

## UNDERGRADUATE PRESERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO VIETNAMESE YOUNG LEARNERS

Le Van Tuyen\*, Tran Kim Hong, Vo Tran Minh Hieu  
Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH University)

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	28/01/2024	Teachers' beliefs about teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to young learners may influence teaching effectiveness, and understanding beliefs of EFL teachers in a context like Vietnam is useful for EFL teacher educators. The current study, therefore, aims to investigate undergraduate preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching English to young learners. The study was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology with the participation of 133 undergraduate preservice teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the employment of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews; for data analysis, descriptive statistics and content analysis were employed. The findings of the study revealed that most of the participants held common beliefs about young learners' EFL learning, teaching methods and techniques, and themselves. The study highlights the importance of beliefs in EFL teaching and learning and provides meaningful contributions to undergraduate preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators to enhance the quality of teaching EFL to young learners in Vietnam in particular, and in other EFL contexts in general.
Revised:	22/3/2024	
Published:	22/3/2024	

### KEYWORDS

Beliefs  
EFL young learners  
EFL learning and teaching  
Preservice teacher  
Vietnamese context

## NIỀM TIN CỦA GIÁO SINH VỀ VIỆC DẠY TIẾNG ANH CHO TRẺ EM VIỆT NAM

Lê Văn Tuyền\*, Trần Kim Hồng, Võ Trần Minh Hiếu  
Trường Đại học Công nghệ Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 28/01/2024	Niềm tin của giáo viên về việc dạy tiếng Anh cho trẻ em có lẽ sẽ có những ảnh hưởng tới hiệu quả giảng dạy của giáo viên. Hiểu rõ về niềm tin của giáo sinh trong ngữ cảnh Việt Nam thực sự rất có ích cho các nhà giáo dục và đào tạo giáo viên tiếng Anh. Cũng vì thế, mục đích của đề tài này là khám phá niềm tin của giáo sinh về việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh cho trẻ em. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện tại Trường Đại học Công nghệ Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh với sự tham gia của 133 giáo sinh. Nghiên cứu thu thập cả dữ liệu định lượng và định tính thông qua việc sử dụng bảng câu hỏi khảo sát và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Để phân tích dữ liệu, phương pháp thống kê mô tả và phân tích theo nội dung đã được sử dụng. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy hầu hết giáo sinh đều có những niềm tin giống nhau về việc học tiếng Anh của trẻ em, về phương pháp giảng dạy và về chính bản thân họ. Nghiên cứu làm rõ thêm tầm quan trọng của niềm tin trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh và cũng có những đóng góp cho giáo sinh, giáo viên và những người đào tạo giáo viên góp phần nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy tiếng Anh cho trẻ em ở Việt Nam và ở những ngữ cảnh tương tự.
Ngày hoàn thiện: 22/3/2024	
Ngày đăng: 22/3/2024	

### TỪ KHÓA

Niềm tin  
Người học là trẻ em  
Dạy và học tiếng Anh  
Giáo sinh  
Ngữ cảnh Việt Nam

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.9648>

\* Corresponding author. Email: lv.tuyen@hutech.edu.vn

## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, Vietnam's education system has paid more attention to English as a foreign language (EFL) education for young learners (YLS) at primary schools, and even at preschools and language centers. Vietnam has witnessed a lot of responses to the national language policy such as restructuring the English programs, issuing new textbooks, training English teachers for teaching YLS in primary schools. Nonetheless, the policy also shows a lack of alignment with its implementation due to poor planning [1], and teaching EFL to Vietnamese YLS is still considered a difficult and challenging task for teachers, especially for novice ones. That is because it depends on a variety of related factors including the teachers themselves, learners, facilities, textbooks, and learning environment. Teacher-related factors, consisting of teachers' knowledge, experience, thought or belief, may have much influence on the process of EFL teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs may be one of the dominant factors. Zheng [2, p.14] defined teacher beliefs as "teachers' psychologically held thinking, conceptions and understanding about teaching and learning, and they are both implicit and explicit in nature". Teachers' belief systems are formed gradually over time and derived from different sources, such as their own learning experience when they were learners, teaching experience, practices, and personal factors, etc. [3].

