EFL Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and Classroom Management Approaches: A Case Study

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EFL Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and Classroom Management Approaches: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This case study focused on EFL teachers' classroom management approaches and examined how Epistemological beliefs shadowed management approaches. To collect data, we used semi-structured interview questions and journal writing. Thirty EFL teachers participated in this study. Findings showed that EFL teachers following interactionalist (learner-centered) approaches at behavior and instructional dimension believed in learners' active role in knowledge acquisition. Meaning that learning effort, critical thinking and unique features of contexts were mentioned as elements contributing to constructing knowledge. EFL teachers' journals also showed connections between what they believe to be the source of knowledge and how they manage classroom.

As a branch of philosophy, Epistemology presumably underpins the development of knowledge, individuals' understanding of knowing and human behavior and practice (Bromme, Kienhues, & Porsch, 2010). As a factor predicting individuals' behaviors, epistemological beliefs refers to "how individuals come to know, the theories and beliefs they have about knowing, and the manner in which such epistemological premises are part of and an influence on cognitive process of thinking and reasoning beliefs about the processes of knowing and the nature of knowledge" (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997, p.435). Cognizant of this, Epistemological beliefs, (EBs) hereafter, trickle down into the teaching profession and affect pedagogy, teachers' behavior, interactions with students, regulations and students' processing, learning strategies, problem solving and academic performance (Chan, 2010).

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Teachers' classroom management practices constitute a great part of their professional identity (King, 2013) and play key role in a successful teaching career. Generally, classroom management refers to a wide range of activities and plans to supervise learning, social interactions, and students' behaviors (Martin & Sass, 2010). The idea of classroom management might seem elusive and encompass multiple layers and subcomponents, yet, Martin, Yin and Baldwin (1998) categorized it into three broad classes: behavior, people and instructional management. Based on this categorization, teachers' plans to control misbehaviors and deviations fall in behavior management. People management pertains to teachers' approach to help students as specific individuals and teachers' material selection, time budgeting, syllabus design and pedagogical activities are attributed to instructional management. This classification was modified later on since Martin and Sass (2010) concurred that some overlaps existed between people and behavior management dimensions. In their new classification, Martin and Sass (2010) merged people management with the other two components and the final categorization was narrowed down into behavior and instructional management.

Given the role of EB in explaining the practical aspects of teaching (Roth & Weinstock, 2013), a great deal of recent studies into teacher education has focused on this issue. For most of the teachers, the primary goal of teaching is contributing to the learners' knowledge acquisition and creating an interaction between the learners and the outside world. Similar to other teaching practices, teachers' classroom management might be rooted in what teachers believe about knowledge gaining. Despite the bulk of investigations into teachers' EB in relation with various factors in teacher education (e.g. teachers' beliefs about teaching (Aypay, 2010); cognitive processing (Kardash & Howell, (2000); self-regulated learning strategies, (Schreiber & Shinn, 2003), the question of how teachers' EB might inform their classroom management practices calls for more attention (Roth & Weinstock, 2013).

Acknowledging the impact of teachers' EB on their classroom realities in earlier studies into teacher education, the status and inner connections between EBs and language teachers' performance still seems a new avenue of research (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). In particular, a sense of inadequacy is sharpened when it comes to research into how language teachers' experience, performance and beliefs are developed in interaction with one another (Moodie, 2016). That said, using a reflective inquiry, this study focuses on the nature of EFL teachers' EB and classroom management approaches and how EFL teachers' classroom management approaches are informed by their EB.

1.1. Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs

Hofer and Pintrich (2002) described "personal epistemology" as the different psychological and educational approaches to acquire knowledge. Personal epistemology could also be referred to as the personal senses that people manipulate to analyze something (Muis, Bendixen & Haerle, 2006).

