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Teaching a skill or using a tool? Studying Finnish EFL teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing

How teachers construct their beliefs about foreign language (FL) teaching in shifting educational contexts is an important, yet little known area. This study addresses this issue through a discourse analysis of research interviews conducted with 16 Finnish English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers about their views of teaching reading and writing. It identifies four different subject positions: 'unaccountable', 'old-time', 'modern' and 'authentic'. The study shows that the participating teachers' beliefs are contradictory and that although the teachers are aware of more recent discourses of language teaching, they find it difficult to link these with their teaching practice.

Keywords: teacher beliefs, teaching reading and writing



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1 Introduction

Teaching languages is arguably a practice that is highly dependent on context and ideologies that surround language. In teaching, existing ideologies and practices become part of the educational realities of the pupils (Borg 2006). Teachers can therefore be recognized as gatekeepers between scientific innovations and educational practices (e.g. Pajares 1992; Alexander 2001; Barcelos 2003a; Cheek, Steward, Launey & Borgia 2004; Cummings, Cheek & Lindsey 2004; Borg 2006; Barcelos & Kalaja 2013). Whilst teachers hold this important position in creating conditions for learning, there is little understanding of how Finnish English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers respond to discourses of language teaching as represented for example in the Finnish national core curriculum (FNBE 2014). This paper concentrates on offering some insights into this question. More specifically the paper concentrates on how Finnish EFL teachers draw on different contextual resources, such as previous experiences and the national curriculum, in constructing their beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing.

Conventionally, reading and writing have been recognized as tools (Reid 2001; Alderson, Haapakangas, Huhta, Nieminen & Ullakonoja 2015) used to complete different tasks and to copy sentences based on the assumption that first language (L1) activities can easily be applied in foreign language (FL) learning (Koda 2012). As theories of learning have developed over time, reading and writing have been more clearly conceptualized also as skills that need to be taught and developed in FL teaching (e.g. Hyland 2003; Dombey 2010). In communicative theories, pupils' reading and writing skills are conceptualized from the point of view of real life encounters (Nunan 2004; van Lier 2004; Mackey, Abbuhi & Gass 2012). Instead of focusing on reading and writing as the central tools to learn a specific linguistic system (Reid 2001), reading and writing become skills needed to interact in the changing social and historical environment (Nunan 2004). This theoretical shift has brought the complexity of reading and writing to the fore (Hirvela 2004; Grabe 2009; Koda 2012) and as communicative theories of language development have become more popular, the developmental processes of learning a FL have received more attention (e.g. Savignon 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011). This theoretical shift has significant implications for teachers and teacher development.

Beliefs, or the convictions people hold, are conceptualised in different ways. A number of common key characteristics, however, can be identified in recent research literature. Beliefs, for example, are (1) situated within "specific sense-making activities" (Neguerula-Azarola 2011: 368) and are the result of a particular place and time (Sakui & Gaies 1999). Beliefs are (2) constructed through language (Kalaja 1995) and (3) develop through social interaction. As beliefs are situated, constructed and developed through

social interaction, they can (4) only be understood in relation to the context in which they are constructed (Barcelos 2003b). Furthermore, when individual beliefs are stated, wider discourses are also always present (Benson & Lor 1999) suggesting that beliefs are (5) individual and shared. In an interview, for example, an individual's belief can be a response to the immediate "other" of the interviewer as well as a response to wider discourses. Finally, characterizing beliefs as fundamentally individual and profoundly social creates the space for (6) contradictory and conflicting voices to be present within an individual's beliefs (Kalaja 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos 2013).

Teacher beliefs, that is, the convictions teachers hold with regard to teaching, have a well-established history in the field of education (e.g. Lortie 1975). Although competing conceptualizations of teacher beliefs exist, the six characteristics outlined above suggest that teachers use beliefs to make sense of and act within their environment (Barcelos & Kalaja 2013; Kalaja & Barcelos 2013). From a research perspective, this suggests that an understanding of teacher beliefs should contribute to a better understanding of teacher practice and the possibilities for teacher development.

