Teaching English to young children as an innovative practice: Kuwaiti public kindergarten teachers’ beliefs

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Abstract: Globalization has driven the popularity of teaching English as a lingua franca. In Kuwait, expanding the teaching and learning of English to include public kindergarten schools would be an innovative practice, which would bring great expected learning outcomes. First, it would help children achieve more native-like pronunciation. Second, it would consolidate the notion that English is the language of study at later stages of education. To achieve these high expectations, it is important to explore the beliefs of Kuwaiti kindergarten teachers about teaching English. For the purpose of the study, 90 female Kuwaiti teachers whose first language is Arabic were randomly selected from three educational districts to respond to a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. SPSS was used to calculate percentages, means and standard deviations. ANOVA and t-test were applied to identify significant differences with reference to the study variables (affiliation, experience, and educational district). The results indicated that kindergarten teachers believed strongly in the importance of teaching English to children at kindergarten stage. They reaffirmed the importance of children learning English as a global language as a means to empowerment and improved international communication. However, teachers were concerned that learning a foreign language at...
a young age may have a negative impact on their mother-tongue Arabic, especially their writing skills. The results identified significant differences with reference to participant affiliation and years of experience. Finally, the study concluded with some recommendations.

**Subjects:** Educational Research; Teachers & Teacher Education; Early Years; Language Teaching & Learning; Languages of the Middle East

**Keywords:** English teaching; innovative practice; kindergarten children; Kuwait; teachers’ beliefs

## 1. Introduction

The use of English as an international language has become so widespread that it is now recognized to be the world’s lingua franca. Devrim and Bayyurt (2010, p. 4) affirm that “It is an undeniable fact that English has become a global lingua franca, as it is the most spoken foreign language”. This impacts educational policies in non-English speaking countries regarding the teaching of English in public schools and it has even led to English becoming a medium of instruction in higher educational institutions. Roothoort (2017), Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2011), and Pinter (2006) point out that in many countries, English is a compulsory subject in the early primary grades. As stated by EurActiv Languages & Culture (2012, p. 5), “English is still by far the most taught foreign language in nearly all countries from primary level and onwards”. Jenkins (2009) states that many countries not only begin English language teaching at the primary stage, but they have extended the English language learning cycle to include the kindergarten stage. Hashemi and Azizinezhad (2011, p. 2083) state “It is fundamentally essential for children to learn English from a young age in this rapidly globalizing world”. Without doubt, there are many advantages in learning English from a young age. According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2010, p. 428) “When language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness”. In addition, Hashemi and Azizinezhad (2011, p. 2083) explain that “English knowledge will help to open many opportunities for them (children) in the future and it will be invaluable in their future careers”. Furthermore, children will master better communication and social skills, when learning English at a very young age. They will gain self-confidence and will be motivated to continue improving their English at higher levels of education. Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2011, p. 98) extend the many benefits of early language learning to include “better language skills” and “favorable attitudes to other languages, people and cultures”, as long as teachers are trained and classes small. Marsh (2002, p. 3) elaborates on the positive impact of language learning on children’s thinking processes by stating: “Being able to see the same phenomenon from different angles, as though looking through different language ‘spectacles’, can have a very interesting impact on our ability to think and understand”. Based on the results of a survey of EYL teachers from 55 countries around the world, Shin and Crandall (2014) report that more than 50 percent of these countries have introduced compulsory English language courses by the third grade. According to Garton et al. (2011, p. 5) English is “overwhelmingly the first choice” of parents in non-English speaking countries of a foreign language for their children. It has been noted that there is an increase in the number of EYL programs available worldwide. On the one hand, this is justified by the growing demand for English; on the other hand, it is a result of parents’ beliefs that learning English provides their children with a better education and better employment opportunities (Ennever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009; Zare, 2012).