Perry (1970) is one of the pioneer scholars whose original studies into personality and conceptual dimension of learners' views of knowledge gaining opened up new windows into future studies on EBs. His collection of studies showed how individuals' reasoning and EB moved towards more sophistication. Perry's (1970) investigations paved the way for other scholars including Erwin (1983), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberber and Tarule (1986) who examined EB from other perspectives and discovered the role of gender and other contextual factors in development of EB. Relying on these strands of studies, Schommer (1990) came up with a more comprehensive model of EB. Schommer (1990, p.498) defining the system of epistemological belief as "a multidimensional issue consisting of more or less independent components", proposed a five-dimension epistemological belief system consisting of omniscient authority, certain knowledge, simple knowledge, quick learning, and Innate/ Fixed Ability. According to this classification, naïve believers hold that knowledge is not sophisticated but a simple matter; however, for sophisticated believers knowledge is a complex phenomenon. Omniscient authority knowledge regards knowledge to be imparted by an authority (naïve believer) rather than by logical reasoning (sophisticated believer).

From the perspective of those who believe in certain knowledge, knowledge is either certain or tentative. Innate ability believers hold that the capacity of learning is innate rather than acquired. Quick learning deals with the speed of learning (quick and or gradual). Based on this classification, Schommer (1990) designed a 63-item scale to examine epistemological beliefs. However, some of the factors were not extracted in the validation study and that posed some challenges to Schommer's research method (Chan & Elliott, 2002).

In an attempt to rectify Schommer's EB model, Chan & Elliott (2004) conducted a validation study on Schommer's Epistemological beliefs scale (EBS) and came up with a four-dimension model of EB. They named these four factors as Authority/Expert Knowledge, Certainty Knowledge, Learning Effort/Process and Innate/ Fixed Ability. According to this categorization, the first dimension shows the tendency to believe in the presence of an authority to transfer the knowledge to the learners. The second one deals with the process through which knowledge is acquired: whether knowledge is something to be achieved by hard work and the third dimension deals with the point that whether knowledge is something fixed or changeable. Finally, the fourth category deals with the question whether people perceive knowledge as an innate capacity and fixed. In other words, from the perspective of innate/fixed ability believers knowledge is something that could not be changed because and the ability to gain and reshape the knowledge is very limited.

There exists a consensus that teaching practices and behaviors in the classroom are influenced by epistemological beliefs (Feucht & Bendixen 2010) and those teachers who believe that knowledge is sophisticated or more complicated tend to practice more learner-centered pedagogy (Chan & Elliott, 2004).

1.2. Classroom Management Approaches

As an area influenced by teachers' EB, classroom management approaches has been persistently appreciated as an invaluable factor determining the efficacy of teaching and learning (Marzano, 2003). To project the concept of classroom management, Wolfgang (1995) produced a model of the approaches teachers adopt toward their classroom management. The underlying idea of classroom management originated from child development theories based on which teachers' approach to managing a classroom was divided into three orientations: interventionist, interactionalist and non-interventionist. From a noninterventionist point of view, a child needs to be driven to find his expression in real world (Wolfgang, 2005). Therefore, a non-interventionist teacher believes that he/she should be less involved with adjusting student behavior and exert not much control over classroom. Yet, an interventionist takes the control of the environment and students' manners. Halfway between the two extremes is the interactionalist approach focusing on the mutual give and take between learners and their environment. What the students do to modify their environment and how the external world shape individuals are of interactionalists' interest (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998).

Within this model, teachers' approaches to classroom management vary from more controlling or interventionist to less controlling or non-interventionist and the midpoint is interactionalist approach whereby teachers seek a balance in their teaching career. According to Wolfgang (2005), teachers with controlling approach (interventionist) to classroom management tend to present high degree of authority and consider learners as passive recipient of knowledge whereas teachers with less controlling approach (non-interventionist) to classroom management give students more latitude in the classroom and learners enjoy maximum freedom. Interactionalist teachers holding a balanced view in their approach to classroom management represent themselves as the authority in the class and at the same time respect to students' opinions to attain teaching goals.

