

Epistemological Beliefs and Teaching Style of Public School Teachers in the Context of English Language Teaching

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Abstract

This descriptive-correlational study was conducted to determine the significant relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching styles of public school English teachers in Cluster 12 Malabog District, Division of Davao City, during the academic year 2022-2023. The respondents to this study were the 30 public school English teachers. It was found that the level of epistemological beliefs of public school English teachers is high. On the other hand, the level of teaching style of public school English teachers is very high. Further, it was noted that there was a significant relationship between the epistemological beliefs and teaching styles of the public school English teachers, and the indicators of epistemological beliefs such as innate/fixed ability, certainty knowledge, learning process, and authority/expert knowledge significantly influenced the teaching styles of public school English teachers. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Education, through the school administrators, improve the professional development and capacity building of teachers by designing workshops, courses, or online modules that focus on epistemological beliefs to improve the teaching styles of the teachers. In addition, future researchers may consider examining the relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching styles across various disciplines and comparing findings across subjects to reveal discipline-specific instructional issues.

Keywords: Epistemological beliefs; Teaching style; Davao City, Region XI

1. Introduction

Teachers are a keystone species in the learning ecosystem and are crucial to education (Lei, 2016). Teaching styles, "a teacher's preferred way of solving problems, carrying out tasks, and making decisions in the teaching process, impact teaching effectiveness and students' learning and development. A study conducted in Iran revealed that most learners, especially at schools, seem frustrated by how their English language classes are presented or taught, which may ultimately discourage them from pursuing learning

English. In addition, learners can notice that how they conceptualize themselves as language learners may need to equip them with more motivation or abilities to deal with the learning process (Pishghadam & Navari, 2010).

In the Philippines, according to Wa-Mbaleka (2014), English language teachers must learn the necessary skills for teaching English because they need to correct the teaching passed on to students, jeopardizing the foundation of English language abilities. This is supported by Lasaten and Racca (2016), who argue that English teachers may require more access to professional development opportunities. They emphasized that a lack of training and exposure to new educational approaches can impede the implementation of innovative teaching styles. As a result, they urged that English language teachers pursue professional development and stay current on new teaching styles and methodologies.

Meanwhile, epistemological beliefs are considered a context-free notion that can be examined in different disciplines and from multiple perspectives of education (Sosu & Gray, 2012). While epistemology has been discussed from various angles, scholars typically concentrate on epistemological beliefs, such as the nature of knowledge, its definition, construction, evaluation, location, and mode of knowing. On the contrary, teachers who believed in naive belief systems tended to practice transmission and teacher-centered teaching styles. Teachers holding sophisticated beliefs have also been found to use integrated teaching strategies, which create chances for group discussion and involve learners in problem-solving tasks (Soleimani, 2020).

Further, the researcher has yet to come across studies on epistemological beliefs and teaching styles in the local setting, particularly in Cluster 12, Malabog District, Davao City. This study addresses the gap by exploring the relationship between epistemological beliefs and the teaching style of public school teachers in the context of English language teaching. There is an urgency to conduct the study to help public school English teachers be aware of their prevailing epistemological beliefs and understand how these beliefs influence and relate to their teaching style.

1.1. Review of Related Literature

Epistemological beliefs have four dimensions namely innate/fixed ability, learning effort/process, certainty knowledge and expert/authority knowledge. These refer to an individual's beliefs about the nature and knowledge of learning. By itself, epistemological beliefs may be considered as the subjective counterpart of epistemology, the branch of theoretical philosophy that is concerned with characteristics, criteria, and justification conditions of knowledge (Bromme, Pieschl & Stahl, 2014).

Innate / Fixed Ability. Innate/fixed ability is an indicator of epistemological beliefs, a continuum ranging from the belief that the ability to learn is fixed at birth to the belief that learning improves over time with experience. In addition, Chan and Elliot (2004) postulated this as beliefs regarding whether people's ability is innate and fixed or changeable.

Certainty Knowledge. Certainty knowledge is a belief that knowledge is absolute and never changing. Students who believe that knowledge is certain and unchanging regard learning as a simple task of memorization and consequently adheres to a surface approach to study (Teo & Chai, 2012).

Learning Effort / Process. This dimension is referred as beliefs of hard work and effort in drilling. It deals with the process through which knowledge is acquired, whether knowledge is something to be achieved by hard work. Students who believe that learning requires effort and a clear process are more inclined to strive for understanding and to adopt a deep approach to study (Chan & Elliot, 2004).

