Investigating a Teacher's Beliefs and Practices in Teaching Grammar: A Case Study of a Senior Teacher of English in a High School in Jakarta

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Abstrak

Apa yang diyakini dan dilakukan oleh seorang guru dalam pengajaran tata bahasa adalah masalah substansial yang perlu dieksplorasi. Memahami keyakinan guru dapat memfasilitasi pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang praktik kelas guru dan, pada akhirnya, nuansa kinerja muridnya. Beberapa penelitian telah dilakukan tentang keyakinan dan praktik guru dalam mengajar tata bahasa dalam konteks Indonesia. Namun, penelitian yang menyelidiki kepercayaan dan praktik guru senior dalam mengajar tata bahasa jarang terjadi di Indonesia. Pengajaran tata bahasa selalu menjadi kontroversi bagi guru bahasa di lingkungan L2/EFL. Masalah utama adalah bagaimana tata bahasa harus diajarkan dan diperoleh. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kepercayaan dan praktik guru yang berkaitan dengan pengajaran tata bahasa. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan observasi kelas. Penelitian ini hanya berfokus pada seorang guru senior perempuan yang telah mengajar bahasa Inggris selama puluhan tahun di lingkungan sekolah menengah atas. Dari wawancara mendalam dan observasi, peneliti memperoleh informasi yang bermakna dari guru, mulai dari awal pengajarannya, kemudian selama fase Post Method, dan melalui fase integrasi pengajaran tata bahasa dengan teknologi. Dari wawancara dan observasi kelas, peneliti dapat menyimpulkan bahwa guru telah menunjukkan konsistensi dengan keyakinannya, dan beberapa inovasi pengajaran dengan tetap mengadopsi metode deduktif.

Kata kunci: Keyakinan dan Praktik Guru, Metode Deduktif, Guru Senior

Abstract

What a teacher believes and does in grammar instruction is a substantial issue that needs to be explored. Understanding the teacher's beliefs could facilitate a better understanding of the teacher's classroom practices and, eventually, the nuances of her student's performance. A few studies have been conducted on a teacher's beliefs and practices in teaching grammar in the Indonesian context. However, studies investigating a senior teacher's beliefs and practices in teaching grammar are infrequent in Indonesia. The teaching of grammar has always been controversial for language teachers in L2/ EFL settings. The main problem is how grammar should be taught and acquired. The aim of this study is to analyze a teacher's beliefs and practices relating to the teaching of grammar. The data were gathered through an in-depth interview with the teacher and classroom observations. This research focused only on a female senior teacher who has taught English for tens of years in a high school environment. From the in-depth interview and the observations, the researcher obtained meaningful information from the teacher, starting from the beginning of her teaching, then during the Post Method phase, and through the phase for the integration of the teaching of grammar with technology. From the interviews and classroom observations, the researchers can conclude that the teacher has shown consistency with her beliefs, and the several teaching innovations while still adopting the Deductive Method.

Keywords: Teacher's Beliefs and Practices, Deductive Method, Senior Teacher

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, language teachers' cognition has become a significant part of language instruction research. In the field of language teaching, the number of studies carried out in this research area has augmented considerably. Earlier studies have been done about the connection between teachers' cognition and practices concerning grammar teaching (Başar, 2020; Borg & Burns, 2008; Farrell & Yang, 2019). Declarative knowledge and beliefs related with teaching grammar, and the connection between cognition and practice. Teachers' beliefs are significant as they affect their willingness to experiment with new approaches; this

would impact the efficacy of teaching they might offer (Borg, 2003; Said & Chahrazed, 2022). Previous study also states that teacher cognition refers to an intricate combination of language teachers' knowledge, beliefs and thoughts about their teaching decisions and actions (Borg, 2005).

Teachers' beliefs have been an appealing issue for researchers due to their contribution to the development of teaching and learning English. Teachers' beliefs have a significant effect on their classroom principles. People act because they believe that what they are going to do is valid. The same condition also occurs in English learning classrooms: a teacher plays a significant part in facilitating learners' proficiency (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Ong, 2011). Previous statement implies that teachers' teaching practices heavily influence learners' ability in mastering English, and these practices are influenced by their beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1984). Thus, there is a close connection between language proficiency and teachers' beliefs. Therefore, understanding teachers' beliefs might help better understand teachers' classroom practices and, ultimately, the nuances of their students' performance. Teachers' beliefs originate from various sources (Gray, 2017; Ozer & Akçayoğlu, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

