

A STUDY ON EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS–PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP REGARDING GENDER

Assist. Prof. Dr. Sibel ERSEL KAYMAKAMOĞLU

European University of Lefke

Dr Fazıl Küçük Faculty of Education, Gemikonağı-Lefke

skaymakamoglu@eul.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the fit between the EFL teachers' beliefs and practice regarding gender in the Cyprus Turkish secondary state schools context. The data was collected through quantitative means. 81 English language teachers in the secondary schools participated in the study. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire which had two main components as "beliefs" and "practice". For the purpose of statistical analysis, the belief and practice items of the questionnaire were paired (20 pairs were formed) and the data was subjected to two-tailed t-test to measure whether there was a significant difference between the female teachers and male teachers regarding "belief - practice" relationship. The analysis of the impact of gender on "belief- practice" relationship showed that female and male teachers were very similar to each other in their responses. The female teachers' reported perceptions for the paired items showed significant results in 11 pairs whereas the male teachers' reported perceptions indicated significant results in 9 pairs.

Key Words: Belief, practice, ELF teachers, EFL learning and teaching, gender.

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades there has been a growing interest among researchers in education in exploring what goes on in the mind of the teacher. For this purpose, they have focused their attention on investigating concepts such as, 'teacher thinking' (e.g. Clark & Peterson, 1986) 'teacher beliefs' (e.g. Pajares, 1992) , 'teacher knowledge' (e.g. Borko & Putnam, 1995), 'teacher craft knowledge' (e.g. Cooper and McIntyre, 1996), 'teacher images' (e.g. Black 2002), 'teacher metaphors' (e.g. Black 2002), 'teacher cognition' (e.g. Borg, 2003), and so on.

This growing interest has stemmed from the recognition that the beliefs individuals hold influence their decisions and the choices they make during the course of everyday life (Bandura, 1986). In this respect, it has been suggested that teachers' classroom decisions and actions are guided by certain practical and professional theoretical frameworks, which derive from beliefs and are developed through their own learning and teaching experiences and professional socialization.

Research literature suggests that teachers' beliefs directly affect their perceptions and judgment of learning and teaching interactions in their classrooms and they in turn influence their classroom behavior (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Clark & Yinger, 1987). Besides, teacher beliefs may function as a "contextual filter" through which teachers may screen their classroom experiences, and interpret and adapt their subsequent classroom practices (Clark & Peterson, 1986). For this reason, Higgins and Moseley (2001) indicate that for professional development "an understanding of teachers' thinking and beliefs is a vital ingredient in effective support" (p.205). Since teachers' thinking and beliefs play an important role in their classroom practice and influence their learning and teaching interactions (Borko & Putnam, 1995), it is essential to find ways of exploring teachers' beliefs and thoughts to provide insights for teacher educators to better help teachers develop.

The above claim has been taken further by Richard and Lockhart (2000) who remark: 'Teaching is a very personal activity, and it is not surprising that individual teachers bring to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching' (p.36). Teaching decisions are made under the influence of beliefs, and teaching becomes a personal act because beliefs are "accepted as true by the individual" (Borg, 2001, p.186).

As well as being personal, teaching is, however, to a large extent a public activity. In most countries, teachers face bureaucratic demands and can be forced to engage in externally imposed pedagogical practices which they might not believe in. Since they are required to implement a highly prescribed curriculum, they experience a lack of autonomy which may result in them keeping their personal

views and beliefs to themselves and not opening them up to external scrutiny. This does not necessarily mean that their teaching is not influenced by these 'hidden' beliefs.

Having raised the issue of the effect teachers' beliefs may have on teachers' practice, in the following sections teachers' beliefs will be discussed from different perspectives in relation to the existing literature.

