

# Becoming an EFL Teacher Educator in Nicaragua: A Phenomenological Study

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**Abstract** EFL teacher education has two sub-fields. On the one hand, we find English teachers, those professionals who teach English proficiency. On the other hand, we find teacher educators, those professionals who are teachers of teachers. Current research suggested that the latter needs more examination yet [2]. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenological study sought to examine EFL teacher educators' sources of knowledge base and the types of knowledge and skills that constructed their knowledge base. The purposefully selected research site was a teacher education program at a public university in Nicaragua. The sample consisted of six experienced EFL teacher educators. We gathered data through structured interviews and document analysis. Findings revealed that to become an EFL teacher educator might take more than three years of teaching in EFL teacher education programs, and it requires more preparation than just being an English teacher. The results indicated that teacher educators construct their knowledge and skills from eight sources, namely, coursework, observational knowledge, experience as language learners, EFL teaching experience, technology, research, teaching experience as EFL teacher educators, and professional development. Out of these sources of knowledge, participants built sixteen types of knowledge and fourteen skills. The knowledge and skills they valued more were English proficiency, language learning experience, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience in EFL teacher education programs, assessment knowledge of students' teachers, and knowledge of students' L1. This study concluded that becoming an educator requires more preparation and commitment than just being an English teacher. It suggested that universities should consider offering undergraduate and graduate programs to train EFL teacher educators.

**Keywords** EFL Teacher Educators, Knowledge Base, Teacher Training

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## 1. Introduction

This study falls into the field of research of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education. In general, teacher education has to do with the preparation of teachers. Teacher preparation focuses on helping teachers develop professional knowledge, skills, and values [1]. In the EFL field, teacher education refers to the process of learning to teach English in a country or geographical area in which English is neither the official language nor the primary language for everyday communication and interaction. Based on the existing literature, the field of EFL teacher education has two subfields, EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators. According to Moradkhani et al.[2], EFL teachers can be defined as "language teaching experts who are involved in the real act of teaching English as a Foreign Language to language learners." On the other hand, EFL teacher educators refer to "those professionals who provide formal instruction and support for teacher candidates during pre-service teacher education programs" [2]. In this qualitative phenomenological study, we investigated the last group. Therefore, in this research, we defined EFL teacher educators by combining the definitions of EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators presented by Moradkhani et al.[2]. That is, EFL teacher educators in the context of Nicaraguan teacher education, where this investigation took place, were defined as *language teaching experts who help EFL pre-service student teachers develop English proficiency and who provide formal pedagogical and didactic instruction and support for pre-service student teachers to become effective EFL teachers*. This definition implies that the curriculum in the university where we conducted this phenomenological inquiry centered on delivering a knowledge base composed of pedagogical, didactical, and language-focused

instruction and preparation.

Knowledge Base refers to the professional knowledge that EFL teachers need to develop. To some researchers, Knowledge Base has to do with the understanding, awareness, expertise, knowledge, and skills that should equip EFL teachers to provide effective teaching in EFL classrooms [1,3,4]. Based on current research, the knowledge base that English teachers need to acquire in teacher education programs in order to teach English adequately has been examined extensively [1,2,3,5,6,7,8]. In this scenario, communication skills and English proficiency are two critical competencies that should be part of EFL teachers' knowledge base [1,2,3,6,7,8,9]. Other types of knowledge that must integrate EFL teachers' knowledge base are content knowledge and theories of L2 teaching [1,2,3,5,7], teaching skills [1-3], pedagogical content knowledge and support knowledge, knowledge of disciplines which influence language teaching, for example, linguistics and sociolinguistics [1,2,3,5], and contextual knowledge [1,2,3,7]. As we can see, EFL teachers' knowledge base has been investigated extensively.

However, the knowledge base of EFL teacher educators has not yet received enough attention. Existing research showed that there is still neither a consensus on how these professionals construct the knowledge base that determines them as EFL teacher educators nor a consensus of what types of knowledge compose their knowledge base [2]. So far, research shows that EFL teacher educators build their professional knowledge from the following sources, namely, EFL teacher education training, vicarious learning, experience as EFL learners, teaching experience as EFL teachers [2,10], teaching experience in teacher education programs, and language teaching-related research [2]. Regarding knowledge, the existing literature suggested that EFL teacher educators should possess knowledge of the language they will teach. They also need knowledge of related disciplines; knowledge of English language teaching theories, skills, and techniques; knowledge of context and social relations; knowledge of the class, time, and learning management; knowledge of research and professional development; knowledge of practicum; knowledge of teachers and their assessment; and knowledge of reflective and critical teaching [2].

Pursuing this further, it looks like that being an EFL teacher is equated the same as being an EFL teacher educator. Nevertheless, the main difference lies in that the central role of an EFL teacher is to teach English communication skills. On the other hand, EFL teacher educators, besides teaching English communication skills, help pre-service student teachers develop other types of knowledge, such as pedagogical knowledge, teaching knowledge, among others.

Furthermore, EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers differ in the types of knowledge and skills that are possessed. Moradkhani et al.[2] found that EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators have some knowledge in common. For instance, they know the language they teach;

know about disciplines such as phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and semantics; and possess knowledge of ELT theories, teaching skills and techniques, and classroom management. However, EFL teacher educators possess some other types of knowledge that English teachers do not have. For instance, they have research knowledge, knowledge of student teachers and their assessment, and knowledge of reflective and critical teaching in language teacher education programs. In the same line of thought, EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators differ as well in that the latter possess a higher level of depth of pedagogical knowledge and a higher degree of consciousness of their pedagogical command [2]. It was in this scenario that the need to conduct this qualitative phenomenological study arose.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the sources of six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators' knowledge base and the types of knowledge and skills that constructed their knowledge base.

To explore this research problem, we proposed the following research questions.

### 1.1. Central Research Question

- How do EFL teacher educators construct their knowledge base in an EFL teacher education program in a public university in Nicaragua?

#### 1.1.1. Sub-questions

- What are the sources of Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators' knowledge base?
- What types of knowledge and skills build the knowledge base of Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators?

Why did we believe that conducting this inquiry would contribute to the research area of EFL teacher education? The justification lies in that some EFL researchers agreed that more research is needed to continue to explore the field of EFL teacher educators. Researchers outside the field of EFL teacher education also concurred that it is paramount to understand how teachers of teacher candidates, as they referred to teacher educators, acquire the knowledge and skills they need to teach effectively in teacher education programs [11-14].

## 2. Literature Review

This literature review covers theoretical and empirical studies concerning EFL teachers' knowledge base.

### 2.1. EFL Teachers' Knowledge Base

Programs to prepare pre-service EFL teacher educators

are non-existent [2,11,12,13,14]. Universities do not focus on preparing teachers of teachers in undergraduate programs. The types of programs related to EFL teacher preparation that universities offer nowadays are undergraduate degrees to train pre-service ESL or EFL teachers. In master's and doctoral levels, language teachers can study graduate programs in fields such as TESOL, ESL, EFL, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, among others. However, none of those programs are specifically devoted to training teachers of teachers. In practice, besides undergraduate programs in teaching English, training for language teacher educators occurs through professional development such as workshops, conferences, congresses, or other short training programs. Therefore, we wonder if it is not time for universities to start designing or offering undergraduate programs to train pre-service EFL teacher educators, teachers of teachers. We think that those programs are needed today because research has shown that EFL teacher educators' preparation might need to begin at an undergraduate level.

Currently, the foundations of knowledge, skills, and teaching experience of EFL teacher educators are informed in teacher education programs focused on preparing English teachers as well as in EFL teaching experiences. Research showed that ELF teacher educators commonly start becoming educators when EFL teacher education programs recruit them either because they hold advanced graduate degrees, such as master's degrees and PhDs in areas related to teaching English as a second or foreign language or because they have accumulated successful teaching experience as English teachers [2,8,15,16]. However, Moradkhani et al.[2] found that being an EFL teacher differs from being an EFL teacher educator. Thus, to understand how EFL teacher educators build their knowledge base and teaching expertise, we started analyzing what research says about EFL teachers' knowledge base construction.

In this regard, the primary purpose of EFL teacher education is to equip teacher candidates with the knowledge base they may need in their teaching careers [1,3,17].

What is knowledge-based in the first place? EFL teachers' knowledge base has to do with the understanding, awareness, expertise, knowledge, and skills that should equip EFL teachers to provide effective teaching in EFL classrooms [3,4,17,18].

In the same vein, Layette[7] said that EFL teachers should possess three types of knowledge, namely, language proficiency, civilization and culture, and language analysis. By language proficiency, he meant that EFL teachers are to possess or develop native-like English proficiency to teach effectively. As for civilization and culture, he said that EFL teachers need to have knowledge of issues, such as literature and customs, to help their L2 learners better understand people and things related to the target language. Lastly, by language analysis, he meant that EFL teachers

are to have a solid command of the target language structure and knowledge of second language acquisition theories and applied linguistics.

Informed by Layette's[7] work, Day[5] created a framework of the knowledge and skills that EFL teachers need. This framework consisted of four types of knowledge: a) content knowledge, subject matter knowledge; (b) pedagogic knowledge, knowledge of practices of teaching; c) pedagogic content knowledge, knowledge of teaching strategies for teaching the subject matter; and d) support knowledge, knowledge of disciplines which influence language teaching, for example, linguistics and sociolinguistics.

