

Estimating EFL Teachers' Awareness of the Types of Knowledge Needed for their Profession.

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اختبار وعي معلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلفة اجنبية بانواع المعرفة اللازمة لمهنتهم

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Abstract

Teaching has matured to the point in recent years that it is now seen as a profession that produces

its own knowledge that is essential to the practice. Teachers are increasingly viewed as intellectual actors rather than technicians, and specialist literature supports teaching as a career and acknowledges that teachers own a "knowledge base," or a collection of abilities that they acquire while teaching. The present study tries to explore EFL teachers' awareness of the types of

knowledge they are in need during their profession. Some of these types of knowledge are, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (PK), Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, technological knowledge and so on. After shedding light on various models of knowledge base, the researcher builds a questionnaire of (18) items. The questionnaire aims at exploring EFL teachers' awareness of such types of knowledge. (82) EFL teachers participated in this study. After analyzing results of the questionnaire the researcher gets an idea that EFL teachers do not recognize the types of the types of knowledge they in need for as EFL teachers. Also the present study concludes that EFL teachers are unable to see the differences between certain types of knowledge. Some recommendations are proposed by the researcher to make teachers bridge this gap.

Key words: EFL teachers; Awareness; content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge; curriculum knowledge; teachers' knowledge.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Dewey (1902) in (Liu et al, 2014: 682) asserts that teaching is a process that is far more complex than the transference of knowledge from a teacher to learners. Teachers need to acquire and continuously update their knowledge to be and remain effective (Ulferts, 2021:16).

One crucial factor in determining the efficacy of education is teacher knowledge, which has been recognized as a crucial component of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006 in Lan, 2020:1). Pineda (2002) claims that for a long time, the idea of teachers' knowledge base was restricted to their mastery of their subject matter, their application of pedagogical procedures, and their learning of the basic skills required for teaching. However, other important aspects of teaching include the classroom setting, the students' physical and psychological characteristics, the

instructors' personal and practical experiences, their reflective practices, and their research skills (Fandino, 2013:84).

As a result, there is a lot of pressure on educators to broaden and deepen their knowledge in order to become more proficient in their day-to-day work, and on legislators and policymakers to enhance the support system that allowed educators to oversee classrooms, create lesson plans, and give students concise explanations.

Research Question

To understand EFL teachers' awareness of the types of knowledge that they should be aware of, the following research question has been formulated to guide this study: To what extent EFL teachers are aware of the constituents of the teachers' knowledge base?

Aims of the study

The present study aims at estimating EFL teachers' awareness of the components of teachers' knowledge base.

Value of the Study

Gaining an understanding of the intricacy of teachers' knowledge bases offers valuable insights into the activities of language instructors as well as practical information for implementing policies in professional development programs for teachers (Valencia, 2009). Throughout the history of professional development in teacher education programs, helping instructors prepare for a genuine teaching environment has always been valued and stressed (Akarsu & Kaya, 2012). (Tajeddin & Bagherzadeh, 2021: 5)

Keywords

EFL teachers

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruct pupils in the language as a topic, but the

general public does not utilize English for daily conversation. As is the situation in Iraq schools, students in the EFL environment therefore have limited chances to utilize English both within and outside of the classroom (Nguyen et al, 2023:91).

Awareness

According to Gafoor (2012) (in Jati: 2019:165), awareness is the degree of consciousness and is described as "the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns".

Content knowledge

This is the subject-matter expertise of EFL instructors, including their command of the English language and their understanding of its formal features, including grammar, phonology, and so forth (and sometimes culture). (Asl & colleagues, 2014: 1601)

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

refers to the ability of educators to connect the dots between curriculum and the most effective teaching methods within the framework of their daily lesson preparation and execution. Nguyen and colleagues, 2023:93–4(

- Curricular knowledge

Examples of the curriculum include the entire spectrum of programs designed to teach particular subjects and topics at a particular level, the variety of instructional materials associated with those programs, and the collection of characteristics that serve as both recommendations and disindications for the use of particular curriculum or program materials in particular situations (Schulman, 1986:10).

