

## **A Correlational Study of EFL Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Students' Class Participation in Bandar-Abbas Language Institutes**

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### **Abstract**

Beliefs can play an influential role in any learning and teaching experiences. It is widely acknowledged that beliefs are a vast and complex area for conducting a research. The objective of the study is the pivotal role of teachers' beliefs about teaching across gender, students' perceptions about class participation across gender, and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and learners' class participation. To do so, 48 language teachers and 408 language learners from 15 language institutes in Bandar-Abbas participated in the study and three instruments was utilized: self-assessment of class participation checklist (SACPC); to investigate students' perceptions about class participation whether they are active or passive participants, open-ended teaching beliefs questionnaire (OTBQ); to find out teachers' pedagogical beliefs through metaphors, and observation; to see the actual behavior of both teachers and learners in the class. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The findings indicated that teachers' beliefs (male and female) inclined to art and among 27 factors of students' class participation, 7 factors of class participation in students (male and female) showed differently. There was no significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and students' class participation.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Beliefs, Pedagogical Beliefs, Students' Class Participation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Beliefs can play an influential role in any learning and teaching experiences. It is widely acknowledged that beliefs are a vast and complex area for conducting a research (e.g., Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992; Pintrich, 1990). Teachers are not only considered as an aid to language learning but also can provide some obstacles towards it. Teachers' beliefs are personal theories about language, educational process, learning, and teaching a language, which are deeply context independent (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver & Thwaite, 2001).

They can powerfully shape both their own practices and the learning opportunities and obstacles learners receive. Indeed, many teachers are not aware of what their beliefs are or how they impact their instructional decisions (Farrell, 2016). Thus, metaphors can serve to make implicit beliefs explicit and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The key integral part of learning and teaching system is the environment where both play own roles, classroom. Class participation does not conflict with teacher's practices; the more impact teachers put on practice, the more class participation we may have. This can be understood from the linear relation between these two. Calderhead (1996) also accepted the importance of teachers' beliefs and differentiated among five interrelated areas of teachers' beliefs: beliefs about learners and learning, beliefs about teaching, beliefs about subject matter, beliefs about learning to teach, and beliefs about ones' self and ones' role. Conducive classroom environment involves a two-way interaction between students and instructors. It will stimulate learning and make both the instructor and student feel satisfied, which eventually lead to an effective learning process. Almost most of the students appear to have an inactive role in the classroom participation (Weaver & Qi, 2005). In the current study, the concern is the role of teachers' beliefs in student less- participation in classroom discussion.

According to the past studies, several factors are dealt with participation: the first is the personality of the students. Students with high self-efficacy have shown better academic achievement and more participation in the classroom (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995 as cited in Mohd. Yusof Abdullah, Noor Rahamah Abu Bakar & Maizatul Haizan Mahbob, 2012). The second important factor that affects the students' active participation in the classroom is the trait and skills of the instructor.

In this paper term *participation* will be used interchangeably with term *willingness to communicate*. Traits that have been shown by instructors, such as supporting, understanding, approaching, being friendly through positive nonverbal behaviors, giving smiles, and nodding for admitting the answer that are given by students (SitiMaziha, NikSuryani & Melor, 2010), being affirmative, and open minded (Dallimore, Hertenstein & Platt, 2004; Fasinger, 1995, 2000) also contribute to the students active participation in the classroom. It is also defined as "an individual's volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topics, and conversational context among other potential situational variables" (Kang, 2005 as cited in Kuciel, 2014).

A number of factors were perceived by learners to influence WTC behavior in class: the group size, familiarity with interlocutor(s), interlocutor(s)' participation, familiarity with topics under discussion, self-confidence, medium of communication and cultural background (Cao & Philp, 2006). Fives and Buehl (2012) have made much effort to explain the significance of teachers' beliefs which rest in their relation to practice and ultimately to students' outcomes (p. 471). Numerous studies have examined the relations between teachers' beliefs and practices in different content areas (e.g., science [Endedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006]; literacy [Power, Zippay, & Butler, 2006]; technology integration [Chen, 2008]) with varying level of specificity (Fives & Buehl, 2012). However, few studies have claimed about the role of teachers' beliefs on students'