On the same subject, Richards [3] stated that language teachers' knowledge base consisted of six dimensions, namely, 1) theories of teaching, 2) teaching skills, 3) communication skills and language proficiency, 4) subject matter knowledge, 5) pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and 6) contextual knowledge. The first dimension refers to acquiring a thoughtful understanding of the contribution to L2 teaching of major second and foreign language learning theories, to name a few, behaviorist theory, universal grammar, Krashen's theory, cognitive theory, and sociocultural theory [19]. It adds to this dimension the values, assumptions, and beliefs of L2 teachers' teaching philosophy [3]. The second dimension has to do with the teaching repertoire that L2 teachers possess. It includes high command of fundamental elements of teaching, for instance, lesson planning; effective and critical instruction; classroom management, assessment as well as advanced competence in utilizing and adapting language teaching approaches [3]. The third category, language proficiency as well as communication, denotes not only the native or native-like L2 language command English teacher should have but also the ability to communicate and convey information effectively to L2 learners [3]. In other words, speaking English with a native or native-like fluency does not translate into effective teaching necessarily. Subject matter knowledge, the fourth dimension, revolves around the specialized disciplinary knowledge of language teaching, for example, pedagogical knowledge of syntax, grammar, phonology, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics as well as awareness of language teaching approaches, assessment, curriculum development, and teaching materials development [3,6]. The fifth category, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, refers to the individual teaching expertise that L2 teachers possess to make informed decisions of how to transform content and theories and approaches of L2 learning for effective teaching [3]. Finally, contextual knowledge has to do with the understanding of how context, society, community, and institutional factors influence L2 teaching [3]. Taking into account these knowledge dimensions in EFL teacher education programs, according to Richards[3], it can allow EFL teacher candidates to graduate being more prepared to

face thoughtfully and effectively their classroom teaching realities.

In the same year that Richards[3] introduced his EFL teachers' knowledge base framework, Freeman and Johnson[1] proposed a reconceptualization of knowledge base that rejected the subject matter-learner binary view, which was the center of the debate in the literature regarding L2 teaching and teacher education [1]. Freeman and Johnson's[3] knowledge base framework consisted of three interrelated domains: (1) the teacher as learner of language teaching, (2) schools and schooling as historical and sociocultural contexts for teacher learning, and (3) the teacher's pedagogical thinking about teaching, the subject matter and its contents and the language learning process. In other words, they believed that second and foreign language teaching could be enriched by systematically examining how L2 teachers come to understand what they know as well as what they do in their teaching environment.

More recently, Moradkhani et al.[2] said that EFL teachers' knowledge base is composed of four types of knowledge. The first one is knowledge of the English language and related disciplines. This knowledge means that EFL teachers should possess a native or native-like English proficiency and have a good command of other fields directly or indirectly linked to English language teaching. The second category is the knowledge of English language teaching theories, skills, and techniques. According to Moradkhani et al.[2], this kind of knowledge can be defined as "knowledge of teaching language skills

and components and awareness of technicalities." The third type of knowledge that EFL teachers possess is knowledge of students, time, and learning management. By this competence, Moradkhani et al.[2] means that EFL teachers understand "the conditions in which they work and the way to behave with others." Finally, the fourth competence that EFL teachers have is knowledge of context and social relations, which Moradkhani et al.[2] defined as "knowledge of lesson planning and classroom and time management as well as differences in learning teaching among teacher candidates." As can be seen, the conceptual framework introduced by Moradkhani et al.[2] differs from the ones presented, for example, by Day[5], Richards[3], and Freeman and Johnson[1] in the terminology used, but the underlying meaning of the categories is somewhat similar.

Other researchers also supported the types of knowledge presented by Lafayette[7], Day[5], Freeman and Johnson[1], and Richards[3]. For instance, these researchers agree that EFL teachers need to possess knowledge such as subject matter knowledge, theories of L2 teaching, teaching skills [6,9], communication skills and language proficiency [6,8,9], and contextual knowledge [6]. Something that has not changed at all in the current literature is the fact that language proficiency was considered as the most important type of knowledge or competency that EFL teachers should possess to be effective EFL teachers. Table 1 summarizes EFL teachers' Knowledge-Based categorizations available today.

**Table 1.** EFL Teachers' knowledge base frameworks

Lafayette (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language proficiency</li> <li>• Language analysis</li> <li>• Civilization and culture</li> </ul>
Day (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content knowledge</li> <li>• Pedagogic knowledge</li> <li>• Support knowledge</li> <li>• Pedagogic content knowledge</li> </ul>
Freeman and Johnson (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-learner</li> <li>• Pedagogical process</li> <li>• Social context</li> </ul>
Richards (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills and language proficiency</li> <li>• Subject matter knowledge</li> <li>• Theories of teaching</li> <li>• Teaching skills</li> <li>• Pedagogical reasoning and decision making</li> <li>• Contextual knowledge</li> </ul>
Moradkhani et al. (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of language and related disciplines</li> <li>• Knowledge of English language teaching theories, skills, and techniques</li> <li>• Knowledge of class, time, and learning management</li> <li>• Knowledge of context and social relations</li> </ul>

## 2.2. EFL Teacher Educators' Knowledge Base

In this section, we present the sources of knowledge from which EFL teacher educators construct their knowledge base. We also cover the types of knowledge and skills that language teacher educators need to possess.

### 2.2.1. EFL Teacher Educators' Sources of Knowledge

According to Tsui[20], to understand teacher knowledge, it is necessary to comprehend its sources because these determine the types of knowledge teachers or educators may possess. These sources also determine the perceptions that teachers or educators may have concerning teaching and learning [2,8,20,21]. Based on existing literature in the field of EFL teacher education, there are six possible primary sources from which EFL teacher educators may build their knowledge base [2,6,10,21,22].

#### 2.2.1.1. Coursework in EFL Teacher Education

Research on the relationship between language teacher education, EFL teachers' perceptions, and classroom practices has revealed that teacher education courses play an essential role in EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators' knowledge base [2,8,10,21]. That is, learning to teach requires mastering the specific content language teachers are to teach as well as mastering learning and teaching methodologies for making that content available to learners [1,2,3,5,].

#### 2.2.1.2. Teaching Experiences as EFL Teachers

Teaching experience as EFL teachers is the second source from which EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators build their knowledge base [2,8,10,21]. The type of knowledge acquired through actual classroom teaching is referred to by researchers and educators as pedagogical content knowledge [23], pedagogical reasoning and decision making [3], pedagogic content knowledge [5], pedagogical process [1], or Knowledge of class, time, and learning management [2]. In general, teachers perceive teaching experience to be one of the most significant sources of knowledge as far as teaching has to do [12,13,20,24]. In language teacher education, EFL student teachers generally start accumulating real teaching experience as they enter private or public school systems upon graduation, for instance, teaching English as Foreign Language or Second Language in elementary schools, high schools, or in intensive English programs. Additionally, as Zhang[21] would put it, actual language classrooms provide opportunities and challenges for language teachers to reflect on and to test the knowledge and skills acquired in language teacher education courses. This pedagogical reasoning and decision-making process of where to teach, what to teach, how to teach, to whom to teach, and why to teach specific content become the domain of language teachers as they mature and better understand their teaching successes and teaching failures

[1,2,3,23].

However, novice language teachers may not count on the knowledge of language learning theories, language teaching methods, or on any other pedagogical and didactic knowledge developed in teacher education programs when they just start teaching [6,8,10,21,22]. Reflection on these types of knowledge may come later as novice language teachers become more experienced teachers [6,8,10,21,22]. In the beginning, they tend to rely on two types of knowledge: 1) knowledge acquired vicariously or through observation from their professors [8,10,22] while in their teacher education program and 2) their own experiences as language learners [6,8]. Whether these learning experiences are successful or unsuccessful or not, they help language teachers shape their teaching experience.

#### 2.2.1.3. Experiences as Language Learners

Experience as language learners is the third source of EFL and EFL teacher educators' knowledge base [6,8,21]. The impact of teachers' prior language learning experiences has been recognized in applied linguistics and language teacher education [6,8,9]. Borg[25] stated that language teachers' prior learning experiences "establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives." In the same vein, Tsui[20] expressed that experiences as learners allow teachers to create perceptions of what teaching is as well as what teaching should be like.

Further, Macías[8] found that EFL teacher educators reflected on how they acquired English proficiency and applied that experience to their teaching mainly to help their EFL student teachers to learn the English language. Faez[6] provided support for Macías'[8] findings as he said that non-native EFL teachers "have often experienced a number of teaching methodologies as a student in such classrooms and therefore have developed a unique set of assumptions about language teaching theories. They have personally experienced what does and does not work for them" (p. 38). Students' teachers also learn by unconsciously observing the way their professors teach.

#### 2.2.1.4. Apprenticeship of Observation

Apprenticeship of observation is the fourth source of knowledge from which EFL teachers and teacher educators construct their knowledge base [8,25,26]. This source has to do with the knowledge that EFL student teachers accumulate through observation in their language teacher education program [8,25,26]. Bandura[27] called this type of experience vicarious learning, where individuals observe models of behaviors, and the constant reappearance of these modeled behaviors makes that the observers acquire them without needing to produce

modeled responses overtly. That is, apprenticeship of observation does not require explicit teaching or instruction. Instead, it occurs through simple observation of teaching activities and teaching strategies that language educators may utilize in language teacher education programs. According to Tsui[20] and Zhang[21], apprenticeship of observation contributes to EFL teacher and EFL teacher educators in various ways. For instance, it equips them with memories of activities and strategies for teaching specific content, and it may impact their knowledge of students' understanding. Lastly, Macías[8] found that new EFL teachers find a mismatch between the knowledge they overtly received in their teacher education programs and the real school settings at the beginning of their teaching careers, which makes them rely more on the teaching techniques they acquired vicariously from their teacher educators.

#### 2.2.1.5. Teaching Experiences as EFL Teacher Educators

Teaching experiences as teacher educators are the fifth sources of knowledge that contributes to EFL teacher educators' Knowledge Base development. In this respect, the prior teaching knowledge that EFL teacher educators accumulated in EFL classrooms changes once they start teaching in language teacher education [2]. That is, EFL teacher educators develop a higher level of meta-cognitive capacity as they reflect on their pedagogical content knowledge, teaching environment, and their pre-service or in-service student teachers [2].