Chapter Two: Theoretical Background

Introduction

Teaching is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves managing challenges, target courses, or even administration; maintaining classroom discipline; demonstrating affection and patience; being a good leader and facilitator; and being aware of the differences among students, their cultures, proficiency levels, intelligence levels, and needs (CESUR, 2019:1).

Since "the target language is both the medium of instruction and the object of learning," teaching foreign languages is more complicated than teaching other subjects. As a result, teaching EFL is a complex activity with several facets that must meet the demands of its expanded duties (KUHLMAN & KNEŽEVIĆ, 2010:2).

Enhancing language competency, teaching in a variety of settings, conducting classroom-based research, having access to professional development, and networking are just a few of the obstacles that EFL instructors must be able to handle (González, 2000). They must be able to combine their understanding of language, pedagogy, learning theories, and educational situations to meet these obstacles. Additionally, as a result of standardisation, globalisation, and certification (Fandino, 2013:84). One of the main concerns in the context of teacher education is defining the knowledge base—the set of abilities a teacher must possess in order to teach. As previously said, for many decades, it was thought that the precise subject was what the teacher needed to know in order to teach. However, in reality, a good teacher is more than just material (Fernandez, 2014:80).

Since EFL teachers' knowledge is a complex construct that has sparked numerous enquiries about its nature, components, complexity, and methods of development, it has drawn a lot of attention in research. Darling-Hammond (2006) refers to it as "the black box of the teacher education program" (Troudi & Zayani, 2020: 6).

By concentrating on the knowledge base of EFL instructors, we may get insight into the factors that influence their pedagogical choices and reflections on their behaviour.

WHAT Constitutes an EFL Teachers' Knowledge?

EFL teachers need to have a certain body of knowledge in order to teach with confidence. The primary subjects of debate in the literature continue to be the nature of this knowledge, its components, characteristics, and distinctiveness in producing EFL teachers. Rather than what a language teachers should know, the debate centers on what basic knowledge is (Troudi, 2005). For instance, albeit not in chronological order, Pineda (2002) describes teachers' knowledge base as the core skills required for teaching and the use of pedagogical strategies. An alternate view of teachers' knowledge bases is offered by Kaur Yuen and Kaur (2011), who contend that they need to include both pedagogical and subject knowledge. Additionally, Shulman (1987) considered the knowledge base of teachers to be a fundamental understanding necessary for effective teaching. Shulman argues in favor of a paradigm that links content, pedagogy, context,

and curriculum. In his framework, Shulman (1987:8) separates the professional knowledge base of teachers into two main categories. General teacher knowledge is the first and may be broken down into four types:

1) (comprehension of educational objectives, 2) comprehension of educational conditions, 3) general pedagogical expertise, and 4) comprehension of pupils. The second category of teacher knowledge is composed of three types of content knowledge: curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and subject matter knowledge.

Additionally, Day (1993) offered a framework consisting of four knowledge domains: 1) Content knowledge, which includes knowledge of pragmatic, semantic, phonological, syntactic, and cultural components 3) Specific information about teaching FL, such as grammar and language abilities, is found in pedagogical content knowledge; 4) support knowledge includes the strategies used by language instructors to teach and acquire FL; and 5) pedagogical knowledge includes lesson planning, classroom management, and other topics.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue that the concept of a knowledge base for FL educators has to be reconsidered. "This knowledge-base should include forms of knowledge representation that document teacher learning within the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it occurs," according to Freeman and Johnson (1998). This means that the emphasis of the knowledge base should be on the instruction itself. Their framework is made up of teachers' pedagogical ideas about teaching, schools and education as historical and sociocultural contexts for teacher learning, and the teacher as a language instruction student. The role of the FL instructor in practice and activity is emphasized by this method (Troudi & Zayani, Emna, 2020: 6-7).

