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## English Language Teacher Educators' Pedagogical Knowledge Base: The Macro and Micro Categories

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*Abstract: The aim of this study was to determine the major categories of English language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge base. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 teachers, teacher educators, and university professors (15 participants in total). The results of data analysis indicated that teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge encompasses eight macro categories; namely, knowledge of language and related disciplines, knowledge of ELT theories, skills, and techniques, knowledge of context and social relations, knowledge of class, time, and learning management, knowledge of research and professional development, knowledge of practicum, knowledge of teachers and their assessment, and knowledge of reflective and critical teaching. Among these categories, the first four ones are shared by language teachers, while the rest belong to the domain of teacher educators. The findings also revealed no significant statistical difference among the categories proposed by the three groups of the participants. The results are discussed and suggestions are provided for future research.*

### Introduction

The significant role of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in preparing qualified teachers is almost an uncontroversial issue in teacher education literature (Smith, 2005). It is through these programs that teachers take the rudimentary steps to become professionals (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Smith, 2005), gain more confidence about their teaching (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002), and enlarge the domain of their knowledge base (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011).

Teacher educators are normally the people who make a significant contribution to "the total ecology of teacher education" (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2005, p. 588). Their role may be described as that of a mediator who bridges the gap between top level policy makers at the national and/or local domain and teachers as the grass roots who put the educational decisions into practice. As a result, they need to meet the knowledge and performance standards set by political bodies (Bullough, 2001) and demonstrate these standards in practice (Lunenberg et al., 2005).

The fundamental shift that occurred in the orientation of teacher education programs during the last two decades of the twentieth century (Freeman, 2002) has made the already demanding task of teacher educators even more complicated. Before the mid-1970s a process-

product approach to teacher education was followed which supported the idea that in order to enhance student achievement, teachers needed to learn a set of tried-and-tested behaviors with predictable learning outcomes (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In such a context, the role of a teacher educator was passing bits of personal and professional knowledge to teacher candidates (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

However, as this traditional approach was replaced by a dialogic one (Freeman, 2002), teacher candidates were looked upon as “active, thinking decision-makers” (Borg, 2003, p. 81) who use their prior experience as students to conceptualize teaching (Lortie, 1975). This led to a growing interest in teachers’ beliefs (Pajares, 1992) and cognition (Borg, 2003; Feryok, 2010). Teacher educators’ mission statement changed from providing a set of ready-made techniques to considering broader historical, social, cultural, and political factors that shaped and affected teacher candidates’ thinking (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). With this new description of duties, teacher educators have become essential agents for change in the teaching profession (Margolin, 2011).

Despite their important role, little attention has been paid to the professional features of teacher educators in both mainstream education (Murray & Male, 2005; O’Sullivan, 2010) and language teacher education (Borg, 2011). This relative neglect might be due to the low status that is assigned to the field of teacher education; there are some people who believe that teacher education is “something that can be quickly mastered in a 45 min conversation” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 120) and prefer to concentrate instead on doing research and publishing in other fields. On the other hand, in the context of teacher education studies, this scarcity of research can be attributed to the fact that many teacher educators are researchers who usually pay attention to teachers rather than themselves (Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2005).

In the absence of empirical studies, the task of teacher education has traditionally been fulfilled by experienced teachers with a good teaching practice record (Fisher, 2009; Korthagen, 2000) or advanced academic degrees (Wilson, 2006). The type of knowledge teacher educators need to have and the way they acquire that knowledge have been largely ignored (Dinkleman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006; John, 2002), resulting in the lack of an agreed-upon set of standards for teacher educators’ professional knowledge (Murray & Male, 2005). However, it has recently been argued that despite their commonalities, there are considerable differences between teachers’ and teacher educators’ work (Wright, 2009), an issue that signifies the importance of doing research on the knowledge base of the latter group.

The present study is a partial attempt to compensate for this paucity of research in the field of English language teaching (ELT). More specifically, the study intended to come up with a conceptual model of the pedagogical knowledge base of typical language teacher educators by considering three groups of participants’ ideas into account. The main research question that was addressed in this study is:

*What are the categories of English language teacher educators’ pedagogical knowledge base?*

In other words, we were interested in finding those areas of pedagogical knowledge that must be possessed by an expert language teacher educator. To do so, we sought the ideas of university professors, teacher educators, and teachers in this regard.

For us, teacher educators are those professionals who provide formal instruction and support for both teacher candidates and practicing teachers during pre-service and/or in-service teacher education/training programs. Therefore, mentors and supervisors are included in this definition only when they are also members of the teacher education team. University professors, on the other hand, are the academicians who are engaged in teaching language-related majors at the university, but are not in direct contact with prospective teachers. Furthermore, teachers are

the language teaching experts who are involved in the real act of teaching foreign/second languages to language learners.