There has been some research on teachers' beliefs in the EFL context. Some of the studies were conducted in Indonesia. Previous study examined the teacher's beliefs in teaching grammar that influenced the teacher's grammar teaching practices in a high school in Indonesia (Puspitasari Dani et al., 2013). They collected the data using in-depth interviews with the teachers and students. The results gave some evidence that the teacher's beliefs had some impacts on her grammar-teaching practices. Similar research conducted by involved four English teachers with diverse experiences in teaching (Raikhapoor, 2020). This study is one of few studies conducted in the Indonesian context concerning teachers' beliefs and practices when teaching grammar. The data showed the consistency between teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices. Another study was focused on high school teachers' beliefs about the significance of grammar in learning English and its part in EFL teaching and its practices for teaching grammar in the teaching of communicative languages (Jusmaya, 2017). Results showed that teachers agree that grammar ought to be the core component of any language teaching. However, their perceptions of what they believe to be an effective instruction are influenced by their experience as learners.

The term a senior teacher in this study is a teacher having taught for tens of years and has gone through several teaching stages. The teacher is very familiar with conventional methods such as Audio-Lingual, grammar translation, Total Physical Response, and Grammar Translation, which were very popular in the 1980s. In the early 1990s, another term, "Post Method Pedagogy," was coined in previous study (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). It is a movement in English language teaching emerging to fulfill discontent with the present language-teaching methods from the late 19th century to the late 20th century. This method was aimed at breaking the 'cycle' of traditional methods. And nowadays, the integration of technology in teaching grammar has been used widely. Technology has caused impacts to language education in the all-skill areas including the teaching of grammar. The teaching of grammar with technology offers unique challenges as well as opportunities for students to improve their communication skills through technologies (Bikowski, 2018; Cheung, 2010).

The leading problems related to the teaching of grammar may be attributed to teachers' lack of awareness of grammar teaching values and contextual issues. Previous study stated that teachers' beliefs about language learning affect how they handle grammar (Farrell & Lim, 2005). Teachers'-led grammar teaching is derived from how they perceive language learning, their students' needs, the time provided, and whether it takes a long process. Moreover, the teachers' knowledge of grammar also affects their instructional decisions (Kahraman, 2020; Käsper et al., 2018; Ong, 2011). The English teacher is often described as

an unattractive grammar teacher whose only pleasure in life is to report the errors of others (Başar, 2020; Federkeil et al., 2020; Wang, 2010). For most in a class, any mention of grammar causes moments of discomfort and feelings of terror. Many teachers have attempted to present grammar instruction a manner that is non-threatening, imaginative and effective activity in the English curriculum.

Meanwhile, inductive instruction, in which the learners find the rules for themselves, has been supported as it promotes active involvement and enhances the learner's cognitive contribution (Calhoun, 2005; Lee et al., 2019; Long & Doughty, 2009). Nevertheless, complaints have been expressed of this instruction being unclear for learners and a profound dependence on the learner's inference-making skills (Cerezo et al., 2016; Erlam, 2003). Another way to teach grammar is teaching grammar contextually as an alternative way to separate grammar lessons and units. It simply means that teachers should approach grammar as an integrated element of language skills: reading, writing, and speaking, an indispensable facet of students' day-to-day language experiences (Crovitz, 2016; Herron & Tomasello, 1992; Vogel et al., 2011). However, teaching grammar in context needs preparation and creativity, and most teachers already handle heavy workloads in conjunction with their teaching activities. Nowadays, technology is in the mainstream for teaching English skills and components commonly used among English teachers.

Research on grammar instruction has been teachers' primary concern in English teaching for decades, but it remains a debatable issue in L2/ EFL settings. The focal problem is how grammar is best acquired and taught. Scholars and language teachers have addressed this issue considerably (Alenezi, 2019; Ellis, 2006; Richards & Reppen, 2014). Teachers' cognition is a recent phenomenon needing exposure in the Indonesian context, particularly regarding teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction and their teaching practices. Thus, this study attempts to better understand a teacher's decisions in grammar instruction while being focused on a teacher's beliefs about grammar instruction and the practices in the class. The influence of a teacher's beliefs on grammar teaching practices has been examined in prior research (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014). The present study is aimed at analyze a senior teacher's beliefs and classroom practices when teaching grammar and whether there is any connection between her beliefs and pedagogical practices.