In the same line of thought, in general teacher education, teaching experiences as teacher educators have been recognized to play an important role in teacher educators' knowledge construction [12,13,24,28]. For instance, Murray and Male[13] said that novice teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge, teaching skills, and pedagogical reasoning change when they start working in teacher education programs. In other words, teacher educators grow a pedagogy for teaching student teachers [13,24]. Additionally, Murray and Male[13] found that "learning to become a teacher educator was seen as a slow, uncertain process, requiring the acquisition of new professional knowledge and understanding." They also found that "there was no straightforward transfer of the pedagogical knowledge and experience acquired in school teaching" [2]. EFL Teacher educators also learn from research.

#### 2.2.1.6. English Language Teaching Research

Lastly, research knowledge related to English language teaching is another source of knowledge from which EFL teacher educators build their knowledge and skills. This source comprises two perspectives. On the one hand, EFL teacher educators are consumers of research [2]. In this case, the role of foreign learning and teaching language-related research keeps EFL teacher educators up-to-date on the existing knowledge in the field. On the other hand, EFL teacher educators are researchers [2]. In

this instance, teacher educators examine teaching and learning issues that occur in their teaching environment and share that research with other researchers in the field, contributing with new perspectives about learning and teaching English and teacher preparation. In short, based on existing literature, EFL language teacher educators construct their knowledge base out of the sources discussed previously.

#### 2.2.1.7. EFL Teacher Educators' Knowledge Base

The knowledge base of EFL teacher educators is rooted in the knowledge base of EFL teachers. However, the way this knowledge is constructed varies between EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators. Moradkhani et al.[2] said that EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators shared some knowledge, but they differ in the level of understanding and reasoning to process and make use of that knowledge in their teaching task. Additionally, some researchers agreed that since there are not any programs explicitly devoted to preparing EFL teacher educators, pre-service and in-service teacher education programs recruit EFL teachers who either are experienced EFL teachers or those who hold high academic degrees such as master's degrees and doctoral degrees [16,29].

Moradkhani et al.[2] found that EFL teacher educators have eight types of knowledge. For example, they possess knowledge of language and related disciplines, which means that EFL teacher educators should possess a native or native-like English proficiency and have a good command of other fields that are directly or indirectly linked to English language teaching.

Knowledge of English language teaching theories, skills and techniques is another type of knowledge that EFL teacher educators have. According to Moradkhani et al.[2], this kind of knowledge can be defined as "knowledge of teaching language skills and components and awareness of technicalities."

The third kind of knowledge that integrates the knowledge base of EFL teacher educators is knowledge of context and social relations. This type of knowledge is defined as "knowledge of the conditions in which teacher candidates work and the way to behave with others" [2]. In Richards' (1998) EFL teachers' knowledge base, he refers to this knowledge as contextual knowledge. Faez[6] and Macías[8] also found that having a good understanding of the context in which the teaching of second and foreign language occurs is important for language teachers.

Additionally, knowledge of students, time, and learning management is also part of the knowledge repertoire of EFL teacher educators. Moradkhani et al.[2] defined this competence as "knowledge of lesson planning and classroom and time management as well as differences in learning teaching among teacher candidates." Other researchers agree with Moradkhani et al.[2] that it is critical that language teacher educators need a strong understanding to prepare lessons, effectively manage a

classroom, and comprehend learners' learning needs and differences [3,6,8].

Teacher educators also must possess research knowledge and professional development knowledge. By this, Moradkhani et al.[2] referred to the understanding that EFL teacher educators should have regarding the different types of research and available English language teaching resources. For instance, educators should know how to integrate technology in the classroom, read quantitative and qualitative research, and find academic materials and teaching resources. They should also demonstrate knowledge beyond the boundaries of books. In this respect, Macías[8] and Johnson[30] said that research awareness is beneficial for EFL teachers as well as for EFL teacher educators.

Another type of knowledge that integrates EFL teacher educators' knowledge base is what Moradkhani et al.[2] called knowledge of practicum. By this, they meant "knowledge of practical solutions which are based on theoretical underpinnings." Shulman[23] called this type of teaching expertise pedagogical content knowledge, Richards[3] named it pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and Freeman and Johnson[1] referred to it as pedagogical processes. Regardless of the way it has been termed, this type of knowledge implies that EFL teacher educators are to be skillful in connecting theory and practice.

Knowledge of student teachers and their assessment are the seventh type of knowledge that EFL teachers need to develop. This kind of knowledge implies that EFL teacher educators know the EFL teacher candidates to whom they teach and the way they should use assessment not only to measure their learning process but also to help teacher candidates use assessment as a tool to continue to learn [2,8]. In this regard, EFL teacher educators know how to motivate their student teachers to learn more effectively. They know how to provide appropriate and effective scaffolding and feedback as well as to activate prior knowledge [2]. EFL teacher educators also know how to identify what Vygotsky (1987) called zones of proximal development in order to assist student teachers in acquiring those skills that they cannot develop on their own yet. This type of knowledge also suggests that EFL teacher educators must possess knowledge of supervision. This knowledge is paramount when educators supervise and observe student teachers in micro-teaching classes and practicums [2].

Lastly, knowledge of reflective and critical teaching is another fundamental component in EFL teacher educators' knowledge base. Moradkhani et al.[2] defined this type of knowledge as "knowledge of the ways to be engaged in reflection and critical pedagogy" [2]. Some instances of this knowledge are, for example, knowledge of oneself as an EFL teacher educator, knowledge of the provision of a good citizen model, knowledge of fostering reflective teaching in teacher candidates, and knowledge of political

relations [2].

As can be seen, Moradkhani et al.'s[2] EFL teacher educators' knowledge base framework shares many similarities with the conceptual frameworks of the EFL knowledge base presented, for example, by Richards[3] and Freeman and Johnson[1]. These researchers examined their conceptualizations by taking into consideration EFL teachers. Moradkhani et al.[2] and Macías[8] recognized that EFL teachers possess similar knowledge to EFL teacher educators. However, they differ in that the latter possess a higher level of depth of their pedagogical knowledge and their degree of consciousness. Moradkhani et al.[2] said that research regarding EFL teacher educators' knowledge base is in its infancy; therefore, more research is needed to continue to understand how EFL teacher educators build their knowledge base. Table 2 recaps EFL teacher educators' sources and types of knowledge.

**Table 2.** EFL teacher educators' knowledge base

<p><b>Sources of knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coursework in EFL teacher education</li> <li>• Apprenticeship of observation</li> <li>• Experiences as language learners</li> <li>• Teaching experience as EFL teachers</li> <li>• Teaching experience as EFL teacher educators</li> <li>• Research related to EFL teaching</li> </ul> <p><b>Types of Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills and language proficiency</li> <li>• Theories of teaching</li> <li>• Subject matter knowledge</li> <li>• Teaching skills</li> <li>• Pedagogical reasoning and decision making</li> <li>• Knowledge of Content and social relations</li> <li>• Curriculum knowledge</li> <li>• Knowledge of student teachers and their assessment</li> <li>• Knowledge of research and professional development</li> <li>• Knowledge of reflection and critical teaching</li> <li>• Knowledge of teacher supervision</li> </ul>
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### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Design

To carry out this study, we used phenomenology. Current phenomenological approaches originated from Husserl's[31] philosophy. Phenomenology seeks to understand and describe the lived experiences that a group of people has experienced about a phenomenon [32,33]. Out of the phenomenological research approaches available today, we chose transcendental phenomenology. Creswell[34] said that transcendental phenomenology presupposes four underlying assumptions. First, participants describe their lived experiences about a phenomenon. Second, participants describe their lived experiences as they occurred, and researchers make the

best effort to suspend any judgment they may have related to the target phenomenon, valuing participants' voices as they describe the chosen phenomenon. Third, informants ascribe meaning to their lived experiences. Finally, participants and researchers understand that reality is only in the experience of the participants.

The phenomenon under investigation leads the research approach to be chosen [35]. Therefore, inspired by Creswell[34], Moustakas[32], and van Manen[33], we used transcendental phenomenology in this study because our purpose was to investigate the lived experiences of how EFL teachers become EFL teacher educators. Lived experiences were collected in the form of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meaning constructed related to the target phenomenon.

### 3.2. Research Site

To select the research site, we used a purposeful sampling strategy. A purposeful sampling, according to Creswell[36], allows researchers to select research sites which, based on their judgments and the purpose of the study, permit them to collect meaningful data to inform the inquiry. The research site was a public university in Nicaragua. This research site was chosen because it met the following selection criteria: 1) had an EFL teacher education program which had been operating for the last fifteen years, 2) had EFL teacher educators with at least three years of teaching experience, and 3) some of the EFL teacher educators were potential research participants.

### 3.3. Participants

As for participants, we recruited six EFL teacher educators out of a population of twenty. We applied a purposive sampling to select them. Purposeful sampling is perceived as an appropriate form of non-probability sampling [36,37]. It allows researchers to choose their informants based on their judgments and based on the purpose of the proposed study. We recruited participants who met the following selection criteria. Participants should have had at least three years of teaching experience in the target pre-service language teacher education program. They should have graduated from the pre-service EFL teacher education program where they worked. Also, they needed to show a willingness to participate in the study voluntarily, and 4) share their lived experiences of how they became EFL teacher educators.

### 3.4. Data Collection

We collected data through structured interviews and curriculum analysis. We carried out the curriculum analysis to learn about the types of knowledge and skills research participants acquired in their pre-service language teacher education program. As for interviews,

we used structured interviews to examine participants' lived experiences regarding the process of becoming EFL teacher educators. Structured interviews suit qualitative data collection because they provide the scope and sequence of all possible questions to be asked [38]. Each participant was interviewed three times. The first interview took sixty minutes. The second one took about thirty minutes. The last one took about 15 minutes.

