

Knowledge-based Language Teaching and its Implications on Teacher Education: Perceptions of Teacher Educators in Pakistan

Haji Karim Khan & Muhammad Naeem Butt

Abstract

Research on the language teachers' knowledge has always remained a grey area in Pakistan. Urdu and English are generally the medium of instruction in schools, whereas English is the sole medium of instruction in the mainstream universities. Both Urdu and English are being taught as languages in schools, too. Besides Urdu and English, respective provincial languages are also in practice in schools. The question, what knowledge should our language teachers know, and what are their implications for teacher education, have always received lesser attention in the country. Through the use of a qualitative case study approach, we explored perceptions of teacher educators regarding language teachers' knowledge. Data were collected through in-depth interviews from nine teacher educators from Departments/Institutes of Education of two public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one university as well as one Elementary College of Education in Skardu, Pakistan. A thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. Findings showed that besides content, pedagogy, and pedagogical content knowledge, language teachers need to know cultural knowledge and knowledge of using IT resources and research findings in their routine practices. As a result, some key implications for language teacher development have surfaced from the findings.

Keywords: Knowledge-base for language teaching; knowledge of culture; Language teacher education; Teacher educators

Introduction

Language is considered as a key element in the human development. Students from various linguistic background come to schools; as a result, maintaining quality education and provision of equitable learning opportunities for all the students, become a real challenge for schools. Therefore, proper understanding of the knowledge-base for teaching, appropriate sources for the development of that knowledge, and making sense of the complexities of the pedagogical process (Shulman, 1987) are of a paramount importance. As noted by Hawkins (2013), language and literacies have become key elements of learning at home, in schools, and communities.

Given the issue of linguistic diversity, educating the young men and women becomes a question. Schools need to have teachers who are well aware of the role of languages in teaching and learning processes as well as of how individuals acquire languages. Questions such as: what is the role of languages in teaching and

learning? How do children learn languages? How should languages be taught in schools? What do language teachers need to know? And how language teacher education should respond to such questions need to be addressed. These are, in fact, some of the key questions that have been the focus of the research and advocacy in the language teaching and learning across the world.

Highlighting the complexities of teaching and the importance of teachers' knowledge-base, Shulman (1987) argues that the complexities and demands of teaching have been overlooked and teachers themselves generally fail to make sense of what they know and how they know it. In addition, the theory and practice dilemma (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995) in education has always been a spotlight in the education research making it further complex and debatable. When it comes to the teaching of languages, knowing the language themselves and knowing how to facilitate the learners in learning and practicing the languages, is vital from the teachers' part (Moats, 1994).

A historic analysis of the teachers' knowledge shows that the need for a knowledge-base for teachers surfaced in the nineteenth century. For instance, in the USA, the realization of teaching as a discipline, teachers requiring certain knowledge to teach, and how to equip the teachers with certain knowledge, came to the surfaces in the 19th century. Lucas (1997) mentions that until the initial decade of the 19th century the notion that school teachers would need certain repertoire of knowledge and formal training for their work could not get the realization and support. As far as the history of language teachers' knowledge and teacher education is concerned, the traditions of language teacher education have formed its structure over the past quarter century (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In Pakistan, there are five major languages including Punjabi, Pashtu, Sindhi, Saraiki, and Baluchi whereas Urdu is the national language. The language of the elites is English as it was before the partition; however, this trend continued after the independence too (Rahman, 1997). Urdu is the medium of instruction in government schools, English is the medium in elite and non-elite private schools. As a result of the Urdu-English media of instruction in the schools, English is an examination subject, and the rest of the languages have been marginalized (Coleman, 2010). In the recent times, various provinces in the country have also started using the respective provincial languages as media of instruction in schools.

Almost all of the national education policies have statements about medium of instruction in the country; however, a robust and sole policy in the context of medium of instruction for schools is missing. Though the National Education Policy 2009 emphasizes on the importance of framing such a policy, yet a serious attempt has not been made in the country so far. For instance, schools generally

lack designated language teachers and there has been a bleak emphasis on preparing cadre of language teachers through relevant language teacher education programs in the country.