2. Review of Key Studies

Personal EB is believed to underpin what teachers do and how they behave in classroom (Olafson & Shraw, 2006). Findings of the root of EB and the way that EBs are created have been the topic of a plethora of studies into education. Studying EBs has been recognized to be the first step toward triggering changes into teacher education programs and developing new insights into teaching profession (Lee & Schallert, 2016). Analyzing elementary school teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching, Nespor (1987) suggested that teachers' EBs either implicitly or explicitly influence learners' beliefs about knowledge acquisition and curriculum development. A similar idea has also implied by Schraw and Olafson (2003) who labeled teachers' beliefs as important predictors of pedagogical outcomes. More specified questions, however, are related to the aspects of teaching behaviors affected by EBs. According to Donmoyer (2001) EBs are determinant elements defining how a teacher reacts in a classroom. Likewise, Tsai (2002) asserted daily routines and teachers' practices, deciding what to teach or the content of instruction mirror teachers' EBs about learners' role in knowledge construction and status of curriculum. Extending studies into EBs, Tsai and Kuo (2008) also proposed that classroom practices, classroom climate and management and instructional tasks are filtered by positivistic and or constructivist views. Similarly, Yang, Chang, and Hsu (2008) argued that teachers' EB was an important sign of teachers' values and how knowledge is shaped in learners. Extant studies showed that teachers holding more relativist and sophisticated EB tended to celebrate learners' latitude in constructing knowledge and classroom performance. Whereas teachers holding naïve epistemological beliefs tend to be more teacher-centered in their decision-makings and practices in classroom (Chan, 2003).

Talking about more specific effect of EBs on different aspects of teaching and learning, review of key studies showed that the following areas are influenced by EBs: teacher-learner interaction, controlling classroom (Tanase & Wang, 2010), learning motivation (Kuhn & Park, 2005), skills of decision making (Tsai, 2002), learning strategies and comprehension of texts (Schraw & Olafson, 2003) and instructional practices (Tanase & Wang, 2010).

Similarity and or discrepancy of EBs among teachers of different subject matter have also been the topic of studies into this issue. Assuming certain commonalities in human nature, Schommer and Walker (1995) believed in the same EBs for different teachers, regardless of the contexts and subject matters. Bendixen and Rule (2004) challenged this idea arguing that depending on teaching subject, teachers' EBs are variable. For example, in contrast with soft science teachers (literature and social science) hard science (e.g. math and science) teachers hold naïve beliefs. Additionally, as evidenced in many studies (Davison, 2001; Arkoudis, 2003) cultural norms and social contexts are believed to be other sources of conception and changes in EBs. Undoubtedly, cultural norms are unique in different contexts and bring about special and unequaled effects into EBs. With this argument in mind, Ertmer (2005) proposed that language teachers' EB might hold differing EB due to nature of what they teach. Language teachers' experiences and beliefs are outcomes of sociocultural contexts (Arkoudis, 2003). Experimental studies gave credence to this assumption: Chan and Elliott (2002) examined EFL teachers' EBs in Hong Kong and found that conception of learning and teaching were related to each other and EFL teachers' performances in a classroom reflect their EBs. In a quantitative study, Ketabi, Zabihi and Ghadiri (2012) studied pre-service English teachers' epistemological beliefs and their conceptions of teaching. They distributed the teaching and learning conceptions questionnaire and the epistemological beliefs scale developed by Chan and Elliott (2004) among 92 EFL pre-service teachers and found that participants of their study believed in innate/fixed ability and certainty knowledge and tended to traditional conception of teaching and learning.

