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University of Tlemcen
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English

An Investigation on the Impact of EFL Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs on their Teaching Practices / Performance. The Case of Teachers at the Department of English at Tlemcen University.

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for A Master's Degree in Didactics and Assessment in English Language Education

Presented by:

Mr. Mohammed Rayen CHAOUICHE

Supervised by:

Dr. Abdellatif SEMMOUD

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Prof. Zoubir DENDANE

Prof

Chairperson

Dr. Abdellatif SEMMOUD

MCA

Supervisor

Dr. Kamila GHOUALI

MCB

Examiner

Academic year 2021/2022

Statement of Originality

I testify that “an Investigation on the Impact of EFL Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs on their Teaching Practices / Performance. The Case of Teachers at the Department of English at Tlemcen University” is my own work and does not contain previous material published by others except where there is citation.

Signature

Mr. Mohammed Rayen Chaouche
06/06/2022

DEDICATION

**To my dearest parents, Rabea and
Taoufik,
Sweet siblings,
And
Lovely grand-mother,
I dedicate this work.**

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First and foremost, I would like to thank ALLAH for making everything easy and smooth for me, and for supplying me with guidance, strength and the best of luck to submit this work.

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ABSTRACT

A significant amount of research was dedicated to personal epistemology. However, research on teachers' epistemological beliefs is quiet scarce. The current study investigated the impact of EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs on their teaching practices. To reach this end, the researcher opted for an exploratory case study dealing with fourteen EFL teachers in the English department at Tlemcen University. The educed evidence was a mixture of both, quantitative and qualitative data as data collection was based on a questionnaire to examine the teachers' beliefs and reveal their actual practices, as well as a semi-structured interview to check their opinions upon the teaching process. Overall, the results revealed that teachers possess a combination of naïve and sophisticated beliefs to various extents. Moreover, it was indicated that effective teaching practices are primarily related to more sophisticated beliefs and lastly, the findings showed that adopting for a complex epistemological belief system is one of the effective ways to acquire compelling teaching performance. Eventually, the researcher mentioned some limitations faced during the research process and then provided some recommendations for greater English language teaching outcomes.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EP: Epistemological

EB: Epistemological Beliefs

NB: Naïve Belief

POT: Peer Observation Technique

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

SB: Sophisticated Belief

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

General Introduction

Teaching a language necessitates highly qualified teachers with sufficient knowledge to achieve proficiency in the target language. One major concern when it comes to teaching is that not all teachers are consciously aware of their epistemological belief system. In simple words, many of them ignore how they acquire knowledge and the effective way to use it. As a matter of fact, the way we acquire and use knowledge could heavily affect our teaching/learning attitudes. Because of that, most scholars agree on the major role of the teachers' epistemological beliefs and how easily those faiths could improve our teaching/learning outcomes.

The different epistemological beliefs vary from simple and naive ones, like believing that the same teaching practices are mostly shared by all instructors, to more complex and sophisticated ones, like believing that teaching requires individual efforts to elect an adequate teaching style adapted to the personal situation.

What is beneficial about this topic is the ability to improve one's capacities and the ease of taking action at the outset. As it is commonly agreed that teaching is a constant reflective process, it is much obliged to reconsider one's knowledge of language and deduce the proper ways to use that sum of information by transmitting it adequately to the learners.

This research study is therefore conducted to examine Tlemcen's University teachers of English and to check whether they hold a naive or more sophisticated belief system.

As a result, the researcher attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

Q1: Do English teachers at Tlemcen University have sophisticated or naive epistemological beliefs?

Q2: To what extent do personal beliefs about teaching influence teachers' teaching strategies?

Q3: What are the best possible attitudes to enhance language teachers' practices?

General Introduction

Ultimately, the research's roadmap, conducted as part of this dissertation, will provide evidence and arguments in support of the following research hypotheses:

H1: Teachers of English at Tlemcen University hold both, sophisticated and naïve beliefs depending on their belief system about teaching.

H2: Personal beliefs about teaching largely influence the teachers' teaching strategies as they stand to shape the teaching methods and practices.

H3: One of the best possible ways to enhance language teachers' practices is through adopting a sophisticated belief system.

This research work is based on two different research instruments, which are the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. The goal of the selected research tools is to learn about the teachers' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. Therefore, our case study will be based upon 14 EFL teachers from Tlemcen University teaching different modules to have more reliable results. The research instruments used will be 10 questionnaires administered to ten teachers, and 4 semi- structured interviews held with four other instructors.

In this regard, the current work consists of two chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework concerning the teaching and learning processes, in addition to the epistemological belief system in accordance with its' definition, history, and the five beliefs. Afterwards, the researcher included different effective teaching practices and concluded the chapter by settling a core relationship between sophisticated beliefs and efficient teaching practices. The second chapter is dedicated to the practical facet of the research. First, it embodies the methodological procedures of the study in reference to the research design, the sampling, and the research instruments. Afterwards, it is followed by an in-depth analysis of both the quantitative, and qualitative data, and then tackles the interpretation of the main findings. Finally, the last section is devoted to limitations and recommendations for further research, which are intentionally mentioned to enhance the quality of teaching and thus, sustain a recognized high quality of education.

CHAPTER ONE

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at giving a global overview of the epistemological belief system that each teacher/learner possesses and consciously or subconsciously uses in his/her teaching/learning process. In further stages, the researcher strives to find a core relationship between sophisticated EB and effective teaching practices.

Ontology is the study of what there is in the world and its reality. Epistemology is the study of how you know that truth. Epistemological beliefs are therefore responsible to accordingly shape our teaching practices and ultimately acquire positive outcomes; because effective teaching is highly related to sophisticated beliefs, while deficient teaching is due to naïve ones.

According to the current data, most university teachers in Algeria have never been exposed to any kind of research about their personal beliefs of knowledge in general and teaching in particular. Therefore, this research study is conducted to examine how Tlemcen university teachers at the department of English perceive teaching, and to investigate their inner beliefs towards knowledge acquisition.

1.2 Teaching/Learning Defined

Teaching is defined by Dewey (1934) by an equation: “Teaching is learning as selling is to buying”. He also said that, “teaching can be compared to selling commodities. No one can sell unless someone buys ... yet there are teachers who think they have done a good day's teaching irrespective of what the pupils have learned.” Dewey (1939). Teachers play a major role in facilitating the learning process since their task is to simplify the rule and provide multiple real life situation examples. Learning on the other side is the global preparation for would-be teachers. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, learning can be defined as “the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something”. It implies both; linguistic knowledge, and the technical psychological preparation before tackling the job of teaching.

In this vein, active learning is highly supported in language acquisition as it sustains the learners' abilities towards better results.

1.2.1 Active Learning

Unlike surface learning, active learning provides students with the adequate skills and strategies to be fully engaged and integrated within the course. Through discussions, role plays and problem solving activities, students would develop their sense of autonomy and start deducing the lesson using their own efforts. Moreover, active learners are self reflective and critical thinkers as they skillfully analyze the delivered pieces of information before taking them for granted. To illustrate, they are more likely to ask multiple questions about the source of the given data, whether it is a valid and certified source. They also refer to their personal principles and accept the received knowledge only when it matches their beliefs and cultural background.

Similarly, Meyer and Jones (1993) define active learning as a shift in focus away from the teacher and material delivery and toward the learner's active participation with the subject being studied. According to them, active learning approaches prevent the learner from becoming a passive receiver. Rather, he or she learns and practices how to comprehend and apply knowledge and abilities in creative ways. As a matter of fact, the lack of personal involvement characterizes passive learning. As a result, passive learning is not self-reinforcing and to further justify, passive learning lacks the required engagement and desire to participate. In this vein, passive learners usually show complete reliance on the teacher to transfer knowledge, and their contribution to the learning process is typically limited. On the other extreme, active learning, as opposed to passive learning, encourages students to consider the teacher as a reference, a mentor, and a promoter for future endeavors. Active students are more likely to take a dynamic and enthusiastic approach to their studies.

For that reason, most western educational institutions support active learning because it gives birth to future leaders and brighter learners exceeding all expectations.

Broadly speaking, teaching mostly occurs in a physical context inside a classroom, which has always been favorable by many teachers around the globe.

1.2.2 In Class Teaching

Before Covid-19 pandemic, in class teaching has always been the commonly used method around the globe. It provides a real face to face interaction with the teacher that enormously benefits the learner's input comprehension. When students physically attend the lesson, they are more likely to purely concentrate with their instructor as they are engaged in the process and could raise their hands to ask for clarification of any crossed-by ambiguity.

Moreover, the teacher is able in this case to establish a genuine rapport between him/her and the learners and also between the students themselves. In fact, the role of teacher as involver requires settling a collaborative non-judgmental atmosphere where the students could participate spontaneously without any fear. In class teaching is therefore a perfect opportunity for teachers to apply their acquired knowledge about the different ways of teaching and play different roles depending on the current status.

In this vein, in class content delivery demands certain skills in order to successfully obtain positive outcomes. One major aspect is the content mastery, i.e. language teachers have to be proficient in both, written and spoken forms of language. They must achieve language proficiency and possess the systemic language. Furthermore, they have to be trained about the technical and psychological requirements to avoid any unnecessary stress or negative impressions.

Public speaking, classroom management, problem resolution, empathy and team working are some essential skills to be covered and tackled in order to achieve remarkable in class teaching outcomes.

However, teaching could also take place virtually using an electronic device supplied with internet connection.

1.2.3 Online Teaching

With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increased widespread fear of contamination that gave birth to new sanitary measurements. This created a shift from traditional in-class teaching to on line one. On-line teaching is the act of educating, mentoring and guiding learners via the internet.

Teachers in this situation could use online platforms such as Zoom, Udemy, Microsoft Teams and work remotely from home or co-working spaces instead of travelling personally to the physical classrooms. With no doubt, online teaching saved the educational industry during the past two years as most individuals were quarantined in their homes. It allowed the continuity of the schooling system while every other activity was in total suspension.

Controversially, third world countries did not witness the same online teaching success due to the limited technological appliances and the economic incomes. As it is mentioned in this commentary written by ‘Stanley Ndambakuwa And Gillan Brand’ At Chicago University: “A higher percentage of learners in developed countries have access to the internet than those in developing countries. The United States, with a population of 330 million, has up to 313 million internet users with more than 152,000 available Wi-Fi locations. Zimbabwe, with a population of 14.8 million, had only 8.6 million internet users in 2019. The U.S. has an 87.27% internet penetration rate compared to 21% in Zimbabwe.” (AUGUST 13, 2020 page 01)

Furthermore, some teachers prefer the physical in class teaching affirming that it is the only way to obtain positive and effective outcomes. They justify their opinion by saying that online teaching does not provide real interaction and it is quite impossible to detect the learner’s facial expressions. As it is commonly known, effective teaching practices depend significantly on learners’ status and needs, therefore, it is challenging

to guess the students' current psychological behavior from only behind the screen. Moreover, some students could take advantage and escape the session by keeping the signal online and turning off their cameras.

In conclusion, to cope with the current events, it is quite mandatory to adapt to the online teaching system by designing local workshops to illustrate the proper usage of the platforms, and the governments should introduce new facilities and aids to the individuals who are in need of any technological appliance.