2. METHODS

The study sets out to discover both a senior teacher's beliefs and classroom practices concerning the controversial issues of the teaching of grammar. The study applied a qualitative research method, of which the primary instruments were a classroom observation and an in-depth interview. The researcher used purposive sampling to obtain the sample. The study was undertaken with a teacher teaching in a state school. She has taught for over 30 years. She is fifty-three years old and teaching in a Senior High School. Before conducting the research, the researcher did a preliminary interview with the principal where the teacher teaches. The interview aims to the criteria of a suitable participant for the current research.

The qualitative research design applied aims to explore an Indonesian EFL in regards to the teacher's beliefs and practices in teaching grammar the qualitative method sheds light on the phenomena under investigation by understanding the underlying opinions, findings, and motives associated with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007). Hence, this study used a qualitative research method to get more information on the teacher's beliefs and practices in teaching grammar. The observation was conducted six times when the teacher was teaching grammar, and it was also recorded. The in-depth interview was conducted face to face. There were seven items asked of the teacher. The interview questions were designed

to elicit information about teachers' beliefs and practices and different approaches to the teaching of grammar.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results and the discussion are split into 3 parts: first, the senior teacher's beliefs and practices toward the teaching of grammar; the second, how she teaches grammar in the class, and the last about the problems encountered by the teacher during the teaching of grammar in the classes.

Based on the Interview the Important of Grammar Important

The teacher agrees that the teaching of grammar is vital for students both in written and spoken. Refraining from overlooking English grammar teaching is not favorable to encourage teaching English as a whole and even affects students' proper use of English. Due to the lack of accurate grammar, many students inside and outside the classroom need some help to correctly analyze the sentence structure. In oral and written expressions, the mix of Indonesian-English utterances/sentences often appears. For instance, some high school students still say, *"I school at SMA 3"; "She is work hard."* Reading comprehension of long and complex sentences requires help to correctly analyze the sentence structure. With good grammar knowledge, students can fully develop their integrated English and promote their overall levels of English. Consequently, teachers who teach foreign languages should develop the existing situations on neglecting the teaching of grammar in English education and explore grammar with the teaching methods to promote students' English level. The teaching of grammar should be balanced. It should be a central part of teaching foreign languages in Indonesia.

How does the Senior Teacher Teach Grammar in the Classroom?

Based on the interview (Question 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6: How do you teach English in your classes? Should it be taught implicitly or explicitly? Are students required to know the grammar rules and how to use them in their writing and speaking? Is the grammar concerned with the use of the accurate tenses? Do you integrate technology in your teaching?). She believes that the Deductive Method is an effective way to teach grammar. When she first taught English, she applied the Deductive Method traditionally. The traditional language teaching method encompasses the teacher focusing on language form by explaining the grammar rules and giving the students some exercises. It worked because the students could understand the material quickly. This method places grammar as superior to other aspects of the language. However, her students finally grew weary of this method as they were passive recipients, and the teacher rarely involved them in the activities. This method is teacher-centered; the teacher gives instructions and elicits explanations and responses. Even though they could generate correct language forms on paper, they still made some errors when speaking the language in its context. Therefore, the student could not appropriately apply the language in contextualized situations where language fluency is essential.

When the teacher presents the rules in the Deductive Method, the presentation should be equipped with ample examples, brief explanations, students' involvement, and comprehension, allowing learners to personalize the rules. If students have been exposed to languages whose meaning and construction they understand, give them enough practice to apply the rules in meaningful/ contextual situations. Practice can be in writing, speaking, reading, speaking or listening. If teachers give attention to their student's relevant issues relevant to their age, life, cognitive level, and language proficiency, successful teaching

results could be achieved. To motivate their students, teachers might consider creating a situation to provide visual satisfaction, make grammar activities more open, individualing the practice and making the grammar activities challenging.

The teacher did not realize that she had actually applied the Post Method Pedagogy. This method aims to facilitate the development and progress of teachers' theory to practice. This method took place to meet the demand for an optimal way to teach English without the limitations based on the method. In the past, some leading methods in language teaching, such as Grammar Translation, Audio Lingual, and so on, have greatly influenced and become universal language teaching methods. However, in the current period, teachers and researchers have realized that no single-language teaching method would bring total success in teaching a second language. Teachers can create their own methods and roles play as evaluators, observers, theorizers, practitioners, autonomous teachers, and critical thinkers.