Calderhead [4] categorized teachers' beliefs as beliefs about learners and learning, teaching, subject, learning to teach, self and teacher role [3]. Teachers' beliefs about learners reflect their beliefs about learners' ability to learn languages (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and four language skills), their learning styles, motivation as well as attitudes towards learning. Beliefs about learning show that teachers understand the nature of language learning, the learning process, or learning activities or styles, and ways of making learning take place. Meanwhile, beliefs about teaching reflect teachers' perceptions of effective teaching methods, teaching process, and successful ways of managing classroom [5]. Researchers have indicated that teachers' beliefs influence their practices, consciousness, attitudes, teaching methods and policies, and decision-making and interactions with their learners, and finally bring about the improvement of learners' learning abilities [6]. Moreover, beliefs help teachers form their planning, curricular decisions, and identify what should be taught in the classroom, which will bring a considerable amount of advance in learners' language capabilities [7].

So far researchers both in foreign and local contexts have conducted studies to investigate different aspects related to teachers' and undergraduate preservice teachers' (UPT) beliefs about teaching EFL, for example, UPTs' beliefs about YLS' language learning [8], beliefs about EFL teaching [9] - [10], beliefs about EFL learners and learning, pedagogical knowledge, teaching, content, goals of language teaching, the role of teaching, subject, schooling, hearsay, self, learning to teach, and the teacher education program [11] - [12], beliefs about classroom practices, lesson planning, assessment [13]. In the Vietnamese context, literature reveals few studies in this field, for example, Vu [14] investigated teachers' beliefs about teaching English speaking skills, or Le et al. [15] conducted a study on UPTs' beliefs about learner autonomy development. Rarely have previous studies been conducted to investigate UPTs' beliefs about learners' ability, EFL learning, teachers themselves and their teaching methods in EFL education for YLS in Vietnam although as stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Training, YLS from Grade 3 to Grade 5 in primary schools learn English as a compulsory subject, and many of them also learn English at language centers optionally. To meet the demand of primary schools and language centers, many universities of education are striving to train more qualified EFL teachers. Nevertheless, research is still at an early stage in terms of evaluating UPTs' beliefs about teaching English to YLS, and UPTs' beliefs about teaching English to young learners has received relatively little attention in the Vietnamese context. Beliefs of UPTs need to be researched thoroughly for successful implementation of EFL teacher education and practices in primary schools and language centers. The present study seeks to fill the research gap in this area. It aims to investigate the UPTs' beliefs

about YLs' EFL learning in terms of learning styles and preferences and their ability to learn four English skills, and beliefs about EFL teaching to YLs in terms of teaching methods and self. The study attempted to address two research questions as follows:

- 1) What are the undergraduate preservice teachers' beliefs about young learners' EFL learning?
- 2) What are the undergraduate preservice teachers' beliefs about self and teaching methods used in teaching EFL to young learners?

The research findings are expected to inform EFL teacher trainers, educators and curriculum designers of the value and necessity, and significance of investigating and understanding UPTs' beliefs about EFL teaching and to shed light on the field of EFL education for YLs.

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Research site and participants

The current study was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH University). It is a private multidisciplinary university located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. "English language" is one of over 50 majors trained at the university. The students who enroll in the Faculty of English Language (FoEL) can choose one of the four sub-majors, including "English for business", "English for tourism and hospitality", "Translation and interpretation of English", and "Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)". The TEFL-majored students are required to complete four compulsory courses on "theories of English teaching and learning", "techniques for teaching EFL", "teaching EFL to young learners", and "teaching practice". Before graduation, those students take the course "teaching practicum" which requires the students to observe experienced teachers' classes, practice making lesson plans and teaching English to YLs at primary schools and English centers.

Convenience sampling was employed for the current study. The sample of the study consisted of 133 undergraduate preservice students. The number of female students was 90 (67.7%), while that of males was 43 (32.3%). Their ages range from 21 (93.2%) to 24 (6.8%). Their English proficiency level ranges from upper-intermediate (79.7%) to advanced (20.3%). All of them took part in this study just after they finished the four TEFL courses and before their eight-week teaching practicum at primary schools and English centers.

