

Exploring Teacher's Beliefs and Practices in Teaching Speaking Skill for Junior High School Students: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigates an English teacher's beliefs and instructional practices in teaching speaking skills at a junior high school in Karawang, Indonesia. The research focuses on understanding the teacher's beliefs on speaking instruction and how these beliefs are implemented in the classroom. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of relevant documents. The results indicate that the teacher holds thoughtful and consistent beliefs about the value of speaking as a tool for communication and self-expression. He adopts a flexible teaching role, functioning as a teacher, friend, and supporter based on students' needs. To foster student engagement and confidence, he utilized the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) alongside interactive games. While many of his practices were consistent with his stated beliefs, some discrepancies arose due to contextual limitations such as time constraints and lesson content. This study emphasizes the significance of aligning teachers' beliefs with their classroom practices to enhance the effectiveness of speaking instruction in EFL settings.

Keywords: teacher beliefs, speaking skill, classroom practice, EFL, case study

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' beliefs play an essential role in shaping their teaching approaches, especially within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. The way speaking skills are taught is strongly influenced by what teachers believe about language instruction, their students' capabilities, and the pedagogical methods they consider effective (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Guebba, 2021). These beliefs function as internal guides that inform decisions about instruction, classroom engagement, and the delivery of feedback.

Despite the important role of teacher beliefs, research indicates that these beliefs are not always consistently reflected in classroom practice due to contextual constraints such as limited time, curriculum requirements, large class sizes, and institutional regulations (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Zheng, 2013). Exploring the alignment or misalignment between what teachers believe and what they do in the classroom is crucial for enhancing teaching effectiveness and student learning in language education (Rahimi & Ong, 2023; Husaini & Prasetyowati, 2023).

Although numerous studies have investigated teacher beliefs in EFL settings, most have concentrated on specific methods or particular instructional challenges (Khairunnisa et al., 2020; Ainun & Yusuf, 2024). Limited attention has been given to how junior high school teachers' beliefs are enacted in their daily speaking instruction. To address this gap, the present study examines the beliefs of an English

teacher about teaching speaking and how those beliefs are realized in an Indonesian junior high school classroom.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Teachers' beliefs encompass the personal understandings and values they hold regarding teaching and learning, which directly influence how they plan lessons and manage their classrooms (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2006). In EFL settings—where students often have limited exposure to English outside of school—these beliefs can significantly impact the strategies teachers use to support or hinder students' development of communicative skills (Liu & Ren, 2021; Barcelos, 2024).

The connection between what teachers believe and what they practice in the classroom is often fluid and multifaceted. Although many educators aim to apply communicative and student-centered methods, practical barriers such as high-stakes testing, limited time, or lack of professional training can make it difficult to fully implement these beliefs (Farrell & Guz, 2019; Spruce & Bol, 2014).

Numerous studies have identified this disconnect between belief and practice. For instance, Mammo et al. (2022) found that while EFL teachers in Ethiopia supported communicative approaches, they frequently relied on more traditional techniques due to low student motivation and contextual challenges. Likewise, Oktami et al. (2022) observed that Indonesian teachers appreciated the use of English songs to engage students but faced obstacles in applying these methods because of inadequate resources.

These insights emphasize the need for reflective teaching practices and institutional backing to help align teachers' beliefs with their classroom behaviors. However, research specifically examining speaking instruction in Indonesian junior high schools remains scarce. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the beliefs of one English teacher and how those beliefs are applied or limited within an actual classroom setting.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine the beliefs and teaching practices of a junior high school English teacher in Karawang, Indonesia. The case study method was chosen to enable a detailed and contextualized exploration of the teacher's viewpoints and instructional behavior in a real-life educational setting (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). This design is especially well-suited for investigating how abstract beliefs are translated into practical teaching actions.

Research Site and Participant

The research was conducted at a private junior high school in Karawang, West Java, known for its emphasis on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and communicative competence. The participant, referred to as Mr. Ir (a pseudonym), is

an English teacher with two years of teaching experience at the junior high school level. He regularly conducts speaking lessons and is known for incorporating interactive methods, making him a relevant subject for this case study.

Data Collection Techniques

To gather comprehensive data, the researcher used three methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Three interview sessions were held. The first, conducted online on May 1, 2025, explored Mr. Ir's beliefs about speaking instruction, his role as a teacher, and his perceptions of students' roles. Two additional interviews took place offline on May 7 and May 8, 2025, to clarify and expand on the initial responses, particularly in relation to upcoming lesson plans.

Classroom Observations: Observations took place on May 7 and 8, 2025, during Mr. Ir's speaking classes. These sessions were documented using both video and audio recordings, complemented by field notes to capture teaching strategies, student participation, and the classroom atmosphere.

Document Analysis: Relevant teaching documents, such as lesson plans, student worksheets, and instructional materials, were collected to provide insight into how the teacher's beliefs were embedded in the planning and implementation of speaking instruction.

Instruments

Interview Protocol: Adapted from prior research Purwono et al., 2021, the interview guide included open-ended questions focusing on the teacher's beliefs, teaching strategies, and perceived roles of both teachers and students in speaking instruction.

Observation Sheet: A structured template was used to document observed speaking activities, teacher-student interaction, and instructional techniques during class.

Document Review Checklist: This included criteria for analyzing syllabi, teaching resources, and assessment tools to assess consistency with the teacher's professed beliefs.

Data Analysis

The collected data from interviews, classroom observations, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process began with transcription and repeated reading of the data to develop codes. These codes were then grouped into themes representing the teacher's beliefs, instructional choices, and the extent of alignment between the two.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing insights from all data sources (Denzin, 1978). Ethical considerations were also addressed by securing informed consent from the participant and maintaining confidentiality through the use of a pseudonym. All data were used solely for research purposes in accordance with ethical research standards.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section outlines the study's findings based on the two central research questions: (1) What beliefs does the junior high school teacher hold about teaching speaking skills? and (2) How are these beliefs manifested in classroom practices? The findings are presented thematically and are substantiated with evidence from interviews and classroom observations.

