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Abstract

Regardless of the increasing emphasis on the importance of language teachers' content knowledge, there is a lack of consensus regarding its constituents. To this end, a panel of experts and non-experts were requested to express their opinions regarding the constructs of content knowledge (CK) in the format of an open-ended written questionnaire. The findings indicate that teachers' CK includes eleven categories: teaching skills, structures, method and approaches, curriculum, language acquisition theories, classroom context, language testing theories, learner related knowledge, ELT research methods, and teacher related knowledge. The findings can help training educated teachers to be familiar with various aspects of the CK.

Keywords

English Language Teaching, Construct Definition, Professional Teachers, Content Knowledge, Educated Language Teachers, Teaching as a Profession

The Construct Definition of an English Language Teachers' Content Knowledge

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Regardless of the increasing emphasis on the importance of language teachers' content knowledge, there is a lack of consensus regarding its constituents. To this end, a panel of experts and non-experts were requested to express their opinions regarding the constructs of content knowledge (CK) in the format of an open-ended written questionnaire. The findings indicate that teachers' CK includes eleven categories: teaching skills, structures, method and approaches, curriculum, language acquisition theories, classroom context, language testing theories, learner related knowledge, ELT research methods, and teacher related knowledge. The findings can help training educated teachers to be familiar with various aspects of the CK. Keywords: English Language Teaching, Construct Definition, Professional Teachers, Content Knowledge, Educated Language Teachers, Teaching as a Profession

English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone fundamental changes in the past few decades. These changes include the emergence of different English language teaching methods such as Audio-lingual method, silent way, natural approach, etc. known as period of unity as well as period of diversity in 1987 (Larsen Freeman, 2012) and from communicative language teaching to task-based teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Cook's (1989) article propelled the next movement by emphasizing that methods are not only neutral, but they also contribute to the unequal relations of power. This was supported by highlighting that there is no such concepts as best method (Kumaravedivelu, 2006; Prabhu, 1990) and teachers have to find a personal way to teach in a way that leads to effective learning (Prabhu, 1990). Degrading the nature of methods (Nunan, 1989; Richards, 1990) as well as death of the methods (Allwright, 1991), it thus leads gradually to the emergence of post method pedagogy (Kumaravedivelu, 2006).

The above mentioned transitions undoubtedly affected the conceptualization of language teachers in general and teacher education programs in particular. About fifty years ago, becoming an English language teacher only required the knowledge of knowing how to speak the language efficiently. Consequently, native speakers of the language were considered as the most qualified language teachers. However, as a result of the aforementioned changes, ELT gradually transformed from an occupation to a profession. Although there are continuing controversies regarding the consideration of the ELT as a profession (Zeichner, 2005), attempts have been made to establish the field as a profession (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009; Katz & Snow, 2009). Defining professionalism as the process of continual intellectual growth (Lange, 1990,), teachers are assumed to have an effective role in managing the most successful learning process (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). As a result, it then accentuates the needs of training and move towards educating teachers who are fully qualified and not just label them as competent teachers solely due to their capability of speaking the language. Consistent with the discussion of professionalization, Burns and Richards (2009) consider ELT as a career requiring a certain types of knowledge that can be acquired through experience and education. Accordingly, the impetus for defining qualified teachers has tended to direct the attention towards teachers' subject matter preparation. Even there has been claimed that students' achievements are highly linked to the amount of teachers' knowledge as well as the quality of learning opportunities

provided by teachers (Hattie, 2009). It can be thus inferred that there is a fundamental shift in duties carrying work load to the shoulder of teachers as they are now seen as the autonomous authority in the field being responsible for activities done in the classroom. Hence, they need to be familiar with all information required on appropriate handling of any pedagogical task in classroom. This requires the knowledge of why such an act or task are carried out for a particular audience and under what conditions. Additionally, an English language teacher is a person familiar with teaching procedures and related knowledge. Considering teachers as authority in the above mentioned sense is consistent with other expressing similar assumptions, most notably Prabhu's (1990) "sense of plausibility," Hargreaves's (1994) "ethic of practicality," Kumaravadivelu's (2006) ten macro strategies of post method pedagogy, and Richards's (2001) post method era, as well as the equally persuasive concept of teachers as "therapist" by Khani (2003). Thus, one might claim a professional teacher is the hidden authority in language learning classes.

Similar to any certified association of education that has theoretical underpinnings of professional training, the field of ELT relies on the Second Language Teachers Education (SLTE) programs for its development. The origin of SLTE traces back to the late 1960s where short training programs were designed to make teachers familiar with new methods such as Audiolingual method being popular on that time. After a couple of decades, the field of SLTE was influenced by the distinction between theory and practice and ultimately resolved to the categorization between teacher training and teacher development (Burns & Richards, 2009). Currently, due to recent perspectives regarding the changes in duties, teacher educators are thus seen as agents of change in the field (Margolin, 2011) who train professional teachers who could most probably be teacher educators in near future. Therefore, establishing a clear cut boundary that firmly differentiates language teachers' and teacher educators' knowledge does not seem plausible. As the results of the post method conditions, language teachers are not considered as those who consume knowledge of the theories, but rather those who are capable of theorizing from practice (Edge, 2001). This objective, cannot be achieved if teachers just make use of theories proposed by others rather than attempt to theorize from practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Nevertheless, it seems to be more practical to assume their knowledge range in a continuum that includes ELT teachers' knowledge at one side of the continuum and ELT teacher educators' knowledge at the other side which stems from the initial level of being a teacher. The developmental processes are not only specified to language teachers, as teacher educators also experience developments (Russel & Korthagen, 1995).

