

EFL Student Teachers' Beliefs about Language Teaching Approaches and Instructional Practices

Marianna Lórinicz

(lorinc.marianna@kmf.org.ua)

College of Higher Education in Berehove, Ukraine

Abstract

The crucial role of beliefs in shaping language teachers' performance has been well-documented. By contrast, research focusing on EFL student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches is still sparse, especially their manifestation in instructional practices. This study aimed to investigate the beliefs of English student teachers in Ukraine regarding language teaching approaches and document any similarities and differences with their actual performance. The data were collected through a researcher-designed questionnaire, reflective journals, and lesson observations, which allowed for a comparison between the student teachers' stated beliefs and their observed practices. The findings revealed that the participants identified with recent methodological thinking, endorsing the principles of communicative language teaching. The questionnaire data indicated a statistically significant difference in the beliefs of student teachers, suggesting a preference for contemporary language teaching approaches over traditional, with a medium effect size. Nevertheless, while the respondents expressed a preference for meaning-focused over form-focused instruction, they experienced difficulties in interpreting how these are implemented in practice. Specifically, they professed advocacy for classroom procedures and techniques associated with both contemporary and traditional language teaching and used them non-discriminately during lesson observation. In this respect, their beliefs and teaching practices align. Additionally, the participants demonstrated conversance with and reported implementing a repertoire of contemporary approaches and methods. However, the observation of their instructional practices did not consistently demonstrate strict adherence to communicative language teaching, as features of traditional teaching methods were visible. Therefore, the results suggest a partial alignment between the student teachers' beliefs and their actual performance. Overall, by opening a window into student teachers' mental lives, these findings highlight the likely trajectory of their professional development and the support required by them to bridge the gap between their beliefs and classroom practices.

Share and cite

Lórinicz, M. (2023). EFL Student Teachers' Beliefs about Language Teaching Approaches and Instructional Practices. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching [e-FLT]*, 20(2), 167–192.
<https://doi.org/10.56040/mlrc2024>

1 Introduction

A wealth of empirical evidence has showcased the pivotal role that beliefs play in shaping teachers' instructional practices and decision-making (Basturkmen, 2012; Berger et al., 2018; Buehl & Beck, 2014; Farrel & Bennis, 2013; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Beliefs were described by Borg (2011) as “propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change” (pp.

370–371). As such, beliefs about effective language teaching and learning guide teachers in selecting appropriate approaches, methods, and techniques congruent with their epistemic stance. As beliefs tend to solidify over time (Borg, 2011; Kalaja et al., 2016), probing for prospective teachers' beliefs who are only learning to teach gains special significance. Existing research reports disparate findings in terms of changes in language teacher beliefs affected by formal training, ranging from minimal shifts (Borg, 2005; Mattheoudakis, 2007) to occasionally demonstrable changes (Debreli, 2012), or even no changes at all (Tang et al., 2012). Furthermore, the current literature could not confirm a linear relationship between language teachers' beliefs and their performance. In fact, the expressed views are not always discernible in instruction, or even run counter to it (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Mardali & Siyyari, 2019).

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the stated beliefs of EFL student teachers regarding language teaching approaches and compare them to their actual performance. By doing so, the study seeks to understand how the recently introduced reforms in Ukraine, which stipulate communicative language teaching (CLT), are construed by prospective language teachers. It is of interest to examine how these beliefs are translated into teachers' instructional practices and the potential implications for language education in the Ukrainian schooling system. The acquired insights have the potential to shape future initiatives aimed at advancing language teacher education and improving language teaching practices - holistically.

2 Literature review

2.1 Teachers' beliefs

Due to their predictive and explanatory power, the study of teachers' beliefs continues to be a focal point of academic interest (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Kalaja et al., 2016). However, beliefs are a challenge to observation as they may be concealed even from the teachers themselves (Farrell & Bennis, 2013, p. 174), lending the existing scholarship a precarious conclusion. According to a common observation, beliefs come under the influence of and interplay with a host of factors. They are deeply impacted by previous language learning experience, whether positive or negative (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Student teachers embark on a university program with already well-established beliefs that act as filters affecting the construal and assimilation of new knowledge. Incongruence between conservative beliefs and new concepts -hinders or precludes their acceptance. By extension, beliefs might be difficult to change, and their influence on teacher performance might persist for an extended period (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 381). As Tang et al. (2012) explain, conservative beliefs might lie dormant during initial teacher education but can emerge as influential forces shaping instruction once teachers enter the workforce (p. 91).

Beliefs about teaching tend to vary in terms of their level of awareness among teachers. Unless acknowledged or articulated by teachers themselves, beliefs are often characterized as tacit or implicit (Borg, 2011; Sun et al., 2022). In other words, teachers may hold certain beliefs without being fully conscious of them or without being able to explicitly express them. These implicit beliefs may lack conceptual substantiation or be acquired through experience but often go unrecognized. Conversely, teachers' heightened awareness of propositions, especially embedded in conceptual knowledge or experience, leads to the formulation of explicit beliefs. In the existing literature, the study of teachers' beliefs and knowledge is closely interconnected. Beliefs -carved out a research niche that focuses on attitudes, while knowledge pertains to factual information (Fajardo, 2013). However, this study maintains that it is more convenient to view beliefs and knowledge as - a continuum (Woods, 1996). Implicit intuitive beliefs represent one end of the continuum. They are not nested in conscious conceptual knowledge and may elude full recognition by teachers. On the other end of the continuum, explicit beliefs emerge through experience and the acquisition of relevant knowledge. These beliefs are consciously formulated and can have the potential to evolve over time.

Another distinction is drawn between teachers' espoused and enacted beliefs. The former refers to the beliefs that teachers express or verbalize, and the latter pertain to the actions and behaviors that can be observed in the teaching process (Fives & Buehl, 2014). There is often a mismatch between the espoused and enacted beliefs (Berger et al., 2018; Borg, 2011; Breen et al., 2011; Fajardo, 2013). Further differentiation is made between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs held by teachers (Kalaja, & Barcelos, 2007; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Core beliefs refer to a stable set of generic beliefs developed with experience, while peripheral beliefs are more specific and are reinforced by theoretical knowledge. Core beliefs exert a powerful influence on teachers and are often evident in their teaching practices. Due to the limited teaching experience, which hinders the ability to make broad generalizations, novice teachers tend to hold a less rigid set of beliefs (Gatbonton, 2008). Based on this argument, the initial period of teacher education is an opportune time to align and reconcile core and peripheral beliefs. By raising student teachers' awareness and providing them with opportunities to test and verify new ideas in practice, it is possible to reduce discrepancies between their beliefs and their actual performance in the classroom.

2.2 Teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches

A specific research focus centers on exploring language teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding teaching approaches and methods. Pedagogical content knowledge, which encompasses knowledge about language teaching methods, forms a fundamental aspect of language teachers' competence. In the view of EFL teachers, the initial teacher education phase exposes them to a wealth of information, that serves as a primary source of relevant knowledge (Lőrincz, 2022). However, the internalization of this knowledge is contingent upon teachers' beliefs, which act as affective filters. As the frequently cited maxim suggests, there is a tendency to teach in the manner we were taught rather than following the instructions on how to teach (Oleson & Hora, 2014).

In a notable study, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) questioned the prevailing notion regarding the rigidity of student teachers' pre-existing beliefs concerning language teaching and learning. Their study represents a shift from the notion of "inflexibility" associated with an absence of dramatic changes in beliefs, favoring a more dynamic perspective. Here, change is seen as an ongoing process of development and progression in the beliefs of student teachers (p. 389). They adopted the viewpoint that belief development is a continuous negotiation between personal sense-making and their professional validation as students undergo the process of becoming language teachers. This approach allowed for the identification of a set of change process categories describing the ways through which student teachers' beliefs evolved. The study shed light on the ways initially held beliefs were subjected to challenges, modifications, or reinforcement, dispelling the notion that beliefs are unresponsive to formal training.

Additionally, Tang et al. (2012) considered how pre-service ESL teachers develop their beliefs while experimenting with new teaching methods they learned at the university. The combination of longitudinal research design together with qualitative and quantitative analysis methods (descriptive accounts, surveys, lesson recording, lesson plan analysis, and interviews) allowed the researchers to track the development of prospective EFL teachers' beliefs. Initially, all four participants expressed a desire to incorporate CLT into their future teaching. However, as they progressed through 936 contact hours of methodological input from the university program, a noticeable shift occurred with their beliefs diverging from their actual instructional practices. The study revealed that despite having different theoretical preferences, the students' instructional practices converged to a similar traditional approach with its focus on accuracy, explicit teaching of forms and drills, traceable to their prior language learning experiences (traditional language teaching referred to as TLT). Interestingly, this pattern persisted even though they were enrolled in a teacher education program that emphasized CLT. The researchers concluded that if new teaching approaches clashed with entrenched beliefs held by student teachers, the likelihood of a transformation in their practices would be low (p. 103).

