Teacher Belief in a Focus Group: A Respecification Study

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This paper investigates teacher belief as a social practice in a focus group setting with three second language teachers by utilizing a discursive psychology (DP) approach (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 2005). By adopting an empirically based emic perspective (i.e., how the participants display their understandings through their own contributions), we aim to respecify individual psychological states as an embodied interactional activity and study what members achieve through their interaction, particularly in their disagreement and teasing sequences. The findings show how teacher belief is a socially co-constructed phenomenon that not only evolves through interaction but stands as a foundational concept upon which participants build and display their teacher competence within the focus group setting. We thereby provide a new methodological means of investigation and new methods to focus on when examining teacher belief, as well as to show the procedure of what members do in a teacher belief focus group session. We conclude by summarizing our findings and addressing some implications for further work on teacher belief.

**Key words:** teacher belief, focus group, conversation analysis, discursive psychology, ethnomethodological respecification, extensive reading

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher cognition researchers have focused their study on the psychological processes—also referred to as the mental lives of teachers’ classroom behaviors—in order to better understand the cognitive dimensions of teaching. Among many research areas

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within teacher cognition (e.g., teacher knowledge, teachers’ thought processes, and culture of teaching), teacher belief has been a widely researched topic since the 1980s, when Clark and Peterson (1986) highlighted beliefs as a key category of teacher thinking—a cognitive information processing approach that deals with teacher planning, judgments, and decision-making. However, most researchers so far have examined teacher cognition by identifying factors underlying teachers’ discourses, instead of taking discourse as its own topic (Hsu & Roth, 2012). They have not yet investigated teacher discourse as a topic even though it can provide a social account of what teachers do when they share their inner psychological world, and unpack how teachers deploy interactional resources to achieve teacher cognition. In this study, we strive to fill this gap in the existing body of knowledge by taking the ethnomethodological respecification approach (Garfinkel, 1967) and utilizing the discursive psychology (DP) approach (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 2005) to investigate teacher cognition as available in talk-in-interaction in a focus group setting. Specifically, we focus on teacher belief toward a particular reading approach (i.e., extensive reading, ER) based on a focus group interaction among three participants—all language teachers in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) setting.

Pajares (1992) noted the term belief was too broad for the purposes of research, and that it needs to be deconstructed into many different foci (e.g., beliefs about confidence to affect students’ performance, about the nature of knowledge, and about causes of teachers’ or students’ performance), in order to open up a range of topics for discussion. Thus, the focus of this study is on the teachers’ (a) professional beliefs (see Tschannen-Moran, Salloum, & Goddard, 2015 for more information) about the practicality of implementing ER-only class in an EAP setting and (b) instructional beliefs (see Barnes, Fives, & Dacey, 2015; Rubie-Davies, 2015) about the assessment of reading circles, which will be analyzed in the result section of this paper. In this study, we adapt Thompson’s (1992) definition of conception in defining beliefs as teachers’ overall perception and awareness of both contextual matters in implementing instruction and the purpose of assessment, and recognize that teachers possess beliefs about many different aspects related to teaching (e.g., knowledge, students, and instructions; see Pajares, 1992). By examining the teacher talk on ER in the focus group setting with a radical emic perspective (i.e., how the participants display their understandings through their own contributions), we attempt to show what members achieve in teacher discourse sessions and that teacher belief is by nature co-constructive discursive phenomena that are practiced by participants involved in interaction rather than a concrete psychological state that one carries around in their minds.

The structure of the paper is as follows: We begin by briefly reviewing the literature on

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1 For more information see Day and Bamford (1998).
2 A classroom activity in which students share and discuss books that they individually read.
teacher belief (with a focus on its relation with teacher practice in L2 settings) in the classical \textit{telemamentation myth} oriented approach (i.e., the transmission of ideas and intentions between minds; Coulter, 2005; Hauser, 2005) and some of their limited scopes, followed by a discussion of the DP approach. Then we outline the direction for analysis. The main body of the article investigates what focus group members do in a teacher belief focus group session. By investigating in-depth how a moderator and the three participants interact and share their belief toward ER usage in their classrooms through a focus group meeting, our aim is to show how teacher belief is constructed through the interaction as the participants’ practical orientation towards their own teacher belief. The concluding section discusses the implications for future research on teacher cognition and belief.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teacher Belief in the Classical \textit{Telemamentation Myth} Approach