In Kuwait, English is considered the first foreign language and significant value is attributed to it. The Ministry of Education has included English as a compulsory subject from primary to high school education (AlAzmi, 2018). However, it would be highly innovative to introduce English language teaching in Kuwaiti public kindergarten schools as well, with promising learning outcomes. To assure success, it is therefore important to explore the beliefs of kindergarten teachers prior to any
implementation of English language teaching at that level. Stronge (2000) reminds us that teachers affect student performance significantly, as they are the most influential factor in the teaching/learning process. Sanders et al., (1997) also point to the strong cumulative effect teachers have on students’ achievement. The focus on kindergarten teachers’ role in the success of kindergarten education is captured by Hanušová and Najvar (2006, p. 7), when they state that “the younger the pupil [starting to learn L2], the more significant the qualification of the teacher”. Rixon (2015) also emphasizes that teachers play a crucial role in providing the right conditions for language learning to take place, especially in contexts where there is limited contact with English outside school, as in Kuwait.

1.1. Kindergarten in government schools in Kuwait: a brief review

In Kuwait, education at government schools from kindergarten to high school is offered for free. As for kindergarten education, it is not compulsory, yet the Ministry of Education attributes great importance to it (UNESCO, 2011/11). It lasts for two years prior to children’s enrollment in the primary stage. Children enter at the age of four and finish at the age of six (College of Education, 2012). According to Noor (2019) “Kuwait is a regional leader in preschool enrolment—Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the preschool level is an impressive 66.4%”. Kindergarten education started as early as 1954, when two kindergarten schools, Al-Mohalab and Tareq, were first established in Kuwait (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). Since the 1950s the Kuwait kindergarten schooling system has undergone several changes and education at that level has been developed and improved. Kindergarten education aims to develop children’s capacities for interaction and communication, encourage them to discover their environment, and provide them with social and moral guidance in a safe environment (UNESCO, 2006). Al-Hooi (2009, p. 30) summarizes the nature of education in kindergarten stating: “Children are taught about and through language, literature, arithmetic, natural science, music, art, motor skills, role-play, and creativity”. Thus, language plays a significant role in the learning process. It is worth noting that Arabic is the medium of instruction in Kuwaiti government kindergarten schools.

1.2. Research problem

With globalization and the spread of English, there is a growing demand to teach it at all levels, including to kindergarten children. Crystal (2003) confirms that English is undeniably the language of knowledge, science and mathematics, politics, business, media and allied technology. Therefore, it is crucial for children to acquire English language proficiency as early as possible to learn and comprehend the information presented through English. In Kuwait, English is taught as a foreign language from as early as six years old, which means from the primary stage onwards. This was decided in the school year 1993/1994 (AlAzmi, 2018) and therefore it is almost three decades since the decision was implemented. However, the outcomes are unsatisfactory and this has led to increased interest among parents in their children being taught English at a younger age. According to Brewster et al., (2004) the drive to learn English normally comes from parental pressure, as parents want their children to obtain greater opportunities in the fields of economics, culture, and education. Many Kuwait parents enroll their children in private bilingual kindergartens and some even further by starting their children’s bilingual education at nursery age. The widespread consideration that younger children absorb lessons faster is forcing the government, as well as private schools, to teach English from an early age, (Brewster et al., 2004). The purpose of the present study is to explore Kuwaiti public kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding teaching English to young children.

1.3. Research questions

In the light of the above-mentioned problem, the study addresses the following questions:

(1) What are the beliefs of Kuwaiti kindergarten teachers regarding teaching English to public kindergarten children?

(2) Are there statistically significant differences in the beliefs of kindergarten teachers about English language teaching with reference to experience, affiliation, and educational district?
Based on the second research question, the null hypothesis is as follows:

It is expected that there will be no differences of statistical significance (at the level $P \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the participants with reference to the study variables (experience, affiliation, and educational district) based on the results of both $t$-test and One Way ANOVA.

2.1. Research objective
The present study aims to explore the beliefs of kindergarten teachers about teaching English to children in Kuwaiti public kindergarten schools.

2.2. Research significance
The present study will be of considerable significance as it will highlight the beliefs of public kindergarten teachers for future research. To the researcher’s best knowledge, there are no studies that have been conducted to discuss the beliefs of kindergarten teachers about teaching English in public kindergarten. It will provide an input for educationists and decision-makers at the Ministry of Education to avoid any future obstacles to teaching English in Kuwaiti kindergarten schools. Furthermore, it could lead to the restructuring of the kindergarten program at the College of Education at Kuwait University with the implementation of future programs where English is taught as a compulsory foreign language.