Debreli (2012) reported somewhat different findings in a study that explored the beliefs of pre-service language teachers regarding EFL teaching and learning. It involved the collection of data from three student teachers through semi-structured interviews and diary entries conducted throughout their training program. The researcher observed that their beliefs evolved over the course of formal training. The most notable shifts in the beliefs occurred after student teachers participated in teaching practicum and the methods course. The participants modified their beliefs as they gained classroom experience and observed the applicability of their theoretical knowledge. Debreli suggested that allowing pre-service teachers to put their newly acquired knowledge into practice played a crucial role in fostering self-reflection, which, in turn, facilitated the identification and modification of their beliefs. It is reasonable to assume that the initial beliefs held by these student teachers were in alignment with the program's overall orientation towards CLT, which likely played a role in bridging the gap between their espoused beliefs and the teaching practices they implemented.

A comprehensive examination of the influence of the context, including the institution and learners, on the world language teachers' beliefs regarding instructional approaches in the USA was conducted by Wesely et al. (2021). The data sources encompassed a survey about teaching methods, in-depth interviews, and classroom observations. Initially, the findings indicated that many world language teachers professed commitment to a single teaching approach. However, a more detailed analysis revealed that these teachers regularly re-evaluated their beliefs under the influence of contextual factors, which included the characteristics of their learners, district leaders, curriculum, and the yearly assessments imposed upon them. These factors often led to a complex interplay between teachers' beliefs and the demands and expectations of their teaching environment. Teachers demonstrated a willingness to adapt to contextual factors, reflecting the presence of post-method thinking where they prioritized responsive, context-driven teaching approaches over adherence to a single teaching method.

A recurring topic in relevant literature focuses on the beliefs held by language teachers regarding contemporary and traditional language teaching approaches (Chang, 2011; Coskun, 2011; Rahimi, 2014; Sun et al., 2022). One such study, conducted by Sun et al. (2022), delved into the implicit and explicit attitudes of EFL teachers towards language teaching methods, particularly in the Chinese context. By applying a specifically designed implicit association test, they aimed to reveal how an ongoing reform of the language teaching curriculum in China affected EFL teachers' attitudes. The study presented evidence indicating an overall preference among teachers for CLT over TLT. However, what made this investigation intriguing was the discovery of a misalignment between the teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes. In other words, what teachers professed to believe did not consistently align with their actual thoughts. This discrepancy was attributed to a complex interplay of personal, institutional, and social contexts within the realm of language education. Firstly, traditional Chinese culture, which places significant emphasis on the authority of teachers as knowledge transmitters to passive students, stood in stark contrast to CLT's learner-centeredness. This cultural clash served as one source of the disparity in teachers' attitudes. Additionally, the early learning experiences of EFL teachers, where they were trained using traditional methods, contributed to this dissonance in attitudes. Furthermore, institutional pressures, such as overcrowded classrooms and resource constraints, posed significant hurdles to the effective implementation of CLT. These practical challenges within the educational system further exacerbated the conflict between expressed beliefs and actual practices.

In a study exploring the implementation of CLT in Turkey, Coskun (2011) discovered inconsistencies between the attitudes expressed by language teachers and their actual classroom practices. The data for this study were elicited through open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations. Despite affirming their commitment to CLT that emphasizes fluency, target language use, and contextualized grammar instruction, the classroom observations pointed to the reverse. Teachers were predominantly seen "lecturing" about grammar, often relying on their native language, and neglecting fluency-oriented tasks. The author found that the incongruity between EFL teachers' beliefs and

their classroom practices could be attributed to several key factors, including large class sizes, traditional grammar-based examinations, and lack of resources and time to access appropriate materials to support CLT in their classrooms.

The analysis of language teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar, conducted by Phipps and Borg (2009), also disclosed discrepancies between their stated beliefs and practices. The study drew on two data sources: observations provided insights into how grammar was taught, while interviews aimed to uncover the underlying beliefs shaping classroom performance. Despite the participating teachers expressing a belief in contextualized grammar presentation, discovery-based grammar learning, and group work – features aligned with CLT – their observed lessons predominantly adhered to a more traditional approach to language teaching. The researchers hypothesized that while teachers may endorse innovative theories, translating these ideas into classroom reality often requires practical, hands-on experience and support. Therefore, the study underscored the importance of experiential grounding in bridging the gap between theoretical ideals and their day-to-day classroom performance.

Overall, existing research consistently demonstrates that teacher beliefs are heavily influenced by factors such as learners, educational institutions, and the broader socio-cultural context (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate beliefs within their specific situational contexts. Thus far, only a limited number of studies have addressed the concept of language teaching approaches in relation to teacher cognition (Wesely et al., 2021). Similarly, research focusing on prospective EFL teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches and methods remains scarce. It is a serious omission since student teachers “are experiencing the most crucial period of conceptualizing teaching” (Tang et al., 2012, p. 92). Further, there is a scarcity of studies examining the beliefs of Ukrainian EFL student teachers regarding language teaching approaches. In addressing this gap, this study provides an opportunity to understand the adaptability of diverse cultural and educational contexts. Comparing the beliefs of Ukrainian EFL student teachers with those in other settings could reveal commonalities and differences, offering a nuanced perspective on the influence of sociocultural backgrounds on language teacher beliefs. Through this comparative lens, the study could make a relevant contribution to the broader field of language teacher cognition research. Thus, the study's primary objective is to offer insights into the beliefs of prospective language teachers in Ukraine, particularly focusing on how these beliefs shape their perceptions of the effectiveness of language teaching approaches and how these beliefs manifest in their actual instructional practices.

The current study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What beliefs do EFL student teachers hold about language teaching approaches and methods in Ukraine?

RQ2: To what extent do the stated beliefs of EFL student teachers align with or differ from their actual instructional practices?

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

The current study employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The research was guided by the transformative procedures proposed by Creswell (2009), who uses a theoretical framework to shape the research focus, select appropriate data collection and analysis methods, and interpret the results. Specifically, the study adopted a concurrent approach within the transformative procedures, wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously. To explore language teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches, a survey research design was utilized, which involved administering a questionnaire, conducting journal analysis, and observing classroom lessons. This design allowed for a comprehensive examination of the research

topic, capturing both the student teachers' self-reported beliefs and their actual instructional practices. Through the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data, a more nuanced interpretation of the findings was possible.

3.2 *Participants and context*

Twenty-five student teachers (20 females and 5 males) voluntarily participated in this study. The participants were in their fourth year of training and were enrolled in a teacher education program specializing in English language and literature at a university in the western region of Ukraine. The study was conducted during the final phase of their teaching practicum, which lasted for four weeks. The student teachers were assigned to comprehensive secondary schools, both urban and rural, located in different parts of the region. Throughout the practicum, they gained teaching experience at various educational levels, ranging from primary to high school. On average, each participant delivered approximately 40 lessons under the guidance of a mentor. All participants were non-native speakers of English. To maintain confidentiality, the student teachers' identities were anonymized using coded names (e.g., T1 to T25).

To fully comprehend the beliefs of Ukrainian language teachers, it is essential to briefly sketch the background against which language education has evolved in this country. Following Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991, the country's trajectory towards European integration prompted a re-evaluation of its language policy, premising the strategic objectives of its language education. One significant response to this shift was the adoption of a communicative approach, aiming to foster intercultural discourse through language use. It stood in stark contrast to the previous ideology of the Soviet era, which sought to disguise its efforts to hamper such outreach to the "collective West".

Although foreign languages were previously included in the curricula of all educational institutions, the primary objective was NOT communicative competence development on a large scale to impede the society from meeting representatives of the "undesirable" cultures. It resulted in the preparation of whole generations of language specialists, stereotypically teaching about language rather than using it for communicative purposes. As the clash between these two fundamentally different ideologies is relatively recent, it is intriguing to explore whether the new generation of EFL teachers has embraced innovative thinking regarding language instruction.

3.3 *Data collection and analysis*

In this study, a researcher-designed questionnaire, grounded in teacher cognition theory, served as one of the data sources. This questionnaire delved into essential facets of language teachers' beliefs regarding teaching approaches and methods. The process of selecting the questionnaire's content led to the identification of four overarching themes frequently explored in studies concerning teachers' perspectives on the fundamental principles of language teaching. These themes included instructional orientation and language focus, classroom procedures and techniques, teacher and student roles, and the theoretical foundations underlying language teaching methods.

The first theme of the questionnaire focused on "instructional orientation and language focus", specifically addressing the contrast between fluency and accuracy as one of the principal concerns in language instruction. The relative merits of learner exposure to tasks that prioritize language forms and accuracy versus those that emphasize meaning and fluency have been highlighted in several publications over the years (Murphy, 2016). This research interest is deeply rooted in the conceptualizations of successful language acquisition and is reflected in the evolving trends of teaching methods.