Teacher belief studies have been focusing on examining the relationship between the teachers’ beliefs and their classroom behaviors, particularly because there is a general belief that teachers teach what they preach (see Borg, 2009, 2011; Phipps & Borg, 2007, 2009). In fact, studies in the field claim that teacher belief influence teachers’ behaviors in the classroom (see Borg, 2006; Cole, 2009; Min, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2007, 2009; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). For example, by adopting the teacher-researcher method and analyzing her own learning logs and reflection journal entries, Min (2013) reported that even though she changed her instructional beliefs about writing feedback throughout her teaching semester, her beliefs and practices were congruent at the beginning and end of the semester, arguing for a strong relationship between the two. In another study, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) examined Japanese teachers’ professional beliefs, knowledge, and practices in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach through interviews and surveys. They found that it was mostly the teachers’ own personal trial and error teaching experiences that influenced teachers’ professional beliefs and the efficacy of their use of CLT in their classrooms, as opposed to knowledge gained from teacher development programs or watching other teachers. The teachers’ classroom experiences revealed their general beliefs towards second language (L2) teaching and learning, and reflected their own classroom practices. As Borg (2006) noted, these studies tend to imply that teacher cognition seemed to play a pivotal role in teachers’ professional lives in general and their classroom behavior in particular. Teacher beliefs are propositions that teachers “consider to be true…have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change” (Borg, 2011, pp. 370-371). According to these views, teacher
beliefs are assumed to act as a basis for rationalizing what teachers do in their classrooms. There were also studies, however, reporting that the practice-belief relation did not hold true (e.g., Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Tsui, 2007). In a teacher identity study, for instance, Tsui (2007) examined one EFL teacher’s identity formation through a narrative inquiry. Drawing on Wenger’s (1998) social theory, Tsui showed complex relationships between the teacher’s membership, competence, and legitimacy of access to practice. These complex relations, in fact, revealed how the teacher was teaching in a way that he did not fully believe in or agree with. Similarly, Borg (2009) claimed that the practice-belief relationship is complex, in that teachers’ actions are not simply a direct result of their beliefs, and questioned whether this simplistic view represents the actual relationship between teacher beliefs and their classroom behaviors. In line with Borg’s concern, in their study, Phipps and Borg (2009) drew a distinction between teachers’ core beliefs (a generic set of beliefs about learning) and peripheral beliefs (a specific set of beliefs about language learning), and showed that teachers’ beliefs affect their instructional choices in a complex manner. Through longitudinal semi-interviews with the teachers for 18 months, they found that their generic set of beliefs about learning (i.e., practical knowledge—e.g., teacher-class interaction promotes learners to respond well), rather than specific set of beliefs (i.e., propositional knowledge; e.g., group work promotes speaking), were the key factor shaping the participants’ instructional decisions.

2.2. Limitations in Classical Teacher Belief Studies

The aforementioned literature on teacher cognition makes claims regarding both the importance of investigating and understanding teacher belief (as a rationale for classroom practices), and the complexity of both the cognitive notion of educational beliefs and the relationships between teacher beliefs and practices. However, studies in the field so far have not paid particular attention on the teachers’ ways of talking or what they achieve through their ways of talking. Instead, focus has been merely on what they said (i.e., the contents; cf. Furukawa, 2010; Kasper & Prior, 2015; Prior, 2011; Talmy, 2010). As noted by Kasper and Prior (2015), however, “Whether we are primarily interested in the content … or in the interactional conditions and methods of their production, there is no way to get at the former without consideration of the latter” (p. 230). Teacher belief in talk needs to be perceived through the ways they are told. Many of the researchers in the field so far often overlooked the fact that participants’ voices are situationally contingent and discursively co-constructed (see Talmy, 2010) and transformed their findings directly into psychological categories as stable entities in people’s minds.

Moreover, teacher belief studies have not yet examined teacher discourse by taking discourse as its own topic, even though it can provide rich additional insights of how
teachers construct their inner psychological world as a social practice and what they accomplish through the interaction (Hsu & Roth, 2012). Thus, to show how teacher belief is locally accomplished in the setting and how teacher belief can be studied with the consideration of interactional conditions and members’ methods of their production, we utilize the DP approach in this study. In the following section, we introduce DP as a means of investigating teacher cognition as it is available in interaction.

### 2.3. Teacher Belief: A Discursive Psychology Perspective

DP, by taking a post-cognitive psychology approach, is grounded in the direct study of people’s practices, recognizing psychological language and mental practices as structured for action and interaction (Edwards 1997; Edwards & Potter 1992, 2005; Potter, 2010, 2013). The core of this approach is to examine how people use psychological terms in their daily lives and is interested in seeing how “people assemble socially shared semiotic resources in the discursive (co-) construction of mind and their social world” (Kasper, 2009, p. 14). In other words, DP takes an approach towards mentalistic claims as performative (i.e., what a participant does) and examines how psychological themes are handled and managed through action in situ. In this way, the psychological themes become directly observable as actions performed through language, which in turn has important methodological consequences. DP requires a commitment to an empirically grounded analysis set in the sequence and structure of the data.

By drawing on the analytic power of conversation analysis (CA), the focus of DP is not on language itself as an abstract entity but on rhetorical or argumentative organization of talk (Potter, 2010). Together, linguistic utterances (e.g., lexical choices, grammar, and rhetorical constructions) and other semiotic resources (e.g., pauses, hesitations, gaze, and gesture) allow interlocutors to organize their talk to construct particular situated realities in the context of local interaction.

