Experts' View on In-service Mexican English Teachers' Knowledge Base Framework[1]

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Abstract

Mexican public and private schools employ many English teachers. So, creating a knowledge base framework for English language teachers seems feasible for stimulating discussion of existing studies and the growth of the industry in Mexico. A quantitative study was conducted to explore, describe, and better understand the different fields of knowledge which integrate the framework. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire with 15 closed-ended items in the form of a Likert scale. The online questionnaire asked about ELT practitioner training methods and personal details, instructional practices, effective educator training trends and essential professional skills. Eight Mexican and seven non-Mexican experts, academics, researchers, book authors, and professors were consulted for their knowledge, expertise, skills, experience, or research studies. Their opinions concerning the most and the least important fields of knowledge and the most outstanding skills were measured through frequency and average, utilizing Pearson´s correlation coefficient and Friedman and Wilcoxon tests. The findings indicate that the five most significant categories of knowledge that contribute to the teacher learning knowledge base of in-service language instructors are: 1. academic research, 2. teacher training, 3. didactics, 4. educational technology, and 5. educational intervention projects. This paper could be a key resource on Mexico in-service English language teacher knowledge and skills. The framework could also guide language teacher education program development.

Resumen

Las escuelas públicas y privadas mexicanas emplean a muchos profesores de inglés. Por lo tanto, la creación de un marco de base de conocimientos para los profesores de inglés parece factible para estimular la discusión de los estudios existentes y el crecimiento de la industria en México. Para comprender qué tipos de conocimientos y habilidades conforman el marco, se realizó un estudio cuantitativo para explorar, describir y comprender mejor los diferentes campos de conocimiento que integran el marco. Los datos se recopilaron a través de un cuestionario en línea con 15 ítems cerrados en forma de escala de Likert. Las opiniones de los expertos sobre los campos de conocimiento más y menos importantes y las habilidades más destacadas se midieron a través de la frecuencia y la media, utilizando el coeficiente de correlación de Pearson y las pruebas de Friedman y Wilcoxon. Los hallazgos de este estudio indican que las cinco categorías de conocimiento más significativas que contribuyen a la base de conocimiento del aprendizaje docente de los instructores de idiomas en servicio son: 1. investigación académica, 2. capacitación docente, 3. didáctica, 4. tecnología educativa y 5. proyectos de intervención educativa. Este documento podría ser un recurso clave sobre el conocimiento y las habilidades de los maestros de inglés en servicio en México. El marco también podría guiar el desarrollo del programa de formación de profesores de idiomas.

Introduction

English language teaching holds a crucial role in Mexico´s educational environment, with over 14 million students and half a million teachers engaged in its instruction across public and private institutions (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 2022; British Council, 2015). Despite this scale, existing research has predominantly focused on pre-service teacher training, leaving a critical gap in understanding the professional competencies required for in-service language educators. While studies such as Sebire (2017) and Ramírez Romero et al. (2012)have examined undergraduate teacher preparation, there remains a lack of agreement on the essential knowledge and skills that practicing teachers need to deliver effective teaching in real-world classroom settings.

This paper addresses this gap by systematically analyzing expert perspectives on the core competencies for in-service English language teachers. The study reviews perspectives from 15 English language teaching (ELT) experts, including academics, researchers and teacher trainers from México and abroad. The research identifies critical areas for professional development. Through a rigorously designed Likert-scale questionnaire and statistical validation, the findings highlight five key domains: academic research, teacher training, didactics, educational technology and intervention projects. These results not only contribute to academic discussions about teacher expertise but also provide actionable insights for refining graduate programs and in-service training initiatives.

By establishing an evidence-based framework grounded in expert agreement, this study aims to enhance teaching quality in Mexico´s ELT sector and offer transferable insights for similar educational context globally.

Review of the Literature

Goodwin Seadler et al. (2015) examined students', professors', graduates', and employers' views on four Mexican universities' training programs and how well they fit society's demands. They highlight the varied perspectives held by stakeholders about English teacher training, emphasizing the necessity for a thorough and pragmatic curriculum that improves both linguistic competence and instructional abilities. The text emphasizes the significance of ongoing professional growth, the integration of technology, and the ability to work effectively in many cultural contexts. The results support the need for enhanced collaboration between institutions and the implementation of rigorous assessment methods to achieve successful training outcomes and bridge the gap between the desired training objectives and the actual skill levels of graduates.

Ramírez et al. (2019) reported in a documentary research study in Mexico on the first training of potential English teachers in public secondary schools and its primary successes and obstacles. Although the topic of language teacher training has been investigated, the available literature does not specifically address the subject of language teachers' 'knowledge base'. Thus, more research is needed on the professional development possibilities for English language teachers and how these opportunities can help build and use a knowledge base framework.

The reason for studying a knowledge base framework for English language teachers is to meet the need for a well-organized and all-encompassing way to teach teachers and help them improve their skills. Teachers of English as a foreign language need to know a wide range of things, including the subject matter, how to teach, and the students and their environment. A knowledge base framework can provide an organized way to synthesize this wide range of knowledge. This helps teachers understand how different parts of their knowledge interact and how they can use this knowledge in their teaching. Also, a knowledge base framework can help teachers determine where their knowledge is lacking, which can help them get the professional growth they need in specific areas. Overall, a study about a knowledge base framework for English language teachers can tell us a lot about how teachers can build and improve their knowledge base, making them better teachers and help their students do better in school (Richards, 2011).

