

## **Developing Preservice Elementary School Teachers' Beliefs and Practices through TBLT-Based Teacher Education**

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DOI: 10.22236/JER\_Vol7Issue11-20

Although the Japanese government decided to make English a formal subject for fifth and sixth graders from 2020, there has been little discussion about how to prepare English teachers. In fact, Curtain and Dahlberg (2003) pointed out that lack of skillful teachers has been a serious issue in teaching foreign languages to elementary school students all over the world. Moreover, in the research on task-based language teaching (TBLT)<sup>†</sup> “the role of the teacher has received scant attention” (Van den Branden, 2016, p.164). This study attempts to reveal how Japanese university students who desire to be elementary school teachers transform their beliefs about English language teaching to young learners and develop their teaching skills through TBLT-based teacher education.

Keywords: preservice teachers' beliefs and practices, teacher development, TBLT, beliefs about language learning, beliefs about language teaching

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<sup>†</sup> Willis (1996) defines task as “goal-oriented communicative activity with a specific outcome, where the emphasis is on exchange meanings not producing specific language forms” (p. 36).

ISSN: 2502-292X, e-ISSN 2527-7448.

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University of Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA Jakarta  
DOI: 10.22236/JER\_Vol7Issue1

## INTRODUCTION

The question of how teachers learn to teach, whether in general or second language disciplines, is more concerned with what teachers actually know and how they develop their practices than what teachers need to know and how they can be trained (Carter, 1990; Golombok, 1994; Lange, 1990; Richardson, 1994; 1996). In other words, current research on teacher development focuses on teachers' beliefs in relation to their practices rather than teachers' skills and dispositions mandated by educators or policymakers (Carter, 1990; Richardson, 1994).

Pajares (1992) reviewed research on teachers' beliefs and summarized 16 fundamental assumptions.

- (1) Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate.
- (2) Beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college.
- (3) Changes in beliefs during adulthood are rare.
- (4) Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks.
- (5) Individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behavior (for complete discussion on all 16 assumptions, see Pajares, 1992, pp. 324-326).

In short, Pajares (1992) summarized the nature of beliefs. "Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence, they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information" (p. 325). Additionally, Richardson (1994) affirmed "[t]eachers make decisions on the bases on a personal sense of what works, but without examining the beliefs underlying a sense of 'working,' teachers may perpetuate practices based on questionable assumptions and beliefs" (p. 6).

Fox (1993) made a survey of 147 first year graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in French at twenty universities in the U.S. She found that teaching assistants did not conceptualize language according to the model of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980, see also Savignon, 1997). Instead, they showed strong emphasis on grammar at the expense of communicative activities. She claimed that "TAs who understand the nature of communication will be less apt to fall back on incorrect notions and outdated methodologies than those who do not" (p. 322). Johnson (1994) conducted a study on four pre-service language teachers. She concluded that prior beliefs based on formal language learning experiences were so powerful that pre-service teachers could not alter their beliefs without sufficient alternative instructional practices "to test out their emerging beliefs" (p. 451). More recently, Kelly (2018) conducted a study on 12 preservice teachers who engaged in a second language K-12 teacher education program. The study found that preservice teachers' view—"imparting basic literacy skills to passive students" (p. 132) — did not change after the course.

Yet, by reviewing the literature, Fives et al. (2015) found that there are several studies which documented preservice teachers' belief change during preparation "by immersing them in preservice courses that require a variety of experiences, such as workshops, reflection activities (Brownlee & Chak, 2007), and immersion in the field (Ozgun-Koca & Sen, 2006)" (p. 257).

In brief, although previous empirical studies represent the difficulty in changing beliefs and practices of inservice teachers (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Lamb, 1995; Sato & Kleinsasser,

1999; 2004) as well as preservice teachers (Fox, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Kelly, 2018), little research has been done on preservice elementary school teachers' beliefs and practices. Moreover, Fives et al. (2015) claim that "[r]esearch on teachers' beliefs needs to expand to clear investigations of beliefs about learning as distinct from beliefs about teaching, as the former serve as the foundation for the latter" (p. 261).

Consequently, this study focuses on preservice teachers' *beliefs about teaching* and *practices*, who had already changed their beliefs about a foreign language learning from traditional teacher-centered one to more communicative, student-centered one (Nguyen 2018; Nguyen & Sato, 2016). Are they ready to develop their beliefs about teaching and practices? Furthermore, Cochran-Smith, et al. (2016) found that most studies were about teacher candidates' beliefs and "[m]uch less attention was paid to the development of tangible teaching practices" (p. 493). With these research issues in mind, this study will focus on the development of preservice elementary school teachers' *beliefs about teaching* as well as *practices*. Accordingly, we formulated the following research questions.

- (1) How do pre-service elementary school teachers change their beliefs about language teaching?
- (2) How do they develop their teaching skills through the yearlong teacher training course?