1.3 Teaching Strategies

As any other profession, teaching could be performed differently according to the personal interests and beliefs of teachers. One category prefers dominating the classroom and being the center of attention, the other group of teachers tends to focus more on their learners and provide them with the adequate atmosphere to be fully integrated within the lesson.

1.3.1 Teacher-Centered Style

Classrooms with a teacher-centered style witness more authority from instructors and less active participation from learners. In this scenario, teachers are the only knowledge providers by taking control over the flow of the lesson.

From a diachronic standpoint, teaching has always been teacher-centered in most subjects; be it scientific or humanitarian. It was not about the type of the delivered content; it was rather a common agreed-on strategy that all teachers ought to follow, until the advent of modern teaching methods that require more active students' participation and less teachers' engagement.

In teacher-centered classrooms, the instructor is the one getting most attention as he/she monitors the flow of the lesson with almost zero interventions or suggestions

from the learners. However, it is noticed sometimes that boredom, jadedness and monotony remarkably spread in such classes among students. Even worse, some students imagine their teacher as an alien speaking a foreign language as they do not understand what the topic is about. This huge frozen bridge could damage the learning process and negatively affect the teachers' reputation.

In this vein, because most Algerian Universities lack pedagogical preparation and in-service training programs for instructors, the teacher-centered approach has been popular and widely implemented. Moreover, these kinds of teachers do not wish by any chance to establish a rapport between their learners, nor among their learners with their mates. Current educational trends, on the other hand, place a greater emphasis on the learners' participation and involvement, as they are more likely to learn better when they are integrated.

1.3.2 Learner-Centered Style

Recent studies in education and pedagogy have shown that learner-centeredness significantly sustains the learning mechanism. While attention seeker teachers spend their time trying to steal all the lights in the classroom, instructors with a learner-centered style are busier trying to focus more on their learners providing them with the maximum chances to participate and engage in the lesson enrolment.

As a matter of fact, the true understanding of what teaching is, could amazingly facilitate the learning process. To clarify, once teachers are aware that they cannot personally make students learn, rather that they ought to simplify the rule, it becomes much easier for them to adequately elect the proper teaching method. Therefore, taking into consideration students' needs is actually much more significant than trying to boast the personal skills in front of them.

Likewise, a competent teacher should teach his learners certain qualities that allow them to be autonomous learners. The teacher is therefore no longer the bright star in this teaching style, as his responsibility is now confined to directing and mentoring the

lesson rather than controlling the entire flow. He/she should make sure that all the students actively participate by asking them multiple questions throughout the lesson, and at the same time; welcome any suggestions or interventions related to the topic to increase their self-esteem and make them feel involved in the learning process. Moreover, students are expected in this situation to freely express their opinions and interact with the instructor in formal discussions or even debates.

The established relationship between the two sides in this case should be based on encouragement, empathy and free of prejudices for the sake of fostering students' engagement and avoiding any possible fear or jitteriness.

1.3.3 Grasha's (2002) Kinds/types of Teachers' Model

Grasha (2002) identified five essential teaching styles that are adopted jointly with divergent degrees by every single teacher. Admittedly, teachers' beliefs and psychological behavior affect their teaching style, that is to say teachers who enjoy talking in public are more likely to settle a formal dominion in their classrooms, and instructors who have a higher level of empathy for their students are better at facilitating the learning process than those who are less empathic.

Thereby, Grasha classified the following basic teaching styles:
Expert: Focuses on transmitting knowledge and experience in a very wise and accurate way. Expert teachers challenge their students in order to check their competences and correct the misconceptions.
Formal Authority: is distinguished to be the center of attention through directing the lesson and conducting the rules. He/she is also known for providing a standard example to do things correctly with less flexibility.

Personal Model: Makes sure to provide a personal example for students in order to imitate him/her, however, some of them fail to meet the expectations.

Facilitator: Creates a strong teacher-student relationship that is based on team working, encouragement and mentoring. Besides, despite the fact that it could often be

time consuming, facilitator teachers constantly develop students' reliability and responsibility.

Delegator: always seeks to establish autonomy in every student's behavior. His/her major aim is to make students autonomous learners by every possible means.

Grasha intentionally compared those styles to different colors on an artist's palette by saying: "While it might appear tempting to place teachers into one of five boxes, my initial observations suggested that such attempts at parsimony were premature. Instead, it quickly became apparent that everyone who teaches possesses each of the five teaching styles to varying degrees. In effect, each individual style was like a different color on an artist's palette. Like those colors, they could be blended together" (Grasha 2002).

In other words, there is not necessarily a better teaching style than another; there is simply a possible combination of all the five styles performed simultaneously to fulfill the short, mid and long term teaching objectives.

1.4 Epistemological Beliefs

According to Oxford dictionary, epistemology is defined as 'the part of philosophy that deals with knowledge'. In other words, it seeks to illustrate and simplify what knowledge really is and to analyze how we know things. On the other side, the term belief in Merriam Webster dictionary is stated as something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion.

From the above definitions, one could encapsulate the notion of 'epistemological beliefs' as personal views regarding the nature of human knowledge, such as its certainty and how it is understood, as well as beliefs about the criteria for and process of learning.

Perry (1970) was a pioneering scholar whose research into EB paved the path for succeeding researchers and provided interesting insights. He tackled EB from a

developmental standpoint, demonstrating how a person grows through many stages to arrive to EB. According to Perry's (1970) study, primary and less experienced learners begin with dualist ideas, in which information is absolute and teachers are accountable for conveying the knowledge bases to the learners.

At the next level, a person develops the concept of multiplism and views knowledge from multiple perspectives. Relativism was eventually introduced to this paradigm as a third dimension, demonstrating that knowledge acquisition sources are relative. Commitment within relativism is the ultimate and most sophisticated step of this paradigm, requiring personal judgment and evaluations as well as a dedication to the beliefs.

Schommer (1990) re-examined Perry's EB classification, criticizing it as progressive and generalizable. She presented a belief system with five dimensions: certainty of knowledge (ranging from absolute to tentative), structure of knowledge (from simple to complex), source of knowledge (given by an authority or generated by personal reasoning), knowledge control (fixed to changing and dynamic ability to learn something), and knowledge acquisition speed (quick to gradual knowledge acquisition).

1.4.1 Certainty of Knowledge

According to Schommer, Certainty refers to the difference between concrete and theoretical knowledge. Someone with a less sophisticated understanding of certainty, for example, would assert that scientific knowledge is certain and unchanging, and there is one single "right" solution can be obtained. On the other side, a more sophisticated understanding would be that scientific information can develop in response to new discoveries.

1.4.2 Structure of Knowledge

The belief in the structure of knowledge can range from the simple to the complicated, from the belief that knowledge is being produced without ambiguity, to the more sophisticated belief that complicated theories are a better way to represent knowledge. Schoomer (1990)

1.4.3 Source of Knowledge

The source dimension according to Schommer is concerned with beliefs regarding external authority knowledge. The necessity of critical assessment, examining authorities, and the ability to develop knowledge through one's own thinking ranges from tight beliefs in authority like teachers, to the emphasis on the value of critical evaluation, interrogating authorities, and the potential to produce knowledge through one's own thinking. In science, a less sophisticated assumption regarding the source of scientific information is that it comes from an outside higher power. While a competent epistemic belief system would rather make inquiries and investigations through personal strategies.

1.4.4 Control of Knowledge

The control of knowledge belief refers to people's beliefs about their ability to learn, which can range from believing that one's ability to learn is fixed at birth to believing that one's ability to learn evolves with time. Schoomer (1990). Obviously, individuals with naïve belief system belong to the first category and the ones holding a more sophisticated system confirm that learning ability enhance through time.

1.4.5 Knowledge Acquisition Speed

According to Schommer, the belief of knowledge speed acquisition strives to answer the question of how quickly can a learning process takes place. Individuals hold views varying from the assumption that knowledge may be gained in a short period of time or not at all, to the belief that most things can be learnt by most individuals provided enough time is spent.

1.4.6 The Schommer Epistemological Questionnaire

Schommer (1990) used a 63-item questionnaire to investigate the epistemological beliefs of undergraduates in the United States. She employed factor analysis to identify categories of the epistemology questionnaire which are certain knowledge, simple knowledge, quick learning, and fixed or innate ability.

The questionnaire includes a Likert global additive scale with items written in both positive and negative terms such as:

- “For success in school, it's best not to ask too many questions.”
- I often wonder how much my teachers really know.”
- “Some people are born good learners, others are just stuck with limited ability”
- “Most words have one clear meaning.”

(Journal of Educational Psychology, 82(3), 498-50.)

The response range is 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important. Each score represents the subjects' level of agreement or disagreement with the constructed statement in each item. Low scores in a factor suggest a low level of naivety, whereas high values indicate a higher level of naivety depending on the given statement.

1.5 Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs

All teachers possess a specific variety of an integrated belief system based on their personal beliefs towards knowledge. In fact, the acquired teaching styles practices are highly related to those beliefs, simply because “teaching style is a manifestation of teachers' hidden assumptions and beliefs about what to do and what not to do in a classroom, tasks to be covered, materials to be selected and teacher-student interaction (Braten & Stromso, 2005; Buehl, 2003)”

The role of personal beliefs in this scenario is henceforth to unravel what teachers do inside the classroom and how they behave in certain circumstances. In fact, teachers around the world are being challenged by educational reforms. Teachers must be open and flexible while implementing new pedagogical innovations and techniques in their classrooms. Teachers' desire to challenge and renew their existing understanding and expertise about learning, teaching, and associated activities is a fundamental issue in school policies, as it is difficult to undertake reforms without involving instructors in the process (Lonka 1996).

The few studies that actually looked into the potential link between teachers' epistemologies and various styles of pedagogy found divergent results. Some researchers found no link between teachers' professed beliefs and their practices, whereas others found one (Yang et al.,2008).

In a similar study, Olafson and Schraw determined the epistemological beliefs of elementary teachers and then attempted to find a correlation between their epistemological ideas and their actual teaching practices. The scientists utilized vignettes to describe epistemic world views. Realist, contextualist, and relativist world perspectives were identified. Realists are people who believe in a fixed, basic body of knowledge that is passed down from one expert to the next. Students in a classroom with a realism teacher would encounter an active teacher and be expected to learn passively, while according to contextualists, learners must develop their own knowledge, and the instructor serves as a facilitator for this creative, mutual active

learning. Finally, according to relativists, students must generate their own knowledge, and teachers must create an environment in which students can construct their own knowledge and develop the ability to think independently.

Teachers were then interrogated about their teaching practices, specifically curriculum selection. According to the researchers, 95% of participants agreed with the contextualist viewpoint, 85% disagreed with the realism viewpoint, and 30% supported the relativist viewpoint. All of the instructors employed the curriculum provided by the school district, but there was a lot of variation in how much they depended on it. Teachers who strictly followed the district curriculum had less student-centered classrooms than those who sometimes improvised and chose not to rely completely on the program. Olafson and Schraw(2006)

1.6 Teaching Practices

Quality education is provided only by competent teachers who are not necessarily experts when it comes to teaching experience, but rather they are effective in terms of selecting the best practices to engage their students within the flow of the lesson. These kinds of teachers are able to train their students and provide them with the adequate skills to successfully pass their exams and fulfill the job market in their communities. In the same vein, effective teaching practices could be performed in and out site of the classroom, and they may differ in the application depending on the teacher's personality and mindset, but they certainly lead to the same astonishing positive results.