This is relevant because a knowledge base framework could assist language instructors in building the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective teaching practice. It can aid in identifying, organizing, and applying various categories of knowledge required of language teachers, such as content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and contextual knowledge. When language instructors have a strong knowledge base, they can better design effective learning experiences for their students, thereby enhancing student learning outcomes. They can utilize their knowledge and abilities to select appropriate teaching strategies, create engaging activities, and provide meaningful feedback that aids in the development of language proficiency in students (Richards, 2010).

According to Graves (2009) teacher education and professional development programs are guided by knowledge base frameworks, which serve as a map. They can provide guidance for designing courses, seminars, and other professional development activities that will facilitate teachers' ongoing learning and development. In addition to enhancing learning and development, knowledge base frameworks can also serve as a foundation for language instruction research. They provide a framework for analyzing and interpreting research findings.

The context of English teaching in Mexico

English is the main foreign language taught within the Mexican educational system (Davies, 2008, 2009), with more than 14 million students, 513,000 teachers, and 100,000 schools related to English language teaching and learning (British Council, 2015) and nineteen master´s programs related to English language teaching (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 2022) in the country. Banks (2017) and the British Council (2015) evaluated the challenges faced by English language teachers in Mexico. Their research highlighted several key issues: (1) limited school resources, which hinder high-quality instruction; (2) overcrowded classrooms, reducing opportunities for individualized student attention; (3) a lack of ongoing professional development, leaving teachers unable to adopt current teaching methods; and (4) low student English proficiency, which complicates the teaching of advanced concepts. Both studies also noted contextual opportunities, though these were secondary to the systemic barriers.

With the increasing globalization of the world, there is a growing need for English language teaching in Mexico. This indicates that there are greater employment prospects for English language teachers. Several Mexican schools are investing in technology to enhance English language instruction, which provides teachers with new chances to integrate digital tools and resources into their classes. There are numerous professional associations and networking groups in Mexico for English language teachers, which allow collaboration and the exchange of best practices (Soto Reyes, 2023). Teachers often engage with students from varied cultural backgrounds, which can give both teachers and students significant learning opportunities (Christiansen & Silva, 2016). Teachers with advanced degrees and experience may also have the opportunity to work in other countries, which can be a rewarding professional and personal experience.

Language teachers' knowledge base framework

Teaching frameworks for English language educators consist of various essential elements that are crucial for successful instruction. One of the main elements is specialized knowledge in a certain subject, which encompasses fluency in the language, comprehension of civilization and culture, and skill in language analysis (Richards & Nunan, 1990). Day (1993) and Lafayette (1993) highlight the significance of both language skills and subject topic knowledge in this context. In addition, a deep understanding of pedagogical knowledge is essential, as it encompasses the comprehension and use of teaching procedures and strategies that are especially designed for language learning. The concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was initially proposed by Shulman (1986), continues to be a fundamental aspect of instructional frameworks (Day, 1993).

Another crucial element is contextual knowledge, which necessitates teachers to understand their students and the environment, encompassing cultural and social settings. Freeman and Johnson (1998) and Moradkhani et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of this knowledge in successful teaching. The significance of ongoing professional development and reflective practices in adapting and enhancing teaching approaches is highlighted as a crucial element (Schleppegrell, 2020). Moreover, the incorporation of technological and innovative abilities has gained more relevance, indicating the increasing significance of technology in education (Jesse, 2018). Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of educational objectives, curriculum, media, technology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and other related disciplines is crucial for effective teaching frameworks (Day, 1993; Richards, 1998).

The progression of teaching frameworks throughout history has been characterized by notable advancements affected by evolving educational philosophies and societal demands. Originally, the emphasis was on pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), which emphasized the significance of specialized teaching techniques for particular disciplines. This paradigm established the basis for numerous teacher training programs. As frameworks developed, there was a transition towards including a more comprehensive knowledge base that encompassed subject-specific expertise, pedagogical knowledge, and contextual comprehension. Johnson and Golombek (2011) proposed a comprehensive framework that highlighted the significance of combining these components to improve teaching methodology.

The incorporation of reflective practices emerged as a significant progress, with a growing emphasis on the imperative for educators to consistently assess and enhance their approaches. Schleppegrell (2020) emphasizes the importance of reflective and ongoing professional development in contemporary teaching paradigms. Furthermore, there was an increased emphasis on the significance of contextual knowledge, highlighting the necessity for teachers to comprehend the socio-cultural situations in which their students learn. Freeman and Johnson (1998) played a crucial role in drawing attention to this particular element.