## METHOD

### Participants

Eight university students (one fourth-year female and seven third-year students, two males and five females), who were planning to be elementary school teachers, participated in the yearlong teacher training program (see Table 1). The first semester started in April 2015 with 15 weeks (a 90-minute class per week) and the second semester began in the middle of September with 15 weeks, finishing in early January 2016. The level of their English ability was low-intermediate to intermediate (550 to 750 in TOEIC).

**TABLE 1**  
**Name, sex, age**

Akemi	Aiko	Shinji	Toru	Yuko	Satoko	Midori	Cika
F, 22	F, 21	M, 20	M, 20	F, 20	F, 20	F, 20	F, 20

Notes: All names are pseudonyms.

### Content-Based English Curriculum (CBEC) and Strategy Training Program

All eight students received CBEC for two years when they entered this department. Following the framework for a task-based approach (Willis, 1996) that includes three stages: the pre-task stage, the task stage, and the post-task stage, CBEC starts the task cycle in the form of a discussion topic<sup>‡</sup> (see Appendix 1) and is integrated with four classes over a two-week cycle. In addition, we introduced communication strategies for each topic over two semesters so that students could maintain their conversations (see Wood, 2018), referring to Kenny, T., & Woo, L. (2012) and Kehe, D., & Kehe, P. D. (2004).

<sup>‡</sup> We used *Impact Issues* (Day & Yamanaka, 1998) as a textbook.

The "Pre-task" begins in week one with the introduction of the topic in the "Discussion and Debate" (DD) class and then is followed by reading an authentic news article in the "Intensive Reading" class (IR) to develop students' background knowledge of the topic. The "Planning" stage of the task cycle continues in the next class, "Academic Writing" (AW), where students brainstorm, plan, and write a draft of a two-paragraph essay based on the same topic. In the fourth class called "Power-Up Tutorial" (PUT), the focus is on meaningful speaking output with the students discussing the main topic in groups of three with one native English-speaking language tutor.

This cycle repeats for a second week in DD with students sharing their research on the same topic in discussion groups, then reading another news article in the IR class to deepen their knowledge, followed by students writing a second draft of their essay on the topic and sharing through peer reading and editing in AW. Finally, the students video record their discussion of the topic in pairs during the PUT class.

The "Post task" activity for students is to write a transcription of the recording for self-evaluation and to make a plan for improvement in the next task cycle of the next topic. In the following PUT class before discussing the new topic, the teachers and the tutors give feedback and advice to consolidate and complete the task cycle.

Moreover, they received a seven-week strategy training program both in the first and the second semester as second-year students before entering the teacher training program. The program aimed at developing students' understanding of language learning strategies (listening strategies, communication strategies, reading and discussion strategies) so that they could try them out in CBEC. At the end of each program, students were assigned to write a language learning history (LLH). They were assigned to write an essay (with about 700 words) by answering the following questions: (1) What did you like and dislike about the strategy training program? (2) What were different from English classes you had in your high school? (3) What were three strategies or activities which changed your ways of learning English? and (4) How do you want to further improve your English ability?

### **TBLT-Based Teacher Training Program**

Based on the textbook—*English for Primary Teachers* (Slattery & Willis, 2001), we developed a yearlong program, aiming at developing preservice teachers' practices based on TBLT. Table 2 shows the schedule for each semester. The second researcher conducted all the classes, while the first researcher observed and took fieldnotes. The second researcher taught each class mainly in English except for sharing comments in Japanese after each model lesson and demonstration.

**TABLE 2**  
**Curriculum for the first semester**

	Topic	Activities
Unit 1	Teaching young learners	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 2	Listen and do	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 3	Listen and Make	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 4	Speaking with support	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 5	Speaking more freely	Model lesson, Demonstration

	Final group project
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### **Curriculum for the second semester**

	Topic	Activities
Unit 6	Reading in English	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 7	Writing in English	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 8	Reading and telling stories	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 9	Story activities	Model lesson, Demonstration
Unit 10	Planning for effective use of English in the classroom	Model lesson, Demonstration
		Final group project

Each unit was covered with two weeks. In the first week two to three students were assigned to give a short demonstration, modeling sample tasks in the textbook. Then, in the second week, another couple of students demonstrated their original tasks developing model ones. Finally, students in groups of two to three worked on their materials development project. They chose one lesson from the textbook used in public elementary schools (for fifth or sixth graders) and developed a lesson plan by creating tasks based on what they had learned from the program.

### **Data Collection**

A mixed methods research approach was adopted for this project. According to Johnson et al. (2007), “Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches...for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (p. 213). Multiple data sources such as LLH essays, student surveys, reflection logs, classroom observations, lesson plans, and interviews were collected for this study.