1.6.1 Teaching Portfolio/Journal

Having a personal teaching portfolio is like recording the session in a video tape. It allows teachers to gather massive data about their way of teaching by taking notes during and after each class over the years. Afterwards, teachers read and analyze the small details that either worked or failed and try to identify the reasons. In further

stages, instructors would be able to design their own adapted strategies based on their learners' needs and the new educational reforms.

1.6.2 Peer Observation

Nominated as a compulsory in-service training in most Western Universities, peer observation gave birth to outstanding reflective teachers in the field of language teaching. It is viewed as a collaborative procedure between two colleagues who constantly share their constructive remarks within a non-threatening atmosphere free of any judgments. In this regard, Semmoud (2015) confirms its' advantages and valuable benefits by saying: “ In its full sense, while organized in the whole department, the impact of POT is undeniable and extends to the whole staff and compel teachers of different status and ranks to share understanding, standards of pedagogy and mutual willingness to use peer observation so that their learning on teaching would grow steadily and more importantly would get rid of those feelings of jadedness that accumulated over static years of work”(Dr Semmoud 2015 P.45).

1.6.3 Feedback

Without constant, regular feedback, students may struggle to identify their progression level. For that reason, teachers must provide whole-group feedback on trends they notice in the global class' growth and common issues, as well as a constructive feedback on the individual input for each student (written or spoken). Students must also be offered support and chances to submit feedback to their teacher so that the learning process, resources, and curriculum can be adjusted as needed.

1.6.4 Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based learning technique supports critical thinking and feeds students' curiosity. It implies giving learners the opportunity to reflect and think of any possible question, then formulate it and find an answer through personal efforts. Teachers'

main task in this scenario is to offer help and support whenever asked for. Once they have completed their research, it is highly recommended that they deliver a presentation to improve their communication skills. Eventually, teachers ought to ask students to reflect on their project and analyze both, the positive and negative aspects plus things that could be done differently in upcoming projects. Beside this, students are encouraged to think about not only what they learnt, but also how they achieved their learning outcomes which will boost their confidence and sense of autonomy.

1.7 The Interrelation Between Sophisticated Beliefs and Effective Teaching Practices.

Teachers' epistemological beliefs have a strong influence on how instructors think about teaching and learning. These assumptions, in turn, influence their classroom teaching practices and teachers must have sophisticated epistemological beliefs themselves and appreciate their importance in order to promote similar epistemological beliefs within their students. To illustrate, according to a recent qualitative study, teachers with a more sophisticated personal epistemology recognized students as capable, active learners who generate their own meanings and must be valued as learners (Brownlee et al. 2011).

Such an epistemological approach may pave the way for teacher effectiveness, which aims to respect students' perspectives and offer them options and opportunities to express themselves. Teachers with a naïve epistemic belief, on the other side according to the study, believed that students learn primarily through repetition and imitation. Therefore, Teachers that hold relativistic epistemic beliefs are more likely to use constructivist teaching and encourage learners to build their own knowledge. However, Teachers who see information and learning as certain, unchanging, and something that can be reached through knowledge transfer are more likely to use traditional teacher-centered teaching practices. As a result, it is safe to say that

effective teaching practices are highly related to more sophisticated epistemological beliefs.

1.8 Conclusion

Personal beliefs about knowledge and learning have been found to have a significant impact on how and how much individuals learn. According to various research involving practical instructors, epistemological beliefs help significantly facilitating the teaching/learning process as they depict the most efficient and effective strategies that lead to better outcomes. This chapter tackled briefly the importance of sophisticated epistemological beliefs in enhancing teachers' practices and students' learning outcomes. Throughout the extended essay, the researcher intentionally mentioned some theoretical concepts related to teaching in general and epistemological beliefs in particular to simplify the procedure and provide the readers with basic understanding of the topic. In the following chapter, the validity of the given hypotheses will be tested using two research instruments in order to put the theoretical principles mentioned previously into practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter two: Research Design, Data Analysis and Interpretation

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2.1. Introduction

Personal epistemological beliefs tend to have great influence on teaching practices. The aim of this chapter is therefore to unravel the practical side of this present study. The first section introduces the study's participants, as well as the research design and data collection instruments chosen by the researcher. The research findings are then analyzed and interpreted. Finally, the author devoted the last section to the limitations and some recommendations for further research.

2.2. Research Design

A research design, according to kirumbi (2018) is defined as "the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the research problem". In other words, it is the roadmap for any undertaken study used to facilitate the research process by answering the research questions and testing the research hypotheses. The research design is henceforth crucial since it saves time for the researcher and guarantees that the study is properly investigated. It facilitates resource management and organization. Moreover, it improves the efficiency and reliability of research by removing any trace of subjectivity and bias.

Throughout this study, the researcher relied on the case study of EFL teachers at the level of English department at Tlemcen University. In this regard, Yin, Robert K. (2003) identified three different types of case studies, descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. The researcher has therefore used an exploratory, single, instrumental embedded case study. In simple words, the chosen case study is concerned with one case exploring a specific issue in order to find a solution to the current situation, and it attempts to generalize the research findings. In terms of practicality, the epistemological beliefs of a sample of EFL teachers have been investigated and classified into five different beliefs through a set of questions. As a result, the chosen case study has helped the researcher enormously to generalize the findings to all the existing EFL teachers.

2.3 Overview on Department of English at Tlemcen University

According to Semmoud (2017, P.62), Tlemcen University was established in 1974. The Institute of Arabic began teaching foreign languages, particularly French and English, in 1988. The Institute of Foreign Languages was founded in 1991. In 1997, the foreign language department, which included the French and English sections, was severed from this institute. The English section was under this department's administration until 2008, when it became an independent entity. There are 54 permanent teachers on staff. Students must complete a series of courses in order to understand the target language and gain specialized knowledge of nations where English is the first language.

2.3.1 Description of the Sample Population

Sampling is the act of selecting a certain number of participants from a larger population. In the current study, the researcher opted for a representative sampling paradigm using a probability stratified sampling method.

The number of permanent EFL teachers at the level of the English department at Tlemcen University is 54, and the selected sample in this research consisted of fourteen instructors that were selected based on their teaching experience to answer the research instruments. For that reason, the sample was chosen to make the data more precise and to enable the generalization process.

2.3.2 Teachers' Profile

Teachers represent the main and essential sample of this investigation. Fourteen EFL teachers, male and female, from the department of English at Tlemcen University participated in both, the questionnaire (10 teachers) and the semi-structured interview (04 teachers) to collect various data about their different epistemological beliefs. Their teaching experience ranges from two to twenty years.

2.4 Data Collection and Research Instruments

Data collection is the act of gathering information from a variety of relevant sources for the sake of finding suitable answers for the research questions, testing the hypothesis and evaluating the outcomes. The researcher during the investigation has employed two research instruments to obtain both, quantitative and qualitative data. For that reason, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview have been conducted as mentioned earlier.

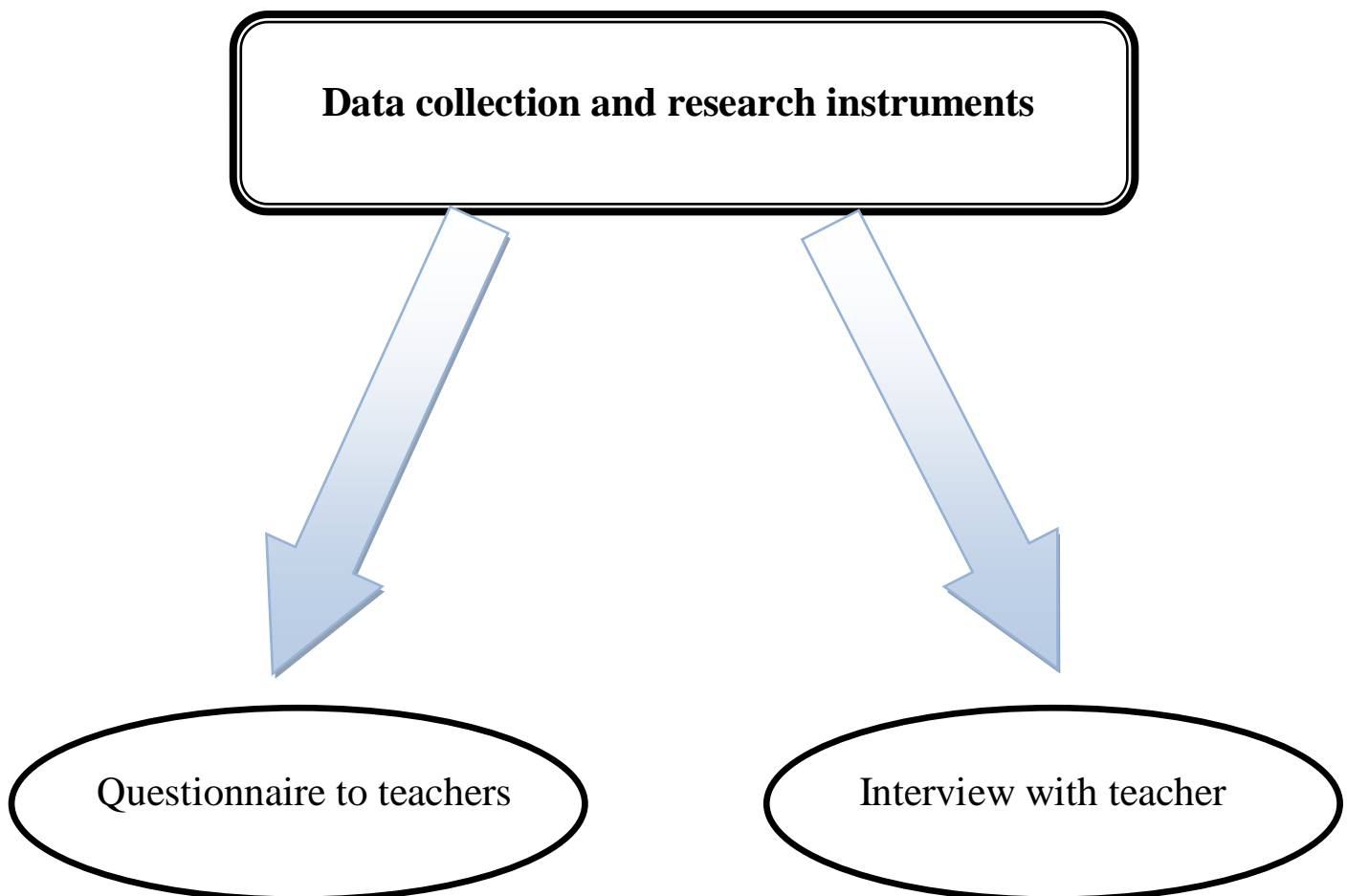


Figure1.1 Data collection and research instruments

2.4.1 Questionnaire to Teachers

The questionnaire is a research instrument that contains a set of written questions intentionally formulated by the researcher to facilitate data collection. In this regard, Brown (2001, p. 6) describes the questionnaire as : "any written instrument that presents a respondent with a series of questions or statements to which they are to reach either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers."

