

**Title**

MY OWN TEACHER'S BELIEFS

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Becoming an English teacher wasn't as easy as I thought; it is not just standing up in front of a class room and teaching a language. Being a language teacher means more than just regulating student's behavior and discipline. But in my case, I became an English teacher empirically, not knowing anything about pedagogy and the methods to approach my student's learning process. But I must have done something right, because students loved my methodology. As time passed, my passion for teaching grew as well.

Frank Smith (2006) said, "Every moment we have moved on from where we were before, not just physically, but in terms of knowledge and understanding and values." Therefore, it was not until I decided to go back to school to get my teaching degree that I realized that the concept of being a teacher implicated my own teacher's beliefs and how this influenced my own role in the teaching-learning process, and the students' learning and evaluation. Thus, being in different courses in Luis Amigo University I have learnt that a teacher can use different methodologies in order to achieve the students' learning process. Kumaravadivelu (1994) said, "The post method condition is a state of affairs that compels us to refigure the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners of method".

First of all, I'd like to give a little background about my beginnings as a learner of English as a Second Language. When I was ten years old my family decided to move to United States of America, to be more specific, Staten Island, New York; even though, I was a child, I knew that this was going to be a whole lot new experience for me. The first thing I knew I had to do was to go to school, and not just any school. I had to go to an English speaking environment school. I remember being so afraid of going to school because I didn't speak a word in English. Finally, the day came for me to go to school and I remember that I was put in a class with a bunch of white guys, Puerto Ricans and African Americans; for me that was very weird and strange because it was the first time I had to deal with such a mixture of cultures. Even with in the white people, there were a lot of differences; Such as, Italian-

Americans, Irish-Americans, and German-Americans etc. Anyhow, I began my first day smoothly because I didn't speak with any one. But as time went by I began to speak little things and interact with the same faces every day, so I began to loosen up a little bit and this is how I started to speak English after two months. I figured that I became real fluent after a year or so. This is because all my subjects were in English. According to Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, (1989). Content Based Learning is interpreted as the use of subject matter as a 'vehicle for second or foreign language teaching/learning. At the time I didn't know I was learning a second language through subjects. Thus, I graduated from Junior High School with Honor Rolls among many students. I was very proud of myself, because I was in school in the US for only two years, and there I was graduating from middle school with honors. My English proficiency by then was pretty good, I've learned a lot because I decided to hang out only with monolingual people; I knew that if I only be friends with them I would become better in English proficiency.

As years went by and I moved back to Colombia; I decided to become an English teacher by accident. It had never crossed my mind of being an English teacher; at the moment the idea was absurd. But my friends kept telling me it was the best choice I had since I spoke English. I figure that teaching English was just another way of training people, as I used to when I was in the hotel industry as a manager. I have a lot of experience in dealing and training people for a job. So, I figured what I can lose by trying, let me try it. Even though, I believe that the process of learning something has to be done by immersion. But it is important to understand that the teacher's beliefs do in fact influence the process on how students perceive knowledge. For example, I believe in the post method condition by Kumaravadivelu (1994) because he defines learner's autonomy "can promote meaningful laboratory *autonomy* in the language classroom by encouraging learners to assume, with the help of their *teachers*. I believe that we language teachers as we get experience in the field, we begin to look over different approaches in order to enhance our teaching practices and the students learning process. Kumar, C. (2013)

said, “There is a need for considerable amount of effort required to create an innovative approach for learning English. Nevertheless eclectic way of learning English speaking primarily involves the four skills.” Thus, there is no one particular model, method or approach that is the best. Also, we take what best works in our classroom in order to provide an effective way of students’ learning. In my situation as an experience teacher there is growing evidence that I’m highly influence by my beliefs, which in turn is closely linked to my values, to my view of the world, and to my understanding of my place within it. As Angyris and Schon (1974) said “Our beliefs about one particular area or subject will not only be interconnected, but will also be related to other more central aspects of our personal belief systems, e.g. our attitudes and values about the world and our place within it.”

Furthermore, the students’ learning process is influenced by the teacher’s beliefs because they can perceive the teacher’s attitudes, methods, knowledge and preparation, and even the way a teacher evaluates a learning process. As a matter of fact, when I do my lesson plans I always include activities which involve cooperative and collaborative learning as well as democratic, individual and inter-skill tasks. This makes the classes more dynamic and interesting to the student. Therefore, they get the sense that they are learning something and this motivates them to become more active participants instead of receptive or passive participants where the teacher is just the center of the class. Since students are engaged into the learning process dynamically, they can be evaluated in a democratic way, because the assessment could be done any time during the process implicitly. But of course, the teacher cannot leave behind any tasks or projects. I totally agree that being a teacher who believes in the post method condition by Kumaravadivelu saves the bell when it comes to have a dynamic and enjoyable class for the student and for the teacher.

In consequence, there is definitely a difference of a teacher that I am today from the one I was 5 years ago when I started going to school to get my degree as

a teacher. I'm sure that I have improved many things along the way. For example, I used to be very strict with deadlines when it came to hand in home work. Now, I think I'm more flexible due to the fact that students in Colombia procrastinate a lot. I came to the conclusion that I was not going to go against this cultural behavior and just relax on the way. Believe it or not it has worked. Students hand in work mostly a day after is due, so what I have done is also ask for work one day before, considering that they will hand it in one day later. So, I save my self being stress about it. So, I think a good principal is applied here because I understand the central concepts of being a teacher. Also I have applied other principles, because I provide learning opportunities to my students. First of all, I usually search for those students who have difficulties in learning and therefore I place them with the ones who are always learning in pace with the rest of the class. This way I create supported groups in the classroom in order to provide better learning opportunities for each students. I think the best way is by cooperative learning. Springer & Verlag (2015). I think when teachers use collaborative and cooperative strategies to reach and optimize the students' learning process, the teacher is actually fitting even more principles and being more eclectic.

Also, something that I have learned during my seven years of teaching is to end my classes with a productive activity where the students are promoted to speak out their mind. What I mean is what they learned during the class they always have to talk about it. This way I believe the students put in practice in a real life context what they just learned. This way I consider that interaction and praxis is put in practice because the student always have a chance for interaction among their peers and the teacher.

Now, when planning a class I am always thinking about how I am going to teach the next class. Usually, I plan my classes while I am in bed or traveling or just wandering around, but then I choose one specific moment, and sit down in and write down all those thoughts. I think as a teacher I am always reflecting upon my own

teacher practices, but of course this process is done through a conscious practice each time that a class is finished and usually students talk about it. Some classes are great but others are not that great. The best thing about reflecting about your own practices is that there is always a second time to change it. Sometimes when I realize that my class was not how I wanted; then, I try to do something different during the next class in order to achieve the goal that I had set for the previous class.

Finally, I think that when you have the vocation to be a teacher, you are constantly reflecting, changing, enhancing and exploring ways in which you as a teacher feel that the praxis is fulfilling's a way that your students sensed it. Therefore, they feel that the teacher is a guide in which they are directed to reach a goal; in my case as an English teacher is for my students to be able to speak English.

## References

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