



A sociocultural analysis of teachers' belief changes: A case of two teach-abroad EFL teachers

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This inquiry explores English foreign language (EFL) teacher beliefs in teach-abroad (TA) contexts under the umbrella of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) of mind. Previous literature on teacher beliefs has relied mostly on quantitative survey research concerning belief as an inert variable; an internal representation of experience that is resilient to evolve. Due to the prevalence of the theory of mind or cognitive orientation under the sociocultural theory, this case study aims to examine two TA EFL teachers' changes in beliefs within a new TA context and conceptualize the teachers' beliefs from a sociocultural perspective. The participants recruited for this research EFL teachers (both pseudonyms): Ivan (male, aged 26) and Melanie (female, aged 24) attending different types of TA. Data was collected from pre- and post-TA interviews along with findings from teaching journals which implemented other triangulated methods such as teaching autobiographies and recall experiences. The findings suggest that EFL teachers' teaching beliefs continuously evolve according to their TA goals and experiences, and that their belief changes involve a remediation process that leads to different teaching actions. Their internalized EFL teaching beliefs within meaningful environments influence the success of their TA teaching.

Keywords: sociocultural theory of mind, internalization, remediation process, recall experience, belief changes

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher beliefs in second language (L2) teaching are well understood as teachers' implicit reasoning about teaching, learners, classroom management, media, and teaching materials which are commonly viewed to have dominant influences on teaching assumptions and execution (Yuan & Lee, 2014). Teacher belief changes are evolutionary because they can largely be exposed and engaged with more experienced teachers, mentors, supervisors, as well as the school community and situated socio-cultural context (Fitzgerald, 2019; Yang & Kim, 2011; Yuan & Lee, 2014). Present research findings have indicated that teacher beliefs are complex dynamic systems which evolve on the basis of personal, educational, and professional experiences (Feryok & Pryde, 2012). In this regard, TA teachers' beliefs about their teaching concepts and practices can change when they participate in different socio-cultural communities, such as in EFL classrooms. Through teaching abroad, L2 teachers can reflect on their pre-conceptions of teaching beliefs and practices in new sociocultural environments, attain new conceptions of teaching, and construct new teaching practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Framed in the sociocultural theory of mind and activity (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), this paper aims to explore EFL teacher beliefs in teach-abroad (TA) settings. We report two TA EFL teachers' teaching experiences on account of their teaching belief changes. In the area of second language teaching and learning, teacher beliefs have been widely studied from teacher cognition viewpoints (Karimi & Nazari, 2021; Lantolf et al., 2021; Ngo, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). L2 researchers have identified several foci for the study of teachers' beliefs. Commonly, they have investigated beliefs about the subject matter, curriculum, teaching behaviors, learning, and teacher professional development. In this vein, teachers' beliefs can be understood as a process in which these components interrelate and are influenced by numerous factors, such as teaching and learning experiences (Kubanyiova, 2012; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015), teaching practice (Lantolf et al., 2021; Kessler et al., 2021; Li, 2017; Sun & Zhang, 2021) and cultural environment (Li, 2019).

While the available literature has unveiled insightful research findings on the relationship between teacher beliefs and their relations to the aforementioned components of these beliefs, the previous studies did not address the potential of teacher beliefs to evolve in the changing context of social interactions and teaching behaviors (Yuan & Lee, 2014). It has been recommended that future studies should explore the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices in different sociocultural contexts (López-Barrios et al., 2021) and how the changes in each context contribute to the evolvement of teacher beliefs in L2 teaching (Bowne et al., 2016). Despite extensive inquiry into observable elements of teacher beliefs, research on TA teacher language education-related beliefs that seeks the unobservable dimension of teaching has not received adequate attention from L2 researchers (Borg & Sanchez, 2020).