outcomes using data from both teachers and student, teachers' beliefs about teaching across gender and students' perceptions about class participation across gender.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Much of the research reviewed in Gill and Fives' book (2015) reveals mixed results with respect to the influence of beliefs on practice and/or student achievement (e.g., Buehl & Beck, 2014). We need complex, context sensitive, well-supported theories of teachers' beliefs that specify the functions beliefs may serve and the factors that they may reasonably influence the class participation. Martinez, Sauleda and Huber (2001) in an analysis of the literature on metaphors of teaching and learning categorize metaphors as falling into three main dimensions of the learning space. Metaphors fall into the behavioristic/empiricist perspective (teachers as transmitters of information, and learners as passive recipients), cognitivist/constructivist (teachers as facilitators and learners as active agent in the learning process), and *situative or socio historical perspective* (knowledge and learning is situated in context). This theory is used to classify the teachers' beliefs about teaching through metaphors. To find out the students' perception about class participation and whether they are active or passive, the theory which is used in this study is represented by Abdullah, Abu Bakar & Mahbob, 2012. Active participation of students with discussion in the classroom is important for the purpose of achieving affective learning and plays important role in the success of education and personal development of students in future (Tatar, 2005). In general, student participation in the classroom is through two communication behaviors, that is verbal and nonverbal (Lee, 2005). Verbal or oral participation refers to behaviors of speaking or giving opinion in the classroom, answering and asking questions or comments and taking part in the classroom discussion (Abdullah et al., 2012). In contrast, non-verbal participation, considered as passive, is associated with behavioral participation during the class, including nod their head, raise their hands, body movements, and eye contact (Abdullah et al., 2012).

### Teachers' Beliefs

There is a very old definition by Rokeach (1968), a 'belief' refers to any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase "I believe that ....."(p.113). Pajares (1992) has labelled beliefs a messy construct.

Teachers hold many different kinds of beliefs at the same time: beliefs about knowledge (epistemology), their students (e.g., attribution, locus of control, motivation, test anxiety, culture, intelligence), beliefs about students and themselves (e.g., self-efficacy, self-worth, self-esteem, sense of agency), about subject matter (content), how to teach (pedagogy), about many moral and ethical dilemmas, and social issues affect their teaching (e.g., politics, poverty, economist)(Fives & Gill, 2015).

Richardson (1996) identifies teachers' beliefs has been driven from three main sources: personal experiences of individual teachers, experiences with schooling and instruction (Leavy, McSorley & Boté, 2007). Teachers' beliefs are personal theories about language, educational process, learning, and teaching a language, which are deeply context-

independent (Breen et al., 2001). Teachers' beliefs can powerfully shape both their own practices and the learning opportunities and obstacles learners receive. Researchers have been focusing on this issue since they started regarding teachers as active decision makers in the 1980s (Freeman, 2002 as cited in Breen et al., 2001).

Calderhead (1997) also accepted the importance of teachers' beliefs and differentiated among five interrelated areas of teachers' beliefs: beliefs about learners and learning, beliefs about teaching, beliefs about subject matter, beliefs about learning to teach, and beliefs about ones' self and ones' role.

### **Learners' Class Participation**

Participation usually means students speaking in class: answer and ask questions, make comments, and join in discussions. Students who do not participate in those ways mentioned above are often considered to be passive and are generally penalized when participation is graded (Jacob & chase, 1992). "Classroom participation means being present with all required class materials, answering questions, offering constructive opinions, and generally cooperating with the teacher and other students in the class" (Ghasemi, 2013, p. 11). Participation, also, has been defined as "the number of unsolicited responses volunteered" (Burchfield & Sappington, 1999, p. 290). Generally, it is believed that class participation is asking and answering questions, raising one's hand and asking comments in the classroom. Strong evidences can be referred to for the importance of class participation (Lyons, 1989; Petress, 2006; Weaver & Qi, 2005).

### **THIS STUDY**

The aim of the current study is to investigate the following objectives:

- To find out language teachers' beliefs about teaching across gender
- To find out language students' perception about class participation across gender
- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between language teachers' beliefs and language students' class participation

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the language teachers' beliefs about teaching across gender?
2. What are the language students' perception about class participation across gender?
3. Is there any significant relationship between language teachers' beliefs and language students' participation?

### **METHOD**

First, the design and participants discussed. In the next step, the applied and measurement instruments mentioned. Third, it focuses on the steps and procedures taking from the very beginning towards the end of this work. And finally, it provides the view about how the data analyzed.

## Research Design

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized in this study. In order to display significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and students' class participation, teachers' pedagogical beliefs across gender and students' perceptions about class participation quantitative method was used. In order to observe the actual behavior of both teachers and students, qualitative method was used.

## Participants

BY using stratified sampling method, among all language institutes in Bandar Abbas 15 institutes were chosen. Among 15 institutes, 48 teachers (25 males and 23 females) mostly between 3 to 14 years of experience and 408 Male and female students were of equal number (204 males and 204 females).

## Procedure

Firstly, male and female teachers and students responded to the two printed questionnaires, namely self-assessment of class participation checklist (SACPC) and open-ended teaching belief questionnaire (OTBQ). As the first questionnaire was Likert-type, it was completed in no longer than 20 minutes. The second one, however was an open-ended test which did need more time for completion because they had to write their ideas based on questions. Therefore, at first, we made them aware of not going back and forth between questions and avoided rechecking the answers of the previous questions. These questionnaires were employed to identify the perceived behavior of the students and teachers.

Observation was done on one class in two terms of institutional schedule. In each term, a teacher with different teaching beliefs but same sex attended the class. During the term, the researcher observed the class in five sessions. The purpose of the observation was to identify the actual behavior of teachers and students in the class and to find out the underlying relationships between teachers' beliefs and students' class participation. The observations were recorded based on the two questionnaires used to obtain the information about perceived behavior of teachers and students.