### 2.2. Research instruments

The current study employed mixed methods research design using two research instruments, i.e., the questionnaire and interview for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. In terms of the questionnaire, it consists of two parts; the first part asks about personal information, and the second one with 40 items using 5-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree, Strongly agree) asks about the UPTs' beliefs about teaching EFL to Vietnamese YLs in terms of four aspects, including beliefs about YLs (9 items), YLs' ability to learn four skills EFL learning (16 items), teaching methods and techniques (10 items), and the self (5 items). All the items were designed based on literature review. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire items is excellent as displayed as follows: beliefs about YLs (9 items) = **0.908** and YLs' ability to learn four skills (16 items) = **0.961**, beliefs about teaching methods and techniques (10 items) = **0.929**, and self (5 items) = **0.909**. The second instrument was the semi-structured interview consisting of five open-ended questions used to collect qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' beliefs to support quantitative data.

### 2.3. Procedures for data collection and analysis

Data of the study were collected in the last two weeks of December 2023, just after the students finished the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. 136 UPTs from three TEFL classes completed the questionnaire within 15 minutes. Due to the irrelevant responses of the three questionnaire copies, 133 copies were relevant, so the final number of participants was 133.

For the interviews, 10 UPTs volunteered to join the interviews. Each participant had about 15 minutes to answer the questions. To ensure that all interview data were accurate and comprehensive, every interview was performed in Vietnamese and meticulously recorded. In addition, an interview sheet was used for each participant; the researcher also took particularized notes throughout the interview procedure.

With respect to data analysis, through SPSS software, descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the quantitative data. Mean (M) and standard deviation (St. D) were calculated. Mean (M) scores for beliefs about teaching EFL to Vietnamese YLs were interpreted as follows: For both research questions, based on the calculated interval coefficient for four intervals in five points ( $5-1=4$ ), intervals with the range of 0.80 (4/5) were arranged. The following criteria in the Likert scale were used to interpret the data: strongly disagree (M = 1.00 -1.80); disagree (M = 1.81 - 2.60); undecided (M = 2.61- 3.40); agree (M = 3.41 - 4.20); strongly agree (M = 4.21 - 5.00). Meanwhile, content analysis was employed for analyzing data collected from the interviews. The students were coded as UPT1, UPT2, UPT3... and UPT10.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Results

##### 3.1.1. Beliefs about YLs' EFL learning

Data from both questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are displayed in this section. The data displayed in Table 1 reveal that most UPTs had positive beliefs about YLs' learning English with M = 3.56 of 9 items for beliefs about YLs' learning styles and preferences and 3.49 of 16 items for beliefs about YLs' ability to learn 4 English skills.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of beliefs about YLs' learning EFL

No	categories	N	M	St. D
1	Beliefs about YLs' learning styles and preferences	133	3.56	0.726
2	Beliefs about YLs' ability to learn four English skills	133	3.49	0.782

#### Beliefs about YLs' learning styles and preferences

Regarding UPTs' beliefs about YLs' learning styles and preferences, data collected from the questionnaire revealed that most of the UPTs believed that YLs "learn English with different learning styles" (item 2), "learn English faster than adults do" (item 3) and "have individual differences in their cognitive development process" (item 4) with M = 3.95, 3.75 & 3.68 and St. D = 0.560, 0.676 & 0.692 respectively. They also agreed that "the earlier YLs learn English, the better the results will be" (item 5), and "the ways YLs use their mother tongue would affect their capabilities to learn English" (item 7) with M = 3.74 & 3.42 and St. D = 0.673 & 0.820 respectively. Particularly, most of them had positive beliefs that YLs "like learning English through the use of technological devices" (item 8), and "prefer interesting and appropriate learning activities" (item 9) with M = 3.65 & 3.90 and St. D = 0.762 & 0.776 respectively. However, the participants were undecided about two items, including "Every YL can learn English well" (item 1), and "YLs can learn English in the same way as they learn Vietnamese" (item 6) with M = 3.34 & 3.22 and St. D = 0.897 & 0.776 respectively.