When it comes to investigating people's beliefs and attitudes, this research tool would be the perfect choice as it provides both quantitative and qualitative data depending on the question type. In addition, the questionnaire is highly relied on in a plethora of research due to its advantages like saving time and obtaining quick answers from the respondents.

In the current study, a questionnaire was distributed to ten EFL teachers at the level of the English department at Tlemcen University, which seeks to provide data on teachers' epistemological beliefs and then to reveal the way those beliefs affect their teaching practices.

The researcher has included fourteen questions in the questionnaire; two multiple choice questions, two close ended questions, and ten Likert Scale questions where the answer ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. (See Appendix A). Most of the respondents took around fifteen minutes to answer the questionnaire with the presence of the researcher to clarify any faced ambiguity.

The first section of the questionnaire includes questions regarding personal information like gender, educational level and the teaching experience. The second section is devoted to teachers' EP beliefs about knowledge in general and teaching in particular. Throughout the questions, the aim of the researcher was to reveal whether the respondents hold sophisticated or naive epistemological beliefs.

Teachers were asked about their beliefs of teaching, their role as instructors in the learning process and the teaching practices that they qualify to be the most effective.

2.4.2 Interview with Teachers

According to Cresswell (2012) an interview is typically a face-to-face conversation between a researcher and a participant involving a transfer of information to the interviewer. In the same vein, interviews are particularly effective for revealing the story behind a participant's experience and gathering in-depth information on a subject matter. In terms of data, the interview mostly provides the researcher with qualitative data regarding the types of questions that seek to find more detailed answers and justifications related to the topic. In fact, the interview allows the participants to feel cozier and more motivated in the subject by giving them the opportunity to discuss global issues from their personal perspectives. Cresswell (2002).

In terms of types, there are three types of interviews, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured ones. Structured interviews consist of pre-setup questions that the respondents ought to answer in the same order. This type of interview is totally controlled by the researcher and the answers are easier to interpret.

In the semi-structured interviews, the questions are also pre-prepared by the researcher, but if needed, it is permissible for any intervention or additional clarification to expand certain aspects. D'nyei (2007, p.136) confirms by saying : "the interviewer provides guidance and direction, but is also keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues". Finally, unstructured interviews take place as a random conversation without any pre-preparation and the researcher has to improvise by highlighting the key factors and giving the respondents the necessary time and space to provide suitable responses. The flow of the interview is therefore guided by the respondents' answers.

In the present research, a semi-structured interview has been conducted because it gives more comprehensive coverage of subjects. The interview was held with a total of four EFL teachers, one novice teacher, one experienced teacher, and two tenured teachers, in order to obtain more precise and detailed information about the research study, as well as to validate the information obtained from the teachers' questionnaire. Moreover, the interview consisted of five questions, and each question fulfills a certain epistemological belief, in which the respondents implicitly expose their beliefs according to the given question. (See Appendix B).

To grasp the maximum amount of data, the researcher has recorded all the interviews using a digital voice recorder after asking for the interviewees' permission. All the interviews took place within the department of English and lasted around ten minutes for each participant.

2.5. Data Analysis

In this phase, the collected data is going to be analyzed. Quantitative data will include: graphic representations, frequencies and percentages. On the other side, qualitative data analysis will be in the form of textual techniques to provide an in-depth descriptive analysis.

2.5.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire to Teachers

Each question of the questionnaire will be analyzed separately as follows:

Rubric One: Teachers' profile

The first rubric is about personal background information and shows that there are 5 males and 5 females and most of them hold a PhD degree. Their teaching experience ranges from one to twenty years, which means all the teacher categories took part in the questionnaire, including novice, tenured, and experienced ones. The modules they teach are sociolinguistics, literary studies, didactics, written expression, ESP, reading comprehension, and oral expression.

Rubric Two: Teachers' epistemological beliefs and teaching practices

Statement 01: You believe that all teachers dispense their lectures using the same teaching practices carried out by the same techniques.

The objective of this sentence was to determine whether the respondents hold a sophisticated belief towards the certainty of knowledge or more naïve one. If they agree on the fact that all teachers share the same teaching practices, it means their belief is naïve, however, if they disagree, then their belief would be more sophisticated. The results are as follows:

Table 2.1 Identification of the belief towards certainty of knowledge

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	3	0	4	3	10

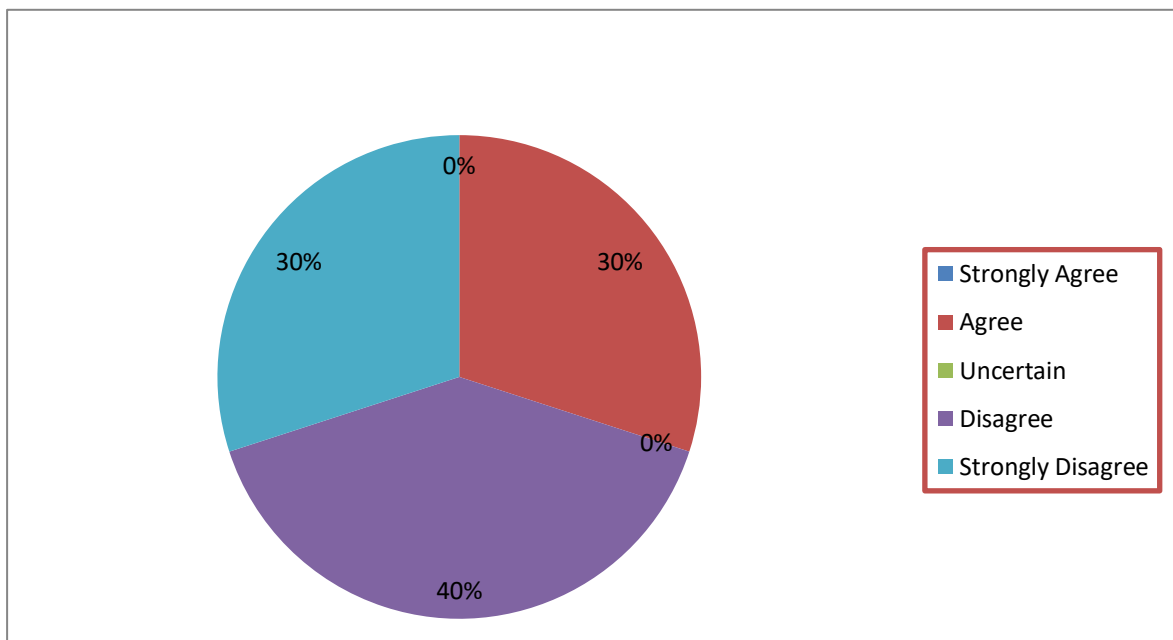


Figure 2.1 Teachers' beliefs towards sharing the same teaching style

According to the illustrated data in the pie chart above, 30% of teachers strongly disagreed with the fact that teaching practices are shared by all teachers. 40% of them disagreed while the remaining 30% of the instructors agreed on the idea that says teaching is performed following one common strategy.

Statement 02: You believe that your teaching style has always been effective and that no changes are necessary to cope with current educational reforms.

The second statement was also about the certainty of knowledge belief. The researcher aimed to check whether the respondents refuse to change their teaching style in accordance with upcoming reforms and would therefore hold naive belief. On the contrary, if they are open to modify their teaching practices to stay in line with the current trends, they would henceforth possess more sophisticated belief. The results demonstrate the following data:

Table 2.2 the belief of the necessity for change to stay updated with new trends

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	2	1	6	1	1

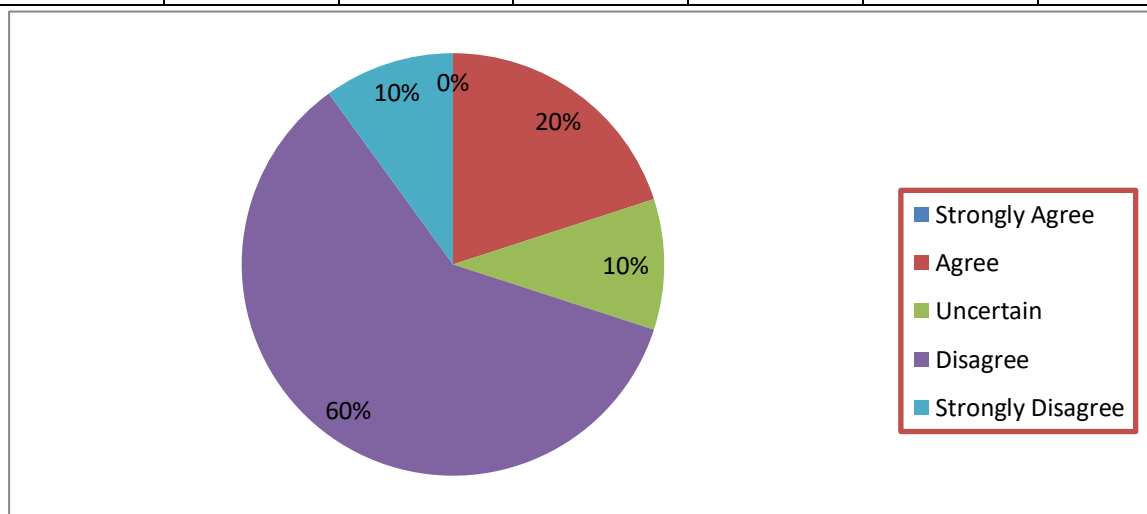


Figure 2.2 Teachers’ belief of the unnecessary change to stay updated with new trends

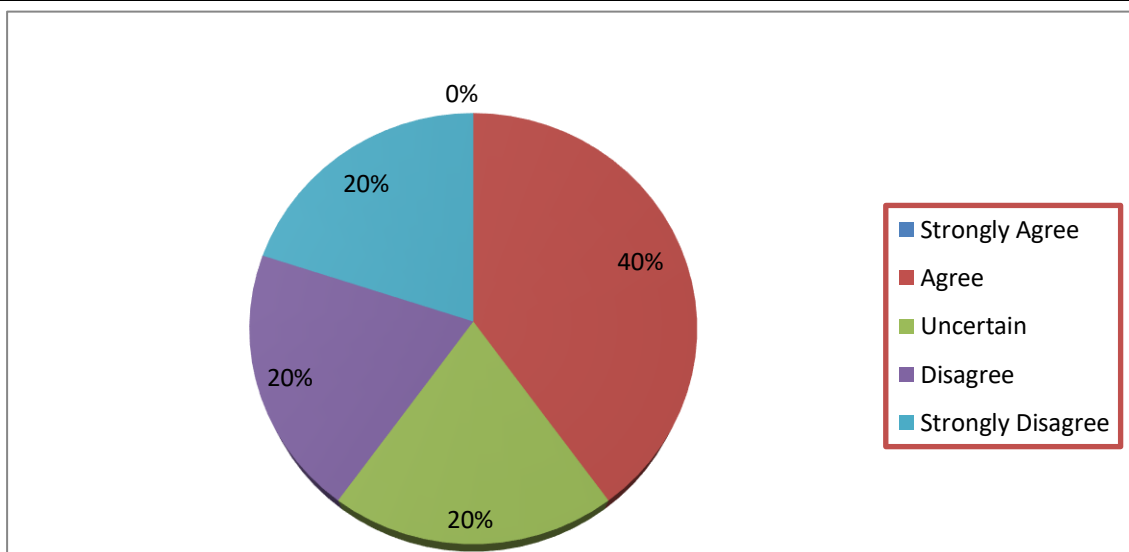
The data displayed in the graph above show that 10% of the respondents strongly disagree and 60% of them agree to the given statement. However, 20% of teachers agree to keep the same teaching style in face of new educational trends. Finally, the last 10% remain uncertain about the statement.