To conduct the interviews, we used what we called *the spiral interviewing approach* to proceed from one interview to the next. For instance, we interviewed participant 1. Then we proceeded to transcribe interview one and conducted a pre-analysis. The pre-analysis helped us improve the next interview before we met with the same participant for the second time. We did the same before applying the third interview. We followed the same logic from one participant to another participant as well. The purpose of conducting three cycles of interviews was to understand better how participants had experienced the phenomenon of becoming EFL teacher educators. During data collection, we were guided by the four transcendental phenomenology assumptions, as explained by Creswell[34]. Figure 1 illustrates the interviewing application process.

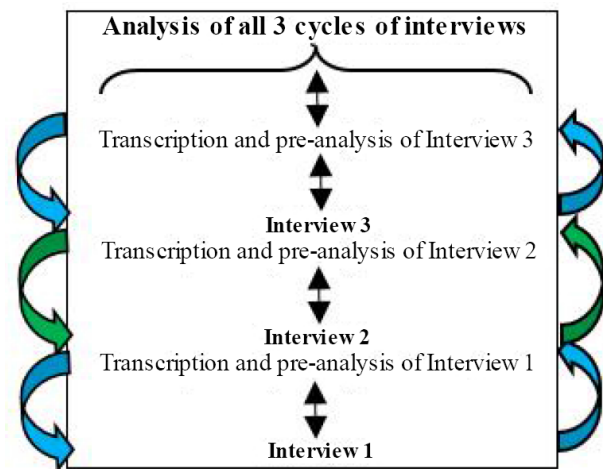


Figure 1. Interviewing process

### 3.5. Data Analysis

In order to analyze data, we used the Interactive Model of Qualitative Data Analysis [39]. This model consisted of four steps. The first stage was data collection. In this stage, we gathered data from participants using structured interviews, as explained above. We also collected data from a curriculum analysis. The second stage was data display. In this stage, we organized a matrix in excel to display the transcriptions of the interviews. Once we created the matrix with all the raw interview data, we applied the third stage of the model, which was data condensation. In this stage, we used a method of first cycle coding called In Vivo coding and a method of second cycle



coding called Pattern coding [39]. Using In Vivo coding, we created the first list of codes that later were transformed into themes and units of analysis using Pattern coding. The proposed research questions guided both coding processes. Finally, we used the last stage of the model, conclusions drawing. It was an analytic process that consisted of a thematic analysis to organize Pattern codes in a logical way to write the findings report. It was accompanied by deductive coding coming from the existing literature [39]. Finally, during the whole process of data analysis, we had in mind the four assumptions to consider in transcendental phenomenology, as described by Creswell[34]. Figure 2 shows the stages we followed to analyze data.

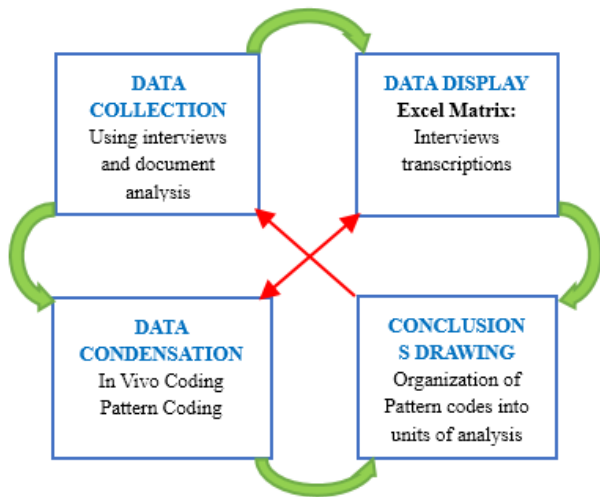


Figure 2. Data analysis process, adapted from (Miles et al., 2014)

**3.6. Rigor and Trustworthiness**

To secure rigor and trustworthiness, we used four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba[40]. In other words, instead of referring to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity, which is the language applied in quantitative research [40,41], when describing how we addressed rigor and trustworthiness, we used the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [40]. We used these concepts because we understand that qualitative studies are based on subjective, contextual, and interpretive data [41]. That is, from our ontological and epistemological perspectives, we accept reality and knowledge as related to our study, the told lived experiences participants had about the research phenomenon.

Credibility and transferability were enhanced using three techniques. First, we applied a thick description of participants' accounts about the research phenomenon as a way to give voice to what they said. In this case, direct quotes from the data were used [42,43]. Second, we used member checks for informants to validate the transcriptions of the interviews [44]. However, as researchers, we acknowledge that the findings of this study can be applied only to the research participants. It is

up to readers whether or not they consider those results transferable to other EFL teacher education settings. Third, we used triangulation of data collection methods. We used three cycles of interviews. Also, we collected data from documents such as the curriculum used in the target EFL teacher education program [44,45].

Dependability was approached in two ways. First, we used team coding as a way to increase the reliability of the findings [39]. Second, we purposefully selected both the research site and participants having in mind the research phenomenon under study. We made the best efforts to choose participants who had intimately experienced the phenomenon.

Lastly, confirmability was established by making sure that the findings presented in this study were drawn from the data. It means that we made the best efforts to bracket our perceptions out as researchers about the phenomenon from those of the participants [32]. We used direct quotes as evidence to support findings in this study [42,43].

**3.7. Ethical Considerations**

As qualitative researchers, we understand that ethical considerations need to be taken to protect research participants. Creswell[46] recommended taking care of some primary ethical considerations in research that deal with people. Therefore, we proceeded as follows regarding this issue. First, we used informed consent forms to recruit potential participants. Consent forms were signed only by those participants who voluntarily decided to participate in the study. Second, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their role as informants. Third, they were told that the study did not represent any harm to them. Fourth, they were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished to do so. Finally, they were informed about how data was going to be collected from them. That is, we told them that they were going to be interviewed three times. In the next section, we present a discussion of the main findings.

**4. Findings and Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the sources of Knowledge Base of six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators and the types of knowledge and skills that constructed their knowledge base. Two sub-research questions to inform the purpose of this study: 1) what are the sources of Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators' knowledge base? 2) What types of knowledge and skills build the knowledge base of Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators? Findings are presented guided by these sub-research questions.

To protect participants' identity, we replaced their actual names with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms for each participant are *Roder*, *Andres*, *Diego*, *Carmen*, *Josseling*, and *Esther*. We decided to use first name pseudonyms,

because in the context where we conducted this research, people addressed themselves by the first name.

#### 4.1. Participants' Teaching Experience

One of the criteria to recruit research participants was that they should have at least three years of teaching experience in EFL teacher education programs. This criterion was determined according to existing research that it may take up to three years to novice teacher educators to build their new professional knowledge base [2,13]. In this regard, the teaching experience of the research participants ranged from three to nine years. Roder was the most experienced of the six EFL teacher educators, with nine years of teaching experience. The least experienced were Diego, Josseling, and Esther, who had taught for three years each. Table 3 displays demographic data about participants teaching experience and level of education.

**Table 3.** Participants' teaching experience as EFL teacher educators

Participants	Teaching Experience	Education Level
Roder	9 years	Master's degree
Andres	8 years	Master's degree
Carmen	5 years	Master's degree
Diego	3 years	Ph.D candidate
Josseling	3 years	Master's degree
Esther	3 years	Master's degree

Next, we present the discussion of Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators' knowledge-based found in this study.

#### 4.2. Nicaraguan EFL Teacher Educators' Knowledge Base

According to Tsui[20], to understand teachers' knowledge, it is vital to understand its sources because sources of knowledge determine the knowledge and skills that educators may possess. In this respect, we found that the target research participants built their knowledge base from eight sources of knowledge. We also found that from those eight sources of knowledge, they developed 16 types of knowledge and 14 skills. Next, we elucidate the found sources of knowledge one by one. Knowledge and skills that were constructed from those sources are discussed as we present each source of knowledge.

##### 4.2.1. Coursework in EFL Teacher Education Programs

The first source of knowledge from which the six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators built their knowledge base was the professional coursework they took in their language teacher education programs in which they became EFL teachers. All of them said that their journey to become EFL teacher educators began in their pre-service teacher education program and acknowledged

that their undergraduate studies were one of the essential steps in their professional lives as language teacher educators. Evidence to support these findings can be seen in these direct quotes from the data. Esther said, "Well, my bachelor's degree wasn't to learn how to teach to other teachers, but I think it was there where I learned English and where I learned to teach English." Further, Diego expressed, "a lot of my knowledge came from all the courses I studied when I was a college student." Research has shown as well that courses student teachers take in their pre-service teacher education programs play an essential role in building their knowledge base [3,8,10,20,21,25]. In this respect, Moradkhani et al.[2] in their grounded theory study about the knowledge base of English language teacher educators found that undergraduate courses are the starting point for English teachers to become language teacher educators.

As we can see, these findings revealed that pre-service teacher education to prepare EFL teacher educator did not exist in the context where we conducted this study. That is, as shown by interview data, the six EFL teacher educators did not receive specific training to be teacher educators; they were trained to be English teachers first. Josseling said, "I imagine I was going to teach other teachers. At university, I was never told that as an English teacher, I could teach future teachers." Andres added, "I would've liked to receive some training in my undergraduate studies to work with future teachers. But everything was set to learn how to teach English only." According to some researchers, pre-service teacher education programs are non-existent, but they agreed that if such programs were created, teacher educators were of better quality [2,13,24,28]. That is, pre-service EFL teacher education programs have contributed a lot to the preparation of language teacher educators; however, programs focused on preparing teachers of teachers might do a better job in training new generations of EFL teacher educators. So far, it seems that even graduate programs do not fulfill those needs. To illustrate, Roder expressed:

In 2008, I had the opportunity to do a two-year Master's degree program in teaching English at an American University, but, again, it was just focused on teaching English. All the classes were, like, on how to teach grammar, vocabulary, writing, reading, and methods of teaching. I thought I was going to learn how to be a teacher trainer because that was what I wanted. But it wasn't like that. I think it would be great to create a program where you study how to train both new teachers and teachers already teaching.