### **Knowledge Base and Teachers**

Bullough (2001) traces the history of knowledge base back to the National Education Association convention of 1907, where the presenters argued in favor of making teachers familiar with the pedagogical tools and techniques which would enable them to convey subject matter to students. The debates originated from the opinion that teaching requires a body of knowledge which goes beyond the mere mastery of the subject matter and that knowing a particular subject matter is one thing and having the knowledge to make it teachable quite another.

However, it was Lee Shulman who formally conceptualized the notion of pedagogical content knowledge (Segall, 2004), implying that teachers must have mastery of both subject matter and pedagogy and know how to combine them appropriately.

Since then, other researchers have come up with various terms, such as “personal practical knowledge” (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985), “practical arguments” (Fenstermacher, 1986), and “cognition” (Borg, 2003), to describe various dimensions of teaching knowledge. Because we have adopted a holistic view of language teacher educators’ knowledge base, the term “pedagogical knowledge” is used throughout the paper to encompass the theoretical, practical, and personal aspects of knowledge base (Woods & Cakir, 2011).

Given the partial similarities in the nature of teachers’ and teacher educators’ responsibilities (Wright, 2009), research on teachers’ pedagogical knowledge can be one source of inquiry relevant to the current study. Of particular importance in this domain are classical frameworks of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge. Shulman (1986), for example, introduced three dimensions for teacher knowledge base that include subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Later, he refined his model by adding a fourth component, namely the knowledge of social and contextual dimensions (Shulman, 1987). A similar categorization, but using different terms, was suggested by Grossman (1990) (as cited in Chauvot, 2009). Finally, Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) concluded that teachers’ pedagogical knowledge consists of common content knowledge (a form of knowledge that is shared by everybody who knows a particular subject matter), specialized content knowledge (knowledge of the subject matter that is uniquely possessed by teachers), knowledge of students, and knowledge of teaching.

These conceptual frameworks laid the foundation for empirical studies that examined teachers’ pedagogical knowledge in different subject matters. In the L2 (second/foreign language) context, Gatbonton (1999) made one of the first attempts to categorize the pedagogical knowledge of a small group of English teachers through stimulated recall protocols, concluding that teachers’ knowledge consists of 21 categories. Of these, the predominant categories dealt with teachers’ knowledge of language management (i.e. the language that students produce or are exposed to), knowledge of students, knowledge of procedure check (i.e. ensuring the smooth transition of classroom activities), and progress review (i.e. evaluating students’ participation and improvement). While other researchers (e.g. Akbari & Moradkhani, 2012; Gatbonton, 2008; Mullock, 2006) added a few minor categories, the core of language teachers’ pedagogical knowledge remained more or less consistent.

## **Pedagogical Knowledge and Teacher educators**

When it comes to teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge, however, no directly relevant research can be documented. Instead, the current study was informed by a number of publications that intended to demonstrate the characteristics of quality teacher educators. In this section, the outstanding findings of these publications are reviewed on the basis that the skills and qualities of teacher educators are mentally represented in the form of their knowledge base. In other words, the assumption is that the following studies shed light (though indirectly) on the components of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge through investigating their required characteristics or skills.

The Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) made one of the initial attempts to identify a set of standards for teacher educators by probing into different groups of educational experts' ideas. The standards, which define the characteristics of an ideal teacher educator, were developed as a result of the input received from a range of distinguished educators, including policy makers, teacher educators, school principals, and teachers. In the latest version, ATE has identified nine standards encompassing various aspects such as teacher educators' instructional ability, research-based skills, technological literacy, program evaluation knowledge, and professional development orientation.

Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen, and Wubbe's (2005) study is another example of a research that intended to identify the professional responsibilities of teacher educators through tapping into multiple groups of stakeholders' perspectives. In a three-phase method, the researchers first reviewed the available literature to find information about the tasks (i.e. activities that a teacher educator should do) and competencies (i.e. the knowledge and skills that teacher educators must possess) of qualified teacher educators. Also, in this stage, they interviewed 8 teacher educators and 9 stakeholders who were indirectly involved in teacher education in Netherlands. In the second phase, a 7-point likert scale questionnaire was developed based on the data collected through phase one. This instrument was completed by 132 educators in various fields. In the third round of this Delphi study, some modifications were made on the instrument based on the data provided in the previous stage and the results of the data analysis of stage two were given to a representative of 119 teacher educators who had responded in the previous phase and were asked to give their ideas about the amendments made on the instrument.