2.3. Research limitations
The present research is limited to its sample gender and nationality, since the majority, if not all, of Kuwaiti kindergarten schools have Kuwaiti female teachers. It is limited in time as it was conducted in the Spring Semester of the academic year 2018/2019. Finally, it is limited to place as it looked at the beliefs of teachers in only three out of six educational districts, namely AlAsima, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, & Ahmadi.

3. Literature review

3.1. The concept of teachers’ beliefs
Teachers’ beliefs have different synonyms, such as teachers’ perceptions and attitudes. These reflect teachers’ classroom methods and have a direct and indirect role in influencing a child’s academic experience, including learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Teachers’ beliefs significantly influence not only how but what is taught. Beliefs pertain to goals and values the teachers have and how they view their students, teaching procedures, and teaching content. Often teachers’ beliefs influence decisions regarding teaching methods; furthermore, they can affect student attitudes towards learning, which are often formulated early in life. According to Qbeita (2011), it is believed that if a teacher is a non-native speaker of English, s/he will have a negative belief towards teaching English as a foreign language and s/he will be apathetic in delivering the EFL content. Thus, many students are likely to mirror these attitudes, especially at kindergarten and primary grade levels. Regarding the meaning of “beliefs”, several influential researchers have provided definitions. Shulman (1986) states that teachers’ beliefs are a combination of new experiences, old knowledge, old experience and attitude. Richards and Lockhart (1996, p. 30) point out that “teachers’ belief systems are founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it”. Clark (1988) indicates that teachers’ beliefs involve a combination of personal experiences, beliefs, values, prejudice and bias. Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) view teachers’ beliefs as steps in the teaching process which even influence teachers’ classroom management. Teachers’ beliefs represent their attitudes toward education, teaching, learning and students (Pajares, 1992). Altan (2006, p. 45) summarizes the concept of teachers’ beliefs stating, “teachers’ beliefs influence their consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods, and teaching policies … Teachers’ beliefs also strongly influence teaching behavior, and finally, learners’ development”.
3.2. Importance of studying teachers’ beliefs
A review of seminal literature on teachers’ beliefs indicates that teachers’ beliefs greatly influence their classroom teaching performance and instructional decisions (Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Richards (1998) elaborates that these beliefs are usually guided by several factors including: teachers own previous experience as learners in classrooms prior to their teaching experience, classroom observations, and their previous training courses. These factors are the ones that shape the teacher as a person and the teacher inside the classroom (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers’ beliefs are reflected in their behaviors, performance, and knowledge, which “provide the underlying framework or schema which guides the teachers’ classroom actions” (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 29).

According to Middendorf (2008), the quality of kindergarten teachers who teach English is important as this will affect the learning outcomes of English language learning. Kindergarten teachers motivate young learners to love both learning in general and language learning, as they engage them in the learning process and help them achieve the expected learning goals. The role which kindergarten teachers play in involving children in learning language in a stress-free context is significant. Kindergarten teachers should be aware of the language expectations of a lesson as well as its content expectations (Echevarria et al., 2004). As a matter of fact, during class time teachers do not hesitate to use their voices, gestures, pictures and any other learning tools to help their children comprehend the content.

Borg (2003, p. 81) describes the important role of teachers in the teaching/learning process stating, “Teachers are active decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically oriented, personalized, and context sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs”. Kagan (1992, p. 85) states that beliefs “may be the clearest measure of a teacher’s professional growth”. Johnson (1994, p. 439) summarizes three basic important assumptions highlighted in research into teachers’ beliefs as: “First, teachers’ beliefs influence perception and judgment. Second, teachers’ beliefs play a role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices. Third, understanding teachers’ beliefs are essential to improve teaching practices and teacher education programs”.

Wenglinsky (2002) advises that a competent teacher cannot be identified by only considering his/her educational level or work experience. On the contrary, teachers influence their students through their classroom motivation and mutual actions. A teacher’s educational level and experience only represent a small part of the classroom management that promotes achievement. Thus, Haddad (2017) alleges that teachers who have the beliefs and attitude of encouragement, motivation, and stimulation reduce learner anxiety about English as a foreign language.