##### 4.2.1.1. Knowledge Built from Undergraduate Programs

Findings also revealed that from coursework taken in EFL teacher education programs, the target research participants developed thirteen types of knowledge, namely, English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, knowledge of language-related

disciplines, lesson planning, material development, classroom management, assessment knowledge, teaching knowledge, knowledge of the Nicaraguan education context, course design knowledge, technology-related knowledge, and research knowledge.

Take the following quotes by Roder, Carmen, and Andres as evidence. Roder said, "in my major, I learned to communicate in English. I learned to teach, evaluate, plan lessons, and choose teaching materials, and to understand how schools work in Nicaragua and other subjects." Based on data from the curriculum analysis by other subjects, he meant disciplines related to teaching such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, English phonology, second language acquisition, phonetics, technology in the classroom, sociolinguistics, syntax, English-Spanish interpretation and translation, and research. On the same subject, Carmen expressed, "...there were two main objectives. One: to learn English. And two: to be an English teacher. So, I learned about pedagogy and didactics of teaching English. I also took courses on research, linguistics, course development, and technology, etc." Finally, Andres mentioned, "I learned to speak English well, how to teach, about translation, investigation, to evaluate what students learn, to choose good books to teach. And other classes like ethics, SLA, grammar, writing, linguistics, etc."

The existing body of literature provided support for the findings presented above. For instance, some researchers said that learning to teach in pre-service teacher education programs entails mastering several types of knowledge and skills, such as developing content knowledge, developing teaching skills, understanding teaching theories, developing pedagogical reasoning, and mastering learning and teaching methodologies [1,2,38].

#### 4.2.1.2. Skills Built from Undergraduate Programs

Coursework taken in pre-service teacher education programs allowed participants to develop nine skills. These skills were everyday communication English skills, academic English language skills, lesson planning skills, creating and adapting teaching material skills, assessment skills, skills to use technology in the classroom, and teaching skills. Carmen said, for instance, "in my teaching program, I learned how to teach and speak English." Similarly, Esther added, "I was lucky because in my bachelor's degree my teachers taught me all related to teaching like planning English lessons, choosing materials from books and the internet, using rubrics to evaluate students and to speak English with C2 competences." In the same line of thought, Diego said, "as a college student, I developed C2 English proficiency, and I learned to plan lessons, use technology, use rubrics, select books to teach, and teach the four English skills, mainly in my teaching practicum." Data from the curriculum analysis supported these results. We found that the curriculum of the target teacher education program included 1,216 hours to develop everyday and academic English proficiency.

Those 1,216 hours were divided into 19 courses of 64 contact hours each. Additionally, students were expected to devote 64 more hours of independent study in each course. Assuming that those 64 hours of independent study were completed, it means that students accumulated 2432 of English learning. According to the Cambridge English language assessment guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning (CEFR), English learners would need about 1,200 guided learning hours to achieve a C2 level of English proficiency [47]. As we can see, the amount of instructional hours suggested by the CEFR is similar to the one in the curriculum we analyzed.

Furthermore, the curriculum analysis demonstrated that once student teachers achieved a C2 English proficiency, they had to take all subsequent coursework in English. That is, after the second year in the target EFL teacher education program, English became a medium of instruction. In total, student teachers had to take 31 required courses after reaching a C2 proficiency. All those courses were related to general pedagogical knowledge, second language pedagogy, curriculum, research, second language learning theories, assessment, English didactics, and other courses related to translation, the education system of Nicaragua, and applied linguistics.

Even though participants said they develop various types of knowledge and skills from the coursework they took in their undergraduate programs, they also acknowledged that not all those skills developed at the same level of awareness and mastery. For example, Andres and Roder said that the skills in which they develop a deeper level of mastery were their English language skills. They expressed that the reason why their abilities to communicate in English were more robust than other types of knowledge was due to more opportunities to practice those skills in their undergraduate studies. The following direct quotations from the interview data provide support to these findings. Andres mentioned:

At university, I acquired a fluent level of English. When I graduated, I was able to speak and write English very well. But I learned how to do other skills, too, like, to create lesson plans, and to evaluate books to teach. And I did some teaching, too. But, to tell you the truth, my English proficiency was way much better than my teaching skills. The thing is, you don't get to teach a lot, only in the practicum. My practicum was short, but it was where I taught for the first time to real students.

Likewise, Roder said:

I remember I took a lot of courses. In my case, I paid more attention to how to speak English well because I thought if I'm going to be an English teacher, I need to speak well. At the end of my program, I got to teach for sixty hours in a high school. My teaching skills kept improving as I kept teaching. I wish I had more practice in, like, teaching, creating lessons, etc.

Based on existing research, even though informants said that they developed all those knowledge and skills mentioned above in their language teacher education programs, as Macías[8] put it, undergraduate coursework is just a starting point for that knowledge and skills to get mastered. It means that language teachers continue to master those types of knowledge and skills as they increase their level of teaching experience. In short, knowledge and skills acquired in undergraduate programs are the foundations of EFL teachers' knowledge. Next, we discuss how knowledge from observation helped participants become EFL teacher educators.

#### 4.2.2. Apprenticeship of Observation

Apprenticeship of observation was another source of knowledge that helped Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators build their knowledge base. Apprenticeship of observation refers to the type of knowledge that is learned indirectly through observation in language teacher education programs. That is, it is the knowledge that is not taught directly to student teachers [2,8,22,25,26].

Findings revealed that even though the target EFL teacher educators recognized that their courses taken in their undergraduate programs were the foundations of the construction of their knowledge base, they did not rely too much on the knowledge and skills they were taught directly in their pre-service language teaching programs at the beginning of their teaching careers. They affirmed that they trusted more in techniques and teaching activities their teachers used with them at university. Josseling, for example, said, "I learned some strategies to teach English from my professors and, also, how to manage a classroom. I remember when I first taught in my practicum, I used many of the activities that my professors used when I was learning English." Esther added, "I still remember that the first day I taught, I asked my students to repeat after me what I wrote on the board. I used some information cards to call their names. It was something that my teachers did." In the same line of thought, Carmen mentioned, "I learned a lot just from watching my teachers teach, like, techniques, how to use the whiteboard and work with students." The existing research supported these findings. For instance, some researchers said that new English teachers begin reasoning on the knowledge and skills they learned in their pre-service teacher education programs later in their teaching careers. However, at the very beginning, they depend on what they have observed from their professors [2,8,21].

Now, you may wonder why participants relied more on apprenticeship of observation knowledge, the knowledge that Bandura[27] would call vicarious learning, at the beginning of their teaching careers. It might be because most of the pedagogical and didactic knowledge that was delivered to the research participants as student teachers were mainly declarative knowledge [48,49]. According to interview data and data from the curriculum analysis, a

sixty-hour teaching practicum was the only real opportunity in which the target participants applied their teaching knowledge and skills during their EFL teacher education programs. In other words, when declarative pedagogical knowledge is not applied to real teaching situations, it may tend to fade as time goes by, which at the same time it may become more difficult to remember and use. However, the participants may have retrieved in an easier way teaching techniques and teaching activities used by their professors to teach English because they learned the "know-how" part of that type of knowledge as their professors applied them [2,8,21,48,49].

Pursuing this further, we would like to highlight something that caught our attention regarding observational knowledge, from which we believe Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators could learn a lot to help their student teachers kindle their interest to acquire procedural pedagogical knowledge from courses which are not necessarily meant to develop such knowledge. According to Diego, while he was taking undergraduate courses intended to develop English communicative skills, he would take notes of the procedures of some of the teaching techniques and activities his professors used to teach English communication skills. Later, when he had to teach for the first time in his teaching practicum, he went back to those notes and used them to inform his teaching. Diego did that without any guidance, moved maybe only by his interest in becoming a good English teacher in the future. To illustrate, see the following excerpt from the interview with Diego:

When you start teaching is hard, but something that helped me was the notes I took over the years when I was learning English at university. I used to take notes about how my teachers taught me English. In the worksheets with learning activities that my teachers gave me to learn English, I would write about how my teachers taught those activities. But I didn't take notes of all the activities my teachers used. I took notes of only the most important ones. Then, when I was told I had to do my practicum, I looked for the handouts I had from when I was learning English. I remember I used many of those activities; I even made some copies because, in the high school that I taught, they didn't have books to teach. I think that helped me. I remember some of my friends were very nervous because they didn't know what to do. With some of them, we got together to plan our classes using the handouts and notes I had kept from my English classes.

From what Diego did, as an EFL student teacher, Nicaraguan language teacher educators could learn two things. First, it is clear that not all students are like Diego with self-motivation and curiosity for learning; consequently, language teacher educators must create that motivation for learning in all students. Second, Diego made observational knowledge more overt to him as he took notes and possibly later reflected on those notes to improve

his pedagogical knowledge. In this regard, we think that a powerful way to help new generations of Nicaraguan English teachers become better teachers is by making apprenticeship learning [2,8,22,25,26] or vicarious learning [27] available to them in a more overt manner. For example, when Nicaraguan language teacher educators teach courses to develop English proficiency, they could take advantage of that time as well to explain to student teachers the teaching strategies, techniques, and activities they will use to develop specific English skills and knowledge. Student teachers could be asked to create a physical or digital diary or notebook in which they could take reflective notes about teaching methodologies used by their professors to teach English communicative skills. Later in their teaching careers, they could do something similar to what Diego did. That is, they could utilize their diaries or notebooks as sources of knowledge and information to inform their teaching practices. This experience would become even more potent if student teachers are given opportunities to do demo classes using some of the teaching activities they observed from their professors. Additionally, we believe that teaching students from an early stage in their teacher education programs that they could learn by observing their professors' teaching may help Nicaraguan universities graduate better English teachers be equipped with a high level of critical thinking and decision-making skills.