**LLH essay.** These eight students’ essays written at the end of the second semester in 2014 (except for Akemi’s one in 2013) were collected to examine their beliefs about English leaning) before they participated in the TBLT-based teacher training program in April, 2015.

**Student survey.** Based on Horwitz (1985), two instruments—the Foreign Language Attitude Survey for Teachers (FLAST; for a full description see Savignon, 1983) and the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) Teacher version—were utilized (see Appendix B). All 27 items in BALLI were included with a minor modification of wording. For instance, “25. Americans are good at learning a foreign language” was changed to “25. Japanese are good at learning a foreign language.” In addition, 9 items from FLAST, which would be appropriate in the teaching context in Japan, were chosen to supplement BALLI. The student survey was conducted three times, at the beginning of the first semester (May, 2015), at the end of the first semester (July), and at the end of the second semester (January, 2016).

**Reflection log.** Students wrote a one page-long reflection log in English in their B5 notebooks about (1) the activities they liked and disliked and (2) what they learned about teaching after every class. They shared their logs with a couple of classmates in English at the beginning of the next class. The second researcher collected their log books every other week and wrote a short comment in English.

**Classroom observation.** As a participant observer, the first researcher documented the setting, participants, events, acts, and gestures (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In other words, the focus was on what was observable avoiding early generalizations, and not on what was not

observable like motivations or attitudes (Silverman, 1993). The researcher usually sat at the back of the class, occasionally moving around the class and documenting what was happening in the class in the field note, except for the occasions the second researcher (an instructor) asked the first researcher for some comment on students' demonstrations. Glesne & Peshkin suggested that “[t]he researcher does not take charge or play the role of change agent or judge, but stays at the psychological margins of interactions” (p.58).

**Lesson plan.** Students made groups (two groups of three and one group of two) for the final project (materials development) at the end of each semester. They were expected to apply what they had learned from the program to their final project. They chose one lesson from the textbooks for fifth or sixth graders and developed a lesson plan based on TBLT before their demonstrations (see Table 1).

**Interview.** Following ethnographic interview ideas by Spradley (1979), the first researcher developed six questions to reveal how the students changed their beliefs about teaching and how they developed their teaching skills. Then, he asked the second researcher for comment to improve the interview questions. With a minor modification including wording, he conducted an interview with eight students in Japanese after the end of each semester (see Appendix C). The interview lasted 15 to 20 minutes. With the permission of students, interviews were taped-recorded, and further transcribed for analysis. Interviews were then translated into English by the first researcher.

## **Data Analysis**

25 items from BALLI and 9 items from FLAST based on Likert-scaled responses (from 1: strongly agree to 5: strongly disagree, except for No. 4 and 11, see Appendix B) were analyzed using descriptive statistics and SPSS (2014). Because the number of participants was small, a nonparametric test (Spearman's ranking ordering) was used to analyzed the results in May, July, and January. There was no significant change, which indicated that these participants had already changed their beliefs about language learning. As a result, we further analyzed the results in January, focusing on salient items. Those items receiving a mean of 3.6 or higher were those with which student teachers disagreed (the closer to 5, the more strongly they disagree with it). Those items receiving a mean of 2.4 or lower were those with which students agreed. Items falling between 2.4 and 3.5 were those with which students neither agree nor disagreed.

Inductive approaches were used to analyze the qualitative data from LLH essays, observations, interviews, and documents (lesson plans) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman, 1993). Data were carefully read repeatedly identifying any category that might encode cultural meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In short, based on mixed methods data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative data appeared to contribute to “breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 213) that neither method alone could have, thus offering greater reliability (Creswell, 2010).

## **FINDINGS**

### **Beliefs about English Language Learning (Before the Teacher Training Program)**

Using multiple data sources including surveys, reflection logs, essays (language learning history), and interviews, together with mixed methods data analysis, Nguyen & Sato (2016)

and Nguyen (2018) concluded that the strategy training program made a significant role in changing students' beliefs about English language learning. These eight students went through the same program. Below are excerpts of essays about language learning history (LLH) students wrote prior to the TBLT-based teacher training program. All students wrote that they learned English in traditional ways in their senior high schools (memorization, grammar, reading and translation from English into Japanese) just to pass university entrance examinations, which is still the norm in Japan (Nishino, 2011; Sato, 2002).

