' attention and let them actively learning English.

(3) Selecting of Teaching Contents Outside the Textbook

When teachers meet any good materials like text or video, they all would like to introduce them to the students as the supplementary materials for learning English. As Mrs. B mentioned, these materials would be useful both in the exams and the real life. Those supplementary materials may be applied in reading or writing. Even if it's not for dealing with the exam, it's still meaningful and necessary for students to know some native expressions, information, western culture, etc. as a foreign language learner. In addition, some good apps can also help students learn English outside the classroom without teachers and master different learning methods.

4.3.2 Differences

The differences of the four teachers' teaching beliefs of senior high English are mainly demonstrated on how to identify the key points and difficult points of a certain lesson, how to choose the teaching method when making a lesson planning, whether the classroom activities are teacher-centered or student-centered.

(1) Identifying of key points and difficult points

Through the interview, it is obvious that the differences of teacher's teaching belief between new teachers and veteran teachers are largely reflected in the grasp of the key and difficult points of a lesson. All of the teachers know that when teachers identify the key and difficult points, they should take the students' actual linguistic competence into consideration.

But the ability of judging the students' current stage varies with the teachers. Veteran teachers have the capacity of quickly judging which content students can master immediately in general, and which content students generally need to think hard and practice a lot to master, through years of teaching experience accumulation. However, new English teachers need to refer to the teacher's book and exercise, to attend to the senior teachers' lectures and discuss with them.

(2) Choosing of teaching method

The second difference lies in choosing teaching method. Although the two veteran teachers actually use the traditional teaching method in general, they believe that an outstand class should be centered by the students. While Miss C admitted that she sometime chooses traditional method to lead the whole teaching, because

only in this way can she save more time, and TBLT and CLT are not suitable for all types of lessons. Miss C emphasized that the real teaching processes are often different from the prescription in pedagogic textbooks.

(3) Arranging of classroom activities

The other distinction is the classroom activities. Based on the ideas of choosing teaching method, veteran teachers think that classroom activities usually should be centered by students, while the new teachers' class are partly led by teachers, and partly centered by students based on different types of the class. For example, when they are teaching new lessons of reading or grammar, students are needed to take part in many activities. when they are giving exercise lesson, they prefer to be the leader of the whole class.

4.4 Analysis of the Causes of the Results

The process of teachers' professional growth is the result of interaction and reflection between teachers and external social resources and social situations. Causes of differences of teaching belief between new and veteran teachers could be divided into the internal and external factors.

4.4.1 Internal Factors

Many factors about teachers themselves have an important influence on the conception, design, preparation and implementation of teaching process. From this interview, these internal factors are mainly reflected in teachers' previous teaching experience, professional education and training, and the ability to deal with modern technological tools.

(1) Teaching Experience

One of the reasons can be considered as the teacher's teaching experience. As mentioned above, the most obvious reason lies in the teachers' grasp of the key and difficult points of teaching. It is because of the lack of teaching experience of new teachers that veteran teachers can easily extract the key and difficult points of a lesson in the teaching process. When teachers of different ages and teaching ages face the same lesson, their teaching design is not the same. Thus, teachers' personal teaching beliefs are related to teachers' age and teaching experience.

(2) Educational Background

Educational background also plays a significant role. Miss D with a master's degree agrees more with the two veteran teacher's opinion on English teaching, such as choosing teaching methods. Professional theoretical study and pre-service training help Miss D to attain a deeper understanding of education and teaching, and a more familiar grasp of advanced teaching methods.

(3) Ability of handling technological tools

Technical skills can't be ignored, either. Educational technology provides rich and colorful media forms for the presentation of teaching content, powerful tools and sufficient resources for teachers' teaching and students' learning, and convenient and quick communication platform for teachers and students' mutual assistance. From the interview, educational technology is repeatedly mentioned by the teachers especially in supply materials outside the textbooks. Nowadays, there are increasing number of learning resources on the internet. Teachers need to promote their technical skills, while Mrs. A said the most influential element hampering her to teach the contents outside the textbooks is that she can't handle computer and those apps well.

4.4.2 External Factors

The external environment is not only one of the important factors that affect students' language learning, but also one of the contributing factors that influence teachers' teaching beliefs. These factors are mainly reflected in students' interests, needs, current language stage and the heavy tasks and requirements of the school and society for teachers.

(1) Students' learning situation

Students' learning situation refers to the existing knowledge structure and individual differences of students in learning a certain content. Teaching design theory advocates "designing teaching for learning". It is emphasized that any teaching activity should take satisfying learners' learning needs as the starting point and foothold to serve learners, to guide and to promote learners' learning with teaching. The teaching design must take learners and learners as the focus to help every learner to learn effectively.