The analysis of the obtained data led to the development of a two-part professional profile, including a task and a competence profile. The respondents considered being engaged in professional development, providing teacher education programs, taking part in policy development, organizing activities for teachers, and selecting future teachers very important or important tasks of teacher educators, whereas carrying out research was viewed as important only by university-based teacher educators. With respect to the competence profile, the participants believed that it was very necessary or necessary for teacher educators to have knowledge of the subject matter as well as communicative and reflective, organizational, and pedagogical skills.

Contextual knowledge is another category that has been conceptualized in different ways; in fact, this dimension of teacher educators' knowledge base highlights the importance of the role of social and political factors in shaping their pedagogical knowledge. For example, Smith (2005) conducted his study in a teacher education college context in Israel, using 40 novice teachers and 18 teacher educators as participants. She invited the respondents to answer three open-ended questions asking their ideas about the definition of a good teacher educator, his/her professional knowledge, and the difference between a teacher and a teacher educator. While some of the aforementioned categories were also suggested in this study, the ability to

communicate effectively was a new one introduced by the participants. In other words, the respondents believed that a good teacher educator should be skillful in terms of social skills, knowing how to collaborate appropriately with their colleagues and other stakeholders.

The role of contextual variables was also emphasized by Chauvot (2009) in a self-study where she reflected on the process of her transition from a teacher to a teacher educator. She suggested the importance of working milieu, believing that apart from the components of Shulman's (1986) model of pedagogical knowledge (mentioned above), her knowledge of the context in which she worked had a great influence on her successful performance upon transferring from a Canadian to an American context.

Awareness of socio-political debates is another dimension of contextual knowledge that is emphasized by Zeichner (2005) in an argumentative paper. After providing an anecdote about the process through which he became a teacher educator, he stated that in order to have a successful transition from teacher to teacher educator, individuals should be aware of the features of teacher education programs and policy debates about how teachers learn to teach. A similar idea was proposed by Doecke (2004) who believes that knowledge of the immediate socio-political context is a teacher educators' integral responsibility.

Finally, knowledge of teaching and learning theories has been elaborated in some position papers. A number of publications (e.g. Loughran, 2005; Bullock, 2009) have argued that, compared to teachers, teacher educators are more articulate about their theories by having the necessary meta-cognitive knowledge. It is in fact one of their primary responsibilities to be familiar with the latest literature on teacher education (Zeichner, 2005) and expose teacher candidates to new ideas and theories (Hadar & Brody, 2010). However, teacher educators must not be stuck in theory and should try to reconcile it with practice (Ariza, Pozo, & Toscano, 2002; Zeichner, 2010; 2012).

Taken together, most of these categories are recognized indirectly as the reviewed studies focus on teacher educators' qualities rather than their pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, lacking from these publications is the categories of language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. The present study tries to partly redress this balance by proposing a comprehensive and empirically-based model of their pedagogical knowledge.

## **Methodology**

The aim of the present study was to shed light on the nature of language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge by identifying its constituent categories. To this end, multiple perspectives were taken into consideration by interviewing three groups of stakeholders (teachers, teacher educators, and university professors). The following sections provide a detailed description of the process of data collection and analysis.

### **Participants**

Five teachers, teacher educators, and university professors (a total of 15 participants) were selected. Purposive sampling (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990) was used to select the participants with a set of pre-defined characteristics; that is, the teachers should have had at least 10 years of teaching experience, the teacher educators should have been actively involved in training pre-service and/or in-service teachers for a minimum of five years, and the university professors should have been engaged in teaching ELT related courses in academic settings. It

was assumed that a minimum working experience would let the respondents develop a more comprehensive picture of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge.

The participants were either known to one of the researchers or introduced by other professionals in the field. All the respondents were approached by one of the researchers (the interviewer) who explained the nature of the study for them. They were assured of the confidentiality of the information they would provide and their free will to participate in the study.

Among the teachers (3 males and 2 females), four had a master of arts (MA) (three in ELT and one in Linguistics), while one held a bachelor of arts (BA) in ELT. Their age ranged from 29 to 37 with an average of 12.6 years of teaching experience. The participants had all been teaching at different proficiency levels and had the experience of attending teacher training courses (as both pre-service and in-service teachers) in either public or private teacher education centers.

Considering teacher educators (5 males), four had an MA (three in ELT and one in English Translation), while one was a PhD holder. Their age was between 31 and 57 with an average of 9.8 years of experience in conducting teacher education courses in public and/or private institutes. In addition, they all had had at least 5 years of English teaching experience prior to becoming teacher educators.