I'd like to talk [about] my language history. I like learning English since I was a junior high school student, because I can learn different cultures by learning English. However, it was little boring to learn English in high school, because my English teachers taught English to pass the exam. Therefore, I really enjoyed Yoshi [the first researcher] sensei's class. I learned English [in] various ways, for example pair work or singing song[s]. Every way was very interesting for me. (Aiko, LLH, 2014)

In my high school days, all the classes didn't have any activities like Yoshi's class. Some of my classmates were sleeping and looked like being bored. I think that generally, there are few high school's classes which have activities. Therefore, it seems to me that there were no students who were sleeping while Yoshi's class, so Yoshi's class was really effective!... That is exactly the difference between Yoshi's class and classes I had in my high school. In addition, I had learned a lot of useful conversation strategies in Yoshi's class. I have never taken classes which teach me a lot of useful things more than Yoshi's class. (Shinji, LLH, 2014)

As these excerpts reveal, through CBEC and the strategy training programs, these eight students changed their beliefs about learning English from traditional ways of learning English to communicative ways of learning English. Chika wrote:

Yoshi's class had a pair work many times, thanks to this I could communicate with many classmates. We can learn not only English but also everything from my classmates, too. That's why pair work is important. (Chika, LLH, 2014)

Midori enjoyed sharing their opinions in the literature circle (group discussion based on the same reading materials). Midori reported:

And in the activity of the literature circle, also I shared my experiences about the topic with my group members. Thus, in Yoshi sensei's class, there are a lot of opportunities to share something. I can know the other opinions or experiences from my classmates, so I can expand the way of thinking. (Midori, LLH, 2014)

These excerpts attest to the findings of Nguyen & Sato (2016) and Nguyen (2018), which revealed that these eight students had already changed their beliefs about English language learning through the strategy training program toward more students-centered, communicative ways of learning English.

### Quantitative Results (Surveys)

Table 3 presents the results of items these students agreed to some extent (the closer to 1, the more strongly students agreed with it). They agreed that “It’s o.k. to guess if you don’t know a word in the foreign language,” “Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language,” and “It is important to repeat and practice a lot,” which indicates that everyone can learn a foreign language through communicating a lot. This view is consistent with what students wrote in their language learning history, which implies communicative ways of language learning, though too much repetition and drills are considered as a part of the Audio-Lingual Method. Table 4 shows the results of items they disagreed to some extent (the closer to 5, the more strongly students disagreed with it). Students disagreed that “You shouldn’t say anything in the language until you can say it correctly” and “Learning another language is a matter of translating from Japanese,” which support a communicative approach to language learning. Yet, they strongly disagreed that “Language learning should be fun,” for which they expressed their reasons in the next section. In short, the survey results were consistent throughout the academic year, which supports the analysis of LLH essays indicating that these students had already changed their beliefs about language learning from a traditional teacher-centered view of learning English to more communicative ways of learning English.

**TABLE 3**  
**Items of 2.4 or lower**

No.	Mean	Statement
8	2.38	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.
3	2.13	Some languages are easier to learn than others.
9	2.13	It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.
27	1.63	Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.
10	1.50	It’s o.k. to guess if you don’t know a word in the foreign language.
13	1.50	It is important to repeat and practice a lot.

**TABLE 4**  
**Items of 3.5 or higher**

No.	Mean	Statement
35	4.50	Language learning should be fun.
7	4.38	You shouldn’t say anything in the language until you can say it correctly.
23	4.13	People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.
31	4.00	All students, regardless of previous academic success and preparation, should be encouraged and given the opportunity to study a foreign language.
11	3.88	If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) You can’t learn a language in 1 hour a day.
17	3.88	Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
28	3.63	Gestures and other kinesics should be taught and evaluated as an integral part of language acquisition.
20	3.50	Learning another language is a matter of translating from Japanese.
34	3.50	When a student makes syntactical errors, this should be accepted by the teacher as a natural and inevitable part of language acquisition.

## Qualitative Results

**Reflection logs and Interviews.** Students wrote comments on what they learned about teaching English to children after each class (15 times per semester). At the end of each semester, the first researcher interviewed all eight students in Japanese (see Appendix C). Based on the data analyses, we found six developmental stages (three for each semester) about how to teach English to children.

**Stage 1: from week 1 to 5 (First semester).** Students enjoyed song activities from the teacher (2nd researcher) without thinking of any teaching skills. They were nervous about demonstration. They paid more attention to classroom English, volume, pronunciation, speech rate, etc. than how to teach English to children. Below are their voices:

- *We sang “Hockey Pockey” for the first time. It was really interesting and even if we enjoyed it, children can enjoy it. (Yuko, RL4)*
- *I was care[ful] about my voice of volume and speed. However, it was not enough for children. I need to do that more exaggerate[d]ly. (Aiko, RL4)*
- *I did “Simon says” activity but it wouldn’t work because of my skills. In my image I thought I could do “Simon says” well but, after end activity, I was depressed. (Toru, RL3)*

**Stage 2: from week 6 to 10.** Some of the students started thinking about how to teach songs to children or what children could learn from songs and chants. As they became used to demonstration, they started adapting the activities from the textbook. They wrote such comments:

- *I’m sure that I could relax during the lesson and really enjoy teaching. There are two reasons I think. One is being accustomed to doing demonstration. Two is preparing for the demonstration [for which] I wrote down the script. So I could reassure the lesson, and what I should do. (Midori, RL8)*
- *It is important to arrange activities to make them suitable to [for] children. If they can do well, a teacher can make it more challenging. If they can’t, easier. Teacher never can arrange without understanding the characteristic of activities. (Shinji, RL7)*

**Stage 3: from week 11 to 15.** Students felt some improvement in their teaching skills and became able to see an activity from the children’s point of view. As they became more confident in teaching, they also found difficulties in making a lesson plan with clear goals. Here are excerpts of their reflection logs.