3. Method

3.1. Aim of Study

Previous strand of studies endorsed that EBs play a key role in predicting teachers' behavior and the actual aspects of teaching and learning and classroom management (Luft & Zhang, 2014). However, conflicts and vagueness in terms of how and in what sense teachers' EBs can affect their practices are still open to research. To address this lacuna, the researchers selected a case study design to focus on EFL teachers' EB and how EB informs EFL teachers classroom management approaches. Bearing on differences existing in diverse contexts, and the status of EBs in determining aspects of teaching and management, this study was an effort to delve into EFL teachers' EBs and classroom management profiles. Studying such a problem might extend the investigation into the role of EB in teacher education and help "understanding about the links between what teachers do and what they believe" (Hofer, 2008, p. 181). Additionally, delving into classroom management practices might introduce illuminating ideas into classroom culture and the flow of learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The importance of studying about classroom management through inquiry about beliefs system is well captured in Larrivee's (2006) view that " classroom management with all its complexities, ambiguities and dilemmas, requires a teacher to go beyond mere control tactics and engage in both critical inquiry and thoughtful reflection, the hallmarks of reflective practitioners" (p. 984). With this justification in mind, in this case study, the researchers intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' classroom management approaches?
2. What are EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs?
3. How are EFL teachers 'classroom management approaches informed by their epistemological beliefs?

3.2. Participants

Purposive sampling was used and participants of this study were EFL teachers working at Shiraz University language learning center (SULC). Before data collection, we sent an invitation to all teachers (n=55) asking them to take part in this research. We explicated the details of research (e.g. purpose of the study, data collection, etc.) in research invitation. To ensure the consent and collaboration of the participants for data collection, we assured confidentiality of the data. All in all, 30 teachers volunteered to participate in this study. The demographic information about participants of the study is represented in the following table (see Table 1).

Table1.
Demographic Variables

Demographic features	Age		Education		Gender		Teaching experience	
	<30	>30	B.A.	M.A.	Female	Male	<5 years	>5 years
Number	18	12	19	11	21	9	14	16

3.3. Instrument

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Patton (1990), interview is the most appropriate instrument to capture the teachers' beliefs about knowledge and other instruments (e.g. observation and self-report scales) may not provide a clear understanding about teachers' thinking. Interview items were developed in accordance with review of literature and some of questions were adopted from the EB scale developed by Chan and Elliott (2004) and the behavior and instructional management scale developed by Martin and Sass (2010). Meanwhile, the researcher did a pilot study to ask the experts (experienced teachers) the interview questions and this pilot study led to the revision of the semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix A).

Before carrying out interviews, I asked for teachers' permission to record their voice. To do so, the teachers gave a written consent for taking part in this study. Each interview took about 20 minutes on average. To establish rapport with the participants, the interviews were conducted in Persian and then the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed. As the researcher is an English translator as well, she did the translation of the transcribed interviews and to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions, two English teachers at university were asked the check the quality of translation and meaning of the sentences.

3.3.2 Journal Writing

Richardson (2000) defines writing as a "method of inquiry", a way of finding out about yourself and your topic" (p. 923). We asked participants of this study to keep a journal of their epistemological beliefs (how knowledge is acquired, sources of knowledge acquisition, teachers' role in building students' background and information, etc). The classes were held twice a week and each teacher submitted 10 entries (1 per week) (the total number of journals was 300) describing the day and how she/he managed the class. Incorporating a precise description of what went on in class, experienced behaviors and misbehaviors and personal feeling, each participant outlined the issues related to epistemological beliefs and how these beliefs affected classroom management approaches. Since the contents of journals were considered in the research, we asked the teachers to write their journals in Persian and do not worry about grammatical and punctuation errors in their writings.

3.4. Data Analysis

We followed a systematic qualitative inductive approach to analyze the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), transcribed, and translated the data into English. To minimize the possibility of meaning loss, the participants checked the transcripts. Journal entries were reviewed and critically revisited to draw the most highlighted points that almost all participants concurred with. Further, interviews were analyzed to identify recurrent themes. We compared all categories and themes drawn from journals and interviews and crosschecked with the theoretical frameworks of this study. Meanwhile, we cautiously tried to concentrate on "indigenous concept" (Patton, 1990, p.454) used by the teachers to describe their biased notes and irrelevant issues. The statements were checked for redundancy and clarity by two coders and the process of theme analyses was implemented up to the point that no new theme could be extracted. To maximize the trustworthiness of the results, participants of the study were asked to give feedback on research findings. To estimate the inter-rater reliability, Cohen's (1960) Kappa statistics was used. The κ value was .85 which, according to Landis and Koch (1977), shows an acceptable amount of agreement between the coders.