Utilizing the DP perspective, we analyze discursive practices of teacher discourse to first examine how teachers’ beliefs are accomplished in that talk. In other words, we explore how teacher belief is co-constructed through descriptions of talk-in-actions from an emic perspective. Thereby, we aim to respecify the concept of teacher belief and provide evidence that teacher belief is not a stable concept within our heads but rather that it is an indexical property of talk that is co-constructed by the participants in the setting through interaction. Our second goal of this study is to provide additional insights of the ways teachers work towards constructing their teacher belief by investigating what they achieve through their focus group interaction.
3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

This one-shot focus group was semi-structured and went on for about 100 minutes. The three participants were chosen on the basis of (a) the teachers’ role as reading instructors in an EAP context and (b) their familiarity with the ER approach. All participants are male, friends with each other, and had previous experiences teaching academic reading in EAP settings. Yan (pseudonym), an American in his late 20’s, had taught English for five years, within which he had used the ER approach for three years at the time of focus group. Tim (pseudonym), a Japanese-American in his early 30’s, on the other hand, had seven years of teaching English and two years with ER, while Bak (pseudonym), a Nepalese in his middle 30’s, had seven years of teaching with four years of experience in implementing ER.

3.2. Data

The 100 minutes of focus group on ER was audio and video recorded, and we transcribed it by adapting the standard Jeffersonian conversation analysis conventions (Jefferson, 2004) to represent the verbal aspect, and a system inspired by Burch (2014) that integrates both textual description and photographic images to represent details of the participants’ nonverbal behavior (see Appendix A). Of the 100 minutes, one minute (3:11-4:11), in which the participants talked about their professional beliefs towards ER-only class in an academic setting (Excerpt 1), and 52 seconds (19:47-20:39), in which two participants tease each other for their distinct instructional beliefs about student monitoring (Excerpt 2), of the data has been chosen and used for the analysis. The two excerpts were selected, as they provide fair amounts of teacher belief interaction and represent information and opinion negotiations among the participants that are distinct (explicit disagreement vs. disagreement through teasing sequences) and frequently found in this focus group data. Focus group members often assess and disagree with each other in order to a claim their epistemic status and to assert their teacher belief. In order to deeply understand the discursive construction of the participants’ teacher belief, investigation on their uses of disagreements in situ is necessary. After transcribing the data, the transcripts were read repeatedly and compared with the recordings, and then examined for instances of displays of beliefs towards ER usage accomplished in interaction, structural, sequential, and rhetorical organization, and co-construction.

We prepared guided questions (Appendix B) for the focus group, delivered in a casual manner in the meeting. The questions were only used to facilitate the talk. We emphasized that (a) variety is desirable, (b) it is acceptable to disagree with other group members, and
(c) they have no personal stake in the product following Puchta and Potter’s (2004) advice on conducting a focus group.

4. RESULTS

In this section, we provide two sample analyses of how teacher belief on extensive reading is constructed through focus group interaction, specifically by focusing on what members achieve in a teacher belief focus group session through two different interactional sequences: (a) disagreement, and (b) teasing sequences.

4.1. Professional Beliefs Through Explicit (Dis)-Agreement Sequence

The first set of data shows how participants construct their individual teacher belief through an explicit disagreement sequence within the interaction. Initiated by the moderator’s question, “What are your thoughts about ER usage in your classes?” preceding this excerpt, this interaction sheds light on how a certain interaction allows for the teachers’ individual teacher belief to surface.

This conversation was held towards the beginning of the meeting, following the moderator’s question as stated in the previous paragraph. The excerpts are situated in a series of sequences in which participants share their professional beliefs toward an ER-only class. Thus, the issue of the ER-only class becomes a focus for the upcoming interaction.

(1) Excerpt 1-1: Announcement of Yan’s professional belief on ER usage

| 01 | Yan:  | +GZ↓ +GZ at T (1.0), GZ M, then down
| 02 |      | +ah:: +(3.1) +Face M, GZ Rup +GZ at M
| 03 | Tim:  | +nods, GZ on the cup while pouring water
| 04 | MOD:  | +nods, GZ at Y
| 05 | MOD:  | °part of a class° (2.5)
| 06 | MOD:  | °part of a class°
| 06 | Yan:  | +slightly nods +GZ↓ +°part of it yeah°+
In line 1, with his search process, Yan takes turn and portrays his stance on ER by explicitly stating that [ER is] good as a part of a class in line 2. This shows Yan’s alignment towards the moderator’s agenda, as he is responding (SPP) to the moderator’s question (FPP). On the one hand, Yan’s use of good as an evaluation of ER should not be taken as it is when accompanied with a stress on a mitigation marker part that emphasizes the range of what good applies to. In here, also considering the falling intonation contour in the end of his turn, Yan is strongly constructing his professional belief towards ER being good as ‘only’ part of a class. On the other hand, Yan locates his argument in his personal opinion rather than framing it as general truth (Scheibman, 2007), by reflexively constructing himself as the owner of the argument with the epistemic stance marker (Kärkkäinen, 2003) I think and the active voice syntax with I, which formulates it as a subject and agent of an utterance. I think here is not a particularly good stake inoculator because it expressly frames what comes next as Y’s personal opinion rather than as a fact. In so doing, Yan downscales the standard of evidence that he can be held to. While Tim acknowledges Yan’s remark by nodding immediately, thereby aligning with Yan, the moderator quietly seeks for confirmation in line 5, which Yan confirms in line 6. After three seconds of silence and mutual gaze between the moderator and Yan (line 7), the moderator attempts to expand the confirmation sequence starting in line 8 with the modification in line 6 of what Yan said in line 2 to offer Yan a chance to elaborate on his response (cf. Schegloff, 2007). However, the moderator’s attempt to seek more information from Yan is rejected with Yan’s use of the sequence closing negative unmitigated marker no (line 9). So far, we have seen Yan’s strong but downscaled
professional belief that ER should not be used for an entire class period\(^3\), as well as other participants’ lay low reaction to it.