Beliefs

The concept of 'belief' has been studied by many researchers and defined differently. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) a belief is a representation of the information a person holds about an object which can be "a person, a group of people, an institution, a behavior, a policy, an event, etc., and the associated attribute may be any object, trait, property, quality, characteristic, outcome or event" (p.12) or a "persons understanding of himself and his environment" (p.131). For Rokeach (1972), a belief is "any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase 'I believe that...'" (p. 113). Sigel (1985) defines beliefs as "mental construction of experience- often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts" (p.351). Pajares (1992) labels beliefs as "messy constructs" expressing that "the difficulty in studying teachers' beliefs has been caused by definitional problems, poor conceptualizations, and differing understandings of beliefs and belief structures" (p. 307). According to Pajares (1992)

They [beliefs] travel in disguise and often under alias- attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature (p. 309).

Although the difficulty and complexity of studying them have been stressed by many researchers, beliefs have been the subject of research for more than three decades since they play an important role in peoples' intentions, decisions and actions. It has been realized that in order to understand peoples' behaviors it is essential to understand their thinking, what they believe in. In an attempt to uncover the mystery of beliefs, researchers direct their attention to not only understanding what beliefs are but also their relationship to knowledge, practice, experience, culture and context. The research on beliefs has been taken further to investigate how beliefs can be altered.

Due to the complexity of beliefs and definitional problems, 'beliefs' have often appeared in the relevant literature alongside the word 'knowledge'. Similarities and differences between the two concepts have also been the subject of discussion in an attempt to understand teachers, learners, teaching, learning and particularly, teachers' thinking. Therefore, the following section will discuss the relevant literature about belief and knowledge.

Belief and Knowledge

The concepts of "teacher knowledge" and 'teacher beliefs' have been studied by many researchers in the field of education. Shavelson and Stern (1981) stress that when knowledge is not available teachers draw for direction on their existing beliefs, implying that belief and knowledge are separate concepts. Clark and Peterson (1986) and Nisbett and Ross (1980), in contrast, state that a belief is a type of knowledge. Kagan's (1990) ideas overlap with Clark and Peterson's and Nisbett and Ross's; to Kagan a belief is a kind of personal knowledge: a teacher's tacit knowledge. More specifically, Kagan (1992) defines belief as a "particularly provocative form of personal knowledge" and explains that

A teacher's knowledge of his or her profession is situated in three important ways: in context (it is related to the specific group of students), in content (it is related to particular academic material to be taught), and in person (it is embedded within the teacher's unique belief system) (p. 74).

On the other hand, a very different view from the aforesaid is expressed by Rokeach (1968) who suggests that beliefs have three components and knowledge is a component of belief. All the beliefs have a cognitive component for knowledge, an affective component representing emotion and behavioral component for action. Similar to Rokeach's assertion, some researchers characterize beliefs as more affectively based and knowledge as more cognitive. For example, Ernest (1989) claims that knowledge is a cognitive outcome of thought while belief is an affective outcome of thought, yet beliefs also have a small but significant cognitive component.

Nespor (1987) argues that while knowledge systems are of a cognitive nature, belief systems are affective. In this respect, for him there is a knowledge-theory and a belief-practice relationship. Similarly, Pajares (1992) considers knowledge to be based on objective facts whereas beliefs are based on personal evaluations and judgments. Therefore, beliefs are "the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (Pajares, 1992, p.307).

Pintrich (1990) claims that both "knowledge and beliefs... influence a wide variety of cognitive processes including memory, comprehension, deduction and induction, problem representation, and problem solution" (p. 836). According to Calderhead (1996) "Although beliefs generally refer to suppositions, commitments, and ideologies, knowledge is taken to refer to factual propositions and the understandings that inform skillful action" (p. 715).

In the 1980s, a plethora of terminology such as 'personal practical knowledge' and 'images' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1986), 'formal theoretical knowledge' and 'practical knowledge' (Calderhead, 1988) emerged in the literature, in an attempt to clarify the concepts of teacher knowledge and beliefs, but it only achieved a further blurring of the distinction between the two concepts. Grossman et al. (1989) point out that "while we are trying to separate teachers' knowledge and belief about subject matter for the purpose of clarity, we recognize that the distinction is blurry at best" (p.31). More recently, Woods (1996) articulates a similar conclusion. The reason for this confusion has been indicated by Verloop et al. (2001): "in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined" (p.446).