In terms of qualitative data collected from the interviews, it was found that the participants expressed different beliefs about YLs' learning styles, preferences and ability. With respect to the age and ability to learn a foreign language, several UPTs expressed that, for example, "in my belief, YLs are better at learning English than adults are" (UPT1); "kids learn English faster than teens and adults as they don't have lots of subjects at school, pressure of examination and work" (UPT4); "the sooner children begin to learn a language, the more likely they are to master it" (UPT5); "YLs can make much more significant progress in learning English than other age groups" (UPT8); "in my belief, YLs are better at learning English than adults since kids can learn English from everyone and everything that make sense to them" (UPT9).

When it comes to YL's learning styles or preferences, most of the participants have common beliefs that YLs' learning styles are diverse. They believed that most of the YLs prefer visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning style. For example, "*It seems to me that the styles of YLs in acquiring English are diverse, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles*" (UPT2); "*each child may have a particular style of learning English. Some like visual, others like auditory or kinesthetic styles*" (UPT5); "*I think most kids have visual learning styles*" (UPT6); or "*I believe that YLs have diverse learning styles. Each child has their unique way of processing information, retaining knowledge, and engaging with the language*" (UPT8).

Regarding learning activities, most of the UPTs believed that YLs are creative and dynamic; they like playing games, songs or engaging in interesting learning activities. For example, UPT6 expressed, "*they are creative so they will discover new ways to learn to keep themselves from getting bored. They have good short-term memory to learn English. They tend to learn better the topics that interest them.*"

#### **Beliefs about YLs' ability to learn English skills**

Regarding beliefs about YLs' ability to learn English listening and speaking skills, quantitative data collected from the questionnaire revealed that among 7 items to show YLs' ability, the UPTs agreed with 6 of them, including YLs can "ask for specific information or for help if something is not clear" (item 11) with  $M = 3.59$  &  $St. D = 0.769$ , "comprehend the gist and sequence of actions in stories, tales, cartoons, songs, games with the help of visuals" (item 12) with  $M = 3.81$ ,  $St. D = 0.817$ ; "comprehend roles in pair or group work and can react to them" (item 13) with  $M = 3.47$ ,  $St. D = 0.671$ ; "give short and appropriate answers to short questions in context" (item 14) with  $M = 3.60$  &  $St. D = 0.672$ ; "ask short, simple questions with a little help" (item 15) with  $M = 3.60$ ,  $St. D = 0.701$ ; "tell a short story with the help of pictures and questions" (item 16) with  $M = 3.80$  &  $St. D = 0.591$ . The only one that they were undecided about is "YLs can follow classroom instructions accurately" (item 10) with  $M = 3.05$  &  $St. D = 0.867$ .

Regarding beliefs about YLs' ability to learn English reading and writing skills, it has been found that most of the UPTs believed that YLs can "comprehend the gist of learnt words, expressions and sentences" (item 17), "comprehend the gist of short, familiar texts (item 18), "read a few familiar picture books aloud" (item 19), and "comprehend the gist of short descriptions, dialogues, and stories including some new words (item 20) with  $M = 3.44$ ,  $3.44$ ,  $3.44$  &  $3.45$  and  $St. D = 0.692$ ,  $0.763$ ,  $0.748$  &  $0.792$  respectively. In addition, with respect to writing skills, the participants believed that YLs can "copy familiar words and short sentences correctly" (item 21), "write down a short simple text quite accurately as it is being dictated" (item 23), "write simple, short sentences about items in a picture" (item 24) with  $M = 3.69$ ,  $3.41$  &  $3.59$  and  $St. D = 0.927$ ,  $0.981$  &  $0.892$  respectively. However, the UPTs were not sure whether YLs can write down most of the familiar words after dictation and can check if the spelling is correct (item 22) and "fill a form with personal data" (item 25) with  $M = 3.38$  &  $3.33$  and  $St. D = 0.779$  &  $0.781$  respectively.