Generally, data collection procedures took about 6 months.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

The descriptive statistics of the variables have been presented in Table 1 and Table 2. Overall, 48 teachers and 408 students participated in the present investigation.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Students' Class Participation (Total and Mean)

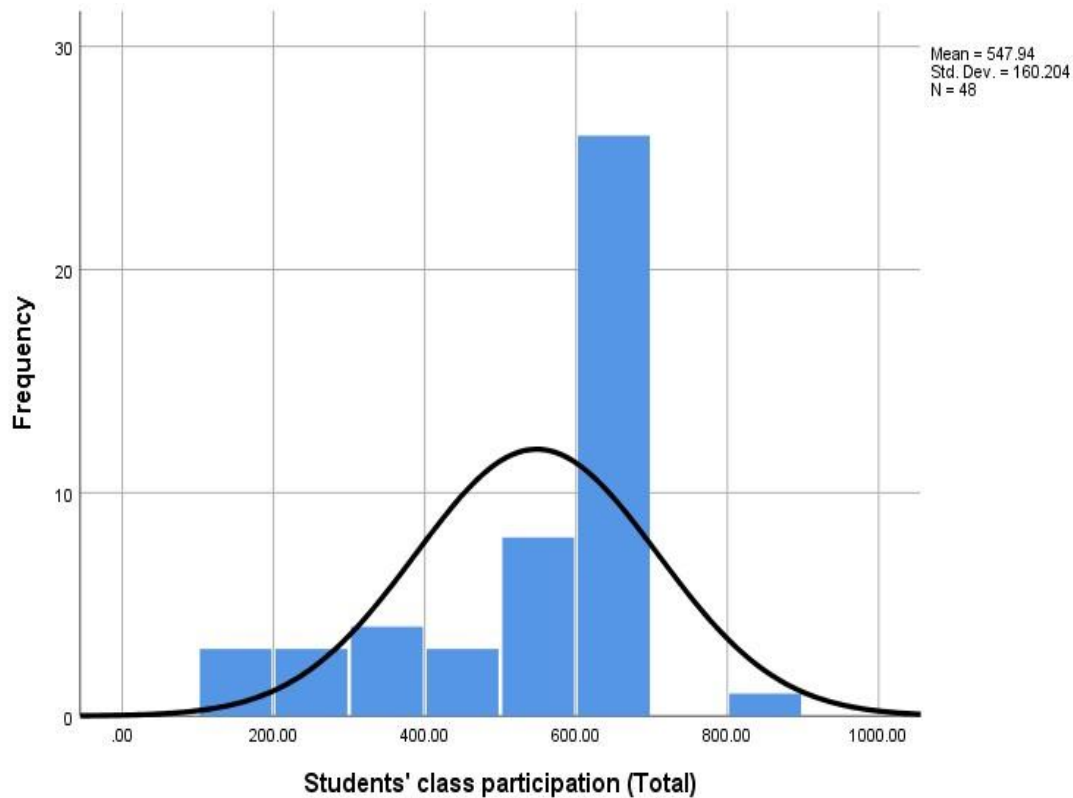
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Students' class participation (Total)	48	669.00	158.00	827.00	547.9375	160.20444	25665.464
Students' class participation (M)	48	17.67	52.67	70.33	63.2194	3.51239	12.337

**Table 2.** Learners Scores on A1, A2,..., H5 and Their Total Scores on Each Variable

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
I come to class(A1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.9142	.30555	.093
I come to class on time(A2)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.6103	.55427	.307
I ask the teacher questions(B1)	406	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5197	.55632	.309
I ask my classmate questions(B2)	406	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.2315	.56707	.322
I answer questions that the teacher asks(C1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.6054	.50420	.254
I answer questions that my classmates asks(C2)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3676	.55386	.307
I take equal turns in all three roles (D1)	402	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.4279	.61244	.375
I offer my opinion(D2)	404	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.4035	.65184	.425
I cooperate with my group members(D3)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5735	.61870	.383
I use appropriate classroom language(D4)	406	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5246	.60298	.364
I offer my opinion(E1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5368	.57261	.328
I cooperate with my partner(E2)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.6152	.59189	.350
I use appropriate classroom language(E3)	406	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.4926	.56977	.325
I make comments(F1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3824	.58304	.340
I ask questions(F2)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.4510	.58444	.342
I answer questions(F3)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5098	.54290	.295
I response to things someone else says(F4)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.2157	.63675	.405
I clarify things someone else says(F5)	406	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.2069	.62187	.387
I use new vocabulary(F6)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3358	.55860	.312
I listen actively to the teacher(G1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.8676	.37375	.140
I listen actively to my classmates(G2)	407	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.5332	.57728	.333
I complete all of the peer-reviews(H1)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3627	.64689	.418
I respond to every question(H2)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3113	.56835	.323
I give specific examples(H3)	408	7.00	1.00	8.00	2.1814	.71244	.508
( I offer suggestionsH4)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.2451	.58543	.343
I use appropriate classroom language(H5)	408	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3995	.59869	.358
Total	408	66.00	12.00	78.00	63.3015	7.25051	52.570
Valid N (listwise)	393						

