

Elementary school english teachers' beliefs and practices toward communicative language teaching

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to probe elementary school English teachers' beliefs and practices toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Based on both quantitative and qualitative research, three instruments, a questionnaire, classroom observations and interviews, were employed in this study. First, 109 English teachers from 63 elementary schools in Changhua County were invited to fill in the questionnaire which was designed to explore their beliefs toward English education environment in elementary schools and CLT. Furthermore, among them, five English teachers were observed and interviewed to probe their practices toward CLT. Based on the collected data from the questionnaire, classroom observations and interviews, the main findings were summarized as follows: First, the results derived from the questionnaire showed that the elementary school English teachers held negative beliefs toward the current elementary school English teaching environment. The elementary school English teachers agreed that school should hold teaching workshops for teachers regularly. Moreover, they expressed slightly favorable opinions about school with appropriate teaching and learning environment, with enough English teachers, and with sufficient teaching resources. However, they were dissatisfied with the total number of students in a class, English level of students in a class, and the total hours of English course per week. Second, the results derived from the questionnaire revealed that the elementary school English teachers held favorable beliefs toward CLT. First, they had highly positive beliefs toward roles of teachers, toward types of activities and toward the strengths of CLT. Second, they had favorable beliefs toward the practice of CLT and ways of error-correction and evaluation. Moreover, the results of the further analysis by one-way ANOVA showed that English teachers' background information such as age, major, ways to become elementary school English teachers and years of English teaching did not affect their beliefs toward CLT. Third, the results derived from the questionnaire and classroom observations revealed that the elementary school English teachers applied both traditional teaching method and CLT. In terms of teachers' roles, the English teachers favored to play roles as facilitators to evoke students' learning motivation and guides to help students solve learning problems. Referred to types of classroom activities, the English teachers widely employed drills to make students familiar with sentence patterns, games and songs to make English class interesting and cheerful. As to ways of error-correction, the English teachers frequently utilized peer-correction to let their students help each other correct errors, and teacher-correction to let their students know the error immediately and understand the correct usage. In terms of ways of evaluation, the English teachers preferred paper-and-pencil written tests and oral tests. Fourth, the results derived from the questionnaire and interviews indicated that CLT was not suitable for the current elementary school English teaching environment. However, the English teachers would still try their best to put CLT into practices. Fifth, the results derived from the questionnaire and interviews reported that (1) difference of students' English ability, (2) large class, and (3) limited instructional hours were the three major difficulties teachers encountered interrupting the practice of CLT in the current elementary schools.

Keywords : Communicative Language Teaching

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