3.3. Factors to consider when planning to teach English to kindergarten children

3.3.1. The age factor
When it comes to the right age for teaching English to young learners, several influential researchers support the theory that language learning is most effective at an early age. Long (1990) argues that the combined findings of studies conducted to date warrant the conclusion that:

The ability to attain native-like phonological abilities in an SL begins to decline by age 6 in many individuals and to be beyond anyone beginning later than age 12, no matter how motivated they might be or how much opportunity they might have. Native-like morphology and syntax only seem to be possible for those beginning before age 15. (p. 280)

Peçenek (2002) also concludes that it is beneficial to start teaching foreign languages at an early age, yet it is also important to provide the necessary conditions for successful language learning in this age group such as competent teachers, suitable materials and proper teaching methods. Du (2010) also supports the claim that learner achievement in second/foreign language learning is largely determined by the age at which that student is first exposed to the language. This clearly suggests that it is preferable to begin second/foreign language learning at the primary stage and
perhaps even in kindergarten. According to Chang (1990), children have great potential to develop accurate pronunciation and fluency. In addition, Dunn (1990, p. 3) stated that “young children are willing to use language and to experiment with sounds, without worrying about making mistakes. Adolescents and adults are less willing to do so”.

However, there are researchers who hold opposing views regarding the teaching of a foreign language at an early age. For example, Soto (1991) indicates that when comparing young children with adults in second language acquisition, children's performance is poorer apart from regarding pronunciation. Johnstone (1994, p. 51) reports on an immersion program in Canada “that early immersion students (beginning in kindergarten) have an advantage in speaking and listening, but late immersion students (beginning at age 13) appear to have an advantage in reading and writing”. Furthermore, Politzer and Weiss (1969) advocate that initial pronunciation and retention of vocabulary increase with age. In general, based on research into the age factor, Krashen et al. (1979) reach the conclusion that adults learn a second language faster than children in the early stages of learning.

3.3.2. The culture factor
Another important factor to consider when teaching English as a second or a foreign language is culture. Al-Dubeab (2002) asserts that language cannot be taken alone, but it comes with various notions and cultural perceptions, which have an impact on the loyalty of a child to his/her own language and culture and that leads to a child's cultural and emotional confusion. Mitchell and Mylesm (2004, p. 235) argue that “language and culture are not separate but acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other”. Gao (2006, p. 59) confirms that “the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural teaching”. Gao (2006) further states that foreign language teachers should be aware of the place of cultural studies in the foreign language classroom and try to improve students’ cultural awareness and promote their communication competence. Moreover, Wang (2008) affirms that foreign language teaching means foreign culture teaching, and this makes foreign language teachers foreign culture teachers as well. According to Wei (2005, p. 56) “language has a dual character: both as a tool of communication and a carrier of culture”. Alyasery (2018, p. 1) confirms that “language and culture are inseparable and can be simply described as two sides of the same coin”. The understanding of culture is very important for understanding any language. According to Al-Ghamdi (2003, p. 2) “the ultimate purpose of teaching a foreign language is to enable the learner to benefit from the knowledge of speakers of that language and communicate with them. If the learner is unfamiliar with the culture of the speakers, s/he cannot understand the literature or communicate effectively”. Differences of culture may cause many mistakes. Thus, no one can ignore the impact of language on the culture of the people; language and culture are deeply connected. Hussein (2000, p. 165) maintains that “it is difficult to engage in effective dialogue without knowing the culture and background of the people with whom you are communicating”. Hussein (2000) affirms that the importance of teaching English to children stems from introducing them to the language functions which facilitate communication and interaction. However, Zughoul (2003, p. 26) states that “teaching English as a second/foreign language anywhere in the Arab World would give it a freehand to intrude into the territory of Arabic and such a practice will have its impact on identity and culture”.