- *This was the last demonstration in 1<sup>st</sup> semester. I think that I improved my teaching skill a little through the first semester. (Aiko, RL15)*
- *I learned from Toru that a teacher [has] to consider the meaning of games or activities. What do teachers want children to learn? Or what is the game or activities for? (Yuko, RL14)*

- *Today, we made a lesson plan for the final project. I felt the difficulty of thinking about a connection of each class (Satoko, RL12)*

The interviews at the end of the first semester revealed that four out of eight students said explicitly that they changed their view from just having fun to organizing an activity with clear goals. For instance:

- *I had a vague idea about how to teach English to children. I thought just having fun is OK. However, through this course I learned that there is a goal for an activity and the teacher has to work out a plan to teach. (Yuko, Interview 1)*
- *I used to think English for fun is all they need for elementary school students. However, I realized that student[s] don't learn English from just having fun. Instead, teachers need to clarify the goal for each activity. (Satoko, Interview 1)*

**Stage 4: from week 1 to 5 (Second semester).** Students began to learn how to teach reading and writing; however, they had difficulty demonstrating activities. They learned some teaching skills for good storytelling such as changing the voice for each character. Below are their voices:

- *Actually, I'm not sure how the Japanese children can read English, so it was really difficult for me to do this activity....When I did this activity, the number of the English words was little, so if I have the opportunity to do [the] same activity, I want to try to add more words and pictures to enjoy more. (Midori, RL17)*
- *There're conversations in the story so a reader should change a voice and express the feeling. It looks easy but it was so hard to me. I tried to change my voice but it didn't change. (Yuko, RL19)*

**Stage 5: from week 6 to 10.** Students developed a deeper understanding of using gestures especially in songs and storytelling. Although they were still struggling with how to teach reading and writing to children, they gradually understood children's learning process. Moreover, they noticed some teaching skills for good storytelling such as asking questions about the story. Here are what they wrote in their logs.

- *Children will be able to read sentences, if there're steps. At first teachers read the sentences or main words and children find the pictures. And then children repeat after the teacher. Next, they play the game like matching game and see the sentences. Finally children can read them [in] silently. (Yuko, RL25)*
- *To get children involved [is] also important. When we read a story, it's good to stop sometimes, and ask questions about the story. It might be like "Who went to the river?" "What's the name of the boy?" In order not to make children passive in classes even in reading, I would like to try to have children speak and think a lot. (Shinji, RL21)*

**Stage 6: from week 11 to 15.** Students gradually gained the knowledge and the skills of teaching English to children. However, they noticed the difficulty integrating four skills, especially reading and writing skills. They further developed their understanding about making a lesson plan with clear goals by integrating four skills. They wrote their comments:

- *Recently we've chosen suitable gestures for children quickly. It means we could understand what children like gradually. I realize I have to think about children all [the] time when I teach English to them and enjoy the class. (Chika, RL28)*
- *Through the demonstration, I thought that it's hard to introduce reading and writing activity. Children need to connect sounds and letters. It takes time to acquire how to read and write English. Therefore, teachers should make a plan considering the procedure of the four classes. (Aiko, RL30)*

In the interviews conducted at the end of the second semester, all eight students reported that they changed their view about teaching English to children. They realized the significance of making a lesson plan with clear goals. For example:

- *I used to think playing games in English is fine so that they can learn vocabulary. However, I realized that teachers need to set up goals in making a lesson plan. (Toru, Interview 2)*
- *Just singing a song, reading a story, or playing a game is not enough. I really understood the importance of the teaching procedure with clear goals and steps. Without them, English class will end up just a fun class, without learning for children. (Satoko, Interview 2)*

**Classroom observation A.** The first researcher observed the group project presentations conducted at the end of the first semester in July, 2015. There were three groups (two groups of three and one group of two). Each group chose one unit from the textbook ("Hi, friends 1") for fifth graders and developed a lesson plan for three to four 45-minute classes. However, each student had 20 minutes for demonstration. Here is a description of the presentations made by one group (Toru, Chika, Akemi). They chose "sports" as a topic. First, Toru introduced sports words such as baseball, soccer, and basketball with picture cards after greeting and singing "Hello Song." The other seven students played roles of his students. He put each card on the board. Then, he took out one or a few cards from the board and asked students, "What's missing?" After that, he moved to "Simon says." When Toru said "Simon says, soccer," students showed how to kick a ball with gestures. He sometimes said "basketball" without saying "Simon says" and a few students made a mistake. Then, Toru moved to a matching game and made pairs. He gave one set of picture cards to each student. Students laid those cards on their desks face down. Then, Toru asked everyone, "What sports do you like?" Each student took one card and said the name of the sport. If both students in a pair took the same card, they could keep their cards. Toru could use ideas he learned from the course book, which belonged to "Listen and do."