Teaching approaches have alternated between emphasizing language analysis and language use (Celce-Murcia, 2001), resulting in diverse perspectives on the advantages of explicit instruction of

language forms. Consequently, a group of methods often labelled as traditional language teaching (e.g., grammar-translation, reading, audiolingual, situational, and cognitive code learning), aligning with a structuralist perspective of language, places explicit instruction of language elements (e.g., grammatical structures, vocabulary items) at the forefront as an ultimate objective. In contrast, more recent approaches rooted in the functionalist perspective of language advocate for teaching language use for communicative purposes.

The term “communicative language teaching” is often used as an umbrella term encompassing a variety of approaches and methods that emphasize meaningful interaction in the target language (TL) as a goal of language education. Within the first theme of the questionnaire, three subscales were included. The first subscale comprised items unique to TLT, with a focal point on accuracy and language forms. The second subscale was associated with meaningful interaction in the TL and an emphasis on fluency. The third subscale addressed participants' perceptions of the goals of language education.

A note of caution regarding the perceived opposition between form-focused and meaning-focused teaching approaches is warranted. It is important to recognize that an approach identified as meaning-focused or emphasizing language use over its analysis does not necessarily exclude explicit teaching of grammar or other language elements. Thus, the approach centered on language analysis can also incorporate meaningful practice of language units within authentic communication contexts. In Ellis's terms (2016), “focus on forms”, roughly corresponding to language analysis or form-focused instruction, has as its principal object the study of specific language forms. Conversely, “focus on form” refers to “techniques designed to attract learners' attention to form while they are using the L2 as a tool for communicating” (p. 409). Thus, meaning and form are not two mutually exclusive extremes, as they can coexist within instructional settings.

The second section of the questionnaire explored student teachers' preferences regarding classroom procedures and techniques commonly associated with traditional and more recent language teaching approaches. Traditional teaching approaches often include features such as translation, repetitive drills without meaningful context, memorization of dialogues, and the analysis of syntactic structures. On the other hand, authentic materials, activities that simulate real-world tasks, and promote communication in the TL are central to recent language teaching approaches. Within this section, the student teachers were also asked to express their views on group work and the use of the TL in the classroom.

The third section of the questionnaire addressed the roles of students and teachers, which have seen considerable shifts under the influence of social constructivism and critical pedagogy theories. These changes reflect a shift towards a more active role for learners in knowledge construction, as well as a transformation in the role of teachers from knowledge transmitters to facilitators of learning (Lőrincz, 2019). The items in this section focused on aspects such as the freedom of choice in instructional materials and types of activities, the consideration of students' individual needs, and enhanced learner responsibility, which are characteristic of contemporary approaches. In contrast, traditional thinking is characterized by tight control over lesson procedures and a belief that teachers inherently know better what students need to know or do.

The instrument's final section covered the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of language teaching approaches and methods. For instance, interaction in the TL as a basis of language learning and a balanced practice in all four language skills foreground the communicative approach. Repetition of language patterns is a key element of audiolingualism. Detailed analysis of language forms is a fundamental point of grammar-translation. Showing respect to learners and a positive classroom atmosphere underlie the affective-humanistic approach. Task-based learning (TBL) involves learning a language through completion of meaningful tasks. Cooperative learning emphasizes student cooperation and interdependence. Content-based instruction involves learning a language while actively engaging with non-linguistic content from various disciplines. Both the direct

method and the natural approach advocate for learning a second language (L2) in a similar way to acquiring a first language.

In the above items, the participants had to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. In addition, an open-ended question asked student teachers to name the specific methods and approaches they considered expedient. The instrument concluded with the section collecting the demographic data. The questionnaire responses were assigned numeric values from 1 (no endorsement) to 5 (high level of support) and processed with the application of an SPSS tool package.

To perform the statistical analysis, selecting an appropriate procedure was imperative. Parametric tests operate under the assumption that the data exhibit a normal distribution and homogeneity of variance. An assumption for normality of distribution of the data was assessed for the variables related to the traditional and communicative language teaching approaches. Due to the identification of an outlier in the data, a decision was made to address and correct it, aiming to enhance the reliability of statistical analysis. As proposed by Field (2009), the score was changed to be one unit above the next highest score in the data set (p. 153). The obtained results indicated that for TLT, the skewness measure was .448 and the kurtosis was .081, while for CLT, the skewness was -.539 and the kurtosis was -.398. The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality yielded the following results: $p=.933$ for TLT and $p=.24$ for CLT. Additionally, no extreme outliers were detected in the boxplots. The variance was 54.33 for TLT and 61.13 for CLT. The assumption of equal variances was not met based on the results of the Levene's test ($p=.700$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the assumption for normality was satisfied and the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

Consequently, a paired-samples T-test was selected, which is considered suitable for within-subjects design. The test produced inferential statistics to identify overall trends in beliefs about language teaching approaches and to determine the extent to which student teachers aligned with traditional or contemporary approaches. The following hypotheses were formulated:

Null Hypothesis: The means of student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches will be equal.

Alternative Hypothesis: The means of student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches will not be equal.

Since the instrument collected information from student teachers who learned English as a foreign language, care was taken to formulate items clearly. Terms that could potentially confuse the respondents (e.g., form-focused, meaning-focused, drill, language functions) were paraphrased or explained to raise the reliability of the questionnaire. A panel of experts assessed the instrument's face and content validity. Two experts, who were teacher educators and researchers regularly publishing in the field, were involved. In addition, two student teachers were invited to assume the role of experts, providing valuable insights on the clarity of the items. Their feedback was integrated into the questionnaire to improve its overall quality.

The transformative approach that underlies this study also played a significant role in contributing to the construct validity of the questionnaire. Its internal consistency was measured with the help of Cronbach's Alpha using SPSS. Given the bidimensional nature of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha score was calculated for two dimensions. It produced the correlation coefficient $\alpha=.761$ for TLT and $\alpha=.778$ for CLT, which was acceptable (Table 1). Also, the questionnaire items were presented to participants in random order and not thematically to raise the study's reliability by eliciting unprompted responses. The participants completed the questionnaire after finishing their school practicum, following the stages of journal writing and lesson observation. The questionnaire data were analyzed collectively, and summative findings were provided.

Table 1. Reliability statistics for TLT and CLT

<i>TLT</i>		<i>CLT</i>	
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items
.761	.771	.778	.785

Reflective journals, prepared by student teachers as they were completing their school practicum, served as the second data source in this study. The purpose of using these journals was to supplement the information obtained from the questionnaire and gain a deeper understanding of the student teachers' experiences. While no structure for journal entries was specified, the student teachers were encouraged to reflect on the theoretical principles informing their teaching and to document their experiences, challenges encountered, and their overall impressions. On average, the length of journals was two to three pages. The participants were free to choose the language for their journals, allowing them to write in either English or their first language, which included Ukrainian or Hungarian.

The journals were scrutinized to identify themes indicative of the student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches. The data analysis was conducted by a single rater, who also happened to be the author of this study. Given that the journals were not anonymous, it was possible to compare the participants' explicitly held views and their actual teaching. Because the author of this study was not responsible for grading the students' performance during the practicum, it created a conducive environment for the participants to provide candid responses.

To process the journal data, a thematic analytical approach was used to observe and detect patterns within the responses (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was applied to process the data, considered a sound procedure for observing patterns emerging from the qualitative output. During its first phase, the data were re-read several times, and pertinent ideas were noted. Common issues transpiring from the journals were singled out and assigned codes. Next, the codes were collated to categories relevant to the objectives of this study. The final stage presupposed checking if the obtained dataset could potentially provide answers to the research questions (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Building on this approach, we could extract specific details regarding student teachers' beliefs about language teaching methods and approaches.

The third data source was a non-participant observation, guided by a specially designed scheme. Each student teacher was observed for a duration of two hours during the final phase of their school practicum. Thus, the lesson observation preceded the stages of journal and questionnaire analyses. With the participants' consent, the lessons were recorded to allow for further observations, if necessary. Prior to the observation session, the participants were informed about its purpose. The researcher explained that the focus would be on the student teachers' preferences regarding language teaching methodology. They were reassured that the observation results would not impact the practicum assessment, and no judgments of "better" or "worse" teaching approaches would be made. This assisted in creating a more comfortable atmosphere and ensured an accurate portrayal of their teaching practice.

The observation scheme encompassed various aspects of the student's actions during the lessons, including the overall orientation (whether the focus was primarily on form or meaning), language focus (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), the four language skills, contextualized or isolated presentation and practice of lesson material, teaching of language functions, the extent of L1 or L2 usage, the language of classroom management, learner involvement in communication, and the roles of the teacher and students. The scheme was employed to document instances in which the observed feature was present in the student teacher's performance. To determine if an activity was fluency or accuracy focused, factors like the emphasis on communication versus correctness, the task's nature

(interactive and communicative tasks were fluency-focused, while tasks emphasizing correct grammar and vocabulary were accuracy-focused), and the learning objectives (e.g., practicing conversational skills versus grammar drills) were considered during the analysis.