5. Results

Themes and subthemes drawn from interviews and journals showed that different approaches might be followed at different dimensions of classroom management. Traditionally, the primary connotation of management is teachers' dominance over classroom, yet most of emergent themes indicated that learner-centeredness was more favored than teacher-centeredness. Reviewing major themes and cross checking earlier studies and theoretical frameworks, we came up with categorizing the classroom management approaches (see table 2 and 3). In the followings, each dimension of classroom management is fully described.

5.1. Behavioral Dimension of Classroom Management

Table 2 shows the details of major themes of behavioral management in classroom. Accordingly, it could be implied that participants of this study mainly believed in interactionalist approach to managing behavioral aspects in classroom. According to Martin and Baldwin (1993), teachers who stand on this point in the continuum of classroom management approaches tend to reflect teachers' flexibility and tendency towards promoting a sense of autonomy in learners.

Table 2.
Behavioral Dimension of Classroom Management

Major Themes	Frequency
Establishing rapport with students to create a friendly learning environment	30%
calling the students by their first names	25%
telling jokes and being humorous to reduce stress and pressure of learning	20%
Using positive words to praise students' success even if the success is not very big.	25%

The participants believed that adopting any action in the classroom should reflect students' needs and psychology. For most of them, striking a balance between teachers' control and taking account of students' position in classroom might lead to a successful classroom management. Setting rules from the first sessions was the first step to control students. "*prevention is my first strategy, so I act like a doctor and try to warn my students about consequence of rule breakings" (interview).* To make it more democratic, however, some funny and humorous articles might be added to the rules as one of the teachers noted in his weekly journal" *I give my students a few options of penalty for different misbehaviors like being late, talking to peers and chewing gum. The options include buying ice cream or chocolate for all students, doing extra homework or cleaning the class. " (Weekly journal).* This piece of finding illustrates the transformation and reconsiderations of classroom management approaches as historically bureaucratic orientation was predominant in classroom and teacher-student interaction was the second priority. Rogers' (1953) humanistic view challenged this approach and since then teachers have tried to change punitive reactions to rule breaking behaviors to rewarding, praising and giving positive feedbacks to students (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). EFL teachers in this study acknowledged that creating positive emotions in students prevents much of the difficulties in classroom management and results in promising learning outcomes (e.g. more willingness to talk, more collaborative learning). As one of the teachers stated in his/her weekly journals, "*my students are very sensitive. They show reaction to even simple signals of encouragement. One day one of my shy students gave a correct answer to my question; I patted him on the back and said well-done honey! It was really amazing to see that reticent and silent student shows great willingness to talk from then on" (Weekly Journal).*

There were, however, some negative outlook on showing flexibility in controlling the class and learners' behavior as one of the teachers stated that *"some learners take disadvantage of my kindness and they mess around, talk too much when they are not supposed to and make the class really chaotic" (Interview).* However, this teacher also added that showing seriousness could make some students feel discouraged and hence repressed from learning or getting involved with pedagogical activities in the class.

Another teacher also described his/her approach to controlling the students as" *although I would rather get close to the students and create a warm connection with them, my experience taught me that some students get too close to me which is somehow annoying because this intimacy and interaction often leads to the students' disobedience" (weekly journal).*

5.2. Instructional Dimension of Classroom Management

From the emergent themes of the teachers' interviews, (see table 3) it could be interpreted that participants of the study pursued interactionalist approach.