Authority / Expert Knowledge. This dimension of epistemological beliefs shows the tendency to believe the presence of an authority to transfer the knowledge to the learners. According to Cheng et al. (2009), authority/expert knowledge is the individuals' belief of whether knowledge is instantly taken from authority/expert figures or autonomously constructed by individuals, as well as whether the authority/expert can be questioned, doubted, or criticized.

Teaching style has five dimensions namely, expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator and delegator. The term "teaching style" describes the enduring personal traits and behaviors that show up in how teachers run their classes. Therefore, it is both a characteristic of teachers, something that directs and guides their instructional processes, and something that has an impact on learners and their capacity to learn. Teachers' teaching style can take many different forms and has an impact on how they deliver material, engage with students, organize classroom activities, supervise student work, socialize pupils to the workplace, and mentor students. They generate a wide range of information on the methods and motivations of teachers in particular (Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011).

Expert. The expert style refers to possessing knowledge and expertise that students need (Soleimani, 2020). In the teaching context, experiential knowledge and self-awareness form the basis of the "know thyself" that is essential for teachers. The word expertise has several connotations, suggesting something that is done "correctly", "with dexterity" or "resourcefully", but it always implies that the person concerned has the competency required by the task in hand (Castañer, Camerino, Anguera, & Jonsson, 2013).

Personal Model. The personal model style refers to believing in teaching by personal example and establishing a model for how to think and behave. The personal model teacher conceives himself or herself as a model for students and students have to emulate his or her approaches (Soleimani, 2020). The teaching for the personal model style should be done using personal examples and "teach by examples". Teachers tend to act as a prototype to students on how to think and behave. They tend to direct and guide the students to observe and imitate the method shown after that (Shaari et al., 2014).

Facilitator. The facilitator style emphasizes the personal nature of teacher-student interactions. A facilitator teacher follows teacher-student interaction, tries to guide students by asking questions and making suggestions, and encourages students to make informed decisions (Soleimani, 2020).

Delegator. The delegator style is concerned with developing students' capacity to function in an autonomous fashion. The delegator teacher is distinguished as a resourceful person who is available when needed (Soleimani, 2020).

1.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was mainly anchored on mental model theory of Laird (1990) who stated that it is a theory of thinking and reasoning that articulates mechanisms involved in the conceptual change process. Senge (2006) explained that mental models are understood as deeply ingrained assumptions and generalizations that influence how teachers understand the world, that is, how they take action. Haim et al. (2004) showed that teachers' mental models, not the depth of their content knowledge, drove their instructional practices; moreover, even when teachers had deepened their subject matter knowledge, they did not reshape their teaching practices until they had elaborated upon their mental models.

Another theory which the study was anchored on is constructivist theory of Piaget (1954). The basic premise of this theory is that people create their own meaning through experience. Constructivism embraces a

“top-down” rather than a “bottom-up” instructional methodology. This means that, rather than teach all of the details that lead to a main idea, students discover the main idea and then derive the detail. One of the most important principles in constructivist approach to language teaching is action orientedness. Cooperative learning, creative and active participation in classroom activities, learning by preparing various projects as well as learning by teaching have been treated as the major tasks referring to the action-oriented method (Aljohani, 2017).

The conceptual framework of the study anchors with epistemological beliefs with the following indicators: innate/fixed ability, certainty knowledge, learning effort/process and authority/expert knowledge; and teaching style with the following indicators: expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator.