The specific research approach adopted in this research draws on work in critical discursive psychology (Edley 2001; Wetherell 2007), which is considered to be in accordance with the latest understanding of beliefs (Kalaja 2003; Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro & Ruohotie-Lyhty 2015). In approaching beliefs discursively, the study of conflicting beliefs also becomes possible (Kalaja & Leppänen 1998; Leppänen & Kalaja 2002; De Costa 2011). The goal of this study is not only to identify what beliefs are available for teachers to conceptualize their teaching of reading and writing, but also to explore in which contexts teachers take certain positions. As teachers make sense of a topic, they do it by taking a "subject position", which can be defined as a stance or a perspective used to look at and express beliefs in relation to a particular subject or topic (Edley, 2001; Hökkä 2012).

We expect that by mapping teacher beliefs in relation to the shifting contextual resources available to teachers, we will get a better picture of the ways in which teachers respond to changing language pedagogies and requirements. This approach is sensitive to the different beliefs of individual teachers, manifested in the different subject positions whilst acknowledging the wider theoretical landscape. The research questions are:

1. What subject positions are available to teachers when expressing beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing?
2. What kind of beliefs are expressed about the teaching of reading and writing from these subject positions?

3. What is the relationship between the different subject positions teachers adopt and the contextual resources available to teachers when conceptualizing reading and writing?

2 Methodology

2.1 Data

The data for the study is drawn from a multidisciplinary research project DIALUKI. The project aimed to provide better understanding of how second language (SL) and FL proficiency in reading and writing develops in psycholinguistic and linguistic terms, and to study the diagnosis of reading and writing abilities in a SL or FL (Alderson et al. 2015). The word diagnosis refers here to identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' reading and writing proficiency. The main focus of the project was on pupil performances on L1 and L2/FL measures. Teachers were also interviewed to investigate their views on diagnosis, as well as on the teaching of reading and writing.

A total of 16 (2 male, 14 female) Finnish EFL teachers were interviewed between 2011–2013. An overview of the participants is presented in appendix A. The teachers came from different parts of Finland and worked as EFL teachers in compulsory education, either in primary or lower secondary school (see FNBE 2016 for an overview of the Finnish educational system).

The interviews were conducted by three researchers. These semi-structured interviews focused on the following themes: using texts in teaching, writing and reading texts, assessment/evaluation of pupils and observing strengths and weaknesses of pupils. The aim of the interviews (interview themes are in appendix B) was to investigate how reading and writing is taught and what practices teachers consider to be important. All the interviews covered these themes, but their duration varied from 30–90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and took place mostly in schools during an ordinary school day in a quiet place. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis (see appendix C for transcription conventions). All quotations of the interviews in this paper are translations from Finnish by the authors. The minimal feedback responses of the interviewees have been removed from the translated narratives. The original Finnish extracts are in appendix D.

2.2 Methods

The analysis builds on the idea that teachers, when recounting their memories or describing their everyday teaching, do not merely retrieve a stock of information, but at the same time also construct the events in a particular, context specific way by using language (Edley 2001). By doing so they refer to larger discourses, typical ways of conceptualizing different topics, that are available to them in the specific moment in expressing their beliefs. More specifically, the analysis concentrated on detecting subject positions. These subject positions are stances that are taken in speech. Subject positions consist of how teachers refer to themselves within the discourses (Edley 2001), who they are in these discourses and what duties these subjects are discursively constructed to have.

The data analysis consisted of three different interpretative phases. In the first phase, the transcripts were analyzed using Atlas.ti computer software. The sequences about teaching and conceptualizing reading and writing were coded for further analysis. This phase was conducted by the first author. In the second phase, the sequences were analyzed across participants. The subject positions taken were detected by asking “who” was indicated through the participants’ talk (Edley 2001). The different subject positions were identified on the basis of variance in the topics and approaches to the topic, and the rhetorical and responsive features of teachers’ accounts (Potter 2004). The three first authors participated in this process. Through intensive rereading and category forming, four different positions (non-accountable, old-time, modern and authentic) were detected. Each teacher spoke from different subject positions during the interview. The third phase consisted of contextualizing the different subject positions taken by the teachers during the interviews (see Table 2 in section 3.5). We identified when these views appeared during the interviews, the level of certainty with which the view was expressed and what kind of perspectives the view offered for understanding reading and writing teaching as well as the contextual resources drawn on.