Finally, all the university professors (3 males and 2 females) had a PhD and were engaged in teaching various university courses, including teaching methodology, testing, and linguistics. All of them also had the experience of teaching general English courses to students at various proficiency levels and had attended pre-service or in-service teacher education courses as teacher candidates or practicing teachers. Their age ranged from 33 to 51 with an average teaching experience of 16.6, in total.

### **Data Collection**

Following the established practice in research related to pedagogical knowledge, a qualitative mode of inquiry was used for data collection (Ben-Peretz, 2011). More precisely, since the primary aim of the study was developing a theoretical model of English teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge, we adopted grounded theory, a research approach in which the theory emerges from the data (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007).

Data was collected through separate, one-shot interviews, which is the most commonly used technique in grounded theory (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). This technique is especially useful in applied linguistics when the aim is investigating participants' beliefs and orientations (Mann, 2011).

To prepare the interview questions, developing an understanding of the concept of pedagogical knowledge, in general, and teacher educators' knowledge, in particular, was necessary. To this end, a comprehensive review of the literature was conducted, focusing on the categories of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge in both mainstream education and ELT context. The main education-related databases (e.g. ERIC, Science Direct, and Wiley Inter-science) were searched using various keywords such as "teacher educator", "knowledge base", "pedagogical knowledge", and "knowledge base of teacher education". Consequently, all the papers and publications directly or indirectly related to teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge were extracted from the retrieved resources.

In the next stage, an interview guideline was designed incorporating key features of teacher educators' knowledge base highlighted in the literature. Attempts were made to use

simple wording and avoid ambiguous or leading questions (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview questions had an open-ended nature and aimed at drawing the participants' ideas about the pedagogical knowledge of English teacher educators. The guideline was then piloted by interviewing an English teacher and a teacher educator, leading to the modification of some of the questions as well as the addition of a number of new ones (see appendix I). In order to come up with comparable data, the same guideline was used for interviewing all the three groups of stakeholders.

After finalizing the interview guideline, the participants attended separate semi-structured interviews which were conducted by one of the researchers. The interviewees worked in various institutions; therefore, the interviewer set an appointment with the individual participants in order to meet them in their office or working place. Because all the respondents were advanced English speakers, the interviews were conducted in English. The interviews lasted between 21 to 44 minutes (an average of 32.66 minutes). They were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### Data Analysis

A mixed qualitative-quantitative procedure was followed for data analysis. To probe into the participants' ideas, an inductive approach, including three stages of open coding, axial coding, and labeling (Merriam, 2009), was adopted. In the first phase, the interview transcripts were scrutinized and the sections which were related to the characteristics of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge were identified, with shorthand designations in the form of gerund phrases assigned to each of the segments. For example, in the following extract from one of the participating teacher educator's response, the segment was designated as "being aware of ELT theories":

*They [teacher educators] should be aware of the new theories, they should be aware of actually the new advances that have been made in the field of ELT.* (teacher educator G)

In the course of the open coding process, care was taken to select the extracts which were related to pedagogical knowledge and exclude the ones that had to do with teacher educators' qualifications (e.g. "teacher educators should have postgraduate degrees), broad attributes (e.g. "teacher educators should have a record of good teaching"), or personality traits (e.g. "teacher educators should have a charismatic character").

In the axial coding stage, the designated segments were clustered into groups based on their thematic content. In other words, the segments which had a similar underlying theme were classified under the same micro category which, in turn, received a label on the basis of shared theme of its segments. For instance, the two segments "knowing how to relate theory and practice" and "striking a balance between theory and practice" were grouped together in the same micro category which was labeled "*Knowledge of Theory-Practice Connection*". These micro categories were then classified based on their similarities to form a number of macro categories which were further labeled.

The two stages of axial coding and labeling proceeded in a circular, iterative mode until the final macro categories were extracted. Furthermore, coding and labelling processes were independently conducted by one of the researchers and a second party who had experience in this type of data analysis and was familiar with the notion of pedagogical knowledge. There was over 80% of agreement between the two parties. Areas of dispute were resolved through discussion, a move to enhance the reliability of data analysis.