### ***Students' Class Participation (Total)***

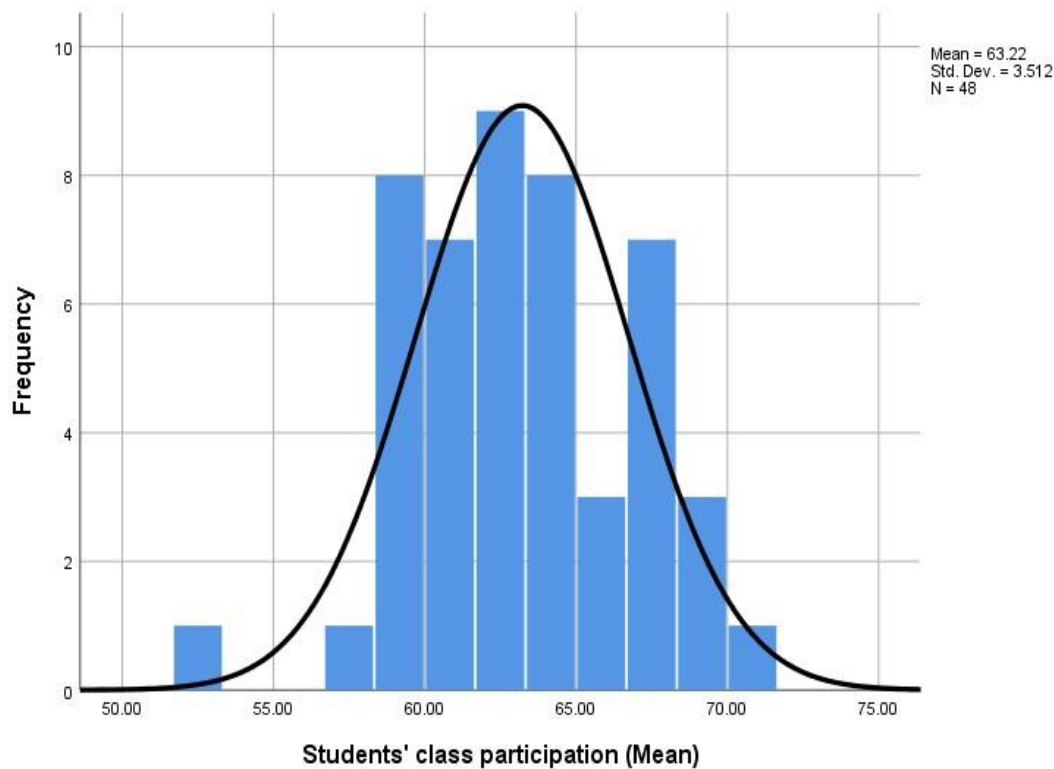
Among 48 teachers of the present investigation, the lowest score obtained on students' class participation (Total) was 158 and the highest score was 827 (Figure 1). Since the number of students varied among teachers, the mean analysis was taken as criteria.



**Figure 1.** Students' Class Participation (Total)

### ***Students' Class Participation (Mean)***

Among 48 teachers of the present investigation, the minimum score obtained on Students' class participation (Mean) was 52.67 and the maximum score was 70.33. Rather than the previous section (Total), this variable was used to analyze the data. The histogram is presented below:



**Figure 2.** Students' Class Participation (Mean)

***Teachers and the Frequency of their Students***

The number of students each teacher varied from 3 to 10 ones. The student number of each teacher has been shown in this table.

**Table 3.** Teachers and the Frequency of their Students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	10	2.5	2.5	25.00	10	2.5	2.5	50.3
	2.00	4	1.0	3.6	26.00	7	1.7	1.8	52.0
	3.00	10	2.5	6.1	27.00	10	2.5	2.5	54.6
	4.00	6	1.5	7.6	28.00	10	2.5	2.5	57.1
	5.00	7	1.7	9.4	29.00	10	2.5	2.5	59.6
	6.00	10	2.5	11.9	30.00	5	1.2	1.3	60.9
	7.00	4	1.0	12.9	31.00	10	2.5	2.5	63.5
	8.00	10	2.5	15.5	32.00	4	1.0	1.0	64.5
	9.00	10	2.5	18.0	33.00	10	2.5	2.5	67.0
	10.00	3	.7	18.8	34.00	6	1.5	1.5	68.5
	11.00	3	.7	19.5	35.00	8	2.0	2.0	70.6
	12.00	10	2.5	22.1	36.00	10	2.5	2.5	73.1
	13.00	10	2.5	24.6	37.00	10	2.5	2.5	75.6
	14.00	10	2.5	27.2	38.00	10	2.5	2.5	78.2
	15.00	10	2.5	29.7	39.00	10	2.5	2.5	80.7
	16.00	3	.7	30.5	40.00	3	.7	.8	81.5
	17.00	6	1.5	32.0	41.00	3	.7	.8	82.2
	18.00	10	2.5	34.5	42.00	10	2.5	2.5	84.8
	19.00	7	1.7	36.3	43.00	10	2.5	2.5	87.3
	20.00	10	2.5	38.8	44.00	10	2.5	2.5	89.8
	21.00	9	2.2	41.1	45.00	10	2.5	2.5	92.4