Table 3.
Instructional Dimension of Classroom Management

Major Themes	Frequency
Using group learning activities, asking student' ideas about their tendency toward having supplementary materials	30%
devoting much of the class time to students' talks rather than teacher talks	30%
Involving silent and shy students in discussions and motivating them to speak	40%

Involving students in creating syllabus and analyzing students' need in materials selection and teaching methodology were delineated in most of teachers' journals. *"To manage instructional aspects, I try to see what is needed. I take time to see weakness and strengths of my students' performance. For example, if they need more speaking tasks I will focus on more speaking" (Interview).* Undoubtedly, needs analyses would make sense when teachers are cognizant of the psychology of the students and identify their likes and dislikes. One of the teachers explained his manner in developing instructional tasks:

"To bring different experience of learning how to speak in English, I use games in class. My students show enhanced interest when I ask them to choose their role in tasks" (weekly journal). Another teacher commented that" *"I try to evaluate my learners' views in classroom in terms of the material selection and first I ask them what books and extra-curricular activities they would like to have or need in their classroom" (interview).* Showing variation in tasks and instructional activities might optimize the opportunity of learning for different students as individuals have different tastes and style for learning (Doyle, 2006). Taking the learners' needs and interest, tastes and methods of learning the language need adopting a learner-centered approach to instruction and a democratic dominance over classroom (Wolfgang, 2005). Moreover, applying group management practices and engaging students in tasks maximize self-regulation, autonomy and social abilities to face real-life problems (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). These extracts exemplify the significance of celebrating students' character in changing the mood of students and mode of learning. Furthermore, the amount of teacher talks was much less than students'. This extract justifies it: *"after all my students are here to learn how speak in English, so they need to talk and they need the time to practice this skill" (weekly journal).* This very aspect of classroom management would be of much more of interest if teachers focus on training students for beyond classroom situations, which is the ultimate goal of education:

"The purpose of education has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being. Other statements of educational purpose have also been widely accepted: to develop

the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career, to promote a particular social or political system" (Foshay, 1991, p. 20).

Yet there were some themes in contrast with interactionalist approach toward instructional management. The following excerpts show authoritative tendency of the participants as far as instructional aspects are concerned. Some parts of weekly journals showed that teachers did not believe in giving latitude to the learners in directing the syllabus or material selection.

For example, one of the teachers mentioned that, *"before I start my classes, the principal of the language learning center gives me a syllabus and tells me what parts of the book must be covered, so I have to cover what is required by the office rather than taking care of learners' needs and designing a syllabus based on my learners' needs"* (weekly journal).

In one of the interviews, also a teacher stated, *"Running discussion and having group activities are time consuming and because teachers are supposed to cover certain parts of the book to get the students prepared for the final test, they cannot devote much time to pair works and group activities".*

5.3. EFL Teachers' Dominant Epistemological Beliefs

The other focus of our study was EFL teachers' beliefs about the source of knowledge acquisition. Table 4 indicates a summary of major themes of the participants' Epistemological beliefs at different dimensions. Review of weekly journals and interviews showed that the ability to learn is not genetic and students can nourish their capacity to learn. *"For me, knowledge construction is a dynamic process and the ability to learn highly depends on creativity"* (interview). For participants of this study, teachers are not transferring knowledge to the students and students are supposed to significantly contribute to knowledge acquisition. To ease this contribution, EFL teachers believed that they provided chances for the learners to pick the knowledge and discover things by themselves. Here are comments supporting this view:

"I think learning a language demands real activity and responsibility. Of course, I transmit my understanding and information to the learners but I do also consider some activities for them so as to ignite their critical thinking and creativity "(interview).

"I asked my students to think about two pictures and find the differences. That said, I challenge them and give them food of thought and this means that knowledge is to be constructed by learners" (Weekly journal).

Table 4.
Epistemological Beliefs

Dimensions of EB	EFL Teachers' EB
Innate/Fixed Ability	The ability to learn the language is not innate The ability to learn is dynamic
Learning Effort/Process	Perseverance is more important than innate ability
authority/expert knowledge	Teachers are not the only source of learning and sometimes they may make mistake
certainty knowledge	Each context requires a special method of teaching Language learning means trial and error Most of ideas are subject to change

Participants of this study described the process of language knowledge acquisition as a gradual phenomenon demanding effort rather than genetic capacity " *I'd not deny the role of innate ability to learn a language, but I think learning a language in a EFL context requires a good deal of practice and hard work" (interview).* Including drills and asking students to repeat structures were suggested to promote learning the lexical items and grammatical functions. This idea was captured in the following excerpt:

"We are learning and teaching in an isolated context where there is no native speaker around and no chance for communicating in English. The activities I assign to my students are all because they need to devote sustained effort to learn the language" (Weekly Journal). "It is not like an overnight business, surely language knowledge is acquired though time and hard work" (Interview).