In terms of the kinds of knowledge that teachers possess, Shulman was an early researcher (1987). Teachers need to have the following knowledge: (1) subject matter expertise; (2) general pedagogical knowledge, including overarching principles and strategies for organizing and

managing a classroom that does not depend on a specific subject matter; (3) curriculum knowledge, pertaining to the programs and materials used in the classroom; (4) pedagogical content

knowledge, which is a distinct blend of subject matter and pedagogy and is unique to teachers; (5) learner characteristics and community/cultural context knowledge; (6) knowledge of educational contexts, including community/cultural characteristics, district funding, and educational ends, purposes, and values, as well as their philosophical and historical context

CHEN created another significant typology in 2003. After researching the literature both domestically and internationally, she divided TPK into six parts. Teachers' educational beliefs, self-knowledge, situational knowledge, critical reflection, impersonal knowledge, and strategic knowledge were among the six domains (Yuhong et al, 2013:485).

Five types of TPK were identified by Elbaz (1983): (1) subject matter knowledge, which includes both the content of the discipline being taught and pertinent learning theories; (2) curriculum development knowledge, which deals with the planning of learning experiences and curriculum content; (3) instructional knowledge, which covers classroom management, routines, and student needs; (4) self-knowledge, which includes awareness of personal traits like personality, age, attitudes, values, beliefs, and individual goals; and (5) knowledge of the educational environment, which refers to the social structure of the school and the community. (Source: 485–486)

Specifically regarding the classroom setting and instructors' thinking expression, Q. LI's (2010) categorization is as follows: (1) understanding of education in general; (2) understanding of context; (3) understanding of educational content; (4) understanding of learners; (5) understanding of subject content; (6) personal beliefs about subject education; (7) class reflection; (8) affect; (9) self-awareness; (10) personal beliefs about pedagogy for individuals; and (11) imitation., 486

The researcher plans to use Shulman's body of knowledge as a springboard for further investigation into the topic at hand, expanding upon it with information pertinent to the technical literacy required of EFL instructors.

Shulman's description of the knowledge base of teaching

Although there are several models that describe teachers' knowledge bases, Shulman's model from the late 1980s is the most prominent (1987[17]; 1986[20]). Shulman separated the knowledge of teachers into seven groups:

General pedagogical knowledge Pedagogical knowledge (PK), according to Shulman (1986), is the whole of the teaching process, or the heart of teaching. It covers literacy skills, les

son planning and reflection, differentiated instruction and rigor, classroom management techniques like grouping students, creating rules, establishing routines, utilizing methods and strategies to improve learning environments, assessment, and feedback (Cherner & Smith, 2016 in Nguyen et al, 2013:93). It explains the understanding of classroom organization and management concepts and tactics that cut beyond topic area. includes knowledge of students and learning processes, basic teaching concepts, classroom management strategies, and the overall aims and objectives of education (Fernandez:81).

Content knowledge (CK) Teachers that possess content knowledge (CK) are knowledgeable about the material that has to be taught or learnt. Every school level has a particular set of material that must be addressed. (Koehler & Mishra, 2009 in Nguyen et al, 2013:93) According to Shulman (1986), this knowledge would encompass knowledge of concepts, theories, ideas, organizational frameworks, knowledge of evidence and proof, and established processes and ways for creating such knowledge. It comprises the knowledge of subject matter and its organizing structures. It refers to the extent and organization of factual knowledge within the teacher's mind.

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) In the context of their daily lesson preparation and execution, instructors' understanding of how to integrate what to teach with how to teach it best is known as pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK. To put it another way, PCK

is the ability to implement suitable teaching strategies that work for a variety of topics, situations, and students. (ibid., pp. 93–4)

It is an awareness of how certain subjects, problems, or concerns are structured for education that combines pedagogy with content. Shulman defined it as "that unique combination of pedagogy and content that is exclusively the domain of teachers, their own unique form of professional understanding" (1987, p. 8[17]). To understand how certain subjects or concerns might be organized, presented, and modified to fit the various interests and skill levels of learners, it entails combining pedagogy with content.

This relates to the technique of language instruction, or the most effective approach to convey and learn the target language (in this case, English in the context of the current article). Richards (2011, p.6) defines pedagogical-content knowledge as information that serves as a foundation for

language instruction. It is information that may be used in a variety of ways to address real-world

problems in language instruction and is derived from research on language instruction and learning (Asl et al, 2014:1601).