In an attempt to address this, Woods (1996) had already proposed the concept of BAK (i.e. Beliefs, Assumptions and Knowledge) to show the relationship among knowledge, assumptions and beliefs and explains "Like schemata, BAK networks are structured in the sense that knowledge, assumptions and beliefs can be posited in terms of interrelated propositions, in which certain propositions presuppose others" (p.196).

My own position is similar to Woods's that knowledge and beliefs are very closely connected and have an effect on each other. Wood's definitions further clarify the relationships. For Woods, knowledge refers "to things we 'know'-conventionally accepted facts" (p.195) and he defines assumptions as "the (temporary) acceptance of a 'fact' (state, process or relationship) which we cannot say we know, and which has not been demonstrated, but which we are taking as true for the time being" (p.195). Beliefs, finally, "refer to an acceptance of a proposition for which there is no conventional knowledge, one that is not demonstrable, and for which there is accepted disagreement" (p.195).

Due to the difficulty of distinguishing among beliefs (B), Assumptions (A) and knowledge (K), it seems useful to regard them as a composite notion, intertwined as BAK. In theory, it might be possible to define knowledge and beliefs distinctively, yet in the practice of teaching and learning it might not be so easy to draw the distinction between the two since their function is intertwined. One's beliefs may affect the organization and the implementation of one's knowledge. Teachers can become influenced by their beliefs when organizing their knowledge in deciding what to teach and how to teach. Therefore, it would be simplistic to ignore the impact of beliefs on teachers' knowledge. Pajares (1992) claims that

Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information (p.325).

For this reason, I adopt Woods' notion of BAK in this study and teachers' beliefs will be used as shortened term to refer to beliefs, assumptions and knowledge taken together.

Teachers' beliefs do not merely affect pedagogical decisions but also influence teachers' interpretation of classroom events. Woods (1996) states that

the teachers' beliefs, assumptions and knowledge play an important role in how the teacher interprets events related to teaching (both in preparation for the teaching and in the classroom) and thus affect the teaching decisions that are ultimately made (p.184).

To sum up, considering that teaching is a complex cognitive and affective activity beliefs and knowledge cannot be thought of in isolation from each other. Sometimes it may be difficult to decide whether what a teacher does is because of his/her beliefs or his/her knowledge because "in their use, [they] may overlap with each other" (Woods, 1996, p.195). Thus, sometimes what teachers think they know may be a deeply held belief. For this reason, researchers need to be careful when exploring teachers' beliefs. Woods (1996) suggests that "In many cases it cannot be clearly determined whether the interpretation of the events are based on what the teacher knows, what the teacher believes, or what the teacher believes s/he knows" (p.194).

With that in mind, the following section will discuss teachers' beliefs and classroom practice in greater depth.

Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practice

Although a relationship between beliefs and classroom practice is well established, it is not as straightforward as it might seem. Hativa & Goodyear (2002) state that "research has shown, though not necessarily simple, links between these areas of (a) teacher thinking, beliefs and knowledge, (b) teachers' classroom practices and (c) student learning" (pp.1,2). Some studies conducted to investigate belief - practice relationship indicated that beliefs can have influence on practice. Borg's (1998) study with an experienced EFL teacher illustrated (i.e. stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes) how the teachers' instructional decisions were influenced by the interaction of his personal pedagogical system (i.e. stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes), his educational and professional experiences and the contexts he teaches in. In another study, Borg (2001) investigated the relationship between the two EFL teachers' perceptions of their KA+G (Knowledge about Grammar) and their practices and found that the teachers' perceptions influenced their practice.