The incorporation of technological proficiency has become a crucial advancement in recent years, mirroring the growing significance of technology in the field of education. Contemporary frameworks frequently incorporate technical expertise and the capacity to foster innovation in educational methods (Jesse, 2018). The comprehensive frameworks developed by researchers such as Moradkhani et al. (2013) and Jesse cover a broad spectrum of knowledge, including subject matter expertise, leadership, and professional skills. This demonstrates the complex and diverse requirements of effective teaching in the present day. This evolution emphasizes the fluid and continuously growing nature of teaching frameworks, adjusting to cater to the varied requirements of educators and learners.

Author	Field of knowledge
Day (1993)	Content knowledge Pedagogic knowledge Support knowledge Pedagogic content knowledge
Lafayette (1993)	Language proficiency Language analysis Civilization and culture
Freeman and Johnson (1998)	Teacher-learner Pedagogical process Social context
Richards (1998)	Communication skills and language proficiency Subject matter knowledge Theories of teaching Teaching skills Pedagogical reasoning and decision making Contextual knowledge
Moradkhani et al. (2013)	Knowledge of language and related disciplines Knowledge of English language teaching theories, skills, and techniques Knowledge of class, time, and learning management Knowledge of context and social relations
Jesse (2018)	Subject matter knowledge General pedagogical knowledge Pedagogical content knowledge Disciplinary knowledge Knowledge of educational aims, goals and purposes Curriculum knowledge of learners Knowledge of learners Knowledge of learning Knowledge of teacher cognitions Knowledge of teacher cognitions Information, media and technological skills Technological pedagogical content knowledge Learning and innovation skills Mentoring, leadership skills and knowledge Life and career skills Knowledge regarding how to incorporate research into teaching Reflective skills

Table 1: Summary of authors and their contributions to the English teachers' knowledge base framework

These frameworks integrate content knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and support knowledge, with a specific emphasis on language competency, linguistic analysis, and cultural comprehension. They highlight the significance of teacher-learner interactions, pedagogical processes, and social context. Furthermore, they provide a comprehensive overview of communication abilities, subject matter expertise, teaching theories, practical skills, and contextual knowledge. The importance of having a wide range of language skills, effective teaching methods, efficient classroom management, and being socially aware is emphasized, highlighting the various abilities needed for successful language education.

The current frameworks have provided significant assistance and direction in comprehending and reaching consensus on the necessary skills and knowledge that a language teacher should possess. Undoubtedly, they make a valuable contribution to the field of language instruction. Since these proposals originate from scholars outside of Mexico, it would be advantageous to thoroughly examine, embrace, and modify them to suit the specific circumstances of Mexico.

The Study

The research problem

Establishing a knowledge base framework for English language teachers that contributes to the current body of literature and promotes the growth of the English language teaching field in Mexico is of the utmost importance. The framework may also serve as a guide for the establishment of language teacher education programs. For this reason, it is crucial to perform a quantitative study to investigate, define, and gain a deeper understanding of the various disciplines of knowledge that comprise the framework in order to comprehend the sorts of knowledge and abilities that comprise it.

Research question

The study explored language teachers' knowledge and skills frameworks. This produced the research question that led this investigation.

What types of knowledge and skills do experts in English Language Teaching believe in-service language teachers should possess?

The answers to this question will contribute to the knowledge base regarding what the most important teachers' knowledge skills in-service teachers should possess to deliver effective teaching.

Methodology

The research approach chosen to conduct this study was quantitative, given that its aim was to better comprehend the subject of the study through a standardized instrument such as a questionnaire to collect data using a descriptive design to describe the framework's integrated fields of knowledge (Kaderavek et al., 2015).

Experts, academics, researchers, book writers, professors, and independent consultants from Mexico and abroad were consulted for their expertise, awareness, skills, experience, or research studies. All participating higher education institutions and Mexican researchers are members of the Academic Network in Foreign Languages. The sampling was purposeful and non-random (López-Roldán & Fachelli, 2015). According to Krueger et al. (2012), expert opinion can be explored informally when the opinions are chosen tacitly given that they are unstructured and undocumented; and, formally, as in the case of this study, when uncertain situations are analyzed using data provided by experts, which provides exceptional data.

The main goal of the survey was to obtain the most reliable agreement with regards to participants' opinion regarding language teachers' optimal knowledge base, given that group opinion is more legitimate than individual judgment (Keeney et al., 2011). The survey explored a range of scenarios, drawing on insights of both Mexican and international specialists regarding the challenges encountered by educational organizations. An online questionnaire (See the Appendix) with 15 closed-ended items on a Likert scale was used to collect data. There were four possible responses, ranging from 0 (unimportant) to 3 (very important). The study was completed by 15 specialists who all work as teacher trainers in second language education.

All participants held advanced degrees and had extensive experience as teacher trainers or researchers in teaching English to speakers of other languages, ELT, or related fields. To ensure a broad perspective, participants represented a range of contexts, including Mexican universities and international institutions. They were required to have a record of scholarly publications, curriculum development, or leadership roles in SLTE, demonstrating their influence on the knowledge base framework.