The collected data provided insights into the student teachers' implicit beliefs as reflected in their actual teaching performance, thereby addressing many of the shortcomings associated with self-reporting in research. The observational data were tabulated and calculated regarding the categories of the observation scheme. The results of the observation were then summarized by incorporating both quantified data from the observation scheme and qualitative field notes taken during or immediately after the observation phase. Given that the lesson observation occurred prior to the evaluation of the questionnaire and the journal, the observer (who is the author of this paper) had no knowledge of the results from the introspective research. This ensured that the interpretation of the observed lessons remained uninfluenced by the subsequent analysis of the questionnaire and journal data.

The collected data from multiple sources were scanned to examine the alignment or disparity between the student teachers' professed beliefs and their instructional practices. This involved comparing the questionnaire and journal data with the observational data. A comparative analysis was then conducted identify any consistencies or mismatches in the student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches across the three data sources. The use of a triangulation process, which combined quantitative and qualitative methods to gather evidence of student teachers' beliefs, contributed to the validity and credibility of the study's findings.

4 Results

In the next section, the results of the study are outlined. First, the self-reported beliefs of student teachers, as captured through the questionnaire and journal data, are presented. Next, the data from lesson observations, which reflect the participants' enacted beliefs, are displayed. Finally, a comparison is made between the student teachers' stated beliefs and their instruction.

4.1 EFL student teachers' stated beliefs

Tables 2–14 provide a summary of the respondents' beliefs about language teaching approaches, as obtained from the questionnaire. The results of the Paired samples T-test (Table 2) indicate that the respondents' beliefs regarding language focus and goals of language education differed, suggesting a preference for more recent methodological thinking (CLT: $M = 28.56$, $SD = 2.77$; TLT: $M=25.8$, $SD=2.77$). The null hypothesis of equal means is rejected. The t-test analysis, examining instructional orientation and language focus, yielded a statistically significant result with strong evidence against the null hypothesis ($t(24) = -3.14$, $p = .004$). The effect size was medium ($d = -.629$) (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). Consequently, student teachers demonstrated an inclination towards emphasizing meaningful interaction and fluency, rather than accuracy, in the EFL setting.

Table 2. Comparison of beliefs about instructional orientation and language focus

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	25.80	2.77	-2.76	4.39	-3.14	24	.004	-.629
<i>CLT</i>	28.56	3.40						

Similarly, Table 3 presents a significant statistical difference in the beliefs concerning language teaching goals, with a strong preference for CLT ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .79$) compared to TLT ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .98$), $t(24) = -9.09$, $p < .001$. The resulting p-value provides strong evidence against the null hypothesis with large effect size ($d = -1.82$).

Table 3. Comparison of beliefs about goals of language education

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	2.16	.986	-2.12	1.17	-9.09	24	.000	-1.82
<i>CLT</i>	4.28	.791						

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' beliefs regarding instructional orientation and language focus. The highest means were obtained for the items "engaging learners in real-life communication in English" (M=4.64) and learning language functions formulated in the questionnaire as "doing things with the language" (M=4.56), both of which are features of CLT. Meanwhile, emphasis on correct language production (M=4.4) and accurate language use as the principal criterion of language knowledge (M=4) as hallmarks of TLT were also among the highest scoring items. When asked about the goal of language education, the student teachers unequivocally supported the idea of gaining fluency in English (M=4.28). The respondents strongly disagreed that becoming fluent in English was an unrealistic goal of language education.

Table 4. Beliefs about instructional orientation and language focus

<i>Primary focus on forms and accuracy (TLT)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Knowing the rules of grammar is necessary for effective communication. They help learners to talk to native speakers.	3.72	.792
Explicit grammar teaching (teaching rules, doing grammar exercises) should occur in almost every lesson.	3.36	1.04
Accurate use of language is the principal criterion of language knowledge.	4	.707
The teacher should present words and grammar structures in isolation so that learners understand their meaning and usage.	3.88	.88
The teacher should emphasize correct language production.	4.4	.764
Over-emphasizing communication in the lessons leads to students' inability to speak correctly.	2.92	.954
One has truly mastered a language only if one speaks without errors.	3.52	1.08
<i>Primary focus on meaning and fluency (CLT)</i>		
The teacher should focus on developing students' ability to engage in real-life communication in English.	4.64	.638
Grammar structures and words are best taught in a meaningful context.	4.2	.577
The primary focus of the lesson should be meaningful language use, with some attention given to the form (grammar, words).	3.84	.746
Knowledge of grammar rules is not enough for effective communication. It is possible to speak fluently without knowing the rules.	3.56	1.00
Some grammar structures can be taught implicitly (without rules).	3.96	.978
Students should be taught to do things with language, i.e., apologize, promise, invite, agree or disagree.	4.56	.768
The ability to communicate ideas effectively and appropriately for the context is more important than producing grammatically correct sentences.	3.8	.645
<i>Goals of language education (TLT)</i>		
A realistic goal of language teaching is the ability to read and understand language with a dictionary.	2.8	1.23
Becoming a fluent speaker of English is an unrealistic goal in the EFL context.	2.16	.987
<i>Goals of language education (CLT)</i>		

Becoming a fluent speaker of English is the ultimate goal of language education.	4.28	.792
--	------	------

M=mean

SD=Standard Deviation

Tables 5–8 display the self-reported data on classroom procedures and techniques. The t-test results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the means (CLT: $M=22.20$, $SD=2.19$; TLT: $M=22.84$, $SD=2.11$), $t(24) = 1.34$, $p = .191$. The effect size was small ($d=.269$). Consequently, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was no distinction in the respondents' preferences for contemporary or traditional classroom procedures and techniques.

Table 5. Comparison of beliefs about classroom procedures and techniques

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	22.84	2.11	.640	2.37	1.34	24	.191	.269
<i>CLT</i>	22.20	2.19						

Regarding beliefs about group work organization (Table 6), a statistically significant difference was observed (CLT: $M = 5.32$, $SD = .711$; TLT: $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.67$), $t(24) = 2.09$, $p = .048$). This finding provides moderate evidence in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The effect size was small ($d=.417$). Hence, it can be inferred that students give precedence to group work organization associated with CLT.

Table 6. Comparison of beliefs about group work organization

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	4.44	1.67	.880	2.10	2.09	24	.048	.417
<i>CLT</i>	5.32	.711						

Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found regarding student teachers' beliefs about target language (TL) use in the EFL setting (CLT: $M = 9.08$, $SD = .862$; TLT: $M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(24) = -9.50$, $p < .001$. The obtained p-value provides very strong evidence against the null hypothesis. The effect size was large ($d = 1.9$), indicating preference for using the TL rather than learners' first language.

Table 7. Comparison of beliefs about language use

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	5.28	1.59	-3.80	2.00	-9.50	24	.000	1.9
<i>CLT</i>	9.08	.862						

The results of the descriptive statistics (Table 8) reveal that student teachers favored activities such as games and role-plays that simulate real-life communication ($M=4.6$) and activities that resemble real-world tasks ($M=4.52$). However, they also approved of mechanical drills ($M=4.36$) and tasks that emphasize accuracy ($M=4.04$). Interestingly, they disagreed with the notion that a course

book should be strictly followed ($M=2.88$) and emphasized the importance of providing learners with additional materials tailored to their interests and needs. The respondents firmly believed that pair and group work facilitate authentic communication and should be regularly implemented ($M=4.44$), while expressing a preference for minimizing whole-class teacher-led instruction ($M=2.7$). Similarly, the student teachers strongly endorsed the use of the TL as the primary medium for instruction, management, and interpersonal communication ($M=4.54$). They opposed the idea that English cannot serve as a means of communication between learners and the teacher and rejected the notion that the teacher should readily resort to the learners' mother tongue when necessary ($M=2.64$).