- **Teacher's Beliefs in Teaching Speaking Skills**

Table 1. Mr. Ir's Stated Beliefs.

| Theme | Stated beliefs |
|----------------------|--|
| Teacher's Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Flexible as teacher, friend, and helper depending on student needs.- Supports students emotionally and academically to reduce speaking anxiety. |
| Teaching L2 Speaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speaking helps students express their thoughts and feelings.- It prepares students for real-life communication and public speaking.- Uses GTM and simple games to teach vocabulary and encourage speaking. |
| Student's Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students are not only learners but also contributors to lesson improvement.- Must be active participants who interact and practice regularly.- Should be aware of themselves as central to the speaking class. |

The teacher, Mr. Ir, demonstrated clear and reflective beliefs about the role of speaking in English learning. He believed that speaking enables students to express their thoughts, emotions, and arguments, and prepares them for real-life communication. He stated that speaking is not just a classroom skill but an essential life competency. His belief highlights the communicative and expressive value of speaking in developing students' confidence and communication abilities.

Regarding the teaching of speaking, Mr. Ir emphasized that instruction should be enjoyable and tailored to students' needs. He acknowledged the limitations of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) he frequently used but expressed a willingness to diversify his teaching strategies with simple speaking games and communicative tasks.

In terms of teacher roles, Mr. Ir saw himself as a teacher, a friend, and a helper. He believed that being emotionally supportive helps reduce students' anxiety when speaking English. As for student roles, he viewed learners as active contributors who should engage in the learning process, provide feedback, and take responsibility for their speaking development.

• **Beliefs Reflected in Classroom Practices**

Table 2. Mr. Ir Stated Beliefs and Classroom Practices

| Theme | Stated beliefs | D1 | D2 |
|----------------------|--|----|----|
| Teacher’s Role | Flexible as teacher, friend, and helper depending on student needs. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Make speaking lessons engaging and meaningful. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Teachers play a major role in motivating students and fostering speaking skills. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Supports students emotionally and academically to reduce speaking anxiety. | ✓ | # |
| Teaching L2 Speaking | Speaking helps students express their thoughts and feelings. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Speaking lessons are important for organizing thoughts and communicating clearly. | ✗ | ✓ |
| | Teaching speaking helps students become confident in public speaking and life situations. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Uses GTM and simple games to teach vocabulary and encourage speaking. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Student’s Role | Students are not only learners but also contributors to lesson improvement. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Must be active participants who interact and practice regularly. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Should be aware of themselves as central to the speaking class. | # | ✓ |
| | Students need teacher guidance to take an active and purposeful role in learning to speak. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Students develop interest, discipline, and attentiveness to learn speaking. | ✓ | ✓ |

Key:

D1: Mr.Ir’s Lesson D1: Prepositions (map reading)

D2: Mr.Ir’s Lesson D2: Parts of the body

✓ = observed in practice; ✗ = did not observe; # = limited occurrence.

Classroom observations revealed that many of Mr. Ir's beliefs were aligned with his teaching practices. For example, in both observed lessons, he demonstrated flexibility in his role by offering support, correcting pronunciation gently, and using engaging activities such as the "Simon Says" game and map-based speaking tasks. These activities encouraged student participation, reduced anxiety, and supported vocabulary development reflecting his belief in building student confidence through interaction.

Additionally, Mr. Ir used GTM to teach vocabulary and sentence structures, especially for students with limited English proficiency. He complemented this with interactive games to create a balance between accuracy and fluency.

However, some minor inconsistencies were observed. While he believed that speaking helps students organize ideas, classroom activities primarily focused on vocabulary identification and repetition rather than structured expression. Emotional support was more evident in the first lesson than in the second, possibly due to time constraints or the fast pace of activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that Mr. Ir's beliefs significantly influenced his classroom practices. His flexible role as a teacher, friend, and helper was clearly visible in his interactions with students. His belief in speaking as a means of expression and real-life communication shaped the selection of speaking tasks that encouraged engagement and reduced performance anxiety.

These findings are consistent with prior studies that emphasize the influence of teacher beliefs on pedagogical choices (Borg, 2003; Farrell & Ives, 2014). At the same time, the observed mismatches support the notion that contextual factors such as time limitations, classroom dynamics, and institutional demands can hinder the full implementation of beliefs (Zheng, 2013; Farrell & Guz, 2019).

Overall, Mr. Ir's case demonstrates a strong connection between beliefs and practices, with minor gaps that highlight the need for reflective practice and institutional support to foster more effective speaking instruction in EFL classrooms

CONCLUSION

This study explored a junior high school English teacher's belief about teaching speaking skills and examined how these beliefs were reflected in classroom practices. The findings revealed that the teacher held strong, reflective beliefs about the importance of speaking as a means for communication, confidence-building, and personal expression. He believed in adopting a flexible teaching role—acting as a teacher, helper, and friend—to support both the academic and emotional needs of his students.

Classroom observations confirmed that most of the teacher's beliefs were consistently implemented through practices such as the use of GTM, communicative games, and positive reinforcement. These strategies encouraged active participation and reduced students' anxiety in speaking English. However, minor mismatches were

observed, particularly in areas such as emotional support and opportunities for structured idea development. These discrepancies were influenced by contextual factors like time constraints and lesson structure.

In conclusion, the study confirms that teacher beliefs play a vital role in shaping classroom practices. Reflective and student-centered beliefs, when supported by appropriate instructional strategies and institutional support, can significantly enhance the teaching of speaking skills in EFL contexts

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