(2) Excerpt 1-2: Tim’s opposing professional belief on ER-only class

12 Yan: \(+GZ\ at\ M\)  
   \(+it’s\ at\ part\ of\)  
   \[(xxx)\]

13 Tim: \(+smiles\)  
   \(+GZ\ at\ Y,\ +\ GZ\ at\ M\)  
   \+[£ah::: ]\ +[I\ disagree£.]

14 Tim: \(+GZ\ at\ B\)  
   \(+GZ\ at\ Y\)

\[heh\ heh\ heh\ heh\ heh\ +heh\]

Yan: \(+smiles\ with\ mouth\ but\ not\ with\ eyes,\ LH\ scratching\ ears\ (awkward\ smile)\)

15 MOD: \(+GZ\ at\ T\)

\[heh\ heh\ heh\ heh\ heh\]

16 Tim: \(+GZ\ up\ with\ smile\)  
   \(+GZ\ at\ Y,\ no\ smile\)  
   \+[£I\ think\ that£(0.9)it\ +COULD\ be(.it\ you\ just\]

17 \(+GZ\ at\ M\)  
   \(+GZ\ away\)

\[\text{+the context +that it would work there +there}\]

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\(^3\) What Yan said in line 13 could be ambiguous in that it could either be interpreted as *for an entire class period* or *for the entire course* (such as semester). However, the teachers do not treat Yan’s use of *class* as ambiguous, as it is unconventional to have ER for an entire course.
18  +GZ at M, no smile

are not +are not common(.)

19  MOD: +nods

Yan: +rolls eyes, then GZ up, eyebrows furrowed

20  Tim: +slightly nods

°those sort of contexts +are not common.°

(1.0)

21  Yan: +GZ at M

+no↑t(.) in the academic [reading]

22  Tim: +shakes head +GZ at M

+[oh no]no +certainly it’s not

Unlike in (1), excerpt (2) shows how Tim portrays his belief not only through the display of professional knowledge, but also through overtly disagreeing with Yan’s remarks. In line 12, after the 1.9 second pause, Yan finally uptakes the moderator’s offer to elaborate his response and attempts to do so. However, in line 13, Tim interrupts Yan, by overlapping and gazing at Yan, and takes the floor with a filled pause and smile voice £ah:::. According to Sacks (1987), such filled pauses are often used in disagreement in order to push back the disagreeing response in the turn. Here we see how Tim uses a humor construction to mitigate the following explicit disagreement. By smiling before interrupting, in line 13, Tim projects that something ‘funny’ will emerge. The ‘funny’ portion is Tim’s explicit disagreement toward or challenge to Yan’s opinion in line 2. In the context of the argument, the normative reaction to such an explicit display of disagreement is not reciprocated by laughs and smiles unless it is considered as humor
understood in the community. Apparently, the laughs and smiles in lines 14 and 15 do not seem to portray any misalignments with Tim’s strong disagreement remarks, nor do they create an awkward moment, except for Yan (considering his awkward smile in line 14). Though the punchline in line 13 created a shared laughter moment (or at least a smile) moment, Tim’s humorously delivered disagreement does seem to place Yan, at least slightly, in an awkward position (cf. Edwards, 2005). This is not an unusual reaction, considering their epistemic status (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b) as teachers and ER practitioners in the local context of a focus group. Though they are friends with each other, they were gathered as teachers and ER practitioners in the focus group context.

Although Tim laughs and smile-voices in lines 14 through 16, thereby showcasing him being in the humor, Tim shows his change of attitudinal stance after the pause (0.9) in line 16 by emphasizing COULD while slowly loosing the smile (compare the pictures above in lines 16 and 18) and gazing at Yan, thereby portraying him in a serious talk. The epistemic stance marker I think is used as a starting-point function and, as noted by Kärkkäinen (2003), it projects—along with the explicit disagreement in line 13—the upcoming turn to convey a different perspective than what is said by Yan in the prior turn. Tim makes his firm stance that an ER-only class could be good, and disagrees with Yan by stressing COULD while gazing at him. Tim’s opposition stance taking not only manifests his knowledge that there could be contexts where an ER-only class could be beneficial, but also concurrently challenges Yan’s, the other ER practitioner, epistemic status. Thus, Tim is attending to the danger of being confronted. However, Tim closes his turn by repairing while limiting the scope of the possibility of an ER-only class being beneficial for certain context in lines 17 to 18: the context that it would work there there are not are not common and in line 20 °those sort of contexts are not common°; he makes a major retreat from his earlier categorical disagreement, thereby reducing the possibility of being confronted at and held accountable for his position (cf. Wilkinson, 2011).