3 Findings

Through the analysis, four positions were identified. These were non-accountable, old-time, modern and authentic. Table 1 provides an overview of how these different positions were distributed among the participants, with the dominant subject position marked with “xx”.

TABLE 1. Teachers' use of different subject position.

Teacher	Non-accountable	Old-time	Modern	Authentic
Hanna	x		xx	x
Tuomas			xx	x
Anna	x	xx		x
Paula		x	x	x
Henri	x		xx	x
Jenni			xx	x
Maria	x	x	x	x
Liisa		xx		x
Tanja	x	xx		
Katja			xx	x
Laura			xx	x
Sonja	x	xx		
Niina		xx		
Emma		x	x	x
Kristiina	x		xx	x
Eeva		xx		

Sections 3.1–3.4 introduce each position in detail by first describing the use and the function of the position in the data and then displaying one or two examples of the analysis of the extracts. The variance and significance of the positions taken by the individual teachers is addressed in section 3.5.

3.1 Non-accountable

The non-accountable position constructed the teaching of reading and writing as something that was not included within EFL teachers' work or was only a side-product of activities implemented in the classroom. This position occurred in the context of responding to direct questions about the role of or strategies linked to the teaching of reading or writing. Rhetorically it functioned as a means for the teachers to explain their non-commitment or uncertainty with regard to the questions of reading and writing at a later point in the interview.

In the extract below, one of the teachers, Henri, responds to a direct question about reading strategies in his language teaching.

- (1) Interviewer: do you somehow teach some reading strategies that for example [explain] how it would be useful to approach the text.

Henri: Well I DON'T REALLY in that that way so so analytically begin I guess to that then that really it's like so these gr- gro-, every class this class well they are anyway so heterogeneous in their skills and in that way that then I just try to that personally support and and and I don't really have like well that forei-, really (laughter) really like something clear *st* strategy then [*x x x *] that well.

In his response, Henri rhetorically justifies the absence of the strategies by referring to the student heterogeneity and positions himself as somebody who is not responsible for teaching any strategies. The tone of his response is rather hesitant, indicated by the laughter and verbal signs of hesitance such as repetition, fillers and the use of speculation *I guess* (Fin. *varmaan*).

3.2 Old-time teacher

The old-time teacher position constructed the teaching of reading and writing as important tools in language teaching. It was directly connected to accounts on everyday classroom work and it was used to justify why pupils were assigned reading and writing tasks. Examples of these tasks were also given, including the translation of chapters, reading aloud, copying texts and doing written grammar assignments. The belief ascription of reading and writing as old-fashioned activities did not necessarily mean that this feature was understood negatively. On the contrary, some teachers rhetorically constructed old-fashioned teaching, including reading and writing, in the form of copy-writing and translation, as positive, and criticized communicative language teaching required in the curriculum for concentrating on plays, games and speaking that did not for them indicate serious study.

In the extract below, Liisa explains why she gives reading tasks for homework.

(2) Liisa: Well, I'm so old-fashioned that I always have reading for homework that when because it's like # like, yeah, after Tuesday I give it for homework the reading [...] I don't trust at all that it would only by # speaking and singing and playing would sink in that, no way it would

Liisa rhetorically justifies her practice by naming herself as an old-fashioned teacher and at the same time she expresses mistrust towards more modern approaches to learning, that is, speaking, singing and playing. The tone of her response is certain. For her, reading a text is a tool that can be used to help the words and sentences of the chapter to sink into the minds of the pupils. This activity is qualified as old-fashioned in comparison to more recent teaching methods.

Paula also positions herself as an old-time teacher when she describes her teaching practices in the primary school.