Table 8. Beliefs about classroom procedures and techniques

<i>Classroom procedures and techniques</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>TLT</i>		
Translation should be a central part of the lesson.	3.48	.87
The teacher should strive to cover all material and exercises included in a textbook.	2.88	1.1
Drills (e.g., exercises in which learners repeat sentence patterns) are extremely effective in language teaching.	4.36	.638
Analysis of syntactic structures is indispensable for effective learning and should be regularly used in the lessons.	3.2	.645
Memorization of dialogues and texts is essential in language teaching.	3.24	.926
Tasks teaching the correct use of language should prevail in the lessons.	4.04	.735
<i>CLT</i>		
Activities simulating real-life communication should prevail in the lessons.	4.36	.81
The teacher should use activities that resemble real-world tasks.	4.52	.77
The teacher should supply learners with additional materials apart from course books based on students' individual needs.	4.48	.714
The teacher should use authentic materials (e.g., advertisements, travel brochures, menus) in teaching English.	4.24	.879
Using games and role-plays simulating real-life communication is essential for language learning.	4.6	.577
<i>Group work organization</i>		
<i>TLT</i>		
Pair and group work is very time-consuming and less effective than teacher-led work.	2.56	.92
Learning as a whole class is more effective than pair and group work. Small group work can be used in the lesson only occasionally.	2.76	1.05
<i>CLT</i>		
Pair and small group work facilitate genuine communication and increases learners' speaking time. It should be a regular part of a lesson.	4.44	.712
<i>Language use</i>		
<i>TLT</i>		
It is unrealistic to expect students to communicate with one another or the teacher in English.	1.88	1.05
Teaching English can take place in the native language of students whenever necessary (even for half of the lesson or more).	3.4	.816

<i>CLT</i>		
Students should use English to communicate with one another and the teacher.	4.56	.507
The teacher should speak English rather than the learners' mother tongue in the lesson.	4.52	.586

M=mean

SD=Standard Deviation

The responses displayed in Table 9 indicate a substantial preference for teacher-centered over learner-centered education. CLT reinforces learner-centeredness, which involves re-evaluating the roles of both students and teachers in the educational process. On the other hand, TLT is characterized by teacher-centeredness. According to the t-test results, a statistically significant difference was observed regarding student and teacher roles in the EFL context (CLT: $M = 20.36$, $SD = 2.14$; TLT: $M = 23.28$, $SD = 2.42$), $t(24) = 4.26$, $p > .001$. However, the effect size was medium ($d = .852$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, leading to the conclusion that the participants demonstrated a definitive preference for teacher-centeredness over student-centeredness.

Table 9. Comparison of beliefs about student and teacher roles

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	23.28	2.42	2.92	3.43	4.26	24	.000	.852
<i>CLT</i>	20.36	2.14						

The results of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 10 show that student teachers primarily associated their principal responsibility with facilitating learning ($M=4.6$) and organizing instruction that is sensitive to learners' needs ($M=4.4$). However, they also expressed the belief that it is necessary to exercise tight control over the lesson procedure ($M=4.56$). Additionally, the participants expressed doubts regarding the expediency of learner autonomy, indicating that learners cannot decide independently on what they should work during the lesson or as homework ($M=3.28$).

Table 10. Beliefs about student and teacher roles

<i>Teacher-centered education (TLT)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
It is almost impossible to teach English taking into account each student's interests and needs.	3.44	1.08
The teacher should carefully lead all discussions in the lesson.	4.08	.64
The teacher knows better what students need to know and how they should learn.	3.72	.74
The teacher's principal responsibility is to transmit knowledge, e.g., by explaining new material and directing activities.	4.2	.71
The teacher should carefully control the procedure of the lesson.	4.56	.507
The students are not competent enough to select the material and tasks to work on in the lesson or as homework.	3.28	1.02
<i>Learner-centered education (CLT)</i>		
Learners should take responsibility for their learning.	4.16	.75
The teachers' principal role is to facilitate learning.	4.6	.58
The teacher should organize teaching taking into account students' interests and needs.	4.4	.71

The teacher should allow students to select what they want to learn and do in the lessons.	3.12	.85
Students learn best when they can explore the material for themselves.	4.08	.81

Table 11 presents the summative findings of the comparison of student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches.

Table 11. Overall comparison of beliefs

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	83.76	6.27	-5.28	7.73	-3.4	24	.002	-.683
<i>CLT</i>	89.04	6.23						

As shown by the results of paired samples statistics, the student teachers advocated for CLT (CLT: $M = 89.04$, $SD = 6.23$; TLT: $M = 83.76$, $SD = 6.27$). The results of the paired samples test provided strong evidence against the null hypothesis as proved by the p-value ($t(24) = -3.41$, $p = .002$). The effect size was medium ($d = -.683$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that student teachers preferred CLT. Notable differences were observed in instructional orientation and language focus, language use, group work organization, and goals of language education. However, no significant difference was found in classroom procedures and techniques, while in student and teacher roles preference was given to teacher-centeredness.

Table 12 presents the results of the t-test conducted to examine the participants' preferences for language teaching methods and approaches based on their premises. The results indicate a statistically significant difference, with strong evidence in favor of the alternative hypothesis ($t(24) = -20.12$, $p < .001$). The effect size was large ($d = -4.02$). Consequently, the respondents strongly aligned with more recent methodological thinking.

Table 12. Comparison of beliefs about the premises of language teaching approaches and methods

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>			<i>Paired Samples Test</i>					
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>TLT</i>	11,56	1,50	-9,64	2,39	-20,12	24	.000	-4.02
<i>CLT</i>	21,20	2,00						

The findings presented in Table 13 provide descriptive statistics regarding the participants' beliefs about the effectiveness of various language teaching methods and approaches, arranged in descending order based on mean scores. Prominent approaches include affective-humanistic, communicative, audiolingualism, cooperative learning, and computer-assisted learning (CALL). Interestingly, the participants displayed less enthusiasm for task-based learning (TBL), content-based instruction (CBI), and the natural approach, as reflected by their comparatively lower scores. Similarly, they did not strongly oppose the principle of language learning as habit formation, which forms the basis of behaviorism theory in psychology and audiolingualism ($M = 4.48$). Some student teachers also expressed approval for a focus on language forms ($M = 3.76$), which is characteristic of traditional approaches such as grammar-translation and cognitive code learning.

Table 13. Beliefs about the premises of language teaching approaches and methods

<i>Premises</i>	<i>Approach/Method</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Students learn the language best when the teacher shows respect and genuine concern.	Affective-humanistic approach	4.88	.44
Interaction in the target language is the basis of language learning.	Communicative approach	4.64	.57
Repetition is the basis of language learning because it helps develop language habits.	Audiolingualism	4.48	.65
Students' cooperating and interacting with one another facilitates language learning.	Cooperative learning	4.16	.99
Modern technologies are indispensable in language teaching.	Computer-assisted language learning	4.04	.735
Careful attention to language forms (e.g., grammatical structures, words) is the basis of language teaching.	Grammar-translation Cognitive-code learning	3.76	.597
Language is best learned by solving meaningful tasks and not analyzing language elements.	Task-based learning	3.56	.77
Language is learned effectively when dealing with the material from other disciplines that interest students (e.g., history, literature). It is not necessary to make language forms the central focus of the lesson.	Content-based instruction	3.36	1.04
English is learned much like the native language.	Direct method, Natural approach	3.32	.988
Reading comprehension is the main skill worth emphasizing.	Reading method	3.29	.41

M=Mean

SD=Standard

Finally, in response to an open-ended question, the student teachers predominantly advocated for CLT and the idea of methodological eclecticism. Specifically, twelve comments were made in favor of the communicative approach. Seven student teachers highlighted the notion of eclecticism, emphasizing the futility of searching for an ideal method and instead emphasizing the benefits of selecting methods based on learners' immediate needs. Six participants expressed adherence to a story-based language teaching method. The direct method received positive comments from five participants, while task-based learning (TBL) received three commendations. Two participants expressed support for grammar-translation and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) each. The situational approach and cognitive-code learning were mentioned only once.

Next, the reflective journals were submitted to thematic analysis, generating qualitative data (Table 14). The journals were scrutinized foremost for beliefs about language teaching and evidence of ascribing to approaches and methods since they are relevant to the study's research questions. The common themes singled out based on the frequency counts were approaches, methods, and techniques the student teachers tried implementing during the school practicum, difficulties and challenges encountered by them, learner motivation, their motivation to teach, teaching language aspects and skills development, and their general impression of the practicum.

Table 14. Student teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches: results of journal analysis

<i>Methods and Approaches</i>	<i>Frequency (n=25)</i>	<i>Examples from journal entries</i>
Communicative approach	17	T5: Communication is the primary function of a language. T11: Language material is meaningless unless students can apply it in real-life circumstances.

Cooperative learning	17	T16: Group work establishes conditions when students learn in a conversational setting. T9: Working in small groups creates an environment, in which students feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts.
Computer assisted language learning	14	T1: Technologies provide audio and visual aids and facilitate language teaching and acquisition.
Total Physical Response	5	T4: It is appropriate for your learners as children like movement. It is entertaining for children.
Audiolingualism	4	T23: The use of dialogues and oral production is essential for language acquisition.
Direct method	4	T8: The target language should be the only medium of instruction. It develops speaking and listening skills.
Eclecticism	4	T2: The choice of an approach or method depends on students' age, level, and the topic being taught. A combination of approaches and methods works the best.
Reading method	2	T 17: Reading is the most useful technique in language instruction. Speaking is unnecessary. T14: The teacher doesn't need to have native-like proficiency.

In terms of the first theme, the student teachers appeared to be well-versed in the repertoire of the language teaching approaches. In their journals, they reflected on the issues of implementing various methods and techniques, discussing their strong points and shortcomings. Among the approaches, CLT and cooperative learning received the most attention, with a particular focus on game-based teaching, songs, and interactive tasks (seventeen comments). CALL came as a runner-up with fourteen comments. The students reported using a variety of technological means to facilitate language learning.