In spite of this role, lack of sufficient attention and research are clearly developed regarding the specification of the features of teachers and teacher educators (Borg, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010). Consequently, teacher educators are either experienced teachers (Fisher, 2009) or higher education degree-holders (Wilson, 2006). As reported by Burns and Richards (2009), one of the essential characteristics of teachers in this arena is related to their knowledge. According to Graves (2008), until the 1970s, the only types of knowledge that was sufficient for language teachers was the proficiency in target language and knowledge about its structure, phonology, etc. In the following decade, the research on teacher cognition shifted its attention from what is necessary for a teacher to what they already know how they teach (Graves, 2008). This developmental processes of professionalization encountered increasing emphasis on the area of teachers' knowledge in the 20th century. Some researchers in general education began to specify more on the notion of teachers' knowledge. For example, Roberts (1998) suggested six categories of knowledge: (1) Content knowledge, (2) Pedagogical Content knowledge, (3) General Pedagogical knowledge, (4) Curricular knowledge, (5) Contextual knowledge, and (6) Process knowledge.

A group of similar attempts with rather narrow contributions have been performed in specification of knowledge system for teaching. For instance, the notion of intercultural

competence has been added by Velez-Rendom (2002). However, the clarity of some issues remained untouched. For instance, Freeman and Johnson (2004) argue that although it is obvious that a teacher necessarily needs to know how a target language works, the existence of diverse categories assert the lack of agreement regarding the required knowledge for teachers.

Broadly speaking, the application of content knowledge (CK) initially traces back to Shulman (1986) who defines it as the knowledge related to the content of the subject matter. A thorough examination of a varied assortment of disciplines such as mathematics (Loewenberg Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008), science (Buchmann, 1982) physics (Hashweh, 1987) illustrates the profound effects of teachers' CK on instruction. The importance of CK gained wide acceptance to the extent that teachers' knowledge of subject matter was even reported to highly correlate with the students' achievement (Miller, McKenna, & McKenna, 1998; Moats, 2000). Consequently, attempts have been made to investigate CK in many fields of study such as mathematics (Anders, 1995), science (Brickhouse, 1990), geometric (Chinnappan & Lawson, 2005), and chemistry (Tepner & Dollny, 2012) as teachers were obliged to acquire detailed CK (Goodwin, 2010). Although attempts have been made to construct the professional knowledge of language teachers, CK as the main features, is only marginally handled. This consequently supports the ignorance of how this knowledge might be acquired (John, 2002). Bearing in mind that the field of SLTE is still in its infancy, there is an insatiable desire to enrich its conceptual frameworks with scientific features to reduce the amount of ambiguities and variations and hence move towards it establishment and confirmation. Therefore, the present study is aimed to achieve a group of agreed-upon set of categories (conceptual model) of CK hoping to be typical for all language teachers in order to be equally and confidently applied for teacher education programs around the world.

Related Literature

For centuries teachers were performing the task of teaching without any need of particular preparation (Lortie, 1975). However, over the past three decades, research has shown growing demand for teachers' qualification. This is evident in the case of concept expansion of teachers' traditional knowledge of grammar (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009). The issue of teachers' knowledge gradually attracts attention among many scholars (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler 2002; Shulman, 1987). Broadly speaking, the emergence of knowledge base traces back to the mid-1980s when Lee Shulman argued that understanding of this knowledge is multifaceted and complex (Chick, Baker, Pham, & Cheng, 2006; Fennema & Franke, 1992) involving the administration of research on teaching effectiveness (Freeman & Johnson, 1998a) as well as teachers' perspectives of what and how new concepts are to be taught (Shulman, 1987). In order to provide more tangible conceptualization of the knowledge base, Shulman (1986) suggested three categories of Content Knowledge (CK), General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPK), and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). He defines CK as the teachers' ability to fully comprehend the content being taught in a sense that the illustrations, explanations, descriptions, and examples are being provided in a way to assure students' learning. Emphasizing the role of "content" by Shulman was then leveraged the establishment of the teaching as a profession (Loewenberg Ball et al., 2008) and was a total departure in research shifting the attention from general to missing aspect of research by arguing that "a blind spot with respect to content that characterizes most research on teaching" seems to be required (Shulman, 1986, p. 8).

The concept of CK in the field of ELT initially developed in 1960, when early experts (Bright & McGregor, 1970; Brooks, 1960) in the period of the emergence of Audio lingual method, declared that the content of the ELT includes concepts such as theory of language,

language learning, language teaching, language and culture, language and literature, Similarly, many books were published aiming to show the approach to language teaching.