Participants	Organization	Position	Academic Level
1	University of Strathclyde	Lecturer in TESOL	PhD
2	Language Department, Autonomous University of Querétaro	Academic Secretary (Full Time Professor)	PhD
3	Language Department, Tuxtla Campus, Autonomous University of Chiapas	Full Time Second Language Teacher Educator	PhD
4	British Council, University of Southampton, University of Cambridge, several Mexican state universities	Consultant	PhD
5	Autonomous University of Baja California	Professor / Investigator	PhD
6	Yanbu University College, Saudi Arabia	Lecturer	PhD
7	Bath Spa University, UK	Senior Lecturer in TESOL	PhD
8	Veracruzana University, Veracruz	Teacher	PhD
9	University of Ottawa	Professor	PhD
10	Brock University	Teaching assistant	PhD
11	Pearson	ELT author and international Educational Consultant	MA in TEFL
12	University Veracruzana	Professor	PhD
13	University de Sonora	Professor / Investigator	PhD
14	Language School, Juárez University, Durango	Principal	PhD
15	Autonomous University of Sinaloa	Full time professor and investigator	PhD

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of participants

The research was conducted with explicit written consent of the participants. Before answering the online survey, an email was sent asking if they agreed to participate in the study. We explained the research objective, the purpose of the survey, why they were invited to participate, and the characteristics of the online questionnaire. Participants' involvement was on a voluntary basis, and it was made clear that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The activities the participants were expected to take part in, a consultation, did not present any risk.

The opinions of the experts concerning the most and the least important fields of knowledge and the most outstanding skills were measured through frequency and average. Aiming to identify whether the group of experts similarly ranked the areas of knowledge, the correlation between their importance ratings was calculated. The calculated correlation coefficient is Pearson's since all the variables are measured on an ordinal scale from 0 to 3 (from not important to very important).

Berlanga-Silvente and Rubio-Hurtado (2012) assert that the Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric test used to assess the hypothesis of equality between two medians in paired samples with a small sample size (fewer than 30 participants) or non-normal distribution. Similarly, the Friedman test is employed when there are three or more medians to compare. In addition, to determine if the ratings issued by the experts had a similar variance, a Friedman test was administered considering a 95% confidence level with the following null hypothesis (Ho)=. The variability is the same among all the areas (p-value>0.05) and alternative hypothesis (H1)=. At least one of the areas has a different variability (p-value<0.05). However, the Friedman test only allowed us to identify if all the ratings were the same, and, if at least one was different, but it did not provide us with statistical evidence to identify which of them is the one that showed differences. To achieve this, a Wilcoxon test was carried out with the same level of confidence (95%) and testing the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no significant difference between the median of the pair of areas tested (p.value>0.05) and the alternative hypothesis (H1) that the medians of the analyzed areas are different (p value<0.05).

Results

Fields of knowledge

The scores of the experts were tabulated to determine the level of global importance of each area of knowledge. Each expert was asked to give a score of 0 to 3, with 0 meaning not at all important and 3 meaning very important. As this is a ranking, the total number of points is used instead of the average. Given the small sample size, using the mean is not the best approach for its description since it is very susceptible in its variability. Instead, the median should be used to describe it when identifying the mean value of the data distribution and being the basis for boxplot plots. As Gravetter and Wallnau (2017) put it, "the median [...] is not easily affected by extreme scores." (p. 86)

These scores were added; under this last criterion the maximum possible result is 57 and the minimum is 0. Figure 1 below illustrates the sum of the points for each area of knowledge.
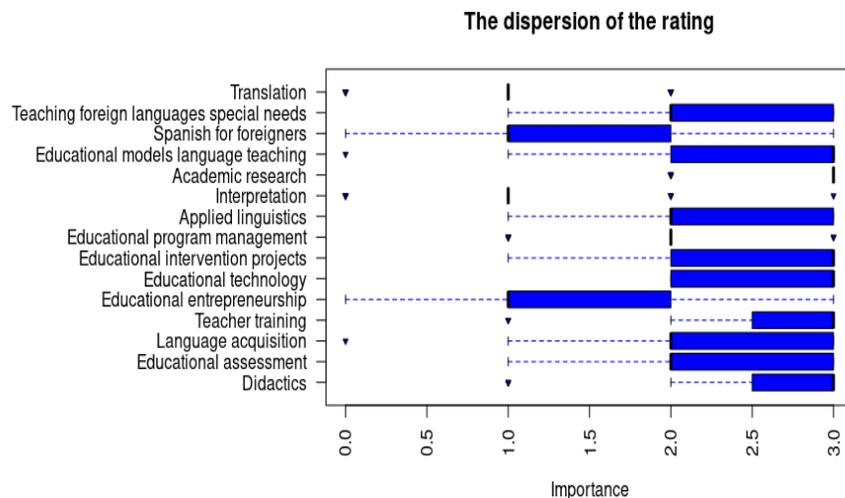

Figure 1: The most and the least important fields of knowledge according to the experts

The above figure illustrates the results of the questionnaire, which, ranked according to the top five are: research (53), teacher training (50), didactics (49), educational technology (49) and educational intervention projects (48). The least important areas are translation (19), and interpretation (20).