- (3) Paula: even though the current tendency is of course in primary school that the third and especially the fourth (COM: grade) are oral. But well, yeah, I am that much of an old school teacher that I have that I have kept all the way from the third grade also the writing on the side.

This position is used to rhetorically justify the use of writing tasks as a tool for language learning in addition to the oral exercises. The position is here, however, only adopted partially, which is indicated by the words *that much* (Fin. *sen verran*). The old-time teacher position is contrasted with the more recent preference in the curriculum for oral language exercises, a goal that Paula also wants to recognize in her teaching. The tone of her account is declaratory; she has clearly thought about the matter before and states this to the interviewers. For Paula, the use of written exercises indicates in this account an old-time approach to teaching languages.

3.3 Modern

The modern position constructed reading and writing as secondary activities in language teaching and underlined the significance of oral language production for language learning. This subject position was typically used in teacher accounts to conceptualize everyday language teaching and talk about duties. For teachers assuming this stance, the use of tools considered modern such as games and communicative oral activities were important signs of belonging to this group. It was contrasted with reading and writing exercises that consisted of copying texts, translating, reading aloud and doing written grammar exercises. This position was taken willingly and with certainty in the interviews and the teachers referred to the support the curriculum gave to their stance. However, similarly to the old-time teacher position, also in the modern teacher position the teaching of reading and writing skills in L2/FL teaching was constructed in relation to language teaching tools rather than skills.

In the extract below Henri describes his teaching philosophy.

- (4) Henri: but I have always tried to aim at that that the speaking would dominate the writing [...] that it would like somehow the most important of language proficiency is that [...] that then well I don't really know that if someone can write a perfect text but is not using the language then what do you do with that ben- how do you benefit from that language proficiency then that you should have the courage to speak and use that knowledge then that.

Rhetorically, he builds a contrast between communicative language competence and writing exercises to justify his practice. For Henri, writing is an old-fashioned tool in language learning which does not serve his educational goals as well as oral exercises. The tone of the extract is contemplative.

In another data extract Kristiina criticizes copying textbook chapters into notebooks.

- (5) Kristiina: But I think that these class teachers so they use that method a lot (COM: copying textbook chapters into notebooks) and that they always like think that you learn everything by writing it down that you learn the language and you learn and understand the chapter and you learn when you write it down but I don't exactly %agree%

Kristiina positions herself as a modern teacher by building a contrast between herself as a qualified language teacher and classroom teachers teaching English without the qualification. The tone of the response is certain; she first identifies the practice and then states her position without hesitation.

3.4 Authentic

The authentic teacher position challenges the emphasis on reading and writing as tools in FL teaching. Contrary to the other subject positions adopted during the interviews, this subject position implicated reading and writing as separate skills with specific characteristics. It also brought a larger variety of written exercises into play. In these accounts, teachers highlighted different text types, communication possibilities and strategies making understanding or the conveyance of a message possible. When taking this position, teachers outlined the importance of real-life language use opportunities for their pupils. Emphasizing such opportunities also made it necessary for the teachers to include cultural and strategic knowledge linked to specific contexts in the writing and reading processes. In the interviews, this subject position was commonly connected to special occasions, projects and extra activities in the classroom. Although this subject position was intermittently adopted in the majority of the interviews, during these moments the teachers were often hesitant about the topics they were addressing and they mentioned many challenges that seemed to prevent them from adopting this perspective more in their everyday teaching.

In the extract below, Kristiina answers a question about the kind of texts her students should be able to write by the end of the ninth grade.

- (6) Kristiina: # well # # not any kind of like # this kind of political text or social satire or but anything like that but well quite like # mostly the themes are from you # yourself and your future and your family and hobbies and mostly still that # that well of course many kinds of texts they can write already letters and emails and and that that it would be well # that kind of # like # can write CV and job applications and [a like]

Interviewer: [ok so you practice] that too.