In particular, we selected TA teachers since teacher belief changes can be seen as agentive efforts to reformulate the relationship between the teacher and the L2 teaching environment. This case study is adopted to explore TA Indonesian EFL teachers' belief changes and their impact on L2 teaching actions from a sociocultural viewpoint. By analyzing multiple qualitative data from two TA teachers, we argue that teachers' belief changes can be understood as agentive efforts to conceptualize the relationship between the teacher and the L2 teaching environment.

SCT and teacher beliefs: theoretical framework

From the sociocultural viewpoint, cognition is viewed as socially mediated and internalized through participation with others in sociocultural activities (Johnson, 2015; Ngo, 2018). A person's cognitive changes occur via the process of internalization and transformation (Borg, 2019; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Situated in the language teaching field, SCT argues that teachers' beliefs emerge through participating in teaching and learning activities. This concept is also well-suited with the metaphors of language in teacher cognition as emergent beliefs manifested in teaching action. The contribution of SCT also accentuates the dialectic connection between thinking and doing, social

activity and individual cognition changes and social activity (Johnson, 2015; Ngo, 2018). In this vein, learning is not viewed as an accumulation of knowledge in an additive way, but as the result of sociocultural participation and transformation. This learning process is often called remediation or a change in the way that mediating tools regulate the adjustment to the sociocultural context (Cole & Griffin, 1986; Lektorsky, 2009). With regard to FL/SL teachers' beliefs, we assume that FL/SL teachers' belief changes can facilitate the process of remediation since the changes of beliefs can cause a tension between the socio-cultural contexts and their perceptions. This remediation process can cause different actions.

In the field of teacher education, SCT researchers have emphasized the impact of foreign teachers (FT) on EFL/ESL teaching approaches and practices (Hauerwas et al., 2017; Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021; DeVillar & Jiang, 2012), professional identity and teaching effectiveness, and teaching challenges (Chen & Cheng, 2010; Chong & Low, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2019; Leigh, 2019), collaborative teaching (Jacobsen, 2012) and perceptions regarding FT (Cowie, 2011; Yeh, 2005)

Recently, attention has been increasingly emphasized on the impacts of TA programs. For instance, based on a year's worth of TA data, Moorhouse & Harfitt (2021) investigated how collaborative TA program among Hong Kong pre-service teachers and China in-service teachers impacted their professional learning. Through pre-and post-questionnaire as well as reflective journals, they reported the positive impact on the TA pre-service teachers' professional knowledge necessary for teaching in the 21st century. The qualitative data indicated that they also became responsive to learners' learning needs through their adjustment to the unfamiliar context. Although, they could not explain whether the remediation or adjustment was achieved during a domestic teaching practicum or collaborative TA. From a similar viewpoint, Hauerwas et al. (2017) highlighted the intercultural development of Caucasian TA EFL pre-service teachers while attending a semester-long TA in Italian Elementary schools. Their longitudinal findings indicated that the TA pre-service teachers changed their intercultural awareness and instructional strategies. This study emphasizes cultural development more than the TA remediation of beliefs and teaching action from the socio-cultural environment. Ngo (2018) reiterated teachers' beliefs should be internalized so that their beliefs can regulate and control the actions of the teaching. If not, their beliefs about teaching will be considered as stable and isolated phenomena constructed from teachers' opinions, representing less successful remediation because most researchers extracted their views from pencil-and-paper responses or online surveys. The did not see teachers' belief as agentive efforts to reconstruct the connection between the teacher and the FL/L2 teaching environment.

Informed by a socio-cultural perspective, this inquiry draws on Vygotsky & Cole's (1978) theory of mind and activity, as outlined in the previous section, to explore the hidden logic of each EFL teacher's idiosyncratic belief

evolutions and their impact on TA experiences. As indicated above, TA EFL teachers' beliefs evolvement can be facilitated or inhibited through their social interactions. A number of language teacher belief remediation types that afford a wide-ranging TA belief evolvement are presented in [Table 1](#).