In terms of qualitative data collected from the interviews, it has been found that they are consistent with quantitative data showing that all the participants reported that YLs have the ability to develop 4 English skills. They can develop listening and speaking skills faster than reading and writing skills. They also believed that YLs can develop different strategies in learning the four skills. For example, "*... I think YLs can get the gist and sequence of actions in stories, tales, cartoons, songs, and games with the help of visuals. They can also tell a story based on pictures and supporting questions..., they can also write down words they are familiar with after dictation and check that the spelling is accurate*" (UPT1); or "*... YLs can write short, simple sentences to describe something but make lots of grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes, ... can listen to the description of people, objects, places to do matching activities, gap-filling, multiple choice and coloring, ... skim/scan a short text to do True/False, gap-filling, multiple choice exercises; ... produce short, simple sentences without using much connector*" (UPT4).

### 3.1.2. Beliefs about teaching methods and self

Data from both questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are displayed in this section. The data displayed in Table 2 reveal that most UPTs had positive beliefs about teaching methods used to teach YLs (10 items)  $M = 3.71$ , and beliefs about self (5 items) with  $M = 3.64$ .

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of beliefs about teaching methods and self

No	categories	N	M	St. D
1	Beliefs about Teaching Methods	133	3.71	0.627
2	Beliefs about Self	133	3.64	0.670

#### Beliefs about teaching methods

Quantitative data show that most of the UPTs agreed with all the items displaying methods used in teaching English to YLs except that they were undecided about whether “YLs are permitted to make errors in English without the teacher’s correction” (item 34) with  $M = 3.38$  &  $St. D = 0.671$ . More specifically, they believed that “Only English method is more effective than bilingual method of using both Vietnamese and English” (item 26) with  $M = 3.59$  &  $St. D = 0.679$ ; “YLs learn English better if they are given opportunities to move around in the English classroom” (item 27), and “acquire English easily when they participate in activities” (item 28) with  $M = 3.77$  &  $3.89$  and  $St. D = 0.667$  &  $0.560$  respectively. In addition, they believed that “English pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar should be taught in an integrative manner, rather than separately” (item 29) with  $M = 3.68$  &  $St. D = 0.670$ ; “All English skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing should be taught to young learners in the very beginning” (item 30) with  $M = 3.59$  &  $St. D = 0.569$ . They thought that “Vietnamese should sometimes be used while teaching English to young learners” (item 31) with  $M = 3.97$  &  $St. D = 0.547$ . Particularly, most of them believed that technological devices are helpful for YLs to learn English and “it is important to use multimedia equipment (e.g., audio, video...) to teach English to young learners” (item 32)  $M = 3.97$  &  $St. D = 0.548$ . In relation to mistake correction, most of them believed that “YLs should not be punished for making mistakes while learning English” (item 33) with  $M = 3.64$  &  $St. D = 0.569$ ; and “Teachers should always correct all mistakes for young learners” (item 35) with  $M = 3.65$  &  $St. D = 0.720$ .

In terms of qualitative data, most of the participants reported that they believed in “interactive methods” which attracts YLs through activities like games, songs, role-play, storytelling. For example, UPT2 expressed, “*Teaching YLs is best done through fun and interactive methods, like games, stories, and songs. Using visuals and creating a positive learning environment helps to make the process enjoyable and effective.*” More interestingly, most of the participants believed that using technological devices in teaching English to YLs is beneficial. For example, UPT7 reported, “*Incorporating age-appropriate educational technology enhances engagement and offers supplementary learning resources.*” Moreover, the participants also believed that such teaching methods as Total Physical Responses”, “Communicative language teaching”, “Direct method”, “Audio-lingual method” or “Multi-Sensory Approach”. For example, UPT6 expressed “*Integrating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities supports diverse learning styles and enhances comprehension*”; or, “*teaching methods and techniques for young learners center around creating an engaging and effective learning environment that caters to their unique needs and abilities;... YLs flourish in environments that are playful and active*” (UPT8).