Though there has been some work on language learning, language acquisition, and on teaching and learning of second language in Pakistan, yet the focus has not been specifically on the language teachers' knowledge-base and how to address it through teacher education. In the teacher education institutions in Pakistan, unavailability of language experts to teach language subjects has been observed, which is either overcome by visiting teachers from different departments or taught by the teacher education institutions' own faculty. Here the questions arise, do such faculty members possess ample knowledge of language teaching? Can they really train future language teachers? We therefore see it a default mechanism, which needs further debate, research, and advocacy.

This study was carried out in the higher education institutions providing teacher education programs in various regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Both Urdu and English were second languages for the people in the region. Majority of the people in the study context of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region spoke Pashtu whereas in the study context of Gilgit-Baltistan majority spoke Balti language. As for as socio-economic conditions are concerned, a larger cross section of the people in both the contexts come from middle and lower-middle- or working-class families.

In both the regions, historically, Urdu and English have been the media of instruction in the government and elite private schools respectively. However, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has recently introduced mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary schools; whereas in GB, the plan is in progress to be implemented. In both the regions, schools generally lack subject specialists in languages. As for as teacher education programs in languages is concerned, there are no specific teacher education programs for language teachers. The mainstream teacher education programs include some specialized courses in the content and pedagogical areas of languages (particularly English and Urdu), which tend to be not enough to develop well-versed language teachers for schools. Likewise, in most cases, the teacher education institutions also lack language subject specialists.

This study aimed at findings the perceptions of teacher educators on the very notion of language teachers' knowledge-bases and their implications for teacher education. Findings showcase teacher educators' perceptions about what language teachers need to know, why they need to know certain aspects of language learning and teaching, and what implications are there for teacher education in the country.

Literature Review

Theoretical landscape for this study is laid down on the generic foundations of teachers' knowledge highlighted by Shulman (1986) who identified teachers' knowledge in the forms of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Freeman and Jonson (1998) argue that knowledge-base of teachers should focus on the teaching, context, and pedagogy of teaching. This knowledge-based should also include forms of knowledge that teachers learn from the social, cultural and institutional contexts where teaching and learning takes place. They further express that teachers are not empty vessels to be filled by knowledge; rather, they come to the profession with prior beliefs, preconceived notions and feelings about teaching and learning and about curricular activities. These beliefs and conceptions impact on what teachers do in their classrooms.

It is a fact that the span of disciplinary contemporary knowledge has not been constructed overnight; rather, it has been shaped up over the passage of time based on human actions and interactions. Popkewitz (1999) rightly mentions that "the debates about knowledge that emerged in the literature of the postmodern thought are themselves related to shifts of the past decades in the politics of social movements, state patterns of governing, and the economy of work, among others" (Popkewitz, 1999: 35). Thus, the notion of what to teach, how to teach, and how to enable teachers to teach in a certain way, are seen as gradual and incremental processes.

Global literature shows that the standards for teacher licensure vary from region to region or country to country. There are commonalities and differences as well resulting in certain implications for teachers' knowledge. Contemporary studies on the very notion of language teachers' knowledge-base have come up with some pertinent findings. These studies have highlighted context specific as well as generic findings in the area. It is therefore imperative to critically review those findings and highlight what and how they portray language teachers' knowledge-base and what are the implications for the language teacher education.

In the developing country contexts, the nature of language teaching depicts almost the same scenario as that of Pakistan. For instance, Vaish and Hornberger (2009) studied language policies and school linguist practices in India, Singapore and South Africa and found that in India despite the Three Language Policy of 1968, many children in the country are being educated in the language which is not their mother tongue. Likewise, though bilingual language policy exists in Singapore, yet the standard media of instruction in schools is English that demands a proficiency in English for teachers. Similarly, though South Africa in its 1993 constitution showcases the multilingualism, yet most of the parents prefer to send their children

to English medium schools resulting in pertinent implications for the teachers' language capabilities.

Likewise, in China, the State Education Development Commission (SEDC) initially introduced a syllabus that required the secondary school teachers to teach English for communication. Later on, the SEDC also introduced task-based language teaching in some schools. The core purpose of such reform initiatives was to enable teachers to enhance their English language proficiencies in order to be able to interact with teachers and experts from outside China so as to have greater opportunities of learning to teach (Liao, 2004).