To sum up, even though participants did not overtly state it, we think that another reason why they might have relied on apprenticeship knowledge when they just started to teach was because of the mismatch between what they learned in their pre-service language teacher education programs and what they were expected to do in real life EFL classrooms. According to Macías[8], at the beginning of their teaching careers, new EFL teachers find incongruity between the knowledge they were overtly taught in their pre-service teacher education programs and the real school environments, which makes them rely more on the teaching techniques they acquired vicariously from their teacher educators.

#### 4.2.2.1. Knowledge Built from Apprenticeship of Observation

Findings revealed that the six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators developed three kinds of knowledge from apprenticeship of observation. They developed teaching knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management knowledge. Participants acquired that knowledge through two types of observation, namely, passive observation and active observation. On the one hand, passive observation would be what Josseling, Esther, and Carmen did when they were doing their teaching practicum. That is, while they were acquiring the English language in their teacher education programs, their brains received and stored some of the teaching and learning activities that their professors utilized to teach the English

language. Later, when they had to teach for the first time in their teaching practicum, their brains retrieved some of those teaching activities and techniques to teach their English classes. The level of mastery of the pedagogical, teaching, and classroom management knowledge grown from apprenticeship of observation may not seem very solid, but it is a tool that novice teachers, as the findings showed, utilized when they teach for the first time.

On the other hand, active observation happened as in Diego's case. That is, he decided to take notes teaching techniques and activities used by his professors. That allowed him to develop a higher level of awareness of pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and teaching knowledge compared to the other research participants who just observed their professors teaching but did not take any further actions. The handouts and worksheets that Diego developed over time as an English learner became a pedagogical source later when he had to teach for the first time.

We think we could learn a lot from Diego's experience. To illustrate, if Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators encouraged their student teachers to be critical learners, the quality of English teachers would improve a lot because EFL student teachers would start developing their pedagogical and didactic knowledge even when taking courses that are not meant to develop such types of knowledge.

However, it would not be enough just to ask student teachers to reflect on what they observe. We think it would be much more effective if language teacher educators devoted some time to make students aware of the teaching techniques and methods they apply when teaching. In our perspective, this would be a win-win scenario both for student teachers and for language teacher educators. Student teachers would become more prepared and more thoughtful English teachers, and language teacher educators could validate in some way the effectiveness of their pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. That is, if as language teacher educators, we could make each class a case to be analyzed and to reflect upon, our student teachers would become not only better English teachers but also more critical professionals.

#### 4.2.2.2. Skills Built from Apprenticeship of Observation

As for skills built from apprenticeship of observation, findings did not show any specific skills participants constructed from it. It might be because apprenticeship of observation provided student teachers only with observational knowledge. In other words, by observing their professors teaching, the target EFL teacher educators, as pre-service student teachers, developed only declarative knowledge; knowing about teaching [48,49]; however, they did not develop procedural knowledge because they were not exposed to hands-on teaching opportunities as they observed [48,49]. That would be something

Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators could add to their English proficiency courses. That is, besides asking students to become active observers in their English classes, they could also give student teachers opportunities to use some of the teaching techniques or activities they are observing from their professors.

In short, we found that the target research participants said that observational knowledge was vital for them at the beginning of their EFL teaching careers. However, as they became more and more experienced English teachers, they began to use other sources of knowledge, including the knowledge and skills they overtly received in their undergraduate programs. Personal experiences as English language learners was another source to build EFL teacher educators' knowledge base.

#### 4.2.3. Own Experiences as Language Learners

This study showed that the third source of knowledge from which the six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators constructed their knowledge base was their own experiences as English language learners. We found that 100% of the research participants asserted that reflecting on the ways they learned English helped them make decisions on how to teach and how to help their students to acquire the English language. All of them also agreed that independent study and self-regulated learning are paramount to develop English proficiency faster. For instance, Esther stated:

Something that has helped me to become the kind of professional that I am now was being an independent learner. I studied hard to complete all the tasks and projects assigned by my teachers outside the classroom. I also studied on my own. That is something I have shared with my English students. I tell them that it is necessary to go beyond what you learn in the classroom. I always think about how I became fluent in English and shared that with them. Like, I share with them how to use the internet and phone and tablet applications to study and show them how to maximize their time and skills to learn better.

Additionally, Josseling added, "learning English here means that you will use all that is available to you, like, speaking English in the community, using YouTube and phone applications to improve the four English skills, watching documentaries and news in English, reading online sources, and creating your English environment at home." Likewise, Andres, Carmen, and Roder affirmed that meditating on how one acquires a language provides valuable ideas to help others learn more efficiently. To illustrate, take these excerpts from the interview data. Andres said, "as a language learner, you need to take everything around you and turn it into opportunities to learn, not only what you're given in class." Carmen stated, "building independent study habits is hard but rewarding at the end. I set myself as an example and guide my students the way I learned English." Lastly, Roder

expressed, "I tell my students to practice passive and active learning. I mean to listen and reading but to practice speaking and writing, too, like, to listen first and echo what they hear, and to compare their speaking with what they hear."

Existing research supported these findings as it has been found that novice English teachers based their pedagogical and didactic decisions on how to teach English based on successful and unsuccessful ways they experienced when acquiring the English language [6,8,10,21]. In addition, Borg[25] expressed that language teachers' prior learning experiences "establish cognitions about language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives." Faez[6] said that EFL teachers' personal language learning experiences are so compelling because they have personally experienced what works and what does not work as far as learning the English language is concerned. It occurs because non-native EFL teachers experience several teaching methodologies as students that allow them to develop a unique set of assumptions about language teaching theories. Monolingual native English teachers lack that type of knowledge [6].

Furthermore, all participants asserted that an advantage that had helped them to be more effective in sharing their lived English learning experiences with their students was that their students possessed similar characteristics compared to them. For instance, they spoke the same first language (Spanish), belonged to the same culture, and the learning process occurred in similar settings, EFL contexts. In other words, teaching students with similar characteristics to them had facilitated the process of making decisions on what to teach, how to teach, how to accomplish expected English skills, and how to assess student learning. To illustrate, Diego said:

Another fact that has helped me to teach better in this teacher education program is that I belong to the same culture of my students. I speak Spanish like them. And I learned English pretty much in the same conditions they are learning English. I know what worked for me and what didn't. And I help my students that way. They see me as one of them. They see that becoming a fluent English teacher is something possible.

#### 4.2.3.1. Knowledge Built from Experiences as Language Learners

Experiences as language learners allowed participants to build subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching knowledge. As for subject knowledge, the participants affirmed that as a language learner, one develops a deep understanding and awareness of how the target language works from a semantical, phonological, morphological, and syntactical point of view. They expressed that as they learned to communicate in English,

they learned to overtly understand its grammar and lexicon as well as how to use its sound system to be intelligible to the ears of English speakers. Even though "you may make language mistakes when speaking, you know when a sentence or word has been misspoken," therefore, "you can help your students improve those speaking errors the same way you did as when you were learning English," Esther said. More support for these findings came from the interviews conducted to Carmen, Josseling, and Diego. Carmen said:

One of the advantages of teaching English to Spanish speakers is that one understands two things. You have experienced yourself the process of learning English, and you speak the language of your students. And that makes it easier to help them to learn English. It's, like, when you teach, say, grammar or vocabulary, you kind of do it in the same way you learned.

Likewise, Josseling mentioned:

Sometimes when I am planning my listening and speaking classes, I think about some techniques I, myself, used when I was at university. Like, I have my students listen to short videos, songs, and podcasts recorded by native or native-like English speakers. One of my favorite activities is to have my students imitate the way those speakers speak and then to videotape or record themselves, saying the same scripts. That worked for me, and I've seen it's worked for my students, too.

Finally, Diego stressed, "part of the knowledge I have and that I use when I teach English grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation came from what I studied when I was a student. I use only what I think worked for me."

Correspondingly, the level of language awareness was acquired when the research participants were student teachers who contributed to enrich their pedagogical and teaching knowledge because, as they expressed, some of their decisions on how to teach and on how to guide their student teachers to acquire the English language had been informed by the way they learned English. Existing research supports these results. It has been demonstrated that EFL teachers or teacher educators who have experienced the process of learning English can develop a particular understanding and level of awareness that make them better understand how to help others learn the English language in more effective ways utilizing those techniques and strategies that worked for them [2,6,8].

#### 4.2.3.2. Skills Built from Experiences as Language Learners

According to the findings, some of the skills that resulted from experiences as language learners were English social skills, English academic skills, skills to select and assess learning materials, and some teaching skills. The direct quotes I described above implied that when the six EFL teacher educators were English learners,

they acquired English skills, both oral and written, in the classroom and as independent learners. In that process, they constructed skills to select and assess learning materials. They did that by trial and error. That is, they experimented English learning with various types of English sources, such as English speaking people, English podcasts, music in English, grammar books, videos, documentaries, Apps for learning English, English news, watching TV in English, and so forth, until they found sources that worked for them to learn the English language. Now, as they asserted, their own English learning experiences influenced the decisions they made regarding teaching the English language in EFL teacher education classrooms [2,6,8].

In brief, findings demonstrated that the fact that the participants experienced the process of acquiring the English language had helped them better inform their teaching in EFL teacher education classrooms. These findings were supported by the existing body of research, which recognized the value that has to learn a language and then teach it. That is, language teachers who have experienced learning a second language may develop an overt understanding of how that language works and how it can be learned and taught to others. Teaching experiences as EFL teachers, according to the findings, contributed to the development of participants' knowledge base as well.