In the quantitative section, the frequency of the segments in each of the micro categories was calculated for the participants, and then added up to calculate the frequency of the macro



categories. It should be noted that if the same concept was repeatedly mentioned by one of the participants, it was counted as a single frequency. For example, if one of the respondents mentioned proficiency as one of the requirements of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge in different occasions during the interview, it had only a frequency of one in the calculation process. However, if different concepts referring to the same micro category were mentioned, they were considered separate and all were added up in the frequency process. These frequency data were considered as the criterion to compare the three groups of participants' ideas about the categories of an expert English teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. Finally, in order to determine if there was any significant frequency difference in the macro categories among the three groups, chi-square analysis was conducted.

## **Findings**

The results of this study are presented in two sections. First, in the qualitative phase, the research question will be addressed by discussing the macro and micro categories of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. Then, in order to address the quantitative phase, a comparison is made among the frequency of the three groups of stakeholders' ideas.

### **The Qualitative Phase**

A total of 235 segments were extracted from the participants' responses about the categories of an expert English language teacher educator's pedagogical knowledge. On the basis of their underlying themes, these excerpts were then grouped into a number of micro categories which were subsequently clustered into eight macro categories. Table 1 provides a brief definition for each of these macro categories along with their constituent micro components.

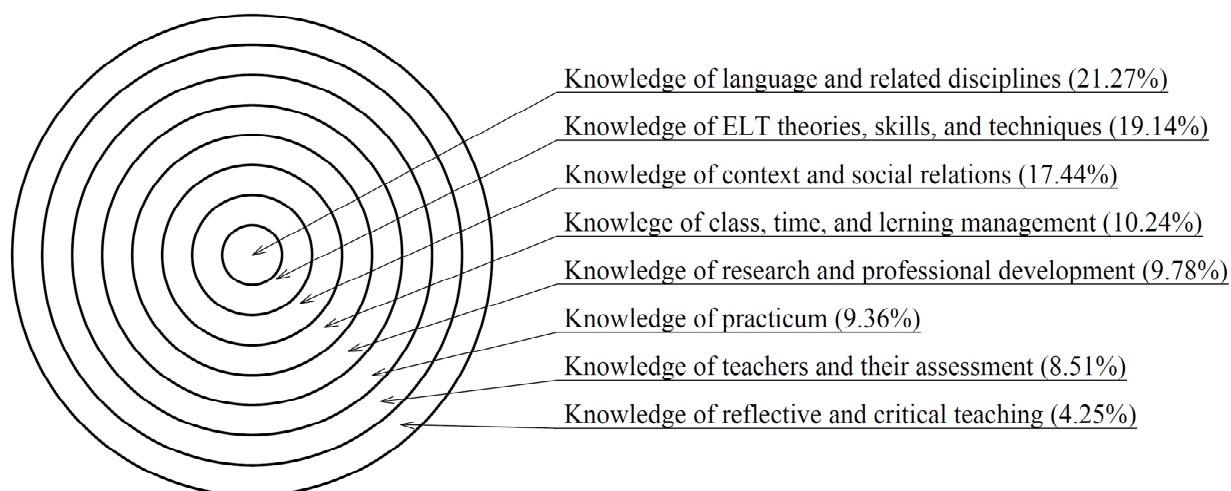
No.	Macro categories	Definition	Micro categories
1	Knowledge of language and related disciplines	Knowledge of English proficiency and other fields that are directly or indirectly related to ELT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of English language (proficiency)</li> <li>• knowledge of educational psychology</li> <li>• knowledge of sociology</li> <li>• knowledge of linguistics</li> <li>• knowledge of testing</li> <li>• knowledge of psycholinguistics</li> <li>• knowledge of sociolinguistics</li> <li>• knowledge of L1 (metalanguage)</li> <li>• knowledge of ESP</li> <li>• knowledge of target language culture</li> <li>• knowledge of teaching-related art</li> </ul>
2	Knowledge of ELT theories, skills, and techniques	Knowledge of teaching language skills and components and awareness of technicalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of teaching skills and components</li> <li>• knowledge of ELT theories,</li> <li>• knowledge of language teaching methods</li> <li>• knowledge of the philosophy of teaching</li> <li>• knowledge of technical jargons</li> <li>• knowledge of teaching techniques</li> <li>• knowledge of error correction</li> <li>• knowledge of classroom teaching routines</li> <li>• knowledge of ELT theory evaluation</li> <li>• knowledge of teaching language</li> </ul>
3	Knowledge of context and social relations	Knowledge of the conditions in which teacher candidates work and the way to behave with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of teacher candidates' (TCs') future teaching condition</li> <li>• knowledge of friendly behavior toward (TC)</li> <li>• knowledge of TCs' future students</li> <li>• knowledge of educational policies, goals, and objectives</li> <li>• knowledge of social relations (with colleagues)</li> <li>• knowledge of consultation with colleagues</li> </ul>