TABLE 1 | Summary of teacher belief remediation (Lektorsky, 2009)

Remediation category	The process of remediation
Dialectical process	Dialectical process refers to teachers' short-term situational and long-term developmental changes in their teaching beliefs
Expansive process	The expansive process depicts the multidirectional growth of teachers in constructing and applying new and more complex teaching strategies
Transformative process	The new teaching concepts and practices generated in an expansive learning process carried out in the teachers' future orientation

However, with a few exclusions (e.g., [Leigh, 2019](#); [Nganga, 2011](#); [Trent, 2011](#)), little research has been done to empirically scrutinize the TA EFL teacher belief changes and their impact on future L2 teaching behaviors, with most of the studies being limited to the theoretical field. Therefore, the core research question is formulated: How do the TA teachers' beliefs evolve before, during and after the TA program?

METHODS

Design

The present study aims to explore the two TA teachers' beliefs before, during and after the TA program and how their beliefs changed from a sociocultural perspective. This qualitative study employed a case study design since it is best suited to facilitate the construction of an in-depth understanding of unique events and deal with complex situations ([Yin, 2018](#)).

Participants and their selection

Two TA participants took part in this case study, Melanie (female, 24) and Ivan (male, 26) (pseudonyms). Melanie brought less significant teaching experience in EFL to her developing teaching practice because she did not have any prior teaching experience except for her teaching practicum which was part of her master's degree studies. In contrast, Ivan had more significantly more teaching experience in the EFL context as he became a teaching assistant for a semester during his master's degree program at the same university. The selection results also indicated that both participants had never participated in international events. Both had been taking their thesis at a private university in Indonesia and were also attending a one-semester TA program at a public university in Thailand as part of an international collaboration program. They were purposely selected based

on their university TOEIC scores and interviews indicating their capabilities in coping with challenging situations and interacting with people from different socio-cultural environments. During the TA program in Thailand, they taught a speaking class and a cross-cultural communication course to international students from China, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia for two years. This campus had many English teachers from different countries, such as America, China, and Indonesia. As the concept of data collection in qualitative research is commonly applied using purposive sampling with a very strict criteria, this study involves only two research participants. This approach is very commonly applied in research where the focus is on in-depth analyses of small numbers of participants (see [Susanto & Arifani, 2023](#) ; [Yang & Kim, 2011](#)).

Data collection

Interviews

The two TA teachers' beliefs and field experiences in the TA environment were investigated using semi-structured interviews ([Table 2](#)). The semi-structured interviews were conducted in three rounds. These interviews had different focuses. The interviews were conducted before, during and after the TA teaching activities. We developed the protocols for the content of the interview based on the study's objective. The protocols dealt with the changes in the two TA EFL teachers' beliefs about the TA environments and their impacting variables. The first interview was administered to unveil the teachers' pre-conceptions about EFL teaching and learning. The second interview was carried out during the fourth and eighth weeks of the TA activities. It aimed to explore their belief changes resulting from their interactions with the international students, host teachers and their involvement in various professional events (such as mentoring and teaching forums) in the TA context. The last interview was conducted a week after the TA program was finished. They were directed to recall their entire TA experiences, belief changes, and personal and sociocultural factors that influenced their beliefs. The entire interview session was recorded via audio. The Indonesian language was the primary mode of communication during the interviews as the teachers felt more comfortable sharing their TA experiences in their native language.

Teaching observation and stimulated recall interview

Each TA participant taught 16 lessons which were 100 minutes each. The two TA participants' classes were observed and videotaped during the TA program every week. During the classroom teaching observations, we also took notes regarding their changes in teaching from time to time. We held a recall interview every week with the two TA participants and a student teacher. During this session, we asked them to play their teaching videos one by one and asked them to stop the video every time they recalled their thought and belief changes in their teaching practices. This stimulated recall interview was employed based on studies by [Meijer et al. \(2002\)](#) and [Yuan & Lee \(2014\)](#).