22.00	8	2.0	2.0	43.1	46.00	10	2.5	2.5	94.9
23.00	8	2.0	2.0	45.2	47.00	10	2.5	2.5	97.5
24.00	10	2.5	2.5	47.7	48.00	10	2.5	2.5	100.0

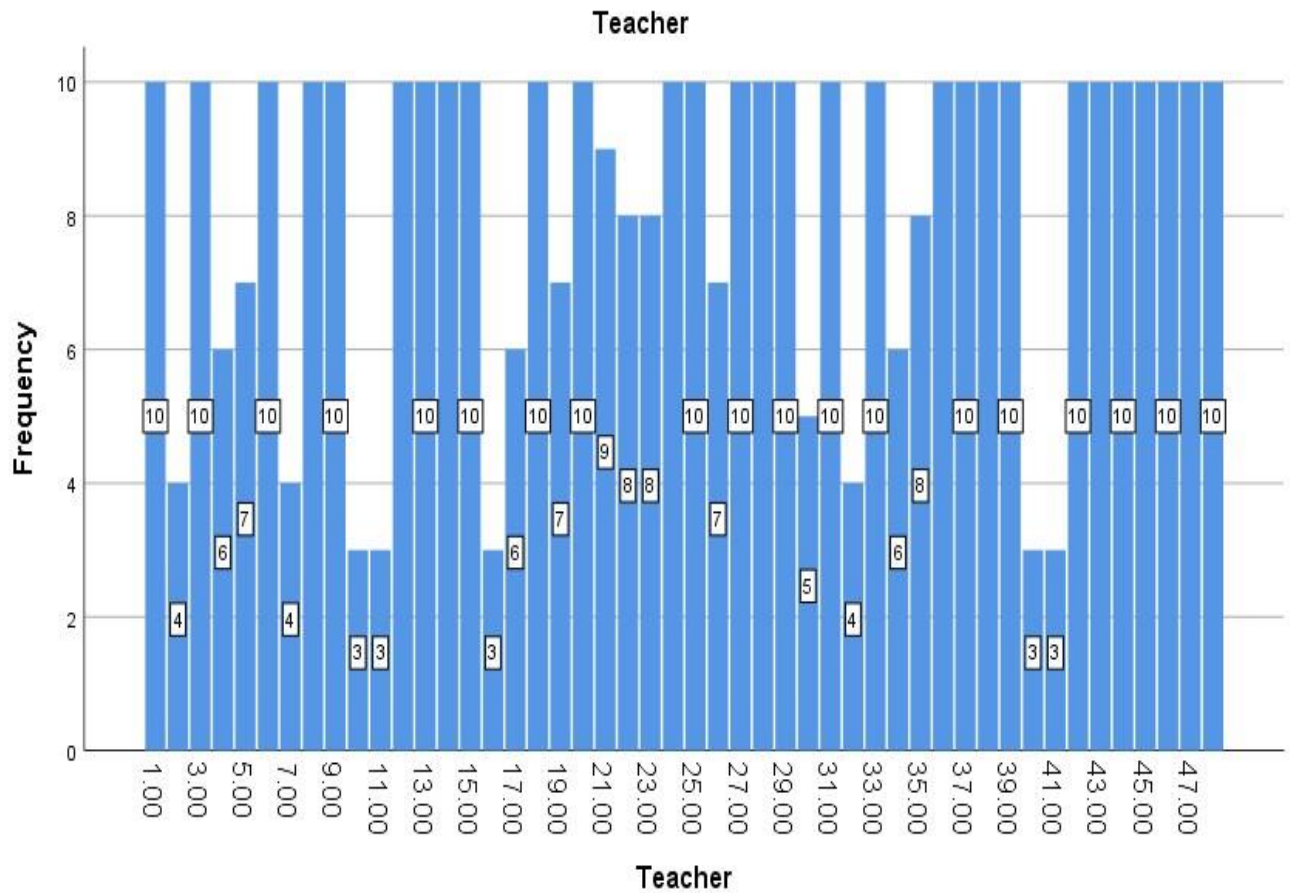


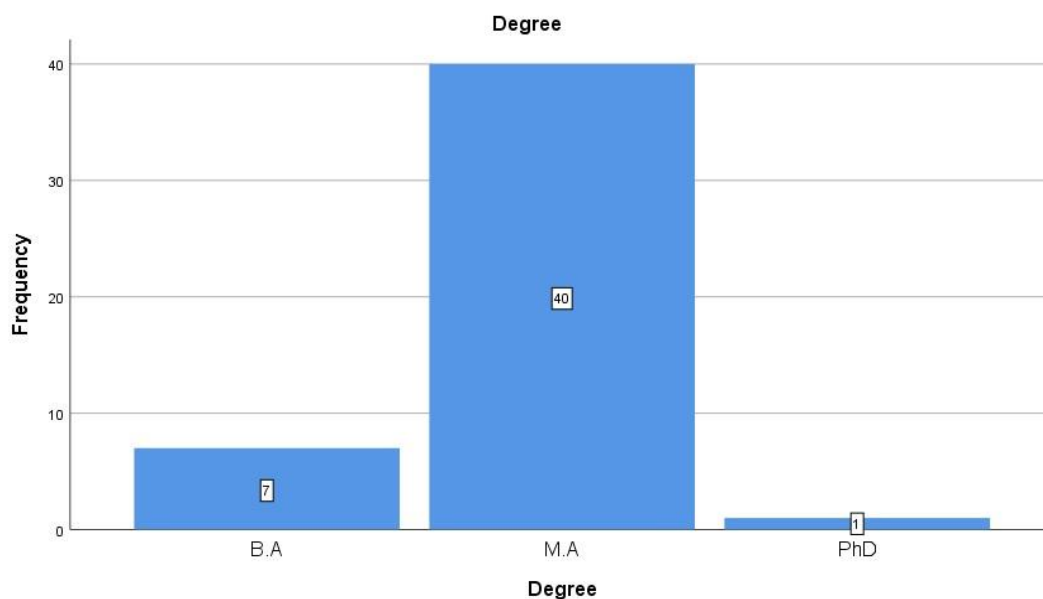
Figure 3. Teachers and the Frequency of their Students

**Teachers' Academic Degree**

Among the 48 teachers in this study, 7 (14.6 %) had a B.A., 40 (83.3) had an M.A., and one teacher (2.1 %) had a PhD degree (Table 4 and Figure 4). Among these teachers, 46 (95.8 %) majored in English and 2 teachers (4.2 %) majored in non-English fields of study.

Table 4. Teachers' Academic Degree

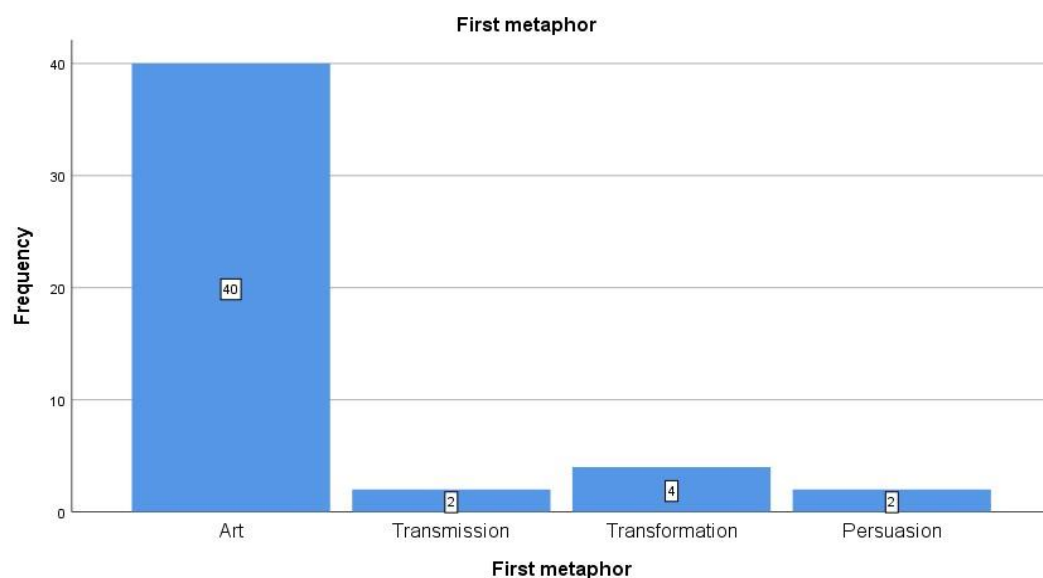
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	B.A	7	14.6	14.6
	M.A	40	83.3	97.9
	PhD	1	2.1	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0