Kristiina: yes, well, yes things like that come like anyway a little bit 'cause in ninth grade you have that working life so # in that *goes* comes also things like that and then a little bit social # like vocabulary on society and # that kind of themes

The perspective from which this account is constructed is not typical of the other positions on reading and writing and provides new information which is also visible from the interviewer's response. This account constructs her as a teacher who is interested in her pupils' abilities for authentic written communication. The tone of the account is hesitant, indicated by the use of the words *like* (Fin. *tota*), *a bit* (Fin. *jonku verran*), *well* (Fin. *niinku*). Also the conceptualization of writing is different; it is presented as part of the communicative competence of the pupil, not as an old-fashioned tool with which to acquire other language skills.

In extract 7 Jenni describes what she would like to do with more time and freedom to decide her own approach.

- (7) Jenni: Yeah, and the pace is, well, somehow I feel that I would like to do something more creative and something different, for example searching for information on the web or # or well, some exercises on free writing or something like that but somehow it is like defined that what you have to do in a certain time frame and it is so so awful the pace that I have to like all the time check that we are sticking to the pace.

Jenni rhetorically positions herself as an authentic teacher who cannot realize her ideas due to outside pressure. The tone of her response is contemplative and she tries to make sense of the situation.

3.5 Teaching a skill or using a tool: fluctuations between different subject positions

The previous section introduced four different subject positions that the participating teachers used in the interviews to conceptualize the teaching of reading and writing. To better understand the contextual resources used to construct the beliefs, we will now

explore the fluctuation between the different positions in more detail. Table 2 illustrates two participants' use of different subject positions in the interview situation.

TABLE 2. Use of different subject positions during interviews.

Teacher	Positionings during the interview	Context	Certainty/tone	Rhetoric/responsive features
Liisa	Authentic	Comenius project	Hesitant whether this will happen again	Describing why the project was important to her, dreaming
	Old-time teacher	Everyday activities in the classroom	Certain	Describing and justifying her pedagogical choices
	Authentic	Comenius project	Astonished about the hidden capacities of her pupils	Highlighting the benefits of the Comenius project
	Old-time teacher	Everyday practices in the classroom	Certain about her duties as a teacher	Describing herself as a hard-working teacher
	Authentic	Goals of reading and writing teaching	Uncertain, contemplative	Contemplating the skills that her pupils should acquire
	Old-time teacher	Everyday activities in the classroom	Certain	Taking a stance against the modern view of teaching languages
	Authentic	Comenius project	Hesitant	Describing when group writing methods can be used
Maria	Non-accountable	Direct question about teaching reading	Surprised	Defending herself
	Old-time teacher	Use of internet	Certain	Justifying why internet is not used by referring to her teaching as basic skills teaching
	Authentic	Goals of the use of texts	Contemplative	Describing the vast goals of language teaching

Table 2 cont.

Table 2 cont.

Old-time teacher	Everyday teaching in the classroom	Certain	Justifying the use of written exercises
Non-accountable	Direct question about the use of strategies	Certain	Justifying her actions
Modern	Values	Certain	Justifying her practice

The fluctuation between different subject positions, even adopting opposing stances towards the role of reading and writing in language teaching, is understandable in relation to the function and context of use for the different positions. The different positions serve teachers in making sense of different phenomena linked to their language teaching. In the case of Liisa, her use of authentic and old-time teacher positions expresses her beliefs about two domains that differ for her in function and goals. In her descriptions of the Comenius project she participated in with her pupils, the authentic stance helps to organize the activities and explain the usefulness of it to her pupils. This position is also used in making sense of the greater goal that teaching reading and writing has. In contrast to this view, in constructing beliefs about her everyday classroom activities, the position of an old-time teacher provides a viewpoint that helps to make sense of her actions and presents her as a teacher who values hard work. In this latter case, her conceptualization of reading and writing is different as she refers to activities such as copying texts, translating, grammar exercises and reading aloud.

In the case of Maria, the fluctuation between different positions is even greater. She responds to the direct questions about how she teaches reading or if she uses strategies in her teaching of writing by denying responsibility for teaching reading or writing. This position constructs reading and writing not as skills but as tools used in her teaching. The old-time teacher position, on the other hand, helps to make sense of why this tool is used in her teaching. To highlight her appreciation of communicative language use she draws on the modern stance and finally, the authentic position is used to ponder the greater goals of language education. In her belief construction, Maria draws on different discourses that are available to her to make sense of the themes at hand.