Student's language competence is vital for English teachers to design a class. Whether when set teaching objectives, identify key points and difficult points or choose teaching methods, teachers always take students' real conditions into account. Besides, all of the four teachers pay attention to students' interests and experience.

(2) Teaching Task

The teaching task is an important element, too. According to Miss C, the school only pays attention to the improvement of students' scores, but ignores the cultivation of students' interest and pragmatic language ability. Both teachers and students are required to complete a lot of tasks, which leads to teachers often lack enough time to use those teaching methods that meet the needs of students and in line with the interests of students. In the long run, it is harmful to students' enthusiasm for English learning and their long-term development of foreign language ability.

As a new teacher, she told that new teachers need more time and energy on getting familiar with teaching process, the system of their school, their students, the textbooks and so on. All these made new teachers feel stressed and overwhelmed.

Heavy teaching tasks make her more inclined to dominate the classroom in the actual teaching process, and students learn passively in her classroom.

5. Conclusion

This study mainly applies the method of interview to collect information about senior high school English teacher's teaching belief, in order to analyze and compare the current situation and causes of the new and veteran senior high school English teacher's teaching belief. According to this study, it can be found that there are both commonalities and differences of teaching belief between new and veteran English teachers in senior high school.

Their same ideas are mainly demonstrated in setting teaching objectives, paying attention to students' experience and interests, and supply extra learning materials for students. The differences are reflected in identifying key points and difficult points of a class, application of teaching methods and whether the classroom activities are teacher-led or student-centered.

As for the causes of the results, they can be summed up as internal and external factors, which contain the teacher's teaching experience, educational background, technic skills, teaching tasks and students' learning situation.

This section mainly aims at the main problems existing in the teaching beliefs of senior high school English teachers, and puts forward corresponding suggestions for teachers to establish scientific and reasonable teaching beliefs.

First of all, strengthen the professional pre-service training of teachers, including the theoretical learning of normal students in school and the practical training of new teachers. It can be seen from the differences between the teaching beliefs of veteran and new teachers that the educational background of teachers will greatly affect their teaching beliefs.

Among those new teachers with the same teaching practice and those who with higher education background often have more similar teaching beliefs with the veteran teachers, because they are exposed to more profound and modern teaching theoretical knowledge in the longer learning process. Therefore, strengthening the pre-service training of new teachers will help them form correct teaching beliefs and guide their teaching practice.

Secondly, establish a one-to-one support mechanism between new teachers and old teachers. Every new teacher has a veteran teacher as a guide to help him or her quickly get familiar with the school system, teaching process, student situation, etc. New teachers can listen to the guide's class more, discuss problems encountered in teaching with the guide, and explore more school-based teaching methods. This is conducive to the career development of new teachers.

Besides, schools should remain some temporal space for new teachers to explore their own teaching. New teachers often have more firm ideals and enthusiasm for education and teaching than veteran teachers and they have just finished their

theoretical study in campus. Schools can arrange the veteran teachers as guides to help the new teachers, at the same time, they should leave some opportunities for the new teachers to practice their ideas.

After all, an excellent English teacher should have his or her own characteristics and teaching style. The purpose of arranging tutors for new teachers is to help them adapt to the new working environment more quickly and clear the confusion encountered in teaching, rather than solidify the teaching of new teachers when they have not formed their own teaching style and mode.

In addition, strengthen the teaching technology training of teachers, such as power point making, video and audio editing. With the spread and application of network and multimedia technology, the transmission of educational information presents multimodality. Those symbols regarded as paralinguistic symbols in traditional time, such as images, music, videos, colors and so on, gradually take the place of the single mode and dominate in modern language teaching. This requires that teaching should also be multimodal.

References

- [1] Farrell, T. S. C. Conceptions of grammar teaching : a case study of teachers' beliefs and classroom practices[J] TESL-EJ 2005, 9(2):13-26.
- [2] Gilakjani A P , Sabouri N B . Teachers' Beliefs in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Literature[J]. English Language Teaching, 2017, 10(4):78-86
- [3] Girardet, Céline. Why do some teachers change and others don't? A review of studies about factors influencing in-service and pre-service teachers' change in classroom management[J]. Review of Education, 2017, 5(9):67-68
- [4] Hasan AYDEMİR. The effect of the pedagogical Formation Education process in Turkey on self-efficacy beliefs of students in teaching[J]. 2017, 23(10):1050-1061
- [5] Tunku Mohtar T M , Singh C K S , Kepol N , et al. Analysis of Teacher Beliefs and Efficacy for Teaching Writing to Weak Learners[J]. English Language Teaching, 2017, 10(9):208-217