Statement 03: You believe that dispensing lectures at university is not that difficult.

This claim was directed to discover teachers’ opinions about the structure of knowledge and as a practical example, about teaching, whether it is easy or difficult job. Naïve belief holders are convinced that teaching is easy and there is no special requirement or condition to teach conveniently. Whereas teachers with a sophisticated belief insist that teaching is not that easy and a certain language proficiency and technical expertise are required to become an effective teacher.

Table 2.3 Teachers ‘ opinions about the easiness level of teaching

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	4	2	2	2	10



Graph 2.3 Instructors’ belief about the easiness of teaching

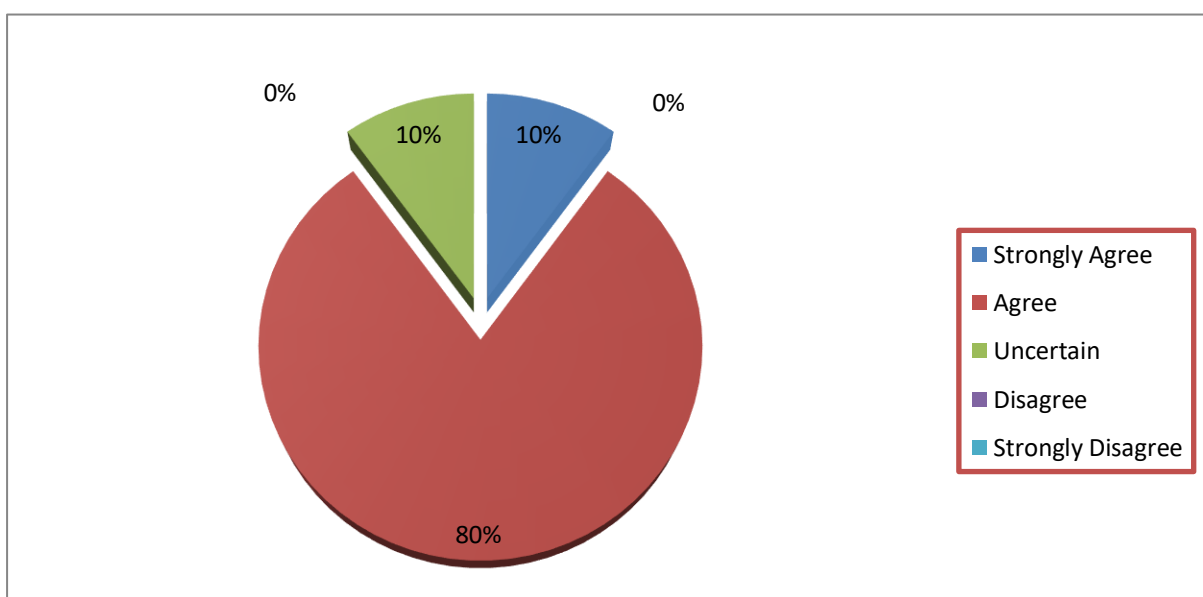
The obtained data from the pie chart have shown that 40% of the respondents agree that teaching is an easy job and could be performed without any challenges. Other 20% are uncertain whether it is easy or difficult. For the disagreement part, 20% of teachers disagree that dispensing lectures is not that difficult and the last 20% strongly disagree upon the given claim.

Statement 04: You believe that your teaching practices are most definitely efficient to achieve positive learning outcomes

The goal of this declaration was also about the belief toward the structure of knowledge. The researcher wanted to figure out if teachers are aware about the effectiveness of their teaching. The results are as follows:

Table 2.4 Teachers’ opinions about their teaching practices

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	1	8	1	0	0	10



Graph 2.4 Instructors’ views upon the efficiency of their teaching practices

The represented data show that the majority of teachers with a percentage of 80% agree that their teaching practices are effective and allow them to attain productive learning. 10% of them strongly agree and the remaining 10% keep uncertain about the delivered statement.

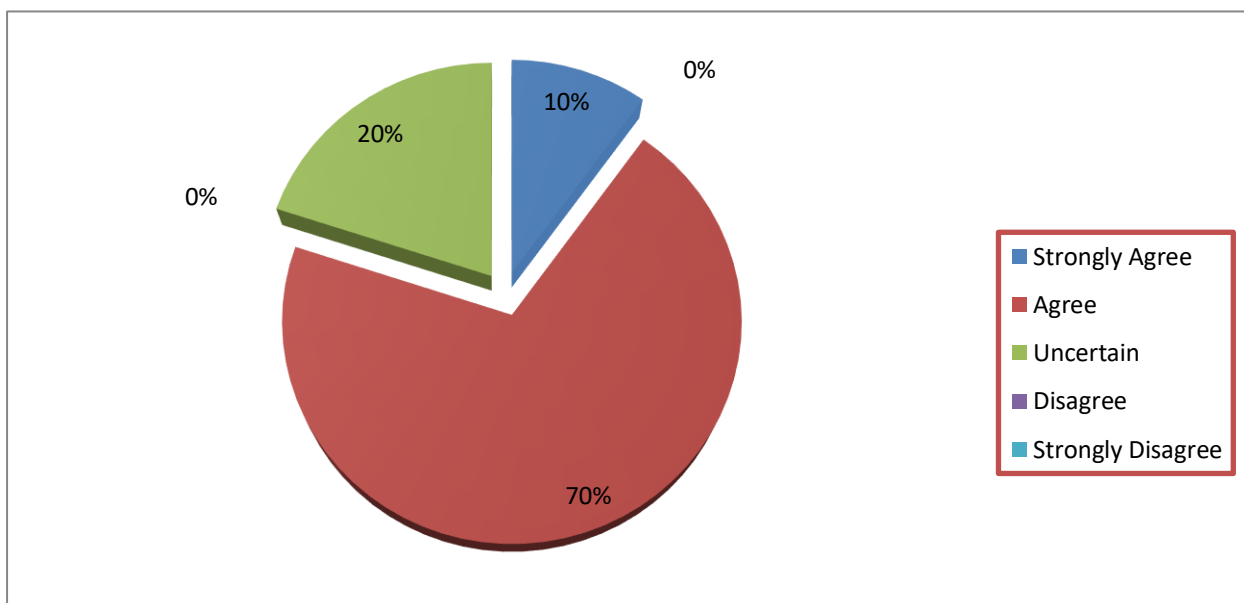
Statement 05: You believe that you are a convincing teacher

Many teachers are confident enough to declare that they are convincing instructors, while others cannot really measure their teaching abilities. For that reason, this sentence seeks to know the respondents' opinion about their professional capacities.

Here are the findings:

Table 2.5 Teachers' opinions about their abilities

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	1	7	2	0	0	10



Graph 2.5 Instructors' perception of the efficiency of their professional skills

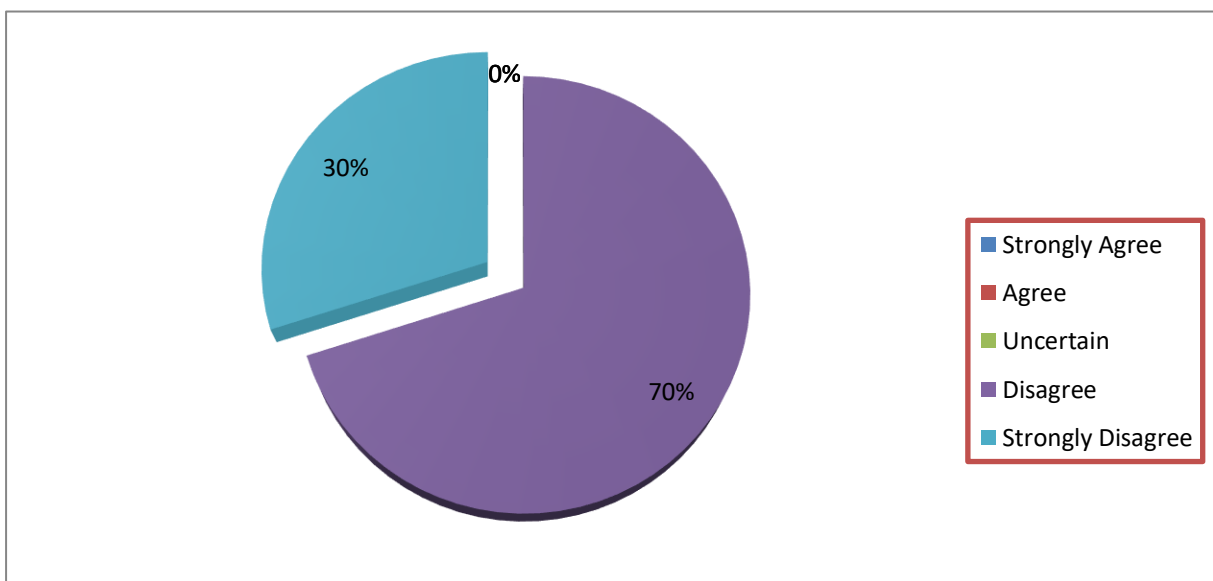
As displayed in the graph above, 70% of the sample consider themselves as convincing teachers, 10% strongly agree with the statement and the remaining sample with a percentage of 20% keep uncertain to decide whether they are convincing instructors or not.