As for as language teachers' knowledge is concerned, Griffith (2017) emphasizes on the pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to make in-the-moment teaching decisions in language classrooms. She recommends teacher education programs to involve assessment-driven instructions and responsive and adaptive teaching. Bunch (2013) also comes up with the pedagogical language knowledge referring to the understandings of the linguistic features and use of socio-cultural approaches in language learning. She is of the view that teacher education should enable teachers to know and become instrumental to create the instructional conditions in which learners could productively engage in the key practices. Likewise, Washburn et al. (2016) highlight content knowledge related to the basic language constructs. They are of the opinion that teacher education should involve initiatives to improve reading instructions among teachers.

Moats and Foorman (2003) highlight knowledge about learning to read, early reading acquisition and language structure. They suggest that content knowledge of language and reading development need to be part of the language teacher education programs. Similarly, Mullock (2006) came up with knowledge of language management and knowing the learners' individual differences. She suggests developing teachers' knowledge-base and its development in the context of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and argues that developing attitudes among teachers towards learners, is a crucial factor. Cahnmann-Taylor et al. (2017) assert that language teachers should know the pedagogy of creative writing therefore teacher education should enable teachers to experience creative writing pedagogies for teaching and learning English.

Gebhard, et al. (2008) mention the importance of knowing how second language learners produce and interpret assigned texts in mainstream classrooms. In other words, this type of knowledge is about developing a deeper understanding of various background sources that bilingual students bring to the school literacy practices. Thus, they see literacy as a critical social practice thereby having implications to enabling teachers to balance the theoretical and practical concerns.

It is therefore important to educate language teachers to be able to critically analyze the consequence of school literacy reforms.

Literature also shows the importance of knowing and understandings the language diversity and teaching. For instance, De Jong et al. (2013) refer to contextual knowledge of bilingual learners including their linguistic as well as cultural backgrounds, language related pedagogical knowledge and skills, and the ability to interpret educational policies and reforms which are likely impact learning. Therefore, they suggest that teacher education programs should involve robust planning, provide appropriate field experiences, and enable teachers to be able to use a variety of resources.

Cho et al. (2012) highlight the importance of knowing social construction of language as well as language diversity. They recommend language teachers knowing race and ethnicity concerns in understanding issues of language diversity; thus, by enabling teachers to explore the complexity of local curriculum development and employing short and long-term strategies for sustaining department level teacher education curricula and pedagogical efforts specific to language diversity. Dogancay-Aktuna (2006) also highlights the knowledge of sociocultural and political contexts for language teachers. They recommend that teacher education curriculum should integrate discussion of cross-cultural variation in language teaching, tools for investigating the variations and examination of the sociopolitical factors surrounding the teaching of English as an international language. Likewise, highlighting the importance of knowing culture and language of the immigrant students, Aung et al. (2013), assert that language teachers must be prepared to give a welcoming environment to the immigrant students in the classrooms so as to make a conducive learning environment for all the students.

Cope and Kalantzis (2010) state that the growing demand of the use of the Information Technology has also huge implications for teaching and learning in general and that of the language teaching, in particular. The use of multimodality in reading and communication has also changed the teaching and learning practices in the classrooms. According to Pasternak et al. (2014) language teachers need to have knowledge and expertise to respond to new forms of literacy, new technologies, diverse K-12 student populations, and field experience. They are of the view that teacher education should enable prospective teachers to use various literacy instruction methods in their teaching careers.

Methodological Decisions

Qualitative case-study approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 1998) was

used for data collection and analysis. The following characteristics of qualitative research enabled the researchers to generate in-depth data for the analysis and interpretation.

- i. Qualitative studies are naturalistic. Researchers generated data in the natural settings.
- ii. Researchers become data generators. This allowed the researchers to generate in-depth data from the field.
- iii. Qualitative studies are in-depth, and researchers remain in the field for a longer period. This enabled the researchers to associate with the participant teacher educators for a longer period during the fieldwork. The researchers conducted multiple interviews with each of the research participants in the field.

Sample size consisted of nine teacher educators from four different teacher education institutions located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Those teacher educators were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Patton, 2002). While selecting the teacher educators, the researchers considered the purpose and need of the study. Thus, the sample was selected based on the following criteria.