TABLE 2 | Demographic information

Name	Age	Nationality	Years of teaching in Indonesia	Experience outside Indonesia	Credentials	English teaching certificate
Melanie	24	Indonesian	None	None	Master in TEFL	Currently undertaking TEFL course
Ivan	26	Indonesian	One semester	None	Master in TEFL	Currently undertaking TEFL course

We also collected several teaching videos and documents for further identification based on the results of our observation records, which may contradict or reflect the participants' beliefs, changes and teaching practices in their previous interviews. Successful teaching practices that also require improvement were identified in this session as well. For example, when Melanie directly answered one of the students' questions in her classroom without passing it through. We then brought it into the recall interview. In this case, Melanie was asked to reflect on the situation and explain her reasoning behind her decision.

Reflective journals

During the TA activities, we assigned the two participants to write their weekly reflective journals in Indonesian and collected them at the end of each month. Their reflective journals contained their inner thoughts and beliefs during the TA activities. The reflection questions involved participants' first impressions of teaching EFL undergraduate students at Thailand universities and the lessons they learned about teaching, the similarities and differences between EFL instruction in Indonesian and in Thailand universities, and their future teaching.

Data analysis

The researchers analyzed the data using an interpretive approach. First, the first researcher transcribed and translated the recorded interviews and recall interviews and sent the translated excerpts to the two participants to check for further revisions and comments. Next, the results of the interview transcripts from each TA teacher were reviewed to identify the specific beliefs held about EFL teaching and learning as well as the changes in belief and teaching actions. The emerging beliefs were then displayed and compared across different steps of interviews to illustrate the possible changes in each participant's belief and teaching practices.

Furthermore, the preliminary interpretations were further re-examined and re-categorized using [Cabaroglu & Robert's \(2000\)](#) belief changes framework. This phase aimed to shed light on how each TA teacher's beliefs changed in the TA environments. To come up with the final interpretation, the researchers conducted an across-case analysis drawing upon findings from [Merriam \(1998\)](#) by comparing the themes and case categories. The results of the classroom observations and videotape analyses were reviewed along with the observation notes, reflection journals, and the transcribed stimulated recall interviews to reflect the process of the two TA participants' belief changes in their TA practices. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher and the first co-author interpreted the data independently. Afterwards, they conducted a discussion with the two TA

teachers to reach an "intercoder agreement" ([Nunan & Bailey, 2009](#)). The first author crosschecked with the three co-authors to ensure the validity and reliability of the data interpretation. This strategy is commonly applied by professional researchers to validate their findings (see [Cabaroglu & Robert, 2000](#), [Karimi & Nazari, 2021](#)).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we explore the multifaceted and distinctive progressions of the two TA EFL teachers' belief changes and their belief conceptualizations in their new TA socio-cultural setting. The findings of the case are explained using a descriptive and analytic interpretation of how the two TA EFL teachers conceptualized their beliefs before the TA practices and how their belief changes occurred during and after the TA program.

Melanie

Melanie held a set of inconsistent conceptions of beliefs about EFL teaching and learning before beginning her TA program. She noticed that the aim of teaching English as a foreign language and its accepted practices were at odds with what she had learned. For her, mastering English vocabulary and grammatical patterns were two crucial factors in her beliefs towards being able to communicate in English fluently. As a result, her teaching practices predominantly consisted of memorizing, drilling, and translating English words and constructing them into grammatically correct sentences. However, her beliefs that EFL teaching focused on vocabulary and grammar learning were at odds with common practice there, and she was not entirely convinced that active learning and communicative methods could be applied in her classroom as all of her secondary English teachers were used to teaching primarily employing the grammar translation method (GTM). She was also worried about students' low English test scores possibly being a result of vocabulary and grammar being underemphasized in classroom teaching and learning. Inspired by her master's study course work, she changed her teaching beliefs from grammar and vocabulary-minded to active learning for communicative purposes (interview 1).

I am so uncertain about the goals of EFL teaching, whether I have to work with a lot of vocabulary and grammatical drills or rely on active learning which lets my students communicate freely using 'their English'. On the other hand, I want to boost their communicative competence because I want them to be able to speak and write well, but I also want them to get good scores on their English written tests. I do not know whether

my teaching choices will be accepted or not (Interview 1).