Among the practical knowledge, the following groups might be identified: (1) subject matter; (2) general pedagogy; (3) student learning and concepts; (4) purposes; (5) curriculum and media; (6) representations and techniques; and (7) context. That was the result of a literature study by van Dreil et al. (2001) that compared different researchers' conceptions of pedagogical content knowledge. This group of authors suggests the replacement of "pedagogical content knowledge" with the phrase "practical knowledge" (Yu-hong et al., 2013).

2.3.4. Curricular knowledge. knowledge related to the curriculum. The full range of programs created for teaching specific subjects and topics at a given level, the range of instructional materials related to those programs, and the collection of traits that act as both recommendations and indications for the use of specific curriculum or program materials in specific situations are all examples of the curriculum (Shulman, 1986:10).

It comprises the understanding of resources and programs created for the teaching of certain themes and subjects that are subject- and grade-specific. involves combining pedagogy and content to comprehend how certain courses or topics are structured, portrayed, and modified to accommodate students' diverse interests and skill levels.

Knowledge of learners and their characteristics Understanding students and their traits include information on their mental, physiological, social, historical, and cultural makeup, all of which contribute to their individual requirements and areas of interest. Pays close attention to the many learning styles of pupils and their unique traits, requirements, and developmental phases.

Knowledge of educational contexts Familiarity with various educational settings A more comprehensive understanding of school administration and financing, as well as the characteristics of school and community culture, are additional components of educational context knowledge that complement an awareness of instructional settings and the social dynamics of classes and groups. includes being aware of the specific context in which teaching and learning occur, including factors such as school culture, community demographics, and available resources (Ulferts, 2021:15).

Knowledge of educational purposes, ends and values and their philosophical and historical foundations. Teachers' understanding of the broader goals of education, the perceived needs of students, and the possible benefits of education for society at large are all included in their knowledge of educational purposes, aims, and values as well as its philosophical and historical underpinnings. It includes knowledge of education's more general goals and purposes, such as its social, cultural, and ethical aspects (Mejri, 2024:2062).

Knowledge of teachers The idea behind teacher knowledge research is that in order to better

understand language instruction, it is crucial to investigate what instructors already know, how they learn it, and how they use it (Freeman & Richards, 1996; James, 2001; Freeman, 2001; Borg, 2003). (Mejri, 2024:2061).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate teacher knowledge, which has resulted in the improvement of current models (Shulman, 1986). There are many strategies to approach teacher knowledge: Leinhardt & Smith (1985) distinguish between instructional knowledge, which deals with the administration of lessons by skillfully navigating through segments, and content knowledge, which deals with the subject matter to be taught. For example, Woods (1996) makes a distinction between procedural knowledge (the "how" of teaching) and declarative or content knowledge (the "what" of teaching). The fundamental idea of this difference is that educators must not only possess information but also comprehend how to put it into practice. Besides these seven types of knowledge proposed by Shulman in his knowledge base, the researcher adds to types of knowledge due to their importance in the teaching process now. These are technological content knowledge and pedagogical technological knowledge.

Technological content knowledge

Understanding the technical tools used in a topic area is known as technological content knowledge, or TCK. It requires an awareness of how content and technology both impact and limit each other. In addition to becoming experts in the subjects they teach, teachers must also be well versed in how the use of certain technologies might alter the subject matter (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p.65 in Nguyen et al., 2023:93).

Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) is defined as "an understanding of how certain technology utilized in specific ways might alter teaching and learning. TPK covers

teachers' understanding of how to create tutorials and learning experiences that encourage students to use technology during instruction, how to incorporate technology-enhanced activities into their lesson plans, and how to incorporate these activities into their teaching practice (ibid., p. 93).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter three deals with the steps the researcher did in order to explore EFL teachers' perception of the types of knowledge needed for them to tackle their career in a sufficient way. The researcher constructs a questionnaire on the bases of Shulman knowledge base. Both the literature research approach and the empirical research method are used in this study. First, the findings of previous study are sorted out by examining a lot of literature; second, a questionnaire survey is created to do an empirical analysis of the state of PCK for English instructors at the moment (Lu & Wu, 2024:1).

Population and Sample Selection

The whole population of the present study includes EFL teachers in Karbala city. The sample of the present study consists of (82) EFL teachers (as shown in table 3-1). All members of the sample are now students in the department of English, Karbala study center, open- educational college in Karbala city in the academic year 2024-2025.