The second class was taught by Chika. After greeting and singing the same song, she made one big circle. She asked one student to say her favorite sport. Then, the next student

repeated the name of her sport and said his favorite sport. Students clapped their hands so that each student could say the name of the sport the previous student said and his/her favorite sport to the rhythm. After finishing the warm-up, she made pairs and showed how to play Tic-Tac-Toe with one volunteer. Each student said, “I like ~.” and put his/her small card to continue the game. Finally, Chika made two groups and gave picture cards to each group. Students in each group spread the card face up. Students asked the teacher, “What sports do you like?” and Chika said “tennis.” The student who took the card first could keep it. They continued the game which also belonged to “Listen and do.”

The third presenter was Akemi. After greeting and singing the same song, she reviewed sports words by using picture cards. She showed a soccer card and said “I like soccer. I like soccer, raise your hand.” Some raised their hands. She then asked a few students “What sports do you like?” After that, she made one big circle and students sat down on their seats. She gave directions in English, “This is a bomb, here you are. Ask next person, what sports do you like and pass the bomb. Next person, answer, I like ~. We have 20 seconds. Are you ready? Let’s start clockwise.” After 20 seconds, the bell rang and all the students asked the question to the student who held the bomb. The student answered the question. Then, she moved to a new game—“Fruit basket.” Akemi took one student’s seat out of the circle and the student stood at the center of the circle. All the students asked the student, “What sports do you like?” She said “I like basketball.” Then, some students who liked basketball stood up and moved to different seats. One student who could not find a seat stood at the center of the circle. They continued the game. Finally, Akemi introduced an interview game. She delivered a work sheet and gave instructions, “Let’s play interview game. First, do rock, scissors, paper. Winner, please ask what sports do you like? Loser, please answer, I like ~. then, switch. Loser ask, winner answer. OK? Are you ready? Let’s start.” By this time all the students could use “What sports do you like? and I like ~. Though Akemi’s instructions in English sometimes included errors, she was successful in having students use more English, which she learned from the course book—“Speaking with support” an “Speaking more freely.”

The observation supports the qualitative data based on reflection logs and interviews, which revealed three stages and development of their teaching skills. Students became used to giving a demonstration and developed a lesson plan by creating activities based on what they had learned from the program.

**Classroom observation B.** The first researcher observed final group presentations at the end of the second semester in January, 2016. Students in two groups of four were assigned to choose one unit from the textbook (“Hi, friends 2”) for six graders and develop a lesson plan for four 45-minute classes. This is a description of one group (Yuko, Midori, Chika, Toru). The topic was birthday. First, after greeting Yuko reviewed words of 12 months and sang –“Months of the year” together with students. Then, she introduced cardinal numbers from 1 to 31. After that, she made two groups and students counted a number from 1 to 31 in a circle. Each student could say up to three cardinal numbers and the last student who said 31 became a failure. She then introduced a matching activity. She made two groups and gave two sets of cards face down: one for events and the other for dates. Each student drew one event card and one date card face up saying in English. The rest members in each group checked and said “Yes” or

“No.” Students took both cards if both cards were matched; otherwise, they returned cards face down.

Second, Midori followed the first lesson. After greeting, she reviewed cardinal numbers and sang a song—“Months of the year.” She then read a picture book she made about 12 animals’ birthdays. After that, she reviewed the story by asking questions such as “When is a bear’s birthday?” She gave each student a mask of an animal and called him/her in front of the classroom. Students asked him/her “When is your birthday?” Then, each student with an animal mask answered.

Chika taught the third lesson. After greeting, she started her lesson by singing “Hello Song” and “Months of The Year.” Then, she quickly reviewed cardinal numbers. After that, she read the same picture book and asked questions about 12 animals’ birthdays. Next, she made pairs and gave 12 picture cards and birthday cards. Students in pairs matched them and put them in order from January to December. She changed pairs and did it again.

The fourth lesson was taught by Toru. After greeting, he showed his birthday card to students and said, “Let’s make a birthday card.” He gave instructions in English including “Please write down your name,” “Please write down your birthday,” and “Please draw your favorite things.” It took about 20 minutes. Then, he said, “Let’s make one line according to birthdays.” Students asked each other—“When is your birthday?” and made a line. After that, he displayed all the birthday cards students made on the blackboard. The class was over.