4	Knowledge of class, time, and learning management	Knowledge of lesson planning and classroom and time management as well as differences in learning teaching among TCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of transferring information to TCs</li> <li>• knowledge of responding to TCs' questions</li> <li>• knowledge of classroom management</li> <li>• knowledge of time management</li> <li>• knowledge of lesson plan</li> <li>• knowledge of TCs' involvement</li> <li>• knowledge of successful classroom performance</li> </ul>
5	Knowledge of research and professional development	Knowledge of different types of research and available ELT resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of academic resources</li> <li>• knowledge of materials</li> <li>• knowledge of professional development</li> <li>• knowledge of research</li> <li>• knowledge of new ideas</li> <li>• knowledge of technology use</li> <li>• knowledge beyond boundaries of books</li> </ul>
6	Knowledge of practicum	Knowledge of practical solutions which are based on theoretical underpinnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of practical demonstration of teaching</li> <li>• knowledge of connecting theory and practice</li> <li>• knowledge of provision of practical teaching experience</li> <li>• knowledge of research-practice connection</li> <li>• knowledge of assignment</li> </ul>
7	Knowledge of teachers and their assessment	Knowledge of pre-service and practicing teachers and the way they should be assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of motivating TCs</li> <li>• knowledge of TCs' needs</li> <li>• knowledge of assessing TC</li> <li>• knowledge of the TCs' learning process</li> <li>• knowledge of TCs' emotional well-being</li> <li>• knowledge of TCs' prior knowledge</li> <li>• knowledge of qualified teacher selection</li> <li>• knowledge of teacher observation</li> <li>• knowledge of feedback provision for TCs' performance</li> <li>• knowledge of supervision</li> <li>• knowledge of a good teacher's characteristics</li> </ul>

8	Knowledge of reflective and critical teaching	Knowledge of the ways to be engaged in reflection and critical pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of creativity and exigencies</li> <li>• knowledge of oneself</li> <li>• knowledge of provision of a good citizen model</li> <li>• knowledge of changing teacher candidates' ideas</li> <li>• knowledge of fostering reflective teaching in teacher candidates</li> <li>• knowledge of political relations</li> </ul>
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**Table 1: The Macro and Micro Categories of Teacher Educators' Pedagogical Knowledge**

Considering the frequency of the eight macro categories, a concentric circular diagram (Figure1) can be drawn, where the most frequently mentioned category is at the center surrounded by others with smaller frequencies in the demonstrated order.



**Figure 1: The Macro Categories of English Teacher Educators' Pedagogical Knowledge**

As shown in the diagram, *Knowledge of Language and Related Disciplines* is the most frequently reported category (21.27%), followed by *Knowledge of ELT Theories, Skills, and Techniques* (19.14%). Considering frequency as the yardstick demonstrating the importance of each category, this indicates that, according to the participants, the most important pre-requisite for becoming a teacher educator is the knowledge of the target language, including both proficiency-related and meta-linguistic knowledge. To borrow two of the interviewee's words, "a teacher educator should be able to speak the language very well" (Teacher E) in order to "impress teacher candidates during the teacher education program" (Teacher educator J). Furthermore, the meta-linguistic knowledge helps the teacher educator have a comprehensive insight of mechanisms of the target language resulting in a better understanding of the way it is taught/learned. It should be admitted that since the study was conducted in a foreign language context, the results might have been inflated in this regard; that is, if the study had been conducted in a country where English is the first language and teacher educators are native speakers, the same category might not have been emerged the most important one.

Knowledge of other related disciplines (e.g. sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, second language acquisition/SLA, etc.) and knowledge of theoretical issues of ELT have also been

corroborated by other researchers. For example, Zeichner (2005) believes that a teacher educator should be familiar with the available literature and have a comprehensive view of the theoretical aspects. The fact that this dimension has been mentioned frequently by the respondents highlights the significant contribution of theoretical knowledge to teacher educators' total knowledge base.

The third most frequently mentioned macro category (i.e. *Knowledge of Context and Social Relations*) have to do with teacher educators' awareness of the important role of social and contextual elements in their profession. There is a considerable body of research (e.g. Doecke, 2004; Smith, 2005; Chauvot, 2009) supporting the idea that socio-political and contextual knowledge is crucial in determining the success of a teacher educator. Moreover, the same studies suggest that teacher educators should know how to collaborate with teacher candidates, their colleagues, and other educational stakeholders.

*Knowledge of Class, Time and Learning Management*, which is the fourth macro category, also depends on the previous category to a great extent. More precisely, it is through contextual knowledge that teacher educators acquire the necessary skills to manage the educational context and the learning process.