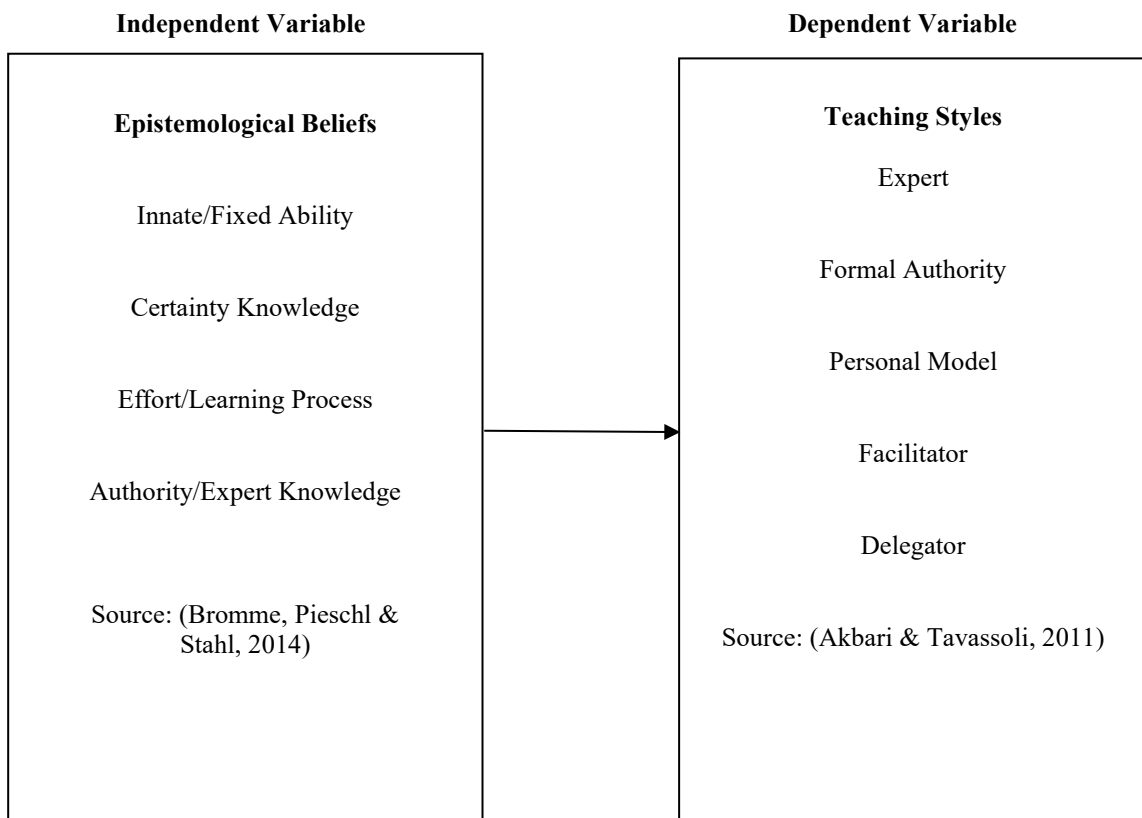


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.3. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the significant relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching style of public school teachers in the context of English language teaching. Specifically, it sought to determine the answers to the following problems:

1. What is the level of epistemological beliefs of public school English teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1 innate/fixed ability;
 - 1.2 certainty knowledge;
 - 1.3 effort/learning process; and
 - 1.4 authority/expert knowledge?
2. What is the level of teaching style of public school English teachers in terms of:
 - 2.1 expert;
 - 2.2 formal authority;
 - 2.3 personal model;
 - 2.4 facilitator; and
 - 2.5 delegator?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the epistemological beliefs and the teaching style of public school teachers in the context of English language teaching?
4. What indicators of epistemological beliefs of the public school English teachers that significantly influence their teaching style in the context of English language teaching?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study used non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing descriptive-correlational technique. It is non-experimental research because the independent variable of the study is not manipulated and there is no random assignment to groups (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

2.2. Research Participants

The respondents of the study included all the English teachers in Cluster 12 Malabog District who have taught English subjects for at least three years. The total number of respondents was thirty (30).

2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

Asking Permission. The researcher asked permission from the Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Pablo F. Busquit, that this study will be conducted. Along with the approval of the dean was his endorsement to the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City Division, to conduct the study among the English teachers of Cluster 12 Malabog District.

Data Collection. Once the request was approved, the researcher personally arranged with the PSDS and the school principals. After getting the approval, the researcher personally administered the survey among the respondents through giving each of them a copy of the instrument.

Data Tabulation, Analysis and Interpretation. Upon retrieval of the completed questionnaires, the data were tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted confidentially and accordingly.

2.4. Data Analysis

Mean. Mean is a simple mathematical average of a set of two or more numbers. The mean for a given set of numbers can be computed in more than one way, including the arithmetic mean method, which uses the sum of the numbers in the series (Hayes, 2022).

Pearson Product Moment Correlation or Pearson r . The statistical tool will be used to determine the significant relationship between the two variables.

Multiple Linear Regression. Multiple Linear Regression is an extension of simple linear regression.

3. Results and Discussion

Presented in Table 5 is the summary on the level of epistemological beliefs of public school English teachers with the following indicators: innate/fixed ability, certainty knowledge, learning process, and expert knowledge.