Considering the median that is equal to 44 points, the rest of the areas can be grouped into two. The first one consists of educational models of language teaching (45), teaching foreign languages to people with special educational needs (45) and educational assessment (44) are part of the best-valued group; whilst the second consists of the remaining areas: language acquisition (42), applied linguistics (41), educational program management (36), educational entrepreneurship (29) and Spanish for foreigners (26) are part of the group considered to be of least important areas. Figure 2 illustrates the dispersion of the rating given by the experts regarding each area.
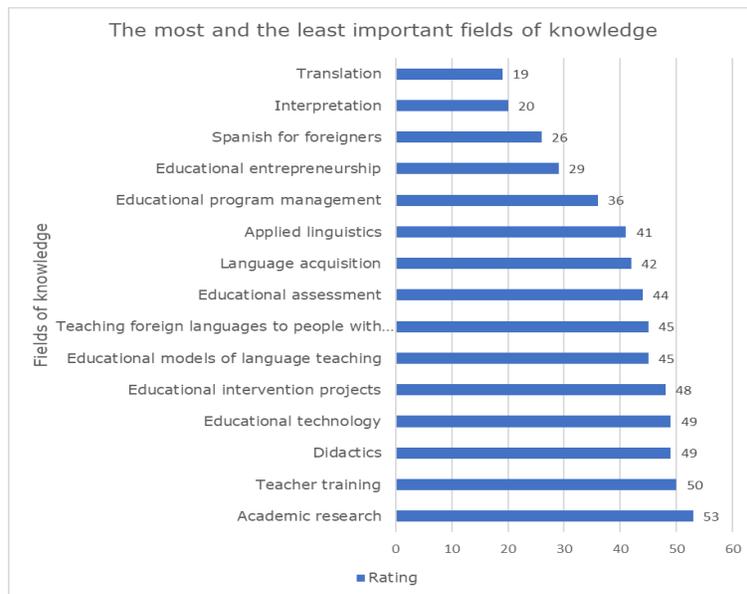

Figure 2: Dispersion of expert opinions.

According to our findings, if we study the dispersion of the opinions regarding the importance of the areas of knowledge, shown in Figure 2, it is possible to observe that areas such as teacher training and didactics are grouped as very important together with academic research, given that it only has one rating as important, whilst the rest of the experts rated it with the highest possible score.

Intending to identify whether the group of experts similarly ranks the areas of knowledge, the correlation between their importance ratings was calculated with a confidence level of 95% and with the following hypotheses: null hypothesis (Ho)=There is no significant relationship (p-value>0.05) and alternative hypothesis (H1)=Yes there is a significant relationship (p-value < 0.05). The calculated correlation coefficient is Pearson's since all the variables are measured on an ordinal scale from 0 to 3 (from not important to very important). In this sense, and for the purposes of this study, the suggestions of Cohen (1988) will be assumed to be among the most well-known and respected in the scientific community; however, it is important to note that these references should only be used as temporary aids when reflecting on the significance of the findings. Interpretation of the magnitude of the Pearson correlation coefficient according to Cohen's suggestions. Table 3 offers this classification. It is assumed in this Table that the relationship is between X and Y, but it applies to any pair of variables. The absolute value of the coefficient is stated, so that the magnitude is independent of the sign.

Value range r_{xy}	Interpretation
$0.0 \leq |r_{xy}| < 0.10$	Null correlation
$0.10 \leq |r_{xy}| < 0.30$	Weak correlation
$0.30 \leq |r_{xy}| < 0.50$	Moderate correlation
$0.50 \leq |r_{xy}| < 1.00$	Strong correlation

Table 3: Interpretation of Pearson's r correlation coefficient.

Area of knowledge 1	Area of knowledge 2	Pearson's R coefficient	R^2	p-value	Sense of relationship	Relationship level
Language acquisition	Educational models of language teaching	0.764	0.58	0.000	Direct	Strong
Applied linguistics	Educational models of language teaching	0.641	0.41	0.003	Direct	Strong
Language acquisition	Applied linguistics	0.626	0.39	0.004	Direct	Strong
Language acquisition	Educational program management	0.621	0.39	0.005	Direct	Strong
Interpretation	Spanish for foreigners	0.621	0.39	0.005	Direct	Strong
Didactics	Educational intervention projects	0.616	0.38	0.005	Direct	Strong
Didactics	Educational entrepreneurship	0.581	0.34	0.009	Direct	Strong
Educational evaluation	Educational technology	0.576	0.33	0.010	Direct	Strong
Educational program management	Applied linguistics	0.553	0.31	0.014	Direct	Strong
Educational program management	Educational models of language teaching	0.518	0.27	0.023	Direct	Strong

Table 4: Significant correlation of the areas of knowledge.

Table 4 summarizes the pairs of knowledge fields with a strong significant relationship. All the correlations are direct and positive, indicating that higher rankings in one area consistently align with higher rankings in the other. These correlations reveal how participants grouped related knowledge areas in their responses. For example, the strongest correlation (*r*=.764) shows that 58% of the variation in rankings for educational models of language teaching can be explained by variation in the language acquisition rankings. This suggests a particularly close relationship between these two domains in participants´ perception.

The output in Table 4 shows that the range of effect sizes for all correlations reported is r=.518 (Educational Program Management and Educational Models of Language Teaching) to r=.764 (Language Acquisition and Educational Models of Language Teaching).