- Teacher educators having more than five years of experiences.
- Teacher educators who taught subjects related to languages in the teacher education programs at Bachelor and/or Master's level
- Teacher educators from institutions located in urban and rural contexts.
- Voluntary participation of the teacher educators

The four teacher education institutions included the Department of Education of the Islamia College University, Peshawar (one teacher educator), Institute of Education and Research of the University of Peshawar (two teacher educators), Department of Educational Development University of Baltistan, Skardu (three teacher educators), and Elementary College of Education Skardu, Pakistan (three teacher educators). The experience of the research participants ranged from 6 to 14 years as teacher educators. Likewise, four of the teacher educators had Ph.D. degrees in Education whereas the rest were M.Phil./MS and Master degree holders. The institutions from the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, present an in-depth views of teacher educators from both well-established and newly established institutions regarding the knowledge-base of language teachers and its implications for teacher education in the country.

The researchers used a semi-structured interview protocol for data collection. The interview protocol was developed on the basis of the review of relevant literature pertaining to the knowledge-base of teachers in general and those of language teachers in particular (Shulman, 1986; Griffith, 2017; Bunch, 2013). The semi-structured questions meant to grasp the views, reflections, and perceptions of teacher educators about the knowledge-base of language teachers. Each of the interview recordings took 60 to 90 minutes. Researchers recorded the interviews upon the consent of the research participants. After conducting the interviews, data were transcribed and prepared for the analysis. A thematic approach was employed for the data analysis that included the themes: knowledge-base of language teachers including content, pedagogy, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of individual differences, and knowledge related to culture and languages that students bring to the classes were developed. Themes related to language teacher development and issues in the language teacher education in the country, also emerged as a result of the analysis.

Results and Findings

Research participants witnessed the importance of language in teaching and learning and saw language as a vehicle for learning. The following extracts highlight the perceptions of the participants about language and its importance. A participant said, “The impotence of language in teaching and learning cannot be denied. We as human-beings, interact, and express through languages”.

Another participant expressed,

As for as the importance of language in teaching and learning is considered, I would say that it is the key medium or path to learning and innovations. Its importance is seen in all classrooms, no matter what subjects you teach.

Research participants perceived that language plays a key role in human development. They saw a huge impact of language on the lives of the people. A research participant, for example mentioned,

It is the language that mediates teaching and learning. Language is key to conceptual understanding of various phenomena and concepts. Through language, we communicate to others, express, and convey our ideas, concepts, and feelings. It therefore, plays a pivotal role in teaching and learning. Fluency in language facilitates construction of knowledge. Without understanding the language, we may just memorize something, but may not make sense of it. That is why it is to say that language facilitates learning.

Another participant added,

Language is a key social tool for communication, understanding, articulation, sense-making and transportation of meanings. Its importance in our lives is as important as that of water for a fish. Language has huge implications for teaching and learning. Language is the career through which we transfer experiences, knowledge, skill and expertise. One cannot deny the importance of clarity of

instructions in our everyday lives whereby language has a key and significant role in giving and receiving instructions.

Thus, the research participants saw the importance of language from the perspectives of communications, making meanings, and knowledge creation and disseminations. They saw language as a vehicle for learning. As for as language teachers' knowledge is concerned, several aspects of the knowledge surfaced from the data, which are discussed below.

Theme-1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

Research participants perceived content, pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge as key forms of language teacher knowledge. One of the research participants said,

Language teachers need to be experts in content, how to teach the content, the surrounded culture and its norms and values. When we talk of pedagogy, it is not just how to teach; rather, how to teach reading, writing, listening and speaking, and being able to adopt appropriate assessment approaches as well designing teaching considering the individual learning needs of the students.

Another participant highlighted,

Language teachers should know the content of the language they teach. They should know how to read, write, listen, and speak while using the target language. Language teachers should know what the basic constructs of a language are, how to teach the language, how to make the content understandable to the learners, how to link it with the everyday life.

He further added,

In our schools, most of the teachers have issues with their own content whatever language they teach; the question therefore is, how can they be able to teach the target languages. I would suggest, they should be given opportunities to enhance their own language proficiency so as they are able to facilitate learners in their language acquisition. Likewise, Urdu is our national language, unfortunately we even do not have mastery in it. The reason once again, is the issue of not availability of subject specialists in our schools. Urdu is a second language for us. Today, most of the language teachers teach the way they had been taught.