#### Beliefs about Self

Quantitative data show that most of the UPTs believed that they are “confident enough to become a good English teacher” (item 36), and “capable of teaching English to young learners (item 38) with  $M = 3.68$  &  $3.65$  and  $St. D = 0.711$  &  $0.803$  respectively. In addition, they believed that “teaching English to YLs is a meaningful job” (item 39), and “they can teach English successfully to YLs just after they graduate” (item 40) with  $M = 3.92$  &  $3.58$  and  $St. D = 0.504$  &  $0.607$  respectively. However, they were unsure about whether “teaching English to YLs will be very easy and a lot of fun” (item 37) with  $M = 3.38$  &  $St. D = 0.701$ .

Concerning qualitative data, the participants reported that they are confident enough and able to teach English to YLs in the future. They have enough knowledge and skills after completing the TEFL program. They also believed that they are able to apply different teaching techniques for teaching YLs at primary schools and centers. For instance, *“I'm quite confident. I believe I can teach YLs pretty well. I was advised to adjust my behaviors in teaching YLs... (UPT10); or, “I believe that with the knowledge I've gained from teaching courses as well as my experience working at English centers,... teach and manage young learners well,... develop strong skills for lesson planning, classroom management, skills of dealing with YLs, and... deliver a lesson effectively” (UPT9).*

### 3.2. Discussion

The findings of the study have revealed that the majority of UPTs hold common beliefs about YLs' EFL learning, teaching methods used to teach YLs and self. That is because they share the same native language, experience common educational system and have the same cultural background. This finding of the study is consistent with that of Liao [16], which shows that EFL teachers usually have certain beliefs about EFL teaching and learning and reflects the effectiveness and issues in EFL teacher education. Those beliefs of the UPTs may originate from their earlier learning experiences, TEFL course at the university, and or their Vietnamese cultural background.

#### **Beliefs about YLs' EFL learning**

More specifically, regarding beliefs about YLs' EFL learning, the findings of the current study are consistent with those of a study conducted by Reynolds et al. [12] showing that preservice teachers hold common beliefs about teaching EFL to YLs. Their common beliefs are related to learning styles, preferences, ages, learning activities. Notably, most of the participants believed that YLs can learn English faster than adults do and have different learning styles. However, at the age of under 12 years old, most YLs cannot decide which style is good for them as stated by Bland [17] that YLs are highly dependent on the teacher. They may not yet have many general learning strategies, and need to learn strategies while they are learning language. In addition, the UPTs agreed that YLs should learn English earlier. Perhaps, educators have a similar opinion. That is why in many countries (e.g., Korea, Mexico, European Community, etc.), English is compulsorily taught to children at pre-primary establishments [18]. This finding also reflects Enever's opinion [19] that it is valuable to start learning languages early to become fluent by adulthood and that the learning of more than one language at a young age increases the capacity for cognitive processing.

The findings also show that learning activities for YLs should be diverse to meet students' pleasure, curiosity, preferences of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. The finding is in alignment with Bland's opinions [17] showing that children have innate abilities and curiosity to discover new things. Finally, the participants also believed that YLs can learn English in a similar ways of learning Vietnamese. Obviously, their belief is supported by educators' consensus, showing that the younger the learners are, the more similar the process of their FL development tends to be to the acquisition of their first language [20].

Regarding YLs' ability to learn English skills, the findings of the study revealed that most of the UPTs hold beliefs about YLs' ability to develop 4 English skills via the engagement in different appropriate activities or tasks. By doing so, their curiosity and interest in languages are awakened. That is also because “children are cognitively stimulated when offered opportunities for developing language-learning strategies” [21, p.6]. Moreover, it cannot be denied that children are able to comprehend a lot more than they can produce. If tasks are tuned to their abilities, they are able to figure out new meanings or guess meaning in a new context [20]. This finding of the study is aligned with Nikolov's opinions [20] that YLs from grade 1 to 5 can comprehend and follow or perform appropriate tasks or instructions, and they can also develop the ability to read or write appropriate texts or messages as mentioned above.