The connection between teachers' beliefs and practices is, however, complicated by the fact that teachers may sometimes not be able to adopt practices that reflect their beliefs. Some researchers have thus found inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practice (e.g. Calderhead, 1996; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan & Ross, 2001; Fang, 1996; Kane et al., 2002). Basturkmen, Lowen and Ellis (2004) investigated the relationship between stated beliefs and practices of three ESL teachers and found that a relationship hardly existed. Kane, Sandretto and Heath (2002) found little evidence for the existence of a relationship between academics' espoused beliefs and practice. Similarly, Hativa et al. (2001) found no relationship between the participant university teachers' espoused beliefs and practice. Feryok (2008) who studied the practical theory of an Armenian EFL teacher found that some of her cognitions seemed to diverge in practice. Phipps and Borg (2009) examined tensions in three experienced EFL teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices and they reported that there were cases that a strong contrast between the teachers' professed beliefs about language learning and the observed practices existed.

This study was conducted to explore the fit, if there is any, between EFL teachers' beliefs and perceived practice about EFL teaching and learning regarding gender in Cyprus Turkish state secondary schools context since in some cases belief does not influence practice in the way one might expect. In light of research on teacher cognition, the present study has the potential to shed light on belief-practice relationship regarding EFL teaching in Cyprus Turkish state secondary schools context.

Method

This study aims to explore the fit between the EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practice in EFL learning and teaching in Cyprus Turkish State Secondary Schools. The key research questions in this investigation were:

1. What relationship is there between the EFL teachers' beliefs and their perceived practice?
2. Are there any differences between male and female teachers regarding belief-practice relationship?

In this study, teachers' beliefs and practice were investigated through a questionnaire which was distributed to all the EFL teachers in Turkish Cypriot state secondary schools. The entire population of EFL teachers (N= 140) in all the Cyprus Turkish State Secondary Schools (N=20) was targeted for this study and 81 teachers (67 female and 14 male) participated in the study voluntarily. These percentages were very close to the female/male ratio in the overall target population which was 80.71 % female and 19.2 % male. This means, of the total population which was 140 teachers, 113 were female and 27 were male.

The theoretical foundations of the questionnaire were 'EFL Teacher's and Learner's Role', 'Learning Environment', and 'EFL Learning'. These theoretical concepts informed the construction of the Belief and Practice items. These themes were reflected in both parts of the questionnaire. The items about beliefs had corresponding items in the practice part. The questionnaire consisted of 34 items: 17 items about teachers' beliefs (first part) and 17 items about teachers' practice (second part). In both parts, a 5 point Likert-scale format was used.

The questionnaire was translated into Turkish by the researcher and by another colleague since it was the teachers' native language. The two translations were compared to see if they were the same, and one version was arrived at. Then, this was given to another colleague to back-translate into English, to check the reliability of the translation. Then, the necessary modifications were made in the light of his advice. To detect possible problems in advance and to modify the instrument before it was used in the actual study, the questionnaire was piloted twice on 20 EFL teachers at tertiary level. The belief and practice items were subjected to reliability tests respectively and the Cronbach alpha scores were calculated as .8580 and .8240, respectively.

For the analysis of the questionnaire data Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 13 was used. Two-tailed "t" tests were administered to test whether there was a significant difference between the means of

- 1) females' beliefs and practice,
- 2) males' beliefs and practice.

Findings

1. Analysis of Belief and Practice-related Differences for 'Females'

The comparison of the mean scores of the female participants' reported perceptions for 'beliefs and practice' revealed that out of 20 belief-practice pairs in total, the mean scores of 11 pairs showed significance. The 9 pairs that did not reveal any significant results are not discussed below. The findings reporting the significant differences are presented under three headings: EFL Teacher's Role, Learning Environment, and EFL Learning, respectively.

1.1. Theme 1: EFL Teacher's Role

The t-test results for females' beliefs and perceptions of practice in regard to the EFL teacher's role in foreign language learning and teaching indicated significance for 2 pairs: B1/P30 and B15/P23 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 1.1. below.