Having delineated the importance of subject matter in language teaching (Hammadou & Bernhardt, 1987), scholars tend to consider subject matter as one source of CK. Thus, there is a need to focus on how teachers understand the subjects they teach (Loewenberg Ball et al., 2008). In ELT, CK is defined as teachers' capability of demonstrating the knowledge and competence of the language system (Roberts, 1998) which thus implicates the necessity for language teachers to possess declarative knowledge of language (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Banegas, 2009) which basically presupposes teachers to be proficient language users (Barnes, 2002). This implies that the existence of CK supports the consideration of the field of ELT as profession (Loewenberg Ball et al., 2008) in which English is taught as a subject (Widdowson, 2002) and does not necessarily need to be equated with the language as experienced by native speakers (Banegas, 2009). As a result, language is a construct of real entity which ultimately demands those interested in teaching to acquire a mastery level of CK originating from "scholarship content disciplines related to language as a system" (Shulman, 1987, pp. 8-9). In this sense, CK is not assumed to simply include knowledge about language, but the improvement of various communicative competence (Bachman, 1990). Nevertheless, it is not quite clear what the unique categorization of this knowledge could be.

Regardless of the number of works based on Shulman's conceptualization of knowledge base in various disciplines, there seems to be a lack of consistency regarding the categorization of CK in many fields especially ELT where the issue is even more controversial as language is treated as a subject to be taught (Widdowson, 2002). This challenge is attributed to the duality nature of knowledge in language teaching in a sense that language teachers "use language to teach language" (Freeman, Orzulak, & Morrissey, 2009, p. 77). Assuming the first "language" in the quotation as the medium of instruction or its common terminology as language proficiency or "content 1" while the second "language" in the quotation is related to the knowledge of subject matter such as what we have in mathematics, physics, science, etc. The concept of content in the second sense is also ascribed to Knowledge about Language (KAL; Freeman et al., 2009) or "content 2." Conceived to document the knowledge of "content 1" is a representative for knowledge of "content 2" (Bartels, 2009; Upshur, 1971). Due to distinctive characteristics of teachers' knowledge "where effective instruction requires the teacher to use a medium the students do not yet understand" (Wichadee, 2011. p. 15), the emphasis on the distinction between the knowledge of "content 1" and "content 2" has been regarded as the fundamental component of discussions in teachers' knowledge (Freeman et al., 2009). Yet, little has been done to explicitly define what exactly is meant by "content 2" so that an agreed-upon definition can be provided. The inadequacies of consensus indices of teachers' CK thus lead to the failure in both assessing the levels of teachers' mastery of such knowledge (Freeman et al., 2009) and connecting the teachers' knowledge and student progress (Loewenberg Ball et al., 2008). Furthermore, many scholars have emphasized that teachers should learn how to apply standards in meaningful ways (Katz & Snow, 2009); yet what seems to be missing is the identification of the assumed standards. In addition, it seems that no studies have been conducted to measure and elucidate whether is there any perceptible CK which has an effects on the acceleration of teaching language processes. Hence, the necessity of an agreement of the construct definition of CK is palpable, which in turn can lead to the advancement of the field of teacher education in training more proficient teachers. As Loewenberg Ball et al., (2008) argue, without such research, the ideas of teachers' knowledge, "remain, as they were twenty years ago, promising hypotheses based on logical and ad hoc arguments about the content people *think* teachers need" (p. 393). Offering a synopsis of the current knowledge on the CK in terms of content and research processes, there is a lack of clear description regarding the topic. The current study thus aims to provide a comprehensive

description, categorization, and conceptualization of the English language teachers' CK to fill the assumed void in the field.

Method

This study is intended to develop a conceptual model in the construct definition and categorization of English language teachers' CK. Bearing in mind the nature of the research on CK including interview and observation as well as researching participants' perspective, a qualitative mode of inquiry (Ben-Peretz, 2011) through the application of content analysis was applied.

Participants

A total number of 42 subjects participated in the study. According to the transitions in TESOL mentioned earlier, teachers were assumed to fulfill a multidimensional and creative role (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Accordingly, it now seems to be quiet obligatory to consider the former stockholders' opinion of what exactly is meant by CK. Although the indication of labeling stakeholder as expert is not such an easy task (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), the importance of experts' opinion has been previously emphasized by Richards (1991) when reporting what stakeholders assumed about a subject is actually valuable sources of information. To identify the sources of this knowledge, a panel of experts' opinion (30) in addition to two groups of non-experts' perspectives (12) were taken into account. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the field, it is not such an easy task to identify who exactly the experts are (ibid). As a result, attempts have been made to fully ruminate on the entire population of expert and finally select participants form ELT researchers, teacher educators, policy makers, linguists, experienced teachers in addition to two groups of non-experts of novice language teachers and highly advanced English language learners. The rationale for choosing advanced learners as participants is reflected in Breen and Littlejohn's (2000) claim that lack of involvement of students' decisions in pedagogical issues, does not grantee the representation of the proper learning. Both simple random and non-random (Patton, 1990) approach of participant selection were applied in this research. In the non-random approach, the participants include six persons from each group of researchers, teacher educators, policy makers and linguists, whereas; the random selection of the subjects includes six persons from each group of, experienced teachers, pre-service teachers as well as highly proficient language learners all equal regarding gender distribution.

For the non-random sample, ELT researchers were defined as ELT university faculty (assistant professors, associate professors, and professors) who had considerable number of publications in various issues related to the field. For the selection of the teacher educators, attempts have been made to ask only those university instructors specialized in the field of second language teacher education at the PhD level. Similarly, linguists were university instructors in the field of linguistics, and finally policy makers were selected among two groups of Iranian material codification committee from ministry of education and human resources committee.