Describing the importance of language teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge, a research participant said,

One of the characteristics of effective teachers is that they know the content well, and know how to teach the content, and how to bring it down to the levels of the students. Thus, when we talk of language teachers, it is to expect that they should be at home in the language they teach and know how to teach and help the students acquire that language.

The same participant further added,

Language teachers should also know how children acquire languages and how they develop linguistic skills. Language teachers should know how to facilitate students' learning of language, what resources to use, how to assess language development, and how to give feedback to them.

Another participant reflected, "It is understood that a language teacher should have strong grasp on the written and spoken aspects of the language that he or she teaches.

In sum, the analysis of the data showed that knowledge of language teachers is inclusive of content, pedagogy or pedagogical content knowledge. Unless teachers know the language themselves, they are not able to teach the language and facilitate learners in their learning of certain languages.

Theme-2: Knowledge of the Culture and Society

It surfaced from the data analysis that language teachers also need to know the culture and society so as to develop pedagogies in relation to the cultural norms, values and practices. It surfaced that knowing the culture and languages individual students bring with them, enables the teachers to link their teaching with the everyday life experiences. A research participant articulated,

I would say that the language teachers should also know the cultural norms and values. Schools are part of the society, and in case of language teaching and learning, the language teachers need to know the culture, its norms and its values. As, we all know that language is also a cultural entity, therefore language teachers should also know the culture. This will enable them to know their students.

Another participant expressed,

A language teacher should also know the culture and the society from where the students come to the school. A teacher should be a good observer, a reflective practitioner so as to be able to know the concerns related to language learning in the context, relate her teaching practice with the everyday life, and help her students learn the language. Therefore, she should have the knowledge related the culture around the school.

Likewise, a participant explained,

Words have contextual meaning, meaning vary the way you express the words, the context where you utter them. Therefore, language teachers should know the relationship of meanings that the words showcase in certain situations. I believe that most of the intangible culture is in language. It is preserved, communicated, and practiced in languages in the form of stories, myths, folklores, music, fiction, life stories etc. Human beings express their feeling though languages. In other

words, it is the language where human beings express their sentimental thoughts. Therefore, language teachers should know the cultural knowledge too. Proper pronunciation also surfaced as a key element of language teachers' knowledge. A research participant expressed,

One thing I must say is, language teachers should know how to pronounce various terms. Language is part of a culture and cultural identity. Unlike the native speakers, people in specific cultures pronounce words in certain ways. You might have noticed that most of us cannot pronounce words from English and Urdu. Because, those are second and third languages respectively for us. We did not have competent teachers in our schools who could teach us proper pronunciations.

Another participant shared his views and said, "They [language teachers] should also pronounce the words properly. Pronunciation is very important. People in our context generally fail to properly pronounce words other languages.". Another participant reflected,

In the primary school where I was studying, teachers' pronunciation in Urdu was something different. As we considered our teachers' authority of knowledge at that time, thus we learnt the way the teachers taught us. Later on, when I went to Karachi for further studies, I felt humiliations due to the wrong pronunciations. Friends usually mocked me on my pronunciation. The same is true with English too!

Consequently, knowing culture where schools are nested, and knowing the languages that students bring to the class and being able to teach correct pronunciation to the second language learners becomes a key aspect of a language teachers' knowledge in the context of second language acquisition.

Theme-3: Knowledge of Individual Differences and Second Language Acquisition

Knowing about individual students' and their ways of language acquisition also surfaced as a form of language teachers' knowledge. The participants believed that children come from different backgrounds and have different ways of learning a language therefore teachers need to know the individual differences of the students. One of the participants mentioned,

They [language teachers] should also know about their students' mother tongues or what other languages do students bring to the classrooms. Language is seen as an identity therefore teachers should respect the languages their students bring to the class. They should know the individual differences of their students and adapt teaching approaches accordingly.

Another participant echoed almost the same,

All the students sitting in a language classroom, come from different backgrounds, speak different languages, and are at different levels of language acquisition, it is therefore important for a teacher to know about them. Knowing the students' background will enable a teacher to enrich the curriculum and design a variety of activities for learning.