Five participants mentioned experimenting with total physical response (TPR) and highlighted its effectiveness. For example, T4 noted that pupils enjoyed TPR because it allowed them to speak and move simultaneously, adding an entertaining aspect to the learning process. Four participants reported using audiolingualism during their practicum. T23 mentioned her preference for this method due to its reliance on dialogues and oral production, highlighting speaking as the most desirable skill to develop. However, she seemed to confuse oral production with genuine communication, failing to differentiate between the two.

Four student teachers discussed the effectiveness of the direct method, with T8 emphasizing the importance of using the TL in today's highly mobile world. She believed that the direct method facilitated the development of speaking and listening skills without requiring explicit focus on grammar. Two participants were convinced of the expediency of the reading method. T17 remarked that reading skills were more significant than speaking and that learners acquired the language more easily through reading. T14 pointed out that the application of the reading method did not require a native-like proficiency on the teacher's part, which she considered a distinct advantage.

Other mentioned approaches and methods included the lexical approach, CBI, the situational approach, cognitive-code learning, and suggestopedia. However, these received three or fewer comments. Additionally, the student teachers also addressed the issue of methodological eclecticism, four of whom were unwilling to ascribe to a single method. As they explained, each method had its strengths and weaknesses.

The remaining themes addressed by the participants were not directly aligned with the research questions of this study. However, they can be summarized as follows: many student teachers frequently commented on the significance of attending to learners' needs and understanding their individual characteristics. They acknowledged difficulties related to student motivation and expressed efforts to enhance it. Many respondents grappled with establishing learner rapport, instructional planning, and individualizing instruction. A few student teachers reported having gained a positive

impression of their teaching practicum, which increased their motivation to pursue a teaching career (mentioned in nine comments). As T25 underlined, the school practicum affirmed her choice to become a teacher and inspired her to continue learning and professional growth. Consistently, the respondents emphasized the significance of developing learners' communicative competence, as mentioned in eleven comments. T25 specifically mentioned using songs to implicitly teach grammar structures and enhance learners' vocabulary.

In sum, the student teachers' recordings provided some glimpses into their beliefs about language teaching approaches and methods. However, several issues arose during the analysis process. Although the participants were instructed to reflect on the theoretical foundations of their teaching, some failed to do so. Instead, many provided descriptive accounts of the main events that took place during their practicum. This echoes the results of a study conducted by Ilin (2020), where participants also prioritized describing classroom events over reflecting on them. In this study, the respondents often mentioned the methods and techniques they used during their school practicum but failed to provide explanations for their choices. This led to incomplete and sparse data, as cautioned by Bowen (2009). Consequently, relying solely on journal data is insufficient to address the research questions of this study. However, coupled with data from other sources, such as the questionnaire and observation, the journals can contribute to a more rounded picture of the student teachers' stated beliefs.

4.2 EFL student teachers' instructional performance

Table 15 presents a summary of the findings from the lesson observations. The data reveal that there is a slight predominance of fluency tasks compared to accuracy tasks. Less than half of student teachers prioritized teaching language forms, which concurs with principles of TLT. However, a larger number of participants conducted lessons with a primary focus on meaningful communication, reflecting the principles of CLT. Vocabulary was the main language focus in the observed classes, with the majority primarily following a topic-based syllabus. Grammar points were not extensively emphasized. Additionally, the student teachers showed a preference for the deductive approach, employing explicit presentation of grammar rules. Only two student teachers explicitly taught pronunciation, while the others occasionally directed learners' attention to the correct pronunciation of vocabulary items.

Regarding the four language skills, speaking and reading were the main targets of the student teachers' attention, although the former mostly took the form of guided speaking. The development of listening skills was regularly incorporated into the lessons, as it is commonly included in modern course books. Writing skills were mainly addressed through activities best described as writing for learning rather than writing for its own sake, which was usually assigned as homework. Concerning the mode of presentation and practice, language items (both grammar and vocabulary) were predominantly presented in isolation, with only a few instances of contextualized presentation. However, when it came to practice, both isolated and contextualized approaches were employed. The student teachers generally followed the logic of a traditional PPP procedure (presentation, practice, and production).

The student teachers made efforts to use English for classroom management, but some encountered difficulties and frequently switched to their mother tongue. The frequency of switching was determined based on the conversation context, learners' language proficiency level, and the language learning objectives of the lesson. In other words, the use of the first language use was deemed appropriate when learners faced challenges in comprehending language input or instructions. While more than half of the participants primarily used English as the instructional language, they faced challenges in organizing authentic communication. Based on the data, it is evident that many participants rarely attempted to incorporate authentic communicative tasks. In four cases, communication in English was not organized. However, in one-third of the observed lessons, learners used English

for interpersonal communication. Additionally, the student teachers mostly dominated speaking time, deviating from the current thinking underlying CLT. Lastly, despite recognizing the benefits of pair or small group work in increasing learners' speaking time ($M=4.44$ -questionnaire data), many student teachers did not organize such activities.

The summative findings indicate that student teachers' instructional practices exhibited elements of both CLT and TLT. The distinction between the two approaches was not clearly defined, with a strong emphasis on accuracy and the presence of pseudo-communicative behavior.

Table 15. EFL student teachers' performance

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Observed practice</i>	<i>N*</i>
1. overall orientation of the lesson	Accuracy tasks prevail	11
	Fluency tasks prevail	14
2. language focus	Vocabulary	23
	Grammar	13
	Pronunciation	2
3. skills	Speaking	24
	Reading	23
	Listening	14
	Writing	11
4. mode of presentation and practice	Language items presented in isolation	20
	Language items presented in context	7
	Language items practiced in isolation	17
	Language items practiced in context	19
5. language functions	Yes	4
	No	21
6. language spoken during the lesson	Mainly L1	9
	Mainly L2	16
7. language of the classroom management	Mainly L1	10
	Mainly L2	15
8. students' use of English communicatively	Never	4
	Rarely	11
	Occasionally	7
	Frequently	3
9. dominance of the speaking time	Teacher	21
	Learners	4
10. pair and small group work	Yes	10
	No	15

*N** number of participants exhibiting the observed practice

4.3 Stated beliefs and practices

A comparative analysis of the EFL student teachers' beliefs and practices revealed a partial alignment (Figure 2). With respect to the summative findings of the questionnaire, the respondents self-identified with a recent methodological perspective by favoring CLT over TLT, indicating a statistically significant difference. However, the effect size was medium. The self-reported data from the reflective journals also indicated a general inclination towards contemporary language teaching methods among many participants. However, these findings were not always congruent with the observed performance, as adherence to CLT was not consistently evident. This was supported by the field notes from lesson observation and the data presented in Table 15, which suggested a closer alignment with traditional methodological approaches in many instances.

In terms of classroom procedures and techniques, the comparison of data obtained from various sources largely coincided. Specifically, there was no statistically significant difference in the questionnaire responses indicating no preference of techniques associated with CLT over TLT. Consequently, student teachers believed that traditional techniques had a place in the classroom setting, which overlapped with the observational data. Regarding instructional orientation, specifically the balance between fluency and accuracy, there was a divergence between the respondents' claimed beliefs and their observed practices. According to the questionnaire data, student teachers underscored meaningful interaction rather than focus on language forms. The difference was statistically significant with a large effect size. However, the results of the observational analysis yielded mixed findings. An example of divergence could serve discrepancy between a high endorsement of teaching language functions in the questionnaire and rare attempts to teach them during the observed lessons (4 participants). Furthermore, most student teachers agreed that language units were best acquired in a meaningful context, but when it came to teaching, they presented the new material mainly in isolation (20 participants). In addition, although the respondents strongly agreed that learners should use English to communicate with one another and the teacher and teachers should rather speak English, there was little interpersonal communication observed. Similarly, while the student teachers emphasized the importance of activities simulating authentic communication, such activities were rarely observed, and guided communication dominated the lessons. Even though the student teachers accentuated the effectiveness of pair and small group work, fewer than half of them organized it. In terms of teacher and student roles, the findings from the three data sources were mostly consistent. The questionnaire data revealed a preference for teacher-centeredness. Additionally, the student teachers tended to dominate the lessons by speaking themselves for much of the time.

The participants' views were unanimous when asked to indicate their level of endorsement of the premises underlying language teaching approaches in the questionnaire (Table 12). Specifically, they expressed a preference for CLT, which did not always align with their performance. In both the questionnaire responses and the analysis of reflective journals, many participants indicated their belief in the effectiveness of CLT. However, this alignment between their beliefs and practices was not clearly observed. One possible reason for this marked difference could be attributed to the participants' limited conceptual knowledge about the underlying theories behind the approaches. During their teaching placement, the student teachers implemented principles of TLT and CLT alike without a clear prevalence of recent methodological thinking. Although the participants enumerated diverse current methods and techniques they assumingly experimented with, as stated in the journals, their actual repertoire was more modest in practice. Interestingly, three student teachers (T10, T17 and T22), who had excellent grades in the methods course and generally high achievements, gave precedence to grammar-translation and cognitive-code learning. Their classroom performance also reflected a focus on form, aligning more closely with TLT principles.