Statement 06: You believe that teaching is based on transmitting knowledge rather than facilitating the learning process

When it comes to the EB toward the source of knowledge, one group of teachers believes that they represent the only source of knowledge inside the classroom, while other category insists on students’ engagement and autonomous learning. The aim of this statement was therefore to unravel teacher’s beliefs in this matter. The results are like the following:

Table 2.6 Instructors’ EB towards the source of knowledge

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	0	0	7	3	10



Graph 2.6 Teachers’ agreement on knowledge transmission as a basic teaching characteristic

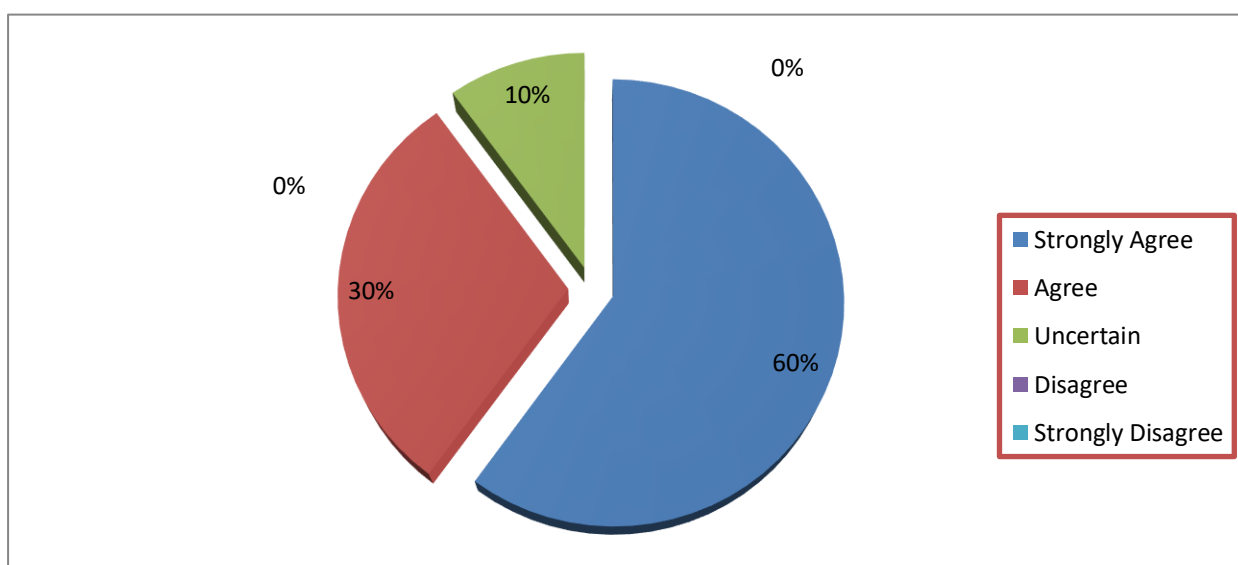
One can notice from the pie chart that 70% of the sample disagrees with the given statement; they refute the idea that says teaching is about knowledge transmission and not about facilitating the learning process. The remaining 30% of the respondents also strongly disagree and believe the opposite of the previous claim.

Statement 07: You believe that teaching English requires a broadened language repertoire

Teachers' with a sophisticated belief towards the control of knowledge would strongly believe to possess a large language vocabulary to teach English effectively, however, instructors with more naïve belief don't necessarily focus on this part and they are convinced that only a minimum vocabulary is sufficient for teaching. This sentence was given to categorize the sample according to their personal beliefs and the results are as follows:

Table 2.7 The necessity to have a large language repertoire

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	6	3	1	0	0	10



Graph 2.7 Teachers' agreement to possess an extended language vocabulary

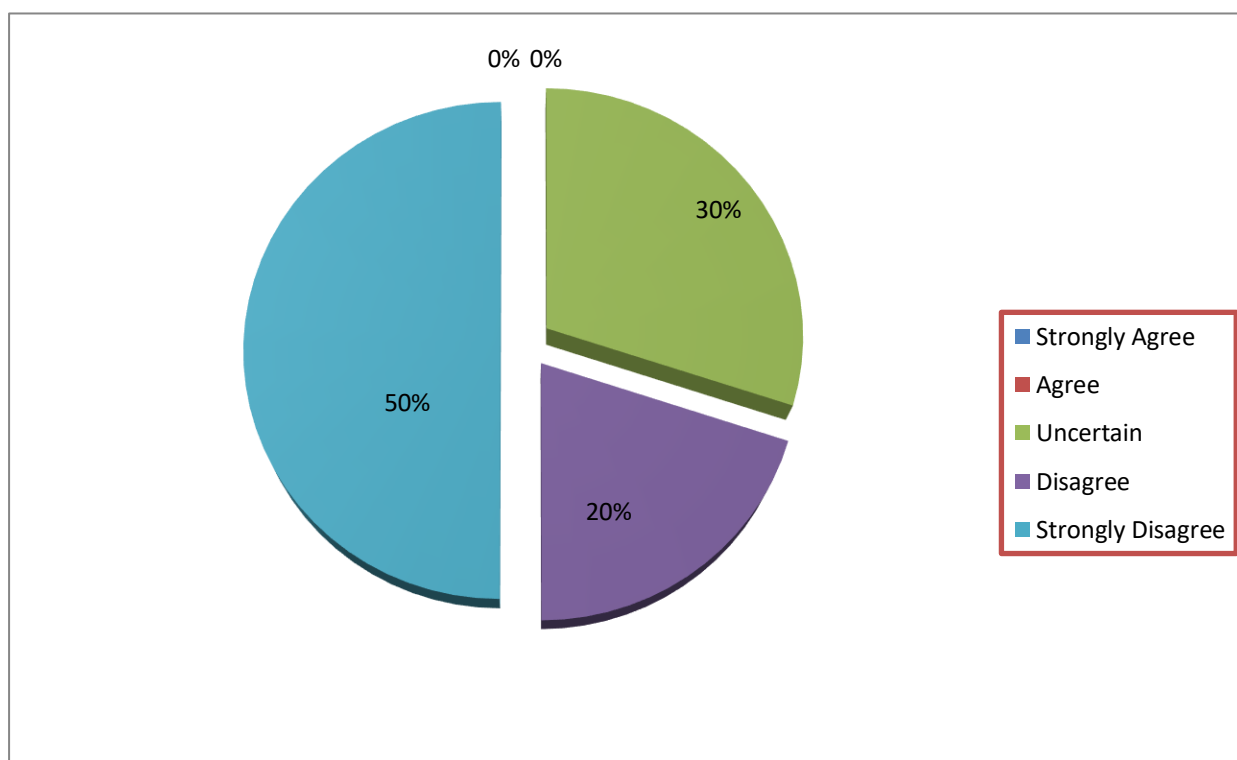
According to the graph, 60% of the respondents strongly agree to have a large language vocabulary in order to teach conveniently, 30% agree as well on the same idea and 10% of them remain uncertain about it.

Statement 08: You believe that your intellectual abilities are fixed at birth.

The EB towards the control of knowledge ranges from having a fixed ability to the capability of developing one's skills through time. This statement was therefore given to discover if the sample of teachers think that their intelligence is innate and remains stable through life, or it evolves and develops in response to life experiences and challenges. Here are the findings:

Table 2.8 Teachers' EB towards the control of knowledge

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	0	3	2	5	10



Graph 2.8 Instructors' agreement with having fixed intellectual abilities

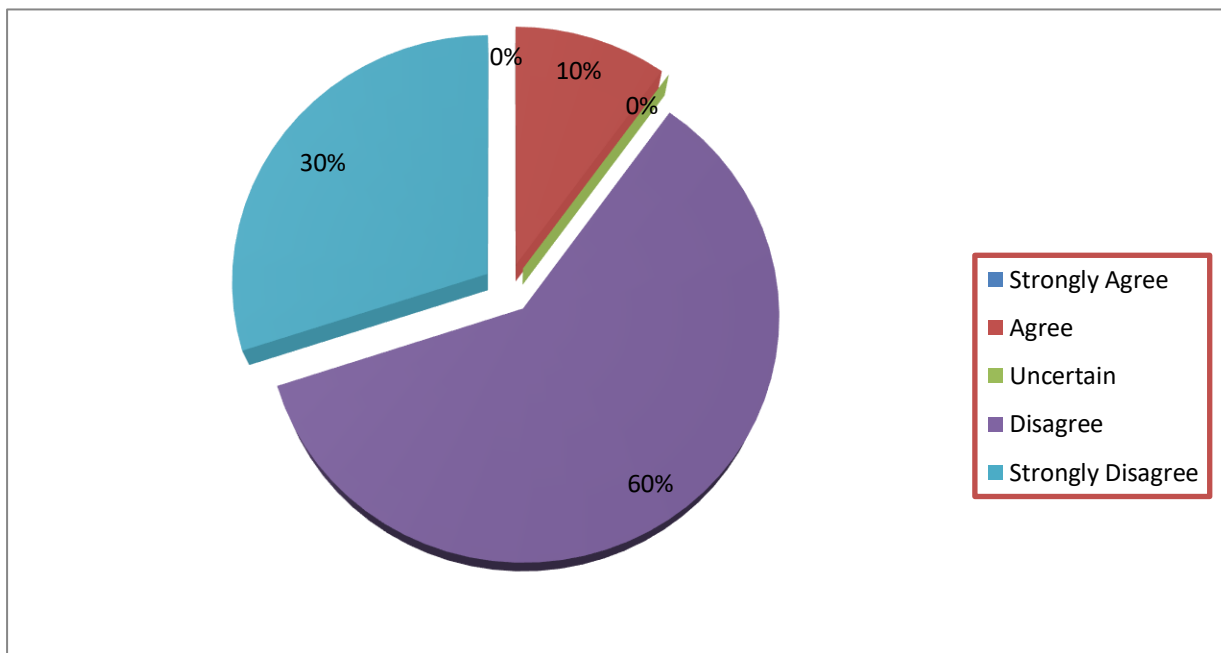
The data displayed in the pie chart show that half of the sample population (50%) strongly disagrees with the provided statement, other 20% disagree as well and the remaining 30% are uncertain whether their intelligence level is fixed once they were born or it progresses through time.

Statement 09: You believe that working on difficult tasks that require countless hours is a waste of time.

The goal of this claim was to have an idea whether the participants believe that consistency is a key to success or just a waste of time. Naïve belief holders would agree with the given statement, while sophisticated believers would strongly agree. The result is as follows:

Table 2.9 Teachers’ EP towards knowledge acquisition speed

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	1	0	6	3	10



Graph 2.9 Participants’ opinions upon consistency as a useless learning strategy

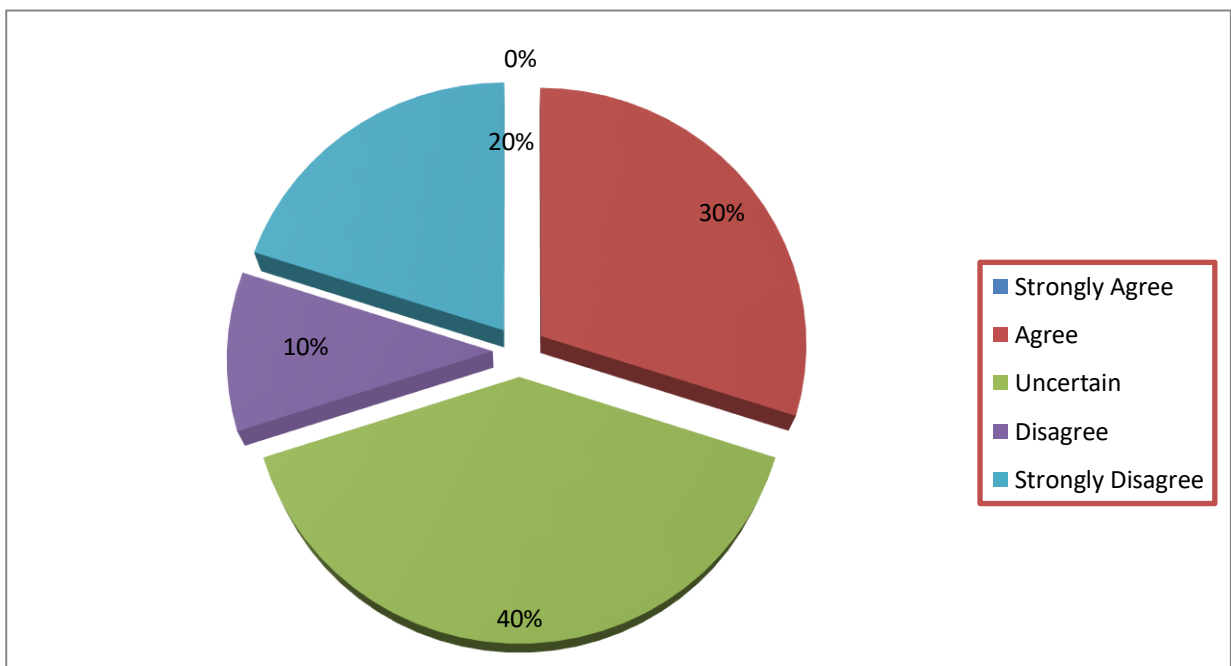
According to the data illustrated in the pie chart, 60% of the teachers disagree with the fact that spending many hours on a certain difficult task is considered as a waste of time. Other 30% strongly disagree as well on the same idea, however, 10% of the sample agrees with the given statement.