3.3.3. The language interference factor
The ongoing controversy is whether teaching English as a foreign language to kindergarten children might affect the development of their Arabic language. Haddad (2017) warns us that there is a negative effect of second/foreign language learning on first language learning. On the contrary, Al-Rasheed (1998) conducted a study to investigate Kuwaiti primary school teachers' opinions on the pros and cons of teaching English to Kuwaiti primary stage students. Al-Rasheed (1998) concluded that the learning of English did not adversely affect the learning of Arabic, and the learning of English did not give pupils the customs and values of that language. Thus, students did not follow or imitate aspects of the foreign culture, customs and values, but maintained their own cultural aspects. Based on scholars' observations, therefore, it is beneficial for the development of kindergarten children's Arabic and English language to introduce English at an early age (Mohammad, 2008).
3.4. Previous studies
A review of literature on teachers’ beliefs about teaching English to kindergarten reveals limited studies on this important topic. The present study will focus on relevant and influential studies and research findings that tackled teachers’ beliefs about teaching English to kindergarten children. Studies will be presented in a chronological order from the most recent to the oldest in date of publication.

Haddad (2017) conducted a study to explore teachers’ attitudes towards teaching English as a foreign language in the first four grades of the primary stage in Jordan. A total of 89 English language primary school teachers (58 females and 31 males) participated and responded to a questionnaire designed by researchers from Irbid Second Directorate of Education in the academic year 2009/2010. The study results indicated positive teacher attitudes towards teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, it showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the English teachers’ attitudes towards teaching English according to educational level, educational districts, gender, experience, and marital status.

Gürsoy (2013) investigated the attitudes of two hundred teacher trainees towards the English language and their self-reported daily difficulties when using their foreign language skills. The data collection tool was a questionnaire which was developed after reviewing relevant literature. The study revealed that trainees showed mildly positive attitudes toward the English language, with females being more positive than males. The findings also suggested that trainees had stronger instrumental motivation than integrative motivation. Moreover, trainees did not differ significantly in terms of their difficulties in using daily language skills. However, there were some statistically significant differences in their academic language, such as vocabulary and monologic speech.

Qbeita (2011) conducted a study on 100 kindergarten teachers to investigate the level of their beliefs regarding English language teaching to kindergarten children. The questionnaire revealed that the level of teachers’ beliefs was low in that the teachers showed uncertainty about the potential benefits. The t-test results showed significant differences based on teachers’ experiences, major, and affiliation. However, there were no significant differences based on their academic level.

Mecham (2007) investigated kindergarten teachers’ developmentally appropriate beliefs, practices, and their perceived problems of children entering kindergarten. The participants, who came from eight Utah school districts, responded to survey items on “Teachers’ Transition Practices’, and “Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Survey’. The study findings revealed that teachers with higher beliefs reported fewer academic problems when dealing with children than those teachers with low beliefs. Findings also showed that teachers with higher beliefs reported a smaller percentage of children having difficulty learning English in kindergarten than those teachers who reported lower developmentally appropriate beliefs.

Chávez (2006) explored teachers’ knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs regarding the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language and the impact of certain variables on teachers’ classroom performance and behavior. The sample was 15 in-service teachers from the Saturday English Program. The findings revealed that teachers’ beliefs were influenced by their experience of what works best, and by their tendency to follow certain ritual behavior and performance inside the classroom. In addition, their school culture and the degree of their empowerment and involvement in instructional decisions were of great influence in shaping their teaching beliefs regarding English.

3.5. Methodology

3.5.1. Participants
For the purpose of the study, 90 female teachers who are native-speakers of Arabic were selected randomly from three out of the six educational districts, namely (AlAsima, Mubarak AlKabeer, & Al-Ahmadi). This means that three kindergarten schools from each educational district were selected with the ratio of ten teachers from each selected kindergarten school. Out of the 90 teachers, 42 teachers
were graduates of the College of Education at Kuwait University, while 48 teachers were graduates of the College of Basic Education, one of the colleges of The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). For further information about the participants, Table 1 represents their demographic data.