#### 4.2.4. Teaching Experiences as EFL Teachers

Teaching experience as EFL teachers was the fourth source of knowledge from which the research participants built the knowledge base that defined them as EFL teacher educators. They said it was until they started to teach English in their teaching practicum and then either in high schools or in intensive English programs that their teaching knowledge and skills began to develop. Consequently, they acknowledged that their EFL teaching experiences were a vital component in their teaching careers. For instance, Esther said, "teaching in high school and an English program for five years made it easier for me to teach in this program. My sixty-hour teaching practicum helped me, too." Lastly, Andres expressed:

After my practicum, which was the first time I taught, I taught communicative English at the university level. There I had to plan classes, teach the four skills, and also evaluate my students. Then I came to teach future English teachers. I would say that my previous experience helped me in some ways to teach here. But I guess I've improved as a teacher. It has not been easy.

Researchers from language teacher education found that teachers perceived teaching experiences to be one of the most significant sources of knowledge as far as teaching was concerned [1,2,3,5]. The pedagogical reasoning and the decision-making capacity of what to teach, how to teach, and why to teach become the domain of language teachers as they mature and better understand their

teaching successes and teaching failures [1,2,3,5,23]. As language teacher educators, we agree that EFL teaching plays a significant role in developing one's pedagogical content knowledge or pedagogical reasoning as well as developing other types of knowledge such as assessment knowledge, knowledge of students, classroom management, subject knowledge, among others.

#### 4.2.4.1. Knowledge Built from Teaching Experiences as EFL Teachers

From teaching experiences as EFL teachers, the participants built teaching knowledge as EFL teachers, material development knowledge, lesson planning knowledge, classroom management knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge, knowledge of students' L1, and assessment knowledge. Most of the participants affirmed that their teaching experiences as EFL teachers in intensive English programs and at the university level contributed to teaching in pre-service EFL teacher education programs. For example, Esther said, "as an English teacher here in the intensive English program, I learned to teach the four skills, plan lessons, evaluate my students, create materials, also, to use the communicative approach, and to teach large and small groups. My knowledge of English, like grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, improved too." Researchers agreed with these findings as they said that it is with each interaction and contact with actual language classrooms that language teachers develop pedagogical reasoning and decision making knowledge and skills [1,2,3,5].

#### 4.2.4.2. Skills Built from Teaching Experiences as EFL Teachers

As for skills, teaching experiences as EFL teachers allowed informants to construct skills about lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, creating and adapting teaching material and teaching skills. All these skills were built by teaching English at the high school level or in intensive English programs. To illustrate, Josseling stated, "As an English teacher, I developed some skills, like, teaching, planning, evaluating my students, choosing books and activities to teach, and using different strategies to teach very large classes." Likewise, Carmen said, "I improved my teaching skills, learned to create exams, rubrics, and quizzes to evaluate my students. Also, I learned to plan my classes and look for teaching materials."

In a nutshell, the six target Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators said that their work experience as EFL teachers contributed a lot to the development of their knowledge base. Next, we discuss how teaching experiences as EFL teacher educators helped participants build their knowledge and skills.

#### 4.2.5. Teaching Experiences as EFL Teacher Educators

Teaching experience as EFL teacher educators helped participants develop their knowledge base. All informants

asserted that their teaching experiences in the target pre-service language teacher education program were one of the most critical stages in their teaching careers that helped them become language educators. It was in language teacher education programs where their knowledge and skills to train pre-service EFL teachers developed. They said that transitioning from teaching settings in which they worked as EFL teachers to pre-service EFL teacher education programs was not an easy process. They had to adjust their previous teaching knowledge and skills and had to acquire new knowledge and skills to be more effective in teacher education classrooms. Based on the findings, becoming a language educator may take more than three years of teaching and reflecting on teaching in language teacher education programs. Pursuing this further, they affirmed that being an EFL teacher is not the same as being an EFL teacher educator. According to them, language teacher educators are more prepared, more critical teachers, more aware of language teaching theories and methodologies, and more aware of research and disciplines related to second language teaching. Additionally, they said that language teacher educators have a more significant responsibility compare to English teachers because they prepare future English teachers whose quality depends directly on the quality of education received from their professors. It is not just teaching English communicative skills but also preparing future professionals that will impact the education they may offer in different systems of education nationwide. Lastly, findings revealed that participants would have liked to study in EFL teacher education programs explicitly devoted to preparing pre-service student teacher educators. Unfortunately, those types of programs are non-existent in Nicaragua. To point out, Diego said:

Even though I had been teaching English for five years when I began teaching here, I think it was here where I really learned to teach to student teachers. It wasn't easy at the beginning. All those years of experience indeed helped. But to tell you the truth, working with future student teachers has been challenging. You need to prepare better because students see you as a model. So you have to read more about teaching, improve the way you speak English, learn new things because here you don't teach only English, you teach other courses, like, research, didactics, pedagogical courses, learning theories, language teaching methodologies, translation, material development, etc. So I would say that it takes you many years of learning to be a good teacher here. But I love it. I like to see when my students learn a lot from me.

In like manner, Josseling expressed:

I would say that I am a different English teacher now, more prepared. I'm still learning. But in the three years I've been teaching at this university, I've learned many things, like, for example, working with future teachers.



These students are very interested in learning English and learning to be teachers. I wish my teachers could have taught me some strategies to work in teaching training programs. That would've made my job easier here. I think it would be great to create undergraduate programs to prepare teacher trainers. For me, it isn't the same to teach English in high schools or language programs than to teach English to student teachers. Another thing, here we work as a team. We help each other. We learn from other more experienced teachers and workshops.

Research in language teacher education recognized that teaching experience in teacher education programs is essential in teacher educators' teaching careers. They said that it is in teacher education programs that teachers become teacher educators [2]. Additionally, some researchers agreed that becoming a teacher educator is a long and sometimes stressful process [13,24]. According to Murray and Male[13], there is no straightforward transfer of the pedagogical knowledge and teaching experiences constructed in school teaching to teacher education programs. It means that the acquired pedagogical content knowledge that the target language teacher educators developed as English teachers had to be transformed or adapted. For example, Roder highlighted how his knowledge base had changed as he started to teach in EFL teacher education programs. He expressed:

Definitely, my teaching knowledge has changed since I began teaching here. I feel more prepared than before when I was teaching in other programs. I'm more reflective of what I do. Now, I think I know how to prepare more effective lessons. I have learned to use technology in my class, like YouTube videos, English Apps, online teaching materials, Google Classroom, Moodle, etc. I think about why I'm going to use certain learning activities or materials. I think a lot about the competences and knowledge my students need to learn and ways they can learn them better. Like, if I'm teaching English, I like to use different activities. I do warm-ups to activate their previous knowledge, activities to present the new topics, activities to practice the four skills, and activities to evaluate what I teach. I think I have improved my teaching because I know how to work with these students. I remember that some years ago, I thought it was going to be the same, like, teaching in high school. Very soon, I realized I was wrong. To teach future teachers, you need to read more. I read articles, books, and magazines about language teaching. Now before teaching, I make sure I know what I am going to do, prepare extra activities, and after my lessons, I think about what I can do to improve in the next class. I think that what makes me different from when I taught in other English programs is that now I think more about what I do, and I think I care more about being a good teacher. Now, I don't just teach the English language. I teach other classes, like,

using technology in the classroom, contrastive analysis between Spanish and English, SLA, English-Spanish translation and interpretation, applied linguistics, and research.

Moradkhani et al.[2] agreed with these findings too. They said that when transitioning from one teaching setting to another one not only the knowledge base of language teacher educators changes but also their professional identity.

#### 4.2.5.1. Knowledge Built from Teaching Experiences as EFL Teacher Educators

According to the findings, the six EFL teacher educators asserted that teaching in pre-service EFL teacher education programs was different from teaching English in other levels of education. Additionally, they expressed that their teaching experiences at this level had allowed them to improve and develop new knowledge, for instance, pedagogical knowledge, teaching expertise working with student teachers, lesson planning knowledge, assessment knowledge, evaluating and developing teaching and learning materials, incorporating technology in the classroom, subject knowledge, knowledge of working in teams, and English proficiency knowledge. Part of this knowledge was related directly to teaching in EFL teacher education classrooms, and another part was related to actions they took to improve, such as reading pedagogical articles and books, workshops, and working in teams with other workmates. Besides the excerpts from the data presented above, further support to these findings can be found in these other quotes. Esther said, "as soon as I'm told which courses I'm going to teach, I begin revising all the topics and prepare myself about those topics." She went on to express, "I speak English better now. My classes are more interactive. I use technology, have clear objectives, think a lot in the strategies I'll use, and choose materials to teach very carefully." Andres added, "Now I prepare better classes. I care about my students' learning. I read articles and books about teaching. And I participate and give some workshops to share my teaching experience with my coworkers." Additionally, Josseling asserted, "here besides teaching, I use formative assessment, summative, and diagnostic assessment with my students. Also, I work with other teachers to plan my classes and sometimes to teach together. I have observed them; they have observed me."

#### 4.2.5.2. Skills Built from Teaching Experiences as EFL Teacher Educators

Regarding skills, it seems that the target EFL teacher educators built more mastery in some of the skills they possessed before teaching in the target teaching education program as well as developed new skills. For example, some of the skills they improved were: teaching English skills, lesson planning skills, technology skills as related to integrating technology in the classroom, English

language skills, English communication skills, and creating and evaluating learning and teaching material skills. Also, they developed other skills. For instance, they learned to teach student teachers, prepare lessons for student teachers, and assess student teachers' learning. Further, they learned to work in teams. They also built critical thinking skills as they thought about how to transform and deliver content, knowledge, and competences to their students. Next, we elucidate the sixth source of knowledge from which participants constructed their knowledge base.