Statement 10: You believe that fast learners are the most successful students

The aim of this statement was to reveal if the sample believes that knowledge is gained within a short period of time or the more time is provided the better learning outcomes. The second category would therefore be identified as sophisticated believers and the first one as naïve believers. The results are as follows:

Table 2.10 Teachers’ views upon fast learning

Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	0	3	4	1	2	10



Graph 2.10 Instructors’ agreement with fast learning as a positive characteristic

The data exhibited in the graph show that 30% of the respondents consider fast learning as a positive trait. However, 20% of the sample strongly disagrees with the given statement and another 10% disagree as well. The last 40% of teachers remain uncertain about the provided claim.

2.5.1. Analysis of the Interview with Teachers

Four EFL teachers participated in the semi- structured interview which included 5 questions. Each one of them addresses a specific belief and will be analyzed separately as follows:

Question 01: Do you think that keeping the same teaching practices will always lead to positive learning outcomes?

This question addresses the belief in the certainty of knowledge, which ranges from the simple belief that teaching is certain and no change is required to achieve positive results to the more sophisticated belief that teaching should be developed to meet modern educational trends. 02 participants out of 04 disagreed with the fact that positive learning outcomes are due to repeated teaching practices. In fact, one participant said that "sometimes we as teachers are losing our motivation." That is why I think we need to change our practices and try new methods. " Another respondent claimed that keeping the same teaching practices will lead to a kind of monotonous teaching and would therefore make learners stagnate in their learning process.

The other two respondents said that successful learning could be achieved by repeated teaching practices only if those practices are effective and have always provided good feedback. An interviewee mentioned that keeping the same practices depends on certain parameters, and when the researcher asked for more clarification, the respondent gave an example of the participants since the current students will not exist after 10 or 15 years with the same level, mentality, and cultural orientation. He added that, for that reason, the teaching practices need to be modified according to the actual situation.

Question 02: How do you perceive teaching?

The aim of this question was to check the interviewees' beliefs towards the structure of knowledge. A naïve believer in this scenario would assume that teaching is easy and does not require great effort, while a sophisticated believer would confirm that teaching is a complicated profession performed adequately only by proficient users who have acquired a certain technical expertise. The results are illustrated in the following graph:

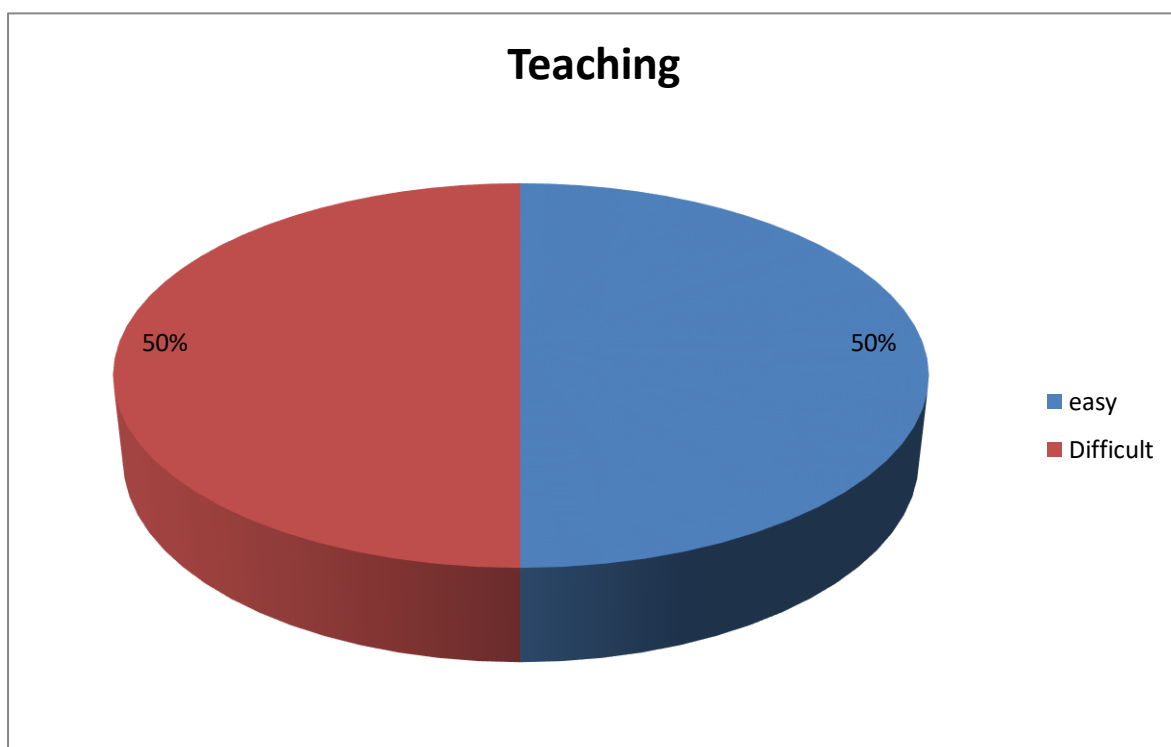


Figure 2.11 Teachers' perception of teaching

According to the graph, half of the respondents (50%) consider teaching an easy process, and the other half (50%) regard teaching as a more difficult mechanism.

One interviewee said that "teaching should be done by specific people who possess certain skills and it is not difficult, but it is something I guess we are endowed with. It is the ability to understand others, to be able to listen to and show patience to them, and to be able to change methods when one method is not working instead of blaming

the others; so teaching is definitely related to skills and personal traits." Another respondent considered teaching to be both, easy and difficult at the same time, depending on the personal efforts of teachers, including reading, publishing articles, and constantly looking for new updates related to the subject matter.

Similarly, an interviewee stated that teaching is actually learning since the delivered content is already learnt previously, and he added that if you can explain a certain point to someone, you would therefore be able to teach it efficiently.

Question 03: To what extent do you agree whether the teacher is the only source of knowledge?

This question is about one's belief in the source of knowledge. Instructors with a simple belief would agree with the given statement and prefer to personify a higher authority in the classroom. On the other hand, sophisticated believers tend to focus more on the students interaction and support autonomous learning. Surprisingly, all four interviewees disagreed with the given statement, claiming that the teacher cannot be the only source of knowledge.

An interviewee provided a personal experience back when he used to be a student. He said that they witnessed a kind of authoritarian teaching sessions where instructors were the only providers of information, but he said that recently the trends have changed and now the focus should be on the learner. He added that teachers should stop teaching and let their students learn. Another respondent declared that "the teacher can never be the only source of knowledge, yet he/she can provide students with the gist, and it is then up to the learner to further read about any topic."

In this vein of thought, the last participant insisted that the teacher at the level of a university is not supposed to deliver the complete information about a certain topic, he/she should rather supply students with headlines only and let the remaining research depend solely on the learners

Question 04: What do you apply as techniques to constantly improve your teaching?

The researcher asked this question to reveal the teachers' beliefs towards the control of knowledge. This type of epistemological belief varies from a simple standard that one's ability to teach is fixed and unchangeable, to a more strong extent that teaching skills can be enhanced through practice and self-reflection. The results showed that all the interviewees reflect on themselves and apply certain techniques to improve their teaching. The first interviewee declared that the best way to ameliorate one's teaching is through asking several questions and trying to find out the proper answer, such as how to select the proper teaching materials, how to best motivate learners, and how to make the teaching learning process more active than has ever been done before in the teaching career.

The second interviewee insisted that the methods used to improve teaching are based on the learners themselves. He mentioned that "what techniques you necessitate is what the learner necessitates."

The third participant announced that "as a teacher, I somehow follow my instincts and I insist on the students' interaction, so to me it's all about the students' feedback and interaction."

The fourth interviewee answered the question by saying, "I participate in conferences and sometimes I learn from people, I also watch videos and I get in touch with teachers from other local and foreign universities." He added that it is unfortunate not to have teacher education programs available in our territory because he would certainly apply for such training as a technique to improve his teaching skills.

Question 05: How much time do you need to develop an effective teaching method?

The final epistemological belief is about knowledge acquisition speed. Henceforth, this question was asked to categorize the sample's beliefs into two sections. If the answer provided is a short period of time, then they hold NB. However, if the response is a long period of time, then they possess SB. One interviewee did not give an exact

timeline; he only insisted that developing an effective teaching method is highly dependent on the students' level. The second interviewee, on the other hand, provided a detailed timeframe by saying, "it takes time and it improves through experience. The more I teach, the more I understand students' psychology and my own negative points. I started teaching without any training and I would say it took around 3 years to truly develop a method, but I started realizing the lack of my practices after 5 years. That's how long it took me to recognize how wrong I was in certain behaviors and I eventually ended up changing them. " Another interviewee replied that it depends on the teacher's time dedicated to a certain classroom. He added that the quantity and quality of time play a major role in deciding the timeline needed to develop an effective teaching method.

2.6 Data Interpretation

The major aim of this exploratory research was to examine EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs and their impact on the teaching practices. This part will therefore shed light on the interpretation and the discussion of the main findings collected from the teachers' questionnaire and the semi-structured interview in relation to the already stated hypotheses. The results prove that EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs vary from simple to more sophisticated depending on the given situation.

Using the questionnaire, the researcher found out that the sample holds strong EB towards the certainty of knowledge. Most of the respondents disagreed with the claim that all teachers share the same teaching practices, which means their beliefs tend to be stronger and more sophisticated. In the same vein, the informants showed diversified answers in their beliefs towards the structure of knowledge since some teachers considered teaching easy while others regarded this job as difficult. Consequently, the participants' EB in this scenario ranges from naïve beliefs to more sophisticated ones.