In random approach towards the selection of the subjects, experienced teachers were defined as those with at least 15 years of experience in teaching English. Inexperienced teachers were selected among those who participated in teacher education program for a period of less than 12 months without any prior teaching experiences. The rationale for selection of the pre-service teachers is the assumption that they are more exposed to theoretical foundation and scientific approaches of becoming teachers than other teachers who might be experienced but not formally educated as teachers. Therefore, putting both categories together, would possible

enhance the reliability of the gathered data. And, finally, since CK is examined for the benefits of students learning, the researchers assumed that advanced language learners' perception regarding the concept of CK might be useful.

Data Collection Instrument

The study instrument includes two sections: background information and main questions of the interview. Due to the purposive approach of participant selection, the background questionnaire was originally developed by the researchers to collect the required information. The second section of the interview protocol includes a group of items, developed by the researchers to gain relevant information about the concept of English language teachers' CK. To do so, gaining a deep understanding of the concept of CK among a group of experts and non-experts who are assuming to play a role in defining this knowledge, seems quiet necessary.

Hence, a thorough examination of the literature, focusing on the notion of English language teachers' CK was followed. Attempts have been made to comprehensively review any possible theme related to CK from the perspectives of the experts mentioned above in various fields. An interview protocol of open-ended items, thus, was generated including essential hallmarks of the CK indicated in literature. This initial pool of ideas was piloted with a focus group interview of one person from each group of participants intending to help generate questions for the written interview scale (see Appendix A). Their responses were analyzed through content analysis and gathered into ten categories: (a) Teaching Methodologies; (b) Language Acquisition Theories; (c) Learning Theories; (d) Material development; (e) Language Testing; (f) ELT Research Methods; (g) Learner-related knowledge; (h) Classroom Context; (i) Language Skills; and (j) Language Structures. Based on the results of the pilot study, the questions to be asked in the real interviews were developed (see Appendix B) to include any further factors which might not been raised in the pilot study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers made contact with participants individually and distributed the written interview scale, and spend some time to explain the procedures in reflecting their opinions about the relevant concept. They were asked to keep the questionnaire for a period of one month and reflect their view as well as their real time experiences. Two participants (one policy maker and one ELT researcher) delayed filling the questionnaire. The researchers made contact with them and reminded them to give it back. Finally, after 2 months, they submitted the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

A qualitative research design was applied. Content analysis was used because it is considered to a reliable method of measuring speakers' voices in human activities that are not observed directly (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). They also, suggested five main objectives specified in content analysis which are in line with the objective of this research.

1) To gather information about a subject
   a. The major objectives of this study was to identify language teachers' CK so that the field can witness a consensus construction regarding the definition and classification of this knowledge.
2) To generate major ideas in order to establish the descriptive information

       a. A total number of ten main categories have been generated based on the results of the pilot study and one was added further based on the analysis of the main interview.

3) To follow the findings of other studies

       a. Although defining English language teachers' CK seems to be a rather untouched issue in the literature, it might be useful to refer to the narrow definition of this knowledge in other disciplines.

4) To collect useful information about educational problems

       a. Bearing in mind that teachers' knowledge in general and CK in particular as an inevitable variable in teaching profession, there seems to be a need in having a rather agreed-upon set of variable for the definition of the English language teachers' CK.

5) To test hypothesis

       a. Due to the complexity of teaching, it is assumed that language teachers' CK consists of multidimensional facets rather than simply general knowledge of English. Therefore, there is a call for scientific research to precisely categorize this knowledge. Scholars agreed upon the application of content analysis as a reliable approach to investigate those object of research which are not directly measurable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006); yet, what lies ahead as a concern is the application of a proper method in converting raw data into relevant categories. As documented by Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987), Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) is an approach in analyzing the content where the researcher is hardly able to act on any pervious assumptions regarding the topic as data are not gathered prior to any former conclusion. Accordingly, this might lead to the theory formation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interview, as one of the common techniques in GTA (Turner, 2010) was performed in the format of written open-ended questions.

To convert the participants' written comments into relevant themes, a three stage coding strategies including open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted. Open coding is the initial phase of coding to delineate the basic ideas and meaning (Given, 2008) and put them into categories. The raw data that are broken down in open coding establishes the phase for axial coding helping researcher to re-read the transcripts (Strauss, 1987) in order to relate categories to their subcategories (Given, 2008). And finally in selective coding, the analyst selects a central theme as a means to integrate all major categories to generate empirically grounded theory and develop theoretical claims (Given, 2008).

Results and Discussions

In order to develop a thematic analysis for English language teachers' CK, the researchers applied GTA to analyze the content of the participants' comments. A total of 837 cases related to teachers' CK were extracted from the content of the written interview and were accordingly grouped into eleven major thematic cases through the affinity-generating process. Ten of those categories were previously generated in the pilot study and one more was added later as the results of the GTA. Table 1 demonstrates the distribution and prioritization of the English language teachers' CK among seven groups of participants with specific reference to their frequency of occurrences between genders.

Table 1. Distribution of the ELT teachers' content knowledge among participants with respect to gender.