Table (3-1) sample of the study

Gender	Number	Percentage	
Male	24	29.27	
Female	58	70.73	

Instrument of the study

In order to achieve aims of the study a questionnaire which is built by the researchers is used.

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The Questionnaire

Questionnaires are printed forms for data collection through which respondents answer questions

or respond to statements in writing (Best, 1986:167; Selinger & Shhamy, 1989:172). According to Best and Kahan (2006:312) a questionnaire is used when opinions rather than facts are sought after.

After surveying previous studies related to the problem of the study, consulting specialists in the field, reviewing literature dealing with the topic, a closed type of questionnaire consists of (18) items with true/false options is built by the researchers. Each type of the knowledge is represented by two items arranged haphazardly in the questionnaire.

Respondents are asked to tick the option in each item that they think it is the correct answer.

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Dear teacher

There researcher intend to explore types of knowledge EFL teachers must be aware of, so please state whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. Thank you in advance.

No.	Statements	True	False
1	Phonology is part of content knowledge.		
2	Lesson planning is part of general pedagogical knowledge.		
3	Knowledge of principles and strategies of classroom management is part of pedagogical content knowledge.		
4	In pedagogical content knowledge teachers blend content and pedagogy.		
5	Understanding learners is part of content knowledge.		
6	How grammar taught is part of pedagogical content knowledge		
7	Knowledge of materials and programs designed for teaching topics is part of curriculum knowledge.		
8	Knowledge of learners focuses on understanding the characteristics, needs, and developmental stages of individual students.		
9	General pedagogical knowledge deals with how topics are organized for instruction.		
10	Accounting for students' needs and interests is part of curriculum knowledge.		
11	Knowledge of educational context deals with the characteristics of the school and community culture.		
12	The potential value of education to society as a whole is part of knowledge of educational goals and aims.		
13	Teaching pragmatics is part of knowledge of learners and their characteristics.		

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14	Ability to operate different types of digital technologies is part of technological knowledge.		
15	Knowledge about the environment in which teaching and learning occurs is part of content knowledge.		
16	Technological content knowledge includes changing subject matter by the application of technology.		
17	A teacher has good technological pedagogical knowledge when he can plan lessons that integrate technology-enhanced activities.		
18	Teachers who have ability to operate digital devices and use software have good educational pedagogical knowledge.		

The researcher: Asst. Prof. Dr. Mohsin Ali Shreeb.

Respondents are asked to mention their gender, age and year of experience as teachers of English as a foreign language.

Validity of the research Instrument

Specialists agree that the most important criterion of an effective validity.

The quality of the data collection tools or process that allows it to measure what it is intended to assess is known as validity (Beast & Kahn, 2006: 289). When a test measures what it is supposed to measure, it is said to be legitimate (Brown, 2005: 220; Coombe et al., 2007: xiv). Face validity is one of the several forms of validity, however.

Face Validity

According to the subjective assessment of the test taker, the administrative personnel who determine its usage, etc., face validity is the extent to which an exam seems to evaluate the knowledge or skills it purports to measure and looks correct (Brown, 2004: 26).

In order to approve face validity of the present research questionnaire, the initial form of the questionnaire is submitted to a group of experts in the field of ELT and Linguistics to decide its face validity. (See appendix 1). The researcher adopts some suggestions mentioned by the experts and some items of the questionnaire are modified. Experts confirm that the questionnaire fulfils the aims behind its construction.

Chapter Four: Result Analysis and Conclusions and Recommendations

The present chapter seeks to submit the results obtained from respondents then an analysis of these results will be mentioned

Results of the Questionnaire

(82) EFL teachers respond to a questionnaire of (18) items. Table (4-1) shows participant answers to the items of the questionnaire.