To support her student's understanding of vocabulary and grammar learning, Melanie believed that the use of games and interactive teaching could promote students' language comprehension. From this position, she could insert games and use teaching media in her classes:

I often used teaching vocabulary and grammar videos to support their comprehension and to introduce them to native speakers' voices from the videos. When I feel that they get bored, I ask them to play scrabble or dabble in my English class to provoke their motivation (Interview 1).

Before the TA program, Melanie illustrated her hesitation toward the necessity for understanding and applying innovative teaching strategies as she felt that the games and interesting teaching media were enough for her to support her classroom teaching and to satisfy students learning needs:

I think teachers don't need to learn various teaching strategies as they can use various teaching aids and games to keep their teaching innovative (Interview 1).

Melanie's participation in the TA program noticeably influenced her belief changes about EFL teaching and learning. Through discussion with her TA mentor, Andrew (pseudonym), an American lecturer who taught at the TA university for more than ten years, she learned about the feasibility of active learning and communicative teaching approaches, as well as other aspects of EFL teaching such as confidence, independence, and critical thinking skills. She felt more 'open-minded' to employing the two approaches in her TA classroom (interview 2). Melanie was convinced that her previous conceptions of teaching vocabulary and grammar were not useless since she could help her students in the TA classroom with grammar and vocabulary problems (Interview 2).

During the discussion with my TA supervisor, I was impressed with his explanation about active learning and the importance of a communicative teaching approach to enhance student's critical thinking and confidence to participate in classroom teaching (reflective journal).

Melanie's ongoing reflection made her realize that there was another important aspect of EFL teaching. She was aware that as an EFL teacher, she should not rely on 'perfect grammar' teaching, but she should promote her students' confidence, independence, and critical thinking skills in the classroom.

I will try to make my students more independent learners. So that they do not just listen to my 'classroom speech' and ask them to do various tasks. I will focus on helping them be brave and confident to speak up, ask questions and express their ideas. (Interview 3).

Melanie's initial belief changes about EFL teaching took place due to the ongoing interactions during her TA experiences (such as with the TA mentors, international students, and other host teachers in the TA environment) and her personal journal reflections; she steadily abandoned her outdated and diverged views about EFL teaching objectives and approaches. She began to adopt an innovative belief in EFL teaching that "mixed her old views of vocabulary and grammar teaching into the umbrella of active and communicative teaching approach" (Interview 3). Furthermore, Melanie's beliefs about EFL teaching and learning underwent further changes throughout the TA program. In the early weeks of teaching in this program, while Melanie understood the importance of games and videos in her class, she had difficulty in maintaining students' attention. One time, she had played an Indonesian cow race video and a puzzle with goal of strengthening her students' vocabulary and arousing their interest and engagement (Lesson observation). She had imagined that the Indonesian cow race would be applicable and could captivate her international students' interest and engagement. Unfortunately, her attempt was unsuccessful as most students did not watch the video, and they considered puzzle game too easy, and she had run out of ideas on how to change her teaching strategies. Reflecting on this failure, Melanie commented:

I got a good lesson today: implementing video games is not enough in my class. I have to design active learning, but I do not know how. (Recall Interview 1).

In the journal reflection, Melanie internalized that showing interesting videos to students is not insufficient in EFL teaching. When Melanie participated in discussions with all of the L2 teachers in the program, she brought up her teaching difficulties with the videos and games. In this monthly teaching forum, one of the host teachers suggested that she connect her lessons more broadly to students' real-life experiences. Furthermore, another host teacher recommended implementing project-based learning (PBL) to support her active teaching conception. As Melanie reflected:

Every Thursday afternoon at the end of the month, we regularly conducted roundtable discussions and reflections about our teaching activities led by one of the TA teachers from the host university. We shared and discussed our teaching activities and any related issues (Interview 2).