In this way, it can be noted if the experts opted for the categories according to groups of areas by putting them together at the time of ranking. The areas which the experts considered essential were language acquisition, educational models of language teaching, applied linguistics and educational program management. This group of experts therefore assumed that professionals in the area must be experts in designing or administering educational programs linked to applied linguistics and educational models of language acquisition. Another group was formed by didactics, educational intervention projects and educational entrepreneurship. This other group of experts assumed that it was necessary to be an expert in didactics to be able to develop intervention projects and educational undertakings.

Two pairs were identified between interpretation and Spanish for foreigners, as well as educational assessment and educational technology to complement these groups. These last relations are obvious given that whoever considers interpretation appropriate will tend to emphasize Spanish teaching. Likewise, educational assessment requires digital skills to be effectively conducted in the new post COVID 19 scenarios.

Figure 3 below shows the most significant correlations between the areas of knowledge, and it is possible to visualize the different groups that are formed. This makes it possible to identify the areas of professional training that experts consider most relevant for the professional training of language teachers.
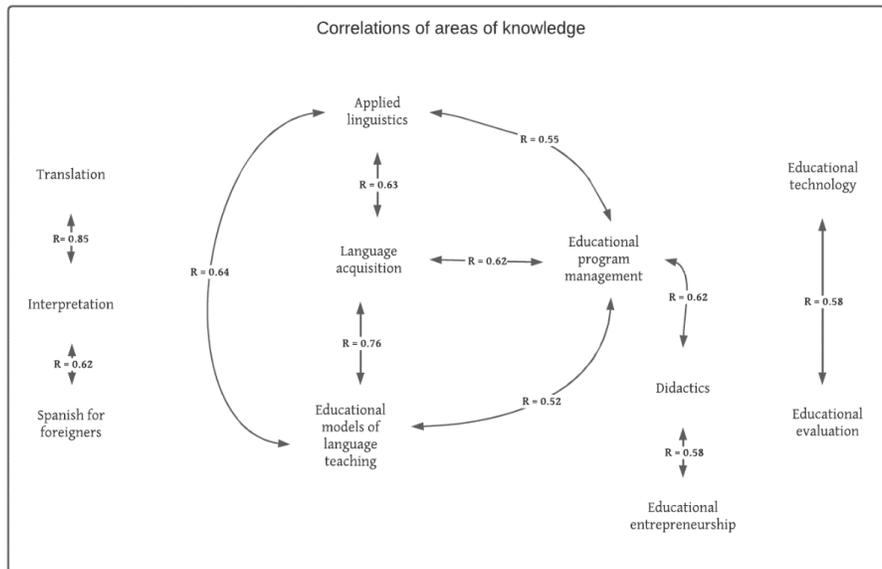
Figure 3: Areas of knowledge.

Specialists consider four categories of knowledge areas to be crucial. The first consists of educational program management, applied linguistics, language acquisition, and educational models of language instruction, forming a core of training in the administration of applied linguistics-focused educational programs. A second category includes educational program management, didactics, and educational entrepreneurship, all focused on developing educational and classroom management skills. The third group consists of interpretation, Spanish for foreigners, and translation, which, while not often found together, are all related to communication between persons who speak different languages. Finally, there are only two domains in the fourth block: educational technology and educational evaluation, which might be referred to as virtual teaching environments.

To confirm the difference in the ranking between pairs in the areas of knowledge, the Friedman test of comparison of means was carried out for non-parametric data. Table 5 below summarizes the results.

Field of knowledge	Friedman's test ranges
Academic research	11.42
Teacher training	10.74
Didactics	10.66
Educational technology	10.37
Educational intervention projects	10.03
Educational models of language teaching	9.45
Teaching foreign languages to people with special educational needs	9.16
Educational evaluation	8.95
Language acquisition	8.58
Applied linguistics	8.05
Educational program management	6.66
Educational entrepreneurship	5.13
Spanish for foreigners	4.50
Interpretation	3.34
Translation	2.97

Table 5: Comparison of means

The Friedman test allows us to identify differences in the variances of the areas ranks. The result of the ranges is shown in Table 6 below and demonstrates that academic research, teacher training, didactics, educational technology and educational intervention projects were the groups of best ranked areas, whilst

educational entrepreneurship, Spanish for foreigners, interpretation and translation are the worst rated. The difference between the ratings is significant with a p-value of 0.000.

Test statistics[a]

N	19
Chi squared	127.976
Gl	14
Asymptotic sig.	0.000

a. Friedman's test

Table 6: Friedman test statistics

The Friedman test only allows us to identify if all the ratings are the same and if at least one is different, but it does not provide us with statistical evidence to identify which of them shows differences. To do this, tests must be carried out between pairs of knowledge areas to distinguish the one that differs from the rest, either by having a very high- or low-grade average.

To achieve the above, the Wilcoxon Test was administered. According to Ramírez Ríos and Polack Peña (2020), this test is used when the following conditions are met: the sample is small (fewer than 30 elements), two paired samples are to be compared, the independent variable is dichotomous (in this case the categories correspond to the pair of knowledge areas) and the dependent variable is measured on an ordinal scale.