The third dimension of epistemological beliefs, the role of authority knowledge and whether learners are allowed to acquire knowledge by personal reasoning, seemed to be challenging for most of participants. They thought that fostering critical thinking in language learner is a high level of achievement in language education, yet for many teachers it is too idealistic and farfetched especially at pre intermediate and elementary levels.

Creating solid background knowledge of language is contingent on believing that sources of knowledge are not restricted and teachers are not the mere sacred source of the knowledge. Each context bears especial features necessitating particular method of teaching and management profile (Borg, 2006). *"Language learning experiences are not the same and different individuals come to class for different reasons. Therefore, no method and strategy could be universally applicable. I have experienced various things in my career" (interview).*

Fitness for purposes was the most important criterion to select teaching and classroom management packages. "Ideas are prone to change and language is the medium through which changes are expressed. I try to keep abreast of the latest changes in textbook and materials. For instance, in this semester, I asked my students to create a group in WhatsApp and practice speaking in English in virtual class. Anyway, technology has changed many things and it has affected language knowledge accumulation as well" (weekly journal). One reason for this finding could be the context where EFL teachers of this study taught. At private language learning institutes, communicative language learning activities requiring giving more latitude to the learners and practicing more learner-centered teaching activities are appreciated. In addition to the EB affecting EFL teachers' classroom management, there could be some other environmental and sociocultural factors influencing teachers' practices. Talking about this, Fang (1996) referred to the external issues including the teaching programs and the place of teaching as the factors affecting beliefs. Generally, as mentioned earlier, the way that a teacher looks at things and believe in different aspects of knowledge acquisition could even marginally change teaching performance and other pedagogical issues (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis, & Purdie, 2002).

5.4. Linking Epistemological Beliefs and Classroom Management Approaches

Close analyses of the interview results helped the researcher come to an understanding of how EFL teachers' EBs can affect their classroom management approaches. EFL teachers' classroom management orientation reflected whatever they preached about the origin of the knowledge.

"Actually I believe that peer works and collaborations are indispensable part of language learning. It is not like mathematics or history that a teacher comes to class and teaches all the material. Here the learners need to talk to learn how to talk in English. So this trend of teaching entails a sense of intimacy in the classroom" (Interview). Believing in mutual collaboration and group works in teaching learn connote student centered and constructive approach to teaching and handing classroom (Sinatra & Kardash, 2004; Yadav & Koehler, 2007).

Relying on discussion, pair works and encouraging a warm and happy learning environment indicate teachers' tendency toward flexibility in managing the learners and having a relent approach towards misbehaviors. This connection shows that teachers' choice of special classroom management performance is rooted in how they believe in knowledge acquisition (Richardson, 1996). In fact, deciding on what to do in classroom and which strategy might best fit the situation depends on what a teacher believes (Olafson & Schraw, 2006).

Drawing a direct and linear connection between teachers' EB and classroom management approaches, however, is not an easy task (Sosu & Gray, 2012). This is because teachers might believe in some particular approaches of classroom management, for example, but in practice, their performance is moderated by some contextual factors (Kember, 1997). In this study, the teachers were selected from private language learning centers where making financial benefits might overshadow the quality of the service offered and making extra money would be the first priority. To fulfill this very particular expectation, the teachers should have an encouraging and pleasant behavior to persuade the learners keep coming to the class and learning the language in that language learning center. Therefore, the teachers' performance is limited by contextual restrictions (Lim & Chai, 2008). For example, one of the teachers stated in his/ her journal that" *sometime, I really cannot bear their behavior and noise. They are too naughty and disturbing. I tried to control them but one day the manager of the office summoned me and asked me to be relent when managing the learners. She told me that one of my duties is to attract more learners to the language learning center and my behavior would be very important element to achieve this goal" (Weekly journal).*

The complexity of the relationship between teachers' EB and classroom management approaches might be best captured in Fishbein and Ajzen (1975):

"a belief links an object to some attribute…the object of a belief may be a person, a group of people, an institution, a behavior, a policy, an event, etc. and the associated attribute may be an object, trail property, quality, characteristic, outcome or event" (p. 12).