Concerning the following belief, teachers who assume that knowledge is transferred by higher authorities are less likely to question the provided teaching curriculum and they attempt to focus more on their personal dominion in the

classroom. The results, however, were controversial as most respondents were actually against the idea of taking full control and dominating the flow of the session. Moreover, when asked whether they consider themselves as convincing teachers, most of the answers were positive due to their sophisticated belief in the source of knowledge. As a result, the targeted sample appears to value their personal judgment and critical thinking over the traditional authoritarian method of teaching.

Afterwards, the next questioned belief was about the control of knowledge. As a matter of fact, there are certain requirements to be fulfilled before tackling the job of teaching. Language proficiency and the mastery of systemic language are two essential examples among the existing other requirements. As a result, the sample was tested on their belief in having a large language vocabulary. Surprisingly, the majority of the informants agreed that teaching necessitates a broadened language repertoire, which in this case indicates that they hold stronger epistemological beliefs towards the control of knowledge. In addition to this, their disagreement with having fixed intellectual abilities at birth would also imply the same diagnosis mentioned previously.

The last investigated belief was about knowledge acquisition speed. The epistemological experts classify this belief into two categories. One section believes that knowledge acquisition occurs within a short period of time, while the other section assumes that any learning process ought to take its' needed time to be fully absorbed. The two last provided statements in the questionnaire revealed that the respondents' EB towards knowledge acquisition speed is not stable as it varies from naive to more sophisticated. To elaborate, because the informants agreed that consistency is a crucial element to success, their view would be sophisticated; nevertheless, because the majority of them believed that learning occurs over a short period of time, their belief would therefore be naive.

In the same line, as far as the interview is concerned, the results were somewhat similar to the questionnaire findings to a certain extent. The interviewees were asked about their epistemological beliefs using reformulated questions distinct from the questionnaire statements. Based on the interview a finding, the sample's epistemological belief system appears to be naïve in a few circumstances and more

sophisticated in other settings. To illustrate, in the second question, half of the respondents considered teaching an easy job, which reveals the naïveté of their belief towards the structure of knowledge. On the other hand, when the informants were asked whether they apply any technique to develop their teaching practices, most of them seemed to be reflective practitioners, and the majority of them make personal efforts to keep away from any feeling of jadedness and keep up with the current educational trends.

To conclude, one can say that the epistemological belief system of each individual generally varies from a simple, naïve extent to a stronger and sophisticated level depending on the existing context.

2.7 Suggestions:

One should highlight the significance of having sophisticated epistemological beliefs as EFL teachers to facilitate the learning process and even inspire the learners and make them subconsciously possess similar strong beliefs. Therefore, higher authorities should urge the local educationalists and field experts to shed more light on this matter and provide instructors with in-service training programs for the sake of enhancing one's teaching practices. This can be accomplished by organizing conferences and study days that bring together Algerian professionals so that they can share their knowledge and exchange the research papers.

2.8 Conclusion

The present chapter provided the design and methodology proceeded in this research. It presented the analysis and the interpretation of the findings attained from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview to explore the impact of personal epistemological beliefs on the teaching process. It has been found from the research instruments that sophisticated EB beliefs generate effective teaching practices, while naïve beliefs lead to deficient ones.

After gathering the data, an in-depth analysis was conducted, followed by an appropriate interpretation. In addition, the researcher offered some recommendations for improving the field of English language teaching in particular and the quality of education in general.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Teaching entails not only physical efforts, but also mental strains related to personal beliefs and assumptions about knowledge in general and teaching in particular. Those personal views are regarded as epistemological. These are beliefs that range from naïve to more sophisticated ones. When it comes to teaching, instructors with a sophisticated epistemological belief system would assume for instance that personal teaching practices are open to improvement through practice and consistency. On the contrary, teachers holding a naïve epistemological belief system would be convinced that individuals' capacities are everlasting and genetically predetermined. For that reason, the curiosity behind the chosen topic has urged the researcher to conduct this study in form of an investigation upon the EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs and ultimately find out their impact on the teaching practices.

The present study has been conducted in the English department at Tlemcen University. Throughout the extended essay, the researcher has tackled two chapters from different perspectives. The first chapter has supplied a theoretical foundation as well as the previous research related to the theme. On the other extreme, the second chapter has embodied the methodology used in the study that involves the study design, sampling, and instrumentation. Moreover, by using the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, the researcher has aimed to examine the teachers' epistemological beliefs and how those assumptions affect their teaching practices. The data collection has been followed by a deep quantitative and qualitative analysis and, afterwards, an overall interpretation of the results containing statistical graphs and written explorations.

The findings have clearly exhibited that EFL teachers hold both, naïve and sophisticated beliefs to various degrees. According to the participants' answers, their beliefs are mostly sophisticated towards the certainty of knowledge and the source of knowledge. To illustrate, the teachers have shown a sound disagreement with the fact that interventions coming from students are prohibited and domination in the classroom should be possessed only by instructors. They have actually proven to

General Conclusion

support students' interaction and engagement within the lesson flow. In the same line of thoughts, the teachers have also illustrated strong beliefs towards the control of knowledge as the majority of them have strongly believed that teaching indeed requires a large language repertoire and that one's intellectual capacities could be developed through exercise and personal efforts. Anyhow, the informants' EP beliefs have seemed to be more naïve when asked about the structure of knowledge and the knowledge acquisition speed. To clarify, some of the EFL teachers have regarded the job of teaching as an easy process, which exhibits their naiveté in this situation. Moreover, other informants have claimed that learning occurs within a short period of time, which also reveals the simplicity of their EP belief system.

In regards of the obtained data, the results have proved the justification of the stated hypotheses. The findings clearly confirm the first hypothesis; that EFL teachers in the English department at Tlemcen University hold a mixture of sophisticated and naïve beliefs towards both, knowledge and teaching in particular. Furthermore, the second hypothesis has also been validated as personal beliefs about teaching which definitely influence the teachers' teaching styles since they stand to shape the teaching methods and practices according to those inner beliefs. Finally, it is safe to say that the third hypothesis has indeed been confirmed because adopting a sophisticated belief system is certainly one of the best possible ways to enhance language teachers' practices in both the short and long terms.

Regrettably, the researcher has come across a series of challenges and limitations across the journey of research. While doing extensive reading about the topic, there have been a very limited number of resources and references as most of the readings have been in form of published articles or submitted theses at different universities. Moreover, the sample population has also been limited due to a lack of time. For that reason, it is strongly advised that the current study ought to be expanded to include a wider range of teachers and settings across the country. In addition, local educationalists and field experts should be urged to shed more light on this issue, and teachers should be provided with in-service training programs to improve their teaching practices.

General Conclusion

To conclude, educational stakeholders ought to put more emphasis on doing much more research on the epistemological belief system of both learners and teachers regarding its efficiency and ability to produce active learners and competent teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire to Teachers:

Teachers' questionnaire

Dear teacher,

For academic research purposes, you are kindly asked to answer this questionnaire as part of a research work carried out in the department of English at Tlemcen university .This research aims at investigating the impact of Epistemological beliefs on teachers' practices.
Please put a tick in the appropriate box.

Rubric One: Teachers' Background:

1-Gender: Male / Female

2-Educational level: Magister / M.A. Doctorate/ PhD

3- How long have you been teaching EFL?

.....years

4- What is the module that you teach? (Write only one)

.....

Appendices

Rubric Two: Teachers' Epistemological beliefs:

Please evaluate the statements below using the following codes:

- SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree
- U – Uncertain D – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

N°	STATEMENT	S A	A	U	D	S D
01	You believe that all teachers dispense their lectures using the same teaching practices carried out by the same techniques					
02	You believe that your teaching style has always been effective and that no changes are necessary to cope with current educational reforms.					
03	You believe that dispensing lectures at university is not that difficult					
04	You believe that your teaching practices are most definitely efficient to achieve positive learning outcomes					
05	You believe that you are a convincing teacher					
06	You believe that teaching is based on transmitting knowledge rather than facilitating the learning process					
07	You believe that teaching English requires a broadened language repertoire					
08	You believe that your intellectual abilities are fixed at birth					
09	You believe that working on difficult tasks that require countless hours is a waste of time					
10	You believe that fast learners are the most successful students					

APPENDIX B: Interview with Teachers

Teachers' Interview

01/ Do you think that keeping the same teaching practices will always lead to positive learning outcomes?

02/ How do you perceive teaching?

03/ To what extent do you agree whether the teacher is the only source of knowledge?

04/ What do you apply as techniques to constantly improve your teaching?

05/ How much time do you need to develop an effective teaching method ?

Summary:

A significant amount of research was dedicated to personal epistemology. However, research on teachers' epistemological beliefs is quiet scarce. The current study investigates the impact of EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs on their teaching practices. To reach this end, the researcher opted for an exploratory case study dealing with fourteen EFL teachers in the English department at Tlemcen University. The results revealed that teachers possess a combination of naïve and sophisticated beliefs to various extents. Moreover, it was indicated that effective teaching practices are primarily related to more sophisticated beliefs and lastly, the findings clearly showed that adopting for a complex epistemological belief system is one of the best ways to acquire compelling teaching performance.

Keywords: epistemological beliefs, sophisticated beliefs, naïve beliefs, teaching practices, teaching outcomes

ملخص

تمّ انجاز عدة أبحاث لنظرية المعرفة الشخصية إلا أنّ البحث عن المعتقدات المعرفية للأساتذة نادر للغاية. تبحث الدراسة الحالية في تأثير المعتقدات المعرفية لأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على ممارساتهم التعليمية. للوصول إلى هذه الغاية، اختار الباحث دراسة حالة استكشافية لعينة من أربعة عشر أستاذًا للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة تلمسان. كشفت النتائج أن الأساتذة يمتلكون مزيجًا من المعتقدات الساذجة والمتطورة بدرجات مختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم الإشارة إلى أن ممارسات التدريس الفعّالة ترتبط في المقام الأول بمعتقدات أكثر تعقيدًا. وأخيرًا، أظهرت النتائج بوضوح أن تبني نظام معتقد معرفي معقد هو أحد أفضل الطرق للحصول على أداء تعليمي فعّال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المعتقدات المعرفية ، المعتقدات المتطورة ، المعتقدات الساذجة ، الممارسات التدريسية ، نتائج التدريس

Résumé:

Un nombre important de recherches a été consacré à l'épistémologie personnelle. Cependant, les recherches sur les croyances épistémologiques des enseignants sont plutôt rares. La présente étude examine l'impact des croyances épistémologiques des enseignants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère sur leurs pratiques d'enseignement. Pour cela, le chercheur a opté pour une étude de cas exploratoire portant sur quatorze enseignants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère du Département d'Anglais de l'Université de Tlemcen. Les résultats ont révélé que les enseignants possèdent une combinaison de croyances naïves et sophistiquées à des degrés divers. En outre, il a été indiqué que les pratiques d'enseignement efficaces sont principalement liées à des croyances plus sophistiquées. Enfin, les résultats ont clairement montré que l'adoption d'un système complexe de croyances épistémologiques est l'une des meilleures façons d'acquérir une performance d'enseignement satisfaisante.

Mots clés : croyances épistémologiques, croyances sophistiquées, croyances naïves, pratiques d'enseignement, résultats de l'enseignement.