**Figure 4.** Teachers' Academic Degree

**Table 5.** First metaphor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Art	40	83.3	83.3	83.3



**Figure 5.** Teachers' First Metaphor Preferences

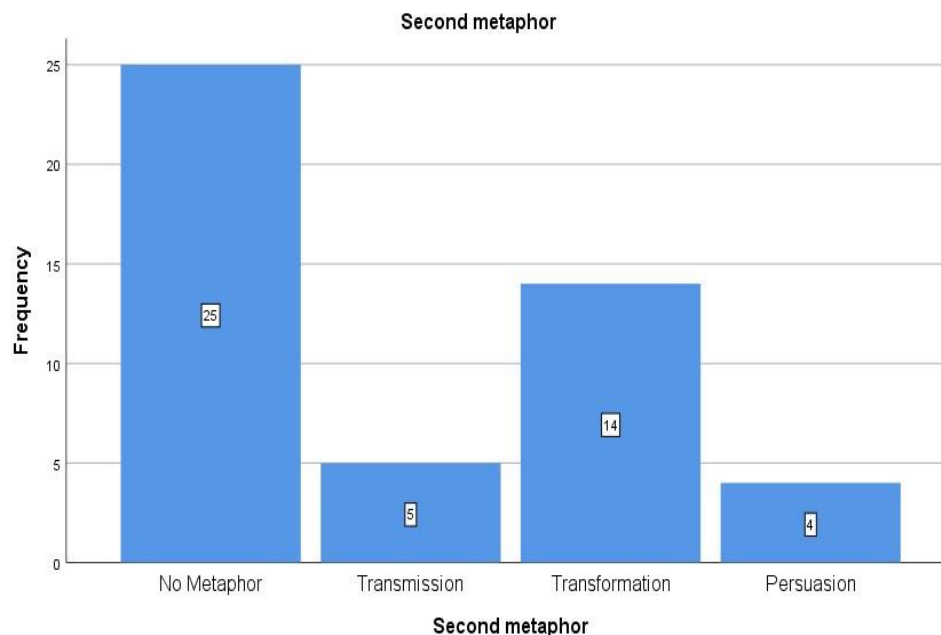
**Teachers' Second Metaphor Preferences**

The teachers' second metaphor preferences are shown in Table 6 and Figure 6. Overall, 25 teachers (52.1 %) chose no preference as the second metaphor, 14 (29.2 %) chose transformation, 5 (10.4 %) chose transmission and 4 (8.3 %) decided on persuasion.

**Table 6.** Second metaphor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Metaphor	25	52.1	52.1	52.1

Transmission	5	10.4	10.4	62.5
Transformation	14	29.2	29.2	91.7
Persuasion	4	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	



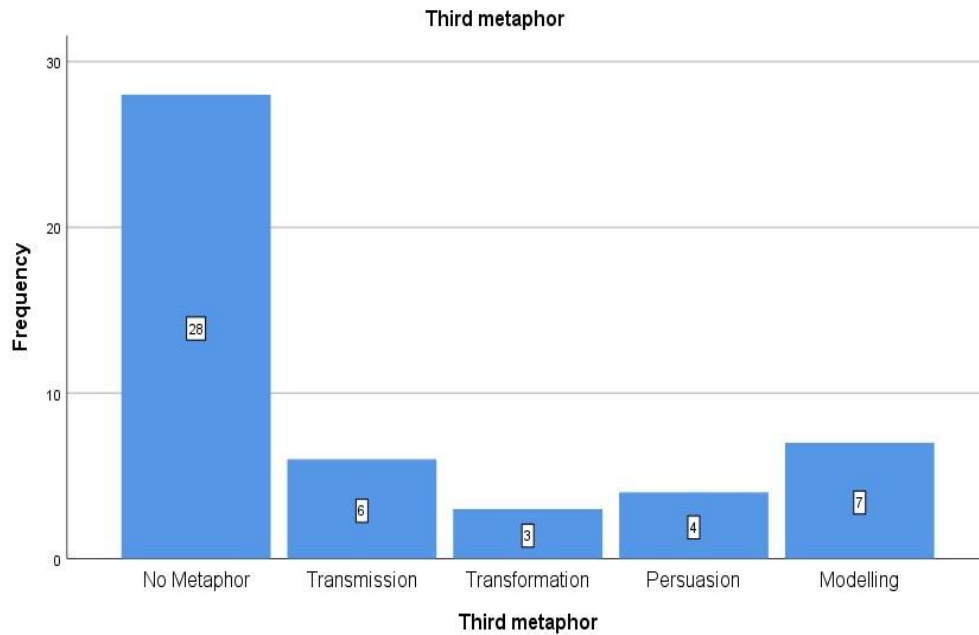
**Figure 6.** Teachers' Second Metaphor Preferences

### ***Teachers' Third Metaphor Preferences***

The teachers' third metaphor preferences are shown in Table 7 and Figure 7. Overall, 28 teachers (58.3 %) chose no preference as the third metaphor, 3 (6.3 %) chose transformation, 6 (12.5 %) chose transmission, 7 (14.6 %) selected modelling, and 4 (8.3 %) decided on persuasion.