Pair 3:

B1: Learners need to be provided with opportunities to discover and construct their concepts and knowledge.

P30: I encourage my students to make inferences and induce rules about the language.

Pair 1:

B15: Learners need to be encouraged to use higher-order thinking skills.

P23: I provide my students with tasks in which they can practice analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Table 1.1. Perceptions of Female Teachers Regarding the Variables 'Belief' and 'Practice' Concerning EFL Teacher's Role (Paired samples "t" Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN DIFFERENCE	T-VALUE	DF	P
Pair 3 B1 P30	67	4.46 4.02	3.90	66	.000 *
Pair 1 B15 P23	67	4.40 3.67	5.53	66	.000 *

*p < .05 Significance

1.2. Theme 2: Learning Environment

The t-test results for females' beliefs and perceptions of practice concerning learning environment in foreign language learning and teaching revealed significance for 1 pair: B3/P25 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 1.2. below.

Pair 7:

B3: Learners need to learn in a cooperative and collaborative environment.

P25: I do not prefer my students to work individually.

Table 1.2. Perceptions of Female Teachers Regarding the Variables 'Belief' and 'Practice' Concerning Learning Environment (Paired samples "t" Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN	T-VALUE	DF	P
Pair 7 B3 P25	67	4.52 2.99	10.62	66	.000 *

*p < .05 Significance

1.3. Theme 3: EFL Learning

The t-test results for the females' beliefs and perceptions of practice regarding learning a foreign language revealed significance for 8 pairs: B4/P24, B7/P32, B7/P28, B8/P30, B12/P21, B14/P20, B14/P29 and B16/P21 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 1.3. below.

Pair 8:

B4: Students' interests have an important effect on learning.

P24: I consider my students' interests when I design activities for language learning.

Pair 13:

B7: Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

P32: I teach some strategies for my students to check their own learning.

Pair 14:

B7: Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

P31: I encourage my students to evaluate their own progress.

Pair 15:

B8: Learning how to learn needs to be promoted.

P30: I encourage my students to make inferences and induce rules about the language.

Pair 16:

B12: Teaching a foreign language should include an element of fun.

P21: I use games to teach language.

Pair 17:

B14: A language teacher should consider the diversity of learning styles and learner needs.

P20: I consider the differing needs of individual students when planning activities.

Pair 19:

B14: A language teacher should consider the diversity of learning styles and learner needs.

P29: I consider the individual differences among my students.

Pair 9:B16: Using games in teaching a foreign language is not a waste of time.

P21: I use games to teach language.

Table 1.3. Perceptions of Female Teachers Regarding the Variables ‘Belief’ and ‘Practice’ Concerning EFL Learning (Paired samples “t” Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN	T-VALUE	DF	P	
Pair 8	B4 P24	67	4.69 4.03	2.35	66	.022 *
Pair 13	B7 P32	67	4.34 3.40	2.56	66	.000 *
Pair 14	B7 P28	67	4.34 3.96	3.28	66	.013 *
Pair 15	B8 P30	67	4.39 4.03	2.90	66	.005 *
Pair 16	B12 P21	67	4.39 3.79	4.88	66	.000 *
Pair 17	B14 P20	67	4.40 3.51	6.82	66	.000 *
Pair 19	B14 P29	67	4.40 4.10	3.01	66	.047 *
Pair 9	B16 P21	67	4.43 3.79	4.67	66	.000 *

*p < .05 Significance

The analysis of the female teachers’ responses regarding ‘EFL Teacher’s Role’, ‘Learning Environment’ and ‘EFL Learning’ showed that their stated beliefs did not match with their claimed practices for more than the half of the pairs (i.e. 11 of 20 items). Indeed, this could be because there are more ways than one to put a particular belief into practice. The female teachers’ responses were more positive towards the belief items in all the pairs that revealed a mismatch. This might mean that the teachers experience some problems in putting their beliefs into practice.