### **Beliefs about teaching methods and self**

With respect to beliefs about teaching methods, the findings of the study revealed that most of the UPTs held common beliefs about the roles of organizing learning activities, creating opportunities for YLs to participate in learning, integrating language into skills instruction, using technological devices, and providing feedback. These findings are consistent with those of Shinde and Karekatti [6] showing that English teaching methods and techniques for YLs seems to be basically in tune with the teaching principles of interactive approaches or CLT and with Nikolov's opinions [20] showing that YLs find pleasure in age-appropriate activities including telling rhymes, singing songs, playing games, listening to and telling picture stories, acting out roles, etc. Most of the participants also agreed that it is necessary to create a dynamic learning environment in which visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities should be employed. Klein [22] states that teaching English to YLs is different from teaching to adults. YLs tend to change their mood quite often. They do not like sitting still in one place. Children show greater motivation than adults to do things that appeal to them. It will be helpful if EFL teachers are creative and dynamic, and select a wide variety of play-based, child-initiated activities, craft activities, Total Physical Response activities, project work, puppets and drama activities in an English learning area set up for YLs [18].

Concerning providing feedback or correction, most of the UPTs believed that the teacher should correct mistakes for YLs, and YLs should not be punished for mistakes. Susan [23] states that making mistakes during learning process have benefits. According to Nikolov [20], errors are typical and they indicate where the children are in their process of learning L2; similarly, in L1 development, errors emerge and then tend to disappear with time if enough learning opportunities are offered. However, YLs need feedback on how they perform on tasks, what they are good at and what they need to practice more to perform better [24].

Regarding beliefs about self, the finding of the study showed that all the UPTs hold common beliefs about self. This finding is similar to that of Liao's study [16], showing a strong sense of self-efficacy, which may have a positive impact on their performance in their future work as English teachers. According to Rixon [25], YL English teachers need a confident and fluent command of English if interaction and linguistic accommodation to the learners are to be feasible in class. If learners are provided with such optimal approaches, they may be able to make the most of their capacities as YLs. In addition, UPTs require an understanding of child development as well as being sufficiently confident to speak fluently and spontaneously to children in the L2 using language considered suitable for this age group [18].

### **4. Conclusion**

The aim of the study is to investigate UPTs' beliefs about EFL teaching to YLs. The findings revealed that most of the participants hold common beliefs about YLs' EFL learning, teaching methods and self. The current study has been conducted before the UPTs take teaching practicum and graduate from university. Therefore, the findings may help UPTs themselves to adjust their instruction in the future. In addition, the study may help to explore whether there are inconsistencies between prospective teachers' beliefs with the realization in their performances as stated in Hadiyanti and Yolanda's study [9]. This study attempted to make a contribution to English teacher education in EFL contexts by emphasizing beliefs about teaching English to YLs. It is expected that the findings of the current study will help student teachers learn more about the importance of beliefs in English teaching and pay more attention to the improvement of their teaching strategies and principles. The beliefs that UPTs hold can affect their responses to teacher education courses as new ideas and information being provided in the courses may be filtered through the individual teachers' beliefs during the training [26]. Moreover, the study may provide English educators, researchers or curriculum designers with more evidence about the student teachers' beliefs about English teaching to YLs so that they can make adjustments to teacher

education programs in order to better prepare teachers for classroom teaching. Although the study has uncovered beliefs about teaching English to YLs as the potential of providing valuable insights into the planning of teacher education courses in HUTECH University and similar EFL contexts, limitations related to sample and research site cannot be avoided. Therefore, it is suggested that more extensive research is needed in the future with more participants and research locations so that the findings can be generalized to more similar EFL contexts; or future researchers should conduct studies to compare beliefs or practices of in-service and preservice teachers in different EFL contexts.