Based on several observations conducted by the researchers, the teacher also utilized technology in her teaching to support students in improving their learning skills. She realized that at present integrating technology into learning a foreign language, such as English, has become necessary. The teacher often gave assignments to visit websites prepared to enhance the reading skills of English learners who also wrote emails to their friends to improve their writing skills. For the lower level, she asked students to write a caption about their memorable past experiences on their Instagram. For higher levels students , the teacher gave an assignment to the students once in two months to conduct their speaking activities in their Vlog. She also encouraged students to have their Blogs to practice their writing.

What are the Difficulties Encountered by the Teacher in Teaching Grammar

From the classroom observations and the interview with the teacher, she explained that teaching tenses was one of the most challenging aspects of teaching grammar. Using tenses can create great confusion among Indonesian students because there are no tenses in Indonesian, while in English, the tenses keep changing depending on the time and situation. Therefore, English learners should know how to use tenses correctly and accurately. It is often believed that with sufficient knowledge of tenses, learners may find it easier to construct grammatically correct English sentences since tenses help them better express their ideas in English. That is why the teacher applied various ways, such as through games and using varied, relevant, and clear examples. The second problem is a mixed-ability class. To overcome this problem, the teacher often asked the students to work in groups of three or four. The teacher often arranged for the more able students to serve as tutors for less able students under the teacher's supervision.

Discussion

Based on the findings, the teacher consistently applies the Deductive Method in teaching English grammar to their students. With this traditional method, the teacher explains grammar rules in a systematic and logical manner. The Deductive Method suited the student's way of learning and was able to activate his master's grammar skills very well. However, although this method is effective, this monotonous method makes students feel bored. Therefore, the teacher tries to make some innovations in teaching grammar which still uses the Deductive Method. By teaching grammar in a more contextual and interesting way, students become more interested in learning grammar.

The teacher is trying to create a new method that is sufficient to improve students' mastery of English grammar. In this way, students can more easily master English grammar rules in a more interesting and contextual way. So, they can be more motivated in learning English grammar and achieve better mastery (Micciche, 2004; Ong, 2011). It is believed that exposure has a vital role in one's language proficiency. Language proficiency is very

important in learning grammar for students. Language proficiency and grammar are interrelated in one's language and communication skills (Ha, 2021; Ramsin & Mayall, 2019; Wang, 2010). Grammar is the rules of grammar which consist of syntax, morphology, and phonology. Good grammar skills are essential for understanding and using language properly.

The level of proficiency that students achieve in foreign languages is greatly influenced by the amount of exposure that the learners have to the target language in its natural setting. Exposure can be in verbal or written form, formal or informal settings (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Lutviana & Mafulah, 2021). Having a conversation with the teacher or role-playing with friends in the classroom is also effective exposure. Previous study also states that there are many ways to get students exposed to language: when listening to the teacher using the language, listening to tapes, reading texts, and looking at computer printouts (Harmer, 2007). Other forms of exposure may include watching English films with/ without subtitles, reading English magazines or newspapers, going abroad, and chatting on the internet with friends from other countries in English. In learning grammar, especially learning tenses, the learners have to know and understand the concept underlying the rules of the tenses, so they can apply them correctly in other skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The implications of this study provide an overview of how senior teachers in a secondary school in Jakarta teach English grammar. This research also provides insight into how a teacher's beliefs can influence the way he or she teaches English grammar. However, this research has limitations. This research was only conducted with one senior teacher at a secondary school in Jakarta. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study may not be generalizable to the population of English grammar teachers in Indonesia as a whole. This research only studies the beliefs and practices of one teacher, therefore, cannot provide an overview of the beliefs and practices of other teachers in teaching English grammar. Finally, it is suggested that future studies should better understand teacher cognition, especially within the Indonesian context. Exploring and understanding the reasons that underpin teachers' beliefs is necessary to improve the quality of English teaching**.**

4. CONCLUSION

The present study explored a senior female teacher's beliefs and practices when teaching grammar. The teacher consistently applied the Deductive Method because she believed that this method was adequate based on previous experience when she studied in secondary school. Her teacher explained grammar only with this traditional method. This method matched her way of learning and enabled her master grammar very well. She also used this method in her classroom when she became a teacher. Unfortunately, it wasn't successful as the students got weary of this method, and she attempted to make some innovations in teaching grammar which still used the Deductive Method. The students became more interested in learning grammar when it was taught in a more contextual and interesting manner. She created a new method which was adequate to improve students' mastery of English grammar.

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