After the regular discussion, Melanie prepared her next meeting using project-based learning as suggested at the teaching forum:

So, in the following meeting, I made serious efforts to design a project-based learning (PBL) lesson from the video used in the class so that they could discuss and collaborate on the project and make group presentations (interview 3).

In the following TA activities, Melanie employed PBL assignments. She prepared two videos about Asian thanksgiving festivals, one from Indonesia called Sedekah Bumi, and the Chinese holiday Lunar Year. Then, she asked the students to observe and discuss the reasons behind the celebrations, similarities and differences between the two festivals and present them in groups. At the end of the teaching, she invited the students to reflect on their lessons learned from the topic and activities (Lesson Observation). Through active participation in the teaching forum, Melanie was able to create with a design for a project so that her teaching could run smoothly. Her previous belief in "reviewing vocabulary and grammar, watching media and playing games" was replaced by a new belief that an EFL teacher must understand various active learning strategies and possess intercultural awareness. She also discovered that professional EFL teachers would never stop learning if their teaching continued to be dynamic (Interview 4).

Ivan

Differing from the first TA participant, Ivan had already internalized his existing conceptions about EFL teaching from his professional experiences before entering the TA program. As a teaching assistant at his university, Ivan had conflicting beliefs about which steps of scientific approach-based learning (observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating) should be applied. When he became a freelance teacher at a senior high school, he applied this approach as required by school regulations. Then, he tried to implement his approach again in his new position as a teaching assistant. During the questioning phase, he always asked his students some questions; he interpreted this phase as the teacher giving questions to the students (interview 1).

I implemented a scientific approach in my class as I believed that this approach could enhance students 'critical thinking and active learning. I usually played a video; I asked them to observe and analyze the concept of politeness between two different countries before giving them some questions to discuss. (Interview 1).

To facilitate the flow of the scientific approach, Ivan believed that providing some questions could help his students understand the content of the video and its learning purposes. He also highlighted the importance of providing questions for his students to foster their understanding (interview 1).

In my teaching video, I always prepared some questions, for instance: "find the politeness concept from the two videos!", "Do you think eye contact is allowed in Asian countries?". Then, I asked them to discuss in groups (Interview 1).

In the TA experience, Ivan's belief in the scientific approach conception was expanded through his active interaction and participation in the teaching forum discussion during his TA activities. In the discussion forum, he shared his experiences with other teachers, and one of them suggested that in the questioning phase, the teacher

should help the students propose some questions instead of giving several questions to the students. In this case, we have to put our role as a guide, helping them raise their questions (Interview 2). Thus, Ivan realized that he did the wrong conception of the scientific approach:

I obtained an interesting lesson from the teaching forum discussion; my mentors and other teachers suggested to me that the questioning stage within the scientific approach aims to help the students to be able to raise questions after they are assigned to observe a teaching video or media. In this case, the teacher should patiently guide the students to ask some questions so that they can learn the concept behind the topic from their questions. This stage also aims to develop students' critical thinking and active learning (Interview 2).

Besides, the teaching forum experience in the TA context augmented her beliefs about implementing a scientific approach in EFL teaching and learning, particularly regarding how the teacher can guide the students to make and raise questions regarding cross-culture understanding topics.

During my third week of TA teaching, it was very hard for me to help my students design their questions. Although only some students raised their questions, asking about the general differences between politeness concepts from the video. It made me happier than before as I could implement the questioning stage more correctly than before (Interview 2).

Ivan's belief changes indicated a small 'evolution' in implementing scientific approach strategies during his TA experiences. In the TA context, Ivan and other EFL teachers in the TA context (including Melanie also) worked together to share and design active teaching and learning strategies in their TA environment. This fruitful experience in which the TA EFL teachers and other TA teachers engaged in collaboration added breadth and depth to Ivan's beliefs of active learning within the umbrella of scientific approach-based teaching and learning (interview 3).