	Categories	Female		Males		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Teaching Language Skills and Practices	98	58.33	70	41.66	168	20.07
2	Language Structures	77	57.03	58	42.96	135	16.12
3	Teaching Methods and Approaches	69	56.09	54	43.90	123	14.69
4	Curriculum and Material Development	39	39.79	59	60.20	98	11.70
5	Language Acquisition Theories	34	47.22	38	52.77	72	8.60
6	Classroom Context	33	47.82	36	52.17	69	8.24
7	Language Testing Theories and Practices	31	62	19	38	50	5.97
8	Learner- related Knowledge	28	59.57	19	40.42	47	5.61
9	Learning Theories	17	38.63	27	61.36	44	5.25
10	ELT Research Methods and Approaches	7	38.88	11	61.11	18	2.15
11	Teacher-Related Knowledge	9	69.23	4	30.76	13	1.55
	Total	442	52.80	395	47.19	837	100

Below, each categories of ELT teachers' CK is presented with specific reference to their occurrence:

1. Teaching Language Skills and Practices: As seen from the Table 1, it ranks the first component by including 20.07% of the total cases and is basically connected with the concept of language practice. It is grouped into seven different categories: (a) speaking, (b) listening, (c) writing, (d) reading, (e) grammar, (f) vocabulary, and (g) pronunciation. This seems quite reasonable that participants' categorization of teachers' knowledge embarks with distinctive attention to language skills. A participant from linguistics group reported that,

> A language teacher does exclusively encompass knowledge regarding the language skills which is not solely reduced to knowing but teaching them in a way they could be learnt by language learners.

Over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in the skill-oriented approaches to language teaching (Abbott & Wingard, 1981; Harmer, 1983) which confirms the designation of teaching language skills as one of the major categories of language teachers' CK. This might be highly influenced by the traditional conceptualization of teachers as someone with mastery levels of language knowledge. In addition, literature is filled with sharp focus on teaching foreign language skills (Rivers, 1981). For instance, Richards (1991) maintains that regardless of some discrepancies of dealing with classroom context, all teachers seem to be similar in reflecting skill-based approach to language teaching. This is confirmed by many teachers who claim to be interested in learning how to teach four language skills in the case they were able to pursue their education in MA level (Richards and Hino, 1983).

2. Language Structures: It ranks the second (16.12%) theme and the suggested comments under this category were basically connected with the earlier assumption regarding the expert teachers as the one who discern the linguistic body of language. In addition, language structures embrace the central role of teachers in applying them appropriately. It includes seven categories: (a) phonology, (b) morphology, (c) syntax, (d) semantics, (e) discourse, (f) pragmatics, and (g) paralinguistic. Similar to the previous category which is mainly followed by language teachers' knowledge about language, this group of comments also centered on the assumptions that language structures are unavoidable section in this categorization. According to a linguistics group participant,

The building of language consists of some floors such as phonology, syntax, semantics, morphology, etc. which are connected under the roof of language structures.

Bearing in mind the early assumptions of teachers as the master of the language use, many scholars including Bright and McGregor's (1970) book with title of *Teaching English as a Second Language* was exclusively emphasized on grammar and vocabulary. As argued by Medgyes (2001), teachers' lack of adequate proficiency level will ultimately lead to teachers' high dependence to teaching materials rather than engaging in improvisational teaching. This has been later named as focus on form (Long & Crookes, 1992) and became indispensable part of required knowledge for language teachers. Equally important is Johnson's (2009) recent argumentation regarding the content of teacher education to be highly influenced by theoretical linguistics. Similarly, Richards' (1990) pedagogical grammar, interlanguage syntax and morphology as well as Hedgcock's (2009) declaration of models of language instruction and mastery of language structures have been reported as the core body of language teachers' subject matter knowledge.

3. Teaching Methods and Approaches: The third category (14.69%) refers to the required knowledge for a language teacher regarding the various and possible methods of teaching in English. In addition, suggested comments under this category provide a chance for researchers to develop the essential subcategories including methods era, post methods era, and principled-based language teaching. A participant from teacher educator group stated that:

Although sticking exclusively to a single method does not seem logical to me, a full understanding of the methods in teaching a language is of central concern since this provides insights regarding the way teacher can be creative of what, when, where, and how to apply a single or a combination of all methods.

A thorough exploration of the literature provide evidence for the necessity of teaching methodologies in the field by referring to the previous expert' perspective regarding existence of language teaching methods (River, 1981) and approaches to language teaching (Abbott &Wingard, 1981) as the core concepts of teaching English. However, as recently is universally believed that there is no best way to teach a language (Gebhard et al, 1990, Nunan 1991), the role of language teachers is then to decide which approach suits to which group of students (Klapper 2001). Such pedagogic choices can only be adequately offered when teachers are aware of a range of existing theories.

4. Curriculum and Material Development: It ranks fourth (11.70%) and is related to teachers' knowledge regarding the selection and implementation of the appropriate course book and syllabus. It also, covers teachers' ability to develop a specific lesson plan for teaching English. This variable includes four major subgroups: curriculum design, lesson planning, material development, and syllabus design. A participant from policy maker group reported that:

After years of teaching experiences, I can sense now following textbooks in a systematic way does not seem to solve the problems. There were times in my teaching that I decided not to demonstrate some sections in the book while other times I highly concentrated on particular sections of the book.