This test is used to verify the null hypothesis of equality between two medians of paired samples, that is, to determine if the group of experts qualifies significantly differently some of the knowledge pairs being compared. This test was performed with all the pairs of knowledge areas, but in this study only those corresponding to a p-value less than 0.05 were exposed, since a confidence level of 95% was used.

The translation area was different when compared with 13 from the other 14 areas of knowledge. When reviewing its rating was found to be one of the lowest, confirming that this area was not considered relevant by the group of experts. Close to this level were Spanish for foreigners, educational program management, interpretation, and educational entrepreneurship, which were different in 11 areas, since the score of the referred areas was lower.

Regarding the areas that the experts best rated, these included academic research, teacher training, didactics, educational technology, and educational intervention projects. In the Wilcoxon test academic research was different in nine areas, teacher training in six, didactics in five, educational technology in six, and educational intervention projects in four.

This test confirmed that the areas which received the lowest scores were significantly different from most of the other areas whilst the best qualified areas were significantly different from the central group.

Discussion

If the results of this study are compared to the knowledge base listed in Table 1 above, this research adds to the knowledge published by Day (1993), Freeman and Johnson (1998), Lafayette (1993), Moradkhani et al. (2013), Richards (1998), and Jesse (2018). This study concludes that the five most essential categories of information contributing to in-service language instructors' teacher learning knowledge base are: 1. Academic research, 2. Teacher training, 3. Didactics, 4. Educational technology, and 5. Educational intervention projects. Teacher preparation and didactics are placed in the same category as academic research, which is also deemed equally valuable.

This study's findings not only contribute to the body of knowledge a language instructor should possess, but also highlight the professional abilities that the experts deemed most important and which they believed should be developed with the highest priority. In this regard, the research suggests that language teaching professionals should develop a profile that enables them to optimally utilize the technologies applied in the teaching-learning process, generate conditions and class sessions with the greatest possible didactics, and are able to conduct research.

The results of Pearson's correlation coefficient are enlightening since these sets of knowledge areas are essential for language teachers to perform their jobs effectively. For instance, according to the experts, a language instructor should be able to design or implement educational programs based on applied linguistics and pedagogical models for language learning. The experts also agreed that one must be a didactics specialist in order to develop intervention programs and educational endeavors.

In addition to providing the group of knowledge fields with the highest rankings, the study revealed the knowledge areas with the lowest ratings, namely educational entrepreneurship, Spanish for foreigners, interpretation, and translation. Translation had the lowest score, showing that, according to this panel of experts, this topic is irrelevant for in-service instructors.

The findings of this study yielded insights that could help develop an English language teaching knowledge base framework especially relevant in the Mexican context. In previous research conducted by Sebire (2017) about the preparation of undergraduate language teachers in Mexican higher education institutions, the various degree programs in language teaching and their relationship to teaching practice are explored. The significance of the practicum in language teacher training is emphasized. Although in some cases it is determined that undergraduate students who will become future language teachers should develop critical reflective skills regarding their practice and professional development, none of the presented documents discuss what a future language teacher's knowledge base should be.

Ramírez et al. (2019) criticize the results of initial teacher training received in teacher training colleges (in Spanish: *Escuelas Normal Superior*) by future English teachers in public secondary and middle schools, as well as the most significant accomplishments and difficulties encountered by educators. This study reveals some aspects of English teacher training in colleges of education and focuses on those areas of language teacher training that require improvement. However, the study does not shed light on the areas of expertise a language instructor attending teacher education training institutes must possess.

Sadler et al. (2015) offer the perspectives of students, instructors, graduates, and employers of four Mexican institutions regarding the effectiveness of their training programs and the degree to which this training matches the actual demands of society. These studies provide a sometimes general, other times extensive review of the areas of knowledge that undergraduate students who will become future language teachers should possess. Yet, they provide little precise information addressing major or highly relevant aspects of second language teacher education. In contrast, the study we offer is clear and precise, as it identifies the five primary areas and skills that an in-service language teacher must possess through rigorous statistical analysis and several statistical tests.

A knowledge base framework could offer a structure for identifying the essential knowledge and skills for effective language instruction. This can be used in multiple ways to inform language teacher training programs and classroom instruction. For instance, a knowledge base framework can assist curriculum developers in identifying the crucial subject fields that must be addressed in language teacher preparation courses to ensure that the next generation of teachers receives an appropriate education. In addition, it can assist training programs for teachers in designing courses that combine the crucial information and abilities required for successful language education. Also, a knowledge base framework can guide the design of professional development programs for in-service instructors. It may involve conferences, seminars, and online training modules that concentrate on improving understanding and abilities in particular disciplines. Finally, it can assist instructors in evaluating what they know and can do and identifying areas for improvement. Additionally, it might offer a framework for preparing lessons and teacher education that concentrates on areas of teaching language skills.