I feel more confident about my teaching beliefs. We need to be more careful in our EFL teaching as we should guide our students not only to be able to raise their questions but also to be able to support their critical thinking and independent learning (reflective journal).

Ivan's involvement in the teaching forum discussion and the feedback he got from his TA colleagues had reformed his prior perception that helping his students be active learners through constructing questions under the scientific approach was inadequate. He also discovered different roles EFL teachers could play in promoting students' critical thinking and learning independence (interview 4). Ivan also expanded on his conception of teaching beliefs into his reflective journal, as he wrote:

I was thinking hard about whether the students could be independent learners if, during classroom teaching, only a few of them engaged in the learning activities. I think teaching them to be more confident in expressing ideas, giving questions, and responding to questions is crucial to support their confidence and critical thinking (reflective journal).

Through the teaching forum and interaction with other TA teachers, Ivan was also aware of the advantages and disadvantages of active teaching and learning strategies as well as an integrated approach in EFL teaching before he could finally discover and extend her beliefs and teaching conceptions.

Situated in a different EFL TA socio-cultural setting, this case study reveals that TA teachers' beliefs evolve dynamically. Such beliefs are not perceived as an isolated or stable phenomenon as they were commonly perceived and extracted through survey responses ([Borg, 2019](#); [Tanaka & Ellis, 2003](#); [Yang & Kim, 2011](#); [Yuan & Lee, 2014](#)). The results of the study reveal that teachers' beliefs are dynamic, and they may change and develop in the context of a socio-cultural environment such as in a TA context. Beyond TA socio-cultural environments, several studies have indicated that L2 teachers' beliefs might evolve as a result of in-service teachers' interaction with their mentors and students during their practicum. Their beliefs may change after they actively interact and participate with their mentors ([Yuan & Lee, 2014](#)). Thus, this present study adds novelty to teachers' belief changes within TA contexts. With their teaching and learning experience as EFL teachers, the two TA teachers gradually were able to construct their beliefs about EFL teaching and professional development. As teachers enter the TA environment, their encounters with mentors, international students, and other teachers during the TA program could help shape new beliefs regarding EFL teaching.

Analyzed from [Lektorsky's \(2009\)](#) remediation framework, our case study shows a range of belief remediation, including dialectical, expansive and transformative change processes. Firstly, the TA participants' teaching belief remediation involved three processes: dialectical, expansive and transformative ([Cole & Griffin, 1986](#); [Lektorsky, 2009](#)). The dialectical process concerns teachers' short-term situational changes and long-term developmental changes in their teaching beliefs. Through dialectical processes, the TA teachers focus on their continuing belief changes brought about by inner and outer influences ([Lektorsky, 2009](#); [Yang & Kim, 2011](#)). For instance, Melanie's beliefs in active learning and communicative teaching approaches evolved after the dialogues with her mentor in the TA environment, which opened up to her the idea of applying the two approaches to her future TA lessons. Melanie's short-term belief changes in her teaching strategies occurred during her intensive dialogues with her mentor when she asked for suggestions regarding her existing view of vocabulary and grammar teaching since she reported feeling unsatisfied with her

initial TA practices. After receiving thorough and acceptable advice from her mentor, Melanie planned to change her teaching strategies in the TA context. In this case, changing her teaching beliefs indicated short-term changes, and changing her teaching strategies in the following TA practices demonstrated long-term developmental changes.

Similarly, Ivan was influenced by his previous misunderstanding of designing a scientific approach in his lesson plan. In the lesson plan, he wrote that the teacher gave some questions to the students regarding the concepts of politeness from different countries at the questioning stage. His mentor explained that the content of the questioning stage should reflect students' ability to propose some questions for further discussion within their group. Knowing this situation, Ivan showed his agreement and changed his beliefs following his mentor's suggestion before he revised his lesson plan and learning activities for his students. These two examples have verified that the TA teachers' belief changes were impacted by their mentors in the TA context, who had more experience in teaching international students ([Yang & Kim, 2011](#)). Similarly, [Yuan & Lee's \(2014\)](#) study examined how pre-service teacher beliefs changed after interaction with their mentors during teaching practicum. Under different socio-cultural contexts, TA teachers' beliefs changed after participating in the TA program.