Similarly, a participant reflected on the language of feelings and shared his views, Expressive and communicative language has huge importance in education as well as in teacher education. I would say that you become an ideal teacher if you make sense of the students' sentimental language, their feelings, and their expressions, it is not about just utterance of certain words. Language teacher is not a mere ordinary teacher; rather, a linguist, a researcher, a historian, an ethnographer and a keen observer.

The analysis of the extracts in the above section showed that knowing the culture and context where your students come from, is important. Likewise, knowing the students' individual differences, literacies, as well as medium of expressions are of paramount importance. In addition, becoming cognizant of the presence of other languages brought to the classroom by different students, is also pivotal.

Theme-4: Knowledge of Using IT Resources and Interpretation of Research Findings

Beside the content and pedagogical knowledge as well as knowledge of culture, knowledge about using IT resources and being able to interpret various research findings in language teaching and learning, also came up as a key element. A participant mentioned, "a teacher should also know what recourses to use in language teaching, where to find them and how to use them". Similarly, another participant mentioned, "the impact of IT and contemporary research on languages are the things our language teachers should know". She further expressed, "This era is no doubt the era of IT. Language teachers should also know how to use IT in teaching and learning. Use of the internet for correcting languages, correct pronunciations, and communication has become an important aspect of language teachers' practices".

Almost all the research participants mentioned that language teachers should also be able to make sense of research findings, be able to interpret them, and translate them in their routine practice. A participant, for example, mentioned, "Language teachers should know how to do research and how to use the contemporary research findings on language acquisition in their practices". Another participant added,

It is good that language teachers should do research on language acquisition and development. However, it is very important that they can use research findings from contemporary language researches. This will enable them to become effective language teachers informed by the contemporary research-based knowledge.

Thus, it surfaced from the data that the contemporary development in the field of IT and academic research, has implications for the knowledge of language teachers. Language teachers need to know how to use IT resources and research findings in their routine practices.

Theme-5: The Nature and Focus on Language in Teacher Education

Research participants highlighted issues related to teacher education with respect to the focus on the English language. They discussed issues related to programs as well as teacher educators' roles. For instance, a participant mentioned,

Proper focus has not been given to teaching and learning of languages in the earlier one-year long PTC, CT, B.Ed. or M.Ed. programs as well as in the current ones. We need a separate B.Ed. program on languages. In addition, teacher educators generally lack language proficiency, particularly in English. As a result, they cannot be in a position to educate prospective language teachers. They just teach whatever they know and consider themselves as experts.

He further added, "We have seen teacher educators teaching English subjects or courses in Urdu. The reason is that they themselves lack English language expertise. Language specialists, particularly, Urdu and English, should be recruited in the Institutes and Departments of Education".

Another participant also highlighted the same issue and said, Our colleges of education generally do not have subject experts; they just have the generic teacher educators, who are basically retransferred from schools to the teacher education colleges. The colleges either should have separate cadre of subject experts or the existing teacher educators who teach languages, should be trained and developed through various professional development opportunities.

A similar issue was discussed by participants from the university departments too. A participant mentioned,

In the departments of education in the universities, there should be some faculty members with MS or PhD in languages such as Urdu and English. Generally, there are faculty members with MS or PhD degrees in Education. The faculty members with the language background will be able to teach and conduct research in the context of language development, acquisition and teaching.

Another participant from the university department also added, “in our department, we have faculty members with the background of Education, we should have faculty members with language background too”.

Highlighting issue related to resources in the colleges of education and departments of education in the universities, research participants mentioned that besides lack of faulty members with language background, language related resources are also rare. For instance, a participant mentioned,

We do not have language labs in our institute where faculty members and prospective students would practice. Similarly, language related books are also limited in the library; though there are books on language acquisition and teaching, yet contemporary books on languages needed to be added.

A participant from one of the university departments mentioned, “our campus is a newly established campus, and we have very limited books in the library. There are some books on language learning and teaching, yet the amount needs to be enhanced”. Another participant also mentioned, “language lab plays a key role in teaching, learning, and research work on languages. However, we do not have it in our department. As a result, just theoretical knowledge is being imparted. We should focus more on practical aspects, too”.

A good teacher education program develops good teachers for the nation. It means that if we have competent teacher educators for languages, equipped with relevant resources, they will be able to not enhance the linguistic and pedagogical capabilities of the prospective teachers, but also do research in the field of language learning and development.