The importance of acquiring curricular knowledge has long been emphasized by scholars who assert that teacher take a guidance and facilitator role in relation to curriculum (Cunningsworth,

1998, Dublin & Olshtain, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Bering in mind the diversity of each language teaching classroom, it would be unreasonable not to emphasis the need of this knowledge for language teachers as they need to be capable of inserting adjustments and modifications into the instructional objectives. Having discussed the complex nature of the subject matter providing an opportunity for teachers to be autonomous in designing the curriculum (Grossman, 1990), good teachers are perceived as those who could successfully teach the entire curriculum subjects (Troman, 1996) and be familiar with curriculum and syllabus design (Richards, 1990).

5. Language Acquisition Theories: The fifth category (8.60%) refers to the familiarity of teachers with theories of first and second language acquisition. An in depth exploration of the participants' comments shows theories of first and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), language transfer, input and interaction, and processes in SLA as the main subcategories. A participant from pre-service teacher group,

> It is extremely necessary that language teachers be aware of the language acquisition theories in both L1 and L2. This will, without a doubt, enhance the chance of their teaching to be more effective. Accordingly, this guarantees students' learning.

The embarking mission of the position of language theories traced back to the days of Audiolingualism when experts outlined the content of the field by writing books such as *Language and Language Learning* (Brooks, 1960) entailing chapters on language theories, mother tongue and language theories. As argued by Ellis (1997), the SLA results do not provide direct instruction for the teacher, however, its prominent role for teachers is its focuses on learners rather than learning environment; as a result, it can contribute toward the insight formation on what learners are capable of doing as well as what they need to be taught (Marjorie Hall & Patricia, 2002). Furthermore, the knowledge of SLA theories provides a chance for teachers to judge the content of syllabus to see if it is in line with the current learners' capabilities. This claim is actually confirmed by Pienemann (1995) that argues "It is important to know what is learnable at what point in time" (p. 4). Currently, it has been declared that in addition to the necessity of familiarity with second language acquisition theories (Richards, 1990), the theories of language development (Hedgcock, 2009) are also considered as the core body of CK.

6. Classroom Context: It ranks the sixth (8.24%) among the themes of CK. It is basically related to sociocultural perspectives of language learning and teaching (Richards, 2010). It encompasses subcategories of language policy, sociocultural and sociopolitical factors, and language planning. A participant from researcher group,

> Teachers should know how be friendly in different contexts, consistent with the way friendly is defined.

Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed the early investigation of curriculum content of teacher education program through the comparison among the content of introductory textbook (Richards, 1991) and teaching language in context (Omaggio, 1986). As Richards (1991) maintains, there are some differentiations regarding how teachers treat cultural issues, classroom management, and assessment. In a similar vein, Posner (1985) asserts that social and physical context are among the immediate knowledge required for a teacher to deal with various classroom contexts. In the same way, Zeichner (2005) believes that since different teaching contexts demonstrate diverse notions of teaching, norm of the collegiality are also expected from a teacher. Johnson (2009) draws attention towards the teacher cognition by

claiming teaching to go beyond the application of knowledge and skills by assuming it as a "complex cognitive driven process affected by classroom context" (p. 5).

7. Language Testing Theories and Practices: the seventh category (50.97%) of teachers' CK is related to their capability to apply testing theories. The study suggested nine subcategories: (a) proficiency models and theories, (b) function of language tests, (c) forms of language tests, (d) test facet, (e) basic psychometric knowledge (f) test construction, (g) reliability and validity in language testing, (h) theories of language testing, and (i) evaluation and measurement models. A participant from experienced teacher group:

> A language teacher does necessarily need to be a language tester too. It is the teacher that perform the very initial test of the acquired knowledge by students. As a result, they should be familiar with at least basic concept and categories of language testing theories and practices.

Considering the substantial amount of attention given to techniques and methods of assessment by curriculum reform being in line with the needs of the teachers, language testing is still seen as institutional purposes (McNamara, 2005). However, this does not imply that testing theories and practices are not among the essential knowledge required for teachers. As put forward by McNamara (2005), although the purpose of language proficiency tests are in line with the target of second language learning, it has not been adequately integrated in language teaching and learning processes, in a way that teachers "have found its terminology and its requirements, developed in other institutional contexts and to serve other institutional needs, both technical and onerous" (McNamara, 2005 p. 775). Therefore, the inclusion of the language testing knowledge as the requirement of language teaching seems inevitable. To support this claim, one can code from Davies (1968) that "the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching" (p. 5).

8. Learner Related Knowledge: This factor is the eighth (50.61%) and these comments are entirely related to individual differences and cover a wide range of psychological and biological factors such as learners' individual differences and socio-economic status.

A participant from advanced learner group,

> Successful language teachers are those with general awareness about the diversity of learners' characteristics. This actually makes the language teachers avoid following entirely a fixed set of behavior towards their pupils.

Similar in the same vein, Katz and Snow (2009) draws attention to the eighteen standards developed for language teachers in Egypt among which is the focus on teachers' adaption of instruction in order to pay attention to learners' diverse characteristics and consequently the way they learn. This clearly confirms the importance of teachers' capability to plan class activities in a way foster the development of learning strategies in students. The importance of knowledge regarding the socioeconomic status of students is so vital that scholars have proposed a framework (Devlin, 2011) of how to deal with students from various economic status especially low level ones (Devlin & O'Shea, 2012).