**Table 7.** Third metaphor

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Metaphor	28	58.3	58.3	58.3
Transmission	6	12.5	12.5	70.8
Transformation	3	6.3	6.3	77.1
Persuasion	4	8.3	8.3	85.4
Modelling	7	14.6	14.6	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	



**Figure 7.** Teachers' Third Metaphor Preferences

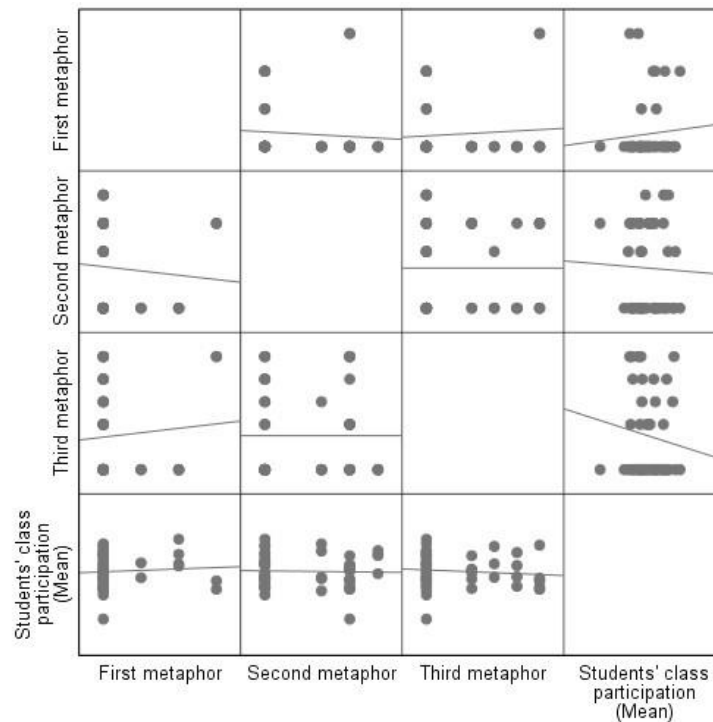
***Language Teachers' Beliefs and Language Learners' Participation***

In order to answer the third research question of the study regarding language teachers' beliefs in relationship with language learners' participation, three Pearson Correlations were launched.

**Table 8.** Language Teachers' Beliefs and Language Learners' Participation

		First metaphor	Second metaphor	Third metaphor	Students' class participation (Mean)
First metaphor	Pearson Correlation	1	-.079	.080	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.593	.587	.626
	N	48	48	48	48
Second metaphor	Pearson Correlation	-.079	1	.000	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.593		1.000	.837
	N	48	48	48	48
Third metaphor	Pearson Correlation	.080	.000	1	-.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.587	1.000		.439
	N	48	48	48	48
Students' class participation (Mean)	Pearson Correlation	.072	-.031	-.114	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.626	.837	.439	
	N	48	48	48	48

As the results indicate, there are not any statistically significant relationships among language teachers' beliefs (first, second, and third metaphor) and language learners' participation. The scatter diagram matrix is presented below:



**Figure 8.** Language Teachers' Beliefs and Language Learners' Participation

## DISCUSSION

Findings based on frequency analysis revealed that males and females had inclination towards choosing art. Males chose transformation more than females did for second metaphor but for third one, females preferred persuasion more than males did. This is a kind of contradiction in the current study with the study of TALIS (2009) in which findings revealed that females were less likely than male as direct transmitters of knowledge, whereas, in the current studies, only 6 males and females out of 48 teachers chose transmission as third metaphor.

Martinez et al. (2007) is in consistent with Akcay (2016) and TALIS (2009). They categorized the teachers' metaphor into three dimensions: empiricist, constructivist, and situative perspective. Findings showed that empiricist perspective was more common in learning and teaching, teachers as transmitters and students as passive learners. According to the classroom observation, it is in line with Aksoy (2015) that there are consistencies and inconsistencies in teachers' beliefs and their practice.

Based on Independent Samples of *t*-test analysis, in cases A2 and F5, females outperformed males while in cases of B1, C2, D1, D3, E2, and G2, males gained higher scores than females ; it means that according Ghasemi (2013), males are more active than females. In contrast with Rocca (2010) that displayed the major role of teachers in learners' participation, being active or passive ones, the current study did not view any relationship between teachers' beliefs and student's participation.

The results of the current study shed light on the importance of teachers' beliefs in language learning and teaching. Based on the results, there weren't any significant relationships between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learners' class participation.

The recent studies revealed the important role of teacher in students' outcomes in different fields but not in the field of teachers' pedagogical beliefs.

## CONCLUSION

Teacher belief is defined broadly as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught. According to literature review, many studies lies on teachers' beliefs and practice that there contains agreements and disagreements in correspondence of these two variables. However, few studies have been conducted in the area of students' outcomes. Since engaging the students in participation in a classroom is an important method of teaching, it provides the students opportunity to receive input from fellow students, to apply their knowledge and to enhance public speaking skills. In line with the significance of variables, teachers and students both benefit from the study. Knowing beliefs affects teachers' instructional behaviors and practices. Moreover, students can improve their speaking and become more active. The study opens a new window to researchers to carry out researches in this area and provide a more beneficial environment for teachers and students to prosper

Regarding the vast area of teachers' beliefs and its importance as well as learners' participation in class, it is highly recommended that carrying out a research bout teachers 'beliefs about learners 'participation and their practice will help you provide a connection between these two variables and can be of a help to learning and teaching.

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