As indicated in the diagram above, these first four frequently reported macro categories are located at the center, demonstrating the area of pedagogical knowledge base that teacher educators share with L2 teachers. In other words, like teacher educators, language teachers should have a sound knowledge base in these categories. For instance, in some of the papers that have investigated English teachers' pedagogical knowledge base (e.g. Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Akbari & Moradkhani, 2012; Gatabonton, 2008), the first category has been similarly reported as the most frequently mentioned thought unit (Language management). The other three macro categories (but with different names) have also been mentioned in these studies with various frequencies.

By inference, the central position of these categories demonstrates the existence of a core knowledge base that must be possessed by all instructors engaged in language teaching. This idea is also reflected in the interviewees' responses who believed that a teacher educator should be a good teacher in the first place. What makes teacher educators distinguished from teachers in this regard, however, is the depth of their knowledge as well as its degree of consciousness. In each of these four macro categories, teacher educators, compared to teachers, should have more conscious, comprehensive knowledge which can be articulated if necessary, an issue that has been raised in a number of previous studies (e.g. Bullock, 2009; Loughran, 2005; Smith, 2005).

The second group of macro categories in the diagram start with *Knowledge of Research and Professional Development* which has the fifth frequency rank with a percentage of 9.78. It has to do with teacher educators' ability to conduct research and be engaged in professional development activities. Previous research supports the idea of teacher educators as researchers who not only are aware of the latest research findings, but also actively participate in conducting different types of research (Koster et al., 2005; Smith, 2005).

*Knowledge of Practicum* (9.36%) is the next macro category and refers to teacher educators' expertise in relating theoretical and practical dimensions of teaching, an element that has been supported by Ariza et al. (2002). In fact, this category suggests that teacher educators do not constrain their instruction to theory provision; instead, they try to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Zeichner, 2010) by finding appropriate practical implications for theoretical propositions.

The next macro category, *Knowledge of Teachers and Their Assessment* (8.51%), has to do with teacher educators' knowledge of the best way(s) to select qualified teachers and monitor/measure their progress. It is in fact one of the integral responsibilities of teacher

educators as indicated by the standards of Association of Teacher Educators. Finally, *Knowledge of Reflective and Critical Thinking*, which is the least frequently mentioned macro category, highlights the fact that teacher educators must be active contributors to the realm of knowledge production; they should not only keep informed of the latest theories and research findings, but also know how to critically examine new ideas and their potential for application.

This second group of macro-categories, which constitute the outer circles in the diagram above, encompass those areas of knowledge that are more special to teacher educators; that is, unlike the first group, teacher educators do not share these knowledge components with language teachers. On the contrary, these are the elements that signify teacher educators' distinguished area of expertise. For example, it is normally the responsibility of teacher educators to know how to select and train teacher candidates; therefore, the outward movement from the center of the diagram illuminates areas in which teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge diverges from that of the language teachers.

### The Quantitative Phase

Table 1 illustrates the frequency of the eight macro categories of English language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge in terms of the three groups of participants' ideas. As shown in the table, among the members of the three groups, *Knowledge of Language and Related Disciplines*, *Knowledge of ELT Theories, Skills, and Components*, and *Knowledge of Context and Social Relations* are the most frequently mentioned categories with slight variation in their order. This might be explained in the light of the core knowledge base of language teaching and learning; that is, with respect to the center of the circular diagram above (which shows the essential categories of knowledge base shared among teachers and teacher educators) different groups of stakeholders have almost similar ideas.

However, the differences are more evident in terms of the least frequently mentioned categories. In other words, while for teachers and teacher educators, *Knowledge of Reflective and Critical Teaching* has the lowest percentage, for university professors, the same position is occupied by *Knowledge of Class, Time, and Learning Management* as well as *Knowledge of Research and Professional Development*, simultaneously. Therefore, opinions about the most important knowledge categories of teacher educators begin to diverge as one moves toward outer circles of the diagram which indicate the special areas of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge.