9. Learning Theories: It ranks ninth (5.25%) in the group and it is generally related to the conceptual frameworks regarding the nature of obtaining, processing, maintaining, and relating new information in mind. They include a wide range of theories such as cognitive, behavioristic, socio-cognitive, and socio-cultural theories.

A participant from ELT researcher group shared,

It is expected that a professional language teacher be familiar with the wide range of learning theories.

As Doughty and Long (2005) argue, the field of SLA is so complex that it highly requires the contribution of other fields. The prominent role of the language learning theories has been identified by some scholars such as Lavadenz (2011). For instance, among the early attempts to discern the core body of the concepts in the field, theories of language and language learning (Rivers, 1981) and nature of language learning (Brooks, 1960) were assumed as the special categories for constituents of the field.

10. ELT Research Methods and Approaches: It ranks the tenth (2.15%) of category of CK and is basically the teachers' ability to identify problems regarding teaching and learning and to decide accordingly. This classification includes a group of five subcategories: research scope in ELT, research methods and approaches, research designs, data collection and analysis, measurement theories and scales. A participant from ELT researcher group:

> In line with the specialization of the teaching profession, teachers are now expected to be aware of research methods, approaches, designs, and instruments. This actually guides teachers to cope with teaching problems by conducting even small piece of classroom research.

Informed largely by studies on the effectiveness of the SLA research on second language teaching (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; VanPatton, 1989), knowledge base has come to be seen inspired by the way learners learn a new language. Accordingly, knowledge of ELT research methods and classroom-based research (Richards, 1990) can thus provide invaluable insights for ELT teachers on what to learn and for teacher educators on what to teach to prospective teachers. As argued by Johnson (2009), teachers' research originates from their perspectives of how to deal with language teaching issues in the classroom and as a result guide them to become effective teachers (McKay, 2006; Johnson, 1992; Politzer 1970). According to Kumaradavivelu (2006), one of the aims of postmethod pedagogy is to "transform classroom practitioners into strategic teachers and strategic researchers" (p. 212). Given the importance of classroom research for teaching and teacher effectiveness (Johnson, 1992; McKay, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Politzer 1970) acquiring knowledge of research methods and techniques thus seems to be unavoidable task for language teachers.

11. Teacher-related knowledge: This last component (1.55%) of teachers' knowledge was typically suggested by teacher educators and experienced teachers. This includes the comments associate with the issue of teacher education, teacher skills, and teacher personality. A participant from teacher educator group,

> As teachers are becoming more experienced, they acquire a sense of familiarity with not only their own characteristics but other teachers as well. This eventually will be an indispensable parts of the experienced and qualified teachers.

The view of teacher education in the postmethod conditions is not anymore directed toward the experience of predetermined and prescribed practice. In other words, the traditional role of teacher educators in transmission models has recently transformed to a dialogically constructed relationship (Bakhtin, 1981; Johnson, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The necessity of teacher educator has been adequately demonstrated by Allwright (1993) who argues teacher educators can help teachers to efficiently perform their demanding instructional responsibilities put on their shoulders by postmethod pedagogy. Consistent with our previous

discussions regarding avoidance of establishing a clear cut boundary between teacher and teacher educator, it could be thus indispensable to assume the initial levels of educators' knowledge emerging from teaching experiences, as it is highly probable that every teacher educator was one day a teacher.

The conceptualized model obtained from the current study is basically consistent with Bartels' (2005) definition of knowledge about Language (KAL) by categorizing it as a combination of knowledge including grammar, orthodoxy, language modes, the way language is used, language learning, etc. In fact, in recent years, research has tended to focus on the effectiveness of teachers' knowledge as a network through which they combine various conception to deal with an issue in language teaching (Boshuizen, 2003). Kumaravadivelu (2006) calls such a concept as the parameter of practicality attributing to teachers who have full capability of acting autonomously in different teaching contexts, dealing with constraints and decide accordingly when necessary.

Having assumed that experts' knowledge consolidates around the intended tasks ultimately lead to automatically reorganization of information related to a particular category (Leinhardt & Smith, 1985), the findings can be concluded with respect to highlighting the need for L2 teachers to obtain a group of "well developed, static models of language and language learning typical of academic knowledge" (Bartels, 2005, p. 127). As suggested by Hiebert et al. (2002), teachers' knowledge base must categorize in a sense to be easily accessible to others. This can hopefully yield further insights for L2 teachers about required skills and behavior.

Although the present study suggested a conceptual model of CK, further attention could be directed to understanding of the relationship of its various constituent. Moreover, examining the CK with the combination of other teachers' characteristics might provide insights of how it can have effects on language learning processes.

Bearing in mind the transition towards the definition of good teacher over the last 30 years Troman (1996) and Leung (2005) draw attention to the concept of sponsored professionalism and highlight the localized nature of ELT professionalism by arguing that diverse conception towards the development of economic rationalism among nations resulted in context sensitive conception towards ELT professionals. He also similarly argues that measurable accountability among people results the diminution of individual chance to promote professional development. Accordingly, the current study can be carried out in diverse cultures for the purpose of cross-cultural validation to identify the extent of diversity. Reasonable to find minor dissimilarities, it is expected to achieve, more or less, a similar conceptual model.