Item no.	Correct response	Yes response	False response	Neglected
1	True	68	11	3
2	True	71	8	3
3	False	57	6	19
4	True	47	15	20

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5	False	63	17	2
6	True	49	29	4
7	True	64	9	9
8	True	56	23	3
9	False	52	24	6
10	False	53	25	4

11	True	60	18	4
12	True	64	14	4
13	False	53	26	3
14	True	63	13	6
15	False	55	25	2
16	True	59	18	5
17	True	71	11	0
18	False	71	9	2

Table(4-1) Participant responses to the questionnaire
Analysis of Results

The percentages of the correct responses to each item of the questionnaire are shown in table (4- 2)

Item no.	Percentage of correct responses
1	82,93
2	86,58
3	07,32
4	57,31
5	20,73
6	59,76
7	78,05
8	68,29
9	29,27
10	30,49
11	73,17
12	78,05
13	31,71

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14	76,83
15	30,49
16	71,95
17	86,85
18	10,10

4-3 Results Analysis

The researcher makes each type of teachers' knowledge is represented by two items to avoid guessing answers as far as possible as shown in table (4-3) with the results obtained

Type of knowledge	Items representing the knowledge	Correct response	Percentage
Content knowledge	1	True	82,91
	5	False	20,37
Pedagogical content knowledge	4	True	57,31

General pedagogical knowledge	6	True	59,76
	2	True	86,58
	9	False	29,27
Curriculum Knowledge	7	True	87,05
	10	False	30,49
Knowledge of the learners and their Characteristics	8	True	68,29
	13	False	31,71
Knowledge of Educational Contexts	11	True	73,17
	3	False	7,32
Knowledge of Educational purposes, aims, and values.	12	True	78,05
	15	False	30,49
Technological Content Knowledge	14	True	76,83
	16	True	71,95
Technological Pedagogical Knowledge	17	True	86,58
	18	False	10,10

Table(4-3)Resultsofthequestionnaire

Resultsmentionedintable(4-

3)indicatesthatrespondentstendtotickthe‘true’choicewhenthey arenot sure about theexact answer.Thus it can be seen that when thecorrect answeris ‘true’the percentage tends to be high but when the correct answer is ‘false’ the percentage is very low.

It can be concluded that EFLteachers are generallynot fullyaware of all the types of knowledge they should be aware of besides they can’t discriminate between the components of each knowledge. For example, content knowledge is examined byitems (1) and (5). When the correct answeris‘true’thepercentageishigh(82,91),butwhenthecorrectansweris‘false’thepercentage is low (20,91). So from item no.1 it can be concluded that teachers have good idea about content knowledgebutresultsofrespondentsofitemfive,inwhichthecorrectansweris‘False’,indicate

thateachersdon’t havegoodideaaboutcontentknowledge.Inthiscase,fromitemsonedfive, it can’t be concluded whether EFL teachers have good idea about content knowledge or not. Another example that affirms what is mentioned is the results of general pedagogical knowledge as shownintable(4-3).Whenthecorrectansweris‘true’thepercentageishigh(86,58)butwhenthecorrectansweris‘False’,thepercentageislow(29,27).Thesamethingcanbesaidabout other typesofknowledgeasitismentionedintable(4-3).Finally,itcanbeconcludedthatEFLteachers arenot awareofall types ofknowledge theyneed to fulfil theiraims ofbeingteachersofEnglish as a foreign language.

4.4 Recommendations

Onthebasisofresultsobtainedtheresearcherrecommends thefollowingrecommendation hoping that they will improve EFL teachers’ profession and remedy the gap in their knowledge.

1. Educators need career coachingand practical experiences to learn how to applyknowledge in suitable contexts.Theimplementationofprofessionalmentoringandguidancefornewteachers upon arrival at school, along with more opportunities for students to experiment and test

knowledge in practice during initial teacher education (such as teaching practicum, pedagogical approach modeling, and computer- and video-based learning), have been made to address this.

2. Strengthening the teaching profession's ongoing participation in research and reflective practice. Programs and courses that aim to improve instructors' ongoing involvement with

research are becoming more and more popular among colleges that train EFL teachers. Planting the seeds for lifelong learning of professional knowledge and skills is the aim.

3. Encourage in-service teachers' professional development via evaluations. For example,

several nations have instituted formative teacher evaluation that link assessment outcomes to pay increases and professional development.

4. Including hands-on workshops designed to increase instructors' technology literacy.

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