Table 1. Represents the demographic data of the participants

| Variable Label       | Value Label                                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender               | Female                                           | 90        | 100%       |
| School Stage         | Kindergarten                                     | 90        | 100%       |
| Nationality          | Kuwait                                           | 90        | 100%       |
| Affiliation          | College of Education (Kuwait University)         | 42        | 100%       |
|                      | College of Basic Education (PAAET)               | 48        |            |
| Experience           | 1–5                                              | 25        | 100%       |
|                      | 6–10                                             | 29        |            |
|                      | More than 10 years                               | 36        |            |
| Educational Districts| AlAsima                                          | 30        | 100%       |
|                      | Mubarak AlKabeer                                  | 30        |            |
|                      | Ahmadi                                           | 30        |            |

3.5.2. Study tool
The present study adopted the descriptive analytical research methodology. To answer the study questions, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on relevant literature, such as Qbeita (2011) and Al Malihi (2015). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section sought the demographic data of the participants: gender, stage, nationality, affiliation, years of experience, and educational district. The second section covered one domain with 14 items. The study questionnaire followed a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree).

3.5.2.1. Validity of the study tool. The validity of the study tool was gained based on the review of faculty staff members from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Department of Educational Psychology at the College of Education. Their comments and recommendations were considered to finalize the 14 questionnaire items.

3.5.2.2. Reliability of the study tool. The reliability of the study tool was achieved by using SPSS to calculate the Coefficient Alpha Cronbach, which showed that there was significant correlation among the domain items. The study tool reliability was computed and proved reliable at (0.764).

3.5.3. Procedures
To implement the present study, access to the chosen kindergarten schools was gained from the educational districts they belong to. A conference was held with the teachers to explain the purpose of the study and how to respond to the questionnaire items. Participation was optional. Those who agreed to take part were asked to sign a consent form. Teachers were given enough time to read the questionnaire and provide the suitable responses and they were assured of the confidentiality of the provided data.

3.5.4. Analysis
The data was analyzed using SPSS. Percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to find out the teachers’ level of beliefs based on the questionnaire items. In addition, t-test and ANOVA were applied to identify significant differences with reference to the study
variables (affiliation, years of experience, and educational district). The results will be interpreted based on the following scale of means:

- Less than 2.50 indicates low level of beliefs.
- Equal to 2.50 and less than 3.50 indicate moderate level of beliefs.
- More than 3.50 indicates high level of beliefs.

### 3.6. Results and discussions

#### 3.6.1. Results related to the first research question

The following section represents and discusses the results of the first research question: “What are the beliefs of Kuwaiti kindergarten teachers regarding teaching English to public kindergarten children?”. Means and standard deviations are provided as well as the level of teachers’ beliefs to rank the responses of kindergarten teachers as presented in Table 2.

| Item | Belief Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation | Level of Belief | Rank of Means |
|------|------------------|------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1)   | Learning a new language may have a negative effect on the first language. | 2.75 | 0.65 | Moderate | 10 |
| 2)   | Learning English is very important. | 3.50 | 0.59 | High | 7 |
| 3)   | The younger the children, the more efficient learning a foreign language will be. | 2.85 | 0.72 | Moderate | 8 |
| 4)   | Children can be native-like when learning English at an early age. | 2.35 | 0.67 | Low | 14 |
| 5)   | Children can speak English with correct pronunciation. | 2.80 | 0.68 | Moderate | 9 |
| 6)   | Writing in English can affect children’s Arabic writing skills, especially with certain letters and numbers. | 3.60 | 0.53 | High | 5 |
| 7)   | Children will be confused when writing in English from left to right compared to Arabic writing from right to left. | 3.54 | 0.57 | High | 6 |
| 8)   | Learning English at an early age will positively impact students’ scholastic achievement in later years. | 2.68 | 0.75 | Moderate | 12 |
| 9)   | Teaching English increases kindergarten children’s self-confidence. | 3.65 | 0.73 | High | 4 |
| 10)  | Teaching English in kindergarten is becoming a contemporary necessity in the globalized world. | 3.90 | 0.78 | High | 1 |
| 11)  | Learning a foreign language helps kindergarten children develop their communicative social skills. | 3.85 | 0.77 | High | 2 |
| 12)  | Learning a foreign language in kindergarten facilitates children’s language learning in later stages of schooling. | 3.70 | 0.83 | High | 3 |
| 13)  | Learning a foreign language in kindergarten introduces children to other cultures. | 2.69 | 0.74 | Moderate | 11 |
| 14)  | Learning a foreign language in kindergarten facilitates children’s understanding of other cultures. | 2.59 | 0.84 | Moderate | 13 |