2. Analysis of Belief and Practice-related Differences for ‘Males’

The comparison of the mean scores for males’ perceptions for beliefs and practice indicated that out of 20 belief-practice pairs in total, the mean scores of 9 pairs showed significant results. The remaining 11 pairs did not show any significant differences, thus they are not reported here. Findings indicating significance are reported under three headings regarding the paired item themes below: EFL Teacher’s Role, Learning Environment, and EFL Learning, respectively.

2.1. Theme 1: EFL Teacher's Role

The t-test results for the reported perceptions of the male teachers regarding beliefs and practice concerning EFL teacher's role in foreign language learning and teaching revealed significance for 2 pairs: B10/P18 and B15/P23 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 2.1. below.

Pair 18:

B10: Learners need to be encouraged to take risks.

P18: I give my students tasks which encourage risk-taking.

Pair 1:

B15: Learners need to be encouraged to use higher-order thinking skills.

P23: I provide my students with tasks in which they can practice analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Table 2.1. Perceptions of Male Teachers Regarding the Variables 'Belief' and 'Practice' Concerning EFL Teacher's Role (Paired Samples "t" Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN	T-VALUE	DF	P
Pair 18 B10 P18	14	4.36 3.21	2.93	13	.012 *
Pair 1 B15 P23	14	4.29 3.71	2.83	13	.014 *

*p < .05 Significance

2.2. Theme 2: Learning Environment

The t-test results for the reported perceptions of the male participants for beliefs and practice regarding learning environment in foreign language learning and teaching revealed significance for 3 pairs: B3/P19, B3/P25 and B11/P19 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 2.2. below.

Pair 6:

B3: Learners need to learn in a cooperative and collaborative environment.

P19: I put my students in small groups or pairs to come up with a joint solution or approach to a problem or task.

Pair 7:

B3: Learners need to learn in a cooperative and collaborative environment.

P25: I do not prefer my students to work individually.

Pair 20:

B11: A foreign language teacher should strive for maximum interaction among the learners.

P19: I put my students in small groups or pairs to come up with a joint solution or approach to a problem or task.

Table 2.2. Perceptions of Male Teachers Regarding the Variables 'Belief' and 'Practice' Concerning Learning Environment (Paired Samples "t" Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN	T-VALUE	DF	P
Pair 6 B3 P19	14	4.57 3.86	3.68	13	.003 *
Pair 7 B3 P25	14	4.57 3.14	6.28	13	.000 *
Pair 20 B11 P19	14	4.43 3.86	3.31	13	.006 *

*p < .05 Significance

2.3. Theme 3: EFL Learning

The t-test results for the male teachers' reported beliefs and perceptions of practice regarding EFL learning indicated significance for 4 pairs: B7/P32, B7/P28, B8/P30 and B14/P20 at the 0.05 significance level, as illustrated in Table 2.3. below.

Pair 13:

B7: Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

P32: I teach some strategies for my students to check their own learning.

Pair 14:

B7: Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

P28: I encourage my students to evaluate their own progress.

Pair 15:

B8: Learning how to learn needs to be promoted.

P30: I encourage my students to make inferences and induce rules about the language.

Pair 17:

B14: A language teacher should consider the diversity of learning styles and learner needs.

P20: I consider the differing needs of individual students when planning activities.

Table 2.3. Perceptions of Male Teachers Regarding the Variables 'Belief' and 'Practice' Concerning EFL Learning (Paired Samples "t" Test Table)

BELIEF & PRACTICE	N	MEAN	T-VALUE	DF	P
Pair 13	14	4.79	5.83	13	.000 *
Pair 14	14	4.79	4.20	13	.001 *
Pair 15	14	4.00	4.16	13	.001 *
Pair 17	14	4.71	3.81	13	.013 *

*p < .05 Significance

The analysis of the male teachers' responses regarding 'EFL Teacher's Role', 'Learning Environment' and 'EFL Learning' indicated that their stated beliefs did not match with their claimed practices for less than half of the pairs (i.e. 9 of 20). This could be because a particular belief can be put into practice in more ways than one. Similar to the female teachers, male teachers' responses were more positive towards the belief items in all the pairs that showed a mismatch. This might mean that the teachers experienced some problems in putting their beliefs into practice.