In the aftermath of Tim’s rejection of Yan’s stance on ER, we see an interesting trajectory of response by Yan. After the display of the dismissive-stance-taking face (rolls eyes, then GZ up, eyebrows furrowed) in line 19, Yan takes the floor with a high pitch stressed sound, thereby emphasizing, negative marker not (22). By doing so, sequentially, he seems to be defending his professional belief in the practicality of an ER-only class against the rejection of it. However, the negative marker here limits the range of places where an ER-only class could be beneficial; it negates the academic reading context as a possible place for an ER-only class being beneficial. Therefore, Yan’s act could also be viewed as partial agreement but in a disaffiliating manner towards Tim: Yan confirms

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4 Tim and Yan are good friends who joke and tease around often, a relationship of which the moderator is also aware of.
Tim’s statement (20) by more specifically elaborating further on what Tim has said, by narrowing the scope of the context within which ER could be implemented, **not in the academic reading** (22). In overlap, Tim agrees with Yan’s form of specification, an interactional shape in which Tim’s initial argument evolves to constitute the suggestions made by his co-participant within the interaction. In other words, while his initial opinion held the strong view that ER was possible as a whole class activity in any context, we are able to detect through the interaction that his opinions evolve, contingent on the socially constructed interaction. By displaying the participants’ interactionally accomplished disagreements and agreements with each other, the above CA analysis reveals that their professional beliefs are not in a static form or independent of the ongoing interaction, but rather are interactionally accomplished within a dynamic arrangement. Moreover, it is apparent from the data that the individual teacher’s belief evolves through the result of the ongoing interaction.

In other words, this analysis indicates that Tim is not simply disagreeing or agreeing with Yan’s opinion as a co-teacher with similar experiences. Rather, he is concurrently making a membership joke (13-16) while also challenging Yan’s epistemic status (16-20), thus showing the proximity of their relationship while adhering to his competence as an ER user at the same time.

(3) Excerpt 1-3: Yan’s accounting practice

24 Bak: +slightly nods +GZ at Y, LHIF points to Y  
   +yeah (.) +yeah that brings it to academic (xxx)
25 Yan: +GZ at B +GZ away  
   +yeah yeah +academic reading.
26 Bak: +GZ away, down  
   +ah
27 Yan: +GZ at M  
   +Tim GZ at Y  
   +you wouldn’t +have +ER only class.
28 MOD: +nods, GZ at Y  
   +°mm°
29 Bak: +nods, GZ↓  
   +yeap
30 Yan: +shifting GZ↓ at the food and at M  
   +and you might (0.9) want to (1.4) even if it were  
   useful (.) to do that completely >it would be<  
   (1.0) impossible politically
Tim’s acceptance of Yan’s elaboration in line 23 closes the sequence. However, Bak’s acknowledgment of the change of frame from general ER to an academic setting in line 24 is further pursued and topicalized by Yan in the following turn. In line 27, in particular, Yan further self-assesses ER usage in an academic setting with would-based claims (cf. Edwards, 2006) in the declarative statement you wouldn’t. According to Edwards (2006), the semantics of would lend itself to “characterological formulations of persons [or institutions] – their tendencies, dispositions, moral nature, desires and intentions” (p. 498). Therefore, with the shift of the agent from I to you, as anyone in this situation, Yan is characterizing and implying that you as institutions or teachers in general do not have desire or intentions in implementing ER-only classes in an academic settings, thereby portraying his firm stance that an ER-only class in an academic setting is not desired.

As assessments in everyday talk normatively evoke second assessments (Pomerantz, 1984), Bak not only shows his affiliation and agreement towards Yan, but also claims his epistemic status as an ER practitioner in the focus group (see Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011) in line 29 with the stressed yeah while nodding. At the same time, however, instead of providing a second assessment like Bak, Tim disaffiliates by holding back his response; he neither makes any remark nor nods. In lines 30 to 32, Yan self-repairs to mitigate his strong proposal in line 27. Yan does it by opening the possibility that an ER-only class maybe desired by other teachers and useful for the students, but continues to make a firm stance that it may not be possible to implement it in an academic setting. By referencing you in line 30, which differs from the generic you in 27, he differentiates himself from the other teachers who might desire to have an ER-only class. Along with what he said in line 27, line 30 shows that he does not desire to have an ER-only class in an academic context. It should be noted that though Tim does not provide any second assessment in response to line 27, he shows his affiliation and agreement by saying yeah while nodding in line 34 in
response to Yan’s comment (30-32). Moreover, he again shows affiliation and agreement towards Yan while establishing his epistemic status as an ER expert by evaluating Yan’s reaffirmation in lines 35 to 36 with nodding and saying "yeap" in line 39. This implies that Tim is agreeing with Yan in the sense that an ER-only class may not be possible in an academic setting, but not in the sense that it is not desired by other teachers.