The observation at the end of the second semester shows that students worked on materials development project by using ideas from the textbook based on TBLT, especially integrating four skills with a clear goal (making a birthday card).

## DISCUSSION

Although previous empirical studies represent the difficulty of changing preservice teachers’ beliefs and practices (Fox, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Kelly, 2018), this study shows the possibility to transform pre-service teachers’ beliefs and practices about English language teaching to young learners. In this section, we discuss the findings by responding to the research questions.

### **How do pre-service elementary school teachers change their beliefs about language learning and teaching?**

These eight students had positive attitude toward language learning and beliefs about teaching English to children when the training started. Their previous two-year English program based on CBLT and the strategy training program influenced their beliefs about language learning (see Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen & Sato, 2016). Chika reported:

Yoshi’s class had a pair work many times, thanks to this I could communicate with many classmates. We can learn not only English but also everything from my classmates, too. That’s why pair work is important. (Chika, 2014)

In short, the data revealed that these students changed their beliefs about learning English from traditional ways of learning English to communicative ways of learning English.

They developed their beliefs about teaching English to elementary school students through the yearlong teacher training program. In particular, by the end of the first semester,

most students changed their beliefs from just having fun to organizing an activity with clear goals. They further developed their understanding about making a lesson plan with clear goals by integrating four skills by the end of the 2nd semester. In summary, this study attests to Fives et al. (2015), who affirm that “[r]esearch on teachers’ beliefs needs to expand to clear investigations of beliefs about learning as distinct from beliefs about teaching, as the former serve as the foundation for the latter” (p. 261). Similarly, Cochran-Smith, et al. (2016) claim that “for teacher candidates to be prepared to teach in ways that support learners’ construction of knowledge, they themselves need to experience the knowledge construction process as students in teacher preparation programs” (p. 492-493). This study revealed the significance of changing beliefs about language learning as students prior to the teacher training program. Then, how many years and what kind of teaching approaches are necessary to change preservice teachers’ beliefs about *learning* before they are ready to change their beliefs about *teaching*? Who can be responsible for creating a foreign language curriculum through which preservice teachers can experience learning similar to teaching approaches in a teacher training program?

### **How do they develop their teaching skills through the yearlong teacher training course?**

By reviewing 1500 articles about teacher preparation which were published in major teacher education journals from 2000 to 2012, Cochran-Smith, et al. (2016) found that most studies were about teacher candidates’ beliefs and “[m]uch less attention was paid to the development of tangible teaching practices” (p. 493). Yet, this study found out that these eight students went through six stages (some were overlapped) to develop their teaching skills. They include:

- (1) enjoy songs and activities without thinking of teaching skills, become nervous about demonstration
- (2) start arranging the activities from the textbook, become used to demonstration
- (3) feel some improvement in their teaching, become able to see an activity from the children’s point of view, find difficulties in making a lesson plan with clear goals.
- (4) learn the difficulty of teaching reading and writing.
- (5) struggle with how to teach reading and writing to children, gradually understand children’s learning processes.
- (6) further develop their understanding about making a lesson plan with clear goals by integrating four skills.

In short, learning how to teach is not linear rather it is complex. Moreover, each stage indicates these preservie teachers’ evolving beliefs about how to teach English. Cochran-Smith, et al. (2016), by reviewing the literature, affirm that “[g]iven the uncertainty involved in teaching, it was not surprising to find that many of the practices explored in these studies focused on preparing teacher candidates to reflect on their practices in order to learn from it” (p. 493). These eight students engaged in writing reflection logs after each class and shared them with other classmates in the following class so that they could “cultivate habits of mind and skills for learning in and from practice” (p. 493, see also Fives et al., 2015). Then, how long do preservice teachers need to form the habit of reflection? What other reflection activities are effective to improve their teaching skills?

## CONCLUSION

Although previous studies documented the difficulty of changing preservice teachers' beliefs and practices (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2016; Fox, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Kelly, 2018) and little research has been done on preservice elementary school teachers' beliefs and practices, this study revealed the possibility to transform pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices about English language teaching to young learners. In sum, the study identified the following three main findings.

- (1) Students need to engage in a communication-oriented English program to change their *beliefs about learning* prior to the preservice teacher training program.
- (2) They need to go through several stages to develop their teaching skills based on TBLT throughout the entire academic year.
- (3) They need sufficient alternative instructional practices with reflection "to test out their emerging beliefs" (Johnson, 1994, p. 451) so that they can further develop their *beliefs about teaching*.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge some limitations. There continues to be need for larger sample size, additional quantitative and qualitative data. In particular, though these eight students received the same kind of English program based on CBLT following TBLT as those who participated in Nguyen (2018) and Nguyen & Sato (2016), they were not involved in those studies.