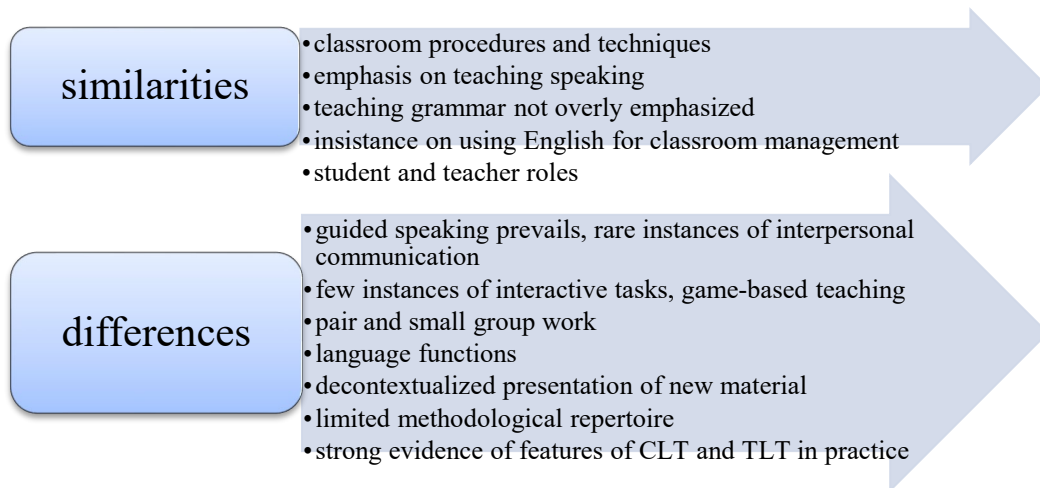


Fig. 1. Stated beliefs and practices

5 Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs of Ukrainian EFL student teachers regarding language teaching approaches and their enactment in the context of recent reforms in the country's language education system. The study operated under the assumption that prospective EFL teachers undergo an active phase of professional conceptualization (Gatbonton, 2008; Tang et al., 2012), which allows for the potential influence of initial teacher education on their beliefs. It was hypothesized that if prospective teachers demonstrate receptiveness to contemporary language teaching principles, there is a high likelihood of these principles becoming integrated into their professional mindset and informing their future professional practices.

A mixed-methods approach was employed to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. The beliefs and practices of 25 EFL student teachers regarding language teaching approaches were examined. Data were gathered through a researcher-designed questionnaire and reflective journals to capture their claimed beliefs. Additionally, observations of teachers' classroom performance were conducted, providing evidence of their enacted beliefs. By integrating data from multiple sources, the study aimed to examine the alignment between teachers' beliefs about language teaching approaches and their instructional practices. The findings indicated that while student teachers demonstrated a clear affinity for contemporary approaches in their stated beliefs, the observed classroom performance only partially reflected the presence of current methodological thinking.

The student teachers in this study demonstrated a strong belief in the effectiveness and relevance of recent language teaching approaches, displaying a reasonable understanding of their underlying principles. This result echoes the findings of Debreli (2012) and Tang et al. (2012), which also revealed similar views among pre-service EFL teachers regarding contemporary methodological trends. The highest level of endorsement of CLT was detected for such categories as instructional orientation and language focus, TL use, group work organization, and language education goals. However, no preference for student-centered education, a central feature of contemporary language teaching, was detected among the participants. The student teachers promoted the idea that English should serve the purposes of interpersonal communication and be the means and end of instruction. In their opinion, instructional procedures and techniques should simulate real-world communication and tasks. The participants also prioritized teaching language functions, focus on fluency and appropriacy. Even so, they held strong beliefs about correct language production and accuracy, which aligns with the findings of Wesely et al. (2021). Interestingly, the participants in this study exhibited

less categorical views concerning the importance of grammar rules and did not perceive any potential harm in prioritizing communication for accuracy development, contradicting earlier research findings (Tang et al., 2012).

Despite the students' expressed alignment with CLT by emphasizing a focus on meaning and fluency rather than teaching forms, reprising previous research conducted by Levrints et al. (2021), no clear preference was reported for classroom procedures and techniques associated with recent methodology. This lack of preference was also detected during the lessons delivered by them. This observation can be attributed to the participants' limited understanding of how CLT should be implemented in the classroom. Pedagogical content knowledge, which encompasses both knowledge of and about language teaching approaches (Lórinicz, 2022), appears to be insufficiently developed among the student teachers. While they have knowledge of the principles underlying contemporary language teaching methods and approaches, this knowledge does not necessarily translate into the ability to select and apply appropriate techniques effectively. Consequently, the obtained findings suggest that student teachers could benefit from additional guided practice to help them incorporate a broader repertoire of techniques used in CLT.

The participants in this study, consistent with previous research conducted by Richards and Rodgers (2014), reported thinking in terms of methods when organizing their instruction. They professed a preference for CLT and eclecticism on both questionnaire and journal analyses, enumerating several methods that collectively constitute the agenda of current professional discourse. There was a distinct self-identification with methods centering on language use rather than language analysis. Many of the student teachers avoided committing to a single method, instead resorting to various methods depending on the learners' age and instructional objectives. They demonstrated an awareness of the strengths and limitations of different methods, discussing them openly and reflecting on their usage. Overall, the participants were conversant with a repertoire of language teaching approaches. They embraced the notion of eclecticism by denying the idea of a fit-for-all method and underlining the need for their principled, context-tuned application. Yet, some misconceptions were noted in their understanding of methods. There were instances where they claimed to favor CLT but relied heavily on accuracy tasks or repetition drills. Consequently, the student teachers would benefit from further development of their pedagogical content knowledge to align their professional mindset with the recent developments in the field.

Regarding classroom practices, the student teachers displayed a weaker adherence to CLT contrary to their stated beliefs. The difference between contemporary and traditional methodological approaches was not well-defined in their instructional behavior. The number of lessons that could be described as meaning- and fluency-focused only slightly outnumbered those that emphasized forms and accuracy, raising doubts about the participants' claims of implementing CLT. Furthermore, the extensive repertoire of language teaching methods mentioned by the student teachers was not consistently reflected in their actual teaching practices. Although many student teachers mentioned using language games, songs, story-based language teaching, TPR, TBL, and cooperative learning with some exceptions, the lessons took a more traditional logic and appeared methodologically blunt and prosaic. The participants adopted a deductive approach to the presentation of language units (grammar, vocabulary), especially in isolation, which aligns with previous studies conducted by Farrell and Bennis (2013) and Tang et al. (2012). They tended to provide formal grammar explanations and present learners with decontextualized sentences, similar to the findings of Coskun (2011) and Phipps and Borg (2009). In addition, the student teachers frequently dominated the speaking time, while their efforts to develop communicative competence often lacked interpersonal communication features.

Significantly, three high-performing student teachers who had excelled in the methods course expressed a preference for TLT, specifically grammar-translation and cognitive-code learning. Their classroom performance aligned with their stated beliefs, as they employed explicit grammar instruction and focused on teaching isolated vocabulary items while providing detailed explanations of

rules. Furthermore, one student teacher with advanced English proficiency (C1) consistently used her native language during instruction. These instances contradict the overarching philosophy of the educational program and the content of the methods course in which they were enrolled. Yet, these findings reinforce earlier research conducted by Tang et al. (2012). Conversely, some student teachers with more modest academic performance demonstrated a closer adherence to CLT by centering on fluency tasks. Some of them displayed enthusiasm for engaging with learners and succeeded in creating a positive classroom environment. However, the behavior described above was not pattern-like. These findings highlight that possessing conceptual knowledge alone is insufficient to reconcile deeply ingrained beliefs shaped by prior learning experiences with the current methodological stance.

As student teachers actively experiment with instructional approaches, their beliefs are susceptible to transformation. Therefore, the disparity between expressed beliefs and actual practices should not be regarded as definitive (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). Moreover, the same beliefs may manifest in different forms and give rise to fundamentally different types of instructional activities, making a direct comparison between claimed and enacted beliefs more complex, as noted by Breen et al. (2001). The tensions between student teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practices reflect the gap between their current professional identities and their desired professional identities (Kubanyiova, 2012). Dissatisfaction with their perceived level of competence motivates student teachers to seek ways to materialize their ideals and implement innovative methods, thus facilitating professional growth. However, the internalization of innovative thinking is a gradual and time-consuming process (Tang et al., 2012).