6. Conclusion

This study focused on examining EFL teachers' EBs and classroom management through qualitative data collection and analyses. Findings of this study illustrated that teachers' EB might shadow their classroom practices. More specifically, we found that EFL teachers' classroom management approaches are amalgamations of preventive strategies and interactionalist approaches rooted in their beliefs about knowledge acquisition. Additionally, the emphasis on learners' active role in building bodies of knowledge highlights EFL teachers' nascent tendency to postmodern teaching whereby learner' autonomy and agency are respected (Brown, 2007). Unlike the Paulo Freir's (1970) "banking concept of education" where learners are assumed "empty accounts" to be nurtured by teachers, we found that EFL teachers were willing to grant the voice to learners and the roles of knowledge construction to the learners. Participants of this study considered learners as active participants of classroom and learning stream rather than passive recipients of input.

Admittedly, findings of this study should be interpreted in light of the certain limitations. Embarking on EBs and traces of beliefs in real classroom management practices, we used reflective journal writing as a method of data collection yearning for a deeper understanding of the issues being raised in this study. However, it must be noticed that some points pertaining to teaching practices might have been left vague, as some individuals might be more or less resistant to reveal themselves (Kobert, 1995) and there might be a lack of congruence between the researchers' view and what participants are supposed to reflect on and write about (Holmes, 1997). Moreover, the focus of this study was only EFL teachers' profile of classroom management and EB and the question as to what differences exist between EFL teachers and

other subject teachers' classroom management remained unanswered. As such, It is recommended to compare EFL teachers with other subject teachers to gain deeper understanding of the issue.

Despite these limitations, findings of this study might introduce some implications: EFL teachers, similar to teachers of any other subject matter, are able to enact substantial pedagogical reform if they raise their consciousness about their beliefs and possible connections between what they believe and practice. Undoubtedly, one of the best ways to maximize this sense of awareness and overcome the paucity of reflective inquiries is contemplating teaching practices whereby empirical contribution to effective teaching and management are enhanced (Moodie, 2016). Moreover, self-awareness becomes critical when teachers intend to develop teaching and management profiles that produce long lasting effect on learners (Luft & Roehrig, 2007). Studying about EFL teacher' EB may maximize the teachers' reflectivity and see if their practices are coupled with what they theorize (Widdowson, 2003). Further, findings of this study suggests that teachers' journal writing and interviews open windows to their mental world and provide information about their cognition which shows how teachers' actual performance is filtered and informed by their beliefs. This knowledge could enrich teacher education programs to highlight the role of beliefs in changing teachers' behaviors (Borg, 2006).

As teachers' EB is mediated by contextual factors and the way that teachers' beliefs affect their performance in classroom is adjusted by ecological and environmental elements (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008), further studies can help elucidate the factors that might change the quality of teachers' practices in classroom. Teachers' beliefs are shaped and reformulated over time; running longitudinal studies might illuminate the process through which teachers' EB is created in long run and how the changes introduced to EB can affect the actual practice in class.

Implying indirect impacts of institution and context on classroom management practices, we suggest that future studies, resorting to sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2004) and its extended tenets (e.g. active theory), focus on the impact and status of larger institutions and macro structures in creation and changes of EBs and how different cultural contexts shape and appropriate teachers' EBs and pedagogical practices.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What do you think about the major sources of the knowledge acquisition?
2. What do you think about your role to help students acquire the knowledge?
3. What is your role as far as classroom management is concerned?
4. How much latitude do you consider for your students in classroom?
5. What is your reaction when you see misbehavior in classroom?
6. How do you think your classroom management approaches are informed by your beliefs about knowledge acquisition?