In excerpt (3), participants accomplished the following teacher belief through their interaction: Bak revealed his implicit negative professional belief towards an ER-only class in an academic setting (29); Yan showed his firm stance that an ER-only class is not desired but may or may not be desired by other teachers (27-32), and Tim displayed his affiliation toward Yan that an ER-only class in an academic setting may not be possible, but not in the sense that it is not desired by other teachers (27-32, 35-39). Furthermore, as specified in the analyses, the participants displayed various interactional accomplishments pertaining to the social activity in progress (e.g., reformulation of aforementioned opinions contingent on the interaction), allowing a more in-depth insight into their individual teacher beliefs. Thus, they established their teacher belief by participating in the focus group interaction in situ, providing further evidence that teacher belief is an occasional and co-constructed interactional phenomenon. Next, moving beyond focusing on the explicit (dis)agreement sequence, excerpts in the following section focuses on the teachers’ instructional beliefs through a teasing sequence.

4.2. Instructional Beliefs Through Teasing Sequence

In the analysis of the following data excerpts, we examine another type of interactional sequence to see how participants orient toward the same topic from each of their different perspectives. Moreover, by examining the specific construct of the interaction—the teasing sequence—we examine how the participants make use of their individual teaching experience as well as their relationship to one another as teachers with similar but different experience in the process of providing responses to the moderator’s question.

The following conversation took place during the end of Tim’s talk on how the monitoring system works in his reading circle activity, which is his underlying belief toward the assessment of the activity. The focus on the following excerpts is when Yan takes the floor (in line 7) by teasing Tim right after Tim finishes his turn responding to Bak.

(4) Excerpt 2-1: Teasing to disagree Tim’s instructional belief

01 Tim: +GZ to Y +frowning face +and you know(+) obviously that doesn’t make that
02 +GZ at B
person feel good↓, they might try of, there’s:

(0.9) any number of things that can happen, but I’m saying (0.6) generally that can help to

keep things in check where the teacher cannot

walk around all the time, yeah,

so you also use an informant system.

(2.0)

where you’re getting everybody to spy on each other

other wow this is just very different thing

Tim:

+GZ shift to

+oh:

Yan:

smiling

I’m kidding

+Tim smile, head↑↓ then chopstick down noise, GZ to Y

+heh heh heh heh

Yan:

GZ at T

smiling

Tim smiles and GZ forward

but I’m not

heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh

Instead of aligning to Tim’s agreement seeking token yeah with a rising tone in line 6, Yan, in line 7, takes the floor by making a remark about how he understood what Tim said
with the upshot formulation so (cf. Heritage & Watson, 1979). In drawing out a specific implication of what Tim has said, Yan reformulates this as a confirmation request by making a declarative statement you also use an informant system with a falling intonation contour directing to Tim with the gaze, which initiates the teasing sequence (i.e., an ‘ambiguous’ playful provocation against someone, cf. Drew, 1987; Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001). The following gap (2.0) in line 8 is adumbrating trouble (Schegloff, 1979), indicating Tim’s recognition of the non-typicality of Yan’s question in line 7. Considering Tim’s gaze at Yan in line 7, which shows that Tim has been following what Yan has said, the delay marks a problem with Yan’s question. Orienting to Tim’s no immediate uptake or the intersubjectivity, Yan self-repairs what he meant in line 7 in line 9 and 10. He does it with mocking embodiments such as a smile while shaking his head with the addition of verbal mocking, stressed wow, in line 10, thereby highlighting the act of teasing that was initiated in line 7 earlier. This act leads Tim to uptake what Yan is doing (i.e., teasing) with a ‘change-of-state’ token oh (Heritage, 1984) in line 11. By categorizing Tim’s belief about assessment in a reading circle activity as an informant system and Tim as the person who has students to spy on each other, Yan not only categorizes Tim as a teacher who distrusts his own students and creates competition among the students, but also disagrees with Tim, in an affiliative manner. The teasing here displays the complexity within Yan’s role in the focus group; he is not only doing being an ER practitioner who disagrees with Tim’s belief, but also is doing being a teasing friend at the same time in an affiliative manner. We see here how a feeling of solidity while displaying expertise in the approach has been created through a teasing sequence in the local context of a focus group (cf. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Eisenberg, 1986; Hay, 1995).

In line 12, both the moderator and Yan laugh while gazing at Tim to mitigate what Yan has said before by trying to create teasing as humor (cf. Glenn & Holt, 2013). The invitation to laugh is not taken up in the following turn by Tim, and Yan tries another strategy, an explicit indication of a joke, by explicitly saying I’m kidding with a smile in line 13. Tim accepts the joke with a slight headshake and a smile in line 14 while suddenly putting down the chopstick to make a noise. This overtly noticeable act of putting down a chopstick is a pre-announcement (Schegloff, 2007) of his upcoming joke (see Excerpt 2-2, line 19). However, between Tim’s pre-announcement (line 14) and his first pair announcement (lines 19 to 20), Yan shows another form of proximity in their relationship by trying making a joke with his punchline but I’m not in line 16, which is accepted by the moderator in line 17 but not by Tim. Tim smiles briefly but does not join in the shared laughter moment. In brief, in Excerpt 2-1 we see not only how Yan uses his teasing humor to disagree with Tim’s instructional belief in student monitoring in an affiliative manner, thereby indirectly displaying his opinion of what he thinks of Tim’s previously mentioned methods, but also how he uses laughter invitation to mitigate his posture towards Tim (cf.
Mullany, 2004). Here we see how Yan is able to start formulating his own opinion through initial disalignment with Tim.