Order	Macro categories	Frequency			
		T	TE	UP	Total
1	Knowledge of language and related disciplines	15 (6.38%)	15 (6.38%)	20 (8.51%)	50 (21.27%)
2	Knowledge of ELT theories, skills, and techniques	17 (7.23%)	14 (5.95%)	14 (5.95%)	45 (19.14%)
3	Knowledge of context and social relations	15 (6.38%)	16 (6.80%)	10 (4.25%)	41 (17.44%)
4	Knowledge of class, time, and learning management	13 (5.53%)	9 (3.82%)	2 (0.85%)	24 (10.24%)
5	Knowledge of research and professional development	11 (4.68%)	10 (4.25%)	2 (0.85%)	23 (9.78%)
6	Knowledge of practicum	7 (2.97%)	10 (4.25%)	5 (2.12%)	22 (9.36%)
7	Knowledge of teachers and their assessment	6 (2.55%)	8 (3.40%)	6 (2.55%)	20 (8.51%)
8	Knowledge of reflective and critical teaching	0 (0%)	5 (2.12%)	5 (2.12%)	10 (4.25%)
Total		84 (35.74%)	87 (37.02%)	64 (27.23%)	235 (100%)

**Table 2: The Frequency of The Eight Macro Categories Divided by Teachers (T), Teacher Educators (TE), and University Professors (UP)**

In order to see if these variations are statistically significant, a series of between-group chi-squares were conducted in all the eight categories (  $\chi^2 = .33$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .32$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .00$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .00$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .00$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .33$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .00$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ ;  $\chi^2 = .00$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > .01$ , respectively). In none of them, the differences were found to be statistically significant supporting the idea that, despite the variations, the members of the three groups of stakeholders had, more or less, identical ideas about the importance of language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge categories.

Although similar attempts have found differences in teacher educators' versus teachers' ideas about the knowledge base of teacher educators (smith, 2005), to date no researcher has investigated the matter from a quantitative perspective. As the results of the present study indicate, the variations among different groups of participants cannot be considered systematic, especially with respect to the core categories of pedagogical knowledge.

This lack of significant difference in the viewpoints suggests that teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge has a set of universally agreed-upon categories, though not clearly explicated. In particular, ideas of various stakeholders converge as one moves from general education to specific subject matters like ELT. In other words, because in a particular subject matter the scope of knowledge base becomes more focused than that in general education, areas of commonality increase among different stakeholders. It is worth noting that the findings of this study are based on the data obtained from a small group of participants. More studies in other contexts are required to be able to make firm speculations.

## Conclusion

The eight identified macro categories can be considered as a milestone to pave the way for a more systematic approach to the selection and training of language teacher educators. For example, teacher educator applicants must be selected from among professional teachers who enjoy a more articulate and deep knowledge base. In this regard, although higher academic degrees may be an indicator of pedagogical knowledge, other reliable approaches can also be taken into account. For instance, a standardized test can be designed in the light of the aforementioned categories in order to measure applicants' knowledge base. Furthermore, applicants can experience a training program whose curriculum is developed based on the eight macro categories.

Future studies can also shed more light on different dimensions of teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. Quantitative approaches can be adopted to gauge a larger group of stakeholders' ideas about the concept. For instance, survey-based studies that tap into a larger group of participants' ideas may be utilized to establish a more rigid theoretical basis for language teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. Together, this line of studies will hopefully result in the development of dependable procedures for recruiting more knowledgeable teacher educators.

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## **Appendix I**

### **The interview guideline**

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of our study is to investigate what the characteristics of a language teacher educator should be and what s/he should know in order to be considered a qualified one.

To probe into this matter, we have decided to interview experienced teachers/language teacher educators/academic experts (or university professors). So, we would like to know your ideas in this regard.

If you do not have any question, we can start with the interview.

#### *Warm up*

1. Could you please introduce yourself?

- Name and age
- Degree and major
- Teaching experience (as a teacher/teacher educator/university professor)
- Past/present school/institution (private sector/public sector/both)
- Age and level of students (for teachers and teacher educators) /field of specialization or university courses taught (for university professors)
- How many hours per week?

2. What made you become a teacher? Why did you choose teaching?

3. What do you like more about teaching?

4. When you hear the word “teaching”, what words or images come to your mind?

#### *Main questions*

5. Have you ever experienced any teacher education program as a pre-service or in-service teacher? If yes, what characteristics did your teacher educators have?

6. What were the qualifications of the people who taught you?

7. What did you like about your teacher educators’ performance?

8. What did you not like about them?

9. What do you think should go into a typical language teacher education program?

10. What are the minimum requirements of becoming a language teacher educator?

11. What differences do you see between a language teacher educator and a teacher educator of other subject matters?

12. What do you think an ideal language teacher educator should be?

13. If you were in charge to design an EFL teacher education program, how would you recruit your teacher educators/trainers? (What qualities would they have?)

14. Some people believe that to be a teacher educator, you need a degree. Do you agree with these people?

15. Some people believe that to be a teacher educator, you need to pass a training program. Do you agree with them?

16. Anything else you would like to share about language teacher educators?