Acknowledging the findings here may not be easily generalized, we encourage future studies. How will these preservice teachers actually teach when they become teachers in elementary schools? Cochran-Smith, et al. (2016) affirm that "since few of the studies followed teacher candidates beyond the completion of those courses, little is known about the persistence of results over time" (pp. 493-493). Similarly, Farrell (2003) claims that "One of the single most influential factors in teacher socialization and development for beginning teachers is their relationship with their colleagues during their first years as teachers" (p. 97; see also Sato, Mutoh, Kleinsasser, 2019, Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001). Such future studies will contribute to the teacher education in general and language teacher education in particular.

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## APPENDIX A

### Main Topics for the CBEC (for the first-year students)

1st Semester	Communication Strategies
1. English in Elementary School (Goal: 3 minutes) (Discussion question (DQ): Are you for or against introducing English into elementary schools?)	<i>Opener: How ya doin? How's it goin? Closer: Nice talking with you. You, too. Turn taking: How about you? Pardon me? Let me see. Let me think. That's a difficult question</i>
2. Living together without marriage (3.5 min.)	<i>Rejoinders: Oh, really? Oh, yeah? Sounds nice/great/fun/interesting/boring/healthy/dangerous!</i>

(DQ: Are you for or against living together without marriage?)	
3. Healthy Eating (4 min.) (DQ: What is a healthy food you recommend?)	<i>Complete shadowing, partial shadowing</i>
4. Environmental Issues (4 min.) (DQ: What can you do for a better environment?)	<i>Follow-up questions: What, Where, When, What kind of, How long/far/late/big?</i>
5. Professional Sports (4.5 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against Japanese baseball players' playing in MLB?)	<i>Clarifications: You did what? He went where? What did you say?</i>
6. Pets (5 min.) (DQ: Do you think keeping a pet is a good idea?)	<i>Clarifications: What do you mean? Can you give me an example? Could you tell me? Could you explain?</i>
2nd Semester	
1. International Marriage (5 min.) (DQ: Do you think the advantages of international marriage outweigh the disadvantages?)	<i>Review of communication strategies</i>
2. Organ Transplants (5 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against using the organs of dead people?)	<i>Shadowing and summarizing</i>
3. Working Women (5.5 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against the idea that women should stay at home after giving birth?)	<i>Paraphrasing: What does that mean?</i>
4. Same-Sex Marriage (6 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against same-sex marriage?)	<i>Explaining in detail: What do you mean?</i>
5. Death Penalty (6.5 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against capital punishment?)	<i>Summarizing: Let's me summarize what you said.</i>
6. Six-year Teacher Training Program (7 min.) (DQ: Are you for or against a six-year teacher training program?)	<i>Review of communication strategies</i>

## APPENDIX B

### Survey on Beliefs about Language Learning and Teaching

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement by choosing the appropriate scale between 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree.'

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

4. The language I am planning to teach is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

5. It's important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

6. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

7. You shouldn't say anything in the language until you can say it correctly.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

8. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

9. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

10. It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

11. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take  
 him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10  
 years, 5) You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.  
 1-----2-----3-----4-----5

12. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary  
 words.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

13. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

14. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of  
 them later on.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

15. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

16. It's important to practice in the language laboratory.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

17. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

18. It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

19. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

20. Learning another language is a matter of translating from Japanese.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

21. If I learn to speak this language very well, it will help me get a good job.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

22. It is easier to read and write a language than to speak and understand it.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

23. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

24. Japanese think that it is important to speak a foreign language.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

25. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

26. Japanese are good at learning foreign languages.  
 strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

27. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

28. Gestures and other kinesics should be taught and evaluated as an integral part of language acquisition.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

29. Dialogue memorization is an effective technique in the process of learning a second language.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

30. To learn a second language, one must begin the study at an early age.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

31. All students, regardless of previous academic success and preparation, should be encouraged and given the opportunity to study a foreign language.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

32. Foreign-language teachers need not be fluent themselves to begin to teach effectively for communication.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

33. Students should answer a question posed in the foreign language with a complete sentence.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

34. When a student makes syntactical errors, this should be accepted by the teacher as a natural and inevitable part of language acquisition.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

35. Language learning should be fun.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

36. One can exchange ideas spontaneously in a foreign language without having linguistic accuracy.

strongly agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly disagree

## APPENDIX C

### Interview questions (translated from Japanese)

1. Did you enjoy the teacher training program about how to teach English to children? Was the program useful?
2. Which activities or teaching approaches were useful? Why? Please choose a few examples and state your reasons.
3. Was the textbook (*English for Primary Teachers*, Slattery & Willis, 2001) by useful?
4. Were model lessons and demonstrations useful? Were those successful? What did you learn?
5. How was the final group project? Did you have any difficulty? What did you learn?
6. How did you change your views about teaching English to children? Why? Please give examples and explain your reasons.