Discussion

Teaching is a complex and challenging profession. Factors such as learners’ individual differences and backgrounds, cultural aspects, and socio-economic conditions, school culture, teachers’ teaching styles as well as learners’ learning styles have direct and indirect impact on teaching. Teaching of language is unique; because, a language is a cultural enterprise and is a key element of a culture and cultural identity. This aspect has huge implications for teaching and learning of a language and that of the language teachers’ knowledge-base.

Findings from this study showcased perceptions of teacher educators regarding the language teachers’ knowledge-base. Firstly, language teachers need to know the content, pedagogy, and pedagogical content knowledge related to the language they teach. Thus, knowing the language means knowing the grammar, composition, phonetics and phonology, etymology as well as being able to use

appropriate teaching approaches and relevant resources in order to be able to make the content understandable for the learners (Bunch, 2013). Hence, these findings reflect the general aspects of teachers' knowledge identified by the earlier researchers (Griffith, 2017; Connelly & Clandinin, 1995; Shulman, 1987).

Secondly, knowledge about culture and the languages that the students bring to the class (De Jong et al., 2013; Cho et al., 2012), also emerged as a key aspect of language teachers' knowledge. It surfaced that in order to become a competent language teacher, an individual need to know the cultural norms, values, and languages that students bring with them to the class. Thus, knowing the language of the individual students enables teachers to adopt appropriate teaching approaches in the classroom such as bilingual or multilingual approaches (Mullock, 2006).

One particular aspect of language teachers' knowledge emerged as the knowledge of appropriate use of pronunciation. This can be specific to the context of teaching to second language learners (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006). For instance, in the particular context where the study was carried out, Urdu and English are the second and third languages respectively for the common people. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are able to use proper pronunciation. This has huge implications for the early-year learners. For instance, if the learners learn a wrong pronunciation, correcting it at latter stage becomes a challenging task. In addition, knowledge of how children acquire second language and how to interpret the text in the second language also surfaced from the findings. Other researchers have also come up with such findings (Gebhard et al., 2008; Moats & Foorman, 2003).

Findings also showcased a bleak picture of the teacher education programs in the country with respect language teacher development. It is imperative that our institutions and programs have the strength to develop competent language teachers for our schools. These institutions need language related resources in terms of faculty members with language backgrounds as well as well-equipped language labs and libraries.

Conclusions

This study aimed to explore teacher educators' perceptions about the language teachers' Knowledge-base. Knowing the content specific to a particular language, knowing teaching pedagogies in order to facilitate learners in their acquisition of a knowledge emerged as key findings. In addition, knowing the surrounding cultures and languages the students bring to the classes with them as well as knowing the students' individual differences also surfaced as key aspects of language teachers' knowledge.

Findings also highlighted issues related to language teacher preparation in the teacher education institutions. Policy makers in teacher education need to consider such issues. As Jones and West (2009) rightly mention “professional and research-based discourse must continue to be generated in order to promote teacher training courses that serve ultimately to influence student outcomes” (Jones & West, 2009: 74). Stakeholders need to conceptualize teacher preparation so as to meet changing curricular needs while considering cultural, political and economic challenges in the contemporary world (Pasternak et al., 2014).

Recommendations

Certain recommendations pertaining to the language teachers’ knowledge-base and the role of teacher education emerged from the study, which are highlighted below.

1. A separate specialization in language teaching is a *sine qua non*. Programs such as B. Ed. in language teaching is a need of the time.
2. Institutes of education and departments of education in the universities should have faculty members with language backgrounds. Studies have shown that teacher educators in the colleges of education generally come from schools with generic background (Khan, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to have faculty members with the background of language teaching and research, too.
3. Courses related to languages in the teacher education programs should also focus on strengthening the prospective teachers’ content, pedagogy, as well as proper pronunciations.
4. Knowledge of how to use IT resources in language teaching also emerged from the findings. It is imperative to involve courses on the use of IT in language teaching.
5. Courses on culture and local languages should be part of language teacher education in the country. That will result in developing a sound repertoire of knowledge in language teaching.