Although the individual use of different positions was varied and even seemingly contradictory at points, there was uniformity across the participants in which contexts the different positions were adopted. The dominant subject positions in making sense of everyday practices in the classroom were modern and old-fashioned. The majority of teachers either clearly identified themselves as modern or old-fashioned, whereas three teachers fluctuated between these two stances. Both of these positions shared a

unified belief about reading and writing conceptualizing them as old-fashioned tools for language learning. In this case reading and writing activities were those that the teachers had encountered during their own time as pupils. As Maria points out:

(8) Interviewer:

well then yeah we are interested very much in teacher's own experiences I mean what kind of reading and writing instruction you yourself received during your school times.

Maria: well, I didn't receive much else %than reading and writing%- that it was only that then in fif- no sixtie- when did I go to school well it was just translation and- if we speak about teaching a foreign language.

The connection with teachers' own experiences makes it more understandable as to why these methods were understood as old-fashioned compared to the later emphasis on communicative and oral activities. The non-accountable position also shared the conceptualization of reading and writing as tools for language learning. This consideration made it unnecessary to explicitly teach them as part of language learning. The use of the authentic position in the teachers' speech, however, shows that they were also aware of other theoretical and educational discourses (i.e. FNBE 2014).

4 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this article was to use critical discursive methodology to explore Finnish EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of reading and writing. The purpose of this research was twofold. On the one hand, we were seeking better understanding of Finnish EFL teachers' beliefs with regard to the teaching of reading and writing. On the other hand, we sought to better understand how beliefs are discursively constructed and linked to shifting contextual resources and available discourses.

Reading and writing have remained key features of EFL classrooms, yet the theoretical understanding of teaching reading and writing has significantly changed over time (Nunan 2004; van Lier 2004; Mackey et al. 2012). This study reveals how Finnish EFL teachers hold several, and often contradictory, beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing. Four different subject positions were identified in the analysis: non-accountable, old-time, modern and authentic positions. Three of these four positions, non-accountable, old-time and modern, shared a similar conceptualization about the role of reading and writing in EFL teaching. From these subject positions, reading and writing were understood as old-fashioned tools or by-products in FL learning more in line with older theorizations of reading and writing in FL teaching (Reid 2001).

The fourth subject position “authentic” provided different kinds of beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing and positioned reading and writing as belonging to the communicative competence of pupils. From this stance, reading and writing were perceived as skills that pupils need in interacting with other people and in participating in the globalized world. This view is consistent with more recent theories of the role of reading and writing in FL learning (e.g. Nunan 2004; van Lier 2004; FNBE 2014). From this position teachers recognized that more varied tasks and activities are needed for their students to acquire these skills.

The complexity of teacher beliefs is in line with earlier studies (Kajala & Barcelos 2013); however, this study also mapped the contextual resources to more profoundly understand this complexity. Our study shows that these beliefs were not randomly expressed, but certain beliefs were relevant to certain contexts and related to distinct wider discourses about language pedagogy. According to Dufva (2003), the existence of contradictory beliefs can be related to the contradictory experiences individuals hold. In our study Finnish EFL teachers drew on their own school time experiences and their own experiences at work in different projects, for instance, Comenius projects. This study illustrates how different beliefs serve different purposes in teachers’ pedagogical thinking. This resulted in splitting teaching practice into separate fields. Whereas Liisa used the authentic position when speaking about the Comenius project, she did not use this position when describing her everyday teaching practices. In her everyday practices she resorted to more traditional beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing by using the old-time teacher position. Mapping the beliefs of teachers in this way helps to make sense of the split between different beliefs. The contradictory beliefs are neither random nor chaotic but reflect the complex relationship between pedagogical thinking and the experience of individuals in relation to the wider social context including shifting theories and curricula. These complex expressions of beliefs all the more underline von Wright’s (1997) point that teachers need to recognize their own beliefs in order to be able to further their pedagogical expertise.