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Appendix A

A) Background Information:

Would you please introduce yourself? (Name, age, educational degree, teaching experience, levels of teaching/learning …)

B) Interview Questions

1) How do you define teaching a language?
2) How do you describe a language teacher?
3) What are the characteristics of an experienced English language teacher?
4) What are the typical characteristics of an inexperienced English language teacher?
5) What are the characteristics of a good English language teachers?
6) What are the characteristics of an unsuccessful English language teacher?
7) What can assure you of an effective English language teaching?
8) What sorts of information an English language teacher necessarily need to know?
9) What sorts of knowledge, though not necessary, would be useful for English language teachers?
10) In your opinion, what is the least ability and requirement for a person to be an English language teacher? Elaborate.
11) If you have your own English language teaching institute, how would you select the teachers to work in your institute? What characteristics would you consider for your selection?
12) How one person can become an English language teacher?

Appendix B

a) Background Questionnaire

We're interested in your views of the requirements for teachers' Content Knowledge in Teaching English Language. Could you please give us your opinions as indicated below?

We hope the information provided by this questionnaire will enable us to design more effective learning programs.

1) You are a

Teacher Educator ☐   Linguist ☐   Policy Maker ☐   ELT researcher ☐

Experienced Teacher ☐   Pre-service Teacher ☐   Language Learner ☐

2) Sex   Male ☐   Female ☐

3) Age   ------------

b) Interview Protocol

A) Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

1) In your opinion, what does include in SLA?

2) How exactly do you think the knowledge of SLA can play a role in teaching?

3) How teachers can acquire such a knowledge?

B) Teaching Methodologies

1) What is the role of teaching methodologies in English language teaching and learning?

2) What kinds of teaching methods you think is useful for student? Why?

3) How much teaching methodologies one need to know in order to be a good language
    teacher?

C) Learning Theories

1) What if any are the role of the learning theories in teachers' knowledge of teaching?

2) Is there anything about you that could make teaching another language easier or more
    difficult for others?

3) In your opinion, what are learning theories and does necessarily a teachers need to learn
    them?

D) Material development

1) What is the role of material, curriculum, syllabus, etc. in English language teaching
    classes?

2) Whose responsibility is to assign books for teaching English? Why?

3) If you have experienced learning another language, explain who decide (s) which book (s)
    to be covered in those classes? Have you been satisfied with that?

E) Language Testing

1) Do language teachers have any tests in their classes? Why?

2) What sorts of knowledge are required for one person to be able to develop language tests?

3) Whose responsibility is to prepare tests in English language teaching/learning classes?

F) Research Methods

1) Why do we have research in English language teaching/learning classes?

2) What is the focus of research in language teaching/learning contexts?

3) To what extent do you think that a language teacher has to be able to conduct a research?
    How they can do that?

G) Teaching Language Skills and Practices

1) In your opinion, which characteristics are required in order to claim that someone
    possesses professional language skills?

2) To what extent language skills are important?

3) How exactly language skills can affect teaching a language?

H) Learner- Related Knowledge

1) Is there any relationship between teaching a language and its learners? Elaborate.

2) Do learners of a language, compared to each other, have a chance to learn better?

3) How teachers' understanding of learners' characteristics can affect teaching the language?

I) Language Structures

1) How can you connect the role of language structures in language teaching?

2) To what extent teaching a language is affected by its structures?

3) In your opinion, what is the favorable relationship between teachers' knowledge of
structures and teaching the language?

J) Classroom Context

1) In your opinion, what makes the context of a language teaching classroom?

2) Can classroom context affect students' learning?

2) How teachers' understanding of classroom context can affect teaching a language?

Appendix C

The Prioritization of the Constituents of CK among each group of participants

	Teaching Language skills & practices		Language structures		Teaching methods & approaches		Curriculum & material development		Language a acquisition theories		Classers context		Language testing theories		Learner Related knowledge		Learning theories		ELT research method		Teacher related knower		total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
ELT Researchers	18	10.71	6	4.44	19	15.44	10	10.20	14	19.44	11	15.94	12	24	7	14.89	10	22.72	8	44.44	2	15.38	117	13.97
Policy makers	19	11.30	10	7.40	17	13.82	21	21.42	9	12.50	6	8.69	6	12	6	12.76	7	15.90	2	11.11	0	0	103	12.30
Teacher educators	23	13.69	17	12.59	22	17.88	17	17.34	13	18.05	11	15.94	8	16	9	19.14	8	18.18	5	27.77	9	69.23	142	16.96
Expatriated teachers	19	11.30	19	14.07	21	17.07	18	18.36	11	15.27	13	18.84	10	20	11	23.40	7	15.90	2	11.11	1	7.69	132	15.77
Linguistics	26	15.74	25	18.51	11	8.94	13	13.26	6	8.33	4	5.79	9	18	5	10.63	7	15.90	1	5.55	1	7.69	108	12.90
Pre- service teachers	32	19.04	29	21.48	24	19.51	11	11.22	13	18.05	11	15.94	5	10	4	8.51	5	11.36	0	0	0	0	134	16
Advanced Learners	31	18.45	29	21.48	9	7.31	8	8.16	6	8.33	13	18.84	0	0	5	10.63	0	0	0	0	0	0	101	12.06

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