Discussion

Here, the research questions will guide the discussion of the findings. The findings of the research questions will be discussed together below.

The research questions are as:

- 1) What relationship is there between the EFL teachers' beliefs and their perceived practice?
- 2) Are there any differences in beliefs and practice according to gender?

The findings of this study confirmed the findings of earlier studies that showed inconsistencies between beliefs and practice (e.g. Calderhead, 1996; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan & Ross, 2001; Fang, 1996; Kane et al., 2002; Hativa et al., 2001). The quantitative analysis of the belief-practice relationship indicated a mismatch in the reported perceptions of female teachers for 55 % of the paired items (belief and practice statements), i.e. 11 of 20 pairs. The discrepancies were found for all three themes: EFL Teacher's Role, Learning Environment, and EFL Learning. The female teachers were

inconsistent in their stated beliefs and practice for more than half of the items which were expected to match.

Similar findings were reported for the males, yet compared to the female teachers' perceptions the male teachers responses were more consistent. The male teachers' perceptions revealed a mismatch for 45 % of the paired items, i.e. 9 of 20 pairs, concerning the same three themes mentioned above. The male teachers were thus less inconsistent in their stated beliefs and perceived practice than the female teachers.

The findings indicated that the male and female teachers seemed to be more similar in their practices than in their beliefs and the male teachers seemed to be more consistent in their beliefs and practice than females.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insights into the nature of EFL teachers' beliefs and perceived practice in the Cyprus Turkish state secondary schools context. This study contributes to our understanding of teacher cognition in EFL teaching and learning. It also has impacts on theoretical and methodological assumptions about teacher education and teacher development (i.e. teacher training). It shows the importance of understanding teachers' beliefs and their practical knowledge in teacher education and has the potential to help educators develop an understanding of teacher behaviors, classroom decisions and actions for the purpose of furnishing EFL classrooms with effective teachers in the Cyprus Turkish EFL context.

This study also yielded evidence in advancing our understanding of how compatible the teachers' beliefs and practice were with each other in Cyprus Turkish secondary state schools context. Although generalizations cannot be made for the whole EFL teachers working in Cyprus Turkish secondary schools contexts, to a certain extent it provided evidence to draw a picture of English language teaching in the state schools and understand at least some of the reasons for the problems in foreign language education in Cyprus Turkish EFL context.

The findings of this study showed that beliefs do not always translate into practice, and teachers' beliefs and perceived practice might differ. Since this study did not reveal any evidence for the reasons of the discrepancy between the beliefs and practice, there is a need for further investigation to explore the underlying reasons of the inconsistency between beliefs and practice.

Therefore, further research which would be carried by qualitative means (e.g. observation and interview) is needed to understand the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and actual practice since qualitative means have the potential to engage the researcher into a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Basturkmen, H., Loewen, S., & Ellis, R. (2004) Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 243-272.
- Black, A. (2002) Making sense of what it means to teach: Artful representations as meaning-making tools, *Teacher Development*, 6(1), 75-88.
- Borko H. & Putnam, R. (1995) Expanding a teacher's knowledge base: A cognitive psychological perspective on professional development, in Guskey, T.R. & Huberman, M. (eds.) *Professional Development in Education: New Paradigms and Practices*, pp. 35- 65, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Borg, S. (1998) Teachers' pedagogical systems and grammar teaching: A qualitative study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(1), 9-38.