The current study contains some limitations that should be acknowledged. Although the research design strove for representativeness by inviting teachers from different schools and backgrounds, participation was voluntary. This inevitably leads to a select sample of teachers that are generally positive towards research projects. It is, however, reasonable to suggest that the complexity of the teacher beliefs and the use of contextual resources identified here represent more general tendencies in FL teachers’ thinking. This study does not, however, address other important aspects of teacher cognition, namely the connection between teacher beliefs and practices that should be addressed in further research with different methodology. It is our hope, therefore, that the research presented here with regard to the role of teacher beliefs on the teaching of

reading and writing significantly adds to discussions on FL pedagogy. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the complexity of teacher thinking and the difficulty teachers face when negotiating the role of different ideas for their teaching. This question suggests that greater research-based knowledge is required as well as on-going engagement with teachers as they construct their beliefs in the context of their classrooms.

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APPENDIX A.

Participants

TABLE 3. Participants.

Pseudonym (gender* in brackets)	Teaching experience	Current employment
Hanna (F)	< 10 years	Primary EFL teacher (children aged 7–12 years)
Tuomas (M)	< 10 years	
Anna (F)	10–20 years	
Paula (F)	10–20 years	
Henri (M)	10–20 years	
Jenni (F)	10–20 years	
Maria (F)	> 20 years	
Liisa (F)	> 20 years	Primary EFL and class teacher** (children aged 7–12 years)
Tanja (F)	10–20 years	Primary class teacher (children aged 7–12 years)
Katja (F)	< 10 years	Lower secondary EFL teacher (children aged 13–15 years)
Laura (F)	< 10 years	
Sonja (F)	10–20 years	
Niina (F)	10–20 years	
Emma (F)	10–20 years	
Kristiina (F)	10–20 years	
Eeva (F)	> 20 years	

* F stands for female, M for male.

** A class teacher is responsible for teaching a range of different subjects in primary level education in Finland.

APPENDIX B.

Interview themes

1. Beginning the interview (teacher's background, common issues)
2. How do you process texts? (reading)
3. What kinds of text do you use? (reading)
4. What kinds of writing tasks do you do? (writing)
5. Diagnosing pupils reading and writing skills
6. What help does your school provide for pupils who have difficulties in reading and writing (reading and writing)
7. Final enquiries

APPENDIX C.

Transcription conventions

The main focus of the transcriptions was to write down the content of the interview speech, not do a very detailed transcription that would, for instance, be needed for a detailed conversation analytic analysis of turn-taking. Research assistants were in charge of the transcriptions, but each interviewer reviewed the transcripts while listening to the recordings.

#	pause
##	extra long pause
[text]	overlapping speech
.	end of the utterance
(COM: text)	transcriber's comment
%text%	word(s) or utterances with laughter
text	uncertain transcription
x x x	unclear word(s), utterances
(laughter)	laughter
"text"	citation or acting
TEXT	emphasized word(s), utterances
-	truncated speech
,	interrupted speech
[. . .]	extract has been shortened from here

APPENDIX D.