#### 4.2.6. Research Knowledge Related to English Language Teaching

Research knowledge related to English language teaching contributed to the development of the six Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators' knowledge base. In this respect, the participants said that they were not researchers but consumers of research. Most participants affirmed that they possessed research knowledge. That knowledge came from courses they took in their pre-service teacher education programs, from research workshops, from reading or from teaching research courses. However, the majority acknowledged not having practical research knowledge because they devoted 100% of their time to teaching. Findings showed that in most cases, they utilized published research to read and learn about teaching methods, teaching techniques, and teaching activities that they could apply in their classrooms. Furthermore, we found that through reading published research, the participants augmented their knowledge about disciplines related to language acquisition. For instance, they read about phonetics, second language acquisition, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, English phonology, computer-assisted language learning, accent reduction, pronunciation, and English grammar. To exemplify, Roder said:

I haven't published any research studies. My contract here is as a teacher. I know that other teachers teach research courses, and some of them have published, but not much. Most of the time, we are just teaching. But we need to learn about research because that is something that our students need. Sometimes, we're given some workshops about it. In my case, I do have some knowledge of research. In the university, I took some research classes and did a short study to graduate. I like to read articles and books about English teaching, about how to use the English sounds and phonetics to teach pronunciation, about communicative grammar and vocabulary development. That's how I use research. I would like to do research, but I teach fulltime. Maybe someday. But now the more I can do is to read about research in case my students ask me about it or in case I have to teach a research course and, of course, to read published information that helps me with my teaching job.

Existing research on language teacher education found that research is a source of knowledge out of which teacher educators grow their knowledge base [2,12,13]. According to them, research as a source of knowledge can be seen from two standpoints. On the one hand, language educators can be research consumers. It was the case of the research participants in this study that said that they mostly used research as a source to be up-to-date with the current knowledge related to teaching and learning the English language. On the other hand, research as a source of knowledge can be used to investigate and disseminate teaching and learning issues that occur in their EFL teacher education classrooms, contributing this way to new perspectives about learning and teaching English and teacher preparation [2,8,30]. This second perspective does not apply to the knowledge base of the six Nicaraguan language teacher educators who took part in this study because the findings revealed that they were not researchers because of the nature of the job contracts.

#### 4.2.6.1. Knowledge and Skills Built from Research

As for knowledge and skills developed from research as a source of knowledge of the target language teacher educators, the findings showed that various types of knowledge were built, for instance, pedagogical knowledge, assessment knowledge, knowledge about disciplines related to language acquisition, content knowledge in some areas of the English language, knowledge related to technology, and curriculum development. However, the findings did not show indications of specific skills constructed from this source of knowledge. Possibly, they might continue to develop their critical thinking skills related to English teaching as a result of reading research. It might be because the target language teacher educators used research as a way to have access to declarative knowledge only; that is, there was no hands-on practice to conduct research. It does not mean, though, that research skills were not relevant to them; on the contrary, they said that because of time, they did not conduct research studies. Next, we describe the seventh source of knowledge from which participants grew their knowledge base.

#### 4.2.7. Technology Related to English Language Teaching and Learning

Technology related to English language teaching and learning was the seventh source from which participants built their knowledge base. In this regard, the results revealed that the types of knowledge and skills that were created from this source of knowledge had to do directly with learning how to use online sources to help students to learn the English language faster and in more interactive ways. For instance, among the technology-related sources that the informants used to teach were YouTube; English teaching websites; English Apps; online learning management systems to deliver content to their students

such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and Google Sites; internet to help students have access to other online sources such as articles and books about teaching English; and a computer laboratory to teach English. To illustrate, Carmen stated:

I have used technology in my class since I started teaching here. Since I have access to the internet in the classroom in this university, I like to use videos from YouTube or English websites, like VOA, ESLPodcast, TED Talks, ManyThings, and English news. I like to use Apps that are for free like Antonyms and Synonyms, 4000 Essential English Words, AudioBooks, Word Bit, 500 English conversations, collocation dictionaries, Duolingo, and 3650 phrasal verbs. These materials help me a lot because my students can learn native English pronunciation, accent, intonation, and how other speakers from around the world speak English. In this university, many teachers use Moodle, Google Sites, or Google Classroom to teach, too. That way, our students can have access to learning materials from their homes or cellphones. I share English information with my students to learn English and to learn to teach English. On my Google Classroom courses, I like to post questions for students to write about; every week, I ask them to videotape themselves talking about something, and then they share their videos with other students and me on Google Classroom. As a teacher in this program, I have learned to use computers too. Part of our courses includes lab classes. My students practice their English skills in the lab.

Some language researchers have pointed out that technology-assisted language learning is beneficial for English learners, including online sources and mobile Apps. [50-52]. This knowledge was not included in the knowledge base categorizations found in the existing literature, but, nowadays, we think language teacher educators need this type of knowledge to help student teachers learn more interactively.

#### 4.2.7.1. Knowledge and Skills Built from Technology Related to Teaching

We found that from this source of knowledge, the target research participants constructed technology-related pedagogical knowledge and skills. They also built knowledge and skills to choose online learning materials. As well, they constructed knowledge and skills to use existing online sources such as websites, apps, and learning management systems. Next, we present the last source of knowledge from which the informants constructed their knowledge base.

#### 4.2.8. Professional Development Opportunities

Another source of knowledge from which the six target Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators constructed their knowledge base was from professional development opportunities. According to the results, participants said

that there were two types of professional development opportunities that contributed to the development of their knowledge base. The first type of professional development opportunity was conference. They asserted that to improve their pedagogical and didactic knowledge and skills, they participated in annual TESOL conferences, English teaching congresses. The second type of professional development opportunity was pedagogical workshops organized and developed in the university where they taught. Additionally, the results showed that in those conferences and workshops, the target language educators participated as presenters and participants. For example, Esther stated:

I've learned a lot from NICATESOL conferences. I go there every year. I have presented many times. I like to go because I can meet and learn from other English teachers. The presentations are about teaching activities, techniques, and methods. I've also been in two congresses. I didn't present. I was there as a participant. Where I have presented a lot is in the pedagogical workshops we develop every semester in our department. In those workshops, we learn about teaching to student teachers. It's great because I can learn from more experienced teachers.

Even though Moradkhani et al.[2] said that language teacher educators need to possess knowledge of professional development. They did not see it as a source of knowledge but as a type of knowledge. Yet, participants in this study saw it as a source of knowledge. Other researchers agreed that professional development is essential for educators to share knowledge and to learn from others [53,54].

#### 4.2.8.1. Knowledge and Skills Built from Professional Development

Now, what types of knowledge and skills did the target EFL teacher educators build from professional development? In this respect, participants constructed general pedagogical knowledge, lesson planning knowledge, classroom management knowledge, teaching material development knowledge, and teaching skills related to teaching English. That is, they said that conferences were mostly focused on teaching techniques, teaching activities, or teaching methods to teach the English language. From the teacher training workshops, they developed knowledge and teaching skills specifically related to working with EFL pre-service student teachers. In the next section, we present the main conclusions of this study.

## 5. Conclusions

This study concludes that in the context where this research took place, there are not any EFL teacher education programs devoted to preparing EFL teacher

educators at the undergraduate level. It was found that even graduate degrees held by participants focused on teaching English only. However, participants expressed that they would like to see that someday universities offer teacher education programs specifically designed to train language teacher educators both at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Further, this study concludes that even though EFL teachers and EFL teacher educators may share some knowledge and skills, they also differ. Teacher educators possess a higher level of awareness of the knowledge and skills they have. They also possess other types of knowledge and skills that English teachers may not have. For instance, teacher educators know about student teachers' learning, student teachers' assessment, curriculum knowledge, pedagogy and didactics to train student teachers, research, learning material development to teach student teachers, student teachers' supervision and teaching practicum, among others. They also differ in the roles they play. For example, English teachers mostly focused on teaching English communication skills or English with specific purposes. EFL teacher educators, on the other hand, teach communicative and academic English skills and also equip student teachers with pedagogical and didactic knowledge for them to become competent English teachers.

As well, this inquiry concludes that it took research participants from three years and more to become EFL teacher educators. According to the informants, it was until they began teaching in EFL teacher education programs that they became language teacher educators. That process requires constant reflection, adjustment, and transformation of the knowledge, skills, and teaching experiences acquired as EFL teachers.

This study revealed that Nicaraguan EFL teacher educators built their knowledge base from eight sources of knowledge, namely coursework, observational knowledge, experience as language learners, EFL teaching experience, technology, research, teaching experience as EFL teacher educators, and professional development. From these sources, they built sixteen types of knowledge and fourteen skills. The types of knowledge possessed by the target participants were: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge, lesson planning knowledge, material development knowledge, classroom management, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of Nicaraguan educational system, research knowledge, technology-related knowledge, knowledge of students L1, language learning related disciplines, teaching knowledge in language teacher education programs, assessment knowledge, teachers' observation knowledge, and professional development knowledge. Participants had the following skills, social English language skills, academic English skills, communication skills, lesson planning skills, material development skills, teaching skills, assessment skills, classroom management, skills to design language

programs, critical thinking skills, L1 proficiency skills, teamwork skills, skills to learn to learn, and skills to use technology in the classroom. The knowledge and skills that participants valued more were English proficiency, language learning experience, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience in EFL teacher education programs, assessment knowledge of student teachers, and knowledge of students' L1.

This study adds a little more to the understanding of how EFL teacher educators, teachers of teachers, build their knowledge base. However, we understand that this field of research is still in its infancy. Therefore, we recommend further qualitative research to continue to examine the types of knowledge and skills that teacher educators possess. We also recommend quantitative research to investigate to understand better the professional knowledge and skills of EFL teacher educators. Maybe someday, after more research has been conducted, we may see universities offering undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs to prepare teacher educators.

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