- Borg, S. (2001) Self-perception and practice in teaching grammar. *ELT Journal*, **55**(1), 21-29.
- Borg, S. (2003) Teacher cognition in language teaching: a review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do, *Language Teaching*, **36**(2), 81- 109.
- Calderhead, J. (1988) The development of structures in learning to teach, in Calderhead, J. (ed), *Teachers' Professional Learning*, London: Falmer.
- Calderhead, J. (1996) Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In D. Berliner & Calfee, R. (eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*, pp.709-725, New York.
- Ertmer, P.A., Gopalakrishnan, S. & Ross, E.M. (2001) Technology-using teachers: Comparing perceptions of exemplary technology use to best practice. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, **33**(5), <http://www.iste.org/jrte/33/5/ertmer.html>.
- Clandinin, J. & M. Connelly (1986) What is 'personal' in studies of the personal?, in Ben-Peretz, M., Bromme, R. & Halkas, R. (eds.), *Advances of Research on Teacher Thinking*, Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Clark, C.M. & Peterson, P.L. (1986) Teachers' thought processes, in Wittrock, M.C. (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, (3rd ed.), pp.255-296, New York: Macmillan.
- Clark C.M. & Yinger, R.J. (1987) Teacher planning, in Calderhead, J. (ed.) *Exploring Teacher Thinking*, London: Cassell Education Limited.
- Cooper, P & McIntyre, D. (1996) *Effective Teaching and Learning: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives*, Open University Press: UK.
- Ernest, P. (1989) The knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of the mathematics teacher: A model, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, **15**, 13-34.
- Fang, Z. (1996) A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, **38**(1), 47-65.
- Feryok, A. (2008) An Armenian English language teacher's practical theory of communicative language teaching. *System*, **36**, 227-240.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975) *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Grossman, P.M., Wilson, S.M. & Shulman, L.S. (1989) Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge for teaching, in Reynolds, M.C. (ed.), *Knowledge Base for the Beginning Teacher*, pp. 23- 36, Oxford: Pergamon.
- Hativa, N. & Goodyear, P. (2002) *Teacher thinking, beliefs and knowledge in higher education*, Kluwer Academic Publishers: Netherlands.
- Hativa, N. Barak, R. & Simhi, E. (2001) Exemplary university teachers: Knowledge and beliefs regarding effective teaching dimensions and strategies. *Journal of Higher Education*, **72**, 699-729.
- Higgins, S. & Moseley, D. (2001) Teachers' thinking about information and communications technology and learning: Beliefs and outcomes, *Teacher Development*, **5**(2), 191-210.
- Kagan, D.M. (1990) Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Inferences concerning Goldilocks principle, *Review of Educational Research*, **60**(3), 419-469.
- Kagan, D.M. (1992) Implications of research on teacher belief, *Educational Psychologist*, **27**, 65- 90.
- Kane, R, Sandetto, S. & Heath, C. (2002) Telling half the story: A critical review of research on the teaching beliefs and practices of university academics. *Review of Educational Research*, **72**, 177-228.
- Nespor, J. (1987) The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, **19**, 317-328.
- Nisbett, R. & Ross, L. (1980) *Human Inferences: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgement*, Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Pajares, F. (1992) Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct, *Review of Educational Research*, **62**, 307-332.

Phipps, S. & Borg, S. (2009) Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System*, **37**, 380-390.

Pintrich, P.R. (1990) Implications of psychological research on student learning and college teaching for teacher education, in Houston, W.R. (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, pp.826-857, New York: Macmillan.

Richards, J. & Lockhart, C. (2000) *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*, Cambridge University Press: China.

Rokeach, M. (1968) *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rokeach, M. (1972) *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shavelson, R. & Stern, P. (1981) Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgements, decisions and behavior, *Review of Educational Research*, **51**, 455- 498.

Siegel, I.E. (1985) A conceptual analysis of beliefs, in Siegel, I.E. (ed.), *Parental Belief Systems: The Psychological Consequences for Children*, pp.345-371, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meijer, P.C. (2001) Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching, *International Journal of Educational Research*, **35**(5), 441-461.

Woods, D. (1996) *Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching: Beliefs, Decision-making and Classroom Practice*, Cambridge University Press: UK.