Original Finnish extracts

- (1) Interviewer: opetatto mitenkään semmosta lukemisstrategiaa että miten vaikka kannattais sit tekstiä lähestyä.
- Henri: no kyl EMMÄÄ OIKEE sillä sillä tavalla niin niin analyttisesti lähe varmaan sitä sitte että tosiaan niinku se on niin nää ryy- ryh-, jokainen luokka tämäkin luokka nii on ne kuitenkin nii heterogeeninen taidoiltaan ja sillä tavalla että sitte vaan yrittää sitä henk.kohtaisesti tukee ja- jaja ei mulla semmosta semmosta tota vierai-, oikee (naurahuus) oikee mitää semmosta selkeä *-sta* strategiaa sitte [* x x x *] sitte että tota.
- (2) Liisa: siis kun mä oon niin vanhanaikane että mull on lukuläksyt [Interviewer: nii.] et sitten ku se on niinko # tuota niin niin tiistain jälkeen mä annan sen lukuläksyks. [...] minä en luota ollenkaan että se pelkästään tällä # puhumalla ja laulamalla ja leikkimällä menee että ei ollenkaan, ei mene
- (3) Paula: vaikka se nykytendenssi onkin tietysti ala-asteella sitä että kolkki ja nelkki varsinkin on sitä suullista. Mutta tota kyllä mä vielä sen verran vanhan kansan opettaja oon et mä oon pitäny ihan kolkista asti myöskin sitä kirjottamista siinä rinnalla.
- (4) Henri: mut mää oon kuitenkin aina pyrkiny sit siihen et sitä puhumista ois enemmän ku [Interviewer: mm.] sitä kirjottamista [...] että se ois niinku kuitenkin se kielitaidon kaikkein ao et se. [...]että sitten tota mää oikeesti en tiedä sitte että jos joku kirjottaa täydellistä tekstiä mutta ei käytä sitä kieltä sitte että [Interviewer: % nii. %] mitä sä teet hirveesti [Interviewer: nii mitä se kielitaito sitte on.] hyö-, mitä sä hyödynnät miten sä hyödynnät sitä kielitaitoo sitte että pittäis uskaltaa puhumaan ja käyttää sitä taitoon sitte että.
- (5) Kristiina: mut must tuntuu et nää luokanopettajat ni käyttää paljo sitä menetelmää (COM: kappaleiden kopioimista vihkoon) et ne kauheesti niinku ajattelee et sä opit kaiken kirjottamalla sen et sä opit kielenkii ja sä opit ja tajuat sen kappaleen ja opit ku sä kirjat sen mutku mä en oo niinku ihan %samaa mieltä siitä%
- (6) Kristiina: # no # # ei nyt mitään niinku tota # tälläst poliittista tekstiä [Interviewer: %mm%.] tai yhteiskuntasatiiria [Interviewer: nii.] tai mutta mitään tälläst mut tota aikailla semmosta # aikailla ne aihepiirit liikkuu niinku siinä omassa # omassa itessä ja omassa tulevaisuudessa ja omassa perheessä ja harrastuksissa ja kuitenkin vielä [Interviewer: joo.] että # että tota tietenki monenlaisia tekstejä ne osaa kirjottaa jo kirjoittaja ja sähköposteja ja [Interviewer: joo.] ja sellasta että et se ois kyllä #

semmosia # tota # osaa tehdä CV:tä ja [Interviewer: mm.] ja työpaikka-hakemuksia ja [sen tyyppistä].

Interviewer: [nii just et te harjottelette] semmosiaki sitte.

Kristiina: nii kyllä kyllä niitä niinku tulee sellasta [Interviewer: joo.] sellasta kuitenkin jonku verran ku tossa on toi ysiluokalla on toi työelämä ni # sinne *menee* tulee just semmostaki [Interviewer: joo.] ja sit vähän yhteiskunnallista [Interviewer: joo.] # yhteiskunnallista niinku sanastoo ja # semmosta aihepiiriä

(7) Jenni: joo ja sit toi tahti on niinkun jotenki must tuntuu että mäki haluaisin tehdä enemmän jotain sellaista luovempaa ja vähä erilaisia juttuja jotain tiedonhakuu netistä tai # tai tota jotain vapait kirjotusharjoituks-tai jotaki semmosta mutku jotenki s- on niinku määritelty et mitä sun pitää tehdä tietys ajan jaksossa ni se on iha- ihan hirveen se tahti et mun tarvii niinku koko ajan kattoo et me pysytää siinä

(8) Interviewer: no sitten tota meitä kiinnostaa kovasti tietenkin opettajan omat kokemukset elikkä minkäläistä lukemisen ja kirjottamisen opetusta olet itse saanut kouluajanasi.

Maria: no enpä juuri muuta saanukaan %ku lukemisen ja kirjottamisen%- [Interviewer: %nii%.] nii että sehän oli pelkkää sillon viis- eiku kuuskytämillon mä oikeen oon käyny kouluni ni sehän oli pelkkää vaan kääntämistä ja- jos kielen opetuksesta puhutaan.