(5) Excerpt 2-2: Counter-teasing to disagree Yan’s instructional belief

18 Y,M: +laughs +Tim BH forward +heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh

19 Tim: +GZ at Y-------------------------------------
+i(h)t’s i(h)ts’ better than:: () running a
+looks away with smile and GZ↓
+BH forward, palm up
+reading class +without measuring +anything at all?

20 Bak: +GZ at T and away +heh heh heh

21 Yan: GZ↓
=heh heh heh

(1.5)

22 Tim: +GZ↑ and slight smile +RH forward, shakes↑↓
+>it’s +be(h)tter than a reading class< where the
+GZ at B
+goal is to () check if they +re:ad continue to
+GZ at Y and M
+read after class, () and +never checking if they
+actually do that °or not°

28 MOD: ((out of the video))
+Yan GZ at T +°um°

29 Tim: +GZ at Y with smile and eyebrows↑
+(challenging with a humor face))
+()
Instead of accepting the laughter invitation, thereby creating a shared laughter moment, Tim evaluates his class and himself in lines 19 to 20 by comparing it with a class in which a teacher does not measure anything at all. The laughter within the talk in line 19 with a smile shows that he is initiating teasing humor. Tim reuses and operates on a previous action that Yan did, and in this way generates interactional density (Goodwin, 2013) while disagreeing with Yan. In line 30, I interviewed them, Yan provides an account, defending himself as a competent teacher, which he considers to be contested through Tim’s reformulation (lines 24 to 27) of what he said in lines 19 to 20.

By closely examining the interaction, we see how Tim and Yan use the discursive practice of teasing to construct and negotiate their identities (cf. Schnurr, 2009). This categorization is again revealed in lines 24 to 27 by insinuating that Yan does not check whether his class goal of ER is realized by the students. Tim delivers his disagreement utterance in an affiliative manner by doing “challenging with a humor face” in line 29. However, Yan does not align with Tim, and instead provides an alternative monitoring method that he conducted in his own class: I interviewed them [students] in line 30, in reaction to Yan’s provision of an alternative method, which counters Tim’s accusations of Yan’s lack of evaluation. By providing student interviews as his particular method of evaluating students within ER context, Yan takes a different stance than his previously joking manner. He situates himself as a serious teacher despite the different belief and approach he may have from his co-participants. In other words, in spite of Yan’s continuous teasing manner in his comments on Tim’s method of student evaluation, he is able to provide an account in response to Tim’s accusation of “being a teacher that does not measure anything at all” (line 20). Thus, through the interaction—whether conducted in a serious or joking manner—the participants show themselves as competent interactants as well as competent and professional teachers with their own pedagogical beliefs and methods, which surface through the various interactional sequences.

In (5), we saw how Tim constructs his argument against Yan while also aligning to the humor stance initiated by Yan. Aligning to Yan’s teasing stance in (4), Tim uses teasing humor to disagree with Yan’s accusative reformulation of his (Tim’s) monitoring methods.
These extracts show how disagreements, particularly the discursive practices of teasing, can not only function as both face threatening (antagonism) and face saving (bonding) acts (cf. Drew, 1987), but also allow participants to accomplish social actions coherent with the ongoing interaction, which in this case is to construct the participant’s individual teacher belief and their teacher competence. In addition, by comparing his informant system to Yan’s no measuring system, Tim goes beyond simply disagreeing; he accomplishes a hierarchy in which his instructional belief is better than Yan’s in regard to the monitoring system. In other words, this study provides descriptions of how (i.e., on what grounds) teacher belief and teacher competence are accomplished by the participants in terms of hierarchy and categorical work with category relevant propositions. This also shows how teacher belief should not be understood as something that is located in the privacy of the individual mind, but rather is to be seen as contingently ongoing accomplishments or as cognition that is “socially distributed between participants through their publicly displayed interactional conduct” (Kasper, 2006, p. 84). By closely analyzing the interaction between the participants line by line, we were able to provide empirical evidence for this argument.

Unlike excerpts (1) to (3) in which participants reflect on their own professional beliefs on ER through explicit disagreements, here in excerpt (4) and (5) participants’ instructional beliefs are documented by other members through being involved in teasing. By either means, however, the participants make their beliefs visible through performance and formulations, drawing on such semiotic resources as embodied action, prosody, laughter, lexical and grammatical selections, and represented talk. These discursive practices enabled participants to represent the social and the psychological context of their talk as matters that concern them the most. This was evident from the data showing that by constantly shifting or maintaining their own stances, the focus group members co-constructed their complex and dynamic moment-to-moment beliefs towards the feasibility of an ER-only class in academic classroom contexts as well as student monitoring in reading circle activities. These actions in the chain of accountability can be seen as evolving means of constituting and maintaining their own identities as ER practitioners.