The findings of the study may have several implications for EFL/ESL research and teaching. For example, the research can provide a firm foundation for EFL/ESL research by identifying the essential concepts and skills to be studied. Researchers can use the framework to guarantee that their research efforts are based on an in-depth comprehension of the topic. Also, a knowledge base framework can be applied to direct the establishment of teacher education courses that are founded on an in-depth comprehension of the crucial ideas and skills of EFL/ESL instruction. The following may ensure that teachers have enough knowledge for successfully teaching a language. Another implication of a knowledge base framework is that it might be implemented to direct the creation of EFL/ESL courses founded on a thorough understanding of the topic in question. This can help confirm learners have access to the essential ideas and abilities they must acquire for them to achieve proficiency in a language. Finally, a knowledge base framework can be employed to promote successful teaching in the classroom by supplying teachers with an in-depth awareness of the crucial ideas as well as abilities to be taught. This can aid in providing students with comprehensive and effective language education.

Limitations of the study

The number of participants represents one of the constraints of the study. The limited scope of the research was a result of its emphasis on expert opinion, as it reduced the likelihood that additional experts on the

topic, such as in-service teachers, could contribute to solving the problem. Undergraduates, especially seniors, could also have contributed to the study's advancement.

Another drawback is the sample size, as there should have been more participants. With the existing sample data, it is challenging to identify significant relationships, as statistical tests often require a larger sample size to assure a population distribution that is representative of the groups to which conclusions would be generalized or transferred. Another limitation of the study is the sampling method. Employing a random sampling approach could enhance the potential for more generalizable knowledge. Random sampling would ensure that every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected, reducing selection bias and increasing the representativeness of the sample. This, in tun, would allow for findings that are more applicable to the broader population, thereby strengthening the study's external validity.

Conclusions

Given that English is the primary foreign language taught in the Mexican educational system, it is crucial to construct a knowledge base framework for English language teachers that will add to the current body of literature and the growth of Mexico's English language teaching profession. Thus, this study aimed to emphasize and reveal the beliefs of a group of ELT researchers from Mexico and other countries regarding the knowledge and abilities that language teachers in service should possess.

The data acquired through an online survey consultation was statistically examined using a variety of tests, yielding highly trustworthy results to determine the essential knowledge skill foundation experts believe in-service teachers must possess to provide effective instruction. This paper's findings may serve as a guide for the development of language teacher education programs. After reviewing the current literature on studies conducted in Mexico, we have determined that no other known studies examine data with the same level of rigor as this one. Hence, we believe that this paper has the potential to become a leading source of information, and reference for the knowledge and abilities that English language teachers in Mexico should possess.

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Appendix

Survey of Expert Opinions on Contemporary Trends in Foreign Language Teacher Training

In an increasingly globalized world, the demand for qualified foreign language teachers has grown substantially. As educational paradigms shift, it is crucial to understand the evolving preferences and trends in the training of these professionals. This survey seeks to capture the perspectives of experts in foreign language education, exploring the most suitable educational modes, prevailing teaching approaches, and the essential skills that should be prioritized in academic programs. The responses collected will provide valuable insights for shaping future educational strategies and programs in this field.

The aim of the survey is to gather insights from experts in the field of foreign language education regarding current trends, preferred educational approaches, essential skills for professionals, and key elements for the internationalization of postgraduate language teaching programs.

This survey has been designed with strict adherence to ethical standards to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of participants' responses. All responses are collected anonymously, and no personally identifiable information will be disclosed or used beyond the scope of this research. Participants are informed about the purpose of the survey and their voluntary participation. They have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The data collected will be used solely for the purposes stated above and will not be shared with third parties without explicit consent. The findings will be reported in aggregate form to protect the anonymity and privacy of all participants.

1. Please provide your details:
   Name: _____   Organization: _____
   Position: _____   Education: _____
   Experience (years): _____

2. Which mode of education do you believe is most effective or currently trending for training professionals in foreign language teaching?
   a.   Face-to-face
   b.   Online
   c.   Blended

3. Which teaching approach do you find most prevalent or innovative in the training of foreign language teaching professionals?
   a. Competency-based
   b. Problem-based learning
   c. Projects-based learning
   d. Service Learning
   e. Case studies
   Other:_____

4. What are the top 5 professional skills that should be prioritized in academic programs to meet the current needs and trends in the field of foreign language teaching?

5. Please rank the following elements in order of importance for the internationalization of a postgraduate program in language teaching (1 being the most important, 7 being the least important):

Element	Order of importance
Double degree agreements	_____
Student exchange	_____
Teacher exchange	_____
Research stays	_____
Research networks	_____
Participation in congresses	_____
Publications	_____

Please justify your top 3 choices:
_____

6. Please evaluate the importance of the following areas of specialization for a graduate program in language teaching (1 = Not Important, 4 = Very Important):

Area	1	2	3	4
Didactics	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Evaluation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Language Acquisition	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teacher Training	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Entrepreneurship	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Technology	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Intervention Projects	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Management	_____	_____	_____	_____
Applied Linguistics	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interpretation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Academic Research	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational Models of Language Teaching	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spanish for Foreigners	_____	_____	_____	_____
Language Teaching (Special Educational Needs)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Translation	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Apart from the mentioned areas, what other trends and successful practices have you observed in the training of foreign language teachers?
   _____
   _____

8. Do you have any other recommendations for improving foreign language teacher training programs?
   _____
   _____