## REFERENCES

- [1] P. Cao, "Teaching English to young learners in Vietnam: From policy to implementation," *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 96-104, 2019.
- [2] H. Zheng, *Teacher beliefs as a complex system: English language teachers in China*. Springer, 2015.
- [3] J. Richards and C. Lockhart, *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- [4] J. Calderhead, "Teachers: beliefs and knowledge," in.), *Handbook of educational psychology*, D. C. Berliner and R. C. Calfee, Eds., Macmillan, 1996.
- [5] C. M. Clark and P. L. Peterson, "Teachers' thought processes," in *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd Ed), M. C. Wittrock, Ed., Macmillan, 1986, pp. 255-296.
- [6] M. B. Shinde and T. K. Karekatti, "Pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English to primary school children," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 1308-1470, 2012.
- [7] A. P. Gilakjani and N. B. Sabouri, "Teachers' beliefs in English language teaching and learning: A review of the literature," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 78-86, 2017, doi: 10.5539/elt.v10n4p78.
- [8] J. Othman and R. Kiely, "Preservice teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching English to young learners," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 50-59, 2016, doi: 10.17509/ijal.v6i1.2661.
- [9] K. M. W. Hadiyanti and M. Yolanda, "Insights into prospective teachers' beliefs in teaching English to young learners," *A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, vol. 24 no. 1, pp. 36-50, 2021, doi: 10.24071/ilt.v24i1.2484.
- [10] B. L. Reynolds, D. Liu, X. V. Ha, X. Zhang, and C. Ding, "Pre-service teachers learning to teach English to very young learners in Macau: A longitudinal study," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, pp. 1-17, 2021, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.720660.
- [11] S. Whyte, C. R. Wigham, and N. Younès, "Insights into Teacher Beliefs and Practice in Primary-School EFL in France," *Languages*, vol. 7, no. 185, pp. 1-21, 2022, doi: 10.3390/languages7030185.
- [12] B. L. Reynolds, S. Liu, M. Milosavljevic, C. Ding, and J. McDonald, "Exploring pre-service pre-primary EFL teacher beliefs about teaching English to very young learners: A Macau Case Study," *SAGE Open*, vol. 11 no. 4, pp. 1-15, 2021, doi: 10.1177/21582440211052932.
- [13] B. L. Reynolds, X. V. Ha, C. Ding, X. Zhang, S. Liu, and X. Ma, "Pre-service teachers learning to teach English to very young learners in Macau: Do beliefs trump practice?" *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 19, pp. 1-21, 2022, doi: 10.3390/bs12020019.
- [14] H. T. B. Vu, "Teaching English speaking skills: An investigation into Vietnamese EFL teachers' beliefs and practices," *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 428-450, 2023.
- [15] T. V. Le, T. H. Ho, and H. K. Tran, "Undergraduate pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy development in EFL learning," *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, vol. 228, no. 4, pp. 51-58, 2023, doi: 10.34238/tnu-jst.6968.
- [16] P. Liao, "Teachers' beliefs about teaching English to elementary school children," *English Teaching & Learning*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 43-76, 2007.
- [17] J. Bland, *Teaching English to young learners: Critical issues in language teaching with 3–12 year olds*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015.
- [18] S. Mourão, "English in Pre-primary: The challenges of getting it right," in *Teaching English to young learners: Critical issues in language teaching with 3–12 year olds*, J. Bland, Ed., Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015, pp. 51-69.
- [19] J. Enever, "The advantages and disadvantages of English as a foreign language with young learners," in *Teaching English to young learners: Critical issues in language teaching with 3–12 year olds*, J. Bland, Ed., Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015, pp. 1-29.

- 
- [20] M. Nikolov, "A framework for young EFL learners' diagnostic assessment: 'Can do statements and task types,'" in *Assessing young learners of English: Global and local perspectives*, M. Nikolov, Ed., Springer, 2016, pp. 65-92.
- [21] S. Rich, *International Perspectives on Teaching English to Young Learners*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- [22] K. Klein, "Teaching young learners," *English Teaching Forum*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 12-17, 2005.
- [23] H. Susan, *Teaching English in the primary classroom*. Longman, 1992.
- [24] S. Krashen, *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman, 1985.
- [25] S. Rixon, "Primary English and critical issues: A worldwide perspective," in *Teaching English to young learners: Critical issues in language teaching with 3-12 year olds*, J. Bland, Ed., Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015, pp. 31-50.
- [26] H. Zheng, "A review of research on EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices," *Journal of Cambridge Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 73-81, 2009.