The results presented in Table 2 show that kindergarten teachers have a range of different levels of beliefs. The discussion will shed light on the ranking of the teachers’ scored means, which can be classified into three groups: high, moderate, and low levels of beliefs. Item numbers 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 & 12 represented a high level of beliefs; items 1, 3, 5, 8, 13, & 14 revealed a moderate level of
beliefs; only one item scored a low mean among the 14 items, item 4. The means scores showed a range of kindergarten teachers' levels of beliefs about teaching English to children. On the one hand, kindergarten teachers showed high levels of beliefs to seven items of the questionnaire; on the other hand, they showed both moderate and low levels of beliefs to the other seven items of the questionnaire. This reflects the nature of education in kindergarten, teacher command of the English language itself, and teacher awareness of English language learning and teaching theories. This all has educational implications when it comes to the actual implementation of English language teaching in Kuwaiti kindergarten schools.

The results confirm that kindergarten teachers are aware of the significance of introducing English language teaching to learners as early as at the kindergarten stage, which means to learners of between four and six years old. According to the results, kindergarten teachers have shown high levels of beliefs in seven items regarding the introduction of English language teaching to children of that learning stage, with means scores above 3.50. This matches the results of Mecham (2007), where the participants showed a high level of beliefs regarding English language teaching to young learners. In addition, teachers believe that the introduction of English will be extremely beneficial to young learners as they will gain self-confidence and will be able to speak it effortlessly with accurate pronunciation; this matches the findings of Peçenek (2002), Long (1990), and Dunn (1990). However, teachers show low beliefs regarding children's ability to achieve native-like speech, which may reflect their own command of the English language.

Furthermore, the results reflect the participants' beliefs about English as a global language of knowledge and science, media and technology, and that is consistent with Crystal's (2003) claim that the English language plays a crucial role worldwide, and confirms the importance of English over other languages. Bilingualism will enhance children's communicative skills and have a positive impact on increasing their self-confidence. This result agrees with the conclusions of Hussein (2000) and Al-Ghamdi (2003), who propose that the ultimate purpose of teaching a foreign language is to enhance the learners' communication with native and other speakers of that language, in this case English.

However, teachers only moderately believe that English language learning will introduce kindergarten children to the culture of native speakers of English, as that depends on the taught content of the English textbook, whether a locally written text is adopted, or a textbook produced by another Arab country, or one of the authentic English textbooks specially written for non-native young learners of English. This finding is inconsistent with those of Al-Rasheed (1998), Wei (2005), Gao (2006), and Wang (2008), as these all agree that learning a language means learning its culture. In other words, language and culture are inseparable and two sides of the same coin (Al-Yaseen, 2018). The present study is also at variance with Zughoul (2003) and Haddad (2017), who suggested that learners could be influenced by the values and customs that they are exposed to in language learning.

A final concern about teaching English to kindergarten children is potential interference with and negative impact on the mother tongue Arabic. Teachers show a high level of belief that learning English can cause confusion when writing, especially with certain numbers in Arabic as they resemble certain letters in English. The direction of writing is a further issue, as in English this is from left to right while in Arabic it is from right to left. This is consistent with Johnstone's (1994) comparison of children's and adolescent writing skills, as adolescents mastered writing skills more effectively than young children.

3.6.2. Results related to the second research question
This section provides answers to and discussion of the second research question “Are there statistically significant differences in the beliefs of kindergarten teachers about English language teaching with reference to experience, affiliation, and educational district?”. Tables 3, 4 and 5 present the means and standard deviations of the t-test and ANOVA test results. As for
the null hypothesis, it is expected that there will be no differences of statistical significance (at the level $P \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the participants with reference to the study variables (experience, affiliation, and educational district) based on the results of both t-test and One Way ANOVA.

| Variable Name | College of Education (Kuwait University) | College of Basic Education (PAAET) | T     | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|----|-----------------|
| Domain 1      |                                        | N. 2.415 Std. Deviation 0.342     | N. 48 Mean 2.963 Std. Deviation 0.426 | 2.571 | 88 | 0.032*         |