The expansive process depicts the multidirectional development of teachers constructing and applying new and more complex teaching strategies. One example can be found in Melanie's TA teaching efforts who used two different thanksgiving videos from Indonesia (Sedekah Bumi) and Chinese Lunar Year, and asked her students to discuss in groups the similarities and differences between the two thanksgiving holidays and reflect on the lessons learned from the discussion. Her expansive process indicated her new teaching strategies. She implemented group discussions and project-based learning as part of her new attempts to solve her previous teaching practices situated in the TA environments. She did a complex teaching preparation and implementation as she had to select two different teaching videos and more complex learning activities which met the students' interests. Melanie has reformed her existing beliefs in this situation by implementing novel and complex EFL teaching dimensions.

Through a regular teaching forum and daily interaction with the teachers and students in the TA environment, Ivan expanded his beliefs about EFL teachers and began to formulate innovative teaching strategies. Applying a more acceptable implementation of the scientific approach, he then prepared several guiding questions so that he would be ready to respond positively to the unpredicted situation when the students did not raise any questions. In addition, this inquiry demonstrates that TA motivates the practice of intercultural teaching practices through dialogic learning practices.

In addition, our findings also testify to the transformative impact that TA socio-cultural contexts can have on a teacher's cognitive evolution ([Borg, 2019](#); [Yang & Kim, 2011](#); [Yuan & Lee, 2014](#)). Framed in an SCT viewpoint,

a number of influencing variables which facilitate the processes of TA teachers' belief changes during the TA program can be identified. As new EFL teachers and members of the TA community, the TA teachers engaged in professional teaching practice in this new context with special assistance from mentors, teaching forums, and discussions with other teachers enhanced their conception and implementation of teaching. In spite of the rather short duration of the TA program, the TA teachers were provided with necessary opportunities to participate in different learning opportunities and events, such as mentoring programs, lesson studies, observations, and teaching discussion forums. These activities offer richer learning inputs for the TA teachers to consolidate, expand, and transform their beliefs about EFL teaching and teachers ([Johnson & Golombek, 2011](#); [Yuan & Lee, 2014](#)).

CONCLUSION

In this inquiry, we have endeavored to explore the perspectives of TA EFL teachers' beliefs by framing a Vygotskian SCT viewpoint. The findings indicate that EFL teacher beliefs are constantly reconstructed in accordance with teaching goals in the context of socio-cultural interaction. From the SCT framework, EFL teachers' belief changes symbolize a remediation process between the TA teachers and the teaching environment, revealing their agentive attempts to uphold or abandon their existing beliefs of EFL teaching goals.

The study's findings suggest pedagogical implications for improving EFL teacher education. First, EFL teachers' belief changes can be seen as their agentive efforts to transform their EFL teaching process. Optimum sharing opportunities should be given to EFL teachers to actively contribute to various socio-cultural activities, such as the TA program and mentoring programs with a professional teacher from different sociocultural backgrounds. This study challenges the rampant assumptions that an exposure-rich TA context is crucial for supporting EFL teaching performance. This study indicates that unless teachers personalize the importance of TA learning based on their dynamic EFL teaching beliefs and goals, they may struggle to succeed in the TA environment. Thus, before going abroad, EFL teachers need to intensively engage with the TA community in setting clear teaching goals in order to attain satisfactory and successful TA experiences.

This case study is not without its limitations. The participants' belief transformations and development are reflected in a short period of time in the TA program. We are also aware that our qualitative case study only explores two TA teacher participants in a particular TA EFL context. Therefore, the transferability of the findings should be interpreted cautiously within similar EFL contexts. Therefore, we recommend further studies to investigate EFL

teacher belief changes using a longitudinal study involving TA participants in EFL and L2 contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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