Changes in student teachers' beliefs begin with their initial encounter with new ideas, which must be reconstructed and personally validated through teaching experiences. Indeed, to sensitize student teachers to advancements in the field of language teaching, teacher preparation programs should go beyond the mere transmission of relevant content. Student teachers require opportunities to "discover" their tacit beliefs, which can then be self-analyzed and reassessed considering the values and principles upheld by the university program. To facilitate this process, interventions can be incorporated within the course framework or as standalone initiatives, aiming for self-reflection and reassessment. One potential approach involves integrating guided reflections into the language pedagogy curriculum. These reflections could be intertwined with course content, encouraging students to critically examine their beliefs in the context of the program's endorsed principles. For instance, students could reflect on specific classroom cases or instructional tasks, unraveling their underlying beliefs, reactions, and decision-making process. Furthermore, the peer-teaching component, a regular feature of the language pedagogy course, can serve as a platform for this exploration. Student teachers, as part of this practice, could be prompted to dissect the underlying assumptions guiding their instructional choices. Engaging in dialogues and self-reflection, students would gain insight into their teaching philosophies, allowing them to align these beliefs more cohesively with contemporary teaching approaches.

6 Conclusion

This mixed-methods study aimed to examine the beliefs of EFL student teachers regarding language teaching approaches and their alignment with their actual classroom performance at a Ukrainian university. The study was premised on the assumption that gaining insight into prospective teachers' beliefs can indicate the direction of language education in this country, especially considering recent educational reforms. Since beliefs are predictive of any activity, understanding what language teaching approaches student teachers endorse can illuminate their potential performance as future teaching professionals.

The findings of this study indicate that the participants generally favored CLT and demonstrated a sizeable grasp of the recent methodological developments in the field of language teaching. Many

of them demonstrated awareness and acceptance of the idea of methodological eclecticism and the importance of adapting instruction to contextual exigencies. Overall, there was a partial alignment between the student teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. While they claimed to advocate and implement contemporary language teaching methods, their lessons only partly confirmed it. This result is not entirely unexpected since the same beliefs may manifest differently in practice (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). More importantly, student teachers undergo an active phase of constructing and re-evaluating their beliefs, in contrast to experienced teachers whose beliefs tend to be more stable. Indeed, a positive attitude to innovative language teaching per se is insufficient to change teachers' beliefs and practices. Transformations in teacher cognition – a complex system of beliefs, knowledge, thoughts as related to actions (Borg, 2003) – require an equally complex influence. To enhance the articulability of beliefs, it is essential to establish a dual foundation anchored in both knowledge and experiential insights. Otherwise, the risks of student teachers' overly relying on intuition and past experiences, potentially downplaying the role of empirical evidence are high.

The study's restriction to a specific context and a small sample size warrant a note of caution in terms of the generalizability of its findings. Notwithstanding this limitation, integrated analysis of multiple datasets in this study compensates for any shortcomings that may arise from using single research methods in isolation, allowing for a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of the findings.

References

- Basturkmen, H. (2012). Review of research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. *System*, 40, 282–295. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2012.05.001>
- Berger, L., Girardet, C., Vaudroz, C., & Crahay, M. (2018). *Teaching experience, teachers' beliefs, and self-reported classroom management practices: A coherent network*. SAGE Open. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017754119>
- Borg, M. (2005). A case study of the development in pedagogic thinking of a pre-service teacher. *TESL-EJ*, 9, 1–30.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444803001903>
- Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, 39, 370–380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.009>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.
- Breen, M. P., Hird, B., Milton, M., Oliver, R., & Thwaite, A. (2001). Making sense of language teaching: Teachers' principles and classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 470–501. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/22.4.470>
- Buehl, M. M., & Beck, J. S. (2014). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices. In *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs* (pp. 66–84). Routledge.
- Cabaroglu, N., & Roberts, J. (2000). Development in student teachers' pre-existing beliefs during a 1-year PGCE programme. *System*, 28(3), 387–402. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(00\)00019-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(00)00019-1)
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a Second or foreign Language*. 3rd Edition, Heinle & Heinle Publisher, Boston.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. London: Sage publications.
- Chang, M. (2011). EFL teachers' attitudes toward communicative language teaching in Taiwanese college. *Asian EFL Journal*, 53, 17–34.
- Coskun, A. (2011). Investigation of the application of communicative language teaching in the English language classroom – a case study on teachers' attitudes in Turkey. *Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 2, 85–109.

- Debreli, E. (2012). Change in beliefs of pre-service teachers about teaching and learning English as a foreign language throughout an undergraduate pre-service teacher training program. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 367–373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.124>
- Ellis, R. (2016). Focus on form: A critical review. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(3), 405–428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168816628627>
- Fajardo, A. (2013). Stated vs. enacted beliefs: looking at pre-service teachers' pedagogical beliefs through classroom interaction. *Ikala, revista de lenguaje y cultura*, 18(2), 37–57.
- Farrell, T. S., & Bennis, K. (2013). Reflecting on ESL teacher beliefs and classroom practices: A case study. *RELC Journal*, 44, 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688213488463>
- Farrell, T. S., & Ives, J. (2015). Exploring teacher beliefs and classroom practices through reflective practice: A case study. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(5), 594–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168814541722>
- Field, A. P. (2009). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS: (and Sex and Drugs and Rock "n" Roll)* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the “messy” construct of teachers' beliefs: What are they? Which have been examined? What can they tell us? In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, & T. Urdan (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook Vol 2. Individual differences and cultural and contextual factors* (pp. 471–499). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Gatbonton, E. (2008). Looking beyond teachers' classroom behaviour: Novice and experienced ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(2), 161–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168807086286>
- Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2017). Teachers' beliefs in English language teaching and learning: A review of the literature. *English Language Teaching*, 10(4), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n4p78>
- Ilin, G. (2020). Reflection or description: A document analysis on ELT student teachers' reflective journals. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 16(2), 1019–1031. <https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.759359>
- Kalaja, P., & Barcelos, A. M. F. (Eds.). (2007). *Beliefs about SLA: New research approaches (Vol. 2)*. Springer.
- Kalaja, P., Barcelos, A. M. F., Aro, M., & Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2016). *Beliefs, agency and identity in foreign language learning and teaching*. Springer.
- Kubanyiova, M. (2012). *Teacher development in action: Understanding language teachers' conceptual change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levrints/Lőrincz, M. (2019). Implementing constructivism in the system of teacher education and approaches to foreign language teaching in the USA. *Педагогічні науки: теорія, історія, інноваційні технології*, 3(87), 154–164. <https://doi.org/10.24139/2312-5993/2019.03/154-164>
- Levrints/Lőrincz, M., Myshko, S., & Lizák, K. (2021). Attributes of effective foreign language teachers: Insights from Ukraine. *Advanced Education*, 8(19), 33–41. <https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.235940>
- Lőrincz, M. (2022). Foreign language teachers' knowledge base and the influence of teaching experience. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(4), 90–110. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2022v47n4.6>
- Lőrincz, M. (2022). English language teachers' knowledge base: An exploration of beliefs. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 12(2), 101–117.
- Mardali, J., & Siyyari, M. (2019). English teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching vocabulary: The case of teaching experience. *Cogent Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1686812>
- Mattheoudakis, M. (2007). Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece: A longitudinal study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1272–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.06.001>
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage.
- Murphy, L. (2005). Attending to form and meaning: the experience of adult distance learners of French, German and Spanish. *Language Teaching Research*, 9 (3), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1191%2F1362168805lr160oa>
- Oleson, A. K., & Hora, M. T. (2014). Teaching the way they were taught? Revisiting the sources of teaching knowledge and the role of prior experience in shaping faculty teaching practices. *Higher Education*, 68, 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9678-9>
- Phipps, S. T., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System*, 37, 380–390. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.03.002>
- Plonsky, L., & Oswald, F. L. (2014). How big is “big”? Interpreting effect sizes in L2 research. *Language Learning*, 64(4), 878–912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12079>
- Rahimi, M., & Naderi, F. (2014). The relationship between EFL teachers' attitudes towards CLT and perceived difficulties of implementing CLT in language classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3, 237–245. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.3p.237>

- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sun, C., Wei, L., & Young, R.F. (2020). Measuring teacher cognition: Comparing Chinese EFL teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes toward English language teaching methods. *Language Teaching Research*, 26, 382–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820903010>
- Tang, E. L., Lee, J. C., & Chun, C. K. (2012). Development of teaching beliefs and the focus of change in the process of pre-service ESL teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(5). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n5.8>
- Wesely, P. M., Vyn, R., & Neubauer, D. (2021). Teacher beliefs about instructional approaches: Interrogating the notion of teaching methods. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168821992180> [136216882199218](https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168821992180)
- Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching: Beliefs, decision-making, and classroom practice*. Cambridge University Press.

About the Author

Marianna Lőrincz (<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2206-7113>), DSc, is a Professor in the Philology Department at Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education in Berehove, Ukraine. Her research interests encompass aspects of EFL teaching and learning, EFL teacher education, and corpus linguistics. Among her recent publications is her monograph titled “Language Teaching Challenges: A Multilevel Approach” (2023), articles “Foreign Language Teachers’ Knowledge Base and the Influence of Teaching Experience” (*Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 2022), “A comparative corpus analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian war coverage in eastern and western English language news releases” (*The World of the Orient*”, 2023).