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference with reference to the affiliation variable as the level of significance is $P \leq 0.05$. A comparison of the mean scores of teachers from both affiliations showed that the mean score (2.963) of kindergarten teachers who graduated from The College of Basic Education (PAAET) is higher than the mean score (2.415) of kindergarten teachers graduated from the College of Education—Kuwait University. This indicates that PAAET graduates hold a high level of beliefs about the teaching of English at kindergarten stage compared to graduates of Kuwait University. The result matches the t-test results of Qbeita (2011), where there were statistically significant differences based on teacher affiliation. As for the null hypothesis and based on the results, a significance level existed; thus the null hypothesis is rejected.

| Variable Name | Source | D.F. | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F-Ratio | Sig. |
|---------------|--------|------|----------------|-------------|---------|------|
| Domain 1      | Between Groups | 3    | 2.263          | 1.607       | 1.921   | 0.029* |
|               | Within Groups  | 85   | 157.310        | 0.584       |         |      |

Table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of the participants with reference to the study variable “years of experience” as the level of significance is $P \leq 0.05$. To find which pairs of groups differ significantly, the multiple comparison test using the Scheffe procedures was applied. Scheffe (0.05) showed that no two groups differed significantly at (0.05). The result does not match those of Haddad (2017) and Wenglinsky (2002), who did not identify significant differences with reference to years of experience. However, the result is consistent with those of Chávez (2006) who identified significant differences with reference to years of experience. As for the null hypothesis and based on the results, a significance level existed; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

| Variable Name | Source | D.F. | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F-Ratio | Sig. |
|---------------|--------|------|----------------|-------------|---------|------|
| Domain 1      | Between Groups | 3    | 4.389          | 1.803       | 2.84    | 0.367|
|               | Within Groups  | 85   | 273.031        | 0.470       |         |      |
Table 5 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the responses of the participants with reference to the variable “educational district” as the level of significance is $P \leq 0.05$. The result resembles that of Haddad (2017), who did not identify statistically significant differences in the responses of English teachers’ attitudes towards English language teaching with reference to educational districts. As for the null hypothesis, it is accepted as there was no statistically significant indication level identified.

3.7. Conclusion

The present study explored the beliefs of Kuwaiti kindergarten teachers about extending the teaching and learning of English to public kindergarten children as an innovative practice. It is of paramount importance for the Ministry of Education to consider the beliefs of in-service kindergarten teachers prior to making significant decisions. The results of the present study indicated that kindergarten teachers showed mixed levels of beliefs regarding the teaching of English. Teachers believed that learning English at such a young age will make a difference in learning the language effectively. It will enable children to communicate easily and express themselves competently. In addition, they will appreciate the foreign language culture and respond accordingly. Learning a foreign language at an early age will pave the way for children to excel in language learning and academically in later stages of schooling. Teachers were concerned about foreign language interference with the mother tongue Arabic. Moreover, they were concerned that children will not be able to express themselves at a native-like level as they are non-native speakers of English. The study results showed significant differences with reference to the study variables affiliation and years of experience.

In conclusion, it is important to consider English language teaching to learners as young as kindergarten children as an innovative practice to achieve better learning outcomes. However, the process has to be gradual, consistent and efficient. On the one hand, this can be effectively achieved by helping in-service kindergarten teachers to master the English language themselves through special training courses. On the other hand, both education colleges at Kuwait University and PAAET must design English language programs for kindergarten teachers that will provide the educational field with academically qualified English language teachers. It is not feasible to recruit kindergarten teachers who have no English language background to teach it to learners who are at a critical stage as these learners need to have a native-like model to follow. Without taking the right steps, the outcomes will not be satisfactory or encouraging. It is recommended that the following should be considered:

1) Investigating the opinions of kindergarten teachers regarding their readiness to teach English in kindergarten schools.

2) Establishing collaborative protocols between the College of Education at Kuwait University, the College of Basic Education at PAAET, and the Ministry of Education to design English language programs for future kindergarten teachers.

3) Hiring native speakers of English to work side by side with Kuwaiti teachers to provide the necessary language modeling and assistance for better performance and teaching practices.

4) Providing constant language training courses for kindergarten teachers to improve their own language and update them in the latest methodologies and research into learning strategies.

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