Table 5. Summary on the Level of Epistemological Beliefs of Public School English Teachers

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Innate/Fixed Ability	2.27	Low
2.	Certainty Knowledge	3.43	High
3.	Learning Process	4.81	Very High
4.	Expert Knowledge	3.94	High
	Overall	3.61	High

When teachers have a high level of epistemological beliefs, it means they possess a sophisticated understanding of the nature and process of knowledge acquisition. This translates to several positive implications for their teaching and student learning. They emphasize critical thinking and inquiry-based learning. Also, teachers with high epistemological beliefs move beyond simply transmitting knowledge and focus on fostering students' ability to think critically, question assumptions, and construct their own understanding through exploration and investigation (Abd-El-Khalick, 2016). Schraw (2013) found that teachers with high epistemological beliefs were more likely to use inquiry-based teaching methods, which encourage students to actively engage with the material, ask questions, and form their own understanding.

Presented in Table 11 is the summary on the level of teaching styles of public school English teachers.

Table 11. Summary on the Level of Teaching Styles of Public School English Teachers

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Expertise	4.13	High
2.	Formal Authority	3.98	High
3.	Personal Modeling	4.37	Very High
4.	Facilitating	4.41	Very High
5.	Delegating	4.21	Very High
	Overall	4.21	Very High

This finding reveals that the teaching style of public school English teachers is always observed. Teachers with a very high level of teaching styles go beyond simply delivering information or managing a classroom. They become a highly effective facilitator of learning, empowering students to become independent thinkers, effective communicators, and lifelong learners (Inayat & Ali, 2020). The finding is in concordance with the study of Pying and Rashid (2014) that teachers with a very high level of teaching style likely demonstrate a commitment to reflection, seeking feedback, and continuously honing their skills. The success of always observing these styles of being an expert, facilitator, delegator, personal model and formal authority is best measured by the positive impact it has on students' learning, motivation, and personal growth.

Presented in Table 12 is the significant relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching style of public school English teachers with an overall computed r-value of (0.627) and with a p-value of (0.00) which is lower than 0.05 level of significance set in this study.

Table 12. Data on the Significant Relationship Between Epistemological Beliefs and Teaching Styles of Public School Teachers in the Context of English Language Teaching

Variables	r-value	Degree of Correlation	p-value	Decision on Ho
(X) Epistemological Beliefs	0.627S	High Correlation (Strong Positive Relationship)	0.00	Rejected
(Y) Teaching Style				

S- Significant at 0.05 Level of Significance

The finding of the study is similar to the study of Neda (2020) conducted among the 200 EFL teachers in the South – West of Iran. It revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between the EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs and teaching styles which indicates that the more they believe that the knowledge is acquired through effort, the more facilitating role they play in their teaching style. Moreover, if they believe in the importance of student inquiry and discovery, they may use teaching methods that encourage active participation and exploration in the classroom.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained in this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The level of epistemological beliefs of public school English teachers is high which means that these beliefs are often held. Meanwhile, the level of teaching styles of public school English teachers is very high. This implies that these styles are always observed by the public school English teachers.

2. There is a significant relationship between the epistemological beliefs and teaching styles of the public school English teachers. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables was rejected. This means that there is a connection between how teachers perceive knowledge and the style they employ in the classroom to facilitate learning.

3. The indicators of epistemological beliefs such as innate/fixed ability, certainty knowledge, learning process, and authority/expert knowledge significantly influence the teaching styles of public school English teachers. The hypothesis tested that none of the domains of epistemological beliefs significantly influence teaching styles was rejected. It means that the fundamental convictions and assumptions teachers hold about the nature of knowledge and learning play a substantial role in shaping how they approach teaching and classroom practices.

4.2. Recommendations

In the light for the forgoing findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher formulated the following recommendations for consideration:

1. The Department of Education, through the school administrators, may improve the professional development and capacity building of teachers by designing workshops, courses, or online modules that focus on epistemological beliefs. The workshops may be conducted during the conduct of Mid-Year Performance Review and Evaluation and in the School Learning Action Cell.

2. School heads may dig deeper into the study's results to understand the nature of the relationship between specific epistemological beliefs and observed teaching styles. Thus, they may organize workshops or seminars that delve into the correlation between the epistemological beliefs and teaching styles during LAC sessions. In this case, they may also invite experts in the field to provide insight and facilitate discussions among teachers.

3. Teachers may attend specialized workshops or seminars tailored to English teachers, focusing on the relationship between epistemological beliefs and effective language instruction. They are encouraged the formation of peer collaboration groups or learning communities where they can share insights, strategies, and experiences related to their epistemological beliefs and teaching styles.

4. Future researchers may consider examining the relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching styles across various disciplines. They may compare findings across subjects to reveal discipline-specific nuances and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of philosophical perspectives on instructional practices.

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