References

- Aung, T. Y., Divatia, S., & Akiyama, R. (2013). Teacher education for immigrant students: The educational issues of immigrant students in the United States and Japan. In: L.C. De Oliveria (Ed.), *Teacher education for social justice: perspectives and lessons learned* (pp 23-34). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bunch, G. C. (2013). Pedagogical language knowledge: Preparing mainstream teachers for language teaching in the new standards era. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, 298-341.

- Cahnmann-Taylor, M., Bleyle, S., Hwang, Y., & Zhang, K. (2017). Teaching poetry in TESOL teacher education: Heightened attention to language as well as to cultural and political critique through poetry writing. *TESOL Journal* 8(1), 70-101.
- Cho, J., Rios, F., Trent, A., & Mayfield, K. K. (2012). Integrating language diversity into teacher education curricula in a rural context: Candidates' developmental perspectives and understandings. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 39(2), 63-85.
- Coleman, H. (2010). The teaching and learning in Pakistan: The role of language in education. The British Council. Available at: <http://asiapacificmle.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/pakistan-ette-english-language-report.pdf>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Secret, sacred, and cover stories. In: D. J. Clandinin & F. M. Connelly (Eds.). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes* (pp. 3-15). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2010). New media, new learning. In: D. R. Cole & D. L. Pullen (Eds.). *Multilateralism in motion: Current theory and practice* (pp. 87-104). New York: Routledge.
- Denzin, K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Entering the Field of Qualitative Research. In: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-17). London: Sage Publications.
- Dogancay-Aktuna, S. (2006). Expanding the socio-cultural knowledge base of TESOL teacher education. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(3), 278-295.
- De Jong, Easter, J., Harper, C. A., & Coady M. R. (2013). Enhanced knowledge and skills for elementary mainstream teachers of English language learners. *Theory into Practice*, 52(2), 89-97.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly (Autumn)*, 32(3), 397-417.
- Gebhard, M., Demers, J., & Castillo-Rosenthal, Z. (2008). Teachers as critical text analysts: L2 literacies and teachers' work in the context of high-stake school reform. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17(4), 274-291.
- Griffith, R. (2017). Preservice Teachers' in-the-moment teaching decisions in reading. *Literacy*, 51(1), 3-10.
- Hawkins, M. R. (2013). Introduction. In: M. R. Hawkins (Ed.). *Framing languages and literacies: Socially situated views and perspectives* (pp. 1-9). New York: Routledge.
- Jones, P., & West, E. (2009). Teacher Education: Reflections upon teacher education in severe difficulties in the USA: Shared concerns about quantity and quality. *British Journal of Special Education*, 36(2), 69-75.
- Khan, H. K. (2011). Becoming teacher educators in Pakistan: Voices from the

- government colleges of education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37(3), 325-335.
- Liao, X. (2004). The need for communicative language teaching in China. *ELT Journal*, 58(3), 207-273.
- Lucas, C. J. (1997). *Teacher education in America: Reform agendas for the twenty-first century*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Moats, L. C. (1994). The missing foundation in teacher education: Knowledge of the structure of spoken and written language. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 44(1), 81-102.
- Moats, L. C., & Foorman, B. R. (2003). Measuring teachers' content knowledge of language and reading. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 53(1), 23-45.
- Mullock, B. (2006). The Pedagogical knowledge base of four TESOL teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(1), 48-66.
- Pasternak, D. L., Caughlan, S., Hallman, H., Renzi, L. & Rush, L. (2014). Teaching English language arts methods in the United States: A review of the research. *Review of Education*, 2(2), 146-185.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1999). A social epistemology of educational research. In: T. S. Popkewitz & L. Fender (Eds.). *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp. 17-44). New York: Routledge.
- Rahman, T. (1997). The medium of instruction controversy in Pakistan. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18(2), 145-154.
- Rossmann, G. B., & Rallis, S. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-21.
- Vaish, V., & Hornberger, N. (2009). Multilingual language policy and school linguistic practices: Globalization and English-language teaching in India, Singapore and South Africa. *COMPARE*, 39(3), 305-320.
- Washburn, E. K., Binks-Cantrell, E. S., Joshi, R. M. M., Martin-Chang, S. L., & Arrow, A. W., (2016). Preservice teacher knowledge of Basic Language Constructs in Canada, England, New Zealand, and the USA. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 66(1), 7-26.