5. CONCLUSION

The micro-level analysis of data in this study allowed us to understand the complex and dynamic nature of teacher belief as enacted in focus group interactions. This study showed how teacher belief is realized as situational accomplishments that participants contingently make through accounts, disagreements, and teasing while pursuing institutional activity at hand. We saw how members accomplished diverse activity-related social actions, such as how they evolve their beliefs (see excerpts 1 to 3) and construct their teacher competence...
(see excerpts 4 and 5), within the focus group interaction. More specifically, we saw how Yan and Tim’s construction of professional beliefs on ER-only classes change from general to specific through a disagreement sequence (e.g., For Yan, from not possible to not possible in an academic context; For Tim, from not common but possible to not possible in an academic context). We also discovered that the focus group members achieve their teacher belief and teacher competence by teasing about their institutional beliefs. We saw how Yan disagrees with Tim’s institutional belief on monitoring system for a reading circle through teasing humor, thereby constructing Yan’s oppositional stance on Tim’s belief. Then Tim also counterattacks on Yan’s institutional belief in his method of assessing students’ reading circle performance by formulating it as a no measuring system in a teasing manner, thereby also constructing his oppositional position on Yan’s belief. Through their accounts in constructing their oppositions, they also built and displayed teacher competence.

By attending to and describing the organizational details of how account and disagreement practices occur during focus group, DP provides new perspectives on teacher belief (i.e., teacher belief is something that members accomplish in situ and that teacher belief can be studied by examining how members disagree and tease each other) and contribute to the fields of psychology, education and applied linguistics. Unlike what one can find from quantitative or content analysis, each of these actions was treated as sequentially implicative in its own right (Wilkinson, 2011), thereby not leaving out those rich semiotic resources and interactional practices in interpreting the data. Despite the potential usefulness of DP for teacher cognition/belief research in dealing with procedural foundations for these activities, there has been very little application of Edward and Potter’s work in this area, particularly in EFL and ESL settings (see Ahn, 2015; Park, 2015).

As noted by Potter (2013), “CA has developed [in a way that] it can be understood as an approach which provides an illuminating, systematic, and progressive account of a wide range of human conduct” (p. 5). It is in this sense that we believe that CA with a DP perspective can contribute to teacher belief research by providing the ways in which belief can be studied by examining talk-in-action; it lays out how psychological matters are live for participants in interactions and how they are sequentially organized. Moreover, the analyses presented here offer insights into how participants work toward co-constructing their teacher belief. The analyses show how the local sequential organization of and membership categorization in the talk can lead these kinds of change processes, thereby, providing evidence for how collective thinking or sharing can improve the quality of diverse practices such as teacher learning (e.g., Mercer, 2000; van Kruiningen, 2013).

Finally, by taking a close look at a focus group conducted with three language teachers—with experience or currently using ER in their classrooms—we were able to
gain better insight into the rather unexplored area of teachers’ perceptions of utilizing a certain methodology in an ESL environment. Such examination not only allowed for a better understanding of teachers’ perceptions, but also shed light on the diverse perspectives each teacher holds on the use and effectiveness of ER in their classrooms. While this is a one-shot study focused solely on teachers in ESL, we believe the results leave room for future studies to be conducted in other contexts (e.g., EFL, young learners, multiple focus groups), which will better inform the use and effectiveness of ER in the larger context of applied linguistics.

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APPENDIX A

Conversation Analysis Transcription Conventions

Conventions for the transcription of talk (adapted from Jefferson, 2004)

. Continuing intonation
. Final intonation
? Rising intonation
\rising Slightly rising intonation
↓ Word abruptly falling intonation
↑ Word abruptly rising intonation
\word Lengthening of the previous sound
= Latching (no space between sound before and after)
[ Overlap
0.7 Pause timed in tenths of seconds
(.) Micropause, shorter than 0.2 seconds
°word° Speech which is quieter than the surrounding talk
WORD Speech which is louder than the surrounding talk
\underline{Underlining} Signals vocal emphasis
(xxx) Cannot be guessed
hhh Aspiration (out-breaths)
.hhh Inspiration (in-breaths)
>he said< Quicker than surrounding talk
<he said> Slower than surrounding talk
\underline{= Latching}
heh heh Voiced laughter
sto(h)p Laughter within speech
£ £ Laughing voice
(( )) Other details

Conventions for description of embodied action (adapted from Burch, 2014)

H Hand(s)
F Finger
R Right
**APPENDIX B**

**Prepared Questions for Focus Group Meeting**

A. Teacher belief
1) What is your belief toward implementing ER?
2) Do you think ER is beneficial for your students? If yes, in what ways? If not, why not?

B. Activities & Motivation
3) What did you do to promote ER in your class? Any particular classroom activities? Do you think your students liked the activities?
4) Do you think ER activities will boost students’ reading motivation?
5) Do you think ER itself motivates learners to read? Why or why not?
6) Do you think your students will be autonomous readers after your course?

C. Concepts
7) Define ER in your own words

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**Applicable levels:** Tertiary